

## PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/79321>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2019-04-24 and may be subject to change.



# Tacitean Elements in Grotius's Narrative of the Capture of Breda (1590) by Stadtholder Maurice, Count of Nassau (*Historiae*, Book 2)\*

Marc van der Poel

Classics Department, Research Institute HLCS, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

Email: [m.v.d.poel@let.ru.nl](mailto:m.v.d.poel@let.ru.nl)

---

## Abstract

This article is part of the Dossier on Tacitus published in last year's issue of *Grotiana*. It offers a combined study of both the content and the language and style of Grotius' account of the capture of Breda in the second book of the *Historiae*, published in 1657 together with the *Annales* under the title *Annales et Historiae de rebus Belgicis*. A thorough analysis of Grotius' account of this eventful and dramatic turning point in the Dutch revolt reveals that it is nothing but a defective and occasionally unclear rehearsal of the standard narrative of the capture based on the well-known and in Grotius' day widely read history-books written in French and Dutch. The rather artificial imitation of Tacitus's *brevitas* on the stylistic level does not suffice to qualify Grotius's account as a masterful piece of Tacitean writing, because it does not highlight the motives of the chief characters in the story nor the connection between the events and their effects, and because Grotius fails to present his own perspective on this important episode in the war against Spain.

## Keywords

Grotius's *Annales et Historiae*, capture of Breda (1590), Turfschip, Dutch historiography, Tacitus, Tacitean writing, style and content

## Introduction

In this article, which is part of the *Dossier* on Tacitus and Grotius published in the previous issue of this journal – *Grotiana* 29 (2008), 73–149 –, I aim to contribute to the discussion of Grotius's Tacitism in the *Annales et Historiae de rebus Belgicis*. Does this work deserve its reputation as an outstanding example of Tacitean historiography? In order to address this question, I will follow

---

\* I am greatly indebted to dr. P. Tuynman, to whose judgements I owe many of my observations and conclusions.

J. Waszink's suggestion in the Introduction to the *Dossier* (p. 75) and offer a combined study of both the content and the language and style of one selected passage from the second part of Grotius's work, the *Historiae*, in which a famous event in the war against Spain is narrated. After a brief introduction, I will first present a summary of the passage in question (section 1), then discuss its Tacitean characteristics, first from the point of view of the content of the narrative (section 2), then from the point of view of its language and style (section 3). Finally in the conclusion (section 4) I will attempt to formulate a general assessment of the Tacitean quality of our passage.

The fame of the *Annales et Historiae de rebus Belgicis* as a preeminent example of Tacitean historiography dates from the second half of the seventeenth century and persists in the modern age. Thus, Fueter praised Grotius in 1911 as Tacitus's equal 'in der Kunst der psychologischen Analyse' and as his superior 'in der Diskussion militärischer und politischer Probleme.' Romein 1941 stressed the great distance between the histories of the Dutch Revolt in Bor, Van Meteren and Van Reyd on the one hand and those of the unsurpassed Hooft and Grotius on the other hand (p. 19); according to Romein, the work of Hooft and Grotius constitutes the 'fourth or dramatic' phase of historiography, in which 'the characters have been given stature and character and thereby motives for their actions and decisions' and 'events have their causes and consequences' (p. 21). As to Tacitus, he is a unique Roman historiographer, because he confines himself to the essentials of the events he chooses to relate, and in his account of those events he focuses on their causes and effects. He recreates single historical occurrences into grandiose scenes, showing particular interest in both the human drama behind events and the hidden motives which direct the running of things. His unparalleled way of presenting historical material is matched by his singular style of writing, featuring short sentences with frequent ellipses and omission of connecting conjunctions, longer periods characterized by participles and ablatives instead of subordinate clauses, deliberate syntactical irregularities, poetic and archaic diction, and the frequent use of *sententiae* throughout. Like all Roman historians, Tacitus seeks to moralize by presenting examples of good and bad behavior, but his mood is uniquely pessimistic. In Grotius's time, it was expected that historiography did justice to the value of history as, to use Daniel Heinsius's words, 'mother of the truth, guide to the lives of people, true instigator of our actions, the "capital" of political wisdom', for, among other things, 'history teaches better than philosophy what it means to be moderate and noble, and what are the tasks of a judge, a member of a governing council and a commander at war'. In his article published in the previous issue of this journal (29, 2008, p. 88-90), J. Waszink has cited in detail some passages from three contemporaries of

Grotius to illustrate why it was Tacitus whose work counted as the supreme model for historiography: Lipsius focuses most on the content, and then briefly counters the objections against Tacitus's style; Daniel Heinsius also stresses the qualities of the content of Tacitus's work and continues with the observation that its style matches its content; finally, Vossius praises Tacitus's style, but judges his prudence more praiseworthy.<sup>1</sup>

In order to assess the alleged Tacitean quality of Grotius's writing, I have chosen a passage at the beginning of book 2 of the *Historiae*, in which Grotius relates a famous episode which occurred at the end of February and the beginning of March 1590 in the war against Spain. In those days, the Dutch army, under Stadtholder Maurice, count of Nassau (1567-1625), used a stratagem to conquer the important fortress of Breda, which had been in Spanish hands since 1581. On the peatbarge of the Van Bergens, a family of skippers in Leur, not far west of Breda, well over 70 soldiers with their officers, led by Charles de Héraugière, captain in the army, were hidden under the deck, which was loaded with peat that was to be delivered in the fortress.

The capture of Breda was the first in a series of victories of Stadtholder Maurice, which eventually forced the Spanish troops to leave the territory of the Seven United Provinces constituting the Dutch Republic. It was already in its own time a legendary act of heroism that was widely boasted of as a modern counterpart of the capture of Troy by means of the wooden horse. The capture of Breda appealed to the imagination of people both in the Dutch Republic and abroad. The first accounts of it were published practically instantaneously

---

<sup>1</sup> E. Fueter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie* (München, Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1911), p. 244. J. Romein, 'Spiegel Historiae van de Tachtigjarige Oorlog', in J. Romein a.o., *De tachtigjarige oorlog* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1941), pp. 1-31. See furthermore E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier, 'Grotius, Hooft and the Writing of History in the Dutch Republic', in *Clio's Mirror. Historiography in Britain and the Netherlands*, ed. by A.C. Duke and C.A. Tamse (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1985), pp. 55-72, and, in the same volume, A.E.M. Janssen, 'A "Trias Historica" on the Revolt of the Netherlands: Emanuel van Meteren, Pieter Bor and Everhard van Reyd as Exponents of Contemporary Historiography', pp. 9-30. D. Heinsius, 'De praestantia ac dignitate historiae' in Idem, *Orationum editio nova* (Leiden: B & A Elzevir, 1627), pp. 147-148: 'veritatis mater, vitae norma, actionum propagatrix vera, prudentiae, ut quidam apud Graecos loquitur, metropolis'. Lipsius: 'Quis illo verius narrat, aut brevius? quis narrando magis docet? In moribus, quid est, quod non tangat? In affectibus, quod non revelet?' 'Who tells more truthfully than he, or more briefly? Who teaches more in telling? Which moral topic is there which he does not touch upon? Which emotion that he does not reveal?' (J. Waszink, 'Shifting Tacitisms. Style and Composition in Grotius's *Annales*', *Grotiana* 29 (2008), p. 88). For Heinsius, see the citations in bold print in Waszink, p. 89, note 7. Vossius: 'Et tamen maior est laus ista, quod nihil eo scriptore cogitari possit prudentius.' 'And even so, still greater praise to this writer is that nothing that is more sagacious than he can even be thought of' (Waszink, p. 90).

after the event in two pamphlets, one in German and one in French.<sup>2</sup> In 1606, the story of the capture of Breda was dramatized by Jacob Duym.<sup>3</sup> In this play the parallel between the peatbarge and the wooden horse figures prominently. Duym underlines two points of comparison (both the wooden horse and the peatbarge were filled with armed men, and both were hauled in by their later victims themselves), then stresses that the wooden horse brought ruin upon Troy, while Breda was liberated.<sup>4</sup> The capture of Breda was naturally also treated in more or less detail by the first history-writers to present a continuous narrative of the Dutch revolt, Jean François le Petit,<sup>5</sup> Emanuel van Meteren<sup>6</sup>, Everhart van Reyd,<sup>7</sup> and Pieter Bor.<sup>8</sup> Grotius read these and many

<sup>2</sup> 'Warhafftige zeitung vnd Beschreibung mit was Wunderbarlichen Practiken vnd mitteln / dez Princen von Vranien Son/ Graff Mauritius genannt / das starcke Schlosz vnd Statt Breda hat eingennommen / durch fünff vnd sechtzig Soldaten / so in einem Schiff / mit einem dobbeln Boden daran kommen / den viertzehenden Martij Anno 1590', (n.p. 1590; Gemeentearchief, Breda, no. 1590) and 'Histoire Memorable de la reprinse de la ville et chasteau de Breda, au pays de Brabant, Au Mois de Mars, 1590', (Middelburg: R. Schilders, 1591; Royal Library, The Hague, pamphlet 884). Texts in A. Hallema, 'De oudste gedrukte bronnen der Bredasche turfschiphistorie uit de jaren 1590 en '91', *Het boek. Tweede reeks van het Tijdschrift voor boek- en bibliotheekwezen* 14 (1925), 118-120 and 120-128. The author of the German pamphlet (and in his wake Hallema, p. 110) mistakenly believed that March 4 was the date according to the old, Julian style ('4. Martij / stylo veteri'; Hallema, p. 119) and converted it erroneously on the title page into the new, Gregorian style, introduced in October 1582, which had been immediately adopted by the Spanish king; however, also the States of Holland had adopted the new style already in January 1583 and the city of Breda surrendered in fact on Sunday March 4 New Style.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Duym, *De cloeck-moedighe ende stoute daet, van het innemen des Casteels van Breda en verlossinghe der stad* (Leiden: H.L. van Haestens, 1606); Modern edn with notes by K. van Meel and translation into modern Dutch by A. van den Kieboom (Breda: Hein van Kemenade, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Duym, *De cloeck-moedighe ende stoute daet* (as in n. 3), pp. 100-101.

<sup>5</sup> *La grande chronique ancienne et moderne, de Hollande, Zelande, West-Frise, Utrecht, Frise, Overysseel et Groeningen, jusques à la fin de l'an 1600*, 2 vols. (Dordrecht: J. Canin/G. Guillemot, 1601), II, pp. 578-582.

<sup>6</sup> *Belgische ofte Nederlantsche Historie van onsen tijden (...)*, (Delft: J.C. Vennecool, 1605), fol. 271 recto - 272 recto. I have also used the unauthorized Latin version *Historia belgica nostri potissimum temporis* (Cologne: s.n., 1598), pp. 514-517. See on this edn Janssen (note 1), p. 16. For the first Dutch edn, see below, note 65. There are slight differences between the Latin text and the 1605-edition.

<sup>7</sup> *Oorspronck ende voortganck vande Nederlantsche Oorloghen (...)* (Arnhem: Iacob van Biesen, 1633; 1st edn 1626), pp. 287-289. Grotius was able to consult this work in manuscript from 1605 onward; see P. Tuynman, 'An unknown letter of Frederic Sandius to Hugo Grotius accompanying Everard van Reyd's manuscript', *Quaerendo* 35 (2005), 21-34; especially pp. 23-24; on Van Reyd and his first (posthumous) edition of his work, pp. 24-26. Tuynman also explains what happened to the manuscript of Van Reyd after Grotius was imprisoned: see the question on p. 282 with note 20 in C. Ridderikhoff, 'Een aristocratische geschiedenis van de Opstand: Grotius' *Annales et Historiae de rebus belgicis*', *De zeventiende eeuw* 10 (1994), pp. 277-291.

<sup>8</sup> *Derden-deels tweede stuck vant vervolch der Nederlantsche Oorloghen, ende geschiedenissen* (Leiden: Govert Basson, 1626), *Sevenentwintichste Boeck*, fol. 21 verso - 25-recto. Grotius can

other works on the first period of the 80-years' war and the capture of Breda during the long period in which he was working on his own history of the Dutch revolt against the Spanish rule.

It is useful to briefly recall the genesis of the *Annales et Historiae de rebus Belgicis*. As early as November 1601 the States of Holland, following the suggestion of their leader, the Advocate of Holland Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, resolved to award the then 18-year old Grotius a grant to produce a trial run of a contemporary history of the Republic. By January 1603, Grotius had progressed so far that he was awarded a second grant for its completion. In 1604 he became the official historian of Holland, as successor of Janus Douza, who died in that year. After he had been appointed 'Advocaat-Fiscaal' (public prosecutor for the States of Holland) in 1607, Grotius became so occupied that he had little time left for historiography. Afterwards, his concern for the religious differences in the Republic may have reduced his enthusiasm for historiographical writing. Thus, it was only in 1612 that Grotius had his work delivered by van Oldenbarnevelt to the 'Gecommitteerde Raden', the executive body of the States of Holland. These men placed the manuscript in the hands of a committee, which came to the conclusion that it was not opportune to publish it.

Whatever the reason for this judgement may have been, Grotius himself admitted to J.A. de Thou that he found his work immature and that it should remain unpublished until it could be made better at the proper time thanks to age and good judgement.<sup>9</sup> In the remaining years of his lifetime, both in the Netherlands and after 1621 as a fugitive in France, he continued to read books

---

not have used this work for the first version of his work from 1612; the year 1590 is not covered in Bor's works published before 1612.

