

Poetry and Atmosphere Prolegomena to a Philology of Air

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The essay explores the relationship between atmosphere and poetry, highlighting the phenomenality of air as a crucial element for understanding the world and human dynamics. As an integral part of the atmosphere, air eludes traditional linear models, requiring a volumetric and transdisciplinary approach. From a geo-poetic perspective, the concept of atmosphere is examined through the works of Rainer Maria Rilke and Gottfried Benn, two central figures in the literary modernity of the 20th century. The thesis argues that their poetics represent the shift in atmospheric paradigms at the dawn of the 20th century: from the symbolic-therapeutic view of air, typical of the late 18th century and still influential before the First World War, to a world shaped and traumatised by the technological malleability and adaptability of air.

KEYWORDS: *atmosphere, air, modern poetry, geo-poetics, eco-criticism*

Federico Italiano, *Poetry and Atmosphere. Prolegomena to a Philology of Air*, in «Studi Germanici», 26 (2024), pp. 329-352

ISSN: 0039-2952

DOI: 10.82007/SG.2024.26.13



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1. SUBTLE TOPOLOGIES

Wherever we happen to be, we coexist in the air, within a gaseous element that we pass through as it passes through us, a highly specific mixture of nitrogen and oxygen, with shifting traces of other gases, that permeates and sustains us. Especially when we do not notice its presence, we exist in perfect biotic equilibrium with a given atmospheric condition that affects our behaviour – sometimes more, sometimes less. Even the enclosed air of a building can influence us, inspiring or oppressing us. If, for example, I were to open the window of the study where I am currently writing or turn on the air conditioning, the air quality would change immediately: the carbon dioxide I exhale would drastically decrease, while oxygen would increase, with generally beneficial effects on my synapses, my perception and thinking, and perhaps even on the work I am doing. However, that same air – were I, say, in an apartment overlooking a busy, crowded street – might mix with rising exhaust fumes and various other odours, which could affect my concentration.

If studying the air is essential for understanding atmospheric conditions, then to grasp the relationship between poetry and atmosphere, we must, in a sense, become philologists of the air. However, before we can do so, it is crucial to reflect on how to conceive of atmosphere itself, as air is an integral part of it. Traditional linear approaches – whether geometric, topographical or narratological – are insufficient for a transdisciplinary yet still humanistic understanding of atmosphere. A storm, for instance, is not a coherent, self-contained mass moving from one point in the sky to another. Rather, it is movement in and of itself, an ‘unrolling’, a process that generates a calm centre within its eye. As it unfurls at its leading edge, it simultaneously develops in retreat, rolling backward. As observed

by the anthropologist Tim Ingold, in theoretical debates, it is the ground that tends to dominate¹.

The ground functions as an interface not only between the earth and the atmosphere but, more fundamentally, between the domains of agency and materiality. Consequently, we tend to imagine the medium through which organisms and people move as they carry out their activities as immaterial and marginal.

This also explains the virtual absence of weather from philosophical debates, Ingold argues: «It is a result of the logic of inversion – a logic that places occupation movement across before movement through, surface before medium. In the terms of this logic, the weather is simply unthinkable»². As Stuart Elden writes: «Just as the world does not just exist as a surface, nor should our theorisations of it [...] space is volumetric»³. To understand the world in which we live and breathe, we must think in volumetric dimensions, we cannot limit ourselves to areas or perimeters. And to do so, we must think about and study the air. But what traces, what trails, should we follow in studying it? Do they even exist in the air?

‘Trace’ is a profound and highly useful concept, yet it is of little relevance in an atmospheric dimension: a trace is a surface-bound notion. Traces form on surfaces; they require a stable substrate on which to be imprinted, to take shape and to persist for some time. Even their absence or ghostly presence needs a background to refer to. In the air, however, we find traces of fumes, mists, odours and scents. We could metaphorically call these aerial phenomena ‘traces’, but it would not be an accurate description.

The topology of weather is conceptually close to the open, smooth world of Deleuze and Guattari – a topology extraordinarily subtle, like that of a desert of sand or ice. Of the air, we might say, quoting *A Thousand Plateaus*, that it possesses

an extraordinarily fine topology that relies not on points or objects but rather on haecceities, on sets of relations (winds, undulations of snow or sand, the song of the sand or the creaking of ice, the tactile qualities of both). It is a tactile space, or rather ‘haptic’, a sonorous much more than a visual space⁴.

1 Tim Ingold, *Being Alive. Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, Routledge, London 2011, p. 73.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Stuart Elden, *Secure the Volume: Vertical Geopolitics and the Depth of Power*, in «Political Geography», 34 (2013), pp. 35-51: 49.

4 Gill Deleuze – Felix Guattari, *Mille plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2* (1980),

These sets of relations, these *haecceities*, are not what we perceive; rather, they are what we perceive *with*. Much like light, we do not see light itself, but we see *within* light. Thus, to paraphrase Tim Ingold once more, perceiving the medium in which we move – the air, the wind, the atmosphere – does not mean searching for the things contained within it or discerning their fixed forms and arrangements. Instead, it means joining them in the material flows and movements that contribute to their – and our – continuous formation⁵. To inhabit the world, to dwell in the open, is not to be fixed upon the outer surface of the earth but to be engaged in the substantial and aerial flows of what Tim Ingold calls the «weather-world»⁶.

To perceive and to act in the weather-world is to align one's own conduct to the celestial movements of sun, moon and stars, to the rhythmic alternations of night and day and of the seasons, to rain and shine, sunlight and shade. For the weather engulfs the landscape just as the sight of things is engulfed by the experience of light, the hearing of things by the experience of sound, and the touch of things by the experience of feeling⁷.

The entomologist Justin O. Schmidt, known for inventing the insect sting pain index – something that is, incidentally, both profoundly poetic and relentlessly scientific – shows in his book *The Sting of the Wild* how wasps and bees are irritated by our breath due to its high carbon dioxide content⁸. Naturally, this is an evolutionary trait of their species, warning them of potential dangers posed by lurking mammals, especially bears and hominids. Yet it also vividly illustrates how the medium that connects living beings is far from neutral or immaterial; rather, it is a substance endowed with agency and materiality. Just as bees and wasps are alarmed by our scent trails, so too are our own consciousness permeated, unsettled, astounded, frightened, drawn in, calmed or transformed by scent trails and the endless permutations of air.

