



**Literature in the Making: A History of U.S.
Literary Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century
(Oxford Studies in American Literary History)**

Nancy Glazener

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In the eighteenth century, literature meant learned writings; by the twentieth century, literature had come to be identified with imaginative, aesthetically significant works, and academic literary studies had developed special protocols for interpreting and valuing literary texts. *Literature in the Making* examines what happened in between: how literature came to be more precisely specified and valued; how it was organized into genres, canons, and national traditions; and how it became the basis for departments of modern languages and literatures in research universities.

Modern literature, the version of literature familiar today, was an international invention, but it was forged when literary cultures, traditions, and publishing industries were mainly organized nationally. *Literature in the Making* examines modern literature's coalescence and institutionalization in the United States, considered as an instructive instance of a phenomenon that was going global. Since modern literature initially offered a way to formulate the value of legacy texts by authors such as Homer, Cervantes, and Shakespeare, however, the development of literature and literary culture in the U.S. was fundamentally transnational. *Literature in the Making* argues that Shakespeare studies, one of the richest tracts of nineteenth-century U.S. literary culture, was a key domain in which literature came to be valued both for fuelling modern projects and for safeguarding values and practices that modernity put at risk—a foundational paradox that continues to shape literary studies and literary culture.

Bringing together the histories of literature's competing conceptualizations, its print infrastructure, its changing status in higher education, and its life in public culture during the long nineteenth century, *Literature in the Making* offers a robust account of how and why literature mattered then and matters now. By highlighting the lively collaboration between academics and non-academics that prevailed before the ascendancy of the research university starkly divided experts from amateurs, *Literature in the Making* also opens new possibilities for envisioning how academics might partner with the reading public.

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