

AARON'S ROD

D. H. LAWRENCE

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INTRODUCTION

When D. H. Lawrence began writing *Aaron's Rod* in the autumn of 1917 he was living in London following his expulsion from Cornwall in October – 'I began it in the Mecklenburg Square days.'¹ It was a dreary, hopeless period in his life when, depressed by the recent banning for obscenity of *The Rainbow* – the novel in which he had expressed his deepest belief in marriage as the way to earthly fulfilment – and by the poverty and police persecution of the war years, he was writing little: 'ones self seems to contract more and more away from everything, and especially from people. It is a kind of wintering. The only thing to do is to let it *be* winter' (iii. 197). Nevertheless by the end of January 1918 he had resumed work on the critical essays which were to become *Studies in Classic American Literature* (hereafter *Studies*) and in February he began to work on *Aaron's Rod* again: 'I am doing some philosophic essays, also, very spasmodically, another daft novel. It goes slowly – very slowly and fitfully. But I don't care' (iii. 216). The novel continued to develop 'slowly and fitfully' and indeed was not completed in its final – and radically different – form until the end of May 1921 (iii. 729, 730). However, by mid-March 1918 Lawrence had written something like a third of the book: 'I have begun a novel now – done 150 pages – which is as blameless as *Cranford*. It shall not have one garment disarranged, but shall be buttoned up like a member of Parliament. Still, I wouldn't vouch that it is like *Sons and Lovers*: it is funny. It amuses me terribly' (iii. 227).

But although he continued to work on the novel at intervals – 'I am slowly working at another novel: though I feel it's not much use. No publisher will risk my last, and none will risk this, I expect'² – and as late as 8 June 1919 still spoke of wanting to finish his 'quite "proper" novel' (iii. 364), his interest in novel writing was flagging: 'I can't do anything in the world today – am just choked' (iii. 280). He probably abandoned *Aaron*

¹ *Letters*, iii. 728. DHL and Frieda were lent a bed-sitting room at 44 Mecklenburgh Square, London, by a friend Hilda Doolittle (see Explanatory note on 26:31 and *Letters*, ii. 203 n. 3) after their expulsion from Cornwall. (Subsequent references to *Letters*, i.–iv. are given in the text with volume and page number.)

² *Letters*, iii. 280. 'My last' refers to *Women in Love*, still unpublished though first completed in November 1916.

shortly after June since there is no further reference to it in correspondence that year. It was not until July 1920 that he began writing the novel again (iii. 567, 572). One can only guess what the early 'blameless' *Aaron* could have been like, lacking as it did the important Italian material of the later version (which was based on Lawrence's experience of Florence in November 1919 and later). He may have drawn on his life in London in the autumn of 1917 for some of the early *Aaron's Rod* as indeed he did for the novel as we have it now. Certainly many of the characters as finally created are thinly disguised, often satirical, portraits of the circle he moved in during the autumn of 1917. The young musician Cecil Gray, whom Lawrence met in Cornwall in the summer of 1917 (iii. 154) became Cyril Scott (the name of an actual person and also a musician);³ the Lawrences' friend Hilda Doolittle (who had lent them a bed-sitting room at Mecklenburgh Square) became Julia Cunningham, and her husband Richard Aldington became Robert Cunningham; while 'Dorothy Yorke – Arabella, the American girl at Mecklenburgh Sq' (iii. 259) was the prototype for Josephine Ford. Various incidents such as the episode of 'The Lighted Tree' in chapter III of *Aaron's Rod* had their origins in actual events,⁴ but of course Lawrence drew very widely on his past for material and it would be dangerous to infer too much about the content, dating and composition of *Aaron's Rod* from such evidence. Lawrence often reworked old material. Indeed, Aaron's surname 'Sisson' appears in an early story 'The Shades of Spring' in the character John Adderley 'Syson',⁵ while the Bricknells of *Aaron's Rod* (like the Crich family of *Women in Love* and the Barlows of *Touch and Go* who were in some measure modelled on the real-life Barbers of Lamb Close) were partly based on a local Eastwood family, the Brentnalls. How much of the material in the early *Aaron's Rod* was transmuted into the novel as it emerged in the summer of 1921 must therefore remain conjectural since no manuscript survives, but it is reasonable to suppose that when Lawrence began the novel again he incorporated the memories of his past in the Midlands and those of the war years, in particular the autumn of 1917 when he was in London, in the first part of the novel, much as he used the flight to Italy in 1919 and the time in Florence for the second half.

