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Pieta Van Beek, “ ‘Non δίγλωττον aut τρίγλωττον neque πεντάγλωττον, sed παντάγλωττον?’ The Polyglot Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678) and Her (Latin–Greek) Code-Switching,” JOLCEL 9 (2024): pp. 96-117. DOI: 10.21825/jolcel.87174.

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NOTE

This contribution is the fifth in a set of five articles that form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are “Introduction: Latin–Greek Code-Switching in Early Modernity” by William M. Barton and Raf Van Rooy (pp. 1-26), “Roger Ascham’s Latin–Greek Code-Switching: A Philosophical Phenomenon” by Lucy Nicholas (pp. 28–49), “Dialects and Languages in the Poetic Oeuvre of Laurentius Rhodoman (1545–1606)” by Stefan Weise (pp. 51–73) and “Latin–Greek Code-Switching in Vicente Mariner’s (ca. 1570–1642) Correspondence with Andreas Schott (1552–1629): A Case-Study” by William M. Barton (pp. 75–94).

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“Non δίγλωττον aut τρίγλωττον neque
πεντάγλωττον, sed παντάγλωττον?”
The Polyglot Anna Maria van Schurman
(1607–1678) and Her (Latin–Greek)
Code-Switching*

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ABSTRACT

Anna Maria van Schurman, the first female university student in 1636, described by the learned poet Jacobus Martin as proficient in every tongue (παντάγλωττον), had knowledge of at least fourteen languages. Her multilingualism is visible not only in her bestseller *Opuscula Hebraea Graeca Latina et Gallica, prosaica et metrica*, but also in her other books and works of art. This article offers an overview of her knowledge of languages and how she acquired and used them. It then considers in detail her (Latin–Greek) code-switching, considering why she practised it, how her practice differed from that of her male and female contemporaries and how it changed when she became a Labadist.

* Quote from De Schurman, *Question Célèbre*, 107–108; Van Schurman, *Opuscula Hebraea*, 357–58.

1 Introduction: The polyglot Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678)

Utrecht 1645. Even though it was Christmas day, Anna Maria van Schurman opened her door for a royal visitor: the bride-queen of Poland, Maria Louisa de Gonzaga. The historian Jean le Laboureur had to report every detail of the visit, first describing Van Schurman’s many works of art, thereafter her polyglottism, which amazed the Queen:

... toutesfois elle demeura plus estonnée de l’entendre parler tant de langues, et respondre de tant de sciences. Elle respondit en Italien à Monsieur d’Orange, qui l’interrogeoit par ordre de la Royne: et elle argumenta tres-subtilement en Latin sur quelques pointcs de Theologie. Elle repartit aussi fort élegamment en mesme langue, au compliment que je luy fis pour Madame la Mareschale. Elle parla Grec avec le Sieur Corrade premier Medecin de la Royne: Enfin elle nous eust encore parlé d’autres langues si nous les eussions sçeuës; car outre la Grecque, la Latine, la Françoisse, l’Italienne, l’Espagnole, l’Alemande, et le Flaman qui luy est naturel, elle a encor beaucoup de connoissance de l’Hebreu, Syriacque et Chaldaïque; et il ne luy manque qu’un peu d’habitude pour les parler. Elle sçait de mesme la charte de tous ces pays; et elle se peut vanter d’y voyager sans guide, aussi bien que sans Interprete.¹

The report of the Queen’s visit gives an accurate insight into Van Schurman’s abilities regarding oral polyglottism and code-switching. She went effortlessly from Italian to Latin to French to Greek. According to the reporter, if someone speaking another language had been present, she could also have spoken in Hebrew, Syriac, Aramaic (“Chaldean”), Spanish, and German, and even more languages. Other reports of visits by *inter alias* Anne Geneviève de Bourbon Condé in 1646, or by Christina, Queen of Sweden, in 1654 refer to her oral polyglottism as well.²

Anna Maria van Schurman was born in 1607 in Cologne into a multilingual community. Her mother was the German noblewoman Eva von Harff, her father the Dutch-speaking Frederik van Schurman from Antwerp. Both were refugees from religious persecution. Anna Maria van Schurman and her family once again had to flee religious persecution of Protestants in Catholic Cologne and ultimately came to the Low Countries after a stay of some years on the maternal family estate

¹ “But more amazed was she [the Queen] when she heard her speaking many languages and engaging in discussions regarding many different disciplines. She answered in Italian to Mr d’Orange, who questioned her by order of the Queen, and she argued very subtle in Latin on some points of theology. She also replied very elegantly in the same language, for which I gave her a compliment in the name of Madame la Mareschale. She spoke Greek with Mr. Corrade, first physician of the Queen. Finally, she would have spoken to us in more languages, had anyone of us been able to understand those, for besides Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, German, and her native tongue Dutch, she has even more a good knowledge of Hebrew, Syriac and Chaldaic; she only needs a little practice to speak them. Likewise, she even knows the maps of all these countries; and prides herself on traveling there without a guide or interpreter.” In this article I reproduce the original orthography. Chaldean is the early modern term to refer to Aramaic. See Van Schurman, *Opuscula Hebraea*, 337–39; Van Beek, *The First Female University Student*, 192–93.

² Van Beek, *The First Female University Student*, 193–97; Van Beek, “Herrezen uit de as”, 37.

of Dreiborn. She was given an early education in French, and after she finally succeeded in persuading her father to teach her the classical languages like he did his sons, she became fluent first in Latin, then in Greek. This becomes clear from the eulogium by the Amsterdam poet Anna Roemer Visscher, who praised her in 1620 for addressing those speaking Greek or Latin without an interpreter.³ Some years later she made a beautiful album with adages in the classical languages, *De Deo* (“On God”). The album starts with her personal motto which she adopted after the promise not to marry which she had made at her father’s deathbed in Franeker (1623), Ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρωσ ἐσταύρωται (“My love is crucified”). A number of proverbs and adages in Latin and Greek by classical writers followed, for example the following attributed to Hermes Trismegistus:

Ἔστιν αὐτός καὶ τὰ ὄντα καὶ τὰ μὴ ὄντα
τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὄντα ἐφάνέρωσε· τὰ δὲ μὴ ὄντα ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ⁴

After her admission to Utrecht University in 1636, Jacob Cats praised her in 1637 for her knowledge of languages, theology, philosophy, and philology, and for her artistic and musical talents. The languages he mentions are not only her maternal and paternal languages, but also other European, Classical and the then so-called Oriental languages:

Die in de Rabbijnsche-Hebreusche, Chaldeusche, Syriscche, Arabische tale soo veel geleert hadde, datse die konde lesen, verstaen, en met de heylige Hebreusche tale confereren, tot reynder ende geleerder openinge van de H. Schrifture.

