

# The Clarity of Clouds



a collection of prose poems  
by David B. McCoy

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## Biography & Acknowledgements

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David B. McCoy is a Social Studies teacher in a township school near Massillon, Ohio, and an ordained member of the Spiritual Humanist Clergy.

Since 1979, David has run *Spare Change Press*, which in 2007 went to a web-based format for its Solo Flyer.

David is the author of *Ohio Wineries Guidebook*; *Geometry of Blue*; *Voices from Behind the Mask*; and the Internet books *Buffalo Time* and *The Book of Afternoon Naps*.



Acknowledgements:

*Poetry Cemetery*: Tears; Evening Fog; Young Clayton Cloud; Foghorn; Cloud Terrorist  
*Full Circle, A Journal of Poetry & Prose*: Fidel Castro Cloud; Cloud Seeding; Boxcar  
Clouds

*Problem Child*: Things We Need to Know About Clouds; Top Hat Cloud; Adolescent  
Clouds

*Color Wheel*: Igor Cloud

*Real Eight View*: The Dance; Clouds; The Old Man; Cloudsville

*Big Toe Review*: Sign

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*What is more appealing than an azure sky  
if not the docile clarity of a cloud?*

Francis Pond

*The fog is rising.*  
Emily Dickenson's last words

*Dance this mess around.*  
The B-52s

## Cloud Seeding

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During the last half of the twentieth century, cloud seeding became all the rage. From airplanes, seeds of different farm crops were dropped into large billowing clouds, creating healthy, well-watered banks of agricultural crops in the sky.

Peas, corn, alfalfa, hay, soybeans all grew in abundance and floated across the sky like helium floats in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Assessing the economic potential they had been handed, clouds soon cornered the market on agricultural exports in North America.

This, of course, led Midwestern farmers to launch their long, but unsuccessful lobbying of Congress to have cloud seeding declared an environmental safety hazard.

## Tears

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Great-Great Grandmother belonged to an Indian tribe out West. It is said that when she was sad, she would wipe her tears away with nearby clouds. When the clouds were tear-filled, she would release them to carry her tears to Midwest farms in the form of mild, summer rains.

When Great-Great Grandmother had angry tears, caused by her drunken husband or foolish children, the clouds that were filled with these tears sometimes spawned tornadoes.

Great-Great Grandmother regretted the death and destruction caused by her anger, but knew it was not her place to break the cycle.

## Clouds

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One spring afternoon a father and his son venture outside to enjoy cloud formations.

After a few minutes, the son says, *Look, Dad, two fingers touching*. When they look around, they are sitting on ceiling-high scaffolding in the Sistine Chapel.

After a few minutes, the son says, *Look, Dad, that cloud looks like an igloo* and discovers they are members of a clan of Asians crossing the Bearing Strait.

After a few minutes, the boy says *That cloud looks like the face of a Neanderthal*, and they find themselves sitting around a circle of stones watching an awfully hairy man rub two sticks together.

Before his son has a chance to look up again, the father says, *How about if we go inside; I'd hate to meet up with any dinosaurs*.

## Cloudsville

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In the Cloudsville Public Library, you will discover that the shelves contain books pertaining only to clouds: the psychology of clouds, the philosophy of clouds, clouds and religion, the statistics of clouds, the economics of clouds, the social welfare of clouds, the education of clouds, the language of clouds, the mathematics of clouds, the physics of clouds, clouds and the medical sciences, clouds and agriculture, clouds in architecture, clouds in paintings, photography and clouds, clouds in films, clouds in literature, and the history of clouds. And even in the glass bookcase behind the head librarian's desk, you will find a reserved collection entitled *The Secret Life of Clouds*.

## Top Hat Clouds

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Near the end of the Top Hat Era of the nineteenth century, men rejected the traditional silk and beaver felt top hats for hats made from clouds. Unlike the static-shaped traditional top hats, cloud top hats were dynamic—their appearance always changing. Men of the arts preferred the wispy, feather-like style of the Cirrus Top Hat; middle class men preferred the Altocumulus Top Hat which appeared layered with a wavy demeanor; but the powerful business men preferred the Cumulus Top Hat with its vertical development and skyscraper appearance. A few oddballs in each city preferred the Funnel Cloud Top Hat, but they were seldom invited to social gatherings.

## Sign

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After extensive research, it has been determined that the bank of billowing, feather-like clouds moving around the Midwest is comprised of evaporated chickens.

At first, it was thought to be a gathering of angels; then maybe a huddle of cherubs trying to keep warm.

The church has yet to release an official statement. They seem to be in some disagreement as to how this heavenly sign should be interpreted.

## **Boxcar Clouds**

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During the years of the Dust Bowl, when a cloud couldn't be found for miles, hell for states, all the ranchers and cowboys boarded a one hundred boxcar train and headed east.

There they rounded up all the rain clouds the East had to offer and jam-packed them into the empty boxcars and returned West.