The early *Aaron* appears to have had only a transient interest for Lawrence. His commitment to fiction temporarily declined after the

³ See Asquith 338 where Lady Cynthia Asquith mentions Cyril Scott as one of a party at Glynde in September 1917. DHL also wrote to another Cyril Scott on 23 March 1921 (*Letters*, iii. 691–2).

⁴ See Asquith 341–2.

⁵ 'Sisson' was a common name in the Eastwood area; see Explanatory note on 5:8.

banning of *The Rainbow* and the difficulty of finding a publisher for its sequel, *Women in Love* which he nevertheless went on revising. However, he wrote in May 1917: 'Philosophy interests me most now – not novels or stories. I find people ultimately boring: and you can't have fiction without people. So fiction does not, at the bottom, interest me any more. I am weary of humanity and human things' (iii. 127). Much of his best writing at this time and in the immediate post-war period, therefore, is to be found not in fiction but in the essays and in the poems which were to be collected in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*. As he later wrote, 'Once be disillusioned with the man-made world, and you can still see the magic, the beauty, the delicate realness of all other life.'⁶ However by July 1918 he was becoming absorbed again by just those 'human things', and he wrote the first chapters of *Movements in European History*, a textbook for school children, commissioned by Oxford University Press (iii. 261, 268–9). During the summer and autumn of that year he continued to revise the essays for *Studies*. These were to become much more than literary essays on American fiction: they contain a searching analysis, and a telling condemnation, of the civilisation that produced the first world war, but it is characteristic of Lawrence that they are equally statements of his belief in man's ability to emerge from that destruction, to create 'a new era of living':⁷

At present there is a vast myriad-branched human engine, the very thought of which is death. But in the winter even a tree looks like iron. Seeing the great trunk of dark iron and the swaying steel flails of boughs, we cannot help being afraid. What we see of buds looks like sharp bronze stud-points. The whole thing hums elastic and sinister and fatally metallic, like some confused scourge of swinging steel throngs. Yet the lovely cloud of green and summer lustre is within it . . . It only wants the miracle, the new, soft, creative wind: which does not blow yet. Meanwhile we can only stand and wait, knowing that what is, is not.⁸

Gradually Lawrence's enthusiasm for writing kindled again, and the second half of 1918 saw the completion of several essays on education as well as some short stories⁹ and the play *Touch and Go* which 'fired up my last sparks of hope in the world, as it were, and cried out like a Balaams ass. I believe the world yet might get a turn for the better, if it but had a little

⁶ 'Review of *Gifs of Fortune*, by H. M. Tomlinson', *Phoenix* 345. Although this review dates from November 1926 the quotation aptly expresses DHL's feelings at this time.

⁷ 'The Spirit of Place', *The Symbolic Meaning*, ed. Armin Arnold (Arundel, 1962), pp. 30–1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–1.

⁹ See *Letters*, iii. 285–6, 302–3, 298, 299–300. The stories were 'The Blind Man', 'The Fox' and 'Tickets Please'. By December DHL had written '4 little essays for the *Times* – "Education of the People"': see *Letters*, iii. 306.

shove that way' (iii. 293). In December 1918 and January 1919 he continued his efforts to give the world that 'shove', and he worked on *Movements in European History* which he completed early in February 1919.¹⁰ But his health, never robust, had been undermined by the strain and poverty of the war years and the frustration of being trapped in England – 'I do so want to *get out* – out of England – really, out of Europe. And I *will* get out' (iii. 312). And the early months of 1919 found Lawrence ill again with little interest in writing anything, although he continued to revise his history book (iii. 347): 'I have not written anything these last few months – not since I have been ill. I feel I don't want to write – still less do I want to publish anything' (iii. 348).

During the summer months of 1919, however, Lawrence rallied and wrote some stories and essays, further revised *Studies* and, with his friend Koteliansky, embarked on a translation of the Russian philosopher Shestov's *All Things Are Possible*.¹¹ At last in October the long awaited passports and visas (applied for in August) arrived. Lawrence's wife Frieda left for Germany in the middle of the month and on the 14th of November Lawrence himself left England for Italy. He first stayed near Turin as the guest of Sir Walter Becker (whom he portrayed in *Aaron's Rod* as Sir William Franks)¹² and then continued to Florence where he stayed at the Pensione Balestra, Piazza Mentana (described in *Aaron's Rod* as the Pension Nardini):

On a dark, wet, wintry evening in November, 1919, I arrived in Florence, having just got back to Italy for the first time since 1914. My wife was in Germany, gone to see her mother, also for the first time since that fatal year 1914. We were poor; who was going to bother to publish me and to pay for my writings, in 1918 and 1919? I landed in Italy with nine pounds in my pocket and about twelve pounds lying in the bank in London. Nothing more.¹³

Nevertheless, after the bleakness of the war years in Cornwall and London, the flight to Italy seemed like an entry into another world: 'Italy is still gay – does all her weeping in her press – takes her politics with her wine, and enjoys them' (iii. 417). And in December Lawrence travelled to Rome, to Picinisco (which he described in the last chapters of *The Lost*

¹⁰ See *Letters*, iii. 304, 322, 326 and 323.

