

The Madness of a Cloud (2e)

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Range: **.667-1.00**

8536:12015 **.710**

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Canto I

Total Echoes: 1,859

Total Syllables: 2,546

Approximate Self-Similarity: **.730**

[C][l]oud was [s][i]tt[i]ng at [S][e]v[e]nth H[ea]v[e]n
d[r]in[k]ing a Fernet on the [r]o[ck]s e[n]g[a]g[i]ng
i[n] [l]ight [c]onver[s]a[t]ion with a
[c]o[ck][s]u[ck]er h[e]’d ne[v]er [e][v]en met
[a][b]out [a] [Q]ueen’s [B][l]ood [p][l][ay]-in g[a]me
that he’d - this [p]arti[c]ular [c]o[ck][s]u[ck]er -
[r]e[q]uested to [b]e [p]ut on the [T][V] at the [b]ar.
Well, a[c]tua[l]l[y] [C][l]oud [c]o[r]re[c]ted, for the
[r]e[c]ord, that he’d a[c]tua[l]l[y] been [r]eading a
[f]ew [p][a]ges of [T]im[a]eus [p][r]ior to all this,
[m]a[k]ing a [f]ew [d]is[p]a[r]ate notes, [f]in[d]ing
him[s]e[l]f [p]uzzled at the [s]en[s]o[r]y
in[f]or[m]ation that [c]on[t]inued [t]o [b]e
[r]e[l]ay[ed] in[t]o his [b][r]ai[n]. [C][l]oud
[b][a]si[c]a[l]l[y] a[l]leged he was [f]l[u]m[m]oxed
a[b]out the [s]en[s]o[r]y in[f]orm[a]tion that
[b]e[c]a[m]e, in [s]ome [w]ay, [r]e[l]ay[ed] to [w]hat
he guessed [w]as his [b][r]ai[n]? - how any of that
was [c]o[r]ro[b]o[r]ated, [b]ut [m]ore [s]o [C][l]oud
[c]on[t]em[p]l[ate]d the [s]t[ati]c n[a]ture of
[s]aid i[m]ages - that’s [w]hat he [w]as
[s]p[e]c[i]f[i]c[a]l[l]y [c]on[t]em[p]l[ate]ing [w]hen [a]
guy [w]ith [a] r[ou]nd-a[s]s [f]a[c]e [l]eaned [o]n[t]o
the [b]ar, [s]ee[k]ing to [c]l[ose] his [t]ab,

obviou[s][l]y ex[c]ited [t]o [t]ell the [b]ar[t]ender
that he may n[ee]d to show [h]er [h]is l[D], just
[b]e[c]ause he [t]oo[k] his wife's [l]a[s]t name and
[h]adn't [h]ad a [ch]an[c]e to [ch]ange his
[l]i[c]en[s]e yet? The pa[t]r[on] with the [r]ound-
a[s]s [f]a[c]e [n]oted how [n]i[c]e the bar[t]ender
was ([T]i[f]a!), [b]ut [w]hat [w]as her [n]ame
again? He [c]ould [d]e[f]i[n]i[t]e[l]y [d]isp[l]ay
his l[D] if sh[e] r[ea][l]l[y] [n]ee[d]ed, just
be[c]ause, again, his [l]ast [n]ame [w]as
[d]i[f]ferent [n]ow - ta[k]ing his [w]i[f]e's [n]ame
and all! Of [c]ourse, [C][l]oud [n]o[t]ed, [th]at it
was [c]lear [th]at [n//o] one gave [a] [f]u[c]k [a]bout
the [p]r[i]nted name on [a] [c]r[edit] [c]ar[d] in that
b[ar], and Ti[f]a, [f]or her [p]ar[t], [d]i[d]n't
exa[c]t[l]y [s]ee[m] [l]i[k]e she was [r]am[p]ing
[u]p to [s]u[ck] this [d]ude o[f]f j[ust] be[c]au[se]
he was a [r]a[d]i[c]al [f]eminist. [F]or [C][l]oud's
[p]art he was still, you know, a [tt]em[p]ting [t]o get
[b]e[h]ind the [b]l[unt] [s]en[s]ations [b]e[ing]
[s]muggled [r]e[l]entl[e]s[s]ly into his [s]o-[c]alled
[c]onsciou[s] [e]xi[s]ten[c]e. [E]ve[r]ything was
[a]n [i]mage to [s]ome e[x]tent, [r]ight Ae[r]ith?
Touch it[s]elf was a [f]u[c]king [s]en[s]o[r]y
i[m]a[ge]. [I]t was a [q]uaint [S]p[r]ing evening
where [C][l]oud [f]elt m[or]e [or] [l]e[s]
[d//es]tined to [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[ze], having
[s]tarted [d]r[i]n[k]ing w[i]ne in [p]r[e]p[a]r[ation]
[f]or a [F]r[i]d[ay] [n]i[ght] [d]inner, on[l]y to have
Ti[f]a [b]ail [l]ast mi[n]ute, [b]e[c]ause sh[e]
[n]ee[d]ed to [p]i[c]k u[p] a [b]ar sh[i]ft -
[l]eav[ing] him [c]om[p]l[e]te[l]y fr[ee] to
[c]ontinue this wine [d]r[i]n[k]i[n]g [i]n a
[r]i[tual[i]s]ti[c] [w]ay that [w]ould be
[c]on[d]u[c]ive to [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al i[d]eas.
Yes, [C][l]oud [c]on[t]inued [t]o Ae[r]ith, it was
[b]asi[c]a[l]l[y] on[l]y vi[a] d[r]in[k]ing [a]llone,

[b]ut in [a] [r]itua[l]i[s]ti[c] [f][a]shion, th[a]t h[e]'d
 ach[ie]ved any [s]ort of [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[i]c[al]
 [i]n[q]ui[ry]. You [c]oul[d]n't just [s]it at a [d]e[s]k
 and *be[c]ome [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al*, at [l]ea[s]t
 [n]ot for [C][l]oud! May[b][e] [s]ome [p][eo][p]le
 [c]ould! [B]ut, [n]o, [n]ot [C][l]oud. He'd i[m]agine
 [th]at [th]ere were [p]ro[b]a[b]lly a [l]itany of
 [p]o[s]si[b]le ways of [b]e[c]o[m]ing
 [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al - [l]i[k]e, [f]or in[s]tan[c]e, [f]or
 the round-[f]a[c]ed al[b]ino ch[a][p], [p]erh[a][p]s
 [t]e[l]ling [T]i[f]a that he'd [t]aken his wi[f]e's [l]a[s]t
 n[a]me, m[ay][b]e that could [b][e] [s]ee[n] as
 po[s]si[b]l[y] ritua[l]i[s]ti[c] [i]n a w[ay], a
 g[a]tew[ay] to [s]ome [s]ort of *be[c]o[m]ing
 [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al*. This was a *c[tua]lly
 [s]cien[c]e*, [C][l]oud [t]old [h]er [h]e [th]ought at
 [th]e bar, [s]uc[c]e[s]sfully avoidi[ng] [m]a[k]i[ng]
 any eye [c]on[t]a[c]t with the round-fa[c]ed [m]an.
 Was it [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]ily *[s]t[r]ange* at all that
 [o]n[c]e the G[r]ee[k]s [w]ent extin[c]t
 [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]y went m[or]e [or] l[ess]
 [c]omp[l]e[tely and utterl[y] *downhill* and
 [n]ever [l]oo[k]ed b[a]ck in the [l]ea[s]t, [th]at
 [th]e [l]a[s]t group to [r]ea[l]ly [r]ea[ch] much of
 any [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al [s]u[c]ce[s]s made a
 [s]in[c]ere e[ff]ort to [c]onjoin getting [f]u[c]ked
 [u]p with [c]on[t]em[p]lating in[t]elligible
 [ph]e[n]o[m]e[n]a? - [th]at [th]e G[r]ee[k]s
 a[t]t[em]p[te]d [t]o [m]a[r]ry i[n]e[b]r[i]ation and
 [r]igo[r]ous dia[l]e[c]tic? [Th]at all [th]ought since -
 to [p]a[r]a[ph]r[ase] [N]orthhead - had been a
 mi[n]or [f]oot[n]ote to [P]lato or [w]hatever? [Th]e
 [th]ing [w]as, a[c]cording to [C][l]oud, you just
 [c]oul[d]n't w[i]lly n[i]lly [d]elve into
 metaph[y]s[i]cs [c]omp[l]e[tely [s]o[b]er! [B]ut
 that wasn't to [s]ay a [p]e[r]s[on] should
 [n]e[c]e[s]sarily [b]e[c]ome [s]ome dege[n]e[r]ate

al[c]ohol[i]c either, [b]e[c]ause a [d]e[n]e[r]ate
 [d][r]unk would in [n]o w[ay] [m][a]ke a g[r][ea]t
 [m]eta-phys[i][c]i[st] either - that was
 [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly impo[s]si[b]le, [b]e[c]ause, [l]i[k]e
 [C][l]oud [s]aid, the [s][o][l][o] m[o]de of
 in[e][b][r][i]ation should [b][e] done
 [r]itua[l]i[s]ti[c]a[l]ly, in [s]p[ur]ts, at [c][er]tain
 times. You [c]ouldn't just [b]e [l]i[k]e h[i]tt[ing] the
 [b]ottle [a]s soon [a]s you wo[k]e [f]rom a
 [s]lum[b]er! - a[f]ter [s]aid in[e][b][r][i]ation
 [s]essions you'd [r]e[q]uire [s]o[b][r][i]ety to
 [p]arse through [w]hatever it [w]as that [c]ame to
 you via [s]aid [c]ontem[p]lation, [n]o? In f[a][c]t,
 the [a][c]tual [s]cience was [n]othing [b]eyond this
 [p]ar[s]ing th[r]ough of in[e][b][r][i]ation [s]essions
 of [r]igo[r]ous [c]ontem[p]l[ati]on! That was it -
 what [l]i[ke]d [b]eh[i]nd [l]ogi[c] and
 metaph[y]s[i]c[s], in [C][l]oud's m[i]nd at [l]east!
 [B]ut in[e][b][r][i]ation [c]ould [b]e anything [r]eally
 - [C][l]oud [c]ould en[t]er a s[t]ate of
 in[e]b[r]i[ati]on in [a] [c]ar [a]ll[one] on [a]
 Tuesd[ay] [A]M, without [c]onsuming a damn
 thing. [A]e[r]ith [m][or]e [or] less ag[r]eed, [a]dding
 th[at] on the one hand a [ph]i[l]oso[ph]ical [m]i[n]d
 should [b]e a[b]le [t]o ana[l]yze, in[t]erp[r]et,
 ex[t]ra[p]o[li]ate, all of that [s]cien[t]i[f]i[c]
 /s[t]u[f]f - but, on [th]e o[th]er, i[f] you [f]ail to
 [p]r[a]c[t]ice yourself [i]n a [p]osi[t]ion to [r]e[c]eive
 [a]n[y]thing to [a]nalyze, in[t]erp[r]et, or
 ex[t]ra[p]o[li]ate then you were [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly
 [s]c[r]ewed! [C][l]oud m[or]e [or] [l]ess ag[r]eed
 [b]ut [a]dded th[at] - [s]a[ys] this ty[p]e of
 "in[s]p[ir]ation," [s]o to [s]p[ea]k - they'd [b][e]
 [s]tu[c]k [s]itt[ing] at [a] ta[b]le just [n]oodl[ing]
 [a]r[oun]d [n]on[s]en[s]i[c]a[l]ly, v[a]l[ui]ng
 [b]a[c]k [a]nd forth [b]e[t]ween [t]wo [t]ypes of
 [n]othing[n]ess, and then just pr[o]b[a]b[ly]

k[n][o][c]king [o]ff s[o]me[o]ne else's [w]ork [b]y
 [a][c]cident. [B]ut [n]one of this [w]as [n]ew! It
 [w]asn't [l]i[k]e [C][l]oud [w]as [b][r][ea][k]ing
 /n]ews i[n] a[n]y [w]ay. [A]t this point [A]e[r]ith
 [a]sked - you k[n][o]w, was thi[s] [a][b]i[n][o]
 douche [b]ag, he was an e[l]ement of this
 [a][n]a[l]y[s]is? [N]o, [n]ot real[l]y - a[c]cording to
 [C][l]oud - maybe the g[uy] was [t][r][y]ing a [t]ad
 [t]oo hard? - to [p][r]es[e]nt him[s][e]l[f] as a
 [s][p]e[c][i]f[i]c ar[c]he[t]y[p]e [t]o the gene[r]al
 [p]ubli[c], as a g[uy] who [d]e[c]l[i]d[ed] to [s][p]i[t]
 i[n] the fa[c]e of his [o]wn [c]h[r][o]mo[s]o[m]e
 [c]ount, [w]hich [w]as [s]omething [C][l]oud
 [p]er[s]ona[l]ly en[d]or[s]ed! Gran[t]ed [C][l]oud
 [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] [w]oul[d]n't [d]o it [b]y [t][a][k]ing his
 [w]ife's [l]ast [n][a]me, [b]e[c]ause [C][l]oud
 [p]er[s]o[n]al[l]y was obviou[s][l]y more [p]rone
 [t]o a [t]y[p]e of [i]s[o]l[ated] and over[l]y
 [d]ramatic [s]elf-ann[i]hi[l]ation than a
 [s]ub[s]ervient and [d]i[s]i[n]gen[u]ous[l]y
 [m]u[t]ed [f]e[m]i[n]ist a[n]nihi[l]ation, b[ut] he
 w[a]sn't i[p]s[o] [f]act[o] op[p]o[s]ed to either!
 Ae[r]ith ag[r]eed [o]n[e] h[un]d[r]ed [p]er[c]ent! But
 [C][l]oud [s]till would g[o] a [l]ittle [f]urther, n[o]ting
 [th]at i[n] [th]e i[n]telligible [s][p]here, as
 [s]o[m]e[o]ne [l]i[k]e, [s]ay, Pr[o][c]l[u]s would
 n[o]te, that [s][o]-[c]alled [f]orms were [s]omehow
 able to [p]arti[c]i[p]ate in [o]ne an[o]ther *wi]thout
 m[i]xing*, [w]hereas [w]i[th]i[n] the [s]en[s]ible
 realm they [p]art[i]c[i]pated i[n] th[i]ngs and
 [s]ub[s]e[que]nt[l]y got [d]i[r]ty. But [C][l]oud
 [th]ought [th]at it [w]as [w]orth going [o]ne [s]tep
 [f]urther - [s]ince they were [d]i[s]c[u]ssing
 a[n]nihilation [a]nd [s]tu[f]f [a][n]yway, [th]at [th]e
 [p]er[c]e[i]ved m[i]x[i]ng be[t]w[ee]n [f]orms that
 [t]ook [p]lace in the [s]en[s]ible a[r]e[n]a was
 it[s]el[f] j[u]st [a] [p][r]o]p[er] [c]o]m[m]ix[t]ure but not

a[c]tual [m]ixture. The in[t]el[l]igi[b]le sphere,
[b]eing [p]ure[l]y e[m]an[a]ted, [p]ar[t]i[c]i[p]a[te]d
w[i]th[i]n [i]t[s]elf without [m][i]x[i]ng [i]t[s]elf[f],
while i[n] the [s]e[n][s]i[b]le [s]p[h]ere [i]t [d][i][d]n't
[s]eem like that was [p]o[s]si[b]le, that [b]y
[p]ar[t]i[c]i[p]ating w[i]th[i]n [s]en[s]i[b]le [th]i[n]gs
[th]ey [b]e[c]ame *e[s]sential[l]y m[i]xed w[i]th
them*, a[s]suming they were [c]ategori[c]al[l]y
[s]en[s]ible. E[s]sential[l]y [n]a[t]ure was
t[ai]nted, which of [c]our[s]e [C][l]oud [a]nd
[A]erith k[n]ew all [t]oo [w]ell! [W]ay [t]oo [w]ell!
He[n][c]e thei[r] sha[r]ed a[c]quie[s]ce[n][c]e
toward [o][c]c[a]sio[n]al [a][n]nihil[a]tion! [B]ut
even this [s]en[s]i[b]le f[i]lth, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k,
[C]loud [th]ought, [th]i[s] [p]er[c]eived *m[i]x[i]ng
u[p]* [i]n the [p]ar[t]i[c]i[p]ation of [s]en[s]i[b]le
th[i]ngs, wasn't it [a]l[s]o a [p]rojec[t]ion? - [a]n
[e]man[a]ti[on], just as the [p]ar[t]i[c]i[p]a[ti]on of
the in[t]elligible [s]phere was al[s]o [a]n
[e]m[a]n[ation] of the [p][r]i[m]a[r]y u[n]ity of all
things? Which, yeah, [b][r]ought [C][l]oud
[b]a[c]k to th[at] al[b]i[n]o [r]ound-[f]aced [f]u[c]k
at the [b]ar, [t]a[k]ing his wi[f]e's [l]ast [n]ame -
[b]e[c]ause ul[t]i[m]ate[l]y the al[b]ino's
[v]antage point wasn't [r]e[m]ar[k]a[b]l[e]
di[v]ergent f[r]om [C][l]oud's or Ae[r]ith's, [C][l]oud
thought. Thi[s] al[b]i[n]o was [p][r]o[m]oting a
[c]ertain t[y]p[e] of an[n]i[h]ilation of their
[c]ultu[r]al-[s]en[s]i[b]le [r]ealm, [th]i[n]k[i]ng [th]at
[th]e [p]a[t]riar[c]hal lineage of their [s]o[c]iety was
[b]a[s]i[c]ally [s]omething obje[c]tiona[b]le,
[s]omething e[s]sential[l]y t[ai]nted, that should
[b]e a[n]nihilat[ed] in the [s]ervi[c]e of
[s]omething *[m]ore pure*. O[k]ay, well, [C][l]oud
[th]ought [th]at [m]ade a [m]odi[c]um of [s]ense!
[M]a[y]be [t]a[k]ing his wi[f]e's [l]a[s]t n[a]me was
in a [s]ense a g[r]ea[te]r [f]orm of [p]u[r]ity than

