

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
AS RHETOR IN *THE RIVER DUDDON SONNETS*

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father and to my late mother for all their sacrifices to provide a good education for me. Their hard work and determination provided their children the opportunity to achieve higher and better goals in life.

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ABSTRACT

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William Wordsworth's later poems, especially *The River Duddon Sonnets*, have not received the recognition that they deserve. Since most of the criticism on Wordsworth's later poems center on the so-called "decline" of Wordsworth's creativity, these poems are unduly neglected. It is time to have a closer look at the merits of Wordsworth's poems other than the ones of the "golden decade," of which a myriad of studies are available. A careful and impartial assessment of Wordsworth's *The River Duddon Sonnets* will show that Wordsworth was capable of genuine artistry and craftsmanship. His education and reading in the classics provided him the knowledge of rhetoric which he utilizes in *The River Duddon Sonnets*. His ethos as a knowledgeable and well-read man projects out in every sonnet of the Duddon series, and he uses this rhetorical strategy of ethos to his advantage. Wordsworth had written 523 sonnets, including the two sonnet cycles: *The River Duddon* and the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. His earlier sonnets earned him the merits of a great sonneteer, and *The River Duddon* must be included in that tradition of excellence. Wordsworth deserves to be ranked with the master sonneteers, Spenser,

Sidney, Shakespeare, and Milton. His influence on other poets, such as Shelley, Tennyson, and Arnold, needs further investigation.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: *The River Duddon Sonnets*: A Critical Perspective

William Wordsworth has long been praised as a truly original genius of his age and as one who revolutionized poetic theories. He excelled in the lyric and different subgenres of the lyric, such as the ballad and the sonnet, besides being the most influential writer of the English Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Samuel Taylor Coleridge detected signs of genius in Wordsworth's rather conventional poem *Descriptive Sketches*, published in 1793, when Wordsworth was an undergraduate at Cambridge. As Coleridge wrote in *Biographia Literaria*, ". . . seldom if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced" (4:56). In 1798 Coleridge and Wordsworth collaborated to publish the revolutionary *Lyrical Ballads*, and a new literary departure took place.

In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth professed the idea that "there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition" (*Wordsworth's Prefaces and Essays on Poetry* 11). Furthermore, the poet centered his discussion on the definition of poetry. He believed in the premise that

. . . all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. (*Wordsworth's Prefaces and Essays on Poetry* 5-6)

However, Wordsworth's theories and definitions of poetry were taken out of context by some contemporary scholars as well as critics. In this century also Wordsworth is not given enough credit for his artistry and skill, some critics dubbing him as just a simple nature poet. Nevertheless, the poet's own treatment of common folks and simple and ordinary themes in his *Lyrical Ballads* revolutionized the handling of materials and diction in English literature. In addition, his ideas and theories set forth in the Preface had a great impact on English literary criticism.

Although Wordsworth had written many excellent poems such as "Tintern Abbey" and the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" in earlier years and continued to influence poets such as Matthew Arnold, he was, at the time of his death in 1850, as Willard Sperry notes, "at the nadir of his literary influence" (6), and his popularity went down further after his death. The first brief study on Wordsworth after his death was an article in

Macmillan's Magazine (1871) by Sir John Duke Coleridge, Samuel T. Coleridge's nephew. This article reawakened people's interest in the poet. The second was Leslie Stephen's penetrating analysis *Wordsworth's Ethics* (1876), and the third was Matthew Arnold's famous essay on Wordsworth (1879). Arnold's essay "Wordsworth" is "still the most authoritative pronouncement upon the poet for the half the century after his death" (Sperry 7). Arnold coined the term "the golden decade" for the years 1798-1806 of Wordsworth's literary career because he believed that almost all of the poet's first-rate work was done during that decade ("Wordsworth" 136). Since Arnold's essay, critical studies and biographies of the poet have multiplied. In 1896, Emile Legouis published *La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth [The Early Life of William Wordsworth]*, "which marks the beginning of the present period of Wordsworth criticism" (Sperry 7).

Ever since Arnold's classification of the poet's first-rate work, many critics have questioned the merits of Wordsworth's later works and have concluded that there is a conspicuous decline in his powers as a poet. Mary Burton in *The One Wordsworth* notes, "His [Wordsworth's] decline in power after a decade of successful poetic activity became a commonplace of criticism, an opinion that, with the exception of a few dissenting voices, is still held even by leading Wordsworthians" (9). In the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Leslie Stephen

states that Wordsworth was "an excellent distributor of stamps" in his later years, but "a very inferior poet" (qtd. in Burton 9-10). Thus, modern scholarly interest has focused largely on the development of the poet's mind and his early poetry.

H. W. Garrod in *Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays* declares that the last forty years of Wordsworth's life were "the most dismal anticlimax of which the history of literature holds record" (138). He attributed the so-called failing inspiration of Wordsworth to the estrangement from Coleridge as his statement indicates:

If there was any medicine for the decline of power which stole over Wordsworth's poetry after 1807, it was perhaps to be sought from Coleridge. It is hardly an accident that the period of decline of power coincided with the period in which Wordsworth's gradual estrangement from Coleridge began. (30)

The causes of Wordsworth's "anti-climax" have been much debated. In *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity*, David Perkins comments on the decline of Wordsworth thus:

. . . few critics have wished to discuss the late poetry in any detail, but have hurried on to consider the poet's life, asking, in effect,

what caused his powers to dwindle. This resort to biography has naturally led to various answers: estrangement from Coleridge, the "very rain & air & sunshine" of Wordsworth's intellect according to Southey; a depleted supply of the vivid recollections that inspired his greatest poetry; remorse from his affair with Annette Vallon; domestication and then distracting family responsibilities; encroaching religious, moral, and political conservatism. (227)

Perkins concludes that "If Wordsworth had written only the later poems . . . , he would still be read, but as a minor poet and for a few poems" (228).

Bernard Groom reaches different conclusions about Wordsworth's decline. He points out that there are two main causes which led to the neglect of Wordsworth's poetry: "One was a general belief that the production of a 'romantic' poet inevitably deteriorates when he has reached the limits which separate youth from middle age. The other was the myth of the 'Lost Leader', according to which the later Wordsworth was a dull conservative and renegade" (ix). He believes that "The neglect of Wordsworth's later poetry has been tolerated for too long" (ix). He admits that Wordsworth's work changed about 1814, but he states that the changes "were not of a kind to justify the conspiracy of silence in which most critics have joined" (ix). He concludes, "Wordsworth's

subsequent poetry should at least be candidly and impartially examined" (ix).

Groom later adds that "The general course of Wordsworth's poetry, though it includes periods of decline, is one of continuity, development, and revival" (xiii).

He feels that "To separate the later work from the earlier is an injury to both" (xiii).

In *The Poet Wordsworth*, Helen Darbishire makes a statement about the modern trend in Wordsworth criticism when she says, "It has become customary to distinguish two Wordsworths. The natural distinction between early, the young Wordsworth--and the late, the elderly and old; the revolutionary, radical, and semi-atheist--and the conservative, the orthodox, the defender of Church and State" (11). W. H. White in *An Examination of the Charge of Apostasy Against Wordsworth* states that "there can be no question here that the strong inspiration which made his [Wordsworth's] poetry unique in the early poems is not to be found but fitfully in his later work" (19). On the other hand, Sperry in *Wordsworth's Anti-climax* disputes the theory that "during his sixty years of literary life Wordsworth wrote first-rate poems for eight or ten years and third-rate verse for fifty years." This conclusion is an oversimplification, according to Sperry, who asserts that as late as 1842 Wordsworth "recovers something of the imperious mood of the great decade in 'To the Clouds'" (29).

No matter what the verdict on whether Wordsworth's inspirations failed him after his youth, his sonnets are often given high praise by critics. Douglas Bush finds the mark of great poetry most often in the public, declamatory sonnets. In Bush's view, these sonnets and others on private themes have suffered much less over the years than the poems in other forms. He awards the sonnets a larger place in his arrangement of the best of Wordsworth than Matthew Arnold did in his selection of Wordsworth's poems and praises them highly. Arnold argued that Wordsworth must be ranked as one of the greatest English poets and created a list of the best of Wordsworth: 160 poems, of which 60 were sonnets. In "A Minority Report" written for the centenary of Wordsworth's death, Bush formulated his list of the poet's best poems. He divided it into two groups of poems; the first group consists of *Tintern Abbey*, the *Immortality Ode*, "The Solitary Reaper," the best of the "Lucy" poems, and a few books from *The Prelude*. "The other group," he said, "embraces a good many of the sonnets, those on Milton, on British ideals of the past and sins of the present, on Toussaint L'Ouverture, and kindred subjects, and some on various themes, from the sight of London at sunrise to mutability In these heroic sonnets, and in others of quieter nobility, Wordsworth is in line with the great poets back through Milton to the ancients" (Bush 21-22). John Wain, British poet, novelist, and critic, states in "The Liberation of Wordsworth" that "It is only

in the sonnets that one feels entirely free of the clash between matter and technique" (76). Lee M. Johnson feels that "The blended strength of William Wordsworth's perceptions and their embodiment in his finest sonnets has a classic dignity and grace which is rarely equalled by his other poems" (173). He also points out that "the quality, quantity, and range of Wordsworth's best sonnets" make Wordsworth "the principal English sonneteer after the Renaissance, ranking him with those whom he called 'my great masters, especially, Milton'" (173). In *Wordsworth and the Sonnet*, Johnson makes high claims for Wordsworth's sonnets even through his later years. He affirms that "Wordsworth's sonnets, from the 'great decade' of 1797-1807 to his later years, often demonstrate a poetic achievement of undisputed distinction and thereby indicate a way of correcting our sense of a 'decline' in his imaginative powers" (9). Wordsworth "wrote sonnets for more than four and a half decades and developed specific . . . theories of the [sonnet] form that, according to Johnson, give "structural meaning to his theories of imagination" (9). His sonnets, as Johnson notices, are "an especially helpful point of reference for evaluating all but his earliest work" (9).

Many of Wordsworth's late poems, such as *The Excursion*, *The Prelude*, *The River Duddon*, and other sonnets, demonstrate sparks of his former greatness. Wordsworth's favorite form during the latter part of his life was the

sonnet, although he also excelled in other branches of poetry. He wrote his first sonnet in 1798 and his last one in 1846. Few readers are aware of the fact that Wordsworth wrote 523 sonnets in all, including two sonnet cycles: *The River Duddon* and *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. As Donald Swanson points out in "Wordsworth's Sonnets," that it was unfathomable for many readers to believe that Wordsworth used sonnets as a vehicle of expression because they saw Wordsworth as a poet who sought freedom in form and diction (12). Johnson reiterates the same idea when he says, "Some have found it disturbing, even incredible, that Wordsworth, on the one hand, was instrumental in revolutionizing English poetry and, on the other, wrote hundreds of sonnets" (171).

From Wordsworth's own comments, we know that this great sonneteer had a very high regard for the sonnet structure (Swanson 12). In one of his most famous sonnets, "Nuns fret not at their Convent's Narrow Room," Wordsworth comments upon the closeness that he feels for the sonnet form itself:

In truth the prison, unto which we doom
 Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,
 In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
 Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground;
 Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)

Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

(The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth 3: 1-2)

In "Scorn Not the Sonnet" Wordsworth tells the critic not to condemn the sonnet without heeding its merits. He defends the sonnet by pointing out that the great English as well as Italian writers used the form to express themselves. In "Scorn Not the Sonnet" Wordsworth refers to Shakespeare, Petrarch, Tasso, Camoens, Dante, Spenser, and Milton. Wordsworth further says that the sonnet was like a myrtle leaf that "crowned" the "visionary brow" of Dante; it was like "a glow-worm lamp" that brought cheer to Spenser

. . . and, when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet; when blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

(The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth 3: 20-21)

Thus, Wordsworth extols the virtues of the sonnet within his own sonnet.

In the beginning of his literary career, however, Wordsworth disliked sonnets, although he was familiar with the form. From 1787-1791 his studies at Cambridge under Agostino Isols, a refugee and grandfather of the girl adopted by the Lambs, had familiarized him with the Italian sonnets. His later reading of

Ariosto, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton acquainted him with English and Spenserian sonnets and with other Italian sonnets (Knight 1:38). Nevertheless, in 1801 Dorothy's reading aloud of Milton's sonnets had made a deep impression on him and had inspired him. At that time he said, "I was struck with the dignified simplicity and harmony that runs through them. I took fire . . . and produced three that same afternoon" (Knight 11:95).

Many of Wordsworth's contemporary writers believed that Wordsworth was responsible for resurrecting the sonnet as a literary form early in the nineteenth century. His first selection of sonnets was published in *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807) and received high praise from the contemporary critics even though the other poems in these two volumes were not well-received. In 1807 Francis Jeffrey wrote for the *Edinburgh Review* (11) 1807-1808 that "All English writers have imitated Milton; and, in this way Mr. Wordsworth, when he writes sonnets, escapes again from the trammels of his unfortunate system, and the consequence is, that his sonnets are as much superior to the greater part of his other poems, as Milton's sonnets are superior to his" (qtd. in McReynolds 12).

Critics in other contemporary magazines also noted the merits of Wordsworth's sonnets. In 1832 in *Fraser's Magazine* (6), a reviewer wrote:

The remainder of Mr. Wordsworth's works is composed chiefly of sonnets; a form of composition that must be a decided favourite with every true lover of poetry, and in which it has been the custom of the most eminent poets to give a ready channel to those brief and evanescent impulses of thought and feeling by which the imaginative mind is continually agitated. Some of these short compositions are among the most delightful of the author's essays. (qtd. in McReynolds 13)

Two years later in *The Quarterly Review* (52), an admirer wrote that "In the last edition of Mr. Wordsworth's works there are contained no less than between three and four hundred SONNETS." This reviewer goes on to praise Wordsworth's sonnets, saying, "Few are the works of art in this kind which are so pure in their material, so graceful in their execution, so delicately wrought, so exquisitely chiselled." This admirer continues, "To none, indeed, of the minor forms of poetry are Mr. Wordsworth's powers better adapted; there is none to which discrimination in thought and aptitude in language are more essential; and there never was a poet who reached so near to perfection in these particulars as Mr. Wordsworth" (qtd. in McReynolds 13).

In *The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth*

Circle, Robinson gives the comments of Walter Savage Landor, a proclaimed enemy of the poet, about his sonnets: "Wordsworth . . . has written more fine sonnets than are to be met in the language besides" (2:821). Leigh Hunt, a noted critic and a sonneteer himself, pronounced that "many of Wordsworth's sonnets were equal to Milton's best." He assigned Wordsworth a singular position among the world's sonnet writers (*Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism* 37-38).

Wordsworth's sonnet sequence on the River Duddon also drew much attention when it was published. Ronald W. McReynolds notes in *A Handbook to Wordsworth's Sonnets*, "The history of the criticism of the River Duddon sonnets runs a course as varied as the flow of the river itself" (38). In August 1820, a note in *Eclectic Review* (14), an important periodical of the time, asserts that "The River Duddon flows through a series of thirty-three sonnets which are of the most part of no ordinary beauty." The reviewer continues by saying that "here and there, a little metaphorical mud, or a Lakish tincture, mingles with the stream, and it occasionally runs somewhat shallow; but the general character of the series is that of a very noble descriptive poetry" (177-78). The reviewer for the *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* (90) in 1820 says that *The River Duddon Sonnets* "are marked by the same apparent ease and elegant simplicity which characterize" the poet's other works (344). Many other

contemporary periodicals, such as *The London Magazine*, *The London Review and Literary Journal*, and *The British Review*, carried reviews of the Duddon series.

In 1857 Wordsworth's friend and fellow author Henry Crabb Robinson joined the chorus of praise of the Duddon sonnets, describing the sonnets as "exquisitely refined" (*Correspondence* 2: 821). Even before Robinson's comments, Wordsworth himself thought his sonnets on the River Duddon had been well-received as he expressed in his statement to Dr. Cairns in 1849: "My sonnets to the river Duddon have been wonderfully popular. Properly speaking, nothing that I ever wrote has been popular, but they have been more warmly received" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 505).

There were, however, a few negative reviews about the Duddon Sonnets as well. The reviewer for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* is somewhat negative when he states that it is impossible to analyze the sonnet sequence. He quotes sonnets VII, XIV, XV, XXI, XXII, XXIX for his reader and singles them out for praise (qtd. in McReynolds 40). Also, a critic in *The Monthly Review* (93) in October 1820 suggests that "the Duddon sonnets cannot be classed with the improved poetry." He says that the chain of *Duddon* is too loose and that Wordsworth is very much "indebted to Ovid and his ornamental style" (143). He also comments that most of the sonnets "are more or less marked and disfigured

by decided *Wordsworthianisms*" (143).

In the twentieth century *The River Duddon Sonnets* are virtually unread and are neglected by literary critics. Not many studies have been recorded on the Duddon sonnets in the twentieth century. In fact, out of the 1612 records on Wordsworth in the MLA database from 1980-1997, only eight works are directly on *The River Duddon Sonnets*, and twenty-two are on Wordsworth's sonnets in general. Much of the criticism of the series after the 1950s is based on the comments by the well-known Wordsworthian critic and biographer George McLean Harper, who writes that a reader who might "expect a series of bright and lively pictures and much variety of colour, or an attempt to delight the ear with musical imitations of waterfalls and softly gliding reaches, would be disappointed" in *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Harper continues:

So if we have any insight to Wordsworth's character we shall be prepared to look for few images and many thoughts, few efforts merely to give pleasure, and a constant care to elevate the mind. Somewhat bare and austere these sonnets are, like the bleak hills and stony valleys they celebrate. They keep faith with their subjects, a self-sacrificing loyalty that scorns the specious gains of flattery. . . . Measure and artistic restraints: the self sufficiency of

truth, the confidence of reason, dwell at home in the Duddon poems. (564-65)

In addition, in 1954 Stewart C. Wilcox notes that none of Wordsworth's poems has been so neglected as the Duddon sonnets. He claims that "Most of the Duddon poems, it is true, fall less sublimely upon the ear and have less nobility and perfection than the finest he composed before 1806. Even so, their level is consistently high, part of their attractiveness being a sometimes bleak austerity" (131). Russell Noyes sees "nothing noteworthy about the river's course to the sea" although he has high praise for the "After-Thought" (170). Geoffrey Durrant, another modern critic, states in *William Wordsworth* that "The Duddon sonnets are worth careful reading not only for their value as individual poems, but as together composing a single longer poem" (157). He has especially high regard for the last three sonnets of the group, including "After-Thought," and says that in them "Wordsworth develops his rhetorical powers in one of the grandest flights" (157). Eric Robertson believes that Wordsworth has captured the very essence of the west of England in the Duddon sonnets; and he adds later on that "This is the loveliest, the only authentic book of the Brook" (314). Robert Aubin, yet another critic who gives high praise to the series, says that this series is "the greatest river poem of all" (924).

The River Duddon: A Series of Sonnets composed between 1806 and 1820, published in 1820, and dedicated to Christopher Wordsworth, the poet's brother, is a tribute to the River Duddon. Although some critics think of it as a testimonial to the poet's decline, the series, in fact, has much excellence scattered throughout it. None of the critics has done a full-length study of the structural and thematic importance of *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Such a study would reveal the poet's genuine artistry. If read as a rhetorical argument, the sonnets would show the harmony of matter and manner as well as a structural and thematic unity.

I propose to demonstrate in this study that Wordsworth knew rhetoric and used his rhetorical skills to his advantage. This study will also show the structural, thematic, and rhetorical significance of *The River Duddon Sonnets* and the way in which each sonnet is an integral part of the whole. As Mary Wordsworth, Wordsworth's wife, noted, the sonnets in the cycle "all together compose one poem" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 506). On the surface, *The River Duddon* is a descriptive poem about the birth of the Duddon River from the clouds and its course of life until it emerges into the ocean. Its course is actually parallel to man's journey from birth to death. Like the river that merges into the ocean, man joins the earth when he dies, but his soul, according

to Christian theology, goes to the eternal Being, God. Although the river loses its identity when it reaches the ocean, an equivalent to death, actually it is united with the ocean, an ancient symbol of eternity.