¹¹ DHL wrote 'Fanny and Annie' and 'Monkey Nuts' in May (see *Letters*, iii. 360). He was editing Koteliansky's translation of Shestov in August (iii. 380–3) and probably finished the work on Shestov around the end of the month (iii. 387). He also revised *Studies* during September (iii. 400).

¹² See *Letters*, iii. 417. See also Sir Walter's account of DHL's visit in Nehls, ii. 12–13, and Explanatory note on 130:39.

¹³ 'Introduction' to *Memoirs of the Foreign Legion* by Maurice Magnus (Secker, 1924), p. 11.

Girl) and Capri, although he wrote little.¹⁴ When he did resume work in January 1920 he was to channel his energy first into *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (iii. 466) and, in February, into the novel which had originally started as 'The Insurrection of Miss Houghton' in 1913, had lain fallow and was now to be completely rewritten and entitled *The Lost Girl*. Lawrence worked on *The Lost Girl* over the next few months while living at the Fontana Vecchia, Taormina, Sicily, where he had moved early in March (iii. 497) and where much of *Aaron's Rod* was also to be written. *The Lost Girl* was finished early in May (iii. 515) – 'quite amusing: and quite moral' (iii. 525) – and although Lawrence mentions that he intended to begin work on a new novel, *Mr Noon* (iii. 537), by June he had set this aside to write poems for his *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* volume and to revise *Studies* and *The Lost Girl*.

When Lawrence finally returned to *Aaron's Rod* in July 1920, he seems to have followed a pattern similar to that which governed the writing of *The Lost Girl*: that is, he scrapped his early work and began the novel afresh, as the subsequent references to his 'new' novel (and indeed his general habit of entirely rewriting his novels) suggest. His correspondence in this month does not specifically mention the novel by title – 'I have begun another novel – amusing it is' (iii. 565) and 'I'm working with ever-diminishing spasms of fitfulness at a novel which I know won't go forward many more steps' (iii. 567). It is just possible that some of the references to the 'new' novel may be to *Mr Noon*, whose composition history is intertwined with that of *Aaron's Rod*, but Lawrence's letter to his English publisher Martin Secker on 18 July clearly establishes that the text he is working on is *Aaron's Rod*: 'Yes, I have another novel in hand. I began it two years ago. I have got it $\frac{1}{3}$ done, and it is very amusing. But it stands still just now, awaiting events. Once it starts again it will steam ahead' (iii. 572). However, the novel progressed very slowly. Already in September when he was again in Florence, Lawrence was complaining: 'My novel jerks one chapter forward now and then. It is half done. But where the other $\frac{1}{2}$ is coming from, ask the Divine Providence' (iii. 594), and by the end of the month: 'My novel – the new one – has stuck half way, but I don't care. I may get a go on him at Taormina. If not, I think I can sort of jump him picaresque' (iii. 602). Early in October Lawrence seemed determined to finish the novel: 'I am still stuck in the middle of *Aaron's Rod*, my novel. But at Taormina I'll spit on my hands and lay fresh hold' (iii. 608) and, a little

¹⁴ DHL mentions that he is 'going to do various small things – on Italy and on Psychoanalysis – for the periodicals' and that he has sent 'Murry an essay from here', which may be 'David' (*Letters*, iii. 426–7, 428).

later, 'I am half way through a novel called *Aaron's Rod*, – hope to finish before Christmas' (iii. 613). There is no evidence in the correspondence to indicate precisely where Lawrence was 'stuck' but it seems reasonable to assume from the meticulous account of the November days spent as Sir Walter Becker's guest and the arrival in Florence which became chapters XII and XIII, the half-way point of the novel, that Lawrence had written at least this much. The thinly disguised portraits of leading figures in the Anglo-Italian community in Florence at this time – Norman Douglas as Argyle, Reggie Turner as Algy Constable, and Maurice Magnus (for whose *Memoirs of the Foreign Legion* Lawrence was later to write an introduction) as Louis Mee¹⁵ – could possibly have been written by then. But since these characters and the events surrounding them do not occur until three-quarters of the way through the finished novel (chapters XVI and XVII) it seems more likely that they were written rather later.

