

## Peter Hammill

# "The Comet, The Course, The Tail"

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They say we are endowed with Free Will  
--at least that justifies our need for indecision.  
But between our instincts and the lust to kill  
we bow our heads in submission.  
They say that no man is an island  
but then they say our castles are our homes;  
it's felt the choice is ours, between peace and violence  
...oh, yes, we choose, alone?  
While the comet spreads its tail across the sky  
it nowhere near defines the course it flies,  
nor does it find its own direction.  
Though the path of the comet be sure,  
its constitution is not,  
so its meaning is possibly more  
than the tracing of a tail  
in one brief shot at glory.  
Love and peace and individuality--  
so order and society are man-made?  
War and hate and dark depravity--  
or are we slaves?  
Channeling aggressive energies,  
the Death Wish and the Will to survive  
into finding and preserving enemies--  
is that the only way we know that we're alive?  
In the slaughterhouse all corpses smell the same,  
whether queens or pawns or innocents at the game;  
in the cemetery a uniform cloaks the graves  
except for outward pomp and circumstance.  
There is a time set in the calendar  
when all reason seems barely enough  
to sustain all the shooting stars:  
times are rough.  
I'm waiting for something to happen here,  
it feels as though it's long overdue:  
maybe a restatement of yesteryear  
or something entirely new.  
And the knowledge that we gain in part  
always leads us closer to the very start,  
and to the founding questions:  
How can I tell that the road signed to hell  
doesn't lead up to heaven?  
What can I say when, in some obscure way,

I am my own direction?

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