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<running head: *Lisbon, new Rome and emporium*>

Lisbon, new Rome and emporium: comparing an early modern imperial capital, 1550–1750

Author's Manuscript Version

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<abstract>

ABSTRACT: Early modern European capitals competed to demonstrate their imperial status, and contemporary urban praise often drew comparisons between them, situating these cities within a shifting hierarchy. Authors frequently combined actual perceptions of cities with metaphors of a New Rome and other classical motifs. This article explores how various writers asserted Lisbon's greatness and civic identity within this shared comparative European discourse. More particularly, it shows how they defended its changing political status as a capital while also developing a strong commercial discourse that centred on the city as an emporium. Views and descriptions of Lisbon and its port paralleled contemporary descriptions of London in particular, as both cities were increasingly defined as paradigms of imperial commerce.

<\abstract>

Recent trends in early modern historiography have promoted imperial comparisons on a global scale. Comparative surveys of French, Spanish and British ideologies of empire and parallel studies of the Atlantic empires of Spain and Great Britain, and of Britain and America, have been joined by more theoretical approaches that analyse the differences between territorial and seaborne empires.¹ Wider, global perspectives on Eurasian empires and recent works on Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal rule have helped to expand and criticize our previous benchmarks.² The idea of universal empire from ancient Persia to Qing China, and from Greek classical thought to Islam and Christianity, has also been examined recently,³ and further parallels have been drawn between the Aztec, Vijayanagara, Carolingian, Assyrian and other ancient and early modern empires.⁴

The only aspect that has escaped this intensive research is the European taste for comparison between imperial capitals. As heads of extended monarchies, Lisbon, London, Madrid and Paris were regularly compared with each other. Most comparative perspectives pay little attention to cities, but an urban, centralized understanding of imperial rule was expressed through capitals as symbols of wealth and political extension. Since it was difficult to gain solid first-hand experience in empire, the global images throughout civic discourse supplemented limited personal experience. By mixing actual and hyperbolic descriptions, authors compared the relative position and aspirations of a capital city within a complex hierarchy of present and past cities. The city of Rome and classical metropolitan imagery played a crucial role in this competitive environment. The need to compete within an imagined hierarchy of cities and the lack of better objective referents explains why the *topos* of a new Rome enjoyed such a lasting life.

Lisbon, capital of Portugal since the mid-thirteenth century, underwent major changes during the reign of Manuel I (1495–1521). A new palace was built alongside the Tagus river, and an ambitious programme to regularize and embellish streets and façades dating from the medieval and especially Muslim periods was devised. Lisbon's most famous commercial street was laid out behind the new palace, and further from the centre the city started to expand beyond its Roman and medieval boundaries. The reign of John III (1521–57) saw the completion of most of his father's projects, but architectural momentum began to falter. From 1580 to 1640, Portugal was integrated into the domains of the Spanish Habsburgs, who resided mostly at the court in Madrid and invested only occasionally in urban projects in Lisbon. Following the Portuguese Restoration of 1640 and several decades of war and political consolidation, Lisbon enjoyed another major moment of urban intervention under John V (1707–50), who linked his imperial aspirations to the image of the city as the head of an extensive empire.

Comparison with Rome served to promote Lisbon's civic identity as one of Europe's most cosmopolitan and commercial cities. Classical motifs were part of a shared, standardized discourse but they evolved as they reflected the shifting political status of Lisbon throughout the early modern period, both as capital of Portugal and (temporarily) as a distinguished member of the Spanish monarchy. Despite all its factual content, early modern urban discourse on Lisbon was not primarily descriptive. It was hyperbolic and aimed at rhetorical affirmation. It was an instance of *'laudando praecipere*, when by telling men what they are, they represent them what they should be'.⁵ It was essentially comparative and competitive.

