



The Madness of a Cloud

A Macrotonal Poem

Syrianus

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The Madness of a Cloud ... 4

Echoes: 8,536

Syllables: 12,015

Aggregate Echo Quotient: .7104

Mean Line Length: 375.47 syllables

Distance from 377: -0.41%

Epilogue ... 51

Echoes: 2,474

Syllables: 3,446

Aggregate Echo Quotient: .7179

Mean Line Length: 143.58 syllables

Distance from 144: -0.29%

The Madness of a Cloud

.715 - .791 - .781 - .697
.819 - .747 - .699 - .695

Cloud was sitting at Seventh Heaven drinking a Fernet on the rocks engaging in light conversation with a cocksucker he'd never even met about a Queen's Blood play-in game that he'd - this particular cocksucker - requested to be put on the TV at the bar. Well, actually Cloud corrected, for the record, that he'd actually been reading a few pages of Timaeus prior to all this, making a few disparate notes, finding himself puzzled at the sensory information that continued to be relayed into his brain. Cloud basically alleged he was flummoxed about the sensory information that became, in some way, relayed to what he guessed was his brain? - how any of

that was corroborated, but more so Cloud contemplated the static nature of said images - that's what he was specifically contemplating when a guy with a round-ass face leaned onto the bar, seeking to close his tab, obviously excited to tell the bartender that he may need *to show her his ID*, just because he took his wife's last name and hadn't had a chance to change his license yet? The patron with the round-ass face noted how nice the bartender was (Tifa!), but what was her name again? He could definitely display his ID if she really needed, just because, again, his last name was different now - taking his wife's name and all!

Of course, Cloud noted, that it was clear that *no one* gave a fuck about the printed name on a credit card in that bar, and Tifa, for her part, didn't exactly seem like she was ramping up to suck this dude off just because he was a radical feminist. For Cloud's part he was still, you know, attempting to get behind the blunt sensations being smuggled relentlessly into his so-called conscious

existence. Everything was an image to some extent, right Aerith? Touch itself was a fucking sensory image. It was a quaint Spring evening where Cloud felt more or less *destined* to philosophize, having started drinking wine in preparation for a Friday night dinner, only to have Tifa bail last minute, because she needed to pick up a bar shift - leaving him completely free to continue this wine drinking in a ritualistic way that would be conducive to philosophical ideas.

Yes, Cloud continued to Aerith, it was basically only via drinking alone, but in a *ritualistic fashion*, that he'd achieved any sort of philosophical inquiry. You couldn't just sit at a desk and *become philosophical*, at least not for Cloud! Maybe some people could! But, no, not Cloud. He'd imagine that there were probably a *litany* of possible ways of becoming philosophical - like, for instance, for the round-faced albino chap, perhaps telling Tifa that he'd taken his wife's last name, maybe that could be seen as possibly ritualistic in a way, a

gateway to some sort of *becoming philosophical*. *This was actually science*, Cloud told her he thought at the bar, successfully avoiding making any eye contact with the round-faced man.

Was it necessarily *strange* at all that once the Greeks went extinct philosophy went more or less completely and utterly *downhill* and never looked back in the least, that the last group to really reach much of any philosophical success made a sincere effort to conjoin getting fucked up with contemplating intelligible phenomena? - that these Greeks attempted to marry inebriation and rigorous dialectic? That all thought since - to paraphrase Northhead - had been a minor footnote to Plato or whatever? The thing was, according to Cloud, you just couldn't willy nilly delve into metaphysics completely sober! But that wasn't to say a person should necessarily become some degenerate alcoholic either, because a degenerate drunk would in no way make a great meta-physicist either - that was basically

impossible, because, like Cloud said, the solo mode of inebriation should be done *ritualistically*, in spurts, at certain times. You couldn't just be like hitting the bottle as soon as you woke from a slumber! - after said inebriation sessions you'd require sobriety to parse through whatever it was that came to you via said contemplation, no? In fact, the actual science was nothing beyond this parsing through of inebriation sessions of rigorous contemplation! That was it - what laid behind logic and metaphysics, in Cloud's mind at least! But inebriation could be anything really - Cloud could enter a state of inebriation in a car alone on a Tuesday AM, without consuming a damn thing.

Aerith more or less agreed, adding that on the one hand a philosophical mind should be able to analyze, interpret, extrapolate, all of that *scientific stuff* - but, on the other, if you fail to place yourself in a position to receive anything to analyze, interpret, or extrapolate then you were basically screwed! Cloud more or less

agreed but added that - sans this type of “inspiration,” so to speak - they’d be stuck sitting at a table just noodling around nonsensically, vacillating back and forth between two types of nothingness, and then just probably knocking off someone else’s work by accident. But none of this was new! It wasn’t like Cloud was *breaking news* in any way. At this point Aerith asked - you know, was this albino douche bag, he was an element of this analysis?

No, not really - according to Cloud - maybe the guy was trying a tad too hard? - to present himself as a specific archetype to the general public, as a guy who decided to spit in the face of his own chromosome count, which was something Cloud personally endorsed! Granted Cloud probably wouldn’t do it by taking his wife’s last name, because Cloud personally was obviously more prone to a type of isolated and overly dramatic self-annihilation than a subservient and disingenuously muted feminist annihilation, but he wasn’t ipso facto

opposed to either! Aerith agreed one hundred percent! But Cloud still would go a little further, noting that in the intelligible sphere, as someone like, say, Proclus would note, that so-called forms were somehow able to participate in one another *without mixing*, whereas within the sensible realm they participated in things and subsequently got dirty. But Cloud thought that it was worth going one step further - since they were discussing annihilation and stuff anyway, that the perceived mixing between forms that took place in the sensible arena was itself just a *projection of mixture* but not *actual mixture*.

