

Peter Hammill, The Mousetrap (Caught In)

After all is said and done,
not very much will have been either way:
I'm a chronicler of action,
I'm an actor in the play.
I know the lines I have to speak,
I know that I won't ever quit, corpse, or dry,
but the performance gets so pointless
and the days just drift on by.

Every time that I go to turn the pages of the calendar
in the third act of this twenty-ninth year of the show
I'm aware of the latest leading lady and get mad at her...
it's perfunctory, but why she'll never know.

When I began I had my hopes,
believed that I could be a leading light of the stage,
but now I've stunned myself to silence,
exhausted all my inner rage,
extinguished all my joy and violence,
trapped all my feelings in a cage.

And every time that I go to turn the pages of the calendar
I can see that I'm not really going anywhere;
all these years I have skirted round experience like a scavenger.
Can I really feel? I wonder if I dare?
At the end of the run, will there be anyone who cares?
And behind the actor's pose, heaven knows
if there's anyone left in there.