<A-head>Romes and new Romes

The first new Rome was, of course, Byzantium. The city and its governors claimed the imperial nature of Constantine's *Second* or *New Rome* for at least ten centuries, and the Ottoman Sultans Mehmed II and Suleiman I also appropriated this heritage.⁶ Both used classical imperial imagery and 'non-Islamic royal status symbols' in order to confront the imperial style of the papacy and of Charles V.⁷ Medieval chroniclers of various Italian and French cities – particularly Aix-la-Chapelle during the reign of Charlemagne – also adopted the notion of a new Rome.⁸ This *topos* underlined their political autonomy, and renaissance Venice combined references to both Rome and Byzantium to recreate its glorious past.⁹

Lisbon was therefore one in the long chain of cities that was compared to Rome. Drawing attention to the wider context, it is easy to detect that this kind of comparison was usually part of a *laus urbis*, a well-established literary piece. Renowned classical authors produced exemplary eulogies of cities that inspired authors from the Middle Ages to the first humanists and throughout the early modern period.¹⁰ For Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* III, 7, 26), praises of a city could refer to its founder, antiquity, famous citizens, geographical position, public works and fortifications. Jeffrey S. Ruth noted that early modern *laudes* had a renovated degree of rhetorical sophistication, and clearer political intents (as the cases of Venice or Florence clearly show).¹¹ After the revival of the genre by Italian humanists, it was first exported to the Iberian Peninsula and northern Europe and then 'channelled into poetry and also absorbed into some historical writing'.¹² This evolution is related to the increasing popularity of urban histories in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain.¹³ The praises of Lisbon I analyse here are found in urban and general histories, traveller's diaries, poems and accounts of festivities.

According to the established pattern, the antiquity of Lisbon and its mythical founder were often celebrated. Not surprisingly, the foundations of the city were located in the very remote past, an essential feature to affirm political importance. In providential tones, Francisco de Holanda indicated in 1571 that Roman conquerors found Lisbon 'already made and older than Rome, built by God'.¹⁴ In 1620, Nicolau d'Oliveira added more detail, explaining that Lisbon had been founded nine years after the destruction of Troy, and therefore was 423 years older than Rome.¹⁵ Both Oliveira and Holanda used Nicolau Coelho do Amaral's *Cronologia* (Coimbra, 1554) to defend Lisbon's precedence.¹⁶ Noble founders also helped to defend hierarchical priority against competing cities, both in the kingdom of Portugal and abroad. With a skilful presentation of Strabo and Solinus, André de Resende established in the 1530s the general framework for the foundation of *Olissipo* – older than Rome – by Ulysses.¹⁷ Most humanists and chroniclers followed Resende's path closely, but in 1652 Luís Marinho de Azevedo argued that Lisbon had been founded by a great grandson of Noah. Venice, Rome, Damascus and Corinth had instead been established by 'fishermen, shepherds, thieves and ignoble people'.¹⁸

Urban praises usually included references to the magnificent location of the city. Comparisons between Lisbon's topography and Rome's seven hills became more frequent due to the growth of the city from the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century – as Lisbon extended to the west over new hills – and to the recovery of its former political prominence after the break with the Spanish monarchy in 1640. In 1577, Diogo Mendes Vasconcelos already suggested that the walls of Lisbon 'emulated the Rome of seven hills and rivalled old Thebes in the Nile',¹⁹ but this was an early example. Damião de Góis²⁰ and the Spaniard Luis

Núñez affirmed that Lisbon settled over five hills.²¹ Nicolau d'Oliveira identified Lisbon's seven hills one by one but he did not mention Rome²² and the French traveller Balthasar de Monconys, who visited Lisbon for the first time in 1628, insisted that the city was placed partly on a flat terrain and partly over 'three little mountains'.²³

In 1652, Luís Marinho de Azevedo criticized Núñez harshly and affirmed that Lisbon 'wanted to resemble Rome even in the greatness of being scattered through seven mounts'.²⁴ This view enjoyed a remarkable vitality during the second half of the century. In 1683, António Vaz Botto described Lisbon as a 'pleasant theatre, founded over seven mounts, like the famous Rome, head of the world'²⁵ and the Englishman John Stevens, who travelled to Portugal in 1705, wrote that Lisbon 'stands upon seven hills'.²⁶ Henry Fielding indicated in 1755 that Lisbon 'is said to be built on the same number of hills with old Rome; but these do not all appear to the water'.²⁷ Fielding's doubts show that the comparison – still used in guided tours – persisted in spite of its inconsistencies.

