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Podcast Interview by John Vogel

Exploring the Balancing Act of Family and Art

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Editor's Note: In December 2022, *Talking Writing* art director John Vogel interviewed poet, writer, and editor Kelli Russell Agodon. The conversation was conducted over Zoom, with Kelli in her writing shed in Washington state and John in his basement studio in Philadelphia. The two discussed their ability to create art while raising their children—hence the tucked-away interviewing spaces.

Kelli (she/her) is the author of four poetry collections, including her most recent, *Dialogues with Rising Tides*, which was published by Copper Canyon Press in 2021. She is the co-founder of Two Sylvias Press and the co-director of Poets on the Coast: A Weekend Retreat for Women.

Dialogues with Rising Tides is described by Copper Canyon as “a humane and honest conversation with the forces

that threaten to take us under.” Her poems explore the anxieties and heartbreaks of life—including environmental collapse, cruel politics, and the persistent specter of suicide. However, the poems are also peppered with emotional vulnerability and darkly sparkling humor. *Rising Tides* holds space for the complexity of conflicting feelings and the people with whom we share these feelings.



Dialogues with Rising Tides Kelli Russell Agodon

At the top of the episode, Kelli read “Slang for Long-Term Relationships,” which is the perfect segue into this year’s theme at *Talking Writing*: exploring the role of art in people’s relationships and how family members affect their work. As both parents and creatives, Kelli and John found common ground in sharing many of the same responsibilities and time constraints.

Post-production for this episode was provided by [CCST](#) [9], a podcast production company.

Episode Information

- “[Ocean Vuong Wrote His Debut Novel in a Closet](#) [10],” *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, June 13, 2019.
- “[The Third Thing](#) [11]” by Donald Hall. *Poetry Magazine*, October 30, 2005.
- [Interview with Brenda Hillman](#) [12]. *McSweeney’s Internet Tendency*, March 29, 2005.
- We could not find a direct source for Clifton’s “bleeding or on fire” sign, but Clifton spoke often about the conflict between closing doors and having kids, as did a number of other well-known authors. Many have noted variations of the “keep out” sign on their office door.

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- [7] <https://www.iheart.com/podcast/269-talking-writing-103321660/episode/kelli-russell-agodon-writing-family-and-116758382/>
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- [10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQI_qbWwCwU

[11] <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/60484/the-third-thing>

[12] <https://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/brenda-hillman>