Die vorder van sin en voornemen is geweest in toe-komende, met Godes hulpe, daer in voort te gaen, en daer noch bij te voegen het Samaritaens, Æthiopisch, ende Persisch.⁵

In the early modern period, the following languages were regarded as daughter languages of Hebrew: Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, Samaritan, Ethiopic, and Persian (the latter nowadays classified as an Indo-European language).⁶

2 Voetius’ sermon on the importance of the study of languages

In March 1636, Voetius held a lecture entitled “Sermoen van de Nuttigheid der Academien”⁷ in the Dom Cathedral in honour of the foundation of the Utrecht University. In it, he set out why the study of languages was considered so

³ Visscher, *Gedichten van Anna Roemer Visscher*, 28.

⁴ “He himself is everything that is, as well as everything that is not, since the things that are, have been manifest and the things that are not, He contains within Himself.” See Van Beek, “*On God*”, 20.

⁵ “Who learned so much of Rabbinical Hebrew and the Chaldean, Syriac and Arabic languages that she can read and understand these as well as compare them with the holy Hebrew language, in order to open up the Holy Scriptures in a purer and learned way. Who further intended to proceed with this in the future, with God’s help, and to add the Samaritan, Ethiopic and Persian languages.” My translation. For the original, see Cats, *’s Werelts begin, midden, eynde*, foreword.

⁶ Van Beek, *Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678) en haar kennis van oud-Oosterse talen*, 35–42.

⁷ “Sermon about the usefulness of Academies.”

extremely important. Besides confirming the generally accepted opinion of the importance of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, Voetius also advised that some Oriental languages which were related to Hebrew should be studied. He thought Hebrew the most important of these, because, besides the fact that God himself spoke in that language, it was always necessary to be able to go back to the original text of the Bible to examine the translations and compare them to the original. It was also important to be able to defend one's interpretation against learned opponents and to better understand the New Testament, which was "de glosse ende uytlegginge van den text des ouden testaments."⁸

After all, the New Testament was full of Hebrew expressions, which one could never understand with the knowledge of Greek alone. The study of Aramaic was also considered necessary, because some Old Testament chapters in Daniel and Ezra had survived in Aramaic, plus a number of Aramaic words appeared in the book of Job. Aramaic would also be useful to better determine the origin and meaning of some other words. In addition, the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament was of great benefit because the correct meaning was believed to be expressed therein. Moreover, the Jews considered this translation to be the very best, and the discussion with the Jews could therefore be enhanced. Furthermore, the New Testament writers would be easier to understand, because they often used phrases from the Aramaic translation. Syriac had to be studied because of the correspondence with the Christian churches in the East. But most of all it was helpful to use the Syriac Bible translation of the New Testament. Then one would also better understand Syriac words and phrases such as "talitha kumi", "mammon" and "akeldama" that occurred in the New Testament. Arabic should be studied for the connections to the language family, but it was also important for explaining many words in the book of Job. In addition, it was very helpful to use the Arabic translation of the Bible. For the education and conversion of the Mohammedans it was very important to read their holy book, the Qur'an, in its original language.

Voetius ended his sermon with his views on the usefulness of the classical languages. In addition to being necessary for reading the New Testament and for the study of the ancient wisdom of the Greeks, Greek was also necessary for reading the writings of the Church Fathers. An additional reason would be to strengthen contacts with the Greek Orthodox Church that had recently been restored. Voetius was referring here to the efforts of the Greek Orthodox patriarch Cyrillus Lucaris, who sent his students to the West. One of them was Meletios Pantogalus, bishop of the Greek Orthodox Church in Ephese, who later became a correspondent of Van Schurman. Voetius finds the study of Latin so self-evident that he covered it in just a few lines. Voetius' view on the study of languages was commonly accepted in Europe at the time.⁹

Van Schurman, who was a student of Voetius, studied all these languages and practised them, thereby putting his advice into action. She knew even more

⁸ "The gloss and interpretation of the text of the Old Testament."

⁹ Voetius, *Sermoen van de nutticheydt der academien ende scholen*; Van Beek, *Anna Maria van Schurman en haar kennis van oud-Oosterse talen*, 43–48; Papy, *Het Leuvense Collegium Trilingue 1517–1797*.

languages than Voetius himself, such as Samaritan, Persian and Ethiopic; for the latter she even wrote a grammar.¹⁰

Her multilingualism also manifested itself in the range of books she had in her possession, for example on proverbs in Persian (*Warneri Centuria proverbiorum Persicorum*), or fables in Arabic (*Locmani sapientis Fabulae et selecta quaedam Arabum*), many bibles in Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Arabic, and Aramaic (for example, *N. Testamentum Graeco-Lat. Bezae*; *Biblia Hebraica cum N.T. Graeco*; *Biblia Italica*; *Psalterium Hebr. Graec. Arab. & Chaldaeum*), and numerous lexicons, dictionaries, and grammars, such as *Buxtorfii Lexicon Chald. Talm. et Rabb.*; *Raphelegii Lexicon Arabicum*; *Dictionarium octolingue*; *Posselii Syntaxis linguae Graecae*; *Buxtorfii Gramm. Chaldaeo-Syriaca*; *Erpenii Gramm. Ebraea*.¹¹ When she or her brother Johan Godschalck did not have a particular book, their friend and pastor-professor Voetius next door had an excellent library as well to which they had access.

Van Schurman used all these languages in her correspondence, in her books, manuscripts, works of art, and during visits of other learned persons. But it depended on the addressee which languages she would use and how she mixed them. In the following, I will show a few examples of this, before I discuss her Latin–Greek code-switching.

3 Van Schurman and Hebrew

For Van Schurman knowledge of Greek was important, but Hebrew even more so: it was the holy language, because just like Voetius she was of the opinion that God himself spoke it. In February 1651, she wrote a poem in Hebrew on the Ten Commandments and translated it into Dutch. It is a compact summary of the commandments, based on *Exodus 20*. She wrote it in capital letters, to emphasise the weight of the commandments, and added a comma after each commandment.

