FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: JONATHA BROOKE

Jonatha Brooke is a highly acclaimed singer, songwriter, recording artist, and playwright. In 2014, Ms. Brooke debuted her one-woman theater piece, My Mother Has Four Noses, at the Duke Theater in NYC, a critics' pick in the NY Times and Time Out Magazine. She has written three other musicals: Hopper and Death and Venice with Anton Dudley; and Quadroon, with Joe Sample. She's currently working on Switched with Geoffrey Naufftts. Honors include a 2018 McKnight Artist Grant and the 2019 International Acoustic Music Awards for best artist and best song for "Put the Gun Down." For the past year, Brooke has been teaching on-line Songwriting Master Classes, and streaming weekly concerts from her home in Minneapolis as her creative antidote to the COVID lockdown.

Read the FAWC interview with Jonatha, and register now for *Secrets, Lies, and The Essential Truths: Finding Your Voice as a Playwright*

What draws you to the Fine Arts Work Center and 24PearlStreet?

FAWC is such a hallowed place. I've played there as a singer/songwriter, but I am also the daughter of a poet and a newspaper journalist. I am enamored of what I secretly call "writer writers!" When my one woman show "My Mother Has 4 Noses" and the other theater pieces I've been working on launched me into this new category of "playwright" I was invited to teach at FAWC's debut year of its playwright series. I jumped. What an honor.

Your work is so varied – music can be performed in front of audiences, of course, but often is experienced apart from the artist. With plays, the audience is a key component of the work. How has COVID and working on Zoom changed the way you create and how you perform?

I think my experience performing "4 Noses" Off Broadway put me in a unique position to maneuver my way through COVID. Live-streaming is its own "theater."

It is like acting – I was already comfortable holding that "stage." So I would approach each livestream as a concert, yes, but also an invitation to small trails of monologue. Honing new stories. I would try to synthesize the world, my songs, my other work into those weekly performances.

Playwriting is much like songwriting. It is about economy. How much can you say in this sleek, distilled format without having to SAY it.

What about touring – have you missed that? How does performing in different parts of the country affect your outlook or writing/performing style?

I have sooooo missed that live component of what I do… There is NOTHING like the electricity of people packed together in a room. The sound, elevated and tweaked. Stories weaving their way through the set list. Laughter, tears, the magic of that one moment in time where this particular experience is happening in this particular way.

You also learn to be nimble – every audience is unique. You can sense, city to city, where the humor lies. Where the heartache will land. I am curious to get back out there post COVID and see how the political tension will play out in live settings. It's daunting. We shall see!

Can you tell us about your latest album *The Sweetwater Sessions*? How is it different from your earlier work?

The Sweetwater Sessions gathers old, new, and a couple of borrowed tunes. It's a bit of a retrospective. But the idea was to record some favorite formerly overlooked songs unfussily. We went for a vibe, tracking the songs together live! (Who knew how precious *that* would be when we were recording!) There's a great abandon to it. And it's mixed like a pop record. John Fields was mixing as COVID hit the country, sending songs to me from his house digitally even though we both live in Minneapolis. I released it in July from lockdown. It was wild and terrifying. I would sign a few hundred CDs, mask up and venture to the post office. If there were too many people, I'd wait and try again the next day. It wasn't ideal, but I was proud we pulled it off.

It's all kind of a blur now….

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: ERIN BELIEU

Erin Belieu is the author of five poetry collections, all from Copper Canyon Press, including her recent *Come-Hither Honeycomb* (2021). Belieu's poems have appeared in places such as the *New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *the New York Times*, *AGNI*, *Ploughshares*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Slate*, *Tin House*, and the *American Poetry Review* and have been chosen for multiple appearances in the Best American Poetry anthology series. She is the founder of the literary resistance network, Writers Resist, and teaches in the University of Houston's MFA/Ph.D. Creative Writing Program and the Lesley University low residency MFA program in Cambridge, MA.

Read the FAWC interview with Erin, and register now for *Vision & Revision: A Poetry Workshop*

Tell us about your new book *Come-Hither Honeycomb*.

Come-Hither Honeycomb feels to me the most intimate, unguarded book I've written thus far. I took my skin off completely for this one. But I always feel that balancing craft discipline and internal decorum can save us from the too sloppy raw. I hope that's true of this book. It's been well received so that's a relief!

Your work is known for its word play, puns, and the like. Do you find this approach makes for an environment more suitable to students that are interested in poetry but might find it intimidating?

I resist the idea that I pun! But there definitely is wordplay. I follow the sound and the rhythm of language at all times, looking for vibrancy and syncopation and how language leads to invention in thought. And yes, I definitely encourage my students to play, to really enjoy this beautiful language the way many of us did as children. I find that freedom of child-mind really useful in thinking about poems. It's easy to

get caught up in what other people think of our poems and worrying that they should be this or that in order to be "good." But poems should be a pleasure at some level, no matter how serious the subject. We should take ourselves seriously as poets, but not too seriously at the same time in order to let go of our self-consciousness. I mean, I've written bad poems–it happens to every poet–but none of them have killed me yet!

Have you found that the variety of places that you've lived – where you grew up, studied, and have taught – has influenced the array of topics you tend to return to?

Yes, landscapes mean a lot to me, and the people in them. A sense of place is often very useful for poems as we want our poems to have the sense of happening somewhere, right? And the particular language and landmarks of various places have such color and life.

What do you hope that your students leave your class having accomplished?

I want my students to feel supported in the ways that need support for their poetry at a given moment in time. Workshops should never be one-size-fits-all. I want to meet my students where they are in the workshop space and it's my job to offer constructive feedback that suits the writer. Wherever you are in my class is just fine. From beginning to explore poetry to already published. We're all in this poem making together.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: JOHN MURILLO

John Murillo is the author of the poetry collections *Kontemporary Amerikan Poetry* and *Up Jump the Boogie*. He is assistant professor of English at Wesleyan University and teaches in the low residency MFA program at Sierra Nevada College. He lives in Brooklyn.

Read the FAWC interview with John, and register now for *Cut, Scratch, & Blend: Revision as Remix*

How important is a daily writing practice to you?

