

**\*The 2006 PEN Hemingway keynote speaker, Joyce Carol Oates, requested that her speech not be recorded.**

**DEBORAH LEFF:** Good afternoon. Good afternoon and welcome. I'm Deborah Leff, Director of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. And on behalf of myself and John Shattuck, the CEO of the Kennedy Library Foundation, and the Friends of the Hemingway Collection, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award and the LL Winship/PEN New England Award Ceremony.

We are here today because the Kennedy Presidential Library has the extraordinary honor, due to the marvelous gift of the Hemingway family, to be the home of the Ernest Hemingway collection, the world's most comprehensive archive of Ernest Hemingway's work. Researchers, writers and scholars from around the world come here to pour over Hemingway's manuscripts and drafts, to view thousands of his letters, and more than 10,000 photographs.

I encourage all of you to read the brochure about the Hemingway Collection and to come back to visit the Ernest Hemingway Room. It is a marvelous place to get deliciously lost, to immerse yourself in Hemingway's words, and to get a sense of what makes his writing so remarkable.

Patrick Hemingway here beside me, Ernest's son, who is the driving force behind this collection and whom we are so fortunate to have with us today, has often

mentioned to me his father's sense of humor. I got some feel for that this week when I was reading through some of Hemingway's letters, trying to find out how he selected the titles of his books.

In a 1940 letter, Hemingway wrote to his editor, Maxwell Perkins. His granddaughter, Jenny Phillips, is in the third row back there and here with us today. "Dear Max," Ernest wrote, "How about this for a title? *For Whom the Bell Tolls: A Novel by Ernest Hemingway.*" Hemingway then proceeded to quote that John Donne poem that begins, "No man is an island," and ends with, "Therefore, send not to know For whom the bell tolls, It tolls for thee." Hemingway writes, "I think it has the magic that a title has to have. Maybe it isn't too easy to say. But maybe the book will make it easy. Anyway I have had thirty some titles, and they were all possible but this is the first one that has made the bell toll for me. Or do you suppose that people think only of tolls as long distance charges? And of bell as the Bell Telephone system? If so, it is out. *The Tolling of the Bell.* No, that's not right. If there is no modern connotation of telephone to throw it off, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* can be a good title, I think. Anyway, it's what I want to say. And so, if it isn't right, we will get it right. Meanwhile, you have your provisional title."

In 1927, Hemingway wrote to F. Scott Fitzgerald to check out a possible title for a collection of short stories. "How the hell are you?," Hemingway wrote. "What do you think of *Men Without Women* as a title? I could get no title, Fitz, run through Ecclesiastics though I did. Perkins, perhaps you've met him, wanted a title for the book. Perkin's an odd chap, I thought, what a quaint conceit! He wants a title for the book. Oddly enough he did. So I, being in Gstaad at the time went around to

all the book stores trying to buy a bible to get a title. But all the sons of bitches had to sell were little carved brown wood bears. So for a time I thought of dubbing the book *The Little Carved Wood Bear* and then listening to critics explanations. Fortunately, there happened to be a church of England clergyman in town who was leaving the next day and Pauline borrowed a Bible off him after promising to return it that night because it was the Bible he was ordained with. Well, Fitz, I looked through that Bible, it was all in very fine print and stumbling on that great book Ecclesiastics, read it aloud to all who would listen. Soon I was alone and began cursing the bloody bible because there were no titles in it -- although I found the source of practically every good title you ever heard of. The search for the perfect title, the perfect word.”

Today we celebrate and honor those who treasure words as we present the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award, America’s best known prize for a distinguished first book of fiction, and the LL Winship/PEN New England Awards, honoring a first book of fiction, non-fiction and poetry with a New England topic or setting or by a New England author.

