VILNIUS TECH
Vilnius Gediminas Technical University

Creativity studies
ISSN 2345-0479 / eISSN 2345-0487
2023 Volume 16 Issue 2: 397–410
https://doi.org/10.3846/cs.2023.15451

"THE MYSTERY OF THIS JOURNEY": DAVID HERBERT LAWRENCE'S CREATIVE QUEST TO DISCOVER TRUE CIVILIZATION

Abhik MUKHERJEE *

School of Liberal Arts, XIM University, Plot no. 12(a), Nijigada, Kurki, Harirajpur, Jatani, 752050 Odisha, India

Received 13 August 2021; accepted 8 January 2022

Abstract. David Herbert Lawrence is famous for telling us to trust the tale, not the artist. When we read the notoriously varied and vital Lawrence, there are many places where he seems to over reach, if not to outright contradict himself. This essay focuses on much of the complexity and ambiguity of Lawrence's thought and its constantly evolving and even self-contradictory nature. Lawrence understands civilization with his utmost creativity and originality – finding the sun and relating it to the sexual vitality of the man – develops over the various travels. And in this essay, I focus on how this creative development is reflected in the travel writings. The more he travels, the more he discovers the subjugation of the self and the subsequent mechanization of it. The creative struggle to overcome this impotence informs Lawrence's travel literature. His four travel books, namely *Twilight in Italy* (originally published in 1916), *Sea and Sardinia* (originally published in 1921), *Mornings in Mexico* (originally published 1927), and *Sketches of Etruscan Places and Other Italian Essays* (originally published 1932) are reflective of different stages in Lawrence's journey to understand how human beings relate to the world they are integrally part of. Lawrence uses his travel to transcend his own nationality too. Lawrence goes on to assert that he belongs to no country. Surely this relates ironically to his belief in the "spirit of place". The essay deeply focuses on his continued movement from place to place with deep consideration of this complex belief.

Keywords: civilization, creativity, David Herbert Lawrence, sexual vitality, spirit of place, tenderness, travel writing.

Introduction

For Lawrence, searching for a way to understand civilization means finding the sun and relating it to the sexual vitality of the man. And Italy was where Lawrence first found the sun. Lawrence writes in *Twilight in Italy*, his first travel novel that, "the Italian is attractive, supple, and beautiful, because he worships the godhead in the flesh" (2016, p. 124). This sense of the effect of Italy on the body and one's sense of it is reflected throughout Lawrence's travel writings. Fussell (1980) starts the essay, "The Places of D. H. Lawrence" with Lawrence's *Sun:*

*Corresponding author. E-mails: *abhik@xim.edu.in*; *abhik_muk@yahoo.com*

A Short Story (2014, originally published in 1926), the story of the New York lady Juliet and her husband Maurice. Fussell notes that, in the story, Juliet awakens to an awareness that a creative relation can be posited between the sun's "coming up" and a male erection (1980, p. 141–142). Fussell compares this story to Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* (2002, originally published in 1929), in which "the erection experienced by Jesus in the presence of the Priestess of Isis is the rising sun" (Fussell, 1980, p. 142). Fussell writes in the same essay that "Juliet exemplifies Mark Schorer's axiom that 'Lawrence's people discover their identities through their response to place'. Of course, all characters in fiction respond to place, but Lawrence's more than most because he is so extraordinarily sensitive to physical context and physical cause" (1980, p. 143). In search of a true civilization, he fights with his utmost creativity the existing eunuch civilization where "mutual bondage and sterility" (Bryfonski et al., 1978, p. 374) characterize the world. Conrad Aiken writes in the essay "Mr. Lawrence's Prose", that "the problem that tormented Lawrence and it may be the great problem of our day, was how to regain innocence in sex" (1927, p. 96). Perhaps, Aiken opines, in the last of his travel books, Lawrence discovered a way to do so through his creative study of the tomb paintings of Etruria, ancient Central Italy, Italy.

1. Travel theories and David Herbert Lawrence

Said writes a chapter entitled "Travelling Theory" in his book *The World*, *the Text*, *and the Critic* (1983, pp. 226–247). In the beginning of the chapter Said opines that just like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel "from person to person, from situation to situation, from one people to another" (1983, p. 226). Said mentions various types of possible movements which may result in both losses and gains. He draws a four-stage model to elaborate that concept. First stage is the point of origin wherefrom the idea emerges and enteres discourse. It signifies a set of circumstances that engender idea. Next stage is the distance travelled, through different aspects of time and space. Third stage is a set of "conditions of acceptance" or resistances. This acceptance or resistances is responsible for the idea's "introduction or toleration". The final stage is when "the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place" (Said, 1983, pp. 226–227). Said also believes that such travelling is also possible within and between various disciplines:

> "there seems nothing inherently literary about the study of what have traditionally been considered literary texts, no literariness which might prevent a contemporary literary critic from having recourse to psychoanalysis, sociology, or linguistics" (1983, p. 228).

