

Gender, genre and authority in seventeenth-century religious writing: Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon as contrasting examples

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Publishing entails publicity or at least an intervention in the public sphere. Women in the early modern period, however, were not allowed to speak in public. In accordance with the admonitions of the apostle Paul (I Cor. 14:34 and I Tim. 2:11-12) they were meant to observe silence. A woman who wanted to publish her thoughts was suspected of being willing to make her body available as well. This injunction to female silence was so strong that the majority of women who did publish felt the need to justify their audacity.

In addition to these cultural admonitions advocating female silence, Merry Wiesner, author of *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, mentions two other barriers that prevented women in early modern Europe from publishing: their relative lack of educational opportunities and economic factors.¹ These barriers might explain why women throughout the early modern period represented only a tiny share of the total amount of printed material, though their share did increase during this period. Patricia Crawford has shown that in England between 1600 and 1640 publications by women accounted for only 0.5 percent of the total, increasing in the next six decades to 1.2 percent.²

The majority of early modern women's published works were religious, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the vast majority of all publications were religious. Their books usually appeared only after mediation by male friends or relatives.³ However, most works of seventeenth-century women writers were published anonymously or posthumously. As long as women's right to write and publish was still contested, early modern women writers would have difficulties in finding their own voice, whether they were writing religious or non-religious works. According to the editors of *Women Writers in Pre-Revolutionary France*, these female authors often struggled against the traditional understanding of genre. This process of appropriating

¹ M. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 191.

² P. Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings 1600-1700', in: M. Prior, ed., *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (London/New York, 1985), pp. 211-282, see p. 266.

³ Wiesner (see n. 1), p. 190-191; J. Stevenson, 'Female Authority and Authorization Strategies in Early Modern Europe', in: D. Clarke and E. Clarke, eds., *'This Double Voice'. Gendered Writings in Early Modern England* (Houndmills, Basingstoke/London/New York, 2000), pp. 16-40, see pp. 32-34.

and/or subverting tradition nevertheless involved the emergence of new genres or subgenres.⁴

Even in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, where, according to foreigners, the female sex was noted for its independence and imperious behaviour, there were many obstacles for women in pursuing a writing career.⁵ In the introductory essay of the first Dutch anthology on women writers of the early modern period, published in 1997, the editors reflect on women's place within the literary enterprise, the conditions which enabled them to work, the problems they encountered, and so on.⁶ Though many women, more or less successfully, managed to overcome these problems, their position in literary culture remained marginal. This is reflected in the difficulty they often had in finding opportunities to publish and in the necessity of having male support to get their work published. According to Annelies de Jeu, who wrote a dissertation on networks of early modern Dutch women writers, religious writings by female authors in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic were therefore usually brought to press by male family members, friends or preachers from the same religious circle as the writer.⁷

In this article I shall focus on two seventeenth-century religious women writers, both prolific authors, who practised different genres and who, thanks to their publications, made a reputation for themselves: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678) and Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680). For my research into Van Schurman and Bourignon as women writers, not only the surviving copies of their printed works are of interest to us, but also their handwritten works comprising a large amount of manuscripts, including autographs, that have come

⁴ Cf. C.H. Win and D. Kuizenga, eds., *Women Writers in Pre-Revolutionary France. Strategies of Emancipation* (New York/London, 1990), Introduction, p. xxii.

⁵ E.M. Kloek, 'De vrouw', in: H.M. Beliën, A.T. van Deursen and G.J. van Setten, eds., *Gestalten van de Gouden Eeuw. Een Hollands groepsportret* (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 241-279, see pp. 247-250; Cf. W. Frijhoff and M. Spies, *1650. Bevochten eendracht. Nederlandse cultuur in Europese context*, vol. 1 (The Hague, 1999), pp. 190-192 [translated into English as: *1650: Hard-Won Unity. Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, vol. 1 (Assen/Basingstoke, 2004)].

⁶ R. Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen, K. Porteman and P. Couttenier, 'Inleiding', in: R. Schenkeveld, L. van Gemert, K. Porteman and P. Couttenier, eds., *Met en zonder Lauwerkrans. Schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550-1850: van Anna Bijns tot Elise van Calcar* (Amsterdam, 1997), pp. 19-24; A. de Jeu, 't Spoor der dichtersessen'. *Netwerken en publicatiemogelijkheden van schrijvende vrouwen in de Republiek (1600-1750)* (Hilversum, 2000), pp. 173-226 (non-religious work) and pp. 227-273 (religious work); R. Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen, 'Met en zonder Lauwerkrans: Crowned and Uncrowned Women Writers in the Netherlands during the Early Modern Period', in: S. van Dijk, L. van Gemert and S. Ottway, eds., *Writing the History of Women's Writing. Toward an International Approach* (Amsterdam, 2001), pp. 3-20, see pp. 12-15.

⁷ De Jeu (see n. 6), pp. 162-163, 224-225, 253-254.

down to us.⁸ While it is known that Anna Maria van Schurman's correspondence with André Rivet, some of her handwritten poems and several inscriptions in *alba amicorum* are held by the Dutch Royal Library in the Hague,⁹ the biographers of Bourignon have only studied her printed works and have not searched for surviving manuscripts. During library research into the writings of networks of religious dissenters in the Dutch Republic, I came across hundreds of seventeenth-century manuscripts of Bourignon's letters and piles of copy ready for press.¹⁰ It goes without saying that I experienced a real historical sensation when I read these records. They offer us a glimpse behind the scenes, or rather behind Bourignon's printed writings, because they contain a lot of information on her involvement in the translation and publication of her works.¹¹ All these references to her own organizational activities were deleted during the preparation for press.

One could argue that both Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon occupied an exceptional position compared to other seventeenth-century women writers in the Dutch Republic. Although I could have added the word exceptional to the subtitle of my article, it was a well-considered choice not to do so. I want to present them, first of all, as female authors who explored the possibilities that were open to them, but who encountered the same barriers in

⁸ The survival of manuscripts written by women is not uncommon as in the early modern period the divisions between unpublished works and works that were published were not drawn as sharply as they are nowadays, cf. M.J.M. Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife. Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill/London, 1987), which designates the seventeenth century as a transitional stage between manuscript circulation and print, not only for female but also for male authors (pp. 64-83).

⁹ For an (incomplete) overview of her unpublished writings, see A.M.H. Douma, *Anna Maria van Schurman en de studie der vrouw* (diss., Amsterdam, 1924), Appendix D (Unpublished poems), Appendix E (Unpublished inscriptions in *alba*) and Appendix F (List of unpublished letters). Cf. for the correspondence between Van Schurman and Rivet, P. Dibon (in co-operation with E. Estourgie and H. Bots), *Inventaire de la correspondance d'André Rivet (1595-1650)* (The Hague, 1971).

¹⁰ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Add Mss A 96-97 (Works, Correspondence, and Miscellaneous Papers of Antoinette Bourignon); Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv, Aurich, Dep. IV (Records of the zu Inn- und Knyphausen Family); Royal Library, The Hague, Ms 78 C 44 (Papers concerning Antoinette Bourignon and her Circle); Royal Library, Copenhagen, Ms GKS 150 2^o (Christian de Cort, Codex Chartaceus, 1665-1668), GKS 1480 8^o, GKS 1480 4^o, Thott 500 2^o f. 301 (Letters of Antoinette Bourignon); University Library Amsterdam (University of Amsterdam), Ms III A 27a-c, III A 28a-c, III A 29, III A 30, III A 31a-f, III A 32 a-u, V G 1a-e, V G 2a-e, V G 3, V G 4a-b, V G 5a-c, V G 6a-b, V G 7a-f, V G 8a-f, V G 9a-e, V G 10 a-c, V G 11, V G 12, V G 13 1-7 (Letters and Tracts of Antoinette Bourignon); University Library Leiden, Ms BPL 246 (Letters of Antoinette Bourignon).

