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Tails of Cross-Channel Comets: From Acclaim to Obscurity

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Article abstract

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Tails of Cross-Channel Comets: From Acclaim to Obscurity

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This article explores the diverse materialities of texts created by three female luminaries that expand our understanding of translation and transformation in early modern Europe. Lady Anne Cooke Bacon's translation of Bishop Jewel's Apologia was praised as the official text of the Elizabethan Settlement and printed without change for the edification of both English readers and Continental sceptics. Yet despite its centrality in the vitriolic controversy between Jewel and Louvain Romanist Thomas Harding, within a generation Bacon's name disappeared. Bilingual calligrapher and miniaturist Esther Inglis prepared and presented stunning manuscript gift books, often including self-portraits, to patrons on both sides of the Channel. Her artisanal expertise emulated and often outdid the typographic variety of the printed text. Scholarly and lionized participant in the Neo-Latin Republic of Letters, Anna Maria van Schurman, whose landmark Dissertatio was translated as The Learned Maid, scandalized her conservative Calvinist supporters by embracing Labadism and praising its simple ways in her autobiography Eukleria. These three early modern women, distinct in temperament, time, and social status, are the subject of this exploration, which seeks to understand the dynamics and fluctuations of cross-Channel transmission and the role played by the Channel divide or bridge in creating a brief notoriety soon to be followed by obscurity.

Cet article examine les divers aspects matériels de textes composés par trois figures brillantes de l'écriture féminine et invite à une approche élargie des phénomènes de traduction et transformations dans l'Europe de la première modernité. La traduction de l'Apologia de Jewel par Lady Anne Cooke Bacon fut célébrée en son temps comme la version officielle du nouvel ordre religieux élisabéthain. Publiée sans modification aucune pour l'édification du lectorat anglais autant que des sceptiques de l'étranger, la traduction joue un rôle central dans la controverse acerbe opposant Jewel au théologien de Louvain Thomas Harding ; mais il suffit d'une génération pour que son auteure tombe dans l'oubli. La calligraphe et miniaturiste Esther Inglis fut célèbre à son tour pour les magnifiques manuscrits bilingues, souvent accompagnés d'autoportraits, composés à l'attention de divers mécènes de part et d'autre de la Manche. Par leur finesse technique, ses productions rivalisent avec le texte imprimé, l'emportant même parfois sur le plan de la variété typographique. Enfin, Anna Maria van Schurman, membre parmi les plus brillantes de la République des lettres néo-latine, auteure d'une Dissertatio qui fit date et circula en traduction sous le titre de The Learned Maid, scandalisa son entourage calviniste lorsqu'elle se convertit au labadisme et fit l'éloge de la simplicité de ses voies dans son autobiographie, Eukleria. On dresse ici le portrait de ces trois femmes de la première modernité, bien distinctes par leur tempérament, leur contexte et leur statut social; il s'agit d'étudier la dynamique et les fluctuations propres à leur trajectoire transnationale, et en particulier le rôle de barrière, ou au contraire, de vecteur, joué par la Manche dans la formation de ces fortunes aussi éclatantes que fugaces.

A learned woman is thought to be a comet that bodes mischief whenever it appears.

– Bathsua Makin

As the dedicatory address “to all ingenious and virtuous ladies” of the anonymously published *An Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673) noted, it was written to debunk the fear concerning the learned woman of those “who think themselves wise men.”¹ Having been tutor to Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, and Lucy Davies Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, Bathsua Makin, now a widow, was desperately trying to make ends meet in publicizing the curriculum of the Tottenham High Cross girls’ school, four miles north of London, where she served as governess for two years; for an annual fee, non-royal and non-aristocratic girls could study languages (Latin and French for all, with Greek, Hebrew, Italian, and Spanish for some), learn dancing, music, and singing, but skip the customary instruction in face painting and hair curling. Although disputes about the authorship of *The Ancient Education of Gentlewomen* persist, with some readers favouring Mark Lewis, I concur with Frances Teague’s judgment that “the author is Bathsua Makin.”² While the image of comets connoting childish troublemaking or difficulty falls back “into repetition of the age-old song of good and evil, so often sung against women,”³ I want to explore the metaphorical potential of these curved tails seen as bright lines in the sky moving about the sun.

The acclaimed and subsequently neglected work of three early modern learned women—translator and letter writer Lady Anne Cooke Bacon (ca. 1528–1610), calligrapher and miniaturist Esther Langlois / Inglis (1571–1624), and scholar, theologian, and autobiographer Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–78), whom I am styling as comets—is the focus of this article. I am applying

1. *An Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen*, in *Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues* (1673), in *Educating English Daughters: Late Seventeenth-Century Debates*, ed. Frances Teague and Margaret Ezell (Toronto: Iter Academic Press, 2016), 51–95, 52. Same source for the epigraph.

2. Frances Teague and Margaret Ezell, “Introduction,” in *Educating English Daughters*, 41.

3. Mieke Bal, “Tricky Thematics,” in “Reasoning with the Foxes: Female Wit in a World of Male Power,” ed. W. H. Bos and J. Cheryl Exum, special issue, *Semeia: An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism* 42 (1988): 133–55, 153. This collection of hermeneutic essays furthers the understanding of women’s intellectual challenge to male power—from biblical times to the present.

the terminology of astrophysics—and specifically the definitions of parabolic versus elliptical orbits—to the case of these literary comets. In their own day, the orbits of their renown in the transnational community of letters appear to follow a parabolic path, that is to say, one that exerted sufficient escape velocity, or speed required for breaking free from gravitational influence, to break through barriers. The reasons for their early notoriety and subsequent slip from parabolic trajectories to elliptical ones, which require lower escape velocity, are central concerns.⁴