<sup>9</sup> 'Prematur itaque immaturus labor, donec aetas cum iudicio tempus quoque emendandi dederit, aut potius exurgat alius, qui res scitu per se non indignas dictione commendet, ut eo libentius discant posteri, quid Batavi fecerint', *Briefwisseling van Hugo Grotius*, ed. by P.C. Molhuysen and others (The Hague, 1928–2001), no. 315, d.d. 5 February 1614 (I, p. 295), hereafter cited as *BW*; also quoted in J.C.G. Boot, 'Hugo Grotius et Cornelius Tacitus', *Verlagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, afdeling Letterkunde*, tweede reeks, twaalfde deel (1883), 339–442, especially pp. 340 and 341. Boot also quotes Grotius's letter to de Thou from June 5, 1615, in which he writes that he lacked a grasp of the historical material at the time of writing his work (= *BW*, no. 315, d.d. 5 February 1614 (I, p. 396)). Moreover, Boot refers to a number of Grotius's letters to his brother Willem between 1637 and 1642 which show that he was never sure whether or not to publish his work (Boot, p. 341, letters cited in note 6; cf. J. Waszink's conclusion of his survey 'Hugo Grotius' *Annales et historiae de rebus Belgicis* from the evidence in his correspondence, 1604–1644', *Lias* 31 (2004), p. 266: 'we cannot be certain that Grotius wanted the text as we have it, to be seen by the world'). See on the genesis of the *Annales et Historiae* also H. Muller, *Hugo de Groot's "Annales et Historiae"*, (diss. Utrecht 1919), chapter 1, p. 1–22, J. Waszink in the article mentioned earlier in this note, and most recently, H. Nellen, *Hugo de Groot. Een leven in strijd om de vrede 1583–1645* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2007), p. 155–156.

and unpublished sources on the revolt of the Dutch against Spain, and he kept revising the text of the manuscript which had been declined for publication. Eventually, the entire work was published posthumously in 1657 by Grotius's sons Cornelius and Petrus, twelve years after the author's death.

I have taken as my starting point the Latin text which has been made public property through this printed edition.<sup>10</sup> The only extant manuscript of the story of the capture of Breda in 1590, the beginning of book 2 of the *Historiae*, is a fair autograph copy of – apparently – the version of 1612 with some additions (most of them in the margin) and a few corrections in the text. Where it seems relevant in the context of my argument, I have mentioned in the notes when a passage constitutes an addition in the manuscript. All additions in the manuscript are printed in italics in the Appendix.<sup>11</sup>

The title *Annales et Historiae de rebus Belgicis*, which Grotius gave to his work well after his escape from Loevestein Castle, calls to mind Tacitus's two main works *Annales* and *Historiae*, and thus manifestly advertises it as a Tacitean historiographical work. Assuming Grotius aspired to write after the fashion of Tacitus, one may expect that the important and dramatic episode of the capture of Breda constituted an outstanding opportunity for him to show his ability to distinguish himself from earlier history-writers as a narrator of great events. It is with this expectation that I approached Grotius's account of the capture of Breda, encouraged by Boot's praise of this narrative in his study of Grotius's Tacitism.<sup>12</sup> To verify my supposition, I have not confined myself to looking at Grotius's style and diction (as Boot has in his study 'Hugo Grotius et Cornelius Tacitus'), but I have also, in accordance with Norma Miller's study on the inseparable unity of style and content in Tacitus (see note 88 below), attempted to assess the narrative quality of Grotius's account. To this end, I have used as material for comparison the works of Le Petit, Van

<sup>10</sup> I have also consulted the seventeenth-century translations in French (1662), English (1665) and Dutch (1681); see for the titles of these translations the introductory note to the Appendix, below, p. 244.

<sup>11</sup> The manuscript is in the University Library of Leiden, ms. Papenbroeck 9.1; the story of the capture of Breda, at the beginning of book 2 of the *Historiae*, comprises fols. 17 recto - 19 verso, with one addition written separately on fol. 18 recto, for which see below, note 51. The title of book 2 underwent three changes; it was first: 'Hugonis Grotii commentariorum de rebus Belgicis liber quartus', *commentarii* being the original title of the whole work. 'Commentariorum' was crossed out and replaced by 'historiarum'; 'quartus' was crossed out and replaced first by 'septimus', then by 'secundus' (cf. Ridderikhoff, 'Een aristocratische geschiedenis', as in n. 7, p. 283. It should be noted that the manuscript does not contain any indication that the entire work had the title 'Annales' at any moment).

<sup>12</sup> Boot, 'Hugo Grotius et Cornelius Tacitus' (as in n. 9), p. 355: 'In rebus gestis narrandis et in institutis describendis quantus artifex fuerit (sc. Grotius), plura exempla ostendunt, maxime in Historiarum libris. Ut pauca nominem ... quaeque de Breda dolo capta.'

Meteren, Van Reyd and Bor. On top of these well-known sources that Grotius certainly used,<sup>13</sup> I have also consulted the two pamphlets from 1590 and 1591 (see n. 2) and used the detailed study by S.A. Vosters on the discussion of the capture of Breda by eleven Spanish and Italian historians of the Dutch revolt, who published their work between 1590 and 1673.<sup>14</sup> Grotius has read some of these foreign works.<sup>15</sup>

### Summary of Grotius's narrative

Before addressing our main question, I will give a synopsis of Grotius's story of the surprise of Breda. The sections and line numbers in this synopsis refer to the text edition in the Appendix. The synopsis will include some notes, in which I will refer to the published sources on the capture of Breda mentioned above, in order to provide some additional information or explanations where Grotius's account makes this desirable or necessary. These notes should not be understood as a contribution to the study of Grotius's use of his sources. For a modern account of the capture of Breda based on the published sources and on additional archival research, I refer the reader to the studies of Van der Hoeven<sup>16</sup> and Wijnbeek,<sup>17</sup> which I have used throughout as a point of reference. For the benefit of the reader, I have occasionally added between brackets clarifications which are lacking in Grotius's text.

#### *Sections 1 and 2 (lines 1-18). Introductory remarks*

In section 1, Grotius provides geographical and historical information on the town of Breda and its rulers. He explains that Breda is situated near the

<sup>13</sup> See on the sources of the *Annales et Historiae* Muller, *Hugo de Groot's "Annales et Historiae"* (as in n. 9), chapter 4, p. 83ff. Muller examines some passages to illustrate Grotius's use of his sources; the capture of Breda does not figure among these passages.

<sup>14</sup> S. Vosters, 'Oude Spaanse en Italiaanse geschiedschrijvers over het Turfschip', in: *Jaarboek van de Geschied- en Oudheidkundige Kring van Stad en Land van Breda "De Oranjeboom"* 14 (1992), 78-152.

<sup>15</sup> On 28 October 1628 Grotius wrote to his brother: 'Nunc lego Hispanos, Italos, Belgas, qui de nostro bello scripserunt, ut cum iis quae ego olim scripsi conferam'; *BW* (as in n. 9), no. 1325, (III, p. 391); also quoted by Boot, 'Hugo Grotius et Cornelius Tacitus' (as in n. 9), p. 341.

<sup>16</sup> G.G. van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (Breda: Broese, 1868; repr. Breda: Van Turnhout, 1978); on p. 58 the author mentions as his published sources, besides Bor and Van Meteren: A. Montanus, *'t Leven en bedryf der prinsen van Oranje* (Amsterdam: Arent van den Heuvel en Samuel Imbrecht, 1664) and G. Baudartius, *Les guerres des Nassau* (Amsterdam: Michiel Colijn, 1616).

<sup>17</sup> D. Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (Assen: Born, 1941); Wijnbeek's printed sources are mentioned on p. 67: Bor (1621-1634), Le Clerc (1728), Van Meteren (1599), Grotius (1657),

frontier with Holland, in the (Western) part of (Dutch Noord-) Brabant where the river Aa (coming from the south) becomes broader and changes its name into Mark (of which it is an affluent); after running along the fortress of Breda, the river (Mark) flows into the sea-bay (then reaching far inland) near the town of Zevenbergen.<sup>18</sup> He briefly recalls that the house of Polanen bought Breda under the title of barony, and that the house of Nassau became its owner through Engelbrecht's marriage,<sup>19</sup> stressing that his great grandson Henry<sup>20</sup> had fortified the city with walls, moats and a fortress (adjacent to the north of the city), and that the present conduct of war had caused new ramparts to be added and had given the city its reputation of being hard to conquer.

In section 2, Grotius turns to the description of the stratagem. He ascribes the invention of it to a skipper ('nauta', line 9) and mentions that captain Charles de Héraugière, from Cambray, discussed the plan with prince Maurice and undertook the execution of it, taking Lambert Charles as his associate. For the execution of the plan, a peatbarge was chosen which had a permit to transport regularly fuel to Breda. Grotius continues with a brief description of the nature of turf.

### *Section 3 (lines 19-26). The journey to Breda*

Seventy<sup>21</sup> brave young men embark for the journey; they are hidden in the hold of the barge<sup>22</sup>, under the deck loaded with peat.<sup>23</sup> Grotius stresses, with

---

Le Petit (1601), and Wagenaar (1749-1759). For information on these authors and their works see E. Haitzma Mulier, A. van der Lem, *Repertorium van geschiedschrijvers in Nederland 1500-1800* (Den Haag: SDU, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> Apparently Grotius felt the need, after 1612, to add in the manuscript, for the benefit of the reader who was unfamiliar with the geography of the region: 'ad confinium Hollandiae' (line 2) and 'et mox ad Septemburgas oppidum in maris sinum se immergit' (lines 4-5); however, these specifications will not have been very useful for the foreign reader, for whom a Latin edition was meant specifically.

<sup>19</sup> Engelbrecht I of Nassau (1370-1443) married Johanna of Polanen (1392-1445) in 1403.

<sup>20</sup> Henry III of Nassau (1483-1538).

<sup>21</sup> Most sources mention 70 men and/or specify 68 soldiers and 4 officers; only the German pamphlet of 1590 mentions sixty-five participants; Hallema (n. 2), p. 118 (the number is mentioned twice, once in the title and once in the text).

<sup>22</sup> 'Tenui interjectu', line 20, means 'with a thin partition in between'; this can only refer to the wooden partition behind which the soldiers were hidden in the hold of the barge, invisible from the cabin, as mentioned by the French pamphlet (Hallema (n. 2), p. 123, Le Petit (n. 5), p. 579 col. b and Bor (n. 8), fol. 22 verso col. b. See also Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 36. Only the German pamphlet (Hallema (n. 2), p. 118) and both editions of Van Meteren (n. 6) mention that an extra ceiling was built in the hold; however, this is very unlikely because the soldiers had to disembark through the hatches in the deck. Van Reyd (n.7) gives no details.

<sup>23</sup> Unlike most of his sources, Grotius does not say where, nor when the journey began, nor even that the barge was to sail up the river Mark. The barge left Zevenbergen on Monday,

an attempt to produce a *sententia*, that the beginnings of the mission were difficult ('ut solent ejusmodi conatus malis onerari', line 21): the departure of the barge had to be postponed because of a strong head wind ('adversa vis venti', line 22), fierce cold ('asperum frigus', line 22) and soon, due to the delay, shortage of food ('defectus ciborum', line 22). He then continues with the observation that the journey was resumed (up the river Mark) not far from Breda ('haud procul Breda', line 26), after the men had recovered and Héraugière had heartened them with a speech ('ubi refoverant corpora et animos Heraugerius sermone firmavit', line 24),<sup>24</sup> and after a messenger was sent to Maurice, who was hiding his army on a nearby island ('proximam apud insulam', line 26).<sup>25</sup>

#### *Section 4 (lines 27-36). Arrival within the boundaries of the fortress*

After the barge had passed the sluice ('aquae septum'<sup>26</sup>) located not too far from the fortress ('quod arcem propter est', line 27), the point from which it

---

February 26, in the evening: Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 66; Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> In accordance with the French pamphlet (Hallema (n.2)), Van Meteren (n. 5), Le Petit (n. 6) and Bor (n. 8), Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 66, states that the delay lasted from Monday night until Thursday March 1 early in the morning; the men then disembarked at a certain distance from the starting point, went back to the fortress Noortdam, near Zevenbergen, at some point on Thursday, recovered there and went back to the barge to resume the journey on Thursday evening. Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 31-32, has interpreted the sources somewhat differently and concluded that the soldiers disembarked on Thursday evening instead of early in the morning before daylight, and resumed the journey only on Friday evening March 2.

<sup>25</sup> Maurice had moved his army to Willemstad (Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 65; Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 28). In Grotius's time, the town of Willemstad stood on an island. It seems however more likely that Maurice had secretly moved from Willemstad closer to Breda on one or several of the small islands by the mouth of the river Mark near Zevenbergen; in the text immediately following our section 8, Grotius mentions that Maurice's troops had occupied these islands. Moreover, in the manuscript Grotius had first written 'proximas apud insulas', and this cannot refer to Willemstad. Finally, the messenger who is mentioned below, in note 43, could not have reached Willemstad (on foot?) in the same night. The French pamphlet, both editions of Van Meteren, Le Petit and Van Reyd say that Maurice and his army were in or near 'de Klundert', a little to the northwest of Zevenbergen and in those days according to Van Reyd in fact an island. Bor hesitates between 'op de Clundert of Willemstadt'.

<sup>26</sup> In seventeenth-century Holland, the word *septum* means 'sluice' ('spuie, spije, sluisse'; E. Spanoghe, *Synonymia Latino-Teutonica*, vol. 3 (Gent: Hoste, 1902), p. 78; cf. the Dutch translation of 1681 (see above, note 10): 'sluys van 't kasteel' (p. 154)). Grotius did not realize or, if he did, he did not care, that by using the phrase 'intra aquae septum ... pervectos' (after having passed the sluice), he introduced something factually impossible into his account, because in

was not possible to return ('unde regressus non erat', line 27), a new disaster ('nova calamitas', lines 27–28) threatens the men: the barge makes water either running aground because of the low tide or because it is pierced by ice.<sup>27</sup> Grotius briefly mentions three facts which illustrate that the situation was very dangerous. First, the men were trapped in their hiding place, knee-deep in water, until the barge, lifted up by the tide, ceased by itself to take in water: '... donec aestu levata navis nulla humana ope perfluere ultro desiit' (line 30).<sup>28</sup> Secondly, the garrison commanders had kept on shifting the inspection of ships to ever lower ranks ('ad minora quisque officia relegaverant', lines 31–32), more for the sake of maintaining the discipline than out of a feeling that it was a necessity ('quasi ex usu magis disciplinae quam quod necesse arbitrentur', lines 30–31). The serviceman who by this passivity of many was in the end charged with the actual inspection, careless after the example of his superiors, confined himself to a superficial inspection of the stern of the ship (with the cabin; 'puppe', line 33). Thirdly, Grotius mentions the extraordinary

---

what follows he still situates the barge in the river with its change of the tides ('fluminis recessu', line 28; 'aestu levata', line 30), although it was the function of the sluice to close off the tides from the moat around the fortress. From the French pamphlet, both editions of Van Meteren, *Le Petit* and *Bor* we know that the events related in section 4 happened after the ship had passed the last boom (in the river), and at any rate before it passed the sluice in the moat of the fortress; see also Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 67 and Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 35–36.