The intelligible sphere, being purely emanated, participated within itself without mixing itself, while in the sensible sphere it didn't seem like that was possible, that by participating within sensible things they became *essentially mixed with them*, assuming they were categorically sensible. Essentially nature was tainted, which of course Cloud and Aerith knew all too well! Way

too well! Hence their shared acquiescence toward occasional annihilation! But even this sensible filth, so to speak, Cloud thought, this perceived *mixing up* in the participation of sensible things, wasn't it also a projection? - an emanation, just as the participation of the intelligible sphere was also an emanation of the primary unity of all things? Which, yeah, brought Cloud back to that albino round-faced fuck at the bar, taking his wife's last name - because ultimately the albino's vantage point wasn't remarkably divergent from Cloud's or Aerith's, Cloud thought. This albino was promoting a certain type of annihilation of their cultural-sensible realm, thinking that the patriarchal lineage of their society was basically something objectionable, something essentially tainted, that should be annihilated in the service of something *more pure*. Okay, well, Cloud thought that made a modicum of sense! Maybe taking his wife's last name was in a sense a greater

form of purity than locking a woman in a kitchen and expecting a blowjob every other evening, Cloud thought. Just as Proclus and Socrates sensed that the intelligible sphere participated with itself yet not in a way where it mixed with itself, that this was distinct from our further descended, sensible sphere where things participated with one another but got *mixed up* in the process - well, maybe this albino man was noting that the patriarchy was a participatory mixing that left unseemly cum stains - for lack of a better phrase! - on human experience. Patriarchy, in the albino man's mind, should be annihilated because of this sensible mixing up, this putrid tainting of what would be better off pure. And taking your nice wife's name was a proper mode of annihilation in response. Aerith remarked that she *knew* Cloud would inevitably bring the discourse back to this poor chap closing his tab, but, just to be clear, what Cloud was saying was that this mixing that occurred in the sensible realm was itself just a separate projection -

just a lesser mode of projecting! So while the material world may have disgusted them, perhaps moving the two toward some sort of all-encompassing conceptual annihilation, and as much as the patriarchy might have seemed putrid to the albino husband at the bar who looked to annihilate himself by taking his nice wife's last name, it could be wise to consider that these disgusting aggregates were themselves simply *derivative projections*, that they weren't *actual mixtures*, that they were just *derivative emanations* as opposed to tattoos of what they thought they despised. Aerith was aware. She wasn't distressed about it, but she knew this poor albino guy would in time take the brunt of it from Cloud. Cloud questioned whether he didn't deserve it? Plus like they'd already implied - they must to proceed from the immanent to the transcendent, no?

.804 - .701 - .721 - .675

.694 - .694 - .724

Cloud found it a tad befuddling, just because Tifa said she'd had an odd dream *about him* the previous night, and he'd replied bluntly that he didn't usually have dreams about people he knew, somehow completely purging the fact from his mind that, just that night, he'd had a vivid dream involving one of his first girlfriends and her current (to the best of Cloud's knowledge) spouse. How could that have possibly slipped his memory, given the vivacity of the dream itself? Barrett didn't have a clue either, really. His ex and her husband were living with Cloud and his fictional wife in a modest condo they'd been leasing in Upper Midgar, yet he told Tifa he "never dreamt" about people he knew, yet perhaps the most befuddling aspect of it was that when

he'd said that to her he actually believed it! Cloud's ex-girlfriend and his fictional wife had become somewhat friendly in the dream, in the condo, and the whole ordeal, in Cloud's dream, struck him as totally fine initially. His fictional wife was obscured, a pure mirage, while his ex was an image of how he'd known her *in the past*, not how she was now (not that he knew how she was now!), but eventually Cloud began to come to the realization that this was *his ex-romantic interest*, and that his current wife and ex-girlfriend *becoming friends* was an absolutely cataclysmic development for him socially, that it was the probably worst thing that could possibly happen to his marriage.

He wondered what the husband of his ex was thinking - Cloud was wondering how it was exactly that he got roped into this whole thing as he was exiting this apartment into an Upper Midgar that, of course, wasn't exactly Upper Midgar at all! Yet only hours later when Tifa told Cloud she'd had a dream *with him in it* that

night he claimed to never dream about people he knew. Odd! Barrett noted that he just did, though, right? That his statement to Tifa was false, no? Um, yeah, that's exactly what Cloud just said! Cloud reiterated that it was "literally that night" that he'd had the dream, further emphasizing the absurdity of his statement to Tifa. Maybe, Cloud thought, it was closer to a coincidence than an acute misremembering or forgetting? Was that possible? Memory was elliptical sometimes. But in any case, he told Barrett he'd had another dream recently - if Barrett was by any chance interested in listening to more bullshit about his dream states? - where Cloud had discovered a glowing, fluorescent insect in one of the drawers on a screened-in patio that didn't exist in so-called "real life," and Cloud tossed the fucking thing outside onto the grass, kind of disgusted by it to be honest, only to discover that same insect just a few moments later - but now appearing in a humanoid form, standing outside the screened-in patio, hoping to be let

in. Now, in the dream there was a little get-together on this patio, so Cloud was a little wary of letting this being - who was female, to be clear - into the party, but curiously everyone else at the pow-wow seemed totally incapable of perceiving her, even after Cloud allowed her in? Yes, Cloud allowed her in and the form of communication between himself and the entity was simply a series of vague feelings, perhaps, he thought, this was some kind of reminder that you couldn't just, you know, *create things* - that refreshing syntheses are the best we could do? With that said, they started copulating on the patio.

Barrett wanted to clarify that it was the butterfly woman that Cloud was fucking? Or whatever she was? Well, Cloud noted, only when she became a human being, of some sort, that that was when the copulation occurred, obviously! But, with that said, it was actually (kind of?) intriguing to Barrett, to be honest? But, more importantly, Cloud really wanted to know how Seventh