Very interestingly Said in this chapter emphasises the travel of a specific theoretical concept (that of "reification and totality") from György Lukács through Lucien Goldmann to Raymond Williams – journey which involves various changes in ways which can be taken as a result of adaption to new conditions and contexts. Said explained the process interestingly and concluded:

> "[t]heory we certainly need, for all sorts of reasons that would be too tedious to rehearse here. What we also need over and above theory, however, is the critical recog-

> nition that there is no theory capable of covering, closing off, predicting all the situations in which it might be useful" (1983, p. 241).

Stevenson in the essay "'The Century of Strangers': Travellers and Migrants" observes that, "'travel' had always offered a metaphor for a reader's progress through a text, and 'holiday' for fiction's imaginative departure from the routines of ordinary life" (2004, p. 480).

Stevenson rather rules out the socio-economic necessity for dislocation and attached it to desire. He writes in the essay previously mentioned, "it begins with more innocent forms of dislocation, based on desire rather than historical or economic necessity, and therefore still able to offer some of the 'psychological orientation' Salman Rushdie mentioned" (Stevenson, 2004, p. 480). And Stevenson also observes that "dreams and imagination" has become a part in the process of marketing of "going abroad" and in the experience of a traveller the terms "holiday", "reading", "travel", and "literature" coalesced into a complex and pleasing idea. He commentes,

> "[n]ovelists naturally exploited more regularly these ways of 'reading' or exploring the individual, and of expanding the imagination of narrative […]. Towards its [this period] end, there were novelists who sometimes seemed to use little else: David Lodge in *Small World* (1984), for example, or Malcolm Bradbury in *Doctor Criminale* (1992)" (Stevenson, 2004, p. 481).

"Without doubt", argues Billy T. Tracy, "an intimate connection exists between Lawrence's travel writings and fiction" and "landscape and cultures so often have a symbolic significance that critics have found it profitable to examine the expository travel essays for an account of Lawrence's own response to a culture and terrain" (1978, p. 272). We can see how this happened if we follow Lawrence's creative thought about modern civilization's destruction of the self through the pursuit of perfection, which results first in spiritual and subsequently in physical impotence. The struggle to overcome this impotence informs Lawrence's travel literature. The more he travels, the more he discovers the subjugation of the self and the subsequent mechanization of it.

2. Spirit of place in a creative sense

Lawrence writes in the chapter "Cagliari" that the

> "spirit of the place is a strange thing. Our mechanical age tries to override it. But it does not succeed. In the end the strange, sinister spirit of place, so diverse and so adverse in differing places, will smash our mechanical oneness into smithereens, and all that we think the real thing will go off with a pop, and we shall be left staring" (1997, p. 57).

In the *Spirit of Place* he writes, that every continent has its own great spirit of place, and the spirit of place is a great reality (Lawrence, 1935). Through his travel literature, Lawrence discovers the spirit of place and how the spirit interacts with the people of the place. Fussell comments: "The place where he writes becomes a part of what he writes" (1980, p. 143). Places have metaphorical meaning to Lawrence, and his very place-consciousness is deeply related to his sense of sexuality and vitality and its opposite, mechanization. As I argue in one of my recenty published essays that

> "Lawrence's restless travels should be read not only as his ceaseless exploration in quest of primitive modes in exotic locales that would help him understand what might constitute true civilization, but also as quests into the fecund darkness of his own mind and being" (Mukherjee, 2021, p. 11)

Fussell explains that

> "[t]he crucial difference between place and placelessness is never far from his focus and without a sense of place one is nowhere. *Nowhere* to Lawrence is simply death, and it has its corollaries in sexlessness and automatism" (1980, p. 145).

This relates closely to Lawrence's denunciation of the "oneness" demanded by the Communist movement, as well as the uniformity of behaviour enforced by the fascists. Instead he endorsed the existing diversity among nations which might be maintained by war but not by love. Universal brotherhood and love would, in his view, put these differences under threat. He writes in "To Sorgono" that for

> "myself, I am glad. I am glad the era of love and oneness is over: hateful homogeneous world-oneness. I am glad that Russia flies back into savage Russianism, Scythism, savagely self-pivoting. I am glad that America is doing the same" (Lawrence, 1997, p. 89).

Nin writes that the "same paradox has been restated in terms of modern science in the latest conclusion of Einstein […]. He [Lawrence] restated mysticism in modern terms" (1964, p. 76). We can understand this if we see that one aspect of modern civilization that Lawrence marks is that money makes the real separation among people – not religion, cast, creed or credo. Trully money corrupts everything.

