TELLING STORIES OF CULTURE THROUGH LITERATURE: D. H. LAWRENCE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

Ana Clara Birrento
Universidade de Évora
birrento@uevora.pt

Abstract

Grounded on Raymond Williams's definition of knowable community as a cultural tool to analyse literary texts, the essay reads the texts D.H.Lawrence wrote while travelling in the Mediterranean (*Twilight in Italy, Sea and Sardinia* and *Etruscan Places*) as knowable communities, bringing to the discussion the wide importance of literature not only as an object for aesthetic or textual readings, but also as a signifying practice which tells stories of culture.

Departing from some considerations regarding the historical development of the relationship between literature and culture, the essay analyses the ways D. H. Lawrence constructed maps of meaning, where the readers, in a dynamic relation with the texts, apprehend experiences, structures and feelings; putting into perspective Williams's theory of culture as a whole way of life, it also analyses the ways the author communicates and organizes these experiences, creating a space of communication and operating at different levels of reality: on the one hand, the reality of the whole way of Italian life, and, on the other hand, the reality of the reader who aspires to make sense and to create an interpretative context where all the information is put, and, also, the reality of the writer in the poetic act of writing.

To read these travel writings as knowable communities is to understand them as a form that invents a community with no other existence but that of the literary text.

The cultural construction we find in these texts is the result of the selection, and interpretation done by D.H.Lawrence, as well as the product of the author's enunciative positions, and of his epistemological and ontological filigrees of existence, structured by the conditions of possibility. In the rearticulation of the text, of the writer and of the reader, in a dynamic and shared process of discursive alliances, we understand that Lawrence tells stories of the Mediterranean through his literary art.

Sinopse

Fundado na definição de comunidade conhecível proposta por Raymond Williams como uma ferramenta cultural para a análise de textos literários, o artigo propõe a leitura das narrativas de viagem que D.H.Lawrence escreveu quando viajou pelo Mediterrâneo (*Twilight in Italy, Sea and Sardinia* e *Etruscan Places*) como comunidades conhecíveis, trazendo para a discussão a importância da literatura não só como objecto de análise para a crítica textual, mas também como uma prática significativa que conta histórias de cultura.

Partindo de algumas considerações sobre o desenvolvimento histórico da relação entre literatura e cultura, o artigo analisa os modos como D. H. Lawrence construiu mapas de significado, onde os leitores, numa relação dinâmica com o texto, apreendem experiências, estruturas e sensibilidades, analisando também os modos como o autor comunica e organiza estas experiências, criando um espaço de comunicação que opera a diferentes níveis da realidade: por um lado, a realidade de todo um modo de vida italiano e, por outro lado, a realidade do leitor que aspira a fazer sentido e a encontrar um contexto interpretativo onde coloque toda a informação, e a realidade do escritor no acto poético da escrita.

Ler estas narrativas como comunidades conhecíveis é compreendê-las como uma forma que inventa uma comunidade que não tem qualquer existência a não ser a do texto literário. A construção cultural que encontramos nestes textos é o resultado da selecção e interpretação de Lawrence, bem como o produto das suas posições enunciativas e das suas filigranas epistemológicas e ontológicas da existência, estruturadas pelas condições de possibilidade. Na re-articulação do texto, do escritor e do leitor, num processo dinâmico e partilhado de alianças discursivas, percebemos que D.H.Lawrence conta histórias do Mediterrâneo através da sua arte.

Keywords: knowable community, discursive alliances, communication, experience, structures of feeling.

Palavras-chave: comunidade conhecível, alianças discursivas, comunicação, experiência, estrutura de sensibilidade.

Bringing together what the historical developments of the modern thought have separated in the relation between culture and society, the analysis I propose of *Twilight in Italy*, *Sea and Sardinia* and *Etruscan Places*[1] by D.H.Lawrence shows that literature, culture and society are not antagonistic terrains. This critical stance shows that the high, elitist culture, the best that was ever thought or written, the pursuit of total perfection in Arnold's definition[2], is not necessarily divorced from the individual and social experience. It does not ignore the representation of experience and of the structures of feeling - of the specific feelings and rhythms as well as of the conventions and institutions - as Raymond Williams has thought them[3].