¹¹ Cf. M. de Baar, 'Publicatiestrategieën van een zeventiende-eeuwse vrouwelijke auteur. Antoinette Bourignon en de uitgave van haar geschriften', in: A. van der Weel et al., eds., *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis* 12 (2005), pp. 46-63.

their expression as writers and in their achievement of independence as all contemporary female authors.¹²

To understand how Van Schurman and Bourignon made the most of their opportunities for public dialogue, I shall focus on the following questions: How did each of the women construct an authorial and authoritative voice? Did they, as female writers, struggle against traditional understandings of genre or did they conform to literary and religious traditions? And how did they succeed in publishing their writings? I shall conclude with some remarks about their intended reading public. Let me first introduce the two women.

1. *The learned maid versus the illiterate daughter*

Anna Maria van Schurman, the daughter of noble parents, was born in Cologne in 1607 but spent most of her life in Utrecht in the Dutch Republic and was, in fact, regarded by her contemporaries as Dutch.¹³ She was a gifted linguist, a scholar of philosophy and theology, and a devoted member of the Reformed Church. Besides modern languages, she learned Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldaic (Aramaic), Arabic, Syriac and Ethiopic to interpret the Bible.¹⁴ From 1636 onwards she moved in the advanced humanist circles of the *Res Publica Litteraria*, corresponding with other learned women and men all over Europe in Latin, French, Greek and even Hebrew, and she achieved international renown

¹² Just because Van Schurman and Bourignon are among the few women from the seventeenth century whose voices were not silenced, they should not be classified as representatives of a deviating category, alongside which can be set the seemingly less spectacular activities of women who felt attracted to Pietism. Cf. two recent references to the ‘exceptionality’ of Bourignon: M. Schwegman, ‘Strijd om de openbaarheid: sekse, cultuur en politiek in Nederland’, in: D. Fokkema and F. Grijzenhout, eds., *Rekenschap 1650-2000. Nederlandse cultuur in Europese context*, vol. 5 (The Hague, 2001), pp. 145-177, see 162-163 [Translated into English as *Accounting for the Past 1650-2005. Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, vol. 5 (Assen/Basingstoke, 2004)]; D.G. Mullan, ed., *Women’s life writing in early modern Scotland. Writing the evangelical self, c. 1670-c. 1730* (Aldershot/Burlington, 2003), p. 15.

¹³ On Van Schurman’s biography see G.D.J. Schotel, *Anna Maria van Schurman* (’s-Hertogenbosch, 1853); U. Birch, *Anna Maria van Schurman: Artist, Scholar, Saint* (London/New York/Bombay/Calcutta, 1909); J. Irwin, ‘Anna Maria van Schurman: from Feminism to Pietism’, in *Church History* 46 (1977), pp. 48-62; K. van der Stighelen, *Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678) of ‘Hoe hooge dat een maeght kan in de konsten stijgen’* (Leuven, 1987); P. van Beek, *De eerste studente: Anna Maria van Schurman (1636)* (Utrecht, 2004). For her reception, see M. de Baar and B. Rang, ‘Anna Maria van Schurman. A Historical Survey of her Reception since the Seventeenth Century’, in: M. de Baar, M. Löwensteyn, M. Monteiro and A.A. Sneller, eds., *Choosing the Better Part. Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678)* (Dordrecht/Boston/London, 1996), pp. 1-22.

¹⁴ Cf. P. van Beek, *Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678) en haar kennis van oud-oosterse talen* (MA Thesis Stellenbosch, 2003).

for her defence of a woman's right to engage in scholarly pursuits.¹⁵ She wrote an Ethiopian grammar and tracts on the termination of life and the interpretation of 1 Cor. 15:29 ('baptising for the dead').¹⁶ Van Schurman, who never married, also devoted a considerable amount of time to artistic and poetic activities, writing didactic and occasional poetry of a religious nature.¹⁷ When she joined the religious community of the radical Pietist Jean de Labadie (1610-1674) in 1669, she felt the need to justify this decision by making public use of her knowledge and erudition. This prompted her to write her *Eukleria seu Melioris Partis Electio*. Nowadays, it is evident that 'the Pallas of Utrecht' should be included in any anthology of early modern women writers.¹⁸

¹⁵ M. de Baar, "'God has Chosen you to be a Crown of Glory for all Women!'" The International Network of Learned Women Surrounding Anna Maria van Schurman', in: S. van Dijk, P. Broomans, J. van der Meulen and P. van Oostrum, eds., *'I have heard about you'. Foreign Women's Writing Crossing the Dutch Border* (Hilversum, 2004), pp. 108-135. Van Beek, *Eerste studente* (see n. 13), pp. 155-198. Her Latin treatise was published under the title *Nobiliss. virginis Anna Mariae a Schurman Dissertatio de Ingenii Muliebris ad Doctrinam & Meliores Litteras Aptitudine* (Leiden, 1641) [translated into Dutch by R. ter Haar as *Verhandeling over de aanleg van vrouwen voor wetenschap* (Groningen, 1996). Cf. B. Bulckaert, 'Vrouw en eruditie: Het *Problema Practicum* van Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678)', in: *Festschrift Miscellanea Jean-Pierre vanden Branden*, Archives et bibliothèques de Belgique 49 (Brussels, 1996), pp. 145-195].

¹⁶ Her Ethiopian grammar was praised but never printed. The original has still not been traced. Cf. Schotel (see n. 13), notes, p. 11; Van Beek, *Eerste studente* (see n. 13), pp. 78-82. What is still lacking is a complete bibliography of her published and unpublished writings. For a list of Van Schurman's printed works see De Baar et al., eds., *Choosing the Better Part* (see n. 13), pp. 156-157 and Van Beek, *Eerste studente* (see n. 13), pp. 253-254.

¹⁷ For her works of art see Van der Stighelen (see n. 13) and Eadem, 'Et ses artistes mains...'. The Art of Anna Maria van Schurman', in: De Baar et al., eds., *Choosing the Better Part* (see n. 13), pp. 55-68. For her Dutch poems see A.M. van Schurman, *Verbastert Christendom. Nederlandse gedichten*, P. van Beek ed. (Houten, 1992) and P. van Beek, "'O Utrecht, Lieve Stad...". Poems in Dutch by Anna Maria van Schurman', in: De Baar et al., eds., *Choosing the Better Part* (see n. 13), pp. 69-85.

¹⁸ See e.g. J. Irwin, 'Anna Maria van Schurman. Learned Woman of Utrecht', in: K.M. Wilson and F.J. Warnke, eds., *Women Writers of the Seventeenth Century* (Athens, 1989), pp. 164-185; K. Aерcke, ed., *Women Writing in Dutch* (New York, 1994), pp. 203-226; P. van Beek, 'De Geleerdste van Allen: Anna Maria van Schurman', in: Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen et al., eds., *Lauwerkrans* (see n. 6), pp. 208-212; T. Dykeman, ed., *The Neglected Canon: Nine Women Philosophers, First to the Twentieth Century* (Dordrecht/Boston, 1999); A.M. van Schurman, 'The Learned Maid', in: B.S. Travitsky and P. Cullen, eds., *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works*, Series II, Part I. *Printed Writings, 1641-1700*, vol. 5: *Educational and Vocational Books* (Aldershot, 2001); P. van Beek, "'Alpha virginum": Anna Maria van Schurman', in: L.J. Churchill, P.R. Brown and J.E. Jeffrey, eds., *Women Writing Latin: From Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, vol. 3 (New York/London, 2002), pp. 271-293; W.St. Claire and I. Maassen, eds., *Conduct Literature for Women II 1640-1710*, vol. 2 (London, 2002). Cf. *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated and Other Writings from her Intellectual Circle*, ed. and transl. J.L. Irwin, *The Other*

