

The Performativity of Literature and Its Ethical Engagements in D. H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gipsy*

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Abstract In this article, I attempt to read Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gipsy* along with such thinkers as Nietzsche, Deleuze, Lévinas and Derrida, focusing on the central character Yvette. The issues of morality, ethics, desire, and otherness are recurrent topoi in Lawrence's oeuvre. In *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, they are intricately enmeshed, and mainly revealed in Yvette's struggle for a new life. In unraveling Yvette's struggles with her desire, her quest for her true self, and her encounter with the gypsy, Lawrence masterfully interweaves the narrative of the novella with philosophical and ethical themes. My reading of *The Virgin and Gipsy* aims to extrapolate the ethical performativity of Lawrence's literature. This paper first discusses Yvette's struggle for a new life in terms of Nietzsche and Deleuze, and then moves on to Lévinas's and Derrida's ethics of alterity so as to elaborate upon Yvette's relationship with the Other.

Key words D. H. Lawrence; *The Virgin and the Gipsy*; Ethics; Morality; Deleuze; Nietzsche; Levinas; Derrida

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I. D. H. Lawrence as a Thinker

As is argued by Isabel Fernandes, Lawrence considers the novel "as a privileged place for reconciling again philosophy and fiction (long ago, pitifully split in our western culture), he believes that the novel, more than any other medium,

promotes the kind of experience that for him is central to human beings” (157). Taking a cue from this claim, I read Lawrence’s novella *The Virgin and the Gipsy* as a work of discursive writing in which we can explore his idea of morality and ethics. There are many discussions about Lawrence’s work in terms of various thinkers, such as Freud, Nietzsche, Bakhtin, Buber, Deleuze, and Lévinas to name a few. In “Absolute Immanence,” Giorgio Agamben reconstructs a genealogy of modern philosophy along two lines of thought: a line of transcendence from Kant to Lévinas and Derrida, and a line of immanence from Spinoza, to Nietzsche, to Deleuze and Foucault (238-39). It is interesting to note that these two opposite lines of thought, in a way, can converge in Lawrence. In *Anti-Oedipus* and many other places, Deleuze quotes and interprets Lawrence’s works, often in relation with Nietzsche. In “Nietzsche and Saint Paul, Lawrence and John of Patmos,” Deleuze situates Lawrence within the Nietzschean thought: “Lawrence is closely related to Nietzsche. We can assume that Lawrence would not have written his text without Nietzsche’s *Antichrist*.... Lawrence takes up Nietzsche’s initiative.... Many things change or are supplemented from one initiative to another, and even what they have in common gains in strength and novelty” (37). Derrida also greatly engages with Lawrence on various occasions. His close reading of the poem “Snake” in *The Beast and the Sovereign* is arguably the most significant reading of Lawrence’s work in terms of Lévinas’s ethics of the Other: “And it’s under the sign of this serious, poetic question (especially for Lévinas’s ethics), that I [Derrida] wanted to read you this text by D. H. Lawrence, ‘Snake’” (317-18). Reading Lawrence’s work in terms of one particular line of thought may result in a coherent narrative or explanation about Lawrence’s thought. Many have successfully explored Lawrence’s work in light of Nietzsche and Deleuze or Derrida and Lévinas. However, in examining *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, this paper would insist that neither line of thought can fully elaborate Lawrence’s work.

