

## Wendell Berry nomination for the Nobel Prize in Literature

JoAnn Baumgartner

### Caxton Nobel Committee: Their project and the process

For years, Caxtonian Junie L. Sinson had an extraordinary interest in the Nobel Prize in Literature and the activities of the Swedish Academy applicable to the awarding of the prize. Sinson conceived the idea that the prize involved areas of interest consistent with the focus of The Caxton Club, involving literature and the book.

The Rules of the Swedish Academy allow a professor of literature to nominate an individual for the Nobel Prize in Literature. It was concluded that, in conjunction with a professor of English, The Caxton Club could assemble a committee, which would work with the selected professor and assist in selecting an author for nomination. It was anticipated that that could be both a rewarding and an enriching project.

A committee of Caxtonians was assembled and the process was begun. Serving on the study committee, which met Saturdays at the Newberry Library, were JoAnn Baumgartner, Sherman Beverly, Michael Evanoff, Wendy Husser, Thomas Joyce, Truman Metzger, Charles Miner, Edward Quattrocchi, Scott Sinson, Robert Brooks, Michael Huckman, and Junie L. Sinson. Professor Robin Metz, Philip Sidney Post Professor of English, Knox College, Chair of the Department of English, and Director of the Program in Creative Writing, agreed to serve as the committee's shepherd.

At the initial meeting, May 4, 2002, The Caxton Club Nobel Committee embarked on a research project, which involved reading, evaluating, and critiquing books by proposed authors. Since the Swedish Academy does not grant an award for a single book, each member enlisted several bibliophiles to help summarize the character and breadth of a proposed candidate's work. The Nobel criteria stated that nominations must examine the "author's larger

Norman Mailer, David Mamet, Arthur Miller, Harold Pinter, Philip Roth, John Updike, Garry Wills, August Wilson, and Maurice Sendak. (This latter author, illustrator, and composer was a nominee that the committee considered well in advance of the recent announcement that he was one of two recipients of the newly-established Swedish Prize for Children's Literature.)

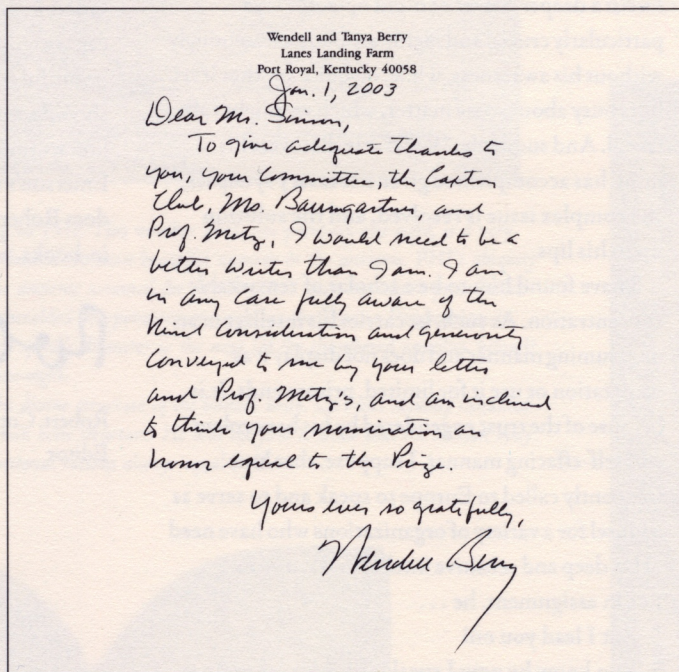
Nobel rules indicate that to be accepted in the year of submission, a candidate must have been previously nominated; otherwise he or she would be subject to consideration the following year. Once a candidate has been submitted, his or her name is kept permanently for consideration. The probability is high that remarkable and deserving authors such as Pinter, Roth, and Updike have been nominated several times in the past. The challenge for the committee was to endorse someone who deserved recognition, but who may not have been previously considered. The original list of 40 authors was winnowed to 20, then 12, and finally, four finalists.

I nominated Wendell Berry and championed him; my paper and passionate speech on his behalf resulted in two people's changing their votes. In the final heated debate, the committee selected the substantial body of life-affirming work by the American poet, novelist, and essayist, Wendell Berry. The

members were convinced that Berry seemed to fit the original criteria of Alfred Nobel as "someone who conferred a great benefit on mankind" and whose body of work is in an "ideal direction."

world human community" irrespective of political, social, economic, scientific, or religious ideology.