<sup>27</sup> During the hour the barge had to wait between the boom and the sluice, it ran aground and sprung a leak. Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 35, says the barge arrived at the last boom 'by 2 p.m.' Only in both editions of Van Meteren (n. 6), Latin version, p. 515 (erroneously 516); Dutch version, fol. 271 verso col. b, there is also mention of the ice as the cause of a leak, but this is only mentioned much later on in the story, after the real leaking had long stopped, when the skipper, who at night was in the fortress, was asked why he made so much noise with pumping, and answered that the ice had caused a leak. The French pamphlet (*Hallema* (n. 2), p. 125) and *Le Petit* (n. 5, p. 581 col. a) also mention this later occurrence, but in their version, the skipper mentions as the reason 'la vieillesse du bateau'. Thus, Grotius has derived the phrase 'sive glacies pertudit' (l. 28), with which he deviates from his sources, from an invented excuse by the skipper in Van Meteren's story. Just as the mistake with the sluice (see above, note 26), this shows his lack of understanding of the things he is writing about; cf. also notes 28, 32, 41, 43 and 45.

<sup>28</sup> With the fanciful statement that the leak closed by itself when the tide rose, Grotius perhaps follows Van Meteren (n. 6), who writes: '... dan also het water ofte vloet wies / soo ist leck weder van selfs miraculeuselic gestopt' (Dutch version, fol. 271 verso col. b). In fact, what happened was not so miraculous, for Van Meteren himself states in the same passage that the barge grounded in the river during the low tide and heeled over, until it became afloat again during high tide and stopped making water. The detailed and well-informed French pamphlet (*Hallema* (n. 2), p. 124) and, in its wake, *Le Petit* (n. 5), p. 580 col. a, also mention that the barge, while it was lying motionless, waiting for the sluice to open, was grounded by the eb and made water (not 'sprung a leak') until the tide rose and it stopped heeling over.

coincidence ('quod vix alias', lines 33–34) that the cold prompted none of the soldiers to cough at the very moment of the inspection. In this context, he also records that one of the men in complete self-effacement uttered the wish to be killed for fear that his cough might jeopardize his fellow-soldiers: 'Occidite me ... commilitones, ne occidamur.'<sup>29</sup> (lines 35–36)

*Section 5 (lines 37–43). Arrival within the moat*

The garrison soldiers hauled the barge towards the fortress, because the ice hindered it in its movement.<sup>30</sup> Another misfortune ('incommoda', line 38) now occurs: the approaching danger inspires fear in the soldiers and they turn against their commander Charles de Héraugière. Some soldiers demanded to be let out of their dark hiding place, preferring to die in the open air, fighting their enemy, lest they be overpowered in their "prison" and be executed. More of them ('plures', line 42) were totally benumbed, and their will to persevere was inspired by despair rather than by their leader's encouragement to show spirit and achieve glory ('ducis hortamenta ad virtutem et gloriam', line 42).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> According to Van Meteren (n. 6), Van Reyd (n. 7), and Bor (n. 8), it was lieutenant Mathijs Helt who, when he was overcome by coughing, made this remarkable statement. However, Van Reyd mentions this episode later on, in a different context: see p. 232 with note 74 and cf. below, note 37. For Helt, see also note 59.

<sup>30</sup> According to Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 67, this action took place on Saturday March 3 at 3 p.m., after the rise of the tide has made it possible to open the sluice of the fortress. Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 39, says that the sluice was opened shortly after three o'clock. The sluice about which Van der Hoeven and Wijnbeek speak here was mentioned by Grotius earlier on, at the point where he should have mentioned the last boom in the river (section 4, line 27).

<sup>31</sup> Grotius mentions wrongly, in section 4, the incident of the leak after the passing of the sluice instead of before the sluice was opened (see above, note 26). With the exception of the German pamphlet and Van Reyd, who are very concise, all sources mention that, when the barge sprung a leak while waiting before the sluice (line 29) and the ice-cold water reached the soldiers' knees, they were struck by fear of drowning in the dark hold. However, unlike Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 67 and Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), pp. 37–38, they do not mention the rebellious unrest among the soldiers and Héraugière's speech aimed at appeasing them, described by Grotius in section 5 (lines 39–43), as a result of the grounding of the barge and its leaking, but rather as a separate event. Van Meteren situates this on Thursday, in the fortress of Noortdam, after the soldiers had waited from Monday evening until Thursday morning in the dark hold of the unmoving barge, in the middle of enemy territory, suffering from cold and hunger, and finally started to make complaints. The French pamphlet as well as Le Petit and Bor, who follow it, state that the soldiers' unrest took place 'during the stay of the soldiers in the barge', and mention besides complaints also the reproach which Grotius refers to in line 39. In their account of the surprise of Breda this event is inserted after

*Section 6 (lines 44–60). The defeat of the garrison force*

Part of the turf is unloaded, but the skipper,<sup>32</sup> who, for his part, was persistently alert, cleverly pretended tiredness ('solertia nautae lassitudinem simulantis', line 44–45)<sup>33</sup>, and so prevented the barge from being discharged completely (by the unloaders).<sup>34</sup> It was decided around midnight to let the men out of their hiding place, when the moon had risen ('media fere nox erat nec illunis', lines 45–46),<sup>35</sup> after an admonition in which the prospect of glory and spoils was held out to them, but that those who would run away from the fight would not even be granted an honourable death ('admonitos ... dari', lines 46–47).<sup>36</sup> The noise of the disembarking soldiers was drowned by the

---

their report on the inspection of the barge, while it lay waiting for the opening of the sluice on Saturday. All sources mention a speech of Héraugière in reaction to the complaints. It is unclear when all this took exactly place, but certainly not after the barge passed the sluice, as Grotius states in lines 37–38, when the time for protest was long over. Likewise, the demands of some soldiers ('poscere', line 41) seem to be Grotius's invention (see below, p. 230–231), to which Héraugière's answer in line 42 ('ducis ... gloriam') does not seem to constitute a convincing reaction. See on his different speeches below, note 36 and p. 233 with note 75.

<sup>32</sup> Unlike almost all of his sources Grotius speaks throughout the narrative of only one skipper without even mentioning the name of Adriaen van Bergen. In fact there were three or four; their names are not known with certainty, but Adriaen is the most prominent of them; see Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), pp. 19–20 and 62. Grotius clearly did not understand how important it was for the success of the venture that Maurice could be informed at an early stage by one of the skippers that the barge with the soldiers had entered the fortress unnoticed, thereby allowing Maurice to order Hohenlohe to be present shortly after the attack during the night. See below, note 43 and p. 234–235.

<sup>33</sup> Only Van Meteren (n. 6) mentions that the skipper pretended tiredness; see also p. 231 with note 73. The phrase 'cui et vox ... praeferbant' (line 45), which has been added in the margin of the manuscript, seems to have been inspired by Van Reydt; see below, note 74.

<sup>34</sup> Grotius and all the other historical sources are silent about where the partial unloading of the ship took place; it is in fact unknown where precisely the soldiers got into the fortress (Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 39).

<sup>35</sup> Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 45, mentions that some sources state that it was midnight, while others say it was 11 p.m.; Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 71, says the moon rose at midnight. Whatever the exact time may have been, the soldiers had waited 8 or 9 hours (from ca. 3 p.m. until 11 or 12 p.m.) in their hiding place after the barge had passed the sluice; they spent all this time with their feet in bilgewater and surrounded by the noise of the pump.

<sup>36</sup> Grotius means the death penalty for deserters; see below, note 49. Most sources mention a speech of admonition to the soldiers by Héraugière immediately before the disembarkment and the actual attack in order to inspire them with courage, and therefore without the psychologically inappropriate threat at the end, inappropriate even though the men were mercenaries. Besides this exhortation, the sources mention only one other speech of Héraugière, namely the speech in reaction to the unrest among the soldiers (see above, note 31), which Van Meteren situates on

pumping of bilgewater;<sup>37</sup> thus, they succeeded in remaining completely unnoticed by the fortress-garrison.

Grotius then briefly sketches the ensuing military operation: the soldiers were divided into two groups; the first group, led by Héraugière, went to attack the guards of the gate of the fortress which led to the city;<sup>38</sup> these guards were all killed in the guardhouse ('intra stationem', line 50); only one guard, an ensign, dashed out of the guardhouse and, wounding Héraugière with his rapier ('mucro', line 51), bravely met his death. The second group, led by Lambert Charles, chased off the garrison soldiers (to the building) in the inner part of the fortress ('in arcis intima', line 52), which the commander of the garrison, Paolo Antonio Lanzavechia, retained as his last hope ('aedes in spem novissimam retinebat', lines 52-53). Paolo had temporarily taken over the command of the city from his father, Odoardo, who, being also garrison commander of Geertruidenberg, three *leuca*<sup>39</sup> (to the north) of Breda, had left to that city to strengthen it because he had been led to believe that Maurice was

---

Thursday in the fortress of Noortdam (see above, note 24), after the frustrating delay at the beginning of the journey, but without a threat at the end; the French pamphlet, *Le Petit and Bor* mention the speech after their report on the inspection of the barge while it waited for the sluice to open, with the threat at the end, which Grotius situates immediately before the attack. The threat at the end of Héraugière's speech is appropriate to the insubordination which found its expression in the complaints of the soldiers, but does not fit the context where Grotius mentions it in line 47.

Without any reason and in an unsatisfactory way the various elements of the speech which are mentioned by the sources were divided by Grotius over three points in time (cf. p. 232): in lines 24-25 during the interruption of the journey (see above, note 24); in line 42 as an inadequate reaction to the rebellious mood of the soldiers, where a threat with death by hanging would have been appropriate (see above, note 31), and here in lines 46-47 immediately before the attack, where only an encouragement is fitting. From this speech, Grotius has left out a particularly Tacitean element, namely the fact that Héraugière brings to the fore his own motivation as an example: see below, p. 233 with note 75.

<sup>37</sup> Grotius does not mention that the pumping of bilgewater had started earlier, as soon as the barge had sprung a leak after its passing of the last boom. In that passage (*section 4*), Grotius mentions only that at some point, by miracle, the barge stopped making water (line 30), not that it contained much bilgewater which had to be pumped out. See above, p. 216 and note 28.

<sup>38</sup> The addition to the 'porta' in line 49 '*qua in oppidum itur*' has been added by Grotius in the margin of the manuscript at a later time, apparently in a vain effort to remove the unclarity about the gates: see below, notes 42 and 45-46.

<sup>39</sup> 'Leuca' is a celtic word, used to indicate the distance of 1500 'passus' (Isidorus, *Origines* 15, 16, 3). The 'passus' or Roman pace indicates the distance of two steps or 1,5 meters, hence one 'leuca' = 1500 'passus' equals 2.250 kilometers. Thus, Grotius states that the distance between Breda and Geertruidenberg was about seven kilometers. In reality, it is more than twelve kilometers in a straight line. The cause of this mistake is unclear. In the manuscript, 'tres leucas distantis' is a later addition.

preparing to gather troops (for an attack) there.<sup>40</sup> Grotius stresses that it was a serious mistake ('nec levis error', line 56) of the duke of Parma (then governor of the Netherlands on behalf of the Spanish king Philip II) to assign the command of two fortified towns to one person. Nevertheless, Paolo made a sortie and attacked his enemy. Grotius eloquently evokes the fight between the men and its inevitable outcome in this *sententia*: 'vicere quibus vinci non licebat multaue caede saucius ipse (sc. Paulus Lanzavechia), qua venerat, refugit' (lines 58-59).

*Section 7 (lines 61-76). Arrival of Maurice with his army*

The noise of the fighting was heard in the city and the inhabitants ('oppidani', line 61)<sup>41</sup> would have burst into the fortress through its gates ('portas arcis' line 61)<sup>42</sup>, had not Héraugière prevented their attack with bullets ('glandibus',

---

<sup>40</sup> Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 68, and Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), pp. 27-28 mention that Odoardo had taken a part of the garrison force with him, leaving only about 50 soldiers (not including the officers) with his son to defend the fortress of Breda. Whether this is true or not, Odoardo undoubtedly did not ride by himself to Geertruidenberg and one may gather from the various sources that not many more than about sixty men, including the officers, were present in the fortress. This figure corresponds roughly with the number of Italian casualties (37) which Wijnbeek, p. 53, mentions on the basis of a bill of the gravedigger, provided the 'many dead' among the 36 men of Lanzavechia mentioned on p. 47, who were permitted to withdraw unopposed, were about ten men.

<sup>41</sup> It is highly unlikely that it were the citizens of Breda who attempted to break into the fortress, all the more since Grotius also mentions that they were frightened ('pavida civitas', line 67). Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 70, and Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 47, say that the soldiers of the Italian city-garrison attacked the fortress in an effort to support Lanzavechia. Grotius has misinterpreted his sources which do not explicitly say that it were *soldiers*, e.g. Van Meteren (n. 6), Dutch version, fol. 272 recto col. a: 'Den allarm ontstack oock inde stadt / so dat eenighe begonnen t'vyer aende poorten des casteels te steken...' Only the German pamphlet (Hallema (n. 2), p. 119) says that 'die Bürger', when they realized that there was a fight in the fortress (cf. below, note 59), gathered together with the garrison to retake the fortress, and all the sources except Van Reyd mention that the citizens for fear of plundering encouraged the Italians in vain to defend the city.

