

J·D·H·L·S

Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies

Citation details

Title: **“ANOTHER BLOOMSBURY SET”: D. H. LAWRENCE, LONDON AND LIFE-WRITING’**

Author: LEE M. JENKINS

Source: *Journal of the D. H. Lawrence Society*, vol. 5.2 (2019)

Pages: 125–142

Copyright: individual author and the D. H. Lawrence Society.
Quotations from Lawrence’s works © The Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli. Extracts and poems from various publications by D. H. Lawrence reprinted by permission of Pollinger Limited (www.pollingerltd.com) on behalf of the Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli.

**A Publication of the
D. H. Lawrence Society of Great Britain**

**“ANOTHER BLOOMSBURY SET”:
D. H. LAWRENCE, LONDON AND LIFE-WRITING**

LEE M. JENKINS

Shortly after their eviction from Cornwall in the autumn of 1917, Lawrence and Frieda were given temporary sanctuary by the American-born poet and novelist H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) in her “cold studio living-room” in Bloomsbury.¹ Lawrence would recall the generosity of an anonymous “American girl” in ‘The Nightmare’ chapter of *Kangaroo* (1923):

The American wife of an English friend, a poet serving in the army, offered her rooms in Mecklenburgh Square, and the third day after their arrival in London Somers and Harriett moved there: very grateful indeed to the American girl. They had no money. But the American girl tossed the rooms to them, and food and fuel, with a wild free hand. (*K* 248)

The Lawrences lodged at 44 Mecklenburgh Square from 20 October until 30 November, forming, with H. D., what she would describe as “a perfect triangle”.² Other triangles would form and fall apart in “the Mecklenburg [sic] Square days” (*3L* 728): between H. D., her then husband Richard Aldington (the “poet serving in the army” mentioned in *Kangaroo*), and Dorothy (“Arabella”) Yorke, the sometime fiancée of Russian-born Jewish-American writer and translator, John Cournos; between Cournos, Yorke and H. D.; between H. D., Aldington and the musicologist Cecil Gray, who had been a neighbour of the Lawrences in Cornwall; and, tentatively at least, between Lawrence, Frieda and Gray. All these people, with the exception of Cournos, appear in fictionalised form in *Aaron’s Rod*, a novel published in 1922 but begun in the Mecklenburgh Square days, and which in Mark Kinkead-Weekes’s

judgement, registers Lawrence's "impatience with heterosexual jealousies and intensities" – in the chapter titled 'The Dark Square Garden', Aaron tells Josephine Ford, who is modelled on Dorothy Yorke, "'I'm damned if I want to be a lover any more'" (AR 66).³

For Kinkead-Weekes, *Aaron's Rod* initiates and enacts the "masculinist turn" taken in Lawrence's "leadership" trilogy of the early to mid-1920s. For Lawrence, however, *Aaron's Rod* was "the end of *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* line" (4L 92), completing his "English" trilogy of the 1910s, as well as opening the later leadership trilogy. In its early chapters, *Aaron's Rod* may indeed be read as a continuation of *Women in Love*, supplementing that novel's satire at the expense of Café Royal society and Bloomsberries like Ottoline Morrell with caricatures of the members of "another Bloomsbury set":⁴ the "Half Bohemians", as Lawrence describes them in *Aaron's Rod* (AR 45), who drifted in and out of 44 Mecklenburgh Square, like H. D. and Aldington (Julia and Robert Cunningham in *Aaron's Rod*), Yorke (Josephine Ford), and Gray (Cyril Scott). Both Bloomsbury sets, to borrow Dorothy Parker's adage, lived in squares and loved in triangles, and their circles intersected, albeit that in its cultural aesthetics the Mecklenburgh Square set was "Not Bloomsburyish", in the judgement of Robert McAlmon: more cosmopolitan or transnational than its Bloomsbury other, H. D.'s set had its origins in the transatlantic avant-garde.⁵ All the Mecklenburgh Square writers – H. D., Aldington, Cournos and Lawrence – were associated with the Imagist school of poetry, launched in London in 1912 by H. D.'s former fiancé, Ezra Pound, with "H. D., *Imagiste*" as its figurehead. When Amy Lowell took the Imagist helm in 1914, she press-ganged Lawrence into the second phase of the movement disparagingly dubbed "Amygism" by a disgruntled Pound; Lawrence and H. D. had met, days before the outbreak of war, at one of Lowell's Imagist dinner parties at the Berkeley Hotel in London. Reverting to the war years in *Kangaroo*, Lawrence would describe "a gorgeous commotion in Somers' rooms [at 44 Mecklenburgh Square]: four poets and three non-poets, all fighting

