



Kathleen Tarr

Circumventing the All-Human World: An Interview with Alaskan Writer Marybeth Holleman

Introduction

It has rarely ever been a lucrative time to be a writer, yet within every epoch and era, it has always been necessary to write. I first met the writer and poet Marybeth Holleman in the early 2000s through creative writing circles at University of Alaska Anchorage. More recently, beginning around 2016, and thanks to Marybeth's creative idea and organizational plan, we formed a loose-knit group of seven writers into something akin to a literary salon. For our LitSalon, we sometimes called ourselves the *Salonistas*. It wasn't a book club, nor was its purpose to offer critiques or to prop up each other's work. Our literary salon existed for literary friendship and to discuss, as writers, mostly contemporary work—poetry, nonfiction, fiction—to see what we, as writers, might learn from it. We read and discussed poems, essays, novel excerpts, and rotated meetings in various private homes.

Marybeth Holleman arrived on the doorstep to my hermitage-by-the-parkway, as I affectionately refer to my small ranch home off a noisy urban street in Anchorage, on October 30, 2022. Armed with two bags of Nepalese and Indian takeout food for our dinner, we carved out three hours to talk about her debut poetry collection, *tender gravity*. (We later emailed back and forth and spoke by phone. Parts of the following conversation were adapted from a recording I made.) Marybeth's book had just been

published in August 2022 (Pasadena, California: Boreal Book, Red Hen Press, 2022). I popped open a bottle of Pinot Noir to celebrate the occasion while we devoured vegetable samosas, saag paneer, and naan.

Marybeth Holleman believes we must live in praise of nature's replenishing beauty and radiance. Humans are here to praise, she says. However, at the same time, we should also ask ourselves to whom and to what are we listening? Deadening political rhetoric and droning media-speak can dominate daily lives adding to the overall cynicism. Holleman chooses to focus on the voices originating from the *non-human* world. "The non-human communicates all the time to us," she said. "Even though we don't understand it, we feel it, and we know it."

The poems in *tender gravity* are antiphons to modern-day anxieties, climate fears, and grief about environmental destruction. Her poetry is not a call-to-action on any political scale. The poems are a reminder that poetry is transformative, a pathway in which to see and to acknowledge life, including the non-human, and to reach for some deeper comprehension and unity.

I vividly recall one particular meeting of our *Salonistas*. As members of the LitSalon, we had all gathered at Marybeth's lower Hillside home on a crisp September day in 2016 to discuss and learn more about the Chinese American poet, Arthur Sze. Four zebra finches

chirped and zipped around their large aviary next to the kitchen. Her two mixed-Husky dogs, Ivy and Luna, lazed at our feet before the commotion began. A large black bear crossed the property. Nothing unusual about that, Marybeth said. But this curious bear ambled up two flights of wooden steps and came onto the deck. The bear stood for a moment, then moved closer and peered at us through the big picture windows adjacent to the couch where I was seated.

The non-human world had spoken.



Marybeth Holleman

Kathleen Tarr: I have known you for close to 15 years, and to put it in rather crass terms, I have kept tabs on your literary output—it's been amazing! I first knew you as a fellow nonfiction writer and essayist. I own the anthology you co-edited with Anne Coray, *Crosscurrents North: Alaskans on the Environment* (UA Press, 2008), and your nonfiction book, *The Heart of the Sound* (University Utah Press, 2004). A few summers ago, on one of our strolls through the Alaska Botanical Garden, you told me you were trying to finish a manuscript for a novel and I remember thinking, "Are you nuts?" And now poetry has taken center stage. Why now, Marybeth? What has changed in your writing life, or life in general, that has brought poetry to the forefront?

Mary Beth Holleman: For a long time, poetry was my medicine. It was what I turned to each morning, to read a poem, to start my day, to—as Jane Kenyon said in her advice to poets—have good sentences in my ears. It wasn't until I became a writer, after my work in environmental policy, that I began to read poetry. The first poet I ever read and really got deep down in my gut was Mary Oliver. She remains one of my favorites.