Deleuze’s notion of ethics and Nietzsche’s critique of morality can be useful tools in understanding the main character, Yvette’s, desire for a new life and escape from the rectory. Deleuze distinguishes ethics from morality; his ethics are equivalent to Nietzsche’s immorality. From Deleuze’s perspective, morality is a set of constraining rules that judge actions and intentions in relation to transcendent values of good and evil. Rather than judging our lives, ethics “involves a creative commitment to maximizing connections, and of maximizing the powers that will expand the possibilities of life” (Marks 85). Therefore, Deleuze’s ethics rest on whether we can create a new life by emerging from the dominant aspects of our current life. However, this Nietzschean and Deleuzian approach cannot resolve all

the ethical entanglement in this novella. One of the problems we face in applying the ethics of Deleuze is the importance of the Other in Lawrence's work. Although, Deleuze also has his own theory of the Other, "Nothing is more foreign to Deleuze than an unconditional concern for the other qua other" (Hallward 92). What most drives Yvette's immorality in the end is her pseudo-religious relationship with the Other. The exploration of otherness is a central preoccupation of Lawrence: "Encountering otherness in all its various forms is for Lawrence a way of rediscovering the emotions that modern society has discarded or even destroyed" (Roux 215). The Other and otherness are mainly embodied in the gipsy and the flood at the end of this novella. Here, I find, the ethical thought of Lévinas and Derrida is particularly helpful in extrapolating Yvette's encounter with the gipsy and the meaning of the flood. The more we read Lawrence's work, the more we find his literature larger than one philosophy. His novel often resists our coherent and thus totalizing understanding of it. "If you try to nail anything down, in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail," says Lawrence in "Morality and the Novel" (172). *The Virgin and the Gipsy* is such one.

In order to clarify the ethical implications of this novella, this paper will begin with Nietzsche's critic of morality and move onto Deleuze's idea of ethics. And then it will finally discuss the relationship between Yvette and the gipsy in terms of Lévinas and Derrida. In doing so, it will demonstrate these two rather incompatible ethical stances inhabit in Lawrence's literature. This is not a weakness or contradiction of Lawrence's work. Rather, this is the ethical performativity of his work, which forces us "to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same, and still retain the ability to function" (Fitzgerald 69).

II. Yvette's Struggles with the Slave Morality

The Virgin and the Gipsy is a short, simple, but provoking novella in terms of its ethical exploration. It begins with an act of immorality: "When the vicar's wife went off with a young and penniless man the scandal knew no bounds" (5). Receptions on this affair in a small community diverge greatly: "Nobody gave any answer. Only the pious said she was a bad woman. While some of the good women kept silent. They knew" (5). The vicar's wife and the penniless man, Mrs. Fawcett and Major Eastwood, Yvette and the gipsy: multiple relationships between men and women in this novella are objects of moral judgment of those in the community. However, Lawrence's descriptions of them are ambivalent or more nuanced. He writes, "the vicar was such a good husband.... he was handsome, and still full of

furtive passion for his unrestrained and beautiful wife” (5). However, the vicar is also illustrated as a man of “self- righteousness”; the novelist writes, “some of the ladies, who had sympathized most profoundly with the vicar, secretly rather disliked the rector” (6). The rector’s younger daughter Yvette is a repetition of her mother with a difference: “to rebellious Yvette, trapped in the constricting and stuffy family home, a gipsy holds out the hope of a freer and fuller life” (Herbert et al xxi). Though she does not run off with the gipsy, Joe Boswell, she is violently in love with him; at the end of this novella Yvette cries in her bed: “Oh, I love him! I love him! I love him!” (77). A rector’s daughter, well educated, young and beautiful, is in love with an exotic, masculine, sensual gipsy, who is scarcely described except that he is surely married and has kids.

In the novella, all the controversial characters including Yvette and her mother are immoralists in that they pursue a different life and value system out of conventional everyday life: “Their mother, of course, had belonged to a higher, if more dangerous and ‘immoral’ world” (28). In reading it, if anyone has had any previous experience with Nietzsche or Deleuze, it would be difficult not to think of this novella in terms of their criticism of morality. For Nietzsche, the Christian morality, which not only restrains our life but also oppresses the new birth of life, is the archenemy of our nature. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche says, “The Church fights against passion with every kind of excision: its method, its ‘cure,’ is *castratism*.... But attacking the passions at the root means attacking life at the root: the practice of the church is *inimical to life*” (21, emphasis in original). Nietzsche believes morality suppresses life. Following Nietzsche, Lawrence also believes that morality is against the natural passion of life.