Heaven was last night, because Barrett stopped by there, didn't he? How was it? Well. Let's see. Barrett definitely felt the purity of the booze expand within his chest upon his first sip, and while the bartender (obviously not Tifa, but he didn't catch her name) was slightly more affable than when he went there with Cloud, but she didn't actually ask what fruit he wanted in the drink. Sitting alone at Seventh Heaven Barrett took note of himself tossing the single orange slice onto his thin, now immediately moist napkin and manually extracting the single seed that had been expelled from the orange into the liquor from the glass, and in doing so, he noted that all that he'd accounted for at the bar - the affability, the fruit, the seed - that extracting those ideas out of the air was basically the same as the coordinate-tracking reported by remote viewers. He glanced back at the bar and took brief note of the bartender chugging a shot of booze with a customer and was violently smacked in the face with an acute memory

of ripping similar shots with a specific bartender from his past, which was basically just another set of coordinates, but these particular coordinates *returned* to him, he didn't pluck them out of the air. He didn't pluck these *ripping shots with a bartender* coordinates from a rapid rush of information - no, said coordinates returned to him as he sat in solitude at the bar totally involuntarily, violently smacking Barret in the fucking face and somewhat rudely collapsing time itself in the process, right as Barrett sat at that tiny table alone, innocently sipping his drink in Seventh Heaven. Barrett then went on to tell Cloud how, before the bar, he'd seen a *bunch* of people with Mako poisoning that he hadn't seen in months, and Cloud noted that's how they knew Spring was approaching, right?! Yet, on that note, it was kind of funny because Cloud was actually thinking to himself the other day - what was the exact definition of sobriety anyway - like how could they actually *distinguish* sobriety from intoxication? Barrett perked up a bit. Cloud

made it clear that, no, he wasn't necessarily like talking about *smoking crack*, or exposing yourself to high intensity mako shards for decades on end, but maybe just drinking white wine or something?

Because Cloud was crossing the Washington Street bridge contemplating a particular vision of indivisible Oneness the other night, as Barrett knew too well that Cloud was apt to do from time to time, and believe it not he was actually discovering a decent amount of enjoyment in the material world at the time! - drinking a mini water bottle filled with Mezcal, but also attempting to gauge whether he'd have the time to grab just one more beer before Tifa was supposed to be at his apartment. Cloud was contemplating the nature of an indivisible Oneness, but he was also comforted by the material realm while coldly calculating his odds of being able to chug another beer while still making it back to his apartment before Tifa was supposed to arrive. And as Cloud was contemplating this nature of an indivisible

Oneness, crossing a Washington Street bridge, drinking Mezcal from a mini water bottle Cloud remarked to Barrett how he'd started to question this very definition of sobriety. But it was here Barrett began to question - well - what did Cloud actually *mean by that*?

Well, what Cloud was trying to get at, Barrett, was that sobriety itself was supposed to be a baseline of sorts, no? Of course it was! Yet how could they measure this baseline exactly? - was there a measurement at all? - was sobriety to be defined by a lack of passion, or a vague sense of the "even-keeled"? But the problem was, in Cloud's mind at least, that there was no *universal emotional baseline* with which to define sobriety. Some people - he meant, even Cloud himself could be totally unhinged emotionally on occasion while quote-unquote "completely sober"! Furthermore, even if they - Barrett and Cloud - could define some baseline emotional status as axiomatic, then they would still have to combat philosophically with external substances that

weren't considered intoxicants that would obviously shift this emotional baseline. What did Cloud mean? *Well*, like, a lack of food could alter mood. The same could be said of caffeine! Consuming dirt would probably shift someone's emotional state. Historically, according to Cloud, people ate fucking plants with small doses of psychedelics embedded within them and probably thought very little about "intoxication" proper! People used to fucking sanitize water with alcohol! Smoking tobacco altered mood. Basically, Barrett, "anything we ingest alters our latent state of existence and therefore changes us in some form or another, which in most all cases probably filters into our mood." Cloud noted, for him personally, a shift in his diet could do wonders for his intellectual disposition - so then what was sobriety? It seemed impossible to even think about sobriety as a thing at all! Well, Barrett hadn't exactly considered it like that and wasn't sure if he would.

But Cloud thought that maybe they'd taken a false baseline of sobriety conceptually, no? After all, what technically was an *external substance*? Could they dig even further and consider the definition of an *external substance*? A conversation could certainly alter a person's temperament exponentially as well! - but did that technically count as an exogenous substance? Did words not carry weight? A vociferous thought or even a fleeting memory - especially in Cloud's case! - could often toss a person completely off-kilter, yet they still for some incomprehensible reason clung to an idea of an objective sobriety, and then they subsequently targeted select substances as *intoxicating*, while deeming so-called "other" substances - which also altered temperaments - as totally fine! Well, this was what Cloud was thinking at least, as he walked over the Washington Street bridge - that if people didn't view consuming fresh vegetables as something fundamentally *mind altering*, then it was possible, in

Cloud's mind, that they just experienced the world in vastly different ways. And Barrett for his part found this to be intriguing yet unconvincing. But Cloud insisted that there simply was no *true and extended stability of our mental states* - even if they were hypothetically deprived of external tinkering, because even thought itself was fundamentally external to some extent, was it not? And people on average were constantly accosted by specific *thoughts*, were they not? Thought almost never ceased accosting these people, which were all people? And even if they confined themselves to commonly agreed upon *material* substances, then there was still no consistent way to calculate the degree of alteration to a mental state across people of different walks of life, period. Barrett might not experience the same mental shift after the consumption of a fresh stick of celery that Cloud would, even if the celery itself remained entirely static. Walking across the Washington Street bridge, Cloud drank from a tiny water bottle filled with Mezcal

and didn't feel intoxicated in any way, shape, or form - any more than had he been drinking a cup of coffee, or eating a delicious snack, or receiving a specific thought. In his mind at the time there was no true division between intoxication and sobriety, and this was Cloud's final conclusion - regardless of whether or not Barrett agreed - as he somewhat anxiously sent Tifa a text message letting her know he was "taking a walk," just in case she arrived at his apartment before he finished slugging down one last beer at the bar that he was walking to.

.679 - .692 - .683 - .737 - .727

"Well, no," were the two words Cloud began with as he explained that his point was that there was a significant distinction between the two, meaning *dinner and drinks!* - that if you make it out like it's *just drinks* and then last minute it *becomes dinner?* - then yeah Cloud's gonna

be a little fucking pissed off! Especially if he didn't know the fucking people, you know Aerith? How did that make any sense? He found it a bit absurd, frankly. Sure, he'd go tie one or two on with a total stranger, that was fine, but to sit down and actually engage in a dinner? - that was an entirely distinct level of socializing, and it was one that, frankly, Cloud didn't particularly care for. And he wasn't ashamed to admit it! - that, frankly, he felt this Philistine notion of *just going out to dinner* with any and every acquaintance, that if you didn't acquiesce to that standard then you would be deemed, what? - anti-social? Well color Cloud anti-social then! But Aerith noted that while, sure, to be fair, it was a different level of socialization, if he truly didn't know the people, but, you know, if it was her personally? Supposing it was Aerith, then she'd hope that it wouldn't be *that* big of a deal to Cloud? To just go out to dinner? Was she kidding him?! Oh, of course not, Aerith! With *her*? You fucking kidding? Cloud was always down to grab a nosh

with someone like *her*, no, it was just that the hypothetical notion of eating supper with a complete stranger (“a more or less complete stranger”) - what were they discussing?

