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Wordsworth's 'Spots of Time' and The Use of 'Chiaroscuro' in Constable: A Study in Aesthetic Parallelism

R. K. RAVAL

Various are the ways in which parallels of aesthetic and thematic nature, acting as analogues of an essentially poetic vision of nature, find their finest expression in the poetry and painting of Wordsworth and Constable. The 'Spots of Time' in Wordsworth is one such analogue that has its correspondence in the 'Chiaroscuro' found so very conspicuous in Constable. The present undertaking is an attempt to show (i) the way in which the poet and the painter succeed in effectively bringing out these corresponding constituents in their respective art forms, and (ii) the vital aesthetic links that relate them (the constituents) together, where possible.

In order to grasp in full what the 'Spots of Time' passages are doing in Wordsworth or in what relation do they stand to 'Chiaroscuro' in Constable, it would be pertinent to read Wordsworth as the poet of memory, for, it is as part of memory, of events associated with a particular landscape from the early life of the poet that such 'spots' acquire an importance in his mature poetry. Wordsworth, through imaginative recapitulation of the days of childhood and early youth, recalls some of the finest memories of the time with an intensity of feeling that revivifies the past almost as a living presence. Indeed,

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it would not be an exaggeration to say that memory itself becomes a form of poetry in him bridging the gulf between a specific experience of the past and its present recollection. Memory is an powerful a factor with Wordsworth that while on a general level 'each man' for him 'is a memory to himself' (*The Prelude*, III, 189), on a more personal level, 'The thought of our past years', in him, 'doth breed/ Perpetual benediction' (*Immortality Ode*, 11. 133-4). Memory, like a preserved letter from the past tucked away in some deep recess of the mind, acts in Wordsworth as the only tender thread that connects his present being with a past event. As a poet of Nature, his link with the past is established by evoking the memory of such landscapes as were emotionally associated with certain events of his early life, That is why such events or experiences of the past that he loves to refer to as those 'first affections' and 'shadowy recollections'

'Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing',

that

'Uphold us, cherish. and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence',

as

'Truths that wake,
To perish never'

and

'Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy !'

— (*Immortality Ode*, 11. 151-60).

The evnts, by being perpetuated in his mind, acquire a significance beyond the mere sensuous as they are recalled, one after another, in his later life. Acting as it does as a powerful mode of imagination, memory is treated by Wordsworth as a restorative power that, while relating the man to his past, also unites his inward self with the outward subject. As Salvesen observes, "Memory has an all-pervading quality which cannot help being sensuous—it pervades the five senses, blending inner and outer; it pervades the sense of time, blending past and present; it unites the physical sense to the sense of temporal flux," [1]

This conception of memory as an active mode of imaginative faculty capable of influencing the growth of a man's personality is a great advance from the days of Hobbes for whom imagination was nothing more than a 'decaying sense', while memory acted as a means to express such decay as signified the fading power of the senses. What, on the contrary, happens in Wordsworth is a unification of the present self with an experience of the past, such experience being retained in the mind as a deep-seated seedling of memory. His real strength as a poet of remembered landscape is evident in his great spiritual autobiography, '*The Prelude*', It is flooded with memories of such episodes from his past which, when imaginatively recalled, serve as important milestones in the development of the poet's self.. It is owing to imagination that he comes to ensnrine them in 'The *Prelude*' as continuous process of evolution from the past to the present. Genuine memory begins to flow in when rememberable experiences are recalled in terms of emotions 'recollected in tranquillity'.

