

D. H. Lawrence's
The Trespasser Revisited*

By Kaien Kitazaki

J. Moynahan in 1963 and R. P. Draper in the next year made almost the same comment on DHL's second novel. According to Draper, 'the extremely difficult problem of welding together romanticism and realism left unsolved.' (Draper, 37) Since then, the failure of 'welding' the idyllic world of Isle of Wight to the realistic domesticity of London in the story-telling in *The Trespasser* was negatively accepted. Such criticism of it was popular among Lawrence studies during the 1960s and seems to be unchanged until today. But does such a fixed interpretation of his novel sum up DHL's real intention?¹⁾

In order to answer this question, from the standpoint of a Buddhist, I would like, first of all, to quote the beautiful sunset scene which Siegmund contemplates during his way back from the Isle of Wight.

Up towards Arundel the cornfields of red wheat were heavy with gold. It was evening, when the green of the trees went out, leaving dark shapes proud upon the sky. But the red wheat was forged in the sunset, hot and magnificent. Siegmund almost gloated as he smelled the ripe corn, and opened his eyes to its powerful radiation. For a moment he forgot everything, amid the forging of red fields of gold in the smithy of the sunset. . . .

. . . The sun had gone done. Over the west was a gush of brightness as the fountain of light bubbled lower. The stars, like specks of froth from the foaming of the day clung to the blue ceiling. Like spi-

ders they hung overhead, while the hosts of the gold atmosphere (rays radiated from the sinking sun²⁾) poured out of the hive by the western low door. Soon the hive was empty, a hollow dome of purple, with here and there on the floor a bright brushing of wings, — a village —; then overhead the luminous star-spiders began to run.

“Ah, well!” thought Siegmund — he was tired — “— if one bee dies in a swarm, what is it, so long as the hive is all right? Apart from the gold light, and the hum and the colour of day, what was I? — nothing! Apart from these rushings out of the hive, along with [the] swarm, into the dark meadows of night, gathering God knows what, I was a pebble. Well, the day will swarm in golden again, with colour on the wings of every bee, and humming in each activity. The gold, and the colour, and sweet smell, and the sound of life, they exist, even if there is no bee: it only happens we see the iridescence on the wings of a bee. Since the iridescence and the humming of life are, always, and since it was they who made me, then I am not lost. At least, I do not care. If the spark goes out, the essence of the fire is there in the darkness. What does it matter! Besides, I have burned bright; I *have* laid up a fine cell of honey somewhere — I wonder where. We can never point to it. But it is so — what does it matter, then!” (164–166)

Out of this long quotation, I want to pick up some of the key words and analyze them from the Buddhist point of view.

Let us notice that there are two aspects to the life phenomenon: ‘the hosts of the gold atmosphere’ which I understand as ‘rays or radiation from the sinking sun in the west’; and ‘these rushings out of the hive’ like a swarm of the bees or the source of the life. These two correspond to ‘a gush of brightness’ and to ‘the fountain of light’. These two aspects, that is, the source of life and the hosts of the gold atmosphere are clearly shown in the above quotation.

‘The hosts of the gold atmosphere’ means Siegmund’s own being as *if it really exists*. But such existence is a transient one. From the Buddhist viewpoint, this kind of interpretation is often called ‘untrue’. The mind and body of the human being is only harmonious when the various relations are well united each other. If one element collapses, the harmony will also disappear.

If it is so, when may we expect the thing that really exists? Siegmund notices that ‘the iridescence and the humming of life are, al-

ways,' which is hidden somewhere in the darkness, but born only from the relatedness of everything³). In short, that which symbolizes the sun has two aspects: transience of the substance (the self nature⁴); the intrinsic nature or substance of a thing or person) and iridescence of eternity or ideality (Dharma-body⁵), Dharma-substance: essential substance of a thing or things). The gaze of Siegmund is surely turned to these.

These two phases the sinking sun symbolizes can be traced back to the former part of the novel. The best example we can see is in chapter 8 where Siegmund and Helena find their elopement most satisfying. But we can surmise that their love cannot escape from the catastrophe, because we find her thinking that 'she wanted to sacrifice to him, make herself a burning altar to him: and she wanted to possess him. (87) She is also depicted as one of the "Dreaming Women" with whom passion exhausts itself at the mouth.' (64) But her dreaming character makes it possible to see through the above two phases which are often missed by the ordinary reader.