Thus, our fears and desires also become matter, as they penetrate, move and stir the materiality of the air through odours and pheromones, becoming part of our respiratory mechanism. Air is thus not

Engl. transl. by Brian Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1987, p. 382.

⁵ Ingold, *Being Alive*, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁸ Justin O. Schmidt, *The Sting of the Wild*, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore 2016.

merely a participant in interaction but, rather, the very condition of interaction. Air is what enables things to interact with one another. As we breathe, air mingles with our bodily tissues, filling our lungs and oxygenating our blood. Even the wind co-participates in our existence, just as we do in its own: «Inhalation is wind becoming breath, exhalation is breath becoming wind»⁹. As environmental philosopher David Macauley writes, we «breathe, think and dream in the regions of the air»¹⁰.

We are not merely ‘meteo-logical’ beings – who scrutinise, observe and study the weather – but, given our inescapable biotic interaction with air and atmosphere we are, in every sense of the word, ‘meteo-pathic’ beings. We feel and are affected by the weather; we are an integral part of it, perceiving and thinking with it, and in turn, being shaped by it.

From what has been discussed so far, it should be clear that the atmosphere referenced in these pages is not the aesthetic-philosophical concept associated with *Stimmung* and *Aura*, terms that rose to prominence in the early 20th century and were later revitalised in the theoretical work of philosopher Gernot Böhme, particularly in *Atmosphäre*¹¹. This is not to say that such an approach does not interest me, quite the opposite. However, it belongs to a much broader field of reflection that both encompasses and simultaneously eludes the aims of this study. In Böhme’s concept of *Atmosphäre*, meteorological and aerial references serve merely as accessories to his introduction of the conceptual framework of *aesthesis* – sensory perception – at the foundation of his ökologische *Naturästhetik* (ecological aesthetics of nature). What concerns the German philosopher is the establishment of a new aesthetics capable of moving beyond the dominant semiotic approach to artistic judgement and reception. His aim is to unify a general theory of aesthetic labour – understood as the creation of atmospheres – with a theory of perception in the strict sense, where perception is conceived as the experience of the presence of people and objects in a given environment¹².

9 Ingold, *Being Alive*, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

10 David Macauley, *The Flowering of Environmental Roots and the Four Elements in Presocratic Philosophy: from Empedocles to Deleuze and Guattari*, in «Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion», 9 (2005), 3, pp. 281-314: 307, quoted in Ingold, *Being Alive*, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

11 Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1995.

12 On the concept of atmosphere in the aesthetic-philosophical sense, see also the writings of Italian philosopher Tonino Griffero, who also translated Gernot

In these pages, air – the realm of ἀήρ, of vapour – is explicitly examined in its phenomenality, its powerful and unequivocal materiality and, crucially, in its emergence as a geopoetic factor of immense critical-aesthetic and eco-critical significance. Specifically, I will explore a paradigm shift in the perception of air at the beginning of the 20th century – one that is as important as it is, curiously, understudied – by tracing its defining features through the ‘atmospheric’ texts of two exemplary and unquestionably canonical authors: Rainer Maria Rilke and Gottfried Benn.

2. GÖRBERSDORF, 1854: THE QUALITY OF AIR

As early as 1621, in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (published in six editions up to 1660)¹³, Robert Burton, in a chapter titled ‘Digression of Air’, claims that the quality of air plays a crucial role in the diverse flourishing of life on Earth. He specifically observes that, depending on the state of the air in which they live, individuals may be indolent, robust, witty, subtle, orderly, clean, rustic, sickly or healthy. He cites, for instance, the Egyptians, who were distinguished by their intelligence and hilarity, attributing these traits to the pure air they breathed, in contrast to the Boeotians of Greece – dull and heavy-minded, the crass Βοῖοῖ – whose sluggishness he ascribes to the «foggy air» of their homeland¹⁴.

The Egyptians by all geographers are commended to be *hilares*, a conceited and merry nation: which I can ascribe to no other cause than the serenity of their air. They that live in the Orcades are registered by Hector Boethius and Cardan, to be of fair complexion, long-lived, most healthful, free from all manner of infirmities of body and mind, by reason of a sharp purifying air, which comes from the sea. The Boeotians in Greece were dull and heavy, crassi Βοῖοῖ, by reason of a foggy air in which they lived, Βοῖοῖ in crasso jurares ære natum, Attica most acute, pleasant, and refined. The clime changes not so much customs, manners, wits (as Aristotle Polit. lib. 6. cap. 4. Vegetius, Plato, Bodine, method. hist. cap. 5. hath proved at large) as constitutions of their bodies, and temperature itself. In all particular provinces we see it confirmed by experience, as the air is, so are the inhabitants, dull, heavy, witty, subtle, neat, cleanly, clownish, sick, and sound¹⁵.

Böhme, and especially his volume *Atmosferologia. Estetica degli spazi emozionali*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2010.

¹³ Quoted in Robert Burton *et al.*, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 3 vols., George Bell and Sons, London 1912, vol. II.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, his reflections were not entirely unprecedented. In his proto-statistical and politico-medical treatise *On Airs, Waters and Places* (*Περὶ αἰέρων, υδάτων καὶ τόπων*), written around 400 BCE, Hippocrates had already identified air as one of the fundamental elements of climate and, consequently, as crucial to human well-being. However, Burton went beyond the father of medicine, arguing that air, as the most subtle and elusive component of climate itself, could generate variations within a single climatic framework. In doing so, he provided a microclimatic explanation *ante litteram* of the environmental diversities that the approximate (macro-)climatic classifications of antiquity failed to fully grasp.

Alongside the emergence of the first scientific studies on air movement, which laid the foundation for modern meteorology, from Edmund Halley's trade wind map (1688)¹⁶ to George Hadley's wind cell (1735)¹⁷, the 18th century saw a growing belief in the therapeutic effects of air. As a result, so-called climatic cures and air baths became increasingly widespread as means of strengthening the body and preventing illnesses. These practices were particularly recommended for respiratory ailments, as fresh air was believed to promote both physical and mental health, counteracting urban diseases and enhancing overall well-being. One of the earliest advocates of air baths was the Scottish Lord Monboddo, mentioned by James Boswell in his *Life of Johnson* (1791)¹⁸: «Lord Monboddo told me, he awaked every morning at four, and then for his health got up and walked in his room naked, with the window open, which he called taking an air bath; after which he went to bed again, and slept two hours more»¹⁹.