Before turning to today’s event, I’d like to thank the many people and organizations who made this award ceremony possible. The Boston Globe Foundation, especially Leah Bailey; the Hemingway Foundation and Society which funds the PEN Award and its President, James Meredith, who is with us today. And, James, could you stand, please? Thank you so much. [Applause]

**MR. JAMES MEREDITH:** Thank you.

**MS. LEFF:** The Friends of the Hemingway Collection, which I encourage all of you to join -- there's a pamphlet about it -- and it's dedicated to commemorating the life and work of Ernest Hemingway and supports the Hemingway Collection; the Ucross Foundation; the University of Idaho; PEN New England, including Perri Klass, the Chair, Helene Atwan, Administrator of the PEN/Hemingway Awards Committee, Andre Dubus III, Administrator of the LL Winship/PEN New England Awards Committee, and Karen Wulf, the Executive Director of PEN New England. At the Kennedy Presidential Library, Hemingway Curator, Susan Wrynn and Archivist, Megan Desnoyers. And I'd also like to thank our Forum Coordinator, Amy Macdonald, for her fine work in pulling all of this together. Most of all, we thank the wonderful Hemingway family. And we are delighted that so many of them are here with us today. Beside me, as I mentioned, is Patrick Hemingway, the son of Ernest. In the front row, his wife, Carol Hemingway; their grandson, Patrick Adams; beside them, their daughter, Mina Hemingway; beside them Sean Hemingway, Ernest Hemingway's grandson, and his wife, Collette; and in the row behind them, John Sanford, the nephew of Ernest Hemingway, and his wife, Judy. It's really an honor to have all of you here today. And we thank you for all you have done for this collection. [Applause]

It now gives me great pleasure to open the 2006 Presentation of Awards. You'll hear first from Rosellen Brown and Patrick Hemingway, who will announce the runners-up and finalists. And then they'll announce the winner of the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award. Andre Dubus III and John Crawford, who is LL Winship's grandson, will announce the three winners of the LL Winship/PEN New

England Award. And Perri Klass will then introduce our keynote speaker, Joyce Carol Oates. Patrick and Rosellen, I turn it over to you.

**MS. ROSELLEN BROWN:** Oh, I thought I would get to stand on that [a stool that was removed]. Instead, I think I have to stand on my toes. It's a great pleasure to be here and see how many people are interested in good literature.

First, I want to thank the other judges who had the opportunity of doing this wonderful work with me. Charlotte Bacon, who is here, and Bernard Cooper, who unfortunately could not be with us today. And I want to acknowledge our two runners-up, Jess Row and Karen Olsson, and begin by presenting a citation to Daniel Alarcon, who is one of our two finalists. [Applause]

And now I'm going to embarrass you by reading this citation for your work:

*War by Candlelight* is as urgent and inflamed as a report from the urban front, but its distinction is that it never yields to the sensational or surrenders its attentiveness to intimate emotion. Daniel Alarcon chronicles vividly both the pain of exile and the entrapments of poverty and the absence of hope. His book is a thrillingly fiery debut, fierce but wrought with impressive care.

I give this to you, [Patrick]. And you give it to Daniel. [Applause]

Our second finalist is Douglas Trevor. [Applause] This is an award for *The Thin Tear in the Fabric of Space*:

From an elderly, speech-impaired professor with a crush on her female student, to a lonely young man who steals exotic soaps from a trendy boutique, Douglas Trevor inhabits a wide range of lives in his debut collection *The Thin Tear in the*

*Fabric of Space*. It's a breadth of vision made all the more remarkable by the author's unfailing compassion. In story after story, he sheds light on the longings his characters hide from others and sometimes from themselves. These are stories where solace is found in words; words declared or stammered or half-remembered in moments of wrenching change. What these characters discover, along with Trevor's fortunate readers, is how often the power of language prevails.  
[Applause]

And now, with great pleasure, the winner of this year's PEN/Hemingway Award, Yiyun Li, author of *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*. [Applause] I have something to say before I ... Well, I'm going to read this first, I guess:

In her collection of stories *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*, Yiyun Li brings to light the hidden places and people of modern China -- the children of civil servants, pensioners, English teachers in the provinces -- and infuses their lives with a sure-handed blend of grace and wisdom, humor and pathos, in prose of quiet, masterful assurance. Utterly real, keenly observed, deeply intelligent, this book has the additional benefit of being unforgettable.

