

A Chief Secretary in Malta: Henry Lushington and the Italian Question

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In his poem 'In the Garden at Swainston' (1870) Alfred Tennyson writes, 'Shadows of three dead men / Walk'd in the walks with me [...] three dead men I have loved.' One of these three dead men was, famously, Arthur Hallam. The second was John Simeon and the third was Henry Lushington who had died 15 years earlier, in 1855.¹

Tennyson dedicated the second edition of *The Princess* to Lushington and said that he had been 'the best critic he had ever known.'² Henry Lushington and his brother Edmund were among Tennyson's closest friends—in Henry's case, especially during the 1840s. They were also linked through marriage as in 1842 Edmund married Tennyson's sister, Cecilia.

Like Tennyson, Lushington belonged to the 'Cambridge Apostles' during his student years at Cambridge and they had many friends in common, including Richard Monckton Milnes, James Spedding and Robert J. Tennant. The close friendship between the Lushingtons and the Tennysons is well documented in John O. Waller's detailed biographical work on the subject.³

Since childhood, Lushington had been enthusiastic about the history and literature of ancient Rome. In 1842 he finally visited the Italian

1. L.G. Whitbread, 'Tennyson's *In the Garden at Swainston*', *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring 1975), pp. 61–69.

2. Hallam Tennyson (ed.), *Tennyson and his Friends*, London, Macmillan, 1911, p. 92n.

3. John O. Waller, *A Circle of Friends: The Tennysons and the Lushingtons of Park House*, Ohio State, Columbus University Press, 1986.

peninsula for the first time when he went on a trip to Italy for nine months with two of his sisters and his younger brother, for health reasons. They left in October and were back in England the following June, travelling to various Italian cities and spending at least six weeks in Naples. During this trip, Lushington wrote and published a review of Thomas Babington Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*.⁴

In Florence, Lushington visited Robert J. Tennant, who had been a good friend of Arthur Hallam and was one of the closest friends of Lushington's brother Edmund at Cambridge.⁵ Tennant had originally proposed both Hallam and Tennyson for membership of the Apostles⁶ and was famous at Cambridge during his student years for having met Samuel Taylor Coleridge on several occasions. Coleridge was Secretary to Civil Commissioner Alexander Ball in Malta in 1804–1805⁷—a similar post to the one that Lushington was to occupy in Malta, as we shall see in a moment.

Tennant was now the Anglican chaplain in Florence and had an Italian wife. In a letter from Italy to Richard Monckton Milnes, Lushington wrote that he also met Savile Morton,⁸ another Cambridge Apostle, and Alfred Tennyson's brother Frederick who, like Tennant, had also married an Italian and settled in Florence.⁹

Three and a half years after this trip, on 23rd January 1847 Lushington received a letter from Lord Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in the new Whig government of Lord John Russell, offering him the post of Chief Secretary in Malta.¹⁰

Several members of the Lushington family had held positions in government service overseas in the British colonies. Lushington's father,

4. *The Christian Remembrancer* (February 1843), pp. 197–222.

5. Tennant first introduced Edmund Lushington to Alfred Tennyson at a breakfast hosted by James Spedding in around 1832. Waller, 1986, p. 52.

6. John Batchelor, *Tennyson: to strive, to seek, to find*, London, Chatto & Windus, 2012, p. 32; and Waller, p. 45.

7. Waller *op. cit.*, p. 45.

8. Morton was 'an ardent liberal and wrote boldly and constantly in support of political progress. During the revolutions in Italy in 1848 he was very outspoken and ended up in some trouble with the French government under Louis Napoleon when he was a foreign correspondent for the *Daily News* in Paris.' W.C. Lubenow, *The Cambridge Apostles, 1820–1914: Liberalism, Imagination and Friendship in British Intellectual and Professional Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 206.

9. Peter Allen, *The Cambridge Apostles: the Early Years*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978 & 2010, p. 180.

10. Waller, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

Edmund Henry Lushington, was a barrister and spent some time posted to Ceylon in India as a judge. After returning to England, he was appointed chairman and chief commissioner of the Colonial Audit Board.¹¹ Edmund Henry's half-brother, Stephen Lushington, was Governor of Madras. Lushington's brother Thomas was employed with the colonial office in Ceylon, and another brother Franklin became a judge in the Ionian Islands. A more distant ancestor, Sir Stephen Lushington, had been director and chairman of the East India Company.