At seven o'clock in the morning Helena lay in the deliciously cool water, while small waves ran up the beach full and clear and foamless, continuing perfectly in their flicker the rhythm of the night's passion.

Nothing, she felt, had ever been so delightful as this cool water running over her. She lay and looked out on the shining sea. All, it seemed, was made of sunshine more or less soiled. The cliffs rose out of the shining waves like clouds of strong, fine texture; and rocks along the shore were the dapplings of a bright dawn. The coarseness was fused out of the world, so that sunlight showed in the veins of the morning cliffs and the rocks. Yea, everything ran with sunshine, as we are full of blood, and plants are tissue from green-gold, glistening sap. Substance and solidity were shadows that the morning cast round itself to make itself tangible: as she herself was a shadow cast by that fragment of sunshine, her soul, over its inefficiency.

She remembered to have seen the bats flying low over a burnished pool at sunset, and the web of their wings had burned in scarlet flickers, as they stretched across the light. Winged momentarily on bits of tissue flame, threaded with blood, the bats had flickered a secret to her.(87)

'Substance and solidity were shadows that the morning cast round itself to make itself tangible' means that substance and solidity are usually accepted as really existing elements. But in this scene they are not really existing as just like a shadow: this kind of realization is quite beyond the common sense. And 'the web of their wings had burned in scarlet flickers' means that if the wings are the substance, it is the 'scarlet flickers' itself that *really exist*. These flickers only can we expect to glimpse as for ever 'secret'.

These philosophical, religious depictions seem to be quite hard to understand. But considering the objective point of view of Helena, we can see how the author Lawrence puts his own view very clearly. His view strongly reminds me of the Buddhist thought of 'Nirvana': it means that the state of complete blessedness attained when the individual soul is absorbed into, and united with the divine infinity, and all personality is extinguished. (*UDEL*)⁶ Though etymologically 'extinguishing' means 'blowing out', its true meaning is that individuality and infinity are quite reciprocal, or interchangeable or just like 'the head and tail of a penny' as in *The Lost Girl*⁷) and that there is no fixed or stable ego or personality or consistent character. In Buddhism, even the five *skandhas*, that is the five aggregates or the five constituent elements of all existence, are taught to be empty in their inherent existence.

With this understanding of Nirvana in mind, let us go back to the first quotation of the sunset scene. I want to apply the idea of Nirvana to Siegmund's contemplation and reinterpret it as follows:

In *Heart of Transcendent Wisdom Sutra*, Nirvana is understood as follows: When emphasizing transience or voidness or emptiness, Buddhist teachings do emphasize voidness as expressed as 'color equals void.' (Color means in this case all that exists or has being: form) But it doesn't negate the eternality of the iridescence of the sun; nor the 'scarlet flickers' of the flying bats which Helena saw at sunset. Contrarily, eternality becomes the origin of the substance according to the relatedness of everything: it is called 'void equals color.' (Void means in Buddhist terms that all things on this planet have nothing of fixed figures: emptiness) But in reality, out of nothingness everything is being born according to the relatedness of everything. But once this relatedness collapses, everything will vanish from this earth. This is not a so-called nihilistic or a negative way of thinking but a

more affirmative one of living. Because if we decide to shape our lives around this thought, we could always find ourselves free from any attachment to anything. Though we are always in danger of being trapped by the various desires, which bring forth our attaching feelings, we are safe if we are always ready to go back to this realization of Nirvana. So we are free in our doing and our thinking.

The sunset scene I quoted above emphasizes the eternity focusing on the iridescence of the sun, and of course, it is quite obvious that the eyes of Siegmund are turned to the eternal iridescence of the sinking sun over the Arundel. 'If the spark goes out, the essence of the fire is there in the darkness. What does it matter! Besides, I have burned bright'; we should not overlook his transcendental awareness of being uncaptivated by either life nor death. Rather he has finally reached the enlightenment (or Nirvana-like) stage of 'life and death' being one and the same just like 'the head and tail of a penny.' Of course we cannot expect too much from Helena: we cannot say for sure she has reached that stage of the realization of Siegmund's understanding of the universe in the novel.

But at least, seen from the viewpoint of Buddhism, it is clear that the way of living, free from the chains of life and death, is presented in the text, though this contemplation might be difficult to follow.

