

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-36607-6 - The Virgin and the Gipsy and Other Stories

D. H. Lawrence Edited by Michael Herbert, Bethan Jones and Lindeth Vasey

Excerpt

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THE VIRGIN AND THE GIPSY
AND OTHER STORIES

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NOTE ON THE TEXTS

The Virgin and the Gipsy: base-text is the autograph manuscript (MS). It is emended with reference to the galley proofs (G) corrected by various hands (GC), none of them DHL's, for *The Virgin and the Gipsy* (F1), wherever substantive revision by DHL in the unlocated typescript may be deduced. The sections run on in MS and G, but start on new pages in F1: MS is silently followed.

'Things': base-text is the autograph manuscript (MS).

Rawdon's Roof: base-text is the autograph manuscript (MS), emended with reference to revisions in the typescript (TS), the later carbon-copy typescript (TCC) and *Rawdon's Roof* (E1).

'Mother and Daughter': base-text is the autograph manuscript (MS).

The Escaped Cock: base-text for Part I is the typescript (TS1a) as typed and emended by DHL; base-text for Part II is the final autograph manuscript (MS). Words DHL revised while typing TS1a and his second typescript (TS1b) are not distinguished from handwritten revisions in recording variants.

'The Blue Moccasins': base-text is the autograph manuscript (MS). DHL's spelling 'moccassins' has been silently emended, as in all other states, and his 'M^cLeod' silently altered to 'McLeod', as in *Eve* (Per1) and *Plain Talk* (Per2), with the further variant 'M'Leod', in *The Lovely Lady* (E1 and A1), not recorded. The breaks with a repeated ornament littering the text in Per2 have not been listed.

The Textual apparatus records all variants between the given states, except for the instances mentioned above and the following silent emendations:

1. Clearly inadvertent spelling, typing and typesetting errors have been corrected, including rectifying the omission of full stops at the end of sentences where no other punctuation exists, missing or misplaced apostrophes in possessives, and omitted or inconsistent quotation marks.
2. Misreadings by typists or typesetters that were corrected before publication (or did not affect any subsequent state in a pre-publication sequence) are not recorded.
3. DHL often wrote colloquial contractions as separate words (e.g. 'were n't') or omitted apostrophes in contractions ('oclock', 'cant'): these have been regularised, as normally in typed and printed states.
4. DHL usually placed commas, semicolons and full stops with quotation marks *inside* the closing marks, but sometimes he placed them outside (as in some typed and printed states) or directly under the closing marks. His usual practice has been adopted.

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5. DHL often used two or three different degrees of indentation, especially in dialogue. This has been regularised, as in all published texts.
6. DHL's spelling of words like 'realise' (and the derivative forms) with an 's', rather than the 'z' (as in 'realize') in some of the printed texts, has been adopted, as has his usual form of titles (e.g. 'Mrs') without the stop, and of 'today', 'tomorrow', 'tonight' and 'goodbye' without the hyphen supplied in some printings, and of 'grey' and 'colour' rather than 'gray' and 'color' in some printings.
7. Variants in italicised punctuation have been recorded only when they form part of another variant.

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I.

When the vicar's wife went off with a young and penniless man, the scandal knew no bounds.* Her two little girls were only seven and nine years old, respectively. And the vicar was such a good husband. True, his hair was grey. But his moustache was dark, he was handsome, and still full of furtive passion for his unrestrained and beautiful wife. 5

Why did she go? Why did she burst away with such an *éclat** of revulsion, like a touch of madness?

Nobody gave any answer. Only the pious said, she was a bad woman. While some of the good women kept silent. They knew. 10

The two little girls never knew. Wounded, they decided that it was because their mother found them negligible.