¹⁰ Van Beek, “Anna Maria van Schurman”, 578–9.

¹¹ Van Beek, “*Ex Libris*”, 57–76.

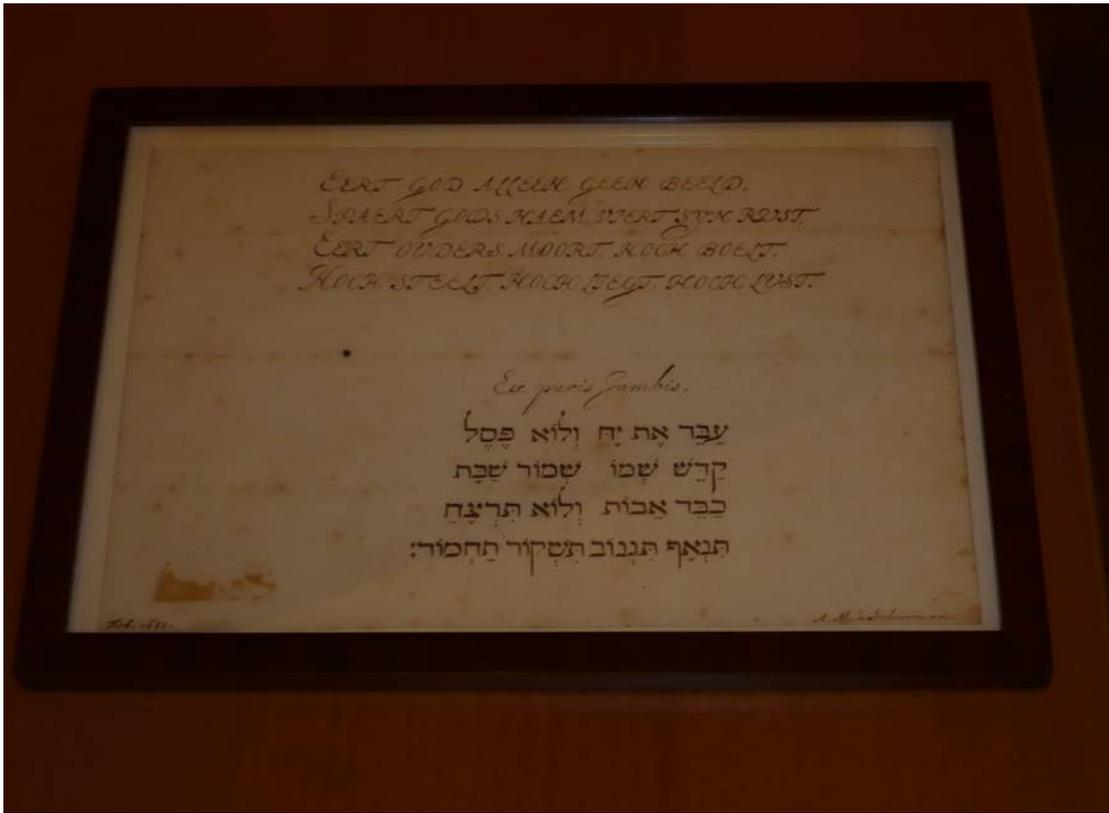


Figure 1: Anna Maria van Schurman. Album inscription in Hebrew, Latin and Dutch, possibly for Menasseh ben Israel. Private collection, Amsterdam.

Over the Hebrew poem she wrote the Latin words *Ex puris Jambis*:¹² in Dutch an iambic metre would have been evident to the reader, and so would not have required an annotation. During her lifetime, fierce debates raged about the origin and metre of Hebrew poetry, for example by Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641), who claimed that the metres of ancient Greek poetry derived from the Hebrew Old Testament. Louis Cappel (1585–1658) refuted this, because Hebrew was originally written without vowels and thus left much more room for metrical interpretation. But because such textual criticism might introduce uncertainty into the interpretation of the Scriptures, Cappel’s position was labeled as heretical and the publication of his book forbidden. Van Schurman avoided the controversy by using a Western metre. She signed this inscription not with her name in Hebrew, as Mozes Heiman Gans claims, but in Latin: A.M. à Schurman.¹³ The Dutch version of the poem runs as follows:

EERT GOD ALLEEN, GEEN BEELD,
 SPAERT GODS NAEM, VIERT SYN RUST,
 EERT OUDERS, MOORT, NOCH BOELT,

¹² “According to pure iambs,” that is, a metre that did not exist in Hebrew.

¹³ Van Beek, “*Verbastert Christendom*”, 64–65; Van Beek, *Anna Maria van Schurman en haar kennis van oud-Oosterse talen*, 71–78; Gans, *Memorboek*, 78.

NOCH STEELT, NOCH LIEGT, NOCH LUST.¹⁴

4 The use of languages in Van Schurman’s works of art

Anna Maria van Schurman also made works of art combined with texts in several languages. A double-sided copper engraving, for instance, which on the front side shows her famous self-portrait as well as the same elegiac couplet that was used in the frontispiece of her *Opuscula* editions of 1648 and 1650: “Cernitis hic picta nostros in imagine vultus / Si negat ars formam, gratia vestra dabit.”¹⁵ On the back are found three proverbs in Latin, French and Dutch. The polyglottism is typical of Van Schurman, and offers a clear example of code-switching. This is reflected in the fact that she wrote these proverbs in different hands: a gothic hand for Dutch and italic for Latin and French:

Omnia conando docilis solertia vincit.¹⁶

Personne ne sera bien son mestier s’il n’y primierement fait quelque peine.¹⁷

Van minder tot meerder.¹⁸

The proverbs all generally state that practice makes perfect. It is as if she is admonishing herself by engraving these proverbs.¹⁹

Van Schurman met all sorts of learned people, and wrote inscriptions in their *alba amicorum*. On the basis of surviving evidence, most of the inscriptions are in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic; there is only one known in French, for the noble woman Juliana de Rosseel; and one drawing of a “fruitage” (“fruit still life”) for Johanna Koerten’s album has no accompanying text. She wrote *inter alia* in the albums of Martens, De Glarges, Gronovius, Alting, Schweling, Voet, Heyblocq, Honing, De Zadelers, Otto Zaunschliefer, Johannes Albertus Zaunschliefer, and Godefridus Verburg. She almost always put her *symbolon*, the Greek life motto *ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρως ἐσταύρωται* (“my love is crucified”) together with her signature, as a hallmark of her identity. Again, the polyglot inscriptions in the *alba amicorum* are good examples of the way she applied code-switching. The same holds for the writing of her life motto in Greek and her signature in Dutch (van Schurman), Latin (à Schurman) and French (de Schurman).²⁰

As is clear from the examples above, Van Schurman knew how to switch between several Western languages. But compared to other erudite writers from her time she is unique in her code-switching, making use also of ancient near-

¹⁴ “Honour only God, no likeness, / respect God’s name, celebrate his rest / honour parents, commit neither murder nor adultery, / nor steal, nor lie, nor desire.”

