

Antonio Manzelli. An early View of Madrid (c. 1623) in The British Library

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ABSTRACT

This article examines a re-discovered printed view of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid from around 1623 by the Italian artist, Antonio Manzelli. The print survives in the British Library in London, having been part of the royal collection of George III. The article analyzes the print for the empirical evidence it affords about the appearance of the Plaza Mayor at the time of its completion, and also for the rich textual evidence it offers. In the text, Madrid is celebrated as the achievement of a well-organized municipal government who serve the city's needs and a benevolent ruler who provides Madrid with a gift worthy of the gods' admiration. The Plaza Mayor is, thus, the embodiment of good government.

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina una estampa recién descubierta con una vista de la Plaza Mayor de Madrid de hacia 1623, realizada por el artista italiano Antonio Manzelli. La obra se conserva en la British Library de Londres, habiendo formado antes parte de la colección del rey Jorge III. El artículo analiza la estampa, considerando tanto lo que nos enseña del aspecto de la plaza inmediatamente después de su terminación, como lo que nos explica el texto que la acompaña. En el texto, se elogia a Madrid como la obra de un gobierno municipal bien organizado que sirve a las necesidades de la ciudad, y como obra de un líder benévolo que ofrece a los dioses un regalo digno de su admiración. La Plaza Mayor se convierte así en un poderoso símbolo de buen gobierno.

In 1622, the Italian-born engraver and painter Antonio Manzelli signed a contract to make a map of Madrid and a view of the recently completed Plaza Mayor, for which he possessed elaborate drawings. Three hundred prints were commissioned on 11 September of that year, and Manzelli was paid for his work eight months later, suggesting that the images had been engraved in Madrid¹. Although copies of Manzelli's prints were sold in the patio of the Royal Alcázar in Madrid—presumably by town officials—as well as from Manzelli's own house in the parish of San Martín, no known copies of these images have surfaced until now. There has been considerable debate about the

identification of Manzelli's Madrid map, as will be discussed below. Notice of the Plaza Mayor view, however, has been rather silent. It would have been the first printed view of the monumental city square, and one made on the eve of its completion. Thus, the survival of the view in a bound album in the Map Room of the British Library in London is both a surprise and a notable find².

The print carries a proud title along its upper border that reads: "Verdadero retrato del suntuoso Edificio de la Plaza de la muy noble villa de Madrid" (Fig. 1). Measuring a considerable 455 × 900 mm, Manzelli's view is significant for the empirical evidence it offers with regard to

the appearance of the great city square. Beyond this, however, the view includes a great deal of text which illuminates the architectural features of the Plaza Mayor, as well as aspects of its construction history, and its meaning for the residents of Madrid, royal and commoner alike. Although a panegyric verse on the print dates the image to 1619, Manzelli's dedication itself makes clear that the view was made in the early years of the reign of Felipe IV, who succeeded his father as king in 1621.

The British Library print derives from the Topographical Collection of King George III of England, meaning that it arrived in British royal hands prior to 1824³. It is possible that Manzelli's view of the Plaza Mayor was part of the George III's purchase in 1762 of the collection of the Cardinal Francesco Albani. Albani's collection included the famous "Paper Museum" of drawings and prints assembled by Cassiano dal Pozzo in the early to mid seventeenth century. Although this provenance cannot be confirmed, it is an especially interesting hypothesis given the presence of two drawings of the Plaza Mayor dating to 1626 that derive from Dal Pozzo's collection and are now in Windsor Castle⁴. Notably, one of the Windsor Castle drawings depicts the southern range of the Plaza Mayor in elevation. This is the only elevation not shown by Manzelli, who depicts it instead in plan. Together, the British Library print and Windsor Castle drawings would have provided a "complete" view of the plaza for a long-distance collector.

