

Maps, Fictions, and Facts: Representations of the City in Literature and Film



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A Book of Cities: Mapping Urban Space in Braun and
Hogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (1572-1617)

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Abstract

The present article sets out to explore the tradition and the innovative forces involved in the production of the first city atlas, *Civitates orbis terrarum*, a six-volume collection of town images published by Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg between 1572 and 1617. In doing so, it considers the consequences of the rediscovery of Ptolemy's notions of geography and chorography and traces how time-honoured ideas and new practices of describing places meet in the depiction of early modern cities. The article discusses the potential of chorography as a genre capable of representing a city while trying to convey information about its character and addresses the role of printing in the dissemination of city views. The analysis extends from classic notions and modern practices of chorography to the humanist pursuit of a global vision that can be identified in the design of the *Civitates*, where the metaphor of the theatre appears to extend from the material of the atlas to the book itself. The research is mostly based on social and cultural histories of cartography and cosmography which can contribute to a better understanding of the complex significance of city images in Braun and Hogenberg's project.

Keywords: atlas, bird's-eye view, cityscape, *Civitates orbis terrarum*, chorography, Franz Hogenberg, Georg Braun, Ptolemaic geography, map, topography

The early fifteenth-century translation of Ptolemy's *Geography* is believed to have ushered in a new stage in the history of geographical knowledge, despite the limitations and errors of the work. The Renaissance rediscovery and revival of Ptolemaic geography opened the possibility for a more systematic, mathematical approach to global views of the world, which provided sixteenth-century cosmographers and editors of atlases with a method to organise the description of the world. Chorography, a genre to which Ptolemy had assigned the description of regions, of parts of the whole, also gained popularity. Remarkably, the Ptolemaic view of chorography brought it closer to art than to mathematics, as the Greek geographer suggested its purpose was "to paint a true likeness" and its nature involved artistic skills that allowed chorographers to describe a place (qtd. in Maier 718). Chorography could incorporate historical and topographical material and profit from artistic skills, such as drawing and painting, while presenting the identity of a place. Its scope and methods were particularly suitable for the description of cities. Representations started to evolve from the generic view of ideal medieval cities to more complex depictions of urban space and aspirations. The publication of the six-volume atlas of cities, *Civitates orbis terrarum*, between 1572 and 1617 bridged ancient and modern methods of describing the world, with a focus on cities as icons of civilisation. It thus drew on the potential of chorography and proposed a complex view of cities with textual and visual information pointing to broader concerns regarding peace and industry, travel, and the place of man in the world.

1570 saw the publication of Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, a collection of maps believed to be the first early modern atlas. The *Theatrum* was a reflection of humanist concerns with classic and early modern knowledge of the world and the systematisation of such knowledge. It opened with a world map (*Typus orbis terrarum*) and proceeded to the geographic description of continents, countries, and regions. From the very first map and lines, the collection revealed its geographic, historical, and moral scope. The *Theatrum* was the product of Ortelius's work and collaboration with numerous humanists, surveyors, and engravers. Among them was Franz Hogenberg, an engraver and a

publisher. Two years later, Georg Braun, a cleric from Cologne, and Hogenberg began the publication of a six-volume atlas of cities, *Civitates orbis terrarum*. This new theatre, as suggested by the title of the French edition (*Théâtre des cités du monde*) and the similarity of scope behind both projects, proposed another global view of the world based on emblematic representations of early modern cities. It moved beyond the simple revival and revaluation of Ptolemy's *Geography* by promoting chorography, a rather hybrid genre capable of accommodating the accumulation of knowledge and changes in art, and by taking advantage of the possibilities for preservation and renewal that printing opened up for cartographers, engravers, and booksellers.