Cloud and the hypothetical stranger? Did he have to come prepared with a portfolio of talking points? - Cloud couldn't imagine that they'd be super intrigued with anything he had to say, or that they'd end up on the precipice of any revelation that he'd conclude to be particularly enlightening either. Cloud was simply going by empirical evidence really. That was all. He wasn't, like, trying to be a dick or anything! Just that, empirically speaking, it seemed unlikely they'd have a lot to converse about, Cloud and this hypothetical stranger. But Aerith added that, to be fair, wasn't Cloud the one who was always railing against so-called sensory data? Yet, in this case, he was all bent out of shape about this impromptu dinner because, in his own words, because of *empirical data*? Of past experience, which was

sensory data? Memories, right? Which, wouldn't Cloud agree, was some of the most unreliable data available no? Of course he did! Aerith, even fucking quantum physics was still fundamentally sense-forward, in the sense that they were *beginning with sense perception* - this was what contemporary so-called science had achieved of course! Placing sense perception as an apex predator until finally, with the discovery of quantum physics, it'd reduced the observable world to a degree that even linear sense-perception no longer made any fucking sense in the upper worlds! That was what they'd done. And quite smugly at times too! But wasn't that what Cloud was doing with this impending dinner? Aerith queried him on this point. Well, Cloud supposed that, thinking about it again, yeah, he was kind of acting like a quantum physicist a bit, wasn't he? Well, Aerith was just saying - to the extent that his argument was fundamentally *empirical*.

But it was kind of intuitive in a sense too, his argument, in Cloud's opinion. He agreed with Aerith to the extent that, yes, he was basing his *disgust* partially on empirical evidence, but he'd also allege that he felt an *intuitive disgust* with these types of social gatherings as well, and then he, to her point, to be blunt, did tend to dip into the world of empiricism to validate said intuitive disgust. Although, technically, they should probably be a little cautious to even employ the word empiricism here, because he didn't think empiricism necessarily needed to be restricted to sense-perception necessarily, you know? Aerith supposed there, yes, was probably an empiricism of the intelligible realm as well? Honestly, to Cloud - it was certainly possible that he maybe wasn't even in the best mind state to even assess it one way or another. Aerith took advantage of this capitulation to say she'd recently had a dream about Cloud - would he mind hearing her out? - where he was emailing her a question about whether a specific action was defined as

'insider trading', while she was processing some non-descript 'orders' for something in a bath tub, which consisted of, for some reason, washing large chocolate cookies down the drain, watching them as they slowly disintegrated under the hot water.

Then, after that, realizing that the cookies related to Cloud's question about insider trading, she contemplated if she should have flushed them all down the drain before answering the question? Did she do wrong by Cloud by washing these cookies preemptively down the drain? If Cloud truly wanted the 'order processed,' so to speak. In a sense Aerith felt an affinity for the cookies, didn't she, Cloud inferred. Cloud postulated that she felt like they were actual beings as she crumbled them down the unforgiving drain with the scorching hot water? In retrospect, Aerith admitted that that may have been the case. Cloud noted that there was a certain level of *gnosis* achieved through contemplating your dreams - yet was there any to be

gleaned from participating in double date dinners? Aerith admitted she'd been clinging onto the fact of the cookies being washed down the drain, and she knew Cloud had a particular talent when it came to interpreting dreams. Well then let's see here, Cloud contemplated, the dissolution of a sweet food in an apparatus usually used to clean yourself? But with a transactional, abutting capitalist undertone. And Aerith was doing it, perhaps unintentionally, for someone else (Cloud), without their knowledge, and not only without their knowledge but while ignoring their inquiry - actually, Cloud guessed it was *his* inquiry technically, about whether it was legal, as apparently this was somehow potentially 'insider trading'?

So she was repurposing an apparatus for cleansing the body to destroy large, life-like pieces of unhealthy food for Cloud, without his consent, Cloud meanwhile wondering if destroying this junk food in a bath tub was actually illegal? Of course in any dream they also should

consider whether what was represented was a representation of another representation, meaning maybe not an analogy at all? But if they proceeded as if what was represented in Aerith's dream appeared as it was intended to appear, then that would be a decent start. So, in a sense, Aerith thought, that she was cleaning particular attributes of Cloud without his permission, while Cloud was thinking - perhaps suspecting - that cleansing himself in this way may have actually been a type of insider trading, it could have been a very serious crime. Cloud noted that - Aerith, cleaning yourself was basically a crime against the state these days. No surprise there! Although Cloud liked a nice cookie every now and then, he didn't necessarily find anything that bad about eating a few cookies on occasion, but Cloud also found it intriguing that Aerith personally identified with the cookies as they broke apart and tumbled down the drain, that she saw a certain goodness, a specific *being* within them, and

subsequently felt a sadness at the fact they had to be washed down the drain of this bath tub. Even what's fundamentally bad for you isn't necessarily bad, Aerith noted. But yes, it was sad to see them fall apart in a bath tub faucet, huh? "Even the running shoes you need to toss into the trash are eternal," Cloud said.

.684 - .718 - .678 - .674

Cloud was for sure fine with whatever Tifa wanted to say to him ("I always want you to speak your mind!"), but he just wasn't going to back off his well-developed (in his mind) idea that the institution itself (as a concept) was basically *restrictive*, that they shouldn't necessarily care what's there in the container ("Category theory!"), but also that *eros was a gateway*. Tifa just wasn't certain that engaging in *that* in the bar, after hours - she didn't know, was that actually appropriate, Cloud?