Lushington was immediately wary of the religious issues that came with the job in Malta. These concerns proved correct as religious questions turned out to be a central preoccupation during his seven years in the Mediterranean. A new Governor of Malta had also just been appointed—the Irish Catholic Richard More O'Ferrall, who was a member of parliament and the first civil Governor in Malta as the former Governors had all been military men.

Lushington met O'Ferrall in London before travelling to Malta. Following this meeting he wrote to his friend Milnes, wondering what 'line' he would take as Chief Secretary between the Catholic Governor More O'Ferrall and the ardently Protestant Anglican bishop in Malta, 'Shall I mediate? Or shall I be ground to pieces in their collision? The one point on which they agree being that of burning the heretical secretary?'¹² Lushington jokingly warned his friend that he might soon, 'hear that I am, in the strict performance of duty, officiating as the chief candlebearer at St. John's.'¹³

The Anglican bishop in Malta was George Tomlinson—one of the first 'Cambridge Apostles' and who would have been known to Lushington at least by name. According to Lushington's good friend George Stovin Venables, who later wrote a memoir about Lushington, the presence and title of this 'zealous Protestant bishop [...] were in the highest degree offensive to the Roman Catholic population. The priests, consequently, in almost all instances, withdrew from the friendly relations which they had established with their heretic neighbours.'¹⁴

11. Lubenow, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

12. Waller, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

13. St John's co-Cathedral in Valletta, formerly the Conventual Church of the Hospitaller Knights of the Order of St John in Malta.

14. Henry Lushington, *The Italian War 1848–1849, and the Last Italian Poet: Three Essays, with a biographical preface by George Stovin Venables*, London, Macmillan, 1859, p. xliii.

Lushington arrived in Malta in January 1848. Together with his sisters Emily and Louy, he had travelled through Italy for a full two months on his way to Malta, as he had been requested by the colonial office to gather information about the different systems of municipal government on the Italian peninsula, with the aim of exploring whether any of these systems might be suitable for Malta.¹⁵ Lushington duly spent two months travelling through Italy in fulfilment of this task, stopping in Turin, Genoa, Florence, Rome and Naples, and talking to British officials who in turn introduced him to Italian lawyers.

In Rome he met the diplomat George Petre and the Italian lawyer Manlio de Angelis, and in Naples he met James Lacaita who was legal advisor to the British legation in Naples and a friend of the minister Sir William Temple. Lushington formed a friendship with Lacaita and they met many times over the next few years.¹⁶

Lushington may have used some of his observations of his report on Italy in his review of Luigi Mariotti's book *Italy Past and Present*, published in the *British Quarterly Review* in 1848.¹⁷ Mariotti was the pen name of the Italian political refugee Antonio Gallenga, who was living in London.¹⁸

Lushington's review gives a detailed exposition of the history and contemporary political institutions of Italy. Like many of his contemporaries, Lushington viewed Italy as an alluring world in which the soul of an ancient civilisation still lingered. His essay opens with an imaginary vista over the Apennine hills and the river Arno, and he rejoices in the idea that exactly the same view was seen by the people of the Italian peninsula in classical times. He declares that the great nation and people of the past, are the same people in Italy today.

Like many other British intellectuals and liberals in 1848, at this time Lushington viewed the new pope as a reforming and positive force in the future of Italy. Pope Pius IX, known as *Pio Nono*, was elected in 1846. In his review, Lushington praises the pope and welcomes the secular reforms that he was introducing in the papal states:

15. Godfrey A. Pirotta, *The Maltese Public Service 1800–1940: The Administrative Politics of a Micro-state*, Malta, Mireva Publications, 1996, pp. 179–180.

16. Lushington, *op. cit.*, p. xli.

17. Henry Lushington, 'Italy: its State and Prospects.' Review of L. Mariotti, *Italy Past and Present* vol. 2, *The British Quarterly Review*, vol. 7 (May, 1848), pp. 464–495.

