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Honors Thesis

“WOMEN THUS EDUCATED”:
TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES ON WOMEN’S ARGUMENTS FOR
FEMALE EDUCATION IN SEVENTEETH-CENTURY ENGLAND

by
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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment
of graduation requirements for University Honors

History Department
Brigham Young University
April 2020

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ABSTRACT

“WOMEN THUS EDUCATED”:

TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES ON WOMEN’S ARGUMENTS FOR FEMALE EDUCATION IN SEVENTEETH-CENTURY ENGLAND

Miranda Jessop

History Department

Bachelor of Arts

This thesis explores the intellectual history of proto-feminist thought in early modern England and seeks to better understand the transnational elements of and influences on proto-feminist theorists’ arguments in favor of women’s education in the late seventeenth century. A close reading of Bathsua Makin and Anna Maria Van Schurman’s essays in relation to one another, and within their social and historical context, reveals the importance of ideas of religion and social order, especially class, in understanding and justifying women’s education. The metaphysical foundation of Makin’s arguments in favor of women’s education is that the true nature of women, including their ability to benefit from education, can be confused with longstanding cultural norms limiting their opportunities to learn. Makin and Van Schurman argue that society’s customs should align with women’s inherent abilities and desires, including providing them with educational opportunities – an argument echoed by both contemporary and later proto-feminist authors. Although the ideals expressed in both of their essays focused on the education of elite women, and so appealed primarily to an upper-class audience, a better

understanding of how highly educated women advocated for the expanded education of women illuminates a portion of the narrative that has yet to be examined in detail: how and why these proto-feminist authors argued in favor of women's education, and how their social, religious, and Humanist atmosphere influenced their arguments as well as their understanding of the apparent discrepancy between the ontological and cultural metaphysics of womanhood.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful for the community of scholars that made this Honors Thesis possible. I gratefully recognize the mentorship of Dr. Nailya Shamgunova, my “supervisor” at the University of Cambridge who provided me with the guidance I needed to lay the foundation of this work. I am especially thankful for the patience and resourcefulness of my excellent advisor, Dr. Rebecca de Schweinitz, whose Transnational History of Women’s Rights class first introduced me to feminist theory and gender history, altering the trajectory of my undergraduate career for the better. I am also grateful for my brilliant reader Dr. Brandie Siegfried, who has been an invaluable source of direction and knowledge, and for the support of Dr. Shawn Miller, our capable History Department Honors Coordinator.

I am also thankful for my beloved family, particularly my parents, Christopher and Tiffany Jessop, and my wonderful friends – for their constant love and their willingness to listen, edit, and encourage. This thesis is as much a product of their love and support as it is my own time and energy.

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EDUCATION: “A WEAPON IN YOUR HANDS TO DEFEND YOUR SELVES”

In the early seventeenth century, an eleven-year-old Dutch girl named Anna Maria surprised and impressed her father, Frederick Van Schurman, by consistently prompting her two older brothers with the correct answers whenever they hesitated during their private Latin grammar lessons. During a time when formal education for girls was essentially non-existent, Anna Maria Van Schurman excelled in her subsequent language lessons, going on to master not only Latin, but an additional thirteen languages, including French, German, English, Italian, Greek, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Samaritan, and “Ethiopic.”¹ In 1636, she became the first female university student in Europe, attending classes in medicine, theology, and the humanities at the newly-founded University of Utrecht.² Five years later she published a treatise known to English readers as *The Learned Maid or, Whether a Maid May Be a Scholar?: A Logick Exercise*, in which she utilized the patterns of university logicians to advocate for the education of women.³

Bathsua Pell Makin, a highly educated Englishwoman who exchanged correspondence with Van Schurman, echoed many of Van Schurman’s arguments in her own treatise, *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*, published anonymously in 1673.⁴ Known for her achievements in mathematics, Makin, like Van Schurman, had a talent for languages; at the

¹ Leo Miller, “Anna Maria Van Schurman’s Appeal for the Education of Women,” *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, Vol. 199, (2012), https://go-gale-com.eri.lib.byu.edu/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T001&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm¤tPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CH1420106709&docType=Critical+essay&sort=RELEVANCE&contentSegment=MISCLIT&prodId=LitRC&contentSet=GALE%7CH1420106709&searchId=R1&userGroupName=byuprovo&inPS=true.

² Sara L. Uckelman, “Bathsua Makin and Anna Maria van Schurman: Education and the Metaphysics of Being a Woman,” in *Early Modern Women on Metaphysics*, ed. by Emily Thomas (Cambridge University Press, 2018): 98.

³ Miller, “Anna Maria Van Schurman’s Appeal.”

⁴ Bathsua Makin, *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues, With An Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education* (London: Printed by J.D., to be sold by Tho. Pankhurst, 1673): 1. I am referencing the version of her essay accessible online at https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=yJVmAAAACAAJ&pg=PA1&source=gbs_selected_pages&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false.

age of sixteen, she published a book of poetry composed in six different languages.⁵ Less than two years later, she published her *Index Radiographa*, the earliest known example of the “stave” system of shorthand.⁶ Sometime in the early 1670’s, Makin also successfully established a school for girls, dedicating the rest of her life to the research, writing, and implementation of pedagogy.⁷

Believing firmly that the metaphysics, or inherent nature, of womanhood included the inclination and ability to learn, Makin and Van Schurman both asserted that women, like men, “have in them by Nature a desire of knowledge.”⁸ The subject of metaphysics encompasses multiple aspects of philosophy, including the epistemological (concerning knowing), the ontological (concerning being), and those dealing with cause (concerning culture). Such statements regarding the “nature” of women are primarily ontological; they make claims about what women intrinsically *are*. Makin begins her essay by differentiating between nature and society, or culture: “Custom, when it is inveterate, hath a mighty influence: it hath the force of Nature it self. The Barbarous custom to breed Women low, is grown general amongst us, and hath prevailed so far, that it is verily believed... that Women are not endued with such Reason, as Men; nor capable of improvement by Education, as they are.”⁹ Thus, the foundation of Makin’s arguments in favor of women’s education is that the true nature of women, including their ability to benefit from education, can be confused with longstanding cultural norms limiting their opportunities to learn. She goes on to argue that these are not *natural* limitations; they are *cultural*, which means that they can and should change. Although society’s customs may be

⁵ Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 2012, 180.

⁶ *Ibid.*, *Republic of Women*, 184.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁸ Anna Maria Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid or, Whether a Maid May Be a Scholar?: A Logick Exercise*, trans. Robert A. Hatch (John Redmayne, 1659), 8.

⁹ Makin, *An Essay*, 3.

influential enough to appear to be “natural,” they are not. Makin and Van Schurman argue that society’s customs should align with women’s inherent abilities and desires, which, in this case, means providing them with educational opportunities.

This paper evaluates these highly educated women’s arguments in favor of the formal education of elite women. A close reading of these women’s essays in relation to one another, and within their social and historical context, reveals the importance of ideas of religion and social order, especially class, in understanding and justifying women’s education. During a time of significant religious tension between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism across Europe that sometimes erupted into armed conflict, Makin, in particular, drew on those religious tensions in addressing the issue of women’s education. Writing for a Protestant audience, she emphasized the role of education in allowing women to study the word of God, and the importance of education for protecting women against heresies.¹⁰ Like Makin, Van Schurman, who lived in the Netherlands, a Protestant nation, wrote within a Protestant context and she, too, emphasized the importance of women’s personal scripture study.¹¹ Although both authors commented on the ontological metaphysics, or inherent nature, of womanhood, Van Schurman viewed it as a universal concept – applicable to all women, whereas Makin explicitly distinguished between different types of women. Makin regarded divisions between wealthy women “of good natural Parts,” and poor women “of low Parts,” as “natural” – manifest through class distinctions in the social order.¹² Although the ideals expressed in both of their essays focused on the education of elite women, and so appealed primarily to an upper-class audience, a better understanding of

¹⁰ Makin, *An Essay*, 25.

¹¹ Uckelman, “Bathsua Makin and Anna Maria van Schurman,” 98.

