I, Cloud: Staging Atmospheric Imaginaries in Anthropocene Lyric

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That was the summer there were so many clouds we didn't know what to do with them. [...] There was no wind, no rain, nothing to break them up or break off the endless building up of them. Ship them to Mars, someone said; but Mars could not sustain them. You needed an atmosphere for that, and how odd was that, since so many clouds clouded our atmosphere and every citizen felt they were in a play, at the theatre, overcome by another's mood, at the mercy of the infinite nostalgia of subconscious dictates.[1]

In Mary Ruefle's poem 'Among the Clouds', an era of ubiquitous cloudiness passes over, sweeping the world's citizens into a pregnant intensity of 'mood' and memory, externalised as a profusion of cloud. The poem begins with looking back — 'That was the summer' — and ends, too, with recollection: 'the familiar cry of that summer comes back to me [...] *O Mother, O Father, wherefore art thou? I cannot see to find thee among so many clouds*'.[2] The poem itself remains 'Among the Clouds': a middling, thick, dislocated space of unspecified gathering and drift between times. Cloud writing is a material poetics in which language itself becomes atmosphere, and lyric subjectivity is dispersed in a way that foregrounds ecological entanglements, questioning our assumptions about presence, identity and agency. Crucially it asks, what atmosphere is capable of sustaining its own excess, and how are atmospheres established as shared, in common? As 'overcome', 'mercy' and 'dictates' suggest, the clouds seem to exert a totalising force of both obscurity and compliance. 'Our dreams of a solution', the speaker writes, 'dissolved in the profound and

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[1] Mary Ruefle, *My Private Property* (Seattle and New York, 2016), p. 48.
[2] Ibid., p. 50.

vital roots of an intractable reality'.[3] The lurid colour palettes of the clouds, from 'orange' to 'ghastly purple'[4] imply toxicity without weighting the poem with the closure of environmental fable — there is no explanation as to why the clouds appear, what they mean, and why they eventually depart. Does this speak to our invisible Cloud infrastructures: the data servers which hold living and otherwise archives — 'the premier receptacle / for backup dumps, archaic, obsolete data'?[5] Ruefle does not offer a fable's moral conclusion so much as lyric atmospherics of density and (re)distribution: the rendered experience of living beneath a palpable, yet changeable, climate 'subconscious' — under which there can be no elsewhere or exile, not even the architectural, techno-capitalist fantasies of colonising Mars. Clouds exist in 'generative flux'; 'at the heart of language', they bear 'infinities of meaning and inflection': a dreamtime of temporal oscillation and existential blur which dissolves the fixed relations of industrial capital.[6]

Subconscious thoughts occur beneath the surface, troubling human sovereignty and offering a more ambient sense of the mattering of memory, time, space and relation. Ruefle's 'subconscious dictates' do not come from above or below so much as through the atmosphere of many gathering moods. Ada Smailbegović suggests cloud writing is a descriptive poetics which can render 'perceptible a more variegated sense of the kinds of change that dynamically constitute the present, thereby opening the unfurling edge of this present toward the future in indeterminate ways'.[7] Cloud writing is a multisensorial writing of attunement, obscurity, drift and dissolve; like Brian Eno's concept of Ambient Music, it invites 'many levels of […] attention', its point is 'immersion' within simultaneous, overlapping moments and sense.[8] If, as Mary Jacobus argues, John Constable's painterly cloud studies are 'the equivalent of lyric poems', where 'cloud forms are his stanzas',[9] then cloud study is not passive observation but affective and temporal attunement to the spatial dynamics[10] of atmospheres. Lyric can recalibrate ecological aesthetics in motion with both the reader's body and the body of the text, with temporality and more-than-human agency. It