And since memory is the storehouse of impressions derived from physical as well as emotional events of the past, a sense of bodily continuity, along with that of the psychic, is felt throughout his retrospective poems. If physical distance lends charm to the view, temporal distance enables the poet. in moments of recollection, to revive both the scene of event and the event itself, long absence of the poet from the scene of original visit having made his heart grow fonder for them. We may notice here how, in the words of Salvesen, "any natural object once 'impressed'. in memory remained there, for Wordsworth, as a presence — it continued to exist both as idea and as things Remembered landscape no less than remembered event contributed to revived emotion. The visible world, taken up into the mind; retained, in the mind, its physical essence."[2] And despite his strong attachment in early life to the delights offered by the world of senses as he indulged in the 'fits of vulgar joy' or 'coarser pleasures' of his boyish days, nature still spoke to him of 'Remem-berable things'. Some of these pleasures, though products of 'collisions and quaint accidents' at times, were

> .... yet not vain
> Nor profitless, if haply they impress'd
> Collateral objects and appearances,
> Albeit lifeless then, and doom'd to sleep
> Until maturer seasons call'd them forth
> To impregnate and to elevate the mind',[3]

the 'maturer seasons' being the inspired moments of recollection. And even if the feeling of vulgar joy were to wear itself out of memory

> 'The scenes which were a witness of that joy
> Remained, in their substantial lineaments
> Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
> Were visible, a daily sight'.
>
> ——— (*The Prelude*, I, 627-30)

These very scenes, so beautiful and majestic in themselves, through the passage of time, become 'habitually dear' as they get associated with our deepest feelings in a manner most imperceptible, their 'subtantial lineaments' (hues and forms) being retained in the mind by 'the impressive discipline of fear' or 'repeated happiness', or the 'force of obscure feelings'.

Memory, by reviving such 'rememberable things' in later, maturer seasons of the poet's life, not only elevates his mind, but also fills it with

> 'Invigorating thoughts from former years,
> ... whose power
> May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
> To honorable toil'.
>
> ——— (*Ibid.*, 11. 649 and 651-53)

Talking about the power of memory to invest our remotest childhood days with a visionary gleam in moments of retrospection, he says how

> "These recollected hours ... have the charm
> Of visionary things, and lovely forms
> And sweet sensations that throw back our life
> A visible scene, on which the sun is shining "
>
> ——— (*Ibid.*, 11. 659-63).

At least the one result of such positive workings of memory can be discerned in the revived power of his mind to 'bring down/Through later years, the story of my life'. Equipped with such memories alone, a theme self-contained in itself, Wordsworth now prepares himself to unfold his autobiography with confidence saying, 'The road lies plain before me'. It is memories of this sort — of things rememberable and episodes not easily forgotten — that by indelibly impressing themselves on the poet's mind get recalled in years of maturity as 'spots of time'.

While '*The Prelude*' is replete with innumerable 'spots of time' from the past life of the poet, I should like to focus my attention on the two famous ones, viz., the gibbet scene and the 'waiting for the horses' episode narrated in Book XI of the poem. It is in the long extract beginning with 'There are in our existence spots of time' (l. 258 to l. 389) that we find Wordsworth giving expression to his quintessential views about the role of such memorable events as beneficent influence in his life.

The significant thing that draws our attention here is the interest that Wordsworth evinces in the selective power of memories in reviving only certain 'spots of time which, by virtue of their ability to lift us up when fallen and depressed, acquire a place of preeminence in our life by their restorative quality. While such moments worthy of our gratitude, though scattered throughout our life, can be found in all their conspicuity in the period of our childhood, the efficacy of their restorative power can be felt only among those passages of life in which the imaginative faculty or 'the mind/Is lord and master, and that outward sense/Is but the obedient servant of her will'.[4] Wordsworth here proceeds to cite the two examples from his childhood days to bring home the importance of such episodes in his development as the poet of imaginative insights into the workings of nature. These episodes, as he further states, however common in themselves at the time of their actual occurrence. assume importance in the course of life as memory comes to clothe them with a new light. That is why in the gibbet scene, the images of the naked pool, the beacon, and the girl, though offering the eyes 'an ordinary sight', come to be invested with the 'visionary dreariness' that 'should need/Colours and words that are unknown to man'. What Wordsworth here wants is to evoke that poetic sensiblity with the help of which one could paint and present such common things in an unusual aspect.

This is at once confirmed when then the poet, on revisiting the 'very scene' after many a year 'in the blessed time of early love', finds all its old objects like the pool, the crag, and the beacon endowed with 'The spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam'.[5] This gleam is further strengthened by 'radiance more divine' emanating from the very 'remembrances' previously associated with the spot and 'from the power/They left behind', the earlier feeling thus reinforcing the new one.