In 1795, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, a renowned German scientist and writer, passionately supported the idea that human beings should «bathe» in the four elements: water, earth, fire and air. Drawing inspiration from the English physician John Abernethy, Lichtenberg proposed that the skin, much like the lungs, could «breathe» and that, as a result, the entire body needed exposure to air.

Ein englischer Arzt, Abernethy [...], hat durch viele Geduld erfordernde Versuche gefunden, daß das, was in der Luft, die die menschliche Haut be-

16 Edmund Halley, *An Historical Account of the Trade Winds, and Monsoons, Observable in the Seas between and Near the Tropicks, with an Attempt to Assign the Physical Cause of the Said Winds*, in «Philosophical Transactions», 16 (1688), pp. 153-168.

17 George Hadley, *Concerning the Cause of the General Trade Winds*, in «Philosophical Transactions», 39 (1735), pp. 58-62.

18 James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D* (1791), Encyclopædia Britannica, Chicago 1955.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 351-352.

rührt, teils durch Übergang aus dem Körper in dieselbe, teils durch Eintritt aus ihr in den Körper vorgeht, große Ähnlichkeit mit dem bekannten Ein- und Ausatmungs-Prozeß durch die Lungen habe. Reine, dephlogistisierte Luft wird ungefähr ebenso dadurch verändert, als durch das Ein- und Ausatmen²⁰.

At the same time as the remarkable work of observation, description, and classification of clouds by Luke Howard, culminating in his most renowned and influential work, *Essay on the Modification of Clouds*, in 1803²¹, the concept of 'climatic cures' became particularly popular throughout the 19th century, especially among German and Swiss physicians. These doctors began prescribing fresh air as a treatment for various illnesses, namely tuberculosis. Among them was Hermann Brehmer, who in 1854 published *Die Chronische Lungenschwindsucht und Tuberkulose*²², advocating mountain air as essential for curing tuberculosis patients. Tuberculosis was one of the most widespread diseases of the time, and the idea that a change of air could improve respiratory conditions became well established.

Das Ozon trägt also, da fortwährend durch Verfaulen tierischer und vegetabilischer Stoffe die Luft verunreinigt wird, durch Zerstörung dieser Verwesungsprodukte wesentlich zur Reinheit der Luft bei. Und da der Ozongehalt im Gebirge größer ist als in der Ebene, so ist klar, dass die Luft der Gebirge auch weniger schädliche miasmatische Beimengungen enthält als die der Ebene. Daher ist schon deshalb auch die Gebirgsluft der Gesundheit im Allgemeinen zuträglicher als die in den Niederungen. Dabei kann freilich nicht unerwähnt bleiben, dass dieser stärkere Ozongehalt möglicherweise die Ursache für den Katarrh der Luftwege ist, der im Gebirge den größten Teil der daselbst vorkommenden Krankheiten ausmacht. Denn das Einatmen von reinem Ozon bewirkt eine katarrhalische Reizung der Luftröhre²³.

In 1854, following the advice of his sister-in-law, Countess Maria von Colomb – niece of the Prussian general Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher – who was captivated by the landscape of Görbersdorf, in Western Silesia, Brehmer opened one of the first sanatoriums for tuberculosis patients in the mountain village. Treatments included Priessnitz's hydrotherapy method, as well as a climatic-dietary regi-

20 Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Das Luftbad*, in Id., *Vermischte Schriften*, Heinrich Dieterich, Göttingen 1803, Bd. 5, pp. 181-196: 189.

21 Luke Howard, *Essay on The Modification of Clouds* (1803), 3rd. ed., John Churchill, London 1865.

22 Hermann Brehmer, *Die Chronische Lungenschwindsucht und Tuberkulose* (1854), reviewed 2nd ed., Enslin, Berlin 1869.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

men that anticipated modern therapies. The tuberculosis treatment developed by Alexander Spengler in Davos – later made famous by Thomas Mann in his masterpiece *Der Zauberberg* (1922), was directly modeled on the sanatorium founded by Dr. Brehmer in Görbersdorf²⁴.

3. BORGEBY, 1904: RILKE'S METEOREOLOGICAL TRANSCENDENCE

It is within this atmospheric paradigm, shaped both by the scientific advancements in meteorology and the growing medical-therapeutic focus on air, that I believe much of German-language Symbolist and Impressionist poetry should be situated. This is particularly true for one of the most renowned 'meteoropaths' of that poetic era: Rainer Maria Rilke.

In a letter addressed to his wife, Clara Rilke-Westhoff, the poet wrote:

[...] und meide den Platz unterm Nußbaum und alle meine sommerlichen Wege; denn ich will den Herbst! Ist es nicht, als wäre er das eigentlich Schaffende, schaffender denn der Frühling, der schon gleich ist, schaffender, wenn er kommt mit seinem Willen zur Verwandlung und viel zu fertige, viel zu befriedigte, schließlich fast bürgerlich-behagliche Bild des Sommers zerstört? Dieser große herrliche Wind, der Himmel auf Himmel baut; in sein Land möchte ich gehen und auf seinen Wegen²⁵.

Rilke was in Sweden, in the North he had so greatly longed for after his stay in Rome. With its warm, oppressive and static spring – almost vulgar in its ever-identical renewal – at least, as we read in the poet's letters from the Eternal City, Rome had represented an alienating experience. Sweden, on the other hand, imposed itself on his imagination as a fresh current of life, immediate and pure, wherein he could immerse himself and find refreshment. Yet upon arriving in Sweden, in Borgeby, despite being captivated by the landscape, the climate and the customs alike, Rilke did not feel entirely content or satisfied: something seemed to be missing. Rilke arrived in Sweden in

24 Cfr. Katrin Max, *Literarische Heilkunst Ansichten und Einsichten der Krankheit in Thomas Manns Zauberberg*, in «Études Germaniques», 288 (2017), 4, pp. 665-689.