The committee considered more than 40 esteemed and established writers, poets, and playwrights. These included John Barth, Wendell Berry, E. L. Doctorow, Rita Dove, Barry Lopez,



Upon learning of The Caxton Club's recommendation and his nomination for the Nobel Prize in Literature by Prof. Robin Metz, Wendell Berry wrote the letter above to Nobel Committee Chair Junie Sinson.



# Musings...

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I'd like to introduce you to one of the most remarkable individuals I've met in the past dozen or so years. His name is Robert Langdon, and he is a professor of religious symbology at Harvard University. He has written several books on religious paintings and cult symbology. I met him the day after he had given a lecture at the American University of Paris on pagan symbology hidden in the stones of Chartres Cathedral.

My recent experience with Langdon provided certain insights into his remarkable personality, which I'd like to share with you, for I know your own perspicacious sensitivities will find him a person of thorough integration. Through careful observation, I have discovered in him what we might best call *mature innocence*: he is often as surprised at the results of his own extraordinary intuitive powers as we who observe him are. It is as if his subtle intellect moves simultaneously on twin levels: a deeper power of mind operates on a particularly crucial and highly arcane issue seemingly without his awareness, while, on quite another level, he is busy about some matter, which we might call trivial. And suddenly, "Voila!" He discovers his mind has accomplished given necessary synapses, the complex issue is resolved, and the solution upon his lips.

I have found him to be a scholar of remarkable concentration. As such, he carries his intellect in an unassuming manner and does not display it as ostentation or use it for limited, private ends. It is because of the trust engendered by his benevolent and self-effacing manner, I suppose, that he is frequently called to Europe to speak and to serve as counsel for a variety of organizations who have need of his deep and sensitive intellectual acumen.

On assignment, he . . .

But I lead you on!

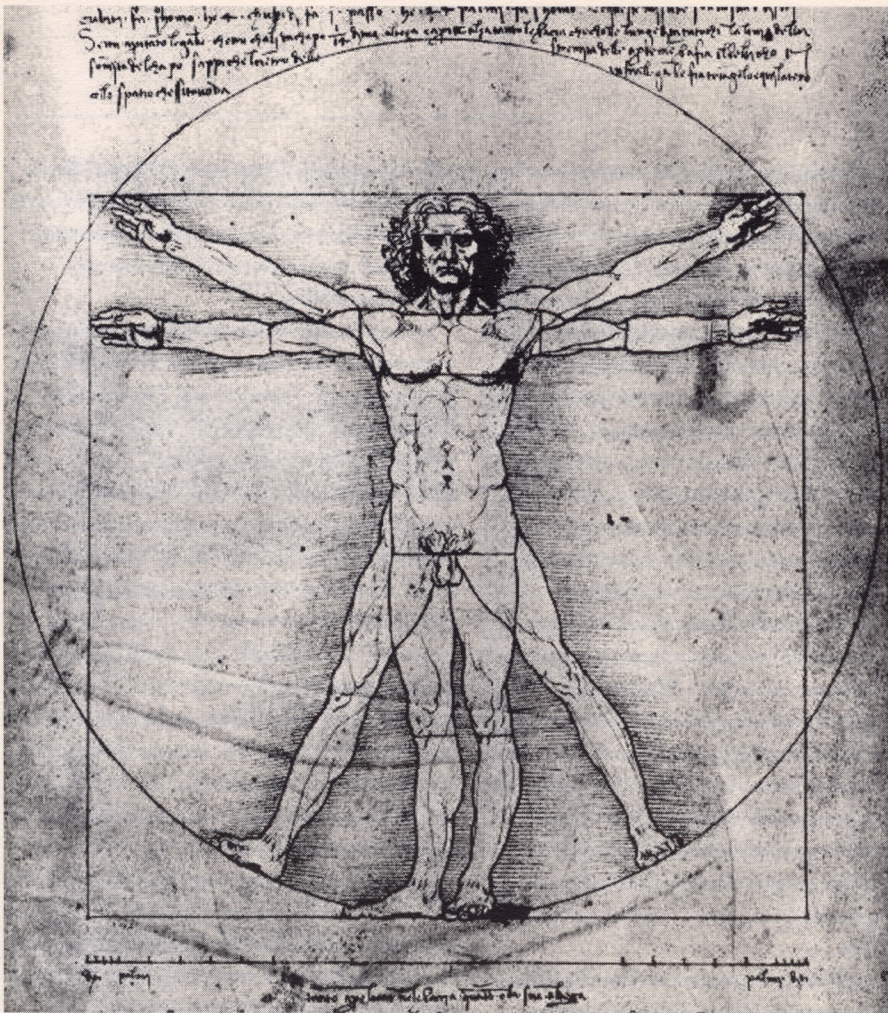
You know by now I speak of a *character* and not a *person*. The character is the product of mind of Dan Brown, and Robert Langdon makes his initial appearance in Brown's *Angels & Demons* (2000), a book remarkable for its insight, historical detail, and just plain old fashioned intrigue. Set in Rome, this novel brings Robert Langdon to the Holy See to foil a plot by the Illuminati to destroy the Vatican. He and CERN scientist Vittoria Vetra