All this seems to be so very parodoxical to Kroeber that he observes, "One would not expect 'dreariness', even of a visionary kind, to increase radiance",[6] But, if looked at from the viewpoint of Wordsworth's own faith

in the power of the visionary gleam that once made 'The earth, and every common sight', as it were 'Apparelled in celestial light', the paradox presented by Kroeber seems to be resolved, for, even as the child moves towards becoming a youth — and that is what the poet already is while revisiting the gloomy spot in the time of early love — who, though 'daily farther from the east/Must travel, is still 'Nature's Priest,/And by the vision splendid/Is on his way attended' (*Immortability ode*, 11. 71-74). The rest of the work is accomplished by the magic power of youthful love that turns even the most gloomy sight into something radiantly beautiful, especially when one is accompanied, as is the poet here, by one's lady-love.

Breaking off at this point from the main line of his narration, Wordsworth tells us how man's greatness is finally based on the experiences of childhood, if only he has been able to contribute something of his own to them. Remembrances of experiences arising out of the very dawn (infancy) of life flood around him as the recognizes in them the sources or 'hiding places' of his visionary power, However, the access to the secret sources of his creative powers as a poet, once open to him, now seems to close upon him as he tries to approach the sources. He can experience them now only in glimpses, and as old age approaches, he fears, he 'May scarcely see at all'. And therefore. before the time runs out he feels it imperative to preserve and recreate such experiences in words by imparting to them 'A substance and a life', so that he may be able to 'enshrine the spirit of the past/For future restoration' (11. 342-3).

The second episode connected with the account of waiting for the horses that were to take Wordsworth and his brothers back home for the Christmas holidays and with the subsequent news about the death of their father, carries value in so far as the poet, in later life, could look back upon the episode, and all other elements associated with it such as the solitary sheep, 'the one blasted tree/The bleak music of that old stone wall/The noise of wood and water' (11. 378-80), the mist enveloping the two roads, etc. , as 'spectacles and sounds to which/I often would repair and thence would drink,/As at a fountain' (11, 383-5). So strong is the impact of this experince on his subconscious mind that he still feels 'in this later time' his power of visionary gleam being revived, not as in the earlier episode, by a revisit to the place concerned, but through association with the occurrence of another similar experience 'when storm and rain/Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day/When I am in the woods (11.386-77).

Only then, unknown to him, he feels how 'The workings of my spirit thence are brought' (l. 389). This is how, by drinking at the fountain of such 'remembera-ble' experiences, that Wordsworth can, even now in 1805, revive and strengthen his imaginative powers that can restore him in times to come.

In both these episodes the element of aesthetic import that at once engages our attention is the way the selective power of memory, by acting as part of the poet's individual history, takes him back to those scenes of early association that, while fulfiling some of his 'dearest landscape longings', require on his part to capture their transience in images of enduring existence. And what Wordsworth is able to achieve through memory, Constable succeeds in achieving through the practice of chiaroscuro. Looking upon chiaroscuro as the source of one of the most efficient principles in art, Constable defines its function as that of marking 'the influence of light and shadow upon Landscape, not only in its general effect on the whole, and as a means of rendering a proper emphasis on the "parts", in Painting, but also to show its use and power as a medium of expression, so as to note "the day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade".'.[7]

So acute is Constable's sense of the moment or hour of the day or season at the time of composing a landscape that he records each one of them in terms such as 'morning breeze', 'summer afternoon', 'sunset', 'windy noon', 'morning after a stormy night', etc., as can be seen from the 'List of the Engravings' mentioned in his 'Letterpress' to *'Enlish Landscape'*. Even major paintings like *'The Hay Wain'* and *'The Cornfield'* originally carried titles like *'Landscape: Noon'* and *'Harvest Noon: A Lane Scene'*, showing the artist's concern for the particular hour. This is what makes his landscapes representations of specific places embodying certain precise moments from the flying course of time, chiaroscuro helping him to capture such moments on the canvas in terms of light and shade. Little wonder therefore that the place in Constable, as in Wordsworth, becomes the projection of the self out in space enshrining the memory of an hour in the form of chiaroscuro. Chiaroscuro thus, acting as the conveyor of emotions representing the inner season of the artist's psyche. and as the recorder of a specific 'spot of time' representing the external season in nature, occupies a very central place in the landscape art of Constable. As Beckett observes, "*Chiaroscuro* could be used to register not only the place where the emotion and been felt, but also the season and the time of day ....."[8]