Antoinette Bourignon, on the other hand, is labelled a female mystic or prophet but not a woman writer, though she wrote hundreds of letters, some poems, two autobiographies, various polemical tracts and even biblical commentaries.¹⁹ More than sixty editions were published during her lifetime, between 1668 and 1680. Bourignon's mother tongue was French but she and her followers produced Dutch, German and even Latin translations of her work. Another seventy-six works were printed posthumously and, in 1686, the reputable Amsterdam bookseller Henry Wetstein reissued the collected works of Antoinette Bourignon in French.²⁰ His sons, Rudolph and Gerard Wetstein, republished these works once again in 1717.²¹

Bourignon, born in Lille in 1616, came from a well-to-do merchant family and was brought up as a Roman Catholic. Though she claimed to be an illiterate daughter, she must have received an education befitting her sex and class. She refused to follow the path her parents had mapped out for her and ran away, at the age of twenty, in order to escape a marriage arranged by her father. Bourignon wanted to devote her life to God. In her spiritual autobiography, *La Parole de Dieu* (1663), written at the request of the vicar general of Mechelen, she relates that, when she was about eighteen, she had a vision in which St Augustine

Voice in Early Modern Europe, ed. M.L. King and A. Rabil, jr. (Chicago/London, 1998); *Anne Marie de Schurman. Femme savante (1607-1678). Correspondance*, ed. C. Venesoen, Textes de la Renaissance, Série 'Education des femmes' 80 (Paris, 2004).

¹⁹ See e.g. 'Bourignon, Antoinette', in: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2006), Encyclopaedia Britannica Premium Service <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9015968>>; *Dictionary of Religion*, vol. 1 (1979), p. 509; *Theologische Realencyclopädie*, vol. 7 (1981), pp. 93-97; *Grote Winkler Prins Encyclopedie V* (1990), p. 23. – Cf. A. von der Linde, *Antoinette Bourignon, das Licht der Welt* (Leiden, 1895); A. MacEwen, *Antoinette Bourignon. Quietist* (London, 1910); J. Björkhem, *Antoinette Bourignon. Till den svärmiska religiositetens historia och psykologi* (Stockholm, 1940); L. Kolakowski, 'Antoinette Bourignon. La mystique égocentrique', in: Idem, *Chrétiens sans Église. La conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1969, ²1987); M. van der Does, *Antoinette Bourignon. Sa vie (1616-1680) – Son oeuvre* (diss., Groningen, 1974); P. Mack, 'Die Prophetin als Mutter: Antoinette Bourignon', in: H. Lehmann and A.C. Trepp, eds., *Im Zeichen der Krise. Religiosität im Europa des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1999), pp. 79-100; K. vom Orde, 'Antoinette Bourignon in der Beurteilung Philipp Jakob Speners und ihre Rezeption in der pietistischen Tradition', in: *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 26 (2000), pp. 50-80; M. de Baar, 'Ik moet spreken'. *Het spiritueel leiderschap van Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680)* (Zutphen, 2004).

²⁰ A complete bibliography, including the reprints and translations, is annexed to my biography of Antoinette Bourignon (see n. 19) (appendix A on the cd-rom). Bourignon's collected works were published under the title *Toutes les oeuvres*, 19 vols., 8°.

²¹ The Bodleian Library (Oxford) holds copies of the second reissue by G. and R. Wetstein. M. Chevallier, *Pierre Poiret (1646-1719). Du protestantisme à la mystique* (Geneva, 1994), p. 156, refers to T. Georgi, *Bücher Lexicon* (1742 and supplement 1753), who noted that Wetstein reissued the collected works of Bourignon in 1717, but she assumed this to be a mistake. Van der Does, who compiled the first bibliography of Bourignon's works, did not notice the second republication.

appeared to her and commanded her to restore his order.²² This marked the start of a spiritual quest, which ultimately resulted in her taking a critical and independent stance in respect of the Roman Catholic Church and its doctrinal authority. Over the years Bourignon sampled various forms of the spiritual life without being drawn in by any of them. From 1653 to 1662 she ran a home for poor girls in Lille, which she helped to finance thanks to an inheritance from her mother. When she found herself embroiled in a scandal because of her harsh treatment of the children entrusted to her care, she resigned from her posts as mistress and governor. In 1663, Bourignon went to Mechelen, where she encountered Jansenism and became involved in the struggle between Jansenists and anti-Jansenists. Their quarrels prompted her to debate the topical theological issues, such as the sacraments, grace, remorse, praying and so on, with her Jansenistic friends, and to formulate her own thoughts on these doctrines in a series of tracts.²³

In 1667, Antoinette Bourignon decided to leave her homeland for the multi-confessional Republic of the United Provinces, partly because she no longer saw any opportunities to realise her mission in a purely Roman Catholic environment. In Holland, where there was freedom of the press so she would not have to submit her writings to an ecclesiastic censor, she would seek to publish her first letters and treatises. She settled in Amsterdam, where she became acquainted with the ideas of Calvinists, Lutherans, Arminians, Mennonites, Quakers, Soci-nians, Cartesians, Jews and various prophets. She realised how divided Christendom had become and how far some had strayed from God's truth. She debated points of theology and religious philosophy with, among others, Petrus Ser-rarius, Jan Amos Comenius, Jean de Labadie (who at that time was still a minister in the Reformed Church of Middelburg) and Anna Maria van Schurman.²⁴

In March 1668, Bourignon and Van Schurman met to discuss Christ's redemption of the believers and the question of grace and predestination. It soon became apparent how great the distance was between them. Van Schurman's

²² Bourignon's *La Parole de Dieu ou Sa Vie Intérieure* was published posthumously together with *Sa vie Extérieure*, in: [P. Poiret], *La Vie de Damlle. Antoinette Bourignon. Ecrite partie par elle-même, partie par une personne de sa connoissance* (Amsterdam, 1683). For the practice of having religious women write their life story under the authority of a father confessor or spiritual mentor, see S. Herpoel, "'Nosce te ipsum', of: schrijven op bevel in Spanje. Over autobiografieën van vrouwen in de Spaanse zeventiende eeuw", in: A.J. Gelderblom and H. Hendrix, eds., *De vrouw in de Renaissance* (Amsterdam, 1994), pp. 42-57; M. Monteiro, *Geestelijke maagden. Leven tussen klooster en wereld in Noord-Nederland gedurende de zeventiende eeuw* (Hilversum, 1996), pp. 205-278.

²³ These tracts were published in A. Bourignon, *L'Academie des Sçavans Theologiens*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1681).

²⁴ On these 'conferences' see De Baar, *'Ik moet spreken'* (see n. 19), pp. 110-124. For De Labadie see T.J. Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem. Jean de Labadie and the Labadists, 1610-1744* (Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster, 1987).

reformed views of the atonement and the doctrine of predestination were insupportable to the Catholic Bourignon.²⁵ Shortly after their meeting the two women went their separate ways. Anna Maria van Schurman, at the age of sixty-two, joined the community of the unfrocked minister Jean de Labadie and broke with the Reformed Church. She followed De Labadie from Middelburg to Amsterdam, then to Herford and subsequently to Altona. From Altona, Van Schurman and the other Labadists moved to Wieuwerd in Friesland, where she died in May 1678.

