
Lisa Scholl’s excellent study *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman* sets the work in translating various texts by three canonical English writers of the nineteenth century – Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau, George Eliot – against the backdrop of Imperial colonisation and the cultural aftershock subsequent to the arrival in Victorian England of new Continental philosophical works in French and German. Scholl offers fascinating insight into the writings of Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot both within and beyond the scope of translation and explores the cultural, historical and professional implications of their work both within and beyond the era of its production.

No longer simply an adjunct of the original author’s intellectual vision, the nineteenth-century translator’s voice and values takes on greater significance in this era, not only as professional authorship in its own right, but as a significant intellectual window into the strange new world beyond the English cultural vision. By deliberately situating her subjects – Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot – as pupils to the tutelage of their linguistic masters, Scholl creates for herself an ingenious theoretical frame via which to examine the intellectual, epistemological, social and cultural implications of female writers as translators occupying the master’s role. Here, Scholl approaches the very genre of translational writing as various acts of *becoming*: textual and literal. The form offered opportunities for writing and travel that aided moving beyond the ideological imperatives then imposed on middle-class women in their *becoming* professional writers.

Scholl’s examination offers a comprehensive and insightful discussion of the ways and means of the genre of translation as writing, specifically by women professionals. As *ways*, Scholl explores the impact of translation as a rebellious act; the exploration of convictions via an alternative and perhaps even original language; the rebellion of student against master; the pupil’s exploitation of the junction between interpreting the master’s knowledge without necessarily replicating it. Scholl conceives the language of transgression in its multiplicity; the pupil’s mastery of foreign language/s; the linguistic dialogue that emerges between original and translated works; and the development of a ‘new’ language made possible by accessing foreign texts and cultures, and the implications of this writing in transgressing the boundaries of Victorian class and gender precepts. As *means*, Scholl argues that translating literary works in effect revolutionised accessing greater intellectual freedoms for women given the genre afforded them significant opportunities to travel: to directly experience foreign cultures, and to apply what Scholl terms ‘appropriating the master’s authority’; to ‘write back’ to nation while simultaneously challenging conventional ideologies of class, empire, gender and subjectivity in Victorian England.

The book is organised into three parts. Part one – ‘Learning the Language of Transgression’ – comprises two chapters considering the business of middle-class women writing beyond the domestic sphere, and how the practice itself can be characterised as an act of transgression; linguistically and socially. In the first chapter, Scholl explores the educational backgrounds of Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot (‘Masters at Home’) and offers close readings tracing pupil/master relationships in their fiction; in Eliot’s *Romola* (1862/3) and *Middlemarch* (1871/2), and in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847). In the second, Scholl accounts for the offshore pedagogic careers and activities of these women (‘Masters Abroad’).
similarly offers close readings tracking attitudes of pupil to master in their fiction and essays; in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Villette* (1853), and Brontë’s own ‘Belgian’ essays (1842/3), among others; Martineau’s translation of Comte’s *Positive Philosophy*; and Eliot’s literary relationship to David Strauss as evident in her letters (c. 1845/6), and to a lesser degree Feuerbach and Spinoza, among others. Part two – ‘Beyond Translation’ – comprises three chapters considering the movement of Scholl’s subjects from translators to commissioned authors; the intellectual and ideological realities of the nineteenth century facilitating public and professional literary opportunities for educated, middle-class women; and concludes with an overview of Martineau’s foreign travel and various writings. Part three – ‘Vacating the Hearth’ – comprises two chapters dedicated to examining the travel writing and cultural translations of Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot. Scholl explores Martineau’s American travel, her themes (e.g. slavery) and the reception of her writings (*Society in America* [1837] and *Retrospect of Western Travel* [1838] among others) as well as her travel and writing in Egypt (1847). Scholl then proceeds to examine Eliot’s Continental travels (and interest in philosophy) as represented in her journal writings and letters, and its resonance in her novels (*Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda* [1874/6], and *Romola*); and concludes with Brontë’s Belgian travels (her interest in education) and narrative reverberation (*Villette* and *The Professor*).

Scholl’s conclusion, ‘Colonising the Text,’ examines the penetration of the translator within and between texts and interweaves into the discussion a kind of implied postcolonial consciousness. The translational role emerges as dissonance: rupturing and contravening audience sensibilities as much as preconceptions of authorial control and authority.

Scholl’s close reading of a number of literary and translational texts by her central subjects are fascinating, not just in terms of their elucidative qualities, but in the fine way in which Scholl situates this writing within history, and at times juxtaposes the impact of writing generally, and translation specifically, on the various familial/professional relationships of her subjects. Scholl takes this reading one step further, however, by also exploring selected fictional works by Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot as a way of considering a kind of historiography of interpretation in their corpus of writing generally, and their novels in particular. In this way, Scholl interweaves into her study various forms of writing – fiction (novels, short stories, etc.), and non-fiction (private letters, articles, essays, reviews, intellectual works, etc.). This intertextuality in many ways illustrates and exemplifies the subversive and transgressive qualities of the genre itself: translation is never simply one text, but rather a multiplicity of defiant acts as texts and becomings.

Scholl’s is a thoughtful and skillfully researched discussion that includes a rich and impressive bibliography. Her study encourages reading and rereading the novels of Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot, as well as reading beyond them, embracing the oft-overlooked translational works of these writers. *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman* is not just a companion to colonial and postcolonial, gender, and/or nineteenth-century literary studies, but a distinctive, original, and finely crafted work of scholarship in its own right.

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