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REVIEW ESSAY

THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION'S PHENOMENAL FINALE

JONATHAN LONG

Christopher Pollnitz, ed. *D. H. Lawrence: The Poems, Volume III*

Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018.

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In my review essay relating to *Volumes I* and *II* of the Cambridge Edition of *The Poems*, published in the 2013 number of *JDHLS*, I quoted Christopher Pollnitz's statement that the third volume would "in due course" complete the edition, comprising 40 volumes of the *Works* and eight volumes of the *Letters*. It took a further five years for *Volume III* to be published but it has been well worth the wait. This third and final volume includes approximately 300 pages of texts of poems, comprising uncollected poems and early versions, together with the poems of *Love Poems and Others* (1913) and *Amores* (1916) in their original published forms. These contrast with the versions appearing in *Collected Poems* (1928), the collection which formed the greater part of *Volume I* of *The Poems*. If the original versions of *New Poems* (1918) and *Bay* (1919) had been included in *Volume III* as well, then all Lawrence's poetry collections would have featured in this edition, if one is content with the versions of the *Look! We Have Come Through!* and *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* collections in *Collected Poems* (1928) and thus in *The Poems*. Constraints of space have made this impossible and instead Pollnitz selected *Love Poems and Others* (1913) and *Amores* (1916) as they were "revised extensively and all-too-often unsympathetically" (lxxxiii). Those constraints have also meant that

he was only able to “make a representative range of early versions available”, including “multiple versions of highly regarded early poems” (lxxxiii).

The new volume is generally similar in appearance to its two predecessors. Naturally the arrangement and content of the sections are somewhat different. The acknowledgements and chronology are followed by lists of collections, cue-titles and abbreviations that supplement those at the beginning of *Volume II*. The chronology is again very thorough and contains material quite different from that in *Volume I*, focusing on what is germane to the volume under review. However, both record the key point that Lawrence’s poetry-writing and revision cover the period from no later than spring 1905, when he composed ‘Champions’ and ‘Guelder Roses’, to his correcting the proofs of *Nettles* less than a month before his death – a somewhat longer period than for any of his other types of writing. These sections are followed by the manuscript listing, which I suggested in my last review would have been welcome in the earlier volumes. Unclear references there are now clarified. The listing is a *tour de force*, cataloguing not only the known sources – manuscript, typescript, proof and author’s copy – but also such unlocated texts we know have been lost or can deduce must have existed, for example Lawrence’s third University College Nottingham notebook, or Frieda’s teenage *Tagebuch*, which Lawrence borrowed from her to write down poems about her. Collected together these sources show just how extensive Lawrence’s poetic endeavour was. The poetry entries in Section E (manuscripts) of Roberts and Poplawski’s *A Bibliography of D. H. Lawrence* (2001) will need to be updated.

The next section of *Volume III* is the 44-page introduction, which provides a survey of the poems in this volume in the order in which they appear, in the process explaining the reasons for their exclusion from *Volume I*. This introduction also provides the opportunity to address errors in and omissions from the ‘Composition, Publication, Reception’ section of *Volume II*. For example, probably the most important find in the intervening years

has been a hitherto unlocated typescript of *Pansies* and its discovery changes our understanding of the timings of the setting-copy preparation for that poetry collection.

After these preliminary sections come the poems themselves. There are over 120 poems that Lawrence could not or would not include in collections, taking the total number of his poems to over 980. There are also over 190 early and variant versions of collected poems (especially from *Pansies*). These together are printed chronologically, then followed by the versions of *Love Poems and Others* and *Amores* published in 1913 and 1916, respectively. Consistent with the earlier volumes there follow Transmission notes, a Textual apparatus and Explanatory notes. The type of Textual notes appearing in *Volume II* would not be appropriate for the uncollected poems and early and variant versions of *Volume III*, and shorter Textual notes have been provided for the poems in the *Love Poems and Others* and *Amores* volumes as these have been provided in full in *Volume II*. By the same token it was appropriate for the Transmission notes relating to the uncollected poems and early and variant versions to be more extensive, providing exhaustive information about their composition and, where relevant, information about their publication. The corrigenda section that follows addresses the inevitable mistakes in the earlier volumes, although such is the thoroughness with which this volume has been prepared it would be difficult to find errors in it. Finally comes the index of first lines and titles. It relates only to *Volume III* and not the three volumes combined.