¹² *Ibid.*, 104. Uckelman claims that both Van Schurman and Makin express a universal conception of the metaphysics of womanhood; however, I argue that Makin’s clear distinctions between types of women stands in opposition to this.

how highly educated women advocated for the expanded education of women illuminates a portion of the narrative that has yet to be examined in detail: how and why these proto-feminist authors argued in favor of women's education, and how their social, religious, and Humanist atmosphere influenced their arguments as well as their understanding of the apparent discrepancy between the ontological and cultural metaphysics of womanhood.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The intellectual history of proto-feminist thought in early modern England, particularly in relation to female authors' arguments in favor of women's education, is a topic that intersects with a number of historiographies, including biographical work on authors such as Bathsua Makin and Anna Maria Van Schurman, and the influence of Humanist ideas on secular education. A thorough understanding of the nature of women's education in early modern England is foundational to understanding how Makin and Van Schurman navigated transnational intellectual currents related to women's education.

The most well-known female authors who promoted the expansion of women's education at this time, Bathsua Makin and Anna Maria Van Schurman, were highly educated themselves. Very little was known about Bathsua Makin until 1993, when Frances Teague elaborated on a recent discovery that Makin's maiden name was not Pell, as long-assumed, but Reginald.¹³ This case demonstrates the difficulty of including women in the broader historical narrative; many noteworthy women have been rendered invisible by name changes or other factors that obscure their stories. Armed with an accurate understanding of her identity, Teague's work provides a wealth of biographical information on Makin, including her dire financial situation in the 1650s. She shows that the crown's denial of her petition for an annual pension of 40 pounds "for her

¹³ Frances Teague, "The Identity of Bathsua Makin," *Biography* Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter 1993): 2.

attendance on the late King's children" and her husband Richard's indefinite absence (possibly due to imprisonment for debt or because he was abroad with the Royalists) made Makin essentially dependent on her sister, Ithamaria, and her brother-in-law, John Pell.¹⁴ These difficult economic circumstances provide context and potential motivation for Makin's decision to publish her writings. Drawing on Teague's findings, scholars such as Sara Uckelman, a specialist in medieval philosophy, evaluate and interpret Makin's writings within her specific historical context. Through a close textual analysis of both Makin's and Van Schurman's treatises, Uckelman explores their personal beliefs concerning the metaphysics of womanhood, arguing that both Van Schurman and Makin assert that because women are as human as men are, they also naturally desire education.¹⁵

Most historical studies of education in early modern England conducted in the 1960s and 1970s focus solely on institutions of education and those who attended them. Lawrence Stone's foundational work, which details what he calls the "educational revolution" of the time, is a prime example of this. This study traces significant growth in both the number of students attending universities and the number of grammar and private schools endowed between 1560 and 1640.¹⁶ Similarly, David Cressy's research on the "social stratification" of literacy and educational opportunity in Tudor and Stewart England ascertains the parameters of the availability of formal education, particularly among lower classes whose economic circumstances often rendered them unable to afford the costs of admission fees, tuition, and/or living expenses, even when opportunities for education existed.¹⁷ Both of these studies explore

¹⁴ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁵ Uckelman, "Bathsua Makin and Anna Maria van Schurman," 108.

¹⁶ Lawrence Stone, "The Educational Revolution in England," *The Past and Present Society* No. 28 (July 1964): 45.

¹⁷ David Cressy, "Educational Opportunity in Tudor and Stuart England," *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1976): 314.

questions of social class, but are exclusively focused on educational institutions and their exclusively male students; indeed, this research cannot include women because they simply were not allowed to be part of educational institutions. However, as the larger field of gender history has gained momentum over the last two decades, studies of women's education and literacy have likewise grown in number, variety, and significance as scholars have written women and gender back into this era of educational history.

Scholars have shown that the question of literacy is more complex than simply whether or not an individual is capable of reading printed text, as Eleanor Hubbard illustrates in her analysis of the ways women in early modern London marked, initialed, and signed legal depositions.¹⁸ Hubbard provides detailed information about which social groups of women were more likely to demonstrate greater literacy than others, noting that levels of reading literacy were much more broadly diffused across women of different social groups than writing literacy.¹⁹ By understanding and examining literacy as a scale of "increasingly difficult and rare skills" learned not only in private educational institutions, but also in homes and informal schools, Hubbard allows for women to be written back into the story of Stone's "educational revolution."²⁰

Since 2015, a series of scholars have taken up Hubbard's work, publishing multiple studies that explore the various levels of women's literacy. Among them are work by Caroline Bowden, which investigates the types and number of schools in which girls may have been educated in early modern England, and by Edith Snook, which focuses on the kinds of literature

¹⁸ Eleanor Hubbard, "Reading, Writing, and Initialing: Female Literacy in Early Modern London," *Journal of British Studies* 54 (July 2015): 553.

¹⁹ Hubbard, "Reading, Writing, and Initialing," 553. These levels of literacy include reading black printed text, reading written hand, and writing, from signing one's name to drafting more complex documents. Hubbard's findings, which are based on the assumption that the ability to write one's initials is an indicator that one was capable of reading, indicate that more than a third of women born in London, as well as nearly a quarter of those who immigrated from the countryside, had at least begun learning to read.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 557.

that women likely read at the time. Bowden also incorporates research on the effectiveness of contemporary “literary schemes” in modern-day countries, which allow girls and women to achieve a basic level of literacy with very little formal instruction.²¹ Similarly, Wendy Wall’s brief study of the variety of ways in which women interacted with and used writing materials in domestic settings includes not only making ink, and reading and sharing handwritten recipes, but an array of “practices imagined within the vocabulary of ‘writing’” such as cutting, carving, printing, and impressing.²² All of these studies follow Hubbard’s pattern; namely, they write women back into the history by focusing on informal types of education rather than concentrating solely on male-dominated institutions.

While multiple scholars have revolutionized how women’s education is understood through their expansion of the definition of literacy, others have explored women’s education through numeracy. This represents yet another previously unexplored aspect of women’s education, which, like some aspects of literacy, could be learned outside of formal educational institutions and even had the potential to economically benefit female learners. Amy Froide utilizes this focus on numeracy in her study of the arithmetic and accounting literature available to women in early modern England. Froide’s study reveals that numeracy was developed by women from social classes ranging from the “urban mercantile” to the elite.²³ A skill seen as primarily vocational in the late seventeenth century, arithmetic became seen as a mark of education “for genteel women inflected by the principles of the Enlightenment” in the early

²¹ Caroline Bowden, “Women in Educational Spaces” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 85-96; Edith Snook, “Reading Women” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 40-53.

²² Wendy Wall, “Women in the Household” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 97-109.

²³ Amy Froide, “Learning to Invest: Women’s Education in Arithmetic and Accounting in Early Modern England,” *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Fall 2015): 5.

eighteenth centuries.²⁴ Froide's work also indicates that although women possessed an increasingly greater knowledge of finances, they were nevertheless placed firmly in the domestic sphere, where they were expected to use this knowledge to aid their families in financial endeavors, such as budgeting. Froide's unique perspective on the types of learning available to women in the home further broadens scholars' understanding of women's education.

An enhanced understanding of women's education in the seventeenth century includes both the recognition of women's attainment of various levels of literacy and numeracy and an awareness of the influence of Humanist ideas on education, which provides insight into how people thought about women, their capacities, and whether or not they ought to be educated. Although some scholars, such as Michel Foucault, who claims that Humanist ideology intentionally operates through coercion and discipline, have labeled Humanism as repressive, others have recently defended its important role in shaping early modern English education.²⁵ For example, in *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice*, Rebecca Bushnell closely analyzes a wide variety of early modern Humanist texts and argues that the authority of pedagogy in instructors and their curricula was quite ambivalent and flexible.²⁶ Other scholars, including Ian Green, focus instead on placing Humanist education within the context of influential religious developments, including the growth of Protestantism. Green concentrates on strategies clergymen used to navigate growing tensions between classical studies and Protestant doctrine.²⁷ Kenneth Charlton bridges these two approaches by examining the ways in which women acted as both recipients and agents of religious instruction,

²⁴ Ibid., 21.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 139.

²⁶ Rebecca W. Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Cornell University Press, 1996), 8.

²⁷ I. M. Green, *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern English Education* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009), 129.

particularly within the home, and how this simultaneously enhanced and limited their autonomy.²⁸ He examines, for example, the lives of specific women such as Catherine, Countess of Huntingdon, and Anne Rich, Countess of Warwick, in order to explore the links between societal expectations concerning women's religious education, their role in transmitting that piety to female children – both their own and those they tutored or housed as wards – and the community of educated elite women this created.²⁹ A growing body of scholarship explores the effects of Humanist thought on secular instruction and on women, particularly in their roles as both students and teachers.

