

MR NOON

D. H. LAWRENCE

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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Reprinted 1984 (twice), 1985

Library of Congress catalogue card number: 83-24082

British Library cataloguing in publication data

Lawrence, D. H.

Mr Noon. –

(The Cambridge edition of the letters and works of D. H. Lawrence)

I. Title. II. Vasey, Lindeth.

823'.912 [F] PR6023.A93

ISBN 0 521 25251 2 hardback

ISBN 0 521 27247 5 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2001

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INTRODUCTION

This volume of the Cambridge edition of D. H. Lawrence is of unique interest; it presents for the first time a substantially new, largely unpublished text. Part I of *Mr Noon* will be familiar to readers who have consulted the volume *A Modern Lover*, published in 1934, and to those who have read it as collected in *Phoenix II*, published in 1968; but, Part II, which is more than two times as long, has never before been published. The Gilbert Noon of Part I, based as he is on George Henry Neville,¹ is reminiscent of other heroes and stories from Lawrence's youth and early manhood in the Midlands. In him Lawrence mockingly celebrates the adolescent rite of 'spooning', the Sunday evening walk after church in which passionate young men go as far as cautious girls will let them (in Gilbert and Emmie's case, too far) but as part of a socially regulated process, usually leading to marriage. He also satirises the moral and social pressures applied by authorities: school managers on their employees and families on their adult children. In Part II Gilbert suddenly becomes another person in another place, in fact, Lawrence in Germany in 1912, and the reader finds he is reading a kind of sequel to *Sons and Lovers*, in which the Lawrence-figure has finally left his youth behind him and has found compelling and fulfilling love, as Lawrence had with Frieda Weekley.² Many of the events are familiar from Lawrence's own contemporary writings – the letters; 'The Crucifix Across the Mountains' in *Twilight in Italy*; the travel sketches of 1912, the two 'German Impressions', 'A Chapel Among the Mountains' and 'A Hay-Hut Among the Mountains', collected in *Phoenix* and *Phoenix II*; poems in *Look! We Have Come Through!*; the play *The Fight For Barbara* – and from biographies of Lawrence. But in this novel these events have the special interest of being told sequentially in thinly fictionalised form, and of being told with an apparently exact recall of great immediacy and vividness (despite being written eight years after the events and without the earlier writings to hand). Though the manner appears light the author penetrates deeply into certain crucial experiences of conflict with the loved woman.

The story is unfinished. Lawrence put it aside in 1921, just as he had for a

¹ See explanatory note on 7:18.

² See explanatory note on 119:1.

time laid down *Aaron's Rod*; but whereas he worked intermittently for three and a half years (1917–21) on the latter, he never returned to *Mr Noon*. It was not unusual at this period for Lawrence to be anxious about experiencing difficulty in completing his novels: it occurred in the case of *The Lost Girl* in 1920 and *Kangaroo* in 1922. (It might be observed here that the long autobiographical chapter 'The Nightmare' in *Kangaroo* may have been originally intended for the third part of *Mr Noon*.) How to end the story of a life which was still in process, and a relationship which was continuing to evolve, was obviously one problem. Another was that living relatives – particularly Frieda's – would have objected to their portrayal in *Mr Noon*; by 1921 Lawrence had more than enough experience of such objections.

For whatever reason, he abandoned the novel, and it dropped completely out of sight. The five notebooks which contain all of Parts I and II in Lawrence's own hand, and one copy of the typescripts of both parts which had been made from four of these notebooks, were left for safekeeping in the possession of his American publisher Thomas Seltzer, and were never returned; they effectively disappeared for fifty years. (The carbon copy of the typescript of Part I was eventually returned to Lawrence's English agent Curtis Brown and was the source for the 1934 posthumous publication.) The manuscript and typescripts were offered for sale by auction in 1972 by Sotheby Parke Bernet, and were bought subsequently by the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin to add to their already rich Lawrence collections; the Center has generously made these materials available for this edition. This Introduction recounts the history of the composition of *Mr Noon*, and the early unsuccessful attempts to publish Part I.

The composition of *Mr Noon*

May 1920–February 1921: 'Began Mr Noon'

Lawrence wrote in his diary for 7 May 1920: 'Began Mr Noon'.³ How much, if anything, he wrote at this time is not known; no manuscript of this stage survives, and the references in his correspondence are ambiguous. He had finished *The Lost Girl* two days earlier, and on 6 May he wrote to Francis Brett Young, a fellow writer whom the Lawrences had met on Capri not long before: 'I don't know what I shall do, my novel finished, myself out of work.

³ *The Frieda Lawrence Collection of D. H. Lawrence Manuscripts: A Descriptive Bibliography*, ed. E. W. Tedlock (Albuquerque, 1948), p. 90.