Again, according to Constable's own declaration, as the subjects of his landscapes were derived from real scenes, the effects of light and shadow revealed

in them were regarded by him as 'transcripts only of such as occurred at the time of being taken'.[9] However, the general effect produced by his great paintings is something so very much akin to Wordsworth's evocation of the 'visionary gleam' that, instead of appearing as mere transcripts of actual scenes, they seem to put on a new dress as coloured by the combined effect of his poetic vision and chiaroscuro, "Capable as this aid of 'Light and shadow' is", to put it in his own words, "of varying the aspect of everything it touches."[10] Finding in no other department of painting the need for its 'first attractive quality' or 'general effect' so much as in the landscape art, Constable came to look opon the latter as the one branch of art which, owing to the very nature of its subject, enables the artist to make his work efficient by applying the principles of colour and chiaroscuro with a greater confidence. "The Artist", he says, "..... ought, indeed, tohave powerful organs of expression entirely at his command, that he may use them in every possible from, as well as ... with the most freedom; therefore, whether he wishes to make the subject of a joyous, solemn or meditative character, by flinging over it the cheetful aspect which the sun bestows, by a proper disposition of shade, or by the appearances that beautify its rising or its setting, a true 'General Effect' should never be lost sight of by him throughout the production of his work, as the sentiment he intends to convey will be wholly influenced by it."[11]

Light and shadow being the two elements nature that, in the famous words of Benjamin West uttered to Constable, 'never stand still', it indeed became a challenging task for Constable to capture their transience on a permanent basis in his art, The important question therefore is: 'How does Constable come to fix in his art the flux of nature's evanescent elemnts ?' Perhaps an answer to this query may be found in what Constable thought of the art of painting, the advice he gave to the young aspirants of art, and his conception of Nature.Regarding painting as a science that should be pursued as an inquiry into the laws of nature, his knowledge of such laws as he could gather from his close observation various phenomena of nature as artist led him to consider chiaroscuro as embodying the relationship of a kinetic nature between the concrete forms of nature and her more energetic forces such as light, shade, and wind that affect the former. It was therefore as an artist who combined poetic sentiment and natural vision into one, that Constable found it imperative to establish this relationship of a most subtle nature on a firmer basis in his art. This he was able to achive in a most exquisite manner by raising the impalpability of such transient forces to a level

of substantiality capable of suffusing the material forms with the bloom and vigour of a new life. Secondly, by putting his own advice into practice as to how any aspiring painter, if he wanted to carve out a name for himself, should not only study nature patiently and laboriously, but more importantly, should suggest 'something more than an outward resemblance of his subject', that Constable found it necessary to render in his own art such elusive forces that represented this 'something more' than what could be offered merely by the outwardly observed front of nature. "Only in this way", as Beckett puts it so very succinctly, "When the observed effect had been recalled on canvas, could the artist hope to make the spectator seem to hear the sound of water dripping from the wheel of a watermill, or feel the wind on his face as the clouds chased one another over Hampstead Heath."[12] Finally, his faith in nature as the altar of God or a 'Living Presence' to which he came, like Wordsworth, to pay his tribute in full humility for its variegated gifts of beauty, also led him, like the poet, to build up the being that we are', by 'deeply drinking-in thus enabling him, once again, to reveal in a flash the fleeting in nature in terms of permanance.