out poetry: a splendid time” – until, that is, Somers comes downstairs to find “three policemen in the porch” (K 249). In *Kangaroo*, Lawrence also pays veiled tribute to H. D. in her person and as a poet: “beautiful, reckless”, she is “one of the poetesses whose poetry Richard [Lovatt Somers, Lawrence’s close fictional proxy] feared and wondered over” (K 248). The pen-portrait of the H. D. figure in *Aaron’s Rod* – “a tall stag of a thing, but she sat hunched up like a witch” – is cruel in comparison (AR 27).

Aaron’s Rod dramatises Lawrence’s postwar disaffection with and departure from what H. D. described as “that particular Bloomsbury scene and those people”, but his novel is itself, at least in part, the product of the “scene” of London modernism in the war years.⁶ In turn, *Aaron’s Rod* would form the nucleus of a transtextual cluster, comprising, among other interrelated works, Cournos’s *Miranda Masters* (1926), Aldington’s *Death of a Hero* (1929) and H. D.’s *Bid Me to Live* (1960). Lawrence is the precipitant of, rather than an active participant in, what Gérard Genette would term the transtextuality of these Mecklenburgh Square novels, whose authors, each revisiting the events of 1917, are writing back to Lawrence writing them in *Aaron’s Rod*.⁷ But even as his contemporaries contest the *matter* of Lawrence’s novel, their response-novels adopt *Aaron’s Rod*’s biofictional *manner*, by extension positioning *Aaron’s Rod* at a key intersection between the modernist novel and life-writing; the latter understood here as an open and hybrid genre, encompassing autobiography, biography, and the imbrication of both with fiction.

Max Saunders has pointed out that “criticism has not adequately described the relations between modernism and life-writing”, and for its part, Lawrence scholarship has given less attention than it deserves to the nexus between *Aaron’s Rod* and the Mecklenburgh Square novels.⁸ One exception to the critical rule is Peter Firchow, who remarks on the recursiveness of the texts in question:

Here is a situation which, if not unique, is certainly highly unusual: four novels – one by a major writer, two by writers of

considerable importance, the last by a writer of some talent and reputation – dealing with parts of the same series of events [the breakdown of the Aldington marriage in 1917], events in which they were all in crucial ways participants.⁹

By contrast, another commentator, Fred Crawford, finds in the same four novels “a confusing welter of contradictory accounts, replete with unmitigated lies”.¹⁰ In Crawford’s judgement, Aldington alone emerges from the battle of the books with any honour insofar as *Death of a Hero* maintains an objective distance from the events described, whereas the other three novels “demonstrate a trait of their authors that we must deplore ... these novelists perverted their art and cheapened their talent by making their fiction serve selfish and even base ends”. Lawrence, H. D. and Cournos are taken to task for shirking “the service to general truth that distinguishes fiction from mere lying”, and thereby reneging on the novelist’s responsibility “to present the truth of life”.¹¹ Yet there is a more intricate interweaving of “life” with “fiction” in and between all four texts than Crawford’s cruder binary between “truth” and “lies” allows, calling in question the generic rather than the ethical integrity of the novel: as Saunders suggests, modernist biofiction and “autobiografiction” – a fusion of auto/biography and fiction – plays “complex games with intertextuality and hybridity”.¹² Crawford’s claim that these novels merely serve the “selfish” ends of their individual authors is complicated by Firchow’s point, that “*Bid Me to Live* is heavily indebted to both *Aaron’s Rod* and *Death of a Hero*, just as the latter novel is heavily indebted to the former”, indicating that “these three novels can only be read and interpreted fully and satisfactorily when taken together as a kind of ‘trilogy’”.¹³ Taken as the first book of a three-handed trilogy, *Aaron’s Rod*’s full meaning is contingent on its reception in the two novels that continue and complete that trilogy. The trilogy mirrors in its tripartite structure the triangular relationships with which all three novels are concerned: indeed, in *Bid Me to Live*, H. D.’s fictional surrogate, Julia, is aware that in her Bloomsbury

bedsit, with its “Three long French windows”, she is “living in ... a trilogy”, while Aldington analogises *Death of a Hero*, which is itself “cut sharply into three sections – pre-war, war, and post-war”, to the origins of the trilogy in Greek drama when he compares his novel to a “House of Atrides tragedy”.¹⁴

