

Last Things

by Turner Cassity

Some say the world will end in fire; some say in ice.
Have they not heard of entropy? The best advice
May be, inure yourself to tepid. Heat exchange
Sees to it Armageddon has a narrow range.
If you would have extremes in your Apocalypse
Encounter it within: a time bad conscience whips
To frenzy or self satisfaction laxly crowns.
And although Judgment Day has had its ups and downs
Outside revival tents, it has returned in force
As terrorism, ozone holes, and melting cores
In power plants, a retribution so widespread
As not to segregate the living from the dead
Or match the sinner with the sin. In soulless wards
In which indifference as a consensus lords,
The complicated tortures on the Sistine wall
Will level out to ordinary medical;
An age's ever vaguer sense of sin dispel
The King James Version's phraseology of Hell,
Although its "thief come in the night" will surely stay;
Its nagging hint "The hour we know not, not the day."