Despite this enthusiasm for war as a force for diversity and creativity, Lawrence was tormented by the false leadership and vague nationalism that were manifested in World War I. He felt that the Italians hated the people of England, United Kingdom and he agreed that England misled the world (Lawrence, 1997, p. 186). He goes on to assert that he belongs to no country, because "I must insist that I am a single human being, and individual, and not a mere national unit, a mere chip of l'Inghilterra or la Germania. I am not a chip of any nasty old block. I am myself" (Lawrence, 1997, p. 186). Through travel, and, of course, by writing about travel, he transcends his nationality. His utmost creativity helps him do so. But the statement that Lawrence uses his travel to transcend his own nationality is to a large extent true. However, while Lawrence does say that he belongs to no country, he is always an Englishman wherever he travels and almost always recognizes this in himself. He experiences the different cultures he encounters from the perspective of his own particular background – and from the particular philosophy that is at the forefront of his interest at the time of his writing. This is true in his fiction as well as in his travel writing. As Roberts writes in "Travel Writing, and Writing about Place", "[h]e became convinced that all Europe, not only England, was succumbing to mechanistic materialism: the 'other' that he saught was against not only English repression, but European civilisation" (2018, p. 141).

3. Consumerism and creativity

Lawrence agrees with many subsequent cultural critics in feeling that science and technology and machines play a vital role in moving societies in another direction, that of democratization

through materialism. All those luxurious things which previously only few people can afford now have come within the reach of many people. The advent of technology diminishes the differences between rich and poor, an aristocrat and common humble labourer. This may sound good, but in art and literature, it has proved catastrophic. Technology destroyed the gloriole of great art by making it cheaper. In *What Was Literature? Class Culture and Mass Society* Fiedler claims that, "[i]n the super-market of mass culture where it is always possible to open a new department to satisfy a new consumer demand, the favoured books of the young co-exist with the preferred genres of the elders", and as a result everything is devalued (1982, p. 80). No wonder, then, that Lawrence advocates a forceful and even violent reaction against the new concept of democracy.

Yet, he places sensitivity and creativity over force. The effect of force is immediate and overwhelming, but not long-lasting. History teaches us so. After seeing the paintings of Etruscan civilization, his attitudes about modernity and scientific and hence progressive civilization were strengthened. He felt the importance of physicality and instinctive passion more than ever. Lawrence claims that although Romans killed the Etruscans, the Romans died out while the Etruscans live on. Lawrence gives a beautiful example in support of this claim: if a person kills a nightingale with a stone, it does not mean that the person is greater than the nightingale. The "delicate sensitiveness" of the Etruscans made them live on among Italians: "Italy today is far more Etruscan in its pulse than Roman: and will always be so" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 36). Violent domination of others is contrary to nature, he argues. Nature selected Etruscans over Romans. And we formed a strong hatred for "Latin-Roman mechanism and suppression" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 36).

4. Logocentrism of modern civilisation

As Etruscans did not believe in force, their art also does not force itself on the mind of its audience. Etruscan art does not stand for a morally and spiritually uplifting influence unlike Greek or Gothic art. But it speaks of spontaneity and creativity. Its charm is not artificial but absolutely related to life-forces. One can easily connect oneself to this old art form without much force, but with ease and *joie de vivre*: "Beautiful it is, with the ease simplicity of life" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 38). Lawrence's painterly soul inflamed at the sight of the wall paintings in the Etruscan underground tomb. Their use of colour and choice of themes gave him a gleam of insight into the Etruscan creativity. Etruscan art is not "grand". It represents "liveliness" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 45) and naturalness.

The shape of the body and the movements of the dancers in the paintings suggest a rhythm and harmony that are in direct relation "to the rhythmic cosmos" (Lawrence, 1968a, p. 114). "They know the gods in their very finger-tips" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 55). Lawrence observed that even the legs of these ancient Etruscans were more beautiful, more provocative and livelier than the whole body of a modern man (1992, p. 53). Lawrence came to the conclusion that civilization and modernity took away the physical beauty of modern men. Natural charming shape and bodily glow had been replaced by artificiality and crookedness.

To Lawrence, Etruscan civilization existed like a wild flower that the Romans killed: "The Romans took life out of them" (1992, p. 56). Here Lawrence also spoke of natural

development of life to its optimum stage. This natural development is only possible if it is allowed to grow accordingly to the religion of life and also the science of life. The religion of life follows intrinsic loveliness without being hindered by any external and artificial imposition. And the science of life is a perfect perception of the universe and man's place in the universe that made men explore all the possibilities of life and live them fully. All his travel literature is actually directed in search of that religion of life and science of life and by traveling through different countries, various places he worshipped that religion, that science. There his work transcends the common travel writing genre and achieves universality and counters what his own time, and ours, sees as important knowledge. The modern age presumes a stance of having enormous knowledge of ourselves and the past. This age thinks that they are at the crest of civilization and all the ancient civilizations are only primitive ones. It only proves the proverb that little learning is a dangerous thing. As Lawrence writes, "No age proves it more than ours" (1992, p. 59).