Chiaroscuro being the only means left open to a painter to record the lvanescent in nature, it became, in the words of Kroeber, very 'vital to great landscape painting ..... wherein the full emotional power of light emerges".[13] However, in landscape poetry which by nature is a 'temporal and sequential' art, light has to be presented metaphorically. And yet, a landscape poem too can reveal nature's metability in an enduring manner by recording passing atmospheric or terrestrial impressions in the form of an abiding aesthetic image. Personal history in landscape poetry thus becomes equivalento chairoscuro in painting, for, 'A Wordsworthian landscape is inseparable from the history of the poet's mind'.[14] Some of the best poems concerning landscapes of memory deal with such moments or episodes from Wordsworth's life as otherwise would be lost into the limbo of oblivion, but for his saving them as significant psychic monuments from the ravages of time. This living sense of the past in respect of the childhood episodes is what makes Wordsworth turn them into 'spots of time' to be enshrined for 'future restoration'. He comes to see them now as repositories of joy and wisdom that lead him to perceive the child as' Father of the Man'. All such episodes therefore would be of no significance unless retained in the mind called back to life through the recollective consciousness of the poet, as this alone can enable him to link the present with the past, the father with the child.

As Kroeber so very illuminatingly puts it, "Much of his best verse concerns unimportant incidents which become significant when, subsequently, Wordsworth perceives them to have been decisive to his maturation. Without the poet's self consciousness the events would remain trivial. Even a spectacular scene, such as the view from Snowdon, would be superficially sensational, .. were it not means through which the poet becomes aware of enhancement of his imaginative power. Here history in the mode of a reflexive conciousness enters into poetic landscape as a genuine equivalent of the painter's chiaroscuro."[15]

The importance and validity of chiaroscuro as the very soul and medium of art in Constable can further be realised if we can see the effective use to which he put it. Chiaroscuro comes to his aid by contributing to the effect of arrested indistinctness by lessening the sharpness and clarity of physical details. This is so because, like Wordsworth, he came to view his subject not necessarily as an object in a given landscape to be perceived keenly by the physical eye alone—though such perception formed the very basis of a larger vision in both—but as a psychic image to be grasped by the inward eye. Such image, owing to its very nature, can never achieve the kind and degree of clarity commonly associated with the physical perception. It is bound to be pictorally blurred being the result of imagination's raid on the visible. This is where one may notice in Constable that while every possible care is taken to paint each portion of a picture in detail and nothing is neglected, [16] there still remains a sense of 'unfinished perfection' as can be evinced from the final versions of '*The Leaping Horse*' and other paintings such as the '*The Cenotaph*', '*The Valley Farm*', '*The Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds*', etc., not excluding even '*The Hay Wain*', painted with such loving care. All this sounds very much analogous to Wordsworth who, likewise, is unable 'to paint' the dreariness of the stony moor because of its visionary quality, or to paint what he was or what nature meant to him when he first went among the hills and woods 'a few miles above Tintern Abbey', precisely because, now in 1798, with his imagination in full command of his mind, he has 'learned to look on nature, not as in the hour/Of thoughtless youth'.

Coming back to Constable we can see how in his 'Cathedral', he sacrificed finish for the sake of freshness in order to make his escape 'in the evanescence of the chiaroscuro'. Kroeber, commenting on '*The Hay Wain*', says that though 'nothing is slighted' or 'out of focus' in the picture, it is still devoid of that

'microscopic accuracy' that we usually find in a Van Eyck landscape, when seen in a magnified form. Says he, "Equal magnification of a background segment of *The Hay Wain* reveals bluriness. Constable's concern for each portion of his picture is care that details of light and shadow contribute to the effect of the picture as a chiaroscuro totality." [17] However, while one may have no quarrel with Kroeber's statement that Constable meant by the term chiaroscuro 'something slightly different from its conventional signification in his own day', it is difficult to agree with his conclusion when he says, "The distinction can be indicated roughly by saying that Constable emphasizes the 'light' half of the fusion." [18] To lend support to his concluding remark Kroeber further states how the importance attached to the quality of light by Constable is evidenced not only throughout Leslie's '*Life of Canstable*', but more especially in Leslie's notes taken from the artist's lectures. This indeed is a bit difficult to swallow, for the general impression, despite what Kroeber has to say, that emerges from our reading of Leslie's '*Life of Constable*' as well as from Constable's own various references to chiaroscuro in the 'Letterpress' to the prints of his '*English Landscape*' and his lectures on the history of landscape painting, appers to be one of a nearly equal emphasis that he seems to lay on both 'light and Shadow' as the two most 'powerful organs' of expression in painting. As already noted earlier, Constable considers the influence of chiaroscuro (light and shade) as very vital in creating general effect in landscape and 'as a means of rendering a proper emphasis on the "parts"; while he shows at the same time its importance as a medium of expression to note 'the sunshine *and the shade*' (Italics mine). Perhaps it would be better to suggest that Constable went on varying his emphasis on the light or the shadowy half of his pictures according to the hour of the day he came to paint them at, 'the effects of light and shadow being transcripts only of such as occurred at the time of being taken'.[19]