And then, reading William Stafford, I learned how he wrote a poem every morning. And so I thought, well, that would be good writing practice, writing a poem a day. Because writing, as you know, requires practice. It's like anything else: you can't just go out and run a marathon; you have to build up to it, build endurance and strength. So, for many years, writing poems was just a practice for me.

Then I started to like some of those morning poems and sent some of them out. And so now I see that I have trained myself to walk through the world as a poet. Which is to say, I experience something, and words come in that way.

And here's another thing: often, my subject matter—oil spills, climate change, extinction, all the ways in which we humans are destroying the very planet upon which we depend—is hard, difficult, dark. But in order to keep writing, I needed it to also be fun. And poetry can be a lot of fun, because you get to play with form. I saw how Annie Dillard, Barbara Kingsolver, and other writers I admire dropped the labels and wrote in all kinds of forms—fiction, nonfiction, poetry. So, why not play in all the fields?

And this is not to say I am only writing poetry now. I have just finished an essay for an anthology on Barry Lopez. I've got a novel out to publishers. I use all the tools in my toolbox. Experimenting with form is useful and fun. As the poet A.R. Ammons said, I "look for the forms/things want to come as."

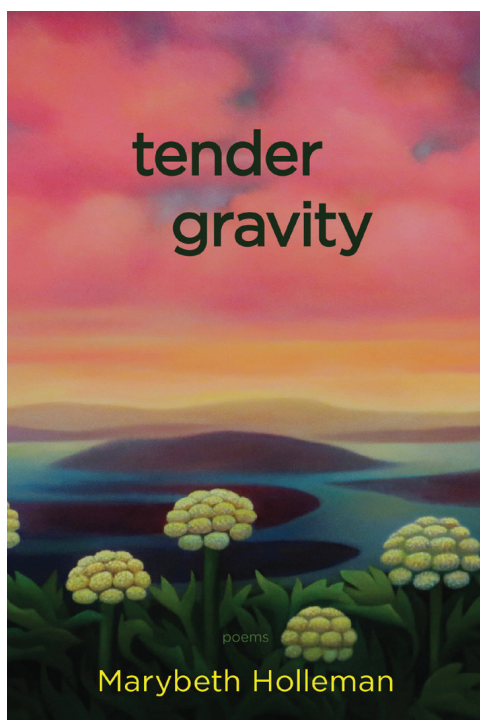
But I do think poetry has a special power for revealing the more-than-human world. With its wide-open form, the way it can dance across the page, it's a visual art. It's not confined by all the norms of prose—sentences and paragraphs and punctuation. You can break all the rules of punctuation and grammar and just let things flow. I think this makes it easier to express the inexpressible, the ineffable, in poetry. I think it allows the more-than-human to show up, be recognized, speak, if you will. It allows us to break down, or slip by, all the walls of rationality human culture has devised, all the ways we think we're different, from each other and from nonhuman life, all the ways we think we are separate, all those old lies that have created this mess. Poetry may be the magic door through which we escape, as D.H. Lawrence said, "the glass bottles of our ego" must be open so that "cool, un[-]lying life will rush in..."

KT: Beautifully articulated! All of what you said reminds

me of something Czeslaw Milosz noted: "Poetry is the passionate pursuit of the real."

MBH: Yes. I think poetry can save us. Not just poetry, but also birches, also nuthatches, also mountain heather. Poetry, as one of the oldest forms of human expression, second only to the cave paintings in France, has not only a long and rich history, but can reach us in ways that circumvent our egos and our walls of rationality. And poetry can allow us to see how every single relationship, whether with another human or a ground squirrel or the waves of the sea, are reciprocal. We need each other, all of us.