As I have mentioned, specific buildings could also be singled out in urban encomia. Together with palaces, fortresses and walls, churches were urban landmarks and Catholic writers often referred to the admired religious architecture in Rome. In the case of Lisbon, this led to two related considerations. First, Lisbon was sometimes considered to have more or better churches than Rome. An anonymous leaflet published in 1625 claimed that the noble buildings of Lisbon outshone those of the superb Babylon. 'In the devout cult of God and in famous churches', further clarified this pamphlet, Lisbon rivalled Rome, while its political organization matched that of Greece.²⁸ Second, Catholic churches were commended as the Christian counterpart of ancient Roman temples. António Vaz

Boto indicated that some of the numerous churches of Lisbon are ‘so impressive that they overcome the magnificence of the Roman Pantheon’.²⁹ Rafael Bluteau stated that the monastery of Mafra – built in 1731 near Lisbon – superseded the pagan Pantheon.³⁰

Comparisons with Rome sometimes exploited this double meaning, ancient and Catholic. Referring both to imperial Rome and to providential notions about the role of Lisbon in history, Luís de Camões wrote in 1572 that ‘heaven was determined to make Lisbon a new Rome’.³¹ In 1639, the erudite editor of the *Lusíadas*, Manuel de Faria e Sousa, explained this same verse. First, it meant that many kings and distant princes recognized obedience to Lisbon. Second, that Lisbon was ‘another Rome in the purity of Catholic religion’ and played a major role in the missionary efforts that accompanied Portuguese imperial activities.³²

The historian Fernando Bouza has reminded us of the universalist tones in Francisco de Holanda’s description of Lisbon, and indicated that the succession of cities and the ruin of Jerusalem, Rome or Constantinople had a key role in the prophetic language of the five monarchies and the *translatio imperii*.³³ Francisco de Monçon also compared Lisbon to Jerusalem and alluded to the series of imperial capitals or the ‘metropolis of the kingdom’ usually identified in prophetic thought. These included Susa, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople – with a reference to the power of the contemporary Turkish empire – and once again Jerusalem.³⁴ Sharing this urban understanding of political prophecy, Luís Mendes de Vasconcelos affirmed in 1608 that we should ‘make Lisbon head of the world’ in order not to offend the providential intention of God.³⁵

It is essential to remember that contemporaries were well aware that much urban praise, including comparisons with Rome, was exaggerated. In 1581, the

Venetian ambassadors Vincenzo Tron and Girolamo Lippomano declared, for instance, that the Portuguese 'celebrate Lisbon with such an abundance of words that they make it equal to the principal cities of the world'.³⁶ But it is nevertheless true that Lisbon could bear these hyperbolic descriptions in ways that lesser cities could not. Pedro de Mariz compared Coimbra to Paris, Rome, Cairo, Constantinople, Venice and Naples and claimed that some buildings of the city were just as good as the ancient Roman amphitheatres. But he had to admit that there existed 'bigger', 'more populated' and 'more esteemed' cities.³⁷

In 1652, Luís Marinho de Azevedo summarized previous hyperbolic praise of Lisbon and indicated that it had been 'applauded as Monarch, Empress, Queen, and Princess of the Ocean;...new Rome, biggest [city] of Europe, a realm of its own'. But instead of treating this ambitious list as mere rhetorical ornamentation, he argued that these commendations were actual proofs (syllogisms, in his words) of the excellences of the city.³⁸

To understand urban comparisons it is important to note that the size of a city and the number of its residents were difficult to ascertain with precision. Calculations on size and population consequently ranged from purposeful exaggeration to comparative estimates, but unlike other rhetorical embellishment they transmitted a neat sense of hierarchy between different European cities. In 1554, Damião de Góis was confident that Lisbon, with its 20,000 houses, could compete with any other European city in size, number of residents and beautiful buildings.³⁹ In 1599, Jakob Cuelvis considered Lisbon 'the major city of the world', identified 15,000 houses within its walls and suggested sending Portuguese women to populate distant colonies 'like the Romans wisely did in ancient Rome'.⁴⁰ Gil González Dávila admitted in 1623 that although the number of inhabitants 'has

never been possible to assess', the 'most curious' estimated it at 500,000 persons.⁴¹ And in 1625, António Gasco Coelho affirmed that Lisbon was the most populated city in Europe if not the entire world.⁴² These claims reflect Lisbon's sixteenth-century growth and imperial expansion. In the second half of the seventeenth century, such estimates were more modest and urban giants like Paris and London were acknowledged as larger.

