

## Books and Pictures: An Unlikely Story of the Brothers Paston

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'You'll have to have girth if ith hithtory, William,' said Violet Elizabeth with quiet satisfaction. 'Hithtory'th full of them – queenth and thingth.'

'They sort of act without talkin',' said Henry, ignoring her.

'How do people know what they're actin' if they don't talk?' said William.

'They're jus' gotter guess, I s'pose,' said Henry.

'I see,' said William thoughtfully. 'If a man comes on in a crown, wearin' a rose, it'd be Charles I in the Wars of the Roses, or somethin' like that.'

'Yes, somethin' like that,' agreed Henry doubtfully, 'but I don't think it was Charles I in the Wars of the Roses.'

'Well, Charles II, then,' said William impatiently.

Richmal Crompton, *William at War: A Collection of Just-William's Wartime Adventures*, ed. R. C. Ashbee, London 1995, p. 217.

There is much to ponder in a passage from a story first published in the magazine *Modern Woman* in May 1946. Girls in the Wars of the Roses for one thing, and we shall be thinking about Anne Paston, a minor mime artist in the Paston drama. For another there will be a considerable amount of guessing. Despite being able to listen to Sir John Paston and his younger brother, John, talking (and however voluble we may imagine other protagonists of the Wars of the Roses to have been, it is only the conversation of the brothers recorded in their letters that has survived), as well as knowing how they acted, why they behaved as they did they do not reveal, no doubt because there was no need to tell one another what each took for granted. As for Just-William's impatience with who exactly was on the throne of England in the Wars of the Roses, do we not share it, especially when it comes to the whirligig years 1469–1471, a period which features prominently in this paper?

Just-William's wartime adventures will not detain us; those of the Paston brothers will. Or, rather, their presence at the battle of Barnet in April 1471 will do so. First, however, listen to one brother talking to another just over a year later. John III wrote from Norfolk to John II in London on 5 June 1472; it is a paragraph of his letter that has engendered the present paper so it will be given here in full:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. N. Davis, 2 vols, Oxford 1971–6, vol. 1, pp. 574–75.

I prey yow recomand me to Syr John Parre with all my servys, and tell hym by my trouthe I longyd never sorer to se my lady [of Norfolk] then I do to se hys mastershepe. And I prey God that he aryse never a morning fro my lady his wyff with-owght it be ageyn hyr wyll tyll syche tyme as he bring hyr to Ouyr Lady of Walsyngham. Also I prey yow to recomand me in my most humbyll wyse on-to the good lordshepe of the most corteys, gentylest, wisest, kyndest, most compenabyll, freest, largeest, and most bowntefous knight, my lord the Erle of Arran, which hathe maryed the Kyngys sustyr of Scotlon. Her-to, he is on the lyghtest, dylyverst, best spokyn, fayrest archer, devowghtest, most perfyght and trewest to hys lady of all the knyghtys that ever I was aqweyntyd with; so wold God my lady [of Norfolk] lyekyd me as well as I do hys person and most knyghtly condycyon, wyth whom I prey yow to be aqweyntyd as you semyth best. He is lodgyd at the George in Lombard Strete. He hath a book of my syster Annys of the Sege of Thebes. When he hathe doon wyth it he promysyd to delyver it yow. I prey yow lete Portlond brynge the book hom wyth hym. Portlond is loggyd at the George in Lombard Stret also.

There is no need to point out the literary-ness of the passage, as that has been done with reference, for example, to Thomas Malory. Nor is there any reason to exclaim at John III's play with the word 'lady': evidently he was as pleased with himself for such word-play as he was at showing off his knowledge of Arthurian literature. How sophisticated this all was I must leave others to decide; that it was witty and that his brother would find it so I have no doubt whatsoever.