¹⁵ “In this painted picture you see our face. If art does not depict beauty adequately, your kindness will provide it.”

¹⁶ “By trying everything, clever ingenuity prevails.”

¹⁷ “Nobody would be good at his profession if he had not spent some effort beforehand.”

¹⁸ “From less to more.” See Manilius, *Astronomica* I, 95 for the Latin proverb; the French and Dutch statements are too general in nature to be ascribed to one specific source.

¹⁹ Van Beek, “*Ex Libris*”, 12.

²⁰ Van der Stighelen, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, 275–76; see also Van Beek, *De eerste studente*; Van Beek, “‘Habent sua fata libelli’”, 199–209.

eastern languages. She does this in several unique multilingual sheets, in beautiful calligraphy. One example is a sheet in the Royal Library in The Hague,²¹ where, on top of the page, in bold, is a text in Hebrew, followed by verses in Aramaic, Samaritan, Syriac, Rabbinical Hebrew, Arabic, and then her Greek motto.²² The recipients of such calligraphic art pieces were often learned Protestant theologians. Although Van der Stighelen labelled the polyglot pages as boring pieces of “schoolmeesterije”,²³ I read them as expressions of her religious beliefs in the many languages that are connected with Hebrew, the most holy language. I think this is the main reason for Van Schurman to apply code-switching between all these languages.



Figure 2: Multilingual sheet, in Hebrew (bold, on top), Aramaic, Samaritan, Syriac, Rabbinical Hebrew, Arabic. Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

But this is not all. People in the seventeenth century knew that she was fond of languages and of showcasing them. Thus, in 1637, the Dordrecht pastor Andreas Colvius (1594–1671) sent her two pieces of writing, one with *specimina* of the Persian, Japanese, and Thai languages, and another single-printed leaf from a Chinese “encyclopaedia full of all kinds of useful knowledge.”²⁴ We know that she understood Persian, and according to Bathsua Reginald Makin she even published

²¹ Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague, 121 D 2/49.

²² Van Beek, *De eerste studente*, 70–71.

²³ “Pedantry.” See Van der Stighelen, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, 229.

²⁴ Helliwell, “Chinese leaves.”

in it: “Anna Maria Schurman of Utrecht [...] hath printed divers works in Latin, Greek, French and the Persian Tongue.”²⁵ However, only one piece in her hand survives, a copy of a bilingual praise poem for her *Teutonice et Persice* by Elichmanus that she kept as a treasure for many years and that she copied for Constantijn Huygens.²⁶

Van Schurman worked so hard that she later realised that her incessant studies had made her ill. She devoted herself tirelessly to learning these languages—not as an objective in its own right, but as a means of acquiring a better understanding of the Bible, which was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and translated into Latin, Syriac, Samaritan, Ethiopian and Arabic.

She published some of her poems, letters, and books from 1636 onwards—very unusual for a woman at the time—including, for example, her *Opuscula Hebraea Graeca Latina et Gallica, prosaica et metrica* (Leiden 1648, 1650; Utrecht 1652). This volume contains new work, but also her earlier published essays, for instance on the capacity of women to study and a contribution on *De vitae termino* (“On the End of Life”), as well her poems in Latin and French, for example at the founding of the Utrecht University, on Queen Henrietta Maria of England after the birth of the little princess Elisabeth in the winter of 1635, and on the French feminist Marie Jars du Gournay. The grammar she compiled for Ethiopic was last seen at an auction in 1715 but is now believed to be lost. Her poems in Dutch circulated in manuscript form, like those of most of the women who wrote in that language, or were included in men’s books, for example in the “Sermon” by Voetius, or her poem on the calligrapher Koppenol that was published together with other poems on a broadsheet.²⁷

5 Latin–Greek code-switching²⁸

5.1 Latin–Greek code-switching in *De vitae termino*

The highly gifted Van Schurman loved learning, languages, and variation. She played with languages, and thus it is no surprise to find a variety of code-switching in her writings, from Dutch to French, Hebrew to Dutch, French to Syriac, from Latin to Arabic, Greek to Hebrew, etc. In this section I will explore her Latin–Greek code-switching in her *Opuscula Hebraea Graeca Latina et Gallica* (1652), especially in the learned letter she wrote to the physician Johan van Beverwijck. He was involved in discussions on several of her publications, such as the multifaceted *Dissertatio*, which included odes, letters exchanged with Andreas Rivet

²⁵ Van Beek, *De eerste studente*, 78; Makin, *Essay*, 12.

²⁶ Museum Martena, Franeker; Helliwell, “Chinese leaves”; Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague B 133 B8; Schotel, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, aanteekening 12, 115; Larsen and Maiullo, *Anna Maria van Schurman: Letters and poems*, xviii, 276–77; Van Beek, “Vrouwen toen en nu,” 26–27.

²⁷ Van Schurman, *Opuscula*, editions from 1648, 1650, 1652; Van Beek, *Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678) en haar kennis van oud-Oosterse talen*; Van Beek, *Klein werk*; Van Beek, “O engelachtige maagdelijkheid”; Van Beek, “Herrezen uit de as”, 11.

²⁸ I am grateful to William Barton and Raf Van Rooy for organising the illuminating workshop on code-switching in Leuven, 13–14 October 2022.

(1572–1651), Andreas Colvius (1594–1671) and Jacobus Lydius (1610–1679), and a logical dissertation on the aptitude of the female mind for academic study.²⁹

Van Beverwijck started a national and international discussion in 1632 on *De vitae termino* from a theological and medical point of view. Is life determined by predestination or can it be prolonged by following a healthy lifestyle and using medicines? He wanted to see such a controversial issue discussed from different perspectives. The participants in the debate hailed from the Netherlands, France, and Italy, and were not only Calvinists, but also Roman-Catholics and Remonstrants (liberal Protestants). There was even a Jewish participant. Van Schurman was the only woman to participate.