Manzelli's view focuses on the northern range of the Plaza Mayor, which, along with the eastern and western ranges, is shown in elevation from a high vantage point. The artist fills the open space of the plaza's interior with figures and a distinctive pavement pattern that suggests a dramatic recession into space. The placement of figures in the scene has direct parallels with a painted view of the Plaza Mayor by an unknown artist in the collection of the Museo Municipal de Madrid (Fig. 2). I previously dated the painted view to around 1620, and the museum itself has published a date of 1618⁵. It now appears that the view should be dated around 1623, when Manzelli was paid for the British Library engraving and its other copies. In a study of a view of Valencia signed by Manzelli, Fernando Benito Doménech has highlighted the engraver's experience as a painter, suggesting that he might have painted city views⁶. Though Benito Doménech's evidence is rather weak for attributing paintings of the expulsion of the Moriscos from Valencia to Manzelli, the similarities between the British Library print and the Museo Municipal de Madrid painting could suggest Manzelli's authorship of both.

In the British Library print, Manzelli notes important street names as well as features such as the "puerta de la carnicería" or the "escalera de la caba de San Miguel." Not surprisingly, the most imposing structure in the view is the Panadería located along the northern range of the Plaza Mayor. Manzelli includes an aedicule with the royal arms

above the royal-sponsored building. The aedicule—which also appears in a later map of Madrid to be discussed below—has caused confusion about the actual appearance of the Plaza Mayor in the 1620s. Despite the original intentions of Madrid's regidores, the arms were never placed in this location, but rather in the window space above the royal balcony on the first level of the Panadería façade. Notably, the Panadería range stands out from the others in Manzelli's print. In this representation, the building achieves a freestanding aspect as was initially desired by Felipe II in his first directive for the building dating to 1590⁷. The king's desire for the isolation of the building would have augmented its authority and presence in the heart of the evolving capital.

Beyond the empirical evidence provided by the view, Manzelli includes a few textual passages that make the image all the more valuable as a historical document. A careful study of Manzelli's words confirms that the view of the Plaza Mayor is the one commissioned by the Ayuntamiento in September 1622. The dedication, which is located in a large cartouche along the left border below the arms of Madrid, is worth recording in its entirety, and in its original orthography:

A LA MUY NOBLE Y MUY LEAL VILLA DE MADRID Ofresco a V[uestra] S[eñoría] el verdadero retrato, del edificio mas suntuoso q V[uestra] S[eñoría] tiene entre los muchos que adornan la grandeça desta Villa començado y acabado en los dos Años postreros de aquel Imortal Monarca Rey don Filipe III. Imitando V[uestra] S[eñoría] a los mejores Enperadores de la Monarquía Romana que hicieron mucho por Illustrar a su Roma haciendola tan famoso con la gloria de sus edificios, como con la de sus Leyes. Suplico a V[uestra] S[eñoría] le reciba en senal de mi agradecimiento y de la mercedes que e recibido de la largesa de V[uestra] S[eñoría] y de las que espero de su liberalidad.

The statement is signed, "Antonio Mancelli. CON PRIVILEGIO." Here, the implied parallel between Spain's king and the emperors of ancient Rome is especially notable. City reform efforts are thus seen as revivals of classical—and imperial—grandeur.

A cartouche at the upper right corner of the print appears atop a Doric column and includes a physical description of the Plaza Mayor. In this description, Manzelli largely concurs with the words of the royal chronicler Gil González Dávila, whose *Teatro de las Grandezas de la Villa de Madrid* also appeared in 1623⁸. Manzelli's description reads as follows:

El Suntuoso edificio de la Plaça de la muy noble y leal Villa de Madrid corte del Rey Catolico. Tiene de longitud 436 pies, de latitud 334. En su circunferencia 1536 y Ay en ella 136 casas y 467 Ventanas con sus Balcones de hierro y 3,700 moradores, y en las fiestas publicas caben 51,000 personas. Y en el lienzo del mediodia tiene Ventanas los Reyes, su casa, Consejo Real, Reyno, Nuncio y En-