I will take issue with those critics who contend that Wordsworth was not widely read, that his poems were not influenced by books, that his *River Duddon Sonnets* series is just a loco-descriptive poem, and that the last sonnet of the sequence, "After-thought," is the only one of any merit. The poet's two distinguished biographers, Emile Legouis and George McLean Harper, might have been responsible for the myth that Wordsworth was not indebted to books. Legouis' opinion is reflected in the following statement: "Wordsworth gives us the impression that, had he lived alone on a bookless earth, he would have reached the same conclusions" (qtd. in Coe 11). Harper states in *William Wordsworth: His Life, Works, and Influence* that "few other great poets are so little indebted to books" (127). Further, I will present a reading of *The River Duddon Sonnets* which will show that the sequence is closely related to the classical schemata of argumentation.

When looking at *The River Duddon Sonnets* rhetorically, one notices a pattern emerging, the pattern of arrangement of the argument in the series. Sonnets I-II form an exordium or proem or an introduction to the discourse at

hand. In the first sonnet the poet alludes to that Crystal Spring/Blandusia, the Persian fountain, and proclaims that he is going to seek the birthplace of a native stream. The poet reveals that his theme is the "long-loved Duddon." He wants his verse to flow "pure, vigorous, free, and bright " just as the Duddon River flows.

Sonnet III is the narratio or statement of issue to be argued. In this sonnet, the poet tries to invoke the river and confesses his dilemma in his inability to truly paint one of nature's wondrous creations. He states that he is trying to let man know of the river's features through his verse, a speaking monument. Sonnets IV-XXXIII constitute the Confirmatio or proof, the main body of the discourse, in which the speaker presents his positive arguments for his thesis. In these sonnets the poet paints the various changes the river undergoes in the course of its life since its origin. There is no Confutatio or refutation of arguments present in *The River Duddon Sonnets* series.

Sonnet XXXIV is the epilogue or conclusion of the series in which Wordsworth focuses again on the idea of creativity. He compares his own creativity, his own poetic bent, with that of the stream. No matter how many changes happen in this world, how many different generations come and go, the river is a symbol of permanence. Its structure remains, and its function is everlasting as the poet's creations will never die and their function of educating

and entertaining is permanent. As Florence Marsh points out in *Wordsworth's Imagery: A Study in Poetic Vision* that the Duddon's flow parallels the creative aspect of the poet (93). The poet wants his creativity to flow as smoothly as Duddon flows. Although Wordsworth does not systematically explain the creativity idea, it is there; and he reiterates it in his well-acclaimed "After-Thought," the concluding sonnet of the series. With the prophetic words in the sonnet, "The Form remains, the Function never dies," he immortalizes the idea of creativity and creativity's function of everlasting pleasure.

The next chapter of this study will focus on the established sonnet tradition at the time of Wordsworth; it will also present some background information on rhetoric and will discuss the ways Wordsworth has utilized his rhetorical skills in *The River Duddon Sonnets* series. The third chapter will give a thematic and rhetorical analysis of *The River Duddon Sonnets*. The fourth will concentrate on Wordsworth's ethos in regards to Quintillian's "good man theory." James L. Golden, Goodwin F. Bergquist, and William E. Coleman in *The Rhetoric of Western Thought* cites Quintillian's idea of a perfect orator from Book XII of the *Institutio Oratoria* as follows: "First, he [perfect orator] is a good man and after that he is skilled in speaking" (59). The last chapter will be an assessment of Wordsworth's merits as a sonneteer who knew rhetoric and used it well.

CHAPTER II

Wordsworth and Traditions: The Sonnet and Rhetoric

When Wordsworth started writing sonnets in 1798, the sonnet already had an established tradition. The sonnet form has enjoyed great popularity both with poets and other readers since its introduction in England in the 1530s. However, the zenith of the sonnet form was during the Renaissance in most European countries, particularly Italy, France, Spain, and England. The sonnet or sonnetto, meaning "little song," originated in Italy; and the most important early Italian sonneteers were Dante and Petrarch. Sir Thomas Wyatt came across "the form during his travels in Italy and Spain and brought it back to England in the 1530s. . . . Of Wyatt's thirty-two sonnets, seventeen are adaptations from Petrarch" (Bender and Squier 7). The Petrarchan sonnet was developed in 13th-century Italy and perfected by Petrarch. The Petrarchan sonnet or the Italian sonnet consists of fourteen lines divided into an octave, rhyming abba abba, and a sestet, rhyming cdcddc, cdcddc, or cdedce, or some other variations of c's, d's, and e's. Usually, the Petrarchan sonnet is "thematically divided into four sections: The first QUATRAIN states the proposition; the second quatrain elaborates upon it; the succeeding TERCET presents an example or ruminates upon the theme; and the last three lines create a final turn in the logical

exposition" (*The Longman's Dictionary of Poetical Terms* 281). Wyatt's immediate successor, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, also "adapted a number of sonnets from Petrarch" (Bender and Squier 8). He, however, took a further step in the development of the sonnet form by introducing the English sonnet form, which is usually arranged into three quatrains and a couplet, rhyming abab cdcd efef gg. The sonnet flourished as a genre under Wyatt and Surrey for many years and later with Shakespeare, Sidney, and Spenser (Bender and Squier 7-9).

Technically, a sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter, but some poets included a variety of short lyrics under the sonnet genre. George Gascoigne, an Elizabethan poet, was concerned with the technical aspect of the sonnet and adhered to fourteen lines containing ten syllables in each line. Even the well-known sonneteers Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare at times departed from the technical nature of the sonnet form. This is evident in Sidney's sonnets of the 1580s that are written in hexameters and Shakespeare's "Those Lips That Love's Own Hand Did Make," written in octosyllabic meter (Bender and Squier 9-10).

The sonnet as a love poem reached its zenith in the 1590s in the great vogue of sonnet sequences that followed Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (1591). The greatest poets of the century including Shakespeare and Spenser also wrote sonnet sequences. Most of the sonnet sequences were dedicated to

ladies either fictional or real with "hyperbolic charms and hard hearts," as Emma Bolenius points out in *Wordsworth As a Sonneteer* (10). Sidney praised Stella, and Shakespeare immortalized the "Dark Lady" in a part of his sonnet sequence. The sonnet sequences were not intended as love stories or narratives but as accounts of emotional states. The vogue for sonnet writing became very widespread. Sequences were written well beyond the turn of the century; however, by 1595 poets were already turning against the sequence and the sonnet. Many poets parodied the excesses found in the unending praise of the lovely ladies. Shakespeare's "My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun" is an important example of an anti-Petrarchan sonnet.

Love remained the theme for the sonnets for a very long time, but the sonneteers began to explore other subjects as well. They varied the subject matter for the sonnets, using politics, religion, falconry, hunting, and sonnet writing itself. Ben Jonson and others used the sonnets as a form for epigrams. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, religion became almost as important a subject for sonneteers as secular love. John Donne in *La Corona* was the first to develop fully the potential of the form for religious expressions. He used sonnets as a vehicle to express the intensity of his religious sentiments. He experimented with the structure of the sonnet, making many of his sonnets different from the conventional Italian type of the octave and sestet division. In the seventeenth century Milton took great interest in the sonnet form and used it

throughout his writing career. He departed from the conventions and experimented freely with both the form and content of the sonnet. In his hands, the sonnet became a vehicle for political protests, for satirical exclamation, and for meditation on the poet's own condition.

However, relatively few sonnets were written in the years between 1660 and 1740. Pope and his contemporaries imitated Horace and Petrarch in their heroic couplets. Even the sonnets of the well-known sonneteers were unpopular in the eighteenth century. However, Raymond Dexter Havens in *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* counts almost three thousand sonnets written and published by now obscure poets between 1700 and 1800 (525). The leading poets wrote no sonnets; they probably believed in Dr. Samuel Johnson's criticism of sonneteers when he discussed Milton's sonnets with Miss Hannah More. James Boswell shows Johnson's opinion about Milton as a sonneteer in the following quote: "Milton, . . . was a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock; but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones (*Life of Johnson* 4: 305). Dr. Johnson's Dictionary defines the sonnet as "a short poem consisting of fourteen lines, of which the rhymes are adjusted by a particular rule. It is not suitable to the English language, and has not been used by any man of eminence since Milton" (McAdam, Jr. and George Milne 156).

The eighteenth century rejected the "barbarianism" of its Elizabethan forbears, and even the sonnets of Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare were

unpopular. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the sonnet form was somewhat revived by Thomas Gray and Thomas Warton. The latter helped to give direction to the subsequent thematic development of the sonnet by using it as a means of reflecting on scenic places and sites of historic interest. The popularity of the sonnet genre is again established by the sentimental, melancholy sonnets written by Charlotte Smith and Anna Seward. The productivity of sonneteers was high towards the end of the century. William Bowles is credited with writing some excellent sonnets during this period, and both William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge admired him (Bender and Squier 7-13).

Wordsworth found the sonnet form highly congenial to his talent and wrote 523 sonnets. His early sonnets were "highly charged," especially *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807) which were written in Miltonic vein and which dealt with the themes of liberty and England. For Wordsworth, the sonnet is a "scanty plot of ground" in which the poet can express lofty sentiments (Bender and Squier 10-13). After the decline of the sonnet form in the eighteenth century, Wordsworth created some excellent sonnets and brought the genre to the forefront again during the nineteenth century, evoking renewed interest in the form. Donald Swanson notes:

It is possible that if it were not for Wordsworth the sonnet

might not have gained the wide popularity that it enjoyed during the Nineteenth Century. He revealed for the poets of his own time and afterward the wide diversity that could be achieved in this form, and the uses to which it could be put, especially in the expression of personal feelings. His influence upon the poets who immediately followed him was great; his contribution, both in the variety and number of his own sonnets, was prodigious. (13)

Jerome Mazzaro also points out in "Tapping 'God's Other Book': Wordsworth at Sonnets," that "WILLIAM WORDSWORTH IS COMMONLY CREDITED with having restored stature to the English sonnet in the early nineteenth century" (337).

Up until Wordsworth's time the sonnet was used as an expression of love or religious ecstasy or as a celebration of historical events or virtues of a friend. Milton extended the sonnet's subject matter, but Wordsworth broadened the scope of it even further to include various topics such as sunsets, sleep, old abbeys, books, paintings, and politics. As Emma Bolenius aptly points out, "Instead of running the gamut of the fair lady's charms, and the varied emotions aroused by love, he fills his sonnets with historical, religious, moral, pastoral thought, with exquisite lyrical touches with noble and vivid nature description" (15).

According to Lee M. Johnson in *Wordsworth and the Sonnet*,

Wordsworth's "sonnets are . . . an especially helpful point of reference for evaluating all but his earliest work" (9). Many of Wordsworth's sonnets rank among the finest poems, and in his final years the sonnet became his main outlet of creativity. Johnson notes, Wordsworth "never spoke of any other form of poetry--such as the ballad stanza, the couplet, rhyme royal, or blank verse-- in the way he extolled the sonnet" (10). Johnson then asserts that "Wordsworth's critical comments and sonnets on the sonnet, which initiated a subgenre in history, testify to the special regard he had for the form" (10). Wordsworth "resurrected the sonnet from the virtual oblivion" it had suffered in the eighteenth century and "re-established it in a position of eminence" (10). Wordsworth, as Mazzaro states, "saw the [sonnet] form as 'an intense unity,' divided in the manner of Milton into the 'three propositions of a syllogism,' beginning (major premise), middle (minor premise), and end (conclusion) or, as Lee M. Johnson interprets it [the sonnet form] along the lines of judicial oratory, into *narratio*, *propositio*, and *peroratio*" (337-38).

Not only did Wordsworth write hundreds of individual sonnets using varying themes, but he also created two sonnet series: *The River Duddon Sonnets* (1820) and the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822). The latter series was originally published in 1822 as the *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, and most of the sonnets in that volume were written in 1821. Wordsworth changed the title in 1837 to *Ecclesiastical Sonnets in Series* and had added thirty more sonnets to

the original 102 by 1845. Anne L. Rylstone in *Prophetic Memory in*

Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Sonnets says:

The *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* consist of 132 sonnets that, while sketching a history of the Christian Church in Britain, dramatize the individual's struggle (including Wordsworth's own as Christian and poet) with service in the fallen world. The individual faces a conflicting desire for both individuation and assimilation into the Communal Christian presence that spans two thousand years of history and extends into an apocalyptic future. The work, in its originality, workmanship, and philosophical scope, is both a remarkable achievement in English literature and essential to a full understanding of Wordsworth's work as it evolves over the course of more than half a century. (xi)

According to De Selincourt and Darbishire's notes, the 1822 edition included 102 sonnets with thirty-eight sonnets in Part I, thirty-six in Part II, and twenty-eight in Part III. Wordsworth later added more sonnets to the series, finally making the 1845 edition with thirty-nine sonnets in Part I, forty-six in Part II, and forty-seven in Part III with a grand total of 132 sonnets (558). De Selincourt also notes that "No other work of W[ordsworth]'s was based on such wide reading definitely undertaken with a view to poetic composition. . . . W[ordsworth] himself refers in his notes to Bede, Foxe, Daniel, Fuller, Strype, Heylin, Walton,

Stillingfleet, Burnet, Hume, Whitaker, George Dyer, and Sharon Turner" (558).

The occasion of the series was Wordsworth's concern over the Catholic Relief Bill of 1820 (passed in 1829) that gave the English Catholics the opportunity to hold state offices and his anxiety over the future of the Church of England. Wordsworth knew that the time was ripe to produce the religious history of his country in verse because of the renewed interest in religion in England. Johnson notes, "The main theme of the series, stated simply, is the progress and struggle of love and harmony to endure against time and strife" (145).

In Wordsworth's own words, "My purpose in writing this Series was, as much as possible, to confine my view to the introduction, progress, and operation of the Church of England, both previous and subsequent to the Reformation" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 557). Wordsworth begins his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* by recalling the stream of liberty from his political sonnets and the Duddon from *The River Duddon Sonnets*. The stream in *The River Duddon Sonnets* has thematic and narrative functions. Duddon is a real river; and during its journey to the sea, the poet associates it with the stages of man's growth from childhood to maturity. Towards the end of *The River Duddon Sonnets*, the river develops symbolic qualities with man's life in relation to its apparent life cycle. Unlike the Duddon river, the river in the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* is not an actual river. Wordsworth stated that the river in the

Ecclesiastical Sonnets is an emblem of church history at the beginning of the series and remains a symbol throughout the course of the series. This symbolic river in the second sonnet series starts as a source and a rill in the first part of the sequence and later becomes a fast stream and finally a large river in Parts II and III. Johnson notes, "Unlike the stream in *The River Duddon*, its narrative function as a reflector of history has virtually no thematic significance. It is, in short, a mere embellishment that could be removed without damaging his theme" (146).

The first sonnet series, *The River Duddon Sonnets*, was published in 1820 within a volume of poems. The title page reads: *The River Duddon, a series of Sonnets Vaudracour and Julia, and other poems: to which is annexed a Topographical Description of the country of the Lakes, in the north of England: London 1820*. A series of thirty-four sonnets, *The River Duddon Sonnets* is dedicated to the poet's brother, the Reverend Christopher Wordsworth. The dedicatory poem, "To the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth" (With the sonnets to the River Duddon, and other Poems in this Collection, 1820) is placed before the actual Duddon series in De Selincourt's and Darbishire's edition of Wordsworth's poems. A footnote in that edition indicates that when the sequence was published in 1820, the tribute to his brother "appears at page 113, not as introductory to the Duddon Sonnets, which are placed first in the volume" (245). "To the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth," composed on Christmas 1819 and published in

1820, is full of nature in the poet's description of the hills, mountains, air, breeze, leaves, streams, and green bowers. The poet's nostalgic mood is emphasized in his memories of that "simple childhood" that he shared with his brother. Now that the poet's brother is a reverend of the Church of England and resides in London near the Thames, the poet wants him not to "slight this passion [for nature] or condemn it " (l. 62). In style, tone, and diction, this introductory poem closely resembles *The River Duddon Sonnets*.

River Duddon is an actual river in England, and it rises from "Wrynose Fell, on the confines of the Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire, and having served as a boundary to the two last counties for the space of about twenty-five miles, enters the Irish sea, between the Isle of Walney and the Lordship of Millum" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 244). Mary Moorman in her biography of *William Wordsworth: Later Years* notes that *River Duddon*

is a description of a rambling walk down the Duddon, from its obscure origins on Wrynose Fell among

brilliant moss, instinct with freshness rare,
until, as "majestic Duddon", it glides, "in silence with unfettered sweep", into the open sea. It is tapestry into which are woven not merely pictures of the ever-changing landscape but indications of Wordsworth's own deep consciousness of the historic and prehistoric past of man; and of his private affections,

memories, and hopes as they were called forth by his progress down the vale. The constant presence of the river unifies and blesses all. (376)

Wordsworth was familiar with the Duddon River from his boyhood. Once, as a young child, he went fishing in the stream with a neighbor, and a sudden downpour of torrential rain occurred. The boy, Wordsworth, fatigued and disappointed, had to be carried part of the way home by his neighbor friend. Later, Wordsworth recollected this experience in the prose introduction to *The River Duddon Sonnets*, noting that for many years he could never think of the stream "without recollections of disappointment and distress" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 504). During his college vacations, Wordsworth returned to the river and had pleasant times on its banks as late as 1811. "The river was thus, . . . an excellent object to illustrate how one experience in childhood will lend deeper significance to all other subsequent ones 'if once we have been strong'" (Beatty 220).

Wordsworth noted that *The River Duddon Sonnets* was written over a period of many years, and the individual sonnets were composed in no particular order. In fact, sonnet XIV was the first to be written (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 505). Although the composition dates of the rest of the sonnets in *The River Duddon* series have never been established, nineteen of the sonnets were probably written in 1818, as Mary Wordsworth's letter to Sara Hutchinson

on December 1, 1818, indicates: "'William is asleep from sheer exhaustion--he worked so long. . . he has written 21 sonnets (including the 2 old ones) on the River Duddon--they altogether compose one poem'"(De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 506). Johnson notes, "*The River Duddon* shows both revision and unaltered incorporation of material" (161n.1). He further points out that "Dear Native Brooks" (1804) was revised as sonnet XXVI, "Return Content." "O Mountain Stream," published in the *Miscellaneous Sonnets* (1806), is a sonnet XIV of *The River Duddon Sonnets* series. "Fallen, and Diffused into a shapeless heap," was published in 1819 with *The Waggoner* volume and was transferred to *The River Duddon* in 1827 as sonnet XXVII (161 n.1).

Wordsworth was very conscious of the structure and unity of his sonnet sequence. As mentioned above, the fourteenth sonnet was the first one written, but Wordsworth does not use it as the beginning of *The River Duddon Sonnets* sequence. As in any logical discourse, he gives an introduction, body, and a conclusion for his work about the journey of this native river. The first sonnet is the introduction that describes the river and its source. The body of the sonnet sequence is about the flow of the river and the actions and activities that the river witnesses along its way to the sea, its destination. After it reaches the sea, which is described in sonnet XXXIII, the poet reflects on his life and his creations--his art--in sonnet XXXIV, the concluding sonnet.

Although *The River Duddon* is a series of thirty-four sonnets, Wordsworth

tried to keep the harmony of the series intact. For any successful discourse, the content and technique must be in harmony. The ancient rhetoricians believed in the alliance between matter and manner or content and technique, and they emphasized the need for this harmony in an effective discourse. From his classical education Wordsworth was obviously familiar with this premise as he focused on the marriage between matter and manner in his works, especially in his sonnets. In *The River Duddon Sonnets* Wordsworth consciously utilized the argumentative techniques as outlined in the classical schemata of rhetoric. Before we look at the poet's argumentation, let us briefly examine the first five "offices" of rhetoric as postulated by the ancient rhetoricians.