<sup>42</sup> Of all the sources only the Dutch version of Van Meteren (see above, note 41) does not clearly have the singular of 'gate', although 'poorten' in this sentence does not necessarily have to be taken as a plural. Nevertheless, in spite of the clarification added to 'porta' in line 49 (see above, note 38), the plural 'portas' in line 61 is again one of Grotius's misinformations, because the fortress of Breda had only one (southerly) gate giving access to the city; there was a second, northerly gate (the 'veldpoort'), which lead to a wood (the 'Belcromsche bos'); see Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), pp. 61 and 63. In lines 49 and 64, Grotius rightly uses the singular ('portam'), but in line 66 we find another incorrect plural ('portas'): cf. below, notes 45-46.

line 62). Finally ('tandem', line 62), after he had received a message that the surprise attack had succeeded ('accepto rei bene gestae signo', lines 62-63), the count of Hohenlohe<sup>43</sup> was present with a part of Maurice's army which was waiting near by.<sup>44</sup> The troops passed through (a gap made in) the palisade ('septum e palis', line 64), because the (northern) gate (of the fortress) ('portam', line 64)<sup>45</sup> was frozen up. Then Lanzavechia did no longer delay to surrender, stipulating the preservation of his life. Before long, the prince arrived with his army; he threatened to burst into the city from within the fortress with his infantry and cavalry ('pedes turmaeque per arcis portas impressionem minabantur', line 66).<sup>46</sup> The inhabitants bought off the pillaging of their city with two months pay (per soldier).<sup>47</sup> The Italian troops charged with the

<sup>43</sup> In fact it was Maurice who received a message and then ordered Hohenlohe to advance to Breda with the vanguard cavalry of the troops after he had been informed by one of the skippers (as told by Van Meteren, Van Reyd and Bor, see above, note 32) that the barge had entered the fortress and that the actual attack was to take place later during the night. According to all sources (except the succinct German pamphlet), the skipper in question had been ordered to leave the barge and spend the night in the city, and it was only thanks to carnival that he had succeeded to leave the city unnoticed along with the local countrymen who were going home after they had been feasting in the city (see below, p. 226 with note 59). This happened after the partial unloading of the barge. See Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 42, and cf. Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 69. Grotius suppressed this crucial information from his sources and confined himself to what only Van Meteren (n. 6) mentions after the fortress had been overpowered, Dutch version, fol. 272 recto col. a: 'de besproken teekenen gedaen (zijnde)' to alert Hohenlohe. Grotius's reader is left with the question how and how fast Hohenlohe could be alerted from within the fortress; see also pp. 234-235; Maurice was at about fifteen kilometers in a straight line from Breda (see above, note 25).

<sup>44</sup> Most sources mention that Hohenlohe arrived two hours after the garrison of the fortress had stopped all resistance.

<sup>45</sup> In his first version, Grotius did not mention (or perhaps did not even realise himself) that the 'porta' mentioned in line 64 is not the same gateway as the 'porta' mentioned in line 49 (see note 38) and, incorrectly in the plural, in lines 61 and 66. Maurice did not enter through the palisade, but through the northerly gate (the 'veldpoort'); Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 71. Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 47. See also above, note 42 for the two gates of the fortress.

<sup>46</sup> The reader has to understand, without being told so by the author, that the 'gates' of line 66 are in fact the one southerly gate, leading from the fortress into the city, not the northern 'veldpoort' mentioned two lines earlier; see also above, note 42. It must be said, however, that Grotius here may have been misled by his sources: all, except Van Reyd, state that Maurice, having arrived in the fortress but still unaware of the flight of the city-garrison, prepared to attack the city through two gates; the French pamphlet (Hallema (n. 2), p. 127), Le Petit (n. 5), p. 582 col. a, and Bor (n. 8), fol. 24 recto col. a, mention here oddly enough 'the two gates' which led from the fortress into the city.

<sup>47</sup> In those days a victorious army had the right to plunder the town or city it had conquered by storm.

defence of the city - six hundred foot soldiers and thirty cavalry, men who had behaved themselves outrageously while billeted in the town - had been in mutual discord for some time ('iampridem', line 70) and fled in fear.<sup>48</sup> Afterwards, Parma punished them (by death) for their desertion, with the exception of the young nobleman Intemel.<sup>49</sup> Odoardo Lanzavechia abdicated his command of Geertruidenberg, as if to punish himself.

*Section 8 (lines 77-90). Entry of Maurice in the city of Breda, ransom to prevent the pillaging of the city, thanksgiving of the States*

Maurice entered the city of his ancestors victoriously and took the inhabitants under his protection and authority ('accepit in fidem et ditionem', line 77). Although the sum to buy off the plundering of the city amounted to 100.000 guilders because many more soldiers gave their names (as rightful claimants) than there had been present (at the actual fight),<sup>50</sup> Maurice pitied (the city for this) more than he accused (the soldiers) ('civitatem ... dolens magis quam

<sup>48</sup> In the version of 1612, the manuscript did not contain the details on the number of soldiers in the city-garrison and what their task was ('erant hi ... tenere portas', lines 68-69), while instead of the phrase 'exterriti ... consenserant' in lines 70-71 Grotius had written only 'vecordes profugerant'. While all sources on the Dutch side, except Van Reyd and even the German pamphlet mention the strength of the garrison, they do not mention the disagreement among them (line 70), but several Spanish and Italian historians do indeed report their dissension (Vosters, 'Oude Spaanse en Italiaanse geschiedschrijvers', as in n. 14, pp. 119-123).

<sup>49</sup> It was customary that soldiers who deserted were put to death by hanging. However, the sources from the Dutch side mention only the public beheading of all the officers or only the three who were in command, and of the corporal who inspected the barge carelessly; see for the punishment according to Paolo Rinaldi and other Spanish and Italian authors Vosters, 'Oude Spaanse en Italiaanse geschiedschrijvers', as in n. 14, pp. 129-131. The remarkable phrase on the sparing of the unknown, young Intemel's life (line 74-75) – while Grotius does not even mention Mathias Helt's name (see above, note 29) or the name of Adriaen van Bergen (see above, note 32) – was added in the margin of the manuscript at some later time, together with the following sentence on Odoardo Lanzavechia. In accordance with Rinaldi and several other Spanish and Italian authors, Bor (n.8, fol. 24 verso col. a) mentions that Parma pardoned a Francesco Ventimiglia, but he does not mention Intemel. With the three later additions in the passage on the flight of the city garrison mentioned in this and the previous note, Grotius appears to have tried to bring into his narrative some Tacitean depth concerning the causes of a crucial event and the consequences for the main characters in it, but it all remains rather vague. Cf. also above, note 48 and below, p. 235 with note 78.

<sup>50</sup> The soldiers did not put their names on the list themselves, as Grotius seems to suggest, but captains came to the fore with the number of their troops and were put on the list through the intercession of Hohenlohe; see Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 72. Perhaps Grotius aimed to protect both Maurice and Hohenlohe by shifting all responsibility to the soldiers. Cf. also below, p. 231 with note 72.

accusans (sc. milites)', line 79)<sup>51</sup>, out of youthful modesty and the desire to avoid giving the impression of being driven by self-interest. Grotius adds by way of comparison that Antwerp paid to Parma not more than 400.000 guilders to prevent a sack.<sup>52</sup> Héraugière was appointed governor of Breda, the other officers received honors and rewards. The States (General) promulgated a thanksgiving-day (in all the United Provinces), decreed public celebrations of joy and issued a commemorative medal. Ingenious people commended the leadership of the prince and the (for a military man) not unworthy ruse ('auspicia principis et non degenerem dolum', lines 84–85) by comparing it with the capture of Troy. People compared the surprise-attack to what had happened nine years earlier, when the Spanish invaded Breda thanks to the absence of the garrison and the treason of the gatekeepers, and thereupon caused a massacre among the citizens. Several companies of foot soldiers were left behind to protect the city, as well as cavalerymen to carry out raids into the villages of Brabant;<sup>53</sup> the rest of Maurice's army left. The supplies which had

---

<sup>51</sup> Here, I follow the French translation of 1662 (see above, note 10): 'il ayma mieux plaindre les uns qu'accuser les autres'. Since a ransom to prevent pillaging was enforced, the French translator apparently – and in my view correctly – thought it inconceivable that reproaches or accusations were formulated against the civilian administrators of a conquered city. The entire phrase in lines 78–81 ('pressam ... pendisset. Tum') has been added in the manuscript on the page facing fol. 17 verso, fol. 18 recto, with an insertion mark added in the text on fol. 17 verso. On fol. 18 recto there is also written a second, smaller addition to the text that follows our section 8. For the rest, fol. 18 has remained blank. It seems to me, however, that these two insertions do not date from the period after 1612, but are part of the version of 1612, and were first overlooked when the draft was being copied, or were added as an afterthought. Research of the manuscript might provide a decisive answer concerning this question. Cf. also below, note 67.

<sup>52</sup> This whole passage appears to be based on Van Reyd (n. 7), who, being a servant of the Frisian Stadtholder Willem Lodewijk, speaks regularly with frankness about this kind of subject matter, especially in relation to Maurice: 'Maer alle dage quamender meer ende meer / als oft sy mede totten aenslach 'teen of 'tander gedaen hadden / ende daerom op 't Register van die gene / die de twee maenden [Grotius, line 67] genieten souden / behoorden ghestelt te zijn / voor de welcke de Grave van Hohenlo met eenige andere Hoofden alleen op des Krijghsvolcx gunst siende / spraecken / ende niemants voor die bedroefde Borgherij. Hebbende Graef Maurits doen ter tijd / om de jonge Jaren / niet aensiens genoeg / d'andere oude Oversten tegen te sprecken / ende daerom niet anders konnende / dan zijne schamele Onderdanen met suchten beklagen.' (p. 289, lines 6–14) After these words, Van Reyd observes that a sack of the city, which had already been heavily afflicted by the Spanish sack of 1581 (Grotius, line 87) and by the billeting of a great city garrison (cf. also Grotius, lines 71–72), would almost have been better than the ransom of 100.000 guilders, and that Parma is reported to have said that he deserved praise for his clemency towards Antwerp in 1585, which had to pay only 400.000 guilders, while Breda equalled not even one twentieth of that city. Van Reyd does not make the soldiers entirely responsible for the draconic ransom, as does Grotius (see above, note 50).

<sup>53</sup> The aim of such hostile and predatory incursions was to plunder, to seize provisions and to deprive Parma's army commander Mansfeld of the support given to him by the Roman Catholic

been gathered by those who had been privy to Maurice's military operation<sup>54</sup> were sufficient for securing Breda for a long period of time.

### Tacitean elements in Grotius's narrative

After this synopsis, it is time to ask ourselves whether we can characterize Grotius's account as Tacitean. Does Grotius give a lively and dramatic account of the surprise of Breda and more specifically, does he, like Tacitus, confine himself to what constitute according to him the essentials of the event, and does he focus in his account of these on the connections between the individual occurrences and their causes and effects as he sees them? In other words, does Grotius in the story of the capture of Breda distinguish himself from the chronological narrative in the works of the first generation of history-books on the Dutch revolt like Van Meteren, Le Petit, Van Reyd and Bor, who were not familiar with the classical models and standards of historiography? And finally, does he convincingly present his own perspective on this psychologically crucial episode in the Dutch revolt? The following observations will suggest that - at least in the story of the surprise of Breda - he does not.

It is clear from the comparison with the sources that Grotius, when he wrote his first version of 1612, did not present other information on the surprise of Breda than the books I consulted,<sup>55</sup> and it is very unlikely that he received additional inside information after his arrest in 1618 and his escape to France in 1621.<sup>56</sup> Grotius's account of the surprise is nothing but a repetition of the standard narrative of the capture based on a number of sources

---

people inhabiting the countryside. It should be remembered here that Brabant, which did not form part of the Republic, was considered to be enemy-country. Grotius says that when the capture of Breda was reported to Parma, who was staying in Germany, he sent Mansfeld from the city of Rheinberg to Brabant, 'ne agros impune raptari pateretur' (lest he should permit the countryside to be ravaged with impunity) (ed. 1658, p. 143).

<sup>54</sup> Namely the Advocate van Oldenbarnevelt and Johan Pauli, member of the Council of State, which was responsible for the supply of the army; see Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 65; Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), pp. 25-26.

<sup>55</sup> The works of Van Meteren (for the first edn 1599: see notes 6 and 65) and Le Petit (1601; see above, note 5), the manuscript of Van Reyd (1605; see above, note 7); possibly also the two pamphlets from 1590 and 1591 mentioned above, in note 2.

<sup>56</sup> After submitting his first version in 1612, he must have seen Bor (1626; see above, note 8) and he may also have read Baudart (1616, see above, note 16); he certainly consulted the printed edition of Van Reyd (1626; see Tuynman, 'An unknown letter' (as in n. 7), p. 24 with note 7) and some of the Spanish and Italian works studied by Vosters, 'Oude Spaanse en Italiaanse geschiedschrijvers' (as in n. 14): see above, note 15.

available to him. One may suppose that this was precisely what the States of Holland had asked him to do: to make available to an international audience (hence: in Latin) the historical facts which, until 1601 (when Grotius was commissioned to write the history of the Republic), people who did not know Dutch could only read in *Le Petit* or in the Latin or German version of *Van Meteren*.

Grotius's account simply follows the chronological sequence of the events from the preparations to the fall of the city, highlighting the planning of the act, the setbacks during its execution and finally its successful completion. So Grotius's chronicle of the facts is not manifestly different from that of the other accounts and it therefore cannot strike the reader as a new kind of dramatic, in-depth historiography modelled after Tacitus. Nevertheless, the version Grotius offers does deviate in some details from the other versions, and Grotius may seem to have made a deliberate effort to make his version concise by leaving out certain particulars which do figure in the story as it is given by others. Yet these deviations and omissions do not make Grotius's account really Tacitean, because they do not make his account dramatically effective, nor do they reveal that Grotius had his own view on what happened. On the contrary, the notes to the synopsis above have shown that Grotius's account is in some places unclear, misleading or even incomprehensible. Let us for the sake of argument review the most conspicuous defects we have noticed.