Although distinctions in time, temperament, and social status separate them, this trio shares the master categories of religion and learning. As Margaret Ezell's recent examination of the invisibility of early modern writing women contends, books of religious devotion, though they "far outsold even those of the most popular poets and dramatists," have been given "little consideration [...] as meriting literary study"; Ezell maintains that "they fall outside the literary canon as being too topical, too ephemeral, and too female."⁵ Boldly displaying elite and demotic elements, the works of these three writers intersect borders of geography, language, and perception. Encompassing the disciplines of religious polemic, book history, and theology, their historical, artisanal, and classical/biblical expertise served the Protestant cause: the established church for Bacon, Huguenot loyalties for Langlois/Inglis, and a move from reformed Calvinism to Labadism for van Schurman. The diverse materialities of the texts of these comets expand an understanding of translation and transformation. Bacon uses linguistic adroitness to skewer the Roman Catholic Church during the reformational period of the Council of Trent; Inglis refashions her texts by adapting and outdoing print features for manuscript production; van Schurman literally translates herself first as a learned maid and then as a spiritual pilgrim divesting herself of academic accomplishments. Spanning more than a century, their learned and often interconnected accomplishments, which exhibit a rich

4. For a further explanation of the various kinds of orbital trajectories, the NASA website is very helpful: "3. Trajectories and Orbits," NASA History Division, accessed 15 November 2019, history.nasa.gov/conghand/traject.htm.

5. Margaret Ezell, "Invisibility Optics," in *The Cambridge History of Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Patricia Philippy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 27–45, [dx.doi.org/10.1017/9781316480267.002](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316480267.002); consulted online via the University of Alberta Library, library.ualberta.ca/. Subsequent citations of this essay will have no page numbers.

knowledge of scripture as well as clashes with ecclesiastical authority, expand the traditions of Protestantism.

Although current feminist scholarship has ignited exploration of their work, in their own day their reputations largely ended with, or even before, their deaths. Such eclipsed or muffled renown also prompts consideration of the reasons for the reversal of fortune. In her study of quattrocento Italian humanism, Lisa Jardine isolates the tension between accomplishment and profession to underscore the threat of the public learned woman to male humanist coteries: "Only if her femaleness is mythologized into the acceptable form of muse or inspiring goddess, apparently, can the woman humanist be celebrated without causing the male humanist professional embarrassment."⁶ The work of this article's trio, generations later, concentrates on the wider Continent and cross-Channel exchanges, yet the enabling and/or castigating roles of male mentors as judges remain critical. Ezell's "Invisibility Optics" illuminates how scholarly practice itself can lead to the erasure of the early modern woman writer; agreeing with Danielle Clarke's comments on the "anachronistic desire for a body of texts from the Renaissance with which modern readers can identify," she notes the foregrounded significance of women's texts "as historical artifacts rather than literary ones." Her call for a combination of historical and aesthetic readings acknowledges "the inherent instability of early modern texts." For researchers today, the texts of Bacon, Inglis, and van Schurman invite adjustments of approach and judgment. In addition to the erasure of her name as translator, Bacon's acute awareness of theological debates has been obscured by the abbreviated and often impenetrable marginalia. The fortunes of Inglis's known fifty-nine manuscript volumes challenge traditional notions of authorship. Translations of van Schurman's *Dissertatio* afford different views of her defence of women's learning, while her Latin autobiography still awaits a full English translation.

Of parallel importance in clustering together these accomplished women is the circulated reality of their texts. The relation between literary form and social content within an early modern labour economy focuses Michelle Dowd's study of women's work, a broad category of subject-hood that can embrace domestic and intellectual commitments: "The contours of female

6. Lisa Jardine, "'O Decus Italiae Virgo,' or The Myth of the Learned Lady in the Renaissance," *The Historical Journal* 28.4 (1985): 799–829, 817.

subjectivity were defined in part by how women's work was narrativized [...] and made available for a consuming public to scrutinize and discuss."⁷ Bacon's translating sermons and the official text of the Elizabethan Settlement, Inglis's scribal publication of stunningly ornamented and scripted manuscript gift books, and van Schurman's participation in the Neo-Latin Republic of Letters generated new and challenging literary formulations of women's political and religious authority. Moreover, our contemporary access to these texts, through manuscript originals, facsimiles, and first or subsequent printings along with authorial or print-shop peculiarities, can also influence our assessment of an original text (if available), the aim and ability of a translator and typesetter, and the projected reader response. Is their work, "open in its own small ways to multiplicity," an example of what Randall McLeod calls "transmission"?⁸ Were their multivalent texts themselves transmissive: translation of the landmark vindication of the English church for Bacon, authoritative adaptation of print and cross-Channel patronage for Inglis, and syllogistic argument and autobiography as apologia for van Schurman? Was their work "transformed as it was transmitted"⁹ or could transmission be the result of critique and non-recognition? Could transmission be connected to devaluation? If so, how and when did these women become less sources of pride for male humanist coteries? Was their reversal of fortune the result of circling too close to the sun? In addition, what circumstances, either in "the drynamic world of editing" or in the rediscovery of "lame ligatures and invalid idioms,"¹⁰ have contributed to their re-emergence?

These comets, to be clear, were actually not invisible. The contexts of their work in England, Scotland, and the Netherlands is an appropriate starting point since these three distinct writers all flourished for a time because they were also

7. Michelle Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 179, [dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230620391](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230620391).

8. Random Cloud (Randall McLeod), "Information on Information," *Text* 5 (1991): 246. For McLeod's notion of "transmission" and how it can be fruitfully and more systematically applied to translation by taking into account both linguistic and material practices, see Marie-Alice Belle and Brenda M. Hosington, eds., "Early Modern 'Transmissions': Linguistic, Cultural, and Material Translation in England and France (1470–1660)," special issue, *The Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 46.2 (2019).

9. McLeod, 246.

10. McLeod, 279, 280.

part of networks of support through family or scholarly mentors. “Espetially the daughters of Syr Anthony Cooke” were cited in William Barker’s *The Nobility of Women* (1559) since their “greke and lattyn be not inferior to any.”¹¹ Anne Cooke was the first of these five illustrious sisters to begin a translating career before marriage, with the 1548 publication of five Italian sermons by Bernardino Ochino, ex-general of the Capuchins who had apostatized and, at Archbishop Cranmer’s invitation, been installed as rector of the London Strangers’ Church and prebendary of Canterbury; Anne thus began her sisters’ tradition of religious translations, later taken up by Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley, and Elizabeth Cooke Hoby Russell. In addition to her tutelage at the family seat of Gidea Hall, upon her marriage to Sir Nicholas Bacon in 1553 Anne entered the influential political circle around Mary, whom she had served as a lady-in-waiting, and subsequently the insider network around Elizabeth, who elevated Nicholas to lord keeper of the great seal. Likely, Lady Anne’s landmark translation of Bishop Jewel’s *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1562) as *An Apologie or answe in defence of the Churche of Englande* (1564) was, as Alan Stewart argues, “an official, commissioned work.”¹² Undertaken when she was a mother of eight (two young sons and the six children from widower Nicholas’s first marriage) and having been vetted by both Jewel and Archbishop of Canterbury Matthew Parker, *An Apologie* was printed with much commendation and without charge for wide circulation; it appeared after the close of the third and final session of the Council of Trent and justified the validity of the Elizabethan Settlement for unlettered or non-Latinate readers. The marginalia in Jewel’s *Apologia* and Bacon’s *Apologie*, both printed by Reginald Wolfe, are identical. Her translation “riffs on the colloquial, giving full rein to the aural qualities of everyday language” and dialogues with Jewel’s text to combine “her elite Protestant humanist education in languages, rhetoric, and philosophy with her experience as a translator” of Ochino’s sermons.¹³

11. William Barker, *The Nobility of Women* (1559), ed. W. Bond, Roxborough Collection 142 (London: Chiswick Press, 1904), 155.

12. Alan Stewart, “The Voices of Anne Cooke, Lady Anne and Lady Bacon,” in “*This Double Voice*”: *Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, ed. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), 88, dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-62888-9_5.

13. Patricia Demers, “Introduction,” in “*An Apology or Answer in Defence of the Church of England*”: *Lady Anne Bacon’s Translation of Bishop John Jewel’s “Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae,”* ed. Patricia Demers (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2016), 2, 5.

As well as inserting such hinging comments as “This therefore is our Belief” between portions of the argument, Bacon adds a passionate, ironic intensity to the admonition of neglect and silence: “Why lieth so ancient a cause thus long in the dust destitute of an Advocate? Fire and sword they have had always ready at hand, but as for the old Councils and the fathers, all Mum, not a word.”¹⁴ Interjections and emphatic reiterations hit home her accusations of hypocrisy: “They have not, good Lord, they have not (I say) those things which they boast they have: they have not that antiquitie, they have not that universalitie, they have not that consent of all places, nor of all times.”¹⁵

A Dieppe- or London-born child of Huguenot refugees, Esther Langlois or Inglis was tutored by her mother, calligrapher Marie Presot; like her mother, Langlois retained her maiden name and often used the French version. With the family’s move to Edinburgh, Inglis’s distribution of hand-made, illustrated, meditative, and biblical texts in a range of scripts—secretary, chancery, and mirror, among them—to potential aristocratic and royal patrons on both sides of the Channel “was at first managed by her father [Nicholas Langlois], who wrote dedicatory verses for her early books.”¹⁶ Nicholas Langlois ran a French school in the Scottish capital. Her husband, Bartholomew Kello, “played the part of loyal helpmate, [... as his] management of Inglis’s books resulted in benefits for them both.”¹⁷ Views of Kello are decidedly mixed. While Susan Frye initially described his management as “opportunistic,”¹⁸ Sarah Gwyneth Ross sees the Inglis–Kello relationship as “fully symbiotic.”¹⁹ Kello’s role in writing to the queen as an intermediary in securing payment for his wife’s handiwork, “so far as was possible [for] a simple woman,” does not seem “condescending” but rather prudent since, Ross argues, Kello would continue to feature Inglis “as a

14. Demers, ed., *An Apology or Answer*, part 5, 132.

15. Demers, ed., *An Apology or Answer*, part 5, 141–42.

16. Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women’s Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 104, dx.doi.org/10.9783/9780812206982.

17. Frye, *Pens and Needles*, 104, 105.

18. Susan Frye, “Materializing Authorship in Esther Inglis’s Books,” *Journals of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32.3 (2002): 469–91, 475, dx.doi.org/10.1215/10829636-32-3-469.

19. Sarah Gwyneth Ross, “Esther Inglis: Linguist, Calligrapher, Miniaturist, and Christian Humanist,” in *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, ed. Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 159–82, 165, dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315257211.

parallel figure to Virgil or Ovid.”²⁰ Moving her family to follow King James to London, with stays in Essex and a return to Scotland, Inglis presented herself as a writer who traced letters onto the page by her own hand and thus “took over for the printing press.”²¹ She proved her ability literally to manufacture, assemble, and adorn books, which amounts, in Frye’s estimate, “to a profound disruption of the usual male-controlled forms of textual production.”²² As Ezell summarizes Inglis’s accomplishment, “because of their survival as beautiful artifacts, Inglis’s works still challenge traditional models of authorship, editing, and literary canons.”²³

Born into a wealthy Cologne family, Anna Maria van Schurman, known as the “Utrecht Minerva” and “Tenth Muse,” showed remarkable talents from an early age—from “intricate paper cuttings with scissors” to exceptional linguistic capacity, fashioning multilingual calligraphy and becoming fluent in fifteen languages: Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldaic, Arabic, and Ethiopian among them.²⁴ Positioned in a “separate cubicle [...] covered with curtain material,”²⁵ she attended lectures at the college that became the University of Utrecht in 1636; at the invitation of her neighbour and first rector of the university, Gisbertus Voetius, van Schurman composed and delivered an inaugural ode in Latin for the new university. She was “the first Dutch woman to seek publication of her correspondence.”²⁶ Noting that “Van Schurman was published by the enormously influential house of Elzevier,” David Norbrook remarks: “The Protestant Netherlands was emerging as the center of the republic of letters because of its press’s relative openness; and that openness extended to