18. Toni Cerutti, *Antonio Gallenga: An Italian Writer in Victorian England*, London, Oxford University Press, 1974.

His mission has been to transfer the highest ecclesiastical authority from the side of absolutism to that of constitutional freedom. He has been the instrument, the lever, by which Italy, at the critical point in time, was enabled to effect that immense political movement.¹⁹

The review also reveals Lushington's support for a united Italy and his admiration of the Italian people. He refers to contemporary Italy as a 'slave' and to Italians as 'a people so capable, so powerful, and so virtuous.' Throughout his essay he attempts to explain why they have 'so often suffered under the rule of viler races and baser minds.' He writes with conviction that, 'No man of liberal principles can have become at all familiar with the great cities of Italy—such as Venice, Milan, Florence, Verona, Rome, and even Naples—without feeling that the people of that beautiful Peninsula *might* be self-governed—*ought* to be self-governed.'

The review also reveals Lushington's familiarity with recent Italian literature, including the works of Ugo Foscolo, Giacomo Leopardi, Alessandro Manzoni and Giuseppe Giusti. Lushington was particularly interested in Giusti and wrote a long essay on his works during his years in Malta, and also translated several of his works into English.²⁰

Lushington's review was published in May 1848 within days of the announcement of Pope Pius IX's famous Allocution—a policy speech which revealed that he was not going to provide assistance to King Charles Albert of Piedmont against Austria and that he was withdrawing his support for a united Italy. Lushington could not have known about this Allocution before sending off the review for publication.

The pope's speech initiated a process which would lead to the complete reversal of the image of the new pope as reformer. The pope had turned his back on the liberals and the *Risorgimento* movement, and had nailed his flag to reactionary and absolutist political solutions. The pope's subsequent actions heightened anti-clerical views among liberal and nationalist activists and their supporters, as people were obliged to choose between their spiritual beliefs and their political aspirations.

The pope became increasingly unpopular and in November 1848, following rioting in the streets of Rome, he fled to Naples. Rome was established as a republic in the early months of 1849, with Giuseppe Mazzini as the head of a ruling triumvirate and Garibaldi commanding its military arm. The pope rallied support from France and by the end of

19. Lushington, 1848, pp. 492–493.

20. Lushington, 1859, pp. 217–218.

June 1849, after fierce fighting by the French army against the Republicans and with Garibaldi leading the defence of the city, the Roman republic had already fallen.

At the time of the fall of Rome, Lushington had been in Malta for two and half years. During the turbulent years of the Italian *Risorgimento*, Malta was a common refuge for those escaping political persecution in Italy. For some, the island was used only as a stop-over on their way elsewhere, often to London, while others eventually went back to Italy or settled in Malta permanently. One of the early waves of political refugees from Italy in 1820 had brought Gabriele Rossetti to Malta, the father of Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, who spent two years on the island before settling in London.

These political refugees used Malta as a base from which to continue their clandestine political agitation for the unification of Italy, involving themselves in activities such as the setting up of newspapers and printing presses, and the collection of arms and ammunition. The island was attractive to them for several reasons—it was geographically close with many cultural affinities to both Italy and Sicily, the Maltese professional and educated classes spoke Italian, and it was a British colony.²¹

Throughout the *Risorgimento*, Britain gave refuge to a multitude of Italian political exiles. In the first half of the nineteenth century, English liberal policies allowed a steady flow of refugees to enter Malta relatively easily, and a small community of exiles flourished in Valletta and around its Grand Harbour. They integrated into Maltese society and influenced a section of it, and by the 1840s some groups of educated Maltese supported Italian unification as can be seen in contemporary Maltese newspapers such as *Il Mediterraneo*.

When the French army defeated Mazzini's Roman republic in July 1849, the supporters of the republic attempted to escape in all directions. Around 120 of these fleeing revolutionaries left Civitavecchia and sailed to Malta, arriving in harbour on 15th July 1849. In a surprising turn of events the Governor of Malta, Richard More O'Ferrall, refused to allow them to land.

