

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.