Cournos’s *Miranda Masters*, meanwhile, with its travesty of the Hellenophile pretensions of the Aldingtons in the characters of Miranda and Arnold Masters, may be taken – setting aside the chronology of the Mecklenburgh Square novels – as satyr play to the tragic trilogy of *Aaron’s Rod*, *Death of a Hero* and *Bid Me to Live*. *Miranda Masters* also supplies a comic coda to Cournos’s own trilogy of *The Mask* (1919), *The Wall* (1921) and *Babel* (1922). However, when Gombarov – Cournos’s protagonist and close fictional alter-ego – learns of the affair between Arnold (Aldington) and Winifred (Yorke), the narrator tells us that “Life appeared to be a comic nightmare, a burlesque tragedy”, revealing that notwithstanding its “comic” aspects, *Miranda Masters* is a “tragedy” too.¹⁵ Certainly, Cournos’s self-reflexive meditations on the relationship between life and art and between literature and lived experience – a relationship as maladjusted, in modernity, as the relationships between his novel’s characters – make *Miranda Masters* as much a novel of ideas as it is a roman à clef, and more than thinly-veiled revenge porn.¹⁶

Lawrence, in the character of Richard Ramsden, only appears offstage in *Miranda Masters*, in Cournos’s quid pro quo, perhaps, for his own absence from *Aaron’s Rod*. Gombarov cautions Miranda against Ramsden, telling her that “Everything he touches turns to ashes in the contact”, a warning H. D. would remember in *Bid Me to Live*, in which the aptly named Julia Ashton “appropriates Lawrence’s icon of a phoenix rising from the ashes”.¹⁷ Notwithstanding his critique of Ramsden, Gombarov nonetheless subscribes to the Lawrentian credo that “art should not be less vital than life”, asking “how was one to write a modern novel, yet retain the sense of art merging with life which the Greeks more than any other people expressed in their drama?”.¹⁸

Aldington, who like Cournos believed that “the Greeks alone of European nations, succeeded in solving the great problem – they coincided life & art”, affirms in his biography that, of the moderns, Lawrence came closest to the Greek example in writing novels that are less “‘works of art’ than life-experiences”.¹⁹

In their receptions of *Aaron's Rod*, Aldington, Cournos and H. D. all adopt and adapt what Paul Delany, in his study of Lawrence and his circle in the years of the Great War, calls Lawrence's “characteristic style of transforming life into art”.²⁰ H. D.'s *Bid Me to Live*, for example, is the last in her series of “attempted” novels in which “writing and life” would not be “diametric opposites” but where “life and letters met”.²¹ *Bid Me to Live* is also, in Susan Stanford Friedman's reading, a female Künstlerroman in which H. D. “rescripts a series of contemporary male texts, some of which [like *Aaron's Rod* and *Death of a Hero*] were written for or about her”.²² H. D.'s Julia Ashton, accordingly, “is an answer to Lawrence's Julia Cunningham, a self-portrait that is closer to the biographical record and that implicitly critiques Lawrence”.²³ Among the fictional liberties Lawrence takes with the biographical record in *Aaron's Rod*, Julia (H. D.) and not Robert Cunningham (Aldington) is the first of the pair to commit adultery, justifying in fiction if not in fact Lawrence's disapproval of H. D.'s decision, in 1918, to live with Cecil Gray in Cornwall, where she became pregnant with his child. In *Aaron's Rod*, Tanny, the Frieda figure, says, with no apparent irony, “After all, one doesn't leave one's husband every day to go and live with another man” (AR 50) – despite the fact that this is what Frieda herself had done in leaving Ernest Weekley to go and live with Lawrence. Rewriting and redeeming Lawrence's likening of Julia Cunningham to a “witch”, H. D. represents her Julia Ashton as “a witch with power”; in Cornwall Julia figures herself as “wise-woman with her witch-ball, the world”, re-gendering Lawrence's pronouncement, in *Kangaroo*, that “Cornwall is a country that makes a man psychic” (K 226).²⁴

