

A Stylistic Study of D. H. Lawrence's *Etruscan Places*

— Sentence Structure and Modifier Structure of *Cerveteri* —

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Abstract

Lawrence's purpose of writing *Etruscan Places* is to express his confidence in the ideal relationship between the sun, the cosmos and human beings as in the primitive state of the old Etruria.

In this thesis, we are going to study his thought above, stylistically, with special attentions to the sentence structure and modifier structure of *Etruscan Places*. In *Cerveteri*, a part of *Etruscan Places*, both of the sentence structure and modifier structure are rather simple and loose. However, it may be said that the usage of punctuation, especially conneted with free modifiers creates the vivid and controlled stylistic effects.

(1)

We' re dying, we are dying, so all we can do
is now to be willing to die, and to build the ship
of death to carry the soul on the longest journey.

....

Oh build your ship of death, oh build it !
for you will need it.
For the voyage of oblivion awaits you.¹⁾

D. H. Lawrence was a "traveller" throughout his life. From his running away from England with Frieda in 1921 to his death in Vence in 1930, his life consisted of several brief stays in Italy, Southern France, Sardinia, Austraria or Mexico. While wandering and being unable to find any settlements as if he were possessed by his own "Dark God", he had been writing a lot of works; novels, short stories, poems, criticism, essays, letters and travels. We understand from his works and his violent way of travels he had sought an Utopia where he could overcome the sterile modern world and realize his vision. For, all his works show his questions and answers to us, modern people, who have lost gaiety and real vividness of life. It may be said that his travel books, *Twilight in Italy*, *Sea and Sardinia*, *Mornings in Mexico* and *Etruscan Places*, also have a mutual relation with the thought of Lawrence

expressed in other works. Especially *Etruscan Places* has the closest relation with Lawrence's last state and thought as expressed in the important works of Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The Man Who Died*, *The Last Poems* and *Apocalypse*. This series of the works convey the way how we can free ourselves from the blind lane of 'machine' and 'mere sensual pleasure' and regain the natural and vivid strength, the intrinsic nature of human beings. In closing pages of *Apocalypse*, he clearly reveals us his conclusion.

What we want is to destroy our false, inorganic connections, especially those related to money, and re-establish the living organic connections with the cosmos, the sun, and the earth, with mankind and nation and family. Start with the sun, and the rest will slowly, slowly happen.²⁾

This is Lawrence's conclusion not only on *Apocalypse* but also on *Etruscan Places*. Before he made a trip to Etruria in 1927 and was himself in the underground tombs of the ancient Etruscans, he had already got his conclusion to a certain extent as we find in his own letter to Garnet.

One need to establish a fuller relationship between oneself and the universe, and between oneself and one's fellow man and fellow woman. It doesn't mean cutting out the "brother in Christ" business simply: it means expanding it into a full relationship, where there can be also physical and passionnal meeting, as there used to be in the old dances and rituals. We have to know how to go out and meet one another, upon the third ground, the holy ground We need to come forth and meet in the essential physical self, on some third holy ground. It used to be done in the old rituals, in the old dances, in the fights between men.³⁾

In the primitive world in Etruria he was just to find the third land. The third land is such a place as Edward Nehls rightly explains as below.

He saw in his Etruscans an ideal balance between the intellect and the phallic consciousness, and made of them not tyrants who raped the natural world for money-lust and power, but fellow members of a world of creatures. . . Because they looked upon as a 'wonder-journey' the Etruscans could think of death not in terms of punishment and reward, but a continuation of living.⁴⁾

Therefore Lawrence's purpose of writing *Etruscan Places* is to express his confidence in the ideal relationship between the sun, the cosmos and human beings, where the intellect keeps balancing with the flesh in the primitive state of sensual feeling.

In this thesis, we are going to investigate what he wants to express, stylistically, with special attentions to the sentence structures and the modifier structures of *Etruscan Places*, because the sentence is considered as one unit in which we can express our thought and feeling completely.⁵⁾

We will take two devices to analyze the sentences; one is the usage of conjunctions and conjunctive speeches, and the other, the location of free modifiers.

