

IL-FEHMA TAL-PROF. L. TRIMBLE DWAR CREMONA

17th March 1972

For Professor Joseph Aquilina:

I never met Dr. Anton Cremona in person, but I feel that I knew him as a gentle man, serene in the security of his faith, lavish in giving his time and effort to help others.

I 'met' Dr. Cremona through correspondence. We began writing to one another just five years ago; yet it seems that he helped me much longer than that. I first wrote to him concerning my need for some information on the Maltese language. He knew nothing about me: I might be a more dabbler in the field; I might be someone with only a passing interest. But his first letter to me ignored these possibilities. To me, it typifies the man more than could any words of my own:

'18th April, 1967: In reply to your letter of April 3rd, I am sending you some of the books and pamphlets which I hope you will find interesting *The Development of Maltese as a Written Language* is out of print. I am sending you a photocopy together with a few other publications. As I had no spare copy of my grammar *Tagħlim fuq il-Kitba* (2 books) I had to buy you a copy... I am also sending you *A Manual of Maltese Orthography and Grammar*.'

My 'thank you' letter received a reply in July of the same year (and an apology for having delayed due to 'several' commitments) thoughtfully included an unsolicited bibliography of Language Study and History, Folklore, and Biography, all of inestimable value to my work. He was always thus throughout our brief five years of correspondence – apologetic for not answering me more promptly (yet always prompt), and clearly delighted to provide assistance to someone he had never met personally and perhaps never would meet.

I received from him many more publications, not only his own but those of many other Maltese writers as well. And each letter that he wrote held a breath of encouragement, an eagerness to participate, even vicariously, in my work, although its level must have seemed elementary to him.

His range of scholarly interests – along with his generosity and interest in the work of others – is no better shown than in his letter to me of 8th April, 1968. I give it here in its entirety.

[Please see enclosed photocopy.]

While the breadth and depth of his scholarship never failed to amaze me, it is as a fine human being that I will always remember him most. Although I was able to reciprocate to a small extent by sending him books on his current interest (folklore) that were difficult to procure on Malta, I never felt that I was able to repay him even in small measure for the help and encouragement he gave me. But perhaps he did not wish repayment; I always think of him as the kind of person to whom doing and giving are reward enough.

In my file of his letters are two written by hand. I look at them now and try to imagine them written by a man of his years. I find it difficult. The writing is clear; the expression is lucid. He mentions (January, 1969) suffering from an attack of sciatica and of being tired at his age of 89 years; and he goes on to speak enthusiastically of 'the task of revising the proofs of my two anthologies (Poems and Prose) which I hope to be able to offer you a copy of each as soon as published.' And despite his illness and his work, he again offers me encouragement in my research.

His last correspondence to me was a card celebrating Christmas, 1971. In his brief note he did not say that he was continuing his work; somehow, I know that he was. I like to believe that he was absorbed to the very end – in his scholarship, in his help to others. I cannot picture him any other way.

Louis Trimble  
University of Washington,  
College of Engineering,  
Seattle 98195, USA.

8th April, 1968

Professor Louis Trimble,  
Humanities Social Dept.,  
University of Washington.

Dear Professor Trimble,

Excuse my delay in replying to your kind letter dated 7th February. Lately, for the last three months I have been engaged in some research

work in connection with some comparative studies, besides attending to other commitments which have prevented me from complying with your request requiring a thorough search in my library and *Għaqda's* publications (the Library of the *Maltese Writers' Association*).

So far I am glad to inform you that I have now been able to trace some spare copies of my works which you haven't yet, as mentioned in the list of your letter of the 2nd August of last year.

The following are the works which, when arranged and packed for posting, will be duly forwarded to you:

*Weraq mar-Riħ* (Poems – 1945)

*Ix-Xebb ta' Għanja Maltija ma' Ballata Qadima Ingliża.* (Pamphlet)

*Rand u Riħan* (An Anthology of verse and prose)

*Preca bħala Filologu* (In *Il-Malti*, June, 1957)

*Is-Sunetti ta' Ġuże Muscat Azzopardi* (A review in *Il-Malti* of Sept. 1956)

*Studji Filologiċi* (A review in *Il-Malti* of June 1957)

*Lista ta' Poeziji ta' Dun Karm (Psaila)* – (In *Il-Malti* of Sept.-Dec. 1963-March & June, 1964)

*Le Relazioni Etnografiche del Folklore Narrativo e Leggendaro delle Isole di Malta* (Off-print from *Maltese Folklore Review* Vol. I, Nos. 1-3 (1962-1966)

*Il-Fidwa tal-Bdiewa* (First Edition, 1936)

*Ninu Cremona Folklorista* (In *Il-Bennejja tal-Folklore Malti* by G. Casar Pullicino, 1964)

As for the rest of the publications mentioned in your list not yet supplied to you I shall try and trace them and duly supply to you if still available.

With regard to *Il-Fidwa tal-Bdiewa*, last 2nd edition is out of print, the only very few copies available in my possession are of those of the 1st edit. of which a copy is being sent to you. The 3rd edition is expected to be published shortly by the Progress Press & Co. Ltd.

A copy of the *Rand u Riħan* had to be purchased as I had no spare copy in my possession. This book, being a text book, is nearly out of print.

As you will see some of my minor works have been originally published in *Il-Malti*, the organ of the *Association of Maltese Writers* (the

*Akkademja tal-Malti* formerly known as the *Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti*).

I have asked the *Għaqda*'s Secretary to forward to you a complimentary copy of the last issue of *Il-Malti* (Dec. 1967) which I hope you will find interesting to read. Other complimentary issues will follow.

With kindest regards,  
Yours sincerely,

A. Cremona