HUMANIST INFLUENCES

Like many highly educated people in seventeenth-century England, Makin and Van Schurman were influenced by the ideals of Humanist intellectuals and teachers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who shaped the ways in which people thought about and structured education by emphasizing a renewed interest in studying classical Latin and Greek texts and focusing on the study of moral philosophy, grammar, and rhetoric, or the art of speaking and writing, all to the benefit of one's character, or moral development.³⁰ Several prominent Humanists, including Comenius, Thomas More, and Juan Luis Vives, expressed progressive opinions concerning the education of women. Comenius, a Czech pedagogue and theologian, was a proponent of universal elementary education with specific limitations, one of which was that women be educated primarily in matters directly related to domestic affairs.³¹ English statesman Thomas More was famous for allowing his daughters to be educated alongside his sons at home, and wrote that “both [men and women] are equally suited for the knowledge of

²⁸ Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England* (Routledge, 2002), 25.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁰ Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching*, 8.

³¹ Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education*, 25.

learning by which reason is cultivated.”³² Like More, tutor to Princess Mary and educational theorist Juan Vives declared that “the woman’s wit is not less apt to all things than the man is.”³³ Vives’ *De Institutione Foeminae Christianae* (1523), dedicated to Mary’s mother, Queen Catherine of Aragon, promotes the importance of female literacy as well as female virtue and chastity, reinforcing the Humanist connection between education and one’s moral character.³⁴ Although Makin echoes several of his ideas, she is much more concerned about the role of class in women’s aptitude for education. She was also influenced by Vives’ and Comenius’ stances on the study and teaching of classical Latin (as opposed to medieval Latin), which was still considered an important aspect of formal education during Makin’s and Van Schurman’s lifetimes.³⁵ Van Schurman repeats the Humanist insistence on the primarily religious importance and purpose of education, an “end” she identifies as “God’s Glory and the salvation of her own soul.”³⁶ Makin echoes this emphasis and incorporates elements of Comenius’ pedagogy into her treatise, such as his belief that effective learning must engage all of the student’s senses. She also explicitly recommends several of his Latin textbooks, including his *Janua Linguarum* (1628-31, 1633) and his *Orbis Pictus* (1658), one of the first illustrated textbooks printed in Europe.³⁷ As this paper illustrates, Humanist approaches to education continued to be influential in the late seventeenth century.

ANALYZING MAKIN AND VAN SCHURMAN

The essays of Bathsua Makin and her contemporary, Anna Maria Van Schurman, give voice to several key arguments in favor of women’s education. Published circa 1673, Makin’s *An*

³² Ibid., 19.

³³ Ibid.19.

³⁴ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual*, trans. and ed. Charles Fantazzi (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 65.

³⁵ Green, *Humanism and Protestantism*, 129.

³⁶ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 4.

³⁷ Teague, “The Identity of Bathsua Makin,” 8.

Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen emphasizes the fact that women have achieved high levels of education in the past, to the benefit of themselves and others, which she uses as justification for her claim that women should be provided access to education now.³⁸ Although she argues in support of women's natural ability to learn, she clearly states that opportunities for education are not to be given to all women; rather, only those with the leisure time that accompanies wealth are in need of education as a means to avoid idleness.³⁹ This sentiment echoes that expressed by Van Schurman in her *The Learned Maid or, Whether a Maid May Be a Scholar?: A Logick Exercise*, published in 1659.⁴⁰ Van Schurman emphasizes the home as the most appropriate site of learning for women, while Makin articulates particular pedagogical strategies to be used in the classroom.⁴¹ Makin also emphasizes the economic roles women may fill by virtue of their education, while Van Schurman places a premium on the religious benefits of their learning, a primary purpose of education that Makin affirms in her essay.⁴² Although Makin relies on Van Schurman's name, position, and authority within her genealogy of highly educated women, she builds on her arguments to present something completely different.⁴³ This includes her unique comments concerning the ways in which the education of women will positively affect men, and her straightforward statement that "Bad Customs (when it is evident that they are so)," such as society's traditional lack of educational opportunities for women, "ought to be broken, or else Good Customs can never come into use."⁴⁴ Makin's perception of which customs are good, and which are bad, forms the foundation of each of her arguments concerning women's education.

³⁸ Makin, *An Essay*, 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁰ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 11.

⁴¹ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 13; Makin, *An Essay*, 38-41.

⁴² Makin, *An Essay*, 27; Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 3-4; Makin, *An Essay*, 15.

⁴³ Makin, *An Essay*, 12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 30, 34.

“WOMEN... FORMERLY EDUCATED”: FOLLOWING LITERARY PRECEDENTS IN FORM AND
OSTENSION

Both Van Schurman and Makin make use of literary precedents in order to lend their publications greater credibility. Van Schurman’s treatise is written in the form of a logic exercise, in which she consistently defines and connects subjects, predicates, majors, and minors to present fourteen arguments in favor of women’s education, followed by five objections and their rebuttals. Van Schurman’s writing conforms to the “a priori” pattern of theoretical deduction used in university disputations of the time – a format she likely learned while studying at the University of Utrecht.⁴⁵ By adhering to the conventions of contemporary scholarly dialectics, the very form of Van Schurman’s treatise implies that her arguments are logically sound. Utilizing accepted scholarly patterns of persuasion and authoritative reasoning, she presents arguments in favor of women’s education, refutes objections to the same, and demonstrates women’s ability to elevate their writings to the same level of erudite prestige and legitimacy as those of their male peers.

Makin’s essay both follows and diverges from literary precedents to present a strong argument for women’s education. She begins by addressing her essay to Lady Mary, daughter of the Duke of York and his heir in the midst of a succession crisis. Protestant Mary’s position as a royal heir, combined with her religious conviction, effectively made her the hope of English Protestants, including Makin herself. Although only thirteen years old at the time, Mary was, in theory, the most powerful woman in the country.⁴⁶ By beginning her essay in this way, Makin connects herself to a literary genealogy of writers before her, including her own father, Henry

⁴⁵ Ibid., 30, 34.

⁴⁶ Tim Harris, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (Penguin, 2007).

Reginald, who had dedicated their books to members of the royal family.⁴⁷ Makin, a working scholar and practiced seeker of patronage, also specifically mentions Princess Elizabeth, whom she tutored in the 1640s, in an attempt to gain royal support.⁴⁸ Makin seeks to increase her credibility by adhering to the literary practice of addressing her writings to royal patrons.

Makin also follows precedents set by Humanist thinkers Vives and Comenius in several of her foundational arguments for the education of women, such as the emphasis she places on the religious fulfillment this will allow them, which she, like the Humanist thinker Erasmus, defines as “know[ing] God, their Saviour, understand[ing] his Sacred Word, and admir[ing] him in his wonderful Works.”⁴⁹ Her argument, however, is more radical than those of her Humanist precedents; rather than simply acknowledging the possibility of universal education, which, when it came to women, Humanist thinkers often limited to literacy and matters directly related to domestic affairs, she explicitly promotes the creation of educational institutions for women.⁵⁰ Makin uses the long history and broad scope of women’s intellectual achievements as a rhetorical device, repeatedly presenting long lists of primarily historical educated female figures as evidence for her main argument. Like Van Schurman, Makin utilizes a form recognized by fellow scholars in order to match contemporary standards of authority and imply the logical nature of her argument.

Makin devotes approximately half of her essay almost exclusively to lengthy lists of women throughout history who are known for their educational achievements. These indexes are primarily used as evidence that women are not only capable of achieving high levels of

⁴⁷ Teague, “The Identity of Bathsua Makin,” 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10. At this point in time, Makin was raising three children in a house that was “in poor repair” while her husband was absent.

⁴⁹ Makin, *An Essay*, 23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

education, but that doing so benefits their immediate relations, their larger society, and even the nation as a whole.⁵¹ This abundance of examples of highly educated women can be interpreted as an expression of an underlying ontological argument; namely, that women possess an intrinsic or natural ability to learn. Makin's lists are organized both by chronology and subject of learning. The former is seen in sequential lists of women from the Old and New Testaments, as well as a multitude of classical examples, both mythical (Minerva and the Muses) and historical (Aspasia and Hortensia). Other historical examples include medieval women such as Amalasantha, Queen of the Ostrogoths. Notably, her lists also contain present-day women, including the Duchess of Newcastle, the Lady Jane Grey, Queen Elizabeth, and Anna Maria Van Schurman of Utrecht, whose writing influenced Makin's own work. She highlights the accomplishments of Princess Elizabeth and the Countess Dowager of Huntington, both of whom she had personally tutored.⁵² Makin's meticulous description of these women and their achievements reflects the common practice of holding up a few educated individuals as exemplars to be followed by other learners, and demonstrates that she views the education of elite women as a good custom that ought to be deliberately continued in ways that benefit more women.⁵³ By beginning her treatise with these thorough lists of intellectually noteworthy women, Makin establishes the education of women as having a strong historical precedent, thereby implying that the formal education of women in the late seventeenth century would simply be a continuation of this precedent. This is a particularly acute argument to make in this specific time and place, as Makin's audience was especially aware of the legal, social, and cultural weight associated with tradition and precedence. Her

⁵¹ Ibid., 28.