O'Ferrall was a fervent Roman Catholic and was not sympathetic to these anti-clerical revolutionaries who had ousted the pope from Rome and confiscated church property. He was close to the Jesuits in Malta and one of his closest advisors on the island was a British Jesuit, Father

21. Bianca Fiorentini, *Malta rifugio di esuli e focolare ardente di cospirazione durante il risorgimento italiano*, Malta, Casa S. Giuseppe, 1966.

Esmond.²² According to Venables, ‘the Liberals who were to be found among the more intelligent Maltese [...] were regarded with little favour by the Governor.’²³

O’Ferrall’s decision not to allow the refugees to land was widely and harshly criticised in the Maltese liberal press, but the Governor only hardened his position and requested constant police surveillance on the ship in harbour.²⁴ As events unfolded, the story spread to the British press, in which the Governor was vilified and the refugees were celebrated as heroes and martyrs. More O’Ferrall was condemned in very strong language by some English newspapers, such as in this excerpt from the *Newcastle Guardian*,

Mr More O’Ferrall, whose refusal to allow the Roman exiles to land at that port has excited such universal disapprobation, appears determined to persevere in his bigotted and narrow-minded conduct. Encouraged by the approval of the Colonial Secretary and the Premier, he has again disgraced our national character [...]. They were exiles who had fought, he fancied, on the side of Liberty and Justice, and therefore obnoxious to Mr O’Ferrall. [...]. What a reproach upon our characteristic liberality, our boasted generosity in welcoming exiles from every land! One hardly knows what possible object this Governor aims at, in thus acting so contrary to our recognised policy and our cherished national feeling. Such a proceeding could not have happened in England. Is British law to be one thing here and another in Malta?²⁵

This was precisely the line that More O’Ferrall used in his defence, arguing that ‘at Malta the case is widely different’ and explaining in a letter to the Colonial Secretary Lord Grey with reference to the Italian refugees that,

the residence of so many idle persons, imbued with strong opinions on the theory of government and the rights of the people, was not conducive to the contentment of the Maltese population among whom they resided. The identity of language and habits, and the vicinity of Malta to Italian states, afforded facilities for the propagation of views and opinions of Italian nationality, which, so far as Malta is concerned, were inconsistent with British interests; the recollection of the period when Malta was an Italian

22. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

23. Lushington, 1859, p. xliv.

24. Fiorentini, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

25. *Newcastle Guardian*, ‘Exiles repulsed at Malta’, 29th September 1949.

state was revived; the young and the thoughtless were incited to look forward to the regeneration of Italy, of which Malta might again become an important part from its position and strength in the Mediterranean.²⁶

The Catholic Bishop of Malta supported O’Ferrall, and his letter to the Governor was also reprinted in the British press.²⁷ George Venables relates that Lushington was ‘deeply hurt and offended’ by the Governor’s refusal to allow the refugees from Rome to land:

Mr More O’Ferrall’s antipathy to the Liberal cause in Italy was strengthened by his orthodox indignation against the temporal opponents of the Holy See. The priests promoted an agitation against the schismatic intruders, and the bishop fulminated a proclamation, in which he asserted that their profane language rendered it impossible for the pious Maltese to approach the harbour in which their vessel was moored.²⁸

On 1st August 1849, only a few weeks after the incident of the Roman refugees in the Maltese harbour, a heated debate on the controversy was held in the House of Commons in London. Lushington’s friend Richard Monckton Milnes, who was a member of Parliament, sharply criticised the Governor of Malta for his actions.²⁹ Another member of parliament, Joseph Hume, then wrote a letter to Lord John Russell on behalf of a committee set up to assist Italian political refugees in England, and also harshly criticised the behaviour of More O’Ferrall.³⁰ The novelist Charles Dickens was one of the prominent members of this committee and he wrote an address stating that,

It must not be forgotten that one representative of the English nation has been found, in the person of Mr More O’Ferrall, Governor of Malta, who, having received with open arms the Jesuits and friends of absolutism, did not think it shame to cast these wanderers forth from that inhospitable shore, as if the ships that bore them were infected with the plague.³¹

26. Letter from Richard More O’Ferrall to Earl Grey of 24th November 1849, reprinted in *The Daily News*, 16th April 1850, p. 5.