Lawrence was surprised when the German scientist accompanying him carelessly commented about the meaninglessness of some Etruscan decorations. Lawrence was deeply moved and concluded that, "[h]e is a scientist, and when he doesn't want a thing to have a meaning, it is ipso facto meaningless" (1992, p. 122). The lion with a second head and neck does not mean anything to the scientist who was an expert on Etruscan civilization. He does not want a thing to have a meaning if it does not follow the conventional concept of civilization. Here Lawrence points out the limitation and subsequent arrogance of conventional science. And on the contrary, the Etruscan artists did not follow any fixed symbol or norm to paint their pictures. They just portrayed their original emotion that does not follow any logic.

The basic difference between Etruscan civilization and modern civilization is that the Etruscans' concept of a civilized life is based on physical realities, whereas modern civilization is based on words. The linguistic world and the real world are different. The relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary. Lawrence comments that the modern people live in a virtual world, far from basic reality and sensitivity of life: "[w]e exist only in the Word, which is beaten out thin to cover, gild, and hide all things" (1992, p. 122).

Etruscans found resemblance between man and non-human animals, such as bulls, lions, and deer. These sorts of images and concepts are actually manifestation of the centrality of creativity and at the same time, unity in diversity. The apparent illogicality of Etruscan paintings made them nonsense to the German archaeologist. He failed to understand that in Etruscan paintings logic had been replaced by psychology. A lion with a goat's head is figuratively absurd but the figure metaphorically represents human beings in a deep spiritual sense. His concrete scientific level did not allow him to reach the "blood relation" and "blood consciousness" that the pictures represent. The paintings are not recognisably derived from life but represents "life-ness". Photographic reality denies the original self of a creature that was exactly attempted by Etruscan artists (Lawrence, 1992, p. 127). The horses are not actual but ideal. The Etruscan painter tried to give the "horse-ness" of a horse. They appeal not to our eyes but to the deepest parts of our minds, to our creative soul.

Later Lawrence criticized the concept of art on the part of modern men. Modern critics could hardly find anything artistic in Etruscan urns found in the tomb. The pure natural and spontaneous approach to life failed to achieve the dignified stratum of art and was considered

déclassé. According to the modern standard of Lawrence's times, art is to be purely artificial. The degree of artificiality and affectation is directly proportionate to the success of becoming modern art. Lawrence gave a beautiful example. We refuse to say "an ear of wheat" is art. We would wait till "it has been turned into pure macaroni" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 164).

Even in the field of art, our civilization is a failure. The cave paintings by ancient Etruscan painters are favourably comparable with modern painting. Lawrence mentions that the paintings of John Singer Sargent, so celebrated in Lawrence's times occasionally appear boring and "cold" (Boulton, 1979, p. 113). But the pictures produced by nameless Etruscan artists are still vivid and full of vitality. The painting of a little game bird on the tomb wall gives pleasure superior to that of all the paintings by this modern artist. Unlike modern animals, the Etruscan animals are virile and malicious. They are full of unused and unprocessed crude procreative force. We see an animal "who has the horns of power on his forehead symbolising the warlike aspect of the horn of fertility; the bellowing master of force, jealous, horned, charging against opposition" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 124). They invite the ignition of "blood-drinking energy", like the sun that can warm the worlds of life. Vivacity and creativity are the motive; sex and violence are the methods. But the violence, like the animals themselves, is symbolic.

In one tomb painting, a dog is provoked by a man to bite a person's thigh. The victim is then entangled in the long cord that holds the dog. Lawrence comments that, "[t]his picture is supposed to reveal the barbarously cruel sports of the Etruscans" (1992, p. 126). But he finds this picture symbolic because of the presence of an augur and a sceptre, wrestlers fighting over a "curious pile of three great bowls", the conical hat of a standing person, and finally the attitude of the person holding the cord. This figure is dancing in a peculiar delight "as if rejoicing in victory or liberation" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 126). The context also suggests reasons for taking the picture as a symbolic one. A flying blind-folded man with some attacking instrument and the absence of any onlookers virtually invalidate the picture as the portrayal of a real game. Now the valid question is what does the picture symbolize? According to Lawrence, it may symbolize life in the sense that man's two thighs "where the elementary life surges" are attacked by two dogs which represent disease and death – the two great enemies of life (1992, p. 127). And Lawrence argues, "[t]he motive is common in ancient symbolism. And the esoteric idea of malevolent influences attacking the great arteries of the thighs was turned in Greece into the myth of Actaeon and his dogs" (1992, p. 127).Whatever the picture means the vital force of it should not, and perhaps cannot, be missed. This force compels it to be seen as more than a game.