A look at some of his paintings would bear enough testimony to what I have been trying to suggest. While pictures like the '*Flatford Mill, on the River Stour*' and '*Bout-Building near Flatford Mill*', having been painted either in broad daylight or in the 'still sunshine of a hot summer's day', display more light than areas of darkness, pictures such as '*Study of a House amidst Trees: Evening*' and '*The Cenotaph*', for their having been painted either in the evening or late in the misty season of autumn, reveal shadowy areas that dominate the few stretches of pale light on the ground, creating a solemnity of atmosphere associated

with such time or season. One can easily notice the details getting blurred in both these pictures, all the more so in the *'Trees'* study, on account of the impressionistic technique revealed in it, If the *'Leaping Horse'*, with its dark foreground and thick foliage of the trees on the left, coupled with the impasto technique of its brushwork, impresses one with the sense of 'unfinished perfection' referred to earlier, the *'Flatford Mill from a Lock on the Stour'* and the full-scale study for *'Hadleigh Castle'* are further pointers in this direction, though gloriously delightful in their picturesque appeal. Moreover, what Kroeber has said of *'The Hay Wain'*, is equally true of *'The Vale of Dedham* and *'The Valley Farm'* whose dark areas, despite magnification, would reveal the same kind of blurriness as is revealed by the shadowy segments of *'The Hay Wain'*.

It would therefore be safer to suggest that at least in paintings such as those where the obscure gains over the clear, Constable is interested in 'no light, but rather in darkness made visible', Hence his admiration for the Dutch masters like Ruysdael and Rambrandt for rendering a similar effect in their landscapes. Paying his homage to the genius of Ruysdael for revealing in his landscapes, unlike Claude, a delight in the type of scenery that he himself loved to paint, he says, "In Claude's picture's with scarcely an exception, the sun ever shines. Ruysdael, on the contrary, delighted in ..... those solemn days, peculiar to his country and ours, when without storm, large rolling clouds scarcely permit a ray of sunlight to break through the shades of the forest." [20] In a like manner, showing his preference for Rembrandt's *'Mill'* wherein the powerful effect of chiaroscuro 'envelopes & swallows up all the detail', he further states how 'Rembrandt chose the twylight to second his wishes, knowing it would be taking too great a liberty with nature to take a *light* in which all the minutiae of Nature is seen and must be displayed'. [21] Referring to the *'Mill'* as Rembrandt's 'pastoral symphony', Constable even goes further in considering it to be a folly on the part of Rembrandt's successors for praising the *'Mill'* for the wrong thing, viz., for its grandeur (of light), 'as if the pastoral symphony, could be played by a trumpet, or key bugle, or any other biosterous and tumultuous instrument'. [22] All such statements clearly point to Constable's interest in a sort of picture where light, at once 'boisterous and tumultuous', revealing things in all their details, no more constitutes its principal person.