25 Letter from Rainer Maria Rilke to Clara Rilke-Westhoff from «Borgeby gård, Flädie, Provinz Skåne, Schweden», 12. August 1904, in Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe*, hrsg. v. Rilke-Archiv in Weimar in Verbindung mit Ruth Sieber-Rilke, Insel, Frankfurt a.M. 1987, pp. 94-95: 94. Partially cited also in Urs Büttner, «denselben Wind, den auch die Wolken fühlen». *Der poetische Ertrag von Rilkes Schwedenreise im Herbst 1904*, in «Zeitschrift für Germanistik», 2 (2014), pp. 312-327: 317.

the summer, a season that, as we know from his letters, was not one of his favourites. «Summer,» Rainer Maria Rilke wrote to his wife Clara in July 1904, «was never, anywhere, my high season. Always and everywhere, it was something to be endured»²⁶. It was not summer that stimulated and excited him, but autumn, the season in which the diversity of nature's forms, and especially the atmospheric elements (first and foremost the winds, but also the light, the rains and the clouds), appeared to him as the perfect image of the flow of life. In the foreboding of winds, of storms, of the atmospheric power of the ever-changing autumn – in a Northern land never the same as itself – poetry and prophecy merged once more, cooperated, making the lyrical self a measuring instrument of the coming, an anemometer, if you will, of the future.

Vorgefühl

Ich bin wie eine Fahne von Fernen umgeben.
Ich ahne die Winde, die kommen, und muß sie leben,
während die Dinge unten sich noch nicht rühren:
die Türen schließen noch sanft, und in den Kaminen ist Stille;
die Fenster zittern noch nicht, und der Staub ist noch schwer.

Da weiß ich die Stürme schon und bin erregt wie das Meer.
Und breite mich aus und falle in mich hinein
und werfe mich ab und bin ganz allein
in dem großen Sturm²⁷.

This poem is not crushed by the present but projected towards what is to come, experienced in waiting, in the almost physical pleasure of anticipation, sensing, intuiting, reading and interpreting the atmosphere. In the poems from his Swedish period, Rilke develops an atmospheric poetics that serves as a prelude to the phenomenological approach of the *Neue Gedichte*, written between 1906 and 1907, which in turn are preparatory, in so many ways, to the great work of the *Elegies*. As Urs Büttner argues in a brilliant essay on the meteorology of the Bohemian poet, the concept of atmosphere in Rilke must be interpreted literally²⁸, confined to tropospheric phenomena, rather

26 Letter from Rainer Maria Rilke to Clara Rilke-Westhoff from Borgeby, 24. Juli 1904, in Rilke, *Briefe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93: 92. Cited also in Büttner, *Der poetische Ertrag*, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

27 In Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Gedichte*, Insel, Frankfurt a.M. 2001, pp. 348-349.

28 «Der 'Atmosphären'-Begriff muss bei Rilke ganz wörtlich, begrenzt auf die Phänomene der irdischen 'Gashülle', verstanden werden und nicht als metaphorische

than as a metaphorical extension of an aesthetic concept – not in the sense of *Stimmung* or *Aura*, nor in the way Gernot Böhme defines it in his *Naturästhetik* (see above). Rilke's conscious immersion in atmospheric 'stagings', in scenic and tropospheric evolutions, allows him to transcend the human gaze, to surpass it, and thus to see the world with the vast and perfect – perhaps angelic – indifference of atmospheric phenomena.

Abend in Skåne

Der Park ist hoch. Und wie aus einem Haus
tret ich aus seiner Dämmerung heraus
in Ebene und Abend. In den Wind,
denselben Wind, den auch die Wolken fühlen,
die hellen Flüsse und die Flügelmühlen,
die langsam mahlend stehn am Himmelsrand.
Jetzt bin auch ich ein Ding in seiner Hand,
das kleinste unter diesen Himmeln. - Schau:

Ist das Ein Himmel?:

Selig lichtes Blau,
in das sich immer reinere Wolken drängen,
Und drunter alle Weiß in Übergängen,
und drüber jenes dünne, große Grau,
warmvallend wie auf roter Untermalung,
und über allem diese stille Strahlung
sinkender Sonne.

Wunderlicher Bau,
in sich bewegt und von sich selbst gehalten,
Gestalten bildend, Riesenflügel, Falten
und Hochgebirge vor den ersten Sternen
und plötzlich, da: ein Tor in solche Fernen,
wie sie vielleicht mir Vögel kennen...²⁹

In this magnificent 'atmospheric' poem, the wind (»In den Wind, denselben Wind, den auch die Wolken fühlen«) becomes becomes a guiding thread that connects the observer to the surrounding landscape and, in particular, to its most changeable feature: the clouds, with their swirling volumes, unraveling upon themselves like sentient and inscrutable beings. Almost as if endowed with self-awareness, the clouds determine their own tropospheric paths, pressing upward

Ausweitung», Büttner, *Der poetische Ertrag*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

29 In Rilke, *Die Gedichte*, *op. cit.*, pp. 350-351.

into the blue sky above: «Selig liches Blau, in das sich immer reinere Wolken drängen». Almost sacred entities, the clouds ascend ever higher. In this image, Rilke, in my view, reconstructs the volumetric spatiality of the troposphere, giving it verticality, depth and luminosity. He hints at the meteorological reason behind the increasing purity caused by the cooling effect at high altitudes, where moisture condenses, freeing the troposphere from denser vapours.

Rilke also describes the stratification of the atmosphere with remarkable visual precision, capturing different gradations of colour and density. The reference to «jenes dünne, große Grau, warm-wallend wie auf roter Untermalung» conjures up the presence of higher, lighter clouds, likely in an upper atmospheric layer, reflecting the light of the setting sun. The «great grey», on the other hand, could refer to clouds such as altostratus or cirrostratus, which spread thinly across the sky and take on warm hues when the sun is low on the horizon.