The ill wind that blows nobody any good* swept away the vicarage family on its blast. Then lo and behold, the vicar, who was somewhat distinguished as an essayist and a controversialist, and whose case had aroused sympathy among the bookish men, received the living of Papplewick.* The Lord had tempered the wind of misfortune* with a rectorate in the north country. 15

The rectory was a rather ugly stone house down by the river Papple, before you come into the village. Further on, beyond where the road crosses the stream, were the big old stone cotton-mills, once driven by water. The road curved up-hill, into the bleak stone streets of the village. 20

The vicarage family received decided modification, upon its transference into the rectory. The vicar, now the rector, fetched up his old mother and his sister, and a brother, from the city. The two little girls had a very different milieu, from the old home. 25

The rector was now forty-seven years old; he had displayed an intense and not very dignified grief after the flight of his wife. Sympathetic ladies had stayed him from suicide. His hair was almost white, and he had a wild-eyed, tragic look. You had only to look at him, to know how dreadful it all was, and how he had been wronged. 30

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Yet somewhere there was a false note. And some of the ladies who had sympathised most profoundly with the vicar, secretly rather disliked the rector. There was a certain furtive self-righteousness about him, when all was said and done.

5 The little girls, of course, in the vague way of children, accepted the family verdict. Granny, who was over seventy and whose sight was failing, became the central figure in the house. Aunt Cissie, who was over forty, pale, pious, and gnawed by an inward worm, kept house. Uncle Fred, a stingy and grey-faced man of forty, who just lived dingily
10 for himself, went into town every day. And the rector, of course, was the most important person, after Granny.

They called her The Mater.* She was one of those physically vulgar, clever old bodies who had got her own way all her life by buttering*
15 the weaknesses of her men-folk. Very quickly she took her cue. The rector still “loved” his delinquent wife, and would “love her” till he died. Therefore hush! The rector’s feeling was sacred. In his heart was enshrined the pure girl he had wedded and worshipped.

Out in the evil world, at the same time, there wandered a disreputable woman who had betrayed the rector and abandoned his little children.
20 She was now yoked to a young and despicable man, who no doubt would bring her the degradation she deserved. Let this be clearly understood, and then hush! For in the pure loftiness of the rector’s heart still bloomed the pure white snow-flower* of his young bride. This white snow-flower did not wither. That other creature, who had gone off with that
25 despicable young man, was none of his affair.

The Mater, who had been somewhat diminished and insignificant as a widow in a small house, now climbed into the chief arm-chair in the rectory, and planted her old bulk firmly again. She was not going to be dethroned. Astutely she gave a sigh of homage to the rector’s fidelity
30 to the pure white snowflower, while she pretended to disapprove. In sly reverence for her son’s great love, she spoke no word against that nettle which flourished in the evil world, and which had once been called Mrs Arthur Saywell. Now, thank heaven, having married again, she was no more Mrs Arthur Saywell. No woman bore the rector’s name. The pure
35 white snowflower bloomed *in perpetuum*,* without nomenclature. The family even thought of her as She-who-was-Cynthia.

All this was water on the Mater’s mill. It secured her against Arthur’s ever marrying again. She had him by his feeblest weakness, his skulking self-love. He had married an imperishable white snowflower. Lucky
40 man! He had been injured. Unhappy man! He had suffered. Ah, what

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a heart of love! And he had—forgiven! Yes, the white snowflower was forgiven. He even had made provision in his will for her, when that other scoundrel—But hush! Don't even *think* too near to that horrid nettle in the rank outer world, She-who-was-Cynthia. Let the white snowflower bloom inaccessible on the heights of the past. The present is another story.

5

The children were brought up in this atmosphere of cunning self-sanctification and of unmentionability.* They too saw the snowflower on inaccessible heights. They too knew that it was throned in lone splendour aloft their lives,* never to be touched.

10

At the same time, out of the squalid world sometimes would come a rank, evil smell of selfishness and degraded lust, the smell of that awful nettle, She-who-was-Cynthia. This nettle actually contrived, at intervals, to get a little note through to her girls, her children. And at this the silver-haired Mater shook inwardly with hate. For if She-who-was-Cynthia ever came back, there wouldn't be much left of the Mater. A secret gust of hate went from the old granny to the girls, children of that foul nettle of lust, that Cynthia who had had such an affectionate contempt for the Mater.