27. Letter from the Archbishop of Malta to Richard More O’Ferrall of 26th July 1849, reprinted in *The Daily News*, 16th April 1850, p. 5.

28. Lushington, 1859, p. liv.

29. Fiorentini, *op. cit.*, 1966, p. 146.

30. *The Northern Star*, 22nd November 1849, p. 5.

31. *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*, 7th September 1849.

Dickens' address was subsequently translated into Italian and reprinted in the Maltese newspaper *Il Mediterraneo*. More O'Ferrall was not on the island at the time, and the Malta correspondent of the *Daily News* observed ominously, 'If he is wise, he will not return to Malta.'³²

Negative criticism of the Jesuits in Malta was already apparent in the British press before More O'Ferrall's refusal to allow the refugees from Rome to land. Two months before this incident, the *Morning Post* criticised the Governor's Jesuit advisor Fr Esmond and the Jesuits in Malta,

They have in their power the majority of the judicial police. They have among their adherents three Judges—the President Bonavita and Judges Satariano and Dingli—they hold the Bishop of Malta, and a merchant or two at the marina. They have a canon in the palace and many employees of government.³³

Lushington's negative opinion of the Jesuits is certainly clear by the 1850s, when in a poem on King Victor Emmanuel he harshly criticises the hypocrisy of the Jesuits.³⁴ Lushington's views on Roman Catholicism evolved while he was in Malta, partly through incidents such as these and also through his experiences in the newly-formed Maltese parliament. As a young man, Lushington had supported the cause of Catholic emancipation in England, and his friend Venables explains that he 'had consistently interested himself in the assertion of perfect social and political equality between Protestants and Catholics. His personal intercourse with members of the Romish communion had been confined to educated Englishmen and to incredulous foreigners of the same class.'

Venables relates that after his experiences in Malta, Lushington's 'love of perfect equality between religious sects always remained unshaken; but his residence in the most orthodox corner of the Latin world produced a visible modification in his estimate of the effects of the popular creed.'³⁵ Several lively and colourful debates about religion took place in the Maltese parliamentary assembly at this time, which included Catholic priests as members, and to which Lushington contributed some lengthy speeches.

32. *Daily News*, 27th September 1849.

33. *Morning Post*, 4th May 1848.

34. Henry Lushington & Franklin Lushington, *La Nation Boutiquiere and Other Poems, Chiefly Political*, London, Macmillan, 1855, p. 35.

35. Lushington, 1859, p. li.

Lushington's relationship with More O'Ferrall had been quite positive initially when he first took up his post in Malta, however within a space of two years it had degenerated. When O'Ferrall eventually left Malta in 1850, Lushington felt a measure of 'personal relief.'³⁶ Apart from his disagreements on religion with the clergy, there is no reason to suppose that Lushington had a negative relationship with the Maltese in general.

His friend Venables, who is however not at all objective as he adored Henry and writes about him in unfailingly glowing terms, said that 'The Maltese learned fully to appreciate the unfailing courtesy which at all times expressed the genuine kindness of his disposition. One of them afterwards paid him a graceful compliment, by asserting that the English in general had become more friendly and considerate to the natives, from the time of Mr Lushington's arrival on the island.'

Yet elsewhere we also find traces of a different approach which indicates that in his own colonial appointment as Chief Secretary in Malta, his attitude was typically paternalistic. Soon after his arrival, the colonial government decided to establish a new parliamentary assembly in Malta, with eight elected Maltese representatives and nine government officials. Lushington seems not to have favoured this decision.³⁷

Soon after the first meeting of this new parliamentary group, the *Daily News* in England reported that, the 'government and the newly-elected council had a "flare-up" at their first sitting.' The Governor presented the council members with a draft of the regulations for the assembly, which imposed strict limits on the entry of any reporters as well as members of the public from attending any of the sittings. The Maltese elected members protested and the discussion degenerated.

