

Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman

Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau and George Eliot

Lesa Scholl

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VICTORIAN PROFESSIONAL WOMAN

For Mum and Dad

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Introduction

Myths of Translation

Beyond the prerogatives of patrons, clients and editors, beyond the materiality of texts, beyond the cost of their labour, translators cross and blur the lines between foreign cultural values and those of their own society.¹

While Victorian England was busily colonising the globe, a different type of colonisation was taking place within the nation's own borders, aided by cultural double agents who had been traditionally denied access to the public sphere. Some middle-class women managed to acquire a Classical education, thus exposing them to various literatures and sciences, and through this unusual privilege they were able to defy the ideological boundaries imposed on them. They were crucially positioned during the rise of the periodical press, which, due to the convention of anonymity in publishing, meant that they could stand on relatively equal professional terms with the men of letters, writing, editing, reviewing and translating. This development took place amid a dramatic shift in scholarship, with a renewed interest in radical French and German schools of thought. Continental philosophies penetrated English shores, causing fissures of faith, understanding and cultural stability. Translation played a crucial part in this ideological invasion, creating paths of access that metaphorically reflected the physical act of colonisation.

Translation was valued professionally by women in the nineteenth century, such as Mary Howitt, who wrote to her sister in some detail of the royalties she would receive for her translations – an activity that became a kind of family business, with her also expecting her daughter to earn a significant income by translating.² Sara Coleridge also made a significant mark as a professional translator by the time she was in her early twenties, before going on to write literary reviews and edit her famous father's poetry for publication. Perhaps even more importantly, though, the ability to translate gave educated middle-class women more or less unmediated access to foreign ideas. The history of female translation is embedded in patriarchy, with many examples of women being required to learn to read (if not write or understand) classical languages specifically to aid fathers. Milton's daughters learned Latin, while in the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Jewish writer Grace Aguilar postponed her own literary activities in order to translate *Israel Defended* (1838) from the original French for her father. Similarly, Sara Coleridge gave up

¹ Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth (eds), *Translators Through History* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins Translation Library, 1995), p. 191.

² Linda Peterson, *Becoming A Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 37.

her own literary aspirations in her ‘quest to promote her father’s genius’.³ Yet while the initial purpose in these cases may have been to serve the patriarchal figure, for some women learning foreign languages meant that they could access alternative cultural ideologies. In this way, they were learning about innovative philosophies from other societies through a discourse that was relatively untouched by Victorian codes of morality. By exploring the continental philosophies that were emerging and being rediscovered, especially from Germany and France, women who could translate were empowered to imagine a different discourse and ideological space.

Beyond being able to read the foreign text in the original, in taking on the role of translation, the female writer engages in a subversive act – even more so when that translation becomes a published text. Louis Kelly argues that translation is a form of ‘literary creation’ that is the result of a relationship between the translator and the original text, or the translator and the original author.⁴ Therefore, the resulting text does not belong solely to the original author, but to both the author and the translator, for it is the product of their dialogic relationship. Translation has historically been defined as a derivative form of authorship, ‘a “mechanical” rather than a “creative” process, within the competence of anyone with a basic grounding in a language other than their own’.⁵ Yet, as Susan Bassnett suggests, these conclusions are a result of looking at ‘the *product* only, the end result of the translation process and not the process itself’.⁶ Even putting aside the pragmatic and political exchanges between editors, reviewers, readers and translators that complicate the reproduction of the text, such conceptions of translation as derivative neglect the very real power the translator possesses to subvert the original author’s message. While translation depends on ‘pre-existing cultural materials’, that is, the contents of the original text, these materials are carefully ‘selected by the author [translator], arranged in order of priority, and rewritten (or elaborated) according to specific values’.⁷ The translator, bringing his or her own system of cultural values to the space of the text, is required to be more self-consciously aware of how these cultural materials operate – both the original author’s and their own – to create a translation that is valid in terms of the original, but also useful and accessible to the translator’s audience. It is in this aspect that the translator’s mediation of the text is most marked: where an original author might attempt to ignore cultural influences by claiming inspiration and imagination, the translator acknowledges and studies these influences, thereby mastering them in a way that enables him or her to manipulate and rewrite.