KT: I felt lucky to be present for the September 8, 2022 book launch of *tender gravity*. I had to stand way in the back at the jam-packed event. I have to tell you I really appreciated that your book launch was held at the restaurant, Organic Oasis. Good grief, what perfect symmetry for you, an avid gardener, a naturalist, an outdoorsy person to have Organic Oasis, emphasis on the *organic*, to be the location. Trustees for Alaska, a conservation advocacy group near and dear to your heart, served as a major sponsor. Linda Infante Lyons, a well-known Alaskan visual artist whose artwork graces the cover of *tender gravity*, shared a Q&A with you and provided reflections about her Alutiiq heritage. A 13-year-old cellist, Izzy Allwright, from McCarthy, Alaska, played his impromptu accompaniment while you read the poem, "Skating After Many Moons." All in all, a fabulous party!



MBH: Thanks for saying that, I think everyone had a good time. My son, James, served as the official photographer. Inviting the young cellist was a cool addition to the festivities. I ended up reading "Skating After Many Moons" to his playing cello two times that night. Afterwards, a woman thanked me for doing that. She said she got much more out of the poem after hearing it repeated.

KT: In a recent interview with Trustees for Alaska, you said one of your primary quests as a writer was to try and figure out how you can give voice to, or rather, as you say, how you can reveal the voice of the more-than-human world. Poetry helps create right connections. It heals. And through words alone, without stepping a foot on a trail or in a kayak, poetry can help open us to the natural world. Taken as a whole, doesn't *tender gravity* represent a kind of altruism, albeit a poetic altruism, in same sense, if I may put those words together?

MBH: Well, yes, I hope to heal this disconnect we are all suffering from, a disconnect with life, to open humans up to the wonders of life on Earth, to help us wake up and reconnect with the world beyond our human skin.

Thinking of altruism and writing, the great American short story writer Grace Paley, when asked whether writers have a moral obligation, said that all humans do, whether a plumber or an artist, whatever your calling is, she said, you have to "make sure there's a little more justice in the world when you leave it than when you found it. Most writers do that naturally, see that more lives are illuminated, try to understand what is not understood and see what hasn't been seen."

And in that altruism, it's not just the nonhuman world that benefits. Opening ourselves to reconnect with the world beyond humans heals us humans. We know this, but we forget. The novelist Lydia Millet relates how, when she first moved to New York, she was "amazed" by how people were "relentlessly interested in exclusively the human self." This is short-sighted, at best: why not look beyond the human for wisdom, guidance, insight?

It's been said that all writing seeks to answer one question: *How shall we live?* I've always turned to the natural world, replete as it is with, as Darwin wrote, "endless forms most beautiful" of living and being and dying, for answers to that question, for models of how to live.

I look to the world beyond humans again and again because there I see a kind of grace and reciprocity and harmony—a way that every being, animate and inanimate, fits together into a seamless whole, cooperatively living together and stitching together the world—as I write in my poem “Marbled Murrelet”—that human society seems to have lost and to desperately need.

For this, I’m eternally grateful. And so I seek, in my work, to praise the nonhuman world. I’ve come to believe, to answer Wendell Berry’s question, “What are people for?” that our most important job may just be to praise and to love this gorgeous world. I want to reveal this power of the world beyond humans, this grace and beauty, so that others, too, might find such solace, grounding, and joy.

Finally, I do consider this work collaborative, in that I’m just a conduit, a transcriber, a translator. The world has a lot to say to us. We spend most of our time just talking to other humans, but the rest of life also has agency, and voice, and—what we humans may need most—a different kind of wisdom.

KT: Marybeth, there is nothing tender about the super force of gravity, is there? Gravity keeps the planets in orbit. Gravity has been described as “the invisible super glue” pulling every object downward. We can’t see it, taste it, smell it—but oh, how we know of gravity’s gravitas! I am curious about the pairing of these two words—tender and gravity—in your book’s title and the immediate tension established.

MBH: The short answer is, it comes from the first poem, “The Beating Heart, Minus Gravity.” You may have noticed that the book itself begins and ends with air: in the first poem, last line, “*the tender gravity of air*” and in the last poem, last line, “*the welcoming air*.”