Commenting on the manuscript of *Bid Me to Live* in a 1953 letter, Aldington tells H. D. that her novel is “better than the equivalent chapters in *Aaron’s Rod*, where Lorenzo was in one of his fits and guying us all”.²⁵ For Friedman, *Bid Me to Live*’s writing back constitutes a more radical act of writing as feminist re-vision, in which Julia / H. D. collapses the false binary of Lawrence’s (“Rico” in H. D.’s novel) “sex-fixations, his man-is-man, woman-is-woman” into an assertion of androgynous creativity where “The *gloire* [creative vision] is both”.²⁶ According to Friedman, in the unsent letter to Rico with which *Bid Me to Live* concludes, “Julia works through the compulsion to repeat into a form of remembering that authorizes and empowers her own rebirth. Repetition of Rico’s ‘*gloire*’ becomes transformation of it”.²⁷ H. D. would say, of her sessions with Freud in Vienna in 1933–34, that “I wanted to free myself of repetitive thoughts and experiences – my own and those of my contemporaries”.²⁸ But as a loan word from Lawrence – borrowed from his poem ‘*Gloire de Dijon*’, an erotic paean to Frieda’s breasts, included in the 1917 volume *Look! We Have Come Through!* – H. D.’s “*gloire*” is repetition nonetheless, albeit repetition with a feminist difference. As Julia acknowledges in her letter to Rico, “Perhaps I caught that *gloire* from you” – “But it isn’t in your books, it was in your letters sometimes, when you weren’t angry with me”.²⁹ In *Bid Me to Live*, *gloire* denotes, if not a reflected glory, then the closeness with which the Penelope’s web of H. D.’s fiction is interwoven with Lawrence’s poetry, novels, and with his letters, a less filtered version of life-writing in which the affective quality of his *gloire* is most contagious.

In her letter to Rico, Julia tells him: “I will go on scribbling. This very notebook is from the Zennor post-office-stationery-cum-what-not corner shop. You know it. This notebook is a replica of the one you were writing in that day”.³⁰ On the day to which Julia refers, Rico “had spread the note-book open on his knee and was scribbling away”, at work, perhaps, on what would become *Aaron’s Rod*.³¹ In this self-reflexive *mise en scène* of writing, writing back to Lawrence is performed as palimpsestic overwriting. On the title

page of *Palimpsest* (1926), the first of her “attempted” novels and a precursor to *Bid Me to Live*, H. D. tells the reader that “a palimpsest” is “a parchment from which one writing has been erased to make room for another”.³² But as Sarah Dillon points out in an article on ‘Murex’, the second story or layer in *Palimpsest*, H. D.’s definition omits the most compelling feature of the palimpsest: the “trace” of original or earlier writing which is not wholly “erased” but remains at least partly legible through or under later inscriptions. Dillon’s supplementary definition of the palimpsest as made up of multiple texts, “involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting one another”, captures H. D.’s own palimpsestic procedure, but is also confined to it, closing off consideration of the “palimpsestuous” relationship between H. D.’s writing and that of Lawrence and her other contemporaries.³³

More capacious, Gérard Genette’s theory of the palimpsest may be more apposite to the workings of the wider transtextual web in which the Mecklenburgh Square novels are interwoven with or over-write Aaron’s *Rod* and each other. For Genette, the palimpsest is a figure for textuality itself, a subset of which, “hypertextuality”, denotes “any relationship uniting a text B” – “the *hypertext*” – and “an earlier text A” – “the *hypotext*”. Applying Genette’s taxonomy to the Mecklenburgh Square novel-palimpsest, Aaron’s *Rod* is the hypotext from which *Bid Me to Live*, *Death of a Hero* and *Miranda Masters*, as hypertexts, derive: each of these last three is what Genette defines as “a text in the second degree ... i.e., a text derived from another preexistent text”.³⁴ That *Bid Me to Live* is a text in the second degree is all but acknowledged when Julia says to the Lawrence character, Rico, “You can write a book about us”. “I wanted to help too”, Julia continues, “only I didn’t want a sort of family album. I wanted a book to myself and as things are, the threads are too tangled”.³⁵ H. D. would have neither a book to herself nor, in the Mecklenburgh Square days, did she have a room of her own – Julia tells us that with the arrival of Rico and Elsa (Frieda), “The room was no longer her home, her own”. “Elsa’s

work-bag was lying on the floor by one of the table-legs”, the sewing bag material proof of Sydney Janet Kaplan’s point, in her composite study of Lawrence, John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield, that “The filaments of intertextuality are ... tangled”.³⁶

