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Clouds Running Out of Juice: A Special Podcast Episode Featuring Tim Winton’s Climate Fiction

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Abstract

This paper presents a pedagogical experiment in the form of a fictional podcast episode that “aired” in January 2025, featuring Tim Winton’s climate fiction novel *Juice* (2024). Emerging from a dialogical reading collaboration between three interdisciplinary “scholars, resisters and ordinary grafters” (Winton, 2024, p.116) — Rumen Rachev, Jo Pollitt, and Emma Nicoletti — the paper and podcast operate together through a method we term *papercast*, centring on three key themes: clouds, atmospheric frictions, and the significance of critically engaging with climate fiction, specifically *Juice*, amid ongoing climate instability. Simultaneously paper and podcast (*papercast*), we invite the reader to “listen” visually to the printed material that follows. Through discussion and excerpts from *Clouds Running Out of Juice*, a creative non-fiction episode of the fictional *Ecosophic Generator* podcast, the work incorporates AI-generated responses from “listeners” who inhabit the liminal space between present imaginings and future realities. This *papercast* emerged through asynchronous reading practices and collaborative dialogue, culminating in a three-way conversation that traverses multiple theoretical terrains. Rachev’s investigation as an atmospheric economist into the future-proofing of clouds, Pollitt’s choreographic exploration of everyday weather and experiences of weathering instability, and Nicoletti’s examination of human-atmospheric binaries collectively generate productive tensions between scientific knowledge and creative uncertainty.

Keywords: Climate fiction pedagogy; interdisciplinary meteorology; meteorological dialogue; practice-led research

“Opportunities to shape the present and future still exist, surely.
Aren’t we facing them right now?” (Winton, 2024, p.244)

Preface

Imagine, you are lying on the grass. You are looking at the clouds drift across the sky. You let your mind wander. Without realising it, the clouds start to look like things you have been thinking about, talking about, reading about. You let these thoughts form and dissipate, catching the moments of insight as they converge, projected onto the clouds in your view. You don’t labour on the why or how the insight came to you but acknowledge that it crystallised in this moment as a scission of all the unique and collective experiences you have had.

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We invite you to read this piece like the cloud-gazer who finds moments of insight in and between the primary cloud formations in this *papercast* creative non-fiction¹; text from the fictional podcast *Ecosophic Generator* (time-stamped and in Courier New font, which features discussions arising from Tim Winton's climate fiction novel *Juice*); metacommentary about the *Ecosophic Generator* (from the fictional world in which the podcast actually occurred); clouds of text cast together in micro-poems from lines collected in *Juice* (in blue font); and theoretical considerations of Climate Fiction, weather and *Juice*.

Introduction

This paper shares a pedagogical experiment in the form of a fictional podcast episode that “aired” in January 2025 featuring Tim Winton's climate fiction novel *Juice* (2024). Emerging through a dialogical reading collaboration between three interdisciplinary “scholars, resisters and ordinary grafters” (Winton, 2024, p.116) — Rumen Rachev, Jo Pollitt, and Emma Nicoletti — the paper and the podcast work together in a method we are naming *papercast* to focus on three key foci: clouds, atmospheric frictions, and the relevance and role of the critical reading of cli fi, specifically *Juice*, in times of climate instability.

Simultaneously paper and podcast (*papercast*), we invite the reader to “listen” visually to the printed matter evident in the following pages. Told through discussion and excerpts from “Clouds Running Out of *Juice*,” a creative non-fiction episode of the fictional *Ecosophic Generator* podcast, it includes the AI generated reception by “listeners” to this episode inhabiting the liminal space between present imaginings and future realities.

This *papercast* emerged from a combination of asynchronous reading practices and collaborative dialogue, manifesting in a three-way conversation that traversed multiple theoretical territories. Rachev's investigation as an atmospheric economist into the future-proofing of clouds, Pollitt's choreographic exploration of navigating everyday weather and the experience of weathering instability, and Nicoletti's examination of human-atmospheric binaries collectively generated productive tensions between scientific knowledge and creative uncertainty.