We are very lucky to be alive on this generous planet right now. This is a very generous and loving world we get to inhabit, with this perfect atmosphere. Think of the generosity of seeds, the giving nature of water, the astonishment of atoms combining to create air that we can breathe, through lungs that work every second of every day.

This world, it is tender, it holds us—I think now of a William Stafford poem called “The World”—no matter what difficulties may come, no matter how harsh and terrifying

the world may seem, it is also *tender*, it offers itself to us, every day filled with more gifts than we can possibly ever count.

And it’s also elusive, this thing called gravity, visibly of course, but also, hard to get our heads around the concept of it—so it is mysterious, isn’t it? And really, all we have are theories and names, we don’t really know what’s going on.



Marybeth in the Chugach with Luna

In writing my novel, where one of the characters is a physicist, I did research on quantum theory and the theory of everything, and, well, the Newtonian theory of gravity has given way now to the Einsteinian theory of gravitational fields—which, put simply, means that there’s not this giant force, like a magnet at the center of the earth holding us here, but rather there’s a field that is as much matter as we are, that curves around every object, each person, and holds us. This curvature of spacetime, talk about mystery!

So, yes, a mystery, a tension, in the title. A way of dropping the reader out of the expected, right from the start.

KT: Besides sharing time in our LitSalon, we have other common interests. For instance, the “god of dirt,” as you mentioned it in *tender gravity*, has called to us both. We are plant lovers and houseplant addicts. I mean look around my hermitage-by-the-parkway...it’s like I live in a greenhouse. I hand-carried an orchid back from Florida for you, and you gave me a cutting from a plant in the iris family with the poetic name of Wandering Apostle... unfortunately, it has since wandered off to plant heaven.

I started counting the plant references in your book—sundew, sphagnum moss, eelgrass, trollius, geraniums,

willow, bedstraw, equisetum, cinquefoil, gentian—to name but a few.

MBH: Oh, yes, our botanical connection! Our houseplants! That Wandering Apostle plant, I thought it'd be perfect for you, given your Thomas Merton-infused life. It was from a cutting I got from friends in college. For years I didn't know what it was even called, but it has followed me for so long. As has my Christmas cactus, which I started from a cutting from my mother's plant. I'm so grateful for these long-lived beings with whom I share my home.

KT: I thought of another connection we have. It's that *Cirque Journal* was, perhaps, the first place where we had poems accepted...No, come to think of it, my very first poem appeared in a local publication produced by Moose Bound Press back in the early 80's. This "journal" was a stack of photocopied pages held together with plastic comb tooth binders—does anyone remember those antiquated things? I published my first poem much more respectfully in *Cirque* 1.1. Didn't you publish your first poem on the pages of *Cirque*, too?

MBH: I'm very grateful to *Cirque*'s founder and editor-in-chief, Michael Burwell, because *Cirque* did accept an early poem of mine in *Cirque* 1.2, "Yesterday, On the Familiar Trail." But *Ice Floe* was the first literary journal to publish one of my poems.

Before I published a poem in *Ice Floe*, though, and before there was Internet, the poet and playwright, Arlitia Jones, was working in a downtown bank. Arlitia had not yet published her poetry book, *The Bandsaw Riots*, and she had not yet written a play. Arlitia convinced her employer to produce a promotional calendar with accompanying poems, and she chose one of my poems for the month of March. We even had a reading at the bank!

KT: Humble poetic beginnings, indeed! You also held a series of jobs that took you all over Alaska, and this predated your vocation and identity as writer/poet.

MBH: One of my first jobs was as a receptionist at the University of Alaska Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER). Then, afterwards, I was promoted to research assistant to help map subsistence use areas in Southeast Alaska. I went to Kake, Klawock, Port Alexander, Point Baker, and other small villages. I took some trips out to Western Alaska, too, to Unalakleet, Eek, St. Mary's, and

St. Paul in the Pribilofs. As a student in UAA's traditional MFA program—I graduated in 1991 and studied under Tom Sexton—I took a class in archaeology and went on a dig in Unalaska Island at a very remote site. We flew onto a lake in a Grumman G-21 Goose to the base camp, from which we worked for about 8 weeks.