15

Mingled with all this, was the children's perfectly distinct recollection of their real home, the Vicarage in the south, and their glamorous but not very dependable mother, Cynthia. She had made a great glow, a flow of life, like a swift and dangerous sun in the home, forever coming and going. They always associated her presence with brightness, but also with danger; with glamour, but with fearful selfishness.

25

Now the glamour was gone, and the white snowflower, like a porcelain wreath,* froze on its grave. The danger of instability, the peculiarly *dangerous* sort of selfishness, like lions and tigers, was also gone. There was now a complete stability, in which one could perish safely.

But they were growing up. And as they grew, they became more definitely confused, more actively puzzled. The Mater, as she grew older, grew blinder. Somebody had to lead her about. She did not get up till towards midday. Yet blind or bed-ridden, she held the house.

30

Besides, she wasn't bedridden. Whenever the *men* were present, The Mater was in her throne. She was too cunning to court neglect. Especially as she had rivals.

35

Her great rival was the younger girl, Yvette. Yvette had some of the vague, careless blitheness of She-who-was-Cynthia. But this one was more docile. Granny perhaps had caught her in time. Perhaps!

40

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The rector adored Yvette, and spoiled her with a doting fondness: as much as to say: am I not a soft-hearted, indulgent old boy! He liked to have this opinion of himself, and The Mater knew it. So she even encouraged him. For the Mater* knew his weaknesses to a hair's-breadth. She knew them, and she traded on them by turning them into decorations for him, for his character. He wanted, in his own eyes, to have a fascinating character, as women want to have fascinating dresses. And The Mater cunningly put beauty-spots* over his defects and deficiencies. Her mother-love gave her the clue to his weaknesses, and she hid them for him with decorations. Whereas She-who-was-Cynthia—! But don't mention *her*, in this connection. In her eyes, the rector was almost hump-backed and an idiot.

The funny thing was, Granny secretly hated Lucille, the elder girl, more than the pampered Yvette. Lucille, the uneasy and irritable, was more conscious of being under Granny's power, than was the spoilt and vague Yvette.

On the other hand, Aunt Cissie hated Yvette. She hated her very name. Aunt Cissie's life had been sacrificed to The Mater, and Aunt Cissie knew it, and The Mater knew she knew it. Yet as the years went on, it became a convention. The convention of Aunt Cissie's sacrifice was accepted by everybody, including the self-same Cissie. She prayed a good deal about it. Which also showed that she had her own private feelings somewhere, poor thing. She had ceased to be Cissie, she had lost her life and her sex. And now, she was creeping towards fifty, strange green flares of rage would come up in her, and at such times, she was insane.

But Granny held her in her power. And Aunt Cissie's one object in life was to look after The Mater.

Aunt Cissie's green flares of hellish hate would go up against all young things, sometimes. Poor thing, she prayed and tried to obtain forgiveness from heaven. But what had been done to her, *she* could not forgive, and the vitriol would spurt in her veins sometimes.

It was not as if the Mater were a warm, kindly soul. She wasn't. She only seemed it, cunningly. And the fact dawned gradually on the girls. Under her old-fashioned lace cap, under her silver hair, under the black silk of her stout, short, forward-bulging body, this old woman had a cunning heart, seeking forever her own female power. And through the weakness of the unfresh, stagnant men she had bred, she kept her power, as her years rolled on, from seventy to eighty, and from eighty on the new lap, towards ninety.

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For in the family there was a whole tradition of “loyalty”: loyalty to one another, and especially to the Mater. The Mater, of course, was the pivot of the family. The family was her own extended ego. Naturally she covered it with her power. And her sons and daughters, being weak and disintegrated, naturally were loyal. Outside the family, what was there for them but danger and insult and ignominy? Had not the rector experienced it, in his marriage. So now, caution! Caution and loyalty, fronting the world! Let there be as much hate and friction *inside* the family, as you like. To the outer world, a stubborn fence of unison.

