Ten Scenes
from

THE BORDERERS

by William Wordsworth

(adapted from the 1842 version)

Tuesday 20 September 2011
Combination Room
St. John’s College
Prior Events

Many years before the action of the play, Baron Herbert, who held lands in the county of Devon, went on crusade. He was blinded at the siege of Antioch, but he escaped with his infant daughter, Matilda, and the two made their way back to England. The Baron discovered he had been dispossessed of his lands and the pair resumed their wanderings till they came to Cumbria (close to the Border with Scotland). A patroness was found to bring up his daughter while he himself retired to live in a cottage next to an abbey at some considerable distance.

Before the action of the play, Matilda, now a young woman, went back to live with her old blind father. She has fallen in love with Mortimer, a nobleman who has become Captain of a band of Borderers. (His situation resembles that of Robin Hood and his Outlaws, since he regards himself as a righter of wrongs and an instrument of natural justice).

One of the Borderers, Rivers, a sinister, somewhat older man, has gained ascendancy over Mortimer, whom he hates and is now seeking to subjugate completely by leading him on to ‘execute’ an innocent person. To this end, he has (almost) persuaded Mortimer that Baron Herbert is an impostor, that Matilda is not really his daughter, and that Herbert is intending to yield her to the lusts of a local libertine, Lord Clifford.

Shortly before the play begins, Rivers was sent to Herbert to act as Mortimer’s go-between in his suit for Matilda’s hand in marriage. Treacherously he set the old man against Mortimer; and Matilda has been forced by her father to write a letter to her lover, renouncing him.

Matilda and her father have set out for the home of her old patroness (who has died leaving her a legacy) — a journey of three days on foot across the moors. The opening scene of this abridgement finds them both on the road at the end of their first day. Here they are observed and overheard by Rivers.
and by Mortimer, who is still struggling to come to terms with Matilda’s letter of renunciation.
THE PERFORMERS

MORTIMER          Adrian Poole

RIVERS            Hugh Mellor

HERBERT           Malcolm Underwood

MATILDA           Gail Trimble

ROBERT            Mark Nicholls

Harpist           Manon Hughes

Projection Synchroniser  Caroline Martin

Directed by

Patrick Boyde
Who’s who?

Patrick Boyde, Emeritus Professor of Italian, plays a permanent part as The Borderer, active in the collegiate space between Fellows and Research Students.

Manon Hughes read Music at John’s. After graduating in 2008 she studied the harp at the Guildhall School of Music before completing a Master’s in Musicology at King’s College London.

Hugh Mellor, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, acts regularly with the two main Cambridge town groups: Combined Actors of Cambridge and Bawds.

Caroline Martin has come to St John’s from Dublin to read for a PhD in Earth Sciences. In February this year she was delighted to have the chance of reading the part of Earth in Shelley’s Prometheus Unbound.

Mark Nicholls is Librarian and President of St John’s and a notable reader of Ghost Stories by M.R. James.

Adrian Poole is Professor of English Literature and a Fellow of Trinity College. His interests include Greek Tragedy, Shakespeare, Victorian and Early Modern writing.

Gail Trimble took her BA and D. Phil in Classics at Oxford and is about to return there in order to take up a Fellowship at Trinity, having spent a year as a JRF at Trinity here, pursuing her research on Catullus.

Malcolm Underwood is our Archivist, co-author of a biography of our Foundress, and has acted with Cambridge town and parish groups.

James Willetts used to be Principal Teacher of Classics at Ardrossan Academy and is now a documentary film maker. He will be filming the performance.