According to the *Daily News*, at this sitting Lushington spoke in an 'imperious and haughty manner' and at one point said, 'It is the will of the government' to which one of the Maltese members, Rev. Amato, replied, 'The word will is too imperative, and not parliamentary.'³⁸

During his time in Malta, Lushington wrote a pamphlet³⁹ on India which draws on the type of colonial discourse which affirmed Britain's right to rule over India and which provides important insights into his views on the relationship between Britain and its colonies. Here he states that:

36. *Ibid.*, 1859, p. lxvi.

37. *Ibid.*, 1859, p. xliii.

38. *The Daily News*, 24th January 1849.

39. Lushington, *The Double Government, the Civil Service, and the India Reform Agitation*, London, W.H. Allen, 1853.

They are very many, and we very few, in the land where they are natives and we strangers. The continued rule of so few over so many can only be justly warranted, as indeed it could only be maintained, by a real superiority. [...] He who falsely tells the natives of India that, speaking *en masse*, they are equals of Englishmen, falsely tells them that the English rule is the most monstrous of tyrannical absurdities [...] If there is one lie more fatal to the hopes of India, and more monstrous in itself, than those of their own religions, it is surely comprised in this—‘We are as good as the English.’⁴⁰

Yet for all this talk of the difference between the races, Henry held firm and strong beliefs in the duties and responsibilities of the English holding public office in the colonies, and the high standards to which they should be held. His pamphlet on India includes a whole section which elaborates this point, describing young men who hold office in the colonies, such as his own brother Thomas in Ceylon, as holding ‘real sympathy’ with the people whom they govern, and contrasting their approach with army men who are stationed in the colonies, who tend to speak of the natives of India with ‘flippant indifference and contempt, perilously relieved, if he be a serious young man, with a dash of missionary fanaticism.’

According to Venables, Lushington’s political views had a ‘leaning to the liberal side and sometimes to radical opinions. He welcomed the Catholic emancipation, admired the French revolution of 1830, approved of the Reform Bill, Negro emancipation, and ‘other liberal measures of Lord Grey’s government.’⁴¹ Yet when it came to the colonies, Lushington firmly believed that England had a right and a moral duty to govern.

In his excellent study on nineteenth-century English poetry and the Italian *Risorgimento*, Matthew Reynolds distinguishes between ‘orientalist’ or ‘colonialist’ discourse, whose objective is ‘to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of instruction’, as opposed to an ‘Italianist’ discourse which is ‘comparatively malleable and free-floating’ viewing Italy not as the ‘converse of Britain, but a relation, albeit an unreliable and backward one.’⁴²

This difference is partly due, says Reynolds, to the fact that ‘there was considerable cultural circulation between the representers and the

40. Lushington, 1853, p. 50

41. *Ibid.*, 1859, p. 215.

42. Matthew Reynolds, *The Realms of Verse 1830–1870: English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001 (2nd ed.), 2009, p. 81.

represented. The English fuelled their imaginings of Italy with readings of Italian writers',⁴³ a phenomenon which was not present in India. As described by Reynolds,

there was available in mid-century English culture a seductively coherent amalgam of ideas about the relation between Italy's landscape, its past, the character of Italians, their religion, and their political capabilities. [...]. Defenders of the Risorgimento sought to divert blame for the Italians' supposed deficiency of moral fibre onto their oppressors [...]. For opponents, however, the Italians were self-condemned to life under absolutism both religious and political: 'such a people must be ruled as children of larger growth—kindly, but firmly.' Like an English household, Italy required paternal government.⁴⁴

While Italy and the Italians were admired for their history, art, architecture and the beautiful landscape, through English eyes the supposed Italian national character was often blamed for the contemporary state of political subjugation of the Italian peninsula.

While being a fervent supporter of Italian independence and unity, Elizabeth Barrett Browning draws on this perspective of the Italian character when she says, 'they are an amiable, refined, graceful people, with much of the artistic temperament as distinguished from that of men of genius—effeminate, no, rather *feminine* in a better sense—of a fancy easily turned into impulse, but with no strenuous and determinate strength in them.'⁴⁵ The combination of the feminine, the child-like, and the lack of strength, was compared to the Northern strength and determination of Britain.