Anyway, from here I can move on to my topic: is "difficult problem of welding together romanticism" so far we have seen and "realism" we will see from now really left unsolved or not? If we look carefully at the insincere attitude of Beatrice in the aftermath of her husband's death, we could finally understand what the intention of DHL was. My conclusion is that the lack of consistency between the idyllic world of Isle of Wight, especially the culmination of the idyllic world in contemplation by Siegmund and the sudden development of realistic domesticity of London, is not fatal to the structure of this novel. If we see this novel from the Buddhist viewpoint, we could at last be able to "weld" the seemingly two different worlds together.

In order to illustrate that, let us look at the quotation from chapter 30 and reconsider the meaning by connecting it with the sunset scene or the morning one I have discussed before.

Beatrice had had all her life a fancy for more open, public form of living than that of a domestic circle. She liked strangers about the house; they stimulated her agreeably. Therefore, nine months after the death of her husband, she determined to carry out the scheme of her heart, and take in boarders. . . . In the tragic, but also sordid, event of his death, the Waltons returned again to the aid of Beatrice. . . . They inquired what she intended to do. She spoke highly and hopefully of her future boarding house. . . . So Beatrice was set up in a fairly large house in Highgate, was equipped with two maids, and gentlemen were invited to come and board in her house. It was a huge adventure, wherein Beatrice was delighted. . . .(218)

This quotation was once interpreted by John Worthen as 'a kind of comic antimasque in the description of Siegmund's wife Beatrice as lodging-house keeper.' (J. Worthen, 333-34). The antimasque generally means 'grotesque interlude between acts of masque.' But why did the author Lawrence abruptly introduce this quite different tone of the scene into the story? We cannot find any answer to this question from Worthen's elucidation of Lawrence's very odd 'experiments' of Beatrice as lodging-house keeper. So I want to set up my question as "Is there any continuity between the serious contemplation of Siegmund we have seen and the comical or grotesque attitude of Beatrice?" Worthen, to my regret, again gives no hint or answer to my question⁸).

My understanding about 'a kind of comic antimasque' is that it is Lawrence's contrivance to ridicule Beatrice's attitude to life, that is, her attachment to only a materialistic, transient phase of living. Moreover, developing humorously her way of living, he clearly throws light on the eternality or ideality which Siegmund (or less strongly Helena) glimpsed in the sinking sun and in the morning sea. Though Beatrice tries to make up her mind to rear her children as a mother, she tries to 'dodge it' (217); or she keeps a keen eye on to her husband's father who 'was always ready further to diminish his diminished income.' Her superficial or barren view of domestic life was already seen in the Chapter 2 of the novel: its small-mindedness was once criticized by L. Williams (Lynda Williams, 44-45). Beatrice attaches as ever her own old ego to the materialistic side of life near the end of the story without noticing life indeed being close to death; as in

the flip of a coin.

This kind of interpretation is quite relevant to Lawrence's real intention of rewriting 'The Freshwater Diary' written by Helen Corke as a prototype of *The Trespasser* especially when we read his letter enlivening her and creating an artistic work out of 'The Diary'.

Let us see the letter to Helen Corke, 1 February 1912.

Why are you so sarky (i.e., sarcastic)? I tell you again I am not altering the substance of the Saga, so that, in spite of my present tone, you will not find it perverted from what of original truth it had. I recast the paragraphs, and attend to the style. As soon as I can, I will send you the MS., that you, may satisfy yourself.

But, as you remember saying yourself, the Saga is a work of fiction on a frame of actual experience. It is my presentation, and therefore necessarily false sometimes to your view. The necessity is not that our two views should coincide, but that the work should be a work of art. Why should I want to falsify it? I am not flippant with the Saga. But you shall see for yourself. (359)

This letter clearly shows how Lawrence is eager to give courage to Helen Corke, his deeply-hurt friend after her lover's tragic death and at the same time, he struggles to transcend his own agony of life and death from his aunt's death around that time⁹⁾ to find harmony or peace of his own mind. His opinion that 'the work should be a work of art' well tells us that his real intention was all those elements deeply considered to be enhanced to the level of an art. In this case it is obvious that Lawrence intended to make an enhancement of one musician's death into universal truth in his second novel.

In other words, the Wagnerian world of life or death is transcended finally by the Buddhist idea of Nirvana that tells us of transcendence over the conflict or chains of life and death. It tells us that life and death are never separated; they are deeply correlated. DHL had already reached at that stage of understanding through the key word of Nirvana of Buddhism, one of the world's most universal religions, even at his younger day.