In this novella, Lawrence represents the Nietzschean antagonism of life and morality focusing on Yvette. In the little morbid stone house where the “atmosphere of cunning self-sanctification and of unmentionability” prevails (7), Yvette embodies a passion for a new life. Her natural enemy is the Mater, ninety-year old Granny: “Her great rival was the younger girl, Yvette. Yvette had some of the vague, careless blitheness of She-who-was-Cynthia” (7). Lawrence contrasts Yvette and the Granny as we contrast life and death: “they [Yvette and Lucille] felt the full weight of Granny’s dead old hand on their lives” (9). Everyday life at this rectory is governed by the Mater. And the Mater symbolizes the decayed life of the rectory:

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 pickles, inexcusable puddings. (10)

This filthiness is the very everydayness of the depraved people. It is naturally against the cheerful, healthy, and vital life. Lawrence represents the rectory as a kind of cultural illness, which is a deadlock of flux for a new life. Deleuze says, "Illness is not a process but a stopping of the process, as in 'the Nietzsche case.'" Moreover, the writer as such is not a patient, but rather a physician, the physician of himself and of the world" ("Literature and Life" 3). Lawrence is a Nietzschean physician of his world. And he is trying to recuperate this illness with Yvette, the immoral Yvette who hates her Granny, and secretly falls in love with a gipsy man, an outsider in her community, but also a social minority: "She [Yvette] liked her covert, unyielding sex, that was immoral, but with a hard, defiant pride of its own. She would despise the rectory and the rectory morality, utterly!" (30). The immoral makes possible a new relationship, a new event, and thus a new life, which is often restricted and hidden in our life by the name of the moral. If the moralists, like the rector, follow abstract and transcendental values which constrain and regulate life, the immoralists act in a totally opposite way: "We who are different, we immoralists, on the contrary, have opened our hearts to all kinds of understanding, comprehending, approving" (Nietzsche, *Idols* 25).

The search for a new life has never been easy, and, in fact, it is a difficult task to be an immoralist. As Lawrence writes in this novella, "It is very much easier to shatter prison bars than to open undiscovered doors to life" (17). In the beginning of the novella Yvette and her sister Lucille are often described as ambivalent: "They seemed so free, and were as a matter of fact so tangled and tied up, inside themselves" (10). Yvette dreams of a new life with the gipsy but "she [also] liked comfort, and a certain prestige. Even as mere rector's daughter, one did have a certain prestige. And she liked that" (65). Her conformism to the present life distracts and confuses her desire to be an immoralist. In addition, her father threatens her greatly if he detects any symptom of immorality in Yvette. When the rector hears about Yvette's intimacy with the Eastwoods, he frightens her greatly. It is interesting to note he was full of hatred but also cowed: "The rector looked at her insouciant face with hatred. Somewhere inside him, he was cowed, he had been born cowed" (59). And Lawrence further writes, "And those who are born cowed hated those who are born uncowed. For the born cowed are natural slaves" (59). From Lawrence's perspective, Yvette's father is a slave figure with resentment. He morally criticizes Yvette's relationship with the Eastwoods, but is secretly afraid

of her contempt as he “had so abjectly curled up ... before She-who-was-Cynthia” (59).

Lawrence's description of the rector reminds us of Nietzsche's idea of the slave revolt in morality. In a number of places Nietzsche speaks of the slave revolt in morality so as to describe the pivotal re-orientation of values in Western civilization. Elaborating a detailed review of Nietzsche's critique of morality is unnecessary as we already have too much research on that topic. However, it is important to note, once again, the slave's morality does not refer to a life of vitality, which Yvette and her mother symbolize in the novella. Rather, the slave's morality, or the rector's morality, aims to suppress and denounce any attempt to pursue a different life. As Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, “everything which lifts the individual up over the herd and creates fear of one's neighbour from now on is called *evil*” (88, emphasis in original). Thus, Yvette is extremely careful to avoid showing any hint of criticism concerning the Mater; if it happens, “He [the rector] would have threatened his daughter with the lunatic asylum” (63). The emotions of pity, guilt and compassion also restrain Yvette from pursuing a new life. For Yvette, the Mater is an object of disgust: “It was Granny whom she came to detest with all her soul” (63). However, she also makes Yvette less powerful through the evoking of the feelings of pity, compassion and guilt:

Then she [Yvette] would immediately feel guilty. After all, it *was* wonderful to be nearly ninety, and have such a clear mind! And Granny never actually did anybody any harm. It was more that she was in the way. And perhaps it was rather awful to have somebody because they were old and in the way. (14, emphasis in original)

In his discussion of morality, Nietzsche criticizes such humanitarian feelings of pity and compassion. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche claims as follows:

What is to be feared, as having an incomparably disastrous effect, would not be great fear of man, but great disgust; as well as great compassion. If these two were ever to mate, their union would inevitably and immediately bring forth something most sinister into the world, the ‘last will’ of man, his will to nothingness, nihilism. (101)

The Mater is not only an object of disgust but also of compassion. From Nietzsche's perspective, she symbolizes the most sinister thing in life, which restrains us from

moving forward into a new territory. In the unclean and airless rectory, Yvette struggles with her father's threat, which stems from his own fear of contempt, and the Mater's evoking of guilty consciousness. Until she meets the gipsy, Yvette is entrapped by such strategies of the slave's morality over the master.

III. Ethics, Connection and Relationship in *The Virgin and the Gipsy*

Deleuze contrasts morality to ethics: "Morality is the judgment of God, the *system of Judgment*. But ethics overthrows the system of judgment. The opposition of values (Good-Evil) is supplanted by the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good-bad)" (*Spinoza* 23, emphasis in original). According to Deleuze, to be ethical, we need to create our own value for action, while not relying on any pre-existing rules of morality. It has never been easy to be ethical; in fact it is dangerous. This would be why Nietzsche cautions about the eternal return: "whatever you will, also will its eternal return" (Bogue 8). Before making a decision, we must ask if we will make the same decision even if this same case, requiring a decision, comes to us again and again eternally. Nietzsche would say, only through this kind of ethical process, can we truly be master of ourselves. For Deleuze, ethics is "a way of assessing what we do in terms of ways of existing in the world," and "[e]thics involves a creative commitment to maximizing connections, and of maximizing the powers that will expand the possibilities of life" (Marks 87-8). Thus, for Deleuze ethics is a pragmatic way of assessing connection, looking for the possibility of a new life in the world. Unlike morality obeying pre-established, transcendental, and universal commandments, ethics does not suggest an explicit moralistic map. In *The Virgin and the Gipsy* Yvette's struggle for a different life in connection with the gipsy is an example of this Nietzschean and Deleuzian ethics.

From Deleuze's perspective, this novella is not about *the virgin and the gipsy*, but about a virgin *and* a gipsy. The relationship or the "and" always matters, because, according to Deleuze, this "and" or an assemblage of at least two units constitutes the very essential unit of event and meaning in his empiricism (*Dialogues* 102). The relationship between man and woman is also significant in Lawrence's thought. In his "Morality and the Novel," Lawrence argues, "The great relationship, for humanity, will always be the relation between man and woman" (175). Lawrence continually claims as follows: "the relation between man and woman will change forever, and will forever be the new central clue to human life. It is the *relation itself* which is the quick and the central clue to life, not the man, nor the woman, nor the children that result from the relationship, as a contingency" ("Morality and the Novel" 175, emphasis in original). In Deleuze's thought, a new

life is a becoming toward the future yet to come: "Becomings, continuous variations of the vital force, ultimately create new life forms" (Colombat 213). Connection, or connectivity, is one of the most fundamental principles of becoming. Creation is possible through connection, difference and event; connection is possible because there is difference, and the moment we encounter difference is an event, which leads us to another becoming. Thus, becoming is a process of connection, difference and event, which evolves into a new form of life. Deleuze and Lawrence similarly emphasize the importance of relationship (or connection) in creating a new life. Without this creation of a life, our life will decay, and eventually perish.