00:16

So here we are on Whadjuk Country in the thick of the complex moving clouds that *Juice* is provoking.

17:50

One thing that strikes me about the book is the near absence of the word *cloud*.

18:00

A smattering in as metaphors, and a few times in descriptions like when they're in a plane above the clouds. So yes, in a sense, clouds are absent from the book.

18:13

As Winton says; Black sky days.

18:13

Yeah, exactly. There's drought, there's heat. Cloud futures might very well be extinction.

¹The pedagogical experiment at the heart of this piece is captured in this notion of creative non-fiction. The conversation between the authors that discusses ideas and concerns that arise from engaging with Winton's *Juice* happened in reality. That this conversation happened in the context of a podcast series called the *Ecosophic Generator* is the fictional component constituting the pedagogical experiment.

Author Tim Winton is actively engaged in bringing attention to climate issues, notably, at the 2022 Perth Festival,² Winton utilised his platform to directly challenge the major mining corporations funding the event. His stance was unequivocally political, carrying tangible consequences. It was a powerful intervention. In selecting *Juice* and Tim Winton, we embrace the generative tensions between popular and experimental storytelling, where environmental and socio-political critique converge. These tensions, rather than seeking resolution, created what we term “atmospheric frictions” — generative spaces where empirical observation meets speculative thought.

Additionally, across Winton’s oeuvre, weather is often portrayed as a character in its own right — alive, temperamental, and deeply entangled with human and non-human lives. In this framing, the atmosphere (including clouds) is not merely a backdrop but an active participant in the unfolding of events. *Juice* features an explicit metacommentary on anthropogenic climate change — for example, when Winton’s narrator learns about his past, which bears a striking resemblance to our, the reader’s, present. Specifically, the narrator is told in conversation with some unnamed characters that “All this grease and gas and coal was how these overlords got their power” (p. 111):

this is a crime. A billion crimes that make one crime against humanity. A crime against the world. ... [narrator] But it’s in the past ... [unnamed character] That’s where you are wrong, I’m afraid. Because it’s here with us. That past is shaping your life. ... [narrator] to be told that my trials were not random accidents but deliberate acts undertaken with the knowledge of their consequences? Jesus, the notion that my burdens were, in essence, other people’s sins? It was infuriating to the point of derangement. (p. 94-5)

Juice is therefore an exemplary text to engage with in relation to environmental education and its role in pedagogical perturbations and outcomes.

18:30

Well, one of the lines from the book is *the weather overtook them*.

18:42

I mean, yeah, maybe those futures—

18:45

—are ahead of us, but they’re trying to tell us something.

18:49

Yeah. I’m fascinated by how the book describes the physical world. For me, it’s all about experience. There are descriptions of objects, of salvaged scraps — sharp edges, certain materials. But there’s not as much description of the landscape itself. Instead, the experience of weather comes to the foreground. It’s hot, exhausting, tiring. When it gets hot, people get angry. They start to turn on each other. Those elements — the felt experience of weather — seem more prominent than, say, a straightforward description of trees with green leaves.

20:03

Which I think is really interesting for climate fiction. I’ve read a couple of interviews where Winton talks about this book as a deliberate departure from his usual writing.

20:26

²For further details, see Tim Winton’s discussion on fossil fuel sponsorship at the Perth Festival: ABC News, *Tim Winton speaks out against fossil fuel sponsorship at Perth Festival, criticising Woodside’s involvement*, 28 February 2022, available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-28/tim-winton-perth-festival-fossil-fuels-sponsorship-woodside/100868632>.

Yeah, for me, it's about how natural objects in this world — trees, clouds — have started to disappear, or at least the language for them has. They still exist — there's mention of shade, for instance — but the way characters experience this future world is different. They don't check the weather report to see if it's going to be 30 degrees, rainy, or cloudy.

