Unexpected Return

Reluctantly, but convinced of the necessity of his venture, Grotius risked the great gamble: he returned to Holland, emboldened by letters from his friends. He took his leave of the King at an audience attended by all the great men at court. This was probably soon after 9 September 1631, when he wrote to Willem that he was about to visit the King and court at Fontainebleau.1 The audience was a demonstration that he had no intention of travelling incognito, and it also showed the special status he enjoyed even in exile. Louis XIII embraced him and even offered to write to the States of Holland.2 Nicolaes van Reigersberch was alarmed by Grotius’ openness and shared his worries with Maria, but she saw no problem: ‘he would be crazy to go there as if into a silent prison . . . , it can only be good to be resolute’.3 At about this time Grotius saw the first printed copies of his translation of Euripides’ Phoenissae, and in all the bustle of his imminent departure he still found time to list some corrections.4

Grotius travelled in a French ship to Zeeland, then through the province to Rotterdam, where he arrived on 29 October 1631. He lodged with the brewer Jan Dirkszoon Versijden, who had served on the vroedschap from 1611 to 1618. Another source, the ‘Particular notes’ of the debates in the States of Holland kept by Stellingwerff and Schot, says that he spent six weeks ‘at the house of the brewer in the sign of the Boat’.5 If this is correct, it was not Versijden, but

1 BW IV, no. 1674. There is no further reference to the visit in the correspondence. At the end of the month the court was in Troyes en route to Lorraine. Grotius expected it to return by 10 October. He may have visited the King after that date as well. Cf. BW IV, no. 1683, to N. van Reigersberch, 5 October 1631.
3 H.C. Rogge, Brieven van en aan Maria van Reigersberch, pp. 207–208, Maria to Nicolaes van Reigersberch, 14 [November 1631]: ‘hij zoude wel geck zijn daer te gaan als in een stil ghevangennisse . . . Het doet altemet goedt wat resolut te zijn.’
4 Amsterdam 1631. Cf. BG nos. 496 and 497; BW IV, nos. 1674 and 1675, to W. de Groot, 9 and 18 September 1631.
5 Stellingwerff-Schot, Particuliere notulen V, no. 810, 13 December 1631.
another brewer who had been a magistrate, Eeuwout Adriaenszoon Bijlewerff. Grotius later referred to a third address, the house of the merchant, *vroedschap* member and former burgomaster Cornelis Claeszoon van Driel, where he beguiled a difficult time with light reading, including Guido Panziroli's studies on inventions and the *Institutio oratoria* of Quintilian. In Rotterdam Grotius revisited his old Remonstrant friends Simon Episcopius, Petrus Cupus and Samuel Lansbergen. He spoke grandly of an offer from England, but first wanted to see what he could achieve in Holland. He had no thought of lurking in secrecy; on the contrary, he made a point of publicity and therefore immediately informed the burgomaster Cornelis Janszoon Hartigsvelt of his arrival. When he realised that the senior burgomaster was not Hartigsvelt but his colleague Pieter Willemszoon Goedereede, he sent Versijden to repair this blunder, as if protocol was vital at such a time. Versijden did not go to Goedereede's house, but waited on him at the town hall, where he found the burgomaster accompanied by the secretary Van Berlecom, a hater of Remonstrants, who exclaimed in amazement: 'Grotius, Grotius, here in the city!'. The flabbergasted burgomaster could only say 'I hear and I see.' Very soon the news reached The Hague, and ultimately even Recife in Brazil, where it was discussed among the troops of the West India Company.

On 2 November 1631 Grotius notified Frederick Henry of his arrival in a letter which revealed his boisterous confidence but also his completely mistaken judgment of the political situation in the Republic. Grotius pointed to his honourable leave-taking from Louis XIII, said that he had not considered it necessary to obtain letters of safe-conduct and recommendation from the French King, reminded the Prince of his innocence and the 'notorious nullity' of the verdict of 1619, and appealed to Frederick Henry's