Paul Slack is one of the few historians to have identified the vogue for urban comparisons. He showed that the great fire of 1666 spurred competition in size, monuments, ornaments and population in both London and Paris. Since 1670, bills of mortality of both cities allowed for precise measurement and showed how London progressively took the lead.⁴³ References to ancient and contemporary Rome played a role in this competition. William Petty compared the greatness of James II's London to Rome in the year of the birth of Christ. Moreover, he indicated that in 1687 London was as big as contemporary Rome and Paris put together.⁴⁴ Madrid counted with 30,000 habitants in 1561 and 130,000 in 1630, but did not grow significantly until the end of the seventeenth century.⁴⁵

In any case, Lisbon maintained a prominent place in the ranking of European capitals. In his travel diary to Spain and Portugal in 1668–69, Cosimo de Medici indicated that with 'nearly 150 thousand souls' Lisbon was 'one of the most important centres of Christianity'.⁴⁶ For the Italian traveller Domenico Laffi, who visited the city in 1687, it was common opinion that 'Lisbon is the most populated city of all Christianity, excluding Paris.'⁴⁷ And at the beginning of the eighteenth century, John Stevens pointed out that 'Lisbon is certainly not to compare for bigness either to London or Paris, but excepting those two, it is much bigger than any other city either in France, or England.'⁴⁸

Competition and comparison served well to express ideas about the real and desired development of cities. Francisco de Monçon, for example, not only compared the noble villas and residences scattered all around Lisbon to those of Solomon, but also to contemporary Florence (and in 1571, to Rome, Florence and Genoa). This shows Monçon's knowledge of the latest architectural novelties and a willingness to relate the aristocratic sociability of Lisbon to Italy. Ancient and contemporary referents mix again in Monçon's description of the building of the Tribunal da Relação. For him, Lisbon's high court was as good as the Athenian Areopagus or the Roman Senate, and better than the contemporary courts of the Roman Rota and Castilian chancelleries.⁴⁹

Authors who had precise ideas about the urban planning of Lisbon used the comparison with Rome even more specifically. In 1571, the art theorist, sculptor and architect Francisco de Holanda claimed that ancient cities cared for their temples, fortresses, walls and palaces, but also took special interest in 'bringing the sources of waters to the cities with arches and pipes, as seen in Carthage and in Rome'. Therefore, if Lisbon pretends to be 'the biggest and noblest city in the world' the king D. Sebastião had to bring back the water 'that the Romans brought from two leagues away'.⁵⁰ Holanda's Roman parallel specifically mentioned the nearby town of Belas, the starting point of the lost Roman aqueduct. He also suggested restoring public signposts in the roads in imitation of ancient Roman ones.⁵¹ Gail Paster has shown that in ancient Rome construction was related to notions of conquest and glory and that Renaissance theorists transmitted the physical and symbolical centrality of the city.⁵² At the beginning of the sixteenth century, King Manuel I moved his palace near the river, promoted significant transformations in the city and opened the waterfront to long-distance

commerce.⁵³ Holanda's project aimed to continue fashioning the real Lisbon according to the perceived relevance of the Portuguese empire.

Examples of architectural programmes imitating contemporary Rome include the circulation of drawings and models of early sixteenth-century Carpi (in the Po river valley)⁵⁴ and Henry IV's project of Place de France in Paris, led by Sully in the first decade of the seventeenth century.⁵⁵ Similarly, the reference to ancient Rome inspired contemporary urban developments. Sixteenth-century humanists in Seville created a complex identity of the city as a new Rome. The great alley built in 1574–78 at the Alameda de Hércules displayed a statue of its mythical founder, Julius Caesar, with a legend that compared Philip II with the Roman emperor.⁵⁶ One interesting case within the Portuguese empire is the convent of Santa Monica in Goa, built in the first decades of the seventeenth century. According to Agostinho de Santa Maria, the residents of Goa protested as heavily against the construction of this building as ancient Romans against the palaces that seemed to 'transform Rome in a single house for Nero'.⁵⁷

In the seventeenth century, many claimed the imperial status of Lisbon, but urban developments were of lesser importance compared to the massive architectural works sponsored by John V at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The new necessities of an expanding city were sometimes linked to old proposals for urban development and projects once again took inspiration in ancient and contemporary Rome. Manuel da Maia resumed Francisco de Holanda's project for an aqueduct in 1728–31, which had also been suggested to Philip III when he visited the water source at Belas in 1619.⁵⁸

