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Paul Hentzner's *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae* (1598)
Remarks from Early Modern Bibliophilia: A Celebration of the Chrzanowski Collection
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Who amongst those gathered here has not purchased and/or read a travel guide? More than likely every single person here has sought out one of these much criticized and utilized tomes. They serve a very distinct purpose, essentially expound with limited expertise on the sights to see and the foods to eat in a land and culture foreign to one's own. And more often than not such travel guides may be labeled pedestrian, banal, touristy, at worst, and at best utilitarian. Keeping that in mind how often can it be said of these much maligned tomes that they not only stand the test of centuries and also serve as a much vaunted historical commentary? Most likely very few, and of even those Paul Hentzner's *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae* (1598) is arguably the most prominent. Hentzner's Travel writing is unique in that it cannot be pulled out of context because it is intrinsically connected to the time and place of the traveler's destination but also to the cultural and political moment. This unique connection between historical and political context and travel writing is the reason why Horace Walpole sought to translate Paul Hentzner's *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae* from the original German. The text is significant not only as it is a German traveler's description of England and environs during the Elizabethan period, but also because of Hentzner's unflinching, honest, and yet ironically complimentary appraisal of the court of Queen Elizabeth I and of the monarch herself.

The story begins thus, in 1598, Paul Hentzner, tutor, lawyer, and counselor to Duke Charles of Münsterberg and Öls, accompanied his student, Christopher Reh diger, a German nobleman, on a tour of England. Like the titled and wealthy before them, they visited Greenwich Palace and, at the invitation of the Lord Chamberlain, were admitted to the royal presence chamber. While there as guests, Hentzner and his student were witness to the ceremony surrounding the sixty-five year old Queen Elizabeth I as she passed through the chamber to attend chapel and then again to prepare for dinner. Hentzner described the pageantry thus:

First went gentlemen, barons, earls, knights of the garter, all richly dressed, and bare-headed; next came the Chancellor, bearing the seals in a red silk purse, between two, one of which carried the royal sceptre, the other the sword of state, in a red scabbard, studded with golden fleur-de-lis, the points upwards.

Next came the Queen, in the sixty-fifth year of her age, as we are told, very majestic...Upon her head, she had a small crown, reputed to be made of some of the gold of the celebrated Lunenburg table. Her bosom was uncovered, as all English ladies have it till they marry, and she had on a necklace of exceeding fine jewels...Her air was stately, her manner of speaking mild and obliging. That day, she was dressed in white silk, bordered with pearls of the size of beans, and, over it, a mantle of black silk, shot with silver threads. Her train was very long. The end of it borne by a marchioness. Instead of a chain, she had an oblong collar of gold and jewels.

...The ladies of the Court followed next to her, very handsome and well shaped, and for the most part, dressed in white. She was guarded on each side by the gentlemen pensioners, fifty in number, with gilt battle-axes.

A gentleman entered the room, bearing a rod, and along with him another, who had a tablecloth which, after they had both kneeled three times with the utmost veneration, lay spread upon the table, and after kneeling again they both retired. Then came two others, one with the rod again, the other with a salt-seller, a plate and bread. When they had kneeled, as the others had done, and placed what was brought upon the table, they too retired with the same ceremonies performed by the first. At last came an unmarried lady (we were told she was a countess) and, along with her, a married one, bearing a tasting-knife. The former was dressed in white silk, who, when she had prepared herself three times in the most graceful manner, approached the table, rubbed tile plates with bread and salt with as much awe as if the Queen had been present. When they had waited there a little while, the yeoman of the guard entered, bare-headed, clothed in scarlet with a golden rose upon their backs, bringing in at each turn a course of twenty-four dishes, served in plates, most of them gilt. These dishes were received by gentlemen, in the same order they were brought, and placed upon the table, while the lady-taster gave to each of the guard a mouthful to eat, of the particular dish he had brought, for fear of any poison.

During the time that this guard, which consists of the tallest and stoutest men that can be found in all England, being carefully selected for this service, were bringing dinner, twelve trumpets and two kettle drums made the hall ring for half-an-hour together.

At the end of all this ceremonial, a number of unmarried ladies appeared who, with particular solemnity, lifted the meat off the table and conveyed it into the Queen's inner and more private chamber where, after she had chosen for herself, the rest goes to the ladies of the Court. The Queen dines and sups alone, with very few attendants, and it is very seldom that anybody, foreigner or native, is admitted

The pageantry that Hentzner describes and which encompassed every aspect of a monarch's life and of which the monarch was the center served a distinct political purpose. The pageantry created an almost cultish aura around majesty. The use of crowns, fine clothes and jewels, ceremony, and ritual were meant to dazzle citizens, visitors, and political emissaries alike. The symbols of majesty were used not only to mark important events such as coronations, marriages, and treaty negotiations but also to establish a continuity of power. The pomp and circumstance of monarchy and majesty remained the same regardless of the monarch who graced the throne, thereby emphasizing the permanence of the monarchy. Elizabeth's court included the monarch's family, members of the government of the realm, the nobles of the realm, scholars, painters, and hundreds of servants. It was at the royal court that visiting ambassadors arrived to negotiate, presenting more opportunities for pageantry and propaganda. Elizabeth's court became well-known for its magnificence and power. It is this dance of power and continuity at the royal court that Paul Hentzner documents along with the standard fare of royal gardens and waterworks. This distinguishes his travel guide from those of his contemporaries and brings it to the attention of the Elizabethan court. For the new queen, her presence, and the subsequent publications of events, allowed her the opportunity to manipulate her image and keep her person

as a focal point not only for her people's love and loyalty but also to the attention of foreign courts.

Queen Elizabeth I and her courtiers were well aware of how powerful a tool the published and spoken word was in the sixteenth century. Elizabeth and her power brokers were no strangers to the use of such power, in point of fact her reign saw a renaissance of theater and political discourse. The performance of plays and masques was a perfect medium for Englishmen to offer their opinions on the pressing topics of the day. Pamphlets, popular dialogues, and dramatic performances entertained, persuaded, and brought attention to the magnificence of the Court. Elizabeth's courtiers, realizing the influence of such performances, sought to manage the licensing of performances and publications. Thus, courtiers who patronized acting companies and published plays and prose such as Hentzner's *Itinerarium* contributed to the growing cult of Elizabeth Gloriana, by presenting plays that perpetuated the image of Elizabeth as a loving monarch, mother and wife to the nation. The queen validated the image by attending the performances and endorsing publications.

This travel guide by a somewhat insignificant German traveler becomes a vital piece of propaganda for the court and the translation of the work by Walpole was widely read and disseminated. Hentzner's glowing descriptions of England and her monarch helped to cement the growing power of England during this period propelling this humble travel guide into the realm of literary notoriety. *Itinerarium* exemplifies the role historical and political context plays in the visual interpretation of places and events. Not only does historical context reaffirm the descriptions in the text, it also, in this case, reinforces the readers' established perception of a prosperous and powerful England ruled by an equally prosperous, powerful, bejeweled monarch. Unlike the works of other travel writers of his era, Hentzner's work is best understood in relation to the historical context in which the writer finds himself as well as the location. *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae* clearly reflects the interaction between the author, the destination, and the body politic of the Elizabethan era.

Work Cited:

Hentzner, Paul. *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae, Italiae*. Wagenmann, 1612.