(2)

Table 1 in the Appendix shows the distribution of sentences in *Cerveteri* in *Etruscan Places*.⁶⁾ We see one stylistic element of this work is that the number of words in one sentence is very small. We gained almost the same results in the study of another travels, *The Crucifix among the Mountains in Twilight in Italy*.⁷⁾ However, it seems that the usage of the sentences in both works is rather different. We can see an example in *Cerveteri* as below.

We arrive at Palo, a station is nowhere, and ask if there is a bus to Cerveteri. No! An ancient sort of wagon with an ancient white horse stands outside. Where does that go? To Ladispoli. We know we don't want to go to Ladispoli, so we stare at the landscape. Could we get a carriage of any sort? It would be difficult. That is what they always say: difficult! Meaning impossible. At least they won't lift a finger to help. Is there an hotel at Ceveteri? They don't know. They have none of them ever been, though it is only five miles away, and there are tombs. Well, we will leave our two bags at the station. But they cannot accept them. Because they are not locked. But when did a hold-all lock? Difficult! Well then, let us leave them, and steal if you want to leave an un-locked small hold-all at the station. So much officials! ⁸⁾

This paragraph is composed of sentences, in conversational style, and the usage of the short sentences such as exclamatory sentences, interrogative sentences and abridged sentences combined with ellipses produces the vigorous style in comparison with the condensed and abstract style of *The Crucifix across the Mountains* also produced by the short sentences. Owing to the various kinds of short sentences we feel Lawrence's pleasant feeling mixed with some expectation and irritation on his way to Etruscan Places and this feeling produced by the combination of short sentences represents an atomosphere of his travel to Cerveteri.

From the point of conjunctions, most of the sentences are connected by means of coordinate conjunctions or coordinate speeches, such as 'and', 'but', 'or' and 'so'. We will pick up some sentences connected by coordinate conjunctions and coordinate speeches.

And it seems to be that way. Either there is instant sympathy, or instant contempt and indifference. Most people despise everything B. C. that isn't Greek, ... **So** Etruscan things are put down as a feeble Greco-Roman imitaion. **And** great scientific historian like Mommsen hardly allows that the Etruscans existed at all.⁹⁾

The paragraph above is composed of short sentences and this is one of the examples of the usage of coordinate conjunctions even in the considerable short sentences.

As shown in Table 2 in the Appendix, the majority of conjunctions is 'and' which can be found in the case of word connectors. We will have a look at one example.

There is a **queer stillness and a curious peaceful** repose about the Etruscan places I have been to, quite different from the weirdness of Celtic places, the slightly repellent feeling of the great pyramid places in Mexico, Teotihuacan and Chulula, and Milta in the south; or the amiable idolatrous Buddha places in Ceylon. There is a **stilness and a softness** in these great grassy mounds with their ancient stone girdles, and down the central walk there lingers still a kind of **homeliness and happiness**. True, it was a **still and sunny** afternoon in April, and larks rose from the soft grass of the tombs. But there was **stillness and a soothingness** in all the air, in that sunken place, and a feeling that it was good for one's soul to be there.¹⁰⁾

As shown above, Lawrence often repeats homogeneous words two times when he wants to describe the nature of something or the atmosphere of the place, such as "stillness and a curious peaceful repose", "a stillness and a softness". We find the same kind of example in another passage in *Cerveteri*, such as "big and handsome", "nice and silky", "proud and sparky" and "freely and pleasantly".

Here's another usage of the conjunction. We will take notice of the conjunctions on the top of each sentence.

... **Then** the Romans hurried the Vestal Virgins and other women and children away to Caere, and the Etruscans took care of them, in their rich city. Perhaps the refugee Vestals were housed on this rock. **And** perhaps not. The cite of Caere may not have been exactly here. certainly it stretched away on this same hilltop, east and south, occupying the whole of the small plateau, some four or five miles round, and spreading a great city thirty times as big as the present Cerveteri. **But** the Etruscans built everything of wood-houses, temples-all save walls for fortification, great gates, bridges, and drainage works. **So that** the Etruscan cities vanished as completely as flowers. Only the tombs, the bulbs, were under-ground. **But** Etruscans built their cities, whenever possible, on a long narrow plateau or headland above the surrounding country, and they liked to have a rocky cliff for their base, as in Cervetri. Round the summit of this cliff, this headland, went the enclosure wall, sometimes miles of the great cincture. **And** within the walls they like to have one inner high place, the arx, the citadel. **Then** outside they liked to have a sharp dip or ravine, with a parallel hill opposite. **And** on the parallel hill opposite they like to have their city of the dead, the necropolis. **So** they could stand on their ramparts and look over the hollow where the stream flowed among its bushes, across from the city of life, gay with its painted houses and temples, to the near-at-hand city of their dear dead, pleasant with its smooth walks and stone symbols, and painted fronts.¹¹⁾

Thus Lawrence's sentences sometimes go forward with conjunctions such as "Then", "And", "But", "So that" and "So".

The same kind of usage of coordinate conjunctions also can be seen on the top of the paragraphs as follows.

And death, to the Etruscans, was a pleasant continuance of life, with jewels and wine and flutes playing for the dance.

Yet everything Etruscan, save the tombs, has been wiped out. It seems strange...¹²⁾

These additive sentence structure may be said not to be periodical but loose, and this way of writing suggests that Lawrence develops his thought or describes the spirit of the place, sometimes focusing or contrasting the point, sometimes moving it on, while he uses the copulative or adversitive coordinate conjunctions according to the stream of his thought or the passage of the time. Besides, the additive way of writing by using coordinate conjunctions means that Lawrence takes the multiplier or cumulative arrangements of sentences.

(3)

The cumulative style produced by using coordinate conjunctions leads to the level of modification structure. Quoting the idea of Francis Christensen, Virginia Tufte emphasizes the importance of the cumulative sentences as follows.

Francis Christensen reminds us that the process of human thought operates by addition, represented in prose by a linear progress of backward-moving modification structures in forward-moving expansions, ramifications of an initial idea gathered as afterthoughts to a grammatically complete base. As he says, "The foundation, then, for a generative or productive rhetoric of the sentence is that composition is essentially a process of addition." .. But what is added? Anything and everything? Yes, in fact, but a certain kinds of additions appear most frequently and effectively in rounding out a cumulative sentence, including primarily noun and adjective absolutes.¹³⁾

It is the right-branching sentence that can create a cumulative sentence and in *Cerveteri* in *Etruscan Places*, the number of right-branching sentence is greater than that of left-branching sentence or mid-branching sentence.

Before we discuss the stylistic effects of each type of modifiers, we should understand Virginia Tufte's explanation of 'modifiers'. According to her definition,¹⁴⁾ there are two kinds of modifiers, one is 'bound modifiers' which are closely tied to the head, with no intervening punctuation, the other, 'freemodifiers' which occur at the beginning of a sentence or are set off from the sentence by punctuation. She claims that a basic source in English syntax is the tendency toward segmentation which are indicated by the arrangement of words in familiar clause and phrase pattern and at least, partially, by punctuation.¹⁵⁾ In case of modifiers in *Cerveteri*, free-modifiers are more important than bound modifiers because Lawrence uses a great number of commas and other punctuations in the

work as shown in Table 2 in the Appendix.

Free modifiers can be embedded in their location at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the base clause. The sentence with the modifiers at each location is called 'left-branching sentence', 'mid-branching sentence' and 'right-branching sentence'. Among three types of sentences, the right-branching sentences are mostly used in *Cerveteri*. Table 3 in the Appendix shows the result of investigation.

Now we'll begin with the left-branching sentence. Left-branching sentence is the front heavy sentence and sometimes risks a clumsy and awkward sentence, if the front branchings are too heavy. But in case of Lawrence's sentences here, left-branching sentences are small in number. Although its structure is very simple and not so heavy at front in most left-branching sentences, the following sentence is one exception which has rather complicated branchings.