Like the Lawrences’ personal belongings – “the untidy heap of half-unpacked bags assembled in a hurry; all that they now had” – properties from Lawrence’s fiction circulate in the transtextual economy of the Mecklenburgh Square novels.³⁷ For instance, an object associated with writing, and with H. D. rewriting Lawrence’s writing, appears in *Bid Me to Live* in the form of the “lump of lapis-lazuli” Rico gives to Julia, leaving it “on the table, where Julia had been sitting, writing”.³⁸ So positioned, the lapis in *Bid Me to Live* is, like the Zennor notebook, a “replica”, a re-presentation of the “blue, beautiful ball of lapis lazuli that stood on [Hermione Roddice’s] desk for a paper-weight” in the ‘Breadalby’ chapter of *Women in Love* (WL 105), underlining the continuity commentators have identified between Lawrence’s pen portraits of Ottoline Morrell and H. D.³⁹ Lump or ball, the lapis may also have the ontological heft of what Christopher Bollas calls “objects in the real”: in a letter to Aldington, H. D. insisted that “There WAS a blob of lapis, L. gave it to me that time they stayed at M Square. He said or F said that the ‘Ott’ had hit him with it”.⁴⁰ As a discursive or symbolic object which may reference an object in the real, the lapis-lazuli paperweight strains almost to breaking point the fine line between “life” and “writing”.

Another object from *Women in Love* is recycled in Cournos’s *Babel*. In chapter six, Gombarov attends a salon at “a large Georgian house” in London:

A little statuette, hewed out of granite, which stood on a writing desk ... attracted his attention. It was the figure of a pregnant negress, and she stood in an attitude of torment, curved almost into a question mark, her two hands on her stomach. It bore the inscription, *The Fecund Earth* ... There was an extraordinary

potency in it for so small a piece of stone. Hardly more than fifteen inches high, it yet gave an illusion of bigness; decorative, it was yet deliberately crude; a thing wrought with elemental forces, wrought by them from within and without; it was as a mountain in travail giving birth to new life.⁴¹

As its title tells us, *Babel* speaks in more than one tongue, and its language here is that of the 'Crème de Menthe' chapter of *Women in Love*. Cournos's *salonnière*, Mrs Rodd, is nearly synonymous with Lawrence's Hermione Roddice. The statuettes displayed in Mrs Rodd's Soho Square townhouse are made of granite rather than of wood, but one of the sculptures otherwise bears a close resemblance to a West African fetish in Julius Halliday's Soho flat in *Women in Love*:

there were several negro statues, wood-carvings from West Africa, strange and disturbing, the carved negroes looked almost like the foetus of a human being. One was of a woman sitting naked in a strange posture, and looking tortured, her abdomen stuck out ... she was sitting in childbirth, clutching the ends of the band that hung from her neck, one in each hand, so that she could bear down, and help labour. The strange, transfixed, rudimentary face of the woman again reminded Gerald of a foetus. It was also rather wonderful, conveying the suggestion of the extreme of physical sensation, beyond the limits of mental consciousness. (WL 74)

Is the likeness between these passages merely coincidental, given that African "fetishes" were common primitivist property in the 1910s, or is Cournos fetishising Lawrence's representation of the "fetish", cashing in, with his proxy statuette, on the symbolic capital of *Women in Love*'s original?⁴² Should we parse the passage from *Babel* as pastiche or parody or plagiarism? Or is Cournos experimenting with a more radical form of recursion, splicing elements of Lawrence's novel into his own to create an intertextual

playback loop into which H. D.'s fiction also feeds? These interpretations need not be mutually exclusive: in *Palimpsests*, Genette classifies pastiche and parody, together with caricature and forgery, as "hypertextual" genres, defining hypertextuality itself as an intentional form of the "transtextuality" which creates "a relationship of copresence between texts or among several texts".⁴³

The palimpsest, as Helen McNeil suggests, "endangers the concept of the separate work of art" and so "returns a potentially endless reflexive meditation".⁴⁴ The co-presence between Lawrence's fiction and the Mecklenburgh Square novels compromises the autonomy of the individual artwork or text, returning a composite meditation – a meditation, moreover, in time of war. "Given normal civilised peace-time conditions", H. D. tells us, "all of this could never have happened, or it would have happened in sections, so that one could deal with one problem after another in due sequence".⁴⁵ Instead, revisiting and reproducing the same series of events, the Mecklenburgh Square novels engage *Aaron's Rod*, *Women in Love* and each other in an iterative process, triggered by war trauma, which bears analogy to the neurosis Freud identifies as repetition compulsion in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920): "The terrible war which has just ended gave rise to a great number of illnesses" which may be classified as "traumatic neurosis", among them the "compulsion to repeat".⁴⁶