Civitates orbis terrarum was a humanist project in its global scope. Braun and Hogenberg published hundreds of city views from the four known continents. The majority of the representations included in the atlas were of European cities, for obvious reasons: geographical knowledge was limited beyond the confines of the known world, despite the interest in collecting new information, drawing up, and printing maps in the sixteenth century. The atlas was a joint venture that engaged the efforts of its main authors: Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, although there were many other contributors, among whom the draftsman Georg (Joris) Hoefnagel and his son, the engraver Simon van den Neuvel, the topographer Jacob van Deventer. As editor of this vast project, Braun carried out an extensive correspondence with map traders and map makers across Europe and collaborated closely with Georg Hoefnagel and Jacob van Deventer to obtain the panoramic views of towns. Hoefnagel's drawings of French, Italian, English, and Spanish towns, his and his son Jacob's images of Austrian and Hungarian towns, and the detailed topographic surveys of Joseph van Deventer led to quite diverse representations of early modern urban spaces (Füssell 46-53).

Unlike Ortelius's atlas, the *Civitates* showed less concern with systematisation, ordering, and movement from the general to the particular. It did not open with a general view of the globe, symbolic of the "mastery of the world," and then moved on to increasingly smaller-scale maps of continents or countries (Jacob 66). But the size of the atlas, which counted six volumes, and the inclusion of towns from Asia, Africa,

and America, suggest an equal interest in a global, total vision and more detailed, precise information. Füssel identifies a certain order of towns that observes the Ptolemaic criterion in the first two volumes but notices that the grouping of cities becomes rarer in the subsequent volumes, and explains this lack of a “recognizable order” as dictated by chance (39). While Ortelius tried to maintain to a certain degree the order in which countries appeared in Ptolemy’s atlas while accommodating the discoveries of the early modern age (19), Braun and Hogenberg began with cities from England, Portugal, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy and moved on to Constantinople, Jerusalem, Mombasa, Cairo, and Mexico City, only to return to Oxford, Windsor Castle, Orléans, Marseilles, and Cambridge. In Füssel’s words, “Braun’s collection of engravings ... is clearly determined to a very large extent by what originals he happened to have to hand” (39-40). If the design of the first city atlas depended on accident, the vagaries of correspondence, of information and map collection, it needed to be conceived as an open work that could be amended and enlarged, as new city views and details became available. In this respect, the development of printing culture served both the historical interests of humanists and the economic demands of early modern trade.

The Janus-Faced Atlas

The 1606 English edition of Ortelius’s *Theatrum orbis terrarum* opened with a record of the author’s life and works and was followed by an introduction in which Ortelius argued that “geography [is called by some] the eye of history.” The metaphor defines one of the roles of the atlas as a mnemonic device and reveals the Antwerp humanist’s encyclopaedic interests and penchant for historical cartography, for which the printing press served as an instrument and a catalyst of both preservation and change (Jacob 63). Ortelius explained that ancient names had been added to modern toponymy, which raises the question of whether he conceived of them as commonplaces of historical and geographical knowledge in early sixteenth-century cosmographic fashion. Moreover, the second part of the atlas, the *Parergon* or *Geography of the Holy Writers* charted

Biblical and ancient events and places such as the peregrination of Abraham the Patriarch and the Roman empire, which points to the role of geography as an aid to memory and to an interest in classic and Biblical sources.

Abraham Ortelius was not only a collector of maps, coins, and antiquities (70, 76), but also a notable early modern cartographer scrupulous enough to name his sources, mention changes he had made and include some of his own maps while acknowledging the provisional nature of his collection. Admitting that maps of certain territories had not come in his possession, he invited further contribution to his atlas. The *Theatrum* was a collection of maps that could always be improved and rendered more accurate. It was both systematic and flexible, “an inexhaustible storehouse of voyages, discoveries, and new knowledge” (76). In this respect, Ortelius proved more than a humanist eagerness to list the etymology of place names and references to authors dealing with topographic information. He was a seller of maps and prints attuned to the novelty and progress brought by his trade.

