

“ΩΣ ‘ΡΟΔΟΝ ‘ΕΝ ΑΚΑΝΘΑΙΣ –
‘AS A ROSE AMONG THE THORNS’:
ANNA MARIA VAN SCHURMAN
AND HER CORRESPONDENCES IN GREEK¹

Pieta van Beek

In 1625 a young woman took up her pencil and started a small florilegium as a present. First she drew her name: Anna Maria van Schurman in huge letters, with loops and flourishes, together with her *symbolon* in Greek next to it: Ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρωσ ἐσταύρωται ‘my love is crucified’, an adage she adopted from the martyr Ignatius of Antioch (Van Beek 2014, 2010: 24–26). It referred to her celibate status as well as to the crucified Lord. Then following Lucretius’ advice ‘just like bees taste everything in flowery meadows, so we pick every golden statement’, she picked several authors on the theme *De Deo*, on God. Thirteen statements on God by Basil, Epictetus, Tacitus, Pythagoras, Hilarius, Anaxagoras, Cicero, an inscription from an Egyptian temple, two writers of the New Testament books, Seneca and Hermes Trismegistus, followed. Thus the small album was filled with a varied group of Greek and Roman philosophers, Bible writers, church fathers and historians, written in her lovely calligraphic handwriting. Later she adorned the cover of the album with a beautiful stamping in gold, of a flower vase with carnations (Van Beek 2014).

Writing in Greek (and Latin) was quite extraordinary for a young lady in the past. Who was Anna Maria van Schurman? And why and what did she write in Greek (except for the florilegium above), and who were here correspondents? And were there other women fluent in Greek?

¹ Dedicated to my lecturer in Greek François Pauw († August 2014). This article is based on my paper given at the conference *Humanist Greek in Early Modern Europe. Learned Communities between Antiquity and Contemporary Culture*, May 8–9, 2014 at Tartu University Library, Estonia. See for earlier publications on specific correspondences of Van Schurman in Greek: Van Beek 1995, Van Beek 1998; the quote is from the letter of Meletios Pantogalos in Van Schurman 1652: 157; for a recent overview on Van Schurman and her academic learning and contacts, Van Beek 2010 and 2007; for more recent publications on Van Schurman, see Van Beek 2014a, b, Van Beek 2015a, b, Van Beek 2016, www.annamariavanschurman.org.

Anna Maria van Schurman’s Life and Works (1607–1678)

Anna Maria van Schurman, born in 1607 in Cologne, Germany, lived the longest part of her life on or in the direct vicinity of the Dom Square in Utrecht. When she was eleven years old, she succeeded in convincing her father that she, as a girl, was also able to learn Latin. In the following years she learned Latin (and Greek) so well that already in 1620 a famous writer, Anna Roemers Visscher, praised not only her beauty, but also her knowledge of Latin and Greek, her artistic hand and her musical talent. We do not know what the occupation of her father, Frederik van Schurman, was, but Visscher praises him: ‘Your father deserves to be saluted, For having educated you so well.’²

In 1636, when Utrecht University was founded, she was asked to write an occasional poem in Latin praising the establishment of the new university. In this poem she complains about the exclusion of women and pleads for their admission to universities. Van Schurman herself obtained the permission to enrol for university studies and thus became the first female student at a university. Through her studies in the arts, theology and medicine she became the most educated woman of her time. She was fluent in at least fourteen languages (German, Dutch, French, English, Italian, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Syrian, Samaritan, Persian and Ethiopian), wrote poetry in various languages and by corresponding with many scholars in Europe and through her publications, especially those in Latin, her fame and reputation spread widely. The many visitors to her house Achter de Dom (Behind the Dom) in Utrecht – not only students, scholars, poets and politicians, but also royalty such as Queen Christina of Sweden, Queen Henrietta Maria of England, Queen Maria de Medici of France and Queen Maria Louisa Gonzaga of Poland – took news about her name and fame to their home countries.

In 1648 she published her major work *Opuscula Hebraea Graeca Latina et Gallica, prosaica et metrica* at Elzeviers in Leiden, a book of which three editions have survived till today, namely those of 1650 (Leiden), 1652 (Van Waesberghe, Utrecht) and 1749 (Leipzig). However, the biographer Johannes Mollerus mentions editions from 1672, 1700 and 1723 as well (Mollerus 1744). In addition to new work such as scholarly letters in Latin, Greek, Hebrew and French, some Latin poems and *Elogia*, the *Opuscula* also contains her previously published work *De Vitae Termino* from 1639, and the *Dissertatio de ingenii muliebris ad doctrinam et meliores Litteras aptitudine* (1641), a study on the capability of women to study.

² Van Beek 2010, passim; the whole poem by Anna Roemers Visscher (in Dutch and English) in Van Beek 2010: 21, see Kossmann 1925: 28–29.

In spite of her learned and pious environment, especially the support of her former professor, minister and neighbour Gisbertus Voetius, she finally left the city, church and university in Utrecht in 1669 to join a group of radical Protestants headed by Jean de Labadie. She defended her choice in her autobiography *EYKAHPIA seu melioris partis electio* (1673) and characterised much of her previous work as having been vain. She burned a lot of work written by her or dedicated to her. After wandering through Germany and Denmark she passed away in May 1678 in the Frisian town of Wieuwerd. (Van Beek 2010: passim)

Her Knowledge of Greek

It was often said that of the three languages a learned man had to know in the early modern period – Latin, Greek and Hebrew – Latin was most widely used as a *lingua franca* in the *Respublica Litterarium*, the Republic of Letters. But we should not underestimate the knowledge of Greek. In that language the classical and early Christian and Byzantine heritage was studied, letters were written, and orations, disputations and scientific conversations held. We see that as well in the case of Anna Maria van Schurman.

After she had learnt sufficient Latin, she started learning Greek, initially with the help of her father and an unknown tutor. It is not clear yet which manuals she used, although we may have an indication from the books mentioned in several auction catalogues, for example of Voetius who had in his library the *Rudimenta Linguae Graecae* (Leiden, 1617) and a *Grammatica Graeca* by Ramus (Hanau, 1605). Another possibility are the books for the study of Greek mentioned in the auction catalogue by theology student Aemilius Cuylenburg who probably sold a part of her books at the end of October 1669: a *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum* (Pasorus) and a *Grammatica Graeca* (Golius). In the auction catalogue of the Labadist library (1675) several study books for Greek were sold, a *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum*, an *Universa Grammatica Graeca* (Alexander Scot) and a *Grammatica Graeca* (Wellerus), a *Syntaxis linguae Graecae* (Vannorius, Posselius), a *Tyrocinium linguae Graecae*, a *Clavis Graecae Linguae* (J.A.) and a *Syllabus Graecos Latinus* (Pasor).³

Voetius became her teacher in *Greek*, especially in the Greek of the New Testament (Koine Greek) and of the Greek Church fathers. But as can be seen from her florilegium *De Deo* (ca. 1625) she read and mastered those authors long before she came to know Voetius in 1634 (Van Beek 2014). Homer became her favourite poet. She valued the work of Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Plato,

³ Van Beek 2016; Voetius 1677: 23, 25.