#### *Defects in Grotius's story*

In section 4, his account of what happened when the barge had passed the sluice makes no sense, because he says that thereafter (i.e. after having passed the sluice that separated the river from the moat, in which there was no change of tides) the barge sprang a leak and subsequently stopped making water *because* of the change of the tides in the river ('fluminis recessu', line 28; 'aestu levata', line 30; see note 26). In section 5, the account of the rebellious mood among the soldiers and the numbness of some of them is incomplete and partly wrong (see note 31 and cf. 36). It also lacks its proper context, and, as we will see, Grotius's version of this dramatic episode in the story consequently lacks a certain dramatic tension which other chroniclers have succeeded in giving it (cf. p. 232). Next, Grotius is most probably wrong when he says that the terrified, unarmed inhabitants of the city, when they heard the noise of the fighting, wanted to burst into the fortress to support the Italian garrison (see note 41), and he is so vague about the different gates of the fortress and the palisade through which Hohenlohe and his horsemen entered, and then how

Maurice entered the fortress,<sup>57</sup> that the reader cannot understand what happened unless he has the right information from elsewhere (see notes 42 and 46). Finally, it is remarkable that Grotius avoids telling that it was Hohenlohe who was responsible for the deceit with the money that had to be paid to avoid the pillaging of the city (see notes 50 and 52).

In what follows, I will discuss some further instances where Grotius leaves out material or deviates from his sources to the detriment of the quality of his narrative. In sections 1 and 2, Grotius gives some details on the history of Breda and in section 2, on turf (lines 14–18). So, Grotius seems to present his remarks on the nature of peat not as narrative elements in the dramatic story of the capture, but purely as background information for the foreign reader whom he assumes does not know turf and is unfamiliar with the fact that the Dutch use it for heating.<sup>58</sup>

A peculiar feature in Grotius's account is the fact that he does not mention any date or time, and that his chronological points of reference are scarce and very general ('diu', line 20; 'prima tempora', line 23; 'tandem', line 62). This omission of precise dates and times not only makes the narrative occasionally vague, but it also contributes to its lack of dramatic force. Lines 22–23 are a case in point: Grotius's sources mention that the soldiers were stuck for as many as two days and three nights on the cold ship before it was decided to disembark them for a while to recover. When we hear these figures, the men's plight on the ship and the inauspicious beginning of the expedition is immediately and forcefully brought home to the reader, but in Grotius's account this is totally obscured. Also, the omission of the date of the surprise, the night of Saturday March 3 to Sunday March 4, is remarkable, all the more because it was a stroke of luck for the attackers that the unforeseen delay during the trip from Zevenbergen to Breda caused them to arrive on their destination during the celebration of carnival, when everybody in the city was not as alert as they would have normally been. Grotius here fails to observe the obvious, namely that the initial setbacks turned out to be a blessing in disguise.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Maurice did not enter through the palisade on top of the earthen rampart, but through the 'veltpoort', which was by then defrosted; see above, note 45.

<sup>58</sup> The barge was loaded with turf at Leur, the home village of the skippers (see above, p. 209 and p. 218, note 32).

<sup>59</sup> The German pamphlet (Hallema (n. 2), p. 118 and 119), and Bor (n. 8), fol. 24 recto col. a, observe that the city was celebrating 'vastenavond', that is, the last three days before Lent or carnival. The pamphlet relates that when the citizens heard the shouting in the fort after Héraugière had begun the attack, thought first that 'die Soldaten Fasznacht hielten' and realized only later what was really going on (see also above, note 41). It is not clear to me why the other sources do not mention the celebration of carnival, while it played such a crucial role in the success of the attack (see above, note 43, and below, p. 231 with note 73). As for the setback of the

In some parts of the story, the narrative seems unnecessarily too laconic for a clear understanding of the course of events, unless one is already familiar with them. A case in point can be found in section 3, where the reader has difficulty to understand how the men could have warmed and fed themselves ('ubi refoverant corpora', line 24), unless he knows that they disembarked to a warm place, only to reembark when he skipper announced that the wind was favorable for sailing.<sup>60</sup>

There are some passages where Grotius seems to deliberately leave out information either purely for the sake of conciseness, or in order to colour the story, perhaps for a political or other kind of reason. For example, following Van Reyd,<sup>61</sup> he simply mentions that a skipper (*nauta*, line 9) came up with the idea of using a peatbarge to bring soldiers into Breda, leaving out some details mentioned by e.g. Bor: it was a group of bargemasters who proposed the plan to count Maurice in the summer of 1589.<sup>62</sup> According to some sources, it was Maurice himself and his half-brother Philip of Nassau who planned to use a stratagem, while other sources claim that the plan was developed simultaneously by these two and a group of skippers.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps for political reasons Grotius also leaves out the prominent role of the States of Holland and the Council of State and notably the Advocate of Holland Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, with whom Stadtholder Maurice was obliged to discuss the plan after his return to the seat of government The Hague, as stated explicitly by Van Meteren. It was Van Oldenbarnevelt who suggested Héraugière as the leader of the commando raid, and he was also present when Maurice discussed the execution of the plan with Héraugière and Adriaen van Bergen.<sup>64</sup>

---

barge making water, it is also Bor (n. 8), the notary who, as historiographer, gained access to the official archives, who literally (fol. 23 recto col. a) remarks that the fact that the ship, while waiting before the sluice for the high tide, ran aground and started to make water, also entailed 'dit voordeel' (this advantage) that the skippers could now drown the coughing and other noises of the men with the noise of the pumps, as in the episode with Mathias Helt (see above, note 29 and 37, and below, p. 230 with note 70 and p. 232 with note 74).

<sup>60</sup> See above, note 24.

<sup>61</sup> Van Reyd (n.7), p. 287: 'Een Huysman hebbende 'tgarnisoen op het Casteel te Breda eenighe jaren met toevoeringe van torf versorgh / presenteerde eenighe Soldaten onder synen torf te verberghen / seggende / hy ware soo dickwils uyt ende ingevaren / dat zijn schip nu voorttaen sonder besoecken ingelaten werde.'

<sup>62</sup> Bor (n. 8), fol. 21 verso col. b. The bargemasters were members of the Van Bergen family (see above, p. 209 and p. 218, note 32).

<sup>63</sup> Vosters, 'Oude Spaanse en Italiaanse geschiedschrijvers' (as in n. 14), p. 105–106, gives a survey of the different versions and the historians who support each of them.

<sup>64</sup> Bor (n. 8), fol. 22 recto col. a; Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), pp. 64–65; Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), pp. 22–26.

So Grotius attributes the planning of the operation entirely to Maurice.<sup>65</sup> Grotius also mentions only one of the officers Héraugière took with him, Lambert Charles, perhaps because only this officer plays a major role in Grotius's version of the story.<sup>66</sup>

Sections 4, 5, 6 and the beginning of 7 constitute the climax of the story, extending over less than 12 hours and including four phases: (1) the arrival of the barge within the limits of the fortress on Saturday, March 3, around 2 p.m., (2) the period until ca. midnight, when the soldiers were trapped in their hiding place, still in the bilgewater, while the risk of being discovered was constantly present, (3) the emerging from the barge around midnight and the ensuing fight with the garrison of the castle, and finally (4) the arrival of Hohenlohe about two hours after the end of the fighting, and later count Maurice himself with his army. In these sections, Grotius seems to have made an effort to relate as many facts and details as possible and be short and concise at the same time, by a terse sentence structure on the one hand and by leaving out some details on the other hand. However, as it is clear from the notes in the summary of these sections, the result was that his story contains inaccuracies (e.g. the sluice

---

<sup>65</sup> At the time he was working on the first version of the *Historiae*, Grotius felt that 'what under Maurice happened in public, demands the most attention (from the historian); the rest calls for silence. For bringing to light what happens (behind the scenes) inside our present form of government, would not only have been difficult (to achieve), it would also have been not without danger both to the state (from the point of view of the public interest) and to private individuals (affecting their lives)', Grotius in a letter of 25 January 1604 to G.M. Lingelsheim (letter 49 in *BW* (as in n. 9), I, pp. 40–41), quoted in the translation by P. Tuijnman, 'An unknown letter' (as in n. 7), p. 28 with note 17. He perhaps wrote this with in mind what happened five years earlier with the first edition of Van Meteren's history-book of 1599, which had been confiscated by the States General: see Ridderikhoff, 'Een aristocratische geschiedenis' (as in n. 7), pp. 279–280 on the basis of L. Brummel, *Twee ballingen's lands tijdens onze opstand tegen Spanje: Hugo Blotius (1534–1608), Emanuel van Meteren (1535–1612)*, Den Haag 1972 (her note 6 on p. 288). The title of Van Meteren's work was in 1599 still 'Memoriën der Belgische ofte Nederlantsche Historie van onsen tijden', a correct characterization of these memorabilia in a continuous story. See for the later title above, note 6. See on the copy of the first edition owned by Grotius Ridderikhoff, 'Een aristocratische geschiedenis' (as in n. 7), pp. 278–279 and 281.

<sup>66</sup> Likewise he leaves unmentioned that by surrendering to Maurice the city government did not place itself under the authority of Maurice, as Grotius has it in line 77, but in the first place 'onder de gehoorsaemheyt vande Staten Generael' of the United Provinces, as Bor rightly states (n. 8), fol. 24 recto a. In lines 81–82 Grotius also suggests with 'attollit' that count Maurice could decide by himself about the appointment of Héraugière as governor of Breda and about the other promotions and rewards, while he naturally needed the consent of the States General, as most sources explicitly mention. Grotius apparently wants to portray count Maurice before the foreign reader as a kind of sovereign, instead of the army leader and Stadtholder of, at that moment, four of the seven provinces he was. Cf. also above, p. 224 with note 54.

in line 27; see notes 26 and 30; the piercing of the barge by ice, see note 27) and lacks clarity in many points (e.g. the confusion about the gates of the fortress in lines 49, 61, 64, 66; see note 42), so that his account, far from being pointedly Tacitean, is difficult to understand to the point of being unintelligible.

In the above we have discussed some passages in which details have been left out to the detriment of the readability of the story. There are also passages in which Grotius inserts details which have no function in his narrative and which only confuse the reader. A good case in point occurs in section 3, where Grotius interrupts his story with the observation, for the sake of completeness ('nec silendum reor', line 23), that rumors claiming that the surprise had succeeded came from England at a time when the peatbarge had not yet even reached Breda.<sup>67</sup> Here, the problem is that the reader is not made to understand from the context why this isolated piece of information is relevant to the event he is reading about.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the 'proxima porticus' (the adjacent colonnade, line 62) from which Héraugière's soldiers fired at the assailants, and the 'porta' mentioned in line 64 leave the reader puzzled (see note 45). It is unclear from the context what kind of thing the 'proxima porticus' is, and the reader wonders whether or not the 'porta' of line 64 is one of the 'portae' (plural) of 61.<sup>69</sup>

Grotius adds other isolated details to the sources I consulted, which arouse needless questions in the reader's mind and divert his attention from the essentials rather than lend depth to the story, e.g. the mentioning of the young Italian who was spared by Parma, while it remains unclear how many were hanged as punishment for their running away (see note 49). Such a detail is also the quasi-learned side-remark in line 86, whether the Trojan horse was really a horse or rather a ship. It is remarkable that Le Petit (as in n. 5, p. 580 col. b) also refers to this discussion, with a reference to the fact that the name of the peatbarge was 'l'Espérance', but then it was not Le Petit's aim to achieve Tacitean brevity and confinement to the essentials, but to present a detailed and accurate account of events that had taken place only fifteen years earlier.

---

<sup>67</sup> The sentence 'Nec silendum ... rumores' (lines 23-24) has been added in the margin of the manuscript, but does in my view not date from the period after 1612. I take it that, just as lines 78-81, this sentence was part of the 1612 version; see note 51 above. The rumors in question are not mentioned in the sources I consulted.

<sup>68</sup> Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), pp. 68-69, with note 1, mentions that it has been suggested that the city had been warned of an assault by Maurice, but states that this obviously has not been the case.

<sup>69</sup> The 'porticus', which did indeed exist and was situated on both sides of the gate to the city, is not mentioned in the sources I consulted.

*Missed chances*

All in all, Grotius's account offers a rather flat sequence of partially unconnected events. In particular, Grotius does not seem to have succeeded in appropriately conveying the risks of the surprise attack or the bravery and endurance of the men who carried it out, nor has he sufficiently highlighted noteworthy facts which might have helped to stimulate the reader's attention. A close look at Grotius's way of presenting the occurrences related in section 3 through 5 can further illustrate this.

At the beginning of section 3, Grotius stresses in a *sententia* that great efforts are often burdened with evil: 'ut solent ejusmodi conatus malis onerari' (line 21). The truth of the *sententia* is proved by two incidents: the adverse wind which caused some delay ('prima tempora abstulere', section 3, lines 22-23) and the leak in the barge (section 4, lines 28-29). Grotius fails to observe, however, that these two strokes of bad luck actually worked out very favorably when the barge finally reached its destination: due to the delay the barge arrived in Breda during the period of carnival, when the vigilance of soldiers and civilians had slackened, while the leak made it necessary to pump out bilgewater, and thus helped to suppress the inevitable noises made by so many men cramped up for so long in their dark hiding-place.<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, Grotius might have mentioned in the immediate context of his *sententia* that the expedition was handicapped by another 'malum' when it had passed the last boom, from which point it was impossible to turn back, namely the necessity to wait for about one hour for the sluice to open because it was low tide (see notes 27 and 30). During this time the men were not only trapped but their situation became also extremely difficult because the barge started to make water and the men, locked up in the hold, had to face the danger of death by drowning (see note 31). Instead of highlighting this ordeal of the soldiers, Grotius is rather minimizing about their justified fear (line 29: 'trepidare ...latebras') and moves the protests which had been expressed earlier, when some men had lost heart and complained about their leader, to an impossibly late moment, when the barge was already within the limits of the fortress (see note 31). Moreover, Grotius seems to aggravate the soldiers' complaints which the sources mention, as related in note 31, to full-fledged insubordination ('poscere', line 41). For at least I did not find what he says in lines 40-41 ('tenebras ... traherentur') in the sources I consulted: if they, the soldiers,

<sup>70</sup> See notes 43 (on carnival) and 59 (on carnival and the pumping) and see on the pumping also notes 37 and 73, and p. 232 with note 74.

were doomed to die, they demanded to get into the open and attack the enemy instead of being overpowered in their hiding and be executed. Grotius did apparently not realize that it was impossible to leave the barge before at least one hatch of the deck would have been made free.<sup>71</sup> To make things worse, Grotius puts the recalcitrance and protests of some soldiers in section 5 down to their dread of the approaching danger ('admotum propius periculum formidinem expresserat et in Heraugerium querelas', lines 38–39), and thus actually turns the brave soldiers into cowards.<sup>72</sup>

Grotius's account lacks precise references of time, and hence he does not give a good indication of the ordeal which the soldiers underwent courageously, namely that, after the barge had passed the sluice around 3 p.m. (see note 30), they were still trapped for a full eight or nine hours (see note 35) in their dark hiding-place, with their feet in ice-cold water, surrounded by the continuous noise of the pump, while the danger of the situation was heightened by the fact that people might come aboard, thus increasing the risk of the soldiers being discovered. When workmen were ordered to unload enough turf to supply all the (open) guardhouses without delay, the skipper shrewdly succeeded in stopping them in time to avert the discovery of the soldiers, by giving the workmen drinking money to celebrate carnival in the city.<sup>73</sup> Grotius briefly mentions the unloading of the barge and the bold intervention of the skipper in one sentence at the beginning of the section in which he relates the disembarkment of the men at midnight and the ensuing fight with the enemy (section 6, lines 44–45), where the reader cannot grasp the dramatic force of the event.