Thomas Malory is a name we all want to conjure with. And most of us have. I do not propose to do so again, save only to suggest that the sense of fellowship underpinning the passage is not simply derived from literature, or if it is then life for the Paston brothers undoubtedly imitated art. Recently Professor Pollard has drawn out attention to the powerful idea of fraternity in the fifteenth-century stories of Robin Hood.<sup>2</sup> Robin Hood was a figure familiar to the Paston brothers, a household name indeed as members of John II's *familia* acted in Robin Hood plays.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, archery was part and parcel of the life the brothers led when members of the Calais garrison, where no doubt there were associations of archers similar to those fraternities of crossbowmen to be found in the towns of Picardy and Flanders. What in the current jargon is termed 'male-bonding' was no doubt a feature of shooting contests such as that between the married men and the bachelors of the Staple held at Calais in August 1478.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted, therefore, that according

<sup>2</sup> Paper read at the 15th-c. history conference at the University of the West Country, Bristol, 7–9 Sept. 2001.

<sup>3</sup> C. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Endings*, Manchester 2000, pp. 65–67.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151–52.

to John III one of the earl of Arran's attributes was that he was an accomplished archer. It is impossible at this distance to decide which contributed most to the 'male-bonding' the Paston brothers went in for with their companions of the Calais garrison and with those members of Edward IV's household, like Sir John Parr and Sir Thomas Wingfield, with whom they were on particularly friendly terms, despite being on the opposite side at Barnet: the 'gestes' of Robin Hood and his 'myry mene' or the deeds of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. It does not matter because it did not matter then. Arthur and Robin were heroes of the English past who, it seems to me, had an equal appeal to men knowledgeable about that past and eager to model themselves on them, albeit in a somewhat ironic frame of mind, as the passage cited above all too evidently indicates. That men will always be boys is a truism that needs no further elaboration here, though Sir John Paston as Just-William seems a shade too far-fetched, the latter not being noted for a sense of irony, especially when things go wrong, even if he does emerge from his scrapes as unbowed (and bloody) as did the Paston brothers from the scrap at Barnet.

There is more worth saying about the theme of fellowship in Yorkist England, for it was more than a cultured pose with which to keep reality at arm's length. The idea of fraternity was what held Edward IV's household together, what we might say bonded those knights, esquires and gentlemen who came from such disparate geographical and (therefore) social backgrounds. Admittedly they shared a common loyalty to the king, but might it not be that they shared a common culture also, one which we might loosely define as Arthurian, for the moment demoting Robin Hood to a subsidiary role? Who, we might ask, set the tone? It is unlikely that it was Edward IV himself, an ex-nobleman whose notions of aristocratic culture resembled those of Miss Petowker in *Nicholas Nickleby*.

'He has a very nice face and style, really,' said Mrs Kenwigs.

'He certainly has,' added Miss Petowker. 'There's something in his appearance quite – dear, dear, what's that word again?'

'What word?' inquired Mr Lillyvick.

'Why – dear me, how stupid I am,' replied Miss Petowker, hesitating. 'What do you call it, when Lords break off door-knockers and beat policemen, and play at coaches with other people's money, and all that sort of thing?'

'Aristocratic?' suggested the collector.

'Ah! Aristocratic,' replied Miss Petowker; 'something very aristocratic about him, isn't there?'

It is far more likely that it was the head of the king's household, the royal chamberlain and ex-gentleman, William, Lord Hastings, to whom the members of that household looked for cultural as well for political leadership, or, having no real need to look to him, as they were well able to look after themselves where culture was concerned, they and he together adopted the Arthurian

position. Unless, that is we wish to call it Maloryian, although doing so would raise many unanswerable questions about art imitating life.<sup>5</sup> William, Lord Hastings, also the lieutenant of the Calais garrison, was above all a good fellow, who addressed a letter to Sir John Middleton and John II 'to my right hertily beloved frendes and felaws', asked them to remember him to 'my felawes the souldours', and signed it fraternally, 'Your felaw HASTYNGES'.<sup>6</sup> Did the members of the royal household and of its overseas branch the Calais garrison see themselves as latter day Knights of the Round Table, at least from time to time and as the occasion warranted, for example, at the Eltham tournament of 1467, or at Bruges in 1468 when they attended the wedding celebrations of Margaret of York and Duke Charles of Burgundy, or in the Spring of 1471 as they came in to make the army led by Edward IV and William, Lord Hastings the effective instrument of the returning exiles' policy? Was William, Lord Hastings their Lancelot, Edward IV their Arthur, Elizabeth Woodville their Guinevere?

