

LOOK BACK

75 YEARS AGO IN THESE PAGES

These studies [of literature] are the food of youth, the delight of old age; the ornament of prosperity, the refuge and comfort of adversity; a delight at home, and no hindrance abroad; they are companions by night, and in travel, and in the country.

—Cicero, “For Archias,” in *Orations*, trans. C. D. Yonge

“Last night being one of those bright and windy nights when not air alone but light itself seems to blow through the open window, I lay awake—so long, in fact, that the desire for sleep was lost. There are several such nights in a year. As after prolonged fasting, the appetite vanishes; a clarity and lightness take hold of the mind. The mind itself feels swept clean to its outermost corners. But this is illusion. Some shred, unseen at first, clings like a cobweb. On such nights as this, if I am lucky enough to remember, I think of Cicero’s words. Rather, I begin by thinking of them or else end so. He is speaking of the *study* of literature, but its *production* might be included, for Archias was a poet as well as a teacher—and it is always a consolation when the mind, fumbling in the dark, strikes *pernoctant nobiscum*: the reassuring idea that literature and our literary studies spend the nights with us. And the realization that they behaved thus obligingly even twenty centuries ago.”

—Herman Salinger, “Confessions of a Translator,”
Books Abroad 22, no. 4 (Autumn 1948): 352

ERRATUM

In the September 2023 print edition, in Robert Con Davis-Undiano’s “Tribute to a Grand Lady,” we mistakenly listed Dolores K. Neustadt’s year of birth as 1920 (page 20). It should have been 1928. *WLT* regrets the error.

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