Monongalis Flats, New Mexico, August 15, 1945

THE SHAPE OF TIME

Longer than a blink, round on wheels of the wagon,
Yet sharp in the splitting of sparked fingers through
The blue haze that swallows the mountains of México
On the horizon of the afternoon, you show yourself
For what you are, for what we know you to be: Impostor.

You stay long in the rivers of song and the night calls
Of coyotes but turn round again in the face of the clock,
Mothers to be, and the spinout spirals of dust devils,
Circling the moment while lovers on the hillside decide
To ride the leaf downwind or to rise as one with the condor.

I have seen you long in jail, short in the hangman’s noose,
Masquerading as candy in the child’s piñata, collapsing
In the charge of the bull, swifiting in the matador’s sting,
Carving in the browlines of viejos and mules, straining
In the tumplines of water bearers and miners in the mine.

I have caught you waiting in the blade of the bandit
And the eye of the panther, slowing on tortoise trails
And the wings of eagles, resting under hats at Matamoros,
Harboring hope in the hidden wet of deep cut arroyos,
Racing on the rails of the Union Pacific and the Santa Fe.

But what shape have you now, in the whisk of prayers
Beneath this cactus cross, in the heat and the haze of God
On this dry lake of life? What shape have you now?
Show yourself for what you are, for what you will be:

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