Aristotle (especially his *Ethica* and *Metaphysica*), Demosthenes, Aeschines and Isocrates, mentioned Xenophon and Plutarch (*Parallel Lives*), but also read Herodotus, Hesiod, Thucydides and Polybius. She knew Pindar, Simonides and Euripides, often quoted from Epictetus and referred to Herodian and Nicephorus. Together with the New Testament, Anna Maria van Schurman read the Greek Church fathers: Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil, Chrysostom, Origen, Theodoret, Hilarius, Cyril, Irenaeus and Clemens of Alexandria, but also Hermes Trismegistus. According to Schotel (1853), she knew their works by heart, and often recited long passages from them.⁴

She did not only absorb this knowledge, but processed it in her academic and artistic work. She constructed an album of sayings, titled *De Deo*, wrote poems and hymns in Greek (now lost), designed the Lord’s prayer as a work of calligraphic art⁵, compiled a dictionary like Matthias Martini’s (lost), annotated many classical texts and wrote commentaries on the New Testament, e.g. on Apostle Paul’s Letter to the Romans (lost), and translated Homer, Simonides and Pindar as well as tragedies from Greek into Dutch (lost).⁶

Like many contemporaries who were fluent in Greek, she enriched her Latin texts with quotations and expressions in Greek. Greek also occurs in her inscriptions in *alba amicorum* and in her polyglot works of art.⁷ Van Schurman must have had an excellent command of Greek.⁸

Her *symbolon* and her Celibacy

Next to her signature Van Schurman nearly always wrote her Greek *symbolon*, her motto Ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρωσ ἐσταύρωται ‘my love has been crucified’ to recall the promise not to marry, made to her father on his deathbed.⁹ The motto had a double meaning: her physical love had been crucified, but also that her love was the crucified Jesus. She follows in this respect the interpretation started by Origen.¹⁰ She came upon the motto in recent editions of Ignatius’ letters in

⁴ Schotel 1853: 30–31; Van Beek 2010: 37–38; Van Beek 2014: 16–20.

⁵ Museum Martena, Franeker, the Netherlands, Catalogue no. S0006.

⁶ The poet Simonides in Van Schurman 1652: 10–11. It is not clear if the translation is by Van Schurman herself. See also Van Schurman 1639, *De Navorscher* I, 1851: 12, 31.

⁷ See for examples Van der Stighelen 1987: 223, 229; Van Beek 2010: 36, 75, 128, 140, 145, 155, 167, 172, 219.

⁸ See more in: Van Beek 2010: 39 and n. 61; cf. Mollerus 1744: 814, 817.

⁹ Van Beek 2010: 24–25, 127; Van Schurman 1652: 303 (her Latin poem in *Symbolum suum*).

¹⁰ Van Beek 1997: 310–316.

Greek. The notion of martyrdom also played a role, because Ignatius had been thrown to the wild animals as a martyr in Rome in 120 AD.¹¹

Greek Letters by Anna Maria van Schurman

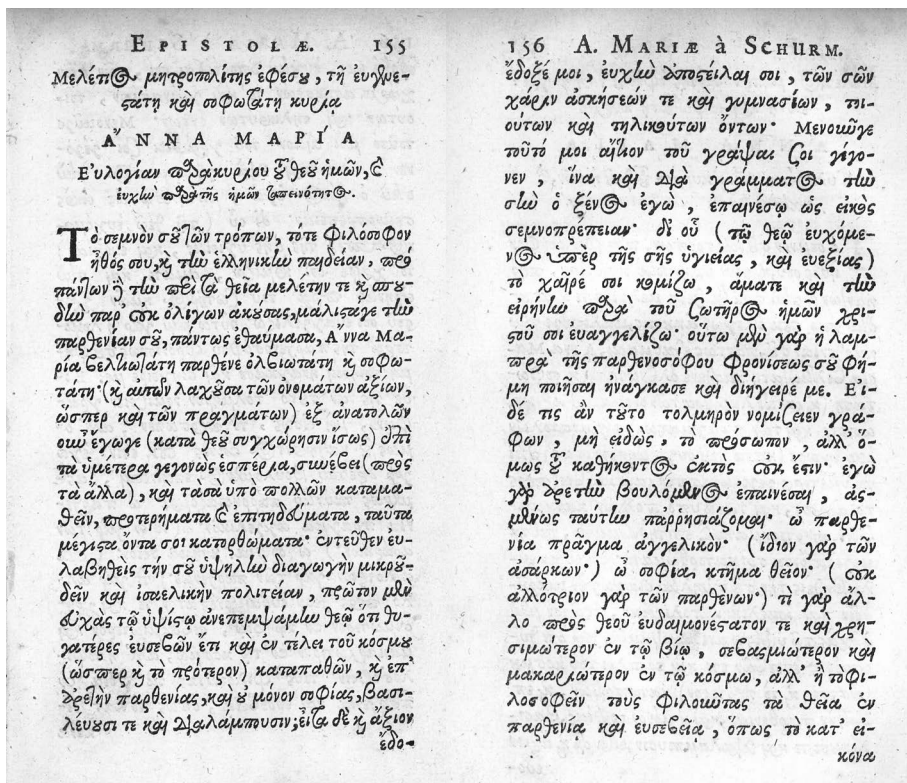
In 1648 Anna Maria van Schurman published several letters in Greek, to (and from) Meletios Pantogalos, Bathsua Makin, Claudius Salmasius, Johan van Beverwijck. The letters were reprinted in every following edition (1650, 1652, 1749) of *Opuscula*. Letters were the building blocks in the *Republic of Letters*. In the following I will present the facsimiles along with the full translation (in the order they appear in the version of *Opuscula* from 1652) and contextualise them briefly (for longer discussions of some letters, see Van Beek 2007, 2010).

Correspondence with Meletios Pantogalos (1595–1645)¹²

In 1645 Van Schurman received a letter in Greek from the patriarch Meletios Pantogalos of the Greek Orthodox Church in Ephesus, filled with what we might call innuendos about her virginity. He was born in 1595 in Crete, just like his great and much more widely-known master Cyril Lukaris (Kyrillos Lukaris) 25 years before him, who had been murdered in 1638 because of his pursuit of ecumenicalism with the Western churches (Lutherans, Catholics, but especially Calvinists). Meletios Pantogalos was one of the few supporters of Cyril Lukaris in his pursuit of ecumenicalism and later Calvinism. For this reason he was relieved of his position as bishop and had to flee his country. Together with another follower of Lukaris, Hierotheos Abbathios, he finally arrived in the Netherlands to ask for help. The national parliament (States-General) allowed them to live and study in Leiden during the winter of 1644–45 at the expense of the state. On December 23, 1644, Meletios, fifty years old, was festively enrolled in the *Album Studiosorum* of Leiden University. There Meletios learned about Van Schurman from Professor Adolf Vorstius and became so excited that he wrote her a long letter in Greek, in which he praised her learnedness, piety, knowledge of Greek, and especially her virginity ('wise virgin [...], like a rose among thorns'). In 1645 Meletios returned to Ephesus, carrying letters of recommendation from the church synod as well as parliament. Unfortunately he died before seeing his fatherland again.

¹¹ The catalogue of Voetius 1677: Libri in quarto, nr. 259 Ignatii Epistolae Gr. Et Lat. Cum comment. Vederli advers. Baronium et Bellarminum. Geneva, 1623; nr. 260 Ignatii et Polycarpi Epistolae ex. Edit. Nitidiss. Usserii. Oxonia, 1644; Van Beek 2004: 247–265.

¹² Van Beek 1998: 180–198; Van Beek 2010: 123–124.



