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The Etiology of Eschatology

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DRUNKS IN A MIDNIGHT CHOIR

Kevin Griffith

The flasks clink under our red silk robes.
Oh God, forgive us for the off-key notes,
the harmonies so far from kilter they punch holes
in the midnight sky, your endless dark coat.

Oh, God, forgive us for the off-key notes.
It's hard to fight the shakes, the bitter cold
in the midnight sky, your endless dark coat.
We should be sent packing, truth be told,

but it's hard to fight the shakes, the bitter cold.
We mangle the words: *mudder* and *chile*.
We should be sent packing, truth be told,
But it's the season to forgive what's vile.

We mangle the words: *mudder* and *chile*.
The whisky dulls us. A grindstone gone bad.
But it's the season to forgive what's vile.
Even wise men praise the humble and make glad.

And so, in spite of our breath, our trembling hands,
the harmonies so far from kilter they punch holes
in the night, we offer our songs. Our music stands.
And the flasks clink under our red silk robes.

THE ETIOLOGY OF ESCHATOLOGY

Kevin Griffith

Or vice-versa. What comes around goes around
and so it goes. Everyone knows that when
the last night's bright trumpet sounds for the final time,

such great darkness is only a prelude to the longest
dawn, a clock strike that begets a new round of blinding light,
of oceans stretching beyond the scope of the mind's iris,

gardens rich with trees so heavy with burst fruit
that all the newly handmade animals will grow fat
waiting for caretakers to slap a name on them.

And then, when one lousy mistake gets made, as they
always do in their own passive-voiced way, the world
will begin its great downhill slide once again, and all

the dark-robed cryptologists who haven't yet gone mad
with trying, will fret over the end of everything once again,
decoding the frail pages of books heavy with nothing more

than what they intended. Yes, once everyone has solved
the great conundrum of the world's possible last song
and dance, time will have already smacked them

with its grand goodnight kiss, the stars will have given
their last call, the universe will have locked
the door on its way out, and the big man will hit rewind.

Kevin Griffith is professor of English at Capital University.