According to classical rhetoricians, argumentation was treated under the first "office" of rhetoric, that is, *inventio* or invention, which means "discovery" or "finding"; the second "office," *dispositio* or arrangement, was concerned with the selection of arguments discovered through invention and their most effective organization. In Aristotle's schemata of rhetoric, arrangement was dealt with in terms of parts of an oration. Richard A. Lanham in *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms: A Guide for Students of English Literature* gives the seven parts of an oration as follows:

1. Entrance or Proemium (*exordium*)-- catches the audience's attention.
2. Narration (*praecognitio* or *narratio*)-- sets forth the facts.

3. Exposition or Definition (*explicatio* or *definitio*-- defines terms and opens issues to be proved.
4. Proposition (*partitio*)--clarifies the points at issue; states exactly what is to be proved.
5. Confirmation (*amplificatio*)--sets forth the arguments for and against; proof.
6. Confutation or Refutation (*refutatio* or *reprehensio*)--refutes opponent's arguments.
7. Conclusion or Epilogue (*peroratio* or *epilogus*)-- sums up arguments and stirs audience. (112)

Theorists differ in the number of parts. Aristotle prescribed only four parts: *Exordium* or the introduction; *Expositio* or the statement of issue; *Confirmatio* or the argument for and against; and the *Epilogue* or conclusion. Cicero in *De Inventione* and the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* combine *expositio* and *propositio*. As Lanham notes, Cicero adds a Digression before the Conclusion (112). The third "office" of traditional rhetoric was *elocutio* or style, an element concerned with the art of expression of the argument that had been discovered, selected, and organized. The fourth and fifth "offices" of rhetoric were *memoria* or memorization and *pronunciatio* or delivery (*The Rhetoric of Aristotle* 182-83).

Through curriculum notes of Wordsworth's classical education and his

reading of Greek and Roman writers, it is evident that Wordsworth was well-aware of rhetoric and rhetorical practices. Duncan Wu gives extensive information on Wordsworth's reading in two books: *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* and *Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815*. According to Wu, Wordsworth was very well read and had access to a vast number of books, including books from his own library as well as his friends' libraries. As Wu mentions, Wordsworth may not have been an "ambitious bibliophile" or "a voracious reader as Coleridge" was. "Sometimes Wordsworth exaggerated the lack of reading matter at his disposal--especially when writing to correspondents, who out of sympathy, were likely to respond to his requests for more" (*Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815*, x). Wu shows in his books that Wordsworth had read a great many travel books, plays, and novels in earlier years and had a voracious appetite for poetry. There is no way to account for every single poem he had read, but the range and variety of those Wu had listed in his books are astonishing. In Appendix of II of *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1779*, Wu gives details about Wordsworth's Hawkshead Grammar School as "an exceptionally fine example of the English Free Grammar school" (162). The four headmasters of Hawkshead during Wordsworth's time there were James Peake, a graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge; Edward Christian, Peake's successor and an old friend of the Wordsworth family; William Taylor, an esteemed classical scholar and a former student at Emmanuel College,

Cambridge; Thomas Bowman, a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge. James Peake, who had an excellent classical education at Manchester Grammar School, reformed the teaching methods of Hawkshead. During his reign as the headmaster of Hawkshead, the school established a fine reputation for classics and mathematics. At Emmanuel, William Taylor was a student of William Bennett, later bishop of Cloyne, who lectured on classics, the Bible, and logic. Taylor, headmaster at Hawkshead for 1782-86, passed down his love for eighteenth-century poetry to Wordsworth. In "Wordsworth's Cintra Tract: Politics, the Classics, and the Duty of the Poet," Richard Clancey points out that "It is William Taylor whom Wordsworth speaks of so affectionately in *The Prelude* as his beloved schoolmaster who 'loved the Poets' and inspired Wordsworth to become a poet himself" [Fourteenth-Book *Prelude* 10. 552-56] " (82). When Taylor died in 1786, Thomas Bowman took over as headmaster of Hawkshead. He encouraged Wordsworth's "reading of old books in the School Library," as Wu states in *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* (163). He gave Wordsworth access to his library and lent him poems, such as William Cowper's "Task," when it came out, and Robert Burns' "Poems." As Wu points out, the numerous classical books that Wordsworth read at Hawkshead ranged from Catullus to Xenophen. For a boy of sixteen, Wordsworth's studies in classical education reached an advanced stage. Through school documents and receipts from school bookbinders, Wu explores the specific textbooks that were needed

at Hawkshead around the time Wordsworth was a student there. The records included Latin and Greek grammar books. Refuting the negative statements made by both Thomas De Quincey and Jane Worthington, Clancey asserts that "Wordsworth admired the Greeks" and "as a grammar school student he was very well trained in Greek" (82). In addition, Wu states that "Wordsworth began his Latin education with Dyche's *Guide to the Latin Tongue*, before moving on to a more advanced grammar. During the early 1780s he went on to translate from Aesop and Cicero, and by 1786 was reading Catullus, Martial and Statius" (*Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* 165). Jane Worthington in *Wordsworth's Reading of Roman Prose* states that "During his long and active career as a poet, William Wordsworth found time to acquire an extensive knowledge of Roman historical and political writing" (1). In *The Prelude* Wordsworth described himself as a youth versed in ancient story, "whose breast had heaved under the weight of classic eloquence, and he plainly admitted that he had long preferred the histories of Greece and Rome to his own country" (Book vii: 540-44; viii: 617-22). According to Dorothy Wordsworth, William Wordsworth's own reading program was devoted mainly to languages--Italian, Latin, and Greek (*The Early Letters* 51). The poet's nephew, Christopher Wordsworth in his *Memoirs* on the poet collaborates Dorothy's statement.

We do not know exactly how many classical authors Wordsworth read at school or the edition he was familiar with; but based on the comparison with the

known syllabi from other schools, scholars speculate that a good student at Hawkshead was expected to have read Greek writers such as, Alaceus, Anacreon, Aristophanes, Athaneus, Callistratus, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Homer,? Longinus, Lucian, Lysias,? Mellager, Moschus, Pindar, Plato, Sappho, Sophocles, and Xenophen and Latin writers such as, Caesar, Catullus, Cicero, Claudian, Horace, Juvenal, Livy, Lucretius, Martial, Cornelius, Nepos, Ovid, Plautus, Pliny the younger, Propertius, Quintilian, Sallust, Seneca, Statius, Suetonius Tranquillus, Tacitus, Terence, and Virgil (*Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* 165-66).

The examination papers at Cambridge required a sophisticated ability to render Greek drama into English, as well as the ability to render Greek prose into really good Latin prose" (*Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* 165). From the College Examination Book at St. John's, Cambridge, Wu lists the books that Wordsworth read in preparation for the exams. The list includes books by the authors Xenophen, Horace, Tacitus, Euclid, Livy, John Locke, Demosthenes, Joseph Butler, and Juvenal. Hence, Wu tries to dispel the myth about Wordsworth's lack of reading which the poet himself at times might have propagated to an extent.

Some modern critics, however, believe that Wordsworth has little indebtedness to books, as Hugh Skyes Davies notes: "Wordsworth's thought and feelings . . . owed comparatively little to books, and nearly everything to his

own special fate, as a boy born and bred in a particular place. The reader of Wordsworth cannot long go ignorant of the part played by the Lakes in making him everything that he was" (3). Charles Norton Coe in *Wordsworth and the Literature of Travel* states that there is this assumption among critics that Wordsworth was not influenced by books, beginning with Ralph Waldo Emerson's remark that Wordsworth has "no master but nature and solitude" (qtd. in Coe 11). He cites Lane Cooper's essay, "A Glance at Wordsworth's Reading," in which Cooper "takes issues with critics who insist that Wordsworth was not widely read and that his poetry was not influenced by books" (Coe 11). Two of the poet's distinguished biographers, Emile Legouis and George McLean Harper, also promoted the view of books' influencing Wordsworth little. Coe refers to Legouis' comments as follows: "Wordsworth gives us the impression that, had he lived alone on a bookless earth he would have reached the same conclusions." He also refers to Harper's view in the following quote: "few other great poets are so little indebted to books" (qtd. in Coe 11). Coe concludes that "The assumption that Wordsworth was not influenced by books is frequently controverted, both by the poet's own remarks and by the findings of scholars who have investigated his reading" (11-12). Ernest De Selincourt, in his introduction to the variorum edition of *The Prelude*, says that Wordsworth was mainly influenced by nature; but the poet who also "spoke of books as 'Powers only less than Nature's self, which is the breath of God,' was not likely to neglect

them. Yet the superficial critic has always tended to underrate their influence upon him" (xxviii-xxix). In spite of all the findings by scholars, the view that Wordsworth was indifferent to books still persists.

As shown above from Duncan Wu's two books on Wordsworth's readings, rhetoric was an important subject in William Wordsworth's education. Intensive reading of the classical rhetoricians was the activity of the universities. Aristotle dominated the curriculum at Oxford; orations of Demosthenes were still the subject matter for examination at Cambridge during Wordsworth's days (Nabholz 119). Also, John R. Nabholz shows in his survey of classical rhetorical education of major Romantic poets that Wordsworth was trained in the classical rhetorical tradition (119-20). Wordsworth uses several important classical allusions in *The Prelude*, in *Cintra*, and in *The River Duddon Sonnets*.

It is clear that Wordsworth was a well-educated poet who knew the classics and was familiar with rhetorical traditions and writings from Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian to Hugh Blair of the eighteenth century. The influence of Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* on Wordsworth is well-documented, as Wu shows in his *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* (Appendix VI: 181). Geoffrey Little, in "A Note on Wordsworth and Blair," indicates that Wordsworth may have known Blair since his schooldays, for the *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* are extracted in Knox's *Elegant Extracts in Prose*

(254-5). Wu points out that even if Wordsworth had not known Blair in his school days, "the critical consensus is that he was probably introduced to the Lectures in 1797-8 by C[oleridge]" (*Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1789* 16). Also, Wu suggests that Wordsworth was very much influenced by Blair's Lecture 38, entitled "Nature of Poetry--Its Origin and Progress--Versification," in volume 2. He also states that "There is something on nearly every page of Blair's *Lectures* that would have interested Wordsworth and Coleridge, and which ties in with various statements they made subsequently. This was the most important single borrowing during the period, and was one of a succession of books. . . that helped establish the thinking behind the Lyrical Ballads" (*Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*, Appendix VI: 182). Thus, we see that intensive reading in rhetoric and literature helped mold the poet Wordsworth.

Wordsworth utilized his knowledge of rhetoric and belles lettres in *The River Duddon Sonnets*. The focus of this study is on Wordsworth as a rhetor in *The River Duddon Sonnets* and the ways the poet utilized *dispositio* or arrangement and *elocutio* or style in this series. William Wordsworth followed the classical schemata of arrangement in setting forth information on the life of the local river and in implying the symbolic nature of the river and human life. In his argument he employs examples, variations of rhyme scheme, and presentation of a universal idea or truth. He points out past examples as he examines the possible and impossible, one of the commonplaces in Aristotle's

topoi.

Wordsworth uses artistic proof of reasons and inartistic proof of evidence in *The River Duddon Sonnets* sequence. He also relies on ethical (*ethos*), logical (*logos*), and pathetic (*pathos*) proofs. *Ethos* is shown when the poet or the speaker is presented as a man of intelligence, character, and goodwill. From admitted propositions or *demonstratio*, the poet achieves *logos*. The display of a range of emotions in the series by the poet-speaker establishes the *pathos* or the pathetic proof. The juxtaposition of opposites or a number of "philosophical pairs," to borrow Chaim Perelman's phrase (97), is used in the sonnet sequence to arouse the emotions of the audience and appeal to the reader. Some of the contrarities used in the poem are life and death, mortality and immortality, permanence and impermanence.

Although Wordsworth believed in the spontaneity of creativity, he knew that "the voice of impulse must be tuned with diligence and care," as James Heffernan points out. He further asserts that Wordsworth was "a meticulous craftsman, precise, and painstaking in the correction of his style" (144). "I yield to none," Wordsworth said in 1827, "in love for my art. I, therefore, labor at it with reverence, and affection and industry" (*Prose Works* 3: 462). By his later years, his own practice had taught him that the making of poetry is a "thoughtful, arduous, and demanding task" (Heffernan 144).

Wordsworth was well aware of the use of rhetoric; and even though in the

"Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," he describes poetry as "spontaneous," he declares that poems of value should be thought out properly (*Wordsworth's Prefaces and Essays on Poetry* 5-6). He used simplicity as a rhetorical strategy in many of his poems. As Florence Marsh points out in *Wordsworth's Imagery*, "the seemingly literal [quality of Wordsworth's poetry] . . . is really a vehicle" (Prefatory Note).

Helen Darbishire says in *The Poet Wordsworth* that

Wordsworth's simplicity has been mocked at, overemphasized, and misunderstood. But it lies at the very core of his art. He sought the truth and tried to express it with the least possible deviation. In all his artistic experiments his salvation lay in the integrity of his imagination and his single-minded devotion to what he knew within. (178)

Colin C. Clarke states in *Romantic Paradox* that "with the simplest of verbal gestures [Wordsworth can achieve] an effect of surprising complexity and power" in *The Prelude* (101). De Selincourt asserts in *Wordsworth's Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind* that "The epithets 'simple' and 'natural' commonly applied to Wordsworth's poetry, alike for praise and blame, suggest a general ignorance of the intense study and careful artistry that lay behind his mind and manner. His style is Wordsworthianism as truly as Milton's is Miltonic" (Introduction xliii).

Careful examination will show that Wordsworth used rhetoric very well in

his sonnet series *The River Duddon Sonnets*. The poet adhered to the classical schemata of *dispositio* or arrangement in setting forth information in *The River Duddon Sonnets* series. Ronald McReynolds points out:

Using a rhetorical style, the poet usually begins each sonnet with a description of the subject at hand, often achieving no more than a piece of well-written descriptive poetry. Nearing the end, however, usually within the last two lines, the poet lifts the level of the sonnet from the limited scope of description of a particular object or situation, and with a phrase or two opens the entire poem to the possibility of an interpretation having universal application.

(175-76)

McReynolds then states that the poet "also achieves this continuity in the sonnet sequence itself by bringing to bear in the final sonnet the culminating philosophical undercurrents that have been running with the Duddon throughout the course of the poetical series" (McReynolds 176).

CHAPTER III

The River Duddon Sonnets: A Thematic and Rhetorical Analysis

Creativity and running water are symbolically connected; and running water inspired many poets, including Wordsworth. Flowing water was dear to Wordsworth from infancy. In his notes to *The River Duddon Sonnets*, Wordsworth states:

The power of waters over the minds of Poets has been acknowledged from the earliest ages;--- through "Flumina amem sylvasque inglorius" of Virgil down to the sublime apostrophe to the great rivers of earth, by Armstrong, and the simple ejaculation of Burns. . . . It is with the little River Duddon as it is with most rivers, Ganges and Niles not excepted,---many springs might claim the honor of being its head. (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 504)

Native rivers and streams were important to Wordsworth as evidenced by the inclusion of them in his poems. Wordsworth's first "water poem" was "The Lines Written Near Richmond, upon the Thames at Evening." His earliest associations with River Derwent were celebrated in *The Prelude*, and his visits to the Wye near Tintern Abbey and memories of those visits had comforted him in hours of suffering and distress of mind. Since the days of the Cambridge long vacations, River Duddon became the poet's favorite river; and "To the River

Derwent" anticipates *The River Duddon Sonnets* (Moorman 373).

In sonnet I of *The River Duddon Sonnets* series that starts with the line "Not Envy Latian Shades--If yet they throw," Wordsworth traces the origins of the Duddon River, identifying it with the Roman legions that were stationed on the bank. The poet alludes to the great Blandusia that prattled along many years ago, inspiring the Sabine Bard to praise its movements. Blandusia may be a reference to "Horace's famous ode to the Blandusian fountain (III. Xiii 13), which W[ordsworth] might have translated as a schoolboy (Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* 76). Also, Ernest De Selincourt indicates in his notes to "Musings Near Aquapendente" that Wordsworth preferred the form "Blandusia," not "Bandusia" as evidenced by the corrections in later editions from "Bandusia" to "Blandusia." De Selincourt also points out that in Wordsworth's early translations of Horace's Ode (1794) he used the form "Bandusia" (492). In the 1820-32 manuscripts, the poet uses "Bandusia," whereas in the 1837 MS he uses "Blandusia." Regarding Wordsworth's preference for "Blandusia," Helen Darbishire comments: "Wordsworth evidently liked the sound and association of this form" (492). He was interested in the sound effects of words, and he manipulated words to convey his purpose.

Just as the Sabine Bard, Wordsworth is inspired by the Duddon River that hails from the mountains. In the octave of the first sonnet, the poet compares the

merits of Duddon with other famous and greater rivers. Lee M. Johnson notes, "The octave ranges range from the slow, Latinate cadences of the beginning to the rushing lines on the Alpine torrents and finally to the directness of prose in line eight. The shift of style--a return to basic beginnings--is most appropriate to Wordsworth's concern for the origin of an unheralded river" (141). The sestet deals with the river's source and presents a petition by the poet for his verse to emulate the nature of the stream--"pure flow the verse, pure, vigorous, free, and bright" (l. 14).

The River Duddon Sonnets begins with an apostrophe or the poet's direct address to the river. The first line, "Not envying the Latian shades--if yet they throw," echoes Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* that begins with the line, "Not marching in the fields of Trasimene." Johnson points out that the opening of the series resembles Adam's address to nature in *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, lines 275-82:

Ye Hills, and Dales, ye Rivers, Woods, and Plains
 And ye that live and move, fair creatures tell,
 Tell, if ye saw, how came thus, how here?
 Not of myself; by some great Maker then,
 In goodness and in power preeminent;
 Tell me, how may I know him, how adore,
 From whom I have thus I move and live,

And feel that I am happier than I know.

After greeting the elements in sonnet I, using an apostrophe, "all hail, ye mountains! Hail, thou morning light," Wordsworth turns to Duddon and finds that its birth is mysterious. As Johnson further states, "Like Adam, he is interested in the problem of man's origin and tries to elicit the answer from nature" (129).

Unlike Adam, Wordsworth has no messenger from God.

In lines 11-12 of sonnet I, the poet expresses his feeling that it is better to breathe the free and clean air of the mountain than to "toil in endless sleep from dream to dream." Here the poet is referring to the soothing effect of nature, especially running water, on the human psyche. He believes that the Duddon River is a symbol of purity and innocence and belongs to an uncorrupted age. Johnson suggests, "The Duddon in the garden of the Lake District is comparable to the rivers in and around the garden of Eden" (130). Moved by the gorgeous sight of the river, the poet thinks of his own verse and desires his verse to flow as purely, vigorously, freely, and brightly as the infant Duddon as it begins its journey to the ocean.

In the first sonnet itself, the speaker's desire to create a literary monument like the ones created by other poets is apparent. The allusion to the Sabine Bard "evokes both Horace's portrayal of a cold river which flows on, 'nobilium' in its aloofness from men (Leishman 156), and reminds us of Wordsworth's addition of

the same allusion to his youthful version of 'An Evening Walk' (*WPWI*, 11. 10-11)" (qtd. in Ponder 164). As Stewart C. Wilcox indicates, the Duddon River "is to be no Horatian spring or Persian fountain, nor will it be like Coleridge's 'Hymn before Sunrise' describe an Alpine torrent 'thundering Through ice-built arches" (136). In the sestet of the first sonnet, the poet asserts that he, unlike other conventional poets, will find his material from local and familiar territory. He does not want to portray "classical or European landscapes" (Ponder 164); instead, he wants to "seek the birthplace of a native Stream." Ponder notes that the last two lines of the first sonnet of *The River Duddon Sonnets* reflect "Cooper's Hill" in which John Denham uses the Thames River's power as an *Exemplum* in lines 189-92; "O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream / My great example, as it is my theme! Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull, / Strong without rage, without oreflowing full." The first sonnet concludes with the statement that the Duddon will be the theme of the sonnet series.