In conclusion, 'romanticism' and 'realism' seem to be conflicting each other on the surface, but we if both understand the meaning of

the sunset or the morning scene and rethink of Worhen's idea of 'a kind of comic antimasque', we can notice that there is a thread which unite two different styles of the text, or that there is a strong continuity running which the ordinary eyes of the reader might overlook.

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Notes:

- 1) Other novels, for example, *The Lost Girl* and even the best novel *Sons & Lovers* have respectively their inconsistencies. The *Lost Girl* consists of the realistically written part of the Bestwood in the former part and the latter being mystical or symbolical scenes set in Italy. Even in *Sons & Lovers* we can find the clear disproportions: the first part of 'dramatic realism' and the latter one being too much subjective point of view by the author, which once Paul Eggart had pointed in his 'Opening up the text: the case of *Sons & Lovers*' in *Rethinking Lawrence*. And his conclusion is that 'Lawrence, after all, was to prove right: he had to guard, with a justified pride, that which was "evolving out of him" over a period of time (we can now see) before, during and after the composition of *Sons and Lovers*. Traditional study of the internal relationships of the novel's final state cannot tell the full story; only by reference to a wider network of influences, personal and intertextual, and to a greater array of textual traces than are provided by the novel in its published form, can its inner tensions be properly understood. . . .' (51)
- 2) Present author owes much to this understanding or interpretation to Takehiko Terada in his voluminous work of *D. H. Lawrence, Living Cosmos and the European Civilization: The Essence of D. H. Lawrence and His Works*, (216)
- 3) This is the characteristic view of Buddhism: *Engi* in Japanese = *pratītiya-samutpāda* in Sanskrit; coming into existence by depending on other things; dependent origination.
- 4) *Jishō* in Japanese.
- 5) *Hottai* in Japanese. *Ho* means *Dharma* in Sanskrit and *tai* means body.
- 6) Recently Toshikazu Takao, in his book called *Who is Buddha?*, taught me the clearest meaning of Nirvana as 'To blow out not all desires or passions but to blow off unjust or unfair or unreasonable and excessive desires or covetous desires: negation of wrongly conceived cravings.' (91-100)
- 7) ' . . . If we turn over the head of the penny and look at the tail, we don't thereby deny or betray the head. We do but adjust to its own

complement. And so with high-mindedness. . . .

So Alvina spun her medal, and her medal came down tails. Heads or tails? Heads for generations. Then tails. See the poetic justice.' . . . (34)

With this relation to non-fixzation, non-attaching attitude, I want to quote a famous anecdote popular among 'Zen Buddhism' or among the people who practice 'The Way of Tea' told in the *Introduction of Heart of Transcendent Wisdom Sutra* by Taidō Matubara, famous Zen priest in Japan:

Sen no Rikyu, who was active in Kyoto as a master of the way of tea more than 400 hundreds years ago, had a grandson called *Sō Tan*. One day the priest who was an intimate friend of *Sō Tan* sent his disciple to the house of *Sō Tan* with a twig of beautiful Japanese camellia called *Myōrenji* as a gift for the master.

The flower of camellia was so fragile and weak that it fell down to the ground while he was carrying though with much care. When he arrived, the disciple frankly told his carelessness and apologized for it. Far from getting angry, *Sō Tan* warm-heartedly welcomed this young student and ushered him into the tea room known as *Konnichi-an*. He took off the scroll already hung from the center of the Tokono-ma, alcove like space found in ordinary Japanese houses. And he prepared the flower vase made from bamboo called *Onjōji Temple*. He put the twig without a flower into the vase and, just under it, put the fallen -flower. And he said "You're welcome" with a cup of tea, after which he sent him off with much warm words.

This anecdote is called 'the charm or taste of the fallen-flower.' But what does this really mean? We should remind of the teaching of relationship between 'color equals void' and 'void equals color'. Through this, we can sum up the anecdote as a value-transference tea ceremony. Everything perishes, but it does not pass away as it does; through perishing, new values are to be created or born if we see this life as it is: there is no life nor death, but only life forever activating our everyday activity.

'The Way of Tea' always puts forward the values of 'harmony, respect, purity and calmness', ones of which are just the embodiment of the spirit of Nirvana: 'color equals void' and 'void equals color'.