Ortelius and Braun worked within an existing tradition of books of maps and early modern cosmographies. Beginning in the fifteenth century, there were several collections of city views, such as Bernhard von Breydenbach’s *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam* (1486), Hartmann Schedel’s *Chronicle of the World* (1493), and Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia* (1544), which included a series of cityscapes (Füssel 11-14). Münster’s encyclopaedic work was intended as a description of the entire world, a global vision that was echoed in the *Theatrum* and the *Civitates*. In fact, Braun drew on Münster’s *Cosmographia* for city views and information on the towns, but he did so on other works as well until “the *Civitates* grew into an anthology of different sources and different artists for the preliminary drawings” (30). Münster was motivated by the sixteenth-century “ambition to describe the whole world, to reduce it to a form which the minds could grasp, and to invest that representation with meaning” (McLean 46). In doing so, Münster and other scholars of his age became indebted to ancient writers but were also driven by contemporary mathematical and artistic interests and by potential practical and economic gain for their readers and suppliers of illustrations. Thus, the German cosmographer followed two ancient models of describing the world:

Ptolemy's mathematical understanding of the world, which relied on the collection of scientific material and favoured a dispassionate perspective on the places represented, and Strabo's anthropocentric perception of "land as experienced by man," which relied on description and favoured a view of the world as a stage (2). McLean suggests that Münster's city images went beyond describing "the city's historic and contemporary appearance," as they allowed a town "to project its desired image" and inspired "meditations on what caused certain cities to become great, and their roles in history" (101-2). However, Maier does not seem to credit Münster's cityscapes with great accuracy, as she points out that he resorted to the same woodblock to represent various cities (722). Moreover, she shows that Münster's image of Rome, despite its claim to contemporaneity, is over half a century old (727). In an attempt to explain the claims to authenticity, Maier distinguishes between the actual appearance of a city and its ideal representation, suggesting that city images played an exemplary role by illustrating "urban ideals" (717). In this respect, cityscapes seem to draw on the historic and geographical information that is available, on the one hand, and the significance that inhabitants wish to assign to their cities, on the other.

Münster's work set a standard worthy of emulation for Braun and Hogenberg's *Civitates*, which presented both textual and visual information on cities around the world. The new level of accuracy became an ideal to strive for and, given the progress from woodblocks to copperplate engraving, new details and decoration could be added to what had become "a general pool of available iconography and cartographic representation" (184). Schedel's *Chronicle of the World*, also known as the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, also provided a special type of city image, the bird's-eye view, in which the representation was "idealised yet recognisable" (116). Apart from greater similarity and accuracy, the collection of city images offered an opportunity to artists, city councils, and patrons to advertise their town and represent their inhabited space in emblematic fashion as a locus of civility and sometimes the stage of significant historical events. The *Civitates* allowed cities to advertise not only their tradition, but also their potential.

Like Ortelius, Braun looked both at the past and to the future. He proved a humanist in his penchant for classical sources, such as Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia*, which appeared in print in 1469, Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, printed in 1472, and Julius Caesar's *De bello gallico*, wherefrom he drew the etymology of place names (Füssel 31). Braun was also an editor within a vast network of patrons, contributors, engravers, and publishers, which included Master Constantinus Lyskirchen, the mayor of Cologne, Heinrich Rantzau, the governor of Schleswig-Holstein, and Heinrich Sudermann, a politician and merchant in Cologne (22, 24-25).

In a letter to Abraham Ortelius, Georg Braun praises the work of the Antwerp humanist and discusses the possibility of departing from the former's design of the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* by putting names in the vernacular instead of Latin on the map and maintaining descriptions in Latin on the back. The hybrid linguistic nature of the city atlas reveals a double orientation – a humanist concern with traditional geographical knowledge and a preoccupation with the economic success of the collection. The letter acknowledges a broader readership comprising both learned men and simple people, men of prominence or men who were simply interested in promoting their own cities:

For various reasons a number of scholars in Cologne are of the opinion that Master Franz's [Hogenberg] city atlas would be regarded even more highly by customers if it contained the names of the squares, churches and gates in the language of the relevant country and thus satisfied the educated and uneducated alike: the educated, because they would find the Latin descriptions on the back, the others because each would find his hometown skilfully illustrated under its familiar name. I consider this suggestion most useful, particularly if one should wish to sell the city views individually. Buyers themselves would surely be disappointed could they not understand the text. Although this is undoubtedly already the practice in your splendid "Theatrum" and the current convention is most beneficial for the educated, you will surely concede that many people find it irritating. Since Master Franz's aim of delighting the uneducated, too, is very popular, however, I consider it right that we should adhere to it. ... These, Master Abraham, were the matters that seemed to me so important that no decision should be made until we know your opinion. (qtd. in Füssel 19-20)

