Peter Hammill, Nightman

At the dead of night, I woke
with the sense that my dreams were escaping,
all uncannily unspoken
like words at the tip of a foreign tongue...

As for language, I have none
to express quite what strangeness overwhelms me:
something's changed and something tells me
to be still in the roar of the distant stars.
The night's full of fire, ice and water;
by day I'll have clay in my hands.

The book is open at a well-thumbed mark
the odds are stacked that I'm facing.
Eyes grown accustomed to light and dark
can't catch the shadows they're chasing.
Open, my heart, to the vital spark
a disordered rhythm is racing,
it's a danse macabre I'm tracing.

As the fire feeds the flame,
as the tongue finds expression in its flickering,
does each breath inform a name
to be dispersed just as soon as it's exhaled?
Was it to myself I came
or to some other strange and parallel existence?
Will I ever see tomorrow,
to wake and begin it again?

Open, the book at a well-read page,
hope triumphs over expectation;
open, the secrets of seer and sage
in awe-inspired anticipation...

Open, my mind in the body's cage,
unchained in consecration;
open, my eyes, to the wider stage
the firestorm of liberation
the night in conflagration.

With a shiver down my spine
I come back to the place where I started;
the sea of consciousness has parted
but stranded is all that I feel for sure.
As nightsight declines into darkness
by day there'll be clay in my hands.
I may feel the clay in my hands.