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[3] Ibid., p. 49.
[4] Ibid., p. 49.
[5] J. R. Carpenter, *The Gathering Cloud* (Devon: Uniformbooks, 2017), p. 93.
[6] Esther Leslie, *Liquid Crystals: The Science and Art of a Fluid Form* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), p. 289, 256.
[7] Ada Smailbegović, 'Cloud Writing: Describing Soft Architectures of Change in the Anthropocene', *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, ed. by Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), p. 95.
[8] Brian Eno, 'Ambient Music', *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, ed. by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 97, 95.
[9] Mary Jacobus, *Romantic Things: A Tree, a Rock, a Cloud* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 30.
[10] The word 'stanza' means 'room' in Italian.

can sabotage the standardised, capitalist time of linear unfolding through a cloud writing of multiple rhythms, of unpredictable gatherings, moments of clarity, loop and repeat. By attending to sensory detail and its partial obscurity, cloud writing traces the nebulous 'edge' of the present — its proximity to atmospheric turn, to being felt otherwise. Through a practice of critical 'drift', reading idiosyncratically between contemporary texts, I perform clustering, associative encounters with texts. 'Ambiance', writes Esther Leslie, is 'legible and engineerable', meaning poetry can convey and intervene in 'the political temperature of the times'.[11] Cloud study and cloud writing are capable of enlivening a more relational, weathering[12] thought towards the atmospherics of infrastructures, climate and the commoning space of the air we breathe. Like Constable's visual works, they offer a space for simultaneous experience: since clouds elude full comprehension and classification, their study invites rupture — cloud challenges our sense of permeability, scale and touch itself.

The inchoate shapes of clouds, their murky definitions, are not unlike our concept of anthropocene.[13] In basic definitions of the anthropocene, we have entered a new geological epoch, shaped by humankind's emergence as a serious geological force, entwining 'human history and natural history—even if the "why" and the "how" remain unclear'.[14] 'Such murkiness', Jason W. Moore argues, 'surely accounts for the concept's popularity'.[15] Embodying a dual sense of latency and retroactive futurity — having already happened, still happening, caught between ethical entanglements of past and future ancestors, it requires us to look back at the present from imagined tomorrows — the anthropocene is at once the coming dystopian storm-clouds, the sudden gathering of Ruefle's cloud oppressors, the ambience of constant disaster and the sense of rupture and continuity in material movement, mutation and porosity of bodies, toxicities and systems. As the anthropocene accumulates conceptual weight and sprawl, its filtering of the contemporary moment through human and geologic history offers a way of reading cloud texts for their simultaneous material and social inscriptions, their temporal and scalar distribution, their bearing of crisis.

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[11] Esther Leslie, 'FOG, FROTH AND FOAM: INSUBSTANTIAL MATTERS IN INSUBSTANTIVE ATMOSPHERES', *Electric Brine*, ed. by Jennifer Teets, (Berlin: Archive Books, 2021), p. 112.

[12] Weathering 'names a practice or a tactic: to weather means to pay attention to how bodies and places respond to weather-worlds which they are also making; to weather responsively means to consider how we might weather differently'. See Astrida Neimanis and Jennifer Mae Hamilton, 'weathering', *feminist review*, Vol. 118 (2018), p. 81.

[13] I decapitalise 'anthropocene' to demonstrate an unease around totalising claims to its authority as an epochal term, and to recognise the emergent duration of its viral agency and mutation within the cultural and academic vernaculars around climate crisis.

[14] Jason W. Moore, 'Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism', *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*, ed. by Jason W. Moore, (Oakland: PM Press, 2016), p. 3.

[15] Ibid., p. 3.

How do we speak to and from this emergent and prevalent conception of scale, time, material and human history? The title of this article operates on a pun: 'I, Cloud' is a lyric declaration which works ambivalently. On the one hand, it is a moment of lyric apostrophe, addressing an undetermined, yet capitalised Cloud; on the other, it exploits the performative dimensions of lyric to speak *as* Cloud. It works as a nod to 'iCloud', Apple's downloadable cloud storage and cloud computing service, whose brand name reassures users that in spite of the global, nonlocalised distribution of personal files, they might still consider such virtual folders as their space. It puns on the fictionalised autobiography of Robert Graves' *I, Claudius* (1934), which reveals historical webs of corruption and lies through a God's instruction to 'speak clear'.[16] The ambient quality of cloud writing speaks less to the anthropocene as an experience of scalar *derangement*,[17] and more to questions of distribution, duration and suspension — to speak cloud is to feel into, and hover around, many cultural assumptions and atmospheric entanglements.

Rather than revealing the workings of the Cloud, I want to establish overlaps between the always available, ambient nowness of Cloud and the 'present' which is lyric's 'dominant' tense: a privileging of *the moment* which offers a performative sense of presence and exposure; a staging of alternative imaginaries, 'resistance to ordinary lines of thought'; a sensing commitment to the future.[18] In *The Gathering Cloud* (2017), J. R. Carpenter warns that 'We treat the air as an abode of the endless / an infinite receptacle for pollution'.[19] As Carpenter uses grey-coloured, translucent words to effect a kind of ambient, fluctuating opacity in her language, we can't take the solidity of words for granted: every reading is a re-drawing of meaning, a webpage refresh; where sometimes the grey words are emphasised, sometimes they disappear, sometimes they function like hashtags, evoking more associative thought across the collection. By eschewing the 'endless' implication of 'infinite' capacity and depth for a surface poetics of description, attending to the unfold of medial and material relations in lyric present-tense, 'the political potential of the moment', cloud writing offers 'a higher perceptual resolution' which accommodates 'a wider range of rhythms and durations'[20] — a gesture of *beyond*.

What if this *beyond* were a kind of suspension? Suspension is, according to Timothy Choy and Jerry Zee, 'a way to orient in an atmospheric problem-space', to challenge

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[16] Robert Graves, *I, Claudius* (New York: RosettaBooks, 2014), np.

[17] cf. Timothy Clark, 'Scale', *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change, Vol. 1*, ed. by Tom Cohen, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2012), pp. 148-166.

[18] Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 284, 30, 290.

[19] Carpenter, p. 93.

[20] Smailbegović, p. 98.

knowledge assumptions, to 'render staid common sense into an opening of possible worlds'.[21] Hubert Damisch suggests clouds in Western painting indicate a refusal of linear temporality's 'finite' causality: 'beyond a certain point, a proliferation of clouds […] signals the beginning of the dissolution of the text'.[22] Clouds register instead a spatial and dynamic notion of *atmosphere*, always arriving *in medias res* to the poem. In the Codex to his *Four Lectures* (1982), Stephen Rodefer writes: 'So at sunset the clouds went nuts. They thought they were a text'.[23] Clouds are personified as theatrical entities of excess, of derangement imbued with agency, excited by the possibility of their own codification, which happens in real-time within the poem. Instead of forcing clouds into metaphor or augury, Rodefer's chiasmic evocation of language and cloud offers a performative exchange of textual effect and future potential. The Codex conclusion to Rodefer's long poem reveals 'Language pointed / To its content':[24] the event of language turning back on its objects, in the process of gathering and thickening event, described through agitated, swerving arrivals and gestures of thought at different scales. The phrase 'And there you are, in a manner of speaking'[25] holds presence and positionality as contingent upon a lyric 'manner of speaking'. Reminiscent of Carpenter's hashtag poetics of varying opacity, *Four Lectures* also comes with an index featuring entries such as 'Clouds, *one opening*', 'Plane debris' and 'Rains, *sky*': encouraging a more immersive, cross-referential, associative (re)reading of the text.[26] Functioning as an ambient catalogue of detail, the index prompts us into a meandering, stumbling experience of the manuscript. The index entries themselves form a kind of debris, suspension, or a proto-internet, associative swarm of word cloud. Through the Codex, we are taught to read *Four Lectures'* high-wire flights of expression and agitated shifts of encounter through a *painterly* writing of cloud, where as Rodefer puts it, 'every movement toward one thing deform[s] another' in strokes of 'blurring' and 'showing through'.[27]