³ Joanne Wilkes, *Women Reviewing Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Critical Reception of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010), p. 38.

⁴ Louis G. Kelly, *The True Interpreter: A History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p. 44.

⁵ Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (3rd ed., London: Methuen, 2002), p. 12.

⁶ Bassnett’s ital., *ibid.*

⁷ Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 43.

Translators access their authority through this role of rewriting. Translation is not just linguistic transmission, but an ambiguous, problematic and sometimes acrimonious cultural exchange. The problems of cultural dominance and politically loaded interpretations of texts is challenging enough when communicating via a single national language, but within the act of translation this problem is further complicated: two cultures, two languages and two imperialistic voices vie for dominance. Regardless of the translator's claims of fidelity, or even the desire to be faithful to the original, the angst and agenda of the translator protrude upon the competitive arena of authorship, which is already occupied by the original text. Translation therefore becomes a work of authorship in its own right: a rewriting of a text that carries the cultural ideology both of the first author and the second, and displaying the tensions between them. Moreover, the first author's voice can only be heard through the interpretative medium of the second, thus the original author is at the mercy of the translator. As mediators between cultures, and between authors and a distanced readership, translators manipulate and direct their readers through their dialogue with the original text.

That a nineteenth-century woman should enter into such a role seems radical enough; in translating a celebrated male philosopher, for example, she enters into an intimate discourse with him, often challenging and critiquing the ideas presented, so they become nuanced by her in translation. The women that I address in this study – Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau and George Eliot – demonstrated the capacity to rewrite texts and discourses, thereby making them their own. Moreover, they were able to support themselves with their writing, and did not remain restricted to the conventional boundaries of discourse in which nineteenth-century middle-class women writers were permitted or expected to engage. They were well-travelled, and refused to limit their scope – in their writing as in life – to the domestic hearth. They did not ignore the domestic space, but reworked it, providing possible alternatives to the claustrophobic private sphere.

Shifting Values

Feminism has imposed a fresh filter on translation studies by exploring the way that the misplaced belief in translation's derivativity created an ideological space for female writers. Recently, some feminist translation theorists have stated that throughout history, women have been permitted to act as translators because it was deemed a properly submissive role: the translator must submit to the original male author. In *Gender and Translation*, Sherry Simon draws attention to the specific tendency throughout Judeo-Christian Western history to link women to the act of translation as both inferior and derivative. As woman was derived from man, so is translation derived from the original: 'Translators and women have historically been the weaker figures in their respective hierarchies: translators are handmaidens to authors, women inferior to men'.⁸ The act of translation has proven to be not

⁸ Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 1.

one of subservience; yet this myth has traditionally made room for women writers to take on a role that inadvertently gives them a public voice.

As the education of women gradually increased, they were encouraged to translate. Even in the Middle Ages, this activity was becoming 'a permissible form of public expression' for women, where other avenues for authorship were denied.⁹ My focus on the nineteenth century is pertinent because it was the age when the controversy over women's education was at its peak. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and other late eighteenth-century treatises were succeeded by the medical debates of the mid- to late-nineteenth century regarding the biological fitness of girls to be educated – a discourse that included works such as Edward H. Clarke's infamous *Sex in Education; or a Fair Chance for the Girls* (1873). At the same time, the ideology of translation was changing in line with the kinds of texts that were being translated and, significantly, the devolution of the authority of the English Church. This junction is critical, for ideas of translation and of being faithful to the original text were rooted in biblical translation, motivated by the desire for the scriptures to be accessible in the vernacular and defined by the need for absolute word-for-word accuracy in transcribing the words of God. Bassnett and Lefevere argue that since the late-twentieth century

it is because the Bible no longer exerts such a powerful influence as a sacred text in the West to the extent it once did, that thinking about translation has been able to move away from the increasingly sterile 'faithful/free' opposition, and that it has been able to redefine equivalence, which is no longer seen as the mechanical matching of words in dictionaries, but rather as a strategic choice made by translators. What had changed is that one type of faithfulness (the one commonly connected with equivalence) is no longer imposed on translators. Rather, they are free to opt for the kind of faithfulness that will ensure, in their opinion, that a given text is received by the target audience in optimal conditions.¹⁰