The paintings are filled with apparent ambiguity. Both goat and lion represent life. But the basic difference is clear when the sun asserts himself by "licking up the life" with his "hot tongue". The goat can challenge the sun by breeding endlessly. But the lion in spite of being the "hard-headed father of procreation" and the symbol of animated life "lifts his paw to strike" the goat "in the passion of the other wisdom" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 124). All the contradictions of creation are connected to each other. This is the most surprising thing about creativity. The rage of the lion, the venom of the snake, the breeding intensity of the goat, the malice of the lion, the soul of a man – all of them are individually connected with all the rest. The centre of all those oppositions which holds and reconciles all the oppositions can be termed god – the germ of all creation. This is the nucleus. This is the blood-stream which

is "one, and unbroken yet storming with oppositions and contradictions" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 125). Traveling and viewing other cultures, as with the Etruscan paintings gave Lawrence an insight into the mystery of creation.

5. Journey towards terderness

In comparing the modern world and the ancient world, Lawrence is perplexed about how to understand their inhabitants in relation to concepts of maturity. The positive qualities that the ancients possess are absent in us. Wonder, fear, and admiration – and the force, the power, creativity and the sensual knowledge of true adults – are all absent in modern man. As we lack the qualities of the ancient Etruscans, the question arises whether they were true adults and we children, or the opposite. Either our maturity should be judged on the basis of their ripeness or ours should be the standard. Lawrence tells us that if we want to judge the maturity of a civilization by its paintings, we can judge the Etruscan civilization both mature and charming. The tomb also reveals the devastating effect of a materialistic civilization (Roman) on that (Etruscan) civilization. In one tomb, Lawrence notices that suddenly "the Etruscan charm seems to vanish" (1992, p. 128).

The Roman conquest is palpable in Etruscan tomb painting. The old tombs were full of a true "dancing Etruscan spirit" that the later tombs do not show (Lawrence, 1992, p. 128). Lawrence vehemently criticizes the imposition of Roman civilization on Etruscan: "The people are governed by the flower of the race. Pluck the flower, and the race is helpless" (1992, p. 129). The transformation of Etruscan civilization into an inert, void was achieved in the third and second centuries before Christ under Roman force. The natural subjective forces collapsed before the Roman objectivity. Etruscan princes became prosaic and without any original creativity, Etruscan people expressionless, and the great natural Etruscan knowledge reduced to a heap of meaninglessness and mere irrational and credulous beliefs. Etruscan civilization lost the very thing that was quintessentially its own. The country became "voiceless and mindless" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 129) immediately. The later paintings are adulterated with Roman meticulous modernity. Lawrence describes this essential tragic age of Etruscan history as "a struggle between the endless patience of life, and the endless triumph of force" (1992, p. 129). The natural life force was being obstructed by the artificial tyranny of power. The traditional hell had been suddenly introduced and went absolutely against the Etruscan concept of life which was followed in death by a continuation of the "wonder-journey of life" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 130).

The way to Vulci, a dead Etruscan city, Italy situated between the two villages of Montalto di Castro, Italy and Canino, in the Maremma, Italy alongside the "coastal strip and the whitish emptiness of the sea's edge", gave Lawrence a "great sense of nothingness" (1992, p. 139). The tragedy of the destroyed town loomed large to him as a symbol of the destruction of natural life. He sadly thinks that all wild animals would be vanished from Earth some day because of their uninhibited, uncultivated, uncontrolled and unrestrained nature. Etruscan civilization gave way to Roman and was termed wild and barbarous because of the natural Etruscan vitality and creativity. Lawrence predicted that soon the only animals that would have existence on Earth would be the "tame ones" – because they are less exciting, less

adventurous and less controversial. They challenge nothing. And because man is "the tamest", he is the "most swarming" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 142). In the name of civilization, man compromises his animal nature and wears a veneer of timidity and tepidity.

But Roman force and imposition could not stop the beating of Etruscan blood totally and permanently. It continued to pulsate from time to time through Giotto and other early sculptors. Lawrence was so struck by the ceativity of the ancient Etruscan civilization, its defiance of conventional, deathly morality, that he thought of settling down permanently in the place where its traces remained strong. In the twilight of a Saturday afternoon, these desolate tombs had become supernaturally conspicuous in his mind and he envied the inhabitants of the Maremma and their simple way of life. His appreciation of the land and its men of the soil – all these appear as a compensation for the damage and wanton destruction brought to them. It is perhaps a mixed feeling of gratitude and mourning that leads him to recognize the people and their way of life as "good", and as a symbol of truth.

Lawrence's attachment to the Etruscans can be understood through some small incidents like his reaction to being given the Roman salute by the "cheeky girls" on the streets of Volterra, Italy. It was very unseemly to him, given the Etruscans' long resistance to Roman imperialism. It surprised Lawrence and he did not return the salute: "a salute which has nothing to do with me, so I don't return it" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 158).

