

Peter Hammill, Shell

Turn a card, turn a page,
the action sure to start,
second-stage reaction
to illogical thoughts on random lines
in a Borges dream we move toward
the writing of lives.

Leave it out, leave it in, no edits
with a shout, with a grin I said
it was a certainty that I'd arrive
in an Escher sketch
we walk around the drawing of lines.

The character uncertainty
as he contemplates his lot
and tries to move with urgency
though he's rooted to the spot.

On the brink, on the edge,
but lately what I think,
what I said escapes me
in a flash, a tiger burning bright
does the visionary trance obscure
the burgeoning night?

And she said "What are you doing?"
And he said "What do you think?"
Oh, no, what on earth are we doing?

The characters procrastinate
on the threshold of the door;
there's something here that fascinates,
though the meaning's still unsure
and the plot so thick.
Is it some kind of history?
Sketch the thumbnail to the quick.
Oh, even though it's full of contradiction,
though it's flawed in the design
this is no fiction,
it's a lifeline.

Here we are, there we went, full circle,
shooting stars, heaven-sent,
turned turtle on the beach
our shells are left behind
life a library, like a memory
of our ghost-written lives.