My first job, though, was working for the Alaska Railroad selling train tickets between Portage and Whittier, and then that autumn I worked at the gift shop at Denali.

KT: Prince William Sound. March 24, 1989. Exxon Valdez Oil spill. This is one of the pivotal events of your life, is it not? That disaster still creates ripple effects in your psyche.

MBH: Yes. I had moved to Alaska three years earlier, in 1986, because I fell in love with Prince William Sound. I knew big tankers traversed the eastern side of the Sound, but I had no idea that such a massive oil spill could happen. This event was a coming-of-age moment for me, but of a different kind. A loss of another kind of innocence. I knew I couldn't take anything for granted anymore. That bad things could happen, that things you didn't even know were possible, *could* happen. I can't really think of another thing about my time in Alaska that has had that kind of deep, serious impact on me. Maybe it's how it must be for those who experienced the 1964 earthquake. Nothing stays the same. There is also a kind of shift inside you.

And now, well, it's so difficult to witness how much Alaska is changing with climate chaos, so difficult to see glaciers I've known for decades retreating, leaving. And it's just painful to see how little our society is willing to deal with it.

I'm always struggling with eco-grief and eco-anxiety. Aldo Leopold said that to be an environmentalist means you are "walking in a world of wounds." I do notice how places are degraded, species are lost...I see these things but sometimes wish I didn't.

Rumi said the cure for pain is in the pain: you go out into the more-than-human world, the world you love that you're losing; you go there, face the loss, and find, then, solace. You witness how the other beings are just living their lives, with "no forethought of grief," as Wendell Berry put it. You realize this is a single moment in time, you're but a speck in this vastness of time and space. You realize, well, of course, the world will go on, with or without humans.

The unknown, the unknowable, brings me great solace. We learn more every day: for example, we know more now about fungi. But we still don't understand how the bar-tailed godwits can fly non-stop from Alaska to Tasmania. Instead, we try to measure "intelligence" by our own limited standards. We humans do ourselves a disservice by thinking we know so much, by thinking we *can* know everything.

KT: Despite the internal pessimism we are discussing right now, as a reader, I felt *tender gravity* invites the reader into a kind of protective space, into a realm away from it all, into a space that is warm and inviting, to be among the flora and fauna, on the page and in imaginations. Everything animate and inanimate contains a spiritual essence, as Linda Infante Lyons said during your public conversation. We can heal our relationship with the earth and be good stewards of the planet.

MBH: Yes, we are all of this earth, and we're all dependent upon one another. Linda was sharing the spiritual beliefs of her Alutiiq heritage. We've much still to learn from indigenous traditions...From all our ancient traditions and heritages, really, like the Celts, Druids, etc. And certainly they remind us that we *do* know, we *do* feel this connection. We're all born with it.

And you and I talked about "nature writing." Or how we refer to some poets as "nature poets." Are there human poets and city poets and country poets and farmer poets? Well, maybe Wendell Berry is a farmer poet! But, wow, all the categorizing we do! We are part of nature, but we act as though we're not. We try and separate ourselves. So much so that anyone that writes about the nonhuman world is labeled "nature writer."

So I'll return to this idea that we're here to praise this gorgeous planet, and to care for it. Why not write poems to help others feel that, to share what I've felt, what I know we can all feel?

KT: I know you are very passionate about environmental causes. But how do you combine art and literature with activism?

MBH: I feel strongly about wanting to be of use in the world, to not just be taking up space, but to make a positive difference. But I'm often conflicted: should I sit down and write, or should I march, do some more direct

advocacy? It's a constant struggle.