[l]o[c]king a woma[n] i[n] a [k]itche[n] and
[e]xpe[c]ting a blowjob [e][v]ery other [e][v]ening,
[C][l]oud thought. Ju[s]t as [P][r]o[c][l]us and
[S]o[c][r]a[t]es [s]en[s]ed [th]at [th]e in[t]el[l]igible
[s][ph]ere [p]arti[c]i[p]ated w[i]th [i]t[s]el[f] yet not
in a [w]ay [w]here it m[i]xed w[i]th [i]t[s]elf, [th]at
[th]i[s] was [d]i[s]tinct [f]rom our [f]urther
[d]e[s]cen[d]ed, [s]en[s]i[b]le [s][ph]ere where
things [p]arti[c]i[p]ated [w]ith [o]ne another [b]ut
got [m]ixed u[p] in the [p]ro[c]e[s]s - well,
[m]ay[b]e this al[b]i[n]o [m]an was [n]o[t]ing [th]at
[th]e [p]a[t]riar[c]h[y] was a
[p]ar[t]i[c]i[p]a[t]o[r]y m[i]x[i]ng that [l]eft
un[s]eem[i]y [c]um [s]t[ai]ns - [f]or [l]a[c]k of a
better [ph]r[a]se! - on hu[m]an ex[p]e[r]ience.
[P]a[t]riar[c]hy, in the al[b]i[n]o [m]an's [m]i[n]d,
should [b]e a[n]n[i]hilated [b]e[c]ause of this
[s]en[s]i[b]le m[i]x[i]ng u[p], this [p]u[t]rid
[t]ai[n]ting of [w]hat [w]ould [b]e [b]etter o[f]f
[p]ure. And [t]a[k]ing your [n]i[c]e wif[e]'s [n]ame
was a [p]ro[p]er [m]ode of an[n]ihilation in
[r]es[p]onse. Ae[r]ith [r]e[m]ar[k]ed that she *knew*
/C[l]oud would inevita[b]l[y] [b]r[i]ng the
dis[c]ou[r]se [b]a[c]k to this [p]oo[r] ch[a][p]
[c]l[o]sing his t[a]b, [b]ut, just to [b]e [c]l[e]ar,
[w]hat [C][l]oud [w]as saying [w]as [th]at [th]i[s]
m[i]xing [th]at o[c]curred in the [s]en[s]ible [r]ealm
was it[s]elf ju[s]t a [s]e[p]a[r]ate [p]rojection -
ju[s]t a l[e]s[s]er mode of [p]rojecting! So [w]hile
the [m]a[t]erial [w]orld [m]ay have di[s]gu[s]ted
them, [p]erha[p]s [m]oving the [t]wo [t]oward
[s]ome [s]ort of a ll-en[c]om[p]a[s]sing
[c]on[c]e[p]tual [a]nnihilation, [a]nd [a]s [m]uch as
the [p]a[t]riar[chi]y [m]ight have seemed [p]u[t]t[r]id
to the al[b]ino hus[b]and at the [b]ar who
[l]oo[k]ed to an[n]ih[i]late him[s]el[f] [b]y ta[k]ing
his [n]i[c]e wif[e]'s [l]a[s]t [n]ame, it [c]ould be

wise to [c]on[s]i[d]er [th]at [th]ese [d]i[s]gu[s]ting
a[g]g[r]e[g]ates were them[s]elves [s]im[p]ly
[d]e[r][i]vat[i]ve [p]roje[c]tions, [th]at [th]ey weren't
a[c]tual [m]ixtures, [th]at [th]ey were just
[d]erivative e[m]anations as o[p]posed [t]o
[t]at[t]oos of what [th]ey [th]ought [th]ey
[d]e[s][p]ised. Aerith [w]as a[w]are. She wasn't
[d]i[s]tressed a[b]out it, [b]ut she k[n]ew this poor
al[b]i[n]o g[uy] would in [t][i]me [t]a[k]e the [b]r[u]nt
[o]f it from [C]loud. [C]loud [q]uestioned whether
he [d]i[d]n't [d]eserve it? [P][l]us [l]i[k]e they'd
al[r]eady im[p]l[i]ed - they [m]u[s]t to [p]ro[c]eed
from the i[m]mane[n]t [t]o the [t]ran[s]cende[n]t,
no?

Canto II

Total Echoes: 2,174

Total Syllables: 3,037

Approximate Self-Similarity: **.716**

[C][l]oud [f]ound it a [t]ad [b]e[f][u]dd[l]ing, j[u][s]t
[b]e[c][au]se [T]ifa [s]aid sh[e]'d h[a]d [a]n [o]dd
[d]r[e]am a[b]out him the [p]r[e]v[i]ous night,
and h[e]'d [r]e[p]l[i]ed [b]luntl[y] that he [d]i[d]n't
usual[l]y have [d]reams a[b]out [p]eop[le] h[e]
knew, somehow [c]om[p]l[e]te[l]y [p]urging the
[f]a[c]t [f]rom his m[i]nd th[at], just that n[i]ght,
[h]e'd [h]ad a [v]i[v]id dream in[v]ol[v]ing one of
his [f]i[r]st gi[r]l[f]riends and he[r] [c]u[r]rent (to the
[b]e[s]t of [C][l]oud's knowl[ed]ge) [s]p[ouse].
[H]ow [c]ould th[at] h[ha]ve [p]o[s]si[b]l[y]
[s]l[i]p[pe]d his [m]e[m]o[r]y, given the
[v]i[v]a[c]it[y] of the [d]ream it[s]elf? [B]ar[r]ett
[d]i[d]n't have a [c]lue [e]ither, [r]eal[l]y. [H]is ex
and [h]er [h]usband were [l]i[v]i[n]g w[i]th [C][l]oud
and h[i]s [f]i[c]tional wif[e] in a [m]o[d]est

[c]on[d]o they'd been l[ea]sing in Up[p]er
 [M]idgar, yet he [t]old [T]i[f]a he "[n]ever
 [d]reamt" about [p]eo[p]le he k[n]ew, yet
 [p]erha[p]s the [m]o[s]t be[f]uddling a[s]p[e]c[t] of
 it [w]as that [w]hen he'd said th[a]t to [h]er [h]e
 [a][c]tua[l]l[y] [b]e[l]i[e]ved it! [C]l[oud]'s ex-
 girlfriend and h[i]s [f]i[c]tional [w]i[f]e had
 [b]e[c]ome s[o]me[w]h[a]t [f]r[iend]l[y] i[n] the
 [d][r]eam, i[n] the [c]on[d]o, and the wh[o]le
 or[d]eal, in [C]l[oud]'s [d]ream, st[r]u[c]k him as
 total[l]y [f]ine i[n]i[tial]l[y]. H[i]s [f]i[c]tional
 [w]i[f]e [w]as ob[s]c[u]r, a [p]u[r]e [m]irage,
 [w]hile his ex [w]as a[n] i[m]age of [h]ow [h]e'd
 k[n]own [h]er *in the [p]ast*, [n]ot [h]ow she was
 [n]ow ([n]ot that [h]e k[n]ew [h]ow she was
 [n]ow!), [b]ut eventua[l]ly [C]l[oud] [b]egan [t]o
 [c]ome [t]o the [r]ea[l]ization [th]at [th]i[s] was *his*
ex-[r]oman[t]i[c] i[n]t[er]e[s]t, and that his [c]u[r]rent
 w[i]f[e] and ex-girl[f]r[iend] *[b]e[c]oming [f]r[iends*
 was a[n] [a]b[s]olutely [c]ata[c]l[y]s[m]i[c]
 deve[l]op[m]ent for him [s]ociall[y], [th]at it [w]as
 [th]e [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] [w]or[s]t [th]ing [th]at [c]ould
 [p]o[s]si[b]l[y] [h]a[p]pen to his [m]arriage. [H]e
 [w]ondered [w]h[a]t the [h]u[s]band of [h]is ex
 [w]as thi[n]k[ing] - [C]l[oud] [w]as [w]ondering how it
 [w]as ex[a]ctly th[a]t he got r[o]ped into this
 wh[o]le [th]i[n]g as he was [e]xitin[g] [t]his
 a[p]art[m]ent into an U[p]per [M]idgar that, of
 [c]ourse, wasn't [e]xa[c]tly U[p]per [M]idg[a]r at
 a[l]l! Yet on[l]y hours [l]ater when [T]i[f]a [t]old
 [C]l[oud] sh[e]'d had a [d]ream *w[i]th h[i]m [i]n [i]t*
 that [n]ight he [c]laimed to [n]ever [d]ream
 a[b]out [p]eo[p]le he k[n]ew. Odd! [B]ar[r]ett
 [n]o[t]ed [th]at he just [d]id, [th]ough, [r]ight?
 [Th]at his [s]tatement [t]o [T]i[f]a was [f]a[l]s[e],
 [n]o? Um, yeah, th[at]'s ex[a]c[t]l[y] what
 [C]l[oud] ju[s]t [s]aid! [C]l[oud] [r]e[i]te[r]ated that

it was "[l][i]te[r]al[l]y [th]at night" [th]at [h]e'd [h]ad [th]e [d][r]eam, [f]urther em[ph]asizing the ab[s]ur[d]i[t]y of h[i]s [s]t[a]te[m]ent [t]o [T]ifa. [M][a]ybe, [C][l]oud thought, it was [c][l][o][s]er to a [c][o]in[c]i[d]en[c]e th[a]n a[n] a[c]ute [m]i[s][r]e[m]em[b]erin[g] o[r] fo[r]gettin[g]? Was that [p]os[s]i[b]le? [M]e[m]o[r]y was eli[p][t]i[c]al [s]ome[t]imes. [B]ut i[n] a[n]y [c]a[s]e, he [t]old [B]a[r]rett [h]e'd [h]ad another d[r][e]am [r][e]c[en]t[l]y - if [B]a[r]rett was [b]y any chan[c]e [i]nte[r]e[s]ted i[n] [l][i]s[te]ning to more [b]ullshit a[b]out his [d][r]eam [s]tates? - where [C]loud had [d]i[s]c[ov]ered a g[l]owin[g], f[l]uo[r]e[s]cent i[n]s[e]c[t i[n] one of the [d][r]awers on a [s]c[r]eened-in patio that [d]i[d]n't ex[i]s[t i[n] s[o]-c]alled "[r]eal [l]i[f]e," and [C][l]oud to[s]sed the [f]u[c]king thing [o]ut[s]ide [o]nto the gras[s], [k][i]nd of [d]i[s]gu[s]ted [b]y it to [b]e hone[s]t, on[l]y to [d]i[s]c[ov]er that [s]a[m]e i[n]s[e]c[t ju[s]t a [f]ew [m]oments [l]a[te]r - but [n]ow a[p]pea[r]in[g] in a huma[n]oid [f]orm, [s]tandin[g] out[s]ide the [s]c[r]eened-in [p]atio, ho[p]in[g] to [b]e [l]et in. Now, in [th]e dr[e]am [th]ere was a [l]ittle [g]e[t-to]g[e]ther on [th]i[s] [p]ati[o], [s][o] [C][l]oud [w]as a [l]ittle wa[r]y of [l]etting this [b]e[ing] - who was female, [t]o [b]e [c]l[ear] - in[t]o the [p]arty, [b]ut [c]u[r]ious[l]y [e]ve[r]yone [e]lse at the [p]o[w]-wo[w] [s]e[em]ed total[l]y in[c]a[p]a[b]le of [p]er[c]e[i]vin[g] her, [e]ven a[f]ter [C][l]oud al[l]ow[ed] her in? Yes, [C][l]oud al[l]ow[ed] her in and the [f]orm of [c]ommuni[c]ation be[t]ween him[s]el[f] a[n]d the e[n]t[i]t[y] was [s]i[m]p[l]y a [s]eries of vague [f]eelings, [p]erha[p]s, he [th]ought, [th]i[s] was [s]ome [k][i]nd of [r]em[i]nder that you [c]ouldn't just, you know, [c]r[ea]te *th[ings]* - [th]at [r]e[f]r[esh]in[g] [s]ynthe[s]es are the b[e]s[t [w]e

[c]ould do? [W]ith [th]at [s]aid, [th]ey [s]tarted
[c]o[p]ulating on the [p]atio. [B][a][r]rett wan[t]ed
[t]o [c][l][i][a][r][i][f][y] [th]at it was [th]e [b]utter[fi][l][y]
[w]oman that [C][l]oud [w]as [f]u[c]king? Or
[w]hatever she [w]as? [W]ell, [C][l]oud n[o]ted,
[o]nly [w]hen she [b]e[c]ame a human [b]eing, of
[s]ome [s]ort, [th]at [th]at [w]as [w]hen the
[c]o[p]ulation o[c]curred, obviou[s][l][y]! [B]ut, with
that [s]aid, it was a[c]tual[l][y] ([k]ind of?)
int[r]iguing [t]o [B]a[r]rett, [t]o [b]e honest? [B]ut,
mo[r]e impo[r]tant[l][y], [C][l]oud [r]eal[l][y]
wan[t]ed [t]o know how [S][e]v[e]nth H[ea]v[e]n
was [l]a[s]t night, [b]e[c]ause [B]a[r]rett
[s]top[p]ed [b]y there, [d]i[d]n't [h]e? [H]ow was it?
Well. [L]et's [s]ee. [B]arrett [d]e[fi]nite[l][y] [f]elt
the [p]urit[y] of the [b]ooze ex[p]and w[i]th[i]n h[i]s
che[s]t u[p]on his [f]i[r]s[t] [s]i[p], and while the
[b]ar[t]ender ([o]bvious[l][y] [n]o[t] [T]i[fi]a, [b]ut he
[d]i[d]n't [c]atch her [n]ame) was s[l]ight[l][y] more
a[f]fable than [w]hen he [w]ent there [w]ith
[C][l]oud, but she [d]i[d]n't [a]c[tual[l][y] [a]sk
[w]hat [f]ruit he [w]anted [i]n the dr[i]n[k]. [S]itting
a[l]o[n]e at [S][e]v[e]nth H[ea]v[e]n Bar[r]ett
[t]oo[k] n[o]te of him[s]elf [t]o[s]sing the [s]ingle
orange [s][l]i[c]e onto h[i]s th[i]n, [n]ow
i[m]m[e]d[i]ate[l][y] [m]oist [n]a[p][k]in and
[m]a[nual[l][y] extr[a]c[t]ing the [s]ingle [s]eed
th[at] h[ad] been ex[p]elled [f]r[om] the o[r]ange
i[n]to the [l]i[qu]or [f]rom the gl[a]ss, a[n]d i[n]
doing [s]o, he n[o]ted [th]at all [th]at he'd
a[cc]ounted for [a]t the [b]ar - the [a]l[f]fa[b][i]t[y],
the [f]ruit, the s[e]ed - that extr[a]c[t]ing those
id[e]as [o]ut [o]f the air was [b][a]s[i]cally the
[s]ame as the [c]oo[r]dinate-t[r]a[c]king
r[e]po[r]ted [b]y [r]emote viewers. He gl[an]ced
[b][a]c[k] [a]t the [b]ar and too[k] [b]rief note of the
[b]artender ch[u]gging [a] shot [o]f [b]ooze with a