Very. I've found that I am at my best when I have a stretch of time–at a residency, let's say–where the demands of everyday living are light enough for me to write with some measure of regularity. My process requires a lot of time and space for failure, false starts, underwhelming drafts, silence, more failure, frustration, futility, staring off into space or at a blank page, and, finally, when the writing does get going, something like a guarantee that neither a doorbell or a ringing phone, a household chore or social commitment, will get in the way of what's about to happen.

That's when I'm at my best. Unfortunately for my work, I spend much more time at my house than at my best. And at my house, there is life. And chores, and errands, and work, and responsibility. Adulting, as the young people call it. (True fact: As I am writing this, my wife calls from upstairs to ask if I've called the collision repair guys to check on a driver side mirror we need to replace. You can't make this stuff

up!) And so, my daily writing practice–and my daily meditative practice, my daily exercise, daily language study, daily guitar practice, basically, each of the dailies I care about and know are good for me–cease being daily at all, and become, instead, something I hope to get around to when I can.

That said, I do make an effort to carve out some time each day to at least try to get after it. To at least fight. Or take flight. I've tried getting up earlier than life. I've tried staying up past responsibility. Ignoring the door when duty knocks. I think, maybe, I'm not good at hiding and run slow. They always find me, and mean to keep me from the desk. Sometimes I feel like half the effort of being a writer is in the fleeing.

(That afternoon reading I had planned today? Dedicated study? Reading Hayden's "Middle Passage" and tracing the connections between that and Eliot's "The Wasteland" to learn what I could about the long poetic sequence? That's out the window. I did call the collision guys and have to take the car in at 2.)

In terms of revision, specifically, do you find you do your best work when you're in a set mindspace working on one poem or one set of poems continually, or that you produce something more dynamic when you've had time away from a piece of work and are coming with a fresh perspective?

Yes. To all this. Time away from the poem does indeed allow for a fresh–and necessary–perspective. And having other poems in progress allows me to step away from one and still feel productive. But when I am working on a particular poem, I lock in and obsess for as long as I'm able. Until the poem comes together, or until I've hit a wall, or until another chore pops up and snatches me out of the room. To the car repair center, for instance.

When you put something out in the world, do you consider it complete, or do you ever look back and think of things you would like to edit?

By the time a poem is ready for the world, I have truly taken it as far as I can and am convinced, in that moment, that I have done my best. I don't send work out until I know I can't possibly make it any better.

Once I see the work in print, I am able to spot–*immediately!*–ways I could have made it better. I find this to be true of even my best poems. Such moments used to really bother me. I've learned, though, to let go, to let the poems be in the world as they are, and to accept that that really was the best I could do at that time. I also like to believe that my ability to see now what I couldn't see then is a sign of growth as both reader and writer.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: VICTORIA REDEL

Victoria Redel is the author of three books of poetry and four books of fiction, including her newest novel *Before Everything* (Viking Penguin in the USA and Sceptre in the UK). She has a new collection of poems forthcoming in 2022. Her work has been widely anthologized and translated into 11 languages. She is on the faculty of Sarah Lawrence College.

Read the FAWC interview with Victoria, and register now for *Possibilities & Necessities: A Fiction Workshop*

Where is the distinction between what is possible in art, specifically writing, and what is necessary?

Doesn't every writer want to get to the material that's most personally essential, most necessary? But that presumes we know what that really is and, even if we do have a sense of it, that we're ready to go there. Often it's scary, uncertain terrain. Often what is necessary and most potent for a writer is hidden behind layers of "shoulds", "shouldn'ts", "shame", "fear" and even one's own sense who we think we ought to be in our writing. Even joy can feel dangerous to write into. Thus, before we even write a word, we begin to limit what's possible. It's hard to get out of our own way. My hope always is that the work we do in class opens a writer to what they need to write—their deep fascinations, the stories they need to tell—and gives them lots of tools—syntax, point of view, description, place, recursion, character range etc.—to get there.

Do you think any writers innately get to what is "necessary" or do you think there needs to be a period of digging, writing and rewriting, and self-reflection to get to what is necessary?

It helps me to think of writing as something physical, like gardening. Digging around in the soil of the imagination, turning over, weeding, rooting, untangling, watering, waiting, are all absolutely inevitable before there's a finished work. Our relationship to language is personal and often complicated, so we need to invite, play and coax our own unique way of being on the page. Writing is messy and the more we embrace the mess and tolerate a place of unknowing, the greater the chance that we'll surprise ourselves and our readers.

How often in your work do you play with all the possibilities you mention—e.g. narrative point of view, syntax, omission, etc—to get at the way in which you want to tell a specific story?

Oh, all the time! I'll just use my last novel, *Before Everything*, as an example. I started it thinking I'd alternate, in first-person, between two points of view, two characters. By the time I published the book it was in third-person with 18 different points of view woven through the book. I'm not sure I would have even thought I could do that. I wouldn't have dared set out to do that. In the end, the story changed—it was no longer about two characters but a community. That's the other thing, the more we play around, try things, the more of a chance we have to write a fuller, richer, more emotionally complicated and even truer story than we set out to write.

As a teacher, how do you know when you've done for your students what you've set out to do?

There's a kind of buzzy fun, a thrill sometimes, that happens in a room of writers opening themselves up to working in new ways, trying new approaches to story, even reconsidering what is a story. When we come away from class with drafts of new work and excitement that the work is going in unanticipated directions, then both the students and I feel we've surpassed initial expectations—which is what I want. Then I kind of feel that I've done my job okay.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: JANUARY GILL O'NEIL

January Gill O'Neil is an associate professor at Salem State University, and the author of *Rewilding* (2018), *Misery Islands* (2014), and *Underlife (2009)*, all published by CavanKerry Press. From 2012-2018, she served as the executive director of the Massachusetts Poetry Festival, and currently serves on the boards of AWP, Mass Poetry, and Montserrat College of Art. Her poems and articles have appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, the Academy of American Poets' Poem-A-Day series, *American Poetry Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, and WBUR's Cognoscenti, among others. The recipient of fellowships from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Cave Canem, and the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund, O'Neil was the 2019-2020 John and Renée Grisham Writer-in-Residence at the University of Mississippi, Oxford. She lives with her two kids in Beverly, MA.