I have to add that it seems wonderfully appropriate, given the writer for whom this award is named, that like last year's prize winner, Chris Abani from Nigeria, our winner transcends borders of nation and language to bring us news of a wider world. I'd like to think that Mr. Hemingway would have approved. [Applause]

**MS. YIYUN LI:** Thank you. I just want to make sure I still speak English. And I thank you, Rosellen, and thank you, Patrick, for the honor. And I would like to thank PEN New England and the Hemingway Foundation for this big honor.

Before I read, I want to talk a little bit about the news. A few days ago, Karen Wulf from PEN New England sent news to me that the Freedom to Write

community from PEN New England will present the 2006 Freedom to Write Award to Shi Tao. Shi Tao is a Chinese poet and reporter. In 2004, he emailed some notes regarding the government's instructions on handling media coverage of the Tiananmen Square anniversary to a Chinese firm in America. A few days later, he was detained. And later, he was formally arrested on a charge of leaking state secrets. He was found guilty in 2005. And he was sentenced to ten years in prison. The incident sparked a controversy about the business practice of Yahoo!, whose Hong Kong arm provided technical information connecting the message, an email account, to Shi Tao's computer. I was very touched when I saw the news. It was picked up by Chinese media from both within the country and without. And I would like just to mention the news because both PEN New England and PEN America Center are doing an important job to support writers and to work toward a better world for writers to have more freedom to write.

So I'm going to read a few lines from the title story *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*. In the story, an old man came to America to visit his divorced daughter. And he was horrified to find out she left her husband for a lover. And the lover was a Romanian-American. And when the daughter confessed about the affair, the first thought of the father was, "*At least the man grew up in a communist country.*" So this is where the story ... This is the part of the dialogue when they talk about the affair.

Mr. Shi looks at his daughter, her eyes candid with resolution and relief. For a moment, he almost wants her to spare him of any further detail, but like all people, once she starts talking, he cannot stop her. "Baba, we were divorced because of this man. I was the abandoner, if you want to use the term."

“But why?”

“Things go wrong in a marriage, Baba.”

“*One night of being husband and wife in bed makes them in love for a hundred days.* You were married for seven years! How could you do this to your husband? What was the problem, anyway, besides your little extramarital affair?” Mr. Shi says. A disloyal woman is the last thing he raised his daughter to be.

“There’s no point in talking about it now.”

“I’m your father. I have a right to know,” Mr. Shi says, banging on the table with a hand.

“Our problem was I never talked enough for my husband. He always suspected that I was hiding something from him because I was quiet.”

“You were hiding a lover from him.”

Mr. Shi’s daughter ignores his words. “The more he asked me to talk, the more I wanted to be quiet and alone. I’m not good at talking, as you have pointed out.”

“But that’s a lie. You just talked over the phone with such immodesty! You talked. You laughed, like a prostitute!”

Mr. Shi’s daughter, startled by the vehemence of his words, looks at him for a long moment before she replies in a softer voice. “It’s different, Baba. We talk in English, and it’s easier. I don’t talk well in Chinese.”

“That’s a ridiculous excuse!”

“Baba, if you grow up in a language that you never used to express your feelings, it would be easier to take up another language and talk more in the new language. It makes you a new person.”

I'm going to stop here. Like many writers, I've always been asked whether my fiction is autobiographical. I'm not an autobiographical writer. But I do, indeed, feel, as the daughter in the story, that I found a new language to express myself better. And I'm very grateful that my effort is acknowledged. And I'm very indebted to PEN New England, the Hemingway Foundation, Ucross Foundation, and the University of Idaho for this honor. And I would like to thank Kate Medina and Richard Abati who are in the audience.

And I would like to thank you for listening to me. And also, just for remembering that for every voice you hear here, there are other voices that we are denied access to in the world. Thank you very much. [Applause]

**ANDRE DUBUS III:** We do take our freedoms for granted, I think, yes. I would like to first thank the judges for this year's LL Winship/PEN New England Award. The poetry judge was Rhina Espaillat; the non-fiction judge was John Skoyles; and the fiction judge was Theodore Weesner. I thank you all for your hard work. They read piles of notable books. [Applause] Yes, thank you.