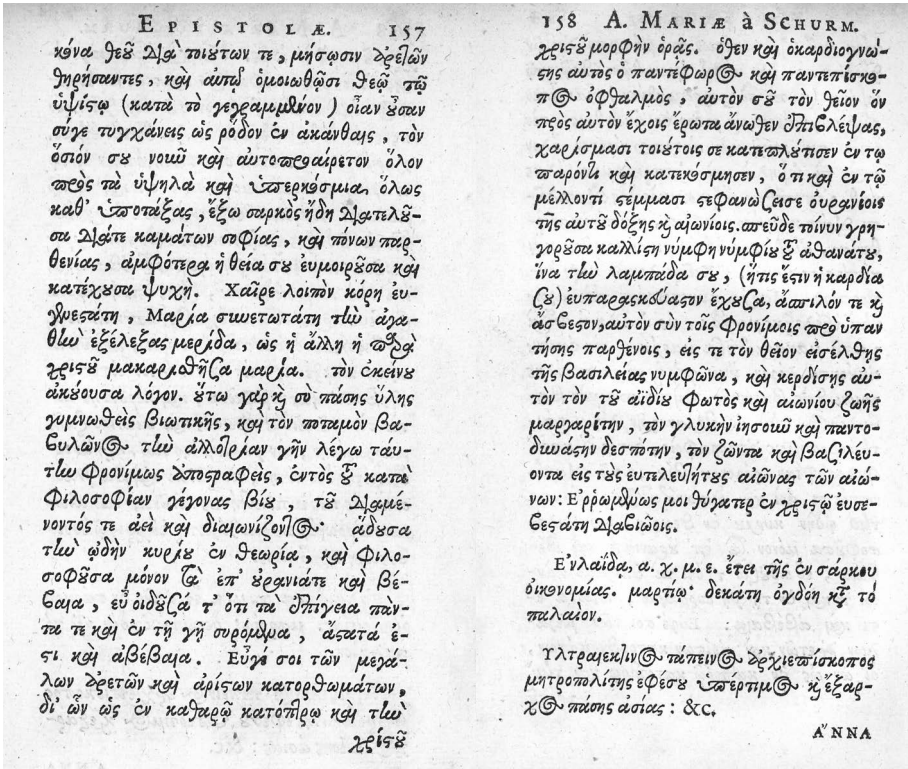
ILL. 1. A letter by Meletios to Van Schurman. Van Schurman 1652: 155–156 (Private collection).

Meletios, Bishop of Ephesus, is sending the noble and highly intelligent lady Anna Maria a blessing from the Lord our God and a prayer in humility.

From all sides I hear about your high-principled moral life and also about your philosophical stance and your learning in the Greek language. I was pleased to hear about your religious studies, but the fullest admiration was directed at your virginal state, Anna Maria, utterly beautiful, blessed and extremely wise virgin. Honourable words accompany your deeds.

When I travelled from the East to the West – surely by Divine inspiration – it happened, among other things, that I was informed by many people of your talents and studies. Your achievements in these were reported to be outstanding.

After becoming an admirer, in a way that keeps spiralling upwards, of your eminent conduct and way of life, I immediately thanked God Most High because even now, at the end of times, just like in earlier times, there are still daughters who, true to hardship, shine and excel not only in the virtue of wisdom, but also in that of virginity. It thus seemed appropriate to me to send you a blessing because you have to endure such hardships and deprivation, and must abstain from so many [things].



ILL. 2. A letter by Meletius to Van Schurman (continued from ILL. 1). Van Schurman 1652: 157–158 (Private collection).

Indeed, this was the main reason for writing to you, so that I, a foreigner, can praise your integrity properly by means of a letter. I am praying to God for your wellbeing and health and convey to you greetings and proclaim to you the peace of our Saviour Christ. The excellent reputation of your life and of your virginly wise intelligence urged me to do so.

Should anyone be of the opinion that it would be impertinent of him to write to an unknown person, be it known that he is not exceeding the limits of decency or propriety. For I want to praise virtue and address her gladly and openly: O Virginity, characteristic of angels (since virginity is the natural state of such incorporeal beings); O Wisdom, characteristic of God (which is not unknown to virgins). For what else is more blessed and beneficial in the eyes of God, what is more honourable and glorious in this world but for lovers of the Divine to devote themselves to the study of virginity and devoutness, so that according to the image of God, by observing such virtues they become equal to God Most High (as has been written).

You are like a rose among thorns, because you have submitted all of your most holy and independent spirit to the supreme and the heavenly, and are

already residing outside the physical realm by way of your exertions in wisdom and encumbrance of virginity.

Thus be greeted, highborn noble lady, very wise Mary, you who chose the good part, just like the other Mary, who was called blessed by Christ because she listened to his words. In the same way you have disposed of all earthly matter and sensibly diverted yourself from the rivers of Babylon, I am referring to that foreign land, and have chosen to live life according to philosophy; [that life] which is everlasting and will remain forever, and in your contemplations you sing the hymn of our Lord and you only meditate on heavenly and certain things, for you know very well that all earthly endeavour is unstable and uncertain.

Thus I congratulate you on your high virtues and outstanding achievements, through which you also see, like in a clear mirror, the figure of Christ. And for this reason He who knows people's hearts, the All-seeing Eye himself, has noticed the love you have for Him. He has granted you many talents in order to crown you one day with heavenly and eternal wreaths of glory.

Thus make haste and keep vigil, beautiful bride of the immortal Bridegroom, so that you keep your lamp (that is, your heart) well-prepared, untainted and inextinguishable, and you are on your way to meet Him together with the wise virgins and you enter the divine bridal room and attain the pearl of eternal lustre and everlasting life, the sweet Jesus and almighty Lord, who lives and reigns in all eternity.

I wish you a life in good health, devout daughter in Christ!

Leiden, 18 March 1645 A.D. From Utrecht, the humble archbishop, the Honourable Patriarch of Ephesus and exarch of all of Asia, etc.

Anna Maria van Schurman waited for several months before answering his letter.

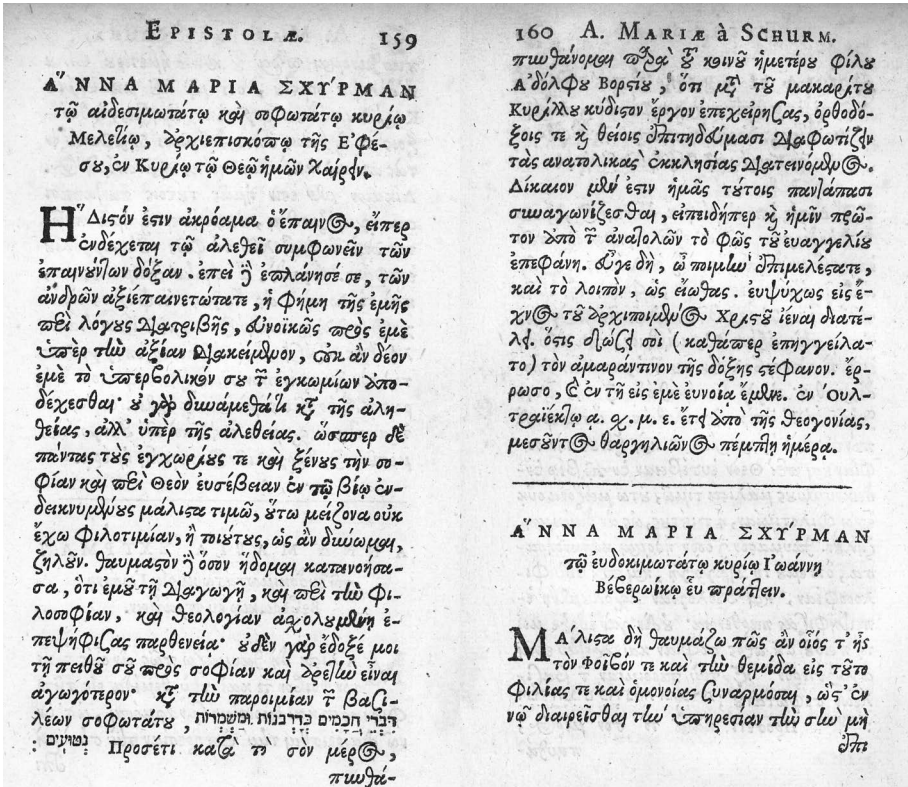
Anna Maria van Schurman sends greeting to the highly honourable and very wise gentleman Meletios, archbishop of Ephesus, in the Lord our God. Praise is welcome when it coincides with the truth. But since the reputation of my studies and publications has misled you, excellent man, and you are according me more praise than what I deserve, it would be unacceptable for me to accept your exaggerated praise. Nothing can be said against the truth, but only when it is indeed the truth.