Van Beverwijck invited Van Schurman to participate in this discussion in a bilingual letter, half in Latin, half in Greek. In her reply, mostly in Latin, Van Schurman took into account the linguistic knowledge of her correspondent and therefore engaged in code-switching. She knew Van Beverwijck was fluent in Latin, Greek, and Arabic, so she used these languages, Latin without translation, Greek sometimes without, but for Arabic and Syrian she added a translation in Latin with an eye on a wider readership.

Taking a closer look at *De vitae termino*, one finds a lot of single Greek words in Latin sentences (as published in her *Opuscula*), such as *λογομάχίαν* (p. 5, “verbal dispute”), which she, like the other single words in Greek, inflects according to Greek grammatical rules within the Latin sentence. Why does she use code-switching here? The reason is that by writing words in Greek she highlights and emphasises them. Other examples are *ὁ μακαρίτης* (p. 4), indicating that Sir Westerburgius (who also wrote a *De vitae termino*) had already blissfully passed away, and the phrase *ἐξ ἄκρου μυελῶ ψυχῆς* (p. 4, “from the bottom of my heart”), which she uses to express emotion. Sometimes, the reason is that the Greek language expresses the meaning of a concept better than the Latin word. For example, a better word than the Latin one is *ἀμεταβλησίαν* (p. 15, “immutability”), referring to the Greek New Testament (James 1:17); *ἐξουσίαν* (p. 15, “power”), emphasising the meaning “power” by using the Greek language. Again, to stress the meaning of a phrase, she uses the Greek *ἐξ ἐναντίας* (p. 8, “from opposite sides”) instead of the Latin, as also in *περὶ ἐτέρου λεγόμενον* (p. 7, “on the other hand”). In *ἀλύσῃν ἀλύτῳ* (p. 15, “by an unbreakable chord”) she emphasises the bond by using two similar-sounding words in Greek, beautifully bound together.

She inserts in this letter Latin quotes from authors like Seneca and Ovid without a translation, but when she quotes a Hebrew verse of the Old Testament, she gives a translation in Latin. In other words, Van Schurman was aware of the limits of code-switching: you have to take into account the knowledge of the reader. Therefore, when she quotes rabbi Aben Esra in Rabbinical Hebrew, she provides a translation in Latin (p. 8). For quotations from Greek authors such as Pindar, Homer, Herodotus, Euripides, Simonides, Nicephoras Gregoras, Plato, and Herodian, she provides translations in Latin either by herself or by Buchanan.

In some instances, however, Van Schurman offers no translation, trusting the knowledge of the recipient Van Beverwijck. An example is her paraphrase of *James*

²⁹ Van Beek, “The Aptitude of the Female Sex,” 59–60.

1:17 in Latin, which she ends with Greek: “cum Apostolus aperte testetur de Patre luminum quod apud eum non sit; παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα” (p. 20). In this text the apostle James testifies about “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (King James Version). Or take the well-known verse from *Romans* 11:36: “ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα” (p. 9).³⁰ The Latin-Greek code-switching in this sentence is a play of recognition, activating religious emotions as well.

On p. 14 she gives a philological explanation for the πολύσημον word γενεά by giving some examples showing that the word denotes more than the age of a person, but also lifespan or lifetime. It can refer to the life of King David as recorded in *Acts* 13:36: “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers” (King James Version), and to other Bible verses such as *Acts* 14:16 and 8:33 (which corresponds to the Hebrew 777 of *Isaiab* 53 and elsewhere,³¹ and is translated into the Greek Septuagint by γενεά). She does not provide a translation, either for the Hebrew or for the Greek, because the meaning is clear from the context.

When she quotes authors in Hebrew, Rabbinical Hebrew, and Arabic, she always gives a translation in Latin, although Van Beverwijck knew Arabic. It was for the benefit of a wider readership.

5.2 Greek verses

Most of the New Ancient Greek appears to be Greek verse. We know that Van Schurman wrote poems and hymns in Greek, but unfortunately these are lost, so we do not know if she was practising code-switching in it. But some poems that were written in honour of her have survived, like a special poem in Greek by her preceptor Voetius, praising her as all nine charming Muses together. In the Latin translation following the Greek verse, he kept one letter in Greek, the letter ω in the Greek genitive “Musōn enneas.”³² She would have seen it immediately, belonging as she did to an in-group of specialist readers.

5.3 Greek prose texts

5.3.1 The Lord’s prayer

A complete text in Greek from her hand is the Lord’s Prayer, a text from the first century CE which can be found both in the Gospel of Matthew (6:9–13) and in the Gospel of Luke (11:2–4). Van Schurman chose the shorter version of the Lord’s Prayer as it appears in Luke and left out the doxology “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever.”

She added the title in Greek ΕΥΧΗ ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ, probably taken from the end of Clenardus’ famous Greek grammar. Van Schurman’s work is a combination of

³⁰ “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things” (King James Version).

³¹ “Generation, lifetime.”

³² “The nonary of the Muses.”

the text in Greek in her beautiful calligraphic hand. She wrote it down on a medieval illustrated parchment (dating from ca. 1450). The Catholic illustration was removed by her or by the seller of the parchment page. In golden letters she calligraphed the first-century prayer that ended with Amen, and even wrote her name in Greek, “*Ἀννα Μαρία Σχούρμαν*.”³³ It was a religious text dear to her, without code-switching at all. Greek was considered a holy language, because the New Testament was written in Greek. And even more holy because it was the language of the Lord’s prayer, the ΕΥΧΗ ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ, written by her in capitals.

5.3.2 Letters in Greek

Some of her letters written in Greek have also survived, for example the one to Van Beverwijck, which is included in her *Opuscula*, as well as the letters in Greek to Salmasius, Bathsua Makin, and to and from Meletios Pantogalus, bishop of the Greek Orthodox Church in Ephesus.³⁴ There is no code-switching in these letters, except that Meletios Pantogalus quotes one bible verse in Hebrew.