Even if she wanted to do it! In the bar?! Of course, Cloud totally understood, but, again - just to reiterate - *eros* was a *gateway*. It didn't have to be about, you know, *purely that*. What? - was Tifa now gonna allow herself to be tyrannically restrained by the institutional norms of Shinra, et al? Was that now how she was gonna live her life? - by the contemptuous rules of Shinra? She could pop that pussy wide open whenever she wanted to! - if she really wanted to, even if it was just super quickly! (What exactly was the temperature in the room?)

There wasn't anything inherently out of bounds about any of that, assuming the correct context, because - well, no, Cloud wasn't saying he was in support of indiscriminate promiscuity - no, not at all! It needed to be rigorous - perhaps even ritualistic, and he wasn't even suggesting Tifa should ipso facto just quote-unquote pop that pussy open to spite the moral norms of Shinra - it was actually the opposite! No, Cloud was simply asserting she shouldn't *not* make beautiful

love in Seventh Heaven simply because of some societal Shinra code - she shouldn't allow herself, Tifa, to be regulated by an institutional entity whose primary purpose was the employment of the universal restriction. To Cloud it wasn't in any way, shape, or form Shinra's place to enforce any universal restrictions whatsoever. Fuck Shinra specifically and fuck the institution in a more generic sense. Ugh, shut up Cloud! He was kidding, wasn't he? Oh yeah! - Cloud admitted it was certainly possible he was exaggerating certain elements of his argument intentionally, in terms of the whole - well, you know - no, he wasn't suggesting Tifa should "pop that pussy" in the bar! No, that was absurd! Unless she wanted to! Because if she wanted to Tifa should know that Cloud took no offense, like, at all! They both laughed at themselves, but didn't he, Cloud, in the abstract *kind of* have a point? No, just listen for a second, Cloud said, please Tifa - he knew she felt an anxiety, from time to time, and according to Cloud it was

actually entirely possible that it was the anxiety of the younger Socrates. Namely, it was this anxiety that Tifa, she felt like she might have fallen into a pit of “bottomless nonsense” - this idea that there could be an actual *conceptual idea* behind all phenomena that had ever occurred, that every action she took had some *capital-I Idea* behind or above it, that every single sensory perception, every single moment of their lives emerged from some conceptual Idea behind it, that ideas themselves became sub-atomic particles which become multiplied into an infinite (“seeming!”) nonsense. It was an extreme vertigo to experience that without a doubt! - and Cloud was all too familiar with that type of madness himself! In fact, his entire experience in the ether, so to speak, was fundamentally in agreement with this anxiety of young Socrates. But what Cloud would say in response, to Tifa, to himself, to Socrates - what Cloud would say in reply is exactly what Parmenides said to this young Socrates himself, that

this anxiety was an anxiety of *youth* (“Cloud, we’re basically the exact same age . . .”), one that would be extinguished when she’d “*learned not to despise any of these things.*”

In short, Tifa shouldn’t allow Shinra mores - or, frankly, institutional mores from anywhere else for that matter! - to interfere with her own processes. That was all Cloud was saying really. If Tifa wanted to do *that* at Seventh Heaven, then, sure, that was fine! Well, Tifa appreciated the kind words, even if it was an awkward subject for Cloud of all people to be broaching, given the fact that it was kind of blatantly obvious that it was Cloud that Tifa would probably do *that* with in the bar. Why would they kid one another about that! But for Cloud’s part - no he didn’t care one way or the other - he just thought that when someone spent a decent chunk of time in the ether that it changed their perspective on that kind of shit - what conclusion, after all, should they draw from the contemplation of sensible objects? If she wanted to

bend over in her own bar, it wasn't philosophically out of bounds to him in the least. Like he said, to some extent eros was a gateway - they shouldn't view it simply *organically* or purely *sensibly* even if it was to some extent existent *inextricably within those realms*, at least from their perspectives in their bodies or whatever. A gateway to what though, Tifa wondered. To a different type of knowledge Cloud confirmed. Wasn't he against sensual empiricism, Tifa queried - but Cloud quickly countered that it was by amplifying the sensory experience, by *speeding it up* that the sensory experience itself was transcended - that was the whole *gateway* part. Again, Cloud wasn't arguing for any of this *indiscriminately!* - he was instead making the case that these amplifications couldn't be completely cut off! - that if *"other bitter and bilious humors wander about in the body and find no exit or escape, but are pent up within and mingle their own vapors with the motions of the soul, and are blended with them, they produce all*

sorts of diseases." That just like particles of matter could be sped up to create anti-gravitational waves, the sensory organs could be similarly sped in order to transcend themselves, basically. Cloud made a decent point, but had he heard back from Biggs and Wedge - were they going to make it to the little thing Tifa was hosting that Sunday? She just needed to, you know, *get a definite head count* so she could know how much food she'd need. Cloud hadn't heard back, and frankly he was finding it a little ridiculous at that point - because at the very least, to Cloud, they could at least *RSVP* one way or the other. Sure, of course, eros was a gateway - there couldn't be a totally *universal restriction* oppressing every single member of a society, but at the same time if a person couldn't RSVP to an event they basically should start eating mud out of troughs with pigs, in Cloud's view at least! People who refused to RSVP to events in a timely manner really had no place in polite society! - or, for that matter, in any society! That

was Cloud's perspective at least! And Tifa agreed! Frankly, she was getting a little frustrated with the whole process. She was, in her mind, doing a *nice thing* - throwing an Avalanche quote-unquote *Sunday Funday*, but she just needed to know a head count ASAP. It was already Wednesday night! Cloud noted that they'd sent out the invitations, like, two weeks back, and they hadn't even heard back from half of the potential attendees, which actually moved Cloud to think that maybe Tifa should just cancel the whole damn thing! But, no, Tifa was right - it was too late to cancel, because then *she'd* look like the asshole. Cloud thought that maybe that was preferable! Maybe that's what needed to happen! There needed to be *some* rules to this shit, right?

.805 - .679 - .675 - .699
.677 - .704 - .707 - .757

Cloud asked Barrett point blank right in Seventh Heaven:
What was capitalism really? - because that's what he was actually *philosophically opposed to* vis-a-vis Shinra, no? The mass production of mako energy - was that not fundamentally just free market capitalism at its finest? - and therefore wasn't capitalism just fundamentally a singularity of sorts, just a complete evisceration of memory, to the extent that memory is the context in which we construct ourselves, our societies? Cloud asserted that capitalism didn't give a fuck about that at all! - simply because capitalism *couldn't*, because if capitalism didn't ruthlessly pursue maximum profits, then *someone else* would. Cloud eventually asked Barrett if capitalism actually consisted of memory at all?