[c][u]stomer and was vio[l]ent[l]y sma[c]ked in the
 [f]ace with an a[c]ute [m]e[m]o[r]y of [r][i][p]p[ing]
 [s][i]m[i]lar shots with a [s][p]e[c]i[f]i[c] [b]artender
 [f]rom his [p]ast, [w]hich [w]as [b]a[s]i[c]ally ju[s]t
 a[n]other [s]et of [c]oordi[n]ates, [b]ut these
 [p]ar[t]i[c]u[l]ar [c]oordinates [*r]e[t]urned [t]o [h]im,*
 [h]e [d][i][d]n't [p][l]u[c]k them [o]ut [o]f the air. He
 [d][i][d]n't [p][l]u[c]k these *ri[p]ping shots with a*
bartender [c]oordinates [f]rom a [r]a[p]id [r]ush of
 in[f]ormation - no, [s]aid [c]oordinates [r]eturned
 to him [a]s he [s]a[t] in [s]o[l]i[t]ude [a]t the bar
 [t]otal[l]y in[v]o[l]un[t]ari[l]y, [v]io[l]ent[l]y
 sm[a][c]king B[a]rret in the [f]u[c]king [f]a[c]e and
 [s]omewhat [r]ude[l]y [c]o[l]la[p]s[ing] time
 [i]t[s]e[f] [i]n the [p][r]o[c]e[s]s, [r]ight as [B]ar[r]ett
 [s]a[t] [a]t th[at] [t]iny [t]a[b]le a[l]one,
 [i]nn[o]c[ent]l[y] [s]i[pp]ing h[i]s dr[i]n[k] [i]n
 [S]e[v]e[n]th H[e]av[e]n. [B]arrett the[n] w[e]nt on
 [t]o [t]ell [C]loud how, [b]efore the [b]ar, he'd
 s[ee]n a [b]unch of [p]eo[p]le with [M]a[k]o
 [p]oisoning that [h]e [h]adn't seen in [m]onths,
 and [C]loud [n]oted that's how they k[ew]
 S[p]r[ing] was ap[p]r[oa]ching, [r]ight?! Yet, on
 that [n]ote, it was [k]ind of [f]unny be[c]ause
 [C]loud was a[c]tual[l]y thin[k]ing to himsel[f]
 [th]e o[th]er [d]ay - [w]hat [w]as the exa[c]t
 [d]e[f]i[n]i[t]ion of sobriety any[w]ay - li[k]e how
 [c]ould they a[c]tually [*d]i[s]t[i]ngu[i]sh*
/s]o[b]riety f[r]om intoxi[c]ation? [B]arrett
 [p]er[k]ed [u]p [a] [b]it. [C]loud made it [c]l[ear]
 that, [n]o, he wasn't [n]e[c]e[s]sari[l]y [l]i[k]e
 [t]al[k]ing about *s[m]o[k]ing [c]ra[c]k*, or
 exp[o]sing your[s]elf to high in[t]en[s]ity [m]a[k]o
 shards for [d]e[c]ades on end, [b]ut [m]a[y]b[e]
 ju[s]t [d]rin[k]ing [w]h[i]te [w]i[n]e or [s]omething?
 [B]e[c]ause [C]loud [w]as [c]r[o]s[s]i[n]g the
 [W]a[sh]i[n]gton [S]t[r]eet [b]r[id]ge

[c]on[t]em[p]l[ɪ]ating a [p]ar[t]i[c]u[l]ar [v]is[i]on of
 [i]nd[i]v[i]sible One[n]ess [th]e o[th]er [n]ight, [a]s
 [B][a]rrett k[n]ew too well th[at] [C]loud was [a]pt
 [t]o do [f]rom [t]ime [t]o [t]ime, and [b]el[ie]ve it
 [n]ot he was a[c]tua[l]ly [d]i[s]covering [a]
 [d]e[c]ent [a][m]ount of e[n]joy[m]ent i[n] the
 [m]a[t]e[r]ial [w]orld at the [t]ime! - [d][r]in[k]ing a
 [m]ini [w]ater [b]ottle f[i]lled w[i]th [M]ez[c]al, [b]ut
 [a]lso [a]t[t]emp[t]ing to [g]auge whether [h]e'd
 [h]ave the [t]ime [t]o [g]rab just one [m]o[r]e [b]eer
 [b]e[f]o[r]e [T][i]f[ɪ]a was su[p]posed to b[e] at his
 a[p]art[m]ent. [C][l]oud was [c]ontemp[l]a[ti]ng the
 n[atu]re of a[n] i[n]d[i]v[i]sible [O]neness[s], [b]ut
 he [w]as al[s]o [c]omforted [b]y the mate[r]ial
 [r]ealm while [c][o]ld[l]y [c]al[c]u[l]ating his odds of
 [b]eing a[b]le to ch[u]g an[o]ther [b]eer while still
 ma[k]ing it [b]a[c]k to his [a][p]artment [b]e[f]ore
 Ti[f]a was sup[p]osed to [a]rrive. [A]nd [a]s
 [C][l]oud was [c]ontem[p]l[ɪ]ating this n[atu]re of
 a[n] i[n]d[i]v[i]sible [O]neness, [c]r[os]s[i]ng a
 [W][a]sh[i]ngton [S]t[r]eet b[r]idge, [d][r]in[k]ing
 [M]ez[c]al from a [m]ini water [b]ottle [C]loud
 [r]e[m]ar[k]ed to [B]a[r]rett [h]ow [h]e'd [s]tarted to
 [q]ue[s]tion this very [d]ef[i]n[i]tion of [s]o[b]r[i]ety.
 [B]ut it was here [B]a[r]rett [b]egan to [q]uestion -
 [w]ell - [w]hat did [C][l]oud [a][c]tua[l]ly *mean by*
th[at]? [W]ell, [w]hat [C]loud [w]as [t]r[y]ing [t]o get
 [a]t, Ba[r]rett, was th[at] [s]o[b]riety it[s]elf was
 [s]u[p]posed to [b]e a [b]a[s]eline of [s]orts, no?
 Of [c]our[s]e it was! Yet how [c]ould [th]ey
 [m]easure [th]i[s] [b]a[s]e[l]ine exa[c]t[l]y? - was
 there [a] [m]easure[m]ent at [a]ll? - was
 so[b]r[i]ety to [b]e def[i]ned [b]y a l[a][c]k of
 p[a]ssion, or a vague [s]en[s]e of th[e] "[e]ven-
 [k][e]eled"? [B]ut the pro[b]l[em] was, in
 [C][l]oud's [m]ind at l[e]a[s]t, [th]at [th]ere was [n]o
 u[n]iver[s]al e[m]otional [b]a[s]eline [w][i]th

[w]h[i]ch to def[i]ne [s]o[b]r[i]ety. [S]ome [p]eo[p]le
- he [m]eant, even [C][l]oud [h]imself [c]ould be
t[o]tal[l]y un[h]inged e[m]o[tional[l]y on
o[c]casion while [q]u[ot]e-un[q]u[ot]e
“[c]omp[l]e[t]e[l]y [s]o[b]er”! [F]urther[m]ore,
even i[f] they - [B]arrett and [C][l]oud - [c]ould
de[f]ine [s]ome [b]a[s]e[l]ine e[m]otional [s]tatus
[a]s [a]xiom[a]tic, [th]en [th]ey would [s]till have
to [c]ombat [ph]ilo[s]o[ph]i[c]al[l]y with e[x]ternal
[s]ub[s]tan[c]es that weren’t [c]on[s]idered
int[er]i[c]ants that would [o]bvio[us]l[y] shi[ft]
th[i]s e[m]otional ba[s]e[l]ine. What did [C][l]oud
[m]ean? *Well*, [l]i[k]e, [a] [l]a[c]k of f[oo]d [c]ould
[a]lter m[oo]d. The [s]ame [c]ould be [s]aid of
[c]af[fe]ine! [C]o[n]suming dirt would prob[a]bly
shi[ft] s[o]meo[n]e’s emotional [s]tate.
Hi[s]to[r]icall[y], a[c]co[r]ding to [C][l]oud,
[p]eo[p]le ate fu[c]king [p]lants with [s]mall
[d]oses of p[s]y[c]he[d]e[l]i[c]s em[b]e[d]de[d]
w[i]th[i]n them and [p]rob[a]bly thought ve[r]y
little about “in[t]oxi[c]ation” [p]rob[ab]ly!
[P]eo[p]le u[s]ed to fu[c]king [s]ani[t]ize [w]ater
[w]ith al[c]ohol! [S]m[oking] [t]o[b]a[c]co al[t]ered
[m]ood. [B]a[s]icall[y], [B]arrett, “a[n]ything we
i[n]ge[s]t alters our l[a]tent [s]tate of exi[s]ten[c]e
and there[f]o[r]e ch[a]nges u[s] in [s]ome [f]o[r]m
or [a]nother, wh[i]ch [i]n [m]o[s]t a[l]l [c]ases
prob[a]bly [f]i[t]s i[n]to our [m]ood.” [C]loud
[n]oted, [f]or him [p]er[s]o[n]all[y], a shi[ft] in his
[d]iet [c]ould [d]o won[d]ers for h[i]s
i[n]tel[l]e[c]tual [d]i[s]p[osi]tion - [s]o then [w]hat
[w]as [s]o[b]r[i]ety? It [s]eemed im[p]o[s]si[b]le to
even [th]in[k] a[b]out [s]o[b]r[i]ety as [a] [th]ing at
a[l]l! *Well*, [B]a[r]rett h[a]dn’t ex[a]c[tly
[c]on[s]idered it li[k]e that and [w]asn’t sure if he
[w]ould. [B]ut [C][l]oud [th]ought [th]at m[a]ybe
th[ey]’d t[a]k[e]n a [f]a[l]se [b]a[s]e[l]ine of

[s]o[b]riet[y] [c]on[c]eptual[l][y], no? A[f]ter all, [w]hat [t]e[c]h[n]i[c]al[l][y] [w]as an *ex[t]er[n]al [s]ub[s]tan[c]e*? [C]ould they [d]ig even [f]urther and [c]on[s]i[d]er the [d]e[f]i[n]i[t]ion of an *ex[t]er[n]al [s]ub[s]tan[c]e*? A [c]onver[s]ation [c]ould [c]ertainly [a]lter [a] [p]er[s]on's [t]em[p]erame[n]t ex[p]one[n]tial[l][y] as well! - but did that [t]e[c]h[n]i[c]al[l][y] [c]ount as [a]n [e]xoge[n]ous [s]ub[s]tan[c]e? Did [w]ords [n]ot [c]arry [w]eight? A vo[c]i[f]e[r]ous thought or [e]ven a [f]l[e]eting [m]e[m]o[r][y] - e[s][p]ecial[l][y] in [C]l[oud]'s [c]a[s]e! - [c]ould [o]f[te]n t[o]s[s] a [p]er[s]on [c]om[p]l[i]te[l]y o[f]f-[k]ilter, yet they [s]till [f]or [s]ome in[c]om[p]r[eh]e[n]s[i]b[le] [r]eason [c]l[ung] to an [i]dea of an obj[e]c[tive [s]o[b]r[i]et[y], and [t]hen [t]hey [s]ub[s]e[qu]e[n]t[l][y] [t]argeted [s]e[l]e[c]t [s]ub[s]tan[c]es as *in[t]oxi[c]ating*, while deeming [s]o-[c]alled “other” [s]ub[s]tan[c]es - which [a]ll[s]o [a]ll[t]ered [t]emperaments - as [t]otally fine! [W]ell, [t]his [w]as [w]hat [C]l[oud] [w]as [t]hink[ing] at [l]east, as he [w]a[l]k[ed] over the [W]a[shington] [S]treet [b]ridge - that i[f] [p]eo[p]le [d]i[d]n't [v]iew [c]on[s]uming [f]resh [v]ege[t]a[b]les as [s]o[m]ething [f]u[n]da[m]en[t]ally *[m]ind all[t]ering*, then it was [p]o[s]s[i]b[le], in [C]l[oud]'s [m]ind, [t]hat [t]hey ju[s]t ex[p]e[r]ien[c]ed the [w]orld in va[s]tly diff[er]ent [w]ays. [A]nd [B]a[r]r[ett] [f]or his [p]art [f]ound this to [b]e i[n]t[r]iguing yet un[c]onvin[c]ing. [B]ut [C]l[oud] in[s]i[s]ted [t]hat [t]here [s]i[m]p[l]y was no *[t]rue [a]nd [e]x[t]ended [s]tabi[l]it[y] of our men[t]al [s]tates* - even if [t]hey were hy[p]o[t]eti[c]al[l][y] de[p]rived of ex[t]ernal [t]hink[er]ing, be[c]ause even though it[s]e[l]f was [f]undamen[t]al[l][y] e[x]t[er]nal [t]o [s]ome e[x]t[er]ent, was it not? [A]nd [p]eo[p]le on [a]verage

were [c]onstant[ly] a[c]costed by [s][p]e[c]i[f]i[c] *th[ou]ghts*, were they [n][o]t? Thought [a]lmost [n]ever [c]lea[s]ed [a][c]co[s]ting th[e]se [p][e]o[p]le, [w]hich [w]ere all [p]eo[p]le? And even i[f] [th]ey [c]on[f]ined [th]emselves to [c]ommonly ag[r]eed u[p]on *mate[r]ial* /s[ub]s[tan]c[es], [th]en [th]ere was [s]till no [c]on[s]i[s]tent way to [c]al[cu]l[ate] the [d]eg[r]ee of al[t]e[r][a]tion [t]o a men[t]al [s]t[ate] a[c]c[r]o[s]s [p]eo[p]le of [d]i[f]fe[r]ent walk[s] of [l]i[f]e, [p]e[r]iod. Bar[r]ett [m]ight not ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e the [s]ame [m]ental sh[i]ft a[f]ter the [c]on[s]um[p]tion of a [f]resh [s]t[i]c[k] of [c]e[l]e[r]y that [C][l]oud would, [e]ven i[f] the [c]e[l]e[r]y it[s]elf [r]emained en[t]irel[y] [s]t[atic]. [W][a]l[k]ing a[c]ro[s]s the [W][a]shington [S]treet [b]ridge, [C]loud [d]ran[k] [f]rom a [t]iny [w]ater [b]ottle [f]i[l]led w[i]th [M]ez[c]al and [d]i[d]n't [f]eel in[t]oxi[c]a[te]d i[n] a[n]y w[ay], sh[a]p[e, or [f]orm - any [m]ore than [h]ad [h]e been [d]rin[k]ing [a] [c]u[p] [o]f [c]off[e]e, or [ea]ting a [d]el[i]c[i]ous [s]n[a]ck, or re[c]ei[v]ing a [s][p]e[c]i[f]i[c] thought. [I]n h[i]s m[i]nd at the t[i]me there was no [t]rue [d]i[v]i[s]ion [b]e[t]ween in[t]oxi[c]ation and so[b]b[r]iety, and this was [C][l]oud's final [c]on[c]l[usion] - [r]egardl[e]ss of wh[e]ther or not Bar[r]ett ag[r]e[e]d - [a]s he [s]omewhat [a]nxious[ly] [s]ent [T]h[is] [a] [t]ext m[e]s[s]age [l]e[t]ting her know he was "[t]a[k]ing a wal[k]," just in [c]a[s]e she [a]rrived at his [a]partment bef[ore] he [f]i[n]i[sh]ed [s]l[u]gging down one [l]a[s]t [b]eer [a]t the [b]ar th[at] he [w]as [w]alking to.

Canto III

Total Echoes: 1,403

Total Syllables: 1,994

Approximate Self-Similarity: **.704**

"[W]ell, no," [w]ere the two [w]ords C[l]oud began [w]ith as he ex[p][l]ained [th]at his [p]oint was [th]at [th]ere was a [s][i]gn[i]f[i]c[ant] d[i][s]t[i]n[c]tion be[t]w[ee]n the [t]wo, m[ea]ning [d][i]nner and [d]r[i]nks! - that if you [m]a[k]e it out [l]i[k]e it's *just* [d]rin[k][s] and then [l]a[s]t [m]i[n]ute it [b]e[c]omes [d]i[n]ner? - then yeah [C][l]oud's gonna [b]e a [l]ittle [f]u[c]king [p]i[s]sed o[f]f! E[s]p[eci]all[y] i[f] h[e] [d]i[d]n't k[n]ow the [f]u[c]king [p]eo[p]le, you k[n]ow [A]e[r]ith? How did that ma[k]e [a]ny [s]en[s]e? He [f]ound it [a] [b]it [a][b]surd, [f]r[an]kly. Sure, he'd go [t]h[is]e one or [t]wo on with a [t]otal [s]tr[a]nger, that was f[i]ne, but to [s]it [d]own [a]nd [a]c[t]ually e[n]g[a]ge in a [d][i]nner? - that was a[n] e[n]tirely [d][i]s[t]i[n]c[t] [l]evel of [s]ocia[l]izing, and it [w]as [o]ne that, [f]r[an]kly, [C][l]oud [d]i[d]n't parti[cu]larl[y] [c]are [f]or. [A]nd he wasn't ashamed to [a]dm[it] [i]t! - th[at], [f]r[an]kly, he [f]elt th[i]s [Ph]i[l[i]s[tine] n[ot]io[n] of *ju[s]t g[o]i[n]g out to [d]inner* with an[y] and ever[y] a[c]quaintan[c]e, that [i]f you [d]i[d]n't a[c]quie[s]ce to [th]at [s]tan[d]ard [th]en you [w]ould b[e] [d]e[e]med, [w]hat? - ant[i]-s[oc]ial? [W]ell [c]o[l]or [C][l]oud ant[i]-s[oc]ial then! [B]ut Aerith n[ot]ed that while, sure, to [b]e [f]air, it was a dif[f]erent [l]evel of s[ocia]l[i]zation, if he tru[lly] [d]i[d]n't k[n]ow the [p]eo[p]le, but, you k[n]ow, if it was he[r] [p]e[r]s[on]al[ly]? [S]u[p]posing it was Aerith, then she'd h[av]e [p]e that it woul[d]n't [b]e *that* [b]ig of a [d]eal [t]o [C][l]oud? [T]o just go [ou]t to [d]i[n]ner? Was she k[i]d[d]ing him?! Oh, of [c]ourse not, Ae[r]ith! With *her*? You fu[c]king [k]id[d]ing? [C]loud [w]as al[w]ays [d]own to gr[ab]

a [n]osh with s[o]me[o]ne li[k]e *her*, [n][o], it was just [th]at [th]e hypo[th]eti[c]al [n][o]tion of [ea]ting [s]u[p]per with a [c]om[p][l][i]te [s]tranger (“a mo[r]e o[r] [l]e[s]s [c]om[p][l]ete [s]tranger”) - [w]hat [w]ere they di[s][c]u[s]sing? [C]loud and the hy[p]otheti[c]al stranger? [D]id [h]e [h]ave to [c]ome [p]re[p]ared with a [p]ortf[o][l]i[o] of tal[k]ing [p]oints? - [C][l]oud [c]oul[d]n’t [i]magine [th]at [th]ey’d b[e] [s]u[p]per [i]ntr[i]gued with an[y]thing [h]e [h]ad to [s]ay, or [th]at [th]ey’d [e]nd u[p] on the [p]r[e][c]i[p]i[c]e of [a]ny r[e]v[e]lation that he’d [c]on[c]lude to b[e] [p]arti[c]u[l]ar[l]y en[l]ighten[i]ng [e]ither. [C][l]oud was [s]im[p]l[y] going by [e]m[p]i[r]i[c]al [e]viden[c]e [r]ea[l]ly. That [w]as all. He [w]asn’t, [l]i[k]e, tr[y]ing to be a dick or [a]nything! Ju[s]t that, [e]m[p]i[r]i[c]a[l]l[y] [s]p[e]a[k]ing, it [s]eemed unli[k]e[l]y they’d have [a] lot to [c]onver[s]e [a]bout, [C]loud and [th]i[s] hy[p]otheti[c]al [s]tranger. [B]ut [A]erith [a]dded that, to [b]e fair, [w]asn’t [C]loud the [o]ne who [w]as al[w]ay[s] r[ai]ling again[s]t [s]o-[c]alled [s]en[s]ory data? Yet, in thi[s] [c]a[s]e, he was [a]ll [b]ent [ou]t of sh[a]p[e] [a]b[ou]t this im[p]romp[is]tu [d]inner [b]e[c]ause, in his own words, [b]e[c]ause of *[e]m[p]i[r]i[c]al [d]ata*? Of [p]a[s]t [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]e, [w]hich [w]as [s]en[s]o[r]y [d]ata? [M]e[m]o[r]ies, r[i]ght? [W]hich, [w]ouldn’t [C]loud ag[r]ee, was [s]ome of the mo[s]t un[r]eli[a]b]le [d]a[ta] [a]v[ai]la[b]le no? Of [c]our[s]e he [d]id! Aer[i]th, ev[e]n [f]u[ck]ing [q]uantum [ph]y[s]i[c]s was [s]till [f]undamentally [s]en[s]e-[f]orward, in the [s]en[s]e [th]at [th]ey were *beg[i]nn[i]ng w[i]th [s]en[s]e [p]er[c]e[p]tion* - this [w]as [w]hat [c]ontem[p]o[r]a[r]y [s]o-[c]alled [s]cien[c]e had [a]chieved [o]f [c]our[s]e! [P]la[c]ing [s]en[s]e

[p]er[c]e[p]tion [a]s [a]n a[p]ex [p]re[d]ator un[t]il
[f]inally, with the [d]i[s][c]ove[r]y of [q]uan[t]um
[ph][y]s[i]c[s], [i]t'd [r]e[d]u[c]ed the obse[r]vable
wo[r]ld to a [d]egr[e]e that [e]ven [l]inear [s]en[s]e-
[p]er[c]e[p]tion no [l]onger [m]ade any fu[ck]ing
[s]en[s]e in the u[p]per [w]orlds! [Th]at [w]as
[w]hat [th]ey'd done. [A]nd [q]uite [s][m]ugly [a]t
[t]imes [t]oo! But [w]asn't that [w]hat [C]loud
[w]as [d]oing w[i]th th[i]s im[p]en[d]i[ng] [d]i[nn]er?
Ae[r]ith [q]ue[r]ied him on thi[s] [p]oint. Well,
[C]loud [s]u[p]posed [th]at, [th]in[k]ing [a]bout it
[a]gain, yeah, he was [k]ind of a[c]ting li[k]e a
[q]uantum [ph][y]s[i]c[i]st a b[i]t, [w]asn't he?
[W]ell, Aerith [w]as just saying - to [th]e [e]xtent
[th]at his argu[m]ent was [f]unda[m]e[n]tally
[e]m[p]irical. But it was [k]ind of [i]n[t]uitive [i]n a
[s]en[s]e [t]oo, his argument, i[n] [C]loud's
opi[n]ion. H[e] agr[e]ed with A[e]rith to the [e]xtent
that, ye[s], he was [b]a[s]ing his [d]i[s]gu[s]t
[p]artially on [e]m[p]irical [e]vi[d]en[c]e, [b]ut he'd
[a]ll[s]o [a]ll[e]ge that he f[e]lt a[n] *i[n]tuitive*
[d]i[s]gu[s]t with these [t]y[p]es of [s]ocial
g[a]therings [a]s well, and then [h]e, [t]o [h]er
[p]oint, [t]o [b]e [b]l[i]unt, [d]i[d] [t]end [t]o [d]i[p]
i[n] [t]o the world of em[p]iri[c]ism to va[l]i[d]ate
[s]aid i[n]tuitive [d]i[s]gu[s]t. Although,
[t]e[c]hni[c]al[l]y, they should [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y]
[b]e a [l]ittle [c]autious to ev[e]n [e]m[p]l[o]y the
word [e]m[p]iri[c]ism here, be[c]ause he [d]i[d]n't
th[i]nk em[p]iri[c]ism [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]il[y]
[n]e[ede]d to [b]e [r]e[s]t[r]i[c]ted to [s]en[s]e-
[p]er[c]e[p]tion [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]il[y], you k[n]ow?
Ae[r]ith [s]u[p]posed the[r]e, ye[s], was
[p]ro[b]a[b]ly [a]n [e]m[p]iri[c]ism of the
intel[l]igi[b]le [r]e[alm] as w[e]ll? Hone[s]t[l]y, to
C[l]oud - it was [c]ertain[l]y [p]o[s]si[b]le that h[e]
may[b]e wasn't [e]ven in the [b]e[s]t mind [s]tate

to even [a][s]se[s]s it [o]ne [w]ay or [a]nother. [A]erith too[k] [a]dvantage of this [c]apitu[l]l[a]tion to [s]ay sh[e]'d [r][e][c]ent[l]l[y] had [a] d[r][e]am [a]b[ou]t [C]l[ou]d - would [h]e mind [h]earing [h]er out? - [w]here he [w]as emailing her a [q]ues[t]ion [a]bout whether [a] [s][p]e[c]i[f]i[c] a[c]t[i]on was [d]e[f]ined as 'in[s]i[d]er tra[d]in[g]', while she was [p]roce[s]sin[g] [s]ome non-[d]e[s][c]ri[p]t 'or[d]ers' for [s]omething in a bath t[u]b, which [c]on[s]i[s]ted [o]f, for [s]ome [r]eason, w[a]shing [l]arge ch[o][c]o[l]ate [c]oo[k]ies [d]own the [d]r[ai]n, [w]atching [th]em as [th]ey [s]l[ow]l[y] [d]i[s]i[n]teg[r]ated un[d]er the hot [w]ater. Then, after [th]at, [r]ea[l]izing [th]at [th]e [c]oo[k]ies [r]e[l]a[te]d to [C]l[ou]d's [q]ue[s]tion about in[s]i[d]er [t]r[a]ding, she [c]on[t]emp[l]a[te]d if [sh]e [sh]ould have [f]l[ush]ed them all [d]own the [d]r[ai]n be[f]ore an[s]we[r]ing the [q]ue[s]tion? [D]id she [d]o w[r]ong [b]y [C]l[ou]d [b]y washing these [c]oo[k]ies [p]r[e]emptive[l]l[y] [d]own the [d]r[ai]n? If [C]l[ou]d [t]r[u]l[l]y wan[t]ed the 'order [p]ro[c]e[s]sed,' [s]o to [s]p[ea]k. In a [s][e]n[s]e Aerith [f]e[l]t an a[f]f[i]n[i]t[y] [f]or the [c]oo[k]i[e]s, [d]i[d]n't sh[e], [C]l[ou]d in[f]erred. [C]l[ou]d [p]ostu[l]ated [th]at she [f]elt [l]i[k]e [th]ey were [a]c[t]ual [b]eings [a]s she [c]r[u]m[b]led [th]em [d]own [th]e un[f]org[i]v[i]ng [d]r[ai]n [w]ith the [s]c[or]ching hot [w]ater? In [r]et[r]o[s]p[e]c[t, [A]erith [a]d[m]itted [th]at [th]at [m]ay have been the [c]a[s]e. [C]l[ou]d [n]o[t]ed [th]at [th]ere was a [c]ertain [l]evel of *g[n]/o/s*is ach[ie]ved through [c]ontem[p]l[ati]ng your dr[ea]ms - yet was there any to [b]e g[l]eamed from [p]artici[p]l[ati]ng in [d]ou[b]le [d]a[te] [d]inners? [A]erith [a]dmitted she'd [b]een [c]l[ing]ing onto the fa[c]t of the [c]oo[k]ies [b]eing washed [d]own the [d]rain, and she knew [C]l[ou]d had a

[p]ar[t]icu[l]ar [t]a[l]ent when [i]t [c]ame to
[i]n[t]er[p]r[et]ing [d]r[ea]ms. W[e]ll th[e]n [l]e[t]'s
[s]ee here, [C]l[oud] [c]on[t]em[p]l[ate]d, the
[d]i[s]so[l]ution of a [s]w[e]et [f]ood in an
[a]p[par]a[tu]s [u]sual[l]y [u]sed t[o] [c]l[ean]
your[s]el[f]? [B]u[t with a [t]rans[a]c[t]ional,
a[b]u[tting [c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]t un[d]er[t]one. [A]nd
[A]erith was [d]oing it, [p]erh[a]p[s]
unint[e]ntional[l]y, for [s]omeone [e]lse
([C]l[oud]), with[ou]t their k[n]ow[l]edge, and
[n]ot on[l]y [w]ith[ou]t their k[n]ow[l]edge but
[w]hile [i]gnor[ing] their [i]n[q]uir[y] - a[c]tual[l]y,
[C]l[oud] guessed it [w]as *h/i/s* [i]n[q]uir[y]
te[c]h[ni]c[al]l[y], about [w]hether it [w]as [l]egal,
as a[p]parent[l]y this was [s]omehow
[p]otential[l]y 'in[s]ider trading'? So sh[e] was
[r]e[p]ur[p]o[s]ing a[n] a[p]pa[r]a[tu]s for
[c]l[ean]sing the bo[d]y to [d]e[s]troy [l]arge, [l]ife-
[l]i[k]e [p]ie[c]es [o]f [u]nhealthy [f]ood [f]or
[C]l[oud], [w]ith[ou]t his [c]on[s]ent, [C]l[oud]
mean[w]hile [w]on[d]ering i[f] [d]e[s]troying thi[s]
jun[k] [f]ood in a b[a]th tub was a[c]tua[l]l[y]
i[l]l[e]gal? Of [c]our[s]e in any [d]ream they al[s]o
should [c]on[s]i[d]er [w]hether [w]h[at] [w]a[s]
[r]e[p]r[es]ented [w]as a [r]e[p]r[es]en[t]ation [o]f
a[n]other [r]e[p]r[es]en[t]ation, [m]ea[n]ing
[m]ayb[e] [n]ot a[n] a[n]a[l]og[y] a[t] all? But i[f]
they [p]ro[c]e[e]d[ed] as i[f] [w]hat [w]as
[r]e[p]r[es]ented in Ae[r]ith's [d]r[ea]m
a[p]p[ea]red as [i]t was [i]n[t]en[d]ed t[o] a[p]pear,
[th]en [th]at wou[d] b[e] a [d]e[c]ent [s]tart. [S]o,
in a [s]en[s]e, Aerith [th]ought, [th]at sh[e] was
[c]l[ean]ing [p]ar[t]icu[l]ar attributes of [C]l[oud]
with[ou]t his [p]erm[i]ss[i]on, [w]hile [C]l[oud]
[w]as th[i]n[k]i[n]g - [p]erh[a]p[s] [s]u[s]p[e]c[t]ing -
that [c]l[ean]sing him[s]elf [i]n th[i]s w[ay] m[ay]
h[a]ve a[c]tua[l]l[y] been a [t]y[p]e of insider

[t]rading, it [c]ould have been a ve[r][y] [s]er[i]ou[s] [c][r]ime. [C]loud [n][o]ted that - Ae[r]ith, [c][l]eaning your[s]elf was b[a][s]i[c]a[l]ly [a] [c][r]ime [a]gain[s]t [th]e [s]t[a]te [th]ese d[ay]s. [N][o] [s]urprise [th]ere! Al[th]ough [C]loud [l][i][k]ed a [n][i]ce [c]oo[k]ie [e]very [n]ow and th[e]n, he [d]i[d]n't [n]e[c]e[s]sarily [f]ind a[n]ything th[at] b[la]d a[b]out [ea]ting a [f]ew [c]oo[k]ies on o[c]casion, but [C]loud also [f]ound it intr[i]guing that Aerith [p]ersonally [i]denti[f]i[ed] with [th]e [c]oo[k]ies as [th]ey [b][r]o[k]e a[p]art and tum[b]led [d]own the [d][r]ain, that she [s]aw a [c]ertain goodnes[s], a [s]pe[c]i[f]i[c] *[b]eing* w[i]th[i]n them, and [s]u[b]s[e]q[ue]ntly [f]elt a [s][a]dne[s]s [a]t the [f]a[ct] they h[a]d to [b]e washed [d]own the [d]rain of this [b][a]th tub. Even what's fundamental[l]y [b]ad for you isn't [n]e[c]e[s]sari[l]ly [b]ad, Aerith [n]oted. [B]ut ye[s], it was [s]ad to [s]ee them [f]a[l]l a[p]art in [a] [b]ath t[u]b [f][a]c[t], h[u]h? "[E]ven the [r]unning shoes you n[ee]d to [t]o[s]s in[t]o the [t]r[ash] are e[t]ernal," Cloud [s]aid.