Greek was often used by medical doctors as we have seen above in the report of the visit by bride-queen Maria Louise de Gonzaga: Mr. Corrade, personal physician of the Queen entered into a discourse with her in Greek and was answered by her in the same language. The same was the case with the letter in Greek to Van Beverwijck, who had sent her a book on indigenous medicines, *Αὐτάρκεια Bataviae sive introductio ad medicinam indigenam* (“The Autarky of Batavia, or an introduction to indigenous medicine”). In the Greek letter we find no code-switching at all, but presumably the address would have been in a language other than Greek.³⁵ It becomes clear that the language she chose depended on the receiver, and Van Schurman only used code-switching when she knew that the receiver could handle it. When Salmasius sent her a book on the Greek language, she had to answer in Greek. When Bishop Meletios Pantogalus of the Greek Orthodox Church wrote to her in Greek and praised her for her knowledge of Greek, she could not but answer in Greek. In her Greek correspondence with the learned British woman Bathsua Makin she used Greek because it had a touch of holiness as the source language of the New Testament, but also because it would show the proficiency of these learned women in that language, their love of languages and their connection as female experts in Greek—two of the very few female members of the Republic of Letters. Makin’s letters to Van Schurman are lost, as are earlier letters by Van Schurman to her. In the two surviving letters by Van Schurman to her one finds no code-switching at all. In Van Schurman’s Greek letter to Meletios Pantogalus, bishop of the Greek Orthodox Church, she applied code-switching only once, from Greek to Hebrew, without giving a translation. As a theologian, Meletios was expected to be fluent in Hebrew, after all.

Greek was sometimes used as a secret language, but not in the corpus of Greek letters from and to Anna Maria van Schurman. She had nothing to conceal

³³ Van Beek, “The Three New Graces,” 269–70; Van Beek, “Het gebed des Heeren en de Sura al Fatiha,” 18–19.

³⁴ Van Beek, “As a rose among the thorns.”

³⁵ See Van Schurman, *Opuscula Hebraea*, 160–62, as translated in Van Beek, “As a rose among the thorns.”

in her Greek writings, so she used no asterisks to conceal names and countries as she did in some Latin letters to Rivet as published in her *Opuscula*. But in a manuscript letter to Andreas Rivet she did quote from an unknown letter in Greek by Voetius, hinting that its content was still secret.³⁶

6 Latin–Greek code-switching and gender

Although research on Latin–Greek code-switching in the early modern period only began recently, the focus thus far has been entirely on learned men such as Constantijn Huygens, Milton, Erasmus, Mariner, Rhodoman, and Comenius.³⁷ The research on early modern women writing in Latin is itself a fairly new development. Research on early modern women writing in Greek and/or Hebrew is rare, and research on early modern women’s code-switching is practically non-existent, as the works *Women in the History of Linguistics* and *Women Latin Poets* show.³⁸ In a piece with the focus on Van Schurman’s code-switching, I can only mention some other women writing in Greek. There is much further work to be done here.

During Van Schurman’s lifetime she corresponded in Greek, mostly with men, but also with Bathsua Makin from London, who in 1616, in cooperation with her father Henricus Reginaldus, published the *Musa Virginea Graeco–Latino–Gallica*. The sixteen pages consist mainly of Latin poems, some Greek pieces and Bible verses, a few lines in Hebrew, in German, a motto in Italian, three lines in Spanish, and some mottos and a poem in French. It is a form of code-switching, but not within the separate texts themselves. The booklet was meant to be an advertisement for her father’s school to attract pupils. At the same time, it was showing off the polyglot knowledge of his young talented daughter Bathsua.

Christina, Queen of Sweden, was able to read Greek authors, but she did not write in Greek; Margaretha Godewijck, who was called a second Van Schurman, could read the Greek of the New Testament but did not write any text in Greek. Van Schurman’s friend, the learned princess Elisabeth of the Pfalz, knew several languages, Latin and Greek included. She was even named La Grecque, but not a single text in Greek or Latin is extant. In Van Schurman’s *Opuscula* she code-switches in her letter to Dorothy Moore from Latin to Greek only once, as she does in her letter to Anne de Rohan from French to Hebrew. Both instances are Bible verses the women knew by heart. Olympia Morata was known for her knowledge of Greek, but her work was only published posthumously. Her letters and poems in Greek were followed by Latin translations and even the Greek

³⁶ Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the Hague, 133B 8–63.

³⁷ See *inter alia* Lamers and Van Rooy, “Graecia Belgica,” 435–62; Pontani and Weise, *The Hellenizing Muse*; Korhonen, *To the Glory That Was Greece*; Gardner–Chloros and Weston, “Code Switching and Multilingualism in Literature,” 182–193; Van Rooy, *New Ancient Greek*.

³⁸ Aryes–Bennett and Sanson, *Women in the History of Linguistics*; Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*. Antoine Haaker found another letter in Greek to Van Schurman by Ismael Bouillieau; Crucius wrote a letter in Greek to Van Schurman, see Van Beek, “The Three Graces,” 279–80; see Haaker, “An Unpublished Greek Letter from Ismaël Bullialdus to Anna Maria van Schurman”; Van der Wal and Noordegraaf, “The Extraordinary and Changing Role of Women in Dutch Language History,” 219–214. See also Joby, *The Multilingualism of Constantijn Huygens*.

quotes are translated. But the choice to provide Latin translations might have been the editor’s rather than Morata’s, given that it is a posthumous publication.³⁹ Her book was in Van Schurman’s library.⁴⁰

The polyglot Anna Maria van Schurman was one of the most accomplished linguistic scholars in early modern Europe. Her knowledge of grammar, dialectic, stylistics and code-switching was profound, reaching the same level as that of learned men like Van Beverwijck and Salmasius. She continuously tried to persuade and encourage girls and women to study and read languages as well, *inter alias* Marie du Moulin (Hebrew), Sara Nevius (Dutch poetry), and Anna van Beverwijck (Greek). As far as we know, they did not practice any code-switching. She was aware of the fact that some female Dutch family members could not read her Latin writings, let alone those in Greek. She thus wrote in Dutch to her cousin Aemilia van Schurman-Van der Haer on 13 September 1673 from Altona, just after the publication of her autobiography *ΕΥΚΛΗΡΙΑ seu Melioris Partis Electio*, explaining that she would send her a copy because the work was written in Latin. She did not even mention the title, perhaps because it had a Greek word in it.⁴¹