20. Ross, 166.

21. Frye, *Pens and Needles*, 110.

22. Frye, *Pens and Needles*, 110.

23. Ezell, “Invisibility Optics,” n.p.

24. Mirjam de Baar and Brita Rang, “Anna Maria van Schurman: A Historical Survey of Her Reception since the Seventeenth Century,” in *Choosing the Better Part: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)*, ed. Mirjam de Baar, Machteld Löwensteyn, Marit Monteiro, and A. Agnes Seller (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996), 1–22, 1. Jean de Labadie called her the “Utrecht Minerva” (1).

25. Pieta van Beek, *The First Female University Student: Anna Maria van Schurman (1636)*, trans. Anna-Mart Bonthuys and Dineke Ehlers (Utrecht: Igitur, 2004), 57.

26. Anne R. Larsen, *Anna Maria van Schurman, “The Star of Utrecht”: The Educational Vision and Reception of a Savante* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 4.

welcoming women into print.”²⁷ Following the advice of theologians Voetius and French Calvinist André Rivet to counter an unauthorized, error-filled version of her text which had appeared two years earlier in Paris, Schurman released *Dissertatio de Ingenii Muliebris ad Doctrinam, & meliores Litteras aptitudine* in 1641; the *Dissertatio* was also included in a collection of her multilingual letters and poems, *Opuscula* (1648). With fourteen arguments and five refutations to illustrate her championing of the education of the Christian woman “with spare time from her General or Special Calling,”²⁸ van Schurman cited Saint Basil, Seneca, Cicero, Aristotle, Erasmus, and Thomas More to obviate objection and allay fear: “Nor is there any reason why the Republic should fear such a change for itself, since the glory of the literary order in no way obstructs the light of the rulers.”²⁹ Rivet, van Schurman’s *père d’alliance* or covenant father, shared her letters about women’s aptitude for study in France and “sent copies of them to England,”³⁰ prompting admiration of and correspondence in Hebrew and Latin with Dorothy Moore, “widow of a younger son in the Irish aristocracy,”³¹ and in Greek with Bathsua Makin, in addition to a later translation of the *Dissertatio* as *The Learned Maid* by clergyman Clement Barksdale in 1659.

While Lady Bacon thrived on the early tutelage of her father and the court connections of her husband and brother-in-law, while Inglis was instructed by parents and guided by her husband’s management, and while Anna Maria van Schurman was tutored by theologians and introduced to mystical sectarian Jean de Labadie by her brother, these women of undeniably prodigious talents were also ambitious, resolute, and forceful individuals. Their work makes them examples of *femmes fortes*, a designation associated with Jesuit Pierre Le Moyne’s *La Galerie* (1647), which argued for the equal advantageousness of learning (“la philosophie n’a point de sexe”); nonetheless, Le Moyne clarified

27. David Norbrook, “Women, the Republic of Letters, and the Public Sphere in the Mid-Seventeenth Century,” *Criticism* 46.2 (2004): 223–40, 227.

28. Clement Barksdale, trans., *The Learned Maid; or Whether a Maid may be a Scholar?* (London: Redmayne, 1659), 3.

29. Joyce Irwin, trans., *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated and Other Writings from Her Intellectual Circle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 42.

30. Brita Rang, “‘An exceptional mind’: The Learned Anna Maria van Schurman,” in *Choosing the Better Part*, ed. De Baar et al., 23–42, 38.

31. Lynette Hunter, ed., *The Letters of Dorothy Moore, 1612–1664* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2004), 1.

that his intention was “not to summon Women to College.”³² However, their singularity and rarity remain uppermost; we continue to deal with the paradoxes of the early modern learned lady who, as Carol Pal notes, “is still haunted by a perhaps-inevitable ‘alone of all her sex’ designation.”³³ Among the remarkable features of this trio of scholarly strength is the combination of visual and textual evidence. Portraiture and, most impressively, self-portraiture—a medium of being seen by others and seeing oneself—underscore the perceptible vigour and energy of these accomplished women.



Figure 1. Lady Anne Cooke Bacon. Stipple engraving by Henry R. Cook 1810. (Chapin Library, Williams College).

Beyond her words, there is no self-portrait of Lady Anne Bacon. But a glimpse of her appearance at two removes does exist. The frontispiece of *An Apologie* tipped into the first edition at Williams College, Massachusetts, is an 1810 engraving by Henry Richard Cook housed in the National Portrait Gallery; this example of nineteenth-century reception is based on the original picture in the collection of Viscount Grimston at Gorhambury (fig. 1). Firm

32. Larsen cites Le Moyne and translates (Larsen, 26).

33. Carol Pal, “Review of Anne Larsen, ed., *Anna Maria van Schurman*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 71.4 (2018): 1451.

look, determined jaw, and penetrating eyes, all relate to the tough-mindedness of her reverence for the early church and reprobation of Rome. It comes as no surprise that her translation, fuelled with righteous indignation at English exclusion from the Council of Trent, “dedicated to reform in faith and practice along the lines of more ancient discipline,” is full of hard-hitting phrases; among the most acerbic are her rendering of “sacrificuli” as “cōmen Massing preestes,” the consecrated host as being “cast out into the privy,” and the tears of venal clergy (“hinc illae lachrymae: animus est in patinis”) as “Hence cometh their whining: theire heart is on their Halfe penny.”³⁴

