

**Hanson Kellogg**  
**Selected Poems**



# Hanson Kellogg

August 11, 1911 [Massachusetts]–

June 9, 1985 [Los Angeles, California]

Kellogg was born in Massachusetts. He married Marianna Lucy Thompson in 1940 in Florida; they formed the Provincetown Marionettes in Tallahassee around this time (they divorced in 1946). Kellogg then moved to California where he married Adele Frain in 1948. He briefly wrote a column for the *New Yorker* on Southern California life called “West Coast Intelligence.” He was working as a professional puppeteer in Glendale when his first poems appeared in Grover I. Jacoby’s two small magazines, *Variegation* and *Recurrence*. His poem “Four Disinterested Prayers” appeared in *Poetry* (Chicago) in 1950.

*Attics Own Houses*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951.

# Another Country

Look, I was never on that corner,  
Where the drugstore lights the grey roughness  
Of the pavement, where the jukebox sings  
The old songs in the bad new way.  
No one came out in perfume,  
In bright new cotton dress.  
There couldn't have been anyone laughing,  
And the leaves of the elm  
Never glowed under the neon.  
I was at sea, or out on a desert, or tearing  
The softness down from the foothills under my boots.

I could not have been twenty in any time past,  
Nor forty last week.  
I never was there.

# The Dispossessed

Street car and bus exert lines of force:  
Magnetism in its patent masquerade of volition.

The cars, Molochs rendered innocuous  
By that other familiarity, breeding desire,  
Haze the lean daybreak air with deadly cosmetic,  
Bursting from tight garages into as spurious a freedom  
As colts walked to no better pasture than the training ring,  
To the discipline of the red light's whip threat.

Only the idle unreluctant poor  
Live with no immediate need to leave such plots of tolerance  
As they have fallen heir to,

In the expanding world of sunrise,  
Through some strange pattern of succeeding.

# Old Man, Alone

He has the transfer clutched in his hand,  
But the rails were torn up for scrap  
A war ago, and that in another city.

The membership cards, bulging his pocketbook  
Are all inscribed on palimpsests,  
The far past creeping out through the grimed designs.

He is buried deep as Herculaneum,  
His artifacts strewn about the midden of his person.  
No shaft can pierce and be shored against  
The soft resettling ash.

# Housewife

She is browned in fat, dusted with flour, pierced  
By impaired paring knives, both dull and pointless,  
Skewered, cooked under pressure, steamed,  
Roasted and baked, sliced, mixed, beaten,  
Toasted,

Nibbled at, devoured, scraped off plates,  
Imprisoned in an eleemosynary garbage can,  
Victim of sportive dogs, and tense, acquisitive cats,  
Disposed of every Monday morning early, to clatter and imprecations.

Yet, phoenix from the gas flames she arises  
Too early of a morning, to be browned,  
Flour-dusted, pierced...

# Sharp Drop in Suicide Rate Predicted

*In the hot light cut off by the thunderhead that is August—*

In the city you'll be tossing away the cigarette just lit  
Sitting out front on the steps after the fight  
Upstairs in the room with her and the radio and the kids not sleeping.

You'll be coming home off the date with your white suit as crumpled and  
grey  
As the band and the songs that were the promise of June  
Or the lights or the beer or the breeze off the water.

In another few days they'll all have had their two weeks,  
The last one bringing back to the office his own familiar ineptitude  
garnished with sunburn  
Replacing the dubious hope of the substitute.

In the country it still is too wet or too dry,  
And it might as well rot in the ground as be picked at that price  
But the boarders at least are soon gone, maybe then  
She'll come down off her high horse . . . And what if she does?

*—the wars come.*

*It is in the spring you'll be doing your dying) after your transfiguration, if any.*

# Accidie: The View from the Mortuary Window

Sometimes despair glows pale as ochre  
Fresh on the palette, destined for filtered sunlight  
To fade leaf shadows of our yesterdays,  
Our last awakenings in afternoon.

The poplars, rigid green in their acceptance  
Of vertical, unyielding, vast responsibility  
For this long mile, this geometric vista,

This landscape where despair must stride, not stroll,  
Stand in formation to repudiate surrender:

Aldebaron invisible; the sea far; the breeze  
Dying along the routes of other dust.  
Formality extends to the horizon.

# The Back Streets

Here the houses squat like women  
Slung in rockers on verandahs,  
Waving languid palm-leaf fans . . .

Here that ancient plodding ghost,  
The iceman's horse, snorts in his nosebag,  
And shambles on, with tar-stuck hoofs,  
Searching, out the sun shot cracks  
His black and studded blinkers grudge,  
For any offer from the past more redolent  
Of green and galloping immortality  
Than the cold, flaked fretwork which erupts:  
Incongruous dainty oaths from the set prim lips  
That clapboards form.

# Noctambulism

Single men at middle age, freed for the night's span  
From the small demanding mechanics of their simple skills,  
Spend countless hours in public places  
Sharing their quarrels and their loves,  
Their food, their drink, their two-short-subjects-  
And-a-feature revery, with strangers:  
Contacts involving the intimacy  
Of marriage grown stale in the reflexes,  
Further burdened by those tentative preliminaries  
Congruous only fo youth's delight.

# Paeon

I honor the small, the shodden men, whose eyes  
Are smoothed off dim from the magnificence of distances,  
Men whose trained, and rather soured wives ,  
Are trapped in the sticky strands of intermediate time.  
Each is entranced by. dissolute hereafters.  
In hells pressed out of papier mache:  
Carnival images, in heavens without shadows,  
With angels shored against vicissitudes,  
Backed to the planed walls of plaques, in never living things,  
Above, below, beyond...

But there is no wind between the stars.  
The planets have no home save their solemnity.

# Four Disinterested Prayers

Alcohol offers dimensions and a vanishing point;  
Benzedrine qualifies the metaphors.  
I am alone and the ten thousand  
Pressed against me, hip, thigh, breast and the seeking fingers  
Through the tissue jungle, scream with loneliness  
And die by the hour, on the hour, and because . . .

Pale moon, the rockets have your answer now.  
The other face is emptier than Sphinx's smile,  
And televised for travelog.  
They yawn out of the theatre yearning for Mars  
In technicolor, filled with cod-piece heroes  
And the unavoidable structure inherent in the girls.

Uncompromising adventist, what  
Would any coming do for you?  
You cannot eat the streets or scale the walls  
Or play the instruments, or frame the paeans again.  
Having no questions, you require no answers,  
Pale nuns without retreat, pale wingless aeronauts.

Cash for your equity. We offer top dollar  
For any lien on your future sufficiently  
Redolent of your past to be caught up and run  
Along the crimp-edged paper conveyor of our time  
In office hours. The moon we'll sell you or the arena,  
Stimulants, depressants and the world beyond your door,  
On time, only on time, we are geared to time:  
The irrevocable future, the flayed past.

The moon and yesterday are yours for a small down payment,  
But the interest is retroactive, back to Charlemagne.

















































































































































