In some quarters it would be regarded as absurd to think so. Yet as the first Yorkist reign fell apart in 1469 would not parallels have been made with the disintegrating Britain of Arthur's time, with Clarence cast as Mordred and Warwick as Gawain? Thomas Malory, for one, was making those parallels in Newgate, turning life into art as even the brotherhood of the Round Table looked like going the way of Britain. It did not: Lancelot returned from abroad, loyalties had held, and the second Yorkist reign began. It was in the post-Barnet euphoria that John II and John III, associates not members of the brotherhood,

<sup>5</sup> If William Paston II was already living at Warwick's Inn in 1469 he was a next door neighbour to Thomas Malory in Newgate: Sutton, 'Malory in Newgate', see Bibliography under 2000, esp. p. 248. Proximity does not necessarily involve contact, not did John II share much fellowship with his uncle, but the bookish Pastons were unlikely to be ignorant of what Thomas Malory was writing; they were surely customers, as Malory was, of the booksellers in Paternoster Row, only 'a stone's throw away' from the gaol and Warwick lane, who, suggests Anne Sutton, were bound to have known from the books he was borrowing what Malory was up to, *ibid.*, pp. 253–4.

<sup>6</sup> *Paston Letters*, ed. Davis, vol. 2, no. 770. It is a haunting sight to see the easy, flowing, companionable hand of the last two lines, just as it is to see the signature written so very large (BL Add. MS 43490, f. 10): the writer was clearly a big man in every sense. Even bigger than I made him out to be in *Endings*, where, according to the percipient Nigel Saul, he is the hero of the book. Two days after I had written the first part of this paper Michael Jones sent me a copy of the June 2001 number of *The Ricardian* (vol. 12, pp. 262–92) which contains his paper, '1477 – The expedition that never was: chivalric expectation in late Yorkist England', and that of David Grummitt, 'William, Lord Hastings, the Calais garrison and the politics of Yorkist England'. The two papers are designed to be read in tandem and they bear witness to the richness of the imagination of William, Lord Hastings, and the poverty of Edward IV's: Louis XI ought to have been stopped in 1477 but the ever and over-complacent Edward was his lazy appeaser. The two papers, I believe, also bear out the brother-in-arms complexion of the Calais garrison-royal household nexus.

were forgiven their militant opposition: fellow feeling was thicker than shed blood. Of course, if parallels were made they cannot have been strict, parallels never meeting as life and art inevitably have to – in a conjunction untidy, unsatisfactory, and incapable of demonstration. This Lancelot did not sleep with Guinevere. There was no Arthurian equivalent of Henry VI, even if, even though, by 1469 he must have seemed a figure more notional than real, while the only place for the misfit Clarence was a butt of malmsey: the private bathroom not the public scaffold was the most suitable place for the elimination of a brother who appeared unable to differentiate between fact and fiction. The mere description of some exceptions serves to remind us of just how different Yorkist England was from Arthurian Britain, of how sane Malory was in a mad world, it being better by far to write history than to take any further part in politics which got the better of honest politicians like the earl of Worcester and John, Lord Wenlock. There was, however, worse to come than 1469–1671; there was for some, including John III, 1483–5 to struggle through.

Thomas Malory was right to opt for literature not life. Something dramatic was taking place in England in these Yorkist years: the Modern State was coming into being. This is not the occasion to go into detail about that brand of political behaviour once called Machiavellian, yet no one can doubt that between the earl of Warwick's brutalism in 1460 and Henry VIII's barbarism in the 1535 there was a halfway house in 1483. When Richard of Gloucester killed William, Lord Hastings, political morality took a mighty turn for the worse, chivalric morality, too, if the contention of Michael Jones that Gloucester and Hastings shared the view that war with France ought to have been reopened in 1477 is right: from such an angle of vision 13 June 1483 was a little like Gawain turning on Lancelot. There was nothing of Arthur about Richard, who at a stroke (and with a couple of pillows) put paid to Arthurian politics, unless it is conceded that Edward IV's household men got their own back in 1485, and restored some sort of normalcy to poor old England. It is hard, however, to make that concession, for Henry VII was as Machiavellian as his post-Yorkist advisors could make him: Malory's world we might say, whether it was the world of Arthur or of Henry V (and surely Malory had the latter in mind when he wrote about the former), had vanished for ever, whatever the superficial similarities. What sense of brotherhood did Henry VII's bureaucrats have? None, seems to be the answer. It was dog eat dog as the sad case of the scapegoats Empson and Dudley shows. Here was the shape of things to come, indeed of things already arrived. We only have to recall the campfires on the eve of Agincourt to measure the change: that band of brothers on the one hand, Henrician civil servants on the other. Thus, it was the invasion of France in 1475, an invasion that turned into a diplomatic defeat, which is the watershed. We have only to imagine what Henry V and Thomas Malory would have thought of Edward's decision to pull out of an enterprise truly Arthurian to grasp its momentousness: the bridge at Picquigny was where and when medieval England became modern.

Moreover, three Paston brothers were there or thereabouts, Edmund having joined John II and John III on the expedition.<sup>7</sup> As eyewitnesses of the end of Arthurian England, and perhaps, to return to an earlier theme, of the demise of the Merry England of Robin Hood, the brothers were in no position to understand the significance of what was happening. That is what historians are for, and even more so creative writers like Thomas Malory. Malory's recreation of the story of King Arthur and the matter of Britain, what he put in and what he left out, and how he adapted his sources to his purpose of charting the collapse of the contemporary world, was a work that reconstructed the past. It was also an imaginative response to the present. Like all great writers, Malory sought to integrate his own experience and the insights that experience had afforded him into a work of historical literature, or perhaps we should say literary history: he wrote about the present in terms of the past. Like many great writers he had made a mess of his life. His genius was not for living; it was for writing about life. If he got it wrong in the short term, for the Arthurian ethic did not die when he did in 1470, he got it right in the longer view.

So much is by way of introduction. What of the books and pictures? More particularly, what of the earl of Arran, who had borrowed Anne Paston's book? He was Thomas Boyd, son of Robert, Lord Boyd, who when the Boyds had control of the young James III of Scotland in the later 1460s had been created Earl of Arran and had been married to Mary, the king's sister. In November 1469, however, the Boyds were condemned as traitors and Robert, Lord Boyd fled to England, while Thomas and Mary went into exile in Denmark. By February 1470 the couple were in Bruges, where they were joined shortly afterwards by Lord Boyd. They were lodged at the *Hôtel de Jerusalem*, the house of Sir Anselm Adornes: 'it was probably under the auspices of the Boyds that this Flemish patrician had been knighted, for his connection with Scotland, which was to be a long one, had begun in 1468, when he had been sent there as an envoy of Bruges.'<sup>8</sup> Of Anselm Adornes we shall hear more. At this point, however, he disappears from the story, departing on pilgrimage to the Holy Land on 19 February 1470, only a few days after welcoming the earl and his wife to his house. The Boyds remained in Bruges on good terms with the duke of Burgundy, whose wife Margaret of York was godmother to their son James, until Edward IV arrived in the city in January 1471 and Anselm Adornes returned from abroad on 4 April 1471. By then Edward was on the point of recovering his throne, the battle of Barnet being fought on 15 April, and a reconciliation between the Boyds and James III was being negotiated by Charles the Bold. On 25 July 1471 Charles issued a safe-conduct for Anselm Adornes, Lord Boyd, the earl of Arran, and Princess Mary to go to Scotland; they sailed from Calais on 4 October 1471. Lord Boyd and the earl of Arran remained

<sup>7</sup> Richmond, *Endings*, pp. 152-55.