Of course, though, writing *is* activism. Writing itself makes a strong statement about our place in the world. I started out in environmental policy because I thought that if politicians just understood what science was telling us, they'd make good choices. I was soon disillusioned, and realized that what had influenced my values, my sense of the world, was the natural world itself, my direct experience in it, but also the written word. I realized writing has a profound and lasting effect on how we humans move through the world. So, striking a balance between direct activism and writing is very important.

Poetry does help us slow down, take a deep breath, look at the so-called "simple" things. Besides, it's more exciting to live in the world as mystery. We need to keep our curiosity, humbleness, and sense of wonder.

(I sipped a little more wine and turned to one of Holleman's poems, "Refugium." I read it aloud to Marybeth. From the last stanza:

... "Let me remain here with you/ large and immoveable rock/ mountain/let you be my whole world.")

KT: "Refugium" is one of my favorite poems in *tender gravity*. And I also marked the poem, "With" which ends with this: "...every day and night/world without end."

I recognized the phrase "world without end" from the famous Catholic prayer, "Glory Be" which closes with "as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, *world without end.*"

Did you consciously interject that phrase to echo back to the prayer, to something Biblical? Over the years, we have talked about you practicing Buddhist meditation, but you haven't told me much about your Catholic upbringing or how that may have influenced your writing, or language choices at times?

MBH: I was born into a large Catholic family, middle child of six, Italian on my mother's side, Slavic on my father's. I went to a small Catholic school through the eighth grade. So, the language of the Bible, of prayers, of hymns...I grew up steeped in them. And I find those rhythms, phrases, stories slipping into my work. It's not intentional; it just happens, and then I look back on a draft and see those

resonances. That's how "world without end" appeared. Another poem ends with the line "the wor(l)d. and then there was." A play on lines from the Bible. And then the poem "Prodigal" comes from an Old Testament story of two sons, one who stayed and one who wandered. This was a story that puzzled me throughout most of my childhood. Still does. Like a Koan in Buddhism, perhaps it's never meant to be fully understood, but just pondered, meditated upon.



Marybeth, far right, with her siblings Angela, Tom, and Carolyn, on the Blue Ridge Parkway

KT: I know the list is long, but I'm curious about what writers have made a difference to you, and I am especially interested in the *non-American* ones? By the way, here's an historical side note to mark this year in another way, poetically speaking: *tender gravity* has been published in the 100th anniversary year of T.S. Eliot's, "The Wasteland."

MBH: I didn't know that!

KT: Yeah, in the October 3, 2022 issue of the *New Yorker*, Anthony Lane wrote a very interesting essay about T.S. Eliot. He quotes from an essay T.S. Eliot wrote on Dante in which Eliot says that between two first-time readers, the erudite and the unformed, Eliot would lean toward the second. "Genuine poetry can communicate before it's understood."

MBH: Yes, I believe that to be true...if I'm trying to reveal the voices of those who have language, but not as words, but as pure sounds, as energy, through facial expressions

or physical movements, etc., then poetry is a good way to do that because it communicates, as Eliot remarked, before it is understood. And, yes, also, to reaching the "uninformed." When people tell me they don't understand poetry, I just tell them they just haven't found the right poet yet. That's how I felt until I read Mary Oliver's poetry—hers were the first poems to speak to me, the first I understood immediately.

Let's see...you asked me about international writers I have admired. There's Paul Celan, Isabelle Allende, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Robert MacFarlane, Arundati Roy, Wislawa Szymborska, Anna Akhmatova...

KT: Switching from great poets and writers for a moment, I want to know something about Marybeth Holleman that would surely surprise people, something that shows a completely different side of you. You relayed the story to me about how you went snorkeling with sea lions in Monterey Bay, California. Wow! But what else about you?

MBH: I love cars. I know, an aberration for an environmental writer! I grew up in a big family and we all loved cars. My Dad was always working on old cars; that was his hobby. And my younger brother, especially, always had so many classics. Right now, I have a 1962 VW convertible in Anchorage. We bought it in North Carolina, fixed it up, and drove it around for years. The VW sat in Chapel Hill, until Dad fixed it up, stored it, and eventually I had it shipped to Alaska.