In the same way that I esteem all Dutchmen and foreigners who uphold wisdom and devoutness, I have no higher ambition than to measure myself against them. I am, however, very pleased to hear that you agree with my virginal way of life while occupying myself with philosophy and theology. Nothing seems to me to have more value for wisdom and virtue than your opinion based on the statement by the wisest king: The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails [Eccl. 12:11].

Furthermore I understand from our mutual friend Adolf Vorstius that with the late Cyrillos you have initiated a splendid project and that you are attempting through orthodox and divine studies to enlighten the Eastern churches. It goes

without saying that we support them in full in this work, especially since the Light of the Gospel has also risen for us in the East in the beginning.

Thus, very attentive shepherd, etc. Persevere, just like you have done before, to follow with joy in the footsteps of the chief Shepherd Christ, who will keep for you the crown of glory that shall not fade away (as He has promised). Farewell, and maintain your good opinion of me. Utrecht, ca. 30 May 1645 A.D.



ILL. 3. An answer to Meletios by Van Schurman. Van Schurman 1652: 159–160.
(Private collection).

The letters that Meletios and Van Schurman wrote to each other have unfortunately not been preserved in the original handwritten form. The letter of Meletios was only published in the third edition of the *Opuscula*; her letter to him had already appeared in the first edition. They used Greek as the medium of correspondence, which was to be expected from a bishop of the Greek Orthodox Church, but not from a woman in the seventeenth century. The letters differ in many respects; the bishop's letter is tedious, repetitive and contains itacisms, Van Schurman's letter is concise and inclines towards Attic Greek usage. She also uses an Attic month reference (μεσοῦντος Θαρηγλιῶνος

πέμπτη ἡμέρα (ca 30 May 1645), while the bishop uses the customary Western European reference.

The similarity between Meletios Pantogalos and Anna Maria van Schurman, in addition to their knowledge of Greek and their religious interests, was their preference for παρθενία, virginity. The praise of Van Schurman’s virginity was not customary in seventeenth-century Dutch society: when Constantijn Huygens or Caspar Barlaeus praised Anna Maria van Schurman, they referred to her female learnedness or artistic talents. On the topic of her virginity jokes were made, but not by foreign writers.¹³

Correspondence with Bathsua Makin (1600 – ca. 1675)¹⁴

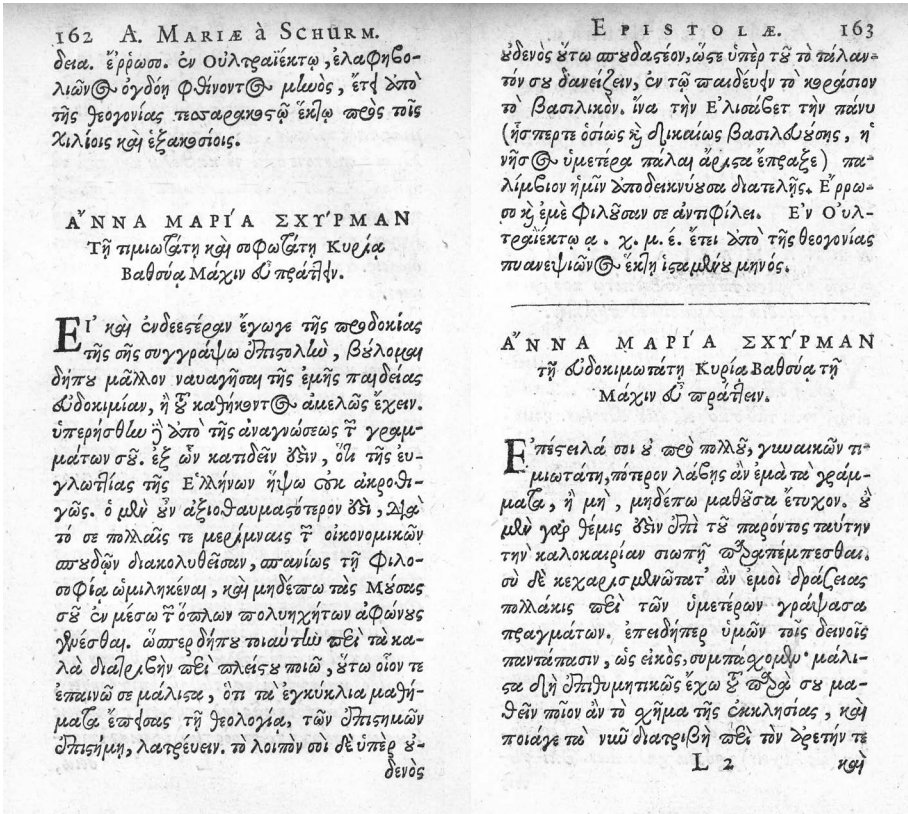
On 13 May 1640 Van Schurman wrote the third letter (the previous two had remained unanswered) to Bathsua Makin. Makin was born in 1600 in London as the daughter of Henry Reginald, a famous schoolmaster. When she was 16 years of age, her father published a thin volume of poetry that she had written, *Musa Virginea*, a tiny collection of poems which demonstrated her knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Spanish, German and Hebrew. The booklet was meant to honour the royal family of James I, but also to promote Reginald’s school. Bathsua married Richard Makin and they had three children. From 1640 she was the governess of Princess Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of King Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria, who at nine years old could write, read and in some measure understand Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and Italian. After the Restoration, Makin became the private tutor of Duchess Lucy Huntington and her daughter; she founded a special girls’ school just outside London, with emphasis on classical education (Latin, French, Greek, Hebrew, Italian and Spanish) and music, dancing, singing, embroidery and bookkeeping. In 1664 she described herself as a widow who had to provide for herself as an educator. At the age of 73 she published her *Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* (Teague 1998).

The reason why Makin did not respond in the first instance probably had to do with the political turmoil during the reign of Charles I. It is typical of Van Schurman’s interest in religion that she enquired after the situation of the church in England. But she was also curious about Makin’s philosophical writings and wished to know what Makin’s discussions with the little Princess entailed.¹⁵ Unfortunately we do not have any response letters from Makin.

¹³ Van Beek 2010: 171.

¹⁴ Van Beek 1995; Van Beek 2010: 178–181.

¹⁵ For Van Schurman’s use of Queen Elizabeth, see Gim 2007: 168–184.



ILL. 4. Van Schurman's first letter to Makin. Van Schurman 1652: 162–163.

(Private collection).