team to lead the reader in a remarkable sequence of revelatory encounters.

We meet Robert Langdon again in Brown's most recent novel, *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), a much more controlled story, telling of Langdon's experience in Paris, solving the murder of the renowned curator Jacques Sauniere, who was also the Grand Master of the Priory of Sion, the secret society charged with protecting the location of — and truth about — the Holy Grail. What a tale it becomes!

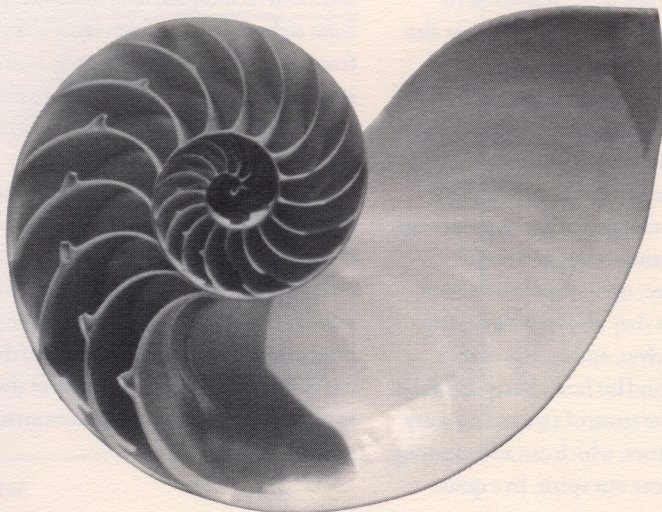
But the character of Langdon, as much as Brown's marvelous storytelling, fascinates me. Langdon is out of an earlier New England literary tradition. That is the tradition of *human goodness* as it emerged from the life and writing of the father of American Romanticism, Ralph Waldo Emerson. It may be best expressed in a letter RWE wrote to an unknown correspondent on July 3, 1841: "I am, like you, a seeker of the perfect and admirable Good. My creed is very simple, that Goodness is the only Reality, that to Goodness alone can we trust, to that we may trust all and always; beautiful and blessed and blessing it is, even though it should seem to slay me." We seldom find in modern literature a character, who consistently exhibits Emerson's spirit of Goodness in all of his doings as does Robert Langdon. I find him a worthy, new friend-in-books, where we all have so much kinship.

Robert Cotner  
Editor



A brief summary of Robert Langston's thinking on PHI: This number PHI, one-point-six-one-eight, is a very important number in art. PHI is generally considered the most beautiful number in the universe. PHI's ubiquity in nature clearly exceeds coincidence, and so the ancients assumed the number PHI must have been preordained by the Creator of the universe. Early scientists heralded one-point-six-one-eight as the Divine Proportion in nature. Can you guess what is the ratio of each spiral's diameter to the next [of the chambered nautilus, below]? PHI. The Divine Proportion. One-point-six-one-eight.

Nobody understood better than DaVinci the divine structure of the human body. DaVinci actually exhumed corpses to measure the exact proportions of human bone structure. He was the first to show that the human body is literally made of building blocks whose proportional ratios always equal PHI.



## Donors to 2002 Challenge Fund

The Caxton Club greatly appreciates the gifts to the club given during the 2002 Challenge Fund Drive. We recognized them, we honor them, for they help us extend the joy of the book arts, the extraordinary pleasure in books, and the blessings of book collecting deep into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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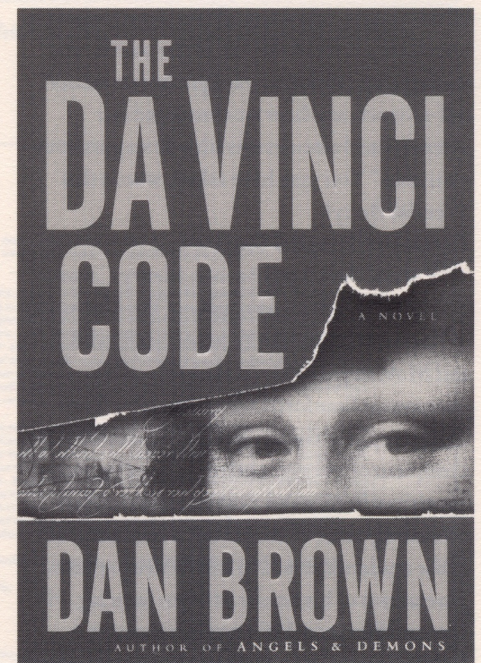
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See DONORS, page 6