I argue, however, that rather than being a modern development, this reconceptualising of translation began with the move away from the Church in the nineteenth century, beginning in the late-eighteenth century, as revealed in the writings of both men and women of the time. Hilary Fraser notes that in the nineteenth century, the 'Bible was ... for the first time criticised as a work of literature', a move that completely altered the way the text was approached.¹¹ Matthew Arnold, for example, argued that the Bible should be considered in poetic terms, rather than scientific, factual terms: 'The language of the Bible, then, is literary, not scientific language; language *thrown out* at an object of consciousness

⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁰ Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), p. 3.

¹¹ Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 2.

not fully grasped, which inspired emotion'.¹² He goes further in *God and the Bible*, reiterating the literary rather than factual nature of biblical language: 'it is the language of poetry and emotion, *approximate* language thrown out, as it were, at certain great objects which the human mind augurs and feels after, and thrown out by men very liable, many of them, to delusion and error'.¹³ Arnold 'demythologise[s]' the text, opening the Bible up to criticism where before it could not be touched: it becomes a dynamic work of poetry and metaphorical description, rather than an immovable, unalterable sacred text.¹⁴ This move has implications for translation, for the role of interpretation and criticism becomes paramount in the same way that it is for other literary texts: the translator is no longer bound by the desire – indeed, the biblical command – not to alter the word of God.

Fraser suggests that the 'cultural conditions' of 'the decline of Christianity in the mid-Victorian period induced by the combined forces of scientific discovery and German biblical criticism' were instrumental in forming the philosophical perspectives of Arnold and many of his contemporaries.¹⁵ The role of German scholarship is of particular interest, as without being translated, it would not have been able to have the same effect on English culture. Indeed, Fraser goes on to say that 'the acceptance of modern German philosophical thought in England was slow and limited' until George Eliot's translation of Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* was published in 1846, a text that had 'a devastating effect on Victorian faith'.¹⁶ That this translated text was the 'first piece of German historical criticism to be read on any scale in England', and that Arnold's literary approach to the Bible is closely related to Strauss's criticism,¹⁷ succinctly shows the way that translation and biblical criticism intersect in the nineteenth century to redefine English culture, a connection that has implications beyond theoretical conceptions of literary and religious translation. By encountering and rewriting the cultural values of German criticism into English, translators like Eliot were 'not merely exploring unknown cultural territories' but 'chang[ing] the perspectives of their own communities' toward the sacredness not only of the text, but of religion itself.¹⁸ Consequently, the meaning and role of translation changed, as translators began to explore poetic expression with freedom, rather than being bound by the need for spiritual authorisation. This cultural invasion would remain a point of contention in English society, as the fear of German philosophies and morality rapidly increased in the conventional public mind.

¹² Arnold's ital., Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma: An Essay Towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1873), p. 30.

¹³ My ital., Matthew Arnold, *God and the Bible: A Sequel to 'Literature and Dogma'* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1884), p. 6.

¹⁴ Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, p. 165.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 168.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Delisle and Woodsworth, *Translators Through History*, p. 191.

The Translator's Precedence

Apart from the social impact on religious belief, the changing perspective on literary criticism and translation also influenced the way translation was seen as an intellectual activity. Previously, translation had been useful in cultivating one's own writing form and style; yet the nineteenth century saw a new focus, as the translator was invited to share with the original author what the *translator* 'deem[ed] to be an enriching experience, either on moral or aesthetic grounds'.¹⁹ Thus the translator's values take precedence over those of the original author. Also, by translating texts from modern languages, the cultures they explored became more pertinent. They were no longer examining static historical texts, but texts originating from places they could actually visit, written by people whom they could, potentially, meet. The ideas presented were current and dynamic; they were a part of contemporaneous debates and dialogues in which the translator could take part and critique in a way that could effect real cultural change. By translating foreign perspectives on issues such as the position of women, slavery, colonisation, poverty and class, they significantly widened the debates and became, to an extent, the English spokesperson for these ideas. This role even led in some cases, especially for Martineau, to direct correspondence and dialogue with key institutional and governmental figures, including estate owners, professors, members of Parliament, presidents and even monarchs. With this development in the nineteenth century, the translation of a foreign text was given an intellectual and cultural rationale. Rather than being merely auxiliary to the traditional studies of literary forms, translation takes on a discrete value as the translator enters into a cultural and ideological discourse with the original author. Thus the act of translation is a key to cultural identification, and the identity of self within that cultural context. Once literary translation has been entered into, the boundaries of the self and the other must be redefined, much as if the translator had physically encountered the foreign place.