The core of my argument is reading literary texts from Williams's standpoint in his arguments regarding the cultural concept of knowable community. It articulates the study of literature with the study of culture and brings together the two torn halves[4]; the two antinomies inaugurated in the English thought in the nineteenth-century by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, developed by Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold and deepened in the twentieth-century by Frank Raymond Leavis in the propositions contained in the pompously called discipline of *English*.

Literature and culture, viewed as the form of human civilization, were, for these thinkers, the high point of civilization and the concern of an educated minority. This

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[1] In the end of quotations, these texts will be respectively referred by the following abbreviations: TI, SS and EP. All the essays belong to the edition *D. H. Lawrence and Italy*. Introduction by Anthony Burgess, Penguin, London: 1997.

[2] Cf. *Culture and Anarchy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932

[3] Cf. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977 and *The English Novel, from Dickens to Lawrence*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1984

[4] Birrento, Ana Clara. *Uniting the Two Torn Halves: High Culture and Popular Culture*. http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/025/016/ecp072516.pdf

process projected literature into categories of selectivity, into a body of knowledge of the canon of a great tradition, with an essential English character, and as a human experience, segregating the field of expertise of aesthetics from all other activities, namely advertising, films and popular fiction. It helped the humanist hegemony of literary studies, attributing to them a normative primacy over all other cultural expressions, becoming the kernel of modern education.

But the tables were turned when the articulation of culture and society, grounded on the practices of the founding fathers of the Birmingham School, enabled a critical position which simultaneously integrates and excludes theories and practices of the literary and cultural studies, in an effort to open new perspectives and horizons to the limits imposed by the ideological apparatus which excluded all social or cultural practice from the academic context.

To analyse literary texts within the frame of cultural theory is to include and to exclude some of the core questions of literary studies, in a new paradigm which, as Thomas Kuhn explained, is only possible when there is an articulation or an extension of the old paradigm, in a process of reconstruction of the basis, a reconstruction built on the clarification of the contradictions, integrating the old one[5].

Integrating a practice of textual, artistic, aesthetic or ethical analysis, this critical perspective also includes the analysis of cultural practices which register what was lived and experienced in a certain time and context, giving voice to what Raymond Williams taught us.

To study the relations adequately we must study them actively, seeing all the activities as particular and contemporary forms of human energy. (…) It is then not a question of relating the art to the society, but of studying all the activities and their interrelations without any concession of priority to any one of them we may choose to abstract (Williams [1961] 1965: 61-62).

We should then be able to study literature and culture understanding them as a whole form of the human mind and energy. In order to be actively communicated and received, literature has to express experience in such a way that it can be recreated by

[5] Cf. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962.

the subjects at an artistic, literary and cultural level; in other words, at an aesthetic, intimate, emotional level and at a structural, rational, and social level. But this is a work that can't be done only in abstraction; in order to make it visible, we need to envisage a practice of cultural studies, proposing new visions of literary texts, as

Literature has a vital importance because it is at once a formal record of experience, and also, in every work, a point of intersection with the common language that is, in its major bearings, differently perpetuated. The recognition of culture as the body of all these activities, and of the ways in which they are perpetuated and enter into our common living, was valuable and timely. But there was also the danger that this recognition would become not only an abstraction but in fact an isolation. To put upon literature, or more accurately upon criticism, the responsibility of controlling the quality of the whole range of personal and social experience, is to expose a vital case to damaging misunderstanding (Williams [1958] 1961: 248-249).

To put upon literature the responsibility of controlling the quality of the whole range of personal and social experience is, indeed, a vital misunderstanding of its wider importance as the adequate realm for the representation and communication of experience. Experienc is the mediating term in the representation of structures of feeling and in the construction of literary texts as knowable communities, because, as Raymond Williams explained, in the knowable we find not only the theme – unknown until the moment of writing, as the consciousness of the moment never precedes the act of creation – but also the writer's capacity to communicate, to turn knowable to the others his own experience, bringing it to the process of communication. In fact, the knowable community is based on the interactivity of communication, where the creative writer communicates and organizes experience to others.

