

Peter Hammill, In The End

I promise you, I won't leave a clue:
no tell-tale remark, no print from my shoe.
Still, a steady trail to the water's edge...
I will keep my pledge to the end:
I intend to go free.

No more rushing around, no more travelling chess;
I guess I'd better sit down, you know I do need the rest....
Yes, it's time to resign with equanimity and placidity
from the game.
I can't explain;
I can't relate....
Have I done it all too late?

Now is the time for the commission to report;
till lately, I thought I'd been planted.
Trying hard to make it all come real,
permission to feel is ungranted.
But now it's happening I'd like to keep it private if I can;
last words, last looks, make a final stand.
Now my number's come up on the Pools,
I guess I'll board the Titanic for a cruise....

Now is the time to make my status clear,
too late, I fear, and lonely,
as friends and enemies traverse the stage;
all in a rage disown me.
And all the pit-props shatter into dust about my ears:
memory and conscience, hope and fear.
As I crawl out further on the limb
something tells me I am crawling
in to unknown prophecies and lives
the rainbow's end is hemmed around with knives....

As I stand on the boards and the stage lights grow dim,
shall I go out of doors, or shall I maybe go in?
Have I reached the point when I should take my cue
and follow you and your signs?
I can't remember my lines
as the prompter cat-calls
and the cards all fall
in the strike.

All the pages are thin, all the corners are curled.
Does the starshine fall in through my window on the world?
Or am I living out (the seeds of doubt) a chronicle of revenge?
The willow bends
as do my hands;
do you understand?
And will you still be my friend in the end?

When my mouth falls slack
and I can't summon up another tune,
shall I then look back and say
I did it all
too soon?