Once released, the thinking went, the broiling soil would cause the rain clouds to suddenly rise and release more than abundant moisture.

For as long as the trip took, the clouds held up pretty well. But when the doors to the boxcars were opened, the clouds refused to leave their new home and the Dust Bowl continued.

## Scab Clouds

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The sheep of sleep have gone on strike. Oh, for the usual things: back pay, better feed, longer vacations. Parents are in a state of panic—can't seem to get their kids to sleep before midnight. To resolve the crisis, the National Parents' Association has begun to hire strike-breaking clouds which double as sheep jumping over white picket fences. While this seems to have pacified the children, negotiations appear to be in the doldrums.

## Baseball

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A boy, who is out playing baseball with his friends, smashes a high fly that disappears in the clouds.

Wanting to play some more ball, the boy climbs up into the cloud and begins his search.

All the boy finds is an arrow whose paint-marks says that it belonged to an Indian named Crouching Bull.

Returning to Earth, the boy learns Crouching Bull has been dead over two-and-a-half centuries.

Grateful for having the arrow returned, members of Crouching Bull's family join in the search for the ball. Once found, they even hang around to watch a few innings.

## The Cloud Family

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The social worker briefly glanced through the folder labeled, “The Cloud family.” A mother, father, and two children, one boy, one girl.

When the social worker walked into the conference room, she found, well, four clouds. She had never treated clouds before.

Not knowing where to begin, she asked, “Now, what seems to be the problem?” *It’s our son, Nadir, he’s always running off with those Tornado boys and tearing things up.*

“Well, what do you think led to this behavior?” *I’m afraid we’ve always been a bit lax, not just with Nadir, but also with our daughter Aurora.* “I see. Continue.”

*It all started when we lived out West and let Nadir play with the Chinook boys. By the time we got to Iowa, he was running with those Tornadoes.*

“And when you tried keeping Nadir home, what happened?” *He’d throw a tantrum—hurl things around, run out of the house.*

“Mrs. Cloud, how would you describe your family?” *Oh, I feel like a bunch of gypsies. My husband here just lays around all day; our son is out destroying or stealing things, and our daughter, well, she’s got one stormy personality.*

“Right.”

## Cloud Personalities

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The cloud on the barstool next to me all of a sudden turns and says, “You humans don’t know squat about clouds and the souls of the dead. Contrary to that pipedream about heaven and life after death, clouds are the only place souls go when a human dies. What else would explain our multiple personalities after a few drinks?”

## Igor Cloud

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Igor Cloud was schooled in classical music and is quite an accomplished harpist. Today, he no longer plays the harp because he is serving time in the Cloud Correctional Institution. Igor was convicted for disrupting outdoor country music festivals with deadly rain and hail. Secretly, he has broad support from the cloud community, but the head cloud magistrate is lead singer for the *Clouds-in-the-Sky* country music group.

## Equation

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Today, clouds are as scarce as straight guys in a gay bar. And yes, the sky is blue, but not like the blue skies out West which are a Boy-Scout-uniform blue—the type of uniform gay kids aren't allowed to wear.

I guess then the overall equation is about the same: there are no gay kids in blue Boy Scout uniforms and there are no clouds in this poem.

## Circus Cloud

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*Most of the time people are content with passing their hand through me. Some like to take a karate chop to see me momentarily divided in half. Little girls, I like best—their tiny hands reach so tentatively for the smallest whiff. Teenaged boys are the worst with their spitting. If it were only gum, I wouldn't mind, but the tobacco spit repulses me. I prefer Northern states to Southern—that Southern humidity reeks havoc on my sinuses. It's not the most romantic job, but considering where most clouds end up, it's pretty tolerable.*

## **The White Flood**

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It's admirable on the part of clouds to descend throughout the night and flood the air white—leaving a cool blanket of moisture covering everything.

While it will do nothing to ease this month-long drought, it does remind us that there is moisture enough in the world and all that is needed is a little patience.

But in the midst of being patient, it must also be assumed that some divine power is simply using clouds as a giant mold with the intent of creating another world more to its liking.

## Adolescent Clouds

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Agony for adolescent clouds is to be stalled for days or weeks on end with no wind.

When the boredom becomes unbearable, especially over the Bible Belt or Eastern Europe, they like to get together and form the faces of religious leaders such as Christ, Mary, the Pope. Mother Theresa is a hit these days.

At night, they roll in laughter at the number of people they attract and wonder how long they can keep egging people on without getting into trouble.

When over Texas, they prefer to do Madalyn Murray O'Hair. It was so good once back during the 1970s, that they even got Phyllis Schlafly out to take a look.

## The Sheep and the Cloud

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One day a sheep grazed too close to a barbed-wire fence which took the opportunity to take a piece of wool from the sheep.

The sheep, knowing what kind of fashion statement this missing patch of wool would make on the other sheep, devised a plan.

