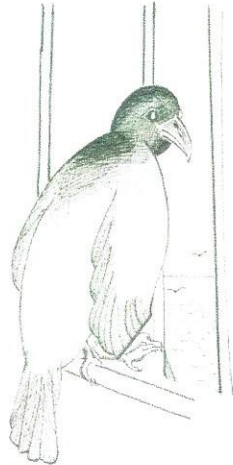


“Birdcage”



Outside the bars
a pair of wagtails skip and sideslip,
a few seagulls steer past the cliffs
 with no honest trawler to follow;
no ploughman, but morning rooks congregate
 for easy pickings from the night's shower
 thrown through the bars
 by the idle and angry.

Inside cacophony –
 insults, instructions, incomprehension.
A few rare specimens; some trapped in error;
 but even the “birds of a feather”
 each, when allowed sufficient space
 sing their unique song
 of tragedy.

From time to time, the door is
 opened,
 some more arrive,
 some released.
Some will return; but all,
 long before departure,
 have had their beaks sharpened,
 feet broken,
 wings plucked.

At dawn and dusk,
 companionable teams of geese fly over.

Patrick