The letter reveals the crucial role played by Ortelius in the conception of the work. Ortelius acted not only as a counsellor, but also as a collaborator of Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg and a contributor to the city atlas (24). But it also points to an intellectual and social distinction that dictates the economics of the collection: the learned readers might be satisfied with the extensive use of Latin in both place names and descriptions, but the uneducated readers were already conceived of in commercial terms. They were an increasingly relevant readership, customers whose education dictated changes in the design from Ortelius's work to Braun and Hogenberg's project. The letter also points to another commercial aspect of the map trade which was fuelled by the development of printing: publishing maps was a business capable of yielding profit even by selling individual city views. The maps could be sold as books of maps or as single representations of a city.

Not only was printing a means to preserve tradition in cartography, but it was also a way to advance the production of maps (Jacob 65). Paradoxically, maps maintained elements specific to older versions, but the printed image enjoyed a wide circulation and could thus be amended and improved, particularly because there was a "blueprint" such as a copper plate on which changes could be engraved (65). Maps could be drawn up, printed, modified, and reprinted. An atlas was also a miniaturised, yet open version of the world, a book to which the publisher could add a new leaf and a new city view. It was more practical than wall maps and it could entertain readers with imagined itineraries. In the opening to the German edition of the second volume of *Civitates orbis terrarum*, Braun invited contributions to the city atlas in order to update the Ptolemaic worldview and the work of his predecessors and allow city officials to advertise their home towns: "Should anyone not find their home town or native city in either of these first two books, however, I would kindly invite them to draw it from life and send it to me. Then I will have it faithfully copied by the skilled Franz Hogenberg and include it in the 1st or 2nd book or keep it for the 3rd book" (qtd. in Füssel 9).

Global Visions in a Global Renaissanceⁱ

The *Civitates* encouraged participation in the making of the city atlas. It was a project fundamentally based on collaboration, since it involved scholars, mapmakers, and publishers, but also artists and town councils. Participation even made its way into representation – the cityscapes produced by one of the main contributors, Georg Hoefnagel, were in fact illustrations of a journey he and Abraham Ortelius had taken from Salzburg to southern Italy in 1577-78 (Cosgrove 135). In the image of Solfatara, an Italian town pictured in the third volume, the viewer can see two men that resemble Hoefnagel and his travel companion (Füssel 50). The two travellers seem to play the roles of “observer and commentator” (50). Apart from what Cosgrove calls “eyewitness authentication for the vicarious explorer in library or study” (135), the view of Solfatara (Phlegrean Fields), together with the images of Pazzouli and Baia and the Gulf of Gaeta and Formia, document their journey to Italy by depicting the two men as participants in the events (re)presented in the theatre of the world. The “commentary technique, in which a true-to life illustration is combined with companions in discussion and an inscription shedding light on the whole” stages a conversation between Hoefnagel and Ortelius on the history of the grotto of the Cumaean Sibyl while in contemplation of the place (52). Hoefnagel and Ortelius’s journey to southern Italy was chronicled in the views he contributed to the *Civitates* (Cosgrove 135). The two travel companions emerged as commentators on ancient and modern history, integrating ancient knowledge into Renaissance geographic pursuits (Füssel 51). But Ortelius and Hoefnagel’s presence in these images also points to the metaphor that underlies the atlas, the theatre.