Waiting for the biggest, fluffiest cloud to float by, the sheep, in its best pathetic voice said, “Oh, kind cloud, would you please wipe the tears from my eyes caused by that wool-snatching fence?”

The cloud, in the classic style of Neville Chamberlain, soon discovered it had been tricked and was now permanently affixed to the sheep’s bare spot.

Not fully grasping its predicament, the cloud asked, “But who will now dry my tears.”

## **Evening Fog: A metaphorical tale**

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Night was falling fast when Evening Fog drifted in. He was a prisoner of the wind and the blazing heat of the afternoon. His eyes were the color of denim blue skies, but you could see he was haunted by a deepening gloom.

The smell of things both living and dead mixed in the air, and thunder scattered crows from a nearby tree. And there was Evening Fog, hot and dusty, silently ushering evening into the lonely desert.

## Young Clayton Cloud

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Young Clayton Cloud was *bored* out of his mind making the usual cloud formations: faces, animals, monuments, flowers, zodiac signs, mythological gods.

If he had to “make” something, he wanted it to be art, and modern art at that.

Clayton wanted to *be* Claes Oldenburg, or Henry Moore, or Robert Holmes. And if a flower, then an O’Keeffe flower; if a face, then a Cezanne face.

At the very least, he would be a Jim Dine robe.

## **Fidel Castro Cloud**

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Despite Mafia hit men, military invasions, assassination attempts, radio and air-dropped propaganda, poisoned cigars, booby-trapped seashells, infected wet suits, one mother of a cloud in the shape of Fidel Castro keeps appearing off the Florida coast about an hour after sunrise.

Unlike his remarkable imitation of a piece of Limburger cheese during the Anita Hill witch-hunt, Ted Kennedy insists that this cloud cannot continue to appear over US waters.

The CIA is being characteristically smug about the whole thing.

## Fog Horn

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There aren't many things clouds despise, but the foghorn is one of them. To clouds it appears as if man is attempting to take "the view from those who have as much right to it" as anyone else.

A five-second, deep throated blast every half minute throughout the night! Such arrogance from such late-comers. Even before man crawled onto land, clouds were hovering around the coastlines of the world.

And the loneliness in those long, repeated groans: salt-faced men off deadly shoals, headlands, and outcrops of rock; worried wives and daughters; sons yearning to sail off to false dreams.

## Cloud Terrorist

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For all the crap we daily pump into the atmosphere, civilization is faced with yet another terrorist: the cloud terrorist.

Looking very innocent with a calm appearance, it descends and engulfs the upper floors of skyscrapers.

Once most of a building is nothing more than a bank of white—in movement so imperceptible as to make icebergs envious—the cloud terrorist floats away with the upper floors snugly concealed within its white mass.

Reports of widespread arrests of suspected clouds are beginning to emerge, but government officials refuse to confirm anything.

## Things We Need to Know about Clouds

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after Lila Zeiger

1. Have cloud stocks ever been considered to be included in the Dow Jones average?
2. Are clouds hermaphrodites?
3. Did Luke Howard (1772-1864), “The Godfather of Clouds,” love his wife as much as he loved clouds?
4. “Did you ever notice how cooled barbecue briquettes look just like clouds?”
5. Do clouds find Andy Rooney as annoying as we do?
6. Do clouds self-segregate or are there cloud versions of Jim Crow?
7. Do clouds earn royalties every time someone uses the Windows cloud wallpaper?
8. What ever happened to the clouds that posed for O’Keeffe’s *Above the Clouds* series?
9. Was that a cloud I heard singing, “I get no kicks from propane?”
10. Where do clouds bury their dead?
11. Does “You make me wet” mean the same to clouds as it does to beautiful women?
12. Do clouds resent being pushed around?
13. Do clouds have lucky numbers?
14. Do clouds accept contrails as distant cousins?

## Sylvia Plath Cloud

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—Love is the bone and sinew of my curse.

One day a woman is pushing a pram around London's Primrose Hill. Inside the pram is a baby cloud which bears a striking resemblance to Sylvia Plath.

On this day, Ted Hughes is out jogging and comes upon the woman pushing the pram.

“Oh, Mr. Hughes, you really must take a look at my baby cloud. It bears a striking resemblance to Sylvia Plath.”

Ted Hughes stops dead in his tracks. “Are you pissed or what?”

“Mr. Hughes, look for yourself. My baby cloud bears a striking resemblance to your dead wife.”

“Sod off, it's only a cloud and it looks nothing like Sylvia.”

All of sudden, in a very small voice, the cloud says, “Well, hello, Ted. I'm glad you've returned to the city where men are mended.”

## **Dream Cloud**

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In my dream I am presenting this manuscript to a publisher. As the publisher begins leafing through the pages, I notice the pages are no longer made of paper but of clouds—every kind of cloud imaginable. “I’m sorry,” he says, “we just did a cloud book last year and it didn’t sell worth a damn.”