And Antoinette Bourignon? She began to publish her first writings, advising searching Christians on how to find the path to a truly Christian life. She managed to become the pivot of an international religious network that included learned men such as the Dutch entomologist Jan Swammerdam (1637-1680) and the French Protestant pastor Pierre Poiret (1646-1719).²⁶ Until mid 1671 Bourignon resided in the Dutch Republic, after which she headed for Schleswig-Holstein. She hoped to establish herself with her followers on the island of Nordstrand, off the west coast of Schleswig-Holstein, but this proved impossible. After a series of conflicts with Lutheran preachers, she found asylum in East Friesland in 1677, where she benefited from the protection of Baron Dodo II zu Inn- und Knyphausen (1641-1698). Accusations of witchcraft forced her to return to Holland and, during a stop in Franeker, in Friesland, she became extremely ill and died on 31 October 1680 at the age of sixty-four.

2. *Reasons for writing*

To understand how Anna Maria van Schurman succeeded in constructing an authorial voice we first have to focus on the social environment in which she grew up. Her wealthy parents ensured that their daughter could develop in many

²⁵ The two letters Bourignon wrote to Van Schurman in 1668 were published in A. Bourignon, *Le Tombeau de la Fausse Théologie* (Amsterdam, 1671), letter 3 (16.3.1668) and letter 4 (6-4-1668). Original copies of both letters are in the manuscript collection of the Royal Library in The Hague, Ms 78 C 44, f. 2r-5v. – Van Schurman would come back to their theological matters in dispute in vol. 2 of her *Eukleria seu Melioris Partis Electio* (Amsterdam, 1685), pp. 113-165. See also J. Irwin, ‘Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon as Contrasting Examples of Seventeenth-Century Pietism’, in: *Church History* 60 (1991), pp. 301-315; R. Albrecht, ‘Konfessionsprofil und Frauen: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678) und Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680)’, in: *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte* 96 (1998), pp. 61-75.

²⁶ On Swammerdam see A. Schierbeek, *Jan Swammerdam (12 February 1637-17 February 1680). His Life and Works* (Amsterdam, 1967); *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* XIII (1976), pp. 168-175; E.G. Ruestow, *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic. The Shaping of Discovery* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 105-145; E. Jorink, ‘Het Boeck der Natuere’. *Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods schepping, 1575-1715* (diss., Groningen, 2004), *passim*; <http://www.janswammerdam.net/> (February 2006). On Poiret see Chevallier (see n. 21).

respects through private tuition. This was not an unusual practice in patrician and upper-middle-class circles in the Dutch Republic.²⁷ Furthermore, Anna Maria proved to be an intelligent child with a diversity of talents: she was skilled in drawing, sculpting, decoupage and writing poetry. In addition she learned various languages and took an interest in theology, history, geography and mathematics. At the age of fourteen, Anna Maria van Schurman made Jacob Cats (1577-1660), Dutch poet and Grand Pensionary of Holland, the subject of a laudatory poem in Latin.²⁸ A letter, also in Latin, from Van Schurman to Cats in 1622 indicates that he was a visitor to her parents' house and was interested in her literary pursuits. Anna Maria van Schurman, who referred to herself in the letter as 'a girl just recently dedicated to literature', thanked him for affording her a certain amount of fame.²⁹ Through her brother, Johan Godschalk (1605-1664), Anna Maria was to become more closely acquainted with intellectual circles in the Dutch Republic in the period after 1623. According to his correspondence with the Dutch scholar and poet Caspar Barlaeus (1584-1648), it was Johan Godschalk who saw to his sister's literary and theological education following the death of their father.³⁰

Van Schurman's treatise on women's fitness for study was sparked off by an exchange of ideas on this question with her mentor, André Rivet (1572-1651). In 1632, this Calvinist theologian from France was appointed tutor to the then six-year-old Prince William of Orange, son of stadtholder Frederick Hendrik.³¹ Shortly before this, Van Schurman had sought contact with Rivet for the first time.³² She was then twenty-two years old, while he was nearing sixty. Rivet subsequently expressed his great admiration of her talents to other people. Van Schurman therefore considered it no longer proper to conceal any of her 'studies or rather, trifles' from him, as she wrote to him on 2/12 January 1632.

²⁷ See for examples B. Rang, "Geleerde Vrouwen van alle Eeuwen ende Volckeren, zelfs oock by de barbarische Scythen". De catalogi van geleerde vrouwen in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw', in: T. van Loosbroek et al., eds., *Geleerde Vrouwen. Negende Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* (Nijmegen, 1988), pp. 36-64, see p. 48.

²⁸ Published in A.M. van Schurman, *Opuscula Hebraea Graeca Latina et Gallica Prosaica et Metrica* (Leiden, 1648; repr. Utrecht, 1652), pp. 294-295; see also: <http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/desbillons/opus/seite154.html> (February 2006).

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 166-167; see: <http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/desbillons/opus/seite90.html> (February 2006).

³⁰ University Library Leiden, Ms PAP2, Letter of J.G. van Schurman to C. Barlaeus, 1629; Schotel (see n. 13), p. 112; Van Beek, *Eerste studente* (see n. 13), p. 29.

³¹ For biographical studies on Rivet, see H.J. Honders, *Andreas Rivetus als invloedrijk gereformeerd theoloog in Holland's bloeitijd* (The Hague, 1930); A.G. van Opstal, *André Rivet, een invloedrijk Hugenoet aan het hof van Frederik Hendrik* (Amsterdam, 1937).

³² The letter in question dates from July 20, 1631 and is the oldest in the surviving correspondence between Van Schurman and Rivet, currently held by the Royal Library, The Hague, Ms 133 B 8/1.

In the same letter she informed Rivet that she would make a contribution to a booklet in the French language, in which she wished to persuade young women ‘of the best way to make use of our leisure’. She would like to put her views on this subject before him.³³ Rivet declared in his answer that he was proud that ‘a girl of such mental ability and such piety’ had sought his friendship and had so amicably requested him to exchange ideas with her.³⁴

In November 1637 the correspondence with Rivet led to a debate on the question of whether it was fitting for a Christian woman to study.³⁵ Van Schurman worked out her ideas on this question by testing her arguments against those of Rivet. To conclude their discussion on this subject, Van Schurman wrote her *Dissertatio logica* in 1638.³⁶ This tract was published in 1641, by the renowned international renowned publishing house of the Elseviers, in an edition that also included part of the correspondence between André Rivet, Anna Maria van Schurman and two other scholars, Andreas Colvius and Adolf Vorstius, on women’s capacity for study.³⁷ This *Dissertatio logica* is probably the earliest work published in the Netherlands that deals with the question of whether women should be allowed to take part in higher education, and whether they are suited for carrying out scholarly work.³⁸

In her *Dissertatio logica*, Anna Maria van Schurman defended the thesis that Christian (read: Protestant) well-to-do women ‘who are better provided than others with leisure and other means and supports for the study of letters [...] can

³³ Original in Royal Library, The Hague, Ms 133 B 8/3. The letter in French comes after Van Schurman’s *Dissertatio logica* (1641). Cf. for an English translation Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated* (see n. 18), pp. 39-40.

³⁴ This letter is dated Leiden, March 1, 1632 and was published in Van Schurman’s *Dissertatio* (1641). For an English translation, see Van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated* (see n. 18), pp. 40-41.

³⁵ Cf. B. Rang, “An Exceptional Mind”. The Learned Anna Maria van Schurman’, in: De Baar et al., eds., *Choosing the Better Part* (see n. 13), pp. 23-41.

³⁶ Fragments of the correspondence between Rivet and Van Schurman (from the years 1637-1638) were already published in 1638 in Paris (without Van Schurman’s consent) under the title *Amica Dissertatio inter Nobilissimam Virginem Annam Mariam Schurmanniam et Andraeum Rivetum de Ingenii Muliebris ad Scientias, et Meliores Litteras Capacitate*. This edition does not contain Van Schurman’s *Dissertatio logica*. Cf. Van Beek, *Eerste studente* (see n. 13), pp. 105-110.