The recovery and re-enactment of Roman models was boosted with the arrival of Italian artists and architects who had studied and incorporated the Roman past

into their styles. Near Belém, Filippo Juvarra projected to build an imposing lighthouse, which his first anonymous biographer described as a 'column in the ancient style, imitating those which are seen in Rome'.⁵⁹ Between 1717 and his first visit to Lisbon in 1719, Juvarra also drafted a sketch for a new royal palace. On both sides of the main façade, he used a model of arches and galleries of columns of Roman inspiration.⁶⁰ And the plans to build this new palace were connected to the building exploits of Domitian in Rome. Inspired by the *Silvae* of Statius, in 1716 the count of Redondo wrote to the engineer Manuel da Maia indicating 'how convenient will it be, if it were possible, to make in this Court the works that Domitian executed in Rome with so many applause'.⁶¹

London was also growing at a speedy pace during these years, and Daniel Defoe offered a similar Roman view of the process. In *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724–26), he commented that 'new squares and new streets rising up every day to such a prodigy of buildings, that nothing in the world does, or ever did, equal it, except old Rome in Trajan's time'.⁶² Domitian was well known for his palaces and Defoe's mention of Trajan recalled the large public infrastructures he sponsored.

Discourse on the city was not limited to texts and buildings. Urban festivities exposed residents and visitors to multiple messages about the city's identity. If the sumptuous entries of ambassadors represented the wealth and power of their country, capital cities acted as telling images of the whole political entities they headed. The greatest examples of royal entries in Lisbon are those of Philip II and Philip III, both moments of major political significance.⁶³

Philip II's 1581 entry transmitted notions of concord and respect of the status of Portugal that were difficult to represent with imperial images of conquest and

triumph. Nevertheless, some aspects of the festivity were assimilated to Roman themes. Bullfights at the Terreiro do Paço, Lisbon's major square, were for instance compared to the Roman amphitheatre.⁶⁴ During the entry of Philip III in 1619, that same square was compared to the Roman theatre built by Lucius Mummius,⁶⁵ and the dramatic play performed for the occasion at the Jesuit College was also compared to Roman theatre.⁶⁶ And one poem equalled Philip's III entry with the entry of 'Caesar the strong' in Rome.⁶⁷

However, compared to James I's London, one feels a relative lack of Roman themes in Lisbon's entries. In 1603, Rome was a central element in the celebration of the union of the crowns in the head of James I and of Britain's imperial character. The arches built by Stephen Harrison and the texts produced for the occasion by Thomas Dekker, George Owen Harry and Ben Jonson depicted London as a new Rome, the Thames as the Tiber and James I as a new Brutus.⁶⁸

Interpreting the audience and the effect of festive imagery is not an easy task. There obviously existed several audiences and varied levels of reading of the messages, emblems and decorations,⁶⁹ and the memory of these festivities enjoyed a second life in news and printed official accounts with engravings and complete descriptions of the speeches and emblems.⁷⁰ It is therefore complicated to determine whether the audience was exclusively local. Although imperial comparison was a common language to establish intra-European claims and legitimacies, most Lisbon residents would never have seen Rome or any of the other cities with which the city was compared. Lisa Voigt stressed the local uses of festivities, but she also indicated that some Portuguese accounts aimed to reach international audiences (notably Spanish).⁷¹ It is equally difficult to assess whether

the crowd 'aggressively asserted its presence'⁷² in the events or was the mere recipient of royal and civic propaganda.

Sidney Anglo suggested that loudness, music and cheers were sometimes preferred to political subtleties in the messages of London's pageants.⁷³ And Benjamin Klein indicated that the moral message of civic performances was lost on the crowd, which found ways to amuse themselves and express their opinions.⁷⁴ Many spectators were probably more impressed by the spectacle of the court moving – in the form of both a progress and an acclamation – than by emblems and poetry.⁷⁵ James Knowles has nevertheless shown that civic rituals were a source of civic identity for London, which was depicted as pre-eminent and beneficial for the realm. The wealth of the city, its maritime trade and its integration in the national fabric were frequent themes of pageants and oaths.⁷⁶ In Madrid, the monarch staged his power publicly, and sumptuary competition allowed aristocrats to recognise his position within the whole and to manifest their aspirations publicly.⁷⁷