Meanwhile Lawrence was finishing poems for *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* and was correcting *The Lost Girl* proofs, although he appears to have been working only sporadically (iii. 609). In November 1920 any work he may have been doing on *Aaron* was further disrupted by a request from Oxford University Press to write a new penultimate chapter on Italian history for *Movements in European History* (iii. 622). The new chapter, like some of the Italian scenes in *Aaron's Rod* and the correspondence of 1920 and 1921, reflects both his growing disenchantment with post-war Italy and Italian politics¹⁶ and his instinct for sensing the mood of a country and its people, as well as his shrewd understanding of that era of political unrest which saw the rise of fascism and communism.

And so Italy was made—modern Italy. Fretfulness, irritation, and nothing in life except money: this is what the religious fervour of Garibaldians and Mazzinians works out to—in united, free Italy as in other united, free countries. No wonder liberty so often turns to ashes in the mouth, after being so fair a fruit to contemplate. Man needs more than liberty.¹⁷

In the meantime work on *Aaron's Rod* had simply ceased: 'Am doing no serious work' (iii. 624) and 'I did more than half of *Aaron's Rod*, but can't end it: the flowering end missing, I suppose – so I began a comedy, which I hope will end' (iii. 626). Presumably the 'comedy' was *Mr Noon* which Lawrence specifically mentions to Secker a fortnight later: 'Probably between *Women in Love* and *The Rainbow* best insert another incensorable

¹⁵ See Weintraub 189–99 and Nehls, ii. 61–6.

¹⁶ See letter to Mackenzie, 7 October 1920: 'Italy feels awfully shaky and nasty, and for the first time my unconscious is uneasy of the Italians' (*Letters*, iii. 609).

¹⁷ *Movements* 291.

novel – either *Aaron's Rod*, which I have left again, or *Mr Noon*, which I am doing.¹⁸ For the rest of December 1920 and part of January 1921 – except for a quick jaunt to Sardinia – he continued work on *Mr Noon*¹⁹ but he seemed unable to recommence work on *Aaron's Rod*: '*Mr Noon* will be, I think, *most* dangerous: but humorously so. It will take me about a month still to finish – this month was lost moving about. *Aaron* will not be dangerous – if only his rod would start budding, poor dear' (iii. 653).

However, Lawrence set aside both *Mr Noon* and *Aaron's Rod* in February to write *Sea and Sardinia* – 'I have nearly done a little travel-book: "Diary of a Trip to Sardinia": which will have photographs, and which I hope, through the magazines, will make me something' (iii. 664) – which he finished in February and revised during March (iii. 667, 681, 686). Although at the time he still intended to 'try to finish *Aaron's Rod*. But am not in a good work-mood' (iii. 688), his enthusiasm for writing anything at all had waned, and the familiar urge to travel seized him. In the early months of the year he proposed various schemes, which varied from the romantic one of sailing the South Seas with a few congenial souls, to working a farm in New England, or touring the Mediterranean by boat:²⁰ 'This is a sort of crisis for me. I've got to come unstuck from the old life and Europe, and I can't know beforehand. So have patience' (iii. 693).

In April Lawrence did travel: he visited Palermo, Capri, Rome and Florence and, by the end of the month, Baden-Baden in Germany, where he was finally to complete *Aaron's Rod*. 'I shall try and finish *Aarons Rod* this summer, before finishing *Mr Noon II* – which is funny, but a hair-raiser. First part innocent – *Aarons Rod* innocent' (iii. 702). At last, early in May 1921, residing in Baden-Baden with Frieda, Lawrence resumed work on *Aaron's Rod*: 'have some hope of finishing it here' (iii. 714), he told his friend and agent in America, Robert Mounstier. To his Buddhist friends Earl and Achsah Brewster he wrote: 'I am finishing Aaron. And you won't like it *at all*. Instead of bringing him nearer to heaven, in leaps and bounds, he's misbehaving and putting ten fingers to his nose at everything. Damn heaven. Damn holiness. Damn Nirvana. Damn it all' (iii. 720). On 12 May he informed Curtis Brown, now his official agent in England, that he was 'having a shot at finishing another novel *Aaron's Rod* – which is $\frac{2}{3}$ done' (iii. 717), and to Secker on 16 May he wrote: 'Here I have got *Aaron's Rod* well under weigh again, and have the end in sight. Nothing impossible in it, at

¹⁸ *Letters*, iii. 638; see also iii. 439, 459.

¹⁹ See *Letters*, iii. 639, 645; and especially 'I left off *Aaron's Rod* and began "Lucky Noon"' (*Letters*, iii. 646).