Suppose I shall run hopelessly to seed one way or another.⁴ On the 7th he wrote to Rosalind Baynes: 'I'm a free man, from work', and on the 10th to Compton Mackenzie: 'But after my novel I am holidaying for one month. Then I should like to start again, with another I have in mind.'⁵

But it is significant that the date of the diary entry (7 May) suggests that the idea for the new book might have grown out of the just completed novel: most of *The Lost Girl* is set in a fictional Eastwood, where Lawrence was born and grew up. So is the first part of *Mr Noon*; Lawrence uses in both the same fictional name 'Woodhouse'. It is possible that some incident or character not used in *The Lost Girl*, either left over from the 1913 manuscript from which Lawrence rewrote it in 1920⁶ or called to mind by thinking about Eastwood, led him to plan for another novel set in Eastwood around 1912. Indeed, Alvina Houghton, the title character in *The Lost Girl* makes a brief appearance.⁷ When Lawrence resumed work on *Mr Noon* in November 1920, *Lost Girl* was once again on his mind: in late October he had had to alter a page in proof for his English publisher Martin Secker, and he wrote about this to Seltzer in early November; publication in England was, too, scheduled for late November.⁸

But in May Lawrence was soon distracted from any new work. He and Frieda left Fontana Vecchia, Taormina on 17 May with Mary Cannan for a trip to Malta which was meant only to last two days, but they were stranded there for ten days by a steamer strike. Then from early June to the 24th Lawrence revised *Studies in Classic American Literature* and the typescript of *The Lost Girl*, and reworked his essays on 'Education of the People'.⁹ By the 28th he had heard that Mackenzie had bought a ketch in which Lawrence hoped they might both sail to the South Seas, and he read some books sent by Robert Mountsier, his American agent, about their possible destination.¹⁰ This plan soon dissolved, and in mid-July Lawrence was considering various plans to go north to escape the Taormina heat; he left in early August partly

⁴ *Letters*, iii. 515.

⁵ *Letters*, iii. 520, 522. On 31 May DHL told Secker he had 'begun another novel': this was probably intended as a pacifier rather than as a statement of work in progress (*ibid.* 537).

⁶ The first version of *The Lost Girl* was begun in late 1912, and a second draft ('The Insurrection of Miss Houghton') was written January–March 1913; the novel was completely re-written from that manuscript early March–5 May 1920; see 'Introduction', *The Lost Girl*, ed. John Worthen (Cambridge, 1981), pp. xix–xxxii.

⁷ See explanatory note on 45:2.

⁸ *Letters*, iii. 619, 628.

⁹ *Letters*, iii. 556; *ibid.* 549 and entry for 23 June 1920, *Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 91; and entry for 15 June 1920, *Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 90 and *Letters*, iii. 554. *Studies in Classic American Literature* was first written in 1917, and 'Education of the People' in 1918 (published in *Phoenix* 587–665).

¹⁰ *Letters*, iii. 560, 563, 566. Robert Mountsier (1888–1972) was a journalist; see also footnote 66.

to travel and partly to stay with various friends, while Frieda went to Germany to see her family.

On 10 July Lawrence told Seltzer, who would have been interested in hearing about a new Lawrence work, especially a novel, that he had 'begun another novel', but this reference is definitely to *Aaron's Rod*.¹¹ He did not write much more of it, for on 13 July he wrote to Brett Young's wife Jessica: 'I'm working with ever-diminishing spasms of fitfulness at a novel which I know won't go forward many more steps', and five days later he reported to Secker that 'it stands still just now, awaiting events'.¹² Although Lawrence said that he had 'begun' *Aaron's Rod*, he had actually started it in November 1917; he now began to alternate working on it and *Mr Noon*.

While the Lawrences were travelling from mid-July (Frieda rejoined him in early October) and even for a month after their return to Taormina on 18 October, Lawrence was unsettled in his work. He corrected proofs of *Women in Love* for Secker and Seltzer and *The Lost Girl* for Seltzer; corrected proofs and wrote another chapter of his history textbook *Movements in European History* for Oxford University Press; wrote some poems; and worked fitfully on *Aaron's Rod*.¹³ So he was unable to start a major new work; on 10 November he wrote to Secker: 'Am not working – too unsettled yet: and this autumn-winter is my uneasy time. Let the year turn', and on the 22nd to Mary Cannan: 'Am doing no serious work, but painting a picture.'¹⁴

But between 22 and 29 November Lawrence started to write *Mr Noon*; he told Brett Young in a letter conjecturally dated 29 November: 'I did more than half of *Aaron's Rod*, but can't end it . . . so I began a comedy, which I hope will end. Who knows.'¹⁵ Since Lawrence had not worked on *Mr Noon* for almost six months, most likely he made a new beginning; his references to the novel do not sound as if he were returning to a work already seriously started. If he had something in manuscript from May, he probably discarded it. Although there were last-minute changes required by Secker to the *Women in Love* proofs and a flurry of cables and letters over copies of the English edition of *The Lost Girl* that Secker sent to America,¹⁶ Lawrence continued writing *Mr Noon* until it came to a 'stop' about 9 December. As he informed Mountsier: 'I began *Mr. Noon* – 1/3 done – sudden stop – may go on soon.'¹⁷

And indeed he resumed writing: in his letter of 12 December to Secker he

¹¹ *Letters*, iii. 565; *ibid.* 572. (*Aaron's Rod* was published in April 1922 by Seltzer.)

¹² *Letters*, iii. 567, 572. DHL's comment in his 23 July letter to Mountsier ('I am doing another novel') again was probably intended as a pacifier (*ibid.* 576).

¹³ *Letters*, iii. 586, 613 and 590; *ibid.* 622; entry for 4 November 1920, *Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 91; and *Letters*, iii. 594, 602, 613.

¹⁴ *Letters*, iii. 622, 624.

¹⁵ *Letters*, iii. 626; cf. p. 629.