In 1666, Alfonso VI's entry celebrated his wedding with Maria Francisca of Savoy. This was the first royal entry in Lisbon of the Braganza dynasty. After the separation from Spain, Portuguese deeds and the power of the king were essential parts of the message, but comparisons with Rome were practically absent.⁷⁸ Overall, the most recurrent themes in the representation of the Portuguese monarchy, both in Lisbon and abroad, were domain over the four continents and the image of a king of kings. Exceptionally, Siro Ulperni's account of the festivities on the canonization of Maria Maddalena de Pazzi in 1672 indicated that he had seen in Lisbon 'a model of ancient Rome', and a festivity more important than 'all the celebrations made when the metropolis of Rome was mistress of all the

world'.⁷⁹ But the notion of Rome did not play a consistent role in Lisbon's civic rituals. The related idea of a commercial emporium was used profusely instead. It expressed Lisbon's political claims at its best and was much easier to detect in everyday urban life.

<A-head>Commerce and the metropolis

While one of the challenges of global perspectives on history is to explain how people experienced global connections both individually and within their local contexts,⁸⁰ there nevertheless exist some indicators that help to solve this problem. Lisbon or London did not only have trade flows and mixed inhabitants but also possessed a global consciousness and were recognized for this particular aspect.⁸¹ And many testimonies linked the commercial activity of these cities to their urban identity.

Praises of Lisbon's port abound. Philip II wrote in 1579 that Lisbon was 'principal port and commerce of everything',⁸² and Luís Mendes de Vasconcelos affirmed that groups of fifty or sixty foreign boats arrived at the city every day.⁸³ The Tagus, said John Stevens, 'conveys up to it the riches of the east and west-Indies, and the commodities of all the European nations'.⁸⁴ The archetypical view of Lisbon always shows in the foreground the river full of boats in frantic activity, followed by the palace, customs and docks by the riverbank.⁸⁵ This view recalls contemporary images of London⁸⁶ and enjoyed a surprising 'afterlife'. A famous view of *Nouvel Amsterdam* in 1672 represented the North Sea full of boats supplying the island of Manhattan. But this image was carefully forged using a view of Lisbon published in the *Civitatis Orbis Terrarum* of 1593 with the legend 'emporium nobilissimum'.⁸⁷

Diego Panizza proposed a stark opposition between eighteenth-century models of commercial empires and Roman Machiavellian notions of civic virtue, military conquest and territorial domination overseas. According to Panizza's analysis, London is the paradigm of the new commercial empire represented in the works of David Hume and earlier of Charles Davenant and Andrew Fletcher.⁸⁸ Although commerce was a controversial issue, notions of universal emporium were particularly apt for urban descriptions. Explicit competition between European cities often referred to the variety of merchandise and the relevance of foreign trade. The Dutch developed particular notions of commercial reason-of-state since the seventeenth century. Johan and Pieter de la Court, for instance, reworked notions of luxury and republican decadence into new theories of commercial colonization and free commerce.⁸⁹ And against the general Catholic reluctance about commerce and luxury, Antonio de Herrera used the example of the Roman Republic to defend the growth of luxury as a normal expression of the growth of the Spanish aristocracy around 1615.⁹⁰

In Lisbon, *exotica* and foreigners made long-distance commerce tangible and the visibility of the New World was surely greater in Lisbon or Seville than in Madrid.⁹¹ Black Africans and North African 'Moors' exoticized Lisbon's festivities and royal entries.⁹² And the Portuguese Queen Catherine of Austria frequently used gifts of rare overseas products and slaves 'as demonstrations of the opulence, exoticism and splendour of her cosmopolitan court'.⁹³ These were distinguishing features of the city, noticed by both locals and visitors.

Bartolomé Villalba y Estaña's *The Pilgrim* (written between 1562 and 1580) described the carved coconuts 'from India' found in some stores at the Rua Nova, and depicted Lisbon as a 'mother of blacks'.⁹⁴ Venetian ambassadors Tron and

Lippomano described its Indian shops and said that Lisbon merchants 'make rivers of money, which our venetians loose' with goods from Syria and Alexandria,⁹⁵ and Giovanni Botero's treaty on the greatness of cities – full of comparative statements – repeated several times this view of Lisbon.⁹⁶ Jakob Cuelvis saw more rarities in the Rua Nova than at the Pont au Change in Paris or in Cheapside in London.⁹⁷ The presence of merchant ships continually reminded observers of the city's trade and oceanic connections, and served to consolidate Lisbon's imperial identity. During his second visit to Lisbon in 1645, Balthasar de Monconys did not miss the opportunity to taste or buy coconuts, pineapples, parrots and parakeets.⁹⁸