³⁷ For the title description see n. 15. On the Elseviers see D.W. Davies, *The World of the Elseviers 1580-1712* (The Hague, 1954); B.P.M. Dongelmans, P.G. Hoftijzer and O.S. Lankhorst, eds., *Boekverkopers van Europa. Het 17de-eeuwse Nederlandse uitgevershuis Elzevier* (Zutphen, 2000).

³⁸ C. van Eck, ‘The first Dutch feminist tract? Anna Maria van Schurman’s discussion of women’s aptitude for the study of arts and sciences’, in: De Baar et al., eds., *Choosing the Better Part* (see n. 13), pp. 43-53; B. Bulckaert, ‘L’éducation de la femme dans la correspondance d’Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678) et André Rivet (1572-1651)’, in: M. Bastiaensen, ed., *La Femme Lettrée à la Renaissance* (Louvain, 1997), pp. 197-209.

and should be stimulated to embrace this kind of life'.³⁹ In her view this study should primarily focus on gaining a better understanding of the Bible and on theology. Her study of oriental languages should be seen in that light. Her contact with Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676), preacher of the Reformed Church of Utrecht and professor of theology and Semitic languages at Utrecht University, was of the greatest importance for her intellectual and religious development.⁴⁰ Through his mediation, Anna Maria van Schurman was invited to write the ode marking the foundation of Utrecht University in 1636. In this Latin poem, which appeared in print, Van Schurman drew attention in no uncertain terms to the exclusion of women from the university.⁴¹ Thanks to Voetius, she herself was given secret access to Utrecht University: the professor allowed her to attend his lectures from within a sort of screened-off booth, so that she was invisible to male fellow students.

Both in and outside the Dutch Republic, Van Schurman's erudition was saluted in numerous poems and eulogies. It was this international fame that fuelled the demand for reprints and translations of her work. In France in 1646, Guillaume Colletet brought out a French edition of previously published sections of Anna Maria van Schurman's correspondence with André Rivet. It was titled *Question Celebre. S'il est Necessaire, ou Non, que les Filles Soient Sçavantes*. The year 1648 saw the publication of a second work by Van Schurman, entitled *Opuscula* [literally: 'little pieces of work'] *Hebraea Graeca Latina et Gallica Prosaica et Metrica*. This contained her *Dissertatio logica, De Vitae Termino*, her *Epistolae Theologica* (on 1 Cor. 15:29) and a selection of her letters and poems.⁴² A second and a partly revised third edition of these publications appeared in 1650 and 1652 respectively.⁴³ And in 1659 an English edition of the *Dissertatio* was published under the title *The Learned Maid; or, Whether a*

³⁹ Van Schurman, *Dissertatio* (1641), cited after the English translation by Irwin, in: Van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated* (see n. 18), pp. 36-37.

⁴⁰ On Voetius see A.C. Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, 4 vols. (Leiden, 1897-1915, repr. 1983).

⁴¹ Cf. L. Miller, 'Anna Maria van Schurman's Appeal for the Education of Women', in: A. Dalzell et al., eds., *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Torontonensis* (Binghamton/New York, 1991), pp. 491-498, see pp. 492-493; P. van Beek, 'Sol Iustitiae Illustra Nos: de "Femme Savante" Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678) en de Universiteit van Utrecht', in: *Akroterion* 40 (1995), pp. 145-162, see pp. 147-151; Van Beek, *Eerste studente* (see n. 13), pp. 45-50. Her poem was entitled *Inclytæ et Antiquæ Urbi Trajectinae Novâ Academiâ Nupperimè Donatæ Gratulatur Anna Maria à Schurman* (Anna Maria van Schurman congratulates the venerable and renowned city of Utrecht with the just-founded university).

⁴² For a literary analysis and translations in Dutch see P. van Beek, *Klein Werk: de Opuscula Hebraea Graeca Latina et Gallica, Prosaica et Metrica van Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678)*, 2 vols. (diss., Stellenbosch, 1997).

Cf. <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/beek017klei01/index.htm> (February 2006).

⁴³ The editions of 1648 and 1650 were published by Elsevier. The third, extended, edition, however, was published by the Utrecht bookseller Johannis à Waesberge.

*Maid may be a Scholar. A Logick Exercise. Written in Latin by that incomparable Virgin Anna Maria à Schurman of Utrecht.*⁴⁴

In the 1650s, however, Anna Maria van Schurman gradually withdrew from her circle of learned friends and increasingly concentrated on the exercise of practical piety. Concerned about the decline of Christianity, she sympathized with the Pietist movement within the orthodox Calvinist Church.⁴⁵ From 1666 she fell under the spell of the Walloon preacher Jean de Labadie. He was discharged from office in 1669 because of his millenarian views and ideal of an exclusive church. When he subsequently established a community in Amsterdam, Van Schurman was one of the first to join him.⁴⁶ She was heavily criticized for this choice by her former learned and literary friends, who expressed themselves in public disputations and pamphlets.⁴⁷ To defend herself and to justify the community of the elect to which she felt she belonged, Van Schurman wrote an apology entitled *Eukleria seu Melioris Partis Electio*, which was published in 1673. She wielded her argument primarily in order to transform De Labadie's insights into a new religious doctrine, a new and consistent system which she defended with scholarly disputation techniques and hundreds of authoritative citations from the Bible, classical literature, Augustine, Calvin and so on. Through this work she demonstrated that she had not altogether given up the practice of scholarship – perhaps, indeed, that she had not given it up at all – and thereby indirectly refuted one of the points of the criticism she had been subjected to when she had made her choice and joined De Labadie. Summing up, it may be stated that Anna Maria van Schurman's writings were aimed at demonstrating her *intellectual* gifts.

Antoinette Bourignon, in contrast, had to convince the world that she had been chosen by God to point the way to redemption in the midst of an unregenerate society. Her writings had to demonstrate her *prophetic* gifts. This is why she stresses again and again that she is just an illiterate powerless daughter who does not read anything. It also explains her abundant use of metaphorical

⁴⁴ Translated by C[lement] B[arksdale] (1609-1687) and published in June 1659 by John Redmayne, London. Its dedication ('To the honourable Lady, the lady A.H.')

alludes to an earlier English edition, no copy of which has been traced thus far. I would not rule out the possibility, therefore, that the reference is to the English translation of one of Van Schurman's letters to Rivet on women's learning, included in Samuel Torshel's *The Woman's Glorie: A Treatise First Asserting the Due Honour of that Sexe and Instancing Severall Examples of Womens Eminencies [...]* (London, 1645 and 1650).

⁴⁵ On this movement, see, for example, J. van den Berg, 'Die Frömmigkeitsbestrebungen in den Niederlanden', in: M. Brecht et al., eds., *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol 1. *Der Pietismus vom siebzehnten bis zum frühen achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1993), pp. 57-112; W.J. Op 't Hof, *Het Gereformeerde Piëtisme* (Houten, 2005), pp. 52-59.

⁴⁶ See E. Scheenstra, 'On Anna Maria van Schurman's Right Choice', in: De Baar et al., eds., *Choosing the Better Part* (see n. 13), pp. 117-132. For De Labadie, see Saxby (see n. 24).