When D.H.Lawrence wrote *Twilight in Italy*, *Sea and Sardinia* and *Etruscan Places* he was paying tribute to the unknown places and people he met in his travels in the Mediterranean, and to the region's inherent capacity for enchantment, seducing him to reflect and leading him to create shrines of experience in the texts. My proposal is to read Lawrence's travelogues as knowable communities and to accept that these are the creation of an imagined space of communication, operating at

different levels of reality and of experience; on the one hand, the reality of the people, constructed and represented by the images of society, by the social and individual relations, by the formations and institutions, conventions and ideologies – the whole way of life[6] of the Italian people, and, on the other hand, the reality of the reader who aspires to make sense and to create an interpretative context where he can put all the information, and, also, the reality of the writer in the poetic act of writing.

For what is knowable is not only a function of objects – of what is there to be known. It is also a function of subjects, of observers – of what is desired and what needs to be known (…) it is the observer's position in and towards it; a position which is part of the community being known. (Williams [1973] 1993: 165)

D.H.Lawrence's interaction with the environment resulted in the writing of the trilogy of travelogues which recreate experience in the space of communication of the text, representing the living organization of the Italian men and women – the reality of Italian society. It is an experience that only exists in the language which embodies the space of the shared literary texts and which is the product of the author's capacity to develop affective processes, in an interrelation of aesthetic, moral and social judgement. Lawrence constructs maps of meaning, where the readers, in a dynamic relation with the texts, apprehend structures and feelings.

To succeed in art is to convey an experience to others in such a form that the experience is actively re-created. - not 'contemplated', not 'examined', not 'passively' received, but by response to the means, actually lived through, by those to whom it is offered. (Williams [1961] 1965: 51)

Bringing his own sensibility and culture to the task of responding to and interpreting what he experienced, Lawrence was, at the same time, changed by what he saw. His relationship to the subject was mediating in the construction of a knowable community.

In the tranquillity of his recollections, Lawrence was able to remake the people and the experiences he apprehended intellectually. When he was at the height of his

[6] Cf. In *The Long Revolution*, [1961] 1965, Williams defined his theory of culture as 'the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life (p. 63). This is the definition of culture which informs this essay.

creative energy[7], he and Frieda lived in Italy, from 1912 to 1913, near Lake Garda, where the genial artist composed the studies of Italian life contained in *Twilight in Italy*, published in 1916. This set of texts are sparkled with the humour and lively sensory images and imagination for which Lawrence is known, also manifesting his relational capacity with the places and the people. It is a book where the readers, while simultaneously discovering the country, discover the author and where Lawrence revealed all his creative capacity of representing the landscapes and the people. Writing seemed 'his best way of freeing up the logjam of his feelings, of realizing in language what he was experiencing' (Worthen, 2006:217).

Twilight in Italy begins with Lawrence's travel along the imperial road from Munich, across the Tyrol, through Innsbruck to Verona. The introductory essay, "The Crucifix across the Mountains", traces Lawrence's steps over this mountainous region, 'a strange country, remote, out of contact' (TI: 3); his descriptions of the crucifixes he found along the roadway suggest the implicit narratives behind the crucifixes, each of which is a shrine itself, and each of which has a story. Lawrence spoke of the atmosphere the crucifixes create not only out of their gloomy religious imagery, but also out of the 'shadow and (…) mystery which each seems to hold' (TI: 4). It is more than just the symbolic meaning of these shrines which intrigued Lawrence. Each crucifix holds a story of its creation and placement which he delighted in either uncovering or theorizing upon. Each crucifix is a different portrayal of faith, exhibited through a subjective *medium.* Through the observation of the people he came across, the Bavarian highlanders – 'a race that moves on the poles of mystic sensual delight' (TI: 6) – the observation of the state of the countryside – 'the strange radiance of the mountains' (TI: 6) - and the observation of the nature of the crucifixes themselves, Lawrence constructed assumptions on the history behind many of the shrines. The strange beauty and finality and isolation of the Bavarian peasant seem to inform the crucifixes he found in the Bavarian highlands. Lawrence hypothesized on a certain artist's intention in his crucifixes in the Zemm valley, writing:

[7] He was completing *Sons and Lovers* (1913) and drafting *The Rainbow* (1915) and *The Lost Girl* (1920)

> *"He is no longer a peasant working out and idea, conveying a dogma He is an artist, trained and conscious, probably working in Vienna. He is consciously trying to convey a feeling, he is no longer striving awkwardly to render a truth, a religious fact "(TI: 9).*

Fulfilling Ruskin's[8] definitions of imaginative art by reproducing visual experience in words and by re-creating his own experiences before art and nature, Lawrence added the sensuous and semi-conscious feelings one experiences within a scene. Lawrence's descriptions take the reader on a visual journey, painting an image of the surroundings as they exist over time and then gradually zoom into a particular experience, a particular relationship, or more focused observation. His imaginative description had to include those sensations that hover around and beneath consciousness. By including and even emphasizing certain elements, Lawrence extended this kind of imaginative description in his own way.

This appears with particular clarity in the essay "The Spinner and the Monks," when he reported his experience of San Tommaso. After explaining that there are Churches of the Dove, 'shy and hidden (…) gathered into a silence of their own (…) invisible, offering no resistance' (TI: 19) and Churches of the Eagle, which 'stand high, with their heads to the sky, as if they challenged the world below' (TI: 19), Lawrence reported the difficulty he had in finding the Church of San Tommaso – a Church of the Eagle - through the 'tiny chaotic back-ways and tortuous, tiny, deep passages of the village' (TI: 20). When, at last, he managed to ascend to the church that surmounts the village, finding a broken stairway, he ran up it, 'and came out suddenly, as by a miracle, clean on the platform of my San Tommaso, in the tremendous sunshine' (TI: 21), and he found himself in 'another world, the world of the eagle, the world of fierce abstraction. (…) I was in the skies now' (TI: 21). After

[8] John Ruskin (1819-1900) – his work developed the doctrines of truth, sincerity and beauty in art, leading to absolute standards of perfection and to the belief in a universal, divinely appointed order. For Ruskin, the artist has a special quality of seeing and apprehending reality

describing his setting, first in terms of the details surrounding him and then by filling in the distant sights far below on the lake, Lawrence reflected upon the church he had come to investigate, after which he entered its sheltering darkness.

It always remains to me that San Tommaso and its terrace hang suspended above the village, like the lowest step of heaven, of Jacob's ladder. Behind, the land rises in a high sweep. But the terrace of San Tommaso is let down from heaven, and does not touch the earth. I went into the Church. It was very dark, and impregnated with centuries of incense. It affected me like the lair of some enormous creature. My senses were roused, they sprang awake in the hot, spiced darkness. My skin was expectant, as if it expected some contact, some embrace, as if it were aware of the contiguity of the physical world, the physical contact with the darkness and the heavy, suggestive substance of the enclosure. It was a thick, fierce darkness of the senses. But my soul shrank. I went out again. The pavemented threshold was clear as a jewel, the marvellous clarity of sunshine that becomes blue in the height seemed to distil me into it (TI: 21-22).

By blending the natural and physical earth with the human beings, in the essays contained in *Twilight in Italy*, Lawrence broadened the concept of travel to include the immaterial as well as the material, the philosophical as well as the concrete; the reader follows, along with the author, the world of light and of darkness, of doves and of eagles, in his physical and spiritual journey through the mountains and through his mind as he attempts to uncover deep truths about the world around him.

His attempt to discover and unveil truths about the world around him and about himself leads Lawrence to establish a difference between himself and the Italians; whereas the latter are 'Children of the Shadow', as their souls are dark and nocturnal, he represents himself as light, clear and evanescent (TI: 20). 'I was of another element' (TI: 20). However, from my point of view, it is a more physical difference than any other thing. Astonishingly, this man from another element, a man from a northern culture, said to be colder and formal, was able to unite and to communicate with the southerners and make of their way of life, his own.