In sonnet II, the poet is still enamoured by the "heavenliness" of the river. He addresses Duddon as the "Child of the Clouds," thereby alluding to the river's origin in the rain from the clouds. The poet's focus lies on the remoteness, purity, innocence, and holiness of the river. Since the river is away from every impurity of filthy industry, it is pure. It helps the "fainted valleys" with its handmaid Frost

that acts as a tissue for the cradle decks. Wordsworth "celebrates" the river's isolation because the river is pure and "remote from every taint / of sordid industry. . . ." Here we can detect the poet's discontent with science and industries that pollute nature. The imagery of the river's maid, Frost, acting as a "spangled tissue" to cool the valleys before they faint, is awe-inspiring because of the eyecatching scenery and the personifications of the valleys. Apparently the ruthless power of Desolation that could not guard the mighty forests is the baby river's guardian and patron saint now. Personifications stress the physical growth of the river when it is described as being a child of the clouds and as having Frost as its handmaid. The fainting valleys and the whistling blasts are also personifications. The repetition of the *p* sound in lines 7-9, as in Poet/Patron/Power," shows the relationships of the composer with divinity (Patron-saint) and creativity (Power). The repetition ties the three important words together. The onomatopoeic words "whistling" in line 7 and "whizzing" used in line 14 give a sonorous effect to the sonnet. The anaphora, the repetition of the word "thy" at the beginning of lines 5 and 6, is significant in that the poet is stressing the association of the river with human beings.

The first two sonnets are the *Exordium* or *Proem* that show the celestial properties of the Duddon River, but the third sonnet is the narratio or statement of

issue to be argued in the discourse. The poet starts sonnet III with the rhetorical question, "how shall I paint thee?" Wordsworth's use of "paint" suggests that the poet is an artist, painting with words. He conveys his difficulty in portraying the river's features because it is not well known. The Duddon River is what the poet is interested in, and he wants to describe it in his verse. In line 3 of sonnet III, the poet hopes that his verse will become a "speaking monument." The river is compared to "tripping lambs" that do not "outrun" their "fellows." Nature has not given any distinctive qualities to the Duddon River; it does not have any "sign of hoar Antiquity's esteem" or "modern Fortune's care." Yet it has made its own individuality by spreading on its banks "a gleam / of brilliant moss," an offering to its foster mother, Earth. The poet maintains the celestial beginnings of the Duddon River by pointing out that the earth is the foster mother of this child of the clouds now. The speaker-poet is looking at the present appearance of this Duddon River, but his mind wanders to the existence of the river in pre-historic time, as in lines 13 and 14.

Lee M. Johnson suggests, "The development of the stream runs through four principal stages. The first stage, at the beginning of the sequence, uses natural metaphors. The Duddon's source or 'birth,' for example, is compared to new-born lambs in sonnet III" (123). Duddon is a rill in sonnet IV but grows in size physically and in complexity because of a Protean change. In the second stage

the stream has several "human associates: children in sonnet V, a young lover in sonnet VI, and the earliest prehistoric man to visit the stream" (Johnson 124). Associations with human life are focused in several sonnets before the third stage introduces figures from mythology as in sonnets XX and XXII. The fourth and final stage is symbolic; for, at this stage, the stream "achieves symbolic identification with human life" (Johnson 124). On the other hand, Stewart C. Wilcox in his article "Wordsworth's Sonnets" divides the sequence into three parts based on the changes in subject matter. According to Wilcox, sonnets I-IV are a *Proem* to the Duddon, sonnets V-XI deal with childhood and youth, and sonnets XII-XXXIV deal with man's religious and social nature (136-38).

In sonnet IV, the river's course takes a Protean change. Proteus, according to Greek mythology, was the legendary sea god who had the power of assuming different shapes and was in the service of Neptune. The river that was the "cradled Nursling of the mountain" takes a turn and departs from the mountain. Duddon has grown in physical size; it has widened and broadened; it is a rill with complexity now, resembling a "glistening snake." The poet is implying that the Duddon is no longer innocent, no longer naive; it is complex. Only a true adventurer can follow this river that used to be the "Child of the clouds." This sonnet is the beginning of the main body of the poem, in which the poet describes the various changes that the Duddon River undergoes in the

course of its path.

In sonnet V, Wordsworth calls himself the sole listener "to the breeze that played with [Duddon's] clear voice." The sullen moss and craggy mounds are the "unfruitful solitudes." The poet praises the Duddon because it has generated life to its surroundings, in the shade trees along its bank as well as in the cottage that was built along the stream to house laughing children. This occasion is the first time in *The River Duddon Sonnets* series that the poet gives the beautiful imagery of different types of trees, such as green alders, ashes, and birches. Wordsworth describes the trees that rise along the Duddon banks as social trees because they provide company for the lonely river. "Ruddy children . . . thy pleased associates" also appear as its first human companions. Assonance and personification in line 7 as in "ashes flung their arms around" are masterful poetic effects that Wordsworth uses. The imagery in line 8, "birch-trees risen in silver colonnade," adds to the beauty of the whole atmosphere. The poet reflects the growth of the Duddon's physical and metaphysical qualities in the changing images. Also, this sonnet brings in three frequently used words in Wordsworth's poetry; "solitude," "sole," and "lonely." "Solitude," referred to in line 4, is a recurring theme in Wordsworth's poetry. Geoffrey Durrant states: "the task of the poet was to transform the desolation of mere loneliness into the 'bliss of solitude'--that 'blessed mood' in which the human mind irradiates and

transforms the world which it perceives, giving life and meaning to what otherwise would be essentially dead" (2). In this sonnet, unlike the blissful solitude that Wordsworth mentions in other works, the solitudes are described as "unfruitful."

In sonnet VI, entitled "Flowers," Wordsworth celebrates the flowers that live in harmony with the trees, the hawthorn bowers, the birds, and the humming bees along the Duddon. All the wild flowers are flourishing because of the water provided by the river. Here the poet emphasizes the beneficence of water, and the circularity of life goes on. Water is what gives life to the flowers; and because of that life-giving feature of water, other life forms are continuing their journey.

The poet paints a picture of natural elegance with the social trees, hawthorn bushes, and loving birds in sonnet VI. This sonnet abounds in images. One of the images that is portrayed is in the age-old tale of bees and flowers. The bees are described as robbers who steal pollen from the sundry flowers. The Duddon, however, is helping these flowers to grow and mature because of perpetual showers that it yields to them. The emphasis here is the sustenance of nature through the power of water. This sensuous sonnet's appeal to the eye is remarkable. The wild strawberries bloomed, the "trembling eyebright" showed its "sapphire blue" blossoms, and thyme showed its purple flowers. In a simile,

the purple blooms of the thyme are compared with the blushing of the evening. All these blooms are peeping out and look like the favorites of heaven because they are fair to see. Wordsworth uses sound effects, such as onomatopoeia, anaphora, and alliteration to get his point across. Lines 10-11, according to Wordsworth's own notes, "are in a great measure taken from 'The Beauties of Spring, a Juvenile Poem,' by the Rev. Joseph Sympson" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3:506). As Wordsworth further states, "his poems are little known, but they contain passages of splendid description; and the versification of his 'Vision of Alfred' is harmonious and animated" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 506).

In sonnet VII, Wordsworth sings about two lovers. The poet invents a scene and character, a "love-sick Stripling," who is envious of the rose on his Laura's breast. Laura's lover wishes he were the rose on her breast or that he were her bird so that he could receive the attention she gives her rose and the bird. The poet thinks this choice is a "too daring" and comments that some others would rather be a wild flower in the glen or a free darkling wren "that tunes on Duddon's banks her slender voice." As for the poet, he would rather be a floweret that is "fearless of plough and scythe." He would rather be one with nature than ruin nature's beauty. Ponder notes that "this sonnet depicts the speaker's movement into poetic constructions; here, into the realm of Petrarchan

complaint, itself an eternizing convention" (166). Wordsworth effectively utilizes the classical allusion of the Nymph for the state of mind of the young man who is in pursuit of Laura's love. The "breathing rose!" is a personification that shows the vividness and vitality of the image. The image of the bird as a singer "that throws / The darts of song from out of its wiry cage," brings to mind Cupid with his arrows of love.

Lines 10-14 show contrasts of images of the lover's desires. The "unculled floweret of the glen" in line 12 is contrasted to the "breathing rose!" in line 1. "The darkling wren / That tunes on Duddon's banks her slender voice" in lines 13-14 is contrasted to Laura's caged song bird in lines 5 and 6. The poet prefers to be the free floweret, not the already-cut rose that adorns Laura. The poet admires the darkling wren that is free to sing in his "slender voice" on "Duddon's banks" rather than Laura's bird that is a prisoner in "its wiry cage."

In sonnet VIII, the poet thinks about the longevity of the river. Unlike an individual, the river has been around for thousands of years and has endured many things. The poet's imagination is stirred up by looking at the river and thinking about all the years that it has been around. He thinks about the savage people who came to this stream many, many years ago. He wonders about the first man who came to this river to quench his thirst. The poet ponders about the first man's intentions, his desires, the problems he might have endured, and the

dreams he had that encompassed his life. The river is like an historian who could tell the poet about the savage rituals of the ancient man. In comparing the present and the past, Wordsworth points out the "hideous usages" of primeval man and nature's endurance of them all. Whatever the results of ignorance Duddon might have witnessed before, it is keeping quiet about them. No matter how much man has mistreated nature, it has endured all of those mistreatments silently. Here, as in the entire sequence, the poet asserts that the stream purifies its companions. The poet glorifies the river because its "function was to heal and to restore, / To soothe and cleanse, not madden to pollute!"

The entire octave of the sonnet consists of rhetorical questions concerning the first man who came to the Duddon to quench his thirst. The sestet begins with the realization that there are no easy answers to all the questions in the octave as "No voice replies." Only the imagination can find the answers. The poet, however, is a little disappointed because the river as well as "both the air and the earth are mute" about every thing that happened thousands of years ago. The ignorance of the savages did not affect the river; the "blue streamlet" goes on without a complaint and murmurs in a soft voice. The poet gets consolation in the idea that the river's natural function was to comfort, purify, and restore, not to pollute. In sonnet VIII, as Ponder mentions, "the speaker arrives at an understanding of the 'function' of the river, an important

concept in view of the kinship he has already established between the river and his own poetic imagination" (166). The river's moral role is akin to the poet's function as it is depicted in the closing sonnet.

In sonnet IX, entitled "The Stepping Stones," the poet notices the growth of the Duddon as he follows its course. The "Struggling Rill" has become a brook of "loud and stately march," an image of power and forcefulness. The contrast is obvious in the change of the "Struggling Rill" into something that is "loud and stately." The poet describes how the water flows under the plank or arch and through an area "Chosen for ornament" where the stepping stones are symmetrically arranged. The Duddon runs fast and "Without restraint," as shown in line 9 with the repetition of the word "succeeding" to emphasize the flow of water. The "studied symmetry" of the stepping stones seems to be reflected in Wordsworth's own symmetrical style in lines 5 and 9. The poet uses exclamation points at times to show his emotions which parallel the river's mood. The Duddon is running wildly and fiercely with its "high-swoln Flood" like a swift and rebellious youth. Negotiating the stones in the swift river is the test that becomes the gauge for the poet in measuring a child's "budding courage" and the infirmity of declining manhood. A young child tries his courage in the fierce flood, but the poet is unwilling to do so. The river and the landscape around the river make the poet think about his own infirmity, his own old age, and impending

death. The three important concepts of time, life, and death are masterfully woven together in the last three lines of the sonnet: "Declining Manhood learns to note the sly / And sure encroachments of infirmity, / Thinking how fast time runs, life's end how near!" The speaker-poet pictures the river as an image of the shortness of human life. This sonnet IX is an important one in that the physical form of the Duddon changes; it transforms from a murmuring Streamlet in sonnet VIII to a "loud and stately" Brook in this sonnet.

In sonnet X, the poet paints a verbal picture of a shy shepherd girl and her playful lover testing their love in attempting to cross the stream on the stepping stones. The girl is afraid to cross the river because of the flood; she is too timid and suspicious of the flood and hesitates to go farther. However, she ventures once more and pauses for a moment. Then she sees the outstretched hand of her lover, which hand he withdraws playfully. Line 3 refers to "sweet confusion," an oxymoron, which adequately describes the girl's state of mind. She is confused about venturing into the river, yet she feels her confusion is sweet because she is with her boyfriend. The octave portrays her timidity and hesitation to venture into the swiftly flowing water, and the sestet resolves that problem, for she gets the necessary help from her friend. When she pleads for help, he surrenders; and both feel the thrilling touch of each other. Watching this incident, the poet exclaims, saying that "if their fluttering hearts should stir

too much / Should beat too strongly, both may be betrayed." The frolicky pagan love gods, watching from another rock, see the struggle and clap their wings in triumph.

In sonnet XI, "The Faery Chasm," Wordsworth turns to the folklore along the Duddon and directs his attention to "A Skyblue Stone" on which the elves had danced after stealing "some sweet Babe," leaving behind their footprints in the rock. The poet begins with the assertion that his story is no fiction of ages past, and he points out footprints of elves in a sky-blue stone. Just as a pile of stones leads to a story in Wordsworth's "Michael," so does this stone lead to a story of dancing elves. He tries to find some vestige of clues that might have been left by the elves. The elves were quite real to the poet, and he wonders where he could find some clues about those wild dances. The flower was stolen, and some weed was left for the grief-stricken mother to soothe her loss. He asks if the notes of the dances are underground or in the upper air or in twilight fields. The elves' stealing of the baby is given in the octave, and the mother's grief is described early in the sestet. The poet's lamentations about the loss of the baby are heard in "But, where, oh! Where" in line 9. In the last two lines the poet asks several rhetorical questions about where the notes of the wild dances might be. There are no easy answers for the questions the poet brings up. Ponder states, "Wordsworth's speaker-poet, like Pope, has adorned our

mortal universe with new beings. The saunterer has left the river behind for the minutely realized literary world of folklore and English fairies" (167).

In sonnet XII, entitled "Hints for Fancy," the poet provides some hints for his fancy by encouraging his muse not to linger on the fanciful reflections that are seen in the water. The poet's imagination stirs him to creativity, and he, inspired by his Muse, is constantly thinking about the act of poetic creation. The poet contrasts the lingering Muse with the "swift Stream" that chides on. In his imagination he sees the immense objects portrayed as small and many wild shapes that defy comparisons. He wants to leave "the toys of fancy," but he cannot and "compulsively continues to play with them, transforming visual objects into emblematic images" (Ponder 167). The phrase "toys of fancy," as Ponder notes, might be a reference to Coleridge's "toys of Thought" in "Frost at Midnight." The first line of this sonnet calls the Muse "loitering Muse," and towards the end of the sonnet it is the "enamoured Muse" that wants to linger on and consume all the breathtaking sceneries by the Duddon, but the poet realizes that he and the Muse have to get on with their journey.

The water evokes in the poet certain fancies. He sees immense objects as small in the water; he sees wild shapes that yield strange comparison. Wordsworth uses several contrasts in this sonnet to convey his idea. Bright liquid mansions that are made to endure crumbled; the palace and tower, the

pride and joy of human beings, also have crumbled into dust. The poet feels he and his Muse must move on but doubts if his Muse can leave the "toys of fancy" without regrets.

Sonnet XIII, "Open Prospect," begins with an apostrophe to the fields. The poet uses extended similes to paint the Duddon and tries to direct our "attention away from the actual river and into the scenes created by his tropes" (Ponder 167). There is a small hamlet the poet wants to visit, which is under a green hill clustered "with barn and byre and spouting mill." This one small hamlet, according to Wordsworth, is Seathwaite (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 507). He imagines a time when the "bleak winds" roar through the pollard ash by the Duddon as "loud as the gusts that lash / The matted forests of Ontario's shore / By wasteful steel unsmitten." To avoid the angry Duddon and to escape the storm, the poet like a sailor would turn into a port and have a drink and laugh beside a warm hearth with others "at all the merry pranks of Donnerdale!" The poet would rather be inside than follow the course of the angry Duddon at this juncture. This is the first time in the series that the Duddon is described as angry. Wordsworth uses several sound effects such as alliterations and assonance to show the power and anger of nature. Line six of the sonnet carries the image of lance-like shoots of pollard ash. The poet cannot overlook the two faces of nature, its gentleness as well as its anger. But he might be

suggesting that no matter what happens around human beings, no matter what the calamities are, their spirits still prevail, as shown in the merry scenes by "the warm hearth" while winds roar outside.

Sonnet XIV, composed before April 1807 (1806 ?) and published in 1807 (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 251), starts with an apostrophe, "O Mountain Stream!" The poet admires the "deep solitude" of the shepherd and his cot and envies the Duddon because it has the privilege to witness the beautiful villages, the simple shepherd and his cot, but the Duddon itself is not happy. The river wants to move on as if it is possessed by some awful spirit. Johnson notes, "A spirit of solitude drives the stream away from all contact with man" (133). The poet is, in fact, in awe of the solitude of the hamlet that is described in the previous sonnet and the cottage of the shepherd. Here we may infer the poet's love of solitude and his desire to be alone with nature and his appreciation of simple folks, like a shepherd. Wordsworth points out the beautiful green fields and a plot of tilled soil that seems like "a spot / Of stationary sunshine." Duddon witnesses all this beauty, yet it is not satisfied, for it wants to move on. The river wants to forsake "the haunts of men" even though it already has only few, simple companions. Duddon escapes to the wilderness where only its own voice is heard except when the clouds and birds of the air pursue its path.

In sonnet XV Wordsworth notices a barren niche in the chasm overlooking the stream. The poet creates possible scenarios that would explain the gloomy niche that is "capacious, blank, and cold." In the octave, the poet brings up the topic of the niche and wonders how it was formed; but in the sestet, as usual, he comes up with several rhetorical questions concerning the origins of the niche. He also sees "a concave free from shrubs and mosses grey" and imagines the rolling over of some religious statue through that region, scaring the flight of "timid Yesterday." Wordsworth uses his imagination to picture the origins of the niche; was it by slaves or by a fiery eruption in the earth? The poet speculates that maybe it was "abruptly cast / Into rude shape by fire" with the wild winds from the caves, or maybe it was formed by the turbulent waves from the Deluge, referring to Noah's time. Lines 9-10, with "weary slaves / Of slow endeavour," seem to move slowly. The last two lines, on the other hand, almost burst with action: "Sun, moon, and stars, and beast of chase or prey; / Whate'er they sought, shunned, loved, or defiled!"

Sonnet XVI, entitled "American Tradition," uses a smooth transition in line 1, referring to the "fruitless" questions the poet has asked in the sestet of sonnet XV. He says such questions as these that he raised may not betray the imagination. He refers to the Oroonoko river in Venezuela, South America, and mentions the myth "of the sculptured shows," "where Oroonoko flows" as the

Indians had told and retold it for centuries. The poet shows the contrast between the Indians and the white man. According to the poet, the Indians are more attuned to the elements than the white men are because they know more about the great waters, the plains, and the landscape. The Indian would answer with a smile about the white man's ignorance and explain how the "GREAT WATERS" rose, covered the plains, wandered where they wanted, and flowed through every polluted plain and came out triumphant. Even in the huge flood the Indians went on their ways; they carved murals of "sun, moon, and stars, and beasts of chase or prey." Line eight, "sun moon stars rain" of e. e. Cumming's "Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town" echoes this line from Wordsworth. The poet has high praise for the Indian's knowledge about the origin of the Oroonoko and about the carvings on the cliff. Wordsworth's source here is *Humboldt's Travels*, ii. (183):

A few leagues from Encaramada, a rock, called *Tepu-mereme*, or the "painted rock", rises in the midst of the Savannah. Upon it are traced representations of animals and symbolic figures. . . .