The metaphor of the theatre, which organises the early modern atlas, is explicit in the title of Ortelius’s *Theatrum*. The collection of maps is a practical theatre of the world, perhaps drawing on an urban practice “in European Renaissance cities, where the city fathers staged pageants and parodies with costumed figures representing the countries of the world” (Virga 2). A look at the frontispiece of the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* unveils an arch similar to the proscenium, with an allegory of the four known continents as female figures depicted in emblematic fashion. A crowned Europe holding the orb and the sceptre sits on top of

the arch, with the celestial sphere to her right and the globe to her left. On the left of the arch stands Asia, dressed in silk and carrying “an urn of smoking myrrh,” while on the right stands Africa, almost naked, with “a branch of balsam” in one hand (Cosgrove 131). At the bottom of the arch sits America, wearing feathers and holding “the medicinal wood *guanacum*, supposedly a cure for syphilis,” in one hand and “a severed European head, signifying the monstrous nature of her peoples “in the other, while at her feet lie a bow and arrows” (131). The fifth head that appears in the form of a bust next to America represents *terra incognita*, the southern landmass that is yet to be discovered. The emblematic fashion in which the title page describes the continents alludes to the theatrical metaphor that underpins Ortelius’s atlas.

Although the Latin title of *Civitates orbis terrarum* points only to the global vision proposed to the reader, the title of the French edition, *Théâtre des cités du monde*, is explicit with regard to the design of the atlas. The *Civitates* continues Ortelius’s vision and work by appealing to urban readers and their taste for the theatre (Virga 135). The global scope of Braun and Hogenberg’s project echoes the global perspectives of Ortelius and Mercator’s atlases, as it charts the place of *civis* and civilisation. A look at the frontispiece of the 1572 Latin edition reveals a similar theatrical design. The title page of the first volume presents an allegory of the establishment of cities based on ancient mythology and the Bible. On top of a façade sits Cybele, known as Magna Mater, holding a carpenter’s level in one hand and a compass and a carpenter’s square in the other. The goddess is depicted as a teacher in “the art of laying the foundations of great buildings” (Krogt 2). The two columns at the sides of the façade have two globes on top and on these two spheres read the words “posteritati” and “consultum,” thus pointing to one of the main functions of Renaissance theatres – instruction. On the left side stands Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom and the patron of towns (3). On the right, Cain stands holding “an ox’s jawbone” (3). While Pallas Athena is identified as “the inventor of fortresses,” Cain is portrayed as “the designer of towns” (3). The three images at the bottom of the stage that upholds the columns and the façade paint Braun’s view of the establishment of cities: mankind moves from learning how to use fire to cultivating the land and, finally, to building the first shelters. The

allegorical displays of ancient deities, virtues, and Christian faith on the title pages of the subsequent volumes reveal the forces that create and preserve cities: Peace, Justice and Religion appear repeatedly to suggest that the development of urban centres depends on them. The frontispiece to the second volume depicts Cybele sitting at the top, flanked by two lions and the feminine figures of Religio and Politia, Christian faith, and civil government, to her right and left. At the bottom sit two Penates and two Lares, Roman deities of the household, while the central medallion describes a figure setting the boundaries of a city. The title page of the third volume, dominated by vegetation and fruit ornaments, reveals the central figure of Iustitia, watched upon by Pax and Concordia and flanked by Opulentia and Securitas. The frontispiece to the sixth volume resumes the visual and verbal comments on the woes of war and the advantages of peace under the auspices of the top central figures of Religio and Iustitia. Instructive as this theatre of cities may be, it can be entertaining and safe as well, as Braun suggests in the preface to the third volume of 1581:

What could be more pleasant than, in one's own home far from all danger, to gaze in these books at the universal form of the earth... adorned with the splendor of cities and fortresses and by looking at the pictures and reading the texts accompanying them, to acquire knowledge which could scarcely be had by long and difficult journeys. (qtd. in Virga 136)

The *Civitates* encourages vicarious travel and pleasure taken in contemplating the cityscapes in the safety of one's home. In this respect, it seems a product of the very world it describes: the civilisation of urban space and society. By reducing the size of large city views to a format in which they can be bound in a book and perused in tranquillity and comfort, the authors of the city atlas have enabled readers to symbolically hold the world in their hands, learn from the textual and visual illustrations and be entertained by the urban scenes under their eyes. From the early modern rhetoric of cartographers who "encouraged the idea of private, vicarious enjoyment of geographic discovery" Braun borrowed the notions of safe contemplation and witnessing the beauty of cities. His ideas can be related to comments made in the preface to the fifth volume on the forces that bring the world together: "The good government of rulers who subject themselves to general laws," adherence to divine order and avoidance of "opposition in matters of religion and faith," which can

be a threat to “civil harmony” and a source of destruction (Füssel 33). The city atlas was an opportunity to contemplate the world and gain more accurate knowledge of it.