But Barrett didn't fucking know. The fuck did he even care - he was attempting to *make an active difference in things*. No, it didn't at all, did it? Capitalism was the singular focus sans memory par excellence - it sought an *increase* at whatever the cost, regardless of the context - driven by the hypothetical other, the hypothetical other moving capitalism to completely ignore memory holistically.

The only context in which capitalism would even remotely consider memory was in its *future forecasts*, but even those types of reports were fundamentally myopic in character, weren't they? Plus "past performance isn't indicative of future results!" And even a five year forecast would basically just cover the attention span of a beta fish in the grand scheme of things. No, Cloud said, capitalism clearly operated sans memory, as a singularity - and therefore was fundamentally an agent of destabilization from a political standpoint - he was agreeing with Barrett! Barrett wasn't

seeking agreement when Cloud then asked if there wasn't also something abutting *divine* to that type of singularity - to Cloud it was almost like the radiation poisoning of pure mako itself and shit, no? Capitalism as a singularity contained a divine element, in its radical rejection of memory capitalism was certainly divine-adjacent. It was like capitalism as an unfettered seeking of increase of expansion was *in itself* something worthy of praise in the abstract, but for an actual sensible society the employment of unrepentant capitalism was the most destabilizing and self-destructive political philosophy you could ever subscribe to! Capitalism was magnificent in the abstract, but if you actually subscribed to the theory in practice then you would almost definitely, in due time, totally destroy yourself and everything around you! Ultimately, Barrett reiterated that he didn't really have a ton of time to *discuss these types of details* - philosophical discussions wouldn't, after all,

fundamentally alter the rapid environmental destruction that was ongoing at the hands of Shinra! Cloud didn't disagree! Yet, at the same time, weren't the two of them at Seventh Heaven drinking fucking beers? How many draft beers had they drank at that point? They weren't gonna slow down Shinra's degradation of the planet via consuming draft beers either! Shit, bro. It was like - Cloud actually woke up that morning *thinking about memory* - not capitalism, but memory at least - about how he could be himself across multiple platforms and shit, but how, with that in mind, memory perhaps wasn't attached to Being itself either. Cloud was always concurrently multiple iterations of himself, and he to some extent partook in Being across those iterations, but at the same time - the thought occurred to Cloud that memory wasn't necessarily *attached to Being* at all times either? Being and memory - what was their exact relationship? That the soul could fundamentally be eternal, but if its being was disassociated from memory

as we understood it then obviously it would kind of be difficult to verify! As we tend to confirm experiences via memory and shit.

Barrett gulped down his eighth pint of Midgar Light but that didn't deter Cloud from prodding further at the point - namely, that fundamentally capitalism contained no memory, and Being itself perhaps only partially partook in memory? Was capitalism a form of being? No, it couldn't be! - not unless they took a static vantage point on an infinite urge to increase and expand, which, to some extent, wasn't that the drive of the infinite, which was fundamentally the transcendent, which was - no Being couldn't be transcendent, not totally, right? Cloud didn't think so. Barrett had had enough of this fucking shit! - and he slammed his mug of Midgar Light on the counter and moseyed out the bar (he'd heard about some new "Queen's Blood" thing that was being introduced to Sector Seven that he wanted to try anyway).

Tifa took the opportunity to ask Cloud if he'd had any encounters with - you know? - those *ruthless apparitions* that seemed to be haunting him intermittently since returning to Midgar? Well, Cloud was after all a *remade* man - in more ways than one, but no? Why? Who else around the slums had seen them recently? It was weird to Cloud, a little curious, he noted to Tifa, mostly because it seemed like sometimes (a) *he'd see* them, yet sometimes (b) no, he wouldn't necessarily *see* them but intuit them, but then other times - like the other day - (c) the apparitions would be everywhere for everyone to see, and he'd whip out his fucking Buster Sword with Tifa by his side. Tifa asked him to extrapolate on the triad of a-b-c, if he could.

She clearly wanted to assist Cloud in reaching the bottom of all of this, so to speak. Well, to Cloud, it was almost like the Eleatics were correct all along - that this type of phenomena - where sometimes (a) he'd see them and she wouldn't, sometimes (b) he wouldn't even

see them but he'd *feel them*, and then other times (c) they'd appear to the public at large, well, phenomena like that basically undermined the entire idea of empiricism via sense perception, no? If sense perception was something that they could reliably *employ as a first principle* to gather data and then *arrive at conclusions regarding the nature of the corporeal world* - then shit like what Cloud just described couldn't be possible, right? Cloud asked how could it possibly?! There had to be a separate first principle they'd need to reference. Also, he'd switch to Fernet if that was okay with Tifa? But the problem with this notion - both he and Tifa agreed (Tifa reluctantly agreed) - was that (a) there was *no evidence* that he saw them when others didn't, and (b) there was no evidence even to himself that he felt them when he didn't see them. Cloud could see them and he'd be sure that he saw them even if Tifa didn't - he'd have an empirical data point that he just couldn't prove! - but when Cloud simply *felt himself to be*

in communion with something formless and incorporeal, then even he couldn't be sure, from an empirical standpoint, what it was he experienced, because his experience lacked a form entirely - he didn't have a sense-based empirical data point to even prove to himself that he experienced anything! Tifa poured the Fernet and said something about wanting to believe Cloud.

At that point Cloud said, hearkening back to the point that previously caused Barret to stomp out of the bar, what was memory anyway? - if not this type of communion with a formless and incorporeal experience like these ruthless apparitions? After all, he remembered a boatload of shit that didn't necessarily have images attached! A lot of his memories were in fact formless feelings, but then - like some of Cloud's other encounters - did indeed contain images, but they featured images that *only appeared to Cloud*, just like Tifa's image-memories only appeared to her! So Cloud

was of the acute opinion that memories themselves were to some extent like these ruthless apparitions he'd been experiencing? - yet Tifa quickly corrected him, aptly pointing out that Cloud's memories, to the best of her knowledge, had never swarmed around Seventh Heaven and attacked innocent civilians? He had to grant that as true! - "but you know what I mean, Tifa." She did.