A summary of Robert Langdon's thinking on DaVinci's Mona Lisa: DaVinci was a prankster, and computerized analysis of the Mona Lisa and DaVinci's self-portraits confirm some startling points of congruency in their faces. Whatever DaVinci was up to, his Mona Lisa is neither male nor female. It carries a subtle message of androgyny.

On December 5, 2002, Professor Robin Metz wrote the eloquent letter (see page 5), submitting Wendell Berry to the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy. In his letter, Professor Metz said that Wendell Berry “stands not only apart from but also in the very forefront of contemporary authors, worldwide, who attempt to address the role and place of human beings within our complex, moral, spiritual, and environmental systems.”

#### ***A Profile of Wendell Berry***

You may have already seen the full-page advertisement in *The New York Times*, Sunday, February 9, 2003, called the “National Security Strategy of the USA,” written by Wendell Berry, in which he described as an essayist, novelist, farmer, and author of more than 36 books, including his most recent book, *In the Presence of Fear: Three Essays for a Changed World*. The article was a reprint from Orion (March/April 2003) of Berry’s political statement on the current war, questioning “why we made no effort to reduce our dependence on oil we import, why we made no improvement in our charity toward the rest of the world, why we made no motion toward greater economic self-reliance, and how we continued our extensive and often irreversible damages to our own land.” You may have asked, who is this Wendell Berry?

#### ***Portrait of Wendell Berry***

Wendell Berry was born in Henry County, KY, in 1934. He is a graduate of the University of Kentucky, where he received both his B.A. and M.A. degrees. He has held teaching positions at Stanford University, New York University, and the University of Kentucky. As a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Berry has visited France and England and traveled extensively since then. He left a successful life in the academic world to follow five previous generations of his family to begin farming. He lives and farms on 125 acres in his native Kentucky, where he and his wife live and where Berry continues to write books, which contribute to his prodigious literary output. His two grown children live nearby with his grandchildren.

As a champion of ecology and of biodiversity and as a lifelong environmentalist and social critic, Berry prefers the older ways of farming instead of modern methods. He eschews much of the modern farming equipment, which he believes disturbs and abuses the soil. Anyone

who has traveled to Appalachia in Berry’s native Kentucky knows that Berry has been a witness to the scourge of the land by strip mines. Berry also writes about cities disfigured by technology, pollution, and the effects of corporate greed; he worries about how families may be displaced by “labor-saving machines.” Critics have attacked his views, saying Berry is against technology; he is not. He is against its mismanagement. Berry has written: “The worst disease of our society is probably the ideology of technological heroism, according to which more and more people willingly cause large-scale effects that they do not foresee and that they cannot control.”

Berry believes individuals should be responsible guardians of the land and strongly asserts that one person can make a difference by speaking out against the gross mismanagement of farmland and by taking a stand against the wasteful use of water. He echoes these beliefs in his agrarian essays that appeal to Illinois and Midwest farmers and are read throughout the world by people who work small farms in countries such as Japan, Latin America, and Africa.

Although Berry’s roots are in rural America, he addresses many other areas of our society. Critic John W. Hattman cited his essay, *The Hidden Wound*, (1970) as “one of the finest personal documents on racism.” The essay is a compassionate study whose message is that if racism is left unchecked, it will always divide a society. After his grandchildren had visited the Holocaust Museum, Berry addressed the darker side of humanity and wrote this poignant remark, “Now you know the worst we humans have to know about ourselves, and I am sorry.”

Berry’s body of work is not restricted to writing about ecology and farming. He has also written over 36 books of fiction, poetry, and essays. In his book, *Recollected Essays (1965-1980)*, Berry said he was “motivated by a desire to make myself responsibly at home in this world and in my native and chosen place. As I have come to understand it, this is a long term desire, proposing the work not of a lifetime but generations.”