In Van Reyd's brief account, there is another incident proving that the skipper was a true hero, which Grotius leaves out altogether. Immediately after the

---

<sup>71</sup> See above, note 22. The only other way out was to make a passage in the wooden partition towards the side of the cabin (see above, note 22), but this was impossible by the fast rising bilgewater. Most sources mention the 'querelae in Heraugerium' (line 39) during the waiting period before the sluice on Saturday, but prior to the incident of the leak (see above, note 31). Only Van Meteren states that the complaints resulted from the long waiting period in enemy territory from Monday evening until Thursday morning. Hence, Van Meteren places Héraugière's reaction on Thursday in the fortress Noortdam; see for this also above, note 36.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. above, note 50, where we have seen that Grotius blames the soldiers for something they were not really responsible for.

<sup>73</sup> For the carnival see above, notes 59 and 70. Van der Hoeven, *Geschiedenis der vesting Breda* (as in n. 16), p. 69, says that the workmen were civilians. According to Wijnbeek, *Het turfschip van Breda* (as in n. 17), p. 41, they were soldiers (as only in the Latin version of Van Meteren (n. 6), p. 515 (erroneously 516): 'milites exportantes') under the command of a sergeant; however, it does not seem likely that the skipper could have given leave to soldiers from the fortress to go to the city, or could have enticed their superior to do so. Grotius avoids the question.

skipper had succeeded in sending away the workmen, his nerves were put to the test again, when a servant of the acting commander of the fortress came to complain about the quality of the turf. The skipper bravely dismissed him too, by assuring him that the best turf was below deck, and was kept there specially for the captain: he will get it tomorrow ('den besten light onder / dien heb ic voor den Capiteyn verordnet', Van Reyd, p. 288; not in the other sources). This dramatic scene full of tension enlivens the story and, with the skipper's bitter sarcasm in defiance of the enemy, is worthy of a Tacitean historian, but we find it in Van Reyd, not in Grotius. And Van Reyd relates at this point yet another proof of the skipper's bravery in the dangerous situation while the workmen were coming on board. When Mathijs Helt, numb with cold, was overcome by continuous coughing and asked to be killed so as not to give away their hiding place, the skipper started pumping bilgewater vehemently to drown the noise of his coughing.<sup>74</sup> This detail is left unmentioned by Grotius, and he thus misses another chance to make his narrative suitably dramatic.

As explained in note 36, Grotius mentions three addresses by Héraugière to the soldiers, in lines 24-25, line 42 and in section 6, lines 46-47, immediately before the disembarkment and the actual attack: 'milites admonitos prius ad decus et praemia victoriae, desertoribus vero animosi facinoris non vitam, ne mortem quidem honestam dari' (the soldiers will achieve glory and spoils if they win; but those who would run away from the fight would not only lose their lives, but would not even be granted an honorable death). Grotius pays particular attention to this last speech, which, as we see, he summarizes in the *oratio obliqua*. However, especially the wording of the clear-cut warning at the end resembles the only speech of which there exists a more detailed account, reported by the French pamphlet (Hallema, p. 124), repeated with small differences by Le Petit (p. 579b - 580a) and with embellishments by Bor (fol. 22 verso col b - 23 recto col. a). It is, as explained in note 31, the speech in reaction to the complaints made by some soldiers much earlier and which, as is stated at the end, drove them to risk everything for the operation. This last detail also shows that the complaints and the speech took place at a moment when the soldiers still had the (theoretical)

---

<sup>74</sup> For Helt, see n. 29 and cf. n. 59. Van Reyd (n. 7), p. 288, adds an eulogy of the young skipper who in the midst of the very dangerous situation 'noyt veranderde van gelaet / varwe noch spraeck', always remained cool-headed and able to give a pertinent reply to every question (cf. above, note 33). Only Bor (n. 8), fol. 23 recto col. a, also mentions the pumping at this point of the story. In spite of its decisive part in the success of the operation, the pumping of bilgewater to drown the noise made by the soldiers is in Grotius's account only mentioned (in two words!) later, in section 6, when the soldiers are coming out of their hiding place (line 48).

choice to refuse to continue, that is, before the passing of the last boom in the river, the point of no return (cf. p. 231 with note 71).

As Hallema, p. 108, convincingly argues, the French pamphlet originates from the circle around Héraugière himself. This also explains how the content and wording of the speech could be handed down, albeit possibly embellished by himself after the event. Now what did Grotius do with this material? Instead of putting in the mouth of the leader a short instigation and encouragement of the soldiers on the decisive moment immediately before the attack, he summarizes here in line 47 an at that moment inappropriate part of the speech (see above, note 36), leaving out the most important part, namely how Héraugière stressed his own ethos: he would rather die, he said, than fail in his duty towards His Excellency.<sup>75</sup> Here again, Grotius missed the chance to show that Héraugière was a true hero. Instead, he once more belittles the soldiers by having them threatened with death at the moment when their leader is dependent not on their fear, but on their loyalty, their dedication and courage.

### *Conclusion*

We may conclude that, on the whole, Grotius seems to have aimed at following more or less closely his sources. He scarcely presents facts that are not found in the most obvious sources, and he roughly follows the chronological sequence of the events. Nevertheless, we have seen that, in his pursuit of *brevitas*, he on the one hand leaves out or distorts indispensable elements of the story (e.g. the omission of the boom and the constant pumping of bilgewater, and in section 6 the ‘escape’ of one of the skippers to warn Maurice (note 43)), and on the other hand includes details which have no function in the abridged story as he tells it, or which are even not understandable by lack of proper explanation (e.g. the rumors from England in line 23; the mentioning of a ‘porticus’ (line 62) from which Héraugière’s men fired at the bridge). The result of these shortcomings is that, in spite of the chronological

<sup>75</sup> Bor (n. 8) embellishes the expression of Héraugière’s ethos: “... hy was ghesint zijn leven ten dienste van zijn Excellentie ende ’t Vaderlant / vromelick te waghén / hy wilde liever sterven dan faelgeren in zijn devoir / de victorie was hen seecker / so sy maer coragie hadden / hy soude hen in alles voorgaen ende een goet leytsman wesen / ...” (fol. 22 verso col. b - 23 recto col. a). Bor has Héraugière here call the Republic of the rebellious provinces his fatherland, but he was native of Cambrai, and most of the soldiers he addressed were not born in the territory of the Republic: they were, after all, mercenaries. Both editions of Van Meteren (n. 6), in a brief summary of this speech, also report that Héraugière used his ethos: p. 515 (erroneously 516) ‘sesse exemplo statuens’, resp. fol. 271 verso col. a ‘(met) sijn exempel’, after which the soldiers ‘verwillichden alles met hem te wagen’.

lay-out of the account, the reader cannot fully comprehend the action described by Grotius.

In his summary of the events related by his predecessors Grotius hardly pays attention, if at all, to the mutual connection between the occurrences he recounts. Only in very rare cases does he indicate a connection between cause and effect, and even then not explicitly: when Hohenlohe has entered the fortress, Lanzavechia negotiates his surrender with preservation of his life ('*incolumitatem pacisci*', line 65). But Grotius did not draw any conclusion from this fact, because he nowhere even makes an attempt to present a reflective analysis of the course of events. For what did the expedition in fact make a success? What were the decisive moments?

In military terms, there were two: firstly, the unforeseen flight of the city garrison after the noise of the fighting had reached the city; secondly, the quick arrival of Hohenlohe and Maurice before the flight of the city garrison could be discovered by the enemy and counteraction could be taken. Grotius however mentions the flight of the city garrison unchronologically after the end of the fighting in the fortress (lines 67-71), presenting it only as the reason why the city government could do nothing but buy off the plundering of the city, whereas in fact it was the main reason for the success of the entire operation and whereas the strength of the Italian garrison, which Grotius initially did not even mention (see note 48), shows how risky the adventure with the peatbarge was.<sup>76</sup> Grotius did not understand that, if the city garrison, which counted no less than 600 men, would have attacked the 70 raiders in the fort, Héraugière would have had little chance to prevail when at the same time Lanzavechia would have made another sortie against him. It is for this reason that Lanzavechia, who could not know that the city garrison had fled, surrenders only after Hohenlohe has come to reinforce Héraugière. In Grotius's version of the events, this causal connection is completely obscured as if on purpose.

The second fact that was decisive for the outcome of the surprise-attack is that by lucky coincidence, Hohenlohe could be alerted early (through Maurice) and because of this could be present as early as two hours after the fighting in the

---

<sup>76</sup> It is true that all sources, except the German pamphlet (n. 2) and Van Reyd (n. 7) who do not mention the flight of the garrison, follow the order of things from the viewpoint of the Dutch troops and thus mention the flight only after having reported the arrival of Maurice in the fortress, who then did not yet know that the Italians had already fled (cf. above, note 46). But this is hardly an excuse for a history-writer of the second generation who presents himself as a Tacitean historian, to not even allude to the decisive impact of this unforeseen event and to completely omit any analysis of the risks and the eventual success of the raid.

fortress was over. Grotius, however, ignores this completely and mentions the fact perfunctorily at the wrong place and in only four words (lines 62-63). He also did not ask himself how the message was brought to Hohenlohe and how much time it took it to reach him and thus Grotius leaves the reader puzzled as to what kind of ‘sign’ Hohenlohe received. See notes 32 and 43-44.

The decisive role that chance played in the successful outcome of the operation remains completely underexposed in Grotius’s narrative<sup>77</sup> (see p. 227 with note 59 and p. 231 with note 70), because he does not present any view on what happened, nor does he offer any critical analysis of the course of events. The only remark that goes some way towards the formulation of a view is found in lines 56-57, where he calls the double-command of Odoardo Lanzavechia over Breda and Geertruidenberg a serious mistake of Parma.<sup>78</sup> However, this fact in itself did not have influence on the course of the fight; here too, the most important factor is missing in Grotius (see note 40). For in his own version, Lanzavechia’s son Paolo emerges as a brave acting commander of the fortress. The only mistake on the Italian side did not come from Parma, but from Odoardo, namely the fact that when he left for Geertruidenberg, he did not station more troops in the fortress. But, as shown above, even this fact was not the most decisive.

Finally, except for the very first sentence of book 2 (Appendix, line 1), Grotius does not devote a single word to the effect the capture of Breda has had in the context of the war. He only mentions as an isolated piece of information that the States General instituted a thanksgiving-day and issued a commemorative medal for this ‘first victory of the commander (Maurice)’ (lines 82-83). However, he does not mention that Breda, after the series of recaptures by Parma (e.g. Ghent, Bruges and Antwerp in 1584-1585), was also the very first victory of the Republic and that it now proceeded to waging a successful offensive war. In this process, it used the fact that Philip II had decided at that moment to concentrate his troops for an intervention campaign on the side of the Roman Catholic Ligue in the French civil war. Thus, the psychological importance of the capture of Breda for not only the position of Maurice, but above all for the Republic as a whole, can hardly be underestimated, but Grotius does not mention it with a single word.

<sup>77</sup> He mentions it only once: ‘forte’ in line 33.

<sup>78</sup> In the manuscript, Grotius has added the sentence on Parma’s error (lines 56-57) after 1612, simultaneously with the related remark in line 54 that Odoardo’s son was ‘juvenis et belli artium rudis’ (cf. also n. 49). Both remarks are not taken from the the sources I consulted.

In sum, Grotius's account of this eventful and dramatic turning point in the war of the young Dutch Republic against Spain is nothing but a rather flat narrative, which attempts in a rather artificial way to imitate Tacitus's *brevitas* on the stylistic level.

## Language and style

So in our search for the Tacitean historian in Grotius's account of the capture of Breda, we are left with Grotius's language and style. The special idiom of Tacitus was in the time of Grotius – as it still is today – famous for a number of features: in general its *brevitas* and conciseness, furthermore frequent and sharp contrasts between words and parts of sentences, designed irregularity and unpredictable running and content of sentences, a number of syntactical peculiarities, poetic and archaic diction, and finally the frequent use of *sententiae*. None of these characteristics is exclusively Tacitean, but their appearing together and with some frequency can lend a Tacitean flavour to a text.