⁵² Makin, *An Essay*, 10; Jean R. Brink, "Bathsua Reginald Makin: 'Most Learned Woman,'" *Huntington Library Quarterly* Vol. 54, No. 4 (Autumn, 1991): 319.

⁵³ Vives uses the same rhetorical technique of listing exemplary educated women in his *Education of A Christian Woman*.

readers were also concerned with how to best protect such traditions from various forms of tyranny, and so were much more likely to accept a case for women's education based on historical precedent.

Makin's collection of highly educated women of elevated social rank indicates that she is well aware of contemporary women who had achieved high levels of education; however, it also illustrates that she is making a partisan argument that features only Protestant women. This is evidenced by her exclusion of the highly educated Catholic queen of England, Catherine of Aragon, the patroness for whose daughter, Mary, Vives wrote his *Education of a Christian Woman* in the 1520s.⁵⁴ Makin uses her historically organized lists of highly educated women both to bolster her argument concerning women's natural ability to learn and to subtly reinforce the importance of the educational achievements of Protestant women, such as Lady Jane Grey and Queen Elizabeth, as superior to those of Catholic women.

Makin's lists are also organized according to academic subject, some of which are prioritized over others based on the strength of their perceived relation to the divine. Some disciplines, such as "Arts and Tongues," are specifically connected to religious learning, while others, such as the more secular subjects of "Oratory" and "Logick," are further divided into subfields to show that women are capable of being "good *Logicians, Philosophers, [and] Mathematicians.*"⁵⁵ Makin emphasizes achievement in poetry as evidence of both God's grace and mastery of many other subjects. "To be a *Poet-laureat,*" she says, "requires great natural endowments, such as man cannot lend, if God doth not give," as an accomplished poet "must know things Divine, things Natural, things Moral, things Historical, and things Artificial."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁵ Makin, *An Essay*, 13.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 16.

Makin uses historical female examples of these “universal Scholars” as evidence for her claim that God must approve of women’s learning, asserting that they would not be capable of being good poets without the abilities He gives them.⁵⁷ Although Makin’s lists of examples of educated women appear to be primarily academic in nature, she establishes a firm connection between educational achievement and divine favor, or godly approval, that privileges fields of study in which women have historically been involved. Poetry stands out among these because it was generally considered a more acceptable field for women, in large part because of its frequent connection to religious subjects. Makin’s list of female poets is one of the longest in her treatise. Makin’s ranking of disciplines grants higher status to qualities generally considered to be inherently female, such as the emotional essence of poetry. While poetry is not as clearly grounded in reason and logic as other areas of intellectual accomplishment, Makin’s focus on the poet’s extensive knowledge of the world and their connection to God as signs of divine favor elevates this discipline above the traditionally male-dominated fields of philosophy and mathematics. Makin effectively argues that women are naturally, or ontologically, capable and deserving of receiving both educational achievement and divine favor.

Makin also highlights the possession of several “natural” attributes, some of them specifically considered female, as part of her argument for women’s natural ability to learn. She declares that women possess some inherent qualities that grant them a natural aptitude for learning. For example, when speaking of logic, considered “the Key to all Sciences,” she states that “Logick disposes to wrangle, a thing Women are inclined to naturally.”⁵⁸ Makin also asserts that for women to be accomplished students in the aforementioned subjects “require[s] most serious Thoughts and greatest Judgment,” both of which were traditionally viewed as masculine

⁵⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 24, 13; Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 5.

qualities, as women were generally considered to be governed more by their “exorbitant Passions” than by their reason.⁵⁹ She concludes her lists of accomplished educated women by combining both assertions into a single statement: “Women are not such silly giddy creatures, as many proud ignorant men would make them; as if they were incapable of all improvement by Learning... Let such but look into History, they will find Examples enow [sic] of illustrious Women to confute them.”⁶⁰ Makin makes effective rhetorical use of her lists of highly educated women by holding up their accomplishments as proof that women are both capable of possessing what were traditionally considered masculine qualities necessary for learning, as well as their own natural ability to learn.

“A THING WOMEN ARE INCLINED TO NATURALLY”: SOCIAL CLASS, THE NATURE OF WOMEN, AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Although Makin asserts that women are naturally capable of learning, she, like Van Schurman, clearly states that only women of higher social groups who have “competent natural Parts” and ample leisure time should be formally educated.⁶¹ Makin distinguishes between social “customs” preventing elite women from being more widely educated, which she argues can and ought to be changed, and inherent natural abilities that qualify one for education, which she only attributes to women of higher social groups.⁶² This perceived dissimilarity between women of different classes is even portrayed visually on the page:

*Women are of two sorts, { RICH, } { Of good natural Parts.
 { POOR, } { Of low Parts.*

⁵⁹ Ibid., 13, 29.

⁶⁰ Makin, *An Essay*, 29.

⁶¹ Ibid., 22. On page 2 of her essay, Van Schurman says that in order for a woman to qualify as one deserving of being educated, she must be “provided of necessities, and not oppressed with want,” and have “spare hours from her general and speciall Calling, that is, from the Exercises of Piety and household Affairs.”

⁶² Ibid., 34.

Makin's statement implies that, rather than understanding womanhood as a single, universal metaphysical conception, as Sara Uckelman suggests, Makin believes that there exist at least two different types of women (rich and poor), and that the differences between them are manifested through their social station.⁶³ Makin also uses this distinction to limit negative characterizations of women by relegating undesirable attributes to women of lower socioeconomic classes, which makes her argument less challenging to the prevailing gender ideology of the time. Although she does not directly address the question, this clearly delineated division between rich and poor suggests that Makin believes that class is inherent, or natural. This line of reasoning indicates that, according to Makin, gender is not a natural category of distinction between individuals, but class is. By focusing on class as a natural, legitimate reason for limiting education, Makin effectively undercuts gender as a valid determinant in the restriction of women's education. Makin attributes lower-class women's lack of education not to limited resources or negative customs, but to their implied inability to learn. For this reason, neither Makin nor Van Schurman advocate the universal education of women; rather, they call for the education of the elite, as they possess not only the spare time and means necessary to pursue such learning, but the requisite "competent natural parts" that make an individual capable of educational achievement.⁶⁴ By identifying opportunity and ability as the prerequisites to learning, however, Makin, who herself was not from the highest levels of society, appears to leave the door open for the possibility of the education of women who do not belong to the uppermost reaches of the social strata if they possess the necessary means and "good natural parts."⁶⁵

Both Makin and Van Schurman state that the capacities and needs of elite women are

⁶³ Uckelman, "Bathsua Makin and Anna Maria van Schurman," 104.

⁶⁴ Makin, *An Essay*, 22.

⁶⁵ Makin, *An Essay*, 30.

different from those of women of the lower classes and agree that because of this difference in nature, wealthy women are particularly prone to finding themselves idle, and thus have the most urgent demand to be educated.⁶⁶ Idleness, a form of the sin of slothfulness that Van Schurman explicitly identifies as “the mother of wickedness,” was considered one of the negative traits of poor social groups, and was therefore seen as something the rich must avoid at all costs.⁶⁷ Makin asserts that although it is understandable for poor women to be guilty of idleness due to their lack of moral instruction and less gifted nature, women of higher social groups, who know idleness is a sin and possess a greater natural ability to learn, have no such excuse. Van Schurman does not differentiate between “idleness” and “leisure,” the latter of which was a sign of wealth and status. Makin, however, implies that because “leisure” is a gift God gives to upper-class women, wasting that time through “idleness” or frivolous activities is a sin: “Meerly to teach Gentlewomen to Frisk and Dance, to paint their Faces, to curl their Hair, to put on a Whisk, to wear gay Clothes, is not truly to adorn, but to adulterate their Bodies; yea, (what is worse) to defile their Souls.”⁶⁸ Rather than dedicate their leisure time to such spiritually insignificant pursuits, Makin states that “it is much better they should spend...the overplus of their time...in gaining Arts, and Tongues, and useful Knowledge;” otherwise, their “leisure” time may be downgraded to “idleness,” which is a sin and the breeding ground of “wickedness.”⁶⁹ Van Schurman also advances this sentiment by arguing that a woman’s end be “not vain glory and ostentation,” but “Gods Glory and the salvation of her own soul.”⁷⁰ Makin, however, takes her argument a step further when she warns that “God... will take an account of every idle thought”

⁶⁶ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁸ Makin, *An Essay*, 22.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 22. To this effect, Van Schurman also cites the Latin proverb, “Homines nihil agendo male agere discut. Men by doing nothing learn to do ill,” on page 11.