These essays reflect upon the environment and country life, but they also include descriptions of woods, the river, and creatures that inhabit the area around his farm. Berry shows us how to rediscover the sense of awe and mystery that are found in nature, which can add meaning to our lives and restore our spirit. In a quiet,

reflective, and meditative way, Wendell Berry addresses everyone who celebrates the virtues of family, fidelity to a human and natural order, hard work, and reverence for all creatures.

#### ***A Writer of Place***

In many respects, Berry’s ideas are reflected in two great American authors to whom he has been compared, Henry David Thoreau and Robert Frost. Caxtonian Dr. Peter Stanlis has revealed in his writings on Robert Frost that the role of play must not be brushed aside; it is an important part of Frost’s creative dualism. Many of Berry’s poems are playful and wise, and, like Frost, he uses a particular rural setting. It is tempting for critics to say Berry’s stories are “regional,” an accusation that is still occasionally made about Robert Frost’s poetry. The truth is that both poets share a distinctive landscape that transcends the locale. For Frost and Berry, the locale becomes a metaphor for the world. Their poems have a wider universal appeal that has no geographical limitation.

Just as Frost’s poetry was “out of fashion” for a short time before being restored to its rightful place of honor, so has Berry’s poetry been called “unfashionable” by a few critics. They have said that Berry seemed slightly “out-of-step” and accused him of being an “exasperated idealist.” Despite this criticism, Berry’s work has been sought after, his books have been reissued, and the demand for him as a lecturer has increased. It is a tribute to his personality that Berry has not sought the television appearances and media habits of many publicity-seeking authors. He prefers to let his books speak for him.

Dr. Stanlis had this to say about Wendell Berry: “In every genre he exhibits a mastery of form and techniques, which enables him to leap from sight to insight, from sense to essence, even from the physical to the metaphysical dimensions of reality...his prose contains much that is characteristic of poetry, particularly in his metaphorical use of language.”

When readers tackle his impassioned essays, they are struck with how the essays are characterized by compassion, humanistic integrity, and poetic intensity. His essays are particularly poignant when they champion humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought. He has garnered a reputation as one of the great spirits of the environmental movement, which

# THE CAXTON CLUB

Founded 1895

December 27, 2002

Mr. Wendell Berry  
Lanes Landing Farm  
Port Royal, KY 40058

Dear Mr. Berry:

Earlier this past summer, I contacted you as Chairman of The Caxton Club Nobel Committee. In conjunction with Prof. Robin Metz, we completed our project which was to nominate an individual for the Nobel Prize in Literature. The Chairperson of the sub-committee who researched and championed your work was JoAnn Baumgartner.

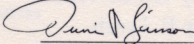
I am pleased to advise you that we collectively selected you as our nominee for the 2003 Prize. Enclosed is a copy of Prof. Robin Metz's letter which is now in transit to the Swedish Academy. The letter expresses the sentiments of both our Club and Prof. Metz.

As a result of our choice, we have received praise from many sources. There exists both an appreciation of your extraordinary literary skill and also the worthiness of your message.

We wish you the very best and we hope that, at some time, the Swedish Academy concurs with our decision.

Very truly yours,

THE CAXTON CLUB



Junie L. Sinson, Chairman  
Nobel Committee

JLS:lr  
Enclosure

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5 December 2002

Nobel Committee of The Swedish Academy  
Attention: Nobel Committee for Literature  
P.O. Box 2118  
S E 103 13  
Stockholm, SWEDEN

Dear Nobel Committee for Literature:

I am writing to bring to your attention, and to nominate for the Nobel Prize in Literature, the great American poet, novelist, and essayist, **Wendell Berry** (born 1934), a writer whose literary magnificence, vision of the Americas and the world, and personal, as well as artistic, integrity far exceeds his reputation in the popular press or commercial marketplace.

In itself, this nomination is the result of an unusual and remarkable process of collaboration. More than a year ago, I was approached by The Caxton Club of Chicago to prepare a list of possible Nobel nominations. The Caxton Club of Chicago is an esteemed organization, the second oldest such club in the United States, whose mission is to promote literary excellence and the art of the book.

In consultation with the Caxton Club, my original list contained some forty names (including, of course, a number of the expected candidates: John Berger, Arthur Miller, Norman Mailer, John Updike, Harold Pinter, August Wilson, Rita Dove, Philip Roth, David Mamet, and so forth). Eventually this list was winnowed to twenty, then twelve, then four finalists. Throughout this procedure more than two dozen members and friends of The Caxton Club of Chicago, lifelong readers all, served as committee consultants and dedicated researchers. Ultimately, the name of Wendell Berry emerged as the consensus choice of the Committee, as well as my own indisputable preference: At a time when economic and political dynamics in the United States have tended toward instability, asymmetry, and excess, Berry offers both a sobering critique and a compelling alternative vision grounded in human dignity, community interaction, and environmental balance.