Lawrence was truly in a quandary, and so were his readers after reading his creative thoughts on what he considered true civilization and what he did not. He observes that "only the town, with its narrow streets and electric light, is impervious" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 162). But impervious to what? To nature? To the life force? The context is sunset. The last reddish small flash of light engulfs the world against the luminous hills. The light appears to Lawrence as molten gold and the vast world as being transformed into a single oneness. Sundown changes the form of everything and extracts the oneness from diversity. Lawrence also previously comments on this unified state of creation: "And man, with his soul and his personality, emerges in eternal connection with all the rest. The blood-stream is one, and unbroken, yet storming with oppositions and contradictions" (1992, p. 125). This particular condition of Earth strips off man's identity and connects it to eternal creation. But the town is unable to respond to this melting process. The narrow streets denote the crookedness of modern urban civilization which has to make do with electric light that deprives the town of experiencing great natural changes happening on Earth. Modern civilized people get comfort and artificiality at the expense of real connection to the world which can bring realizations about their souls and creativity.

The tendencies of the civilization toward arrangement and a general inclination to formularize everything are, in his view, reflected in the National Archaeological Museum, Florence (NAMF), Italy. Objects found in the Etruscan tombs have been kept in an orderly manner in the NAMF. For example, all the ash-chests collected from one tomb that belonged to one family are put in a neat, attractive and chronological order clockwise so that one is able to see "a century or two of development in the Volterran urns" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 170). The museum spoils the experience of Etruscan civilization. A very natural tendency of the modern civilization (that the museum reflects) is to formularize all. All the remains of the abolished civilization have been treated as historical and archaeological relics "to illustrate the unsound

theories of archaeologists, crazy attempts to co-ordinate and get into a fixed order that which has no fixed order and will not be co-ordinated!" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 171). The museum tried to and finally pretended to make logical that which is basically illogic. Modern civilization does not allow anything to be incompatible, inharmonious and discordant. Lawrence asks, "[w]hy can't incompatible things be left incompatible?" (1992, p. 171). According to new historicism also, in the dominant cultural process, subversion and dissidents are controlled by power. It is the usual practice. Ultimately loyalty wins, dissidents are eliminated. Etruscans are removed from Earth, their quintessence from the museum. Power can be disturbed, but not destroyed. Etruscans disturbed the world by posing a challenge to its materialistic philosophy of life. And the museum, in representing the Etruscan civilization is following the same trend that destroyed the civilization itself thousands of years back. Etruscans are nowhere now, not in the tombs and not even in the museum.

According to Foucault's (1995, 1998) famous theory of power-knowledge, societies and their most authoritative members spread their knowledge for the attainment of power. The museum depicts Etruscan civilization in ways that support contemporary values, ones the Etruscans opposed. Lawrence noted that the museum does not allow any darkness about this annihilated nation. Nothing can remain unknown. No space is opened for the magic of Etruscan art to be experienced freely. It can only be experienced through a validated knowledge system. Lawrence questions, "[w]hy must all experience be systematised?" (1992, p. 171). He challenges the dominant world view. In his view Etruscan civilization is an example of God's energy and creativity. They were majestic and grand awe-inspiring, imposing, and august bearing the positive life force. Its system was terrible and disrupting to the modern world. So how can it be reconciled with the creative thought of a neatly arranged and comfortably organised museum? They are mutually exclusive.

Lawrence might also mean that Etruscan civilization embodies the darkness of consciousness which is a trope and prototype of original creation. Darkness is positive to Lawrence as it was to William Blake. To Lawrence darkness is associated with the darkness of the pit, the darkness of the mother's womb. But the view the museum represents does not allow any opaque areas or dark part. Every incompatibility and every irregularity has been given a regular and benevolent design. The museum tries to capture the flesh of the civilization at the expense of its soul. The very existence of the NAMF with its Etruscan collection works to establish one fact: there were never any Etruscans, because there was never any Etruscan civilizationinin the sense the museum represents it.

We see something similar in the essay "Fireworks", which describes the madness of a fireworks show and Lawrence's instinctive reaction towards that:

> "And all the time, in another more real world, the explosions and percussions continue, penetrating through the ear into the soul, with a sense of fear. The dog in vain has tried to get used to it. By now he is numb nervous wreck" (1992, p. 207).

The madness of celebration with fire and noise pose a real threat to the animalistic world. The dog is literally shaken by the sound of the fireworks. Normal, natural human instinct comes in the form of a dog which had become "a nervous wreck" in its unavoidable confrontation with modern urban civilization and its consequent crazy celebration. The universality of this natural reaction is evident in his description of the young men who are watching

the show and "in the subdued tone of mockery usual to the Italians, they say: bello! bello! bellezza! – But it is pure irony" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 206). He remarks that "[a]nd as the eye is dazzled and thrilled, thinking how marvellous man is, the ear almost ceases to hear" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 207). The glory of modern civilization is not possible to perceive without destroying our natural senses. Its treasures cannot be enjoyed with all senses. Stopping the transmission of information and blotting the natural human instincts are the only ways of blowing the trumpet of urbanization. And nobody feels ashamed of that. Then after the show,

> "the crowd disperses quickly and silently, diving into the outlets from the Lungarno, as if they were running away. And you feel they are all mocking quietly at the spectacle. *Panem et circenses* is all very well, but when the crowd starts quietly jeering at your circus, you are left a bit at a loss" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 207).