- 8) Worthen points out not only the author's creation of 'a kind of a comic antimasque' in the description of Beatrice, but also the introduction of 'oddly comic (and choric) window cleaner' brought in to find out what has happened in the upstairs room. But Worthen only says that the significance of the dramatic control of the immediate aftermath is astonishing and nothing more than that. Using coincidentally the term 'oddly' twice to modify the window cleaner and Beatrice, he seems to

be unnoticed about the author's hidden intention to use these comic elements in order to ridicule the one-sided view of life by Beatrice which is contrasted strikingly with Siegmund's meditative contemplation: life and death are one and nothing more, or nothing less. (333–334).

- 9) Lawrence's own agony of life and death and his effort to go beyond that stage, that is, his approach to the understanding of Nirvana can be traced back to four years earlier as we see his letter to Louis Burrows in 1908, April 21. He cares much about his aunt's illness who lived in Leicestershire.

'Last week I did not go to Leicester. My aunt is very ill-this morning we hear that she can hardly last another day. How can I go and see her-how can I go? It is enough to suffer my mother's sighs, and to feel the current of her thoughts like an uneasy quivering note of sad music. Oh, for some blessed Nivrána!

Om, Mani Padme, Om! the Dewdrops slips
Into the shining sea.

Unto Nirvána – he is one with Life yet lives not.
–Nirvána – where the Silence lives.'

About Lawrence's familiarity with Buddhism and its key word Nirvána, Gerald Doherty in his *Oriental Lawrence: The Quest for the Secrets of Sex* (2001) made a clear statement as follows: 'Lawrence's earliest contact with Buddhism came through that most popular of Victorian books (it sold over a millin copies) – Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* (1879), extracts from which appeared in Richard Garnett's anthology *The International Library of Famous Literature* (1899), whose twenty volumes formed part of the Lawrence family library. In Book Eight, he read the four Truths, the eightfold Path, the five rules, the law of karma, and the concept of nirvana.' . . . (19)

For making contrast between the original verse with the one Lawrence cited in his letter to Burrows, I quote from *The Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold himself, Book 8:

Never shall yearnings torture him, nor sins
Stain him, nor ache of earthly joys and woes
Invade his safe eternal peace; nor deaths

Unto NIRVANA, He is one with Life
Yet lives not. He is blest, ceasing to be.
OM, MANI PADME, O!^a the Dewdrop slips
Into the shining sea!^b

Let us take a careful look at and translate the underlined parts. a OM, MANI PADME, O! can be paraphrased as: OM symbolizes one's

impure body, speech and mind, and also the pure noble body, speech and mind of a Buddha. Buddhism claims that an impure body, speech and mind can be transformed into pure one of a Buddha, who was once impure and later by removing their negative attributes, achieved enlightenment on his path. MANI means the jewel, symbolizes factors of method, compassion and love, the altruistic intention to become enlightened. Just as a jewel is capable of removing poverty, so the altruistic mind of enlightenment is capable of removing the poverty, or difficulties, and of solitary peace. Similarly, just as a jewel fulfills the wishes of sentient beings, so the altruistic intention to become enlightened fulfills the wishes of sentient beings. PADME means lotus and symbolizes wisdom. Growing out of mud, but not being stained by mud, lotus indicates the quality of wisdom, which keeps you out of contradiction. And the last word O (or Om or HUM) means inseparability; symbolizing purity and wisdom can be achieved by the unity of method and wisdom. So as a whole, OM, MANI PADME, O. includes the prayer or meditation or recitation of the name of Buddha in order to be one with him. Dalai Lama says all this in his *Discourse on the Heart Sutra*.

And the next underlined representation b reminds me of the letter to his sister Ada; 'When we die, like rain-drops falling back again into the sea, we fall back into the big, shimmering sea of unorganized life which we call God. We are lost as individuals, yet we count in the whole.' (Ada Lawrence, *Young Lorenzo: Early Life of D. H. Lawrence*, 86) This letter, too, gives us a good clue to the influences of Buddhism upon the writings of Lawrence, especially upon the molding the character of Siegmund.

Furthermore in Japan, a famous Lawrentian scholar, Yoshio Inoue, further investigated about Arnold's staying in Japan and marrying Japanese lady and other interesting informations of the oriental influences he underwent which no one ever brought to light so far in his voluminous biography: *Lawrence in Twilight I* in 1992. (158)

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