For Damião de Góis, who listed in detail the exotic goods that arrived at Lisbon from India, Persia, Arabia, Ethiopia, Brazil and Africa, only Lisbon and Seville could be named 'ladies and queens of the Ocean'.⁹⁹ Seville and Lisbon, with their annual fleets from India and America, were rivals with a relatively similar role within the Spanish empire. This explains why Nicolau d'Oliveira explained the differences between both cities and proudly remarked that Lisbon was 'at least three times bigger than Seville'.¹⁰⁰ Affluence of trade also served to express notions of European pride. In his *Descrição de Portugal*, Duarte Nunes do Leão compared Lisbon's commercial flows to 'Alexandrine merchandises', the name given to Indian products traded through Alexandria to ancient Rome.¹⁰¹ He claimed that the goods that arrived from China, India and other far-flung territories and were distributed into Europe should be named 'merchandises from Lisbon'. For Nunes, Lisbon exceeded Rome and Alexandria, because the Portuguese had passed 'further away than where the Greeks and Romans reached'.¹⁰²

When in 1672 the travel writer Jouvin de Rochefort said that Madrid 'can be called the capital of the world with more reason than pagan Rome because the

rarities of the Indies can be seen there', he merely adapted a description used for Lisbon many years before. The French author moreover recognized that this merchandise 'spread in all parts of Europe' after their arrival to Cadiz or Lisbon.¹⁰³ Cadiz partly replaced Seville at the end of the seventeenth century, and officially adopted the discourse of commercial emporium in a local history commissioned in 1690. Quotes by Strabo and Herodotus proved that the city had been 'since its origins, Emporium of all the world, in which the most remote nations negotiate and deal'.¹⁰⁴

Copiousness of things had a political reading, since capital cities were used as metonyms of their empires. The abundance of things and peoples from all over the world highlighted the reach of imperial power. This kind of discourse is often present in the first chorographies of London. William Camden's definition of the city as 'epitome of or Breviary all Britain, the seat of the British empire' was later complemented by Edward Chamberlayne and others with the terms 'Emporium' and 'town of trade'.¹⁰⁵ In the case of Lisbon, these terms also expressed the intense competition between Lisbon and other Spanish cities, both before and after the period of Spanish rule from 1580 to 1640.

In 1586, the Venetian ambassador Vincenzo Gradenigo reported Cardinal Granvelle's view that Lisbon would be the best capital of the monarchy, but 'the Castilians would not allow it'.¹⁰⁶ The exceptional transfer of the court of Philip III from Madrid to Valladolid (1601–06) and the increasing complaints about the decline of Portuguese dominion in Asia fostered Lisbon's claims.

In 1608, Luís Mendes de Vasconcelos amassed a number of arguments to promote the city to head of the Iberian empire.¹⁰⁷ He praised Lisbon's oceanic location in economic, geographical, strategic and astrological terms and

established a detailed theory on the characteristics of imperial cities. Quoting Cicero (*De lege agrarian*, 2, 87), he argued that the ancient Romans only identified three cities able to 'sustain the empire' apart from Rome.¹⁰⁸ These were Carthage, Corinth and Capua. All of them, to Vasconcelos's great contentment, were placed nearby the sea.

During Spanish rule, the Portuguese repeatedly claimed royal attention, local privileges and the defence of Portuguese interests in Asia. The theme of an abandoned, widow Lisbon expressed these claims.¹⁰⁹ The notion of a metropolitan emporium also contributed to sustain Lisbon's pre-eminence and imperial identity.

The arches sponsored by Portuguese merchants and English residents for Philip III's entry in 1619 showed two different statues representing the city. Both were similar to the allegorical figure of the crowned city drawn by Francisco de Holanda in 1571.¹¹⁰ The first, which was the very first thing the king would see, 'wore a royal crown on her head, for she is Princess to the rest of the cities'.¹¹¹ João Baptista Lavanha, official chronicler of this royal journey, indicated that Lisbon was a 'universal market of all the world' and an 'abbreviated world'.¹¹² He also described the second crowned statue, which represented the Metropolis 'of the biggest empire'.¹¹³ In their speech to Philip III, urban authorities evoked Lisbon's imperial character and suggested that the king should 'make head of his Empire this ancient and illustrious city'.¹¹⁴

Practically at the same moment, the Spanish chronicler Gil González Dávila recognized the metropolitan character of Lisbon in a book dedicated to Madrid. For Dávila, Lisbon was 'a Realm on its own, where many nations join together to deliver on the increasing of their wealth and commerce'.¹¹⁵ António Coelho Gasco fused the political and commercial when he described Lisbon as 'universal

mistress, emporium of commerce, and contact point for the Universe, where all the peoples of the world, no matter how remote, arrive to its Court'.¹¹⁶ The court, the city and its markets were thus proposed as an example of universal, centralized power.