Between the banks of the Cassiquiare and the Orinoco . . . these hieroglyphic figures are often seen at great heights, on rocky cliffs which could be accessible only by constructing very lofty scaffolds. When the natives are asked how those figures could have been

sculptured, they answer with a smile, as if relating a fact of which only white man could be ignorant, that "at the period of the great waters, their fathers went to that height in boats." (De Selincourt and Darbishire 507)

In sonnet XVII, "Return," the poet paints the picture of the "imperial Bird of Rome" that invokes ancient history. He describes the appearance of the soaring eagle and its "wild wailing" which scattered the clouds, thrilled "the chambers of the rocks," and silenced the timid flocks of sheep. By night time the timid flocks of sheep are still as they settle down at the old Roman fort at Hardknot and at the ancient Druid circle nearby. The Roman Fort here alluded to is known as "Hardknot castle." It is situated halfway down the hill on the right of the road that descends from Hardknot into Eskdale (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 508). The Druidical Circle, as De Selincourt points out, "is about half a mile to the left of the road ascending Stone-side from the vale of Duddon: the country people call it *Sunken Church*" (508). The ancient Druids are linked to stone circles all around Great Britain, including the famous Stonehenge. The adjective "timorous" given to the flock of sheep in this sonnet reiterates the deadly silence that encompassed the sheep because of the appearance of the eagle. The image of "nightly dew / Moistened each fleece, beneath the twinkling stars" appeals to the senses. Images of the dark, croaking raven and blasted yew are

associated with death, a pervading element in this sonnet. The words, "Departed ages," "wailing," "silence," "hush," "calmly," "nightly," "sleep," "sinking" . . . and "deep into the patient Earth" all solidify the image of death which is quite appropriate for the content of this sonnet.

Sonnet XVIII of the series is a dedication to the "Gospel Teacher" of the Seathwaite Chapel. De Selincourt identifies the Reverend Robert Walker as this teacher and notes that "In the Seventh Book of the Excursion, an abstract of his character is given, beginning--

"A Priest abides before whose life such doubts

Fall to the ground, --." (510)

Wordsworth admired this minister and wrote a prose memoir on him in the notes that were published with *The River Duddon Sonnets*. In this rather long almost twelve-page tribute to the venerable preacher, Wordsworth describes him as the prototype of a simple man who lived in nature and utilized nature for his betterment and goodness of his community. The poet starts the sonnet with an apostrophe and calls religion "Sacred" and the "mother of form and fear," a phrase from *Musophilus*, a work by Samuel Daniel. New rites and rituals are added when old ones are ruined and have been stopped to please the "fickle worshipper." In a metaphor, the poet calls religion the "Mother of Love!," and in another he asks religion to "protect / Truth's holy lamp"

for the sake of the vale. Wordsworth describes his preacher in the last three lines of the sonnet as follows:

A Pastor such as Chaucer's verse portrays;
Such as the heaven-taught skill of Herbert drew;
And tender Goldsmith crowned with deathless praise!

Line 12 of the sonnet refers to a Pastor who is like Chaucer's parson in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. This pastor is also like the parson in Herbert's prose treatise "A Priest to the Temple or the country Parson, his Character and Rule of Holy Life." This religious man is like the one that tender Goldsmith praised greatly in "The Deserterd Village" as he echoed Chaucer's description of the ideal parson in *The Canterbury Tales*. Wordsworth admired the Reverend Walker for his "candour and meekness, his sober, chaste, and virtuous conversation, his soundness in principle and practice . . . " (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 512).

In sonnet XIX, "Tributary Stream," the poet watches the stream pouring into the lordly River Duddon. He sees hope in the union of the rush of waters. The poet gives superlatives "fairest, softest, liveliest" to the white torrent produced by the Duddon. Wordsworth is delighted to see the tributary stream which is the "hope presented some far-distant good," that seemed to fall from heaven as the stream has hurried to unite with the "lordly Duddon," making it bigger. At this juncture, the poet compares the river to a bridegroom. As Florence Marsh suggests in *Wordsworth's*

Imagery: A Study in Poetic Vision, "the union of the river and its tributary stream is described in terms suitable for human marriage" (94). Duddon the groom loves and praises his bride dressed in white torrent. The "murmur musical" of the Duddon is a blessing to "the thirsty fields" around it because the river quenches the fields, making them dewy and fresh until the next rainfall. The poet trembles with delight because the tributary stream was like the manna that came down from heaven. He equates this hope with the flood of Duddon's pure waters from high above. He thinks the tributary stream cannot wait to unite with the Duddon because of the impressive images of the river. Images of music announce blessing to the fields. As Ponder notes, "This image dramatizes the abstract symbol of the arrival of a hoped-for good in a very concrete way and unites the idea with the object, as Coleridge might have perceived" (168). De Selincourt and Darbishire point out in *Wordsworth's Poetical Works* that the stream that unites the Duddon "is Tarnbeck, which rises in Seathwaite Tarn and flows into the Duddon by Newfield" (523). Florence Marsh asserts in her study of *Wordsworth's Imagery: A Study in Poetic Vision* that "the sound of water is the most characteristic Wordsworthian sound of all. The sound of the water, its movement and its peace, its transparency and its power to reflect is one of Wordsworth's most all-pervasive vehicles" (91).

In sonnet XX, "The Plain of Donnerdale," the poet describes a change that will take place in the course of the river. On the plain of Donnerdale, the river

changes its smooth flow and begins to dance wildly from rock to rock.

Donnerdale is the little hamlet that Wordsworth has seen before; it is described in sonnet XIII. It lies on the east bank of the Duddon from Ulpha bridge to the limits of Broughton. The river becomes an estuary about a mile from Broughton. It was probably from the bridge below Donnerdale that Wordsworth saw the scene described in this sonnet (George 892). The river's tranquillity is easily apparent to the poet at this time as it is described in the octave, but in the sestet the poet prepares the reader for a major change in the appearance of the river. The river's calm, composed demeanor of an innocuous firstborn of the flock with the appearance of a soft azure sky will be replaced by revelry because the Duddon is going to dance like a Bacchanal dancer, "tossing her frantic thyrsus wide and high!" Bacchus in Greek mythology is the god of wine; and Bacchanal dancers are revelers who toss their frantic thyrsus, which is a symbol of Dionysus, the fertility god. "Liquid lapse" in line 4 is an allusion to *Paradise Lost*, VIII. 263: "And liquid lapse of murmuring Streams" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 53). Some critics, such as Laurie Magnus, have praised Wordsworth's description of the Duddon scenery in this sonnet (140). Johnson sees "The Plain of Donnerdale" as an excellent sonnet that asserts that the Duddon is worthy of Elysium (124). If the "old inventive poets" had seen this gorgeous scenery that the Duddon creates, such as its serene "liquid lapse," the

flowery plains on its bank, and the "imperishably green" bowers, they would have "beautified Elysium." The Duddon River is like a paradise at this juncture, but this tranquillity and serenity will be broken because there is a rough course ahead for Duddon just as there had been a rough course in the past. In the near future Duddon's harmless, innocent appearance will change.

Sonnet XX has the most similes in the series. The river is compared to an "Innocuous firstling of the flock" as in the "tripping lambs" in sonnet III. Also, the river is like a "soft cerulean sky" in its appearance and "like a Bacchanal" in its dance. Repetition of the word "rough" in consecutive lines 7 and 8 emphasizes the roughness of the river's movement in the past as well as in the future. The abundance of the liquid sounds / and r in this sonnet gives that atmosphere of serenity and tranquillity.

In sonnet XXI, Wordsworth recalls when he roamed alongside the Duddon with friends and relatives. According to De Selincourt, "a tenderly beloved" relative referred to here was Wordsworth's cousin Mary, who passed away in 1799. She was the daughter of Richard Wordsworth of Whitehaven and wife of John Smith of Broughton (523). The sonnet starts with the question "Whence that low voice?--A whisper from the heart, / That told of days long past." Once more under the kind Earth's tranquillity the poet and his kin and friends unite through memory. Time brings forth the "glistening tresses" of

memory that were bound, yet are "light and free" as the "golden locks of the birch" tree. The three key words in this sonnet, "Time," "Memory," "Duddon" are all personified. The repetition of "once more" in lines 6 and 7 is a premonition of the impending conclusion of the poet's life after which, he believes, he will meet his cousin. Sonnet XXI, as Durrant notes, is a good "example of Wordsworth's contemplative verse at its most subtle and at its most precise" (156). This sonnet which starts "Whence that low voice?" "begins with the low sound of a whisper, suggesting the ghostly thinness of the recollection quietly aroused by the associations of the river," according to Durrant (156). The figures of the poet's dearly departed appear in the consciousness of the poet. The word "steal" used in line 5 suggests how slowly his memory is awakened. Now in the poet's imagination the departed figures are ghosts. "This kind Earth's Tranquil light" suggests the underworld where the ghosts of the departed have been. The sestet uses two images: Durrant describes the first image as being

the goddess-like figure of Memory [that] is made to merge, by a process like that of a "dissolve" in a film, into the birch trees whose boughs rise and fall gently in the breezes. So the goddess is there, and not there. . . . As with the slight personification of the

city in the sonnet on Westminster Bridge, the personification of memory is limited, and at no point becomes too precise. (157)

The second image is about the "cloudy stall / Of Time" and the way Memory breaks out occasionally triumphant from under the bondage of Time. The sonnet ends with the line "Aught of the fading year's inclemency!" This evocation of autumn, seen in the golden locks of the birch trees, is suggestive of the declining years of life. In due course of time, the poet, who is in the autumn of his life, will also become a ghost. Durrant aptly reminds us, "This recognition of the power of time is, however, only one of the chords of feeling struck by the poem: the dominant idea is that of the capacity of the human mind, in favourable circumstances, to enjoy at least an occasional respite from the ordinary laws of time" (157).

In sonnet XXII, entitled "Tradition," the poet describes a "Love-lorn Maid." Some time ago, she came to this hidden pool that was "a fine bathing pool with sheer crags on one side of it, a little above Ulpha Bridge" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 523). The poet compares the hidden pool in the Duddon with the goddess Diana's "looking-glass" and says that the pool surpasses the "looking-glass" in crystal clearness. The love-sick maiden wanted to get that rose, "the starry treasure," which reflected in the pool as the "chime of Echo" was heard. As the story goes, the maiden debated whether to jump into the pool or to climb

the wet precipice and seize the "guest / Of April, smiling high in upper air."

What an awful alternative, says the poet. Now, on the steep rock, the primrose blooms again, untouched by the sad demise of the maiden. In this sonnet, as in sonnet XXI, the poet juxtaposes the impermanence of human beings with the permanence of nature so that his audience will reflect on how a life is gone too fast. All the personifications, "the guest of April," "smiling rose," "steep rock's breast," and "the lonely primrose," make the tragedy of the maiden alive to the reader.

In contrast to the above sonnet, in sonnet XXIII Wordsworth portrays the uses of the river. He paints a picture of the clamor, the bleating sheep, the barking dogs, and the sheepwashing in the Duddon's waters. In this sonnet, the poet's mood changes; in an apostrophe in line 1, he orders his "sad thoughts" to leave, and he wishes to join in the "blithe cheer" of the sheep washers. The poet regrets that the noise and the dirt are ruining the nature's mien but adds that we must not blame the people because the sporting is "frank" and the stains are just temporary. Ponder points out, "Even the 'Sheep-washing,' which dramatizes the forgiving nature of the river in a contemporary pastoral scene, the sonnet's topic and voice recall both Horace's ode and Dyer's *The Fleece* in its moralizing" (168-69). McReynolds notes that "Wordsworth saw and interpreted the Lake Country's shepherd folk as simple, unaffected people whose frankness and

innocence drew them close to the most fundamental principles of nature" (192-93). Significantly, as the poet commands the "Distant Mountains" to hear, he immediately "Hear[s]" and "repeat[s]." Commands to nonhumans are uttered in lines 1, 5, and 6. The poet's intention in this sonnet is to point out the benevolent, forgiving, and generous nature of the river.

In sonnet XXIV, "The Resting-Place," the poet found a place to rest; and he enjoys this "Nook--with woodbine hung and straggling weed." The adventurous poet has been on his journey along the Duddon bank for half of a day. It is unbearably hot at this time, past midnoon, and the meadow has no zephyr, the west wind, or clouds to cool it. The only solace from the heat is this nook that is covered with woodbine and straggling weed, a nook that encloses both body and mind. The poet feels that it is tempting for a pilgrim to take a recess here. Wordsworth thinks that resting at this nook will help him shake off his idleness.

There are two references in this sonnet; one is to the vagrant reed, which is a symbol of pastoral or rustic song. De Selincourt and Darbishire suggest that the reader should consult the following: "For the reed as symbol of pastoral or rustic song cf. 'the melancholius croon O' Robin's reed" (Burns, *Poor Mailie's Elegy*) and for the solace of the reed, Burns, *To William Simpson*, 'I kittle up my rustic reed, It gies me ease'" (523). There is also an echo of John Keats in line

10, in "Fancy, too industrious Elf." Line 10, according to De Selincourt, "is a subconscious reminiscence of Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale,' 8, " which reads, "The fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf" (523).

Fancy and Idleness are personified; Idleness is personified as a "loose" being who wears a "wily mask."

In sonnet XXV, the poet wants to have his beloved, "The One for whom my heart shall ever beat / With tenderest love," to be with him. This sonnet is an excellent example of an aching heart's desire to be with its beloved. The woman the poet is pining for is not identified in Wordsworth's notes, but one can assume that it was his wife, Mary, because in the initial pages of his notes where he explains about his visits to the Duddon, the poet recalls an incident in which he and his wife were separated on the banks of Duddon and how upset he was and how they were reunited (De Selincourt and Daebishire 3: 504-05). The poet misses her and confesses that without her "the waters seem to waste / Their local charm; their sparklings "cease to please" him. He wishes for some benevolent minister of air to lift this tender woman in a chair of clouds and bring her over to him to this dim retreat, or he thinks perhaps a safer alternate to this plan might be for the minister of air to place her between his soft wings to carry her over the hill and valley and bring her to him. The poet says he has walked through some rough roads, "too rough and long / For her companionship." The

rough roads that he traveled are a metaphor for his own life. Johnson sees this sonnet as "a tribute to his [Wordsworth's] wife." He also sees this poem as "one of the few love-sonnets" that Wordsworth ever wrote (137). In diction and imagery, sonnet XXV is indebted to earlier Italian and English love-sonnets, as Johnson suggests. The sonnet echoes "Sir Walter Raleigh's 'A Vision upon this conceit of the Faery Queene,' which begins, 'Me thought I saw the grave where Laura lay,' and Milton's sonnet XXIII, 'Me thought I saw my late espoused Saint'" (Johnson 138).

In sonnet XXVI, composed in 1803 or 1804, the poet defends his loving pursuit of streams. He credits them with having taught him "random cares and truant joys" that carried over into manhood with him, allowing him to overcome maturity's servility with his impetuous thoughts. Nature has been the young Wordsworth's teacher, keeping him from mischief and preserving him from evil deeds as an adolescent. The poet has pursued the not well-known streams through the "tangled woods" and "impending rocks." The boy Wordsworth watched the reservoirs "with water pure as morning" yet "fretful, boisterous, keen" and "Green as the salt-sea billows." The water looks white and green while flowing down the hills and sounds like a chorus. Following and appreciating nature were not a waste for the young Wordsworth because he gained wisdom and joy from these actions. Nature has kept the young boy in

line as he grew up worshipping it. Here, the poet's ethos of a good, moral, responsible person is filtering through his description of his relationship with nature. Nature had helped him grow up to be a responsible adult, not a vagrant individual, because it was a teacher as well as a friend to Wordsworth. This sonnet exemplifies Wordsworth's belief in the protective, purifying influence of nature. Additionally, water and its noise had been an inspiration to the poet's "Maturer Fancy." According to Johnson, sonnet XXVI, referred to as "Return, Content" because of its first two words, "is a revised version of 'Dear Native Brooks' . . . It celebrates the value of a lifetime's companionship with streams" (133). This sonnet starts with an apostrophe to Content as the poet commands Content to return, as contrasted with "Sad thoughts avaunt!" in the opening of sonnet XXIV. Similes are found in the comparisons of young Wordsworth's being "Free as air" and the water's reservoirs' being "Pure as morning" and "green as the salt-sea billows." In the sestet the poet details the benefits that pursuing streams had brought him "while men were growing out of boys."

Sonnet XXVII, composed probably between 1815 and 1819 and published in 1819, describes an "embattled House," probably referring to "a ruin at the head of Holehouse Ghyll, near a farmhouse called the Old Hall" (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 524). That house is all destroyed into a shapeless heap now, but one time it inhabited "the gay, the bountiful, the bold" until misery struck "like

the sweep / Of winds." Wordsworth sees the "embattled House" from Duddon's bank and recalls that it was the stronghold for warriors until they fled in terror from their enemies. Time has taken care of both the enemies and the castle, the seat of the Lord of Ulpha (George 892). Wordsworth states that "Time's unsparing hand / Hath plucked such foes, like weeds, from out the land." The poet hopes for peace now that the warriors have fled.

As in the two previous sonnets, the speaker portrays scenes from his imagination and memory. The poet recalls the elegance and beauty of that castle several hundreds of years ago, but now the castle is a shapeless heap of dust. He shows the huge contrast between the past and the present scene. He might be pondering the impermanence of man-made buildings and castles and the way man destroys man. Time, which is impartial and spares none, is personified .

In sonnet XXVIII, "Journey Renewed," the poet resumes his journey on the Duddon banks after his rest in sonnet XXIV. Wordsworth is thankful for his "leader," the Duddon, because the river's bank was a place for "Glad meetings and tender partings." People meet and greet each other and say farewell to one another on the river's banks. The poet sees a herd of cattle trying to stay away from the heat of the sun, "Crowded together under the rustling trees / Brushed by the current of the water-breeze." The Duddon's bank is a shelter for the

creatures that want to stay away from the sweltering heat. Taking advantage of the "coolness" of the river banks are "scaly tribes," such as snakes, lizards, and frightened turtles as well as "dancing insects." For all the good things that the Duddon and nature provide the human beings and other animals, the poet is grateful and appreciative. After being refreshed from the rest he had, the poet continues his journey. Wordsworth calls Duddon the Leader of the poet's "onward way," and he is simply the follower.

In sonnet XXIX, Wordsworth mentions that there are no records about the forgotten battles and men who died on the land by the Duddon. However, he thinks that the winds and the torrents could proclaim the contempt of the usurped power. In this sonnet the poet describes a burial ground of the Friends, a sect of the Quakers. Their sepulcher is located on the hillside near Seathwaite and "The Traveller's Rest" Inn. Inside the surrounding walls can be seen the stone seats used by the Friends, who worshipped under the roof of heaven (George 892-93). According to De Selincourt, the sepulcher is "about half a mile above Ulpha Bridge, on the east side of the Duddon, near New Close." There are no tombstones in that burial place (De Selincourt and Darbishire 524). The octave notes that no records exist to tell of who fought in battles, or who won the battle, or who suffered severe injuries. The sestet opens with the contrast word yet and shows that the passing winds pay tribute to the "loyal and the brave,"

who lie underground, "neglected and forlorn." The poet suggests that though the fellow human beings forget their heroes and the brave, Mother Earth does not. She gladly acknowledges and receives all of them with open arms. In this sonnet Wordsworth juxtaposes nature's generosity with human being's narrow-mindedness. He also ponders the question of mortality when looking at "the spiritual peace and power represented by the unassuming burial ground of the Quakers," according to Robertson (336) .

In sonnet XXX, the poet moralizes about friendship. As Ponder suggests, "He once more sees the landscape as an image to be used for a didactic analogy" (169). Wordsworth states that a person who "swerves from innocence" and loses his good name "Recovers not his loss." If a person breaks up with that "serene companion," a good name, he may never get it back and will walk with shame, / With doubt, with fear, and haply with remorse." Being estranged from a "chosen comrade" or "faithful friend" will also bring futile regrets. Also, a person who separates from a good friend or companion can never mend the harm done. Incidentally, this situation might refer to the collapse of Wordsworth's friendship with Coleridge. As Wordsworth leaves the Duddon banks to walk across the plain, he thinks aloud that since he and his companion, the River Duddon, have separated amicably, they will meet again with their friendship intact. In lines 1-8 the poet gives a situation that cannot be mended

and in lines 9-14 shows his temporary separation from the Duddon. In lines 11-12 the poet and the river take two different paths; but Wordsworth states in line 14 that "we, who part in love, shall meet again." The scene of sonnet XXX is just below the sepulcher described in sonnet XXIX where the Duddon plunges into the woods. "Rough copse" in line 11 is between the Sepulcher referred to in the previous sonnet and Ulpha Kirk (XXXI), a plantation known as Birks Wood (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 524).