The metaphor of the theatre of the world, which underpins the *Civitates*, had become very popular by the end of the sixteenth century. In Ronsard’s terms, the classic understanding of the world as theatre included men as actors and fortune as “the stage director,” while the heavens were “the spectators” (Blair 153). In the early modern period, the idea of theatre was extended beyond the realm of human affairs. As indicated by works in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the metaphor was in use with reference to nature and books (153). These two uses altered the classic view of the theatre of the world by either portraying man as “the spectator rather than the actor, looking out at the world stage as to a stage where God displays his skill and providence as author and producer” or by referring to books as theatres, as shown by numerous titles at the time, which revealed “encyclopedic ambitions to treat a vast topic in a concise and systematic way” (153). The theatre of nature was more concerned with beauty and divine order than with the tragedy of human existence in the world. A similar outlook can be identified in Braun and Hogenberg’s theatre of cities, where Braun discusses the possibility to delight in the splendour of towns away precisely from the misery and threats of human affairs. The opportunity to contemplate is embodied and enacted by Ortelius, represented in some of Hoefnagel’s illustrations, while the possibility to represent the city more precisely is symbolised by Hoefnagel, who portrays himself as an observer and prospector on the city stage. The metaphor of the theatre in its more serene version prompts Braun to comment on civil concord, divine order, and the perils of religious dissent.

There is a sense of similarity that permeates early modern theatres, whether they refer to anatomy, mushrooms, countries or cities. The providential scheme is made explicit in Ortelius’s *Theatrum* from the very first map, a world map entitled *Typus orbis terrarum*. The quotations in the cartouches of the map reflect on the place and role of man in the world. The Neostoic cosmology of the *Theatrum* can be traced to citations from Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations*, *Natura Deorum*, *De Re Publica* *de Legibus* and Seneca’s *Naturales Questiones I* and *Epistle 89.1*. The

cartouches unveil reflections on how insignificant human affairs are when contemplated from above, from a divine perspective (Gillies 80-81). The citations emphasize the role of man, who is virtuous as long as he does his duty and remains detached from vain pursuits of glory in a transient world. They draw attention from details on the map to a philosophical stance on the world and human affairs, thus contrasting early modern pursuits of cartographic accuracy with the relative small size of the earth, when contemplated from an elevated vantage point, a common practice in “the classical tradition of cosmographical ascensions” (Nutti, *The World Map* 50). On the other hand, Braun seems concerned about the destructive effects of religious tension and conflict. He deplores the decline of civilisation brought by religious wars and the situation of the “unfortunate Germany” of his own day, as he looks at ancient sources on the woes befalling cities such as Jerusalem, Carthage, Alexandria, and Athens (Füssell 33). In the introduction to the first volume, he draws up a concise history of civilisation centred on the construction of cities and fortresses, a spectacle that unfolds before the reader in the six volumes of the *Civitates*.

The metaphor of the theatre extends from the material of the atlas to the book itself. The collection of cityscapes is not only a theatre of the world, whose traits reveal a set of beliefs shared by Renaissance authors of diverse theatres, but also a theatre of city views. The former understanding of the world as a theatre dominated by “beauty, order and vastness” casts people in the roles of contemplators and/or participants (Blair 155). The latter notion of the atlas as a theatre veers from “the theme of human contemplation of divinity in the world” towards more practical considerations on the reception of the book (158). Blair’s discussion of the metaphor focuses on Jean Bodin’s *Universae naturae theatrum*, but the author engages with numerous other texts and practices of the time. For the second meaning of the metaphor, Blair draws on the comments made by François de Fougerolles, the translator of the French edition, who compares the “marvels of nature” in Bodin’s theatre to the curiosities presented by captains to the inhabitants of a city. The Book is thus a form of “edifying entertainment” comparable to the procession that reveals the greatness of rulers to people in order to impress and inspire admiration (160). In this respect, the *Civitates* is a noteworthy spectacle of the cities of the world presented with their most distinctive features either

in the commentaries and cartouches or in the illustrations that unveil the beauty, order, and industry of civilisation. Adding to the design of the atlas, the staffage of the cityscapes, usually placed in the foreground, invites the reader to contemplate scenes of urban life: a conversation between scholars in the view of Oxford or a group of men and women standing on a small hill in the London plate (Füssell 55-56). Barges on the Thames, ships sailing to and from Lisbon, people on horseback, they all point to the emblematic features of the cities while the plates bridge geography and art, ancient and modern knowledge of urban life. If the reader focused only on the figures in the foreground, the *Civitates* could be read as an atlas of Renaissance dress.

In service to the entertainment offered by the city atlas is the variety of images – town plans, profiles, bird’s-eye views, landscapes, and even battles views (Krogt 9). Such diversity may be accounted for by the various contributions that Braun himself invited. But it can also be read as a record of scientific and artistic changes in representation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What is of little doubt is the particular interest that cities drew to their political, economic, military, and even cultural relevance and the symbolic role of city views (Ballon and Friedman 680). From the imaginary cities of the medieval tradition to the more accurate representations of the Renaissance, cityscapes could account for the progress made in measurement and observation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Town plans were produced for military purposes and land surveys were organised to gain a better understanding and more control of urban resources (Buisseret, *Envisioning the City* x). Topographical surveys proved essential to increasingly accurate images while changes of perspective allowed the prospector to experiment and present urban space from different angles, all aiming at a global image of the early modern city. The main types of representation followed either a vertical axis, such as in the case of town plans and bird’s-eye views, or a horizontal axis, as was the case with profiles (Buisseret, *Envisioning the City* x). Regardless of the perspective, their visual impact either inspired a sense of control or a feeling of admiration. Early modern efforts to map cities included an ever more precise delineation of streets and their directions. At the same time, increased accuracy could be a threat to coherence, which is why city plans were remarkable for their “conflation

of ancient and modern structures into a timeless classical landscape” (Ballon and Friedman 683). As far as precision is concerned, military cartography contributed substantially to the representation of cities, although the visual effect of cityscapes was never underestimated. As a global view, the city image was supposed to express “the essence of a city” (Ballon and Friedman 687). A cartographic genre emerged to bridge the all-encompassing layout of the urban space and the strong impression of important buildings against the skyline.

The purpose of a global, synthetic image seems to have been served by the bird’s-eye view, a genre that mediated between the quest for a global picture and the pursuit of complexity and accuracy found in details such as streets, buildings, and walls. In fact, the bird’s-eye view was more abstract than particular, despite its details, which aimed at mimesis rather than the “true” image of a city (Ballon and Friedman 688). By selecting a number of significant architectural features, the bird’s-eye view was both entertaining and instructive, magnificent and comprehensive. The true-to-life effect could be obtained from empirical data, from experiencing urban space, but this type of cityscape stayed close to abstraction, since it pursued a global, systematised form (Ballon and Friedman 688). It nonetheless had more to offer in visual terms than the profile view or the town plan and had more to claim in terms of authenticity (Ballon and Friedman 690). Just like Ortelius’s maps, the city views allowed the reader to grasp the entire city, since “the sense of enclosure and containment was essential to urban identity” (Ballon and Friedman 691). The city, just like the world, needed to be complete, beautiful and, if not great, at least presented in more detail. The bird’s-eye view allowed contemplation and eye-witnessing, it inspired pleasure and admiration in a single image that encapsulated the essential traits of a city. It merged science and art in a fashion similar to the empirically-rooted profile (Nuti, *Mapping Places* 99). Yet, it came closer to the ideal of a “total picture” (Nuti, *Mapping Places* 93). In an age of “terrestrial globalism,” to quote Jerry Brotton (*Terrestrial Globalism* 71), the bird’s-eye view emerged as a genre capable of abstraction and authentication. It promoted a global view of the city, while focusing on outstanding details that defined its identity.