In a series of self-portraits, Inglis was expert at making her gift books professional calling cards; examples are widely dispersed, some housed in the Bodleian, Folger, Houghton, Huntington, and University of St. Andrews libraries as well as the private collection of Sir John Paul Getty Jr. at the Wormsley library in Buckinghamshire. A new acquisition by the Folger, the 310-page *Psalms in French* presented as a New Year’s gift to the eighteen-year-old Henry, Prince of Wales in 1612, showcases her miniaturist expertise. Measuring three inches by two inches, including a self-portrait and a depiction of David, and encased in an embroidered binding of “knot stitch and stump work,” as Georgianna Ziegler elucidates, it remains a treasure.³⁵ In every type of self-portrait she is presented at a table, pen in hand, at an open book.³⁶ *Psalms* and *Proverbs* were favoured texts, presented to Essex (1599) (fig. 2), to Prince Maurice of Nassau (1599), and to Catherine de Bourbon (1601); they feature a similar cross-hatched drawing of a slim, high-browed figure in professional attire wearing a veiled headdress and displaying delicately poised fingers at a table with a lute,

34. Patricia Demers, “‘Neither bitterly nor brabblingly’: Lady Anne Cooke Bacon’s Translation of Bishop Jewel’s *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*,” in *English Women, Religion, and Textual Production, 1500–1625*, ed. Micheline White (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 205–17, 211, 212, [dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315579818](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315579818).

35. Georgianna Ziegler, “A Recently Discovered Esther Inglis Manuscript,” *The Library* 19.4 (2018): 490–98, 498, [dx.doi.org/10.1093/library/19.4.490](https://doi.org/10.1093/library/19.4.490).

36. This acquisition is illustrated and profiled by Georgianna Ziegler in “Princely New Year’s Gift? A Newly-Discovered Manuscript,” Folger Shakespeare Library, 5 January 2017, collation.folger.edu/2017/01/princely-new-years-gift-newly-discovered-manuscript/. For a catalogue of Inglis’s gift books, see A. H. Scott-Elliott and Elspeth Yeo, “Calligraphic Manuscripts of Esther Inglis (1571–1624): A Catalogue,” *The Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 84.1 (1990): 11–86. The blog of Barbara Wells Sarudy, consulted 15 November 2019, supplied a colourful sampling of Inglis’s work. Sarudy’s blog is no longer available.

an open musical score, and a text bearing the motto “De l’Éternel le bien, de moi, le mal ou rien” with different clusters of fruit and architectural ornaments surrounding the medallion and commendatory verses.



Figure 2. Esther Inglis, *Les Proverbes de Salomon*, presented to the Earl of Essex 1599 (Bodleian Library, MS. Bodl. 990).

Van Schurman also sketched several self-portraits, in addition to the syllogistic argument supporting capable women’s right to study and her correspondence displaying incomparable erudition. They include her first attempt at an etched self-portrait in 1634 concealing her hands, which correspondent Constantijn Huygens explains was due to their being blackened by the work with copper,³⁷ and the more sober and most frequently copied of her portraits, which appeared at the time of the publication of the *Dissertatio*. As Anne Larsen describes it, she “depicts herself against a plain background, in a lacedup dress, with a white collar covering amply her shoulders; her hair, knotted in short pigtails, is held up in the back in a bun with a simple row of

37. De Baar and Rang, 22.

pearls.”³⁸ Although she studied portrait engraving with Magdalena Van de Passe until Magdalena’s marriage in 1634, Van Schurman produced and printed most of the subsequent portraits “not in Van de Passe’s workshop [but] in her house near the cathedral in Utrecht.”³⁹ The frontispiece to her 1673 autobiography, travelogue, and meditation, *Eukleria seu Melioris Partis Electio*, with the date of her death in the medallion, signifies that this engraving was used in the later Dutch translation (fig. 3).



Figure 3. Anna Maria van Schurman, self-portrait, *Eukleria seu Melioris Partis Electio*, 1673 (University of Amsterdam Library Onderzoekzaal Bijzondere Collecties OTM OTM: 061-4111).

Just as Schurman’s engravings register the changes from youth to age as well as from worldly ornament to determined stricture, elements of probing and interrogation in their work complicate a sense of easy understanding or recognition. In their shared realm of scholarship and faith, the limited period of renown each writer enjoyed was itself marked with signals forecasting an eclipsed reputation. Printer’s corrector William Baldwin, who in 1551 supplied

38. Larsen, 1.

39. Katlijne Van der Stighelen, “‘Et ses artistes mains ...’: The Art of Anna Maria van Schurman,” in *Choosing the Better Part*, ed. De Baar et al., 55–68, 63.

the preface to further translations of Ochino, *Fourtene Sermons*, by Anne Cooke (identified as A. C.), offered condescending praise: "If ought be erred in the translacion, remember it is a womās yea, a gentyl womās, who cōmenly art wonted to lyue idelly, a maidens that neuer gaddid farder thē hir fathers house to learne the language."⁴⁰ In 1564, Archbishop Parker's commendatory letter "To the right honourable and virtuous Ladie A. B.," prefacing *An Apologie or Answer*, flavoured its praise of Lady Bacon's "delivering [Jewel] by your clear translation from the perils of ambiguous and doubtful constructions: and [...] making his good work more publicly beneficial"⁴¹ with three mentions of her modesty. Yet from 1600, unacknowledged printings of Bacon's translation continued to appear with Peter Martyr's letter to John Jewel, his one-time pupil, replacing the commendation of Archbishop Parker. During the almost four decades of her widowhood, support for godly clergymen and antipathy toward Catholics fuelled her correspondence. In a letter (26 February 1585) to her brother-in-law William Cecil, Lord Burghley, after the Lambeth Conference and in support of suspended clergy who did not subscribe to Archbishop Whitgift's Three Articles, she praised these clerics: "I have profited more in the inwarde feeling knowledge of God his holy wyll, though but in a small measure, by such syncere and sownde opening of the scripture by an ordinary preaching, within these 7 or 8 yeres then I dyd by hearing odd sermons at Powles well nigh 20 yeres together."⁴² Her likely patronage of the surreptitious and threatening publication, *A Parte of a Register* (1593), which documented persecutions and publicized Puritan arguments, was "aimed at Archbishop Whitgift's despotic exercise of power" and performed, Lynne Magnusson argues, "a bold form of political action."⁴³ As a mother longing to be a grandmother, she writes to her two sons, Anthony and Francis, warning Anthony against Catholic companions and cautioning both against improvident, homosocial living, with the reminder:

40. Anne Cooke, *Fourtene Sermons of Barnardine of Ochynne, concerning the predestination and eleccion of god. Translated out of Italian in to our native tongue by A.C.* (London: John Day, 1551), A2 r–v. STC 121:14.