In sonnet XXXI, Wordsworth describes the kirk of Ulpha and gives several images to show how a traveler welcomes this kirk. The kirk is as welcome as a star that peeks through a dark cloud in the sky or as a towering fruitful palm tree beside an Arab's tent or as an Indian tree (Bunyan tree) whose branches are bent downwards, growing roots again, forming a great canopy. All three excellent similes are used to demonstrate the relief a traveler would feel by being at the kirk of Ulpha. The last simile, as Ponder notes (169), "is reminiscent of Milton's similar image" in *Paradise Lost* Book XI:

The Figtree, not the kind for Fruit renown'd
But such as at this day to Indians known
In Malabar or Decan spreads her arms
Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
The bended Twigs take root, and Daughters grow. (1101-05)

Lines 10-11, "Than 'mid that wave-washed Church-yard to recline, / From pastoral graves extracting thoughts divine" echoes the poet's action in Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." Line 14 is on the soothing effect of the river. The image of the river is that of a lion with its roar; however, this river's roar is a gentle one, as shown in the oxymoron, "gentle roar." The poet enjoys his leisure and feels that it is sweet to have a rest amid that "wave-washed Church-yard" and to extract divine thoughts from the pastoral graves. He thinks it is great to pace and view the mountains in the moonlight, "Soothed by the unseen River's gentle roar." The majestic beauty of nature, which pervades this sonnet and the pastoral graves, inspires the poet.

In sonnet XXXII, Duddon is no longer just the little Duddon river. It is no more a pastoral river that flowed through precipices and lingered on flower beds and "blooming thickets"; instead it has grown in proportions, and it is spread out over smooth, flat sand now. It glides past towns and villages until it reaches the sea where it will sink "into powerless sleep" and forget its humble origins. Repetition of the word "steep" in line 1 stresses the past course of the river where it flowed through steep and deep precipices. Wordsworth ties together earlier views of Duddon in lines 1-4; the river is no longer flowing through hills or rocky places. The italicized word in line 6 "now" contrasts the Duddon's past course of movement with the present. Duddon is larger and more majestic now

than before, and the poet associates it with the sovereign Thames that flows under Kentish downs with commerce or triumphant war.

In sonnet XXXIII, entitled "Conclusion," the poet provides the ending of the Duddon's journey; and the narrative ends with the river's merging with the sea. He contrasts the Duddon to the Thames, but at the start of the sestet in line 9, he compares himself with the river. After all the tribulations that the river has gone through on its passage to the sea, its ultimate destination, it is now smooth and serene. The poet asks that he be allowed in his life to advance the same way, leaving the fruits of his labor scattered behind him as he is "Prepared, in peace of heart, in calm of mind / And soul, to mingle with Eternity!" Finally, he identifies his own journey of life with that of the Duddon. As the Duddon mingles with the ocean, the poet will one day mingle with eternity. He wishes to go as peacefully and serenely as the river does. Johnson brings up the suggestion about the link between the first sonnet and the concluding one. He says that in Wordsworth's "petitions for his verse in sonnet I and for his spirit in sonnet XXXIII, he asks that each be free like the river--free from preoccupations which muddy one's expression, free with the freedom of innocence. The repeated long e is apparently part of the freedom and purity of his verse" (142). As Johnson further suggests, the last two lines of sonnet XXXIII "are separated by commas into a succession of one, two, three, and four feet, respectively. Their arithmetic

expansion helps to express the poet's progress towards infinity" (139). Human mortality is the foremost thing in the poet's mind, especially his own end, his own mortality. The poet wants to be away from the worries, problems, and even the "sweets" of life. He wants to be like the river who has forsaken everything to mingle with the ocean, its final destination. The poet desires his soul to have serenity and peace of mind when it finally mingles with eternity. The river's merging in the sea in this sonnet "mirrors the Christian hope of dying into eternity" (Johnson 132). De Selincourt notes that "originally the octave of XXXII and the sestet of XXXIII formed one sonnet, the comparison to the Thames, with its far-fetched allusion to 'triumphant war' and 'cannon' being a not entirely appropriate afterthought" (524).

The final sonnet, "After-thought," was penned after the conclusion of the series, sonnet XXXIII. In this sonnet, Wordsworth emphasizes the idea that the form of the river remains, and its function will remain. He reflects on the life of the Duddon and philosophizes about his own works of art and artistic endeavors in general. In the first line of the sonnet, Wordsworth calls the Duddon his partner and his guide. Even though the Duddon has run its course and merged with the ocean, the poet realizes that the stream is there and will forever be there; therefore, he reminds himself not to feel any "vain sympathies" for the river because the actual physical form of the river is still there to help, to guide,

to teach, and to lead human beings even though it has merged with the ocean. The consolation follows from line 3 to the concluding line. The river remains, and its function never dies, whereas human beings, no matter how brave, strong, and wise, will vanish. Even the young people who defy the elements will perish, but the poet feels comfort and accepts his mortality stoically by saying, "be it so!" He will be content "if something from our hands have power / To live, and act, and serve the future hour." The poet's consolation is heard at the end of the sonnet in the lines: "And if, as toward the silent tomb we go, / Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower, / We feel that we are greater than we know." Though the river loses its identity by merging in the sea (McReynolds 199), the poet looks back at the stream and sees "What was, and is, and will abide; / The Form remains, the Function never dies." The river brings forth the idea of human mortality in the poet, which in the sestet he stoically accepts as his fate. "We Men, who in our morn of youth defiled / The elements, must vanish;--be it so!" The poet believes that an artistic creation can endure the test of time, and the power of eternity can make a mortal human being immortal. Man too passes away from this world; but his works remain behind, which works, in fact, will insure that he is greater than he knows. His works will last for posterity, which will learn from them and cherish them. As Ponder notes, the poet may be feeling superior to the river because even if the form of the river is

everlasting and an inspiration for the poets and artists, it cannot create a work of art just as a poet or artist can (171). In the end, a powerful work of art is all that matters for an artist because he will be remembered by succeeding generations for his creations.

This last sonnet of the series is like a foreshadowing and a summary of the poet's life and works. The poet's favorite juxtapositions of opposites, mortality versus immortality and human beings versus natural elements are also stressed in "After-thought." Also, the power of water--the life-giving, life-sustaining quality of water--is stressed in the whole series. Human beings live only through their works of art, whereas nature and water are everlasting. The main rhetorical strategy used in this sonnet is that in order to emphasize this sonnet written after the concluding sonnet of the series, the poet italicizes the whole sonnet. Wordsworth aptly ends his sonnet series *The River Duddon Sonnets* closely following Adam's words to Raphael about what he remembered after his own creation: his life in Paradise, his talk with God concerning companionship, his first meeting with Eve, and his discourse with the angel afterwards. Wordsworth's words "We feel that we are greater than we know" echo Milton's words in *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, line 282 "And feel that I am happier than I know." Wordsworth feels superior to the river because he believes that his works will endure and provide pleasure for his readers. The

river, again, is personified and identified with the poet who considers it as his "partner" and his "guide." Didacticism "is the concern of the 'After-Thought,'" as Johnson indicates (124). He further states that "The effect of the stately 'After-Thought,' which Wordsworth italicized to set it off from the sequence proper, is all the greater because it is the only sonnet of *The River Duddon* which is expressly written as an individual performance" (125). It emphasizes the moral nature of the stream as well as the poet's own works. The river's function to "heal and to restore, / to soothe and cleanse, not madden and pollute" (sonnet VIII) is again emphasized in this sonnet. Ponder states, "Perhaps recalling the functions of healing and restoring he had earlier identified in the river, he now enacts those functions himself, identifying the river as his 'partner' and 'guide' (XXXIV 1). The river's full possibility as a symbol is now fulfilled" (171).

"The beginning and end of the sequence associate the Duddon with the immemorial past and eternity," says Johnson (132). While man can never go back to the bliss of the Garden of Eden, he can be even better and greater by living with love, hope, and faith. Wordsworth comes to the realization in this climactic sonnet that it is man's creativity, his art as well as his moral and spiritual life, that will endure just as the healing power of the river will endure. No matter what goes on in this world, the stream glides on and "shall forever glide." Peter Larkin, in "Wordsworth's 'After-Sojourn': Revision and Unself-

Rivalry in the Later Poetry," calls attention to the river as an image of "an instituting power with which youth is connected. . . [and] as a passage from youth" (214).

Wordsworth's use of the rhetoric of imagination and pantheism is evident if we look closely at *The River Duddon Sonnets*. The poet uses landscape as a source to stimulate his imagination. Ponder suggests, "The sonnets portray not the landscape itself, but the workings of the poet's mind upon the landscape, and call attention to the speaker's voice as a poet" (165). The sonneteer, Wordsworth, knows that enduring art is created by imagination. The affinity between the river and the poetic imagination is established from the opening sonnet itself. The poet instructs nature "All hail" in sonnet I, line 10, and portrays the river as a baby in need of a poet to "chant its birth" in sonnet II, lines 6 and 7. In sonnet III he asks, "How shall I paint thee?" and hopes that his poem will become "a speaking monument." Even though the Duddon has the most humble origins because there is nothing noteworthy about its surroundings, the speaker invents "peculiar ground" for the river because he has seen the river's gleam around itself. The river can produce a radiance even when it is flowing through unworthy landscape.

While looking at the river, the poet imagines prehistoric time, "Thousands of years before the silent air / Was pierced by whizzing shaft of hunter keen!" as

seen in sonnet II, lines 13-14. Wordsworth wants to use the most effective poetic language to describe exactly how the river looks. In sonnet IV, a Protean change occurs in the physical shape of the river. The poet who literally tries to follow the river's flow is bewildered by the curves and changes that make the river appear to be like "a loosely-scattered chain." The growth of the poet's mind could be compared to the growth of the river child in that the poet's mind undergoes several changes and takes sharp turns like the river. Many changes are occurring in the imaginative and creative aspect of the poet's mind. In sonnet VIII, the poet's imagination is taking him to the first man who might have "roved or fled" to the Duddon to quench his thirst. At this juncture the poet believes that the "function" of the river is "to heal and to restore, / To soothe and cleanse, not madden and pollute" (ll.13-14). He thinks that healing is his function, too, as an artist, thereby establishing an affinity between himself and the river. In sonnet XI, the poet explores folkloric tradition to convey his ideas. He gives the story of tiny elves' dancing after stealing "some sweet Babe" and leaving a "coarse Weed" with which the grief-stricken mother could assuage her grief. The poet tries "to hear the faint sounds left hanging in the air of memory" (Ponder 167). Ponder further comments:

Having invented this story to explain the origin of the small marks
in the "sunless cleft" of a sky- blue stone above the river,

Wordsworth's speaker poet, like Pope, has adorned our mortal universe with new beings. The saunterer has left the river behind for the minutely realized literary world of folklore and English fairies. (167)

In sonnet XII, "Hints of Fancy," the speaker indicates that he has been toying with fancy all along. His imagination is stirred up, and he sees minute objects as emblematic images. The poet paints the river using extended similes and directs our attention away from the actual river and to the imaginary realm he has created. He imagines the Duddon's winds to be "loud as the gusts that lash / The matted forests of Ontario's shore / By wasteful steel unsmitten." He compares himself to a mariner's turning into a port to escape the storm as seen in sonnet XIII. In sonnet XV he tries to explain how the gloomy niche was formed beside the river. He uses the natural landscape to evoke his imagination. By looking at the niche, the poet imagines it as a place where a statue might once have stood or the cave itself as a sculpture of "mortals . . . weary slaves / Of slow endeavour!"

In sonnet XVIII, "Seathwaite Chapel," the speaker uses allegory; he calls religion "Mother of Love." He calls the Reverend Robert Walker "Gospel Teacher" and compares him to the parson in Chaucer, Herbert, and Goldsmith. In sonnet XIX a tributary stream is united with Duddon. The poet uses the

analogy of associating the river with a man who is extremely happy about the arrival of something that he has wished for all along. The "murmur musical" of the voice of the river is a boon to the thirsty fields.

"In the remaining sonnets," Ponder suggests, "the speaker continues to respond to the Duddon landscape with his imagination, his literary eye, and his memory" (168). The poet is amazed with the serenity of the river. He thinks that his famous predecessor poets could have "beautified Elysium" with Duddon's peaceful flow. However, he says that this tranquillity will be broken when the river gets aggressive and dances like a wild Bacchanal dancer. In sonnet XXI, the poet depicts how his imagination has stimulated the memories of the past as in

From her unworthy seat, the cloudy stall
Of Time, breaks forth triumphant Memory;
Her glistening tresses bound, yet light and free
As golden locks of birch, that rise and fall
On gales that breathe too gently to recall
Aught of the fading year's inclemency!

In sonnet XXII the poet introduces a sentimental narrative and sets it in mythological time. Even in "Sheep-Washing," the next sonnet, which dramatically places the river in a pastoral scene, the theme and voice use

literary ancestors, such as Horace and Dyer in its moralizing (Ponder 169). The fancy as "too industrious Elf " in sonnet XXIV recalls the idea that the poet's fancy is working overtime.

In sonnets XXV, XXVI, XXVII, and XXIX, the speaker creates scenes using his imagination and memory. In sonnet XXX the poet uses the landscape to moralize again. In sonnet XXXI, the poet's rich imagination uses various similes to portray the Ulpha church. In the concluding three sonnets, the poet describes the Duddon's journey from the landscape of "flower-enamelled lands / And blooming thickets" to its "radiant progress toward the Deep." Ponder notes, "Comparing the Duddon's 'stately mien' to 'sovereign Thames,' the poet evokes the Thames portrayed by Pope in 'Windsor Forest.' Unlike Pope's martial setting, however, Wordsworth's Duddon is lowly and peaceful" (169-70). At this stage, it is obvious that the poet identifies himself with the river that is serene and calm. After all the trials and tribulations that the poet has undergone in his life, he is ready to be free from this world; and he wants his soul to mingle with eternity just like the river that has peacefully mingled with the ocean. Thus, the river becomes a symbol for the poet's own life as well as for all humanity.

Wordsworth's pantheism is evident all through *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Pantheism is defined as " a philosophic-religious attitude which finds the spirit of God manifest in all things and which holds that whereas all things

speak the glory of God it is equally true that the glory of God is made up of all things" (Holman and Harmon 335-36). Pantheists believed that nature is a manifestation of God. In *The River Duddon Sonnets* Wordsworth attributes life and feelings to everything in nature. He personifies the Duddon River all the way through the series. Initially, the Duddon is the child of the clouds with decks as its cradle and frost as its handmaid in sonnet II, foster child of mother earth in sonnet III, "cradled Nursling of the mountain" dressed in "garb of snow-white foam" in sonnet IV, later described as the "undaunted Rill." In sonnet IX, the Duddon is "the struggling Rill"; in sonnet XIII, the Duddon is angry; in sonnet XIX, it is lordly; in sonnet XX, it is a dancer; in sonnet XXIII, it is the forgiving river; in XXVIII, it is the leader; in sonnet XXX, the river is pleasant; in sonnet XXXI, it is the gentle river; and in sonnet XXXII, it is the majestic Duddon. The words "thy," "thou," and "thee" that carry biblical overtones are frequently used to describe the Duddon river, perhaps to glorify it.

Almost everything in nature is personified in the hands of Wordsworth. Forest is mighty; moss is brilliant; breeze is playing; trees are social; bees are robbers; eyebright is trembling; thyme and other flowers are peeping; rose is breathing and beholding; the bird from "its wiry cage" is throwing darts of song; and the blue streamlet is murmuring. Whistling blast is a poet; snow white foam is a garment; "both air and earth are mute"; the winds are bleak; the niche is

gloomy; the earth is kind and patient are personifications. Swift stream is chiding; sunbeams are quivering; flocks are timorous; the rose is smiling; and the primrose is lonely. These are some examples of the numerous personifications in *The River Duddon Sonnets*.

The didacticism of the speaker-poet often filters through the sonnet series. The poet's ethos, permeating the sonnets, will be further explored in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Wordsworth's Ethos in *The River Duddon Sonnets*

William Wordsworth had a multi-dimensional ethos and philosophic mind. It was characteristic of Wordsworth to be all inclusive as is evident in his application of Pantheism, Platonism, Christianity, paganism, and Empiricism in his poems. In *The River Duddon Sonnets* he employs all these philosophies. In fact, all the theories that he utilizes in his works bring out his ethos as a well-educated man speaking to his readers.

The Greek word *ethos*, one of the three artistic proofs of persuasion, means "character." The character or personality or reputation of an artist has been a major concern of art and criticism for centuries dating back to Plato and Aristotle. In Plato's *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* the character of Socrates as a sensible, sincere, and honest man was emphasized to promote the persuasive objective of the discourse. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* states that "the character of the speaker is a cause of persuasion when the speech is so uttered as to make him worthy of belief. . . . We might also affirm that his character is the most potent of all means of persuasion" (chapter 1. 2). Ethos, as *The Longman's Dictionary of Poetic Terms* says, is "a term used by Aristotle (*Rhetoric* II, xii-xiv) and adopted by many later writers to refer to one or more of the following applications:

- (1) the moral stature of a major character in a piece of literature as described by his actions rather than by his thought or emotion . . .
- (2) the characteristic spirit, principles, and beliefs of a people or community . . . (3) the principles of aesthetics and rhetoric of the ancient world--e.g., the Platonic distinction between reality and appearance. (105)

Aristotle identified the constituent elements of ethos as being intelligence, character, and good will. His interest in ethos was concerned only with the immediate rhetorical situation and not with the orator's actions outside of the speech presentation. Sharon Crowley in *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* recapitulates Aristotle's "ethical requirements" for a rhetor as follows:

Rhetors can construct characters that seem intelligent by demonstrating that they are well informed about the issues that they discuss. They project an appearance of good moral character by describing themselves or others as moral persons and by refraining from the use of misleading or fallacious arguments. Rhetors project good will toward an audience by presenting the information and arguments that audiences require in order to understand the rhetorical situation. (89)

The ancient Romans, however, broadened ethical proof or ethos to include the image of the speaker's life as a whole (Golden, Bergquist, and Coleman 58-59).

A rhetor's moral character was closely aligned with his ability to persuade, and the effect of the artist's character or the ethos or the ethical character upon his work became an invaluable feature of classical rhetoric. As John F. Schell notes in "Prose Prefaces and Romantic Poets: Insinuation and Ethos," "It became so standard that it colors much of Cicero's oratorical theory, which, in turn, influences Quintillian" (88). In Book XII of the *Institutio Oratorio*, Quintillian formulates the qualifications for a perfect orator. According to Quintillian, an orator must be a good man first, and he must be skilled in speaking. He believed strongly in the concept that "no man can be an orator unless he is a good man." James Golden, Goodwin Berquist, and William Coleman notes, "Quintillian, like Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, stressed the importance of knowledge as an essential requisite of the orator" (59).

Trained in the classic, Wordsworth realized the significance of having knowledge in order to communicate effectively. The poet's rhetorical sense and multi-faceted ethos surface in his writings. Wordsworth's ethos as a philosopher is evident in his writings. As Arthur Beatty states, "Wordsworth is primarily a philosophical poet; and in his own mind this is what he consistently was" (130). Wordsworth was concerned with the problem of the development of the human mind. The poet believed in the doctrine of Nature and Man; he believed that nature was the best teacher. From nature Wordsworth got his inspiration, and he worshipped nature. Norman Lacey, in *Wordsworth's View of Nature and Its*

Ethical Consequences, restates the poet's leading ideas on nature as follows:

"The universe is interfused throughout by an eternal creative spirit. It is a spirit of love which he sometimes speaks of as God, but more frequently as nature.

The physical universe is the pure signature of the Creator--the forms of nature are 'types and symbols of eternity' " (73). In *The River Duddon Sonnets* too, the poet is exhilarated by nature, and the joy he feels in nature gives him the power to love fellow human beings.