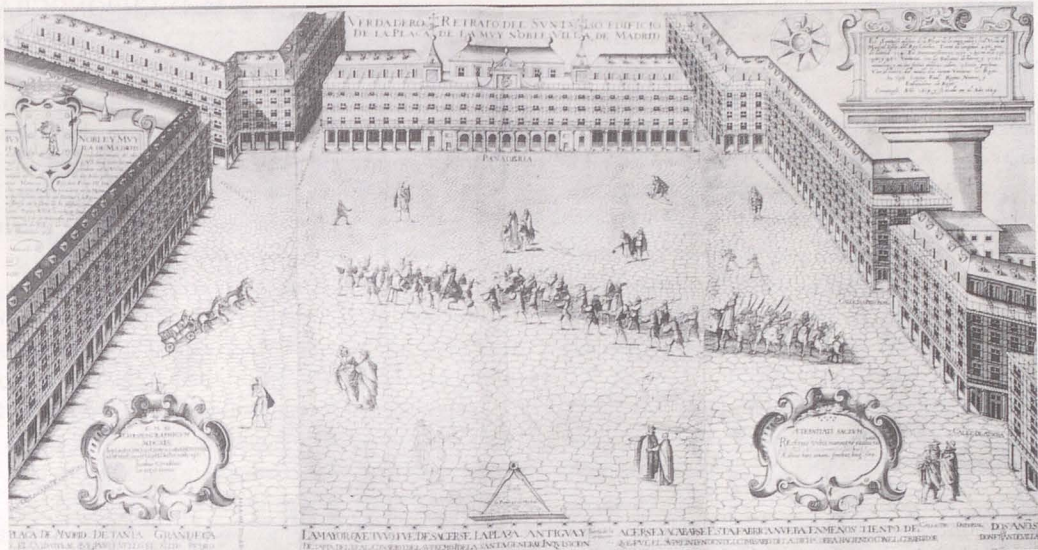


Fig. 1. Antonio Manzelli, "Verdadero retrato del suntuoso Edificio de la Plaza de la muy noble villa de Madrid", c. 1623. Grabado. British Library, London.

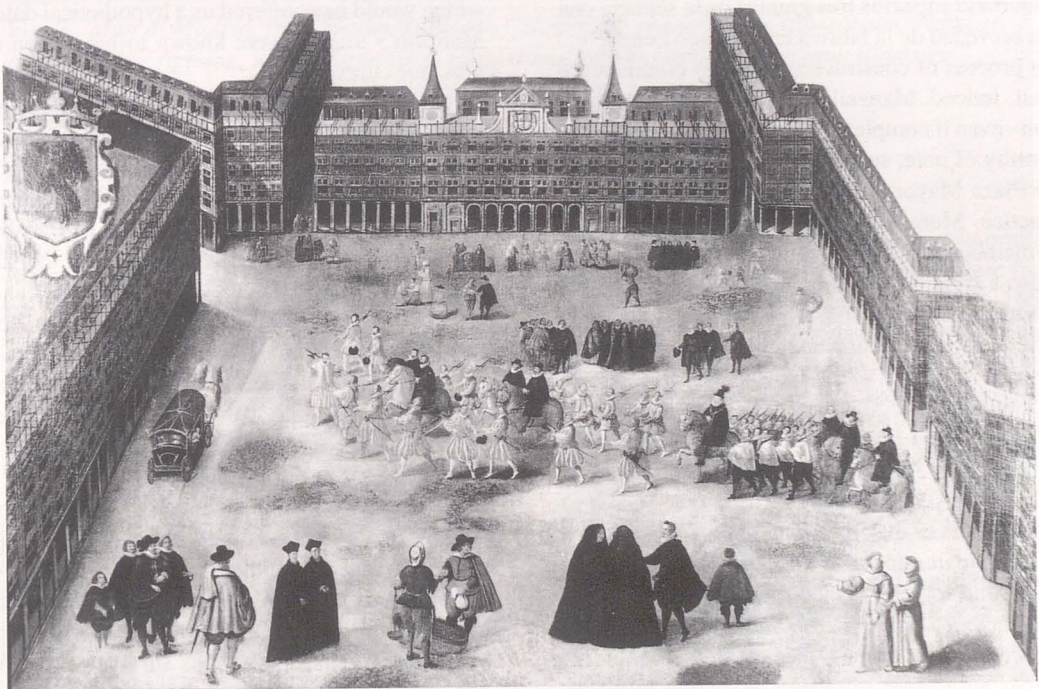


Fig. 2. Anónimo [Antonio Manzelli?], "View of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid", c. 1622. Oil on canvas. Museo Municipal de Madrid.

bajadores de Reyes. Comencose Año 1617 y se acabo en el Año 1619.