As Deleuze argues, if ethics is a matter of good and bad, then, how could we know what connection (or relationship) is ethically good for us? Arguably, Lawrence would say that we can know it intuitively; he famously writes, "The only justice is to follow the sincere intuition of the soul, angry or gentle" (*Classic* 17-8). Deleuze would similarly argue that we can see what a good relationship is, because it always brings us good affect and emotion, which eventually increases our power. If morality were abstract and transcendental and also only present in the mind of the rector or the rector-like-people in the novella, we would say the ethics of Nietzsche, Lawrence and Deleuze are more about the physical body and unconscious. Differentiating itself from morality, ethics asks us to experiment actively in our life. And our body has its own grammar, which leads us to a good relationship: "She [Yvette] met his dark eyes for a second, their level search, their insolence, their complete indifference, to people like Bob and Leo, and something took fire in her breast" (20). This "something" in Yvette's body is an affect, "a non-conscious experience of intensity" (Shouse). It makes her more powerful and greater than before: "The thought of the gipsy had released the life of her limbs, and crystallized in her heart the hate of rectory: so that now she felt potent, instead of impotent" (30). In "Feeling, Emotion, Affect," Eric Shouse writes, Deleuze's "[a]ffect is the body's way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance." As is the case with Deleuze's affect, this "something" is a way to a new life for Yvette in the great influx of value struggles and various lives. In "Art and Morality," Lawrence also says as follows:

Each thing, living or unloving, streams in its own odd, intertwining flux, and nothing, not even man nor the God of man, nor anything that man has thought or felt or known, is fixed or abiding. All moves. And nothing is true, or good, or right, except in its own living relatedness to its own circumambient universe; to the things that are in the stream with it. (167)

Yvette wonders about her own relatedness in the world. She is in search of her own ethics, or a new morality, which people might criticize as an immorality. In this search, “something in her heart” is her only reference.

Until almost the end of novella, Yvette has trouble in understanding her true will. She oscillates between the slave’s morality and the master’s ethics: “Yes, if she belonged to any side, and to any clan, it was to his [the gipsy] And she liked comfort, and a certain prestige. Even as mere rector’s daughter, one did have a certain prestige. And she liked that” (65). Although the old gipsy cautions Yvette “Be braver in your body, or your luck will go” (66), she could not make a decision. Though she identifies the rectory with “the whole stagnant, sewerage sort of life” (30), she could not find the strength to be the master of her own life. Thus, Yvette relies on the gipsy man as if he is a substitute for the vulgar Christian morality. Though she “had a free-born quality” (59), Yvette acts as if she is a sort of slave figure looking for another master who can eventually liberate her from the dominating morality. She imagines that the gipsy might be someone who holds sway over her: “What she wanted to know, was whether he really had any power over her” (38). Instead of the Christian morality, which Nietzsche harshly accuses as a slave morality, she is trying to replace it with the gipsy. However, this effort is fruitless: “No, he hasn’t any power over me! she said to herself: rather disappointed really, because she wanted somebody, or something, to have power over her” (38). What Yvette misrecognizes here, from Nietzsche’s perspective, is the fact that she should be her own master.