Like *Death of a Hero* and *Bid Me to Live*, the early chapters of *Aaron's Rod* return to and repeat the "war-bitten" Mecklenburgh Square days, but transpose the events of 1917 to the immediate postwar scene: "All the men, except Aaron, had been through the war in some way or other. But here they were, in the old setting exactly, the old bohemian routine" (AR 194, 57) – this despite the fact that, as Peter Brooker points out, with reference to Ezra Pound's relocation to Paris in 1920, "In London, the immediate post-war years witnessed an end to the collective life of modernist experiment".⁴⁷ H. D. would likewise remark that "We were dispersed and scattered after War I".⁴⁸ The temporal relocation of the war years to the post-war period in *Aaron's Rod* may itself

signify post-traumatic stress, the delayed onset of “war neurosis” which also explains the temporal lag between the war itself and the return to it in writing in the “war book boom” of a decade later – Aldington’s *Death of a Hero*, like its German counterpart Erich Maria Remarque’s *Im Westen nichts Neues* (published in translation as *All Quiet on the Western Front*), appeared in 1929.⁴⁹ Commenting on the composition of *Death of a Hero* in his autobiography, Aldington says “I wrote and destroyed part of such a book in 1919; and in 1925 and 1927 I made other abortive starts ... time was needed for the assimilation and arrangement of these experiences”.⁵⁰

As Steven Vine recognises, “The War haunts and harries Aaron’s *Rod* with the force of trauma”.⁵¹ “The War was over”, we are told at the outset, yet “the violence of the nightmare [is] released now into the general air” (AR 5). That “nightmare” is recapitulated in the novel in the “mesmerised voice, going on and on” of the shell-shocked veteran, Captain Herbertson: “the hot seared burn of unbearable experience” is embodied again in Angus, “a war hero with shattered nerves” (AR 114, 194). The irruption of the war into the postwar narrative of *Kangaroo* in ‘The Nightmare’ chapter is also activated by post-traumatic stress: for Lawrence’s fictional surrogate, Richard Lovatt Somers, “memory of all this came on him so violently, now in the Australian night, that he trembled helplessly under the shock of it” (K 258). Somers, we are told, “faced out all his memories like a nightmare in the night, and cut clear” (K 259). That H. D. would never “cut clear” of the trauma of the war years is indicated in the extreme belatedness of her autobiographical “*retour*” to the events of 1917: the last of the Mecklenburgh Square novels, *Bid Me to Live* would not be published until 1960, the year before H. D.’s death.⁵²

Saunders’s point that “the First World War transformed the crisis in life-writing” is as germane to the Mecklenburgh Square novels as it is to the “New Biography” of the Bloomsbury set proper.⁵³ At the same time, the Mecklenburgh Square novels’ composite experiment in synthesising life-writing and the

modernist novel unsettles and amplifies received definitions of First World War literature.⁵⁴ Aldington's *Death of a Hero* reinforces in its structure and storyline the experiential gulf between soldiers and civilians, and yet, bookended by *Aaron's Rod* and *Bid Me to Live*, Aldington's novel also forms the middle part of a wartime trilogy which registers the traumatic fallout of the war on both the home and the Western fronts. Aldington tells us that his protagonist, George Winterbourne, "was living in a sort of double nightmare – the nightmare of the War and the nightmare of his own life. Each seemed inextricably interwoven".⁵⁵ Aldington's representation of the nightmare on the home front is also, and as inextricably, interwoven with Lawrence's – indeed, Aldington was at work on his novel when Lawrence and Frieda visited him at Port Cros in the Îles d'Hyères in October and November 1928. "I shan't attempt to describe the sinister degradation of English life in the last two years of the war", the narrator of *Death of a Hero* tells us: "Lawrence has done it once and for all in the chapter called 'The Nightmare' in his book *Kangaroo*".⁵⁶ The tribute to Lawrence in propria persona in *Death of a Hero* as "probably the greatest living English novelist" offsets Aldington's novel's caricature of him as Comrade Bobbe, conscientious objector and all-round "queer-Dick".⁵⁷