Wendell Berry is the author of thirty-six books (poetry, essays, fiction) and the recipient of many distinguished awards, including Guggenheim, Lannan, T.S. Eliot, and Rockefeller Foundation Awards, and fellowships from the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Institute and Academy of Arts and Letters. He is the certain hero

## Junie Sinson's letter to Wendell Berry

of such environmental writers as Wes Jackson, Barry Lopez, Gary Snyder, Terry Tempest Williams, David Orr, and many others. Writing in the American tradition of Thoreau, Mumford, Muir, Leopold, and Steinbeck, and the international tradition of John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Knut Hamsun, Wole Soyinka, E.F. Schumacher, and Nadine Gordimer, he is, in our view, the world's greatest living champion of biodiversity and the spiritual values associated with the interdependent communities of soil, water, and habitat; animal, plant, atmospheric, and geophysical dynamics; human enterprise (in all of its complex, shortsighted, visionary, hopeful, woeful, and tragic yearning); and overarching biospheric necessity.

In particular, we recommend the following books for your initial consideration: *A Place on Earth: The Country of Marriage; Recollected Essays, 1965-1980; Standing by Words; Standing on Earth; Fidelity; What Are People For?; The Memory of Old Jack; The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture; The Collected Poems, 1957-1983*; and, most recently, *Jaybar Crow: The Life Story of Jaybar Crow, Barber, of the Port William Membership as Written by Himself*. I also bring to your urgent attention the following on-line essay by Berry: "Thoughts on America: Writers Respond to Crisis"; "Thoughts in the Presence of Fear": <http://www.oriononline.org/pages/oo/sidebars/America/Berry.html>

Selected excerpts from Berry's work make apparent his artistic, environmental, humanitarian, communitarian, and moral vision:

It is impossible not to notice how little the proponents of the ideal of competition have to say about honesty, which is the fundamental economic virtue, and how very little they have to say about community, compassion, and mutual help. But what the ideal of competition most flagrantly and disastrously excludes is affection. (*What Are People For?*)

People are joined to the land by work. Land, work, people, and community are all comprehended in the idea of culture. ("People, Land, and Culture")

If we are serious about reducing the size of government and its burdens, then we need to return economic self-determination to the people... We must do it by fostering economic democracy. We must do everything possible to assure ordinary citizens the possibility of owning a small, usable share of the country. ("Decolonizing Rural America")

The fighting had been like work, only a lot of people got killed and a lot of things got destroyed. It was not work that made much of anything... When your power is in a big gun, you don't have any small intentions. Whatever you want to hit, you want to make dust out of it. Farms, houses, whole towns—things that people had made well and cared for a long time—you made nothing of it. ("Making it Home")

How would you describe the difference between modern war and modern industry—between, say, bombing and strip mining, or between chemical warfare and chemical manufacturing? The difference seems to be only

that in war the victimization of humans is directly intentional and in industry, it is "accepted" as a "tradeoff." (*What Are People For?*)

Betwixt, critics have also begun to recognize the unparalleled value of Berry's work. Writing in the *New York Times*, Ronald B. Shwartz declares *A Place on Earth* to be "one of the great American novels...one that people [will] still know and love a hundred years from now," while Noel Perin asserts that Berry is "one of a half dozen living American authors" whose work is "absolutely inimitable." Reviewer Larry Woiwode sums up the views of many when he writes that: "These books are the kind that you spend months with, hate to give up, and plan to return to soon and often. There is that much pleasure in them, both in the spare and crafted elegance of their prose, and in the breadth and depth of their content."

After an extended period of dedicated study and research, therefore, it is clear to me, and to The Caxton Club of Chicago, that Wendell Berry stands not only apart from but also in the very forefront of contemporary authors, worldwide, who attempt to address the role and place of human beings within our complex moral, spiritual, and environmental systems. Berry understands that human beings must use the earth and preserve the earth, if we are to preserve each other. He is a writer for our time who also stands outside of time; he is a writer who speaks for the forgotten people of a particular locale, yet addresses with insight and compassion the agonies and aspirations of the world's multitudes.

With humility and conviction, I offer Wendell Berry for your earnest consideration.