¹⁶ *Letters*, iii. 628, 627, 633.

¹⁷ *Letters*, iii. 634.

mentions having seen several reviews of *The Lost Girl*, and these reviews are commented on by name at the start of chapter xiv of *Mr Noon*, so work on the novel probably recommenced by about the 12th.¹⁸ Lawrence also added – he knew his publisher would be glad to plan for a new novel – that Secker could count on the publication of *Aaron's Rod* ('which I have left again') or *Mr Noon* ('which I am doing'), both 'incensorable', after *Women in Love*. Lawrence wrote with some enthusiasm to a Taormina friend Marie Hubrecht on 16 December: 'I am writing a sort of comic novel – rather amusing, but rather scandalous.'¹⁹ And on 31 December 1920 Lawrence confidently reported to Mountsier that '[I] now have done 2/3 of "Lucky Noon".²⁰ I hope to finish it in January: see no reason why I shouldn't. Probably you'll dislike it: it is peppery. I like it myself better than *Lost Girl* – much', and he recorded in his diary that he had completed up to p. 374 (the beginning of chapter xx) on 1 January 1921.²¹ The next day he also wrote to Seltzer: 'I left off *Aaron's Rod* and began "Lucky Noon". Have done two-thirds, and if the infernal gods don't prevent, I shall finish it this month. I get much wicked joy out of it. Probably you and the world will detest it. But it is unique. Which, from a publisher's point of view, is I know a misfortune.'²² Lawrence's view of how his publishers and agent would react to *Mr Noon* had changed in three weeks: what would become Part I was 'incensorable', but Part II was 'peppery' and 'unique'.

When Lawrence began *Mr Noon* cannot be precisely determined: the only specific reference prior to 29 November is the May diary entry. Since the question of his rate of writing has relevance at several points in the history of the composition of the manuscript, this should be examined in some detail. The five manuscript notebooks are a continuous narrative of 447 pages – numbered [1]–450 with a few errors – which ends in mid-sentence. The chapters are numbered in a single sequence (the manuscript is not divided into parts). Although the notebooks are almost the same size, 1 and 2 (pp. [1]–48, 49–161) have an average of just over 200 words per page, and 3–5 (pp. 162–275, 276–388, 389–450) of about 330 words.²³ Lawrence had

¹⁸ *Letters*, iii. 638, and see also explanatory notes on 118:13 and 118:31.

¹⁹ *Letters*, iii. 639.

²⁰ On the title 'Lucky Noon', see 'June 1921–October 1922: "finishing *Mr Noon* II"' below.

²¹ *Letters*, iii. 645; *Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 91. When DHL revised the typescripts of Part I (see below), he added three new chapter divisions, so that starting with chap. viii (p. 61; see also explanatory note) the numbering of the chapters in the manuscript is inaccurate. In addition DHL numbered two chapters in the manuscript 'xiv' (see textual apparatus for 206:1 and 238:1). In this Introduction and all editorial material, the chapter numbers have been corrected.

²² *Letters*, iii. 646.

²³ The pages of notebook 1 (shiny dark-blue and black marbled soft cover with green tape spine) measure 8¼ × 5⅞ inches; notebooks 2–5 (dull olive grey-green soft covers with different

probably written most of what became Part I (pp. [1]–172) by 9 December 1920 when he mentioned his ‘sudden stop’. While it is not possible to determine definitely where this occurred, there is a break in the writing in the manuscript at 92:16, ‘Emmie now gave way . . .’, after which Lawrence as narrator sounds impatient with the scene and abruptly brings it to an end. This shift is emphasised in the next chapter when the narrator tells the reader directly that he will not hear another word about Emmie (97:22–98:16), that he had better be prepared for a change, *and* re-introduces Gilbert Noon. Again, if Lawrence thought that the 373 pages which he had written by 1 January represented two-thirds of the novel as he envisaged it, then the end of Part I (p. 172) would be approximately the one-third he said he had written before the ‘stop’. Lawrence had written *The Lost Girl* in just over eight weeks, with an average of about 3260 words per day for the whole: if he had worked at the same pace for *Mr Noon* he could have begun on 28 November or slightly earlier.²⁴ Between (at the latest) 12 December and the 31st Lawrence wrote 200 pages: he had started again on p. 171 and completed p. 373, and this would mean a rate of about 3300 words per day.²⁵ Lawrence was a rapid writer: he wrote 373 pages in just over five weeks: in less than a fortnight (c. 28 November–9 December) he wrote 170 pages of this total, and in just over three weeks (11 December–1 January) the other 200 pages. What survives in

borders; notebook 2 is more orangish red and 3–5 purplish red) measure $7\frac{1}{16} \times 6$ inches. All have lined exercise-type paper, but notebooks 1 and 2 have evenly spaced lines which DHL used in his writing (23 lines of writing per page) while notebooks 3–5 have unevenly spaced lines which he did not follow – he squeezed extra lines on pages, often filling them from top to bottom (33–40 lines per page, with an average of 35–6). The two groups of notebooks average nine and ten words per line respectively. (There is no significant break in the writing in the first notebook, and thus no indication that this notebook, despite its difference in physical appearance from the others, contains any of the May 1920 writing.)

On the lower cover of the third notebook DHL sketched a man experiencing moral ‘uplift’: he is floating above houses and a tiny figure with a cart and an animal drawing it; see 156:39ff. The notebooks are located at the University of Texas at Austin (hereafter UT).