In 'The Nightmare' chapter of *Kangaroo*, Lawrence's evocation of London in 1915 as "a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears and horrors" (K 216) puts a negative spin on Ezra Pound's definition, in 1914, of the Great London Vortex as "a radiant node or cluster".⁵⁸ According to Hugh Kenner, "any Vortex is somewhere on the map", and in 1917, 44 Mecklenburgh Square was a vortex of broken passions where, Cournos recalls in his autobiography, "An atmosphere of sex hysteria, which is only a part of war hysteria, prevailed".⁵⁹ But in the late years of the war, H. D.'s "cold studio living-room" in Bloomsbury was also, however makeshift, a matrix of London modernism, a living laboratory – "a test-tube, this room" – in which a group of writers attempted to find a new formula for fiction.⁶⁰ As Saunders suggests, "to synthesize modernism and life-writing is to redefine modernism".⁶¹

Lawrence's relationship to and reception in the Mecklenburgh Square novels not only reconfigures our reading of *Aaron's Rod* and *Kangaroo*, but also places Lawrence's oeuvre's formative experiment in autobiografiction in the wider trajectory of the development of the modernist novel.

¹ H. D., *Bid Me to Live* (London: Virago, 1984), 18.

² *Ibid.*, 78.

³ Mark Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile, 1912–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 457. H. D. rented the Mecklenburgh Square bedsit from February 1916 to August 1918. On his return from the Western Front in July 1917, Aldington was sent for reassignment to Whittington Barracks in Staffordshire. H. D. took lodgings in nearby Lichfield, and when she returned to London on occasional visits "they managed, by dint of Lawrence taking the room upstairs while Frieda and Arabella shared the double bed and H. D. slept on a camp-bed, all in the big first-floor room": *ibid.*, 410. Vivien Whelpton speculates that "the tensions in the relationship between H. D. and D. H. Lawrence came to a climax" in mid-November, when H. D. spent a few days at Mecklenburgh Square: *Richard Aldington: Poet, Soldier and Lover, 1911–1929* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013), 159.

⁴ Perdita Schaffner, Afterword to H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 185.

⁵ Robert McAlmon, 'Forewarned as regards H. D.'s Prose', in H. D., *Palimpsest* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, SI: Southern Illinois UP, 1968), 242.

⁶ H. D., letter to Richard Aldington, 23 February 1949, in Caroline Zilboorg, ed., *Richard Aldington and H. D.: Their Lives in Letters, 1918–1961* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003), 304.

⁷ See below for a discussion of Genette and palimpsestic transtextuality.

⁸ Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modernist Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 12.

⁹ Peter E. Firchow, 'Rico and Julia: The Hilda Doolittle: D. H. Lawrence Affair Reconsidered', in *Journal of Modern Literature* 8.1 (1980), 51–76, 55.

¹⁰ Fred D. Crawford, 'Misleading Accounts of Aldington and H. D.', in *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 30.1 (1987), 49–67, 49.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 64–5.

¹² Saunders, *Self Impression*, 6.

¹³ Firchow, 'Rico and Julia', 72.

¹⁴ H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 10; Richard Aldington, *Death of a Hero* (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), 24.

¹⁵ John Cournos, *Miranda Masters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 250.

¹⁶ In his novel, Cournos punishes H. D.'s fictional proxy, Miranda, for her alleged collusion in the affair between Arnold and Winifred (Aldington and Yorke), calling her "the direct author of his misfortune", an allegation H. D. would refute, blaming Aldington and Yorke for assigning her "the wifely part of camouflaging love-affair for husband-on leave": *ibid.*, 18; H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 70.

¹⁷ Cournos, *Miranda Masters*, 176; Diana Collecot, *H. D. and Sapphic Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 96.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 110, 119.

¹⁹ Aldington, letter to H. D., 4 July 1918, in Zilboorg, *Richard Aldington and H. D.*, 78; Richard Aldington, *Portrait of a Genius, But ... The Life of D. H. Lawrence, 1885–1930* (London: Heinemann, 1950), 145.

²⁰ Paul Delany, *D. H. Lawrence's Nightmare: The Writer and His Circle in the Years of the Great War* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1979), 226.

²¹ H. D., letter to John Cournos, 15 September 1922, quoted in Donna Krolik Hollenberg, 'Art and Ardor in World War One: Selected Letters from H. D. to John Cournos', *Iowa Review* 16.3 (1986), 126–55, 150; H. D., *Asphodel*, ed. Robert Spoo (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1992), 76, 4.

²² Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990), 144.

²³ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁴ H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 146–7.

²⁵ Aldington, letter to H. D., 7 January 1953, in Zilboorg, *Richard Aldington and H. D.*, 362.