Although it does not explicitly mention barometric concepts, the poem conjures up a scene of meteorological stillness, typical of a high-pressure area. The presence of slow winds and the gradual chromatic transition of the sky at sunset suggest stable weather conditions, as if the scene were depicting an atmospheric high-pressure system calming the wind and allowing the sky to open gradually to new horizons. The final image of «stille Strahlung sinkender Sonne» leads us to consider the role of solar radiation in this atmospheric tableau: the setting sun is described as a silent radiation, a phenomenon that unfolds slowly yet permeates and saturates the surrounding environment – from the clouds tinged with warm colours to the windmills remaining motionless in the background. This description of solar radiation also conjures up the cooling of the air and the transition from day to night, which brings changes in the distribution of light and temperature.

As this poem so vividly demonstrates, for Rilke atmospheric stagings turn into privileged models for artistic creation – not simply for secondary imitation or mere representation, but because they provide a kind of aesthetic methodology that art *can* and *must* translate into its own creations³⁰. Referring to Rilke's monograph on *Worpswede*, Urs Büttner highlights how Rilke formulates these reflections within a strictly pictorial context, wherein the idea of the «Poeta-Alter-Deus» resonates with echoes of the biblical story of creation.

30 Cfr. Büttner, *Der poetische Ertrag*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

Die Stürme des Frühlings gehen über das Land. Aber manchmal halten sie ein und es entsteht eine Stille. Es kommen Tage, da der ganze Himmel Regen ist, lauer hellgrauer Regen, – und die ganze Erde ein Empfangen und halten dieses Regens, der sanft fällt, ohne sich wehe zu tun.

Und die Stunden gehen, und es gleicht keine der anderen. Und viele nahen, entfalten sich und schließen sich wieder, ohne daß jemand es sieht. Und man denkt manchmal, daß das die besten und seltsamsten sind, die am meisten Größe haben.

Es ist so vieles nicht gemalt worden, vielleicht Alles. Und die Landschaft liegt unverbraucht da wie am ersten Tag. Liegt da, als wartete sie auf einen, der größer ist, mächtiger, einsamer. Auf einen, dessen Zeit noch nicht gekommen ist³¹.

The meteorological and atmospheric theism that pervades all religions across the planet as a constant element, from Aton to Yahweh, from Zeus to Thor, from Indra, the Vedic god of thunder and rain, who wields lightning while riding a white elephant, to Huracán, the Mayan god of wind, storms and fire, remains an active principle that nourishes and sustains Rilke's poetry. He is, indeed, a poet who manages to see the landscape as pristine as it was on the first day of creation: «unverbraucht [...] wie am ersten Tag». Curiously, Urs Büttner, despite citing part of the same passage³² and extensively referencing Rilke's prose work throughout his article, omits precisely the final two sentences («Liegt da, als wartete sie auf einenn... gekommen ist»), which do not merely conclude the passage but the entire prose piece *Wörpswede*. In my view, this omission overlooks the transcendental, almost messianic, dimension of Rilke's geo-poetics, a dimension in which the poet places both the figure of the artist in general and, indirectly, his own earthly destiny. For Rilke, after all, the poet is the ultimate and privileged recipient of beauty, the one to whose eyes the world appears intact and pure in its transcendence.

4. YPRES 1915

From an atmospheric perspective in the broadest sense – and particularly in terms of the anthropological-cultural perception of air – things changed rapidly in just a few years.

31 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Wörpswede*, in Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, Insel, Frankfurt a.M. 1965, Bd. 5: *Wörpswede, Rodin, Ausätze*, pp. 7-134: 134.

32 Büttner, *Der poetische Ertrag*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

On 3 February 1914, the United States Patent Office in Washington, D.C., issued a patent destined to radically transform our living conditions: *Method of humidifying air and controlling the humidity and temperature thereof*. This patent (number 1,085,971) both protected and publicised the invention of an American engineer born in 1876 in the state of New York and residing in Buffalo: Willis Haviland Carrier. Carrier had installed his first air conditioning system in July 1902 at the Sackett & Wilhelms printing house in Brooklyn. The document described a system designed to resolve ventilation issues in a textile factory, while also highlighting its potential for broader applications, adaptable to various environments and air use purposes.

This invention relates more particularly to methods or systems for humidifying and regulating the humidity and temperature of air in textile mills. The invention is nevertheless applicable generally for humidifying and regulating the humidity and temperature of air regardless of the use to which the air is put. It is essential, for various well-known reasons, to keep the temperature and humidity of the atmosphere in textile mills within prescribed limits and to maintain prescribed conditions of humidity regardless of fluctuations in the temperature in the mill³³.

Just a few months later, on 28 July, the Great War broke out, the first ‘atmospheric’ war, a war of the air in every way: due both to the shocking use of aviation in combat for the first time and to the deadly implementation of gas as a weapon of environmental extermination. For the first time in human history, the troposphere became a theatre of war.

Aviation made its debut on the military stage as a new tool for attack and surveillance, radically altering the nature of warfare. Initially used for reconnaissance, aeroplanes were soon equipped with weapons, becoming key players in aerial combat. But the ‘atmospheric’ war was not solely about dogfights and barometric maps for fighter-bombers; the conflict also saw the terrifying use of lethal gases as weapons of mass destruction.

On 22 April 1915, during the Second Battle of Ypres, German forces used chlorine gas – a lethal chemical weapon – on a large scale. This attack marked a dramatic escalation in the brutality of the conflict, adding a new horror to an already devastating battlefield. In the days and weeks leading up to the attack, German soldiers had silently positioned thousands of gas cylinders along the front near

³³ Willis H. Carrier, *Method of Humidifying Air and Controlling the Humidity and Temperature Thereof*, U.S. Patent 1,085,971, issued on 3 February, 1914.

Ypres, in northern Belgium. These cylinders, hidden in the trenches, were primed to release liquid chlorine gas, turning it into a deadly cloud. At 6:00 p.m. on 22 April, taking advantage of a favourable north-north-easterly wind, chlorine gas was released from approximately 1,600 large cylinders (each containing 40 kg) and another 4,130 smaller ones (each holding 20 kg)³⁴. The result was a toxic cloud of roughly 150 tonnes of gas that rapidly spread across the battlefield, covering a width of 6 kilometres and penetrating up to 900 metres into enemy lines. The gas, visible as a dense yellowish cloud, moved quickly towards the French trenches, driven by the wind at a speed of 2-3 metres per second. The French and Canadian troops, unprepared to face such a threat, were caught completely off guard. The highly toxic chlorine gas irritated the lungs and respiratory tract, causing suffocation, internal burns and death. The French soldiers, overwhelmed by the gas, began to flee in a panic, many coughing up blood, desperately trying to breathe or pleading for water.