Translation played an essential part in promoting the literary careers of Brontë, Martineau and Eliot. From Brontë's work as a student and teacher in Belgium and the translational infusion of French Romanticism in her novels, to Martineau's and Eliot's published translations of European philosophers and scholars, these women actively worked with current discourses and texts to rewrite foreign cultural ideas in order to influence their home culture. Yet they not only drew foreign concepts into England, they travelled abroad, going outside their known culture in order to experience and explore other social and cultural contexts. In the foreign place, even more than in reading foreign texts, they were required to confront cultural alternatives and contend with them on a new level. They then wrote back from a new place of dislocation between the known and the unknown, the domestic and the foreign, in order to unsettle the boundaries that were imposed upon them, first affecting their individual roles in society and the literary world, but also having wider implications for women's roles in general.

¹⁹ Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, p. 72.

The power to mediate, reinterpret and lead the reader gives the translator the authority to redefine both the home culture and the foreign on their own terms. Brontë, Martineau and Eliot did not read foreign texts merely for their own intellectual development, but used their experiences and knowledge to speak to their home nation. With the access they had to the foreign, they were able to articulate ideological alternatives to Victorian ideas through their roles as professional writers. The influence of translation can be seen in all aspects of their writing, from the topics they engage in to the cultural self-consciousness in their style. By translating both literary and cultural ideas, these women gained real authority in the public sphere – an ironic move, given the apparently derivative nature of translation. Their professional voices were thus justified from a highly educated position that was vastly removed from the self-deprecatory claims of many of their contemporary women writers. For Brontë, Martineau and Eliot, their need to speak was not due to some kind of unfeminine weakness for which they needed to apologise, but to their possession of knowledge that needed to be publicly shared. They brought to the literary world perspectives that were unique to their experiences as both linguistic and cultural translators: experiences that liberated them personally in many ways from the closed sphere of middle-class imperialist Victorian ideology, which was steeped with moral and cultural conservatism.

The overall structure of this study reflects the professional and intellectual development of these women in terms of their access and approach to foreign texts. Part 1, 'Learning the Language of Transgression', contextualises them as students of foreign languages and cultures. The texts they read provided a degree of intellectual and ideological freedom from the constraints of Victorian convention. Yet, like the relationship between the original author of a text and a translator, the relationships of these students to their masters (both in the classroom and in the text) were not passive, but dialogic and often traumatic. This section explores not only the empowering influence of the foreign culture, but also the dynamic relationship between the master and the student as the student learns to appropriate the master's authority. This relationship becomes a metaphor for the way the translator appropriates the authority of the original text before rewriting it as her own.

Part 2, 'Beyond Translation', explores the ways in which being known as a translator could become a pathway to other forms of literary recognition, as it clearly did for George Eliot. Becoming, in a sense, a master of translation, Eliot played a significant role at the *Westminster Review* in, for example, being largely responsible for choosing the translator for Comte's *Positive Philosophy* – although her disapproval of Martineau did not prevent the latter from acquiring the role. Eliot, first known as the 'translator of Strauss', was able to delve into areas of journalism, editing and reviewing, particularly dealing with new translations and the subjects they addressed, such as philosophy and art. The periodical press in itself played an important role in the popular translation of new ideas, hence the extremely successful career of Harriet Martineau. Martineau's career as a journalist began well before her published translation of Comte, yet in her *Autobiography*

she notes the role translating texts played in her intellectual advancement. It is also clear that her translation of Comte was instrumental in cultivating many significant business connections that enabled her to develop professionally, both as a writer and as a businesswoman. Both Martineau and Eliot became key decision-makers in varying capacities at the *Westminster Review*.

