

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-00701-6 - Sketches of Etruscan Places and Other Italian Essays

D. H. Lawrence

Excerpt

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***SKETCHES OF
ETRUSCAN PLACES***

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Note on the text

The base-text for *Sketches of Etruscan Places* is the manuscript (MS), located at UT, with the typescripts adopted as the primary sources for substantive emendation as follows: ‘Cerveteri’, TSa (UT); ‘Tarquinia’, TSa (UT); ‘The Painted Tombs of Tarquinia’ 1., TSc (UTul); ‘The Painted Tombs of Tarquinia’ 2., TSc (UT); ‘Vulci’, TSb (UT); and ‘Volterra’, TSc (UTul).

The Textual apparatus records all the variants from the base-text in subsequent texts. The apparatus for ‘The Florence Museum’ records all the deletions and corrections in MS since that is the only surviving text. Secker’s first edition (E1) follows the page proofs (PP) unless otherwise indicated.

DHL’s use of an initial capital letter in ‘Dazio’ and ‘Museum’; the capitalisation of his ‘c’, which is often difficult to distinguish in his handwriting (though he generally writes ‘christian’ when the word is used as an adjective); and the Italian names of the tombs generally italicised and capitalised by DHL have all been regularised according to DHL’s most usual practice, and the variants have been recorded in the apparatus.

DHL is often inconsistent when using the ancient and modern names of the Etruscan cities. His inconsistencies have been preserved in this edition except in ‘Vulci’ where, particularly in the first two pages, DHL is actually mistaken. ‘Volci’ and ‘Vulci’ – the first being the old name of the city and the second the modern one – have been standardised throughout the essay, with the variants recorded in the apparatus.

The apparatus records all textual variants, except for the following silent emendations which have only been recorded when they form part of another variant:

- 1 Clearly inadvertent spelling and typesetting errors have been corrected. When a variant occurs only in an unpublished text (i.e. the typescripts or PP) it has not been recorded.
- 2 Omitted or misplaced apostrophes in possessive cases and contractions, incomplete quotation marks and full stops omitted at the end of sentence where no other punctuation exists, have all been supplied or corrected.
- 3 DHL did not usually italicise punctuation, and variants have only been recorded when they are part of an entry.
- 4 Per2 and PP consistently printed ‘to-day’, whereas DHL wrote it as one unhyphenated word; Per2 and PP printed ‘for ever’ as two words, whereas DHL generally wrote it as one word; DHL’s spelling has been preserved in this

- edition. The American spelling of words such as ‘center’ and ‘color’ in Per₁ and TScC (i.e. non-Lawrentian corrections to TSc) has not been recorded. DHL consistently wrote ‘fulness’, which was typed as ‘fullness’, and so printed in Per₂ and PP; and he regularly wrote ‘maremma’ which was generally capitalised in E₁; DHL’s spelling has been preserved.
- 5 Per₁, TScC and PP house-styled ‘-is-’ to ‘-iz-’, e.g. DHL’s ‘realise’ became ‘realize’; DHL’s practice has been retained in this edition. The diphthongs ‘ae’ and ‘oe’ were printed as ‘æ’ and ‘œ’ in Per₂, and PP and Per₁ often printed ‘e’ instead of ‘ae’ in words such as ‘mediaeval’ and ‘archaeologist’; this edition follows DHL’s practice.
 - 6 DHL often followed a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark with a dash before beginning the next sentence with a capital letter, e.g. ‘spinach.—The’ (11:32). His typist occasionally and the typesetter consistently omitted the dash, which has been restored in this edition.
 - 7 Inconsistencies in the placing of quotation marks for a single word or short sentence before, over or after the punctuation, e.g. ‘norm’.’ (39:14) ““Volterra,”” (160:24) ‘uplift.’” (39:16), have been regularised to have the quotation marks following the punctuation, as it occurs most often. DHL’s preferred practice was also used in PP. When quotation marks have an emphatic function, they have been regularised from single to double, e.g. ““classical”” (130:36), respecting DHL’s usual practice.
 - 8 In MS, at the beginning of each essay, the chapter title is preceded by the general title of the volume; both titles are in upper and lower case letters. In the extant typescripts the general title is given in capitals. PP dropped the general title and printed the chapter titles in capitals. In this edition the general title has also been dropped, whereas the chapter title follows the MS reading.
 - 9 In MS and in the typescripts a full stop always follows the roman numerals which number the essays; the stops were dropped in PP and have been restored in this edition. A full stop also follows the individual titles of each essay in three cases in MS and always in the revised typescripts; they were dropped in PP and do not appear in this edition.
 - 10 With very few exceptions, ‘Etruscan’ in its adjectival form always appears uncapitalised in MS, the typescripts and PP, whereas in Per₁, Per₂ and E₁ it is always capitalised (see Introduction). DHL’s preferred practice has been restored in this edition.
 - 11 In ‘Vulci’ the dialogues are always introduced by dashes in MS and in the typescripts whereas PP substituted quotation marks; DHL’s practice has been retained in this edition. E₁ always italicised the Italian ‘carretto’; italics have been dropped in this edition following DHL’s practice.
 - 12 For the captions and order of the Illustrations see Appendix III, pp. 275–8.