Grotius's language and style have such a Tacitean flavour. A large collection of samples of Tacitean usages in his *Annales et Historiae* has been presented by Boot in an article dating from 1883.<sup>79</sup> Following Boot's method, that is, using the still unsurpassed nineteenth-century analyses of Tacitus's style as point of reference,<sup>80</sup> I will give some examples from the account of the capture of Breda illustrating that Grotius aimed for Tacitean brevity, variety and irregularity, and I will give a survey of the Tacitean idiosyncrasies of language and style which Grotius has adopted. It is likely that Grotius read Tacitus in the edition of Lipsius, to which he wrote himself some notes and emendations, but the differences between the old and the modern text of Tacitus do not affect the reader's general impression of Tacitus's language and style.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, any

<sup>79</sup> Boot, 'Hugo Grotius et Cornelius Tacitus' (as in n. 9), pp. 333-362, especially 343ff. See also Muller, *Hugo de Groot's "Annales et Historiae"* (as in n. 9), chapter 6, pp. 163-183 (general observations on the *Annales et Historiae* as, in his opinion, a masterpiece of historiographic writing) and pp. 183-190 (observations on Grotius's language and style, including a summary of Boot's findings).

<sup>80</sup> A. Draeger, *Ueber Syntax und Stil des Tacitus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1882; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1967) and, based on Draeger, H. Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus*, 2nd edn, rev. by H.F. Pelham and C.D. Fisher, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896; repr. 1978), pp. 38-74.

<sup>81</sup> Lipsius's method of editing Tacitus was studied in detail by J. Ruyschaert, *Juste Lipse et les Annales de Tacite: une méthode de critique textuelle au XVIe siècle*, Louvain 1949. Grotius's *Notae et emendationes* were published in the Elsevier edition of Tacitus's *Opera*, 1640; some of Grotius's emendations are quoted by Boot, 'Hugo Grotius et Cornelius Tacitus' (as in n. 9), pp. 335-339.

future thorough and detailed study of Grotius's grammar and style should take Tacitus's seventeenth-century text as Grotius knew it as its starting point.

Grotius writes overall short, grammatically correct sentences, consisting of a main clause with one or two subordinate clauses or an equivalent thereof (e.g. a participle or an adverbial adjunct), in some cases supplemented with one or more ablative absolutes.

In Grotius's syntax and style we find various Tacitean features that contribute to brevity.<sup>82</sup> Thus, Grotius's sustained effort to say as much as possible in as few words as he can is shown in four cases of parenthetical sentences; the parenthetical word or expression, or a complete parenthetical sentence is one of Tacitus's much used means to achieve brevity:

1. 'Nam fluminis recessu afflictus vado alveus - sive glacies pertudit (sc. eum) - oppleri undis coeperat' (section 4, lines 28-29).
2. 'Sed Paulus, si forte exiguum adhuc manum praelio exturbaret, denso militum cuneo (sex et triginta assumserat) egressus ponte hostem irruit' (section 6, lines 57-58).
3. 'Namque Itali, queis commissa oppidi tutela (erant hi centuriae peditum sex, turma una), quorum officium fuerat aut pontem arci oppidoque medium abrumpere aut aversas ab hoste tenere portas, ad armorum ex arce sonum exterriti atque inter se jam pridem discordes, hoc facilius in fugam consenserant' (section 7, lines 67-71).
4. '(Mauritius ...) pressam stipendii solutione civitatem (et multo plures quam affuerant milites nomina profitebantur) dolens magis quam accusans modestia juventae et ne privata curare crederetur, quanquam ad centena florenorum millia crescente summa, cum Parmensi Antverpia quater centenis haud amplius pependisset' (section 8, lines 77-81).

Other stylistic devices used by Tacitus to achieve brevity are ellipses and similar abbreviated expressions, the frequent use of participle constructions, zeugma and other constructions. Here are some examples of each of these devices in our text:

- There are a number of ellipsis of the auxiliary 'est' or 'era(n)t', in lines 13: 'quae solita', 26: 'haud procul Breda repetitum iter', 44: 'Ejecta pars oneris nec ultra levata navis', 45: 'cum visum', 48: 'aversae aures', 55: 'submissi', 56: 'Nec levis error Parmensis', 65-66: 'secutus princeps', 68: 'queis commissa oppidi tutela';

<sup>82</sup> See Furneaux' division of stylistic devices to achieve brevity in *The Annals of Tacitus* (as in n. 80), pp. 68-69.

- there are a few cases of ellipses of a verb or (pro)noun easily supplied from the context, in lines 33–34: ‘quod vix alias’, sc. evenit, 38: ‘inde alia incommoda’, sc. inciderunt, 55: ‘submissi (sc. quidam) specie exploratorum’, 65: ‘dedito (sc. eo) quod arcis retinebat’.
- Grotius imitates Tacitus’s tendency to frequently use participial clauses; thus, we find two dominant-attributive participle constructions, in lines 38–39: ‘admotum propius periculum formidinem expresserat’, and 54–55: ‘Odoardum ... creditus illic copias trahere Mauritius detinebat’. Additionally, there is a remarkably large number of ablative absolutes, in lines 4, 11, 18, 25, 55, 62–63, 65 (with ellips of the subject), 73, and 87.
- Finally, there is a clear case of zeugma in lines 38–39: ‘admotum propius periculum formidinem expresserat et in Heraugerium querelas.’
- There are a few attractive *sententiae* or pointed sayings. In section 3, Grotius stresses in a *sententia* that great deeds are often burdened with evil: ‘ut solent ejusmodi conatus malis onerari’ (line 21); In section 4, Grotius records the memorable and heroic saying of Mathias Helt, who puts the life of his comrades before his own. This saying is also recorded in other sources, but Grotius casts it in the form of a particularly balanced and euphonious sentence: ‘occidite me, commilitones, ne occidamur’ (line 35–36). Finally, ‘vicere quibus vinci non licebat’ (section 6, line 59).

Tacitus’s style is not only characterized by brevity, but also by variety and irregularity.<sup>83</sup> Grotius does not seem to have used these stylistic devices frequently, but the following examples show that they are not lacking completely:

- in lines 2–3 the subject ‘oppidum’ has two attributes, one adverbial expression (‘fertili circum agro’) and one present participle (‘imperitans’).
- There are several cases of asymmetrical construction. Grotius alternates ‘pars’ with ‘plures’ in lines 39, 42, and ‘pars’ with ‘manus altera’ in lines 49, 52. In lines 63–64 the singular ‘pars exercitus’ is followed by a relative ‘qui’ in the plural. In lines 87–88, we have a relative clause alternating with propositional complement in an ablative absolute: ‘Relictis centuriis quae tuerentur et turmis ad incursandos Brabantorum pagos.’

On top of the devices for brevity and variety, we find in our text a number of syntactical and stylistic characteristics which are known as typical of Tacitus’s idiom:

---

<sup>83</sup> See Furneaux’ division of stylistic devices to achieve variety of expression in *The Annals of Tacitus* (as in n. 80), pp. 69–72.

- a dative of purpose or end instead of ‘in’ or ‘ad’ with accusative: ‘caetera arcendis hostibus ... adjecerat’ (lines 7-8).
- use of abstractum pro concreto: ‘audacia’ = daring enterprise (line 21); ‘ingenia’ = smart people (line 84).
- an adjective with a genitive: ‘pavidi hostium’ (line 71).
- promptus with ‘in’ instead of ‘ad’ with accusative: ‘prompta in periculum juventus’ (line 19).<sup>84</sup>
- an adjective or participle used as substantive: ‘arcis intima’ (line 52).
- the adverb ‘mox’ in the sense of ‘deinde’ (lines 4 and 22).
- use of historic present: ‘imponitur’ (line 19), ‘obtruncant’ (line 50), ‘adest’ (line 63).
- use of historic infinitive: ‘trepidare ac detestari’ (line 29), ‘morari, poscere, torpere’ (line 40-42), ‘irrumperere’ (line 62; the historical infinitive is used instead of *indicativus pro coniunctivo*, an indicative used by Tacitus to stress the reality of the act<sup>85</sup>).
- In line 1, Grotius uses indicative instead of subjunctive in the apodosis of the unreal conditional sentence: ‘videbatur ... ni traxisset’; this may be an imitation of Tacitus, e.g. *Hist.* 4.15: ‘nec, si providissent, satis virium ad arcendum erat’.
- coepi with passive infinitive: ‘exaudiri tumultus coeperat’ (line 61).
- anastrophe of prepositions: ‘partes inter’ (line 13), ‘arcem propter’ (line 27).

Finally, Tacitus’s preference for uncommon language led him to innovate vocabulary and to give new or deviant meanings to existing words and expressions.<sup>86</sup> In our passage we find a few oddities of the same kind, which in some cases are common in humanistic Latin, but which Grotius may have used deliberately to contribute to the Tacitean flavour of his text. Thus, in line 54, we find the celtic word ‘leuca’ to indicate the distance between Breda and Geertruidenberg, where Grotius could have easily used a good Latin wording.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> This example is not in Draeger, *Ueber Syntax und Stil* (as in n. 80) and Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus* (as in n. 80). The occurrences in Tacitus are Ann. 15.25: ‘promptus in pavorem’; Ann. 15.61: ‘promptus in adulationes’; Agr. 35: ‘promptior in spem’). The only other classical witness of this expression is Flor., *Epitome de Tito Livio* 2.25: ‘in latrocinia promptissimi’.

<sup>85</sup> Draeger, *Ueber Syntax und Stil* (as in n. 80), p. 78, par. 194 1.a.

<sup>86</sup> See Furneaux’ survey of this stylistic device in *The Annals of Tacitus* (as in n. 80), pp. 63-65.

<sup>87</sup> G.J. Vossius mentions that this word of barbaric origin (‘vox ... ortu barbara’) is used in France (*De vitiis sermonis et glossematis latino-barbaris* (Amsterdam: L. Elzevir, 1645), p. 474). The word is also recorded in L. Diefenbach, *Glossarium Latino-Germanicum mediae et infimae aetatis* (Frankfurt a.M.: J. Baer, 1857; repr. 1997), s.v.

There are also a few cases of meanings and constructions which seem unclassical. We may perhaps safely assume that such cases are examples of Grotius deliberately deviating from the classical idiom to strengthen the Tacitean flavor of his text.

- In line 40 he uses the unclassical and slightly awkward phrase ‘pars (militum) ... non tenebras morari ... poscere’ (some soldiers demanded that they should no longer be detained in the dark).
- In line 69, he unexpectedly writes ‘portas aversas ab hoste tenere’ instead of ‘hostes a portis tenere’.
- In line 77 he uses the collocation ‘paternos penates’ to express the notion that Breda is count Maurice’s hereditary city. This collocation is very rare – it only occurs in Tacitus, *Historiae* 3.86.3 and in pseudo-Quintilian’s *Major Declamation* 5.8, where it means ‘his father’s house’ – and it may be intended by Grotius as an intertextual reference to Tacitus.

### General conclusion

To sum up: is Grotius’s narrative of the capture of Breda a masterful piece of Tacitean writing? It is clear from our observations in the section ‘Language and style’, that, as Boot already showed for the entire *Annales et Historiae*, Grotius made a conscious and successful effort to imitate the language and style of Tacitus. However, when we turn to the structure of the narrative, we find that little or nothing resembles Tacitus’s historiography.

On the whole, Grotius simply follows the chronological sequence of the events and therefore, surprisingly, does not distinguish himself in essence from the Breda-story in the well-known and in Grotius’s days widely read history-books written in a vernacular (Le Petit, Van Meteren, Van Reyd, Bor). In many cases, Grotius does not notice the coherence of the narrated events or he even breaks it up. Thus, for instance, he does not observe that it was owing to the barge making water that the men were not discovered during the waiting period of 8 or 9 hours, because it made it necessary to pump bilge water during that entire period (see notes 37 and 59). Hence, the pumping mentioned in line 48 is an isolated fact in his narrative, just like the rumors mentioned in line 23–24 (see p. 229, with notes 67 and 68). When he mentions the connection between the absence of Parma’s city commander and the success of the surprise attack, Grotius fails to mention the main reason for it, namely the weakness of the garrison in the fortress: see note 40 and p. 235. And to cite a final example, he presents the delay at the beginning of the trip

in section 3 as an isolated fact, which he fails to bring into connection with the fact that the guards of the fortress, apparently deprived of turf for several days, were keeping themselves warm in their guardhouse and therefore could be killed ‘intra stationem’ (line 50).

Furthermore, we have found that his version of the surprise-attack differs, to its detriment, in certain places from other reports: some facts have been left out although they are necessary to understand the sequence of events, while others are included which have no function in the story line. Moreover, Grotius does not at all succeed to grip his readers; he does not to the full extent represent the trials and dangers to which the soldiers in the barge were exposed, nor the perseverance and bravery necessary to face them successfully. Grotius’s version of the surprise of Breda contains nothing for the reader to remember it by, except the feeling that there is a clear incongruity between style and content.

In pp. 236-240, I have analyzed the language and style of Grotius’s story as if this could be an object of study in its own right. However, it is my conviction that this approach – which is also that of Boot, Draeger and Furneaux - is in fact at variance with the nature of the object as it is, namely a text which passes on to the reader knowledge of a series of facts and, in the way it presents those facts, simultaneously transmits a certain view of them. This ‘content’ of the text just cannot be separated from its ‘form’. I therefore completely agree with Norma Miller, who wrote about Tacitus that it is not only impossible to ‘divorce the man from the historian’, but also that such a divorce would make us fail to notice that ‘the content may have been subtly affected by the form in which it is cast,<sup>88</sup> because, as she stresses, ‘the historian is, by definition, not only a recorder, but an interpreter’,<sup>89</sup> by the mere fact that he relates the historic events in his own manner. This fact also applies to Grotius, however much he seems to have tried to present an ‘objective’ account of the events.

I also fully agree with Norma Miller that ‘Tacitus fits his style to its content’ and that the stylistic devices he uses are ‘always connected with the content which is being presented’ (pp. 111-112). If we judge Grotius by these standards, then we cannot but find that the Tacitean characteristics listed above in

---

<sup>88</sup> N.P. Miller, ‘Style and Content in Tacitus’, *Tacitus*, ed. by T. Dorey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 99 with note 2. Miller reacts against the judgement of M.L.W. Laistner, *The Greater Roman Historians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947), p. 115.