<sup>8</sup> R. Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, Edinburgh 1974, pp. 419-20; cf. C. A. J. Armstrong, 'A letter of James III to the duke of Burgundy', *Scottish Historical Society*, 3d s., vol. 43, *Miscellany* (1951), pp. 19-31, *passim*.

in London, the latter delivering to Edward IV a letter from the duke of Burgundy, while Adornes and Princess Mary travelled to Scotland. They travelled in vain: James not only would not have Lord Boyd and his son back, he bigamously married off his sister to Lord Hamilton. Meanwhile, the earl of Arran languished in London, dying in England at some unknown date before 1475, when his father served on Edward IV's French expedition.<sup>9</sup>

Hence in John III's letter we glimpse the earl of Arran in June 1472 when he is languishing; to while away the time he is reading the *Siege of Thebes*. Being true to his lady will have been difficult; by that date he must have suspected that he was either not to see the mother of his two children again or unlikely to be able to win her (and them) back again. Archery was one way of taking one's mind off things; reading was another, and far more effective, way. But: why the *Siege of Thebes*? It cannot have been the only book knocking about the *George* in Lombard Street; besides, he had borrowed it and borrowing suggests deliberate choice. I find the book not much more than a ripping yarn, but mine is a modern mind untutored in medieval literature. Possibly, the medieval earl of Arran read it for escapist reasons, yet may it not have spoken to his condition? If it did and he had selected it because it did it would mean that he had read it before. All this is speculative, but in the circumstances it has to be. How it might have spoken to his condition, always presupposing he knew what his condition was and could have recognised it when he came across parallels to it in a book, is not easy to determine. Discovering ourselves in books is, after all, a subtle process; we are not always subtle enough to be up to it. Did the earl of Arran see James III in Eteocles and himself in Polynices? Was he ready in 1472 to see his wife in the faithless Amphiorax? Did he nod his head sagely when he came to the truism that destiny was hard to escape? Can he have identified with Tydeus? Having been speculative a moment ago, now I am being simplistic. It is in a good cause: there has to be some relation between book and reader, and discovering a specific reader for a specific book at a specific time seems an opportunity too good to miss. Some may think I have not taken it wisely. That, however, is not my aim. To take it at all seems to me to have been worthwhile. Let others do better in trying to put together a Scottish gentleman, who in John III's Maloryish terminology was a contemporary Lancelot, and a book by a recent English writer. Perhaps they have already done so.

We need also to ask why it was Anne Paston's book. Did it have anything to say to her in 1472, or, if she had owned it for a while, did it speak to her when she was younger and rather more impressionable than she was in 1472? When there are so many varieties of reading it is impossible to know. Anne might have read out of curiosity, out of sheer boredom, especially when she was in the household of Sir William Calthorpe in 1469-70;<sup>10</sup> she appears to have been an unruly sixteen-year old with a mind of her own: 'your suster'

<sup>9</sup> F. P. DALLIARD, *Edward IV's French Expedition of 1475*, Oxford 1925, pp. 2v and 41-42.

<sup>10</sup> *Paston Letters*, ed. Davis, vol. 1, pp. 339, 348.