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I.
CERVETERI

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I.

Cerveteri*

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.*

Now, we know nothing about the Etruscans except what we find in their tombs. There are references to them in Latin writers.* But of first-hand knowledge we have nothing except what the tombs offer.

So to the tombs we must go: or to the museums containing the things that have been rifled from the tombs.

Myself, the first time I consciously saw etruscan things, in the museum at Perugia,* I was instinctively attracted to them. 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, for the good reason that it ought to be Greek if it isn't. So etruscan things are put down as a feeble Graeco-Roman imitation. And a great scientific historian like Mommsen* hardly allows that the Etruscans existed at all. Their existence was antipathetic to him. The Prussian in him was enthralled by the Prussian in the all-conquering Romans. So being a great scientific historian, he almost denies the very existence of the etruscan people. He didn't like the idea of them. That was enough for a great scientific historian.

Besides, the Etruscans were vicious. We know it, because their enemies and exterminators said so.* Just as we knew the unspeakable depths of *our* enemies in the late war. Who isn't vicious, to his enemy? To my detractors, I am a very effigy of vice. A la bonne heure!*

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 maître parle, tout le monde 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 snow-flakes, aren't we? We have every right to judge.

Myself, however, if the Etruscans were vicious, I'm glad they were. To the Puritan all things are impure, as somebody says.* And those naughty neighbours of the Romans at least escaped being Puritans.

But to the tombs, to the tombs! On a sunny April morning we set out for the tombs. From Rome, the eternal city, now in a black bonnet. It was not far to go—about twenty miles over the campagna towards the sea, on the line to Pisa.*

The campagna, with its great green spread of growing wheat, is almost human again. But still there are damp empty tracts, where now the little narcissus stands in clumps, or covers whole fields. And there are places queer and foam-white, all with camomile, on a sunny morning in early April.

We are going to Cerveteri, which was the ancient Caere, or Cere, and which had a Greek name too, Agylla. It was a gay and gaudy etruscan city when Rome put up her first few hovels: probably. Anyhow, there are tombs there now.

The inestimable big Italian railway-guide says the station is Palo, and that Cerveteri is eight-and-a-half kilometres away: about five miles. But there is a post omnibus.*

We arrive at Palo, a station in 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 Cerveteri? 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 ever lock? Difficult! Well then, let us leave them, and steal if you want to. Impossible! Such a moral responsibility! Impossible to leave an unlocked small holdall at the station. So much for the officials!

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I I

However, we try the man at the small buffet. He is very laconic, but seems all right. We abandon our things in a corner of the dark little eating-place, and set off on foot. Luckily it is only something after ten in the morning.

A flat, white road with a rather noble avenue of umbrella pines for the first few hundred yards. A road not far from the sea, a bare, flattish, hot white road with nothing but a tilted oxen-wagon in the distance like a huge snail with four horns. Beside the road the tall asphodel is letting off its spasmodic pink sparks, rather at random, and smelling of cats. Away to the left is the sea, beyond the flat green wheat, the Mediterranean glistening flat and deadish, as it does on the low shores. Ahead are hills, and a ragged bit of a grey village with an ugly big grey building: that is Cerveteri. We trudge on along the dull road. After all, it is only five miles and a bit.

We creep nearer, and climb the ascent. Caere, like most etruscan cities, lay on the crown of a hill with cliff-like escarpments. Not that this Cerveteri is an etruscan city. Caere, the etruscan city, was swallowed by the Romans, and after the fall of the Roman empire it fell out of existence altogether. But it feebly revived, and today we come to an old Italian village, walled in with grey walls, and having a few new, pink, box-shaped houses and villas outside the walls.