²⁰ See *Letters*, iii. 655, 664–5, 667–8, 689, 702.

all.²¹ Indeed he had sent the first part of the novel to be typed by Violet Monk in England early in May with instructions to Mountsier to bring both typed copies (ribbon and carbon) with him when he came on his proposed visit to the Lawrences.²² By 27 May Lawrence was confident of completing the novel and he wrote both to Secker and to Koteliansky:

I have *nearly* finished my novel *Aarons Rod*, which I began long ago and could never bring to an end. I began it in the Mecklenburg Square days. Now suddenly I had a fit of work – sitting away in the woods. And save for the last chapter, it is done. But it won't be popular. (iii. 728)

You will be glad to hear I have as good as finished *Aaron's Rod*: that is, it is all done except the last chapter – two days work. It all came quite suddenly here. But it is a queer book: I've no idea what you or anybody will think of it. When it is typed I will let you see it. (iii. 729)

The book was completed by the end of the month: on 1 June Lawrence wrote to both Mountsier and Curtis Brown that he had just finished the novel (iii. 730, 731).

Lawrence called *Aaron's Rod* 'the last of my serious English novels – the end of *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* line. It had to be written – and had to come to such an end' (iv. 92–3). *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* – 'an organic artistic whole' as he termed them (iii. 459) – move chronologically from the rural England of the mid-nineteenth century to the very brink of the first world war, while *Aaron's Rod*, opening with the Christmas of 1918 after the armistice, follows the travels of a character who leaves England altogether. All these novels chronicle the individual's search in each generation for fulfilment, and all question the quality of existence possible in an increasingly materialistic and technological England where the value of the individual seems to be diminished and his needs reduced to insignificance. The novels in this 'line' dramatise the question which Lawrence thought faced every generation: *how* to live, how to bring the needs of the intellectual and emotional selves into harmony and into equilibrium with the outside world, how to find a rule of conduct that both

²¹ *Letters*, iii. 722. It seems likely that DHL had written at least as far as chaps. XVI and XVII by this time and may have been working on the scenes between Aaron and the Marchesa, which makes his assurance to Secker that there was 'nothing impossible', in the novel ironic, in view of later censoring by his publisher.

²² '... the first part of *Aaron's Rod* was being typed by Miss V. Monk, Grimsbury Farm, Long Lane, near Newbury, Berks. I wrote a week ago and asked her please to post me the carbon copy only. You might ask her if she has done so: and if she hasn't, bring the whole, both type copies, if you like. I really think I may finish *Aaron's Rod* while I am here' (*Letters*, iii. 724). The Lawrences knew Violet Monk during their time at nearby Chapel Farm Cottage in 1918 and 1919; see Nehls, i. 463–7, 486–7 and 501–6. (The reference on p. 505 to Violet Monk typing *The Lost Girl* is an error for her work on *Aaron's Rod*.)

interprets man's role in the world and sustains his inner being. Like Nietzsche (whom he quotes in *Aaron's Rod*), Lawrence saw human existence as a dialectic, a continual process of conflict between elements within the self as well as outside it, a conflict however which was a necessary condition for the creation of oneself into new being. In *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* this quest for integration is achieved to a greater or lesser degree through the coming together of opposites, male and female, in the sacrament of marriage. *Aaron's Rod*, however, completed in the desolation of post-war Germany ('Germany helped me to the finish of *Aaron*' iv. 259), not only rejects the civilisation that had rushed into that cataclysm – 'I am feeling absolutely at an end with the civilised world' (iii. 689) – but questions marriage itself as the goal of human fulfilment: 'How we hang on to the marriage clue! Doubt if its really a way out' (iii. 521). Indeed it suggests that marriage is only a prelude:

The best thing I have known is the stillness of accomplished marriage, when one possesses one's own soul in silence . . . And I must confess that I feel this selfsame 'accomplishment' of the fulfilled being is only a preparation for new responsibilities ahead, new unison in effort and conflict, the effort to make, with other men, a little new way into the future, and to break through the hedge of the many.²³

The writings of the post-war period reveal two important developments in the direction of Lawrence's thinking: first a desire to explore the nature of human relationship outside the marriage bond, in particular that of political man; and second a growing fascination with the unknown forces within the psyche itself, 'the source and well-head of creative activity'²⁴ as he called it. It is no accident that the major essays Lawrence wrote while engaged on *Aaron's Rod* (and which, with *Studies*, may be said to stand in the same relation to that novel as 'Study of Thomas Hardy' does to *The Rainbow* and 'The Crown' to *Women in Love*) should have been studies in psychology: *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. *Aaron's Rod*, then, set at first in the industrial Midlands, belongs in one sense to the old world of Lawrence's 'English novels', but in the Italian chapters it also looks forward to the exploration of man's deepest impulses as they manifest themselves in his political, social and religious activity. These are the issues that were to inform the novels Lawrence wrote next, *Kangaroo* and *The Plumed Serpent*.

