

*Tanzania 1982*

## Lake Manyara

Pelicans,  
pink and white by the hundreds  
splash in the brown creek,  
rinsing themselves of the soda  
of Lake Manyara,  
while ten times more  
patrol the lake edge  
or spiral in the raising sky.

Beyond, a flurry of terns  
twist in allometric acrobatics.  
Sun flashes instantaneously  
on a thousand ivory wings  
under a rainbow arch.

Below, ninety-five hippos belch,  
tails spinning like rotors,  
manuring their fellows,  
half-submerged in pig piles  
at midstream.

Along the shore  
short sharp cormorants,  
white-necked with sulfur chins,  
dry their wings  
in the shadow of Marabou storks.

And in the distance  
dour palms and fever trees  
on the coastal plain  
are bent by spiked crowns  
of yellow-billed storks.

Inland, the doums are joined  
with wild dates and thorn thickets.  
Impala and olive baboon mingle  
in a clearing guarded  
by a long muzzled monarch  
on a termite castle.

A fiscal shrike,  
in formal black and white,  
whistles alarm as a marital eagle  
lands and feeds.

Unconcerned, a butterfly, the frilled sailor,  
brown with white wing spots,  
beats the air lightly  
in search of acacia flowers.