Read the FAWC interview with January, and register now for *Tiny Miracles and Everyday Wonders: A Poetry Workshop*

What do the poets you will be studying in class – Lucille Clifton, Ross Gay, Keetje Kuipers, Ada Limon, Natasha Trethewey, Ocean Vuong – have in common? What is it about their work that finds and celebrates beauty or randomness?

I am enamored with the work of these poets. Their voices ring honest and clear, and they have a unique perspective on how they see the world. Even if these poets were not writing pandemic poems, their words have been a salve for a difficult time.

Is it possible to infuse joy and wonder in a poem after revision? Or does there need to be some element of it – whether thematically or stylistically – at the start of conceptualizing the work?

Yes. If that's the ultimate truth of the poem, then the joy (or pain) of the poem will come through. I've read poems that disguise their intent, so the delight is hidden and surprises the reader at the end. Those poems are the tiny miracles.

You speak of finding the tiny miracles and everyday wonder for your poems. Is finding and celebrating that what makes poems about the quotidian have a stronger impact?

I don't know if finding joy in the everyday has a stronger impact, but the poems that resonate with me celebrate the ordinary. That doesn't mean the poet shies away from difficult subjects or large moments. Quite the opposite. Txhe poet finds a way to make the most personal experience seem universal.

What sort of language can students expect to employ in your workshop that is not typically found in poetry?

That's just it, I want writers to get past what they think a poem should be and write what it is. So I will encourage writers to use the language of the everyday, but to always reach for language that lifts off the page.

This is your first time teaching with The Fine Arts Work Center and 24PearlStreet. What are some hopes you have for the course, and what do you hope your students take away from the experience?

I hope my students write something that truly startles them. My favorite moments are when writers start a poem in one place but the poem takes them in another direction. That's when I know the poet is working in service to the poem.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: NICK FLYNN

Nick Flynn has worked as a ship's captain, an electrician, and as a case-worker with homeless adults. He is the author of five collections of poetry, most recently *I Will Destroy You.* He is also the author of a play, *Alice Invents a Little Play and Alice Always Wins*, and the memoir trilogy *The Ticking is the Bomb*, *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City*, and *The Reenactments.* Other recent, notable books include the multi-media retrospective *Stay: A Self-Portrait* (March 2020) and the memoir *This Is the Night Our House Will Catch Fire* (August 2020).

Read the FAWC interview with Nick, and register now for *Memoir as Bewilderment*

Do you find that writing – writing memoirs in particular – lends itself to mining bewilderment more so than other artistic mediums?

I am unsure if "more" is the word…I think it depends on the temperament of the artist. I can imagine that a dancer would be right on the knife edge of bewilderment with each slight gesture, almost watching as the body makes movements and gestures that likely have little to do with the intellect. It seems like with any artistic practice at some point we reach that place where what we know and plan dissolves, and something else takes over. That to me is thrilling, in whatever medium.

When playing with incomprehension, does it tend to appear as you begin your writing, or do you have a tendency to write in a more structured format and

return to your work with the intention of exploring incomprehension and bewilderment?

That really depends on the moment, though in our workshop we will begin each writing exercise with a short mediation, as a way to bring ourselves to the threshold of the unknown, and then when we start writing we will hopefully cross that threshold. Inversely, we will also look at work we have already written before the workshop and look for those threshold in that work, where we can push a bit deeper into the unknown.

What is it about bewilderment that you find worthwhile? How does incorporating it into your work get at a deeper truth or a more compelling way of sharing a story, be it through memoir, poetry, or fiction?

David Mamet has said "The conscious mind cannot create art"—and I agree. Our conscious minds often get in the way of allowing the greater mysteries of existence to flow through our work.

How will you know you've accomplished with your 24PearlStreet students what you've set out to?

Ideally, by day three or day four, the writers will start to let go of whatever has been blocking then, and they will read something they've written and be filled with surprise…" I don't even know who wrote this" is a very satisfying thing to hear a writer say about their own work.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: REBECCA MORGAN FRANK

Rebecca Morgan Frank is the author of four books of poems: *Oh You Robot Saints*, *Sometimes We're All Living in a Foreign Country*, and *The Spokes of Venus*, all from Carnegie Mellon University Press, and *Little Murders Everywhere* (Salmon Poetry), a finalist for the Kate Tufts Discovery Award. Her poems have appeared in such places as *The New Yorker*, *American Poetry Review*, and *The Kenyon Review*, and her collaborations with composers are performed widely. Co-founder and editor of the journal *Memorious*, she teaches in Northwestern University's MFA program in Prose & Poetry and is the writer-in-residence at the Hemingway Birthplace outside of Chicago.

Read the FAWC interview with Rebecca, and register now for *The Art of Getting Unstuck: Writing Your Way Back Into the Poem*

How does viewing a poet's first and final draft illuminate their journey? Have you ever gone back to a first draft of a finished poem and worked your way to a different final version?

What I love about reading a first draft of a published poem is how it reveals both the seed of an individual poem and the path of discovery the poet has followed to get to what they consider a final draft. I also think it shows the many possibilities of each poem, its many possible futures. There is no one direction for a poem to go, and that is what makes revision so thrilling (and challenging!) My poem "The Girlfriend Elegies" had a former "finished" version many years before I went back to it and worked my way to a very different final form; the new revision process began with me finding the right first line.

You make art not only as a poet but also in collaboration with composers. What is it about the melody or lyricism of both music and verse that lends itself to getting out of a creative rut?

I think when we are feeling stuck, anyone who is creating in any art form can inspire us, whether through their work or their process. As poets, we also make music and we also make images, so it makes sense that we often turn to these sister arts. When you're feeling stuck, looking at art or listening to music can unlock emotions, thoughts, or narratives to work with.