Cloud's memories were similar to those ruthless apparitions in terms of (a) and (b), but not in terms of (c). Cloud continued on to say, sipping a fresh Fernet, that the point more or less remained, that while sure memories were distinct, these apparitions - these unidentified flying apparitions, they fundamentally undermined the utility of our sense-perception, which was something, to Cloud's original point, that the Eleatics really emphasized. Tifa acknowledged Cloud's point about memory - she didn't necessarily disagree with it just because memories, to the best of their

knowledge, never physically manifested themselves in corporeal forms, that it struck Tifa as basically true that memory was a similar type of experience, something that they interacted with sometimes via an image that wasn't sensible to anyone else, and sometimes via a vague feeling that they couldn't even corroborate themselves! - even memory to some extent completely undermined the idea that our sensory faculties were reliable instruments to use to come to accurate conclusions about what we perceive to be the corporeal world.

Epilogue

.706 - .695 - .720 - .674 - .829 - .699
.728 - .716 - .726 - .713 - .756 - 846

Cloud knew that of course Aerith was suffering from this gnawing inkling that, you know, Cloud may have gone and *given away* the flower - or perhaps that was a tad too strong a phrase - maybe *passed along* was a better way to put it, that's what *Cloud* postulated at least - but in any case he knew that Aerith knew that he forwarded the flower, right? But how did she *come to possess that knowledge exactly?* - could it have possibly been via the under city whisper network? Or did Aerith come to realize Cloud gave the shit away via some sort of divine intuition?

Basically, Cloud was attempting to ascertain the *source origin* of Aerith's knowledge - was it opinion or intuition - whereas Aerith was chiefly concerned with the implications of the knowledge itself. She actually made it quite clear that she wasn't sure if Cloud's prevarications were *really the point* she was attempting to make when she brought the *whole flower re-gifting* up to Cloud - that the issue at hand wasn't, perhaps, *how* she obtained this particular knowledge, but instead *whether or not Cloud gave the flower away*, which to be fair she wasn't, like, *offended by* - Aerith was just a little curious? Who'd Cloud "forward" it to anyway? Tifa, right?

Of course it was Tifa - which was totally fine! They were actually friends! But Cloud, if possible, wanted to stay on this prior point - this epistemological point - because he thought there was a pretty important distinction to be found there, between knowing something via opinion - because, for instance, some Sector Six dipshit was yapping his fucking gums in the slum - or by contrast

becoming familiar in a more *pure* fashion. There was pure knowledge of things - and then there was bullshit you heard third hand from douchebags in the Sector Six Slums. Cloud felt like Aerith probably knew via the former method - could she confirm though?

Instead Aerith chose to posit the radical notion that maybe it could have been both? Sure, Cloud thought that was possible (he guessed . . .) - but he didn't think so - it was possible yet not probable - in fact, Cloud felt like he knew that Aerith knew, no, not via some whisper network, no, not by opinion at all, but instead by direct intuition.

And it just so happened that it was by his own intuitive capabilities that Cloud knew that Aerith knew that he gave that very fucking flower away via her own intuition, not by any lurid rumor monger frolicking shamelessly in the slums. Were there any rumor mongers frolicking shamelessly in the slums though? Spreading

disinformation about Cloud giving away flowers to a plethora of women in Midgar!

No, that wasn't the way Aerith had accessed her knowledge - not at all. Anyway, Aerith thought maybe Cloud should consider thinking twice before giving away flowers again. That was all. Not that she was particularly perturbed. Not in the least actually! But maybe Cloud could just - hypothetically - if a girl like her were to give him a beautiful yellow flower in the middle of Midgar, maybe he should *hold onto the thing!* Or at the very least don't go and give it to some other fucking chick! Was it really that difficult to just continually keep a single flower on your person?

Not that it was Aerith's business anyway, because clearly if Cloud *wanted* to gift the flower to Tifa - sure that was fine, it was totally his option if that's how he wanted to go about it, but didn't Cloud think it was just a little rude? No, instead he thought that there was a notable distinction between the two types of knowledge - but if

Aerith did so happen to *hear it in the street*, then would she be willing to tell Cloud who was flapping their lips? Was anyone out in the slums specifically looking to rat his spiky ass out? In any case, regardless of all that, Cloud totally understood where Aerith was coming from, and he guessed he just wasn't really thinking at the time, when he re-gifted the flower - Tifa took note of the flower, and he didn't want to go into the whole *flower girl* anecdote, so he figured it might be kind of nice to, you know, pass along the love? Aerith repeated the phrase *pass along the love* in a way that, quite amazingly, wasn't completely filled to the brim with consternation and contempt.

To Cloud there was something *ineffably true* about *contemplating the female form*, in its blunt physical iteration - there was *no lurid opinion* present within it, although Cloud didn't explicitly express this idea to Aerith at the time, given her reticence to engage in the *opinion versus intuition* dichotomy he started the

conversation with - yet he was still obviously contemplating her form as this back and forth occurred. Her typical philosophical disposition when it came to love triangles was waning just slightly - this little flower incident seemed to almost rile her up emotionally, although it was clear to Cloud when she repeated the phrase *pass along the love* that she wasn't entirely riled up. Not yet at least.

Aerith finally confirmed for Cloud that, yes, it was via pure intuition she'd surmised *her flower* no longer resided on his person, and sure she agreed that there was a certain distinction between the two types of knowledge. Cloud then asked Aerith what she thought was the cause of each type - well, obviously opinion consisted of literal *whisper* networks, she said, from what people saw and heard and all that. This allowed Cloud to note that wasn't everything Shinra was working on - especially Hojo - was that not basically another *whisper network*, that Hojo, despite being a so-called

scientist, was simply working off of what he and his associates *heard and saw*?