The early seventeenth-century reform of the Plaza Mayor actually took place over five years, between 1617 and 1622. Nonetheless the 1617-1619 chronology had been promoted by the Ayuntamiento on a plaque that was ordered in December 1619, installed in 1620, and can still be seen today at the extreme western end of the Panadería. González Dávila, for instance, skirts the dating problem by referring to the Panadería plaque as his information source. Thus, for Manzelli and the royal chronicler, the official date was difficult to contradict, especially since it had been carved in stone.

A committee led by the royal judge, Pedro de Tapia, oversaw the plaza's seventeenth-century reform. Interestingly, Manzelli mentions de Tapia along the lower frame of the engraving. This text also includes the unexpected detail of the committee's working schedule that required its gathering three days a week:

Esta placa de Madrid, de tanta grandeça la mayor que tuvo fue de sacarse la plaza antigua y acerse y acabarse esta fabrica nueva en menos tienpo de dos años. I deve se el ciudadano al que puso en el Sr. L[icencia]do Pedro de Tapia del Real Consejo y del Supremo de la Santa General Inquisicion que fue el Superintendente i comisario de la dicha obra haciendo con el Corregidor Fran[cis]co de Villasis i regidores comisarios tres giuntas cada semana con que luçio la brevedad de la fabrica en tan poco tienpo.

That the process of construction receives commentary is significant. Indeed, Manzelli singles out the brevity of construction—even if completed in 1622 rather than 1619—as a fact worthy of note, suggesting that the careful planning of the Plaza Mayor was a novelty in Spanish architectural practice. Moreover, Manzelli gives credit to the committee members for their work, a nod in part to his patrons but also a tribute to the organization that made the building reform possible “en tan poco tienpo.”

In another cartouche at lower right, Manzelli praises the regidores as inheritors of an ancient Roman tradition of caring for their city as guardians. The Latin inscription reads: “AETERNITATI SACRUM Rectores Urbis, maneat ne ea cura nepotes Aedibus hanc ornant fontibus hocq foro.” It can be translated roughly as follows: “Sacred to Eternity: The rectors of the city so that this care would not await their descendants decorate this [city] with buildings, fountains and this forum”⁹. Once more, the equation of Madrid with ancient Rome via the building of a forum provides evidence of a late Renaissance effort to aggrandize Madrid on par with other European cities that relied on this sort of analogy.

To illustrate further the Renaissance humanist nature of this image, a special verse was composed by a certain Jacobus Verulitius to be included in Manzelli's print. Although Verulitius remains for now a mysterious figure, his verse appears in a fourth cartouche, located at lower left,

and reads as follows: “F. M. D. CHRONOGRAPHICVM M.DC.XIX. IVPITER IN CVNCTAS CERNENS EX NVBIBUS VRBIES, NVN VASTI ASPICIET PULCHRIUS ORBIS OPUS. Iacobus Verulitius iço estos bersos.” A translation suggests that the gods themselves approved of the urban renewal effort represented by the Plaza Mayor. Verulitius asks: “Jupiter looking from out of the clouds upon all of the city, does he not see this most beautiful work of the vast world?”

The large dimensions of Manzelli's print suggest that it was suitable for framing. They also suggest that the accompanying map of Madrid must have been of a similar if not identical size. The original 1622 contract to Manzelli specifies that he could sell his prints at a price of seven reales without illumination, or twenty-six reales with¹⁰. A gold border fetched an additional seven reales for a sale price of thirty-five reales.

In October 1628, the Ayuntamiento recorded in its minutes that each of its members, along with the city's chief scribes, attorney general, and accountants were in possession of Manzelli's prints. However, the copies owned by these officials lacked “marcos de madera dorados” that were used in those copies given to the members of the Consejo de Castilla¹¹. At an earlier date alluded to in the minutes, it had been decided that these images should be framed at the cost of the Ayuntamiento. The earlier date, which would have offered us a hypothetical date by which Manzelli's images were known to have been in circulation, goes unrecorded.

One of the recipients of the gold-leaf frame would have been the corregidor Francisco Brizuelas y Cárdenas who was present at the October 1628 meeting. A 1630 inventory of Brizuela y Cárdenas's house includes painted copies of Titian's *Poesie*, many portraits of Habsburg rulers, and two items of note for the purpose of this article. The first is a view labeled “La plaça de M[adri]d” and assessed at 12 reales, and the second is what appears to be a map called “La villa de Madrid” and assessed at 32 reales¹². Both images can be assumed to be prints by Manzelli. As an aside, it is interesting to note that the Ayuntamiento awarded its members 50 reales in 1628 to frame their prints, while the assessment was taken at 32 reales just two years later. This is concrete evidence of the devaluation of currency—and goods—suffered in Spain in the third decade of the seventeenth century.

Although Manzelli's map of Madrid remains to be discovered—and the appearance of the Plaza Mayor print suggests that it most likely does survive—the printed view considered in this article offers historians important clues of what to look for. Returning to the 1622 contract for the two prints, we note the Ayuntamiento's insistence that the map be dedicated to the local governing body. Moreover, the map should include the town arms of Madrid, as well as images of its patron saints. These saints are not named though the newly canonized Isidro el Labrador would cer-

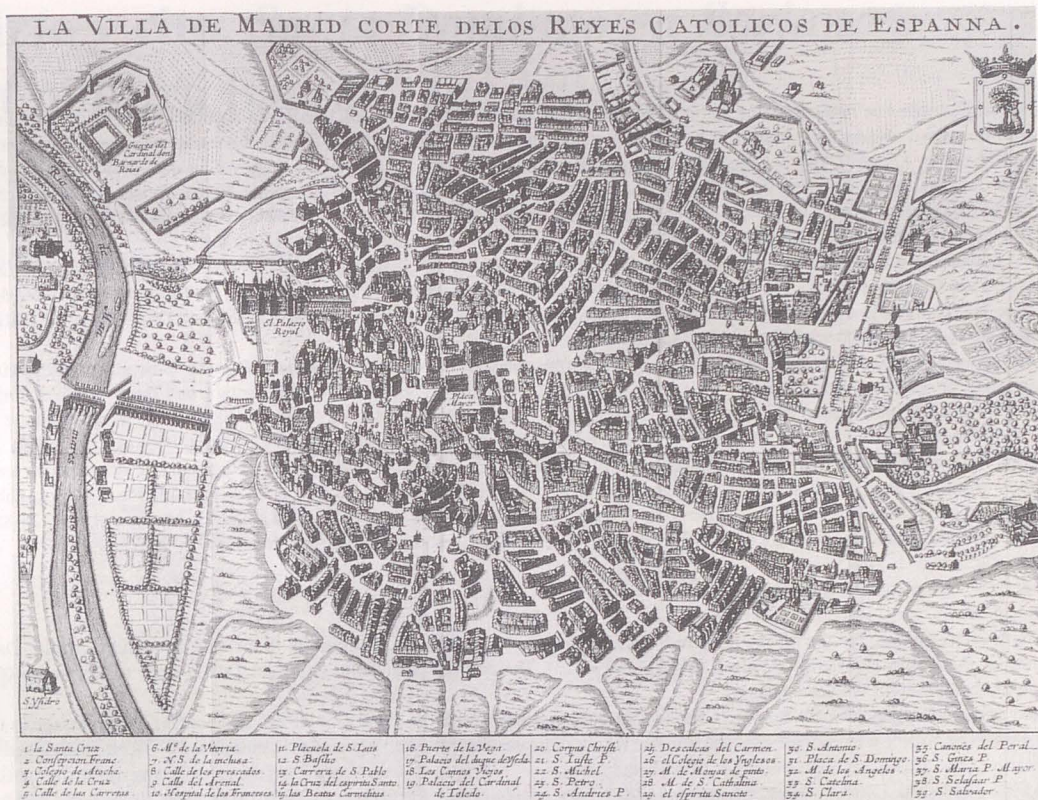


Fig. 3. Map of Madrid, from Martin Zeillerus, "*Hispaniae et Lusitaniae Itinerarium: Nova et accurata descriptione, iconibusq; novis et elegantibus loca earundem praecipua illustrans*" (Amsterdam: Ianssonium Valckenier, 1656). Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