Then, how could she become her own master? Or has Yvette ever become her own master? The contingent flood at the end of this novella is an ethical event prepared for Yvette’s transformation. As the dam was undermined, the moral barrier in her mind was shattered. Like the roaring water, Yvette’s desire traverses any barrier, which she used to have in her relationship with the gipsy. It is the moment for the irruption of her desire. In this sense, the flood represents a strong stream of desire for a new life finally erupted in Yvette’s heart. The old gipsy cautions her, “Be braver in your body, or your luck will leave you. And she said as well: Listen for the voice of water” (66). This is Lawrence’s ethical advice to her and probably to us; be aware of what we truly desire as being constituted in this great flow of desire. Due to this flood and following traversal, Yvette finally realizes what she truly desires. After the flood, Yvette receives a letter from the gipsy man. And in this letter, contrary to Yvette’s expectation, the gipsy man calls himself a servant of Yvette: “Your obdt. servant Joe Boswell” (78). This is as an awakening moment for Yvette, a moment of her promotion from a slave to a master who will have her

own ethics, a value system of endlessly assessing life's power for a new life. Yvette says, "I love him! I love him! I love him!" Without hesitation and confusion, she can finally claim what she wants. However, the gipsy might mean nothing to Yvette at this point. Further, she might have never loved the gipsy. She did not even know his name: "And only then she realized that he had a name" (78). In truth, what Yvette loved is not the gipsy but the *relationship* with the gipsy, which leads her to overcome herself, to make her another Yvette, to be a master of her own life. As Lawrence says, what matters most in life is the *relationship*, which gives our life a new impulse for a new life.

IV. The Ethics of the Other in *The Virgin the Gipsy*

This paper has argued that Yvette is an immoralist dreaming of a new life. However, some would argue that Yvette is too passive and reluctant to be an immoralist: "She had a curious reluctance, always, towards taking action, or making any real move of her own. She always wanted someone else to make a move for her, as if she did not want to play her own game of life" (67). On many occasions, the implications of her transgressions are at best somewhat ambivalent. Her violations are often trivial or even foolish rather than being groundbreaking movements forward another life. For example, "the episode of Yvette's tea-cake transgression, in which she sins against decorum by absent-mindedly winding up with two cakes on her plate" (Guttenberg 170) or her careless mishandling of the Window Fund money makes us hesitate to affirm Yvette's transgression in general. And it is hard to say that those insignificant matters or her naivety could embody any sort of Nietzschean or Deleuzian transgression for the birth of a new life. Yvette is often described as a subversive reminder of her mother who "had only been a moral unbeliever" (28): "She [Yvette only looked at him [the rector] from that senseless snowdrop face which haunted him with fear, and gave him a helpless sense of guilt. That other one, She-who-was-Cynthia, she had looked back at him with the same numb, white fear" (27). No matter how sincerely Yvette dreams of a new life like her mother has, she never becomes the one who truly revolts. Thus, Michael Kramp concludes, "The narrator presents Yvette as a passive prisoner who awaits her rescue at the hands of a dashing French knight" (70-1).

At the end of this novella, every conflict Yvette had in the rectory is settled down by the sudden flood. The filial conflicts between her father and Yvette are also relived through the delight of survival that father and daughter share:

There were great shouts. She [Yvette] had to go to the window. There below,

was the rector, his arms wide open, tears streaming down his face. “I am perfectly all right; Daddy!” She said, with the calmness of her contradictory feelings. She would keep the gipsy a secret from him. At the same time, tears ran down her face. “Don’t you cry, Miss, don’t you cry! The rector’s lost his mother, but he’s thanking his stars to have his daughter. We all thought you were gone as well, we did that!” (88)

The flood resolves all the antagonistic relations Yvette previously had in the rectory. In addition, Yvette’s reunion with her family after the flood forecasts her return to the conventional middle class home, while extinguishing her desire of flight: “The grief over him kept her prostrate. Yet practically, she too was acquiescent in the fact of his [the Gipsy’s] disappearance. Her young soul knew the wisdom of it” (77-8). If this is the ending of this novella, where is all the impulse for the creation of a new life? On the one hand, Lawrence emphasizes the immorality as Nietzsche did in his *On the Genealogy of Morals* or *Twilight of the Idols*. On the other hand, in the conclusion of this novella he also insinuates reservation on the immorality, unless one is a critic of it.