The uncollected poems and the early and variant versions have been divided into six periods, 1905–11, 1912–14, 1914–19, 1920–25, 1926–27 and 1928–30, with the introduction structured in a similar fashion. This chronological approach “makes developments in theme and style readily traceable and offers new perspectives on each period of Lawrence’s verse-writing”, as the front flap of the dust jacket tells us. These periods have been selected to distinguish “phases of his writing life on the continents and in the countries and regions where he chose to live”. Most of the poems in this section

have already been published in either Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts's *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence* (1972) or T. A. Smailes's *Some Comments on the Verse of D. H. Lawrence* (1970), but the former, in particular, is full of errors, as Pollnitz has noted. However, according to my rough and ready calculation there are over 40 early versions of poems not published before. There are also a handful of poems or fragments not published before in any version, and we see in print for the first time the last five stanzas of 'Drunk', which Lawrence disliked and did not include in *Amores*. Lawrence's two attempts at limerick-writing are also included, with corrected texts! Finally, of course, as *Love Poems and Others* and *Amores* are printed in full, we have the one poem from the former and two poems from the latter (mentioned in my last review) that were omitted from *Collected Poems* (1928) and thus from *Volume I*.

As was the case with *Volume II*, each poem has (where appropriate) notes under five headings: Versions, Other Titles, Transmission, Textual apparatus, and Explanatory notes. I won't repeat my comments on these from my earlier review, but the slight inconvenience of having poems in *Volume I* and *Volume III*, introductory material and notes in *Volume II* and *Volume III*, and two indexes is all too apparent, flowing from the bisecting of this project. I will comment on the Explanatory notes. These are, again, excellent. They are helpful and not excessive, reflecting Lawrence's detailed knowledge of the Bible, literature (particularly poetry), natural history, mythology and art. They also reflect Pollnitz's extensive knowledge of Lawrence's letters, works and biography, together with some new research. We now know, for example, the probable location of the yew tree that featured in 'Liaison', and that 'Mating' recalls his walk through the North Downs in May 1911, from Westerham to Limpsfield.

My comments would not be complete without mention of the full variorum apparatus promised in *Volume I*. It has not been provided and no reason for that has been given. Carole Ferrier, who initially took on the job of editing *The Poems*, had produced as her

1971 Ph.D. dissertation a variorum edition up to 1919, subsequently extended. That alone was a monumental feat, and as the manuscript listing shows there would have been a lot more poems to cover and often in many versions, not always possible to date. Pollnitz described the nature of the task in an essay published in 1995, written when he had begun to collaborate with Ferrier but not taken over editorship. The essay described editing the poems composed between November 1928 and November 1929:

A variorum edition should aim at reproducing the experience of polysemy that comes with reading manuscript verse, of an enriching competition of alternative revisions. A variorum edition of Lawrence's verse should also aim at reproducing the clarity with which Lawrence evolved versions of poems, intact and entire, even when successive versions were drafted, one over the other, on a single, heavily revised page.¹

In short a full variorum would appear to have been an extremely difficult, if not impossible, task, particularly given the time constraints of getting the edition completed.

At the end of my last review I speculated as to what Cambridge University Press might do with this excellent work. In 2018 it authorised RosettaBooks to produce a digital (Kindle) version of *Volume I* and *Volume II* (and some other Cambridge Edition texts), which although not identical in every way to, nor always as easy to use as, the print edition contains the same key material (but reordered), with the exception of the textual apparatuses. It is searchable and has hyperlinks between the poems and the notes etc. And it only costs 99 pence. That is far too cheap for what has been achieved. What we have from Christopher Pollnitz in *The Poems* is an incredible piece of scholarship.

¹ Christopher Pollnitz, 'Cough-Prints and Other Intimacies: Considerations in Editing Lawrence's Later Verse', in Charles L. Ross and Dennis Jackson eds, *Editing D. H. Lawrence New Versions of a Modern Author* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1985), 155.