The 2006 award winner in poetry for the LL Winship/PEN New England Award goes to Stanley Kunitz for his book *The Wild Braid*. I'm going to read you Rhina Espaillat's citation:

*The Wild Braid: A Poet Reflects on a Century in the Garden* is a remarkable look into the mind of a man who, at 100, is still investigating the mysteries of the human and our place in the non-human world, a man who "is mindful of his garden, which prepares to die." I've chosen this collection for its honesty, intimacy and unpretentious wisdom; for its easy blend of conversation, meditation

and lyric poems that are among the loveliest produced by any contemporary poet; and for the wit with which it links the natural and the work of human creativity, the personal and the transcendent, the joys of the body and the serene contemplation of the body's inevitable withdrawal. These are pages filled with the "curious gladness" that is the hallmark of poetry that endures.

Mr. Kunitz was unable to attend today. But we will accept this on his behalf.

[Applause]

This is a lovely ... it's not a coincidence; it's hard work and talent ... But the 2006 award winner in fiction for the LL Winship/PEN New England Award goes to Jennifer Haigh for her novel *Baker Towers*. Jennifer Haigh, two years ago as you recall, won the PEN/Hemingway Award for her novel *Mrs. Kimball*. Come on up and take it. [Applause] Jennifer Haigh.

This is Theodore Weesner's citation for *Baker Towers*:

The story of a coal mining family, *Baker Towers* is also a revealing account of a small town in Pennsylvania as well as of a region and a nation at an uncertain time in its history. Tracing a handful of family members as they make their separate ways in the aftermath of World War II to Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C., the texture and backdrop of their narratives is brilliantly evoked and presents the readers an authentic drama based on both topical and personal sensibilities that may be the very purest form of history."

Congratulations, Jennifer. [Applause]

Due to time constraints, we are now having one winner of the LL Winship Award read per year. This year will be the non-fiction winner. The 2006 award winner in non-fiction for the LL Winship/PEN New England Award goes to Leo Damrosch

for his National Book Award finalist work *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Restless Genius*.

Leo Damrosch's *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Restless Genius* is a moving portrait of the inventor of modern autobiography, but it also depicts an entire age. In clear and compelling prose, Damrosch explores the evolution of this major thinker in a narrative that delves into both his intellectual and sensual sides. Other important figures, such as Diderot and Hume, appear at certain twists and turns of this eccentric and brilliant writer's life. While giving a clear analysis of Rousseau's philosophical positions, and describing how they jostled against those of his time, Damrosch's biography always keeps the reader in the company of flesh and blood.

Congratulations, Mr. Damrosch. [Applause]

**MR. LEO DAMROSCH:** One theme of my book is that Jean-Jacques Rousseau in trying to understand his conflicted and vulnerable psyche, developed a style of self-analysis that's had enormous influence ever since. It was usual in his day to strive to have a consistent character, to emphasize behavior that seemed normal and typical. Rousseau's great originality was to grasp the significance of episodes in his life that were atypical and peculiar and to focus on them instead of editing them out. In his confessions, he startled readers by going into detail about experiences that seemed trivial, embarrassing, sometimes perverse. His goal was to locate a coherence of personality that lay deeper than outward, visible characteristics.

But if Rousseau is the prophet of introspective analysis, we have other models of self-understanding as well. Perhaps the most interesting contrast is his contemporary Benjamin Franklin, who likewise wrote a famous autobiography. Franklin's book influenced generations of readers because it showed how a self-

made man did the making. We remember Franklin as he wanted to be remembered, a tireless inventor and organizer in a world of projects and public works, founding fire departments and post offices and public libraries and universities, inventing the lightning rod and bifocal glasses and the Franklin stove.

His inner life is another matter, however, obscure to the point of opacity. A scholar who has studied every word Franklin wrote concludes, "*Who can do more than guess about this man?*" But if Franklin wore a mask, it was one that fitted his face for he liked best to immerse himself in a group identity. He was committed to politics as compromise among groups, the very thing Rousseau's social contract argued against.