²⁴ See ‘Introduction’, *The Lost Girl*, ed. Worthen, pp. xxvii–xxviii. If DHL had started on the earliest possible date, 22 November, he would have had to write only 9 pages per day to complete the 171 pages, and if he began on the latest, the 29th, 16 pages per day (3200 words).

The next most likely place for the ‘stop’ is the end of chap. xiii (p. 203) just before DHL refers to the reviews of *Lost Girl*. This would mean an average of 11–18 pages per day with the last 40 pages being the more densely written sheets. If DHL started on 29 November, this would have meant writing 4000 words per day; if he had started on the 22nd, 2445 words. Thus he probably began writing closer to the earlier date; see next note.

²⁵ This would mean an average of 10 of the more densely written pages per day; but if he began on the 11th and if p. 373 was completed on 1 January 1921 as seems possible from the diary entry for that day, this would give a rate of 3000 words (9 pages per day).

If DHL had stopped with p. 203 (see note above), then he would have written an additional 170 pages by 31 December: 8 pages per day (2640 words).

the five notebooks is a quickly written first draft, of which only the first part was subsequently revised: this accounts for the freshness of the writing in Part II.

An interruption followed in January 1921 in the form of a trip to Sardinia. The Lawrences toured Sardinia from 5–13 January to see if they would want to live there, and the day after their return Lawrence told Secker that he planned to write ‘a sketch book’ about Sardinia in the summer.²⁶ But a week later Lawrence had started his ‘Diary’ of the trip, later published as *Sea and Sardinia*, because he could not work on his novel: ‘*Mr Noon* holds me’, and ‘Novel having a little rest, it being a bit of a strain’ he told Mountsier and Secker.²⁷ But Lawrence believed this constraint was only temporary: ‘I think I may finish “Lucky Noon” – the new novel – next month. But you’ll simply hate it’, and ‘*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.’²⁸

In early February Lawrence was restless and started making plans to move to a dilapidated farm in Connecticut which he could lease cheaply,²⁹ and he continued to work on the Sardinia diary. It is possible that he wrote some more of Part II of *Mr Noon* at this time: although he had told Secker on 4 February that the novel was ‘having a little rest’, in a postcard probably written the next day Lawrence said to Seltzer ‘Am busy with *Mr Noon*.’³⁰ We know Lawrence was working energetically on *Sea and Sardinia* on 5 February and had ‘nearly finished’ it by the 12th;³¹ thus it seems unlikely that he would have set it aside for *Mr Noon*. However on 7 February he wrote to Mackenzie: ‘I am fighting my way through various pieces of work: and through life. It works out to a long fight, in which one doesn’t emerge as much of a winner so far’ – all of which *may* indicate that he was working on more than one book.³²

The manuscript itself helps to settle the question of when Lawrence stopped writing *Mr Noon*. At first the most reasonable supposition seems to be that he put the novel aside for the trip to Sardinia and never returned to it, but the length of the manuscript requires a further explanation. The decision to go to Sardinia had not been made on 1 January 1921; so Lawrence and Frieda must have spent some time on the 2nd and 3rd making preparations,

²⁶ *Letters*, iii. 648.

²⁷ *Letters*, iii. 650; *ibid.* 653, 660.

²⁸ *Letters*, iii. 648, 653; see also p. 651.

²⁹ See *Letters*, iii. 659–78.

³⁰ *Letters*, iii. 662. It is dated in DHL’s hand ‘5 Jan. 1921’, but postmarked ‘8 FEB 1921’. It seems most likely that DHL’s date is wrong; see *Letters*, iii. 622 n. 1.

³¹ *Letters*, iii. 662; *ibid.* 664–5.

³² *Letters*, iii. 663.

e.g. booking a passage by ship, arranging to stay with Ruth Wheelock³³ overnight in Palermo, shopping and packing; and they left Taormina early on the 4th.³⁴ It is unlikely that Lawrence took the manuscript of *Mr Noon* with him to Sardinia since he would expect to do a great deal of walking and would not have time to write or want the extra bulk in his pack. We know that Lawrence had completed up to p. 374 by 1 January, and the manuscript ends on p. 450; this leaves 75 pages to be accounted for. It is possible that Lawrence – if he wrote at the pace which he seems to have set in December of 9–10 pages a day³⁵ – completed chapter xx (pp. 374–97), 25 pages, before he left for Palermo, but highly unlikely that he would be able to write 75 pages in two or three days (1/2–3 January). Thus the last fifty or more pages must have been written after the trip. This may have been in February 1921; perhaps when Lawrence wrote that he was doing ‘various pieces of work’, or later in the month when he had completed *Sea and Sardinia* and finished correcting the typescripts of *Mr Noon* Part I (see below).³⁶

January–July 1921: Part I ‘a little book all to itself’

Lawrence’s intention to continue *Mr Noon* may have been deflected by a plan to publish the first part separately. Robert Mountsier occasionally sent questionnaires to Lawrence to enquire about details of past publications and with proposals for future works, and it must have been in reply to one of these that he conceived the idea of dividing *Mr Noon* into parts and publishing the first part on its own.³⁷ In the letter of 25 January in which he had predicted to Mountsier that he would finish the novel in ‘about a month’ he continued: ‘I think the first 200 pages of *Mr Noon* might make a rather funny serial. It is an episode all by itself: a little book all to itself. And the girl in the American consulate who is typing it says: *so* like an American small town.’³⁸ Whether

³³ Ruth Wheelock (1891–1958), an American; she worked in the American consulate in Palermo, 1919–22 and in Cologne before 1930; she married John Holbrook Chapman, who had been a consul in Cologne, in 1931. DHL must have heard of – or met – her in late October 1920 because he sent her the manuscript of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* to be typed in early November (*Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 91); she also typed *Mr Noon* Parts I and II and *Sea and Sardinia*.