KT: I remember times when we talked sports, and you spoke about your love for college basketball, but your genuine interest in cars, well this is a real shockeroo! (*laughter*)...I want to return to this idea that *tender gravity* is a response to existential angst, the pall of dread that hangs over us so often, the sense that humankind will only commit more foibles, missteps, violence, and stupidities. I mean, what will we do next?

MBH: Well, yes, I want my poems—every word I write, really—to be of use in the world. To be worth the trees they're written on, as Thomas Lyons once said. And what I have to offer, and what I think is of use, is to remind us of our greater connections, of the inherent reciprocity of every relationship, and of the joy to be found there.

But, yeah, where do we as a species go next? It doesn't look good, does it? I mean, we've gone through too

many mass shootings, Sandy Hook, climate change, the insurrection on the U.S. Capitol, election deniers, outright fabrications by elected officials, incredible losses of species and habitats and clean air and water... I don't know what will finally wake people up. That is my doomsday self, speaking. That's why I have the bumper sticker on my car that says, "I'd rather be a coyote." Do you know that quote?

KT: What a strange sticker to have on your car! No, tell me the story.


MBH: Sometimes—increasingly, these days—I'm ashamed of being human! I'd rather, as Walt Whitman wrote, "turn and live with the animals." "I'd rather be a coyote" comes from singer/songwriter Katie Lee who lived in the West and fought the Glen Canyon Dam alongside Edward Abbey and others—a travesty, this dam, which flooded a unique and gorgeous canyon, and created Lake Powell. This incredible female artist and activist was scathing about developers who would destroy anything for profits. In her obituary, she was quoted as saying she just didn't want

to be a part of the human race when she witnessed all the destruction we caused. She said, "I'd rather be a coyote!"

Why does my species do such stupid things? Pick your poison. We're just not thinking. We're destroying the only home we know. I just don't get it. If we were any other species, our actions would have made us extinct by now. Which may be where we're headed.

So, Katie Lee's quote resonated with me...had some bumper stickers made and gave them away to friends who feel the same. It seems to sum things up...

KT: Except that coyotes don't build jet planes or write poetry.

MBH: Well, not that we know, anyway! (*laughter*). I'll bet coyotes do some creative things akin to poetry. It's just we can't, or don't, recognize it. And that brings us back to the joy, the solace of all we don't know, the mystery. 

Kathleen Tarr is the author of the memoir, *We Are All Poets Here*. A frequent contributor to *Cirque* since its inception, her writing has also appeared in the *Alaska Quarterly Review*; *Eco-Theo Review*; *Anchorage Daily News*; *America magazine*; *Tri-Quarterly*, *Sewanee Review*; and in the peer-reviewed journal, the *Merton Seasonal*. She has received fellowships from the University of Southern California's Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies and a William Shannon research grant from the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University. She serves on the national board of the International Thomas Merton Society. For five years, Kathleen worked as the program coordinator of the University of Alaska's low-residency MFA Program in Creative Writing. She earned an MFA in literary nonfiction from the University of Pittsburgh. A long-time Alaskan, she lives and writes under the Chugach Mountains surrounding Anchorage.

Marybeth Holleman's newest book is the poetry collection *tender gravity*. She's also author of *The Heart of the Sound*, co-author of *Among Wolves*, and co-editor of *Crosscurrents North*, among others. Her award-winning work has appeared in venues including *Orion*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Sierra*, *Literary Mama*, *ISLE/OUP*, *North American Review*, *AQR*, *zoomorphic*, *Deep Wild Journal*, *Minding Nature*, *The Guardian*, and *The Future of Nature*. Raised in North Carolina's Smokies, Marybeth transplanted to Alaska's Chugach Mountains after falling head over heels for Prince William Sound two years before the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill.