

The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English



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In the one hundred and ten years covered by volume four of The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, what characterized translation was above all the move to encompass what Goethe called 'world literature'. This occurred, paradoxically, at a time when English literature is often seen as increasingly self-sufficient. In Europe, the culture of Germany was a new source of inspiration, as were the medieval literatures and the popular ballads of many lands, from Spain to Serbia. From the mid-century, the other literatures of the North, both ancient and modern, were extensively translated, and the last third of the century saw the beginning of the Russian vogue. Meanwhile, as the British presence in the East was consolidated, translation helped readers to take possession of 'exotic' non-European cultures, from Persian and Arabic to Sanskrit and Chinese. The thirty-five contributors bring an enormous range of expertise to the exploration of these new developments and of the fascinating debates which reopened old questions about the translator's task, as the new literalism, whether scholarly or experimental, vied with established modes of translation. The complex story unfolds in Britain and its empire, but also in the United States, involving not just translators, publishers, and readers, but also institutions such as the

universities and the periodical press. Nineteenth-century English literature emerges as more open to the foreign than has been recognized before, with far-reaching effects on its orientation.

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