Aerith was tempted to say Hojo's operation was a more systematic version of that, yes, but instead abruptly cut herself off, because when she considered it further she concluded the under city whisper networks were actually quite complex themselves! So instead she accused Cloud of changing the subject, then she noted that, actually, *she* wanted to shift topics, but not to the so-called whisper networks of Hojo versus the well-known whisper networks of the Sector Six Slums, no! No, Cloud understood. Even he didn't even really want to talk about Hojo! Maybe he *was* obfuscating. Cloud apologized, but Aerith said it wasn't necessary, there was no sorry needed really - they probably shouldn't beat a dead horse, so to speak. But, ugh - what a horrendous turn of phrase. No, Cloud agreed - it was a terrible saying, a scumbag saying, really - Hojo probably would do it though, beat a dead horse? - and

then fucking, like, inject it with mako or some shit, make it a mutant steed! Gross! Fucking loser!

.673 - .765 - .677 - .692 - .740 - .753
.683 - .712 - .671 - .768 - .702 - .687

Cloud just at that moment had begun to recapitulate, this time to the two of them - Aerith *and* Tifa - how it wasn't actually the case that he'd *seen* the being, no, there wasn't in fact an actual physical *being* in that sense of the phrase - it wasn't like the men in the black cloaks they'd be following in Rebirth (were either of them familiar with that plotline yet?). He'd just began to explain this to the both of them, and Cloud didn't feel any different about it necessarily - the fact that he was telling the *both* of them - Tifa was behind the bar and Aerith just happened to *be there*.

It was fine. Were they familiar with Rebirth yet? Probably not, right? But no, in this case Cloud had been fucking,

you know, just sitting on this carpet in Wutai at the time - he sat on the carpet cross-legged - and then he suddenly intuited a purely divine being emanating in the triangle head encapsulated in the perfectly square design that repeated endlessly throughout the entire carpet.

This triangle head was what Cloud could only describe as a “laughing Allah”. That’s how it struck him. There wasn’t really a question about it in Cloud’s mind and it was actually beautiful. Yes, a “laughing Allah” was the only way he could describe the divine being, which certainly communicated with him as he sat cross-legged in Wutai in a somewhat mystical manner, albeit not quite verbally, but the being certainly communicated in a way that caused Cloud to smile.

Cloud, *smile?! The two women found that totally hilarious! Tifa nearly fucked up the beer she was pouring she was so surprised to hear Cloud of all people talking about *himself smiling*. But neither Tifa nor Aerith*

found this anecdote of Cloud's to be *disingenuous* in any way - in fact they both fully supported Cloud's confessions and more often than not even found them legitimately intriguing (but there were, of course, some exceptions!), albeit they generally found the anecdotes intriguing in a one-on-one setting, as opposed to this FFM arrangement. But that was clearly fine! It just so happened Aerith was *around* and she popped in the bar. No big deal at all!

Yet, while contemplating whether or not another Moscow Mule was advisable or not, Cloud expressed quite vigorously that he wanted to relay a subsequent anecdote that he viewed apropos of the carpet encounter, if that was okay? Of course! Well, specifically it was that when he popped into his local co-op grocery store that morning, for just a few minor items, a couple hand fruits really, and the new cashier asked him - right as he shifted his headphones up off of his ears to start the formalized sales transaction - if his

brother “or something” went there sometimes? - to the grocery store? Did Cloud have a brother by any chance? Because she, the new cashier, felt like she’d seen him before?

Well, Cloud said to the cashier, thinking about it for a second he found it quite possible that this alleged doppelganger was actually fucking just him! - Cloud himself! - that the cashier was in that particular instance confusing Cloud for his actual self, that this cashier only believed she’d seen someone who looked just like Cloud before because she’d, in fact, *seen Cloud before*. He walked away just momentarily, he told Tifa and Aerith, just to toss his basket back into the stack of baskets behind the automatic doors. Yeah, he’d take one more Mule, please Tifa? The new cashier was chuckling when Cloud arrived back at the checkout counter ready to pay for his shit - she was in the process of entering the item number for his red quinoa, chuckling alone - “it could’ve been you” she repeated,

chuckling, but then, Cloud relayed to Tifa and Aerith, she actually came around to Cloud's particular hypothesis.

The new cashier, after thinking about it, came to agree with Cloud, that she actually probably *had* seen him in the grocery store before, and that she'd just now erroneously figured he had a brother, when in fact this hypothetical brother was actually just Cloud himself. Tifa considered, after she'd ingested the full anecdote and served Cloud his refreshed Moscow Mule, that it was somewhat likely that the cashier wanted to quote-unquote *suck his cock*, and Cloud didn't necessarily disagree with the notion! - he certainly considered it possible, that this cashier may have been amenable to something like that, but that wasn't quite the point! There was a type of wisdom latent in the exchange, wasn't there? - regardless of whether or not the cashier wanted to perform fellatio on Cloud?

Aerith, by contrast, took a more philosophical angle to her analysis of the encounter, because she agreed with Cloud that the cashier exhibited a certain spiritual insight, even if it was inadvertent. Aerith, for her part, didn't put much of any stock into the cashier's *intentions*, whether or not they were sordid, benign, or simply indifferent. Upon acknowledging this Tifa noted that she recognized Aerith's point of view as valid, that it was probably the "right way to take it in," even if she, Tifa, wasn't personally at the point of participating in quite that level of objectivity (if they could, in fact, call it that).

Cloud noted that, at the end of the day, he couldn't help it if a certain person felt an urge to suck his cock - that whether or not someone wanted to suck *anyone's cock* is something ultimately unknowable, that he couldn't simply toss potential spiritual encounters to the wayside purely because of a purported sordid subtext or intention.

Both women agreed with this, yet perhaps Aerith just a tad more than Tifa? - not to say Tifa was somehow *beside herself with jealousy* in any material way - no, this distinction between Tifa and Aerith was probably rooted more so in Aerith's basically absurd ability to remain philosophically undeterred about other women while steeped in an obvious love triangle. Did she even like Cloud, really?

Because it was really quite evident that Cloud, Tifa, and Aerith were collectively entwined in a sort of *love triangle*, but Aerith, for her part, maintained quite the unique ability to remain essentially *philosophical* about it all - she didn't seem to allow feelings of jealousy to overcome her in the least when Cloud relayed anecdotes about cashiers that, if the three were being honest, clearly wanted to whip the guy's cock out and suck on it for an extended interval of time. Did she even really *like* Cloud? His individual feelings on the situation

were a little ambiguous, even to when he was all alone.
Cloud was of course incapable of assessing his own
feelings for somewhat obvious reasons.