Scene by Scene

The global image promoted global fame and, to a certain degree, systematised it according to criteria of political, economic, and cultural importance. Ortelius's *Theatrum* opens with a "typus" of the globe, a world map that summarises and systematises geographical knowledge in the late sixteenth century. Braun and Hogenberg's *Civitates* opens with a bird's-eye view of London, which advertises its fame as well as its political, economic, and cultural relevance in the world. The cavalier view, as it was also called because it offered an image from the raised perspective, may have been less capable of giving information about the height of the buildings, for example, but it could offer "a remarkably full impression of the general layout of a city" (Buisseret, *The Mapmaker's Quest* 169). The London plate reveals the general plan of the city, with its streets, buildings, the Thames, and a foreground portrayal of four people dressed according to sixteenth-century fashion. The bottom-left cartouche cites ancient knowledge London, once known as Trinobantum (Füssel 70), while stressing its commercial and cultural role on the world stage. The London plate testifies to the central position of the city:

Although this city is already very large, it also still has beautiful suburbs and a magnificent castle, called the Tower. It is embellished to the best possible degree with splendid buildings and churches and possesses 120 parish churches. ... The fame of all other cities is utterly exceeded by London ... It is a powerful city of commerce ... furnished with abundance and wealth in all things. The Thames brings riches from all over the world, since even large vessels can sail right into the city on the tide. Here the kings are crowned and installed in office, here too the parliament is held by 24 citizens, called aldermen, according to old English custom. (qtd. in Füssel 70)

The cityscape draws on earlier representations of London but stresses its contemporary fame. It stages London's place in global trade, as it describes a busy life by means of ships on the Thames. The image of London was a cartographic commonplace that could entertain the reader and inform travellers and merchants while inspiring admiration. Its history seems somewhat intricate: the *Civitates* London plate is a representation of London dating back to the period between 1553 and 1559 and was

published in the first volume of the atlas in 1572 (Cartwright 71). It has been suggested that the view shares a common lineage with another general view of London, the “Agas” map, which describes London in the following decade of the sixteenth century. The third map, the possible source for both the London view in the *Civitates* and the “Agas” view, was a copper engraving charting London in the 1550s (Cartwright 72). The existence of the three layouts in the sixteenth century points not only to the role that printing played in the dissemination of city views, but also to a growing interest in this type of representation. David Buisseret suggests that the increased popularity of cityscapes cannot be explained solely by the progress made in printing or the more numerous and wealthier readers and seems more inclined to agree with Thomas Frangenberg that the views may have played a practical role in travel: the reader/ traveller could consult the volumes before the journey and then even take the sheets with the views of their destination with them (Buisseret, *The Mapmaker's Quest* 174). Or, as Braun suggested, it was a safe alternative to actual travel in more perilous times.

The *Civitates orbis terrarum* was a large-scale project benefiting from the contributions of remarkable scholars, engravers, patrons, and publishers in an age where access to visual information was facilitated by the printing press. With an eye to the past and one to the future, the atlas served both memory and the imagination, it bridged history and political and economic interests. In doing so, the *Civitates* relied on the revived methods of ancient geography and the practice of topography to communicate a view of the world of urban space.

Notes:

¹The notion of a global Renaissance is explored by Jerry Brotton in *The Renaissance Bazaar* and defined as “an extensive and complex exchange of ideas and materials” with the east (37). Beginning in the late fifteenth century, Europe engaged in travel to, and exploration of, the New World. Brotton cites, among others, the example of the Spanish conquest of today’s Mexico and Peru, which resulted in the exploitation and “violent depredations” by the Spaniards (179). Brotton argues that European trade with the east created a sense of a “mobile and global world” (220).

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