⁷⁰ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 4-5.

and that while poor women will be able to excuse their idleness due to their lack of education, men “who industriously deny [women] better improvement” will be unable to provide an adequate answer to God for this sinful behavior. By implicating both upper-class men and women in the sin of elite women’s idleness during their divinely bestowed leisure time, Makin implies that male readers bear some responsibility in changing the “bad customs” of their society.⁷¹ Perhaps referencing one of the main thrusts of Protestantism, she adds that “it would be a piece of Reformation to correct” this negative custom of encouraging elite women to waste their God-given leisure time by instead giving them the opportunity to use that time to obtain an education and thereby gain spiritual strength and knowledge and protect themselves from the sin of idleness. Makin builds on her established hierarchy of academic subjects by curtly comparing the relative unimportance of women preoccupying themselves with their physical appearances to what she and Van Schurman, like Humanist scholars before them, consider to be the ultimate, elevated purpose of education: to help individuals to “know God.”⁷²

Although both Makin and Van Schurman make strong arguments concerning the primarily religious purpose that education ought to serve in the lives of women, Van Schurman places greater emphasis upon this point than does Makin. Both, however, are clearly influenced by contemporary Protestant theology concerning the importance of good works, particularly reading the word of God, which, though not key to one’s salvation, was nevertheless considered a great spiritual and moral aid.⁷³ Just as Van Schurman asserts that learning is not “a thing requisite and precisely needfull to eternall salvation [sic],” Makin affirms that it is “not... necessary to the *esse*, to the *subsistence*, or to the Salvation of Women, to be thus educated.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ Makin, *An Essay*, 34.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷³ Green, *Humanism and Protestantism*, 286-7.

⁷⁴ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 5; Makin, *An Essay*, 22.

Both authors, however, argue that despite this, education is a “very usefull” spiritual support because it promotes a greater love for God and His creations.⁷⁵ Makin even includes a disclaimer stating that “if any think all this Learning is but meerly humane, I acknowledge the great end of Arts and Tongues is the better to enable us to know God in Jesus Christ, and our own selves, that we may glorifie and enjoy him for ever [sic],” emphasizing the religious benefits of education, which will keep them in line with acceptable Christian doctrine.⁷⁶ Both Makin and Van Schurman follow Protestant tradition in arguing that while education may not be critical for salvation, it nevertheless plays a valuable role in elevating learners to a higher level of knowing and loving God, from which Christian women may profit.

One of the primary religious benefits of education that both authors address is the role of education in preventing people from descending into “heresies,” although neither specifies the origin of these heresies.⁷⁷ However, given the public moral panic that resulted from the religious conflicts of the 1650s as well as the crown’s exclusive approval of Anglican Protestantism in the 1670s, it is likely that they are referring to the perceived dangers of Catholicism. Van Schurman argues that “that which armes us against Heresies, and detecteth their fraud,” such as science, “is convenient for a Christian Woman,” adding that “no Christians in this common danger, ought to neglect their duetie [sic].”⁷⁸ Van Schurman advocates for women’s education by stressing the obligation all Christians have to mentally defend themselves against heresy. Although Makin acknowledges education is “a Hedge against Heresies,” she makes no specific mention of this Christian duty; instead, she focuses explicitly on the improved ability to reason that learning

⁷⁵ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 6; Makin, *An Essay*, 25.

⁷⁶ Makin, *An Essay*, 15.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 25; Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 17.

⁷⁸ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 17.

affords, which allows educated men and women to recognize and reject logical fallacies.⁷⁹

Perhaps referring to a specific group of misguided or deceived Christians, she says “so many Persons of Quality” would not have been led astray “had they been instructed in the plain rules of artificial reasoning, so as to distinguish a true and forcible Argument, from a vain and captious Fallacy.”⁸⁰ Makin implies that teaching Protestant English women “logic” will provide them with the mental defense they need to resist the heresies of other Christian sects. In addition to this key point, she argues that just as “Men are furnished with Arts and Tongues for this purpose, that they may stop the mouths of their Adversaries,” “Women ought to be Learned, that they may stop their ears against Seducers.”⁸¹ Although the identity of these seducers is not specified, it is possible that she is referring to both spiritual seducers, offering heresies and incorrect religious thinking, and physical seducers, who also pose a moral threat. Makin asserts that education aids women in logically recognizing and dismissing these heresies as well as protecting themselves from the moral dangers of the advances of seducers. While both Van Schurman and Makin address the role of education in defending against heresies, the former claims that this is the duty of all Christians, while the latter emphasizes several additional ways this benefits women specifically, including enhanced abilities to identify logically sound arguments and resist seducers. Both lines of reasoning result in women’s development of greater mental independence.

“THEIR QUALITY TIES THEM AT HOME”: EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES IN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

Whether educated women were to guard against heresies or thwart physical seducers,

⁷⁹ Makin, *An Essay*, 25.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

Van Schurman stresses the importance of domestic religious piety by emphasizing the importance of women's learning taking place in the home, adding that "it is more decent for a Christian Maid to find her self both worke and recreation at home then abroad [sic]."⁸² Although little is known about specific curriculums taught in the home in late seventeenth century England, recent research indicates young women wealthy enough to live at home were significantly more literate than other women.⁸³ Although female children typically received less instruction than their brothers, the daughters of landed families generally received several years' worth of education by tutors, governesses, or, in some cases, their parents.⁸⁴ Educated women were expected to play an important role in the later education of their own children, especially with regards to religious instruction.⁸⁵ Van Schurman's argument in favor of women being educated at home, particularly religiously, and their own later role in that same education of their own children, is not a revolutionary one; rather, it is aligned with what social custom dictated as acceptable for women at the time.

The home was often the center of both women's religious and economic activity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁸⁶ Both authors briefly address the economic benefits of women's education; however, Makin discusses the subject in much more detail than Van Schurman does. While the latter makes passing mention of women working in the home, the former asserts that "Women thus educated, will be beneficial to their Relations," and notes it will be of particular advantage to widows, as they "will be able to understand and manage their own Affairs."⁸⁷ Scholars have long known that the early modern English economy was bolstered

⁸² Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 13-14.

⁸³ Hubbard, "Reading, Writing, and Initialing," 571.

⁸⁴ Bowden, "Women in Educational Spaces," 87.

⁸⁵ Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England*, 188.

⁸⁶ Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 208.

⁸⁷ Makin, *An Essay*, 27.

significantly by the labor of women; more recent research has enhanced our understanding of the details of that contribution by indicating that Englishwomen from a wide range of social groups engaged in economic activity. Middling to lower women were heavily involved in the household production of goods, while women from the urban mercantile to the elite were educated in accounting and arithmetic, achieving a “practical numeracy” that allowed them to keep their own financial accounts while tracking household expenses, engaging in trade, or investing in stocks.⁸⁸ Makin also links the economic activity of women to the continued engagement of their male relatives in business:

How many Families have been ruined by this one thing, the bad education of Women? Because the Men find no satisfactory converse or entertainment at home, out of meer weariness they seek abroad; hence they neglect their Business, spend their Estates, destroy their Bodies, and oftentimes damn their Souls.⁸⁹

While Van Schurman underscores the domestic and familial benefits of education in the home, which she understands to be primarily religious, Makin presents a more thorough, multifaceted evaluation of how education may economically benefit a woman and her household. According to Makin, these benefits include greater numeracy and perhaps an element of increased economic independence. This would have been an especially persuasive argument in late seventeenth-century England because many men and women were still grappling with the repercussions of the English Civil War fought several decades earlier, including the loss of a significant number of brothers, husbands, and fathers.

The economic aspect of education addressed in Makin’s essay also reveals a partisan view written in a specific political context, as she uses the Catholic Italians as a foil for the Protestant Dutch – a religious comparison that she then links to economic prosperity. She

⁸⁸ De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, 199; Froide, “Learning to Invest,” 1, 21.

