



## 75 YEARS AGO IN THESE PAGES

*The British Museum Reading Room*

"After extensive renovations and the repair of bomb damage incurred during World War II, the famous Reading Room of the British Museum, London, has been reopened. Five million books, filling bookshelves fifty-five miles long, are at the disposal of anyone who has succeeded in getting a reader's ticket for the Reading Room of the British Museum, the world's largest library. . . . Behind the scenes, connected through an elaborate modern mechanism of lifts, trolleys, and conveyor belts, is the wealth of literature collected from every corner of the earth, in every living or dead language. . . .

The gaps [in the collection] you may discover are probably those for which the Luftwaffe is responsible. During the blitz a number of German explosive and incendiary bombs fell on and around the British Museum. A large number of volumes were destroyed, and the historical Reading Room damaged. . . .

Small wonder that for the last two hundred years many famous men of letters, British and foreign writers, politicians, and philosophers have done their research work or written their books and essays in the Reading Room. Sir Walter Scott had his customary place at this desk, Charles Darwin used to work at another; Thomas Carlyle would dig himself in at his favorite spot, behind a wall of historical works. . . . Charles Dickens and David Hume, Browning and Irving, Ruskin and Thackeray, Macaulay and Meredith—there is hardly a name from the index of English literature of the nineteenth century that cannot be found in the list of readers."

—Egon Larsen, "Fifty-Five Miles of the World's Books,"  
*Books Abroad* 22, no. 1 (Winter 1948): 14–15

PHOTO BY ERIN DOERING ON UNSPLASH

# World Literature Today

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2023  
Volume 97, Number 1

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & NEUSTADT PROFESSOR

Robert Con Davis-Undiano

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR & EDITOR IN CHIEF

Daniel Simon

MANAGING & CULTURE EDITOR

Michelle Johnson

BOOK REVIEW & ONLINE EDITOR

Rob Vollmar

ART DIRECTOR

Gayle L. Curry

PROGRAMS & DEVELOPMENT

Terri D. Stubblefield

CIRCULATION & ACCOUNTS

Kay Blunck

### EDITORIAL BOARD

Roger Allen  
Alice-Catherine Carls  
César Ferreira  
Erik Gleibermann  
George Gömöri  
Alamgir Hashmi  
Emily D. Johnson  
Farzaneh Milani  
Tanure Ojaide  
Nii Ayikwei Parkes  
Mahtem Shiferraw  
Ilan Stavans  
Michelle Yeh

### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Irene Bulla  
Kalenda Eaton  
Karlos K. Hill  
Carol Rose Little  
Marcelo Riosco  
Rhona Seidelman  
Janet Ward  
Kimberly Gail Wieser

### ADVISORY BOARD

Rilla Askew  
Nancy Barcelo  
Kyle Harper  
Jeanne Hoffman Smith  
Ed Kelley  
Alana Marie Levinson LaBrosse  
Kathy Neustadt  
Susan Neustadt Schwartz  
David Shook

### INTERNS

Brennan Clifton  
Devyn Dlugokinski  
Anne Hyslop  
Max Kriegel  
Hannah Morris-Voth  
Stevi Smith  
Julia Wu

*World Literature Today* is published at the University of Oklahoma, Norman. Postmaster: Send address changes to WLT, 630 Parrington Oval, Suite 110, Norman OK 73019-4037. Periodicals postage paid at Hanover PA 17331. Copyright © 2023 by *World Literature Today* and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma. ISSN 0196-3570 (1945-8134 online). Subscription and advertising rates are listed on our website ([worldlit.org](http://worldlit.org)) or can be obtained through the editorial office. Phone: 405.325.4531. 2,500 copies of this issue have been prepared and distributed by the Sheridan Press at no cost to the taxpayers of the State of Oklahoma. The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution.