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EDITED TEXT

Thomas Wriothesley, *Oraciuncula* (CA Ms 2.L.12 fo. 71r-71v). Edited by Clive Cheesman. What follows is a transcript of a short and incomplete text by Thomas Wriothesley, Garter King of Arms 1505-1534, surviving in one of his MSS in the College of Arms. It carries the title ‘Oraciuncula Thome Wrythesley de Greckelade [= Cricklade] ad Henricum septimum Anglie Francieque Regem’; in accordance with this, it appears to be a rhetorical address to Henry VII petitioning the king to reform the Office of Arms, though it breaks off mid-sentence without really developing the theme of the petition very much. The bulk of the text is an abbreviated version of the fantastic account of the origin of heralds given by Enea Silvio Piccolomini (d. 1464), Bishop of Siena and later Pope Pius II. The ascription of the petition to ‘Thomas Wriothesley of Cricklade’, without citing any heraldic office, implies that it dates from before his appointment as Garter in 1505 and almost certainly before his appointment as Wallingford Pursuivant in 1489. Other Wriothesley texts in the same volume name him as Garter and make no mention of his origin in the small Wiltshire town of Cricklade. On the other hand the use of the name in the form ‘Wrythesley’ is anachronistic, although he is known to have regularly backdated it to his birth and ascribed it to his ancestors. Composition before 1489 would mean that the petition dates from the first four years of the new Tudor regime. His father John Writhe was Garter at the time, and so one would not expect the petition to be deeply hostile to the Office of Arms though of course it repeats Piccolomini’s views on the degenerate character of modern heralds; it is perhaps a young man’s attempt to make a mark. Whether it really was unfinished and never delivered, or just incompletely transcribed when Wriothesley came to transcribe it into Ms 2. L 12, is probably now unknowable.

In this edition abbreviations are silently expanded, punctuation and capitalization are modernized, and the only line break indicated is the point where the text moves from the *recto* to the *verso* of fo. 71.

Oraciuncula thome Wrythesley de greckelade ad Henricum vii^{mum} anglie
francieque Regem

Serenissime Invictissime Xristianissime Rex, si quam primum loqui incipiam rubor
adest necnon vox in mediis faucibus heret non miretur, exoro, vestra illustrissima
mansuetudo; nam cum nedium tuam magestatem dignitatemque considero quas natura
sicut altissimi et illustrissimi sanguinis excellentissimas fecit ac variis virtutum floribus
adornavit, non possum non vehementer timere. Vereor ne me vestri peritissimi ac
circumspectissimi conciliarii ex temeritate arguant. Horresco meipsum ne balbuciens
fiam ita quo inercia non patitur que intra me sentio vobis notum efficere. Novit vestra
sacratissima magestas tua, non ambigo, qualiter heroes quos heraldos appellandos
primus omnium Dionisius instituit; qui eciam primus armatus et cum excercitu in-
vasit Indiam et rudes illos et agrestes homines corticibus arborum et crudis ferarum
carnibus utentes in urbes legit boves aratro iungere, frumenta serere, deos colere,

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mitram ferre docuit. Quibus compositis cum vellet abire atque alias lustrare regiones complures in eius comitatu fuerunt qui iam senio confecti et assiduis attriti laboribus non remanere volebant sine rege, neque sequi ducem valebant, recessurumque principem lacrimis et fletibus obsecrabant ut sui misereret. Ad quos Liber Pater ‘Deponite curas,’ inquit, ‘commilitones fratresque mei, diu pugnastis, diu me secuti estis. Ego alia ex aliis in fata vocor; vobis iam parata quies est, et hic premia laboris vobis manent. Sistite hic, urbem [*for uberem*] hanc terram quam vestri michi lacerti quesiverunt possidete. Ego vos hodie milicie laboribus absolvo, veteranos milites esse volo heroesque vocari.’ Cuius principis privilegiis, que magna fuerunt, heroes gaudebant usque ad tempus Herculis qui regnum Indie sibi subiecit. Heroum tum privilegia non ademit sed auxit. A quorum evo sane L^eciam imperantibus Alexandro Magno, Julio Cesare, Octaviano Augusto et Carolo Magno progenitori tuo non in exiguo honore viguerunt heroes. Nam Carolus autem Magnus progenitor tuus, ex cuius sanguine et stirpe es, qui primus post Grecos apud Romanos suscepit imperium ex antiqua Francorum prosapia natus, post Saxones sepius rebellantes multa vi domuit ac feces Hunorum Longobardos ab infestacione Romani presulis exterruit. Suscepto Cesaris nomine et Augustus appellatus, milites omnes qui tanti laboris comites fuerant in hunc modum fertur honore et libertate donasse. ‘Ite,’ inquit, ‘milites mei, vos heroes vocabimini socii magnatum, judices criminum. Vivite post hac laboris expertes, consulite regibus et publico nomine turpia fugite; [fo. 71v] favete feminis, juvate pupilos, concilio circumdate principes, ab hiis victum vestitum stipendumque petite. Si quis negaverit ingloriosus infermisque [*for infamisque*] esto. Si quis iniuriam vobis intulerit reum se magestatis agnoscat.’ Cur modo, serenissime potentissime Rex, et ei qui nunquam militarunt, qui principes concilio circumdare nequint et complures, ut ita dicam, quasi abiecti homines illud nomen assequntur, nescio causam; nisi quia multa degenerant. Nam et indocti doctioris insignia recipiunt. Sed modo officii illius institutorem ac renovatorem maiestatem vestram fore speramus, et quaevis de vestris victoriis prudencia et justicia magnum lumen inclita suscepit Anglia, serenissime, et cuius modo fama per orbem est divulgata. Sed si officium predictum renovare volueritis adhuc magis erit ampliata, ac quivis beatus estis a temetipso et tua virtute contentus adhuc tum te beaciorem cernere cupimus et sic merito cum Virgilio dicere quam semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt. Humilime autem supplico ut incultam hanc oraciunculam, ut reliqua soletis accipiatis animo [*cancelled?*] et dum hac luce fungar deum supplex exorabo ut maiestatem vestram incolumen semper custodiat et, quoad me attinet, vehementer opto ut deus optimus...