Describing Clouds

I'd have to be really quick
to describe clouds,
because in a second
they become another

WISLAWA SZYMBORSKA

Describing clouds is a talent I wasn't given …
I am walking on a mountain and looking from a height
toward the clouds, as they hang from the lapis orbit
light and diaphanous,
like cotton ginned by wind,
like a white idea about the meaning of existence.
Perhaps some gods would refine the story of creation
"No final shape for this universe …
no history of shapes …"
I am looking from a height, and I see the bursting of shape
out of the frivolity of no-shape:
the bird feathers sprout in the white stag horns,
the human face appears
out of a marine bird's wing …
The clouds sketch us in their manner
and the faces get mixed up with the vision,
nothing is complete nor anyone, because in a moment
your new image will become the image of the tiger
wounded by the wind's scepter …
Unknown painters are still in front of you
playing, and drawing the absolute eternal,
white, like clouds on the wall of the universe …
And the poets build homes with clouds
then move on …

Mahmoud Darwish, (1998, 2002, 2003), Describing Clouds [Don't Apologize for What You've Done (2003)], in The Butterfly's Burden, Translated from the Arabic by Fady Joudah, Copper Canyon Press, Port Townsend, WA, 2007, pp. 250-251