³⁴ See DHL’s diary entries for 1 and 3 January: ‘meditate trip to Sardinia’ and ‘Going to Palermo [to catch the boat] for Sardinia . . . in the morning’ (*Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, pp. 91–2).

³⁵ See footnote 25.

³⁶ It is possible, but less likely, that DHL wrote some of the last fifty pages in November–December 1921; see p. xxxii below.

³⁷ One questionnaire survives: see *Letters*, iii. 673–4.

³⁸ *Letters*, iii. 653. This and the comment on finishing *Mr Noon* within a month are separate numbered points in the letter.

Mountsier had asked if Lawrence had any works suitable for magazines or specifically enquired about *Mr Noon* for this purpose is unknown. Lawrence was not doing any major writing from which he could expect to make much money: the prospect of a serialisation, of a kind he had wanted for *The Lost Girl*, would have been attractive.³⁹

Lawrence had sent the manuscript for Part I⁴⁰ to Ruth Wheelock, 'the girl in the American consulate' in Palermo, to type before he wrote the letter of 25 January to Mountsier; he finished revising the typescripts on 22 February.⁴¹ He worked on the ribbon copy first and then the carbon, making different alterations in each, and he added three paragraphs at the end of the typescripts which served to make Part I complete in itself and also to indicate that it was only the first volume of a longer work.⁴² When the carbon copy was sent to Mountsier on 22 February (he received word of its arrival a month later) Lawrence commented: 'This first vol. is very small. You do as you like with it. I think it should serialise. For a serial, cut it and arrange it as you like. But keep an *intact* MS. for printing the *book* from, finally.'⁴³

Most of the rest of this letter to Mountsier is concerned with arrangements about the Connecticut farm for which Lawrence showed a continuing enthusiasm; he wrote to Mary Cannan about his disenchantment with the cold Taormina winter.⁴⁴ On 25 February Lawrence wrote to Beatrice Bland, an artist he had met in Taormina: 'I've finished two bits of work and I am having a bit of a holiday.'⁴⁵ This might mean that he had corrected the *Mr Noon* typescripts and completed the *Sea and Sardinia* manuscript which he had sent to Ruth Wheelock to type. Lawrence offered to send the typescript of *Mr Noon* Part I to J. C. Squire, editor of the *London Mercury*, but Squire apparently did not express interest; eventually the ribbon copy typescript was posted to a friend in England, Barbara Low, who Lawrence hoped might act as his agent.⁴⁶

But on 3 March Frieda received a telegram that her mother was very ill, and she quickly made preparations to leave for Baden-Baden to see her;⁴⁷ this scotched the plan for the Connecticut farm.⁴⁸ Lawrence corrected the typescript of *Sea and Sardinia*, sat for a portrait, and on 22 March announced

³⁹ See 'Introduction', *The Lost Girl*, ed. Worthen, pp. xxxi-xxxv. DHL also hoped to serialise *Sea and Sardinia*; see *Letters*, iii. 681, 700.

⁴⁰ Part I (pp. [1]-172) was contained in notebooks 1-3.

⁴¹ *Letters*, iii. 667.

⁴² See 'Selection of base-texts' below. The typescripts are at UT.

⁴³ *Letters*, iii. 689; 667; see also p. 678.

⁴⁴ *Letters*, iii. 670; see also p. 671.

⁴⁵ *Letters*, iii. 671 and entry for 22 February 1921, *Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 92.

⁴⁶ *Letters*, iii. 681, 688.

⁴⁷ *Letters*, iii. 678 and entry for 3 March 1921, *Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 92.

⁴⁸ *Letters*, iii. 684.

his new writing plans: 'I intend to try to finish *Aaron's Rod*. But am not in a good work-mood.'⁴⁹ He was restless: he considered going to Florence to be measured for a coat; or taking a walking tour of Sardinia with Jan Juta, a South African painter, who could draw illustrations for the Sardinia book; or meeting Frieda in Germany; or buying a boat with Mountsier.⁵⁰

By 4 April Lawrence had decided that Curtis Brown, managing director of the literary agency, should act as his agent in England and told him to retrieve the typescript of *Mr Noon* Part I from Barbara Low; he asked Curtis Brown to try to get it serialised and repeated that it might be cut for this purpose.⁵¹ Lawrence also wrote to Secker about the 'tiny first vol.', hoping Secker would agree to consider it one of the five novels to be written by Lawrence to which Secker had a contractual right.⁵² Lawrence left Taormina on 9 April, visited friends in Capri and Rome, and went on to Baden-Baden where he and Frieda planned to stay all summer. Curtis Brown 'seemed quite pleased with *Mr Noon*', and so did Secker: 'If Secker wishes to publish the first part of *Mr Noon* as a separate little book, let him: because the second part may be a bit startling.'⁵³ Secker decided to publish *Mr Noon* Part I on its own as he wrote to Curtis Brown on 29 April: 'It is certainly excellent, and I fully share your enthusiasm for it. It is quite clear from the last page that it is complete as it stands, and that the author intends it to be published in a book by itself, with one sequel, possibly more, to follow later', but he also commented that its brevity 'presents certain difficulties'.⁵⁴