Thus, the Second Battle of Ypres not only marked the first large-scale use of chemical weapons in modern warfare, forever altering the rules of conflict, but it also transformed the very atmosphere into a deadly weapon. The air we breathe became a medium so profoundly altered that it could be militarised and weaponised, laying the foundations for one of the defining aspects of the 20th century, according to the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk: «atmo-terrorism»³⁵. «Man wird das 20. Jahrhundert», writes Sloterdijk, «als das Zeitalter in Erinnerung behalten, dessen entscheidender Gedanke darin bestand, nicht mehr auf den Körper eines Feindes, sondern auf dessen Umwelt zu zielen. Dies ist der Grundgedanke des Terrors im expliziteren Sinn»³⁶. Air, which until then had been, at most, a symbol of freedom and an absolute metaphor for life, whether good, beautiful, healthy, foul, fragrant or odorous, became a deadly weapon of extermination and destruction.

These two ‘aerial’ ruptures, one technical and one military – the patented invention of air conditioning on the one hand, and Gaskrieg, the ‘atmospheric’ war, on the other – marked such a radical paradigm shift at the beginning of the 20th century that an atmospheric and, more broadly, meteorological approach to the study of modern and contemporary art and literature became not just crucial but almost

34 Here I follow Peter Sloterdijk’s telling of the events in the third volume of his *spherology*, Id., *Sphären III*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 2004, pp. 89-93.

35 Cf. the chapter by Peter Sloterdijk, «Der Gaskrieg – oder: das atmoterroristische Muster», in Id., *Sphären III*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-117.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

inevitable, regardless of the specific interests of individual philological disciplines.

5. BERLIN, 1930: GOTTFRIED BENN AND THE METEOROLOGY OF THE INNER WORLD

My thesis is that that the German-speaking poet who best embodies this radical shift in 'atmospheric' paradigm, to which we have just hinted, is Gottfried Benn. In his lyrical output which, as we shall see, is accompanied by sharp critical and poetological reflections, this substantial shift – both epistemological and discursive, as well as aesthetic – becomes particularly clear. A shift which marks the passage from a poetic vision still bound to a symbolic-therapeutic perception of air, prevailing from the late 18th century to the early 20th century (wherein humans are merely receivers, beneficiaries and the final aim of a fundamentally inscrutable and at most measurable natural mechanism), to a concept of the atmosphere where the air we live in is not only measurable and largely predictable, but also modifiable and artificial, adjustable and temperable according to our will – both in beneficial and harmful ways – and thus almost as malleable as art itself.

In an article from a few years ago³⁷, Nadia Centorbi showed how, in the lyric work of the Berlin dermatologist specialising in venereal diseases, the once romantic, and then decadent and *fin-de-siècle* pathos of the *Sturm*, the storm, and atmospheric disturbance, so beloved by his closest predecessors, including Rilke himself, as well as Stefan George, explicitly disappears and, I would add, not silently at all. Centorbi, exploring the meteorological and 'seasonal' perspective in Benn's poetry, rightly begins her survey from the famous lecture given by the poet in Marburg in 1951, *Probleme der Lyrik*. In this address, Benn ironically dwelled on the common practice in the newspapers of his time of publishing occasional poems linked to the changing of the seasons, noting how these texts, often brief and placed at the margins of the newspapers themselves, tended to reflect seasonal stereotypes, such as November fogs in autumn or crocuses in spring. Distancing himself from the *Stimmungslyrik* of Impressionism, Benn did not so much criticise the observation of atmospheric

³⁷ Nadia Centorbi, «Mai più solo che in agosto». *Estate e autunno nelle poesie di Gottfried Benn*, in «L.C. Online journal published by the Dipartimento di Letterature e Culture europee of the Università degli Studi di Palermo», 3 (2009), 2, pp. 15-26.

phenomena per se but, rather, the naïveté with which some sought an instant connection between the poet's mood and the atmospheric phenomenon, between inner states and the external environment: «die Öffentlichkeit», the poet argued, «lebt nämlich vielfach der Meinung: da ist eine Heidelandschaft oder ein Sonnenuntergang, und da steht ein junger Mann oder ein Fräulein, hat eine melancholische Stimmung, und nun entsteht ein Gedicht»³⁸.

In other words, Benn mocked the cliché that saw nature and atmospheric phenomena as an easy catalyst for poetic creation. «Nein, so entsteht kein Gedicht. Ein Gedicht entsteht überhaupt sehr selten – ein Gedicht wird gemacht»³⁹. Poetry is not a simple emotional response to the impression caused, say, by a thunderstorm but is, above all, a deliberate and performative act, the result of highly controlled craftsmanship «Wenn Sie vom Gereimten das Stimmungsmäßige abziehen», Benn continues, «was dann übrigbleibt, das ist dann vielleicht ein Gedicht». For Benn, poetry is a crafted artefact, an artistic product, an object whose creation depends only tangentially on the mood that may have inspired it. It is the result of an «*Artistik*» that transcends the simple correspondence between emotion and the natural environment.

In this sense, Benn clearly aligns with the central idea of modern poetry formulated by Edgar Allan Poe in his 1846 essay *The Philosophy of Composition*, namely the complete, almost mathematical, control the author exerts over a text, where nothing is left to chance or intuition, where nothing can be said to be a mere occurrence of inspiration: «no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition – that the work proceeded step by step, to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem»⁴⁰. With this not-so-veiled reference to the author of *The Raven*, Benn aligns himself with the models of international poetic modernity, including authors such as Baudelaire, Valéry, Eliot and Pound. However, beyond these essential elements for understanding Benn's meteorological-poetical approach, which have already been well analysed by Centorbi, what I am particularly interested in here is how Dr. Benn conceives and represents the relationship between air and subject, between atmosphere and the human being in his writings.

38 Gottfried Benn, *Probleme der Lyrik*, in Id., *Gesammelte Werke in 4 Bänden*, Bd. 1: *Essays, Reden, Vorträge*, hrsg. v. Dieter Wellershoff, Limes, Wiesbaden 1959, pp. 494-532: 495.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Edgar Allan Poe, *The Philosophy of Composition*, in *The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by Gary R. Thompson, Norton, New York 2004, pp. 675-684: 677.