Over the course of the pandemic, watching composers and performers who I collaborate with find innovative ways to still create, collaborate, and find audiences was so moving and motivating. It was a reminder that we can find ways to create, to do what we love, in many conditions.

How important are other people in getting a writer unstuck? Whether a writing group, editor, a friend or family member with a sympathetic ear?

I think other people are essential for most of us. What I have found as a writer, teacher, and consultant is that we all need encouragement, validation, or even permission– for someone to say writing poetry is a real and valuable pursuit. A writer's path is also solitary and can come with challenges such as handling rejections or struggling to find the time to do this thing we love. We may need others to support us through this or to provide us with deadlines and audiences. One of my closest and most supportive writer friends is someone I met in a weeklong workshop back in 2004, and we have encouraged one another, and traded work, ever since. I love when I see my students forge these kinds of writerly connections, whether within a class or beyond it, because I know how vital such support can be.

This is your first time teaching with The Fine Arts Work Center and 24PearlStreet. What are some hopes you have for the course, and what do you hope your students take away from the experience?

I have seen so many friends, and writers on social media, report their struggles with writing over the last 20 months, and I hope that this class will offer a space for poets to return to their writing with fresh approaches and to feel the joy of writing, of generating new work, again. Our live virtual meetings will provide an opportunity to not only break out of isolation, but to carve out time and space for writing. So much of getting "unstuck" is about that first act of returning pen to page.

I also have gathered so many writing prompts and activities over my years of teaching, and I love the idea of a class that lets me pull out all the stops and send writers home with many tools to keep them writing in the year ahead.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: ANNE SANOW

Anne Sanow is the author of the story collection *Triple Time*, winner of the Drue Heinz Literature Prize and the PEN New England Award for Fiction. Twice a fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center, her awards include the Nelson Algren Award for Short Fiction from the *Chicago Tribune* and fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. She currently lives and writes in New Orleans.

Read the FAWC interview with Anne, and register now for *Liftoff: Getting That Story Draft Moving*

What tends to motivate your writing? Is it reading other writers' work, experiencing something new, your natural surroundings, something else?

Place has always been a huge motivator for me; I suspect this comes from having moved around so much, and as an outsider to places, wanting to take a deep dive to see what's underneath. That tension between knowing and not knowing is at the root of it. Reading the work of writers I admire always makes me want to raise my own bar. And nature for me is a place to figure out problems—a good long walk is more likely to untangle a narrative problem than sitting too long and pecking about at the screen.

What authors and artists inspire you the most? Has this changed throughout your writing career, or are there any you return to, time and again?

Oh, so many! They do change, but some of those who have left deep, lasting impressions are Michael Ondaatje, Krzysztof Kieslowski, Margaret Atwood, Shirley Hazzard, Michelle de Kretser, Michael Haneke, Eric Rohmer, Diego Velazquez, Edward P. Jones, W. G. Sebald, Jenny Erpenbeck, Kazuo Ishiguro, John Edgar Wideman, Alice Munro.

What sort of prompts can students expect throughout the course? Do you encourage writing prompts in general, or do they focus on the specific piece of work students are working on?

The prompts in this workshop do focus on the specific piece of work the students are sharing with the class—the point is to get a story moving from its staging area (which is often where writers get stuck in a draft) to something in action, moving forward. The prompts are flexible: there's always more than one option, and you can either follow the prompt if you're in the generating phase, or use it to question and maybe take a new direction if you're already working on a draft. It's all about finding possibilities you may not have known were there. And all the prompts are part of deepening one's larger perspective on writing, which you can take forward to anything you're working on in the future.

What will four weeks of class, rather than one week, offer to students?

We need four weeks for truly immersive fiction, and I welcome students writing at longer lengths, which would be tough to handle in a week's time. We're also all looking at drafts in progress more than once, so there's the opportunity to get that feedback on where something started and where it's progressed over the course of a month. We also have the weekly Zoom "coffee shop" writing sessions—which are optional, but they're great for establishing (or re-establishing) a regular writing practice!

How will you know when you and your students have accomplished what you and they have set out to with this course?

If students get to the end of a first draft, that's great—but more important is getting to a point of being compelled to continue. You've got to step off a cliff to really get a story going to interesting places, and the results of that first leap will be messy. There's that fine point between utter chaos and the beginnings of refinement that produces a weird tingle you feel as a writer when you know you've gotten to a point where you simply *must* keep the story going, and that's where I want students to be at the end of our month together.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: PETER CAMPION

Peter Campion is the author of *Radical as Reality: Form and Freedom in American Poetry*; four collections of poems: *Other People*, *The Lions*, *El Dorado*, and *One Summer Evening at the Falls* (forthcoming in 2021); and several monographs and catalog essays on modern and contemporary visual art. His work has appeared in publications including *ARTNews*, *Boston Globe*, *Harvard Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Modern Painters*, *New Republic*, *New York Times Book Review*, *Poetry*, *Sculpture*, *Slate*, and *Yale Review*, among others. A recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship and the Joseph Brodsky Rome Prize, he teaches in the writing program at the University of Minnesota.

Read the FAWC interview with Peter, and register now for *Form & Feeling*

Can you tell us a bit about your interest in the seven formal elements you'll focus on in your class – action, voice, sentence, phrase, line, sound, and metaphor? Is there anything else that makes up a poem's form? Why these seven elements?

Let me answer your second question first. There's definitely more that goes into making poems: there's emotion and experience and thought and, the biggie, imagination. Technique alone doesn't make a poem. And for me, form doesn't have to do with rules so much as resources. So I call the class "Form and Feeling": I believe that form and feeling are mutually entailing, that the formal elements convey and embody feeling, and give the poem gestural, physical life.

Sometimes, when we talk about the experience or the feelings related to a poem we're working on, when we talk about the subject, we can discover its form. And sometimes, when we jog things around formally and try something out, we can connect with the subject in a way we never knew was possible and that gives the poem its depth.

How does studying and working within the "fundamentals" of poetry engage with the vaguer notion of "feeling" within a piece?