Canto IV

Total Echoes: 1,332

Total Syllables: 1,960

Approximate Self-Similarity: **.680**

Cloud was [f]or sure [f][i]ne [w]ith [w]h[at]ever Ti[f]a [w][a]nted to [s]a[y] to him ("I al[w][a]ys [w][a]nt you to [s]peak your m[i]nd!"), [b]ut he just [w][a]sn't going to [b]ack off his [w]ell-[d]eveloped (in his m[i]nd) [i][d]ea [th]at [th]e [i]n[s]t[it]ution [i]t[s]elf (as a [c]on[c]ept) was ba[s]i[c]ally *[r]e[s]t[r][i]c[t]i*ve, [th]at [th]ey shouldn't ne[c]e[s]s[ar]ily [c][ar]e what's th[e]r[e] in the

[c]ontainer (“[C]atego[r][y] theo[r][y]!”), but al[s][o]
that *e[r][o][s] [w]as a g[a]te[w][a]y*. Ti[f]a ju[s]t
wasn’t [c]ertain th[at] e[n]gaging i[n] *[th][a]t* in the
bar, [a][f]ter hours - she [d][i][d]n’t kn[ow], was
th[at] [a][c]tual[l]y ap[p][r][o][p][r]iate, [C][l]oud?
[E]v[e]n i[f] sh[e] wan[t]ed [t]o [d]o [i]t! I[n] the
[b]ar?! Of [c]our[s]e, [C][l]oud total[l]y
un[d]er[s]tood, [b]ut, again - ju[s]t to [r]eite[r][a]te
- *e[r]os* was a *g[a]te[w][a]y*. I[t] [d][i][d]n’t have to
[b]e a[b]out, you know, *purely that*. [W]hat? -
[w]as [T]i[f]a [n]ow gon[n][a] [a][l]low her[s]el[f] to
[b][e] [t]y[r]an[n]ical[l]y [r]e[s]t[r]ained [b]y the
[i]n[s]titutio[n]al [n]orms of Shin[r]a, et al? [W]as
that [n]ow h[ow] she [w]as go[n]na [l]ive her
[l]ife? - by the [c]ontem[p]uous [r]ules of
[Sh]in[r]a? [Sh]e [c]ould [p]op that [p]ussy [w]ide
o[p]en [w]henever she [w]an[t]ed [t]o! - if sh[e]
r[e]all[y] [w]an[t]ed [t]o, ev[e]n i[f] [i]t was ju[s]t
[s]u[p]er [q]u[i]c[k]l[y]! ([W]hat exa[c]t[l]y [w]as
the tem[p]e[r]ature in the [r]oom?) There wasn’t
an[y]th[i]ng i[n]he[r]entl[y] [o]ut [o]f [b]ou[n]ds
[a][b]ou[t] an[y] of that, [a]ssuming the [c]orr[e]c[t]
[c]ont[ext], [b]e[c]ause - [w]ell, no, [C]loud [w]asn’t
[s]aying he [w]as in [s]u[p]port of
[i]nd[i]s[c]r[i]m[i]nate [p]rom[i]s[c]uit[y] - [n]o,
[n]ot at all! It [n]eeded to b[e] [r]i[go]r[ous] -
[p]erhaps [e]ven [r]i[tual[i]s[t]i[c], and h[e] wasn’t
[e]ven [s]ugge[s]ting [T]i[f]a should i[p]s[o]
[f]a[c]t[o] ju[s]t [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te [p]o[p] that
[p]u[s]sy [o]p[en] to [s]p[ite] the m[o]r[al] n[o]rms
of Shinra - it was a[c]tually the o[p]posite! No,
[C]loud was [s]im[p]ly a[s]serting [sh]e [sh]ouldn’t
not ma[k]e [b]eautiful [l]ove in [S]e[v]e[n]th
H[ea]v[e]n [s]im[p]l[y] [b]e[c]ause of [s]ome
[s]o[c]ietal Shinra [c]ode - [sh]e [sh]ouldn’t al[l]ow
her[s]el[f], Ti[f]a, to [b][e] [r]egu[l]ated [b]y a[n]
i[n]s]titutio[n]al e[n]tity whose [p][r]i[m]a[r]y

[p]ur[p]o[s]e was the em[p][l]oy[m]ent of the univer[s]al [r]e[s]t[r]i[c]tion. To [C][l]oud it [w]asn't in any [w][ay], sh[a][p]e, or [f]o[r]m Shi[n]ra's [p]la[c]e to e[n][f]o[r][c]e a[n]y u[n]iver[s]al [r]e[s]t[r]i[c]tions what[s]soever. [F]u[c]k Shin[r]a [s][p]e[c][i][f][i][c]ally and [f]u[c]k the [i]n[s]t[i]tution in a more generi[c] [s]en[s]e. [U]gh, sh[u]t [u]p [C]loud! He [w]as [k]idding, [w]asn't he? Oh yeah! - [C]loud ad[m][i]tted [i]t was [c]ertain[l]y [p]o[s]sible he was [e]xaggerating [c]ertain [e][l]e[m]ents of his argu[m]e[n]t i[n]te[n]tiona[l]ly, i[n] terms of the [w]h[o]le - [w]ell, you k[n][o]w - [n][o], he [w]asn't [s]ugge[s][t]ing [T]ifa should "[p]o[p] that [p]u[s]sy" in the [b]ar! No, that [w]as a[b]surd! Unle[s]s she [w]an[t]ed [t]o! [B]e[c]ause if she wan[t]ed [t]o [T]ifa should know that [C]loud [t]oo[k] no o[ff]en[s]e, li[k]e, at all! [T]hey both [l]i[gh]t[en]ed [a]t them[s]elves, but [d]i[d]n't he, [C][l]oud, in the [a]bst[ra]ct [*k*]ind of h[a]ve a [p]oint? No, ju[s]t [l]i[s]ten for a [s]e[c]ond, [C][l]oud [s]aid, [p]le[as]e T[i]fa - h[e] knew she [f]elt [a]n [a]nxiety, [f]rom [t]i[m]e [t]o [t]i[m]e, and a[c]cording to [C][l]oud it was a[c]tua[l]l[y] en[t]irel[y] po[s]sible [t]hat it was [t]he anxiet[y] of the younger [S]o[c]rat[es]. Namel[y], it was [t]his anx[i]et[y] [t]hat T[i]fa, sh[e] [f]elt [l]i[k]e she m[i]ght have [f]a[l]le[n] i[n]to a pit of "b[o]ttomle[s]s n[o]n[s]en[s]e" - this [i]dea [t]hat [t]here [c]ould be an a[c]tual [*c*]on[*c*]eptual [*i*]dea beh[i]nd all phe[n]ome[n]a th[at] h[a]d e[v]e[r] o[c]cu[r]red, th[at] e[v]e[r]y [a]c[tion she too[k] had some [*c*]apital-[*i*] [*i*]de[a] [b]eh[i]nd or [a]b[ove] it, that eve[r]y [s]ingle [s]en[s]o[r]y [p]er[c]e[p]tion, eve[r]y [s]ingle [m]o[m]ent o[f] their [l]i[v]es [e][m]erged fr[o]m [s]o[m]e [c]on[*c*]eptual [*i*]dea [b]eh[i]nd it, that [i]deas them[s]elves [b]e[c]ame [s]u[b]-a[t]omi[c]

[p]arti[c]les which [b]ecome mul[t]i[p]l[i]ed i[n]to a[n] i[n]f[i]n[i]te (“[s]eeming!”) [n]on[s]en[s]e. It was a[n] [e]xt[r]eme vertigo to [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]e that with[ou]t a d[ou]bt! - and [C]l[ou]d was all [t]oo [f]amiliar with that [t]y[p]e of [m]adnes[s] him[s]el[f]! In [f]a[c]t, his [e]ntire [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]e in the [e]ther, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k, was funda[m]entall[y] in ag[r][ee][m]ent w[i]th th[i]s anxiet[y] of young [S]o[c][r]at[es]. B[ut] wh[a]t [C]l[ou]d would [s]ay in [r]e[s]ponse, [t]o [T]i[f]a, [t]o him[s]el[f], to [S]o[c][r]ates - [w]hat [C]l[ou]d [w]ould [s]ay in [r]e[p]ly is exactly what [P]armen[i]d[es] [s]aid to this young [S]o[c][r]at[es] him[s]el[f], [th]at [th]i[s] anxiet[y] was a[n] a[n]xiet[y] of *youth* (“[C]l[ou]d, we’re b[a][s]i[c]a[l]l[y] the exa[c]t [s]a[m]e [a]ge . . .”), [o]ne that [w]ould be ext[i]ngu[i]shed [w]hen sh[e]’d “*learned not to despise any of [th]e se [th]ings.*” In [sh][or]t, Ti[f]a [sh]ouldn’t a[l]low [Sh]in[r]a [m]or[es] - or, [f]r[an]k[l]y, i[n]s[t]itutional [m]ores [f]rom anywhere el[s]e for th[at] [m]a[t]ter! - to i[n]terfere with her own p[r]o[c]e[ss]es. That [w]as all [C]l[ou]d [w]as [s]aying [r]eal[l]y. I[f] [T]i[f]a [w]an[t]ed [t]o d[o] *th/a/t* [a]t [S]e[v]e[n]th H[e]av[e]n, [th]e[n, sure, [th]at [w]as [f]ine! [W]ell, [T]i[f]a [a]p[p]r[e]ciated the [k]ind [w]ords, [e]ven [i]f [i]t was an [a]w[k]ward subject for [C]l[ou]d of all [p]eop[le] to [b]e [b]roaching, given the [f]a[c]t th[at] it was [k]ind of [b]l[atantl]y obvious [th]at it was [C]l[ou]d [th]at Ti[f]a would p[ro]b[a]b[l]y do *that* with in the [b]ar. [W]hy [w]ould they [k]id [o]ne [a]nother [a]b[ou]t that! [B]ut for [C]l[ou]d’s [p]art - no he [d]i[d]n’t [c]are [o]ne [w]ay or the other - he ju[s]t [th]ought [th]at [w]hen [s]ome[o]ne [s]p[ent] a [d]e[c]ent [ch]unk of time in [th]e [e]t[he]r [th]at it [ch]anged [th]eir p[er]s[p]e[c]tive on that [k]ind of shit - what

[c]on[c][l]usion, after [a]ll, should they d[r][aw]
f[r]om the [c]ontem[p][l]ation of [s]en[s]i[b]le
o[b]je[c]ts? If she [w]an[t]ed [t]o [b]end [o]ver in
her [o]wn [b]ar, it [w]asn't [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al[l]y
[ou]t of [b][ou]nds to him in the [l]ea[s]t. [L]i[k]e he
[s]aid, to [s]ome [e]xtent [e]ros [w]as a
g[a]te[w]a[y] - they shouldn't view it [s]im[p][l][y]
organi[c]al[l]y or [p]ure[l]y [s]en[s]i[b]l[e]
/e]ven [i]f [i]t was to some [e][x]tent [e][x]istent
in[e][x]t[r]ica[b]l[l]y w[i]th[i]n those [r]ealms, at
[l]ea[s]t from their [p]er[s][p]e[c]tives in their
[b]odies or [w]hat[e]ver. A g[a]te[w]a[y] to [w]hat
though, [T]i[f]a [w]on[d]ered. [T]o a [d]i[f]ferent
[t]ype of knowledge [C]loud [c]on[f]irmed. Wasn't
he agai[n][s]t [s]e[n]sual empi[r]i[c]ism, Ti[f]a
[q]ue[r]ied - [b]ut [C][l]oud [q]ui[c]k[l]y [c]ountered
that it was [b]y am[p]lif[y]ing the [s]en[s]o[r]y
ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e, by *[s]p[ee]ding it u[p]* [th]at [th]e
[s]en[s]o[r]y ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e it[s]elf was
t[r]an[s]cended - that was the whole *[g]a[t]ew[a]y*
[p]art. A[g]ain, [C][l]oud wasn't arguing for any of
th[i]s *[i]nd[i]s[c]r[i]m[i]nate[l]y!* - he was in[s]tead
m[a]k[ing] the [c][a]s[e] [th]at [th]ese
ampl[i]f[i]cations [c]ouldn't b[e] [c]omp[l]e[t]e[l]y
[c]ut o[f]f! - [th]at i[f] "*o[th]e[r] [b]i[t]ter and [b]i[l]ious*
humors wan[d]e[r a[b]out in the [b]o[d]y and find
no [e]xit or esca[p]e, [b]ut are [p]e[n]t u[p] w[i]th[i]n
and [m]ingle their own va[p]ors with the
[m]o[tions of the [s]ou[l], and are [b]len[d]ed with
[th]em, [th]ey [p]ro[d]uce all [s]orts of [d]iseases."
That ju[s]t li[k]e [p]arti[c]les of matter [c]ould be
s[p]ed u[p] to [c]r[e]ate anti-[g][r]avit[a]tional
w[a]ves, the [s]en[s]o[r]y or[g]ans [c]ould [b]e
[s]imi[l]ar[l]y [s]p[ee]d in order [t]o [t]r[an]s[c]end
them[s]elves, [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]l[y]. [C][l]oud made a
d[e]c[is]e[n]t [p]oint, [b]ut [h]ad [h]e [h]eard [b]a[c]k
from [B]iggs and [W]edge - [w]ere they g[o]ing to

ma[k]e it to [th]e little [th]ing Tifa was h[o][s]ting
that [S]unday? She ju[s]t [n]eeded to, you k[n]ow,
g[e]t a d[e][f]inite h[e]ad [c]ount so she [c]ould
k[n]ow how much [f]lood sh[e]’d [n][e]ed. [C]loud
[h]adn’t [h]eard ba[c]k, and [f][r]an[k][l]y h[e] was
[f]inding it a l[i]ttle [r][i]d[i][c]u[l]ou[s] [a]t th[a]t
point - be[c]ause at the ver[y] [l][ea][s]t, to
[C][l]oud, they [c]ould at [l]ea[s]t *R[S]/[V][P]* one
way or [th]e o[th]er. Sure, of [c]our[s]e, eros was
a g[a]tew[a]y - there [c]ouldn’t be a totally
univer[s]al [r]e[s]tri[c]tion op[p]r[e]s[s]ing [e]very
[s]ingle mem[b]er of a [s]o[c]iety, [b]ut at the
[s]ame time if a [p]er[s]on [c]ouldn’t *RS[V][P]* to
[a]n [e]vent they ba[s]i[c]all[y] should [s]tart
[ea]ting mud out of t[r]oughs with [p]igs, in
C[l]oud’s view at [l][ea]st! [P][eo][p]le who
[r]efused to *RS[V][P]* [t]o events in a [t]imely
[m]anner [r]eally had no [p][l]a[c]e in [p]o[l]ite
[s]o[c]iety! - or, for th[a]t [m][a]tter, in any
[s]o[c]iety! That was [C][l]oud’s [p]er[s]p[e]ctive
at [l][ea]st! And T[i]ff a ag[r][ee]d! [F][r]an[k][l]y,
sh[e] was getting a [l]ittle [f][r]u[s]t[r]ated with the
whole [p][r]o[c]e[s]s. She was, in her m[i]nd, doing
a *n[i]c[e] [th]ing* - [th]rowing an Avalanche
[q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te *[S]/[u]nday [F]/[u]nd[a]y*, but
sh[e] ju[s]t [n][e]eded to k[n]ow a head [c]ount
[A][S][A][P]. It [w]as alrea[d]y [W]ednes[d]ay
[n]ight! [C][l]oud [n]oted [th]at [th]ey’d sent out the
invi[t]ations, [l]i[k]e, [t]wo weeks [b][a]c[k], and
they [h][a]dn’t even [h]eard [b][a]c[k] from [h][a]lf
of the po[t]ential a[tt]end[e]es, which [a][c]tuall[y]
[m]oved [C]loud to [th]ink [th]at [m]ayb[e] T[i]fa
should ju[s]t [c][a]n[c]el the whole d[a]mn thing!
[B]ut, no, [T]ifa was right - it was [t]oo [l]ate to
[c][a]n[c]el, [b]e[c]ause then *she’d* [l]oo[k] [l]i[k]e
the [a][s]shole. [C][l]oud [th]ought [th]at [m]ay[b]e
that was [p][r]efe[r]a[b]le! [M]ay[b]e that’s what

[n]ee[d]ed to ha[pp]en! There [n][e]e[d]ed to [b][e]
some /r]ules to this shit, [r]ight?