John II calls her when writing testily to John III, not 'my' or 'our' sister.<sup>11</sup> Did she read it for consolation when she fell in love with John Pampyng, emulating her older sister Margery in falling for a Paston retainer,<sup>12</sup> but unlike Margery not being sufficiently sure of herself to marry him and break with her mother and brothers? It took them long enough to find her a husband, or rather to raise sufficient money to get her married to the mercenary William Yelverton, grandson of the judge, who had only but the harshest words for his 'cursed grandson'.<sup>13</sup> William Yelverton said in 1472 'that he wold have hyre iff she had hyre mony, and ellis nott'; wherffor', continued John II, 'me thynkyth that they be nott verry sewre'.<sup>14</sup> Sure they were not, as five years passed before in 1477 they were married. There is nothing of the stuff of romance here, so perhaps Anne read the *Siege of Thebes*, if she got it back from the earl of Arran, against the grain of her own experience between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four. For do we not sometimes read in order to weep both for ourselves and for the state of the world? If only life were like that we murmur through our tears. In one respect it was for Anne: she did honour her parents as the book told her to, at any rate in the person of her implacable mother, who would have no other husband for her but William Yelverton.<sup>15</sup> One cannot help thinking that a lively, companionable, and wealthy member of the Calais garrison like Edmund Bedingfield would have made a young woman who read the *Siege of Thebes* a more congenial husband than the embittered and money-grubbing William Yelverton. Anne Paston as mistress of Oxborough Castle would have been altogether in keeping with that book. It was not to be. If the earl of Arran's life was as unreal as the books he read, poor Anne's was the opposite: life for her was as remorselessly real as fifteenth-century reality could get.

Life for Anselm Adornes was certainly never prosaic. He seems a character out of Hizigna's *Waning of the Middle Ages*, although that is not a book in which he features. He has been exhaustively studied so that only an outline of his life is required here. The Adornes family originated in Genoa and had been resident in Bruges since the late thirteenth century. 'It would be difficult', says one commentator, 'to overstate the importance of the Adornes family in the economy and politics of Flanders'.<sup>16</sup> They were more important than the Arnolfini, so it is no surprise to discover Jan van Eyck painting pictures for Anselm's father Pierre Adornes. That, at any rate, has to be the conclusion derived from the following fact: two paintings of *St Francis Receiving the Stigmata* were in his son Anselm's possession on 10 February 1470, nine days before

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348, line 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 472, 473.

<sup>13</sup> Richmond, *Endings*, pp. 56, 193

<sup>14</sup> *Paston Letters*, ed. Davis, vol. 1, p. 472, lines 87–89.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 574, lines 33–34.

<sup>16</sup> J. J. Rishel in J. R. J. van Asperen de Boer *et al.*, *Jan Van Eyck: Two Paintings of St Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, Philadelphia Museum of Art 1997, p. 5.

his departure for the Holy Land, when he made a will in which he left to each of his two daughters a picture of 'St Francis in portraiture from the hand of Master Jan van Eyck'.<sup>17</sup> Both these pictures survive, one in Philadelphia, the other in Turin, and to them we shall shortly come. Let us first quickly dispose of Anselm's exciting life. After he had left the Boyds in London in 1471 and journeyed to Scotland with Princess Mary, the earl of Arran's wife, he had no difficulty in recovering the favour of James III, receiving in 1472 grants of land and office. In return he presented to the Scottish king an account he had written of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1470-1 and which was dedicated to the young king with whom he had clearly got on so well on his first visit to Scotland in 1468.<sup>18</sup> He returned to Bruges in mid-1472. Did he return the way he had come, via London?