The unconscious beginnings of the impressionistic technique that Constable reveals in his studies preparatory to his finished oils (visible in the full-scale studies

of these oils as well) in the form of colour broken into graded tints and in his later paintings in the form of white pigment broken into flecks — popularly known as 'Constable's snow' — lend support to our main line of argument as to how with passing of time, he became 'more interested in broad masses of light and shade and less and less interested in details and fidelity to appearance. .....'[23] Moreover, Gessner's famous *'Letter to M. Fuslin on Landscape Painting'* (1770), read with both pleasure and profit by Constable, also must have influenced his young mind to develop a picture from the first impressions of a landscape 'conceived in the first warmth' of a spontaneous response to it, thus making it necessary on his part to cut out at the same time the clutter of details as forming the main features of his pictures. Gessner regarded this interest in 'the merest accessories' as a fault among the weaker artists. the best ones seeking beauty 'in the disposition and variety of masses, in the arrangement of shadow and light, and so forth'.[24] All this must have helped Constable to formulate his own individual manner of enlarging his pictures from the first illuminating impressions of a given spot at a given time, all captured in rapidly drawn sketches, before the sweep of advancing shadows replaced them by new ones. It is a well-known fact as to how Constable and his friend Dunthorne the senior, an amateur artist, were in the habit of recording the first impressions of a view drawn directly from nature. Thanks to David Lucas, Constable's engraver, who, commenting on their practice, informs us, "Both Dunthorne (senior) and Constable were very methodical in their practice, taking their easels with them into the fields and painting one view only for a certain time each day. When the shadows from objects changed, their sketching was postponed until the same hour next day." [25] Constable was perhaps already looking at things with the eye of an impressionist when, convinced of finding nature to be always in a state of constant flux, he said, "The world is wide; no two days are alike, not even two hours; neither were there ever two leaves of a tree alike since the creation of the world."[26]

Constable's was a gentle soul that loved to be at home amidst the scenes of his native region where he was born and brought up. Like Wordsworth celebrating the beauty of his 'Dear native regions' of his childhood days, Constable was never tired of capturing the beauty of such scenes as lay scattered among the quiet retreats of nature associated with his boyhood days, like his beloved Stour valley and the region around East Bergholt and Dedham that, in his own words, made him a painter. Expressing his sense of gratitude and longing for such places that always stirred his deepest feelings, he states, "As long as I do

paint, I shall never cease to paint such places, They have always been my delight "[27] "Still", as he further states, "I should paint my own places best; painting is with me but another word for feeling and I associate 'my careless boyhood' with all that lies on the banks of the Stour; those scenes made me a painter, and I am grateful."[28] We know it very well how almost throughout his life he returned to East Bergholt every summer 'to draw fresh inspiration from the scenes he knew so well and his first paintings all depict the Stour valley and other parts of England that he both knew well and which harboured for him happy associations'.[29] It is therefore no wonder that he hardly felt any desire to go out in search of the stupendous amidst the aweinspiring Alps, as did Turner. Instead, as Orpen would have it, " ... Constable opened his door and found beauty waiting to be painted."[30]

It would be of interest to note here how he achives his best chiaroscuro effects mainly in landscapes representing scenes of his most favourite haunts since his boyhood, his Lake district pictures lacking remarkably in this quality on account of his feeling oppressed and uneasy in an otherwise alien atmosphere of the Lakes. The full title of his *'English Landscape'* also makes it clear how his avowed aim in publishing the prints of some of his favourite pictures, engraved by Lucas, was to display 'Various Subjects of Landscape, Characteristic of English Scenery, principally intended to display the phenomena of the Chiaroscuro of Nature'. How very strikingly all this reminds us of wordsworth whose best poems are those where the deep-rooted impressions of some of the most rememberable (enchanting as well as terrifying) expriences of his childhood and early life are revived through memory as endearing "spots" hallowed by the passage of time'. And if Constable's intensity of attachment amounting to deep reverence for Nature as found in the most simple localities of England's country-side makes his art essentially spiritual and English, his effective use of chairoscuro as a means not only to arrest the evanescence of nature, but also to create a unity of poetic mood, turns it into being essentially romantic.

We may note in conclusion that whatever the subject of his landscapes, almost all of them are bound together by the kindred quality of chiaroscuro, whose ubiquitous presence in each one of them makes them appear as veritable variations on the common theme of light and shade. Moreover, it is chiaroscuro which helps Constable achieve internal unity for his major landscapes by fusing together in each one of them various elements of nature, transient and enduring alike, into a harmonious whole. In sum, one can safely assert that

what Wordsworth is able to achieve through memory, Constable is able to accomplish through chiaroscuro that, by acting as a visual counterpart to memory (the verbal mode of imagination in the poet), makes it possible for the painter to enshrine the fleeting in nature in terms of permanence.