<sup>89</sup> Miller, ‘Style and Content in Tacitus’ (as in n. 88), p.103. Cf. also N.P. Miller, ‘Tacitus’ narrative technique’, *Greece and Rome* 24 (1977), p. 21 (‘Tacitus’ comments are not explicit nor separate, but implied by the style of presentation of his narrative’.)

his case never serve to give the occurrence he is relating a certain ‘color’ or liveliness: his account of the capture of Breda remains a sequence of dry and unconnected occurrences. Nowhere does an unusual or striking linguistic usage cause excitement, nowhere does a case of irregular syntax express a quick succession of events or a causal chain of actions, nowhere does an interruption of the course of events serve to insert a circumstance which had an effect on what happened, nowhere does the style express the complex of conflicting motives of the different parties involved or tendencies which cross each other as, for instance, on the one hand the eagerness with which the Italian soldiers, who were bitterly cold because of the forced delay of the barge at the beginning of the journey, hauled it into the fortress and hastily tried to get their hands on the fuel for their braziers, and on the other hand the fact that their impatience increased the risk for the attackers to be discovered, because they were with their feet in the bilgewater and could hardly suppress their coughing. Even the parentheses nowhere serve, for instance, the depiction of the interaction of simultaneous events, or the introduction into the story of different interpretations of motives, each of which convey a different view of the course of the entire enterprise, such as the fact that the flight of the city garrison on the one hand brought about the success of the surprise attack, while on the other hand it shows that the operation was almost doomed to fail without a great deal of good fortune. Grotius’s imitation of the language and style of Tacitus in fact only accentuates how little Tacitean his account of the capture of Breda actually is.

All in all, the judgement of Boot, that Grotius wrote for the mature and careful Latinist, who will understand what the author means, if need be after reading a passage two or three times,<sup>90</sup> does not hold good for the account of the surprise of Breda. The attentive reader of that account is rather tempted to agree with Grotius’s contemporary Hieronymus Bignonius, who, after having read the entire *Annales et Historiae* in manuscript, did not approve of its *breuitas* because it is ‘obscuritati obnoxia’ (resulting in obscurity).<sup>91</sup> Indeed, judging by the surprise of Breda, the imitation of Tacitus’s language and style has driven Grotius to produce a narrative that goes all but completely without the

<sup>90</sup> Boot, ‘Hugo Grotius et Cornelius Tacitus’ (as in n. 9), p. 351.

<sup>91</sup> Boot, ‘Hugo Grotius et Cornelius Tacitus’ (as in n. 9), p. 350. Jean Leclerc (1657-1736) formulated the same judgement in his *Parrhasiana ou pensées diverses sur des matières de critique, d’histoire, de morale et de politique* (Amsterdam: Henri Schelte, 1701). Both Bignonius and Leclerc are cited in full by P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 4th edn, 4 vols (Amsterdam: Pierre Brunel etc., 1730), II, pp. 619-620, note (P). Cf. Waszink, ‘Shifting Tacitisms’ (as in note 1), p. 91.

qualities for which Tacitus's *Annals* and *Histories* are famous: it not only lacks factual coherence, but it also fails to give a good impression of the dramatic occurrences which took place in Breda, and on their causes and effects, and it leaves totally unexpressed any judgement or view of the author on how that important success in the history of the Dutch revolt was achieved.

## Appendix: Historiarum de Rebus Belgicis Liber Secundus

The text is taken from the second edition, printed in Amsterdam by Joannis Blaev, 1658, pp. 139-143. The spelling has been left unchanged, but the punctuation has been adapted and the division into sections has been added for the sake of clarity and convenience. Italics are used to indicate passages which were added in the manuscript; in all but two cases, the additions date from after its completion in 1612 (see for the manuscript note 11 above). There exist to my knowledge three old translations of the *Annales et Historiae de rebus Belgicis*, one in French: *Annales et Histoires des troubles du Pays-Bas* (Amsterdam: Jean Blaev, 1662), pp. 169-173, one in English, by Thomas Manley: *De rebus Belgicis, or, the Annals, and History of the Low-Country-Warres* (London: H. Twyford and R. Paul, 1665), pp. 244-250, and one in Dutch, by Joan Goris: *Hugo de Groot's Nederlantsche Jaerboeken en Historien* (Amsterdam: Wed. J. van Someren etc., 1681), pp. 153-156.

### Liber II

- [p. 139]<sup>92</sup> **1** Incubitura in Frisios belli moles videbatur, ni capta Breda traxisset exercitus. Brabantiae id oppidum jam olim accensetur, fertili circum agro *ad confinium Hollandiae* et septendecim vicis imperitans. Ab amne nomen; is Aa hactenus, in latumque editus moenia perlabitur mutato in Mercam vocabulo et *mox ad Septembergas oppidum in maris sinum se*
- 5** *immergit*. Polana domus Baronum titulo ex emto tenuit, inde Nassavia Engelberti matrimonio, cujus Henricus pronepos munimenta fossasque addidit et nobilissimam arcem, [p. 140] praesidio simul et ostentui. Belli usus novissimis temporibus propugnacula caeteraque arcendis hostibus et a difficili expugnatione gloriam adjecerat.
- 2** Dolum quo capi posset nauta monstravit. Philippi Nassavii impulsu (Iohannis hic
- 10** filius, missus gentile in bellum, partem militis et pauca ad Mosam oppida regebat) Heraugerius Cameracensis centurio, re aestimata cum Principe *Mauritio*, cepit audendi consilium Lambertumque Charlium, strenuum militem, adoptavit in facinoris societatem. Navis assumta fraudi quae solita partes inter commere fide publica, ut alimenta ignium Bredam conveheret. Limus Hollandiae paludibus editur, qui, postquam solibus inaruit,<sup>93</sup>
- 15** scissus in cespitem ligni praestat usum. Nam bitumini sulphurique par ingenium efficit inclusus terrae calor, quem ut alibi montium incendia, ita hic prorumpentes interdum flammae prodiderunt, nisi prostratae olim silvae impulsu maris ac turbinum, postquam superinducta humo putruere, mutata facie naturam retinent.

<sup>92</sup> In the margin: 1590

<sup>93</sup> In the ms. *induruit*, changed into *inaruit*.

3 Imponitur carinae *oblongae* lecta e cohortibus et prompta in periculum iuventus,  
 20 numero septuaginta, quos tenui interjectu tegerent cespites dissimulantque. Diu parum favit  
 fortuna audaciae, ut solent ejusmodi conatus malis onerari, etiam quae non metuantur.  
 Adversa vis venti et, quamquam exitu hyemis, asperum frigus, mox defectus ciborum, quos  
 mora consumserant, prima tempora abstulere. *Nec silendum reor has inter moras rei quae*  
*agitabatur jam patratae perscriptos ex Anglia rumores.*<sup>94</sup> Vbi refoverant corpora et animos  
 25 Heraugerius sermone firmavit, misso ad Mauritium nuntio, qui proximam apud insulam<sup>95</sup>  
 militem occultabat, haud procul Breda repetitum iter.

4 Intra aquae septum quod arcem propter est pervectos, unde regressus non erat, nova  
 calamitas terruit. Nam fluminis recessu afflictus vado alveus - sive glacies pertudit - oppleri  
 undis coeperat. Ibi inclusi trepidare ac detestari infelices latebras, madentes genuum tenuis,  
 30 donec aestu levata navis nulla humana ope perfluere ultro desiit. Explorandi curam, quae ex  
 usu magis disciplinae quam quod necesse arbitrarentur, praesidii rectores ad minora quisque  
 officia relegaverant. Multorum per socordiam<sup>96</sup> ad manipularem rejectum munus, qui, securus  
 exemplo jubentium, puppe leniter pertentata nihil ultra scrutatus est. Et forte evenerat, quod  
 vix alias, ut tussim frigus nemini excuteret. [p. 141] Servari meretur vox militis, qui  
 35 praemetuens ne spiritu prorumpente secum caeteros proderet, 'Occidite me', inquit,  
 'commilitones, ne occidamur'.

5 Ipsi navem praesidiarii in arcem traxere, quod non satis soluta glacies aquas  
 attineret. Inde alia rursus incommoda, quippe admotum propius periculum formidinem  
 expresserat et in Heraugerium querelas, ut alieni pariter sanguinis ac sui prodigum. Pars omni  
 40 projecta spe salutis tenebras non morari, sed, quando moriendum esset, apertum coelum et  
 hostem in quem caderent,<sup>97</sup> poscere, ne in illo suo carcere oppressi ad supplicia traherentur;  
 torpere plures nec tam ducis hortamenta ad virtutem et gloriam quam desperatio compulsi  
 coeptum exsequi.

6 Ejecta pars oneris nec ultra levata navis, ne insidias nudaret, solertia nautae  
 45 lassitudinem simulantis, *cui et vox et vultus miram animi praesentiam praeferebant.* Media  
 fere nox erat nec illunis, cum educere visum milites admonitos prius ad decus<sup>98</sup> et praemia  
 victoriae, desertoribus vero animosi facinoris non vitam, ne mortem quidem honestam dari.  
 Haustu sentinae aversae hostium aures; ita exiere, quod mirum est, inobservati excubitoribus.  
 Pars militum praetergressi armamentarium obvios vigilam, dehinc custodes portae, *qua in*  
 50 *oppidum itur*, intra stationem obrucant, nisi quod ausus prorumpere signifer, et infesto  
 mucrone vulnus in Heraugerium ferens morte haud ignava procubuit. At Charlius, cui  
 attributa erat manus altera, praesidium hostile in arcis intima compulsi. Aquae aedes ambiunt;  
 has in spem novissimam retinebat Paulus Antonius Lanzavechia, vice patris Bredam regens,  
*juvenis et belli artium rudis.* Ipsum Odoardum Gertrudisbergae, *tres leucas distantis*, munitio  
 55 et creditus illic copias trahere Mauritius detinebat; quippe submissi specie exploratorum qui  
 falso metu vulgato verum averterent. *Nec levis error Parmensis, qui uni duo oppida servanda*  
*commiserat, cum vix singulis singuli sufficiant et bene meritis alia sint sine periculo praemia.*  
 Sed Paulus, si forte exiguum adhuc manum praelio exturbaret, denso militum cuneo (sex et  
 triginta assumerat) egressus ponte hostem irruit. Vicere quibus vinci non licebat multaque  
 60 caede saucius ipse, qua venerat, refugit.

7 Exaudiri interea per urbem pugnantium tumultus coeperat et oppidani portas arcis  
 irrumpere, ni Heraugerii miles proxima e porticu glandibus arceret. Tandem, accepto rei bene

<sup>94</sup> For this addition, which probably does not date from after 1612, see above note 67.

<sup>95</sup> In the ms.: *proximas apud insulas*, changed into *proximam apud insulam*

<sup>96</sup> In the ms.: *socordia*, changed into *per socordiam*

<sup>97</sup> In the ms. *inciderent*, changed into *caderent*

<sup>98</sup> In the ms.: *gloriam*, changed into *decus*

gestae signo, adest [p. 142] Hohenloius cum parte Mauritiani exercitus, qui speculabundi non procul substerant. Cum portam glacies moraretur, septum e palis transiere, nec distulit  
**65** Lanzavechia, dedito quod arcis retinebat, incolumitatem pacisci. Secutus confestim Princeps et major altera exercitus portio, pedes turmaeque per arcis portas impressionem minabantur. Sed pavida civitas et praesidio nudata bimestri stipendio direptionem redemit; namque Itali, queis commissa oppidi tutela<sup>99</sup> (*erant hi centuriae peditum*<sup>100</sup> *sex, turma una*), *quorum officium fuerat aut portem arcis oppidoque medium abrumpere aut aversas ab hoste tenere*  
**70** *portas*, ad armorum ex arce sonum *exterriti atque inter se jam pridem discordes, hoc facilius in fugam consenserant.*<sup>101</sup> Quod fere ejusdem animi est, pavidi hostium, hospitibus infensi, nullo, dum oppidi potiebantur, abstinerant contumeliae aut libidinis genere. Itaque desertorum supplicio affecti, cum Parmensis populare flagitium in suum quoque pudorem vindicaret, sero sceleribus poenas solverunt, *excepto Intemelio, quem adolescentia et nobilitas*  
**75** *sua supplicio*<sup>102</sup> *exemit. Et Odoardus Lanzavechia, quasi poenam sibimet irrogans, Gertrudisbergae praefecturam a se abdicavit.*

**8** Victor ingressus paternos penates Mauritius populum accepit in fidem et ditionem; *pressam stipendii solutione civitatem (et multo plures quam affuerant milites nomina profitebantur) dolens magis quam accusans, modestia juventae et ne privata curare*  
**80** *crederetur, quanquam ad centena florenorum millia crescente summa, cum Parmensi Antverpia quater centenis haud amplius pependisset. Tum*<sup>103</sup> *Heraugerium*<sup>104</sup> *praefectura oppidi, caeteros deinceps honoribus et praemiis attollit. Decreta et ab Ordinibus supplicatio ac publica gaudii signa, utque nummi inscripti primam ducis ac sine suorum sanguine victoriam testarentur, quae postea mos secutus usurpavit quoties prospera evenerant. Nec ingenia*  
**85** *defuere, auspicia Principis et non degenerem dolum celebrando: ita Trojam equo ingressos Graecorum proceres, seu vere talis effigies seu navis insigne fuit. Ipsius urbis fortunam comparabant quam novem ante annis Altipenna absentia praesidii, proditione vigilum, deinde oppidanorum strage incusserat. Relictis centuriis*<sup>105</sup> *quae tuerentur et turmis ad incursandos Brabantorum pagos, discessit exercitus. Simul convectae copiae illorum providentia, quos*  
**90** *Princeps conscios habuerat expeditionis, longum in tempus sufficiebant.*

<sup>99</sup> In the ms. the following addition has been inserted before *queis ... tutela*

<sup>100</sup> The ms. reads *peditum centuriae*

<sup>101</sup> In the ms. this addition came instead of *vecordes profugerant*, followed by a comma and *quod*

<sup>102</sup> In the ms.: *poena*, changed into *supplicio*

<sup>103</sup> For this addition, which probably does not date from after 1612, see above note 51.

<sup>104</sup> In the ms.: *Heraugeriumque*, changed into *Tum Heraugerium*

<sup>105</sup> In the ms: *cohortibus*, changed into *centuriis*