Canto V

Total Echoes: 1,768

Total Syllables: 2,478

Approximate Self-Similarity: .713

[C][l]oud [a][s][k]ed [B][a][r]rett [p]oint [b][l][a]n[k]
[r]ight in [S][e]v[e]nth H[ea]v[e]n: [W]hat [w]as
[c][a][p]ita[l]ism [r]eal[ly]? - [b]e[c]ause that's
[w]hat he [w]as [a][c]tual[l]y
[ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al[l]y o[p]p[os]ed to [v]is-a-[v]is
Shinra, [n][o]? The [m]a[s]s [p]rodu[c]tion of
[m]a[k]o e[n]ergy - was that [n]ot
[f]unda[m]ental[l]y ju[s]t [f]ree [m]ar[k]et
[c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]m at [i]ts [f]ine[s]t? - and there[f]ore
wasn't [c]a[p]ita[l]ism ju[s]t [f]unda[m]ental[l]y a
[s]ingu[l]a[r]it[y] of [s]orts, ju[s]t a [c]om[p]l[et]e
evi[s]ce[r]ation of [m]e[m]o[r]y, to [th]e ex[t]ent
[th]at [m]e[m]o[r]y is [th]e [c]on[t]ext in [w]hich
[w]e [c]on[s]tru[c]t our[s]elves, our [s]o[c]ieties?
[C][l]oud a[s]serted th[at] [c][a][p]ita[l]i[s]m
[d][i]d[n't] g[i]ve a fu[c]k about th[at] a[t] all! -
sim[p]l[y] [b]e[c]ause [c]a[p]ita[l]ism [c]oul[d]n't,
[b]e[c]ause if [c]a[p]ita[l]ism [d]i[d]n't
[r]uth[l]e[s]s[l]y [p]ur[s]ue [m]axi[m]um [p]r[of]its,
then [s]ome[o]ne el[s]e [w]ould. [C][l]oud
eventua[l]l[y] [a][s]ked B[a]r[r]ett if
[c][a][p]ita[l]ism [a][c]tual[l]y [c]on[s]i[s]ted of
[m]e[m]o[r]y [a]t all? [B]ut [B]ar[r]ett [d]i[d]n't
[f]u[c]king know. The [f]u[c]k [d]id h[ea]v[e]n
[c]are - he was a[t]tempting [t]o ma[k]e an a[c]tive
[d]ifference [i]n th[i]ngs. No, [i]t [d]i[d]n't at all,
[d]i[d] [i]t? [C]a[p]ita[l]ism was the [s]ingu[l]ar
fo[c]u[s] [s]ans [m]e[m]ory [p]ar ex[c]e[l]len[c]e - it

[s]ought a[n] *if[n]/[c]rea[s]e* at whatever the [c]o[s]t,
[r]egard[*e*]s[s] of the [c]ont[*e*]xt - d[r]iven by [th]e
hy[p]o[th]eti[c]al o[th]er, [th]e hy[p]o[th]eti[c]al
o[th]er [m]oving [c]a[p]ita[l]ism to
[c]om[p]l[*i*]e[te]l[y] ignore [m]e[m]or[y]
ho[l]isti[c]a[l]l[y]. The on[l]y [c]ontext [i]n wh[i]ch
[c]a[p]ita[l]ism would [e]ven [r]e[m]otely
[c]onsider [m]e[m]or[y] was [i]n [i]ts *[f]uture*
[f]ore[c]asts, but even those ty[p]es of [r]e[p]orts
were [f]unda[m]entally [m]yo[p][i]c [i]n
[c]ha[r]a[c]ter, weren't they? [P]lu[s] "[p]a[s]t
[p]er[f]or[m]an[c]e [i]sn't [i]nd[i]cative of [f]uture
results!" And even a [f]ive year [f]ore[c]ast would
[b]a[s]i[c]ally ju[s]t [c]over the [a]ttention [s]pa[n]
of [a] [b]e[ta] [f]ish in [th]e gra[n]d [s]cheme of
[th]ings. No, [C][l]oud [s]aid, [c]a[p]ita[l]ism
[c]l[e]ar[ly] o[p]erated [s]a[ns] [m]e[m]or[y], [a]s
a [s]ingu[lar]it[y] - and there[f]ore was
[f]undamental[ly] an [a]gent of de[s]t[abi]lization
[f]rom a [p]o[l]iti[c]al [s]tand[p]oint - h[e] was
ag[r]e[ei]ng with [B]a[r]rett! [B]a[r]rett wasn't
[s]e[e]k[ing] agr[*e*]ement whe[n] [C][l]oud the[n]
a[s]ked if there wasn't al[s]o [s]omethin[g]
a[b]uttin[g] *divine* to that [t]y[p]e of [s]ingu[lar]ity -
[t]o [C][l]oud it was al[m]o[s]t [i]i[k]e the
r[adi]a[tion] [p]oisoning of [p]ure [m]a[k]o it[s]elf
and shit, [n]o? [C]a[p]ita[l]ism as a
[s]ingu[lar]ity [c]ontained a [d]ivine e[le]ment, [i]n
[i]ts [r]a[d]i[c]al [r]e[j]ection of [m]e[m]or[y]
[c]apita[l]ism was [c]ertain[ly] [d]ivine-adjac[en]t.
It was [i]i[k]e [c]a[p]ita[l]ism [a]s [a]n unf[*i*]ttered
[s]e[e]king of in[c]r[e]a[s]e of [e]xp[an]sion [w]as
[i]n [i]t[s]e[f] [s]omething [w]orthy of [p]r[ai]se in
the [a]bs[*t*]r[ac]t, but for an [a]c[tual] [s]en[s]ible
[s]o[c]iety the em[p]h[*i*]s[is] of unre[p]entant
[c]a[p]ita[l]ism was the [m]o[s]t [d]e[s]t[abi]lizing
and [s]elf-[d]e[s]tru[c]tive [p]o[l]iti[c]al

[ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]y you [c]ould ever [s]ub[s]c[ribe]
to! [C]a[p]ita[l]ism was m[a]gni[f]i[c]e[n]t i[n] the
[a]bstr[a]ct, [b]ut i[f] you [a]c[t]ually
[s]ub[s]c[ribe]d to [th]e [th]eo[r]y in
[p]r[a]c[tic]e [th]en you would almo[s]t
[d]ef[i]n[i]te[l]y, in [d]ue [t]ime, [t]otal[l]y
[d]e[s]t[r]oy your[s]elf and eve[r]ything a[r]ound
you! Ultimate[l]y, Ba[r]rett [r]eite[r]ated that he
[d]i[d]n't [r]eal[l]y have a [t]on of [t]i[m]e to
[d]i[s]/[c]u[s]s these [t]y[pe]s of [d]e[t]ails -
[ph]ilo[s]o[ph]i[c]al [d]i[s]c[uss]ions woul[d]n't,
a[f]ter a[l]l, [f]un[d]a[m]entally a[l]ter the [r]apid
envi[r]on[m]ental [d]e[s]t[r]u[c]tion that was
ongoing at the hands of Shinra! [C]loud [d]i[d]n't
[d]i[s]agree! Yet, at the [s]ame [t]ime, weren't [th]e
[t]wo of [th]em at [S]e[v]e[n]th H[e]av[e]n
[d]r[i]n[k]ing [f]u[c]king [b]eers? How many
[d]r[a]ft [b]eers h[a]d they [d]r[a]n[k] [a]t th[at]
[p]oint? They weren't gonna slow [d]own
Shin[r]a's [d]eg[r]a[d]ation of the [p]lanet via
con[s]uming [d]r[a]ft [b]eers [e]ither! Shit, [b]r[o].
It was [l]i[k]e - [C]l[oud] [a]c[t]ual[l]y w[o]k[e] up
th[at] [m]or[n]ing *thin[k]ing a[b]out [m]e[m]ory* -
[n]ot [c]a[p]ita[l]ism, [b]ut [m]e[m]ory at [l]e[a]s[t -
[a]b]out [h]ow [h]e [c]ould [b]e him[s]elf
[a]c[r]o[s]s multi[p]le [p]lat[f]orms and shit, [b]ut
how, with that in [m]ind, [m]e[m]ory [p]erha[p]s
wasn't a[t]tached to [B]eing it[s]elf [e]ither.
[C]l[oud] [w]as al[w]ays [c]on[c]ur[r]ently
multi[p]le ite[r]a[tions of [h]im[s]e lf, and [h]e [t]o
[s]ome [e]xtent [p]ar[t]oo[k] in [B]eing a[c]ross
those ite[r]a[tions, [b]ut at the same time - [th]e
[th]ought o[cc]urred to [C]loud that [m]e[m]o[r]y
wasn't ne[c]e[s]sa[r]ily *a[t]tached [t]o [B]eing*
[a]t all [t]imes [e]ither? [B]eing and [m]e[m]o[r]y
- [w]hat [w]as their ex[a]c[t [r]ela[t]ion[sh]ip?
[Th]at [th]e soul [c]ould [f]un[d]a[m]entall[y] [b]e

eternal, [b]ut [i]f [i]ts [b][e]ing was
[d][i][s]a[s]sociated [f]rom [m]e[m]or[y] as w[e]
un[d]e[r[s]tood it then obviou[s][y] it would [k]ind
of b[e] di[f]fi[c]ult to ve[r]i[f]y! As we [t]end [t]o
[c]on[f]irm expe[r]iences via [m]e[m]o[r]y and shit.
[B]arrett gul[p]ed [d]own his eighth [p][i]nt of
Midgar [L][i]ght [b]ut that [d][i]d[n't] [d]eter [C][l]oud
[f]rom [p][r]od[d]ing [f]urther at the [p]oint -
[n]ame[li][y], that [f]unda[m]en[t]al[li][y]
[c]a[p]ita[l]ism [c]on[t]ained [n]o [m]e[m]or[y], and
Being itself [p]erha[p]s on[li][y] [p]a[r]tial[li][y]
[p]a[r]t[oo]k in [m]e[m]or[y]? Was [c]a[p]ita[l]ism
a form of [b][e]ing? [N]o, it [c]ouldn't [b][e]! - [n]ot
unles[s] they too[k] a [s]t[a]ti[c] v[a]ntage [p]oint
on a[n] i[n]f[i]n[i]te urge to i[n]c[re]ase and
ex[p]and, which, to [s]ome exte[n]t, wasn't [th]at
[th]e [d]rive of the i[n]f[i]n[i]te, [w]hich [w]as
[f]un[d]ame[n]tally the transce[n]d[e]nt, [w]hich
[w]as - [n]o [B]eing [c]oul[d]n't [b]e
[t]ran[s]cen[d]ent, [n]ot [t]otal[li]y, [r]ight? [C]loud
[d][i]d[n't] thin[k] [s]o. Ba[r]rett [h]ad [h]ad enou[gh]
of thi[s] [f]u[c]king shit! - [a]nd he [s][l]a[m]med his
[m]ug of [M]idgar [L]ight on the [c]ounter and
[m]oseyed out the [b]ar ([h]e'd [h]eard a[b]out
some new "[Q]ueen's [B]lood" [th]ing [th]at was
[b]eing introdu[c]ed to [S]e[c]tor [S]even that he
wan[t]ed [t]o [t]ry anyway). [T]i[f]a [t]oo[k] the
op[p]or[t]unity to as[k] [C][l]oud i[f] [h]e'd [h]ad
a[n]y e[n]c[ou]nters with - you kn[ow]? - th[o]se
[r]uth[li]es[s] ap[p]a[r]itions that [s]e[e]med to b[e]
[h]aunting [h]im in[t]er[m]ittently [s]in[c]e
re[t]urning [t]o [M]idg[a]r? [W]ell, Cloud [w]as after
[a]ll [a] *re[m]a[de]* [m]an - in [m]ore [w][a]ys than
[o]ne, but no? [W]hy? Who el[s]e a[r]ound the
[s][l]ums had [s]e[e]n them r[e]c[entl]y? It [w]as
[w]eird to [C][l]oud, a [l]ittle [c]urious, he n[ot]ed
[t]o [T]ifa, m[o]s[tl]y be[c]ause it [s]e[e]med

[l]i[k]e [s]ometimes (a) *h[e]'d s[e]e* them, yet
 [s]ometimes (b) [n]o, he wouldn't
 [n]e[c]e[s]sarily [s/e/e] them [b]ut in[t]uit them,
 [b]ut [th]en o[th]er [t][i]mes - l[i]ke the o[th]er day
 - (c) the a[p]pa[r]itions [w]ould be [e]ve[r]y[w]here
 for [e]ve[r]y[o]ne to [s][e]e, and h[e]'d whi[p] out
 his f[u][c]king B[u][s]ter [S]word with [T]i[f]a b[y]
 his [s][i]de. [T]i[f]a a[s]ked him to ext[r][a][p]olate
 on the [t][r]iad of a-b-[c], if he [c]ould. Sh[e]
 [c][l]ear[l]y wan[t]ed [t]o as[s]i[s]t [C][l]oud in
 reaching the b[o]ttom [o]f [a]ll [o]f thi[s], [s]o to
 [s]pea[k]. [W]ell, to [C][l]oud, it [w]as almost [l]i[k]e
 the E[l]eatics were [c]orre[c]t [a][l]l [a][l]ong - [th]at
 [th]is [t]ype of phe[n]ome[n]a - where some[t]imes
 (a) h[e]'d [s][ee] them and sh[e] wouldn't,
 [s]ometimes (b) he wouldn't [e]ven [s][e]e them
 [b]ut h[e]'d *f[e]el them*, and [th]en o[th]er times (c)
 [th]ey'd a[p]pear to the [p]u[b]l[i]c at l[ar]ge, well,
 phe[n]ome[n]a l[i]k[e that [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly
 un[d]ermined the [e]nti[re] i[de]a of
 [e]m[p]iri[c]ism v[i]a [s]en[s]e [p]er[c]e[p]tion, no?
 If [s]en[s]e [p]er[c]e[p]tion was [s]ome[th]ing [th]at
 [th]ey [c]ould [r]e[l]iably *em[p]l[o]y as a fir[s]t*
[p][r]i[n]c[i]p[le] to g[a]th[er] d[a]ta [a]nd [th]en
a[r]rive at [c]on[c]lusions [r]egarding the n[a]ture
of the [c]or[p]o[r]eal [w]orld - then shit l[i]k[e
 [w]hat [C][l]oud ju[s]t [d]e[s]c[r]ibed [c]oul[d]n't
 [b]e [p]o[s]si[b]le, [r]ight? [C][l]oud a[s]ked how
 [c]ould it [p]o[s]si[b]l[i]ty?! There had to [b]e a
 [s]e[p]a[r]ate [f]ir[s]t [p][r]i[n]c[i]p[le] they'd n[e]ed to
 [r]e[f]e[r]en[c]e. Al[s]o, he'd [s]witch to [F]er[n]et
 i[f] that was okay with Ti[f]a? [B]ut the p[r]o[b]lem
 with this [n]o[tion - [b]o[th] h[e] and Ti[f]a
 ag[r]e[ed] (Ti[f]a [r]e[l]uctant[l]y ag[r]e[ed] - was
 [th]at (a) [th]ere was *no evi[d]en[c]e* that he [s]aw
 [th]em when o[th]ers [d]i[d]n't, and (b) there was
 no e[v]i[d]en[c]e e[v]en to him[s]e[l]f that he [f]i[e]lt

th[e]m wh[e]n he [d]i[d]n't [s]ee them. [C]loud
[c]ould [s]ee [th]em and h[e]'d b[e] sure [th]at h[e]
saw [th]em [e]ven i[f] T[i]f[a] [d]i[d]n't - [h]e'd
[h]ave an em[p]i[r]i[c]al [d]ata [p]oint that he just
[c]oul[d]n't [p][r]ove! - [b]ut when [C][l]oud
[s]im[p][l]y [f][e]lt *him[s][e][f]* to [b]e in
[c]ommunion with [s]omething [f]o[r]mle[s]s and
in[c]o[r][p]o[r]eal, then [e]ven h[e] [c]ouldn't [b][e]
sure, [f]rom [a]n [e]m[p]i[r]i[c]al [s]tand[p]oint,
[w]hat it [w]as he ex[p]e[r]ien[c]ed, [b]e[c]ause his
[e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]e [l]a[c]ked a [f]orm [e]ntire[l]y -
[h]e [d]i[d]n't [h]ave a [s]en[s]e-b[a][s]ed
em[p]i[r]i[c]al d[a]ta [p]oint to even [p][r]ove to
him[s]e[f] that he ex[p]e[r]ien[c]ed anything! T[i]f[a]
[p]oured the [F]ernet and [s]aid [s]omething
abou[t] wanting to be[l]ieve C[l]oud. [A]t th[a]t
[p]oint [C][l]oud [s]aid, hear[k]ening [b]a[c]k to the
[p]oint that [p]r[e]v[i]ou[s][l]y [c]aused [B]ar[r]et to
[s]t[o]m[p] [ou]t [o]f the [b]ar, [w]hat [w]as
[m]e[m]o[r]y any[w]ay? - [i][f] not th[i]s ty[p]e of
[c]o[m]munio[n] with a [f]orm[l]e[s]s and
in[c]o[r][p]o[r]eal ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e [l]ike these
[r]uth[l]e[s]s [a]p[p]a[r]itions? [A][f]ter all, he
[r]e[m]em[b]ered a [b]oatload of sh[i]t that
[d]i[d]n't ne[c]e[s]sa[r]ily have i[m]ages
a[tt]a[ched]! [A] [l]ot of his [m]e[m]o[r]ie[s] were in
[f]a[c]t [f]orm[l]ess [f]eel[ings], but then - [l]ike
some of [C][l]oud's other en[c]o[un]ters - [d]id
in[d]eed [c]ontain i[m]ages, but they [f]eatured
i[m]ages that *on[l]y a[p]peared to [C][l]oud*, just
[l]ike T[i]f[a]'s i[m]age-[m]e[m]ories [o]nly
a[p]peared to her! S[o] [C]loud was of [th]e
[a]c[c]ute [o]p[in]ion [th]at [m]e[m]ories
[th]em[s]elves were to [s]ome extent [l]ike [th]ese
[r]uth[l]e[s]s [a]p[p]a[r]itions he'd been
ex[p]e[r]ien[c]ing? - yet Tifa [q]ui[c]kly
[c]o[r]re[c]ted him, a[p]tly [p]ointing [ou]t that

