

71 Raymond Avenue  
Peughkeepsie, N. Y.

October 30, 1958

Dear Professor Ferrater Mora:

At the instigation of Charles Norman, the author of the enclosed article, I am about to apply to the American Council of Learned Societies for a grant to give me time to complete my translation of the poems of the late Francesca Biondi and to prepare an edition of the original texts, the ultimate hope being publication of a bilingual edition of his work.

May I make so bold as to ask you to be one of my sponsors (or, in the language of the Council, "Referees") for this project? Acceptance on your part would entail your sending the Council a "Confidential Report on Applicant for Grant-in-Aid" (covering "your evaluation of the applicant as an individual ... and your critical opinion of the proposed program") on an official "form" which would be sent to you and which would have to be returned to the Council by November 30th.

If it strikes you as odd that I should apply to you to support a project that is neither in your particular field nor in your particular language, the explanation is simple. The Council being essentially an academic organization, I thought that I might in some measure offset my lack of academic qualifications (which, as you know, are nil) by the brilliance of these of my sponsors. So far, I have secured the kind offices of A. Lanza di Trabia, of Rutgers, and of Jacques Barzun, of Columbia.

On the other hand, I can well understand that you might not wish to express an opinion in a field that is not officially yours. And if that is the case, or if for any other reason you do not care to sponsor the project, I shall take it as a kindness if you will simply decline to do so.

I am at present engaged in translating Goethe's "Egmont." Until which occasion I had been mercifully spared the knowledge of how bad a "classic" can be. I think it is the most wooden composition ever to have emerged from mortal pen. I imagine that if the "translating" machine is ever developed into a "creative writing machine," its products will be very much like "Egmont." This, of course, is for money. As voluntary atonement I am contributing a translation of some passages from Hölderlin's "Hyperion" to a forthcoming "Hölderlin" issue of "The Literary Review." Closer to my official interests, I am to talk to the Vassar Medieval Society on Galician-Portuguese Lyric toward the end of next month.

I hope that your Princeton lectureship proved rewarding. Are the lectures published or being published? I suppose you are now engaged on some new project? If you care to tell me, I should like to know what it is, and how in general you are faring.

Please remember me to Mr. Ferrater Mera. I often think with pleasure of my visit to your house at Bryn Mawr.

With best regards,

Yours most sincerely,

William Thrane

May I ask you to return the photostats? I shall need them to submit with my own application to the Council. I enclose an addressed envelope for the purpose.

3-X1-5P.