Juice is set in a future where the worst impacts of climate change have come to pass—sea levels are so high they have despoiled fresh water supplies; extended periods of drought have rendered industrial scale agriculture impossible and excruciating daily and seasonal heat drives the characters indoors and underground for basic survival. In this world, fossil fuel (perhaps energy and money as well), that is, *Juice*, has all but run out and the process of its extraction and the consequences of how it was used to support the lifestyles of some of us in our present to have “lived longer and in better health than at any time before” (p. 119) is the burden of the characters in the novel's present. Indeed, purging the novel's present of the ancestors of those who profited from our fossil fuel economy, and who still enjoy the privileges these profits bestowed as they luxuriate in their climate-controlled bunkers, is the driving purpose of the novel's nameless narrator.

They were here before there was before after there was after
The weather overtook them
The wind returned
Bristling with ornaments and implements

Ecosophic generator: A (fictional) podcast

Ecosophic Generator is a popular podcast begun in 2020 in response to increased climate instability. Hosted by a trio of interdisciplinary researchers based on Whadjuk Noongar Country in Western Australia consisting of an atmospheric economist investigating cloud futures (Rachev), a feminist artist-scholar exploring choreographic weather instabilities (Pollitt), and a climate fiction scholar interested in meteorological imaginaries (Nicoletti), the infamous podcast features an unfolding and overlapping dialogue traversing weather- thinking boundaries. The summer series (2024–2025) was particularly downloaded/ listened/streamed 7809 times with Episode 9 breaking records on the day it went to air on the 31st of January 2025, becoming synonymous with the blazing LA fires.

The podcast draws attention to the metaphor of clouds “running out of juice,” a poetic yet troubling image that suggests a depletion of atmospheric vitality or energy. Clouds, as liminal and transient phenomena, embody “atmospheric becomings” through their constant state of flux — forming through accumulation, breaking apart into dispersal, and carrying traces of land and sea across the sky. In a world grappling with climate change, this imagery prompts reflection on the limits of natural systems to sustain themselves under human pressure.

The podcast's unique reception — particularly the dialectic between acclaim and criticism from Western Australian audiences — highlights, through its creative technique, the complex relationship between local environmental experiences and broader theoretical discourse.

The critical response from locals to the podcast was particularly evident on the X platform:

@WestCoastdreamer: “*Bit fancy? Maybe. Important? Too right! Loving how they're connecting our local legend's writing to the bigger conversation. Proper smart stuff, no dramas!*”

@BurnoFromBunbury: “*Strewh! These podcasters are carrying on about 'atmospheric becomings' like they're ordering a deconstructed flat white in Brunswick. Mate, Winton's writing about our barbie literally melting!*”

These passionate responses prove particularly salient given Winton's position as a Western Australian author writing about climate futures deeply rooted in local, place-based experience.

How to listen to this papercast

The following episode of *Ecosophic Generator* is formatted throughout this *papercast* as “clouds” for a reading that can be approached as a kind of vertical cloud gazing. In a formatting move that the authors term an “atmospheric unbounding,”³ the papercast follows an expanded reading structure with the transcript of the three presenters, appearing throughout this document within, and as part of, a contextual reading of *Juice*. This arrangement of the conversation invites a dipping in and out of focus as the various “clouds” dissipate and come together in various forms of sense-making to reveal insights or groupings of weather formations. Like in the book *Juice*, the *papercast* offers this unbounding of cloudspaces to frame each moment of atmospheric diffusion as both a pause and a pivot, where boundaries blur and new connections emerge in the unfolding narrative. This approach invites readers (listeners) to engage with knowledge as an open system, shaped by visual literacy and the interplay of disciplines, perspectives and sensory modalities. Here we also see an analogy to classroom discussions where novels like *Juice* act as catalysts for new connections to emerge when students engage with rich texts and each other's interpretations of the text in the context of their lived experiences.