In this process of unveiling the truth to himself and to others, in his encounter with the old spinning woman whose world was 'clear and absolute, without consciousness of self' (TI: 24), Lawrence made knowable his unified theory of life: which is 'just the same in the half-apple as in the whole' (TI: 25).

After this first experience of Italy and of his reflections upon himself and upon the 'mechanising of human life' (TI: 168), a life where people are 'but attributes of the great mechanised society we have created in our way to perfection (…) It works on mechanically and destroys us, it is our master and our God' (TI: 45), Lawrence and Frieda returned to England and their happy times were to come to an end.

In England, during WWI, they went through the nightmare of harassment on suspicion of espionage. Prevented from leaving the country, D.H.Lawrence and Frieda Richthofen stayed in remote towns where they were ostracized by the local citizens because of her nationality and of his burgeoning reputation as a pornographic writer. In 1917, Lawrence and Frieda were expelled from Cornwall, and without a penny to their name, they returned to London[9]. These were troubled times for the couple, as they were both accused of spying for Germany, and Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow* was banned for its alleged obscenity, with over 1000 copies of the book being destroyed. This caused Lawrence great financial hardship and damaged his chances of getting further novels published in England, causing a permanent estrangement of the author from his homeland. From those times on, his readership was mostly American and he became an exile.

It was only in 1919 that the couple was able to travel south, to France and then to Italy, and if in 1912 Italy had been a radical new experience, in 1919 it was a place to go when England was finished. This travelling south was the real end of Lawrence's relationship with England and the regaining of the author's freedom.

The first four months of Lawrence's return to Europe saw him going steadily south. After a return visit to Fiascherino, he went on to Florence, making contact with the writer Norman Douglas. Travelling further south, as their attempt to live in the Abruzzi mountains proved impossibly cold and remote, they went to Capri, where the English writing colony, including Compton Mackenzie and Francis Brett Young,

[9] What supported them financially was *The Trespasser*

made them welcome; and finally, in February 1920, they went down to Sicily, to the Fontana Vecchia on the outskirts of Taormina. Here, Lawrence and Frieda lived for almost two years, and he got down to some serious work. Having always explored the life of emotions in his writings, the blank periods when he was producing little fiction were destructive, leaving him enraged at being enclosed. The only relief was the island of Sardinia, which, seen from the sea, seemed, at dawn, magic, 'more transparent than thin pearl' (SS: 46).

(…) a naked town rising steep, steep, golden-looking, piled naked to the sky from the plain at the head of the formless hollow bay. (…) The city piles up lofty and almost miniature, and makes me think of Jerusalem: without trees, without cover, rising rather bare and proud, remote as if back in history, like a town in a monkish, illuminated missal (SS: 52)

He had been writing *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*; he now wrote *The Lost Girl* (which drew on the 1913 *Insurrection* novel), and arranged for the publication of *Women in Love* in America with a new publisher, Thomas Seltzer, and in England with Secker. He also worked on a novel left unfinished since 1917, *Aaron's Rod*, and started *Mr Noon*, but did not finish that either.

In January 1921, he and Frieda visited Sardinia and he wrote the second of his travel books, *Sea and Sardinia* (published in 1923), an acute and often very funny diary of the trip; a book where the author, critic of the new face of England, revealed his political and ideological positions, his inquiry into the political and social values of an era which saw the rise of both communism and fascism. *Sea and Sardinia* meant cutting his ties with his country and showing his bitterness towards what England had become and what it had made of him.

Distressed by the industrialization of the West, which he believed would destroy the human soul, Lawrence found Sicily wonderful, because it represented a final toe-hold on Europe; the prospect out over the Mediterranean made it the place where he had been happier to live since Cornwall. 'Sardinia (…) lies outside the circuit of civilization (…) There is an uncaptured Sardinia still. It lies within the net of the European civilization, but it isn't landed yet' (SS: 3), he wrote.