Lawrence recognizes that the event, "full of sound and fury" primarily aims to entertain common local people deemed of inferior understanding, but the event is so foolish, so childish and so empty that even the commoner mocks it. So the huge celebration entertains none, and signifies nothing but the failure of modern civilization.

A few pages earlier, in the same essay, Lawrence criticizes something that is fixed and permanent and never undergoes any change ("How dreary things are when they never flicker and waver and change" (1992, p. 204)). But now, tired by the ever changing artificial spangle of fireworks and fusillade and iridescent fiery figures, Lawrence, much like that scared dog, takes refuge in the lap of soft and everlasting nature:

> "And as you drive home again, into the silent countryside smelling faintly of vine-flowers, and you see the high moon filling the sky with her soft presence, you are so glad that she does not spin round and shed sparks, and make horrible explosions out of herself, but is still and soft, and all-permeating" (1992, pp. 207–208).

Conclusions

To Lawrence the idea of true (rather than sentimental and artificial) tenderness is always connected with deep sensual feelings of the heart. As Mark Spilka notes, "What Lawrence wants, apparently, is to release a whole range of spiritual possibilities by accepting the sensual basis of emotion" (1992, pp. 67–68). Lawrence rejects the pecuniary standard of life in all of his four travel books and in its place, he establishes the standard of spontaneous human tenderness as the corner stone of relationship. Although on the surface his work may seem to some to advocate violent suppression of people in the name of autocratic leaders, close reading of his travel works reveals an unending search for a selfhood based on tender connection to others and to the natural world that is our true home, the true locus of all values and creativity.

Lacan (2005) believes that we have multiple selves. It is tricky to determine which is the real "I". It is like walking in a hall of mirrors. If one walks in front of mirrors arranged on the wall of the hall, multiple images of the person will be reflected. Which image is the real "he"? Man travels into himself. Each setting brings out a part of his self. Travel for Lawrence was journey – as in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2010, originally published in 1899) – which was both geographical and psychic. Nin writes, "[w]ith his usual truthfulness Lawrence, while admiring the Indian dances, asserts that there can never be any close

association with or communing with the primitives" (1964, p. 48). Lawrence's restless travels should be read not only as his ceaseless explorations in quest of primitive modes in exotic locales that would help him understand what might constitute true civilization, but also as quests into the fecund darkness of his own mind and creativity. These modes of life, these mysteries of the hidden self, he believes, can balance and heal what Freud (1989) terms the discontents of civilization. Lawrence strongly believes that, "a new place brings out a new thing in a man" (1965, p. 98). And he urges that "when in doubt, move" (Lawrence, 1968b, p. 318). A new place for Lawrence was a new life full of new possibilities. He writes in *Letters*, "I feel sometimes, I shall go mad, because there is nowhere to go, no new 'world'" (Zytaruk & Boulton, 1982, p. 330). So place translates into a trope for life and creativity.

The most dangerous thing for our age, as Lawrence noted, is its feverish lust for money. But materialistic development cannot give us the *élan vital*. Spiritual development only can provide that. The ancient Etruscans knew it. That is why their society advanced its soul instead of economic and military power. And Romans destroyed it by brutal force. But they (Etruscans) continued to exist through their art. It is Etruscan magic. And it is "the wonder of their soul" that chooses to "play round the mystery of this journey" to death and the mystery of "this sojourn" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 60). Roberts writes that "Lawrence almost certainly idealized the Etruscans, and he underestimated the degree to which they were actually influenced by the Greeks, but his last book epitomises a value that runs throughout his travel writing" (2018, p. 149). Lawrence noticed and marked a clash between ideal and instinct all over Europe. He asserts, "What has ruined Europe, but especially Northern Europe, is this very "pure *idea* […]. The beast we have to fight and to kill is the Ideal" (Lawrence, 1992, p. 250, italic – A. M.). And Lawrence thinks Germans succeeds in killing the beast: "The German has a strong primitive nature" which "has an instinctive wisdom of its own, an intuitive ethic also, much deeper than the ideal ethic" (1992, p. 250). In all his four travel books, Lawrence preferred primitivism to civilization. Civilization is based on fixed ideals or some standard principles that is supposed to be accepted and followed by every civilized people. But this ideal appeared to him artificial, empty and nothing to do with man's original nature. Man is in his best when he is most instinctive. When he follows his instinct, the impulse of his blood, he gets the right path to expression of his soul, original happy state of his mind and finally emancipation. Man originally knows what is right and what is wrong for him. The truth is in his blood. The set principles, moralities, and urbanisation are the results of man's greed. Missing or mistaking the perception of the relation between man and the cosmos and the fevered lust, lust for power and materialistic comforts resulted in making those false ideals. And in pursuit of those comforts, man forgot himself. His original consciousness is lost. Through travelling into different countries and observing different kinds of people, Lawrence realised it. Until and unless one is out of his home, he cannot see the broader perspective of the world. One has to throw away one's own identity (which one's country, language or religion forces him to accept and is artificial) to know his original self, original identity. The process is not an easy one. Lawrence observes that, "it needs a very high sense of responsibility and a deep courage, to depend on the intuitive wisdom and ethic, instead of on the ideal formula" (1992, p. 250).

