



# PEN/FAULKNER

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## BENJAMIN ALIRE SÁENZ RECEIVES 2013 PEN/FAULKNER AWARD FOR FICTION

**Washington, DC**—Benjamin Alire Sáenz’s *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club* (Cinco Puntos) has been selected as the winner of the 2013 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. The announcement was made today by the directors of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation, Susan Richards Shreve and Robert Stone, Co-Chairmen.

The **judges**—Walter Kirn, Nelly Rosario, and A.J. Verdelle—considered more than 350 novels and short story collections by American authors published in the U.S. during the 2012 calendar year. Submissions came from 130 publishing houses, including small and academic presses. There is no fee for a publisher or writer to submit a book.

**The honored book**, *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club* presents seven stories set on the south Texas border of El Paso and Juárez, examining lives bounded by geography, politics, violence and the echoes of personal history. The titular Kentucky Club, a Juárez institution that sits four blocks from the U.S. border, provides a guiding thread for the collection, acting alternately as backdrop, touchstone, and oasis for a humane set of characters who struggle with the impossible ambiguities of borders whether they be sexual, emotional, national or economic.

In the words of judge A.J. Verdelle, “In *Everything Begins & Ends at the Kentucky Club*, his *twentieth* published book, Benjamin Alire Sáenz shows how decades working at your craft gives birth to might and mastery . . . He presents a rendering of reality that is lush, tender, expansive, inclusive and profound. The author takes stunning care with language—English, Spanish, and the languages of sunlight, daylight, dimlight, night light—twisting and tumbling with the whispered language of the human heart. Sáenz also devotes impressive attention to rendering communities on the borders of the United

States and Mexico, on the boundaries of sensual and sexual expression, on the edge of despair, and on the cusp of redemption.”

Adds judge Nelly Rosario, “In *Everything Begins & Ends at the Kentucky Club*, Benjamin Alire-Sáenz uses the straightest lines of language to encircle the muted light inside each of his narrators. Their collective voices speak artlessly, as wisdom does, and ask us to listen for the borderless poetry of the spirit. To sit with Alire-Sáenz under the dimmed lights of *The Kentucky Club* is to lend an ear to a writer who has surrendered you the alphas and omegas of his heart.”

Sáenz is a poet, fiction writer and essayist who has been a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize and PEN Center’s award for young adult fiction. He is the chair of the Creative Writing Department at the University of Texas at El Paso.

The PEN/Faulkner Award is America’s largest peer juried prize for fiction. As winner, Sáenz receives \$15,000. Each of the four finalists— **Amelia Gray** for *Threats* (FSG); **Laird Hunt** for *Kind One* (Coffee House); **T. Geronimo Johnson** for *Hold It ‘Til It Hurts* (Coffee House); and, **Thomas Mallon** for *Watergate* (Pantheon)—receives \$5,000.

All five authors will be honored during **the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual PEN/Faulkner Award Ceremony** at the Folger Shakespeare Library, located at 201 East Capitol Street, SE, on **Saturday, May 4, 2013** at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$125, and can be purchased by phoning the Folger Box Office at (202) 544-7077, or online at [www.folger.edu/penfaulkneraward](http://www.folger.edu/penfaulkneraward)

The PEN/Faulkner Award was first given in 1981. Past winners include last year’s winner, Julie Otsuka, as well as Joseph O’Neill, E.L. Doctorow, Ann Patchett, Philip Roth, John Updike, Sherman Alexie, Annie Proulx and John Edgar Wideman, among others. A full list of winners is available at <http://www.penfaulkner.org/2011/08/01/1996-2010-award-winners-finalists/>

The PEN/Faulkner Foundation is committed to building audiences for exceptional literature and bringing writers together with their readers. This mission is accomplished through **a reading series** at the Folger Shakespeare Library by distinguished writers who have won the respect of readers and writers alike; the **PEN/Faulkner Award**; the **PEN/Malamud Award**, honoring excellence in the short story; and the **Writers in Schools** program, which brings nationally and internationally-acclaimed authors to public high school classrooms, and to book groups of teen parents and incarcerated youth, in Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD.

For More Information, visit [www.penfaulkner.org](http://www.penfaulkner.org)

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