When writing about Italy, Lushington adopts a different tone to the one which he uses in his pamphlet on India. He is aware of the negative prejudices towards Italy, and wants to dispel them. In his essay of 1848 on Italy in the *British Quarterly Review*, he states that, 'in order to a comprehension of the past, to a just estimate of the future, it is necessary to cast off many old prejudices, and not a few modern ones, of Italian degeneracy, innate slavishness, and the like.' He adds:

43. *Ibid.*, 2009, p. 82.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 80

45. Frederick G. Kenyon (ed.), *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1897, vol. 1, p. 388.

It may be true to a considerable extent that every people is responsible for its own history—that according to its capacity, its industry, and its virtue, will be its advancement and prosperity. But some part of the vicissitude also must be attributed to chance, some to the invasion of external influences; and this latter is the point on which we insist so strongly as having been brought to bear to a singular degree against Italy, and as explaining why a people so capable, so powerful, and so virtuous, has so often suffered under the rule of viler races and baser minds.⁴⁶

With this type of argument, Lushington is making a clear distinction between other nations or people who are ruled, such as Britain's own colonies, who benefit from England's paternalistic rule due to their own innate deficiencies or backwardness as a people, and Italy—also dominated by foreign powers, although, significantly, not by England.

Lushington here shifts away from the view of the Italians as an inherently different, 'feminine' and implicitly weaker race. He moves away from an 'orientalist' or 'colonialist' view of Italy as the 'Other', and emphasises that England itself owes much of its own success to the inspiration of Italy, and that England has been 'enlightened' by Italy's 'genius':

It must be remembered that we who boast our own more developed political systems, owe to Italy the lead which she took in modern history. She began the enterprise of civilisation before we did—she made its earlier experiments; and if in the sequel her practice led her to grievous misfortunes, it is not for us, who have been enlightened by her genius, and have profited by her experience, to reproach her with the calamity.⁴⁷

Here Italy is not the 'Other', but one of 'us'—albeit with major problems which need to be overcome. Lushington, whose education, as we have seen above, was steeped in the history and literature of ancient Rome, emphasises the direct descent and link between the old and classical civilisations of the Italian peninsula, and contemporary 19th-century Italians:

The Tuscan is the Etruscan. The Ligurian races still people the northern shores of the Mediterranean: the Greek and Roman blood that once possessed the known world still warms the people of the south.⁴⁸

46. Lushington, 1848, *BQR*, p. 465.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 491.

After the events of 1848, English opinions of Italy began to shift increasingly towards support for a united Italy, and the cultural discourse shifts accordingly. As described by Matthew Reynolds,

Colonial discourse fixes the identity of the colonized, but English metaphors for Italy included a capacity for change. If the Italians were children, they could grow up; if Italy was asleep, it could wake; if it was dead, it could be resurrected. Although the word 'race' does appear in discussions of Italians, it has none of the defining force that it assumed when applied to the inhabitants of Africa or India.⁴⁹

In Lushington's view, Italy's 'capacity for change' could be unleashed through education. He states, 'The thing wanted to bring this fine race up to the mark of modern civilisation and popular power, is education [...] to teach the means of attaining civil liberty as well as material welfare.'

In the case of Italy, Henry switches from the colonialist discourse that he adopts towards India, towards a liberal perspective. As noted by Roger Ebbatson, 'In the contrast between the classical Hellenic freedom and Eastern despotism, Lushington places Italy firmly on the side of Europe.'⁵⁰

While Lushington elevates the Italian race to the equals of the English, in his essay on India he points out that 'equality [...] contradicts their religion.'⁵¹ While Italian ancient history and culture, including literature and the arts, are proof of the ability and genius of its people, in the case of India he rejects completely the idea of the India Reform Society, which in a petition seeking to grant Indians a share in the management of their own affairs, describing India as a country,

which, for scores of centuries, has been renowned throughout the world for its civilisation, literature and commerce, and which had its own sovereigns, governments, and codes of law long before the English nation had a name in history.⁵²

All that Lushington will concede is that individual Indians may educate and raise themselves, and improve their position, but here he

49. Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

50. Roger Ebbatson, *Heidegger's Bicycle: Interfering with Victorian Texts*, UK, Sussex Academic Press, 2006, p. 19.

51. Lushington, 1853, p. 52.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

does not contemplate that possibility for the general Indian population as he does in the case of the Italians.