⁴⁷ See Van Beek, *Eerste studente* (see n. 13), pp. 216-218.

language, referring to her works ‘being written’ instead of writing them herself. In this respect, she wrote herself into the tradition of female mystic leaders. However, in Bourignon’s case, the central message she proclaims is located in her act of writing under the authority of God, rather than in a mystical life-style.⁴⁸ Her voice was, as it were, empowered by the Word of God.⁴⁹ In order to receive the divine voice or lights and to transmit them in her writings, Bourignon needed seclusion and stillness. She literally claimed a place of her own by having her own writing-room in the houses she and her followers rented during their stay in Schleswig-Holstein. There are, however, no indications that she went into a trance and her written texts are not characterized by sudden changes of style.⁵⁰

3. Success in publishing

At first sight it seems as though both Van Schurman and Bourignon succeeded in breaking the publication barrier by means of the support of male friends who acted as intermediaries. The publication of Van Schurman’s *Dissertatio* by Elsevier in 1641 was arranged by one of her male friends, Johannes van Beverwijck (1594-1647). This Dordrecht physician had contributed to the *Querelle des Femmes* in 1639 with *Van de Wtnementheyt des Vrouwelicken Geslachts* (‘On the Excellence of the Female Sex’) and was a great admirer of Anna Maria van Schurman. In 1640 he urged her to publish the correspondence with Rivet together with her *Dissertatio logica*.⁵¹ Van Beverwijck felt that a completely error-free version ought to be produced, since a pirate edition of her work (*tua edita*) had appeared (*satis neglegenter*) in Paris the previous year.⁵² Van Schurman, described by Van Beverwijck as a ‘jewel’ and a ‘miracle, not only of this

⁴⁸ Cf. U. Wiethaus, “‘If I had an Iron Body’”: Femininity and Religion in the Letters of Maria de Hout’, in: K. Cherewatuk and U. Wiethaus, eds., *Dear sister. Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 171-191, see p. 173.

⁴⁹ This is illustrated by the title of the spiritual autobiography written by Bourignon in 1663 to underscore her prophetic claims: *La Parole de Dieu* (God’s Word).

⁵⁰ Nor does one find in her writings the split, generated by prophecy, between voice (coming from God) and body (the passive vessel through which it speaks). Cf. D. Purkiss, ‘Producing the Voice, Consuming the Body. Women Prophets of the Seventeenth Century’, in: I. Grundy and S. Wiseman, eds., *Women, Writing, History, 1640-1740* (London, 1992), pp. 139-158.

⁵¹ For Van Beverwijck’s views on women see, for example, C. Niekus Moore, “‘Not by Nature but by Custom’”. Johan van Beverwijck’s *Van de Wtnementheyt des Vrouwelicken Geslachts*’, in: *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (1994), pp. 633-651.

⁵² See Van Beverwijck’s preface-cum-letter to Van Schurman in the 1641 edition of the *Dissertatio* (dated Dordrecht, July 2, 1640). He was probably alluding to *Amica Dissertatio* (see n. 36), published in Paris in 1638. According to Van Beverwijck two admirers of Van Schurman, the theologians Colvius and Lydius, had financed the 1641 edition of the *Dissertatio logica*.

age', agreed to this, apparently with hesitation. Possibly to underline her modesty, Van Beverwijck did not omit to stress this fact.⁵³ In his preface to the reader he expressed the hope that the edition would inspire outstanding young women to model themselves on Van Schurman and direct their studies towards the acquisition of 'good qualities' and 'knowledge'.

The preface of Van Schurman's *Opuscula* was signed by another of her erudite friends, Frederick Spanheim (1600-1649), professor of theology at Leiden University. He introduced himself as the one who, at the instigation of some of his friends, had taken the first steps to edit her collected letters and poems.⁵⁴ In his address to the reader, Spanheim stresses that the 'noble virgin' had not sought publicity of her own accord but that she was forced, by people who thought it would serve the public interest, to publish her writings instead of hiding all this virtuousness. However, Van Schurman did not completely adopt a modest attitude. The print used as the frontispiece for her *Opuscula* was an engraved self-portrait that she herself sent to Spanheim in 1648.⁵⁵

Bourignon's first tracts were probably published anonymously, without either her name or initials on the title pages.⁵⁶ However, from 1669 onwards her full name is printed on the title page. Male friends of Bourignon signed all the prefaces in the editions published between 1669 and 1672, among them the Oratorian priest Christian de Cort, who had accompanied her when she left for Amsterdam in 1667. In the prefaces subscribed by him, Bourignon is introduced to the reading public as an illiterate virgin who was sent by God to divulge His message.⁵⁷ De Cort presented himself as the male authority who had decided to bring Bourignon's writings to press, just as Van Beverwijck and Spanheim had

⁵³ *Dissertatio* (1641), Van Beverwijck's preface to the reader.

⁵⁴ Cf. Van Schurman's letter to Spanheim, dated Utrecht, December 24, 1645, published in *Opuscula* (1652) (see n. 28), pp. 213-214, in which she finally decided to agree with his request to edit her letters: <http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/desbillons/opus/seite113.html> (February 2006).

⁵⁵ Van Schurman, *Opuscula* (1652) (see n. 28), p. 236 (letter to A. Vorstius, January 19, 1648), see: <http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/desbillons/opus/seite125.html> (February 2006). – Van Schurman was also the author of the distich in the caption. See also Van Beek, *Klein Werk* (see n. 42), pp. 88-89.

⁵⁶ This makes bibliographical research into Bourignon's works published in 1668 rather difficult. Thus far I have only traced one copy of one of her first publications: *Copie van eenen Excellenten Brief. Geschreven van een Godtverlichte Ziele, dewelcke wonderbaerlijke waerheden is verklarende, raeckende diversche poincten van misverstanden ende quade leeringen, die tegenwoordigh in de Christelijcke Religie ingekropen zijn, ten regarde van de zaligheyt der Zielen [...]* (printed for the author, s.l., 1668), Anhaltische Landesbibliothek, Dessau (Germany), BB 2053 (4), 12o.

⁵⁷ To underscore his authority De Cort did not refer to his priesthood (which would identify him and Bourignon as Roman Catholics), but to his former directorship of the poldering of the island of Nordstrand in Schleswig-Holstein. He signed as 'Christian de Cort, Director of Nordstrand'.

done before with the works of Anna Maria van Schurman published in 1641 and 1648 respectively.

However, in Bourignon's case it is possible, thanks to the surviving copy of her writings, to reconstruct the editing and printing phases in broad outline. One of the insights this offers is that Bourignon let it appear as if she left the publishing of her writings to her male friends. In reality she did it herself. She acquired a press of her own and established a private printing-house at her lodgings in Amsterdam. Her published works, however, give no hints of her own organizational and editorial activities. Acknowledging such activities might have undermined her public self-definition as the female prophet who was wholly dependent on God and who would not take any initiative to seek publicity. This explains why all references to her printing activities were deleted during the preparation for press. Bourignon herself kept a significant degree of control over this process by getting her followers to prepare her writings for the press. This secrecy emphasizes Bourignon's awareness that, as a woman, she had to mask her publishing activities in order to divulge her divine message. She also, as was customary in smaller religious circles, kept as much control as possible over the distribution of her work, although from 1669 onwards she did call on the assistance of various Amsterdam bookseller-publishers.⁵⁸ The latter did not, however, take any of the financial risk. Bourignon herself continued to be responsible for this until 1673; thereafter she was able to call upon various followers who were prepared to provide financial backing.⁵⁹

After joining the Labadists, Anna Maria van Schurman, like Antoinette Bourignon, had direct access to a printing press. The Labadists too had their own private press on which the Latin edition of her *Eukleria* was printed in 1673.⁶⁰ When the Labadists left Amsterdam in 1670, they moved their press to Herford and later on to Altona and Wieuwerd. Unfortunately, all archival papers concerning their printing press and their editing practices seem to have been lost.

4. *Intended reading public*

Anna Maria van Schurman wrote both her *Dissertatio logica* and her *Eukleria* in Latin, 'the language of authority'.⁶¹ With her *Dissertatio*, Van Schurman addressed, in their own language, the group of readers who played a significant

⁵⁸ Among them were Pieter Arentsz, a small bookseller specializing in works of religious dissenters, and the reputed publisher Johan Janssonius à Waesberge.

⁵⁹ See De Baar, '*Ik moet spreken*' (see n. 19), pp. 239-244.