7 Van Schurman’s Labadist view on the study of languages

In 1666 Van Schurman came to know the charismatic learned ex-Jesuit pastor Jean de Labadie (1610–1674) whose life was filled by his lifelong vision and quest for the New Jerusalem, to restore the fervour and purity of the post-Pentecost community. He started a communitarian settlement of the regenerated in Amsterdam with his male and female followers in 1669 and Van Schurman followed him there as well. She became the female leader of the Labadists, despite a considerable campaign of slander and opposition conducted by her former reformed friends and professors, especially Voetius. During their wanderings and stays in Amsterdam, Herford, Altona, and Wieuwerd, she spoke to people like Janus Comenius, Antoinette de Bourignon, Paul Hachenberg, Wilhelmus à Brakel, William Penn, using Latin, French, German, Dutch, Frisian and English as languages.⁴²

Her Latin autobiography reveals the changes in her views on learning languages as a tool for better understanding theology and thus the Bible. It was published in 1673 in Altona, titled *ΕΥΚΛΗΡΙΑ seu Melioris Partis Electio. Tractatus brevem Vitae ejus Delineationem exhibens*. The Greek word for the “good choice” (εὐκλήρῖα) is in capital letters, pointing to her good choice for the Labadists by referring to *Luke* 10:42. Just as Maria had chosen the better part, so did Anna Maria by choosing for the Labadists. This is what she writes on languages:

³⁹ Korhonen, “Christina of Sweden and her knowledge of Greek,” 41–56.

⁴⁰ Morata, *Olympiae Fulviae Moratae Foeminae Doctissimae*. In the 1570 edition it is said in the preface: “Graeca in hisce libris sparsim posita latinis verbis ne quis laboret expressa” (“The Greek in these books is sparse and expressed in Latin words so that no one should labour”). See Van Beek, “*Ex Libris*,” 72 (nr 12); Schotel, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, 72–73.

⁴¹ Franeker, Museum Martena. See Van Beek, “*Verbastert Christendom*,” 159–62, 163–65.

⁴² Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem*.

Exempli gratia videamus unicum studium Linguarum, quas vehicula scientiarum vocant Eruditi, quibus sane, quamvis illas mihi remoras esse saepe comperirem, horas tamen quam plurimas impendi. Sed cui quaeso fini? An ut cum Catone, qui sexagesimo suae aetatis anno Graecas literas addiscebatur, ejus causam indaganti respondere possem, ut tanto doctor moriar, aut, cum junior essem, ut tanto doctior vivam?⁴³

In this quotation, Van Schurman reflects on her life and the time spent on studying languages. She now sees that these studies did not always lead to greater knowledge; on the contrary, they often hindered it. She considered such learning now a waste of time, like lighting torches in the sunlight:

sed quod Graecam juxta ac Hebraicam linguam respiciebam, ac suspiciebam veluti S. Scripturae originales; et quod caeteras linguas Orientales, veluti Hebraeae filias, sive ramos, eoque amabiles, et commendation doctorum Virorum, dignas, quas inexhausto labore mihi pararem, mihi persuasum habebam. In primis vero Syriacam, Arabicam, atque Æthiopicam, eo quod plures haberent radicales voces, quarum derivata tantum essent in S. Literis, eoque lumen aliquod conferrent ad eruendum intimum earum sensum: Sed, si verum amamus, annon hoc erat faces accendere Soli? Aut ex Musca facere elephantem? Et in re seria, ne quid gravius dicam, ludere? Cum illae voculae sint paucissimae, quae hoc tempore eruditas Versiones et Hebraeae linguae peritos lateant.⁴⁴

Here, Van Schurman recognises that the study of languages is not so important as she formerly thought. She now thinks that the language of the Bible is clear enough: “there are very few words which in our day are obscure in the learned translations and unknown to the experts in the Hebrew Language.” So, reading in the light of the Holy Spirit would be enough to understand the Holy Scriptures, she continues:

Deinde *εὐστοχία* quaedam spiritualis potissimum hic requiritur, ad quam parum aut nihil ista conferunt. Aut enim in lumine Spiritus S. legitur S. Scriptura, aut non. Si non? Frustra verbuli unius aut alterius Grammaticalem explicationem adhibeas, ad intimam ejus mentem spiritualem assequendam: sin eo Magistro docere? non pendebit ex notitia alicujus voculae seu radicis rarioris verus ac integer, sive universalis ejus sensus; quem tota series orationis

⁴³ “For example, let us look solely at the study of languages which the learned call vehicles of the sciences, and to which indeed, even though I found that they often were hindrances, I devoted very many hours. But to what end, I ask? So that with Cato, who studied Greek at sixty years of age, I might respond to one who inquires, that I may die more learned? Or when I was younger, that I might live more learned?”

⁴⁴ “But because I respected the Greek as well as the Hebrew language and esteemed them as the original languages of Holy Scripture and because I considered the other Oriental languages to be daughters or branches of Hebrew and for that reason lovable and, by the recommendation of learned men, worthy, I was persuaded that I should acquire them with inexhaustible efforts, especially Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic, because they have the most root words, of which only the derivatives are in Sacred Scripture, and consequently shed a bit of light in my quest to unearth its deepest meaning. But, if we love the truth, was this not lighting torches in the sunlight? Or making an elephant out of a fly? Or playing in a serious matter, in order to avoid saying anything too serious? [...] For there are very few words which in our day are obscure in the learned translations and unknown to the experts in the Hebrew Language.”

in universali illo lumine repraesentat. cum solus Deus, et Spiritus ejus sit unicus Sacrarum Literarum infallibilis ac realis Interpres.⁴⁵

Thus, God alone, through his spirit, is the only infallible and real interpreter of the scriptures, according to Van Schurman. The position formulated here is markedly different from the academic approach in her earlier learned correspondences with Lydius, Van Beverwijck, and Salmasius, which show us the beginning of her Bible criticism. But her work was as clearly and eloquently written as before, following the rules of rhetoric and logic. The many classical authors she had cited in her earlier books do not appear in the second volume of her autobiography, written before her death in 1678 but only published in 1685. In this volume the quotations are mostly from the Bible; one is from Augustine. That was sufficient. Classical and other authors were not important anymore, and that was also the main reason for the book auction in 1675 where the Labadists sold their books, those of Van Schurman included.⁴⁶

In her manuscript letters of this period, code-switching appears only when she refers to the title of her *ΕΥΚΛΗΡΙΑ*, written in Greek. But of course, during her daily existence, she practised all sorts of languages within the multilingual community of the Labadists, having as her company people from Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, England, France, and Switzerland. As the ‘matriarch’ of this group, she stood out in regard to her linguistic competences, also because of her knowledge of so many languages. If only one could hear them speaking, or singing which they often did, in Dutch, German, and French, for example the French songs written by Jean de Labadie and translated and published by Van Schurman in Dutch, *Heylige Gesangen* (1675).

