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Print and Epigram: Grotius' Prince Maurice Epigrams.

Grotius found room for two books of epigrams in his first volume of collected poems: Poemata Collecta of 1617 (referred to below as PC; Note 1). A good many of the epigrams fall into the category of occasional verse, but others were inspired by or written in connection with prints. Some of these were even published in combination with a print, a notable example of co-operation between poet and printmaker being the poems descriptive of the journey made by Stevin's sand yachts from Scheveningen to Petten in 1602, which were printed on the engraving made of this event by Jacques de Gheyn II (Notes 6, 7). The group of epigrams entitled Instrumentum Domesticum (Note 8), which evoke memories of other great series of epigrams of the day (Notes 9, 10), may well have been created in a similar way, albeit no trace exists of a series of prints (Note 11).

A separate problem in this connection is posed by the poems entitled Epigrammata de rebus gestis ductu principis Mauriitii, which cover the highlights of the military history of the United Provinces between 1588 and 1609, from the defeat of the Spanish Armada to the conclusion of the Twelve Years' Truce, the emphasis throughout being on Prince Maurice's campaigns. The series comprises forty Tetrasticha dealing with the period up to the Battle of Gibraltar in 1607 and eight Alia, seven dealing with events round the Battle of Nieuwpoort and one with the Truce. Although these poems might seem to form a closed series, it can be shown first of all that they were not all written at the same date. In a letter of 21 July 1616 to Vossius, (Note 13), who was closely involved in the preparation of the PC editions and was at that time in possession of all the poems, Grotius indicates their correct order and says that he is adding four or five to round off the series. Thus a small number of epigrams must have been written at a fairly late stage, probably in 1616, while most of them were composed much earlier. We know the dates of composition of some of them more or less for certain from their appearance in the rough ms. by De Groot in Leiden University Library (referred to below as Pap. 10; Note 14). Most of these were written in 1601-3, a few around 1608. Moreover in a letter of 31 July 1601 to the French historian J. A. Thou (Note 15), Grotius says that engravers in the Netherlands were planning to publish a collection of all the prints covering the 'ten years' of Prince Maurice and he encloses a genealogy of Prince Maurice (obviously the poem Genealogia, Note 17) plus depictions of all his conquests, including one of Breda 1590 on which appears a poem by Grotius (Fig. 7). Obviously there were already numerous separate prints in circulation at this time and Grotius was in contact with their makers and supplying poems. His close relations with Floris Balthasar, for whom he wrote poems for, among other things, maps of Nieuwpoort 1600, Grave 1602 and Ostend 1604 (Notes 18, 19, 22), and Jacques de Gheyn, for whom he wrote a poem for the map of Turnhout 1597 (Fig. 14, Notes 20, 23), have already been pointed out.
The catalogues of prints relating to Dutch history by Muller and Van Stolk and Knuth's catalogue of pamphlets in the Royal Library give scattered indications for ten prints and maps bearing poems by Grotius (Note 24). Some of these were later used in famous collections of prints (Note 25), two of which command attention here. The collection published by Baudart (Note 26) is largely based on that by Hogenberg (Note 27), from which have been taken the prints relating to Dutch history, which are supplemented by some new engravings. The accompanying text is based on J. F. le Petit (Note 28), Bor and Van Meteren. In this book, which was published in various languages from 1615 onwards, the prints copied from Hogenberg are poor in quality and often coarsely done in the cases where they are coloured.

The Leiden publisher Jan Janssz. Orlers who is linked with Grotius in connection with the Genealogia (Notes 29, 30), published two works concerning the House of Nassau, which are often found bound together in one volume: Nassausche Lauren-crans, dealing with Prince Maurice's victories, published first in Dutch in 1610, later in various translations and thereafter in a much enlarged version in 1619 (Note 33); and Généalogie des illustres comtes de Nassau, first published in French in 1615 and in Latin and Dutch in 1616. The French editions of the two books were published together in Deuxième Edition in 1612 and again in 1624. Grotius' Genealogia appears in the French and Latin editions, but not in the Dutch.

Orlers is much more limited than Baudart, covering the period 1588 to 1608 in 39 prints as compared with Baudart's 285 for the period 1559-1614, among which 80 are reserved for 1588-1608. However, the same plates are used in both for the same events, virtually all Orlers' prints appearing in Baudart in smaller, less good versions in reverse (cf. Figs. 9 and 10). Thus both appear to go back to the same original, albeit Orlers includes legends under the prints in the 1610 edition, but omits them later, and none of his prints are coloured, while Baudart gives Latin poems with his prints, many of which are coloured. It must therefore be concluded that the existing material assembled, with much difficulty as he says (Note 41), by Orlers was taken over by Baudart and incorporated in his larger series.

There further exists an unmistakable link between these two series, especially Orlers, and Grotius' epigrams. Firstly, Baudart's and Orlers' titles show a striking resemblance to the description of the collection mentioned in Grotius' letter of 1601 to De Thou (Note 43). Secondly, the prints in Orlers were supplied separately in order to be added in and the list of illustrations he gives parallels Grotius' series of epigrams almost completely. Grotius does include in his series a number of non-military events which fall outside Orlers' plan (Note 45), while there are three prints for which no poem appears in PC. However, one of these poems is to be found in Pap. 10, the other two probably being lost (see Fig. 5, Note 46).

No evidence for a direct link between the prints and epigrams can be found in Grotius' correspondence or the few facts known about Orlers (Note 47), but that the agreement between them is no coincidence can be demonstrated from a piece of evidence that seems never to have been adduced before. In a copy of J. F. le Petit's Grande Chronique of 1601 in the Royal Library (Notes 48, 49), there are twenty very fine coloured prints which have been added separately at some stage: four large folding plates concerning Breda 1590, Turnhout 1597, Bommel 1599 and Nieuwpoort 1600, the first three in the form of large ovals and Breda and Bommel having poems by Grotius in the borders (see Fig. 7); and sixteen prints of the same size and tallying with sixteen prints in Orlers, but earlier in date and bearing legends and quatrains in Dutch (cf. Figs. 4 and 13). It is notable that these prints cover only the period 1590-1600, albeit they are preceded by a large portrait of Prince Maurice, with scenes of the Flanders expedition of 1600 in the background, which could very well have functioned as a title-print (Fig. 6, Note 54). The most striking feature in all this is that the legends on the Petit prints are identical in content with the legends in Orlers' 1610 edition, while the Dutch epigrams tally in content with Grotius' Latin epigrams on the same events and thus the two clearly constitute an original and a translation. Thus the Petit prints undoubtedly provide the missing link between Grotius' epigrams and separate history prints and the epigrams and the Orlers collection.

The picture is complicated, but at the same time made somewhat clearer by a number of separate historical prints and maps among the collections assembled and described by Muller and Van Stolk in the Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam, and the Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam, and in the