And having stood on the rocks in Sicily, with pink asphodel proudly sticking up like clouds at sea, taller than myself, letting off pink different flowers with such sharp and vivid *éclat*, and saving up such a store of buds in ear, stripey, I confess I admire the flower.¹⁶⁾

In this left-branching sentence it should be noted that it is not built up by entirely homogeneous branchings and is intended to isolate each sentence by using different types of branchings. This sentence is composed of verb-phrase (having stood on ..., letting off pink... and saving...), prepositional phrase (with pink asphodel...) and adjective phrase (taller than myself,). In fact the combination of these branchings effects preventing the sentence from monotonous and clumsiness in spite of its heavy front. Though the modifiers of left-branching sentence are more commonly found than those of right-branching sentence in *Cerveteri*, we're going to study later on.

Next comes the mid-branching sentence. There are less mid-branching sentences than left-branching sentences in *Cerveteri*. Besides, most of their modifier structures of mid-branching sentences are as simple as those of the left-branching sentences. Among the simple modifiers of mid-branching sentences, we'll pick up one exceptional and rather complicated sentence which contains mid-branching both in the principal and the subordinate clause at the beginning of *Etruscan Places*.

The Etruscans, as everyone knows, were the people who occupied the middle of Italy in early Roman days and whom the Romans, in their usually neighbourly fashion, wiped out entirely in order to make room for Rome with a very big R.¹⁷⁾

Lawrence rarely begins his works with such complicated sentence structures. Usually he begins his story with right-branching sentence and lead us, readers, to the kernel of his thought before we are aware of it. So far as this mid-branching sentence at the beginning is concerned, it brings a little strained stylistic effect.¹⁸⁾

As Virginia Tufte says, mid-branching sentence suggests that the author has begun to say what he intends, has interrupted himself to elaborate so far as he feels *in advance* is necessary, and has then added the required grammatical conclusion, all without the need of a cumulative afterthought.

In other words, mid-branching sentence is not fitted for the style of Lawrence because he gets his idea or thought is shaped while going on his writing. In this point, Lawrence's style is not so logically organized but round and uncontrolled.

Now is the turn to pay attention to right-branching sentence. As already mentioned, the sentence modifiers of *Cerveteri* are mostly occupied by right-branching sentences. Besides, compared with other branching sentences, many modifiers of right-branching sentences are full of various sorts.

According to Virginia Tufte, the distinguishing feature of the right-branching sentence is the accumulation of materials if the base clause is grammatically complete...and many cumulative sentences add materials that could never be found before the subject.¹⁹⁾ Among right-branching sentences here, it is to be noted that even in short sentences they had one or two branchings as below. The following sentences are composed mainly of noun and verb phrase (NP and VP), nominative absolute (Abs), incorporated prepositional phrase (PP), adjective phrases (AP), subordinate clause (SC), and relative clause (RC).

He says no, so in we go, into the cavern, down a few steps. (PP)²⁰⁾

He would have been afraid, as if he were in the dark. (SC)²¹⁾

Then outside they liked to have a sharp dip or ravine, with a parallel hill opposite.
(PP)²²⁾

The tombs seem so easy and friendly, cut out of rock underground. (VP)²³⁾

Everything was in terms of life, of living. (PP)²⁴⁾

There are many tombs, though not many of the great mounds are left. (SC)²⁵⁾

We can show the preceding examples of right-branching sentences used in the short sentences anywhere in the work. But the more distinct features of right-branching sentences are also found in its various parts.

... He glances at us from a corner of his eyes, ducks, wipes his mouth on the back of his hand, and is gone, clambering with his hairy legs on to his lean pony (VP), swirling (VP), and rattling away with a neat little clatter of houses (VP), under the ramparts and away to the open (PP).²⁶⁾

This sentence is an example which Lawrence can convey his strong ongoing feeling by the addition of verb phrase and present participle.

The next one is an example of well-rounded sentence which is composed of a mere noun phrase, though it is a little flat and monotonous.

And all these tombs along the dead highway would seem to have been topped, once by the beautiful roundness of tumuli, the great mounds of fruition (PP), for the dead (PP), with the tall phallic cone rising from the summit (PP).²⁷⁾

The most cumulative and expansive sentences with various combinations of the elaboration are seen as follows.