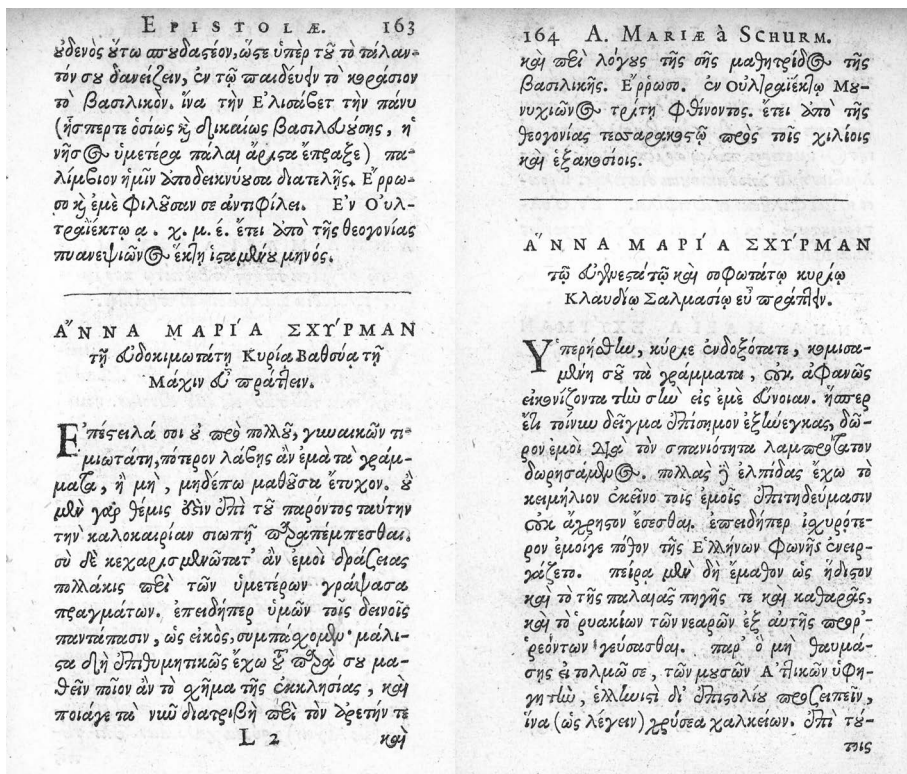
Anna Maria van Schurman sends greetings to the excellent Mistress Bathsua Makin. Not so long ago, most esteemed lady, I sent you a letter asking you whether you had received my previous letter or not. I still do not know. But it would not be proper in our time to just let this favourable opportunity pass in silence. You would do me a huge favour if you could write to me often about your activities, for as a matter of course we have profound sympathy with your terrible circumstances. In particular I would like to know from you what the situation is in the church, also what your present dissertation on virtue entails and what discussions you have with your royal pupil. Farewell.

The second letter of Van Schurman is dated five years later (1645). The correspondence between these two dates is unknown to us, but it is clear that Makin did write back, also in Greek, for Van Schurman praised her beautiful Greek:

Greatly honoured Mistress Bathsua Makin

Even if I would write you a letter that by its awkwardness would disappoint you when compared to your expectations, I would rather have your positive opinion about my learning come to grief than neglect my duty. I was overjoyed on reading your letter. It is clear from your letter that I could not even come close to match your eloquence in Greek. It is most admirable that you, despite being kept busy by many domestic obligations, are not seldom found in the company of philosophy and that your Muses have not been silenced in the midst of the tumultuous battle. I think that is why I value your dissertation on Beauty so much and I can only praise you for your encyclopaedic knowledge that forced you to serve theology, the Discipline above all disciplines. For the rest you should not be troubled about anything but the dedication of your talent to the education of the little royal girl, so that you may resurrect the famous Elizabeth for us (under whose holy and just government your island has indeed flourished). Farewell and please love me, in return for my love for you.

Utrecht, ca. 20 October 1645 A.D.



ΑΝΝΑ ΜΑΡΙΪΑ ΣΧΥΡΜΑΝ
τῇ Ὀδοικμοπέτῃ Κυρίᾳ Βαθσούα τῇ
Μάχιν δι' ἀγάπην.

Ἐπίσειλά σοι εἰ πῶς πολλῆς, γυναικῶν πι-
μιωτάτη, πρότερον λάβῃς ἀν' ἐμά τὰ χεῖμα-
τα, ἢ μὴ, μὴδέπω μαθῆσαι ἔτυχον. εἰ
μὲν γὰρ θέμις εἶναι ὅπῃ τὰ παρόντος ταύτην
την καλοκαιρίαν σωπῆ ὑποπέμπεσθαι,
σὺ δὲ κεχαρισμένωτατ' ἀν' ἐμοὶ δράσεις
πλάκας πρὸς τῶν ὑμετέρων γραφίσασα
περαγμάτων, ἐπειδήπερ ὑμῶν τοῖς δεινοῖς
πανταπεισιν, ὡς εἰκός, συμπαροῦν'· μάλι-
στα δὴ ἄπληρη μὲν ἔχω εἰς ὅσον σε μα-
θεῖν ποιοῦν ἀντὶ τὸ ἄξιμα τῆς ἀκλήσιας, καὶ
ποιᾶσα τὰ νυκτὶ διατρεῖθαι πρὸς τὸν ὄρεθὸν τε
καὶ

164 A. MARIE à SCHURM.
καὶ πρὸς λόγους τῆς σῆς μαθητείας τῆς
βασιλικῆς. Ἐρρωσο. ἐν Οὐλλεργιέκκῳ Με-
νυχίων τριτῇ Φθινοπότης. ἐπεὶ ἀπὸ τῆς
θεογονίας ποσαρκεσθῆς πρὸς τοῖς χιλίοις
καὶ ἑξακχοσίοις.

ΑΝΝΑ ΜΑΡΙΪΑ ΣΧΥΡΜΑΝ
τῷ ἀγαπῶμένῳ καὶ σφωπάτῳ κυρίῳ
Κλαυδίῳ Σαλμασίῳ εὐ' ἀγάπην.

ὑπερήδην, κύριε ἐνδοξότατε, κομισα-
μένη σὲ τὰ χεῖματα, σὺν ἀφαιῶς
ἐκθνήσκοντα τῷ σὺν εἰς ἐμὲ ἄνοιαν. ἡσπερ
εἰ τῷ τῷ δαίγμα ἄπιστοι ἐξέλεγκας δώ-
ρον ἐμοὶ διὰ τὸν σπανιότητα λαμπεροῦτον
δαρησαμένῳ. πολλὰς ἢ ἐλπίδας ἔχω τὸ
καμήλιον ἄκαιο τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἄπληθεύμασιν
σοὶ ἀχρηστοῦ εἶσεσθαι. ἐπειδὴπερ ἰσχυρότε-
ρον ἐμοῖσι πᾶν τῆς Ἑλλήνων Φωνῆς ἐνεργ-
γάζετο. πείρα μὲν δὲ ἐμαθὼν ὡς ἦδυσον
καὶ τὸ τῆς παλαιᾶς πηγῆς τε καὶ κατὰρῆς,
καὶ τὸ ῥωμαϊκῶν τῶν νεαρῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς περ-
ρεόντων ἰσχυροῦσθαι. πᾶρ' ὁ μὴ θουμά-
σις εἰ τὸ μὲν σε, τῶν μεσῶν Ἀπικῶν Ὀφθ-
ρητῶν, ἐλλειψί δι' ἄπληθους περὶ σπῆν,
ἵνα (ὡς λέγουσιν) χεῖρ' ἔσται χαλκείων. ὅπῃ τὰς
τις

ILL. 5. Van Schurman's second letter to Makin. Van Schurman 1652: 163–164. (Private collection).

The first translation of Schurman's *Dissertatio* appeared in 1645 under the auspices of Bathsua Makin and was included in the work *The Woman's Glorie*, a manifesto written by Samuel Torshell, a devout chaplain at the royal court. From Makin's *Essay* it becomes clear that Van Schurman's *Dissertatio* inspired and influenced Makin, in the section 'Women have been good linguists' she wrote the following: 'Anna Maria of Utrecht (called by Spanhemius 'ultimum Naturae in hoc sexum conatum et decimam musam', Natures master-piece amongst Women, excelling the very Muses) hath printed divers Works in Latin, Greek, French and the Persian Tongue; she understood the Arabick also. Besides she was an excellent Poet.' From Greek letters it also becomes clear that Van Schurman had the highest respect for Makin (Makin 1673: 16).