Rousseau was a prophet; Franklin was a facilitator. Psychologically, Franklin embodies the ideal of being well-adjusted. And in the life story he tells about himself, he turns every setback around. He was born just one year after Rousseau and at the outset had surprisingly similar experiences. With a limited formal education and a hated apprenticeship, he says his master's tyranny gave him a lifelong aversion to arbitrary power.

But Franklin was not interested, as Rousseau was, in the ways in which servitude could alter a person for the worse, an insight that underlies Rousseau's great discourse on the origins of inequality. Rousseau became an idler and petty thief, ran away from Geneva at 16 with no idea what to do next, and drifted aimlessly for the next ten years. Franklin ran away from Boston at 17 with plenty of self-

discipline and skills, set himself up as a printer in Philadelphia, and immediately became a watchword for industriousness and honesty.

To build up the kind of stable character that 18<sup>th</sup> century society admired, the best means was to condition oneself to act in the desired ways. Franklin figured this out very early. At the age of 19, he drew up a plan of conduct to accomplish it. He realized that he had begun to strike people as an assertive free thinker and that he was given to outbursts of anger that alienated them. So he set out to delete the undesirable tendencies and acquire the correct ones, making a chart of 13 virtues and attacking them systematically, one virtue per week, four cycles per year. This was a behaviorist experiment with himself as subject.

And the contrast with Rousseau could not be more marked. Rousseau wanted to recover his true self by getting rid of the habits that society called for, whereas they were exactly what Franklin wanted to acquire. Franklin showed he was able to learn from his mistakes and correct them. Rousseau showed that mistakes form a pattern full of meaning for self-understanding.

It's no exaggeration to say that Franklin and Rousseau stand at opposite poles of the legacy we have inherited from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Contemporary American culture talks the Rousseau line, but lives the Franklin life. When we talk about getting in touch with our true selves or about being what we're meant to be, we're talking like Jean-Jacques Rousseau. When we commit ourselves to careers or strive to be team players, we're living like Benjamin Franklin.

To say it another way, Franklin's autobiography encourages readers to construct a public life. Rousseau's confessions challenge them to make a journey into the self. These are fundamental tensions in modern life. And their first great analyst was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Thank you. [Applause]

**MS. PERRI KLASS:** Hello. I'm Perri Klass. I'm the Chair of PEN New England. It is such a joy to see you here and to be part of this day. PEN New England is an organization of writers and people who care about the written word. We are part of PEN American Center. And we are a group that takes delight in good writing as we do today, that, as you have heard, works for the freedom of writers around the world and that brings together people for whom the written word really matters.

It's my honor today to introduce our keynote speaker Joyce Carol Oates. Now, most writers, I think, have shelves or a shelf of iconic books, books that you go back to again and again, books that you can sort of recognize in your sleep by their size and shape and the color of the cover. I told our speaker today that I was going to wave a book around that I bought new in paperback in 1989. That is such a book for me. It's called *Woman (Writer)* by Joyce Carol Oates. And the subtitle is *Occasions and Opportunities*. And I've looked into this book again and again over the years for exactly that reason -- occasions and opportunities -- to see what a writer makes of the opportunities and occasions that life offers, and how she transmutes them into her brilliant prose, into fiction, into non-fiction, into novels and into essays.

I'll make one Hemingway remark because of the occasion today. This is a book which includes not just an essay on the Hemingway mystique, but also a wonderful essay on food and poetry in which she discusses Hemingway and also Charles Dickens and Thomas Mann and Emily Dickinson, all in terms of how they write about eating and drinking.

How many writers are there who can offer an essay collection which ranges with skill and competence and real passion from the romance of Emily Dickinson's poetry or Kafka as storyteller to meeting the Gorbachevs to Mike Tyson?

[Laughter] It's a book with essays about many of the subjects which engage her again and again, including an essay on the function of the pseudonym in writers' lives. And Joyce Carol Oates writes under two other names as well: Lauren Kelly and Rosamond Smith.