Lawrence had started working on *Aaron's Rod* again in early May and finished it on the 31st, and both he and Secker came to the conclusion that it would be better to publish this 'normal-length' novel and 'any decision regarding the little *Mr Noon* can be postponed'.⁵⁵ Lawrence's change of mind was partly the result of Secker's wanting 'to count this little *Mr Noon* novel as not a novel, but a bit thrown in with his legal five'.⁵⁶ As Secker wrote to Lawrence: 'I am very glad to hear that "Aaron's Rod" is practically finished . . . I now think, in the circumstances that far the best plan to adopt with regard to "Mr. Noon" . . . would be to make it an immediate successor to "Aaron's Rod", if you feel like turning to and writing the second half before you do anything else.'⁵⁷ Lawrence responded with his outline for the complete book (see below).

⁴⁹ *Letters*, iii. 685–7; *ibid.* 688.

⁵⁰ *Letters*, iii. 692. (Juta made the trip alone later.)

⁵¹ *Letters*, iii. 700.

⁵² *Letters*, iii. 700–2.

⁵³ *Letters*, iii. 710, 717.

⁵⁴ *Letters*, iii. 717n. DHL was very insistent about receiving proofs (*ibid.* 717, 722).

⁵⁵ *Letters*, iii. 711, 729–30.

⁵⁶ *Letters*, iii. 731.

⁵⁷ Letter from Secker to DHL, 8 June 1921, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Secker had written to Curtis Brown on 1 June 1921: 'My feeling now about "Mr. Noon" is that it would be better for Lawrence to write the remaining half next and let it succeed

Seltzer had signed an agreement on 1 March 1921 for autumn publication of *Mr Noon* without having seen it.⁵⁸ On 17 June when he had read it but had not seen *Aaron's Rod*, he had another proposal for Mountsier: he hoped *Aaron's Rod* had the 'possibility of a popular success . . . and if it is really unobjectionable, then AARON'S ROD ought to be the next novel for us', while *Mr Noon* 'may arouse a storm of protest which we could stand very well after a second success like THE LOST GIRL but not so well before'.⁵⁹ Like Secker Seltzer was thinking of the effect of the furore over *Women in Love* and what it had done for Lawrence's reputation. Although Secker still had not read *Aaron's Rod* a month later, he decided to publish it and postpone *Mr Noon* Part I: 'I prefer to bring out MR. NOON in one volume.'⁶⁰

Lawrence's (and Mountsier's) plan to serialise *Mr Noon* or publish it separately had failed. Both his English and American publishers preferred to print the newly completed, full-length novel and postpone 'the little *Mr Noon*' until it was finished. In addition Seltzer had expressed reservations about the subject matter which Mountsier doubtless passed on to the author.

June 1921–October 1922: 'finishing Mr Noon II'

As early as 4 April 1921 Lawrence had attempted to reassure Secker that he would finish *Mr Noon*, but *after 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'.⁶¹ But on 6 May he had conceded to Mountsier that he would leave work on *Mr Noon* Part II for the winter; he confirmed this to Curtis Brown from Baden-Baden a week later: 'I have only half done it [the second part] – and I shan't be able to finish it till I go back to Taormina. Cant write it here.'⁶² When Lawrence wrote to Secker a few days later about the delay he mentioned again that the second part might be a problem: 'I have postponed finishing Part II – it will give you a fit – of laughter also, I hope. But I intend to finish it in Taormina.'⁶³ After Secker's plan to publish Part I by itself collapsed, Lawrence sent him an outline on 12 June for the continuation of *Mr Noon*:

"Aaron's Rod" as the next novel under my contract. This seems to me the most straightforward course and, in the circumstances, much preferable to issuing it in two separate parts' (*Letters*, iii. 730n.).

⁵⁸ A copy of the contract is in the Charles Smith collection.

⁵⁹ Letter from Seltzer to Mountsier; UT (*D. H. Lawrence: Letters to Thomas and Adele Seltzer*, ed. Gerald M. Lacy, Santa Barbara, 1976, p. 207).

⁶⁰ Letter from Seltzer to Mountsier, 16 July 1921; UT (*Letters to Thomas and Adele Seltzer*, ed. Lacy, p. 210).

⁶¹ *Letters*, iii. 702.

⁶³ *Letters*, iii. 722.

⁶² *Letters*, iii. 714, 717.

I will finish 'Lucky Noon' before Christmas, God being with me. But it will be rather impossible, only funny – It is 3-parts done, nearly the first two vols – up to 1913. Sec. part ends 1914. Third part ends 1919. But third part not yet begun. Part I you have seen. Part II, which is 3 times as long – or more – is about ½ done. MS in Palermo. Will get it here.

