

## THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

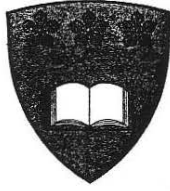
CITATION DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR ROBERT BARRY LEAL, CHAIRMAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADMISSION OF LUIGI STRANO TO THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (HONS), *HONORIS CAUSA*, 2ND MAY, 1985.

Chancellor, I present to you Luigi Strano.

Luigi Strano occupies a position of considerable eminence among Australian writers of Italian background. Indeed, most of those who are in a position to judge would rank him as Australia's finest Italo-Australian poet. In the past 25 years he has published numerous volumes of verse, and for these he has received important awards both within Australia and in Italy. Today the University of Wollongong also wishes to honour Luigi Strano and in so doing to manifest the importance it attaches to the cultural contributions brought to Australia by those born in other lands.

The depth of the literary and classical culture that Luigi Strano has acquired and which is expressed in his poetry is almost totally the result of his own unaided efforts. Born at Castellace in the Province of Reggio Calabria in 1913, he finished his formal education at the age of 16. He migrated to Australia in 1930 at the beginning of the Great Depression and found varying types of work, principally with the Cinzano company as a machine operator. During this time he pursued his literary and linguistic studies in his free time, attending classes in English and German, and privately studying Latin, Greek, French and Spanish. Prior to the Second World War he joined his family in farming on the south-western outskirts of Sydney and at this time was called upon to teach Italian for the Dante Alighieri Society, the Berlitz School and at evening studies centres. From 1940 he also worked as an Official Court Interpreter and Translator, a task which he still occasionally undertakes. In 1959 he founded the St Johns Park Real Estate Agency. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1966 and now lives in active retirement at Mt Wilson in the Blue Mountains. As well as continuing to write and publish verse, he carries on regular correspondence with literary figures in Italy, such as the distinguished Latinist Professor Giuseppe Morabito of the University of Messina.

Chancellor, in honouring Luigi Strano today with a degree of the University, we are honouring a successful migrant who has contributed not only to the material well-being of his adopted country but also to its literary culture. In the preface to Luigi Strano's most recent volume of poetry, Professor John Scott, a leading Italianist, writes: "The example of Luigi Strano is very important for all of us who are natural or spiritual sons of Italy: it will serve to guide us to a greater awareness, a clearer consciousness that will one day allow us to come to terms with our Australo-Italian reality. Such a



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reality will finally be able to satisfy all the demands of the spirit, not only material demands; Australian material well-being will have been grafted on to ancient Italian wisdom." It is with this "ancient Italian wisdom" that Luigi Strano has enriched the Australian community as a whole, and it is this contribution that we recognize today. By his work he reminds us of Dante's famous lines from the *Inferno*:

fatti non foste a viver come bruti,  
ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza  
(you were not made to live like brutes,  
but to follow virtue and knowledge.)

It is singularly appropriate that it should be the University of Wollongong that honours Luigi Strano with its degree. The Italian section of the Department of European Languages has in recent years developed courses in Italo-Australian Studies and become a national leader in this field of scholarship, largely thanks to the efforts of Gaetano Rando. Luigi Strano has taken a keen personal interest in these developments and is no stranger to the campus, having taken part in Departmental poetry readings and seminars. The Department looks forward to his continued participation in its activities.

Chancellor, it is my privilege and pleasure to present to you Luigi Strano for admission to the degree of Master of Arts (Hons), *Honoris causa*.