Rodefer's painterly excess of overlay and translucence, alongside his hypertextual gesture of indexing, indicates a more dynamic, performative composition which transforms lyric into a generative present-tense of material becoming, mediation and hypercritical turn. W.S. Graham's lyric poem 'Enter a Cloud' also refuses to transform cloud into reified

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[21] Timothy Choy and Jerry Zee, 'Condition—Suspension', *Cultural Anthropology* (2015) <https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/article/download/ca30.2.04/238?inline=1> [Accessed 3rd March 2021].

[22] Hubert Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud: Toward a History of Painting*, trans. by Janet Lloyd, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 202.

[23] Stephen Rodefer, *Four Lectures* (Berkeley: The Figures, 1982), p. 69.

[24] Ibid., p. 69.

[25] Ibid., p. 69.

[26] Ibid., pp. 71-73.

[27] Ibid., p. 7.

metaphor, inviting instead a more ambient sense of agency. The first and final stanzas are the same, effecting a moment of trembling suspension: 'Gently disintegrate me / Said nothing at all'.[28] The title, which reads like a stage direction, personifies the cloud, whose presence becomes one of both address and refusal. But in doing so, lyric conventions of presence, confession and address are dissolved. Is the speaker a cloud, asking to be gently undone, or is Graham imbuing that 'nothing' with what elsewhere Bernadette Mayer calls the 'human rain' of lyric outpouring?[29] Instead of figuring clouds as pregnant metaphors of abstract feeling or concept, these poems render clouds in their open possibilities of writerly excess, of semiotic residue.

Cloud writing feels into the existential blurriness and conceptual surplus of the anthropocene: at once an abstract term of fraught definition and an extremely concrete experience of ecological crisis; unequally distributed and tied to historical relations of racial capitalism, slavery, consumption, labour and extraction. Not all clouds are fluffy, picturesque and benign; clouds carry silica dust into the lungs of mine workers, clouds carry acid traces of pollution and petrochemical interference. Clouds are traces of legacy, events happening now and bearers of augury. Cloud's indeterminacy and imminence resonates with Kathryn Yusoff's idea of indeterminacy as 'a vulnerable and porous relation', whereby 'Pollution activates a potentiality in the organism to be otherwise': encounters with toxicity affirm 'forms of non-identity in biopolitical relations'.[30] By attending to something at once deeply material and somehow ambient, conceptually elusive, profligate beyond its originating strain of geology, the anthropocene distorts Enlightenment constructs of figure and ground, self and other, observation, study and lived experience. The 'gathering of atmospheric sensation', Timothy Choy and Jerry Zee argue, is 'a compositional process'.[31] Drifting between examples of contemporary poetics, enacting an expansive and ambient sense of critical attention, I want to argue that cloud writing is a mode of hypercritique: a recalibration and intensification of ecological thought, where pollution is not just the static stuff of landfills but an agential force of biopolitical relation and perceptual overhaul, carried by clouds.

'What would it mean', asks Louise Amoore, 'to change the aperture of observation?'.[32] Our 'desire' to '"open the black box" of cloud computing and to expand the vocabulary of the

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[28] W. S. Graham, *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 2004), pp. 216, 219.
[29] Bernadette Mayer, *Eating the Colors of a Lineup of Words: The Early Books of Bernadette Mayer* (Barrytown: Station Hill, 2015), p. 209.
[30] Kathryn Yusoff, 'Indeterminate Subjects, Irreducible Worlds: Two Economies of Indeterminacy', *Body & Society*, Vol. 23, No. 3., p. 75.
[31] Choy and Zee, p. 219.
[32] Louise Amoore, 'Cloud geographies: Computing, data, sovereignty', *Progress in Human Geography,* Vol .42, No. 1, p. 13.

