



A Voice Full of Cities: The Collected Essays of Robert Kelly

Robert Kelly

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It is no exaggeration to suggest that Robert Kelly may well be America's most prolific poet, and certainly one of the most singular and ceaselessly innovative poets the country produced in the 2nd part of the past century. To date, he has written more than 70 books of poetry and fiction - books that reveal a breathtaking range, from freshly minted trobar clus and contemporized sonnet forms, to epic-length narratives and non-narratives - such as *Axon Dendron Tree*, *The Common Shore*, *The Loom*, or the first two installments of a recent trilogy, *Fire Exit & Uncertainties*. Just as compelling are the volumes of shorter lyric forms, such as *Finding the Measure*, *Songs I-XXX*, *Not this Island Music*, and *Lapis*, or his even more experimental work, such as *Sentence*, *The Flowers of Unceasing Coincidence*, or his writing-through of Shelley's poem, *Mont Blanc*. The deeper unity of the work is unavoidably present in the voice that underlies the multiplicity of forms. As Guy Davenport wrote: "A Kelly poem is a Kelly poem. It dances in his way, sings in his intonations, insisting on its style. No American poet except perhaps Wallace Stevens has his sense of balance in a line. [...] Kelly has nothing to hide: the unilttable balance is there to begin with." Less visible than the poetry, but certainly no less important, incisive, worth preserving & circulating anew, are the trove of essayistic materials disseminated throughout numerous small & not so small magazines of the second-half of the 20th C. The out-of-print 1971 *In Time* was Kelly's sole published book of essays properly speaking, even though he has been writing on his (& others') poetry & poetics since the early 60s. Long over-due, the present volume, *A Voice Full of Cities*, collects for the first time Kelly's essays, statements, & other writings on poetry & poetics, making available a vast array of difficult to obtain works. The editors' aim was to insure that - in Robert Kelly's own words - "the fifty years of thinking around the fifty years of making won't get lost, and making and thinking will be seen as one thing." A forthcoming companion volume from Contra Mundum Press, *A City Full of Voices*, will present critical essays on Robert Kelly's work by a wide range of contributors.

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