The ethics of Nietzsche and Deleuze is by no means the only kind of ethical relation we can find in this work. There is to be room in *The Virgin and the Gipsy* for other thoughts of ethics. For example, Derrida’s idea of messianic justice can improve our understanding of the flood as well. Taking his cue from Benjamin’s and Lévinas’s ideas of justice, Derrida, in a number of places, writes of the messianic justice or the Other’s justice, which he contrasts with the justice of law. Derrida associates true justice with that which is infinite, incalculable and unknown to us. Unlike the justice of law, the Other’s justice is not something we can claim or define, for God’s justice exceeds our reason and control. And so, Derrida proposes that justice is an experience of the impossible. For one thing, the flood can be read as a moment of justice, the very revelation of the Other. The unexpected wild flood which devastates the rectory around the bank suddenly comes to Yvette’s stagnant life. In the face of this erupting force of the flood, Yvette is impotent. It is no longer a question whether Yvette hates her Granny and the rector or not. Rather, the tension between morality and immorality is violently resolved by the advent of the Other. We are mere existents thrown into the world by the Other’s hand. Our life in the face of the power of the God is always helpless and powerless. And the messianic moment will be to come into our life like the flood.

This ethics of otherness can shed light on our understanding of Yvette and her relationship with the gipsy. Lévinasian ethics is based on the responsibility to

the Other: “[w]ithout the other’s being ‘first,’ and above myself, there can be no ethical relation” (Smith xxi). According to Lévinas, we are obliged to answer to the Other, whoever she is and whatever she does to us. Thus, we have an asymmetrical relation with the Other. This Other is our master, who orders us to act ethically for the sake of the Other. The Other, which cannot be comprehended or identified by our knowledge and power, is also a different name of the infinity or God: “God is the other” (Lévinas 211). And with this Lawrence would clearly agree. In this novella, Yvette makes her covert relationship with the gipsy, as if she passively accepts this Lévinasian Other. She claims that she is always looking for someone who has power over her. Her waiting is “what Derrida calls ‘waiting on the coming of the other’” (qtd. in Sargent and Watson 410): “She [Yvette] always expected *something* to come down the slant of the road from Papplewick, and she always lingered at the landing window” (36, italics in original). For Yvette, the gipsy is a pseudo-revelation of the Other who has power over her, who comes into her life as if her master: “Of all the men she [Yvette] had ever seen, this one was the only one who was stronger than she was in her own kind of strength, her own kind of understanding” (24). Yvette says, “She was aware of *him*, as a dark, complete power” (47, emphasis in original).

Yvette’s relationship with the gipsy is complicated to say the least. To Yvette, the gipsy could be her master, but also just a mere social outcast who cannot be her lover or master. After her first meeting with the gipsy, Yvette fluctuates widely to maintain a distance from the gipsy. On the one hand, her relation to the gipsy is clearly nonsymmetrical; on the other hand, she is also involved in a reversible relationship with the gipsy: “Your obdt. servant Joe Boswell” (90). At the end of the novella, all the mysterious image of the gipsy as the Other is destroyed, as he appears to the ordinary world in the name of Joe Boswell. The mystic Other is, at last, comprehended as Joe Boswell by the letter written in uncouth language: “I see in the paper you are all right after your ducking, as in the same with me. I hope I see you again one day, maybe at Tideswell cattle fair, or maybe we come that way again. I come that day to say good-bye!” (90). This letter demystifies all the relations Yvette once expected to the Other. This moment of comprehension of the Other is a way back into the realm of unethical ontology about what Lévinas would argue: “By the world ‘comprehension,’ writes Lévinas, ‘we understand the fact of taking [*prendre*] and of comprehending [*comprendre*], that is, the fact of englobing, of appropriating. This appropriation as denial of the ethical relation emerges as what Lévinas calls, ‘ontological imperialism’” (Gibson 56). In the novella, the act of comprehending the Other accompanies the naming of the gipsy. And this is an

act of violence: “There was in fact a first violence to be named. To name, to give names that it will on occasion be forbidden to pronounce, such is the originary violence of language which consists in inscribing within a difference, in classifying, in suspending the vocative absolute” (Derrida 112). In this sense, Yvette, at the end of the novella, not only returns to her ordinary life, but also reverts to the ontological imperialism over or the originary violence of language to the Other.