Lawrence may have expanded his design for *Mr Noon*, perhaps after he revised the typescripts of Part I in February 1921. In late December 1920 and early January 1921 he referred to the novel as being two-thirds finished, but after he decided to divide it into parts and revised the typescripts of Part I separately, he said it would be in three volumes: 'The novel will have three vols, I think. I have nearly done the second'.⁶⁴ This may indicate that he planned to extend the material included in *Mr Noon*, or it may mean only that he now thought of the novel in parts. In February he also wrote that Part II was 'nearly done', but in May it was 'half done'. His outline suggested that the second volume would include two more years (perhaps not in the same detail as that which he had already written, which spans a little more than four months) and the third would cover five years.

Robert Mounstier joined the Lawrences at Baden-Baden on 5 July and went with them to Zell-am-See, the home of Frieda's sister Nusch von Schreibershofen.⁶⁵ He and Lawrence undoubtedly discussed publishing plans; Mounstier's questionnaire and Lawrence's detailed letters to him would indicate that Mounstier was intensely interested in Lawrence's writing.⁶⁶ He would have listened to Mounstier as a friend of long standing, and as his agent, especially about placing his work in magazines and promoting the sale of his books. Plans for *Mr Noon* were probably discussed during their several weeks together. In any event, Lawrence received the ribbon copy typescript of Part I back from Curtis Brown on 14 August:⁶⁷ whether he (or Mounstier) asked for it to be returned, or⁷ Curtis Brown just sent it is not recorded in the surviving correspondence, but the first is more likely, since Curtis Brown did not usually send back typescripts when he could not place the work. Mounstier may have suggested revision of the first part, bearing in mind Seltzer's concern about the 'storm of protest', as well as his own criticisms.

⁶⁴ *Letters*, iii. 667.

⁶⁵ See explanatory note on 154:35.

⁶⁶ Mounstier had first met DHL in 1916 when he and a friend stayed with him in Cornwall; after this visit Mounstier was apparently interrogated as a possible spy (DHL and Frieda were being watched because of her German birth and their unusual, and therefore suspicious activities) which had strengthened their bond of friendship. See *Letters*, iii. 65, and the experiences of Monsell in *Kangaroo*, chap. xii.

⁶⁷ Letter to Curtis Brown, 14 August 1921.

It is unlikely that Lawrence had the manuscript sent to him from Taormina, and even less likely that he would have worked on it. He again worked fitfully – correcting the typescript of *Aaron's Rod* – and even after his return to Taormina, he only pursued small projects, revising and ‘pottering with short stories’.⁶⁸ He now spoke of *Aaron's Rod* as the ‘last of my serious English novels’ and said he had begun ‘a proper *story* novel – in the Venetian lagoons’.⁶⁹ But also at this time he became furious with Secker’s cautious handling of Philip Heseltine’s threatened libel suit over his portrayal in *Women in Love*.⁷⁰ Lawrence’s diary entry for 26 October expressed his frustrations:

Hear from Wheelock who is just back from America that Tortoises & Sardinia are both ready for this month – wanted to see them . . . Have had a month of loathing everybody, particularly the canaglia of England. Canaille! . . . Sent [two cheques] to Haskard, but have not heard if they arrived. Post erratic . . . Had impudent letters from CB & R.M. about Aaron’s Rod . . . Lost the blank cheques R.M. gave me . . . Want to know how many dollars I have, but M. does not tell me. Have only fifty pounds in England . . . Have felt seedy & hateful all this month.⁷¹

His health was bad from November to mid-January 1922. He was still ‘pottering’ on shorter pieces, and he received a request from Seltzer in late November for alterations to *Aaron's Rod*.⁷² Circumstances, then, were not propitious for his making progress with *Mr Noon*.

Lawrence also received in early October a letter from Mabel Dodge Sterne urging him to come to Taos, New Mexico; she had read excerpts of *Sea and Sardinia* and believed he was the only person who could write truly about the New Mexico landscapes. He toyed with the idea, and also with following Earl and Achsah Brewster to Ceylon; but in January 1922 he very suddenly decided to go to Ceylon first and to approach the USA from the west.⁷³

Lawrence’s irritability in the autumn is evident in his references to *Mr Noon*. In late October he snapped at Mountsier: ‘I don’t know whether I shall finish *Mr Noon*. I get so annoyed with everybody that I don’t want to tackle

⁶⁸ Letter to Catherine Carswell, 25 October 1921; see letter to Seltzer, 8 October 1921 and entry for 26 October 1921, *Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 93.

⁶⁹ Letter to Seltzer, 8 October 1921; see also letter to Seltzer, 26 November 1921. No manuscript survives for the Venice novel.

⁷⁰ DHL (and Secker) altered the descriptions of Halliday and Pussum, who was based on Heseltine’s wife Minnie (‘Puma’) Channing (letter to Secker, 8 October 1921).

⁷¹ *Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 93.

⁷² Letter to Seltzer, 26 November 1921; see entry for 13 November 1921, *Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, p. 93.

⁷³ See letter to Mountsier, 17 January 1922.

any really serious work. To hell with them all. Miserable world of canaille.⁷⁴ And in his next mention of the novel on 21 December to Mountsier: 'If I am to finish *Mr Noon* it shall be in the States.'