41. Demers, ed., *An Apology or Answer*, 43–44.

42. Anne Bacon, *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, ed. Gemma Allen (London: Royal Historical Society, Cambridge University Press), 88.

43. Lynne Magnusson, "Imagining a National Church: Election and Education on the Works of Anne Cooke Bacon," in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558–1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 42–56, 48, dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230289727_4.

“I have continually kept howse and lyved owt of dett.”⁴⁴ Following more than two centuries of neglect, Parker’s letter and Bacon’s acknowledged translation only re-appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century.⁴⁵



Figure 4. Esther Inglis, emblematic drawing of Mary Queen of Scots, *Sapiens Mulier Aedificat Domu[m]*, 1622 (Huntington Library).

Showcasing her bravura as creator of miniature books, Inglis spent her career in quest of patrons and thus she presents “as the prototype of the career woman.”⁴⁶ An exacting borrower, she mimicked by hand the intricate ornaments, medallions, and lettering of the press, as in her title pages for *Les Proverbes du Roy Salomon* (1601) and *Le Livre de l’Ecclesiaste* (1601) presented to the Huguenot Rohan family. Among the instances of intersections within this network is the fact that Inglis, ever the re-purposer, also dedicated *Le Livre de l’Ecclesiaste* to

44. Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon [ca. 23 September 1593], *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, ed. Allen, 150.

45. John Jewel, *Works of John Jewel*, 4 vols., ed. John Ayre for the Parker Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1845–50) and John Jewel, *The Apology of the Church of England*, ed. Richard W. Jelf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1848).

46. Frye, *Pens and Needles*, 106.

Anthony Bacon, while Kello followed up to try to secure payment.⁴⁷ “One of the four untraced calligraphic manuscripts of Esther Inglis [...] identified in the Huntington Library”⁴⁸ is her 1622 emblematical drawing of Mary Queen of Scots (fig. 4). With the Latin poem by Bartholomew Kello dedicated to John, Earl of Mar (1558–1634), Inglis adapted Pierre Woeiriot’s engraving of Jeanne D’Albret, Queen of Navarre, and adjusted the verse of emblemist Georgette de Montenay, “child *filles d’honneur* and later [...] lady-in-waiting to the queen of Navarre,”⁴⁹ who had been a crucial supporter of the French Huguenot movement. An edition of Montenay’s *Emblèmes ou devises chrestiennes*, the first devotional emblem book by a woman, was originally published twice in Lyon in 1567 and 1571; with Latin and polyglot editions “attesting to continuous interest in the book in Huguenot circles,”⁵⁰ it was reissued in La Rochelle in 1620, an appearance which may have prompted Inglis’s work. This first example of the one-hundred-emblem collection “praise[s] the queen of Navarre, not for her wisdom as a ruler, and not as a queen, but as a Christian”⁵¹ who advanced the building of the holy temple—“d’auancer l’edifice / Du temple saint.”⁵² How would the Catholic Queen of Scots be a suitable subject for Inglis? Mary Stuart’s position as a tragic figure, though vilified by Protestant poet George Buchanan and Reformation theologian John Knox, may have influenced Inglis’s choice. Moreover, the queen’s series of imprisonments, particularly her being forced, while held at Loch Leven Castle, to sign a document making her one-year-old son the crowned king, and her execution at Fotheringhay Castle, likely intensified the pathos surrounding this monarch to whose son’s court and grandchildren Inglis was forwarding gifts. Adjusting the gloss, based on half of the verse from Proverbs 14.1, of *Sapiens Mvlier Ædificat Domv[m]* to refer to

47. Ross, 169.

48. Thomas Lange, “A Rediscovered Esther Inglis Manuscript in the Huntington Library,” *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 89.3 (1995): 339–42, 339, dx.doi.org/10.1086/pbsa.89.3.24304428.

49. Régine Reynolds-Cornell, *Witnessing an Era: Georgette de Montenay and the Emblèmes ou Devises Chrestiennes* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1987), 5.

50. Carla Zecher, “Georgette de Montenay’s *Emblèmes ou devises chrestiennes*: Material Object, Digital Subject,” in *Teaching French Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Colette H. Winn (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2011), 153–60, 153.

51. Reynolds-Cornell, 30.

52. Georgette de Montenay, *Emblèmes ou Devises Chrestiennes* (Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar Press, 1973), 1.

“ceste Dame” as opposed to “ceste Reine,” Inglis duplicates the beringed index finger, the book-like bricks, the set-square, compass, and rule of measurement, and on the stone pillar replaces Woeiriot’s rebus with the declaration, “Drawin and writtiin by me Esther Inglis Ianvar 1622.”