Sincerely,

Robin Metz  
Philip Sidney Post Professor of English  
Chair, Department of English  
Director, The Program in Creative Writing

cc: Horace Engdahl F.D.  
Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy

## Nomination letter for Wendell Berry to The Swedish Academy

has been his lifelong commitment. Consider this excerpt from *Preserving Wilderness*:

*We need wilderness of all kinds,  
large and small, public and private  
We need to go now and again  
into places where our work is  
disallowed, where our hopes and  
plans have no standing.  
We need to come into the presence of the  
unequal and mysterious formality of  
Creation.*

Berry's nature essays and poetry allow readers to have interior dialogues, to engage in self-examinations, and discover what is truly important and creative in the relatively short span of their lives. By probing our psyche, he helps us to rethink the values of self-reliance and rejoice in the healing qualities of nature.

Much of what Berry writes on ecology and the environment resonates with remarks made by Nobel Prize winner, Leon Lederman. Surrounding the Leon M. Lederman Science Education Center at Fermilab, Batavia, IL is land that has been restored to its original prairie state. As an articulate advocate for the earth, Berry would applaud the comments of Lederman, who has written that "we are inundated by a tide of unsustainable consumerism; the wonders of nature revealed pass us by; we lost the exposure to the spiritual beauty of nature." Wendell Berry's graceful prose and moral vision echo much of what this Nobel Laureate feels.

#### **Poetic Reflections**

In his second book of poetry, *Openings*, Berry addresses public issues and the need for finding meaning and love in our lives. He is convinced we need a replacement for our frenzied lifestyles to one that is more simple and quiet, unfettered by extremes of consumerism. Because many of his poems are meditative lyrics, he tells us some of his poems are to "be read in silence and solitude," that by withdrawing into nature we can discover our true nature.

With the war in Iraq being covered by the media 24-7, consider the wisdom of this poem by Berry, which invites the reader into the grace of creation:

*The Peace of Wild Things  
When despair for the world grows for me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's  
lives may be,*

*I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests,  
in his beauty on the water, and the great  
heron feeds.*

*I come into the peace of wild things,  
who do not tax their lives with  
forethought of grief.  
I water,  
and I feel above me the dayblind stars,  
waiting their light,  
for a time, I rest in the grace of the world,  
and am free.*

In a recent novel, *Jayber Crow*, Berry reflects about a particular place and how people read to each other in that place. It is a study of longing and loss, the essence of friendship and virtues in a small town. This novel, like his poetry, allows us to think about how we live our lives and what we do with the time we have before we die. For Berry, life is a miracle, and his prose reflects this kind of spirituality. In this age of sound bytes, Wendell Berry, poet, novelist, farmer, and environmentalist, may seem out of step advocating a life of selflessness directed toward neighbors and the community at large; or does he represent the best of what America is all about? In an effort to celebrate our prospective Nobel candidate, I would like to quote what reviewer Larry Woiwode has said about him: "One of the rewards of being a faithful reader arrives when you open a new book and realize it's the one you've been reading for years. That has been this reader's experience with these books by Wendell Berry: *Recollected Essays 1965-1980* and *The Gift of Good Land*. These books are like the kind you spend months with, hate to give up, and plan to return to soon and often. There is that much pleasure in them, both in the spare and crafted elegance of their prose, and in the breadth and depth of their content."

The significance of Berry's voice is that it counters the disrespect and hate that many countries feel about our country. Would they think more of us if they were to read the values, morality, and simplicity of American authors like Berry? And conversely, when Berry holds up a mirror to us, would we be willing to reconsider or change the gross mismanagement, greed, and consumerism he sees?

Freedom demands making responsible choices. It demands honesty, discipline, balance,

and restraint. The virtues may be old-fashioned, but they are hardly irrelevant. Through Berry's narratives and elegant lyrics, his metaphors and irony, we are given signposts for transformation, and his voice is universal. Berry tells us that what he values most in the world is "the life and health of the earth and the peacefulness of human communities and households." It is an important message for our world. ❖

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*Continued from page 3*

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### *Slate named for new officers*

The Nominating Committee of The Caxton Club is pleased to announce the following members as officers for the next year:

- President - Michael Thompson
- Vice President & Program Chair  
- Robert McCamant
- Secretary - Susan Hanes
- Treasurer - Dan Crawford
- Past President - James Tomes
- Council Class of 2006  
Kathryn DeGraff  
Adele Hast  
George E. Leonard III  
Junie L. Sinson  
Robert Williams
- Council Class of 2004  
Caryl Seidenberg
- Council Class of 2005  
Susan Keig

Respectfully submitted by Charles Miner, Chair, Kim Coventry, Dan Crawford, and Robert Karrow. The election will take place at the May dinner meeting. ❖

### *Club's Exhibitions Committee looking for Leaf Books*

The Exhibitions Committee of The Caxton Club is looking into the possibility of organizing an exhibition on leaf books. Defined as a publication containing a leaf from an original printed book or manuscript accompanied by explanatory text, these books often also have elaborate bindings. In 1905, The Caxton Club issued a now very-collectible leaf book containing a page from an imperfect copy of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, printed by William Caxton in 1478.

