

Wild Budgerigars

In the desert pool
a scattering skyful
of lime-greens and yellows,
no captive blues.

A hawk's shadow passes, distant, lonely,
as they pour in, thicken the mulga branchlets,
grinding seed-paste from the grasslands;
they dart, flit, flip, flick, sip drops for dough
from a mud-pool two metres long;
plonk hard down on its gruel,
whir up like houseflies from the swat, return;
less flap than buzz, on stumpy wings
riding an invisible flicker,
they pulse through light and heat, absent
and back, in the twitch of a tomcat's paw.
First there are two, then four,
forty, four hundred, three, then none: and again.

How to slow their wing beats, squeals,
so the brain will unravel?
Only that giant muddy eye is swift to snatch
each flurr of radiant wings, give each shrill squawk
its millisecond, and its drink.

The cat mews, disconsolate;
its first slink from cover
sent these bright ragged troupes,
querulous parliament of birds,
whirring out of the pond's clay eye
that shakes, empties, un-blurs.