Given such remarks it is surprising to discover that late in 1921 he arranged for Ruth Wheelock to type the second part. She had returned from New York at the end of October, and Lawrence expected her to visit him the weekend of 5–6 November.⁷⁵ There is no record in the correspondence of why he wanted an incomplete section typed, or when she actually typed it. It is certain that Ruth Wheelock was the typist: she used the same typewriter as for Part I, and one page of the paper matched some used in Part I.⁷⁶ She did not, however, type all of Part II: she stopped at the end of the fourth notebook, and Lawrence may have had the fifth notebook in case he wanted to go on writing.⁷⁷ Since her typing for Lawrence was in addition to her consulate work, she may not have finished his typing before he left in late February 1922 for Ceylon.⁷⁸ So Lawrence may have asked her to post the lot to Seltzer for safekeeping while he was on his travels, since he did not expect to work on the novel until he had settled.⁷⁹

Seltzer certainly had the manuscript and typescript including the ribbon copy typescript of Part I, which had been returned earlier to Lawrence by Curtis Brown. (Mountsier still had the carbon copy typescript of Part I). Mountsier had encouraged Lawrence to recall several manuscripts from Seltzer; hence Lawrence's letter from Australia to the publisher, on 9 June 1922: 'Will you please hand back to Mountsier the MSS. of *Mr Noon* – till I see what I'll do further with it – and of *Birds Beasts and Flowers*. Please let him have them at once.' But Seltzer ignored this request and a further letter from Mountsier on 18 January 1923.⁸⁰ The material remained unlocated (and indeed unknown) for fifty years.⁸¹

⁷⁴ 31 October 1921.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ruth Wheelock also used a second typewriter for Part II; p. 302 is on the same watermarked paper used for pp. 1–28 of Part I. The surviving carbon copy typescript is 267 pages, numbered 142–407 with one error (located at UT); the ribbon copy is unlocated.

⁷⁷ The typescript stops with '... with snow.' (248:38).

⁷⁸ Ruth Wheelock was no longer DHL's regular typist: from late October 1921 he sent his manuscripts to a Mrs Carmichael to be typed (*Lawrence MSS*, ed. Tedlock, pp. 93–5).

⁷⁹ See quotation from letter of 21 December 1921 to Mountsier above. (Or DHL may have posted the manuscript, including the fifth notebook, and the typescript to Seltzer himself.)

⁸⁰ A carbon copy draft survives at UT.

⁸¹ The manuscript and typescript were passed to Seltzer's nephew Albert Boni in settlement of a debt and were sold to Urling (Mrs O'Donnell) Iselin in 1936 (letter from Louis Henry Cohn, House of Books, to Eugene Delafield, Jr, 20 April 1936; UT). This letter states that the manuscripts were delivered to Curtis Brown who gave them to Seltzer. They remained in her family's possession until they were sent to be auctioned. Frieda remembered in 1951 that there had been a Part II, 'the second part disappeared', but apparently did not recall who had it (letter to Harry T. Moore, 18 February 1951; Tedlock 302).

Even though Lawrence no longer had the manuscript, he did not forget the novel. He was discouraged about the long 'stop's he had experienced on several novels: he had started *Kangaroo* in May 1922, and hoped to 'be able to finish it: not like *Aaron*, who stuck for two years, and *Mr Noon*, who has been now nearly two years at a full stop'.⁸² His last reference to *Mr Noon*, on 6 October 1922 when he was settled in Taos, was in answer to a questionnaire from Mountsier: 'I doubt if I want to finish *Mr Noon*. One day I might.' Lawrence had dangled the prospect of the completed novel before his publishers from summer 1921 to autumn 1922, but his last comment showed no desire to complete it or even to retrieve the missing manuscript.

Lawrence consistently called the novel *Mr Noon* until late December 1920 and early January 1921 when he referred to it as 'Lucky Noon'. He may have been indicating a change in his attitude to his character: the Noon of Part I who had been locked in the 'spoony' phase of love had found his Johanna and experienced mature, lasting love in Part II. In short, his experiences paralleled Lawrence's own when he met Frieda (the 'Johanna' of the novel). Noon had escaped from 'Britten-women, Goddard-women, Emmie-women' to a new birth: 'Gilbert might have had a thousand Emmies, and even a thousand really nice women, and yet never have cracked the womb. It needed the incalculable fight such as he fought' with Johanna.⁸³ So Noon was 'lucky' in his choice of mate. This new title was soon dropped (although it occurs as an alternative title for Part I in a letter to Secker⁸⁴), perhaps because publishers and agents called it by the original title.

Lawrence gave no reason for his inability to complete the novel. Although *Mr Noon* contained a great deal of very personal material in its second part, this cannot have been the only reason for his hesitation: *Aaron's Rod* and *Kangaroo* both drew on Lawrence's life with Frieda. However, the publication of *Kangaroo* in 1923 precluded Lawrence's re-using the war material, especially in a closely autobiographical form; and *Aaron's Rod*, finished in May 1921, had been set in the immediate post-war period. Rawdon Lilly (the character based on Lawrence) and Aaron Sisson leave England, as Lawrence himself had done, in autumn 1919: the year he had stated *Mr Noon* would end. In *Aaron's Rod*, furthermore, marriage is presented as unsatisfactory because women are too concerned with pleasing themselves sexually, and subsequently turn their attention to their children; the male is always subservient to the female, and the individual therefore looks for (though he does not find) alleviation for his loneliness in love or society. The ways forward proposed are the proper submission of the woman to the man, and of

⁸² Letter to Seltzer, 21 June 1922.

⁸³ See 57:8-9 and 291:39-292:1 below.

⁸⁴ *Letters*, iii. 722.