cloud' remains within a 'paradigm of observation' which extends from modes of classification, human projection and 'data deployment'.[33] The attunements of cloud writing and hypercritique interrupt this impulse towards resolution and instead perform the lyric indeterminacy of atmospheres. As Kathryn Yusoff writes of her work on indeterminate worlds and subjects:

> This is not an article about solutions, but rather it is a project of recognition *without end*; in which something *presents* itself, where something indeterminate and incommensurable might be allowed to come near and not be immediately incorporated into a schema of valuation or signification.[34]

Hypercritique is also a project of recognition without end: an embodied, energised, weathering poetics brought to bear within the accelerated conditions of the anthropocene, veering and scrolling within and beyond everyday limits of sense and critique.[35] The prefix *hyper* invites a more speculative, charged and expansive poetics: we are plunged into a *beyond*; we remain in motion, we inhabit 'the dreamtime of the extra-sensible'.[36] Jacques Ranciere's 'distribution of the sensible' — 'the system of self-evident facts of sense perception', that at once reveals 'something in common' as well as defining the 'respective parts and positions within it'[37] — underpins hypercritique's capacity for reading atmosphere-as-commons through possibilities of (re)distribution, multiple entry and dissolve. Its stage of theoretical and poetic encounters wants to collapse intellectual authority, metaphoric closure and sense-making within a reciprocal, sympoietic[38] and ambient discourse.

Cloud writing embraces an ecological thinking of hesitant command, of lyric intensity, of speculation and relation. Anna Gurton-Wachter's *Utopia Pipe Dream Memory* (2019) offers a poetry of utopian imaginary which drifts in a hybrid space between poetry and prose, memory and speculation. It begins with a foreword:

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[33] Ibid., p. 10.

[34] Yusoff, p. 78.

[35] Maria Sledmere, 'Hypercritique: A Sequence of Dreams for the Anthropocene', *Coils of the Serpent*, Vol 8 (2021), pp. 54-79.

[36] Ibid., p. 55.

[37] Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill, (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 12.

[38] Meaning 'making with'; a word that evokes the lively, 'dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems' of ecology. See Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 58.

though this book inhabits a world of imagined communities,

it was only through the vibrancy and generosity of my real lived community

that I was able to picture myself outside of it[39]

Riffing on Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as an 'imagined community', where 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship',[40] Gurton-Wachter offers spatial metaphors for considering her book's dwelling in other kinds of speculative commons — intergenerational love, friendship, comradeship and poetic coterie — which wilfully disregard the borders of history and nation. The very title describes utopia as simultaneously a pipe dream, an impossible imaginary of something to-come, and a *memory* of this imaginary. The book's spaced-out, cloud-like stanzas of varying density offer a descriptive poetics of *the now* while also tracing tenses of pause, desire, reflection, overflow and clustering intensity. Smailbegović argues that cloud writing can attune us to incremental processes, temporal rhythms and accumulating effects that occur within the anthropocene, at scales often unavailable 'to the human sensorium'.[41] The cloudscapes of Gurton-Wachter's 'utopia pipe dream' are grounded in 'real lived community', its *memory* (as the book's title suggests), whose material support allows for an imagined beyond or wishful 'outside' — the utopian pipe dream. As opposed to the top-down projections of a utopian blueprint, Gurton-Wachter writes to *inhabit* the ambience and (im)possibility of a pipe dream. She addresses the reader:

Did I tell you already that I'm getting an advanced degree in cloud

watching? In flames and ruby and fog? In cupped hands and surfaces

and the concept of giving up? I am giving up my construction site

studies, all of my tools, my language. I will explain it all in a letter once

my love of endurance subsides.[42]

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[39] Anna Gurton-Wachter, *Utopia Pipe Dream Memory* (New York: Ugly Duckling Presse), np.
[40] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: *Reflections on the origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 7.
[41] Smailbegović, p. 97.
[42] Gurton-Wachter, p. 126.