Correspondence with Johan van Beverwijck (1594–1647)

Scholarly physician Johan van Beverwijck from Dordrecht and senator in Parliament in the Hague was her good friend (with his family) and they corresponded in Arabic, Dutch, Latin and Greek. He responded to Van Schurman's Latin poem for the opening of Utrecht University by including her Latin and French poem in his book *From the Excellence of the Female Sex*. He asked her to participate in the scholarly discussion on *De Vitae Termino*, on life's end. She received the honour to conclude the international discussion (from 1632 onwards) with her contribution in Latin.¹⁶ Van Beverwijck wrote the introduction of Van Schurman's *Dissertatio* on women's right to study (Leiden: Elzeviers, 1641). On Van Beverwijck's death in 1647 Van Schurman wrote a fitting memorial poem in Latin.¹⁷

From their correspondence in Greek, only one letter by Van Schurman has survived. She wrote to Van Beverwijck to thank him for the present he had given her, the book *Ἀντάρκεια Bataviae, sive introductio ad medicinam indigenam* (Leiden: Johan le Maire, 1644).¹⁸ In a Latin letter Van Schurman thanked

¹⁶ *De Vitae Termino* was first published in Latin, then in Dutch (*Paelsteen van den tijd onses levens*), Van Schurman 1639, Van Schurman 1647. In total Van Schurman's contribution has appeared at least fifteen times, separately or as part of another work, in Latin, Dutch, German and French.

¹⁷ Van Beek 2010: 118–119.

¹⁸ Some years before he published the original book in Dutch, Van Beverwijck 1642. Van Schurman, May 11th, 1642: "Ik hebbe sonderlingh verlangen na het boek van de Inleydinge tot de Hollantsche Genees-middelen dat U.E. onlanghs geschreven heeft ende ick en ben niet verwondert, dat UE het maken van 't selve seer vermaecklick is gevallen dewijl de Goddelicke Voorzienigheydt hierin niet op eene wijze en blinckt ende in elcks gemoedt een wonder openbaart" in: 'Vraagb brief over de Genezing van de Blindgeborene' in Van Beverwijck 1644: 121–124; 1664:

him exuberantly for this excellent work (‘eximium hoc opusculum’).¹⁹ Ten years after Van Beverwijck, a London apothecary Nicholas Culpeper published a herbal titled *The English Physitian, or An Astrologo-Physical Discourse of the Vulgar Herbs of this Nation* (1652). It had the simple goal to discuss how anyone could cure himself while being sick with such things that only grow in England, like Van Beverwijck had argued (Cooper 2007: 21, 41–45).

The title of the book, *Ἀυτάρκεια Bataviae*, she received requires an explanation. Van Beverwijck was fascinated by tales of the ancient Batavi, the Germanic tribe said to have originally inhabited the region of the Low Countries before the arrival of the Romans. Earlier Humanist writers, in the throes of the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs, had seized on the Batavi, who were reported to have fiercely resisted the Romans, as symbols of Dutch national pride and hope for independence. By the mid-seventeenth century it became standard scholarly practice to use the term Batavian as synonymous with Dutch, and Batavia for the Dutch Republic. Van Schurman uses the term Batavi quite often, for example in the Latin poem she wrote on Claudius Salmasius’ return to Holland in 1644 (‘Hospes ave Batavis jam tandem reddite terries / Quin orbis resonet Battavus Hospes ave,’ “Greetings to you, foreigner, now finally restored to the Batavian land, or rather let the world resound with: Batavian foreigner, greetings to you!”).²⁰

Secondly, Van Beverwijck uses the term *autarkeia*, which was also loaded with meaning. It referred to a situation of economic self-sufficiency and of the *autochthonous* nature of the region’s inhabitants. In his book Van Beverwijck explains why every country possesses the appropriate medicinal plants and herbs for curing health problems and why one doesn’t need foreign products. The book fits into the early modern debate over indigenous and foreign nature. People explored the world and travelled long distances and authors started to contrast indigenous European natural objects with exotic imports from abroad, often warning for moral, medical and economic danger. We see that in Van Beverwijck as well: he tries to prove that it is unnecessary to look for medicines abroad, with high costs and great danger, as there are better ones at home, not

198–200 (“I long so much for your book the *Introduction to the Dutch Medicine* which you wrote recently. I am not amazed that you did love to produce it, because the godly Providence shines in a multiple way and reveals a wonder in every heart” in: Van Beverwijck 1642 (12^o). Also included in all editions of his standard work *Schat der gesontheit en ongesontheit (Compendium of health and illness)*, e.g. in the 1660 Amsterdam edition, p. 156–176.

¹⁹ ‘Valde in caeteris probavi eas rationes, quibus herbarum indigenarum usum imprimis vestri ordinis hominibus probare contendis,’ Van Schurman 1652: 202–206; Van Beverwijck 1642: 72.

²⁰ Van Schurman 1652: 308.

only the herbs, but also milk, butter, cheese, honey and lard. It was as if Van Beverwijck had a religious sense of trust in his own country.²¹

Van Schurman's letter in Greek is not a learned reply as she usually wrote in Latin (e.g. *De Vitae Termino* and with the letter on John 9 on the question why Christ the Lord spread saliva and mud onto the eyes of the blind man). It is just an eloquent 'thank you' for the book. Why did she write in Greek in the first place? She knew that he was fluent in Greek, not only from the letters in Latin he wrote to her, which often included Greek, but also from his letters in Greek to other members of the *Republic of Letters* (for more, see Van Beek 2010).

The content of the letter is as follows. Van Schurman compliments Van Beverwijck on his work in medical science (symbolised by Phoibos, the attribute of the god Apollo) as well in politics (symbolised by the goddess Themis). He is able to balance both, although his medical work absorbs him the most. In every way he shows that he is a real cosmopolitan and not only a citizen of a city, and that he is more concerned about public welfare than about his own profit. That is why Van Beverwijck is generous with gifts. She eloquently refers to an (unknown) saying that generosity causes more eagerness in receivers (Machiavelli?). But not in her case: although he promises her more and more presents, she will be content with this gift. She longs for more works by his hand in the future. She writes that she takes extraordinary pleasure in horticulture and finds nothing more pleasant, nothing more useful than instruction in botany. She praises him because he has been able to make clear that every country possesses the things necessary for everyone's health.

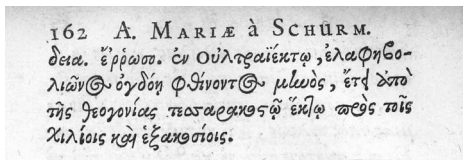
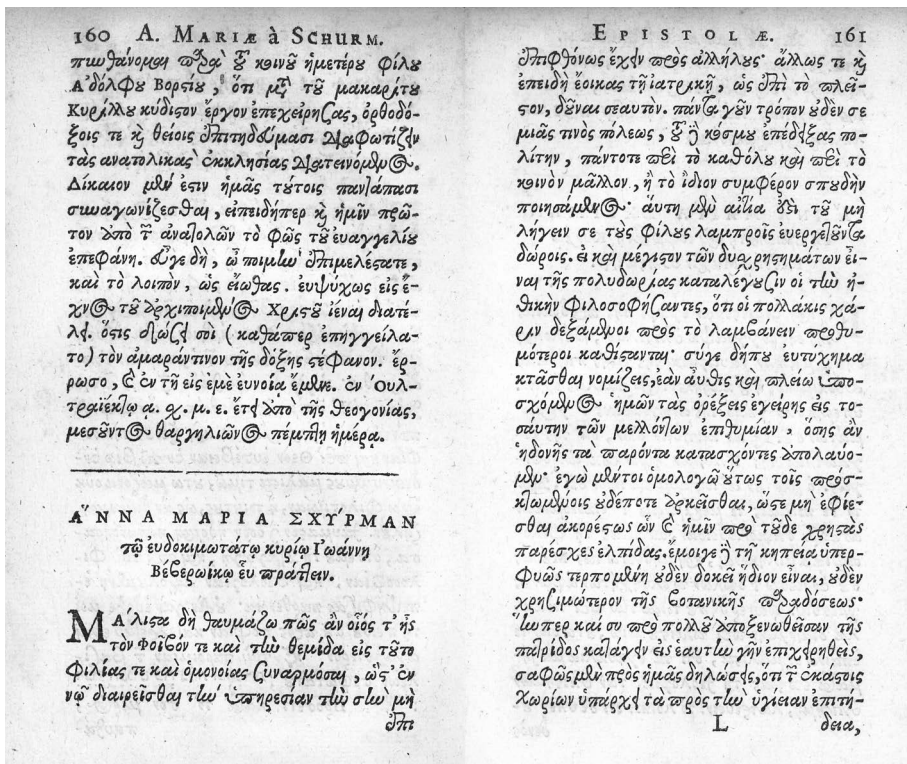
Anna Maria van Schurman wishes the greatly esteemed Sir Johannes van Beverwijck well!

Indeed, I am surprised at how capable you are in joining Phoibos²² and Themis²³ in such friendship and harmony that they are not envious of sharing your service, especially because you seem to dedicate most of your time to the medical sciences. In every way you showed therefore that you are by no means a citizen of a city but also a citizen of the world, a cosmopolitan in that you do your utmost for the public welfare more than for your own profit. That is for sure the reason that you don't stop presenting your friends with gifts.

²¹ Cooper 2007: 41–46; Van Beverwijck 1660: 124.

²² Apollo in his quality of Greek god of light; god of prophecy and poetry and music and healing.

²³ Themis, goddess of divine law, personification of justice.



ILL. 6. Van Schurman's letter to Van Beverwijck. Van Schurman 1652: 160–162. (Private collection).

However, those who study ethics accuse generosity for being the greatest of inconveniences,²⁴ because those who often receive favours become more eager in receiving. You think without doubt to be lucky when you are promising again and more, which would stir up my longing for the joy of things that bring pleasure.

Nevertheless I acknowledge that I do not content myself so much with the acquired goods that I would not insatiably long for those things on which you gave us also good hope in the past. I, however, who take an extraordinary delight in horticulture, find nothing more agreeable than the study of botany. And after you also did take upon yourself this study so long banned from your

²⁴ Source not found.

country to return to your own country, you will for certain make crystal clear for us that every country possesses the appropriate things for health. Fare well.

Utrecht on the 8th day of the descending month Elaphebolion, in the year 46 added to 1600. (= March/ April 1646)

Van Schurman was able to praise Van Beverwijck because of her studies in horticulture (see her letter from 4 October 1644 to Van Beverwijck).²⁵ In a scholarly letter to Claudius Salmasius on a medical-botanical-theological topic *De Cruce et hyssopo* (*On the cross and the hyssop*) she gives Van Beverwijck all the credit and mentions him as the top authority.²⁶ Earlier, in 1639, she had written a scholarly letter on life's end which was regarded by contemporaries sometimes as theology and sometimes as medicine, like her essay about the question implicit in John 9. Van Beverwijck included both of her essays in his collected works.²⁷ Later in life she corresponded in Latin with her own physician Bernardus Swalve from Harlingen informing him of her uses of medicines.²⁸ By studying the book *Ἀντάρκεια Bataviae* Van Beverwijck sent her (and the Dutch edition from 1642 and her response in Latin and Dutch) and her letter in Greek, we get another hint about the content of her training in medicine.

Correspondence with Claudius Salmasius (1588–1653)²⁹

Claudius Salmasius was born in Semur-en-Auxois, France, studied in Paris and Heidelberg. He was one of the most famous Leiden scholars, who had been named successor to Scaliger in 1632. Anna Maria van Schurman was introduced to Claudius Salmasius by Andreas Rivet, who also was a Huguenot.

Salmasius corresponded with Van Schurman in Latin on theological-philological topics and he sent her many of his books as *antidoron*, gifts.³⁰ Salmasius praised her versatile artistic talents, her learning, her knowledge of European and Oriental languages. She shared Queen Christina of Sweden's friendship with him as a real member of the Republic of Letters.³¹

²⁵ Quoted in Schotel 1853: 74–75.

²⁶ Van Schurman 1652: 141: summi Medici, nostrique dum viveret studiosissimi Jo. Beverovicii rationes et auctoritas.

²⁷ Van Beek 2010: 91–92.

²⁸ Schotel 1853 (Notes): 141–147; 145–146.

²⁹ Van Beek 2010: 122–123.

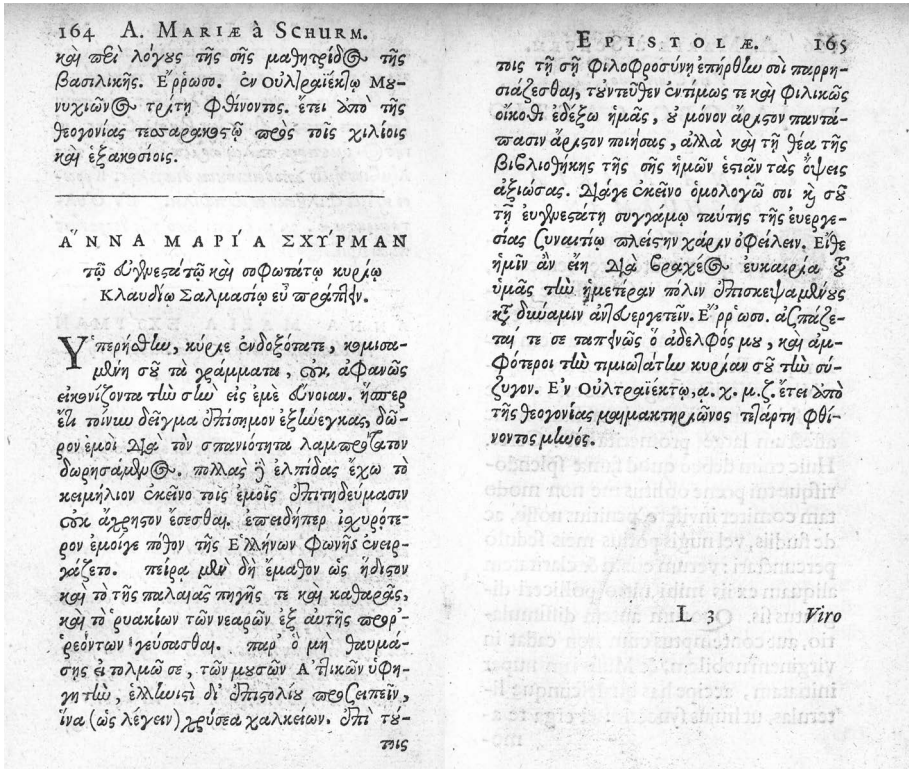
³⁰ For Van Schurman's letters to Salmasius, see Van Schurman 1652: 121–152, 164–165.

