

## Under Cover Names

Peter Hammill

No thanks for the memory, no thanks at all,  
No way we can wipe the slate or contrive escape  
From the names we're called.  
No thanks for the memory, here it comes again,  
This life running on the spot, though we hide a lot  
With our cover names.

We can no more change the past than shed our skins.

But we keep on thinking that we might go someplace  
Where not a soul knows what has gone before,  
With such headfuls of self-accusation  
That we don't even know our own names anymore.

No thanks for the memory,  
No thanks.

Call them by a different name and turn about -  
We can no more change our spots than wash them out.

No thanks for the memory, locked in the frame.  
No way we can change the pattern of things that happened  
Under cover names.

And we keep on skirting round the true confession,  
With fresh identities and best-laid plans;  
And we keep on working to outreach the shadow,  
But the shadow will outrun the man.  
With such headfuls of self-accusation,  
That no pseudonyms can hide our shame,  
Lost in a jungle of our own creation,  
Lost in a labyrinth of cover names...  
We can no more change the past than live again.  
We can no more shed our skins than know our real names.

Nobody knows our real name,  
Nobody knows their real name,  
We hide under cover names...  
No thanks for the memory.