[C][l][ou]d's [m]e[m]ories, to the be[s]t of her k[n]ow[l]edge, had [n]ever [s]warmed [a]round [S][e]v[e]nth H[e]av[e]n and [a]ttacked i[n]no[c]ent c[i]v[i]lians? [H]e [h][a]d to gr[a]nt th[at] [a]s [t]rue! - "but you know what I m[ea]n, [T][i]fa." Sh[e] did. C[l]oud's [m]e[m]o[r]ies were [s]i[m]i[la]r [t]o those [r]uth[l]e[s]s a[p]pa[r]i[t]ions i[n] [t]erms of (a) and (b), [b]ut not in [t]erms of (c). [C]loud c[on]t[inu]ed on to [s]ay, [s]i[m]p[p]ling a [f]resh [F]ernet, [th]at [th]e [p]oint [m]o[r]e o[r] les[s] [r]e[m]ained, that [w]hile sure [m]e[m]o[r]ies [w]ere [d]i[s]tinct, these a[p]pa[r]itions - these un[i]denti[fi]ed [f]lyi[n]g a[p]pa[r]itions, they [f]un[d]a[m]ental[l]y un[d]er[m]ined the uti[l]it[y] of our [s]en[s]e-p[er]c[e]p[t]ion, [w]hich [w]as [s]omething, to [C][l]oud's or[i]g[i]nal [p]oint, [th]at [th]e [E][l]eati[c]s real[l]y [e]m[ph]asized. Ti[f]a a[c]k[n]ow[l]edged [C][l]oud's point about [m]e[m]o[r]y - she [d]i[d]n't [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]il[y] [d]i[s]ag[r]e[e] w[i]th [i]t ju[s]t [b]e[c]ause [m]e[m]o[r]ies, to the [b]e[s]t of their k[n]ow[l]edge, [n]ever [ph]y[s]i[c]al[l]y mani[f]e[s]ted them[s]e[l]ves in c[o]r[p]o[r]eal [f]orms, that it [s]tru[c]k [T]i[f]a as [b]a[s]i[c]al[l]y [t]rue that [m]e[m]o[r]y was a [s]i[m]i[la]r [t]y[p]e of ex[p]e[r]ienc[e], [s]ome[th]ing [th]at [th]ey in[t]era[c]ted with [s]ome[t]i[m]es v[i]a [a]n i[m]age that wasn't [s]en[s]ible to [a]nyone [e]l[s]e, and [s]ometi[m]es v[i]i[a] [a] [v]ague feeling [th]at [th]ey c[ouldn't] even c[o]r[r]obo[r]ate them[s]elves! - [e]ven [m]e[m]o[r]y to [s]ome e[x]tent c[omp]l[e]te[l]y un[d]ermi[n]ed [th]e [i]dea [th]at our [s]en[s]o[r]y f[a]c[t]ulties were [r]elia[b]le instruments t[o] [u]se t[o] c[ome] to [a]c[cu]rate c[on]c[l]usions a[b]out [w]hat [w]e [p]erc[e]ive to b[e] the c[o]r[p]o[r]eal [w]orld.

Epilogue

Canto VI

Total Echoes: 1,247

Total Syllables: 1,707

Approximate Self-Similarity: .731

[C][l]oud k[n]ew that of [c]our[s]e Ae[r]ith was
[s]u[f]fe[r]ing [f][r]om this g[n]awing [i]n[k][l][i]ng
that, you k[n]ow, [C][l]oud m[ay] have [g]one and
[g]iven aw[ay] the [f][l]ower - or [p]erh[a]p[s] th[at]
was a [t]ad [t]oo st[r]ong a [ph][r][a]se - m[ay][b]e
[p]assed *a[l]l*ong was [a] [b]etter w[ay] to [p]ut it,
that's what *C[l]oud* [p]ostu[l]ated at [l]east - [b]ut
i[n] a[n]y [c]ase he k[n]ew [th]at Ae[r]ith k[n]ew
[th]at he [f]or[w]arded the [f][l]o[w]er, [r]ight? But
how did she [c]ome to [p]osse[s]s *that*
k[n]ow[l]edge exa[c]tly? - [c]ould it have
[p]o[s]si[b]l[y] [b]een via the under [c][i]ty
[w]h[i]s[p]er [n]et[w]or[k]? Or [d]id Ae[r]ith
[c]ome to [r]ea[l]ize [C][l]oud g[a]ve the shit
aw[ay] via [s]ome [s]ort of [d][i]vine [i]ntu[i]t[i]on?
Ba[s]i[c]a[l]ly, [C][l]oud was a[t]tem[p]ting [t]o
[a][s]cer[t]ain the [s][our]c[e] *or* *g[i]n* of
[A]e[r]ith's know[l]edge - was it o[p]i[n]ion or
i[n]tu[i]t[i]on - [w]hereas Aerith [w]as ch[ie]f[l]y
[c]on[c]erned with [th]e im[p]l[i]cations of [th]e
know[l]edge it[s]elf. She a[c]tua[l]ly made it
[q]uite [c][l]ear that [sh]e wasn't [s]ure if [C][l]oud's
[p]r[eva]r[i]cations were *rea[l]ly the point* she
was a[t]tem[p]ting [t]o ma[k]e when she b[r]ought
the *whole [f][l]ower [r]e-gi[f]ting* u[p] to [C][l]oud -
[th]at [th]e issue [a]t h[a]nd wasn't, [p]erh[a]p[s],
how she ob[t]ained thi[s] [p]ar[t]i[c]u[l]ar
k[n]ow[l]edge, but in[s]t[ea]d *wh[e]ther* or *not*
[C][l]oud g[a]ve the [f][l]o[w]er a[w]ay, [w]hich to

[b]e [f]air she [w]asn't, [l]i[k]e, *offfended* [b]y - Ae[r]ith was just a [l]ittle [c]u[r]ious? Who'd [C][l]oud "[f]or[w]ard" it [t]o any[w]ay? [T]i[f]a, [r]ight? Of [c]ourse it [w]as [T]i[f]a - [w]hich [w]as [t]otal[l]y [f]ine! They [w]ere a[c]tua[l]l[y] [f]riends! [B]ut [C][l]oud, i[f] [p]os[s]ible, wan[t]ed [t]o [s]tay on this [p][r]ior [p]oint - this e[p]i[s]temo[l]ogi[c]al [p]oint - [b]e[c]ause he [th]ought [th]ere was a [p][r]etty im[p]ortant d[i]s[t]i[n]c[t]ion [t]o [b]e [f]ound there, [b]etween knowing [s]omething via o[p]inion - [b]e[c]ause, [f]or [i]n[s]t[a]n[c]e, [s]ome [S]e[c]tor [S]ix d[i]p[sh]i[t] was ya[p]ping his f[u]c[k]ing g[u]ms in the [s]u[m] - or [b]y c[on]trast [b]e[c]oming [f]a[m]iliar in a [m]ore [p]ure [f]a[sh]ion. [Th]ere was [p]ure knowledge of [th]ings - and [th]en [th]ere was [b]ull[sh]it you h[ear]d th[ir]d hand from dou[ch]e[b]ags in the [S]e[c]tor [S]ix [S]ums. [C][l]oud [f]elt [l]i[k]e Ae[r]ith p[r]o[b]a[b]l[y] knew via [th]e [f]ormer me[th]od - [c]ould she [c]on[f]irm though? Instead Ae[r]ith ch[o]se to [p]o[s]it the [r]adi[c]al n[o]tion that may[b]e it [c]ould have [b]een [b]o[t]? Sure, [C]loud [th]ought [th]at was [p]o[ssi]b[le] (he guessed . . .) - [b]ut he [d]i[d]n't [th]in[k] [s]o - it was [p]o[s]sib[le] yet not [p]ro[b]a[b]le - in [f]a[c]t, [C][l]oud [f]elt [l]i[k]e he k[n]ew that Ae[r]ith k[n]ew, [n]o, [n]ot via [s]ome [w]hi[s]p[er] [n]et[w]ork, [n]o, [n]ot [b]y o[p]inion at all, [b]ut i[n]s[t]ea[d [b]y dir[e]ct i[n]tuition. And it just [s]o h[a]p[p]ened th[at] it was [b]y his own [i]ntu[it]i[ve] [c]a[p]a[b]i[li]ties th[at] [C][l]oud k[n]ew [th]at Ae[r]ith k[n]ew [th]at he g[a]ve [th]at [v]e[r]y [f]u[c]king [f]l[ower] [a]w[ay] [v]i[a] her own intu[it]i[on], [n]ot by a[n]y [l]u[r]id [r]u[m]or [m]onger [f]r[o]m [c]king shame[l]e[s]s[l]y in the [s]ums. Were there any [r]u[m]or [m]ongers

[f][r]o[ʃ][c]king sh[a]me[l]e[s]s[l]y in the [s][l]ums
though? [S][p][r]ea[d]ing [d][i]s[in]f[or][m]a[t]ion
[a]b[ou]t [C][l]o[u]d [g]iving [a]w[ay] [f][i]l[ow]ers to a
[p][i]etho[r]a of wo[m]en [i]n [M][i]d[g]ar! [N]o, that
[w]asn't the [w]ay [A]erith [h][a]d [a][c]ce[s]sed
[h]er k[n]owledge - [n]ot at all. [A][n]yw[ay],
[A]erith [th]ought [ma]ybe [C]loud should
[c]o[n]sider [th]in[k]ing t[w]i[c]e be[f]ore [g]iving
[a][w]ay [f]l[ow]ers [a][g]ain. That [w]as [a]ll. [N]ot
that she was [p]ar[t]i[c]u[l]ar[l]y [p]e[r]f[u]rbed.
[N]ot in the [l]eas[t] a[c]tua[l]l[y]! [B]ut may[b]e
[C][l]oud [c]ould just - hy[p]othe[t]ic[a]l[l]y - if a
[g]irl [i]f[k]e h[er] w[er]e to [g]i[v]e h[i]m a
[b]eauti[f]ul ye[l]low [f]l[ow]er in the [m]i[d]dle of
[M][i]dgar, [m]ay[b]e [h]e should *[h]old onto [the
/th/]ing!* Or at the ver[y] l[eas]t don't [g]o and [g]ive
it to some other [f]u[c]king chi[ck]! Was it real[l]y
that d[i]f[f]i[c]ult to just [c]ontinua[l]l[y] [k]ee[p] a
[s]ingle [f]l[ow]er on your [p]e[r]s[on]? [N]ot that it
was [A]erith's [b]usiness [a][n]yw[ay], [b]e[c]ause
[c][l]ear[l]y [i]f [C][l]oud *[w]an[t]ed* [t]o g[i]f[t] the
[f]l[ow]er [t]o [T]ifa - sure that was [f]ine, it was
totally his [o]p[t]i[o]n if that's [h]ow [h]e w[a]n[t]e[d]
[t]o go a[b]o[u]t it, [b]ut [d][i]d[n]t [C][l]oud th[i]nk
i[t] was just a [l]i[t]tle rude? [N][o], in[s]tead he
[th]ought [th]at [th]ere was a [n]o[t]a[b]le
[d]i[s]tinction [b]e[t]ween the [t]wo [t]ypes of
k[n]owledge - [b]ut if Ae[r]ith [d]id [s]o [h]appen to
[h]ear [i]t [i]n the [s]/t[r]/[ee]t, then [w]ould sh[e] b[e]
[w]illing [t]o [t]ell [C]loud who was f[l]a[p]ping their
[l]i[p]s? [W]as any[o]ne out in the [s][l]ums
[s][p]e[c]i[f]ic[a]l[l]y [l]oo[k]ing to [r]at his [s][p]i[k]y
a[s]s out? I[n] a[n]y [c]a[s]e, [r]egardl[e]s[s] of all
that, [C][l]oud [t]ota[l]l[y] under[s]t[ood] wh[er]e
A[er]ith was [c]o[m]ing [f]rom, and [h]e gue[s]sed
[h]e ju[s]t wasn't [r]eally th[i]n[k]i[n]g at the
[t]ime, when h[e] [r]e-g[i]f[t]e[d] the [f]l[ow]er -

[T]ifa [t]oo[k] n[o]te of the [f][l]ower, and he
 [d][i]d[n't] wan[t] [t]o go in[t]o the wh[o]le *fl[o]wer
 girl* a[n]ecd[o]te, s[o] he figured it m[i]ght be
 [k][i]nd of [n][i]ce to, you k[n]ow, [p]ass a[l]ong the
 [l]ove? Ae[r]ith [r]e[p]eated the [ph]r[a]se *[p]ass
 a[l]ong the [l]ove* in [a] w[ay] that, [q]uite
 [a]m[a]zing[l]y, wasn't [c]om[p][l]e[te][l]y
 [f]i[l]led to the br[i]m with [c]ons[t]ern[a]tion and
 [c]on[t]em[p]t. [T]o [C][l]oud there was something
ine[f]fa[b]l[y] [t][r]ue a[b]out *[c]ontemp[l]a[ti]ng the
 [f]em[a]le [f]orm*, [i]n [i]ts b[il]lunt [ph]y[s]i[c]al
 [i]te[r]a[ti]on - there was *no [l]u[r]id o[p]i[n]ion
 [p]r*esent w[i]th[i]n [i]t, although C[l]oud [d][i]d[n't]
 e[x]p[re]s[s] thi[s] [i]dea to
 [A]e[r]ith a[t] the t[i]me, given her [r]eti[c]en[c]e to
 e[n]gage i[n] the *op[i]n[i]on [v]er[s]us
 [i]n[t]u[i]t[i]on* di[c]hotomy he [s]tarted the
 [c]onver[s]ation with - yet he was [s]till
 o[b]viou[s]l[y] [c]on[t]em[p]l[ati]ng her [f]or[m]
 a[s] this b[a]c[k] a[n]d [f]or[t] o[c]curred. Her
 [t]y[p]i[c]al [ph]i[lo]s[oph]i[c]al
 d[i]s[p]os[i]t[i]on when it [c]ame to [l]ove
 triangles [w]as [w]aning just [s]l[i]ghtl[y] - this
 [l]ittle [f]l[ower] [i]n[c]i[dent] [s]eemed to
 [a]l[m]o[s]t [r]ile her up e[m]o[tionally, a[l]though
 it was [c]l[ear] to [C][l]oud when she [r]e[p]eated
 the [ph]r[a]se *[p]ass a[l]ong the [l]ove* that she
 wasn't ent[i]rely r[i]led u[p]. Not yet at [l]east.
 Aerith [f]ina[l]l[y] [c]on[f]irmed [f]or [C][l]oud that,
 yes, it was v[i]a [p]ure [i]ntu[i]t[i]on she'd
 [s]urm[i]sed *her fl[ower]* no [l]onger [r]es[i]ded on
 his [p]e[r]s[on], and [s]ure [sh]e ag[r]eed [th]at
 [th]ere was a [c]e[r]tain di[s]t[i]n[c]ti[n] be[t]ween
 the [t]wo [t]ypes of kn[ow]l[i]edge. [C][l]oud then
 [a]s[k]ed [A]erith [w]hat she [th]o[ught] [w]as [th]e
 c[au]se of each [t]y[p]e - well, o[b]viousl[y]
 o[p]i[n]ion [c]on[s]i[sted] of [l]i[t]eral *[w]h[i]s[p]er*

[n]et[w]orks, she [s]aid, from what [p]eo[p]le [s]aw
[a]nd heard [a]nd [a]ll that. This [a][l][l]ow[ed]
[C][l]oud to note that wasn't eve[r]ything Shin[r]a
[w]as [w]or[k]ing on - e[s][p]ecial[l]y H[o][o] -
was that [n]ot [b]a[s][c]al[l]y a[n]other
[w]hi[s][p]er [n]et[w]ork, that H[o][o], de[s][p]ite
[b]eing a [s][o]-[c]alled [s]cientist, [w]as [s]im[p]ly
[w]or[k]ing [o]ff [o]f [w]hat [h]e and [h]is
a[s]so[c]iates *heard and /s/aw*? Ae[r]ith was
[t]em[p]t[ed] [t]o [s]ay H[o][o]'s o[p]e[r]a[t]ion
was a [m]ore [s]yste[m]a[tic] version of th[at], yes,
[b]ut in[s]tead a[b]r[u]p[tly] [c][u]t her[s]elf [o]ff,
[b]e[c]ause when she [c]on[s]i[d]ered it [f]urther
she [c]on[c]l[u]d[ed] the un[d]e[r [c][i]t[y]
[w]h[i][s]p[er] net[w]or[k]s [w]e're a[c]tual[l]y
[q]uite [c]om[p]l[ex] them[s]elves! [S]o in[s]tead
she a[c]cused [C][l]oud of changing the
[s]ubj[ec]t, th[e]n she noted th[at], a[c]tua[l]ly,
[sh]e wan[t]ed [t]o [sh]ift [t]o pi[c]s, but [n]o[t] to the
[s]o-[c]alled [w]hisper [n]et[w]or[k]s of H[o][o]
versus the [w]ell-k[n]own [w]h[i][s]p[er]
[n]et[w]or[k]s of the [S]e[c]tor [S][i]x [S][i]ums,
[n]o! [N]o, [C][l]oud under[s]tood. [E]ven [h]e
[d]i[d]n't [e]ven r[e]ally want [t]o [t]alk ab[ou]t
H[o][o]! Maybe he was obfus[c]ating. C[l]oud
a[p]o[lo]gized, but Ae[r]ith [s]aid it wasn't
[n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]y, there was [n]o [s]o[r]ry
[n]eeded [r]ea[l]ly - they [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y]
shouldn't [b]ea[t a [d]ead [h]orse, [s]o to
[s]p[ea]k. [B]ut, [u]gh - what a [h]o[r]ren[d]ous
[t]urn of ph[r]ase. No, [C][l]oud ag[r]ee[d - it was
a [t]e[r]ri[b]le [s]ay[ing], a [s]c[um]b[ag] [s]ay[ing],
[r]ea[l]ly - H[o][o] p[ro]b[ab]l[y] would [d]o it
though, [b]eat a [d]ead horse? - a[n]d the[n]
[f]u[c]king, [l]i[k]e, [i]nje[c]t [i]t w[i]th [m]a[k]o or
[s]ome shit, [m]a[k]e it a [m]utant [s]teed!
G[r]o[s]s! [F]u[c]king loser!