5

II.

10

But it was not until the girls finally came home from school, that they felt the full weight of Granny’s dead old hand on their lives. Lucille was now nearly twenty-one, and Yvette nineteen. They had been to a good girls’ school, and had had a finishing year in Lausanne,* and were quite the usual thing, tall young creatures with fresh, sensitive faces and bobbed* hair and young-manly, deuce-take-it* manners.

15

“What’s so awfully *boring* about Papplewick,” said Yvette, as they stood on the Channel boat watching the grey, grey cliffs of Dover draw near, “is that there are no *men* about. Why doesn’t Daddy have some good old sports for friends? As for Uncle Fred, he’s the limit.”

20

“Oh, you never know what will turn up,” said Lucille, more philosophic.

“You jolly well know what to expect,” said Yvette. “Choir on Sundays, and I hate mixed choirs. Boys’ voices are *lovely*, when there are no women. And Sunday School and Girls’ Friendly,* and socials, all the dear old souls that enquire after Granny! Not a decent young fellow for miles.”

25

“Oh I don’t know!” said Lucille. “There’s always the Framleys. And you know Gerry Somercotes *adores* you.”

“Oh but I *hate* fellows who adore me!” cried Yvette, turning up her sensitive nose. “They *bore* me. They hang on like lead.”

30

“Well what *do* you want, if you can’t stand being adored?—I think it’s perfectly all right to be adored. You know you’ll never marry them, so why not let them go on adoring, if it amuses them.”

“Oh but I *want* to get married,” cried Yvette.

35

“Well in that case, let them go on adoring you till you find one that you can *possibly* marry.”

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“I never should, that way. Nothing puts me off like an adoring fellow. They *bore* me so! They make me feel beastly.”

“Oh, so they do me, if they get pressing. But at a distance, I think they’re rather nice.”

5 “I should like to fall *violently* in love.”

“Oh, very likely! I shouldn’t! I should hate it. Probably so would you, if it actually happened. After all, we’ve got to settle down a bit, before we know what we want.”

10 “But don’t you *hate* going back to Papplewick?” cried Yvette, turning up her young, sensitive nose.

“No, not particularly. I suppose we shall be rather bored. I wish Daddy would get a car. I suppose we shall have to drag the old bikes out. Wouldn’t you like to get up to Tansy Moor?”*

15 “Oh, *love* it! Though it’s an awful *strain*, shoving an old push-bike up those hills.”

The ship was nearing the grey cliffs. It was summer, but a grey day. The two girls wore their coats with fur collars turned up, and little *chic* hats pulled down over their ears. Tall, slender, fresh-faced, naïve, yet confident, too confident, in their school-girlish arrogance, they were so
20 terribly English. They seemed so free, and were as a matter of fact so tangled and tied up, inside themselves. They seemed so dashing and unconventional, and were really so conventional, so, as it were, shut up indoors inside themselves. They looked like bold, tall young sloops just slipping from the harbour, into the wide seas of life. And they were, as a
25 matter of fact, two poor young rudderless lives, moving from one chain anchorage to another.

The rectory struck a chill into their hearts as they entered. It seemed ugly, and almost sordid, with the dank air of that middle-class, degenerated comfort which has ceased to be comfortable and has turned stuffy,
30 unclean. The hard, stone house struck the girls as being unclean, they could not have said why. The shabby furniture seemed somehow sordid, nothing was fresh. Even the food at meals had that awful dreary sordidness which is so repulsive to a young thing coming from abroad. Roast beef and wet cabbage, cold mutton and mashed potatoes, sour
35 pickles, inexcusable puddings.

Granny, who “loved a bit of pork,” also had special dishes, beef-tea and rusks, or a small savoury custard. The grey-faced Aunt Cissie ate nothing at all. She would sit at table, and take a single lonely and naked
40 boiled potato on to her plate. She never ate meat. So she sat in sordid durance, while the meal went on, and Granny quickly slobbered her