



# **Romantic Tragedies: The Dark Employments of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley (Cambridge Studies in Romanticism)**

*Reeve Parker*

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Troubled politically and personally, Wordsworth and Coleridge turned in 1797 to the London stage. Their tragedies, *The Borderers* and *Osorio*, were set in medieval Britain and early modern Spain to avoid the Lord Chamberlain's censorship. Drury Lane rejected both, but fifteen years later Coleridge's revision, *Remorse*, had spectacular success there, inspiring Shelley's 1819 Roman tragedy, *The Cenci*, aimed for Covent Garden. Reeve Parker makes a striking case for the power of these intertwined works, written against British hostility to French republican liberties and Regency repression of home-grown agitation. Covertly, *Remorse* and *The Cenci* also turn against Wordsworth. Stressing the significance of subtly repeated imagery and resonances with Virgil, Shakespeare, Racine, Jean-François Ducis and Schiller, Parker's close readings, which are boldly imaginative and decidedly untoward, argue that at the heart of these tragedies lie powerful dramatic uncertainties driven by unstable passions - what he calls, adapting Coleridge's phrase for sorcery, 'dark employments'.

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