Notes and References

1. Christopher Salvesen, *'The Landscape of Memory; A Study of Wordsworth's Poetry'* (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), p. 80.
2. Ibid. , pp. 86-87.
3. *'The Prelude'* (1805), ed. Stephen Gill, 2nd ed. (London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 1, 619-24. Elsewhere he refers to such 'Remembrances' as being not lifeless: Cf. Bk. IV. 11. 360-61.
4. Ibid. , XI, 11. 271-73. Cf, 11. 368-71 from Bk. II. Recalling here the memory of his early morning walks as a school boy, and seeking to trace the origin of what he felt then, he says:

   'Oft in those moments such a holy calm
   Did overspread my soul, that I forgot
   That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
   Appear'd like something in myself, a dream
   A prospect in my mind'.

   The parallel is striking. The 'Prospect' he sees in the surrounding landscape is here realised as part and projection of his mind in complete control of the bodily eye.
5. Ibid. , 1. 323. Cf. 'Elegiac Stanzas', 11. 13-18. On visiting the Peele Castle in a season of Calm and contrasting it with its picture in a storm painted by Sir George Beaumont Wordsworth tells how

   'THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand
   To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
   The light that never was, on sea or land,
   The consecration, and the Poet's dream;
   I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile.
   Amid a world how different from this !'
6. Karl Kroeber, *'Romantic Landscape Vision: Constable and Wordsworth'*

(Madison: The University of Wiscons in Press, 1975), p. 11.

7. R.B. Beckett (ed.) *'John Constable's Discourses'*, XIV (Ipswich: The Suffolk Records Society, 1970), p.9. Also see *post-* chapter IV, *'The Divine as Immanent in Nature'*, p, 112, for Constable's comment on the importance and function of chiaroscuro in Nature in arresting her sudden and transient appearances from the fleeting passage of time, thus imparting to such evanescant elments (like light and shade) 'a lasting and sober existence' in art.
8. Ibid, p. 5.
9. Ibid, p. 10.
10. Ibid, p. 24.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid. , p, 5.
13. Karl Kroeber, op. cit. , p. 90. I owe much to Professor Kroeber's brilliant treatment of chiaroscuro in Constable in relation to the treatment of 'spots of time' in Wordsworth. His critical insights have helped me in my own discussion of the present topic.
14. Ibid, p. 103.
15. Loc. cit.
16. It is worth noting his own comment in this connection in his letter of 8 April, 1826, to Fisher with reference to *'The Cornfield'* : "It is not neglected in any part; the trees are more than usually studied, the extremities well defined, as well as the stems."— C.R. Leslie, *'Memoirs af the Life of John Constable'*, ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1951), p. 153.
17. Karl Kroeber, op. cit. , p. 16.
18. Ibid. , n. 16.
19. See above, n. 9.
20. R. B. Beckett, op. cit. , p. 63.
21. Ibid. , p. 87.
22. Loc. cit.
23. John Sunderland, *'Constable'* (London: Phaidon, 1970), p. 13.
24. Excerpt from Gessner's *'Letter'* quoted by Lorenz Eitner, 'Neoclassicism and Romanticism (1750-1850), *'Sources and Documents in the History of Art Series'*, ed. H. W. Janson (London: Prentice Hall International Inc. , 1971), p.50.
25. John Sunderland, op. cit. , p.4. Lucas quoted.
26. C.R. Leslie, *'Memoirs of the Life of John Constable'*, ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidoh, 1951), p. 273.
27. Ibid. , p. 85.
28. Loc. cit.
29. John Sunderland, op. cit. , p.5.
30. Sir Willsam Orpen, 'Natural Landscape', *'The Outline of Art'*, ed, Sir Wiliam Orpen: (London: George Newnes Ltd. , n. d.), p. 400.

Professor,
Department of English,
M. S. University, Baroda-2. , India