... But now the high place is forlorn, with a big, weary building like a governor's palace, or the bishops palace (PP), spreading on the crest behind the castle gate and a desolate ruinous enclosure (VP).²⁸⁾

... And all round the chamber goes the broad bed of rock, sometimes a double tier (NP), on which the dead were laid (RC), in their coffins (PP), or lying upon carved letters of stone or wood (VP), a man glittering in golden armour (Abs), or a woman in white and crimson robe (NP), with great necklaces wound their necks (PP), and rings on their fingers (NP).²⁹⁾

Even if these right-branching sentences are the loosened modifier structures, they are not so over expanded that Lawrence gives the sketching of the place the richness and depth by additive, cumulative and expansive right-branching sentences.

In the following sentences we find much more controlled types of right-branching sentences marked by reglarity and balance.

Whereas at Cerveteri the masters were laid full-length, sometimes in the great sarcophagi (PP), sometimes in big coffins of terra-cotta(PP), in all their regalia(PP).³⁰⁾

This is an example of the kind of mild parallelism of the cumulative additions which are extended effectively over successive expansions The same kind of examples of parallelism is:

Perhaps some tumuli had a great phallic column on the summit: some perhaps by the door.³¹⁾

The big phallic stones that, it is said, probably on top of the tumuli, sometimes carved very beautifully, sometimes with inscriptions.³²⁾

The two sentences above are the effective examples where Lawrence can achieve the controlled type of cumulative sentences and give the sentences rhythm and balance of prose.

(4)

As pointed out in the last sentence above, the usage of punctuation with parallelism or parataxis scattered in *Cerveteri* makes vivid and rhythmic effects on the work.

They were all, apparently, killed in the war: they would be sure not to survive such a war.³³⁾

It is like a house that has been swept bare: the inmates have left: now it waits for the next comer.³⁴⁾

There are many tombs: some were standing half full of water: some were in process of being excavated, ...³⁵⁾

Here we notice that some parataxis appear in the form of repetitions. One of the effective parataxis with repetitions in *Cerveteri* is the sentence as follows.

But to the tombs, to the tombs! ³⁶⁾

This repetitions is important because of its rhythmic effect not only partially but wholly in the first part of *Cerveteri*. The phrase "to the tombs" repeats four times in the work.

- (1) So to the tombs we must go: ³⁷⁾
- (2) But to the tombs, to the tombs!
- (3) We will go to the tombs. ³⁸⁾
- (4) ... this is all the way to the tombs. ³⁹⁾

In the description from starting to arrival at the tombs Lawrence expresses his ideas on civilization which destroyed the old Etruscan civilization, sketching the people, the place, the Greek flower. Without the repetition "to the tombs" each description would be persistent, arbitrary and difficult to read. As this repetition gives a kind of frame in the first half of the travels, it makes a tight and rhythmic effect on the style. In the latter half of the travels, particularly in the description of the inside of the tombs, the different kind of repetition appears.

But when we remember the great store of treasure that every notable tomb must have contained: **and that** every large tumulus covered several tombs: **and that** in the necropolis of Cerveteri we can still discover hundreds of tombs: **and that** other tombs exist in great number on the other side of old city, towards the sea.⁴⁰⁾

Here it is, in stone, unmistakable, and everywhere, around these tombs. **Here it is**, big and little, standing by the doors, or inserted, quite small, into the rock: the phallic stone! ⁴¹⁾

The stylistic effect by these repetitions, often combined with parataxis, is to keep off the over expansion of the cumulative sentence, and to serve for the smoothness of the texture and the balance and rhythm of the sentence. In such way Lawrence can controll his own emotional expression for the tombs.

(5)

Up to now, we've studied the stylistic characteristics, mainly from the point of sentence structure and modifier structure of *Cerveteri*, a part of *Etruscan Places*.

So far, it follows that both of sentence structure and modifier structure are so simple and loose that Lawrence's way of writing creates not a kind of suspense, but cumulative, expansive sentences. However, in the point of stylistic effects we are impressed by crisp and rhythmic expressions. We've learned such impressions come from the combination of different sorts of short sentences and the various but controlled ways of composing branching sentences. In addition, the usage of punctuations also creates the tense and controlled stylistic effects to prevent Laurentian emotion to the tombs of Etruria.