In 1628, Manuel de Faria e Sousa recalled the deeds of the Portuguese king D. Manuel, who had succeeded in transforming the court of Lisbon into a 'universal marketplace and the common fatherland of all nations'.¹¹⁷ Ernst Kantorowicz signalled the political significance of this classical motive¹¹⁸ and Pablo Fernández Albaladejo recently demonstrated that in seventeenth-century Spain, discourse on *communis patria* was linked to the debate on the characteristics of strong, stable courts and to the efforts to 'imperialize the monarchy'.¹¹⁹ Faria e Sousa used the phrase to highlight the reign of D. Manuel I as the starting point for the process of Portuguese empire building.

Francisco Manuel de Melo once again praised Lisbon in 1660 as the capital of an empire and an emporium,¹²⁰ and the French priest Rafael Bluteau, who contributed actively to the development of a sense of Portugueseness in the years after the separation from Spain, compared himself with a Persian visitor in the Rome of Constantine. At that time, Bluteau indicated, Rome was arbiter of the universe and now Lisbon is the 'illustrious head of the Lusitanian empire' and a 'brief compendium of the great things of the entire world'.¹²¹ Some ten years after, António Vaz Boto similarly linked the commercial, maritime and political aspects of this 'head of the universe', 'court and an emporium'.¹²² Boto indicated that there existed a 'fixed' and a 'floating Lisbon' and that the 'ancient navy was a puerile thing' compared to the boats constructed in the docks and shores of Lisbon.¹²³

Finally, I want to stress that these kinds of Roman and metropolitan images were not limited to Iberian empires but were shared across Europe. Edward Hatton's *New View of London* (1708), offers a very similar mix of political and economic claims. Hatton, like Nicolau d'Oliveira in 1620, also shared an imaginative approach to the remote foundation of London, which had been built '350 years before the building of *Rome*'. London was, according to the etymology proposed by William Camden, and recovered by Hatton, a 'City of Ships'. It was not only ancient, but also spacious, populous, rich, beautiful and 'Seat of the *British* Empire', 'the Compendium of the Kingdom' and 'the Principal Town of Traffic'.¹²⁴ Lisbon expressed its identity and its political ambitions in extremely similar terms.

In fact, Lisbon's historical role occasionally inspired eighteenth-century commercial views on empire. In 1776, William Julius Mickle's translated the *Lusiads* of Camões, a work he considered as 'the epic poem of the birth of commerce'. Richard Helgerson has considered Mickle's rendering completely misplaced, since it failed to acknowledge Camões' Christian conception of empire.¹²⁵ Helgerson, as Panizza, distinguished the commercial traits of the British empire from previous imperial theory, Roman and Christian inspired. However, Miguel Martínez has recently reinterpreted the references to commerce (understood as an imperial enterprise led by the monarch himself, not as the activity of individual agents) that went along with the Christian epic framework of the poem. Indeed, Mickle exploited these characteristics and introduced his translation with an apology for commerce and an historical account of Portuguese exploration. As Martínez has underlined, Mickle traced a Portuguese genealogy for the improved commercial mission of the British empire, and praised 'the glorious

gifts which the spirit of Commerce, awaked by prince Henry of Portugal, has bestowed upon Europe in general; and...upon the British empire in particular'.¹²⁶

Lisbon's European role was expressed through the accustomed references to Rome and continuously recognized by contemporaries. Modern research on empires tends to minimize the role of the city, partly because of its integration within the Spanish empire. But Lisbon competed fiercely to defend its rank within the Spanish monarchy and exploited an image of metropolitan emporium used also by other major cities, like London and even New York. The Catholic New Rome of John V disappeared with the 1755 earthquake, but only after two centuries of being a 'Princess of the cities of the world'¹²⁷ and a notable competitor in the ranks of European imperial capitals.

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