In her own name, she is the Roger S. Berlind Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at Princeton University. She's won many awards, including the National Book Award and the PEN Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Fiction. Her recent novel *Blonde* was a National Book Award finalist and a *New York Times* bestseller. She's received the Commonwealth Award for Distinguished Service in Literature and the Kenyan Review Award for Literary Achievement. And in 2005, her novel *The Falls* won France's Prix Femina Award. A new book *High Lonesome: New and Selected Stories, 1966 to 2006* will be published this month. She and her husband edit the *Ontario Review*, publishing established writers, new writers and a remarkable range of voices.

Joyce Carol Oates writes with erudition and with urgency. She compels your attention as if the most important business on earth is this writing, *this writing*, the story right now being told. I was struck as I thought about her by the urgency, the imperative of her first sentences, whether in an essay, like the essay on *Beginnings* in this book, which starts, “I begin with the proposition that the impulse to create, like the impulse to destroy, is utterly mysterious. That it is, in fact, one of the primary mysteries of human existence,” or the opening paragraphs of this novel *The Falls*. I’m going to read you a little bit of it, of just that opening paragraph.

“When she discovered the enigmatic note her husband had left for her propped against a mirror in the bedroom of their honeymoon suite at the Rainbow Grande Hotel, Niagara Falls, New York, Ariah had been married 21 hours. When, in the early afternoon of that day, she learned from Niagara Falls Police that a man resembling her husband, Gilbert Erskine, had thrown himself into the horseshoe falls early that morning and had been swept away, vanished so far without a trace, beyond the Devil’s Hole Rapid as the scenic attraction downriver from the Falls was named, she had been married not quite 28 hours.”

It’s easy to find yourself in a conversation with people who have been struck and deeply moved by particular books that Joyce Carol Oates has written. And her titles are so remarkable as well: *Because It Is Bitter and Because It Is My Heart*, *We were the Mulvaney’s*, *Blonde*, *Where are You Going? Where Have You Been?* Books that resonate, stories that resonate for so many of us: *Middle Age*, *A Romance*, *I’ll Take You There*.

Her work is marked by an extraordinary range of knowledge and expertise. As a writer of fiction, as a reviewer, and as an essayist, she writes in many genres. She writes young adult fiction. She writes wonderful crime novels. She takes on philosophy and political science. And she does each one brilliantly. She not only has won many O. Henry Awards for her short stories and had many stories published in *Best American Short Stories*, but she's also been included in *Best American Essays*, in *Best American Short Plays*, in *Best American Mystery Stories*, and in this year's, *Best Fantasy and Horror*.

Now, as I say, she teaches at Princeton. She's known for truly remarkable generosity of spirit. And, actually, one of our honorees today, Douglas Trevor, was one of her students. She's known for discovering and championing new talent and for using everything she has to help young writers along the way. She's also a phenomenal reviewer. And as we were talking before the ceremony, one of our judges, Theodore Weesner, came up to her and said, "You reviewed my first novel. And I'm still using that quote." And she remembered the novel! And she turned to me, and she said, "Have you read it? You should read it." [Laughter]

She takes on the task of looking at a book or the complete works of a writer with seriousness, with grace, with courtesy, but with clear vision and real intellectual toughness. I want to finish by reading to you something from an essay she wrote called *Literature as Pleasure, Pleasure as Literature*, in which she wrote about leading a seminar and reading a short story by Ernest Hemingway. And it's about one of the students:

And one of them remains after class, wanting to say something further, not wanting the talk of Hemingway to end. Or the talk, in any case, of this Hemingway to end, this page and a half of perfectly honed and seemingly immortal prose, wanting to ask me something, but not knowing what to ask. As at all crucial moments in our lives, we want to speak without knowing what to say. What can I tell him of the unfathomable mystery of personality, of personality transcribed and made permanent in art, in mere finite words? Perhaps the young man wants to ask, "Can I do it, too? Can I try, too?" But he would not ask such a thing, would not expose himself so rawly. That isn't Princeton's style. He says, the book still open in his hands, his voice rather vague, searching, "It's so short. It does so much." And I'm thinking, "Yes. This is the real thing. This is love. That look on your face, again, always, what pleasure."

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to introduce Joyce Carol Oates.

[Applause]