

To Make a Poem in Prison by Etheridge Knight

It is hard
To make a poem in prison.
The air lends itself not
To the singer.
The seasons creep by unseen
And spark no fresh fires.

Soft words are rare, and drunk drunk
Against the clang of keys;
Wide eyes stare fat zeroes
And plead only for pity.

But pity is not for the poet;
Yet poems must be primed.
Here is not even sadness for singing,
Not even a beautiful rage rage,
No birds are winging. The air
Is empty of laughter. And love?
Why, love has flown,
Love has gone to glitten.

Click here for audio of the poet reading this work:

http://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Knight/2-25-86/Knight-Etheridge_23_To-Make-a-Poem_So-My-Soul_Watershed_2-25-86.mp3