⁶⁰ The printer mentioned on the title page, Cornelis van der Meulen, was a member of De Labadie's community, see Saxby (see n. 24), pp. 215, 250.

⁶¹ Cf. Stevenson (see n. 3), p. 16.

role in the education of women, among them the theologians with whom she had corresponded. In the case of her *Eukleria*, she addressed herself partly to the same group of readers but for different reasons. In the first sentence of her treatise she immediately, albeit rather long-windedly, sets out the objective of her work: to make her readers understand her choice – her decision to join De Labadie’s community. But which readers? Van Schurman herself had two groups in mind: the ‘great men’ whose disapproval of her and her choice she wanted to change, and the little children in Christ who held certain prejudices that she believed she could dispel with her book.⁶² Going by the language, the style and the form in which the *Eukleria* was written, however, it seems likely that her primary target were the great scholars – a learned male audience.⁶³

Bourignon published her works in different languages: in French, which towards the end of the seventeenth century was beginning to supersede Latin as the international language of the European elite, in Dutch, in German and even in Latin. Her letters and other writings appealed to the conscience of ‘true Christians’ regardless of religious, social or economic background. More than once, however, Bourignon made a distinction as to sex. She felt that ‘true Christians’ were more likely to be found among men than women. In her view men had ‘more Courage, and greater Certainty’ to be born again in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Women, on the other hand, possessed a ‘natural soft-heartedness’ that made them prey to ‘the depravity of their Nature’.⁶⁴ It is also striking that Bourignon always opts for the male form when speaking to her readers directly. She addresses herself to her ‘brothers in Christ’, not to her ‘sisters in Christ’.

The published collections of Bourignon’s letters, in particular, had a manifest effect on recruiting people to the group. This was due in no small measure to the editing of the content of the letters before they appeared in print. The epistolary form was maintained but personal messages and references were as far as possible edited out. This meant that authenticity was preserved, while at the same time a new readership was offered various options for identification. As the author, Bourignon could use these letters to create a personal bond with the unknown readers of her books. The epistolary form must have made it easier for the readers, in their turn, to seek personal contact with the woman whom they had got to know, through reading her published letters, as one who loved the souls of so many ‘friends’.

⁶² I consulted the Dutch edition, entitled *Eucleria, of Uitkiezing van het Beste Deel* (Amsterdam, 1684, repr. Leeuwarden, 1978), p. 2.

⁶³ M. de Baar, “‘Now as for the Faint Rumours of Fame Attached to my Name...’”. The *Eukleria* as Autobiography’, in: De Baar et al., eds., *Choosing the Better Part* (see n. 13), pp. 87-102, see p. 92.

⁶⁴ A. Bourignon, *Heylsame Raadgevingen en Onderwysingen, aan Allerhande Persoonen, en over Allerley Materien, soo Goddelijke en Zeedelijke, als van Speculatie, van Practijk, en van Conscientie* (Amsterdam, 1685), letter 123 (April 21, 1677), p. 486.

Considering the response of their readers, both Van Schurman and Bourignon succeeded in constructing an authoritative voice. In my view this has to be attributed to their awareness of the interrelationship of the form and the content of their writings. For her *Dissertatio*, Anna Maria van Schurman seems to have deliberately chosen the form of the scholastic *quaestio*, the structure in which debates on a given question would have been framed at a university. The Dutch philosopher Caroline van Eck produces convincing arguments that Van Schurman's choice of the *quaestio* form 'was in fact a rhetorical choice in that it was a stylistic device to strengthen the cogency of the text'.⁶⁵ 'By choosing the traditional academic form of the *quaestio*, she achieved a dual purpose'. She reassured the group of readers who played a significant role in the education of women by addressing them in a traditional academic genre. Moreover, Van Eck argues,

[...] she forced them to take her argument seriously because – at least in form – it was entirely in line with their own scholarly practice. By producing a dissertation that satisfied the prevailing academic requirements of rigour and scholarship, she demonstrated that there was at least one woman who was capable of being included in the academic debate.⁶⁶

Van Schurman's *Eukleria seu Melioris Partis Electio* combines different genres. It is not just an autobiography; it is also a theological and philosophical treatise. Above all, it is an apologetic work. If one sees the life story as an integral part of the argument in the *Eukleria*, it becomes clear that by various means – life story, theological and philosophical treatise, chronicle – Van Schurman is constantly endeavouring to make the same point: that she has made the right choice in her life.

As far as its structure is concerned, we can see parallels between the *Eukleria* and Augustine's *Confessions*. As a seventeenth-century woman, however, Anna Maria van Schurman was in a very different position from that of the authoritative Church Father, who was completely free to produce theological works by virtue of his office. The narrative perspective Van Schurman chose allowed her to link the 'I' of her constructed life story and the 'I' of her scholarly argument, thus enabling her to make a contribution, almost as a matter of course, to the theological discourse of her day.⁶⁷ There are none of the obligatory apologies that she, as a woman, should be meddling in these matters, and, contrary to Bourignon's *La Parole de Dieu*, there is no invocation of divine revelations to lend legitimacy to what is said. Van Schurman, moreover, published her work

⁶⁵ Van Eck (see n. 38), p. 52.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, p. 53.

⁶⁷ Cf. De Baar, 'The *Eukleria* as Autobiography' (see n. 63), p. 101.

under her own name and her own authority.⁶⁸ In the *Eukleria* there is no preface by an authoritative male friend – as there was, for example, to introduce her *Dissertatio* (1641) and her *Opuscula* (1648, 1649, 1652).

In Bourignon's writings the interrelationship between form and content is less sophisticated but equally effective. Her spiritual autobiography, *La Parole de Dieu*, is in fact a many-voiced text due to the insertion of internal dialogues with God.⁶⁹ Apart from the voice of the first-person narrator, Bourignon alternately makes use of an authorising (divine) voice, a protesting voice ('I') and an endorsing voice ('I').⁷⁰ In these internal dialogues, God is the One who instructs and who assigns authority to the searching and despairing 'I'. By doing so He is transforming the illiterate daughter, this weak and powerless female being, into an 'I' who is invested with prophetic authority, thus enabling her to claim a voice on religious matters.⁷¹

Bourignon too was well aware of the communication possibilities of the epistolary genre.⁷² Firstly, it was a genre that fitted extremely well with the

⁶⁸ The *Eukleria* is the only work from Van Schurman's Labadist period (autumn 1669 until her death in May 1678) that she published under her own name. Although her *Bedenkingen over de toekomst van Christi Koningryk* ('Reflections on the Future of Christ's Kingdom') was printed in 1675 at the back of her translation from the French of the *Heylige Lof-Sangen*, Van Schurman had probably already written this poem in the 1660s (cf. University Library Utrecht, Manuscript Collection: Correspondence from and to Joannes van Almelveen, minister in Mijdrecht, VI.K.II, no. 107: 'sung in Mijdrecht 15 Sept. 1668'). I venture to doubt that she is the anonymous author and translator of the theological treatises referred to by U. Brandes, 'Studierstube, Dichterklub, Hoffgesellschaft, Kreativität und kultureller Rahmen weiblicher Erzählkunst im Barock', in: G. Brinker-Gabler, ed., *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen, vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1988), pp. 222-247, see 'Anmerkungen', p. 527. In the case of none of these works can it be stated with certainty on the grounds of the title page or the text of the publication that Van Schurman was the (co-) author or translator. Only in the treatise entitled *Verklaringe van de Suyverheit des Geloofs* (1671/1672) and in the Latin edition *Veritas sui Vindex* (1672), published under the names of De Labadie, Yvon, Dulignon and the Schlüter brothers, is a declaration of support by Anna Maria van Schurman appended after the text, dated Herford, February 14, 1671 in the Dutch edition (pp. 167-168) and dated May 28, 1672 in the Latin edition (3 pp.).