The original ethic is universal. This intuitive wisdom is ever illuminating. This ethic, for example, does not criticise cannibalism as barbarous and does not cheer up, in the name of "progress", destructing a whole city by just pressing a button sitting in a cool room without turning a hair and killing and injuring thousands of people.

The original ethic and original wisdom which are rare gifts of nature to her creatures unfortunately do not come so naturally to man. He has to wage a war against the ideal. Through all his travel books Lawrence declared a war against ideal, a present from the fake civilization. He sets primitivism that brings man closer to nature and creativity as well, as the original source of man's glory, success and joy.

Acknowledgements

I thank my friend and fellow Lawrencian, Professor Carol Siegel, for reading this article and making useful suggestions for its revision.

References

Aiken, C. (1927). Mr. Lawrence's prose. In *The dial* (pp. 343–346). The Dial Publishing Company, Inc.

Boulton, J. T. (Ed.). (1979). *The letters of D. H. Lawrence* (Vol. 1: 1901–1913). Cambridge University Press.

Bryfonski, D., Hall, Sh. K., & Carmel Mendelson, Ph. (Eds.). (1978). *Twentieth-century literary criticism. Excerpts from criticism of the works of novelists, poets, playwrights, short story writers, and other creative writers, 1900–1960* (Vol. 2). Gale Research Company.

Conrad, J. (2010). *Heart of darkness*. Tribeca Books.

Fiedler, L. A. (1982). *What was literature? Class culture and mass society*. Simon and Schuster.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Random House, Inc.

Foucault, M. (1998). *The history of sexuality* (Vol. 1: The will to knowledge). Penguin Books Ltd.

Freud, S. (1989). *Civilization and its discontents*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Fussell, P. (1980). The Places of D. H. Lawrence. In P. Fussell, *Abroad: British literary traveling between the wars* (pp. 141–163). Oxford University Press.

Lacan, J. (2005). The mirror stage as formative of the function of the *I* as revealed in psychoanalytic experience. In *Écrits: A Selection* (pp. 1–6). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003209140-1

Lawrence, D. H. (1965). *Aaron's Rod*. Viking Press.

Lawrence, D. H. (1968a). A propos of Lady Chatterley's lover. In W. Roberts & H. T. Moore (Eds.), *Phoenix II: Uncollected, unpublished, and other prose works by D. H. Lawrence* (pp. 485–519). Viking Press.

Lawrence, D. H. (1968b). *The lost girl*. Viking Press.

Lawrence, D. H. (1997). *Sea and Sardinia*. M. Kalnins (Ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Lawrence, D. H. (1992). *Sketches of Etruscan places and other Italian essays*. S. de Filippis (Ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Lawrence, D. H. (2014). *Sun: A short story*. Blackthorn Press.

Lawrence, D. H. (2002). *The man who died*. Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.

Lawrence, D. H. (1935). *The spirit of place*. William Heinemann.

Lawrence, D. H. (2016). *Twilight in Italy*. J. M. Robinson (Ed.). Crescent Moon Publishing.

Mukherjee, A. (2021). D. H. Lawrence's travel writing: Concept of nudity and sexuality with a difference. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, *13*(4), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v13n4.49

Nin, A. (1964). *D. H. Lawrence: An unprofessional study*. The Swallow Press, Inc.

Roberts, N. (2018). Travel writing, and writing about place. In A. Harrison (Ed.), *D. H. Lawrence in context* (pp. 141–150). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108567862.015

Said, E. W. (1983). *The world, the text, and the critic*. Harvard University Press.

Spilka, M. (1992). *Renewing the normative D. H. Lawrence: A personal progress*. University of Missouri Press.

Stevenson, R. (2004). "The Century of Strangers": Travellers and migrants. In R. Stevenson, *The Oxford English literary history: 1960–2000. The last of England?* (Vol. 12, pp. 479–501). J. Bate (General Ed.). Oxford University Press.

Tracy, B. T. (1978). D. H. Lawrence and the travel book tradition. *D. H. Lawrence Review*, *11*(3), 272–293.

Zytaruk, G. J., & Boulton, J. T. (Eds.). (1982). *The letters of D. H. Lawrence* (Vol. 2: 1913–1916). Cambridge University Press.