⁸⁹ Makin, *An Essay*, 27.

focuses on the prosperity of Holland, a fellow Protestant nation and one of England's main economic competitors at the time.⁹⁰ Not only does she place both the English and the Dutch into the world hierarchy of wealthy nations, but she credits the economic success of the Dutch in part to the education and treatment of their women, saying, "one great Reason why our Neighbours the *Dutch* have thriven to admiration, is the great care they take in the Education of their Women, from whence they are to be accounted more vertuous, and to be sure more useful than any Women in the World."⁹¹ Makin presents the staunchly Catholic Italians, who were then experiencing a drastic economic decline, as a foil to the financially successful Protestant Dutch, claiming that the Italians "slight their Wives, because all necessary knowledge, that may make them serviceable (attainable by institution) is denyed them [sic]."⁹² Makin's case also responds to the practice of salon culture, which, although an entry point for wealthy women into serious conversations about science, politics, and literature, was also associated with moral degradation because many attendees became the mistresses of kings and high aristocrats. Although there were alternate routes to education for upper-class women, they were far from ideal options, particularly for those concerned with religious and moral uprightness. By connecting religion and economic success to the treatment of women, Makin essentially argues that if the English formally educate their women like the Dutch, then they too will avoid the economic depression affecting the Catholic Italians and the less "vertuous" demands made on women in salon culture, and instead become a prosperous, Protestant nation. This claim, written at a time when the English political climate was characterized by anxieties about King Charles II, who was

⁹⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁹¹ Ibid., 28.

⁹² Carlo M. Cipolla, "The Decline of Italy: The Case of a Fully Matured Economy," *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1952): 180; Makin, *An Essay*, 27. It is worth noting that, because there was no politically unified Italian state at the time, this is a generalization on Makin's part having more to do with religious affiliation than political organization.

suspected of harboring Catholic sympathies, reaffirms Makin's partisan view favoring Protestantism, this time in an economic context.⁹³

Although there are strong parallels between Makin's and Van Schurman's essays, including leisure (and therefore, wealth) as a prerequisite to education for women and the religious purposes of learning, including the avoidance of idleness and rejection of heresies, there are also some key differences, such as Makin's greater emphasis on the economic activity of educated women. In addition to this economic argument, Makin clearly sees at least some of her readers as female, as demonstrated by the fact that she addresses them as "Ladies" in the first section of her essay.⁹⁴ In comparison to Van Schurman, Makin presents a more partisan argument that favors the education and achievements of Protestant women, and, unlike Van Schurman, explicitly calls for the discontinuation of the "Bad Custom" of purposely not educating women.⁹⁵

"MISTRESSES OF TONGUES": A CASE STUDY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

The subject of language learning addressed in Makin and Van Schurman's essays provides a case study of how the larger themes present in their general arguments, including the importance of religion and social order in education, as well as the ways in which social "customs" circumscribe feminine ontological metaphysics, including women's inherent intellectual abilities, may be seen and understood in a different, narrower context. The study of languages was a key component of formal education in early modern England, with particular emphasis on the study of Latin and French, typically in that order.⁹⁶ Instruction in both of these

⁹³ For more information, see Tim Harris, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy* (Penguin, 2007) and Steven C. A. Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (Cambridge UP, 2002).

⁹⁴ Makin, *An Essay*, 4.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁶ Michèle Cohen, "French Conversation or 'Glittering Gibberish'? Learning French in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Didactic Literature in England 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 103.

languages relied heavily on rote memorization of phrases, sentences, and scripted dialogues or sections of famous classical texts, as it was believed that constant oral practice was the surest way to proficiency.⁹⁷ The learning of these languages, however, was greatly affected by gender; although male children were taught Latin in school and French in the home, it was expected that they would later achieve fluency in French while traveling in France on their grand tour.⁹⁸ Female children, on the other hand, had little opportunity to learn languages unless their parents were wealthy enough to pay a private tutor to teach them. Thus, although it was not commonplace, daughters of the provincial gentry and minor aristocracy were much more likely to be educated in Latin than women born to lower groups within the social order, particularly if their specific family had traditionally taught their daughters Latin.⁹⁹ Some other women, such as the nuns at the Catholic English Benedictine convent in Brussels, were able to learn languages later in life, although this particular route would not have been an option available to Makin's Protestant readers.¹⁰⁰

Although learning French became increasingly fashionable in the late sixteenth century, pedagogical methods changed little, as indicated by the continual reprinting of the same dictionaries, grammars, and primers over decades.¹⁰¹ These were generally written by renowned male teachers rather than studied grammarians.¹⁰² Standard language primers used to teach French typically included chapters on grammar and pronunciation, followed by a long list of dialogues to be memorized. This was often the largest section of the book – in the case of Pierre

⁹⁷ Cohen, "French Conversation," 107.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁹⁹ Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2005), 368-9.

¹⁰⁰ Emilie K.M. Murphy, "Language and Power in an English Convent in Exile, c. 1621-1631," *The Historical Journal* Vol. 61, No. 1 (2019), 101.

¹⁰¹ Jerome de Groot, "'Every one teacheth after thyr owne fantasie': French Language Instruction," in *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England: Gender, Instruction, and Performance* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 36.

¹⁰² Cohen, "French Conversation," 100.

Eronnelle's influential *The French Garden* (1605), it took up 178 of 240 pages.¹⁰³ Students were expected to read these scripted dialogues aloud, the primary focus of the language instruction being pronunciation rather than grammar, vocabulary, or syntax.¹⁰⁴

Eronnelle was one of several authors that claimed to have written their primer especially for the use of English gentlewomen.¹⁰⁵ Whereas the dialogues memorized by male students typically dealt with matters related to travel, Eronnelle's dialogues for female students are predominantly set in domestic environments, where the speakers discuss topics such as "bedrooms and dressing; the receiving into the house of guests; buying linen, silk and cloth at the shop; attending to your baby and his nurse...visiting your sons; table talk."¹⁰⁶ Gender affected not only one's opportunity to learn languages, but the ways in which that language was to be studied and used.

The learning of "Tongues" is discussed by both Makin and Van Schurman in their essays; however, each author emphasizes different aspects and effects of language learning. The value the former places on proficiency in languages, particularly as they relate to the Arts, is made clear by her inclusion of a list of "Mistresses of Tongues" who were "equal to most men" as well as a list of women who were accomplished linguists.¹⁰⁷ These sections include several historical women, such as Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, but are mostly made up of contemporary elite women, including Lady Jane Grey, the Duchess of Newcastle, Queen Elizabeth, and more. Makin also states that teaching languages "will be very useful to Women" because "the profit will be to themselves. In the general they will be able to understand, read, write, and speak their

¹⁰³ De Groot, "Every one teacheth after thyr owne fantasie," 39.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 41.

¹⁰⁵ Juliet Fleming, "The French Garden: An Introduction to Women's French," *ELH* Vol. 56, No. 1 (Spring 1989): 19.

¹⁰⁶ De Groot, "Every one teacheth after thyr owne fantasie," 42.

¹⁰⁷ Makin, *An Essay*, 11.

Mother-Tongue, which they cannot well do without this.”¹⁰⁸ Unlike the study of other subjects, the primary value of learning languages, according to Makin, seems to be the ways in which doing so personally benefits individual women rather than their families or society at large.

Makin acknowledges that “many say one Tongue is enough for a Woman,” a reference to the stereotype of the loquacious woman, before boldly asserting that “the Tongue is the only Weapon Women have to defend themselves with, and they ha[ve] need to use it dextrously.”¹⁰⁹ She goes on to argue that most men who object to women learning languages do so “to hide their own Ignorance,” and therefore, the “greatest hurt, that I can fore-see, can ensue” from “this way of Educating Ladies... is to put your Sons upon greater diligence to advance themselves in Arts and Languages; that they may be Superior to Women in Parts as well as in Place.”¹¹⁰ According to Makin, learning languages is not only a valuable academic achievement for women that aids them in mastering their own native language, but an accomplishment that will encourage their male counterparts to greater success in their own study of “Tongues.” She acknowledges that men may be ontologically and culturally superior to women while reaffirming women’s inherent or natural ability to succeed in and benefit from the study of languages.

The central importance of religion in education is again revealed by Van Schurman’s focus on the study of Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, “which may advance to the more facile and full understanding of *Holy Scripture*: to say nothing now of other books.”¹¹¹ Makin reaffirms this sentiment in her own essay, adding that students at her own school are instructed primarily in Latin and French, with the option of studying Hebrew, Greek, Italian, or Spanish.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹¹¹ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 5.

¹¹² Makin, *An Essay*, 42.