Writing to Katherine Mansfield in December 1918, Lawrence had already recognised a decisive change in his conception of the novel and in

²³ *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (Seltzer, 1922), chap. xi. Cf. 'Whitman' in *The Symbolic Meaning*, ed. Arnold, p. 263; cf. also below pp. 104 and 266.

²⁴ 'Introduction' to *All Things Are Possible* by Leo Shestov, *Phoenix* 216.

the purpose of his writing: 'It seems to me, if one is to do fiction now, one must cross the threshold of the human psyche' (iii. 302). The letter is revealing, and may suggest one reason why Lawrence had such difficulty in completing *Aaron's Rod*: he was in a period of transition, reluctant merely to continue the 'picaresque' adventures, as he rather dismissively called them, of his hero and concerned to move away from the vividly realised physical settings and events of post-war England and Italy to a deeper exploration of the spiritual process of his age, for which Aaron's experiences were to provide a vehicle. Of course the novel also renders particular places and characters, but the story of Aaron's search, as the last chapters of the novel reveal, also becomes the presentation of Lawrence's – and everyman's – quest: 'Allons, there is no road yet, but we are all Aarons with rods of our own', as he wrote in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*,²⁵ and again: 'Men live and see according to some gradually developing and gradually withering vision. This vision exists also as a dynamic idea or metaphysic—exists first as such. Then it is unfolded into life and art.'²⁶

The Rainbow, *Women in Love* and *Aaron's Rod* chronicle that 'gradually developing and gradually withering vision': *Aaron's Rod*, with its discussion of the obscure but powerful forces which move men and civilisations, offers a glimpse of the vision to come. In the concluding chapters Lilly (who often articulates Lawrence's beliefs) discusses the two primary impulses in man, love and power, and questions the nature of the political and religious ideologies which have shaped western civilisation, suggesting that the love mode is outworn and that the new era will be one of power. But what becomes clear in the novel, as elsewhere in Lawrence's writings, is that Lilly's idea of power transcends any notion of mere authoritarianism. Lawrence's vision of man is not political but spiritual, not a denial of man's freedom and individuality but a confirmation of it because it is based on a recognition of the innate and inexplicable differences between each unique human being. 'Power—the power-urge. The will-to-power—but not in Nietzsche's sense', says Lilly and he goes on to explain the doctrine of power as a creative force, that which causes individuals and cultures to rise into being, to create themselves: 'you develop the one and only phoenix of your own self' and 'your soul inside you is your only Godhead'.²⁷

²⁵ Chap. I.

²⁶ 'Foreword' to *Fantasia of the Unconscious*.

²⁷ See below 297:28–9, 295:38–9 and 296:26.

An account of a conversation between Lawrence and Earl and Achsah Brewster in May 1921, shortly before he completed the novel, reveals a fascinating glimpse of an alternative ending to *Aaron's Rod*:

We were alone, and he told us that he was writing *Aaron's Rod*, and began outlining the story. It seemed more beautiful as he narrated it in his low sonorous voice with the quiet gesture of his hands, than it ever could written in a book. Suddenly he stopped, after Aaron had left his wife and home and broken with his past, gravely asking what he should do with him now.

We ventured that only two possible courses were left to a man in his straits – either to go to Monte Cassino and repent, or else to go through the whole cycle of experience.

He gave a quiet chuckle of surprise and added that those were the very possibilities he had seen, that first he had intended sending him to Monte Cassino, but found instead that Aaron had to go to destruction to find his way through from the lowest depths.²⁸

Neither for Aaron nor for the England of his time was a retreat into the peace of a monastery possible, as Lawrence recognised. On finishing the novel he wrote: 'the old order has gone . . . And the era of love and peace and democracy with it. There will be an era of war ahead' (iii. 732). Lawrence's words have proved all too prophetic: the novel ends with an anarchist's bomb which destroys Aaron's flute – his rod, the emblem of his quest and the means by which he has followed it. Yet, characteristically, the final message of the novel is one of hope: 'It'll grow again. It's a reed, a water-plant—you can't kill it'.²⁹

Like Aaron, fleeing the devastation of post-war England, Lawrence struggled with his writings which were, as he wrote on finishing *The Lost Girl*, 'the crumpled wings of my soul. They get me free before I get myself free . . . I get some sort of wings loose' (iii. 522). His post-war works, particularly *Aaron's Rod*, *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and the essays in *Studies*, are a record of that struggle to find a new vision of regeneration for modern man. In the travels that were to come – Ceylon and the Far East, Australia, and the Americas and finally his eventual return to Europe – and in the literature that arose out of them, Lawrence sought to understand the creative and vital forces in man which alone can reshape his world.