While still in the planning stages, the exhibition would highlight the history of the leaf book as a pedagogic phenomenon. It would also look at the history and uniqueness of the individual leaves themselves, and would examine the ethical issues related to "book breaking." The Committee would like to hear from Caxtonians with leaf books who are willing to consider lending them to the exhibition, which, if plans proceed, would open in 2005, marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the club's leaf book.

Please contact Kim Coventry at 773/871-7204 or [coventryk@aol.com](mailto:coventryk@aol.com) if you would like to participate in this exciting exhibition. ❖



*Himself doing a self-portrait  
Truman Metzler*

# Bookmarks...

## Luncheon Program

May 9, 2003

Peggy Sullivan

*"Naming the Branches"*

**N**aming the Branches" is the story of how branches of the Chicago Public Library got their names. At the moment, there are 76 of them, and new ones are currently being named after neighborhoods or locations, not people. That's how Budlong Woods, the newest branch, got its name. Peggy Sullivan, who was assistant commissioner for extension services at the Chicago Public Library from 1977 to 1981, when there were 100 extension services agencies, has to admit that Budlong Woods isn't at the top of the most well-known neighborhood names in Chicago, but she notes that the number of branches named for ethnic minorities has increased substantially in the past 20 years.

Some branches have had several names, even though they have remained in the same locations; others have carried their names with them to new sites. It's a real Chicago story, related to the history of the City of Big Shoulders and the men who built it and supported it. Railroad tycoons, philanthropists, and a couple of mayors as well as U.S. presidents are among those honored with having branch libraries named after them. In recent history, a few women have been honored with their names on branches, but at least one of them no longer exists. Some of the negotiations about names are cloaked in secrecy, and — could you believe? — related to political connections. Peggy Sullivan's account is based on her own experience, as well as on extensive

recent research. She also connects it to some of the studies made of the Chicago Public Library which have become classics of public library administration and management.

This is an interesting and important program for Chicago book-lovers — and a fine chance, before summer vacations, to join friends and colleagues around the table for book-talk.

*Edward Quattrocchi & Leonard Freedman*  
Co-Chairs



*"The Cups and Balls trick may be said to be the groundwork of all legerdemain, and it is supposed to be the very earliest form in which sleight-of-hand was exhibited." Prof. Hoffman, 1876*

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56<sup>th</sup> floor of BankOne, BankOne Plaza, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Luncheon and discussion, 12:30pm. Dinner meetings begin with spirits at 5pm, dinner at 6pm, lecture at 7:30pm. **Members planning to attend luncheons or dinners must make advance reservations by phoning the Caxton number, 312/255-3710.**

Luncheon for members and guests, \$25. Dinner, for members and guests, \$45.

## Dinner Program

May 21, 2003

Bob Read

*"The Oldest Trick in the Book"*

**T**here will be a special reception for Hermann and Gundrun Zapf, sponsored by The Caxton Club and the Society of Typographic Arts, at 4:30 p.m.

The magic of collecting and the collecting of magic will be celebrated in Bob Read's presentation. He has an extensive collection of illustrative art about the famous cups-and-balls trick, and other magic. An internationally renowned magician who will be performing elsewhere in the Chicago area on this trip from his home in England, Read will feature his collection in his illustrated talk.

A special treat of the evening will be the presence of another international visitor, Honorary Caxtonian Hermann Zapf and his wife Gundrun Zapf von Hesse. A world-class type designer, Zapf will be in Chicago after receiving an honorary degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This will be a great opportunity to welcome a notable colleague to the Windy City. The Society of Typographic Arts will also make a presentation to Zapf, a 1963 Honorary STA Member.

In addition to the international highlights of the evening, the May dinner meeting will also feature the Caxton Club Annual Meeting, during which the election of officers will take place. This is, indeed, a meeting worthy of note, and all Caxtonians are urged to attend this important meeting.

*Peggy Sullivan*  
Vice President and  
Program Chair