(to be continued)

Notes

- 1) D. H. Lawrence, *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Heinemann, 1964), pp. 718-720.
- 2) D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse* (London: Martin Secker, 1932)
- 3) D. H. Lawrence, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Heinemann, 1956) pp. 671-672.
- 4) F. J. Hoffmann & H. T. Moor, *The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953) p. 288.
- 5) H. Sweet, *New English Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) p. 155.
G. O. Curme, *Syntax* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1972) p. 1.
- 6) D. H. Lawrence, *Etruscan Places* (Penguin Books, 1960)
- 7) M. Shimizu, *The Style and Structure of D. H. Lawrence's The Crucifix across the Mountains* (Kurashiki: Kawasaki College of Allied Health Professions No. 2, 1982) p. 111.
- 8) D. H. Lawrence, *Etruscan Places* (Penguin Books, 1960) pp. 98-99.
- 9) *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 10) *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.
- 11) *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- 12) *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 13) Virginia Tufte, *Grammar as Style* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1971) p. 153.
- 14) *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 15) *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- 16) D. H. Lawrence, *Etruscan Places* (Penguin Books, 1960) p. 104.
- 17) *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 18) Virginia Tufte, *Grammar as Style* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1971) pp. 149-150.
- 19) *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- 20) D. H. Lawrence, *Etruscan Places* (Penguin Books, 1960) p. 100.
- 21) *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- 22) *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- 23) *Ibid.*, p. 108.

- 24) Ibid., p. 109.
- 25) Ibid., p. 111.
- 26) Ibid., p. 100.
- 27) Ibid., p. 111.
- 28) Ibid., p. 101.
- 29) Ibid., p. 106.
- 30) Ibid., p. 106.
- 31) Ibid., p. 109.
- 32) Ibid., p. 110.
- 33) Ibid., p. 101.
- 34) Ibid., p. 106.
- 35) Ibid., p. 111.
- 36) Ibid., p. 97.
- 37) Ibid., p. 98.
- 38) Ibid., p. 100.
- 39) Ibid., p. 105.
- 40) Ibid., p. 108.
- 41) Ibid., p. 109

APPENDIX

Statistics on D. H. Lawrence's *Cerveteri* in *Etruscan Places***Table 1** The length of sentences

number of words in one sentence	total number
1- 9	106
10-19	135
20-29	69
30-39	24
40-49	9
50-59	7
60-69	2
70-79	2
80-89	1
90-99	1
total	356
average number in one sentence	17.25

For this study, a sentence is defined as a group of words beginning with a capital letter just after punctuation in the previous sentence and ending with a terminal punctuation.

Table 2 The number of conjunctions and conjunctive speeches

conjunction & conjunctive speech	total	conjunction & conjunctive speech	total
And	28	Or	1
and (word connector)	110	or	14
,and (")	49	,or	13
:and (")	7	:or	1
;and (")	2	;or	1
-and (")	2	,save	1
and (sentence connector)	5	since	1
,and (")	18	So	10
:and (")	1	,so	1
As (=when)	1	:so	1
as (")	1	So that	1
,as (")	1	such that	1
as (in the way or manner that)	1	such as	1

, as (")	6	than	2
-as (")	1	that	28
as-as	4	, that	6
, as-as	1	Then	4
As if	1	Therefore	1
as if	7	Though	1
, as if	1	, though	4
Because	1	, till	2
because	2	until	1
, because	2	what	8
before	1	When	1
But (word connector)	40	when	13
but (")	3	, when	1
, but (")	5	where	6
: but (")	2	, where	3
, but (sentence connector)	1	Whereas	1
; but (")	1	which	11
Either-or	1	, which	3
For	1	-which	1
, for	4	: which	1
how	1	who	5
However	6	, who	3
, however	2	whom	1
If	1	whose	2
if	3	past participle (head of sentence)	1
, if	3	past participle	2
-ing (head of sentence)	2	, past participle	2
-ing	18	Yet	3
, -ing	18	, yet	1
neither-nor	1	,	590
nor	1	:	39
not that	1	;	28
		-	27

Table 3 The number of left, mid,
right-branching sentences

branching	total
left-branching sentence	15
mid-branching sentence	13
right-branching sentence	104
left+right branching sentence	7
mid+right branching sentence	5
total	144