The inclusion of Charlotte Brontë in this study is not as obvious in comparison to the resonance between Eliot and Martineau. This is mostly due to Brontë's conscious avoidance of the periodical press and her geographical isolation in Haworth. Yet while she did not write for periodicals as a professional author, she was highly aware of the workings of the press, due to reading many journals along with her family from childhood, and creating her own forms of private journalism with her siblings. Interestingly, she participated in the wider literary sphere by being a private reader for her publishers, Smith, Elder & Co. Although this work was unpaid, it meant that Brontë had some influence over publications, including the works of key figures such as William Makepeace Thackeray, and even Martineau, for whom she attempted to support the publication of a second novel, *Oliver Weld*. Brontë was also, like Martineau, a strong businesswoman, as seen in her letters to publishers: she understood the business of writing. Her time in Belgium was crucial in developing her professional skills, although her letter to her aunt when requesting the funds to travel abroad shows she already possessed the ability to present a sound business proposal. The growing authority in the careers of Brontë, Martineau and Eliot can be seen in their willingness to confront literary men, both in letters and in print. They questioned and critiqued texts and their authors, thus entering an extensive literary and social dialogue both at home and abroad.

For all three women, travelling abroad is a defining factor. In Part 3, 'Vacating the Hearth', I argue that by engaging with foreign cultures within the foreign land, Martineau, Eliot and Brontë redefine their sphere. It is through travel that they develop their own voices: Martineau, already famous for her views on political economy, becomes a controversial travel writer as she speaks directly on the position of women and slaves; Marian Evans, translator, editor and reviewer, becomes George Eliot, a writer whose travels help her redefine the Victorian novel, especially the 'silly novels' written by female novelists; and Charlotte Brontë, teacher and student as a temporary resident in Belgium, becomes a novelist who constructs provoking images of womanhood for her home nation, often displacing them into the foreign culture. In this way, they acquire their own authority as writers who are significantly influenced by their encounters with both the texts and culture of the foreign place. Their travels, together with the influences of German and French philosophers, are evident throughout their works. Through their textual and physical encounters with the foreign place, these women wrote back to their nation, penetrating and overturning conventional ideas of womanhood, class, empire and identity. As Englishwomen and as translators, they had a vested interest in seeing alternative ideologies invade their nation's shores, playing a significant role in changing the dominant culture of Victorian England through an onslaught of genres and intellectual streams.

PART 1

Learning the Language of Transgression

Inasmuch as young men go into offices where they have to conduct foreign correspondence, and, as they travel about all over the world, they are taught the dead languages. As woman's place is the domestic hearth, and as middle class women rarely see a foreigner, they are taught modern languages with a special view to facility in speaking.

—Emily Davies, *The Higher Education of Women*
(London: Alexander Strahan, 1866), p. 132.

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Chapter 1

Masters at Home

In 1866, Emily Davies criticised the irrationality of teaching middle-class women modern languages when social convention would not permit them to venture beyond the domestic hearth. This kind of education, however, even though it was considered less important than learning the classical languages, actually provided a loophole for some women to enter the public sphere as prominent literary figures. Apart from opening up practical career opportunities for women, the study of languages also opened their minds to the philosophies and ideologies explicated in foreign texts, enabling them to explore previously unknown cultural ideas, as well as providing them with alternative means of self-expression. The study of languages took women beyond their instructors by giving them independent access to ideas that were outside their current cultural sphere.

