

# Pastorale

MARY ALICE KESSLER

CHORUS:

We chant of an age  
A trim, nervous Time  
Squared into precise line,  
Sheer mathematics, a flawless steel  
claw.

This is the time of soaring monuments  
This is the time of formulae pyramids  
This is the time of shining mechanism  
This age is dwarfing its sire.

THE MAN:

a b—square, but what equals the  
cold stars freezing a blanket of silver,  
tight upon the hills? We have for-  
gotten, forgotten the night and the  
joy of stopping and watching the  
rich, velvety, heavy, sensuous, glori-  
ous field of darkness, and crystal  
goblets of stars.

CHORUS:

Venus is sixty-seven million miles  
away from the sun, the light from a  
distance constellation is seen by man  
125,000 light years after it was shed.  
We have proof, scientific calculations  
and expensive telescopes. We have  
proof that the moon is like the earth.  
We have proof that fire is chemical  
reaction. We have proof that a line  
has one dimension-length. We have  
proof . . .

THE MAN:

Have you proved why the sun lies  
down like a tired old man at night  
and goes to sleep, or why the trembl-  
ing, bright birch leaves rattle a soft  
song in the cold dawn, or why the  
hills blaze up into bonfires in the  
autumnal clearness, or the stars look  
pink and orange and blue all at the  
same time? Oh, no, don't speak your

rock and bone words to me. I ask—  
where has the beauty gone? You  
could not see it as blind, deaf men.  
The smoke of your engines is a terri-  
ble fog. Why may I not see the  
charm of the dance, the jewel notes  
of song, the matched wings of oil  
paint, the little things that took great  
care and hours?

CHORUS:

Oh, listen to our song. Ha, we're  
proud of our toothpaste ads, boogie  
woogie, raw liver art, synthetics, neon  
signs, automatic gears, cannibal  
dances, uninhibited poetry. There's  
no time to worry about your beauty.  
We've got our own words for it.  
"Hot steel and throbbing cornets,  
smoke-crowned bolts of trains, low-  
slung blues voices, a symphony of  
grating, panting honrs. Bravo!"

THE MAN:

I am of an age of tubercular, fright-  
ened poetry, an age built on tooth-  
paste and cold cream and hard, brittle  
rocks. I am on the back of a ranting  
age that paints portraits in fifteen  
minutes and pours lumps of blaring  
notes and rickety drumbeats down  
the throats of the parched listeners.  
A sharp, pointed, gigantic corporation  
of cross-fire melody and rush.

CHORUS:

Well, we like it. Go back to the  
good ole days. You're in the way.  
We're progressing — going ahead —  
pressing buttons.

THE MAN:

Press a button and there's a sky-  
scraper — a swaying line of silver in  
the early morning mist? Press a

button and the roar of the man-sea  
crashes in a frothy tide over the soft,  
lost land? Throw a switch and the  
face of the moustains and full-throat-  
ed rivers disintegrates, crumbles?  
Stack the pyramids so high that the  
clouds are strangled, dazzle the sun  
with shimmering rockets, claw at the  
entrails of the hills—soar, soar, soar?  
The age is a jungle. The jungle is  
filled with them. "Visionaries!" Yes,  
I suppose . . . . but I can see them  
lost in the web of this jungle. They

can't wait. They're afraid of a new  
Time; and it is coming. By the  
infinite hours and seconds — it is  
coming. A great, frightened quiet is  
coming to outswell the smashed notes  
and lacerated canvas and grotesque  
figures. The slam of the age's door  
will fade away. Then I can set and  
watch a moon-blue evening and the  
ice fingers of the tree limbs. Perhaps  
I'll even hear a fur-lined quatrain  
or a soft brush stroke. I might have  
time to walk in the snow.

## Rhyme For A Volume Of W. H. Hudson

ALLYN WOOD

The speckled adder was his friend  
(World, unbend! World, unbend!)  
He loved the pampas-without-end,  
His purple land; the Orinoco;  
The Amazonian Matto Grosso—  
Which are rather far from Soho.  
Yet Gulf Stream turns to pekos-blend  
And London had him in the end.