I think the key here is the difference between what we say in a poem—the content you can paraphrase—and how we say it. When working with new drafts we're often trying to join one to the other, to make the poem do what it's saying. The voice in a poem often endeavors to accomplish something—lyric poetry has its roots in ritual. So what a poem *does*—how the voice makes its claim on us and insinuates itself into memory, how the lines unfold, how the tone changes, how the sentences withhold and deliver information—these things reward our awareness.

And the amazing thing about poetry is that it's made from a medium we all use, language. So we're always working with fundamentals of verbal expression—the bare stuff of our speech.

How necessary is it that a poem excel in each of these elements? Do you find there are any truly memorable or technically skillful works that are lacking in one or more of them?

Certainly, there are many, many. I have "line" in the list, for example, but there are obviously great prose poems.

I see the "seven elements" not as a checklist of criteria, but as seven points of entry into a more dynamic engagement with poetry.

You mention that the process of exploring the elements won't be "academic". Can you give a bit more insight into what the process will be like?

Definitely. We share two poems per week, one a free-choice poem and the other in response to a prompt, meant not only to jump-start writing but to provide some artistic resources. I also post two "mini-essays" per week, and these are geared toward real, collegial conversation. People often have questions about poetry that they've been waiting to ask. So the forum is always open for everyone to use.

How will you know you've accomplished with your students what you've set out to?

If I can tell that someone has found it an enriching experience, I'm gratified. I've had students in FAWC classes who've published several books and I've had students who've been writing their first poems ever. Some people have taken the class two or three times now, and have met new friends, started writers' groups, and so on. It's a very convivial, welcoming vibe.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: KELLI RUSSELL AGODON

Kelli Russell Agodon's newest book, *Dialogues with Rising Tides*, was just published by Copper Canyon Press. She is the cofounder of Two Sylvias Press where she works as an editor and book cover designer. Her other books include *Letters from the Emily Dickinson Room*, *Hourglass Museum*, *The Daily Poet: Day-By-Day Prompts for Your Writing Practice* which she coauthored with Martha Silano, and *Fire on Her Tongue: An Anthology of Contemporary Women's Poetry*. She lives in a sleepy seaside town in Washington State on traditional lands of the Chimacum, Coast Salish, S'Klallam, and Suquamish people where she is an avid paddleboarder and hiker. She teaches at Pacific Lutheran University's low-res MFA program, the Rainier Writing Workshop.

Read the FAWC interview with Kelli, and register now for *Secret Doorways Into Poetry: A Week of Writing New Poems*

Poetry is often described as inaccessible, which is one of the reasons your use of the word "entryway" is so notable. Can you elaborate a bit on the idea of entryways into poems?

So many times when we sit down to write, we have no idea how to enter into the poem or to write the poems we need to write. I view poetry as a house with many doors (and even windows!) to climb through.

We can get in our own way as poets; we can have trouble beginning the poem and entering in. Sometimes, we might have to break into the poem through a side door,

sometimes we have to crawl down the chimney, but many times we just need to knock and the poem will let us in.

Once we've entered into the poem, we can settle in. But so many times, it's finding that beginning point, the place to enter—this is what I mean when I say *entryways*—I hope to help poets find new and innovative ways to enter poems and to get their creativity and imagination rolling.

This is a week-long intensive course that places poetry as the primary focus. Given this, how important is writing every day to you? Do you tend to create more work when you write in smaller bursts – like a week-long course – or by writing and editing a little bit every day?

I actually do both—I will write a poem-a-day for a month or I will completely engage myself in my work while on a week-long residency. There's no right or wrong way to be a poet. Both ways have their rewards.

The benefits of a week-long course is that you're in the groove of writing and you're supported by the structure of the class. I always think when you sign up for a class, you are making space for your art and putting poetry as your priority; the poems written during that time would not have been written if you chose not to show up—that is what I love and appreciate about classes that generate new poems.

What are some of the unexpected ways of drafting poems and new techniques to begin poems that you will work on with students?

Since poetry isn't one-size fits all, I like to come up several ways to begin a poem and play with surprising ourselves by finding ways to distract our minds and our inner critic when we're writing.

I try to take away the "importance" of writing the poem and create a space where we can just have fun using innovative ways to enter into writing. I can't tell you all the secrets here because one of the magical elements about writings poems is the spark that happens at the moment we begin writing together.

But I can tell you I believe in play, taking risks in our work, and I continue to look for enjoyable and inventive way to inspire the poets I work with.

This is your first time teaching with 24PearlStreet. What are some hopes you have for the course, and what do you hope your students take away from the experience?

My hope for the course is that poets find new ways to be creative, find joy with what they learn in this course, create community, and to feel both supported and nurtured as a poet and human.

I hope my students have fun, take risks, support each other's work and creative goals, and most importantly, that they leave with several new drafts of poems.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: ALLISON JOSEPH

Allison Joseph is the author of several poetry collections, including *Confessions of a Barefaced Woman* (Red Hen Press, 2018); *Worldly Pleasures* (Word Press, 2004); and *What Keeps Us Here* (Ampersand, 1992), winner of the John C. Zacharis First Book Award.

Joseph has received fellowships and awards from the Illinois Arts Council. She teaches at and directs the Southern Illinois University–Carbondale MFA Program in Creative Writing, where she also serves as the editor-in-chief and poetry editor of *Crab Orchard Review*. She lives in Carbondale, Illinois.

Read the FAWC interview with Allison, and register now for *Elegy as Healing Art: The Role of Elegy in Healing Our Wounds*

We often turn to poems in the "big" moments – birth, weddings, death. What do you think it is about poetry that comforts or supports us in these times?

I think it's the comfort of language that we didn't have to make. It's like cake. Cake always tastes better when it's made by someone else. Hearing the words of solace or sorrow in another's language is cathartic.

Do you think that reading and writing elegies transcends cultural relationships to grief, or that this practice is in response to how we as Westerners grieve?

I do think it's a western thing in that we think grieving is over when we've written the poems. I have an inkling that non-western societies would hint that the grieving has just begun when the poem is written.

"Grief" has a connotation of sorrow. How much do the elegies that you engage with uplift or focus on joy?