This quote occurs in 'A Study Group' section of Gurton-Wachter's book: within this ambient reading space, the speaker invites a redistribution of sensibility in the space of address, in mutual study. They evoke a lavish atmosphere of *red clouds at night, shepherd's delight* — the flames and ruby — a vivid red gel through which we glimpse tomorrow, heatedly, in the sky's archival flux. Addressing us with an air of forgetting, or repetition, 'Did I tell you already', we are hailed into the lyric situation of envisioned imminence: the promising skies, the cupped hands of implied receiving. Cloud writing requires close listening:[43] a receptive mode of ecological attunement, a descriptive poetics of hesitant command. In conceptualising 'giving up', the speaker questions what study is possible, what is reached for, in the ambient, microcosmic commons of the text — its 'Study Group'. If '[p]olitics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it',[44] then Gurton-Wachter positions cloud study as an undecidable dream space within the momentary sociality of utterance, carrying material traces of affective encounter between past and future presents. The pregnant 'fog' cannot be pinned, built around or controlled by 'construction', 'tools' and 'language' — it is always in excess of human method. In giving up their 'construction site studies', the speaker surrenders architectural inquiry for a cloud imaginary — which is to say, one that exists beyond 'endurance', that dwells in the contingent space of intimacy, shift and epistolary exchange. There is the promise of a letter, of more to come, Yusoff's 'recognition without end',[45] of *disclosure*. The space of inhabited sense spills over the poem's otherwise confinements, as cirriform's scrolling exceeds its field of human view. 'We need different lenses', argues Leslie, chiming with Amoore, 'to see this fog': 'what it does and what it makes us feel, what atmospheres we—and it—are producing'.[46] Clouds scroll back and forth to the future we want or wanted, always already, taking in failures and harms, particulate matter, along the way.

What kinds of reading does this require? Is cloud watching the opposite of building with language, atmosphere the opposite of architecture? Are we to find ourselves always beholden to a 'love of endurance' or can we study in fugitive degrees of cloudy thinking, in hypercritique? What if words were not blocks but atmospheric moments of touch, imbued with multiple temporalities? Gernot Böhme calls 'atmospheres' a way of situating 'bodily feeling' within the environment in a way that 'mediates' between subject and object, in a

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[43] 'poetry needs to be sounded' — a statement which implies poetry is a performative art, occurring in space and with unique temporal duration. See Charles Bernstein, 'Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word', *Pennsound*, July 2001, <http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/authors/bernstein/essays/close-listening.html> [Accessed 8th March 2021].

[44] Ranciere, p. 13.

[45] Yusoff, p. 78.

[46] Leslie, 2021, p. 113.

sensuous and temporal dimension.[47] As Böhme puts it, 'you can enter an atmosphere and you can be surprisingly caught by an atmosphere'.[48] In her poem 'The Lit Cloud', Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge writes of such reciprocity: 'I receive from the cloud a sense of dignity for my fervent desire to express it'.[49] Here, the cloud isn't depicted so much as the act of receiving its affective atmospheres in the speaker. As condensing entities and 'forms of visibility'[50] as well as obscurity, clouds allow thought towards what affective, weathering and elemental densities (of pollution and temporal 'thickness') are (re)distributed in the medial realm of the anthropocene. In Berssenbrugge's poem, clouds are not summoned for deterministic purpose but contribute to a metabolising of multiple, flickering energies and events in the poem's distributed atmosphere, the speaker's 'filters' and 'facets of exposure' within 'stress reality'.[51] As with Gurton-Wachter's cloud study, there is a reaching towards, an attunement to cloud's obfuscations and manifestations, a blurred sense of agency, instead of arrival at cloud's meaning: Berssenbrugge writes, 'The cloud is passionate according to creative principles of motion, counterforce, exchange, as I also try to experience a symptom'.[52] This 'as I also' of simultaneous encounter situates the speaker's perceptive openness and intimacy within a billowing, cloud imaginary of 'motion, counterforce, exchange' — these weathering gestures of reciprocity, drift, effect and refusal.