tainly be the most important alongside Santa Ana whose special devotion among Madrileños would also require her presence. The contract also specifies that portraits of the princes and princesses born in Madrid be included. Here, the mapping effort can be tied once again to the historical account of the Spanish court city presented by González Dávila in his *Teatro de las Grandezas de la Villa de Madrid*. The royal chronicler includes 101 pages devoted to the histories of these royal figures, the most important of which is Felipe III to whom all glory is given in the Plaza Mayor view¹³.

A number of scholars have proposed that Manzelli's lost map of Madrid might resemble a well-known map printed by Frederick de Wit in Amsterdam. Indeed, the bird's eye nature of the Plaza Mayor print adds to this hypothesis. Astutely, the scholar of Madrid's growth, Miguel Molina Campuzano, dated the "de Wit" plan to around 1635 given the depiction of monuments included in the

map. The map is known from numerous printings, including the small scale version illustrated here from a guidebook to Spain and Portugal published in 1656 (Fig. 3). More recently, Felipe Pereda has argued convincingly that the "de Wit" map must date to the 1650s¹⁴. It remains possible that the "de Wit" map is based on a lost prototype by Manzelli, though the irregularity of the Plaza Mayor as captured in the later map leaves this matter open to doubt. Moreover, the known map-view of Valencia by Manzelli suggests a wholly different manner of representation that exhibited in the "de Wit" map¹⁵.

It seems safe to conclude that Manzelli remains the earliest recorder of Madrid's appearance as capital of the Spanish Habsburg monarchy in a map. Would this map, too, have been labeled a "verdadero retrato" as is the view of the Plaza Mayor in London? If so, we can only hope that it, too, will resurface soon to help us envision what this transformed Madrid looked like in the eyes of its mapmaker.