³¹ Buckley 2011: 98–99 and the picture between 176–177; Considine 2012: 295–305.

Van Schurman wrote a fine letter in Greek to Salmasius to thank him. He had presented her with a book when she and her brother visited him. The precious book – on the origin of the Greek language – inspired her to write back to him in Greek. She invited him and his wife to visit her and her brother in return in Utrecht. The book she received was one of the two Salmasius published in 1643; the topic of both had to do with the dispute between Salmasius and Daniel Heinsius on whether the Septuagint and the New Testament were written in a distinctive *lingua Hellenistica* or not. In 1627 Heinsius had published his *Aristarchus sacer*, where he argued that the Greek of the New Testament was the language of the Greek-speaking Jews who read the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew scriptures and who were strongly influenced by the Aramaic language. That’s why the meaning of some Greek words had changed. Heinsius developed his theory further in his *Sacrarum exercitationum ad Novum Testamentum libri XX* (1639). But Salmasius responded fiercely. In 1643 he published two books on the topic, *De Hellenistica commentarius* and *Funus Linguae Hellenisticae Sive Confutatio Exercitationis De Hellenistis et lingua Hellenistica* with even an addendum called *Ossilegium Hellenisticae Sive Appendix ad Confutationem Excercitationis De Hellenistica*. He refuted the argument about the language of the Septuagint (Heinsius called it ‘Hellenistica’) being a dialect, because there is no such nation as the Hellenistics. Salmasius agreed that languages can change. But using borrowings, contact phenomena and usage as the basis for identifying a new language variety, like Heinsius did, is not enough. Considine sees in Salmasius’ criticism of Heinsius’ taxonomy and his nomenclature a rigid sense of descent and precedent. In any case both Heinsius’ and Salmasius’ books are milestones in the historiography of Greek and important sources for the best ideas of the period on the relationship of languages.³²

It is not clear which book Van Schurman received from Salmasius, because she does not mention the title. She was also friends with Daniel Heinsius, the bitter enemy of Salmasius. She suggests in her Greek letter that she appreciates all books old and new on the topic of the Greek language. That might imply that she had read Heinsius’ books as well. Now that she had a new book on the Greek language, she felt that she was more obliged to write him, teacher of the Attic Muses, a letter in Greek.

³² Considine 2012: 296–298.



ILL. 7. Van Schurman's letter to Salmasius. Van Schurman 1652: 164–165.
(Private collection).

Anna Maria van Schurman wishes the well-born and clever Lord Claudius Salmasius well.

I have been so extremely glad and honoured in receiving your letters which show your goodwill in an unmistakable manner towards me.

Of this goodwill you gave me now another clear example by presenting me with a most beautiful gift. I have great expectations that this *keimelion* will be extremely useful for my studies. It caused, as you know, a stronger longing for the Greek language.

I have for certain learned by experience that the tasting of the old and clear pure stream as well as the new little streams that spring from them is very agreeable.

And that's why you should not be amazed that I dare in a small attempt for you, Teacher of the Attic muses, to speak to you in Greek as if exchanging gold for bronze³³. Even more so because I am so encouraged by your goodwill to feel free to address a letter to you.

³³ χρύσεια χαλκείων, Homer, *Iliad* VI, 236.

Furthermore because you did receive us at your home in a friendly and distinguished manner, not only treating us to an in every way exquisite lunch but also feeding our eyes by seeing the goddess of your library. I therefore acknowledge that I am very grateful to you and your wife.

If there is any chance in the near future to repay your goodness to the best of our ability when you will visit our city. Fare well! Humbly my brother greets you and we both greet the very honoured Lady your spouse. Utrecht, in the year 1646 since the divine birth on the fourth day of the descending month Maimakterion. (November/December 1646.)

The polite letter is eloquently written, in beautiful classical Greek with references to the Muses and to Homer. Salmasius exchanges his gold (his letter and book on the Greek language) for her bronze (her letter). But it is not a scholarly letter like the one she wrote in Latin on Salmasius’ books *De Transsubstantione* (*On transubstantiation*) and *De cruce et hysoppo* (*On the cross and the hyssop*).³⁴ It is again a letter showing her capacity in Greek and eloquence.

Women Writing Greek

It was said of learned women of the past that ‘it was so very fashionable that the fair sex seemed to believe that Greek and Latin added to their charm and that Plato and Aristotle untranslated were frequent ornaments of their closets.’³⁵ But although we know that quite a few women were able to write in Latin, as the books *Women Writing Latin* (3 volumes, 2001) and *Women Latin Poets* (2005) reveal, research on women writing in Greek in the Renaissance is still going on.³⁶

Van Schurman corresponded with some of the learned ladies in Europe (her so called *Women’s Republic of Letters*): Queen Christina of Sweden, Marie Jars du Gournay, Bathsua Makin, Dorothea Moore, Elisabeth van der Palts, Marie du Moulin and Birgitte Thott. We know that most of them were educated in Latin as well as in Greek, but only some texts by Anna Maria van Schurman and Bathsua Makin survive. In her work Van Schurman refers to other learned women from the past as well as from her own lifetime: (her favorite) Lady Jane Gray (1537–1554), queen of England for 10 days and martyr, Queen Elizabeth I, and Lucrezia Marinelli (1571–1653), writer of inter alia *La nobiltà et l’eccellenza delle donne co’ diffetti et mancamenti de gli uomini* (*The Nobility*

³⁴ See Van Schurman 1652: 139–152.

³⁵ ‘Mr. Wotton’ in: *The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure* (93) London, 1793: 288.

³⁶ Churchill, Brown, Jeffrey 2002; Stevenson 2005; Van Beek 1995; Parker 1997, 2002, 2003.

and *Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men*, Venice, 1601), a book she had read.³⁷

Another example Van Schurman gives is Olympia Morata (1526–1555), an Italian Protestant learned lady who had to flee religious persecution in Ferrara, to endure bombardments in Schweinfurt and who died tragically in Heidelberg in Germany. She was attacked by some as a “Calvinist Amazon” but praised by others as an inspiration for all learned women for her orations, dialogues, letters, and poems in Latin (and some in Greek as well). It is known that even Goethe was inspired by her letters. She is mentioned in the correspondence between Van Schurman and Andreas Rivet on the topic of learned women as one of the *prima donna* examples. Her work was in the library of Voetius, Van Schurman’s neighbour and professor, and in the Labadist library.³⁸

Although only a small amount of Van Schurman’s work in Greek survives, we can see in her letters her involvement in the relevant topics of her time. Her letters in Latin were imitated by (*inter alia*) the Swedish poet Elisabeth Brenner.³⁹ Were also her Greek letters? Only after excavating the whole field of early modern women writers in Greek we will know, ‘Ansikte mot ansikte’, face to face and πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον (1 Cor. 13:12).

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³⁷ Van Schurman 1652: 63, 72–73, 80–81, 85, 154, 253.

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Abstract

In this article you will find an overview, analysis and translation of Greek correspondence by the learned Anna Maria van Schurman: her letters to the Leiden Professor Claudius Salmasius, the scholarly physician Johan van Beverwijck from Dordrecht, the British governess Bathsua Makin and to Meletios Pantogalos, bishop of the Greek Orthodox Church in Ephesus (Turkey), as well as Meletios’ letter to Van Schurman.