We pass through the gateway, where men are lounging talking and mules are tied up, and in the bits of crooked grey streets look for a place where we can eat. We see the notice, *Vini e Cucina*, *Wines and Kitchen*; but it is only a deep cavern where mule drivers are drinking blackish wine.

However, we ask the man who is cleaning the post-omnibus in the street, if there is any other place. He says no, so in we go, into the cavern, down a few steps.

Everybody is perfectly friendly. But the food is as usual, meat broth, very weak, with thin macaroni in it: the boiled meat that made the broth: and tripe: also spinach.—The broth tastes of nothing, the meat tastes almost of less, the spinach, alas, has been cooked over in the fat skimmed from the boiled beef. It is a meal—with a piece of so-called sheep's cheese, that is pure salt and rancidity, and probably comes from Sardinia; and wine that tastes like, and probably is, the black wine of Calabria* wetted with a good proportion of water. But it is a meal. We will go to the tombs.

Into the cave swaggers a spurred shepherd wearing goatskin 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 subduedly, 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 the ramparts and away to the open. He is the faun escaping again out of the city precincts, far more shy and evanescent than any christian virgin. You cannot hard-boil him.

It occurs to me, how rarely one sees the faun-face now, in Italy, that one used to see so often before the war: the brown, rather still, straight-nosed face* with a little black moustache and often a little tuft of black beard; yellow eyes, rather shy under long lashes, but able to glare with a queer glare, on occasion; and mobile lips that had a queer way of showing the teeth when talking, bright white teeth. It was an old, old type, and rather common in the south. But now you will hardly see one of these men left, with the unconscious, ungrimacing faun-face. They were all, apparently, killed in the war: they would be sure not to survive such a war. Anyway the last one I know, a handsome fellow of my own age—forty and a bit—is going queer and morose, crushed between war-memories that have revived, and remorseless go-ahead women-folk. Probably, when I go south again, he will have disappeared. They can't survive, the faun-faced men, with their pure outlines and their strange non-moral calm. Only the deflowered faces survive.

So much for a marenna* shepherd! We went out into the sunny April street of this Cerveteri, Cerevetus, the old Cere.* It is a worn-out little knot of streets shut in inside a wall. Rising on the left is the citadel, the acropolis,* the high place, that which is the arx in etruscan cities. But now the high place is forlorn, with a big, weary building like a governor's palace, or a bishop's palace, spreading on the crest behind the castle gate, and a desolate sort of yard tilting below it, surrounded by ragged, ruinous enclosure. It is forlorn beyond words, dead, and still too big for the grey knot of inhabited streets below.

The girl of the cavern, a nice girl but a bad cook, has found us a guide, obviously her brother, to take us to the necropolis. He is a lad of about fourteen, and like everybody in this abandoned place, shy

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and suspicious, holding off. He bids us wait while he runs away somewhere. So we drink coffee in the tiny café outside which the motor-omnibus reposes all day long, till the return of our guide and another little boy, who will come with him and see him through. The two boys cotton together,* make a little world secure from us, and move on ahead of us, ignoring us as far as possible. The stranger is always a menace. B. and I are two very quiet-mannered harmless men. But that first boy could not have borne to go alone with us. Not alone! He would have been afraid, as if he were in the dark.

They led us out of the only gate of the old town. Mules and ponies were tied up in the sloping, forlorn place outside, and pack-mules arrived, as in Mexico.* We turned away to the left, under the rock cliff from whose summit the so-called palace goes up flush, the windows looking out on to the world. It seems as if the Etruscans may once have cut this low rock-face, and as if the whole crown on which the wall-girt village of Cerveteri now stands may once have been the arx, the ark, the inner citadel and holy place of the city of Caere, or Agylla, the splendid etruscan city, with its Greek quarters. There was a whole suburb of Greek colonists, from Ionia, or perhaps from Athens, in busy Caere, when Rome was still a rather crude place. About the year 390 B.C. the Gauls came swooping down on Rome. 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 site of Caere may not have been exactly here. Certainly it stretched away on this same hill-top, 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, like bulbs, were underground.

But the 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 Cerveteri. Round the summit of this cliff, this headland, went the enclosure wall, sometimes miles of the great cincture. And within the walls they liked 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 liked to have their city of the dead,