NOTAS

- ¹ Manzelli's identity surfaced in 1980 when the archivist and historian, Antonio Matilla Tascón uncovered documents for the printing in the Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid; see Matilla Tascón, "Autor y fecha del plano más antiguo de Madrid. La incógnita resuelta," *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileños*, 17, 1980, 103-7. Note that scholars are not consistent in the spelling of the engraver's name. In this article, I do not follow the spelling on the print in question, but the Italian way of Spanish documents (Manzelli and Mançelli). Fernando Benito Doménech, "Un plano axonométrico por Manceli en 1608," in *Tiempo y espacio en el arte: Homenaje al profesor Antonio Bonet Correa* (Madrid, Editorial Complutense, 1994), 231-45, and also published in *Ars Longa* 3 (1992), 27-37, fills in some of Manzelli's Italian biography.
- ² The print was bound into its present volume in the 1940s, with a shelfmark of K Top. 73.15.c. Miguel Molina Campuzano, *Madrid: Los Siglos Sin Plano* (Madrid, Caja de Madrid, 2004), 51, lists an incorrect reference number at the British Museum, as per the *Catalogue of Printed Maps, Charts and Plans* (London, British Museum, 1967), vol. IX, 445. I am indebted to Mark McDonald, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, who suggested that I look at the British Library for Manzelli's print.
- ³ Peter BARBER, Head of the Map Collections at the British Library, very generously provided information about the provenance of the Manzelli print. On the king's collection, see Barber, "George III's Topographical Collection: A Georgian View of Britain and the World," in *Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Kim Sloan (London, British Museum, 2003), 158-65, and idem, "George III and His Geographical Collection," in *The Wisdom of George the Third*, ed. Jonathan Marsden (London, Royal Collection Publications, 2005), 262-89.
- ⁴ The hypothesis belongs to Peter Barber, to whom I am grateful for sharing his ideas about the arrival of Manzelli's print in British territories. For the drawings at Windsor Castle, see Fernando Marías and Agustín Bustamante García, "De las Descalzas Reales a la Plaza Mayor: Dibujos madrileños en Windsor Castle de la Colección de Cassiano dal Pozzo," in *Cinco siglos de arte en Madrid* (Madrid, Alpuerto, 1991), 74-85, and Jesús Escobar, *The Plaza Mayor and the Shaping of Baroque Madrid*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 206-7.
- ⁵ See ESCOBAR, *Plaza Mayor*, 104-5.
- ⁶ Benito DOMÉNECH, "Un plano axonométrico."
- ⁷ See ESCOBAR, *Plaza Mayor*, 118-125.
- ⁸ There are slight discrepancies, but the efforts to record "facts" about the Plaza Mayor are similar in Manzelli's print and González Dávila, *Teatro de las Grandezas de la Villa de Madrid* (Madrid, Tomas Iunti, 1623). The privilege granted to González Dávila dates to December 1622, and the tome was clearly composed in the years prior.
- ⁹ I am indebted to my colleague, Vincent Rosivach, for his generous assistance with the translation of this and another Latin passage in the print.
- ¹⁰ See MATILLA TASCÓN, "Autor y fecha," for the contract. The author indicates that Manzelli's prints were completed by April 1623, when he was paid for his work.
- ¹¹ Archivo de Villa de Madrid, Libro de Actas, 6 October 1628: "Q por quanto estava acordado que al señor corregidor y cavalleros regidores y escrivanos mayores del ayuntamiento y procu[r]ador gen[er]al y cont[ador]les se pusieran a las mapas de M[adri]d y al lienço q se les dio a cada uno marcos de madera dorados como se pusieron a los que se dio a los señores del Cons[e]jo Y que para ellos se diesen a cada uno cinqu[en]ta r[e]ales para q los hiciesen. Y este acuerdo aunq se hiço no pareçe se escrivo en el libro y así agora se buelve a acordar de nuevo y manda que el acuerdo que a de servir de librança con el qual se le pagen y reçivan en qu[en]ta al dho may[or]do[m]o de propios."
- ¹² AHPM, Prot. 2683, fol. 725v, cited by Marcus B. Burke and Peter Cherry, *Collections of Paintings in Madrid, 1601-1755* (Los Angeles, Provenance Index of the Getty Information Institute, 1997), vol. I, 218-19. Brizuela y Cárdenas died around 25 September 1630, the date in which the Ayuntamiento notes his passing; see Archivo de Villa de Madrid, Libros de Actas.
- ¹³ GÓNZALEZ DÁVILA, *Teatro de las Grandezas*, 37-138. The bulk of these pages is dedicated to an account of Felipe III's reign.
- ¹⁴ PEREDA, "Iconografía de una capital barroca: Madrid entre el simbolismo y la ciencia, *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, 11, 1998, 103-34, and idem, "Immagini di Madrid, fra scienza e arte," in *L'Europa moderna. Cartografia urbana e vedutismo*, eds. Cesare de'Seta and Daniela Stroffolino (Naples, Electa, 2001), 129-43.
- ¹⁵ It seems worthwhile at this stage of the research to put one last point of local folklore to rest in our consideration of the Manzelli images. There has not surfaced any evidence of a link between the earliest map of Madrid and the work of the Florentine cartographer, Antonio Tempesta. Such a link was first suggested in 1947 by Eulogio Varela Hervías, "Noticia sobre un plano de Madrid," *Revista de la Biblioteca, Archivo y Museo* 16 (1947): 271-2, who cited two letters from the German philosopher G.W. Leibniz to Henri Justel, an advisor and secretary to Louis XIV. Dated to 1678, these brief letters make reference to a plan of Madrid in which "toutes les maisons...sont représentées en perspective." When Leibniz suggests "il a esté gravé par Tempeste," this should be taken as a slip for what must have been an intended reference to Pedro Teixeira's great map of 1656.