The weather can always turn. There is a participatory theatricality to atmosphere and our enmeshment with it: 'a mutual need for presentation between sky and inner self'.[53] 'We think of the weather now as a dance of airs', writes Muriel Rukeyser, 'predictable in relationship, with its parades of clouds, the appetites of pressure areas'.[54] If airs can be melodious songs, expressions or impressions of opinion, mood or intensity, lyric (which, especially since the Romantic period, has been associated with breath, air, the wind) can be a space of ventilation, opening and weathering utterance among the clouds. The air is not transcendent but rather a deeply embodied space of mutual breath: 'If one opening clouds, another will clear, so long as you both will breathe'.[55] Like language, clouds pass something on. We might think of cloud writing as a mutual summons of atmospheric event, a performative, scrolling codex, where, as Etel Adnan puts it: 'Images are not still. They are

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[47] Gernot Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmosphere*, ed. by Jean-Paul Thibaud, (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 1.
[48] Böhme, p. 2.
[49] Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, *Hello, the Roses* (New York: New Directions, 2013), p. 69.
[50] Ranciere, p. 13.
[51] Berssenbrugge, p. 70.
[52] Ibid., p. 72.
[53] Ibid., p. 69.
[54] Muriel Rukeyser, 'The Life of Poetry, Chapter 1', *poets.org*, 7th October 2011, <https://poets.org/text/life-poetry-chapter-1> [Accessed 4th March 2021].
[55] Rodefer, p. 7.

moving things. They come, they go [...] they are pure feeling. They're like something that calls you through a fog or a cloud'.[56] 'The Cloud', in our present understanding, 'is generative of particular imagined futures', 'condensing the data traces of what matters'.[57] It is sympoiesis; a summons to a more participatory, commoning thought within the pressures and relations of our multiple present(s).

Clouds hold the matter we don't want to confront: the carbon weight of data-servers; the at once unpredictable and unequal distribution of climate disaster; the atmospheric legacies of industrial, racial capitalism. Cloud writing happens at the risk of abstraction — deferring 'pure feeling' to metaphor or empty gesture — but its lyric weathering can help us think expansively in condensed form the fertile blind spots, obscurities, clearings and illuminations of an affective, ecological poetics which acknowledges historical and ongoing inequalities. This is lyric poetry not so much Wordsworth's 'spontaneous overflow' as a call-back to atmosphere-as-commons or portal in the swirling shadowlands, openings and partial glimmers of voice, text and breath — not to mention the structural and political limitations placed upon them. 'Within that chiaroscuro', Lisa Robertson argues, 'we need to gently augment the fraught happinesses of our temporary commons by insisting on utopian delusion as a passage'.[58] What kinds of pipe dream do we cultivate, design, toggle between, disintegrate or share towards the non-places of tomorrow, while recognising the chiaroscuro flicker between light and shade, presence and absence, hope and trauma? What cloudy utterance would carry this in memory, bear us towards that processual, ambient gathering, scroll or burst, and how might it be sited, situated, mediated, cited? 'Clouds present themselves as evidence,' writes George Szirtes, 'so you open the file and read. The reading itself is consuming'.[59]

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Acknowledgements

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[56] Etel Adnan, 2014. 'Etel Adnan by Lisa Robertson', *BOMB Magazine*, 1st April 2014, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/etel-adnan/> [Acccessed 10th March 2021].
[57] Amoore, p. 17.
[58] Robertson, p. 67.
[59] George Szirtes and Clarissa Upchurch, *Thirty Clouds* (Newton-le-Willows: The Knives, Forks and Spoons Press, 2019), p. 18.

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