Interestingly, Makin also mentions the acquisition of Eastern languages, including Arabic and Persian.¹¹³ Given that these languages, unlike “the three Learned Tongues,” were typically learned by people in the land trade, the inclusion of them in her essay may be interpreted as a comment on the economic role women may play; namely, that they are equally capable of successfully navigating traditionally male-dominated fields of business.¹¹⁴

Although both authors clearly establish the positive relationship between learning ancient languages, particularly Latin, and the study of holy scripture, Makin’s discussion of Latin is much more pedagogically focused than Van Schurman’s, which does not address any language teaching methods. In response to the objection that there simply is not enough time to instruct female students in languages in addition to the array of domestic skills they are expected to master, Makin proposes a more streamlined method of teaching Latin, and then French.¹¹⁵ She discusses the value of several different Latin primers, stating that since children learn much more quickly if they learn words while looking at corresponding images, Comenius’ *Nomenclatures*, *Orbis Pictus*, and *Janua Linguarum* are ideal teaching tools.¹¹⁶ She argues that focusing on these more pragmatic connections is a much more effective teaching strategy than the rote memorization of passages of famous classical texts.¹¹⁷ With regards to grammar, she criticizes *Lilly’s Grammar* for its use of esoteric language in describing key grammatical principles and parts of speech, and even includes her own set of simplified explanations for the same concepts.¹¹⁸ Makin introduces several methods for simplifying Latin instruction as further justification for taking the time to instruct women in “Tongues,” which she argues will be to the

¹¹³ Ibid., 12.

¹¹⁴ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 53.

¹¹⁵ Makin, *An Essay*, 36-37.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 36.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 37.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 39-40.

personal and religious benefit of female students and their male relations.¹¹⁹ By implying that the education of “Woman,” including the teaching of languages, conforms with God’s intention that she be “a help-meet to Man,” Makin again adds a religious weight to her overarching argument that women possess the natural capability and desire to learn.¹²⁰ She consistently reaffirms this ontological claim while pointing out the ways in which society’s limits on the education of women are in conflict with women’s inherent nature, abilities, and aspirations.

“WOMEN THUS EDUCATED”: MAKIN AND VAN SCHURMAN IN CONTEXT

Although it is difficult to know whether or not either Makin or Van Schurman read the writings of earlier female authors, there are striking similarities between their essays and the work of Christine de Pizan, the early fifteenth-century author of “The Book of the City of Ladies” (1405), that indicate Makin and Van Schurman may have been inspired by earlier proto-feminist writers. For example, a significant portion of de Pizan’s book is composed of lists of learned women. Women named and embodying Reason, Rectitude, and Justice present these lists of accomplished women to the main character, Christine. The women described by these personified virtues are drawn from classical myth and history alike, ranging from regent queens to Christian martyrs.¹²¹ The inclusion of these women and their achievements is meant to illustrate the natural intellectual capabilities of women, which de Pizan attributes to God. Makin also uses this same strategy of listing dozens of accomplished women and their achievements to demonstrate women’s many scholarly successes throughout history, and even mentions some of the same individuals, including Zenobia, the Roman ruler of Palmyra, and Sappho the ancient

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 36, 41.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹²¹ Christine de Pizan, “The Book of the City of Ladies, 1405” in *The Essential Feminist Reader*, ed. Estelle B. Freedman (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 7.

Greek poet.¹²² Although Van Schurman does not include lists of accomplished women, she, like de Pizan, emphasizes women's natural, God-given "desire of knowledge."¹²³ Unlike Makin, neither de Pizan nor Van Schurman articulate specific divisions between different "types" of women; instead, both present women collectively, implying that there is a single, universal conception of womanhood in which all women are connected to God, their Creator, who planted within them an innate, natural desire for education.

Religion is central to de Pizan's narrative of female intellectual achievement being a result of "the natural behavior and character of women."¹²⁴ Similarly, connection to the divine is the foundation of Makin's ranking of academic subjects and Van Schurman's reasoning as to why women ought to be educated. This focus on the religious importance and purpose of education echoes Humanist ideals, which emphasized the role of education in one's moral development. Makin and Van Schurman argue that prohibiting the education of women prevents them from achieving both their intellectual and spiritual potential, shortchanging women on all the benefits that education would bring to their household and, according to Makin, their nation at large.¹²⁵

In addition to this religious reasoning, de Pizan also makes an ontological argument by asserting that "if it were customary to send daughters to school like sons, and if they were then taught the natural sciences, they would learn as thoroughly and understand the subtleties of all the arts and sciences as well as sons."¹²⁶ By juxtaposing women's natural "inclinations" with society's limiting customs, de Pizan claims that God "could not go wrong in anything;" rather, it

¹²² Makin, *An Essay*, 9; de Pizan, "The Book of the City of Ladies," 55.

¹²³ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 9.

¹²⁴ De Pizan, "The Book of the City of Ladies," 4.

¹²⁵ Makin, *An Essay*, 28.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

is the fault of society, not divinity, that women are denied educational opportunities.¹²⁷ This sentiment is echoed by both Van Schurman and Makin. Van Schurman claims that “a Maid hath naturally a desire [to study] Arts and Sciences” and that this desire is acceptable “because Nature doth nothing in vain.”¹²⁸ She also states that “no man can tightly judge of our Inclination to studies, before he hath encouraged us... to set upon them.”¹²⁹ Taken together, these arguments imply that it is society’s restrictions, not women’s natural abilities, that prevent them from educational opportunity. Makin likewise attributes women’s natural intellectual ability to God, saying, “Had God intended Women only as a finer sort of Cattle, he would not have made them reasonable.”¹³⁰ She also consistently identifies society’s lack of educational opportunities for women as a “Bad Custom” in which they are “kept ignorant, on purpose to be made slaves.”¹³¹ Both Makin and Van Schurman appear to have built upon de Pizan’s earlier ontological arguments that women’s desire and ability to study are natural and God-given, and that it is society’s negative customs that limit these inherent capabilities by preventing women from achieving their intellectual potential.¹³²

Although some of Makin and Van Schurman’s contemporary female thinkers, such as Margaret Cavendish, also discussed the metaphysics of womanhood, not all of them seemed to advocate the education of women as explicitly as Makin and Van Schurman did. Cavendish, mentioned in Makin’s essay as “the present Dutchess of New-Castle,” was a prolific writer in a variety of genres, including poetry, plays, letters, essays, orations, biographies, memoirs, and

¹²⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹²⁸ Van Schurman, *The Learned Maid*, 8.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹³⁰ Makin, *An Essay*, 23.

¹³¹ Ibid., 5.

¹³² Ibid., 30, 34.

works of fiction.¹³³ Some of her writings, particularly her plays and fictional narratives, explore themes of womanhood and female agency. Her two-part play, *Bell in Campo* (1662), dramatizes the heroic deeds of an army of women, whom she calls “heroickesses,” led by Lady Victoria.¹³⁴ This female general asserts that women are not naturally inferior to men, and, in a tone reminiscent of de Pizan, Van Schurman, and Makin’s treatises, insists that if women had the same opportunity for education as men, they would prove “as good Souldiers and Privy Counsellors, Rulers and Commanders, Navigators and Architectors... as men are.”¹³⁵ Similarly, in her play *The Unnatural Tragedy* (1662), published in the same collection as *Bell in Campo*, a group of women known as “the Sociable Virgins” spend a significant amount of the play debating philosophical, historical, and political topics. They conclude that “if women were imploy’d in the Affairs of State, the World would live more happily.”¹³⁶ Such assertions of natural female ability throughout Cavendish’s narratives and plays echo the sentiments found in the writings of de Pizan, Makin, and Van Schurman.

Identifying Cavendish as a proto-feminist writer can be complicated because, on the surface, she does not always appear to consistently support the idea of innate female capability. For example, some of the fictional speakers in her philosophical writings make contradictory statements concerning women’s intellectual capacities and inherent virtues, or even argue against women’s abilities. These capabilities and virtues (or lack thereof) are discussed in her 1662 *Oration of Divers Sorts*, composed of seven speeches delivered by seven orators. While one

¹³³ Ibid., 10; Brandie R. Siegfried, “Introduction: The Other Voice” in *Poems and Fancies with The Animal Parliament*, ed. Brandie R. Siegfried (Toronto, Ontario: Iter Press, 2018), 1.

¹³⁴ Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille, “Margaret Cavendish’s *Femmes Fortes*: The Paradoxes of Female Heroism in *Bell in Campo* (1662),” *Revue de la Société d’études anglo-américaines des XVII et XVIII siècles* Vol. 73 (2016): 243-265.