Inglis’s *Ce Livre contenant cinquante emblems chrestiens* (1624), addressed to Prince Charles, is another adaptation of Montenay; it is a selection of fifty emblems “recribed to members of the English nobility, another of her masterpieces.”⁵³ She recycles the depiction of the wise woman building her house to refer this time to Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia and wife of Frederick, Elector Palatine. Martine van Elk terms Inglis’s adaptation of Woeiriot’s engraving “both tribute and usurpation,” noting how her changes, “which tell Charles to support Protestant courtiers, [...] also serve to advance her own position.”⁵⁴ In fact the influence of Montenay could be considered pervasive; the engraved portrait of Montenay by Woeiriot, which appeared in some, but not all, 1571 editions and reappeared in the 1584 Latin edition, may have been a suggestive model for Inglis herself. Montenay is depicted at a writing table “surrounded by tools useful to poetic production: an inkwell, a lute, and two open music books [with] the date of the first printing engraved on the underside of the pegbox of the lute.”⁵⁵ She has written on the sheet “Ô plume en la main non vaine” and “the motto that forms the last verse, ‘Gage d’or tot ne te meine’ (‘Let not the promise of gold guide / seduce you’)” is, as Carla Zecher clarifies, “an anagram of her name: Georgette de Montenai.”⁵⁶ Despite Inglis’s announced motto, “nil penna, sed usus,” concentrating on the “act of putting pious knowledge into practice”⁵⁷ and her dedicated transmission of godly texts among like-minded sympathizers, some of whom acknowledged and repaid her efforts, she died in debt at the age of fifty-three. Although she was never

53. Georgianna Ziegler, “‘More than feminine boldness’: The Gift Books of Esther Inglis,” in *Women Writing and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart England*, ed. Mary E. Burke et al. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 19–37, 27.

54. Martine Van Elk, “Courtliness, Piety, and Politics: Emblem Books by Georgette de Montenay, Anna Roemers Visscher, and Esther Inglis,” in *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, ed. Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 183–211, 171, 173, [dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315257211](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315257211).

55. Zecher, 156.

56. Zecher, 156.

57. Ross, 175.

truly neglected by her royal and aristocratic patrons, her books, now housed in research libraries and made more widely known and accessible through scholarly cataloguing and digitization, remain treasured rarities of a singular artistic talent who mirrored and often outshone the printing press and, in the process, reformulated the authority of the author.

The reputation of the unmarried Utrecht Minerva is perhaps the most difficult to comprehend fully. The renown of the *Dissertatio*, with its identification of jealousy as the underlying motivation of the opponents of women's study, was largely promoted by Schurman's male mentors, who sided with the views of Juan Luis Vives that women's learning is a vocation for private life and never for political, ecclesiastical, or academic ends. The *Dissertatio* succeeded in refuting adversaries by showing that weaker minds occur among men as well as women, that what is at question is not inclination but rather encouragement, and that only home training, not colleges, provides means of study for women. In many ways, Schurman's argument, buttressed with citations from the Bible, church fathers, and Erasmus, illustrates the housebound situation for which printer William Baldwin had praised Anne Cooke almost a century earlier. Throughout her career, Schurman had champions and detractors. Her contact with René Descartes was friction-filled. She had met him in Utrecht as early as 1635, but by the time of his farewell visit in 1649, seeing her reading the Bible in Hebrew which he considered wasteful, he criticized her for becoming "intellectually isolated."⁵⁸ Queen Christina of Sweden, following her abdication, visited her in 1654, and in *An Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen* Makin included Schurman in her catalogues of good linguists, logicians, and profound philosophers, stating "The works of Anna Maria Schurman that are extant declare how good a divine she was."⁵⁹

Makin did not know of the publication of van Schurman's *Eukleria* in Latin prose in the same year as her *Essay*. An apology for her embrace of the communal life of Labadism, *Eukleria* is as determined a vindication of her choice of the better part as was Lady Bacon's *Apologie and Defence*. Of course, considerable differences separate an agile translation of the national declaration of religious loyalty and a defence and personal account of a spiritual journey which perplexed many. Bacon was broadcasting for the Protestant

58. Rang, 31.

59. Teague and Ezell, eds., 67.

majority, while Schurman was speaking for herself and a small splinter group. Van Schurman's text took its title from the choice of one of Lazarus's sisters to sit and listen at the feet of the Lord (Luke 10: 42). Labadism modelled its beliefs on the church at Jerusalem, an inspiration Lady Bacon would likely have approved. Dismissed Walloon minister and leader Jean de Labadie maintained that "the duty of the true Christian was to come out from [...] a dead church."⁶⁰ Translated into Dutch in 1684 and German in 1783 (no full English translation exists), *Eukleria* "was probably the most widely-disseminated Labadist writing in Germany."⁶¹ Blushing, as she wrote, "non sine rubore" at the excesses of the *Dissertatio* and assessing her previous unexhausted labour in language studies as futile and grammatical, van Schurman strives to possess the most precious pearl of the Gospels, "ad pretiosissimam Evangelii margaritam [...] possidendam," and, with Saint Paul, considers all other things as muck and manure so that she might gain Christ, "imo omnium jacturam fecerat, & pro stercoribus habuit, ut Christum lucrificeret."⁶²

The Labadist commune, meanwhile, with van Schurman as its original "intellectual guide," grew to almost four hundred, eventually attracting such new converts as "the artist-naturalist Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717), who joined the community with her mother and two daughters for a ten-year sojourn."⁶³ Under the direction of surgeon and gynaecologist Hendrik van Deventer, following de Labadie's death, the Labadist commune developed "an orthopedic workshop, a pharmacy and a laboratory," manufacturing painkillers and toothache tablets which "brought in much needed income."⁶⁴ When Quaker William Penn visited the year before her death, he recorded van Schurman's views about learning as "vanity" and her desire "to be found a living sacrifice, offered up entirely to the Lord."⁶⁵ Although she found supporters in Halle rector Mechovius and Penn, critics and skeptics were more numerous. Her mentor Voetius was shocked at her disregard of propriety, while correspondent

60. T. J. Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem: Jean De Labadie and the Labadists, 1610–1744* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987), 335.

61. Erica Scheenstra, "On Anna Maria van Schurman's 'Right Choice,'" in *Choosing the Better Part*, ed. De Baar et al., 117–32, 119.