The language master initially has the power to choose the cultural material presented in the foreign language, although as the pupil masters the language, they can access other texts without assistance or further mediation. The relationship can never be clear cut, though: ‘the language of another becomes our own when we begin to speak to ourselves as others first spoke to us’.¹ There is the potential for originality in owning the language, yet also the risk of still being defined by the influential material choices of the master. Within this conflict of roles, the significance of educational development in constructing identity becomes clear: as the pupil models him- or herself on the master, emulating the authority displayed, the master manifestly loses power as the pupil seeks to obtain it, for the identity of the master is interdependent with that of the pupil. The pupil desires to learn from the master, not just information, but how to engage in their authority, which symbolises success. This internalisation of knowledge is an act of translation in itself, as the pupil takes the material and, in effect, rewrites it as his or her own. As pupils grow in knowledge (and consequent authority), they seek to go beyond the master, and begin to resist the master’s role in relation to themselves. Their movement from participation in the act of learning to taking responsibility for that learning marks their departure from dependence on the master for knowledge and status. It is essential for this resistance to occur, for in seeking to take on the master’s role, the pupil must relinquish the pupil identity: the roles become mutually exclusive.

The development of a second language enables the pupil to establish a new sense of self that identifies with the culture of the second language as well as the first. This new identification broadens the field of perception to encapsulate

¹ Bonnie E. Litowitz, ‘Deconstruction in the Zone of Proximal Development’, in E. Forman, N. Minick and C.A. Stone (eds), *Contexts for Learning: Sociocultural Dynamics in Children’s Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 184–96, p. 188.

the experiences of the other culture: the pupil can call upon a second 'cultural repertoire'.² There is some limit to this development, in that the pupil has not been exposed to the other culture in the same way, or for as long, as to the home culture and language; however, depending on the type of exposure given, the pupil who becomes fluent in the language, experiencing immersion either through textual and theoretical experience or through travel, is able to develop a stronger mastery of self that is less dependent on the ideologies of their home culture. Even more interesting, a dynamic combination of the two cultures enables the pupil to transgress the cultural boundaries almost at will. Through this transgression, they expose the boundaries, even becoming, as Homi Bhabha suggests, the markers of those shifting perimeters,³ thus claiming mastery and authorship of them. In this way, the pupil goes beyond embodying both cultures, permeating the limitations set by the master. These limits are both secured and resisted through the medium of language. Access to other languages, therefore, means access to other forms of teaching and learning. It is this factor which culturally empowers the educated nineteenth-century woman.

Exploring ideas through another language enabled such women to recreate themselves, which often led them to rebel against their masters. This rebellion is outworked through the pupil's desire to become the master, or at least to take on the authority of mastery, a redefinition that the master, more often than not, resists. A dynamic interplay is thus created, which is similar to that existing between the translator and author in literary and philosophical translation. There is a direct correlation between the translator's activity in taking a text and transforming its content, and the pupils who take and interpret their master's knowledge before recreating it as their own once they have assumed the master's role. In effect, the master provides the pupil with access to cultural capital, which the pupil then appropriates in order to establish his or her own social and intellectual position.

André Lefevere speaks of cultural capital as 'the kind of capital intellectuals still claim to have ... as opposed to economic capital ... Cultural capital is what makes you acceptable in your society at the end of the socialisation process known as education',⁴ while according to the Russian developmental psychologist Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, who founded sociocultural psychology, 'human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them'.⁵ Yet although in some contexts it seems that the master/pupil relationship presupposes an unequal exchange between an authority figure and an eager, submissive inquisitor, by mastering cultural

² Stuart Hall, 'New Cultures for Old', in Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (eds), *A Place in the World? Places, Culture and Globalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 175–213, p. 206.

³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 164.

⁴ Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), p. 42.

⁵ L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 88.

capital, the pupil not only gains knowledge, but acquires a level of authority in the wider sphere of society. Vygotsky's idea turns on the word 'presupposes'. It could suggest that the submission of the pupil is necessary for learning; but the reader must also confront the *assumption* that the pupil is always, to some degree, dependent on the master, and therefore grows to fill a predetermined space of learning – that is, the already existing intellectual space of those who influence and teach them. Significantly, the mastery of languages enables pupils to access not only the authority available in their own culture, but also the cultural values of the foreign texts they read and translate. The pupil can then take on the political task of mediating between the two cultures. This act of mediation is always one of dialogue and a certain level of cultural exchange. The mediator is a translator, one who is able to create understanding across previously uncrossed boundaries.

