

THE DATE OF COMPOSITION OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S 'LAURA PHILIPPINE'

The date of composition of D. H. Lawrence's short article 'Laura Philippine' has long been a matter for speculation among Lawrence scholars. There is no reference to its composition in any of the author's extant correspondence. Lawrence's first mention of it comes in a letter of 13 May 1928, when he forwarded it to Nancy Pearn, Manager of the Magazines Department at the London office of his agent, Curtis Brown, suggesting that she might try to place it in the *Evening News*, whose literary editor, Arthur E. Olley, had recently solicited and published a piece by him.¹ He told his agent: 'If it won't do for the Olley man, it may for somebody else' (*Letters*, VI, 401). The article finally appeared in *T.P.'s and Cassell's Weekly* on 7 July 1928. Lawrence was interested enough in its publication to request to see the relevant issue of the paper.²

In *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game, 1922-1930*, David Ellis indicates that 'Laura Philippine' may have been written earlier than May 1928, since it closely records Lawrence's impressions of Mary Christine Hughes, the twenty-year-old daughter of his American friend Christine Hughes, whom he saw during brief visits to Rome in March and April 1927, and in Florence in June 1927. Ellis argues that Lawrence sent it to his agent in May 1928 because only then had he begun to see a market for it.³ However, in the absence of the manuscript, and of any other material evidence, he was forced to give its date of composition in an appendix to his biography as 'by 13 May 1928' (559). In the Cambridge edition of Lawrence's *Late Essays and Articles*, published six years later, James T. Boulton is less tentative: he firmly implies (but does not actually state) that it was written shortly before Lawrence sent it to Nancy Pearn, in early May 1928.⁴

Fortunately, the four-page holograph manuscript of the essay has now come to light. It was purchased by the University of Nottingham at an auction of the Roy Davids Collection

of Papers and Portraits at Bonhams in London on 29 March 2011, as part of a lot which included three letters from Frieda Lawrence to Christine Hughes, and one to Mary Christine.⁵ In the letter to Mary Christine Hughes, dated 15 September 1937, Frieda explicitly refers to the composition of 'Laura Philippine': 'I remember so well, when Lawrence came back from a visit to you in Rome and sat, chuckling to himself, writing this sketch'.⁶ Lawrence saw the Hugheses during two short stays in Rome on 19-21 March and 4-6 April 1927. After the second of these visits he spent one week with his friend Earl Brewster, travelling to various sites in Cerveteri, Tarquinia, Vulci and Volterra in order to gather material for a projected volume of essays on the Etruscans. He did not return to his home, the Villa Mirinda, in Scandicci, near Florence, until the evening of 11 April 1927. The following day he wrote a letter to Nancy Pearn, telling her that he hoped he would soon be sending her 'some small things' which she could attempt to place in magazines (*Letters*, VI, 29). 'Laura Philippine' was almost certainly one of the pieces he wrote at this time. Frieda's assertion to this effect is supported by two pieces of circumstantial evidence. Firstly, the watermarked paper on which it is written is identical to that which Lawrence used for Version 2 of the Introduction to his translation of Giovanni Verga's *Mastro-don Gesualdo*, which he wrote in late April or early May 1927.⁷ Secondly, there are strong thematic links between 'Laura Philippine' and another article entitled 'Making Love to Music', which he wrote between 12 and 26 April. The most likely date of composition of 'Laura Philippine' is therefore April 1927.

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¹ *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. VI, eds James T. Boulton and Margaret H. Boulton with Gerald M. Lacy (Cambridge, 1991), 400. (Hereafter *Letters*, VI). The published article was 'The Bogey Between the Generations', later re-titled 'The "Jeune Fille" Wants to Know'; it was published in the *Evening News* on 8 May 1928.

² See *Letters*, VI, 438 and 460.

³ David Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game, 1922-1930* (Cambridge, 1998), 414 and 693 fn. 39.

⁴ See D. H. Lawrence, *Late Essays and Articles*, ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge, 2004), 76. In an editorial note, Boulton refers to Lawrence's meeting with the Hugheses in Florence in June 1927; he states that 'Laura Philippine' was written 'nearly a year later'.

⁵ The manuscript is Roberts E194a. See *A Bibliography of D. H. Lawrence*, Third Edition, ed. Warren Roberts and Paul Poplawski (Cambridge, 2001), 618. The four letters are La L 26/3-6 (Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham). The letters from Frieda Lawrence to Christine Hughes are dated 9 November 1936, 15 September 1937, and 28 September 1949.

⁶ La L 26/5 (Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham).

⁷ Roberts E231g. (University of Nottingham). The paper is watermarked 'EXTRA STRONG' (21.8cm x 28.8cm).