62. *Eukleria, seu melioris partis electio* (Altona: Cornelis van der Meulen, 1673), 29, 10, 207.

63. Larsen, 6, 67.

64. Van Beek, 238.

65. As quoted by Larsen, 67.

Huygens labelled Labadie a “French rooster.”⁶⁶ John Locke recorded his opinion of the Labadist community during his visit to the Frisian village of Wieuwerd. His journal entry of 21 August 1685 notes his suspicion of “a little of Tartouf [... in] their discourse [which] carries with it a supposition of more purity in them than ordinary.”⁶⁷ However, van Schurman’s rejection of learning is not to be understood literally. Contemporary revisionist assessments consider the absence of “the feminine humility topos” and the new confidence of the “strange and quiet strength” of *Eukleria* as according to van Schurman “an ‘authority,’ handing out advice to important leaders throughout Europe and influencing the development of early German pietism in Frankfurt and beyond.”⁶⁸

The elliptical orbits of these comets have followed comparable trajectories of updraft and plummet, in and out of historical focus, with more or less aesthetic commendation. They all “allowed [themselves] the liberty of drawing conclusions from [their] beliefs that significantly changed” their lives.⁶⁹ Bacon’s initially hailed and continuously cited translation obscures her role for over two centuries, a circumstance influenced possibly by her widowhood since 1579 and her vocal support of godly preachers. Inglis’s indebtedness casts an ironic shadow over her lifelong pursuit of elite patronage, yet her miniaturist gems repose securely in private or access-controlled research collections. Van Schurman’s early, prodigious talent as a polyglot calligrapher, commented on by Canon Claude Joly who “had never seen anything which came close to the beauty of her writing in Rabbinic, Syriac, and Arabic,” places her within “the minority of Dutch female calligraphists” and means that “her ability can be compared to that of Esther Inglis.”⁷⁰ However, her decline from Renaissance polymath who reinvested learning in the private sphere to a deranged eater of spiders⁷¹ is precipitated by her embrace of Labadism, interpreted as either

66. Van Beek, 224.

67. Lord Peter King, *The Life of John Locke, with extracts from his correspondence, journals and commonplace books* (London: Colburn, 1829), 162–63.

68. Bo Karen Lee, “‘I wish to be nothing’: The Role of Self-Denial in the Mystical Theology of Anna Maria Van Schurman,” in *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sylvia Brown (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 189–216, 213, dx.doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004163065.i-325.

69. Scheenstra, 130.

70. Larsen, 79, 77, 81.

71. Carol Pal, “Forming *familles d’alliance*: Intellectual Kinship in the Republic of Letters,” in *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, ed. Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen

rash or heretical, and subsequent turn away from previously prized erudition. Fittingly, Bathsua Makin, whose image of a comet provides the frame for this discussion, is herself both a connecting link and an instance of acclaim and neglect. Her publication at the age of sixteen, *Musa Virginea* (1616), with poems in Latin, Greek, French, and Hebrew, included encomia addressed to Prince Charles and Princess Elizabeth, celebrating her marriage to Frederick, the Elector Palatine, to both of whom within a decade Esther Inglis gifted texts. In addition to the praise of van Schurman, Makin's *Essay* cites the Cooke daughters and Lady Bacon's "worthy character" for poetry.⁷²

But opportunities for renewed updraft or focus are also evident. The multiform material worlds of Bacon, Inglis, and van Schurman could be primed for larger audiences. Some promising signs can be cited. Makin's *Essay* itself is available in a new edition (2016) for *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series*. Bacon's letters constitute an edition for the Royal Historical Society (2014); her translation along with Parker's commendatory letter, previously limited to Victorian editions of Jewel and an edition for the Folger (1963), now exists in a Modern Humanities Research Association fully annotated edition (2016). Carefully curated catalogues and new acquisitions chart the continuing recognition of Inglis's artistry. Although van Schurman has been "virtually unknown to the twentieth century," particularly in North America, Mirjam de Baar and Brita Rang note "a wave of renewed international interest" on the occasion of the three-hundredth anniversary of her death with "two exhibitions of her art" and a self-portrait on a postage stamp.⁷³ Anne Larsen's detailed study (2016) of the correspondence and networks of this *savante*, the star of Utrecht, opens new avenues of discovery and exploration.

Digital archiving and editions offer both opportunities and challenges. Laura Mandell's observations about digital projects on women's writing becoming dead links warn about the works themselves becoming inaccessible and about big data (and its prize of size) threatening "to eradicate the history of women writers altogether."⁷⁴ The digital Pulter Project's emphasis on the

(Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 251–80, 257, [dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315257211](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315257211).

72. Teague and Ezell, eds., 73.

73. De Baar and Rang, 18.

74. Laura Mandell, "Gendering Digital Literary History: What Counts for Digital Humanities," in *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. S. Schreibman, R. Siemens, and J. Unsworth (Wiley Online Library, 2015), 511–23; consulted online, [dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118680605.ch35](https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118680605.ch35).

woman writer and different representations and readings of her work is a welcome counterbalance. Since all three of this article's early modern comets thrived for a period in the medium of print or hand-crafted text, is it feasible to consider other means of transmission for them in our digital age? Lady Bacon, Esther Inglis, and Anna Maria van Schurman all championed the materiality of the book as a physical object, as a form of meaning-making, and as an application or manifestation of knowledge. Although each was a distinct and single-minded individual, I believe all three would be awestruck by the potential for connectivity. Our networked possibilities are rich resources for visualizing and modelling the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century networks in which their work participated, and for interpreting these connections. Is there an opportunity here for a hyperbolic orbit as a faster escape from the gravitational pull of a canonical order? In the interests of open books for an open world and the formation of new media ecologies, I want to suggest that a three-part wikibook tracing the circulation of their texts across the Channel could be an engaging and open-ended way of introducing students in early modern studies and beyond to these recovered luminaries and their worlds.