As Worthen recognizes, Lawrence was 'caught between an irrecoverable beloved past, in which he had believed, and a present committed to a rising materialism in which he was in danger of believing in nothing' (2006: 225). Italy proved to be a reencountering of the artist and of the man with himself. Travelling through Palermo, Cagliari and Sogorno he got hold of himself and of his past, being then able to look forward. He was a man exhilarated by the new experience of Italy, by love and by creative achievement.

Life was not only a process of rediscovering backwards. It is that, also: and it is that intensely. Italy has given me back I know not what of myself, but a very, very great deal. She has found for me so much that was lost: like a restored Osiris. But this morning in the omnibus I realise that, apart from the great rediscovery backwards, which one *must* have before one can be whole at all, there is a move forwards. There are unknown, unworked lands where the salt has not lost its savour. But one must have perfected oneself in the great past first. (SS: 123).

The book reveals Lawrence's response to a new landscape and to people, as well as his ability to transmute the spirit of place into literary art; it is a celebration of the creativity and freedom of the human spirit. To Lawrence, crossing from Sicily to Cagliari in 1921, was '(...) like liberty itself, after the peaky confinement of Sicily. Room – give me room – give me room for my spirit: and you can have all the toping crags of romance. So we ran through the go of the afternoon, across a wide, almost Celtic landscape of hills' (SS: 72)

With the q-b ("the queen bee", that is, Frieda), Lawrence wandered about the market in Cagliari, his senses overwhelmed by the sheer abundance of produce, meats, cheese, eggs, and breads. In the colours and shapes of all of these offerings, and in their cheapness and goodness, there is enormous beauty and life.

This is the meat and poultry and bread market. There are stall so new, various-shaped bread, brown, and bright: there are tiny stalls of marvellous native cakes, which I want to taste, there is a great deal of meat and kid: and there are stalls of cheese, all cheeses, all shapes, all whitnesses, all the cream-colours, on into daffodil yellow. Goat cheese, sheep's cheese, Swiss cheese, Parmegiano, stracchino, caciocavallo, torolone, how many cheeses I don't know the names of! (..) And there is

lovely ham (…) there is a little fresh butter too (...) There are splendid piles of salted olives. There are chickens and ducks and wild-fowl (…) there is mortadella, the enormous Bologna sausage, thick as a church pillar (…) and there are various sorts of smaller sausage, salami, to be eaten in slices. A wonderful abundance of food, glowing and shining (SS: 64).

Even the inevitable disappointments of travel - the dullness of inconsequential towns or the misery of bad food, of bleak weather or of bad accommodation, the wine stained shirt of some landlords were not sufficient to hinder Lawrence's 'artful spontaneity' (Worthen: 241) and his remaking of people and of places in a new language, bringing together two levels of experience: the experience of the object and the experience of the subject.

In the process of the composition of the texts, Lawrence seems to have experienced the structures and the feelings which he was representing; this process equates with the authors' consciousness of what has to be represented and how it is done; it lies on the presupposition of knowing who this authorial identity is, an identity that holds the knowledge to create and to select knowable cultural constructions, as well as to decide what should or should not be part of these constructions. In his travelogues, Lawrence paid tribute to stories yet untold; he put into narrative form elements of the world of which we might not otherwise have been able to see or hear. The places visited are respected for what they are, places to be encountered not as a quaint consummation of one's dream but as a constituent of common humanity. His search for rural cultures enabled him to find vestiges of a time when human beings lived in harmony with nature.

Lawrence's capacity to communicate his experience to others and thus, to tell stories of culture of a landscape of movement and of human beings is clearly seen, when he gives a charming account of their travel from Cagliari to Sogorno, leaving the coastal plain to the forests of Gennargentu: 'At first it is only hazel-thickets, miles of hazel-thickets, all wild, with a few black cattle trying to peep at us out of the green myrtle and arbutus scrub which forms the undergrowth: and a couple of rare, wild peasants peering at the train' (SS: 87).

Lawrence travelled straight up the mountainous backbone of the island, avoiding the more civilized coastal areas, looking for the real, rough Sardinia of the interior, with its stony deserts and shepherds.