In the novella, it is described that Yvette is looking for her master. But what if, in fact, it is the gipsy who is looking for his master? What if Yvette’s relationship with the gipsy, actually mirrors the gipsy’s responsibility to the Other? Risking his life, Joe Boswell saves Yvette from the flood without hesitation. Here, he neither pursues a reward nor seeks Yvette’s love. As his letter proves, he is an obedient servant to Yvette. Then, isn’t Boswell really the one who performs the infinite responsibility to the Other? The novella ends with the gipsy’s revelation of his name, and Yvette’s recognition of it: “And only then she realized he had a name” (78). Why does this novella end this way? What is the meaning of this remaining name? The considerable part of Derrida’s later work is dedicated to the idea and practice of mourning. In *To Follow: The Wake of Jacques Derrida*, Peggy Kamuf writes, “From the very first, every name, anyone’s name, names a site of mourning to come” (3). Our names outlive us, and every name eventually becomes the name of our loss. Then, how will Yvette answer to the name Joe Boswell? The meaning of that name remains open; it is an unanswered question in the novella. It can be a life-changing moment of awakening for Yvette. And it can also be interpreted as a moment revealing Yvette’s indiscretion. The ending is indecisive; we cannot know what Yvette will make out of the name Joe Boswell. It does not reveal but at least prefigures another possible ethical act and decision to come —possibly but not definitely, Yvette’s mourning for Joe Boswell. We cannot fathom how this act will turn out yet. Arguably, neither does Lawrence.

V. The Ethical Performativity of *The Virgin and the Gipsy*

This paper has so far revealed and discussed the ethical entanglements of the Yvette character in *The Virgin and the Gipsy*. In doing so, it suggests mainly two ways of understanding the ethical entanglements in this novella, first through Nietzschean and Deleuzian ideas of ethics, and then through Lévinasian and Derridean ideas of the Other. Lawrence is “a writer working at the edge of advanced thought, not just by the standard of his own time but also by the standards of today” (Sargent and Watson 429). A Nietzschean-Deleuzian reading of the Yvette character reveals Lawrence’s criticism of morality. Through his descriptions of the rectory, Lawrence

criticizes the moral decay of the English society. And Yvette, though entangled with conservative values, strives to pursue a different life. However, Lawrence's ethical vision does not simply affirm the ethical perspective of Nietzsche and Deleuze. Regardless of his temperamental similarity with them, Lawrence is also cautious of the presence of the mysterious Other. Here, the thought of Lévinas and Derrida can help us understand him better. In the light of Lévinas and Derrida, we can claim that Lawrence is also greatly concerned to see the ethical issues of the Other. But it does not follow that we have to reject Lawrence's affinity with Nietzsche and Deleuze. Rather, with his novella, he opens up various ethical issues that urge us to engage repeatedly with different milieus of ethical thinking.

What Lawrence shows us in this novella may never be fully understood in either way. Yvette's struggles over the immorality enact the entanglement of ethical issues, which we cannot avoid in our life. And what Lawrence truly shows us in this novella might be not simply a new life or infinitely asymmetrical relationship to the Other, which is next to impossible to be actualized in reality. Rather, it could be just the very difficulty of being ethical. However, our recognition of Lawrence's commitment to ethics and morality can encourage us to generate more productive readings of his work. More importantly, it also challenges the pre-established topology of our ethical thought. And this is the very ethical performativity of this novella.

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