¹³⁵ Jacqueline Pearson, ““Women May Discourse...as Well as Men’: Speaking and Silent Women in the Plays of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* Vol. 4, No. 1 (1985): 33.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 33.

orator states that women's lack of intellectual achievement is a result of their natural inferiority to men, the next, like Lady Victoria, argues that women might be capable of achieving as much as men if society offered them the opportunity to participate in traditionally masculine activities and institutions – an argument reminiscent of those of Makin and Van Schurman in that it contrasts the intrinsic intelligence of women with the limited opportunities afforded them by society's "bad Customs."¹³⁷ The following orator, however, contradicts this statement, claiming that if women were to imitate men in this way, they would become "hermaphroditical," or something other than a woman.¹³⁸ On the surface, this position might lead the casual reader to think that Cavendish's understanding of the metaphysics of womanhood does not allow for any transgression of traditionally gender-specific qualities or activities; however, a more careful reading of the orators' opposing statements in relation to one another (rather than simply focusing on a single oration) reveals a more feminist approach in which Cavendish actually points out that theories of feminine inferiority are grounded in society's flawed practices rather than the true ontology of women. In other philosophical writings, she more explicitly articulates her beliefs concerning the nature of women, asserting that all creatures and sexes are made of the same fundamental matter, and that matter is inherently intelligent. Ontologically, then, men and women are made of the same intelligent matter and therefore possess equal intellectual ability.

While it may initially appear that only in her fiction does Cavendish explore expanded ideas of women's intellectual abilities and offer a more progressive vision of the metaphysics of womanhood, these writings may be understood as a demonstration of her overarching "belief that women and men are for the most part equal in terms of their abilities and capacities" – an

¹³⁷ Makin, *An Essay*, 34.

¹³⁸ Eugene Marshall, "Margaret Cavendish," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource*, accessed 29 Nov 2019, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/cavend-m/#SH3c>.

effective illustration of the ways in which women could thrive if they lived in a social environment that embraced, rather than limited, their natural abilities.¹³⁹ Rather than discussing concrete possibilities regarding the expansion of the education of women, as Makin and Van Schurman do, Cavendish “craft[s] imaginary worlds that serve as an effective model for how our world might be very different” if society allowed women greater autonomy, authority, and opportunities to develop their abilities.¹⁴⁰ While Cavendish primarily illustrates how intellectual, social, and political possibilities for female success can exist in imagined spaces, she also “explain[s] how the shared world of reality is always a layered world of imagined possibilities” and “advises her readers that they, too, may ‘create worlds of their own.’”¹⁴¹ Although she utilizes a different literary genre than that employed by Makin and Van Schurman, Cavendish echoes some of the same metaphysical ideas – namely, that society’s practices do not match what could or should be, particularly with regards to women’s inherent capabilities.

While Makin and Van Schurman were perhaps unique among their contemporaries in systematically arguing that women deserve to be educated, later proto-feminist writers in addition to Cavendish also affirm women’s natural intellectual abilities in similar ways. For instance, in her 1694 “A Serious Proposal to the Ladies,” Mary Astell argues that because God “has given Women as well as Men intelligent Souls” and “not denied [women] the faculty of Thinking,” women deserve the opportunity to develop their minds.¹⁴² She seeks to provide greater educational opportunity to women herself by articulating her plans to establish a Protestant seminary for women. Like Van Schurman and Makin, she emphasizes the primarily

¹³⁹ David Cunning, “The Feminist Worlds of Margaret Cavendish,” in *Worldmaking Women of Renaissance England: Female Spheres of Power in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Brandie R. Siegfried and Pamela Hammons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, “Margaret Cavendish.”; Siegfried, “Introduction,” 3.

¹⁴² Mary Astell, “A Serious Proposal to the Ladies,” in *The Essential Feminist Reader*, ed. Estelle B. Freedman (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 22.

religious role of education in helping women to “contemplate[e] Truth” and resist “a thousand seductions and mistakes.”¹⁴³ She rephrases Makin’s desire to “expel that cloud of Ignorance, which Custom has involv’d us in,” following Makin and de Pizan’s precedent of holding society’s negative “customs” responsible for women’s lack of educational opportunity.¹⁴⁴ Makin and Van Schurman’s treatises built on the general themes and specific arguments found in the writings of earlier female scholars, including the perceived disparity between the ontological and cultural metaphysics of womanhood, particularly society’s limited educational opportunities for women, and inspired later proto-feminist writers to incorporate and expand on these same ideas.

EDUCATION: “THE ONLY WEAPON WOMEN HAVE TO DEFEND THEMSELVES WITH”

Makin and Van Schurman, two of the most highly educated women of their time, both drew from and built on the works of earlier proto-feminist scholars to call for the expanded education of women. Later authors likewise echoed their assertions of women’s natural desire for and ability to succeed in intellectual pursuits, the accomplishment of which would be possible if they were provided with the educational opportunities necessary for such achievements. Despite the role they played in the development of transnational proto-feminist thought, however, Makin and Van Schurman are largely ignored and excluded from the broader historical narrative of women’s education. The close examination of their writings within their specific historical context reveals how these proto-feminist authors argued in favor of women’s education, and how their social, religious, and Humanist atmosphere influenced their arguments and their understanding of the discrepancy between the ontological and cultural metaphysics of womanhood.

The issue of religion, particularly as it related to the sometimes volatile conflict between

¹⁴³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 22.

Catholics and Protestants in the late seventeenth century, is key to Makin's understanding of education, which was also influenced by the earlier writings of Humanist thinkers, who emphasized the connection between education and moral development. A close reading of Makin's essay in relation to Van Schurman's reveals not only the importance of these themes to both authors, but the presence of partisan arguments within Makin's writings. She wrote in a Protestant manner, emphasizing the achievements of Protestant women while excluding those of Catholic women, for a Protestant audience concerned with piety in the home and protection against the sin of idleness and heresies. Van Schurman likewise emphasized religious themes in her consistent assertion of women's natural, God-given desires for education and the importance of studying scripture.

Although Makin's essay may initially seem to invoke a universal conception of the ontological metaphysics of womanhood, her repeated references to supposed inherent distinctions between women of lower social classes and elite women imply that only those women with "good natural parts" possess the natural abilities necessary for success in education, ultimately indicating that she does not have a universal concept of womanhood. Her understanding of the ways in which socioeconomic class generally evinces one's natural intellectual abilities (or lack thereof) reveals significant limitations in her otherwise progressive vision for the expansion of women's education. Although her argument seems to be primarily focused on class differences as a reflection of inherent ability, she does not explicitly preclude the idea that if a woman possesses both "good natural parts" and the opportunity to learn, she ought to be educated even if she is not part of the upper echelons of society.¹⁴⁵ Examining the

¹⁴⁵ Makin, *An Essay*, 22. She also warns, however, that "*Ex quovis ligno non fit Minerva*," meaning one cannot make a Minerva (goddess of wisdom) out of a stick of wood – a warning that those women who are "of low Parts, though they have opportunity," regardless of whether they are rich or poor, simply cannot reach the same intellectual heights as women who are inherently more capable of educational achievement.

ways in which the subject of language learning is discussed in the work of Makin and Van Schurman highlights the same themes of religion and class in a new, narrower context currently at the forefront of scholarship while also providing some insight into contemporary teaching methods. Although Makin's identification of "good" and "bad" customs is clearly shaped by her unique social and historical context, her essay represents a multifaceted, erudite argument for the education of elite women in early modern England – an argument echoed by proto-feminist writers who came after her.

While it is difficult to know whether or not these medieval and early modern female authors read one another's writings, a careful analysis of their works reveals transnational connections in the development of proto-feminist thought regarding the expanded education of women. Makin and Van Schurman's use of accepted scholarly patterns of persuasion and authoritative reasoning coupled with their insistence that "there is in *all* [emphasis added] an innate desire of knowing, and the satisfying this is the greatest pleasure" created a potent new formula for demanding educational opportunities for women that shaped the trajectory of proto-feminist thought.¹⁴⁶ Again and again, they pointed out that the cultural and ontological metaphysics of womanhood were, in fact, in conflict and ought to be brought into alignment by extending educational opportunity to women, which would be accompanied by religious, economic, and societal benefits. Makin and Van Schurman themselves are an important link in the genealogy of proto-feminist thought as it progressed from the age of Humanist idealism to the early modern period, and ought to be included in modern understandings of the development of arguments in favor of women's education.

¹⁴⁶ Makin, *An Essay*, 25.

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