Rendering the spirit of place in such a self-reflecting and self-positioning mode, Lawrence attempted to distance himself from the mechanical age which was trying to override humanity and to destroy human soul, and visited the Etruscan cities in search of the lost human values and the perfect natural people. His were travels of pilgrimage towards spiritual renewal and the recovery of the sense of daily life, as in his own words 'we have lost the art of living (…) the science of daily life' (EP 59-60).

Four years after the publication of *Sea and Sardinia*, in 1927, the author wrote six sketches of Etruscan Places, after visiting several Etruscan cities in central Italy (Florence and Siena– Tuscany). These texts – meditations on ancient lives – were published posthumously in 1932. Lawrence idealized the organic, earthy warmth of the Etruscans and contrasted it against the mechanical, systematic coldness of the rest of the world, namely the Romans.

The first section, "Cerveteri" opens with humorous exaggerated claims regarding the Romans' relationship to the Etruscans.

The Etruscans, as everyone knows, were the people who occupied the middle of Italy in early Roman days, and whom the Romans, in their usual neighbourly fashion, wiped out entirely in order to make room for Rome with a very big R. They couldn't have wiped them all out, there were too many of them. But they did wipe out the Etruscan existence as a nation and a people. However, this seems to be the inevitable result of expansion with a big E, which is the sole *raison d'être* of people like the Romans (EP: 1).

He continued, attacking the Romans' cold hearted destruction of the Etruscans.

However, those pure, clean-living, sweet-souled Romans, who smashed nation after nation and crushed the free soul in people after people, and were ruled by Messalina and Heliogabalus and such-like snowdrops, they said the Etruscans were vicious. So basta! Quand le maitre parle, tout le mond se tait. The Etruscans were vicious! The only vicious people on the face of the earth presumably. You and I dear

reader, we are two unsullied snowflakes, aren't we? We have every right to judge (EP: 2)

"Cerveteri" seems to be a travel narrative of a different kind: Lawrence mentally transported himself to a reconstructed Cerveteri, and filtered it through his modern perspective. The tombs acted as the bridge between the past and the present. Beyond the tomb, Lawrence saw the entire town as the descendents of the Etruscan, still emanating the Etruscan liveliness thousands of years later. The following paragraph describes a shepherd Lawrence encounters in a tavern, as if transplanted from another time period, the time of the Etruscans.

Into the cavern swaggers a spurred shepherd wearing goat skin trousers with the long, rusty brown goat's hair hanging shaggy from his legs. He grins and drinks wine, and immediately one sees again the shaggy-legged faun. His face is a faun face, not deadened by morals. He grins quietly, and talks very subdued, shyly, to the fellow who draws the wine from the barrels. It is obvious fauns are shy, very shy, especially of moderns like ourselves. He glances at us from a corner of his eye, ducks, wipes his mouth on the back of his hand, and is gone, clambering with his hairy legs on to his lean pony, swirling, and rattling away with a neat little clatter of hoofs, under again out of the city precincts, far more shy and evanescent than any Christian virgin. You cannot hard-boil him (…) They can't survive, the faun-faced men, with their pure outlines and their strange non-moral calm. Only the deflowered faces survive. (EP: 4)

The truth is, as Lawrence himself pointed out, 'we know nothing about the Etruscans except what we find in their tombs' (EP: 1); the author seemed to act as the last living voice of these long dead and long forgotten people.

The tombs seem so easy and friendly, cut out of rock underground. One does not feel oppressed, descending into them. It must be partly owing to the peculiar charm of natural proportion which is in all Etruscan things of the unspoilt, unromanticised centuries. There is simplicity, combined with a most peculiar, free-breasted naturalness and spontaneity, in the shapes and movement of the underworld walls and spaces that at once reassures the spirit. The Greeks sought to make an impression, and Gothic still more seeks to impress the mind. The Etruscans, no. The

things they did, in their easy centuries, are as natural and as easy as breathing. They leave the breast breathing freely and pleasantly, with a certain fullness of life. Even the tombs. And that is the true Etruscan quality: ease, naturalness, and an abundance of life, no need to force the mind or the soul in any direction (EP: 12).