²⁶ H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 62, 176. Compare Virginia Woolf's assertion that "The great mind is androgynous" in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957), 102. "Rico" is the husband of Lou Witt, the American-born heroine of Lawrence's story *St. Mawr* (1925). Lou is a Persephone-figure with whom H. D. may have identified: Persephone and Dis are Julia and Rico's chthonic avatars in *Bid Me to Live*.

²⁷ Friedman, *Penelope's Web*, 163.

²⁸ H. D., *Tribute to Freud* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1985), 13.

²⁹ H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 176.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

³² H. D., *Palimpsest*, n.p.

³³ Sarah Dillon, 'Palimpsesting: Reading and Writing Lives in H. D.'s "Murex": War and Postwar London (circa A.D. 1916–1926)', *Critical Survey* 30 (2018), 29–39, 29. Dillon discusses Lawrence as well as H. D. in her study of the palimpsest, but in separate chapters; her focus in the Lawrence chapter is on the figure in his poetry. Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 3.

³⁴ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1997), 1, 5.

³⁵ H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 173.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 85; Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010), 7.

³⁷ H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 85.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁹ Firchow posits that "Julia Cunningham may be an intentional reworking of aspects of Hermione Roddice's character": 'Rico and Julia', 73.

⁴⁰ Christopher Bollus, *The Evocative Object World* (London: Routledge, 2008), 59; Zilboorg, *Richard Aldington and H. D.*, 358.

⁴¹ John Cournos, *Babel* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), 251, 255.

⁴² The artist Mark Gertler, Lawrence's friend and member of the Bloomsbury group, "had also acquired an African carving by 1915" (*WL* 538 n.74:10). Maurice Beebe speculates that a passage describing African figurines in Gilbert Cannan's novel *Mendel* (1916), the artist-protagonist of which is modelled on Gertler, "may explain the appearance of a similar scene in *Women in Love*": 'Lawrence as Fictional Character', in *The Spirit of D. H. Lawrence*, eds Salgado Gamini and G. K. Das (London: Macmillan, 1988), 295–310, 304. Cournos, who had discussed Gertler in an essay on English painting and sculpture published in *Seven Arts* in 1917, probably read and possibly reviewed Cannan's novel; an anonymous review printed in *Seven Arts* earlier in 1917 finds that *Mendel* "conveys a very dim, cold, and almost abstract sense of the English

society which Mendel is supposed to throw into relief". See John Cournos, 'New Tendencies in English Painting and Sculpture', *Seven Arts* 2.6 (1917); anon., review of Gilbert Cannan, *Mendel*, *Seven Arts* 2.2 (1917), 252.

⁴³ Genette, *Palimpsests*, 1.

⁴⁴ Helen McNeil, Introduction to H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, xix.

⁴⁵ H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 139.

⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in Peter Gay, ed., *The Freud Reader*, 594–627, 597, 605.

⁴⁷ Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene in Early Modernism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 9.

⁴⁸ H. D., 'H. D. by Delia Alton', *Iowa Review* 16.3 (1986), 180–22, 184.

⁴⁹ Aldington, *Death of a Hero*, 287. On the war book boom, see Andrew Frayn, *Writing Disenchantment: British First World War Prose, 1914–30* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2014).

⁵⁰ Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake*, 301. Aldington acknowledged in a letter to Amy Lowell that he had suffered "a sort of deferred shell-shock": qtd. in Whelpton, *Richard Aldington*, 239.

⁵¹ Steven Vine, 'D. H. Lawrence's Exodus', introduction to D. H. Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), xv–xxxvi, xix.

⁵² H. D. letter to Aldington (22 February 1953), in Zilboorg, *Richard Aldington and H. D.*, 365.

⁵³ Saunders, *Self Impression*, 20.

⁵⁴ Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918) is an exemplar of the New Biography.

⁵⁵ Aldington, *Death of a Hero*, 226. In a 1919 letter to Clement Shorter, Aldington asks "I wonder if you realize what a gulf there is in my generation between the men who fought and those who didn't?": Zilboorg, *Richard Aldington and H. D.*, 168.

⁵⁶ Aldington, *Death of a Hero*, 224.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁸ Ezra Pound, *A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska* (New York: New Directions, 1970), 92.

⁵⁹ Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1971), 238; John Cournos, *Autobiography* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935), 327.

⁶⁰ H. D., *Bid Me to Live*, 96.

⁶¹ Saunders, *Self Impression*, 13.