Canto VII

Total Echoes: 1,227

Total Syllables: 1,738

Approximate Self-Similarity: **.706**

[C][l]oud just [a]t th[a]t [m]o[m]ent had begun to
[r]e[c]apitu[l]ate, [th]is [t]ime [t]o [th]e [t]wo of
[th]em - [A]e[r]ith [a]nd [T]ifa - how it wasn't
a[c]tually the [c]ase that h[e]'d s/ee/n the [b][e]ing,
no, there wasn't i[n] [f][a][c]t a[n] [a][c]tual
[ph][y]s[i][c]al [b]eing i[n] that se[n]se of the
[ph]rase - it wasn't [l]i[k]e the me[n] i[n] the
[b][l]a[c]k [c][l]oa[k]s they'd [b]e [f]o[l]lowing in
Re[b]irth (were ei[th]er of [th]em [f]amiliar with
[th]at [p][l]ot[l]ine yet?). He'd just [b]egan to
ex[p][l]ain [th]is to [th]e [b]oth of [th]em, and
[C][l]oud [d]i[d]n't [f]eel a[n]y [d]i[f]fe[r]ent a[b]out
it [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]i[l]y - the [f][a][c]t t[h]at he was
[t]elling [th]e [b]oth of [th]em - [T]i[f]a was
[b]e[h]ind the [b]ar [a]nd [A]erith just [h]appened
to [b]e there. It was [f]ine. [W]ere they [f]amiliar
[w]ith [R]e[b]irth yet? [P][r]o[b]a[b]l[y] [n]ot,
[r]ight? [B]ut [n][o], in thi[s] [c]a[s]e [C][l]oud had
[b]een fu[c]king, you k[n]ow, just [s]itting on this
[c]ar[p]et in Wu[t][ai] at the [t][i]me - he [s]at on the
[c]ar[p]et [c]ros[s]-[l]egged - and then he
[s]u[d]den[l]y i[n]t[ui]ted a [p]ure[l]y [d]ivi[n]e
b[e]ing [e]man[a]ting in the [t]riangle head
[e]nca[p][s]u[l]a[te]d in the [p]erfe[c]t[l]y
[s][q]uare [d]es[i]gn that [r]e[p]e[ate]d
[e]nd[l]e[s]s[l]y th[r]oughout the [e]n[t]ire
[c]ar[p]et. This [t][r]i[angle] head [w]as [w]hat
[C][l]oud [c]ould on[l]y des[c]ribe [a]s [a]
“[l]aughing [A]llah”. That's how it [s]tru[c]k him.
There wasn't [r]eal[l]y [a] [q]uestion [a]bout [i]t [i]n

[C][l]oud's mind and it was a[c]tua[l]ly beauti[f]ul.
 Yes, [a] "[l]au[gh]ing [A][l]lah" [w]as the on[l]y
 [w]ay he [c]ould [d]e[s]c[r]ibe the [d]ivine being,
 which [c]ertain[l]y [c]ommuni[c]ated with him [a]s
 he [s][a]t [c][r]os[s]-[l]egged in [W]utai in a
 [s]ome[w]hat [m]y[s]ti[c]al [m]a[n]ner, al[b]eit not
 [q]uite ver[b]all[y], [b]ut the [b][e]ing [c]ertain[l]y
 [c]o[m]mu[n]i[c]a[te]d in a w[ay] that [c]aused
 [C][l]oud to [s][m]ile. [C][l]oud, *s[m]ile?!* The [t]wo
 wo[m]en [f]ound that [t]otal[l]y hi[l]arious! [T][i]f[a]
 n[ea]r[l]y [f]u[c]ked u[p] the b[ee]r sh[e] was
 [p]ou[r]ing she was [s]o [s]ur[p]rised to h[ea]r
 [C][l]oud of [a]ll [p]eo[p]le [t][a]l[k]ing [a]bout
him[s]elf [s]m[i]l[ing]. [B]ut [n][ei]ther [T][i]f[a] [n]or
 [A]erith [f]ound this [a]n[e]c[d]ote of [C]loud's to
 [b]e *[d]i[s]i[n]genuo[u]s* i[n] a[n]y way - i[n] [f]a[c]t
 they [b]oth [f]u[l]ly [s]uppo[r]ted [C][l]oud's
 [c]on[f]essions and mo[r]e o[f]ten than not [e]ven
 [f]ound them [l]egitimate[l]y intr[i]guing ((b)ut
 there were, of [c]our[s]e, [s]ome ex[c]eptions!),
 al[b]eit they gene[r]al[l]y [f]ound the ane[c]dotes
 i[n]t[r]iguing i[n] a [o]ne-on-[o]ne [s]etting, as
 [o]p[po]sed to thi[s] [F][F]M [a]rrangement. [B]ut
 that was c[on]f[e]ssio[n]ally fine! It just [s]o h[a]ppened
 [A]erith was *a[r]ound* and she [p]o[p]ped in the
 [b]a[r]. N[o] [b]ig deal at [a]ll! Yet, [w]hile
 [c]ontem[p]lating [w]hether or [n]ot a[n]other
 [M]os[c]ow [M]ule was ad[v]isable or [n]ot, [C]loud
 ex[p]re[s]sed [q]uite [v]igo[r]ou[s]ly that he
 wan[t]ed [t]o [r]e[l]ay a [s]ub[s]e[qu]ent
 ane[c]dote that he [v]iewed a[p]p[ro]p[ri]ate of the
 [c]ar[p]et en[c]ounter, if that was o[k]ay? Of
 [c]ourse! Well, [s][p]eci[f]icall[y] it [w]as that
 [w]hen he [p]o[p]ped in[t]o his [l]o[c]al [c]o-
 [o]p g[r]o[c]e[r]y [s]tore that [m]or[n]ing, [f]or
 just a [f]ew [m]i[n]or [i]tems, a [c]ou[p]le h[an]d
 [f]r[ui]ts [r]eally, [a]nd the new [c]a[sh]ier [a]sked

him - [r]ight as [h]e sh[i][f]ted [h][i]s
[h]ead[ph]ones [u]p o[f]f [o]f his ears to [s][t]art the
[f]ormalized [s]ales [t][r]ans[a][c]tion - [i][f] h[i]s
b[r]other “or [s]omething” went there
[s]ome[t]imes? - [t]o the g[r]o[c]e[r]y [s]to[r]e? Did
[C][l]oud have a [b][r]other [b]y a[n]y chance?
[B]e[c]ause she, the [n]ew [c]ashier, felt [l]i[k]e
sh[e]’d s[e]en him [b]efo[r]e? Well, [C]loud [s]aid
to the [c]ashier, thin[k]ing a[b]out it [f]or a
[s]e[c]ond he [f]ound it [q]uite [p]o[s]si[b]le [th]at
[th]is a[l]leged do[p]pelganger was a[c]tual[l]y
[f]u[c]king just him! - [C][l]oud him[s]elf! - [th]at
the [c][a]shier was in [th]at [p]arti[c]u[l]ar
in[s]tan[c]e [c]on[f]using [C][l]oud for his a[c]tual
[s]el[f], [th]at [th]is [c]ashier on[l]y bell[ie]ved
sh[e]’d [s][ee]n [s][o]meo[n]e who [l]oo[k]ed just
[l]i[k]e [C][l]oud [b]efore [b]e[c]ause sh[e]’d, in
[f]a[c]t, *s[ee]n [C][l]oud [b]efore*. He [w]alked
a[w]ay just [m]o[m]en[t]a[r]ily, he [t]old [T]ifa [a]nd
[A]e[r]ith, just [t]o [t]o[s]s his [b][a][s]k[e]t [b][a][c]k
in[t]o the [s]t[a]c[k] of [b][a][s]k[e]ts [b]ehind the
auto[m]a[t]ic d[oor]s. Yeah, he’d [t]a[k]e one
[m]o[r]e [M]ule, pl[e]ase [T]ifa? The new
[c]ashier was [c]hu[c]k[l]ing when [C][l]oud
a[r]rived b[a][c]k [a]t the [c]he[c]kout [c]ounter
[r]eady to [p]lay for his [sh]it - [sh]e was in the
[p][r]ocess of ente[r]ing the item num[b]er for his
[r]ed [q]uinoa, [c]hu[c]k[l]ing a[l]one - “it [c]ould’ve
[b]een you” she [r]e[p]eated, chuc[k]l[ing], [b]ut
then, [C][l]oud [r]e[l]ayed [t]o [T]ifa and Ae[r]ith,
she a[c]tua[l]ly [c]ame a[r]o[un]d to [C][l]ou[d]’s
[p]arti[c]u[l]ar hy[p]othesis. The new [c][a]shier,
[a]fter thin[k]ing [a]bout it, [c]ame to [a]gree with
[C][l]oud, th[a]t she [a]c[tua[l]l[y] p[r]o[b]a[b]l[y]
had [s]een him in the g[r]o[c]e[r]y [s]t[or]e
[b]efo[r]e, and that she’d just [n]ow
er[r]o[n]eously [f]igured [h]e [h]ad a [b]rother,

when in [f][a][c]t this hypo[th]eti[c]al [b][r]o[th]er
was [a][c]tual[l]y just [C][l]oud himself. [T]i[f]a
[c]on[s]i[d]ered, [a][f]ter she'd inge[s][t]ed the [f]ull
[a]ne[c][d]ote and [s]erved [C][l]oud his
[r]e[f][r]eshed [M]o[s][c]ow [M]ule, that it was
[s]omewhat [l]i[k]e[l]y [th]at [th]e [c]ashier
wan[t]ed [t]o [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te *[s]u[c]k his
[c]o[c]k*, and [C][l]oud [d]i[d]n't [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]i[l]y
[d]i[s]ag[r]e[e] with the [n]otion! - he [c]ertain[l]y
[c]on[s]idered it [p]o[s]si[b]le, [th]at [th]is [c]ashier
[m]ay have [b]een a[m]ena[b]le to some[th]ing
l[i]k[e] [th]at, but [th]at wasn't [q]u[i]te the [p]oint!
There [w]as a t[y][p]e of [w]isdom [l]a[tent in the
exch[a]nge, [w]asn't there? - regard[l]ess of
[w]hether or not the [c]ashier [w]anted to
per[fo]rm [f]el[l]atio on [C][l]oud? Ae[r]ith, by
[c]on[t]ra[st], [t]oo[k] a more [ph]ilo[s]o[ph]i[c]al
a[n]gle to her [a]nal[y]s[i]s of the en[c]ounter,
[b]e[c]ause sh[e] agr[e]ed with [C]loud [th]a[t
[th]e [c]a[shier exh[i]b[i]ted a [c]ertain
[s]p[i]ritual in[s]ight, even [i]f [i]t was
in[a]dvertent. [A]erith, [f]or her [p]art, [d]i[d]n't
[p]ut much of a[n]y sto[c]k i[n] [t]o the [c]ashier's
i[n]tentions, whether or [n]ot they were [s]or[d]id,
be[n]ign, or [s]im[p]l[y] in[d]i[f]ferent. U[p]on
[a][c]k[n]owl[e]dging this Ti[f]a [n]oted that she
[r]e[c]og[n]ized [A]e[r]ith's [p]oint of [v]iew as
[v]alid, th[at it was [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] the "[r]ight
way [t]o [t]ake [i]t [i]n," [e]ven [i]f sh[e], [T]i[f]a,
wasn't [p]e[r]s[on]al[l]y at the [p]oint of
[p]arti[c]i[p]ating in [q]uite that [l]evel of
obje[c]ti[v]ity (i[f] [th]ey [c]ould, in [f][a][c]t, [c]all
it [th]a[t]). [C]loud m[en]tioned [th]a[t, [a]t [th]e
[en]d of the [d]ay, [h]e [c]oul[d]n't [h]el[p] [i]t [i]f a
[c]er[tai]n [p]e[r]s[on] ex[p]erien[c]ed an [ur]ge
to [s]u[ck] his [c]o[ck] - that [w]hether or [n]ot
[s]o[m]e[o]ne [wa]n[t]ed [t]o [s]u[c]k *any[o]ne's*

k[n]ob [w]as [s]omething [u]l[t]imately
 [u]nk[n]owable, that [C][l]oud [c]ouldn't
 [s]im[p]l[y] [t]os[s] [p]o[t]ential [s][p]iritual
 en[c]ounters to the way[s]ide [p]ure[l]y
 be[c]ause of a [p]ur[p]orted [s]ordid [s]ub[t]ext or
 in[t]ention. Both [w]omen ag[r]eed [w][i]th th[is],
 yet [p]erh[a][p]s Ae[r]i[th] just a [t][a]d more than
 [T]i[f]a? - not to [s]ay [T]i[f]a was [s]omehow
[b]e[s]ide her[s]e[f] with jealou[s]y i[n] a[n]y
 ma[t]erial way - no, th[is] d[is]t[ri]nction
 [b]e[t]w[ee]n [T]i[f]a a[n]d [A]e[r]i[th] was
 p[r]o[b]a[b]ly [r]ooted more [s]o in Ae[r]i[th]'s
 [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly a[b]s[ur]d [a]b[i]l[ity] to [r]e[m]ain
 [ph]ilo[s]o[ph]ically undet[er]red [a]b[ou]t other
 [w]o[m]en [w]hile s[t]ee[pe]d i[n] a[n] obvious
 l[ove] t[r]iangle. Did sh[e] [e]ven l[i]k[e] [C][l]oud,
 r[e]a[l]l[y]? [B]e[c]ause it was [r]ea[l]l[y] [q]uite
 [e]vident that [C][l]oud, [T]i[f]a, and Ae[r]i[th] were
 [c]o[l]l[e]c[tive[l]y [e]n[t]w[i]ned i[n] a sort of l[ove]
 t[r]iangle, [b]ut Ae[r]i[th], for her part,
 [m]ai[n]t[ai]ned [q]uite the uni[q]ue [a]b[i]l[ity] to
 [r]e[m]ai[n] es[s]entiall[y] *[ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al*
 [a]b[ou]t it a[l]l - she [d]i[d]n't [s]ee[m] to [a]llow
 f[ee]l[ings] of jea[l]ou[s]y to over[c]ome her in the
 l[ove]l[ess]t when [C][l]oud re[l]ayed ane[c]dotes
 a[b]out [c]a[sh]iers th[at], if [th]e [th]r[ee] [w]ere
 [b]e[i]ng h[on]est, [c]l[ea]r[l]y [w]a[n]ted to [w]hip
 the guy's [c]o[ck] out and [s]u[ck] [on] it for an
 ex[t]e[n]d[ed] i[n]t[er]val of [t]ime. [D]id she [e]ven
 r[e]a[l]l[y] l[i]k[e] [C][l]oud? H[is] i[n]d[i]v[is]ual
 f[ee]l[ings] on the situ[a]tion were a l[it]tle
 am[b]i[gu]ous, even when he was a[l]l a[l]one.
 [C][l]oud was of [c]our[s]e i[n]c[a]pa[b]le of
 as[s]es[s]ing his own f[ee]l[ings] f[or] [s]omewhat
 obv[i]ous r[e]a[s]ons.