With language providing access to other cultural spheres, these boundaries could be, and were, penetrated by women such as Brontë, Martineau and Eliot. Their respective educations, often self-motivated, reveal the value of mastering the master by determining their own potential and development. They took the knowledge given by their masters – specifically the knowledge of the languages they studied – and went beyond their masters by independently using those skills to master the cultures and ideologies to which those languages gave them access. Through seeking to take on the master's role, rather than just the knowledge belonging to the master, these women overstepped the immediate boundaries imposed upon them. Apart from biographical and autobiographical writings, the translational activities entered into by Brontë, Martineau and Eliot show the influence of these texts on the translators, as well as the way they entered into dialogue with the originals. Furthermore, the depictions of masters and pupils in their fiction reveal a great deal regarding the way these women positioned themselves both as pupils and educators; for while, unlike Brontë, Eliot and Martineau were never employed as teachers, they very clearly saw it as their role to educate their readership. All three women make the move from translator to author, thereby enacting the desired progression from pupil to master.

The middle-class woman of the mid-nineteenth century would generally receive a certain level of education, but it would not necessarily be equal to that of her brothers, nor would it give her much freedom to use that education beyond the family hearth. Indeed, the master is often also the father, educating his daughters alongside his sons until the sons go to school; thus the metaphor of the master fathering knowledge becomes even more bound to female learning: the father teaches his daughter, as we see in Eliot's *Romola* (1862–63), perhaps to a level of usefulness to himself; yet she is still bound by his authority, as well as the sense of duty imposed upon her by the wider cultural milieu. Sending one's daughter to boarding school, however, disrupted these ties to the hearth. Kathryn Hughes comments:

The scorn of conservative commentators was aimed particularly at farmers' daughters who, returning home from a stint at boarding school, spurned the delights of butter-making in favour of embroidery and afternoon tea with their

friends. Behind such criticism lay the paradoxical fear that once able but low-born girls were given an ornamental education, it would be impossible to tell who was a lady and who was not.⁶

For Martineau, Eliot and Brontë, boarding school played a significant role in developing both identity and intellect, and the impact of their experiences features prominently in their writings. Boarding schools temporarily removed girls, not just from the hearth (although they were in some cases seemingly designed to promote the desire to return home as quickly as possible), but from their accustomed social environment. Thus by travelling to school, a young girl was already transgressing the boundaries of her cultural knowledge. The removal to an institution apart from the home could be an empowering and enlightening situation, if at times socially and emotionally traumatic. It could also lead to a more long-term psychological separation from the family, as the young girl would be expected to be able to exist within both environments, even though the expectations were often conflicting. This separation can be seen, for example, in Martineau's and Eliot's religious turns, and Brontë's desire to travel.

Martineau was a particular anomaly in this case, as she and her sister were sent to Mr Perry's day school, which, because it was failing in numbers, began to admit girls into its ranks. Therefore, for two years Harriet and Rachel were educated alongside boys, thus receiving a 'masculine' education in that they were taught, amongst other disciplines, Latin and Classics.⁷ Martineau also gives an account of the time between attending Mr Perry's school and going to boarding school in Bristol at the age of 16, of having lessons at home with masters in Latin, French and music, as well as family readings of 'history, biography and critical literature'.⁸ She does acknowledge, however, that her particular situation was unusual; she was well aware of the stigma attached to female education from a young age: 'When I was young, it was not thought proper for young ladies to study very conspicuously; and especially with pen in hand'.⁹ Yet in terms of developing beyond her masters, it is interesting to note that she attributes her 'chief intellectual improvements' to the '*private study*' of 'analytic books, on logic and rhetoric', history and poetry.¹⁰ This claim is fascinating in the way it subverts the conventional understanding of 'private'. It can refer to the private sphere, away from the public arena, and therefore the proper place for the nineteenth-century middle-class woman; and yet there is authority in Martineau's statement, as she emphasises her independence in her learning: she was no longer in need of, or bound to, the dominance and guidance of the master. Significantly, it is also at this point

⁶ Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), p. 19.

⁷ Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography*, ed. Linda Peterson (first published 1877, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2007), p. 74.

⁸ Martineau, *Autobiography*, p. 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁰ My ital., *ibid.*, p. 94–5.