One of the incidents that helped to sway public opinion in Britain increasingly against the absolutist regimes on the Italian peninsula, was William Ewart Gladstone's treatise on the terrible conditions in Neapolitan prisons and the corresponding legal system. During a stay in Naples, Gladstone was taken to visit the prisons by James Lacaita, who as we have already seen above was a friend of Lushington. The Neapolitan government turned against Lacaita for the assistance he gave to Gladstone, and as a result Lacaita left Naples and moved to England.

Soon after Gladstone's controversial treatise was published, Lushington was 'influenced by the British Embassy in Naples', possibly through Lacaita, to write an essay in support of Gladstone's findings. Lushington was provided with reports of 'disgraceful court proceedings convicting several prisoners, including Carlo Poerio, recent minister of education and more recently leader of the opposition in the since-dissolved parliament, who had been sentenced to 19 years in irons. (Gladstone had prominently discussed Poerio, whom he himself had seen in the dungeon chained to a murderer.)'⁵³

During his years in Malta, Lushington befriended some of the Italian political exiles living on the island, such as the influential Sicilians Ruggiero Settimo and Pietro d'Alessandro. He wrote a poem dedicated to d'Alessandro on his death as an exile in Valletta in 1855.⁵⁴ This elegy is indebted to Ugo Foscolo's famous poem '*Dei Sepolcri*' (1807) as well as to the 'graveyard poems' of Thomas Gray, such as his 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1751). Lushington's poem begins by the side of the 'covered grave' at which fellow exiles linger, though the simple funeral for the impoverished D'Alessandro, is over.

Beside the covered grave
Linger the exiles, though their task is done;
Yes, brethren, from your band one more is gone,
A good man and a brave.

Scanty the rites, and train;
How many of all the storied marbles, set
In all thy churches, city of La Valette,
Hide nobler heart and brain?

53. Waller, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

54. The poem was first published in the *Examiner* in 1855, and then reprinted in Lushington, 1855.

Lushington extols d'Alessandro's virtues for not having succumbed to bribes or lies to accept the despotic government in Sicily, as a result of which he could not be buried, a prosperous man, in his native soil 'o'er the sea' near 'the great volcano'—a reference to Etna in nearby Sicily. Instead, because of his love of truth, d'Alessandro died in exile, a 'poor man, and proscribed', with Palermo 'on his lips.' Lushington first pities him,

Wrecked all thy hopes, O friend,
Hopes for thyself, thine Italy, thine own—
High gifts defeated of their true renown—
Long toil—and this the end!

He then addresses the dead man's children, and beseeches them to not grieve and to 'never wish that in his native earth, he lay, a baser man.' The poem finally ends with a longing for a free and united Italy:

Rest in thy foreign grave,
Sicilian! Whom our English hearts have loved,—
Italian! Such as Dante had approved,—
An exile—not a slave!

This poem appears in a volume of poetry by Lushington which mainly deals with the Crimean War. Lushington had long suffered from poor health. He almost resigned his position in Malta several times for this reason, however he decided to stay on the island once it became clear that the Island would play an important role as a military base during the Crimean war, which he felt very strongly about.

In an essay on Italy written once the events of 1848–1849 had come to a close, Lushington reveals his views on the future of Italy. At this time, it was not at all clear which way events would go. Lushington hoped for a peaceful solution, stating that 'we should infinitely prefer a more bloodless, more certain, more permanent improvement. For, peace might yet have her victories in Italy though war has failed.'

He prophesied that the idea of Italian union 'is a spirit not yet laid; it walks in and out of Italy in many a thoughtful head and burning heart, as well as in those of Giuseppe Mazzini.' The current rulers should 'strive to show that the Regeneration of Italy is compatible' with the current separation of Italy, otherwise the dream of a united Italy will 'assuredly, sooner or later [...] once more find an armed body to inhabit.'⁵⁵

55. Lushington, 1859, p. 215.

Lushington stayed in his post in Malta and died in 1855, on his way home from the Mediterranean to London for a vacation, so he did not live long enough to see that, five years later, his prophecy about Italy's future would prove to be correct.

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