I find myself writing different kinds of elegies. I write what I've dubbed "ars lacrymosas"–poems about the very process of grief, how grief feels within the body. I have written a lot of those since losing my husband, the great poet and editor Jon Tribble. But I hope I can get to writing more poems about our shared lives–those will be elegies too, but we had a lot of joy between us.

This is your first time teaching with 24PearlStreet. What are some hopes you have for the course, and what do you hope your students take away from the experience?

I hope we can have great conversations–that in talking about elegies, we can talk and write about what we truly treasure. Elegies preserve what matters, and I hope that the class can give individual poets insight into what they should move into the "treasure column."

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: KRISTINA MARIE DARLING

Kristina Marie Darling is the author of thirty-four books, including *DIFFICULT: Essays on Contemporary Feminist Poetry* (Black Ocean, forthcoming); *Look to Your Left: A Feminist Poetics of Spectacle* (Akron Poetry Series, forthcoming); *Angel of the North* (Salmon Poetry, forthcoming in 2023); *Je Suis L'Autre: Essays & Interrogations* (C&R Press, 2017), which was named one of the "Best Books of 2017" by *The Brooklyn Rail*; *DARK HORSE: Poems* (C&R Press, 2018), which received a starred review in *Publishers Weekly*; and two critical studies on contemporary poetry, which are forthcoming from Clemson University Press and Spuyten Duyvil Press, respectively. Her work has been recognized with three residencies at Yaddo, where she has held both the Martha Walsh Pulver Residency for a Poet and the Howard Moss Residency in Poetry; a Fundación Valparaíso fellowship; a Hawthornden Castle Fellowship, funded by the Heinz Foundation; an artist-in-residence position at Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris; five residencies at the American Academy in Rome; two grants from the Whiting Foundation; a Faber Residency in the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities; a Morris Fellowship in the Arts; and the Dan Liberthson Prize from the Academy of American Poets, which she received on three separate occasions, among many other awards and honors. Her poems appear in *Guernica*, *The Harvard Review*, *Poetry International*, *New American Writing*, *Nimrod*, *Passages North*, *The Mid-American Review*, and on the Academy of American Poets' website, Poets.org. She has published essays in *Agni*, *Ploughshares*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Green Mountains Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Literary Review*, and numerous other magazines. Kristina currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of *Tupelo Press* and *Tupelo Quarterly*, an opinion columnist at *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, a contributing writer at *Publishers Weekly*, a staff blogger at *The Kenyon Review*, and a freelance book critic at *The New York Times Book Review*. In 2019, she was named to the U.S. Fulbright Commission's roster of Senior Specialists.

Read the FAWC interview with Kristina, and register now for *The Fine Art of Application Writing: How to Successfully Apply for Residencies, Fellowships, and Grants*

Do you find compiling an engaging application requires a different skillset from writing compelling work? Is there hope for a writer who can use language beautifully in a poem or short story but struggles with administrative logistics?

The elements of an application — like project proposals, CVs, and artist statements — are literary forms in and of themselves, with particular rules and conventions, just like the sonnet or the short story. I've seen writers and artists who craft compelling work struggle to navigate the forms used in residency and grant applications. However, like the sonnet or the short story, these forms can be learned. I've served on several juries, including the Millay Colony, I-Park, Willapa Bay AiR, and many more. The experience of seeing applications from the other side — as a decision maker — is integral to my teaching. Students can expect an array of insider tips over the course of this practically minded workshop.

Is there a "mistake" that you most often see writers make when they draft applications?

The most common mistake tends to happen in the project proposal. Writers and artists will describe multiple current projects, and will often be unclear about which one they're pitching for the residency. This often comes across as indecisive to a selection committee. Single-mindedness of purpose is crucial when crafting the project proposal. After all, decision-makers in the arts want to know that the applicant is focused enough to make the most of their residency.

How will you know you've accomplished with your students what you've set out to with this course?

Students will leave the workshop with what I call a "ready to go folder," consisting of a polished project proposal, artist statement, work sample and CV that can be tailored to specific applications. After all, the application process for residencies and grants is fairly standard across the board, and applicants can often use the same materials to apply to multiple opportunities.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: SARAH ROSE NORDGREN

Sarah Rose Nordgren is the author of *Best Bones* (2014), winner of the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize, and *Darwin's Mother* (2017), a finalist for the 2018 Ohioana Book Award, both from University of Pittsburgh Press. Her poems and essays appear widely in periodicals such as *Agni*, *Ploughshares*, *The Kenyon Review Online*, *Copper Nickel*, and *American Poetry Review*, and she creates video and performance text art in collaboration with Kathleen Kelley under the name Smart Snow. Among her awards are two winter fellowships from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, an Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council, and fellowships and scholarships from the Sewanee and Bread Loaf Conferences, the Vermont Studio Center, and the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. Nordgren holds a BA from Sarah Lawrence College, an MFA in poetry from University of North Carolina Greensboro, and a PhD in English and Creative Writing from University of Cincinnati where she also earned a Graduate Certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She currently lives in Cincinnati.

Read the FAWC interview with Sarah Rose, and register now for *What's the Big Idea? Writing Ambitious Poems in Times of Uncertainty*

What is it about "the big stuff" in poetry that compels you, compared to poetry that highlights the extraordinary within the seemingly mundane?

Both are important, obviously, and I love to read and write both kinds of poems. But I developed this class during the past couple of years in which even people of relative privilege haven't been able to ignore the gravity of our moment in history. Between the Trump presidency and all of its ongoing devastations, racist violence, the climate crisis, and the pandemic, it can be quite daunting for writers — myself

included — to figure out how to approach this moment, and yet many of us feel a compulsion or responsibility to address it in our poems.

Is there any concern that grappling with such large topics – like war or God – will make a poem inaccessible to certain audiences?

I personally don't worry about that. Poets have always grappled with the biggest subjects — war, God, mortality, grief, love, kinship, meaning and meaninglessness, ecstasy and despair. Of course most poets are going to have awareness of their readers and don't want to offend or appropriate. But I don't believe it's the ambition of a poem or poet, or the size of their subject matter, that makes a poem accessible or not. Not all poems will be accessible or powerful for all readers, and that feels okay to me.

How does playing with different approaches – eg form, tone, point of view – change a poem's impact?

Playing with different compositional approaches serves a couple of different purposes. First of all, it can simply be useful to mix things up when one is feeling stuck. As poets, we sometimes get in a rut where we're approaching our poems in familiar ways over and over. These ways may still work for us sometimes, or even most of the time, but when we want to take on new subject matter, or the same subject matter in a fresh way, we may feel lost.

So certain changes, like shifting to an unexpected point of view (like Patricia's Smith's incredible "Skinhead") or giving ourselves formal restrictions (like Marie Ponsot's devastating sonnet, "Winter") can open up our subject matter in surprising ways.

Also, I find that focusing on craft techniques and experiments can be a great way to distract us, temporarily, from the fear and trepidation we may have around writing particular kinds of poems. If we're focused on experimenting with tone, for example, we may allow ourselves to forget to feel inadequate long enough to write something really powerful and ambitious.

How will you know you've accomplished with your students what you've set out to with this course?

I want my students to come out of the course feeling brave, like they can write about anything, and also feeling like they're in good company. They're part of a group of poets — their peers in the class, and myself — who care about poems and big ideas and big questions, and they can draw upon the energy and support of this

group. And beyond that, I want my students to see themselves as part of a larger lineage going back through literary history, a line of all the poets who wrote bravely about what mattered to them and to their communities during uncertain times through history. Poets who grappled with grief and loss, who spoke up against injustice and inequity, who conversed with gods and devils.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: CHLOE CALDWELL

Chloe Caldwell is the author of three books: the essay collection I'll Tell You in Person (Coffee House/Emily Books, 2016), the critically acclaimed novella, WOMEN (SF/LD 2014 and Harper Collins UK, 2017) and Legs Get Led Astray. Her memoir, The Red Zone: A Love Story will publish on April 19th, 2022 from Soft Skull. Chloe's essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Bon Appétit*, *New York Magazine's The Cut*, *The Strategist*, *Buzzfeed*, *Longreads*, *Vice*, *Nylon*, *Salon.com*, *Medium*, *The Rumpus*, *Catapult*, *Hobart*, *The Sun*, *Men's Health*, *The Nervous Breakdown*, and half a dozen anthologies including Goodbye To All That: Writers on Loving and Leaving NYC and Without A Net: The Female Experience of Growing Up Working Class. She lives in Hudson, N.Y. with her family.

Read the FAWC interview with Chloe, and register now for *Structuring the Novella with Precision*

Do you think there are certain stories that can *only* be told in novella form? How does a writer know if what they want to put out into the world is best told in a poem, memoir, novella, short story?

The novella is an excellent container for a love story. I don't mean your average love story of person meets person and falls in love. I'm talking about unconventional love stories: unexpected triangulations, parent/child, friendship as romance. Desire, grief, awakenings—these are all themes I see again and again in novellas.

Novellas are especially great because they can fit in someone's pocket, purse, or fanny pack. You know how sometimes you write a story or essay and you feel you could keep going on, but you don't feel the need to write an entire book? Any time that it happens it could be considered fertile ground for a novella.

Novellas are bound by length – longer than a short story, shorter than a novel. Do you find this structure to be challenging, or freeing?

For me it is freeing! I've never been bound by rules, even loose ones. If anything, I am a total rulebreaker when it comes to writing, since I've had such an unconventional path and never went to school for my MFA or had any formal training. So to have these boundaries around the novella is actually refreshing.

How is teaching the novella format different from teaching essay writing or memoir writing?

The essay and memoir are more unwieldy, and in those genres I believe in digging for meaning and the craft of digression. The novella on the other hand is more action and scene oriented, more urgent and staccato. The novella is slightly less up for interpretation than the essay.

This is your first time teaching with 24PearlStreet. What are some hopes you have for the course, and what do you hope your students take away from the experience?

It is incredible and exciting to be teaching somewhere that some of my writing heroes do (Eileen Myles, Ann Hood!). Hopes: I want to expose the students to writers, authors, and books they haven't known about. Once I read the question, do you feel more or less like writing after spending time in your workshop? I always want the answer for my students to be more. Also: I am known for students becoming friends with one another—some have stayed friends for a decade, so I like to think the students will take away new writer friends and a sense of community.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: ELISA ALBERT

Elisa Albert is the author of the novels *Human Blues* (forthcoming in 2022), *After Birth*, *The Book of Dahlia*, and the short story collection *How This Night is Different.* Her fiction and essays have been published in *Tin House*, *Bennington Review*, *The New York Times*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *The Literary Review*, *Philip Roth Studies*, *Paris Review*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Longreads*, *The Cut*, *Time Magazine*, *Post Road*, *Gulf Coast*, *Commentary*, *Salon*, *Tablet*, *Washington Square*, *The Rumpus*, *The Believer* and in many anthologies. She has taught creative writing at Columbia University's School of the Arts, The College of Saint Rose, Bennington College, Texas State University, and University of Maine. A Pushcart Prize nominee, finalist for the Sami Rohr Prize and Paterson Fiction Prize, winner of the Moment Magazine debut fiction prize, and Literary Death Match champion, Albert has served as Writer-in-Residence at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Holland and at the Hanse-Wissenschaftkolleg in Germany.

Read the FAWC interview with Elisa, and register now for *The Un/Likeable Narrator*

How does a character's likeability or un-likeability change in regards to different settings, structures, content, etc. of a story?

The whole point of narrative is subjective, and there's so much beauty, humor, pathos, and fascination in subjectivity. One person's trash is another's treasure. Notions of "likeability" (or lack thereof) are actually kind of a joke, because what we're asking of readers when we're ruthlessly honest in our perspectives (real and/or imagined!) is that they set themselves aside for a few minutes, take a break from judging. Not all readers are willing/able to do that, but as writers our job is

not to pander, and the more we practice deep reading/listening, the less we're satisfied with superficial stuff.

Is there a danger of readers not connecting to a character or story when crafting "unlikeable" characters?

Sure! But writers have to be brave. Not everyone wants to "go there", and that's okay! The world is big and chaotic and messy and lots needs doing. Storytelling is just one kind of work.

What, in your mind, do the "ethical duties" of storytelling consist of? How do they relate to a character's likeability?

Being brave enough to risk "unlikeability" is a requirement of good storytelling. We all have shit on us, as they say. Pretense, condescension, ego-protection, pandering, personal agendas: these things do not make for great literature. As storytellers, we have inordinate power to decide which rocks we lift, and how we relay what we see scurrying underneath said rocks! We might not love what we find, but we are duty-bound to be honest, especially in the context of fiction.

How will you know you've accomplished with your students what you've set out to with this course?

I hope students feel energized, capable, and inspired during and after our workshop. I hope the processes of reading, writing, and revising become utterly demystified, so that we can take real joy and satisfaction in these processes, and stress less about the false idol of literary "product".

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: PATRICIA SPEARS JONES

Patricia Spears Jones is a poet, playwright, educator, cultural activist, anthologist, and recipient of 2017 Jackson Poetry Prize and is author of *A Lucent Fire New and Selected Poems* (2015) and 3 full-length collections and five chapbooks. She co-edited the groundbreaking anthology, *Ordinary Women: An Anthology of New York City Women* (1978) and organized and edited *THINK: Poems for Aretha Franklin's Inauguration Day Hat* (2009). Her poems are widely anthologized most recently in *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle and Song* and *Why To These Rocks: 50 Years of Poems from the Community of Writers*. Her poems are published in *Plume*, *The New Yorker* and *The Brooklyn Rail*. Essays, memoir and interviews are published in *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry*; *The Whiskey of Our Discontent: Gwendolyn Brooks as Conscience and Change Agent*; and journals including *The Black Scholar*, *Bomb*, *Tribes*, *Pangyrus*, *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, *Rumpus* and *The Writers Chronicle*. The Museum of Modern Art commissioned the poem "Lave" for the exhibition, Jacob Lawrence: The Migrations Series. Mabou Mines commissioned and produced two plays *"Mother"* with music composed by Carter Burwell and *Song for New York: What Women Do When Men Sit Knitting* with music composed by Lisa Gutkin.

She received grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts; New York Foundation for the Arts; Foundation of Contemporary Art; a Robert Rauschenberg Residency and residencies at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Millay Colony, Yaddo, and the Camargo Foundation, Cassis, France via the BAU Institute. She is Emeritus Fellow for Black Earth Institute and organizer of the American Poets Congress.

Read the FAWC interview with Patricia, and register now for *9 Living Women Poets, 4 New Poems*

What do the poets in your curated feminine canon have in common? How do they and their work relate to one another?

A shared belief in the power of language to name conditions, explore complexity and provide a different perspective on the body. This includes transgender poets.

What is it about closely reading the work of a group of poets that helps other writers get inspired and make explorations in their own work?

I think we can always expand our libraries–new phrases, new ways to use traditional or conventional forms or the introduction of new forms are more ways to enliven one's writing practice-whatever the genre.

Artists tend to be inspired by a variety of different things – engaging with other artists' work; listening to music; the landscape. This is an online course, meaning everyone is creating work in their own environments. What's your sense of how this will change the work that students produce, compared to when everyone is in person in class together?

I have no idea. I understand that many people prefer this kind of workshop, especially if they live many time zones away…

This is your first time teaching with 24PearlStreet. What are some hopes you have for the course, and what do you hope your students take away from the experience?

I hope that each poet creates drafts of poems that please them and that they find some new poets' works to add to their knowledge of the field. I hope they enjoy the prompts.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: JUNE SYLVESTER SARACENO

June Sylvester Saraceno is the author of *Feral, North Carolina, 1965*, listed in BuzzFeed as one of "18 Must Read Books from Indie Presses" in 2019. Her work has appeared in *The Rumpus*, *Southwestern American Literature*, *Big Muddy*, *Adirondack Review*, and other journals. In addition to fiction, she is the author of three poetry collections. She teaches graduate writing workshops in the MFA programs at University of Nevada, Reno and Sierra Nevada University.

Read the FAWC interview with June, and register now for *Creating Unforgettable Characters*

You grew up in the rural South and now live in the Sierras in the Western US, and you have noted that both regions have had an influence on your work. This course focuses on creating unforgettable characters. How much does place act as a character in your work?

The rural South is arguably the biggest character in my novel *Feral, North Carolina, 1965*. Setting is never merely backdrop—it is often the central shaping force on a character, influencing how they speak, what they believe, how they experience and interpret the world. For the main character in the book, Willie, life in the rural South is all she knows. For her, it is the world; so when it starts to crack, it feels monumental.

How does developing a character differ when you're writing a piece of fiction compared with a memoir or other piece of nonfiction? Have you struggled with fully fleshed out characters – flaws and all – with "real" people?

The benefit of memoir is that many—if not most—of the characters are already familiar, even perhaps well known to the writer. In fiction, I find that my characters continually reveal themselves to me as the story progresses. I'm getting to know them as they emerge in the story. How characters come alive for readers is remarkably similar, however, whether in fiction or memoir. Their voice, their actions (and inaction), their quirks, their habits—the way they reveal themselves in a narrative comes from the same toolkit. The better we know our characters, the more opportunities we have to give them a fully fleshed out presence for our readers.

What is it about character in particular – compared with (or in combination with) content, writing style, setting – that you feel allows a story to be told at the level it needs to be told?

It's the characters in a story that people love, or hate, root for or against, care about, become intrigued by, and ideally remember. Characters make the other elements of the story—plot, setting, scene, etc.—meaningful. Of course, all of the elements of story crafting work together and can't be separated—what happens to characters is part of who they are—but often when we think of a memorable book or story, it's the individual characters that we recall.

This is your first time teaching with 24PearlStreet. What are some hopes you have for the course, and what do you hope your students take away from the experience?

I hope the participants will see their characters come into sharper focus, hear their voices more clearly. I look forward to engaging exchanges and meeting some memorable characters in the making!