Indeed, from the very outset, the poet appeared to feel, to anticipate, the paradigmatic shift in atmosphere that would come to fruition just a few months later. However, with the exception of a few early poems that were not included in the main collections, Benn's meteorology rarely took the shape of observations of winds, rain, snow or other large-scale tropospheric phenomena. Instead, it developed as a kind of meteorology of the inner world, a barometry of apartments, an anemometry of late-night cafés, hospital rooms and train compartments.

Die Tür fließt hin: Ein Weib.
Wüste ausgedörrt. Kanaanitisch braun.
Keusch. Höhlenreich. Ein Duft kommt mit. Kaum Duft.
Es ist nur eine süße Vorwölbung der Luft
gegen mein Gehirn⁴¹.

In these 'aerobic' verses from *Nachtcafé*, one of the main writings of the early Benn, a woman, upon entering the venue, triggers a morphological and chromatic configuration that evokes a desert-like, rocky, chaste and karstic landscape. A scent accompanies the woman as she moves inside – an indicator of Eros and presence – a perfume («Ein Duft kommt mit») which, perhaps blending with the crowd and other odours, seems to disappear, fade, almost cease to exist, until the lyrical self archives it in memory, localising it in the mind. A gentle arching of the air that presses upon the lyrical self's brain.

This atmospheric dimension of knowledge reappears in another contemporary poem, *D-Zug*, a railway poem, a compartment poem, in which the 'indoor' meteorology I mentioned earlier is enhanced by additional techno-anthropic elements, building a synaesthetic isotopy of air that permeates the entire text.

Braun wie Kognak. Braun wie Laub. Rotbraun.
Malaiengelb.
D-Zug Berlin-Trelleborg und die Ostseebäder.

Fleisch, das nackt ging.
Bis in den Mund gebräunt vom Meer.

Reif gesenkt, zu griechischem Glück.
In Sichel-Sehnsucht: wie weit der Sommer ist!
Vorletzter Tag des neunten Monats schon!

⁴¹ Gottfried Benn, *Nachtcafé*, in Id., *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 2006, p. 19.

Stoppel und letzte Mandel lechzt in uns.
Entfaltungen, das Blut, die Müdigkeiten,
die Georginennähe macht uns wirr.

Männerbraun stürzt sich auf Frauenbraun:

Eine Frau ist etwas für eine Nacht.
Und wenn es schön war, noch für die nächste!
Oh! Und dann wieder dies Bei-sich-selbst-Sein!
Diese Stummheiten! Dies Getriebenwerden!

Eine Frau ist etwas mit Geruch.
Unsägliches! Stirb hin! Resede.
Darin ist Süden, Hirt und Meer.
An jedem Abhang lehnt ein Glück.

Frauenhellbraun taumelt an Männerdunkelbraun:

Halte mich! Du, ich falle!
Ich bin im Nacken so müde.
Oh, dieser fiebernde süße
letzte Geruch aus den Gärten⁴².

The various shades of brown and red («Braun wie Kognak. Braun wie Laub. Rotbraun») recall the autumnal leaf colours, hinting at the change of season, referencing the natural cycle and atmospheric transition. The «Malaiengelb» (Malay yellow) and «Männerbraun» (men's brown) complete the chromatic palette, conjuring up the idea of sunlight tinting the surroundings and the people alike, conveying an image of bodies exposed to the sun, tanned by the sea. These colours hint at the sensory and physical experience of someone immersed in a summer climate that is, however, already shifting towards autumn. This atmospheric-seasonal framework finds a powerful explanatory clause in the verse «wie weit der Sommer ist! Vorletzter Tag des neunten Monats schon!», which situates the atmospheric change temporally, suggesting a spatial dimension as a measure of climate change and existential awareness of passing time. But it is above all in the perception of the quality of air, understood as a vehicle of scents, that we find the text's atmospheric key. The «Geruch» (odour) becomes a key element in signifying intimacy, physical attraction and the transient nature of desire. The scent is described ambiguously and almost ineffably, as something «unsäglich», ineffable, and associated with «Resede», a

42 Gottfried Benn, *D-Zug*, *ibid.*, p. 24.

plant that evokes sweet and delicate fragrances. Here, air becomes a medium that triggers desire and memory, intensifying contact with nature and the body. In the final verses, with the feverish «Geruch aus den Gärten», summer fades both temporally and spatially, like the last remnants of a by-now slight fever, gradually dissipating towards normality. The meteorology of the inner self highlighted in these two exemplary texts recurs in much of the poetry gathered in *Flutto ebbro*, profoundly shaping Benn's poetics up until the mid-1930s. What is realised poetically, in my view, finds an extraordinary articulation in his prose, both artistic and critical. I am thinking, for instance, of a 1930 text with an almost programmatic title, *Saison*, which begins with a kind of lightning-strike meteorological bulletin of an entire century – a drunken, cocaine-fuelled version of the famous – and, significantly, contemporary in terms of writing – meteorological incipit of Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*.

Spätherbst, Saisonbeginn, Premierenflimmer, l'heure bleue aus Sprenebel und Gaskoks, dämmernd, wenn der Autorun beginnt. Glänzender Start der mondänen Neurose: high-life-Pleiten und Pooldebacles, Trattenprestissimo und Kreditkollapse, septisches Terrain, subferile Krisen⁴³.

In a critical essay written at the same time as *Saison* and known as *Fazit der Perspektive*, later, in synecdochal fashion, used as the generic title of a short prose collection published in 1930, Benn developed an in-depth and extremely fascinating *avant-la-lettre* eco-critical thought on the evolution of humankind's relationship with nature and, especially, with climate.