To be near the lives and histories and protagonists, to visit the tombs is experience. Though different from both *Twilight in Italy* and *Sea and Sardinia*, this last set of narratives on the Mediterranean, an historical exploration of an ancient culture, reveals Lawrence's sensitivity regarding lost civilizations which he wanted to make visible, since these were the times of spirituality and truth.

In them, we find an author who, while chronicling his interior life, is constructing his narratives as knowable communities through a strategy of chronicling new experiences in such a mystical place.

Twilight in Italy, *Sea and Sardinia* and *Etruscan Places* reconfigure the image of southern Europe; however, they are not controlled by the Mediterranean myth - the reified Tuscan sun. In them, we can find not only the ordinary life of modern people in a civilization prior to industrialization, but also intense personal reflections of an artist. The texts, departing from Switzerland, to the Tyrol, Bavaria and finally Italy are an 'indispensable guide to the sensibility of one of the most astonishing writers of our century. It is for visitors of Lawrence, a pretty large country, not for rubberneckers in mere southern Europe' (Burgess, vii).

Studies of cultural geography, the texts are his answer to the impact new places and people caused on him. Lawrence is not only able to give the readers the real locations, the ones we can easily trace in a physical map, but more important than that, he is able to acknowledge the uniqueness of these locations and the way they relate to people.

As Michel de Certeau (1984) explains 'the narrated adventures simultaneously producing geographies of actions and drifting into the common places of an order do not merely constitute a 'supplement' to pedestrian enunciations and rhetorics' (de Certeau 1984: 116).

More than a supplement to any pedestrian enunciation and rhetoric, in *Twilight in Italy*, in *Sea and Sardinia* and in *Etruscan Places* we find the *habitus of location*[10] of a past or present Italian whole way of life and of its structures of feeling – the culture of the Mediterranean.

These are stories of experience: of Lawrence and of the people he and Frieda met and the places they went. The stories wrap experience into a narrative curve, as Lawrence knew that travel writing, if it is to be any good, is not about the place but of it.

To read these travel writings as knowable communities is to understand them as forms that invent a community with no other existence but that of the literary text. The construction and the representation of a knowable community, operating at different levels of reality and of experience, is the creation of a space of communication imagined by the subjects involved.

The cultural construction we find in these texts is the result of the selection, and interpretation done by D.H.Lawrence, in a 15-year span, under different conditions. The centrality of experiences is the product of the author's enunciative positions, as well as of his epistemological and ontological filigrees of existence, structured by the conditions of possibility. In the rearticulation of the text, of the writer and of the reader, in a dynamic and shared process of discursive alliances, we understand that Lawrence tells stories of the Mediterranean through his literary art.

Thus our descriptions of our experience come to compose a network of relationships, and all or communication systems, including the arts, are literally parts of our social organization. The selection and interpretation involved in our descriptions embody our attitudes, needs and interests, which we seek to validate by making them clear to others. (…) Since our way of seeing things is literally our way of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community: the sharing of common meanings and thence common activities and purposes; the

[10] Cf. Bourdieu.(1977) - habitus can sometimes be understood as those aspects of culture that are anchored in the body or daily practices of individuals, groups, societies, and nations. It includes the totality of learned habits, bodily skills, styles, tastes, and other non-discursive knowledge. Pierre Bourdieu adopts the concept and considerably expands its meaning to include a person's beliefs and dispositions.

offering, reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to the tensions and achievements of growth and change (Williams [1961] 1965: 54-55).

In the representation Lawrence makes of the Mediterranean, he represents himself, and his identity is 'produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices' (Hall: 4). But he also gives meaning to unknown cultures through the discourse of representation and through the poetics of the text turning the texts into knowable communities.

D.H.Lawrence, the man whom the readers may, at first, consider as *flaneur,* as a stroller who finds himself among strangers, who did not, in a first contact, identify with the Italians and the southern way of life, is at the end of each of the three books not a stranger in the crowd but one of the crowd.

D. H. Lawrence, the writer, was driven by the need to tell the story, to weave together a beginning, middle and end, and to do it in such a way that the readers, for a time, exist within the text.

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