⁶⁹ Cf. the 'double-voiced-concept' in A. van Heijst and M. Derks, 'Godsvrucht en gender: naar een geschiedschrijving in meervoud', in: Eadem, eds., *Terra incognita Historisch onderzoek naar katholicisme en vrouwelijkheid* (Kampen, 1994), pp. 7-38, see pp. 25-32.

⁷⁰ In the posthumously published edition these different voices are typographically marked. The life story written in the first person is set in roman type and the dialogues with God are either set in italics (when the 'I' is speaking to God) or in bold Gothic type (when God is speaking).

⁷¹ Cf. De Baar, 'Ik moet spreken' (see n. 19), pp. 55-58.

⁷² Cf. E.C. Goldsmith, ed., *Writing the Female Voice. Essays on Epistolary Literature* (London, 1989), 'Introduction', p. vii: 'Since the sixteenth century, when the familiar letter was first sought of as a literary form, male commentators have noted that the epistolary genre seemed particularly suited to the female voice'. – In the introduction to *L'Epistolaire, un*

practical orientation of her theology, enabling her to discuss numerous pastoral, spiritual and moral issues and questions of dogma without having to formulate a new doctrine.⁷³ Secondly, the letter form enabled her to address her reading public in a personal way, which may account for the response of readers who sent her letters asking her for personal advice or for further explanation of her words. Their reactions, in fact, legitimated Bourignon's incessant writing and publishing activities, and account for the huge number of letters (and published compilations of letters) among her works.⁷⁴

Epilogue

As women writers, Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon made use of two different media: the traditional manuscript form of circulation and the printed form. As long as Bourignon lived in the Southern Netherlands she had to rely on manuscript circulation because she refused to submit her writings to ecclesiastical censorship. One of the reasons she moved to Amsterdam in 1667 was the freedom of the press. But even after she started to publish her works, she continued to use the form of manuscript circulation, writing (pastoral) letters to her followers.

For Van Schurman, who was a modern Renaissance scholar during the period of her most intense intellectual activity, correspondence was the appropriate means to develop and to communicate her ideas on women's capacity for study, to investigate theological and philological questions posed to her, and to practice her languages. As a member of the *Res Publica Litteraria*, she participated in a European network of correspondents. Male friends who insisted on the printing of her writings contended that she protested. Her opposition might be interpreted as a topos but, in all probability, she initially did not feel the urge to seek publicity. Her *Dissertatio logica* was published in 1641 at the instigation of Van Beverwijck, and in 1648 the first edition of her *Opuscula* appeared, through the intervention of Spanheim.

With her *Eukleria*, however, it was quite another story. At that time both her honour and the truth were at stake. Her former friends, who did not appreciate her doctrinal choice, had openly attacked her, and their criticism prompted her to defend her choice by entering the public debate on fundamental theological

genre féminin? (Paris, 1998), p. 17, the editor Christine Planté points out that for women the epistolary genre was the only means to gain access to domains or activities which would otherwise be impenetrable for the female sex.

⁷³ Cf. Kolakowski, (see n. 19), pp. 661, 663, 682, 684, who for this reason criticized Bourignon's lack of theological knowledge and who could not understand why her contemporaries saw what good she could do.

⁷⁴ Cf. De Baar, '*Ik moet spreken*' (see n. 19), pp. 216-222.

questions. She rejected the custom of including a preface by a male authority; she did not need any introduction. It was precisely because she had previously enjoyed such fame as a scholar that her decision to turn her back on the Reformed Church and to join a sectarian community had caused such uproar. By publishing her work under her own name and her own authority, and by choosing the autobiographical form, she openly set out her theological insights and ideas. While Van Schurman may not perhaps have been the only woman of her time to combine autobiography and theological treatise, by representing herself as someone who had made a religious choice on rational grounds she openly and on her own authority entered the field of theology, a domain that was forbidden to women.⁷⁵

Bourignon, in contrast, did not enter the field of theology on her own authority. She represented a different religious tradition from Van Schurman, presenting herself as the illiterate mouthpiece of God. In this respect, she was adhering to a tradition that had started in the Middle Ages and continued into the early modern period.⁷⁶ However, unlike some English Civil War prophetesses, ‘who “made spectacles of themselves” by appearing and speaking in public’, Bourignon never presented herself publicly.⁷⁷ She preferred to speak by writing. Bourignon was convinced that God had chosen her to restore true Christianity on earth and she was determined to reveal His message ‘to the whole world’. Her urge to seek publicity was thus much greater than Van Schurman’s. Consequently, she was well aware of the opportunities writing and printing offered, though she understood that being a woman she had to be careful. This might explain why she published her first tracts with only her initials printed on the title page and why De Cort had to introduce her in 1669 in the preface of the first work she published under her own name. Until 1670, Bourignon made use of this rhetorical strategy, but from then onwards she mostly signed the address to the reader herself, indicating her strengthened self-confidence as a woman writer.⁷⁸

The contrasting examples of Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon demonstrate that, despite their different methods of self-presentation, both succeeded in breaking the barriers mentioned by Wiesner. Both were educated women – Bourignon denying having had any formal education as a function of her self-definition – and both were financially independent due to their

⁷⁵ The radical nature of the position she adopted becomes clear if one compares her rhetorical strategies with, for example, the rhetorical strategies of concession and humility employed by Teresa of Avila or by seventeenth-century spiritual virgins. Cf. A. Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the rhetoric of femininity* (Princeton, 1990); Monteiro (see n. 22), pp. 262-270.

⁷⁶ Cf. D. Watt, *Secretaries of God. Women Prophets in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1997).

⁷⁷ Cf. Purkiss (see n. 50), p. 140.

⁷⁸ De Baar, ‘*Ik moet spreken*’ (see n. 19), p. 250.

family possessions. For both women, writing was a means to express their ideas about themselves and about their goals in life. Both succeeded in creating new mixed forms of expression by appropriating literary traditions.

The structure of Van Schurman's *Eukleria* reminds one of Augustine's *Confessiones* but also of the genre of the humanist autobiography.⁷⁹ It would seem that she seized upon the genre of the autobiography in order to be able to advance a number of views about learning, theology and the church on her own authority. Bourignon, with her advisory letters answering her readers' questions, in fact developed a new type of piety literature.⁸⁰ Just like Van Schurman, who enjoyed a scholarly reputation, Bourignon succeeded in addressing and communicating with her public as a female authority. This was in no less degree due to her knowing how to manipulate the printed medium, enabling her to hide herself (just like a modern writer) behind her published texts. The publication of her texts served to mediate between the private female self and the public.⁸¹

By publishing their writings Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon assured themselves a continued readership. Their books, though primarily addressed to a male reading public, were also read by women,⁸² and the extent to which they functioned as exemplary figures for other women writers, outside the bourgeois public sphere of the Dutch Republic, is a question that deserves further investigation.⁸³

⁷⁹ Van Beek, *Eerste studente* (see n. 13), p. 227.

⁸⁰ Discussed in greater detail in: De Baar, *'Ik moet spreken'* (see n. 19), pp. 222-224.

⁸¹ Cf. M. Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer. Ideology as Style in the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago/London, 1984), p. 41.

⁸² De Baar, 'International Network' (see n. 15); Eadem, 'Prophetess of God and prolific writer. Antoinette Bourignon and the reception of her writings', in: Van Dijk et al., eds., *'I have heard about you'* (see n. 15), pp. 137-149.

⁸³ Cf. D. Norbrook, 'Women, the Republic of Letters, and the Public Sphere in the Mid-Seventeenth Century', in: *Criticism: a Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, vol. 46, number 2, Spring 2004, pp. 223-240, who compares Van Schurman and the British writer Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623 -1673).

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