Das alte Land soll es ernähren. Sei es durch Steigerung der landwirtschaftlichen Nahrungsmittelproduktion infolge mendelisierter Kombinationskreuzung der Getreidesorten oder durch das Vorrücken der bestellbaren Agrarzone in Richtung der Pole. Sei es – es ist das sprengstofflose Zeitalter, Dynamit gehört zum alten Eisen – durch Kondensatorentladungen, mit denen Metalle und Steine lautlos vergast werden. Sei es, dass der Physiker einen Draht in ein Bohrloch tut, den Schalthebel betätigt, und ein Alpenmassiv wird zu Weizenfeldern zermahlen. Das alte Land soll es ernähren, aber das Gehirn lebt in den großen Städten. Bis vor ihre Tore war die Geschichte ein landschaftliches Aggregat. Für unsere Breiten war sie ein Wandern aus der Wüste in die Baumbestände; es kämpften die Rassen, es kämpften die Pflanzen. Das Altertum war der subtropische Baum, die Neuzeit war der

⁴³ Gottfried Benn, *Saison*, in Id., *Künstlerische Prosa. In der Fassung der Sämtlichen Werke – Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, hrsg. v. Holger Hof, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 2006, pp. 123-129: 123.

Rasen, die durchwässerte Natur. Noch vor zweihundert Jahren, in Strophen an den Mond, entdeckte sich das Naturgefühl. Heute hat die Natur etwas Unnatürliches und Wind und Wetter wirken übertrieben. Der Mensch von heute gehört in eine Etagenwohnung, und seine Ölheizung beschäftigt ihn mehr als jedes Sphinxgefühl. Eine neue Geschichte beginnt: die Geschichte der Zukunft. Es wird die Geschichte des mendelisierten Landes und der synthetischen Natur sein⁴⁴.

The tension between an agricultural past and a technological future, as prophesied by Benn in this passage, is grounded in gaseous («Metalle und Steine lautlos vergast») and aerial dynamics, with innovations in soil cultivation that operate at an atmospheric level, using capacitor discharges to vaporise cumbersome metals and stones. For Benn, air becomes something intrinsically ‘unnatural’, artificial, marking a radical shift from the past when climate was perceived as a natural, powerful and mysterious phenomenon. Benn observes how technological progress has transformed the environment and the way humans perceive it: even the climate, once conjuring up romantic and reverential feelings, now appears out of place, distorted, almost devoid of authenticity: «Heute hat die Natur etwas Unnatürliches und Wind und Wetter wirken übertrieben». Recalling a time when, in poetry, feelings toward nature manifested through invocations to the moon – a symbol of a sensitive and spiritual connection with the environment – Benn highlights how, in modernity, humans live in an increasingly artificial condition, represented by heated apartments. This is not only a symbol of technology’s dominance over nature but, more importantly, of the ability for insulation and self-regulation of temperature and atmosphere: «Der Mensch von heute gehört in eine Etagenwohnung, und seine Ölheizung beschäftigt ihn mehr als jedes Sphinxgefühl». The control over air thus does not merely represent a domestic comfort but, rather, signifies an irrevocable surpassing of the ‘sphinx feeling’, the mystical sentiment towards nature that embodied the ancient human fascination with the mysteries of natural existence.

Within this framework, air emerges as the element that has lost its authenticity *par excellence*, becoming part of a «synthetic nature». The «history of the future», as stated prophetically by Benn, will therefore be the history of a world dominated by genetic manipulation («mendelization») and the artificial alteration of climate and the *Umwelt*. In this sense, Benn’s ‘atmospheric’ poetics positions itself perfectly after

44 Gottfried Benn, *Fazit der Perspektive*, in Id., *Gesammelte Werke in 4 Bänden*, Bd. 1: *Essays, Reden, Vorträge*, hrsg. v. Dieter Wellershoff, Limes, Wiesbaden, Limes 1959, pp. 23-128: 124-125.

the paradigm shift marked by the technical-military rupture caused by the patenting of air conditioning and the first 'atmospheric' war, the Great War.

In Gottfried Benn's early works, the air invoked, sung, desired and longed for is almost always associated with enclosed spaces – such as cafés, train compartments and underground trains, apartments and morgues – or with intensely anthropic spaces, such as late summer gardens, environments where nature appears to be mediated, filtered, synthesized by anthropic and technological elements. This transition reflects a shift from the perception of nature through the sublime image of the ever-changing sky, which embodies an untouched natural beauty, as seen in Rilke, to a nature experienced through bodies, scents and artificial climatization. Benn describes a world where the natural element, and air in particular, hybridizes with the technological dimension, losing its primordial authenticity and acquiring a new and original alphabet made of gases, oxygen levels, adjustable temperatures, and various fragrances. In this synthesis between the human and the artificial, a constant interaction emerges between the body and the surrounding environment, where sensory perception is filtered through the artificiality of modernity. Nature, understood as a modifiable and manipulable object, assumes, on the one hand, a more intimate and direct, almost erotic connotation – a nature of apartments and compartments – while, on the other hand, it becomes more alienating, as it reflects a human condition immersed in an increasingly technocratic and synthetic world.

CONCLUSION

In their highly original poetics, Rilke and Benn depict the two atmospheric paradigms that succeeded one another at the beginning of the 20th century. While the former exemplifies a symbolic-therapeutic apprehension of air, prevailing from the late 18th century until the early 20th century, the latter, instead, almost perfectly represents a world in which technical-military upheavals imposed a new conception of the atmosphere as a medium that could be modified and artificially altered, shaped at will and by design.

Based on what has been outlined and considering the potential and significant geo-poetic and eco-critical developments of this approach, it would be desirable to continue and further validate the theses presented here by extending the research to other canonical figures of the period, such as Stefan George, Else Lasker-Schüler, Georg Trakl,

Bertolt Brecht and Mascha Kaléko, to name just a few. It would also be important to analyse whether and what other changes occurred in the apprehension of the atmosphere after the paradigmatic shift of 1915, once again asking how they, in turn, influenced our way of thinking and acting. One could, for example, consider the nuclear phenomenon, which has shaped geopolitical and ecological imaginaries since the Cold War era, and especially the year 1986 with the Chernobyl disaster.

Particularly intriguing in this sense would be an exploration of the generation of poets who, in the mid-1980s, were children or adolescents. I am thinking, for instance, of Jan Wagner, whose debut book *Probebohrung im Himmel* already hints at in its title a tropospheric reading of his poetry, or of the recent and extraordinary volume *Nimbus* by Marion Poschmann, a sort of ‘cloud atlas’ that appears to inaugurate a new ecological-atmospheric sensitivity.

Translation by Daniela Innocenti