As Voetius lay dying, he and his friends comforted each other with familiar Latin texts that they knew by heart. At Van Schurman’s deathbed there was a gathering of polyglot friends as well, singing and speaking in different languages, *inter alia* French and Latin. When the pain became unbearable, she answered:

In portu jamjam ero ventum tantummodo concitatiorem expecto quo plene in patriam transvehar.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ “Furthermore, a certain spiritual *gift for interpretation* is required most of all, towards which this knowledge contributes little or nothing. For either the Scripture is read in the light of the Holy Spirit or it is not. If not, it is futile to employ a grammatical explanation of one word or another in order to grasp its innermost spiritual meaning. Only if you are taught by that master [the Holy Spirit], then the true and universal meaning will not depend on the knowledge of a few words with unknown ‘roots’. But if you are taught by that Master, then its true and complete or universal meaning will not depend on the knowledge of some word or unusual root. In his universal light the whole context of the discourse manifests the truth, since God alone through his Spirit is the sole infallible and real interpreter of Sacred Letters.” Quotations from Van Schurman, *Eukleria*, 30–32. The translation here and in footnote 45 is taken from Irwin, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, 90–94.

⁴⁶ See Van Beek, “*Ex Libris*”, 70 (nr. 22).

⁴⁷ Van Schurman, *Eukleria. Pars secunda*, 184–89, partly translated into Dutch by Schotel, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, 261–63; Van Beek, *Verslonden door zijn liefde*, 17–18. “I will be in the harbour soon, I only wait for a stronger wind that will blow me straight into the heavenly homeland.”

8 Conclusion

Lawyer and poet Jacob Martin from Lyon, who worked in the Paris parliament, praised Van Schurman extensively, especially her knowledge of languages: “non δίγλωττον aut τρίγλωττον neque πεντάγλωττον, sed παντάγλωττον” (“she could not speak two, three or five languages, but all”). He then quotes the famous physician of antiquity, Galen, who stated that it was a miracle if one man had perfect command of two languages. Suppose this famous physician Galen would now revive, Martin wrote, he would not believe his eyes and ears, because she was not monolingual, bilingual, or even pentaglot but knew all languages. She devoted all her free time to learning languages, including idioms and colloquialisms. Whoever sent her a poem of praise in any language, she understood them all, he said. In doing so, she built such a reputation that she became the bright torch of Europe, the immortal ornament of letters. Martin offered his praise like a twig of ivy for the wreath of her laurels, stating that one world was not enough to contain her praise.⁴⁸

We only have proof of at least fourteen languages, although we know that she could read Spanish and Anglo-Saxon, spoke with experts like the Swedish visitor Stiernhielm on Gothic, and most probably understood Frisian. The hyperbolic praise was repeated well into the nineteenth century, as this anonymous poem shows:

Wie Schurman noemt, noemt in dit woord,
Al wat geleerdheid is in elke stad, elk oord
Er is geen taal ter wereld oyt geweest,
Die zij niet kent, niet spreekt, niet leest.⁴⁹

Van Schurman had an exceptional knowledge of languages and she practiced code-switching from Latin to Greek often without any translation. She was influenced by the customs and practices of the learned world and influenced a lot of women, contemporary and through the ages. But much more research on Van Schurman’s polyglottism is needed—not only with respect to her translations into Latin, German, and French, but also in relation to other aspects that have not yet been investigated in sufficient depth, for example the learned letter in Latin to Salmasius in her *Opuscula*, in which one finds another part of her spectrum of language skills with a lot of Latin–Greek code-switching, and some Latin–Hebrew and Latin–Syriac code-switching as well, but all without any translation.⁵⁰

Another investigation should concern the whereabouts and the content of her Greek linguistic dictionary, which she made in the same way as Matthias Martinus composed his *Lexicon Philologicum* for Latin (1655).⁵¹ In this work she

⁴⁸ De Schurman, *Question Célèbre*, 107–108; Van Schurman, *Opuscula Hebraea*, 357–58.

⁴⁹ Schotel, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, 38. “Whoever mentions Schurman, mentions at the same time everything that represents learning in every city, every place. There has never been a language in the world, that she does not know, or speak, or read.”

⁵⁰ Van Schurman, *Opuscula*, 139–152.

⁵¹ Van Schurman, *Eukleria*, 31; Martini, *Lexicon philologicum*.

referred to a universal grammar or some spiritual lexicon for the conversion of the Gentiles and the Jews.⁵²

Another topic of research is the material, book-historical aspect of her code-switching. The Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew fonts were available at the leading publishing house Elzevier in Leiden, but also in Utrecht, where the third print run of her *Opuscula* was printed at Van Waesberghe. Her polyglot works of calligraphic art were not printed, probably because it was impossible to show off her skill in languages together with her calligraphy at the same time.

Van Schurman influenced many women and set a trend for the polyglot women who came after her, who were often called “second Van Schurmans”, like Anna Elisabeth Buma (Leeuwarden), Francina Roscam (The Hague), Jacoba Busken Huet (Vlissingen), and Hyleke Gockinga (Groningen), who wrote four volumes of biblical exegesis on the book of Genesis.⁵³ In any case, the prediction made in 1620 by Anna Roemers Visscher has been fulfilled. She did indeed become the person who “‘t Puijk sal wesen van die maechden, / Die ooijt wetenschap bejaechden.”⁵⁴

List of figures

Figure 1: Anna Maria van Schurman. Album inscription in Hebrew, Latin and Dutch, possibly for Menasseh ben Israel. Private collection, Amsterdam.

Figure 2. Anna Maria van Schurman. Multilingual manuscript sheet. Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague.

⁵² Van Schurman, *Eukleria*, 32.

⁵³ Van Beek, “Vrouw,” 264–78; Van Beek, “Vrouwen toen en nu,” 26–27.

⁵⁴ “... would be the pride of all women who pursued science”. Visscher, *Gedichten van Anna Roemers Visscher*, 28; Van Beek, *The First Female University Student*, 21.

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