

World Literature Today



OKLAHOMA COMMEMORATIVE

ABOVE: World Literature Today editor Ivar Ivask, right, confers with 1990 laureate Tomas Tranströmer, left, and President Van Horn at ceremonies for the Neustadt International Prize for Literature.

RIGHT: Former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Carl Albert reads from his biography Little Giant, at the April dedication of the Garrard Ardeneum.



Norman, Oklahoma. The center of international literary review and discussion. Improbable, certainly. Incongruous, perhaps, even incredible—but true, nonetheless. The responsibility for this phenomenon rests with a modest quarterly publication first called *Books Abroad*, now *World Literature Today*, created and sustained by the vision, determination and integrity of a succession of modern language scholars at the University of Oklahoma.

The history of *World Literature Today* is made-to-order as a Centennial story. The green-visored Roy Temple House, OU chairman of modern languages, set out in 1927 to provide coverage of current literary activity in the major languages of the world. The project had virtually no financing. House enlisted his colleagues as volunteer reviewers, and together they kept the quarterly alive with publishing costs coming out of their own pockets and those of a few outside donors. Amazingly *WLT* survived to become the world's major resource in contemporary international literature, offering reviews in all major and many minor languages, revered by even the august Nobel Foundation Library.

The Summer 1990 issue, a Centennial tribute to the journal's parent institution, was devoted to literature in, from and about Oklahoma. Included were articles on R. Lynn Riggs, Melvin B. Tolson, John Steinbeck, N. Scott Momaday, Gore Vidal, Ralph Ellison, Lance Henson, John Berryman and the literature of Oklahoma Indians. A special section featured poetry written in or about Oklahoma by laureates and jurors of the quarterly's esteemed Neustadt International Prize for Literature.

The Prize

The luster that surrounds the awarding of the biennial Neustadt International Prize for Literature is unmatched on the University's calendar of events. Coming during the Centennial, the selection of the 11th laureate and subsequent presentation of the \$25,000 prize and the accompanying silver eagle feather added brilliance to an already exceptional year.



LEFT: Allece Garrard receives roses from Louis Ballard, whom she commissioned to compose "Live On, Heart of My Nation" for the Centennial dedication of the Garrard Ardeneum in McAlester.

BELOW: Also commissioned by Mrs. Garrard, David Smithson of Pietra Santa, Italy, son and grandson of OU graduates, created this sculpture of WLT editor Ivask and his wife Astrid. One of the three casts is displayed in the ardeneum library.



The Neustadt jurors, selected from 11 different countries, met in Norman on April 5-6 to present and defend their individual candidates for the prize. The laureate, Tomas Transtromer, journeyed from his home in Sweden in June to receive the award at a black-tie dinner in the Oklahoma Memorial Union Ballroom. Walter Neustadt Jr. presented the feather on behalf of his family.

The prize was first awarded in 1970 and endowed the following year by the Neustadt family of Ardmore. One of the few international prizes for which poets, novelists and playwrights are equally eligible, the Neustadt Prize is widely praised for its freedom from the political motives often ascribed to the more widely known Nobel Prize.

The Garrard Ardeneum

A sizable segment of University officialdom, accompanied by OU choir members and musicians, journeyed to

McAlester, Oklahoma, on April 1, 1990, for a unique Centennial ceremony. The official opening of the Garrard Ardeneum, a magnificently landscaped hilltop museum, celebrated the 100th birthday of the alma mater of its creator, ardent OU supporter Allece Garrard.

The garden museum (the descriptive word "ardeneum" was coined by Mrs. Garrard when no existing word would do the job) pays homage to OU's renowned international literary quarterly, *World Literature Today*. Mrs. Garrard and her late husband Thomas Edward Garrard, with his late aunt, Mrs. J. G. Puterbaugh, were instrumental in obtaining the private endowment for the Puterbaugh Conference on Writers of the Spanish and French-Speaking World. Both Mrs. Garrard and Mrs. Puterbaugh were long-time members of the *WLT* advisory board.

A major feature of the ardeneum is the World Literature Today Library, containing a complete collection of the 63-year-

old quarterly, first published as *Books Abroad*, and papers relating to the Puterbaugh Conferences and *WLT*'s Neustadt International Prize for Literature. Eventually the library also will house the papers of the publication's editor, Estonian poet/artist Ivar Ivask, who is retiring after 24 years, and his wife Astrid, a noted Latvian poet.

A crowd of more than 250 at the opening heard the OU Choir and musicians, directed by Irvin L. Wagner, perform the world premier of "Live On, Heart of My Nation," by Louis W. Ballard, a commemorative song paying tribute to the Indian Nations of Oklahoma. Mrs. Garrard's fellow townsman Carl Albert, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, presented excerpts from his biography, *Little Giant*.

The ceremonies closed with a toast to the late pioneer coal and oil operator J. G. Puterbaugh, whose fortune made possible the many philanthropies of the Puterbaugh Foundation.