Another facet of Wordsworth's ethos is evident in his Pantheism that is present in *The River Duddon Sonnets*. The Greek word *pan* means "all," and *theos* means "deity." The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines Pantheism as "the religious belief or philosophical theory that God and the universe are identical (implying a denial of the personality and transcendence of God) ; the doctrine that God is everything and everything is God." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines Pantheism as "a doctrine that the universe conceived of as a whole is God; the doctrine that there is no God but the combined forces and laws that are manifest in the existing universe." Nature was the Romantics' center; it was their organizing principle. In "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth proclaims his pantheistic philosophy as follows:

And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime:

Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things. (93-102)

Wordsworth had felt a presence in nature that inspired him to be creative.

Nature permeates almost all of his poems; and nature is seen throughout *The River Duddon Sonnets*, starting from the river's obscure origins to its mingling with the ocean, a symbol of eternity. The Duddon River itself is a presence that inspired this English poet to sing its praises. The hills, the valleys, the mountains, the breeze, the crystal clear water, the trees, the birds, and the flowers stimulate the poet's imagination and awaken his creativity. In all these natural objects the poet sees the omnipresence of a divine spirit. By worshipping nature, the poet is worshipping the divine, present in all "thinking things" and "all objects of all thought" ("Tintern Abbey" l.101). When the poet describes the river and its surroundings, he is in awe of the beauty and grandeur of nature.

Wordsworth's use of Platonism, another side of his ethos, is also strong in *The River Duddon Sonnets*. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines

Platonism as "the philosophy of Plato, especially insofar as it asserts ideal forms as an absolute and eternal reality of which the phenomena of the world are an imperfect and transitory reflection." The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines Platonism as a philosophy that has "intense concern for the quality of human life--always ethical, often religious, and sometimes political, based on a belief in unchanging and eternal realities, independent of the changing things of the world perceived by the senses" (539). Sonnet XVIII, entitled "Seathwaite Chapel," is a good example of Platonic ideas, even though the poet is describing a Christian chapel and the Christian minister, the Reverend Robert Walker. Religion is referred to as sacred, and the poet's Platonism comes out through the phrase, "mother of form and fear." Immortality of the soul and the perfection of the human soul are emphasized in sonnets XXIII and XXXIV.

Wordsworth's feelings about Christian faith are reflected in several sonnets. Sonnet XIX is a good example of the poet's concept about Christian hope. Hope is like the manna from heaven as described in the Old Testament. Without hope, one cannot proceed in life as a Christian. The concept of the after-life and the human soul's journey to eternity are Christian concepts. The last two lines in sonnet XXXIV, "Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower, / We feel that we are greater than we know," emphasize the Christian concept one last time in *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Hope, faith, and love, three fundamentals of Christian doctrine, I Corinthians 13:13, are stressed

in the Duddon series.

Besides the Christian doctrine, Wordsworth turns to pagan mythology for conveying his theme. Like Milton, Wordsworth was fond of using both pagan and Christian allusions. Wordsworth's usage of various classical allusions in *The River Duddon Sonnets* shows how knowledgeable he was in that area. Beginning with references to Blandusia and the Sabine Bard in sonnet I and moving on to references to Goddess Fortune in sonnet III, Proteus in sonnet IV, Cupid in sonnet X, Elves in sonnet XI, Muse in sonnet XII, Jove and Mars in sonnet XVII, Elysium and Bacchanal dancers in sonnet XX, and Diana's looking glass in sonnet XXII, the poet demonstrates his knowledge of Roman and Greek mythology.

Presages of evolution are present in some of *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Sonnet VIII foreshadows evolution in its description of the primitive man. The poet points out the "first of his tribe," who came to this "dark dell" to quench his thirst. The description of the "Deluge" in sonnet XV may be a reference to evolution. The "deep chasm" is perhaps an allusion to the cave man. Also, it is reminiscent of Coleridge's archetypal "deep romantic chasm" in "Kubla Khan," line 11. Sonnet XVII mentions the "departed ages," "Druids," and "Deep into patient Earth," all possible references to past sweeps of time and change. Wordsworth's use of the vocabulary of changes that occurred in the past shows his anticipation of creative and Darwinian evolutions. Later on, *In Memoriam*,

Tennyson pictures the creative evolution which values the higher types of life.

In addition to the poet's ethos as an intelligent and learned man demonstrated throughout, his ethos as a loyal and loving husband and a good friend emerges in sonnets XXV and sonnet XXX. In the autobiographical allusion in sonnet XXV, the poet refers to his beloved, who is not with him but whom he desires to have with him. His notes to *The River Duddon Sonnets* suggest that this unnamed woman is his wife, Mary. The separation from his wife is not easy for the poet. He feels that even the water and the sparklings "cease to please" him. In sonnet XXX, the poet moralizes about friendship. As Melinda Ponder suggests, "he once more sees the landscape as an image to be used for a didactic analogy" (169). The poet and the river may momentarily split company, but that does not mean that the poet will abandon his childhood friend, the streams. They will meet again and renew their friendship.

Wordsworth's ethos as an Englishman is seen in the creation of *The River Duddon Sonnets* series itself. His intention is to sing the praise of the native stream, Duddon, not a foreign river. Although the Duddon is an obscure river, the poet believes that through his verse, "a speaking monument," he could make its "features known." The poet is proud to "paint" the river because it is "pure, vigorous, and bright." The poet's pride in being an Englishman is reemphasized by his accurate description of the small hamlet and the fields in sonnet XIII. The splendid description of the "flower-enamelled lands / And

blooming thickets," "Majestic Duddon," and the "sovereign Thames" shows how much Wordsworth appreciated the beauty of his motherland.

The poet's ethos as an intelligent and knowledgeable writer filters through every sonnet of *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Ponder notes, "Wordsworth's persona in sonnets is a poet much like Coleridge's ideal poet. He wants to create 'verse' which will immortalize the Duddon river through the power of his poetic language and imagination" (164). Wordsworth, the poet, knows that art which lasts for generations is created through imagination. As Ponder further points out, "In the course of the speaker's quest for artistic means of bestowing immortality, he pays homage to Horace, Denham, Dyer, Coleridge, [William] Simpson, and Keats, giving the strongest tribute to Milton, the poet praised by Coleridge for his power of imagination" (164). In the following analysis these allusions and others will be specifically discussed.

Wordsworth was a master of allusions. As Edwin Stein in Wordsworth's *Art of Allusion* remarks, "Wordsworth's poetry incorporated the English poetic tradition to a greater degree and in more ways than that of any poet before him" (vii). He further contends that Wordsworth would have agreed with Northrop Frye's remark "that literature is necessarily allusive, 'not externally or incidentally. . . but substantially and integrally so,' but as a practising poet he was deeply committed to using the literature of the past in the making of new poems" (1). Stein studies 280 pieces that represent almost two-thirds of the

60,000-plus lines of the complete poetical works of Wordsworth and compiles a list of 150 writers that Wordsworth may have borrowed from, paralleled, reflected, or alluded to in his writings (9). Stein notes that Milton was echoed 550 times out of the grand total of 1300; Shakespearean echo was found 100 times; Gray, 50 times, Spenser and the Bible, 40 times, Thompson and Coleridge, 35; and Percy's ballads and other collections of ballads 25, (10).

The River Duddon Sonnets has several literary allusions. Lee M. Johnson counts at least five echoes or direct allusions to Milton in the sonnet sequence. The phrase "calm of mind" in sonnet XXXIII is from the last line of *Samson Agonistes*. The other four allusions are from *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, before Adam is brought into the garden of Eden. Three echoes of Milton are from the first thirty-three lines of Adam's speech: Milton's "and gaz'd a while the ample sky" (l. 258) in Wordsworth becomes "beneath an ampler sky" ; Milton's "liquid Lapse of murmuring stream" (l. 163) is "thridding with sinuous lapse" of sonnet IV and "the liquid lapse serene" of sonnet XX (*Paradise Lost*, Book III: 247, 254). The fourth allusion to Milton is found in the final line of *The River Duddon Sonnets*, "We feel that we are greater than we know" is adapted from *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, line 282, "And feel that I am happier than I know." Wordsworth's own notes to *The River Duddon Sonnets* explain a multitude of allusions that he has used in the series. He uses classical, contemporary, and autobiographical allusions in the Duddon sonnets. In the first sonnet itself, the

poet alludes to the Sabine Bard and Blandusia. As Stewart C. Wilcox notes, the first sonnet alludes to Coleridge's description of the wild torrents in "Hymn before Sun-Rise, In the Vale of Chamouni." John Denham's "Cooper's Hill" is alluded to in the last two lines of the first sonnet: "Pure flow the verse, pure, vigorous, free, and bright, / For Duddon, long-loved Duddon, is my theme!" A combination of the Miltonic phrase is used to form the "sinuous lapse" in sonnet IV. Lines 10-11 of sonnet VI are taken from the "The Beauties of Spring, a Juvenile Poem" by the Reverend Joseph Sympson.

Besides using Christian allusions, Wordsworth also uses pagan allusions in *The River Duddon Sonnets*, as Milton combines both in *Paradise Lost*. In Sonnet VII, Wordsworth uses Nymphs from Greek mythology. The poet effectively utilizes the allusion of the Nymph as he describes the mind of the young man who longs for Laura's love. In sonnet VIII, the poet imagines the prehistoric man who came to the Duddon to quench his thirst. The river is a silent witness to everything that went on on its banks and beyond. Only through imagination can one find the answers for all the puzzling questions that the poet brings forth because the river is silent. The poet, however, is consoled in the idea that the river is there "To soothe and cleanse, not madden and pollute!" As Ponder suggests, "the speaker arrives at an understanding of the 'function' of the river, an important concept in view of the kinship he has already established between the river and his own poetic imagination" (166). The poet identifies with

the river and its moral role, for he believes that his function is also similar to the river's. Here the poet's ethos as a good, moral character comes out through his feelings about his own moral role.

The classical allusion in sonnet X to Cupid, the Greek love god, is appropriate because of the context of that sonnet. However, Wordsworth pluralizes Cupid probably to show how strong the couple's love is since more than one Cupid has been "working" on them. In sonnet XI the poet again relies on classical mythology to tell his story. He gives the story of elves stealing a baby. Since the poet is knowledgeable about classical mythology, he looks for inspiration there. The poet's imagination makes him think that the elves are real, and he actually looks for some vestige of clues left behind by them. In Sonnet XII, the poet describes the lingering Muse and the loitering Muse. Although the poet proclaims that he is going to sing the praises of a native stream, he gets out of England for a moment when he mentions Niagra and the Alpine passes. In the phrase "toys of fancy," the poet refers to Coleridge's "toy of Thought" from "Frost at Midnight," line 23. In sonnet XII, the poet shows the anger of the river. So far the river was portrayed as a beneficent, kind, and great entity; but this sonnet shows the other side, the two faces of nature. In "Elegiac Stanzas," Wordsworth shows the harsher side of nature, and Tennyson in poem # 56 of *In Memoriam* speaks of "Nature, red in tooth and claw / With ravine, shrieked against his creed." This idea of the two faces of nature perhaps

suggests Wordsworth's ambivalence towards nature and perhaps presages evolution.

Sonnets XV, XVI, and XVII show the poet's ethos as a historian. Sonnet XV provides possible scenarios that would explain the origins of the gloomy niche beside the river. The last line of the sonnet is a direct allusion to the Biblical Deluge of Noah's time. The poet uses the myth of Oroonoko in sonnet XVI. Wordsworth's source for Oroonoko is *Humboldt's Personal Narrative*, according to De Selincourt and Darbishire (507). Sonnet XVII portrays the "imperial Bird of Rome" that evokes ancient history. The poet alludes to the paganism and rituals of the ancients in line 11 when he says that the "Guardians bent the knee to Jove and Mars." He mentions the Druids too in this sonnet. The poet's ethos as an educated man is seen in the allusions present in sonnet XVIII, entitled "Seathwaite Chapel." Wordsworth alludes to Chaucer, Herbert, and Goldsmith to portray this simple, Christian minister, Walker. The Reverend Walker is a "worthy compeer of the country parson of Chaucer " (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 510).

The poet introduces mythological figures in sonnet XX. Wordsworth's ethos as a knowledgeable, educated man surfaces again in this sonnet as he mentions Elysium and Bacchanal dancers. The change in the calm demeanor of the river is stressed by the comparison with the Bacchanal dancers who are revelers that toss their thyrsus. In sonnet XXII, entitled "Tradition," the

poet turns to mythology again to narrate his story about a "Love-Lorn Maid."

The two classical allusions used in this sonnet are to Diana and Echo.

According to Roman mythology, Diana is the goddess of chastity, hunting, and the moon. In Greek mythology, Echo is a "nymph whose unrequited love for Narcissus caused her to pine away until nothing but her voice remained" (*American Heritage Dictionary*).

The poet's ethos as a benevolent, generous, and forgiving man is emphasized by his identification with the river. In sonnet XXIII, "Sheep-washing," the poet's mood changes. In an apostrophe in line one, he orders his "sad thoughts" to leave; for he wishes to join in the happiness of the sheep washers. The poet sympathizes with the river, for all the sheepwashing that stains the pure water of the Duddon. Again, Wordsworth believes that the river forgives all those wrongs. As Ponder points out, "even in the 'Sheep-Washing,' "which dramatizes the forgiving nature of the river in a contemporary scene, the sonnet's topic and voice recall both Horace's Ode and Dyer's *The Fleece* in its moralizing" (169). There are two allusions in sonnet XXIV. The first is to the vagrant reed, a symbol of pastoral or rustic song as seen in Burns' *Poor Mailie's Elegy* and *To William Simpson* (De Selincourt and Darbishire 3: 523). Wordsworth is also the pastoral piper. The second allusion is to Keats' Ode to a Nightingale, lines 73-74:

. . . the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.

Line 10 of sonnet XXIV, "Fancy, too industrious Elf" is reminiscent of the above lines from Keats. De Selincourt and Darbishire note that "Keats's *Ode* was published in the *Annals of the Fine Arts* in July 1819, a magazine of which Haydon was the inspiring genius. Haydon has doubtless sent Wordsworth a copy" (523). The editors further add that "in a letter to Haydon dated Jan. 16, 1820, W [ordsworth] asks after Keats, a youth of great promise" (523).

The poet's Empiricism comes to the forefront in every sonnet of *The River Duddon Sonnets* series. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines Empiricism as "the view that experience, esp[ecially] of the senses, is the only source of knowledge." Empiricism goes back to the eighteenth-century philosopher, John Locke who held that the mind at birth is like a *tabula rasa* or blank slate on which impressions are engraved as a person matures. These are sensory impressions, and so senses are the ultimate source of all ideas. Romantics believed in nature emitting atoms that enter the sense organs and that influence the Romantics to create. They were influenced by Lockian philosophy of Empiricism that emphasized sensory perceptions. In *The Philosophic Mind: A Study of Wordsworth's Poetry and Thought 1797-1805*, Alan Grob states that Wordsworth believed in the "Lockian premise that knowledge originates largely in sense-experience" (6). He adds that nature is not just a "fixed and potent force that anchors the human spirit to the world. . . . "nature and the language

of the sense" undergo metamorphosis into a far more humanized form as 'the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart.'" As Grob further suggests,

Wordsworth's development has succeeded as well as it has because the order of nature, in a way that is personal and intimate, has made him the object of its solicitous regard. It has tutored and protected him, reached out to him "With gentlest visitation" (*Prelude*, I, 367) and "Severer interventions" (*Prelude*, I, 370). It has led him into temptation, whether it be the attractions of an unattended boat or the enticements of a virgin grove of hazels, so that it might unloose its corrective powers and thereby foster in him a just regard for the property of man and of nature. (26)

Wordsworth's Empiricism can be traced in almost all his writings, especially in *Tintern Abbey*, *Nutting*, *The Tables Turned*, and *The Prelude*. In *The River Duddon Sonnets*, too, the poet's Empiricism is in full force. As a child, Wordsworth has benefited greatly from the streams. They have taught him to be a good, moral, and responsible adult. As an adolescent boy, Wordsworth pursued the streams and appreciated the beauty of Nature rather than succumbing to impetuous thoughts, a descending topicism. The ethos of the poet is evident in this sonnet in his dependence on the stream to keep him in the right path. Johnson points out that this sonnet which begins, "Return, Content" is a modification of Wordsworth's own "Dear Native Brooks," written in or by

1804 (138). The remake of "Dear Native Brooks" shows the poet's intertextuality in relying on his other works to help him with the new ones.

In sonnet XXXIII, the poet wants to be free from the worries or problems of life. Like the Duddon River, he wants to join the other world, forsaking all worldly problems as well as all the good things of this world. He wants to have that serenity and peace of mind that come with the human soul's departure to eternity. As noted above, the poet's ethos as a Christian emerges in this sonnet in his undying hope of living into eternity.

In sonnet XXXIV, entitled "After-thought," the poet feels that his function as an artist is closely akin to the river's function, that is, "to heal and to restore, / to soothe and cleanse, not madden and pollute." Ponder states, "Perhaps recalling the functions of healing and restoring he had earlier identified in the river, he now enacts those functions himself, identifying the river as his 'partner' and 'guide'" (XXXIV 1). The river's full possibility as a symbol is now fulfilled" (171). Just as the river, the poet's soul may go to eternity, but his artistic creations are here to stay, to help, to guide, to teach, and to lead future generations. It is man's creativity that has the enduring quality and not the physical form of human beings. The poet actually takes over the role of a spokesman for the whole of humanity, especially for poets and artists, when he says, "We feel that we are greater than we know." The dichotomous notion of feeling and knowing is important in that the poet strongly feels that poets and

artists are greater than the others because their works will endure for generations. The Romantic stance on "feeling" is also a facet of Wordsworth's ethos.

Wordsworth's use of the echo tradition in *The River Duddon Sonnets* shows his knowledge in that area strengthens his ethos as a knowledge. As Geoffrey Hartman states in "Words, Wish, Worth: Wordsworth," "Poetry is echo humanized, a responsive movement represented . . . in schematic form" (195). Stein notes in *Wordsworth's Art of Allusion* that "the function of echo as a link between poesis and divine harmony was vestigial by the eighteenth century, and the once popular Ovidian image of Echo as Narcissus's deprived counterpart has faded away almost completely; but echo as the voice of sympathetic lamenting in nature has grown stronger" (45-46). Wordsworth uses the tragic story of Echo from classical mythology to narrate the incident of the "Love-lorn" maiden in sonnet XXII of *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Ponder states, "throughout the sonnets, the speaker describes his walk along the river as a recovery of its sounds as he constructs visual images from the associations these sounds suggest to his imagination and so preserves them for future generations" (173). In sonnet V, lines 2-3, the poet describes himself as the "Sole listener" who "caught the fitful sound / Wafted o'er sullen moss and craggy mound." In sonnet VIII, lines 9 and 11, the poet listens but hears nothing except the low murmurs of the river. In sonnet XI, lines 10-11, the poet listens and

looks for a clue of "the vestige notes / That ruled those dances wild." In sonnet XV, the poet describes the deep chasm that is found in the river as evidence of the "visual echo" that is left over by the Deluge of Noah's time. In sonnet XVII, the poet describes the dark raven that "invokes / Departed ages, shedding where he flew / Loose fragments of wild wailing, that bestrew / The clouds and thrill the chambers of the rocks." Caves and chambers of the rocks are traditionally considered as the abode of Echo (Hollander 8). In sonnet XVII, lines 12-14, as Ponder notes, Wordsworth "gives the idea of echo a visual shape with an image which also describes the movement of a sound from its source, as he describes "that mystic Round of Druid frame / tardily sinking by its proper weight / Deep into patient Earth, from whose smooth breast it came" (173). In sonnet XXI which starts with the line "Whence that low voice?", the poet listens to hear the whisper from his heart and sees a scene that has been stored in his memory. Ponder comments, "He realizes that by listening to the echoes from the past in the river, his imagination has released 'triumphant Memory' from 'the cloudy stall / Of Time'" (173). In the next sonnet, as mentioned before, the poet relates the story of the maiden and hints at the mythological Echo that "doth reverberate some sweet sound." In sonnet XXIII, lines 5-6, the poet commands the mountains to "hear, / Hear and repeat." As Ponder states, Wordsworth "creates his own echo by repeating his own word 'hear' which emphasizes the importance of the 'ear'" (174). Ponder continues, "Describing the Duddon as 'the

pastoral River' (11), the speaker himself echoes the pastoral convention in which the echo pattern is used extensively as a structural and thematic device" (174). In sonnet XXXII, the poet hears the Duddon "Gliding in silence" as it enters the ocean. The poet echoes other poets, such as John Denham and Alexander Pope, who described rivers in "Cooper's Hill" and "Windsor Forest," respectively. Sonnet XXXIV, entitled "After-thought," is "a kind of revisionary echo of his earlier thoughts," as Ponder points out (174).

In "After-thought" the poet creates a shape for the sound he has heard that will resound into the future. He creates "a narrative present," as Neil Hertz says in "Wordsworth and the Tears of Adam" (20-21). Ponder notes that Wordsworth suggests that, "it is the speaker's voice which can preserve and interpret the past, and in echoing and so enabling us to hear Milton anew, construct a literary 'Form,' whose echoes will reach into the future as we go 'toward the silent tomb'" (174). The poet's knowledge of the folkloric tradition is used to enhance his Duddon sonnets. He uses the myth of American Indians from *Humboldt's Travels* in sonnet XVI and admires the native inhabitants for their knowledge of the "great water." In sonnet XXII, "Tradition," the poet looks into folklore for the story of the "Love-lorn" maiden who came to the "hidden pool" and succumbed to a tragic end.

Thus Wordsworth through his knowledge, education, allusions, echoes, folklore, and rhetorical strategies offers a sonnet sequence that projects his

multi-faceted ethos. The poet's strong ethos as an intelligent and good man is a rhetorical strategy in *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Wordsworth utilizes his knowledge and reading in creating *The River Duddon Sonnets* that will be valued by future generations, the main objective of the poet in singing the praise of the not very-well known native stream, the Duddon. His ethos and skill are all-important because the river is unknown, but Wordsworth's reputation as a poet extraordinaire gives meaning to it.

CHAPTER V

Wordsworth's Merits as a Sonneteer

Wordsworth's rhetorical prowess was much debated after his death in 1850. Many modern literary critics, however, are exploring Wordsworth's classical education and finding out that he did indeed know classical rhetoric. John R. Nabholz' survey of the major Romantic poets and their education shows that Wordsworth was very well trained in the classical tradition (119-20). Wordsworth uses many allusions to classical writers in his works, especially in *The Prelude*, in *Convention of Cintra*, and in *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Duncan Wu shows how widely read Wordsworth was and how he utilized his knowledge of rhetoric in his works. Recently scholars have written books, articles, and dissertations about Wordsworth's rhetorical capabilities in *The Prelude*, in *Convention of Cintra*, and in "Tintern Abbey," but no one has explored the techniques the poet used in creating *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Thus, this study has focused on the rhetorical strategies that Wordsworth used in *The River Duddon Sonnets* in the hope that readers would not condemn all of Wordsworth's late poems without closely looking into them and would not classify *The River Duddon Sonnets* as just topographical poetry. Chapter I of this study refers to the various comments and opinions of noted critics and students of Wordsworth who think that there was a conspicuous decline in the

poet's powers in his late poems.

A rhetorical examination of *The River Duddon Sonnets* shows how conscious the poet was about his artistry. The additions, deletions, and changes in his manuscripts as documented in Ernest De Selincourt and Darbishire's footnotes on *The River Duddon Sonnets* demonstrate the poet's rhetorical efforts to improve his creation. *The Prelude*, as many modern scholars point out, was worked, reworked, and edited to the poet's satisfaction until his death.

Such careful revision of his own poetry might perhaps remove grounds for condemning the poet for his early definition of poetry as "a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquillity." Many have taken that very dictum of creativity at face value. True, poetry begins in feeling, but it is hard work consisting of both labor and artistry to express those feelings, as Wordsworth himself noted in adding to his famous description of poetry modifying the statement that a poet must also think "long and deeply" (*Wordsworth's Prefaces and Essays* 6). Wordsworth knew that creating poems was an arduous task which needed the skill of an artist. Some detractors of the poet comment, however, that the powerful inspiration that the poet had in early years dwindled and that in his later years he produced only minor and inferior poems. An examination of *The River Duddon Sonnets* proves otherwise. His inspiration was still there; he received inspiration from the landscape, the rivers,

and the wind. With careful artistry he brought that inspiration to fruition when he produced the thirty-four River Duddon sonnets.

Wordsworth, who had written excellent sonnets in his early years, considered the sonnet form his favorite medium in the latter part of his life. The sonnet was a challenge to the veteran craftsman and artist. The fourteen lines gave him the inherent structure that he needed in a genre. The sonnet itself is inherently rhetorical, and this form gave the poet an avenue for his artistic abilities. As Robert M. Bender and Charles L. Squier remark, in their introduction to *The Sonnet: A Comprehensive Anthology of British and American Sonnets from the Renaissance to the Present*, the sonnet is "a kind of structural framework *within which* the poet writes. Length imposes obvious restrictions on content; it is not always possible to write expansively within so short a space" (2). Emma Bolenius notes in *Wordsworth as a Sonneteer* that the poet "allowed himself the greatest latitude in handling the sonnet form" (4). Wordsworth's theories about the sonnet structure are expressed in his letters to friends, in his prefaces, and in several of his sonnets, which this study details in chapter I. In 1803 Wordsworth wrote to Rev. Alexander Dyce, who was compiling an anthology of sonnets to be dedicated to the poet,

Now it has struck me that this [the obliteration of the pause in Milton's sonnet] is not done merely to gratify the ear by variety and

freedom of sound, but also to aid in giving that pervading sense of intense unity in which the excellence of the sonnet has always seemed to me to exist. Instead of looking at this composition as a piece of architecture making a whole out of three parts, I have been much in the habit of preferring the image of an orbicular body, a sphere, or a dew-drop. (Knight, *Wordsworth's Poetical Works* 11: 231)

In a letter to Sir Henry Taylor, Wordsworth stated his objection to the double rhymes in the closing couplets as weak (Knight, *Wordsworth's Poetical Works* 11:258). On January 26, 1836, Henry Crabb Robinson wrote in his *Diary* that Wordsworth did not believe in a full-stop, or a turn of thought in the sestet, or a closing couplet or epigram (Bolenius 5). In five of Wordsworth's sonnets, the poet expresses his own opinion about the sonnet. In the Dedication to the *Miscellaneous Sonnets* of 1827, he speaks of the compactness of the sonnet as an advantage to show the thought it carries. According to Bolenius, Wordsworth has written the "greatest panygeric of the sonnet in the language" when he composed "Scorn Not the Sonnet" (Bolenius 7).

Carl Woodring notes, "Wordsworth reacted to the plight of the sonnet like a knight to the distress of a high born maiden"(156). He further states that during 1802 Wordsworth wrote at least 18 sonnets, "nearly all of them excellent"

(156). In "Milton! Thou Shouldst Be Living at This Hour," written in 1802, the poet wishes for Milton's return to the English people to provide them "manners, virtue, freedom, and power." Wordsworth compares Milton's soul to a star and says that Milton's voice was "majestic and free." Geoffrey Durrant in *William Wordsworth* notes that the above sonnet "is a good example of this grandly rhetorical and public manner. Wordsworth addresses Milton with some solemnity, and speaks on behalf of England, declaring that the English collectively are 'selfish men'" (149).

In "Westminster Bridge," a sonnet also written in 1802, the poet "records a moment of vision in which Wordsworth once is able to achieve a satisfactory ordering of the complexities of the city. This is made possible by the silence of the morning and by the poet's freedom from involvement in the labyrinths of the town" (154), according to Durrant. From far away, the city is seen not as a place with a myriad of houses but as a complex place with some kind of an order. The poet's imagination is stirred, and the first three lines show the poet's imagination as he views the scene. The lines that follow demonstrate that his imagination is now fully awake:

This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie

Open unto the fields, and to the sky;

All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

In the above often-quoted lines, the poet personifies the city that wears the beauty of the morning "like a garment." The "Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples" are "All bright and glittering in the smokeless air" as they form the garment which the city as an organic living thing wears. This image shows the multi-faceted appearance of the city. The beauty of the city as described in this sonnet is only one of its many sides. The word "now" indicates the present as opposed to the past history of the city or "now" means before the city awakens (early morning). The last two lines of the sonnet, "Dear God! The very houses seem asleep; / And all that mighty heart is lying still!" give two different sides of the scene. The city, as a "mighty heart," is the center from which all the activities flow throughout the nation. It is also a collection of individuals and individual dwelling places.

"The World Is Too Much with Us" is a sonnet published in 1807 in which Wordsworth reminds his readers to look closely at nature and be attuned to it. The poet laments that "we are out of tune; / It moves us not." In this also he uses classical allusions to Proteus and Triton, two sea-gods and personifications such as the "Sea that bears her bosom" and "sleeping flowers." "Surprised by Joy," published in 1815, records the poet's grief for the loss of his daughter

Catherine. The sonnet, as Durrant says, "begins with a movement of joy and surprise, reflected in the rapid acceleration in the first line and in the first half of the second line, followed by a sudden stop, and with the sense of emptiness evoked by the echoing 'Oh! with whom'" (150). The poet, however, consoles himself with the thought that "the lost child is now in 'That spot which no vicissitude can find'" (150). In other words, the child is in a peaceful abode now. But the poet feels guilty about forgetting his child "Even for the least division of an hour." As Durrant notes, "the light stresses and the delicately placed fricatives enact for the reader the passing of minute fractions of time" (151). The sense of the present time that brought forth the memory of his child contrasts with the changelessness of her state of being dead. The poet sadly realizes that the loss of his child is forever, and "neither present time, nor years unborn" can bring her back to life. This sad and powerful sonnet sounds, as Durrant notes, "like a knell" (151) with the aid of open vowels and rhymes.

Not only did Wordsworth produce some excellent sonnets, as seen above, in his earlier years, but he also wrote some excellent ones in his later years too. After successfully completing *The River Duddon Sonnets*, the poet did not give up writing sonnet sequences, as evidenced in the publication of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* in 1821. As noted in chapter II of this study, Wordsworth alludes to the Duddon River in the first sonnet of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. As

Anne L. Rylstone notes, "the introductory sonnet serves five interrelated functions that guide the reader to a viable approach to the series" (17). The five functions of the first sonnet, as pointed out by Rylstone, are as follows:

Sonnet I.1 places the series in the context of the poet's other work.

Sonnet I.1 also introduces the Holy River as the central structural metaphor; it articulates the ostensible historical purpose of the series, while providing evidence of a more profound religious one; it establishes a dynamic interaction among poet, text, and reader; and it prefigures the structure of the series. (17-18)

The ethos of the poet in the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* is an important aspect of that series which warrants further investigation and study.

Mutability is a theme that Wordsworth uses in *The River Duddon Sonnets* and continues in the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. In fact, the thirty-fourth sonnet in Part three of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* deals specifically with the mutability theme. The much anthologized "Mutability" sonnet, as Durrant notes, "deals with the power of time as it is experienced historically, in its effects on ideas and institutions" (151). The poet compares the process of change to music and describes a scale, or graph, of growth and decay. The word "dissolution" is used for the growth as well as decay as noted in the first two lines, climbing "From low to high" and sinking "from high to low." As Durrant notes, "the life

of an institution or an idea, even when mounting to the height of its maturity, is climbing the scale of growth and dissolution, and moving towards its end. This scale of growth provides by an analogy with music a harmony to be heard only by the philosophical listener" (152). As Anne L. Rylstone in *Prophetic Memory in Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Sonnets* remarks, "the well-known sonnet III.34, 'Mutability,' merges sound and nature as manifestations of time." She further states that "the changes over time are but notes of a scale, whose harmony prevails for those who can hear it" (104). The outward forms of Truth melt like frost, and the "tower sublime" in the fallen world is so impermanent that it is easily destroyed by "Some casual shout that broke the silent air" or by "the unimaginable touch of Time." The tower with its "crown of weeds" presents, as Durrant suggests, "an ironical picture of an institution which proudly displays the signs of its antiquity, while its apparently solid structure is being steadily broken apart by the new life forcing its way through the cracks and joints of the stone" (153). The seemingly powerless weeds have the strength to collapse the tower by dislocating the stones that hold it together. Although the "casual shout" seems to be the cause of the collapse of the tower, there are other hidden causes that would bring the ruin of the tower. Again, as Durrant notes, "The sonnet expresses throughout, but especially in the last lines, the idea of time as operating in mysteriously hidden ways, so that man can never fully understand

the past, or foretell the future with confidence or with absolute despair" (153). In the concluding line of the sonnet, Time is personified, and the poet gives the idea that with its touch Time drops the sublime ruin of a tower to the ground. This, according to Rylstone, "challenges the reader first to perceive time as a measurable reality and also as a construct of the imagination and then to unite both in a coherent vision" (104).

The sonnet "Mutability" makes use of imagery as well as rhythm and sound to express ideas. Durrant says that "The echoing phrase 'And is no more' which overflows from the octave into the first line of the sestet, imposes a pause as though of wonder at the silent vanishing of the frost " (153). An abrupt contrast follows with the dropping of the tower. In the last line a series of light stresses and short vowels is used to provide a smooth reading.

The introductory sonnet of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* suggests to the reader to pay attention to "two of the poet's other works that share the central structural metaphor of tracing the course of a river, *The River Duddon Sonnets* (1820) and *Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty* (1815)," as noted by Rylstone (4). But the precursor of the Holy River is seen in *The Prelude*. *The Prelude*, *The River Duddon Sonnets*, *Poems Dedicated to Independence and Liberty*, and the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* are all linked by central river images. As Rylstone remarks, "the river serves as a vital source of

information that not only stores, but also imposes a coherence on human experience. The river is also a correlative to the presence of eternity, wisdom, and grace of God in the natural world" (5). Kenneth McLean in "The Water Symbol in *The Prelude* (1805-06)" deals with water images throughout *The Prelude*. He believes that water is a symbol in *The Prelude* in the sense of recurrent and central metaphor. Water, according to McLean, is a provider of images for the mind and its powers, for the imagination, and for poetry (372-89). The progressive use of water imagery is found in *The Prelude* from the crossing of the Alps passage (Book VI) to the Snowdon passage and conclusion (Book XIII). Rylstone notes that the "Snowdon passage prepares the reader for the images of the Holy River in the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* by directly merging water imagery with the concept of the divine" (7).

The poet's conscious and deliberate attempt in cross-referencing and self-referencing was a rhetorical technique that he used to have interrelation and unity for his works. As Rylstone remarks, "these ongoing efforts at some point require the discriminating reader to juxtapose the individual work with the larger Wordsworthian context. . . . This contextual approach . . . nurtures a comprehensive understanding and an appreciation of the uncanonized works, as well as offering fresh perspectives on familiar ones" (5).

Wordsworth was certainly aware of the sonnet tradition and probably

wanted to rank among the great sonneteers like Milton, whose sonnets had inspired him over the years. Lee M. Johnson notes that Wordsworth's sonnets are "the work of a mature artist and in their craft show him to be extraordinarily mindful of traditions" (171). A good sonnet sequence should uphold its unity as a sequence while each sonnet is a single poem in its own right. *The River Duddon Sonnets* has this quality; Wordsworth himself claimed the whole series was "one poem." The Duddon sonnets have a beginning, a middle, and an end; the series has an exposition, a climax, and a denouement.

As with many poets and artists, Wordsworth grappled with the question of the artist's power and creativity. Wordsworth's genius and his classical education influenced him to create an argument within the lyric frame. His knowledge of the classical tradition ensured him the much needed base in arranging an argument. He knew the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes and the way they arranged their speeches. Like the classical rhetoricians, Wordsworth also uses parts of an oration in setting forth an argument, as noted in chapter II of this study. In *Wordsworth and the Artist's Vision*, Alec King remarks that "in art the genuine creator is not just a gifted being, but a man who has succeeded in arranging, for their appointed end, a complex of activities, of which the work of art is the outcome" (28). This statement can definitely be applied to Wordsworth, who was not only a genius but also a master craftsman who tried to perfect his art.

To Wordsworth, nature is not just something that is out there; it is a source of inspiration. River Duddon is not just a native river; to him, it is a symbol of longevity and everlastingness. Nature is a mentor, a friend, a guide, a teacher to him at various levels of his development as he proclaimed in various poems of his, such as "Tintern Abbey," "The Tables Turned," and *The Prelude*. Wordsworth sees the divine in the presence of nature, something powerful, something eternal. As the poet's imagination and creativity flow, so does the river.

An understanding of the later poems, especially *The River Duddon Sonnets*, would help eliminate some of the misconceptions among some readers that Wordsworth's imagination failed drastically after 1805. The poet's imagination is rekindled in his later sonnets, and it is a grave injustice to believe otherwise and to proclaim that Wordsworth should be remembered and valued only for his earlier poems. Various critics from the nineteenth century on gave Wordsworth credit for producing some great sonnets. Matthew Arnold in his essay on "Wordsworth" recognized Wordsworth's ability to create many excellent sonnets and placed sixty of the poet's sonnets in his list of the best poems by Wordsworth (*Essays in Criticism* 2nd series).

The influence of Wordsworth was profound in nineteenth-century literature. Shelley, a major Romantic poet and Arnold and Tennyson, two important Victorian poets, were influenced by Wordsworth's writings.

Wordsworth's influence on Shelley could be found in the latter poet's use of nature, especially his usage of stars and flowers. Shelley was also attracted to the Platonic ideas that Wordsworth was interested in. Perhaps Shelley might have been influenced by Wordsworth's line, "Form remains, function never dies," from *The River Duddon Sonnets* when composing his line "The One remains, the many change and pass" in *Adonais*, line 460. Matthew Arnold, who knew Wordsworth from his childhood, was greatly influenced by the elder poet. As William A. Jamison says, "Arnold felt a strong personal attachment for Wordsworth. In his youth he had seen the legendary author of the *Lyrical Ballads* and had returned to the same countryside from which Wordsworth had drawn his strength" (31). Arnold admits in "Wordsworth" that

It is not for nothing that one has been brought up in the veneration of a man so truly worthy of homage; that one has seen him and heard him, lived in his neighborhood, and been familiar with his country. No Wordsworthian has a tenderer affection for this pure and sage master than I, or is less really offended by defects.

(118-19)

Arnold lists Wordsworth, Goethe, Sainte-Beuve, and Newman as the four most influential people in his life. He adds further that he has "learnt habits, methods, ruling ideas which are constantly with me" (*Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold* 65-66). Arnold's "Strayed Reveller" and "Empedocles on Etna" have

some affinity with sonnet XXIV of *The River Duddon Sonnets*. Both of Arnold's poems describe a nook as Wordsworth's does. When Wordsworth died, Arnold wrote the "Memorial Verses" as a tribute to him. Arnold was also influenced by Wordsworth's doctrine of nature, man, and human life. Another major Victorian poet influenced by Wordsworth was Tennyson. In sonnet XXXIV of *The River Duddon Sonnets*, as Durrant says, "Wordsworth prefigures the Victorian mode. Although Tennyson could not have achieved the strength and firmness of this sonnet, the general pattern of the thought, the sentiment, and the verse could not be out of place in his work. A comparison of this sonnet with his *Ulysses*, for example, will indicate the close affinity" (158). The dichotomy of darkness and light is another image that both Wordsworth and Tennyson favor. The influence of Wordsworth on the above mentioned poets merits further investigation.

The nature of Wordsworth's genius and artistry in his *River Duddon Sonnets* reveals his great sense of the form and function of the sonnet genre and his awareness of rhetoric as a way to impart effective communication. As Johnson notes, "the quality, quantity, and range of Wordsworth's best sonnets argue that he is easily the principal English sonneteer after the Renaissance, ranking him with those whom he called 'my great masters, especially Milton'" (173). Indeed, Wordsworth's sonnets earned him the merits of a great sonneteer, and he must be ranked with the master sonneteers, such as Spenser,

Sidney, Shakespeare, and Milton. As in Milton's hand, in Wordsworth's hand, too, the sonnet became a trumpet.

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