²⁸ Nehls, ii. 58–9. DHL visited Monte Cassino in February 1920 and later recorded his impression of the monastery in his 'Introduction' to Maurice Magnus's *Memoirs of the Foreign Legion*. Also cf. Nietzsche: 'Whoever, at any time, has undertaken to build a new heaven has found the strength for it in his own hell', *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. F. Golffing (New York, 1956), p. 251.

²⁹ See below 285:12.

Publication

Although Lawrence had sent the first part of *Aaron's Rod* to England to be typed by Violet Monk c. 9 May 1921, he did not actually get the 143 pages of typescript back (iv. 54) until 27 June 1921, when he wrote to Mountsier: 'Have received *Aaron MS*.'³⁰ There was a delay of three weeks before Lawrence sent the second part of the novel to be typed, but there is no indication in the correspondence of the reason for the delay. Presumably Lawrence was revising the manuscript. Although on 12 June he had written to Mountsier, 'Hear from Miss Monk she has sent you *Aaron's* first part. I must see it: and then I must sent this Conclusion to be typed' (iv. 36), he did not post the second portion of *Aaron's Rod* until 21 July, and then it was to his agent Curtis Brown.

This is the remainder of *Aarons Rod*. I had planned to type it myself, but find no type-writing machine available. Have it done as quick as possible, then send it back to me for revision – true copy and carbon copy both. I have the first 143 pages here ready typed. But I want to do a lot of revision on the typescript. (iv. 54)

The revisions in the first 143 pages, however, are relatively minor; only chapter II contains any substantially rewritten passages, while chapter III has a few altered phrases and sentences and chapter VII some rewritten dialogue. Presumably Lawrence was making these revisions to both ribbon and carbon copy (only the latter has survived) during the last part of July and early in August.

Curtis Brown duly sent the two copies of the remainder of the novel which Lawrence had requested and these arrived on 7 August 1921:

I was very glad to get the two copies of *Aaron's Rod* this morning – beautifully typed and bound. Very many thanks. I was just beginning to be uneasy, having had no word from you.

Tell me please what the cost is, so that I can compare with what I pay in Italy. (iv. 65)

Although Lawrence went on to promise to 'return the whole MS. directly', he actually revised the second part extensively, and on 14 August warned Curtis Brown (and through him his American publisher Thomas Seltzer)

³⁰ *Letters*, iv. 44. As the June correspondence reveals, DHL sometimes meant the typescript rather than the autograph manuscript by 'MS'. His letter to Mountsier of 7 June 1921 differentiates between the two states of the text but in letters to Secker, Mountsier and Curtis Brown, all dated 12 June 1921, DHL confirms that he is waiting for the *typed* copy of *Aaron's Rod* to arrive from Mountsier, but speaks of this to Curtis Brown as the 'MS' (ibid., 28, 34–6). On 20 June 1921 he was still waiting for Mountsier to bring the typescript with him 'which lies at American Express' (ibid. 39). In the end Mountsier actually posted the copy.

that there would be some delay in despatching the novel: 'I may be some time sending the *Aaron* MSS: must go through it carefully. Surely it is just as well also if Secker publishes it next Spring: is there really any hurry? Please answer' (iv. 69). Seltzer, impatient to have the novel, had hoped to receive it earlier and wrote to Mountsier on 20 August: 'I am definitely determined to bring it out this fall.'³¹ But the only thing Seltzer did receive from Lawrence in August was a brief foreword to *Aaron's Rod*, dated 14 August 1921, of which no trace has survived beyond a description in a public sale catalogue of 1936.³²

There were, then, *two* complete corrected typescripts of *Aaron's Rod*, ribbon and carbon, (pp. 1–143 typed by Violet Monk, pp. 144–490 typed by Curtis Brown's agency). The one destined for Seltzer through Mountsier has survived, the other for Secker through Curtis Brown has been lost. Lawrence sent Mountsier the typescript (mixed ribbon and carbon copy) he had revised for Seltzer (hereafter TS) on 8 October and confirmed this in his letter of the same date to Seltzer himself:

I hope Mountsier has sent you the MS of *Aarons Rod*. He emphatically dislikes the book, but then he is not responsible for it. I want you to write and tell me simply what you feel about it. It is the last of my serious English novels – the end of *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* line. It had to be written – and had to come to such an end. If you wish, I will write a proper little explanatory foreword to it – not the one I sent from Zell am See. I want you to tell me if you consider it 'dangerous' – and what bit of it you think so – and if you'd like any small alteration made. If you would, please name the specific lines. (iv. 92–3)

This second 'little explanatory foreword' was written as 'a small introduction to *Aaron's Rod*' (iv. 104) and posted to Seltzer on 22 October but as with the first (written in August) no copy has been located. In the same letter to Seltzer Lawrence confirmed that he had sent the TS to Mountsier who would be responsible for forwarding it to Seltzer: 'I hear from Mountsier that he is posting you *Aaron's Rod*. I hope you won't dislike it as much as he does. – But I want you to publish it about as it stands. I will

³¹ *Letters to Thomas and Adele Seltzer*, ed. Gerald M. Lacy (Los Angeles, 1976), p. 214. See also *Letters*, iv. 57.

³² The catalogue of the American Art Association (Anderson Galleries Inc., New York) advertised the following items in their public sale of 29 and 30 January 1936: an autograph manuscript of about 285 words, 'Foreword to *Aaron's Rod*', signed and dated 14 August 1921; a letter of about 145 words written from Thumersbach, Zell-am-See, and dated 15 August 1921, to Thomas Seltzer. The catalogue quotes part of the letter which relates to *Aaron's Rod* and the 'Foreword': 'Probably you won't like it; probably it won't sell. Yet it is what I want it to be. I am satisfied with it. It is the end of the *Rainbow–Women in Love* novels: and my last word. I enclosed a little Foreword to it, which you print or not, as you like' (*Letters*, iv. 71). See also *ibid.* 93.

make any small modification you wish. So write at once.' Presumably Seltzer received the TS around 22 October or shortly thereafter. It was not until 10 November, however, that Lawrence wrote to Secker promising to send the second corrected typescript of *Aaron's Rod* to Curtis Brown,³³ and in the end this second copy was not posted until 23 November. However, although Lawrence sent this second copy to Secker a month later there is no reason to suppose that he made any additional corrections to it. His letter to Secker on that date also states: 'I am sending Curtis Brown the MS. of *Aarons Rod*. I want it to be published simultaneously with Seltzer's' (iv. 129).

The direction for simultaneous publication, however, is misleading and at variance with Lawrence's determination that Seltzer not be at a publishing disadvantage. His letter to Curtis Brown of the same date clearly states: 'I am sending you today the MS. of *Aaron's Rod*, for Secker. I don't want him by *any means* to publish it before Seltzer is ready at the American end: if Secker wants to publish it' (iv. 129). This is further confirmed by other references to publication policy: for example, in an earlier letter to Curtis Brown (where he acknowledged receipt of the two typescripts, ribbon and carbon, of *Aaron's Rod*) Lawrence specifically states: 'But *please* see that Seckers date of publication does not precede Seltzers' (iv. 65). And in an earlier letter still of 30 July 1921 Lawrence had actually announced his intention to give Seltzer the edge in publishing *Aaron's Rod*.

Your letter of 15 July today. I had your cable in Baden. – I had to send 2nd half of *Aaron's Rod* to England to be typed after all. Expect it back next week. Then shall post it to you. I shall post your copy two weeks sooner than Secker's. He hasn't seen the book yet. Mountsier read the first half and didn't like it: takes upon himself to lecture me about it. Says it will be unpopular. Can't help it. It is what I mean, for the moment. It isn't 'improper' at all: only it never turns the other cheek, and spits on ecstasy. I like it, because it kicks against the pricks. I'll send it the first possible moment. (iv. 57)

As we have seen, however, Lawrence did not post the TS to Seltzer 'next week' and, during August, on the advice of Curtis Brown and Mountsier he suggested a spring publication date. On 12 September he wrote: 'I think better withhold *Aaron* till spring'.³⁴

³³ 'I am going to send *Aaron's Rod* to Curtis Brown. He and Mountsier hate it. Probably you will too. But I want you to publish it none the less. That is to say, I don't in the least want you to if you don't wish to. But I will have the book published. It is my last word in one certain direction' (*Letters*, iv. 116).

³⁴ *Letters*, iv. 85. Curtis Brown had written to DHL on 26 August 1921, while he was revising the novel, that he thought 'Next spring will be all right for "AARON'S ROD"'. In fact I