Back in Bruges Adornes continued in the favour of James III and Charles the Bold, both of them making use of him as a diplomat. In 1475 he was elected burgomaster of the city. It was a high point. After the death of Charles at Nancy in January 1477 Adornes was among those of the duke's supporters arrested and charged with maladministration. His sentence was lighter than some: he had only to make an appearance before the people robed as a penitent and he was excluded for life from public office. Nonetheless, it was serious enough to make him decide to leave Bruges for Scotland. There, as governor of the royal palace of Linlithgow, he served James III in a variety of capacities over the following five years, until in January 1483 he was murdered by the king's opponents, singled out once again because of his loyalty. His body was interred at Linlithgow, his heart being taken to Bruges for burial beside his wife in a splendid black marble tomb in the Jerusalem church attached to the Adornes house.<sup>19</sup> The tomb survives in what seems to me to be one of the many wonders of Bruges, a chapel begun in 1427 and completed by Anselm and his wife Marguerite van der Banck, modelled on the church of the Holy Sepulchre, and joined to the Adornes house by a bridge at first floor level. It can only have puzzled Johan Huizinga, because it is an ensemble emblematic of fifteenth-century patrician culture at its best, being both confident and cosmopolitan, a culture in no way displaying awareness of decline, let alone of anxiety, and not at all of desperation. The Paston brothers are likely to have visited it, in 1468 for instance, and possibly they knew it well. The Adornes Jerusalem church is a marvellous memento of another world; so, however, are the Adornes pictures of *St Francis Receiving the Stigmata*.

John II and John III might have seen the pictures in the Jerusalem chapel, or, if they were kept there, in the adjoining Adornes mansion. As the two pictures were among the fifteenth-century wonders of Bruges, as they are now two of the wonders of the world, they were no doubt accessible to visitors of

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4 and 7.

<sup>18</sup> A. Macquarrie, 'Anselm Adornes of Bruges: traveller in the East and friend of James III', *Innes Review*, vol. 33 (1982), pp. 15-22, esp. 19.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

rank, especially visitors of rank who had taste. The brothers will have wanted to see them, as depictions of St Francis, particularly of St Francis receiving the Holy Wounds, are and no doubt were, rare in Northern Europe. But, one of the points of this paper is to suggest that the brothers might have seen one of the two pictures in London. These astounding paintings, both by Jan van Eyck's own hand, are virtually identical. The Turin version is larger: it is approximately 11 inches by 13 inches, while the Philadelphia one is less than 5 inches by 6 inches. There are many mysteries attaching to these pictures, chief among them being why there are two in the first place. Among a plethora of hypotheses is that the exquisite Philadelphia picture, painted in oil *on vellum* on panel, was the travelling copy of the larger Turin picture, painted in the more usual fashion in oil on panel, which stayed at home. Did Anselm Adornes, therefore, travel with it to London? Could John II and John III have seen it when they made the acquaintance of the earl of Arran in autumn 1471? Perhaps, being a borrower, he had borrowed it from Adornes when the latter departed for Scotland towards the close of that year, and it was actually at his lodgings in the *George* in Lombard Street when John III wrote to his brother on 5 June 1472.<sup>20</sup> Wherever they saw it, whether in Bruges or in London, I am sure they were as bowled over by it as I was when I saw it in Philadelphia in 1996.

How much we would care to know what the Paston brothers would have made of a painting by Jan van Eyck. The *Adoration of the Lamb* at Ghent, one supposes (when it comes down to it), they are more likely to have seen than a 5 by 6 inch version of *St Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, however ingenious, some might say far-fetched, have been the arguments produced here for them doing so. It is more certain that they read Malory. John III's description of the earl of Arran as the most knightly of knights, Carole Meale informs me, is either a consequence of John knowing the *Morte Darthur*, or of Malory knowing the Paston brothers, or rather of Malory having listened to the chivalric vocabulary used by them and their 'felawes': the former seems to me the more likely. It is absolutely certain that the brothers knew the stories of Robin Hood. All this is a heady mix, more Huizinga than Hoskins, but then Yorkist England was itself a heady interlude in England's humdrum history, an interlude made all the more entertaining for us by Anne Sutton's devoted elucidation of it. Would not the Paston brothers have been as delighted by her erudition as we have been?

<sup>20</sup> As the Philadelphia picture first re-surfaced in modern times in the possession of a Scotsman it is possible, perhaps probable, that Anselm Adornes took it to Scotland in 1477, there being no record of his daughters having received the paintings as he had intended in 1470: Rishel, pp. 3, 7.