



PEN/Faulkner

MEDIA KIT

2011/2012

THE SCENE:

Folger Library hosts PEN/Faulkner dinner *Washington Post, May 2011*

The writers' organization presented its 31st annual Award for Fiction at a reception and dinner Saturday at the Folger Shakespeare Library. The evening featured readings by Deborah Eisenberg, whose "Collected Stories of Deborah Eisenberg" won the \$15,000 first prize, and the other four finalists.



Row 1 (Left to Right): Caroline Simon & Scott Simon; Nell Hanley, Lou Stovall & finalist Brad Watson; Alessandra Gelmi & Mary Ann Gale
Row 2: Clarence Page & Lisa Page with Kris O'Shee & Alan Cheuse; winner Deborah Eisenberg & Wallace Shawn
Row 3: Jennifer Egan; Arthur Allen with finalist Jaimy Gordon; finalist Eric Puchner

JACKET COPY: *Deborah Eisenberg* *wins the 2011 PEN/ Faulkner award* *L.A. Times, March 2011*

Deborah Eisenberg's "The Collected Stories of Deborah Eisenberg" was awarded the PEN/Faulkner award for fiction, it was announced Tuesday.

In the *L.A. Times* review of the book, Marisa Silver wrote, "Her work is a marvel of compression, in which characters speak with the kind of crackling dialogue that tunes our ear to the way language exposes and obscures our hearts."

Eisenberg, whose longtime companion is the actor and writer Wallace Shawn, has taught at the University of Virginia in the fall term since 1994. She was named a MacArthur "Genius" Fellow in 2009.

She will receive \$15,000 and recognition at a ceremony in Washington on May 7. Tickets for the event are \$100.

The four other finalists will each receive \$5,000. Those finalists include Jennifer Egan, who won the National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction last week.

Three judges, all authors themselves, considered more than 300 books published in 2010 for the award. The books were submitted by 125 publishing houses.

The PEN/Faulkner Award was founded in 1980 by Mary Lee Settle, a National Book Award-winning writer who felt the literary establishment was unreceptive to Southern writers and that it valued "personality over achievement."



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Deborah Eisenberg wins the 2011 PEN/Faulkner award

March 15, 2011 | 1:53 pm

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2011 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction winner Deborah Eisenberg

JAMIE STIEHM:

Jonathan Franzen Goes to Jail (for a Book Talk)

US News & World Report, February 2011

The author of *The Corrections* and *Freedom* went to jail in Washington. He left impressed with the “seriousness” level of conversation, compared to meeting with young people on the other side of the tracks.

I felt curious to see the novelist Jonathan Franzen meet with a circle of youths, 16 and 17 years old, in their unit in the city jail. They are housed in the juvenile annex in Southeast Washington, a world away from Northwest. Their faces looked older than their age as they studied the celebrated writer who, they heard, made the cover of *Time*.

Franzen came to visit with them for an hour, Friday at noon. The youths wore orange jump suits and white tennis shoes. They were being tried as adults. Franzen wore jeans, looking Manhattan cool with tousled strands of silvery brown hair falling over his glasses. He looked younger than his age, 51. He came to discuss his art and craft with 25 youths in jail for a PEN/Faulkner Foundation event. The author didn't spend a moment dwelling on their circumstances, but cut right to the fear involved in creating original work.

“There's nothing scarier than a blank piece of paper,” he said. If stuck, he added, “Try writing a letter to someone, or keep a journal. Not to be afraid of the page, that's the main thing.”

Then the circle of 25 or 30 teenage boys clapped. As members of the Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop within the jail walls, they were expanding their literary horizons and connected instantly with what Franzen was talking about. Working things out with words—anger, pain, sadness, remorse, whatever it is—can turn into poetry or stories, which Free Minds publishes for the juvenile community in the city jail, so peers can read each other's writing. Tara Libert, co-founder and executive director, says weekly gatherings at the jail help nurture “humanity, creativity and hope.”

Franzen's large-canvas work is somewhat autobiographical social realism, drawing characters in his family and a portrait of St. Louis, his hometown; the angst of life on a

The screenshot shows a web page from US News & World Report. The main article is titled "Jonathan Franzen Goes to Jail (for a Book Talk)" by Jamie Stiehm, dated February 22, 2011. The article text is partially visible, starting with "The author of *The Corrections* and *Freedom* went to jail in Washington. He left impressed with the 'seriousness' level of conversation, compared to meeting with young people on the other side of the tracks." The page also features a sidebar with social media sharing options (Comment, Tweet, Like) and a "Related Articles" section. The top of the page has a navigation bar with links for "HOME", "OPINION", "WASHINGTON WHISPERS", and "WHITE HOUSE TRACKER". There is also a search bar and a "Subscribe | Contact Us" link in the top right corner.

liberal arts college campus such as Swarthmore; and his adult experiences and relationships in Philadelphia and New York. He spent years composing his fiction in relative oblivion, he told the circle, long before he met Oprah Winfrey (“we made up”) or Barack Obama (“easy to talk to.”) His gorgeous essays, which range from bird watching to Charles Schulz’s *Peanuts* comic strip, often see and frame the familiar anew.

“I’ve been lucky in so many ways,” Franzen said. I knew just what he meant because, so was I. Many miles ago, I had seen his Jon’s talent dance on a page when he was a senior at Swarthmore, in a writing workshop. I had not seen him since.

His statement was so undeniably true that, strictly speaking, it didn’t need to be said. And yet it did, to speak across the chasm of chances. Some of the youths are charged with violent crimes. If convicted, they face life incarcerated for an average of six years. There were a few youths in “lockdown” in the unit as Franzen spoke, confined alone to their cells for long stretches. Sharing a cell is much easier on the human spirit.

In a flash of mordant wit, Franzen said, “What I’ve chosen to do with my life involves solitary confinement. You spend too much time alone, you go crazy,” Franzen said. “The fact is, it makes me a little crazy too.”

But there’s no other way; writing prose or poetry takes introspection—but more, it takes a lot of time, no matter what.

Said Franzen to the aspiring youths congregated around him: “For better or worse, one thing you’ve got is the time.”