The *papercast* represents a transdisciplinary merging of three voices into a singular host — an intentional act of erasure and synthesis that reflects the entangled, overlapping nature of co-authorship. By refusing individual attribution, the conversation itself becomes a shared, generative space where ideas emerge not from singular authorship but through the practice of transdisciplinary listening, responsive dialogue and the gradual accumulation of interdisciplinary expertise. In this convergence, knowledge is neither fixed nor owned but continuously shaped through collective attunement, unfolding in the fluid interplay of thought, experience and practice.

22:34

Scavenging for clouds in *Juice* opens up a speculative exploration into *cloud futures*, where the search for meaning and understanding becomes a process of continuous engagement with the ephemeral. The question “Where is the weather?” in the book (and outside the book!) speaks to a deeper inquiry into the very nature of atmospheric phenomena — where does the weather reside, and how do we come to know it? Is it a force acting upon us, or something we interact with, co- create, and shape as much as we are shaped by it? I think this question challenges us to think beyond the observable, to explore the unseen rhythms and patterns that govern the skies and our lives.

25:16

And what of the accumulation of disappearance? If clouds are in a constant state of disappearance, much like the slow fading of trees painted on a canvas, we are confronted with the paradox of standing in front of that in process of vanishing.

³Atmospheric Unbounding is a methodological approach that redefines the study of weather and climate by dismantling traditional disciplinary boundaries. It emphasises *transdisciplinary weather- thinking*, blending diverse methodologies (*weather-method hybridisation*), and fostering *disciplinary osmosis* — the fluid exchange of ideas across fields. Central to this approach is viewing the atmosphere as a dynamic, interconnected space beyond conventional frameworks. This concept promotes innovative, integrated perspectives on complex atmospheric phenomena.

28:15

I am wondering whether clouds retain memory. Do they carry fragments of the land, the histories, and the moments they pass over? As part of their cyclical journey, clouds absorb, transport, and release elements from the earth, suggesting a kind of atmospheric archive in constant flux.

30:19

That's an interesting question. I've always found it difficult to fully align with the idea of fixed boundaries or static objects, as I work with improvisation, slippage, and the perpetual accumulation of becoming. The notion that something is always in a state of becoming and becoming undone — drawing from Anne Cooper Albright's work — resonates deeply with my practice. If we're always in the process of becoming and becoming undone, then the idea of a boundary or an object as a fixed entity is problematic. This is where the compelling concept of the ecosophic object comes in.

33:26

When we listened to the *Ecosophic Reading: Clouds, Weather, and the Literary Atmosphere* (2025), the podcast generated by Rumen in collaboration with NotebookLM, those little grabs of clouds were so compositional and choreographic, with our conversation around it arising from the dissipation.

38:10

The concept of the 'accumulation of disappearance' evokes the paradoxical nature of existence — where every moment of change seems to accumulate the traces of what has been lost or transformed.

Clouds dissipate, weather shifts, yet their absence, in such fleeting impermanence, leaves an indelible mark on our perception of time and space. This idea echoes the notion that nothing truly disappears; it merely transforms, leaving behind an echo of its former self that lingers in the atmosphere.

39:02

I was thinking about that in terms of sound. Sounds are like clouds — they form momentarily, then pass through. A cloud appears, the wind moves it, and it dissipates. That momentary crystallisation of an idea before it's gone — that's the recount format. And listening to the novel compounds that effect. With a written text, you can earmark it, highlight it, return to it. But when you're listening, it's just a fleeting experience like cloud-gazing. You glimpse pictures, feelings, formations, but they're in transition, always moving. That really resonates with the form of the book and how it's told.

The vertical and compositionally spacious format of this *papercast* attempts to capture the ephemeral and transitional nature of clouds in a format that mirrors the ascending and descending motions of atmospheric processes. As you, the reader, experiences a version of cloud-gazing, this structural choice aligns with atmospheric unbounding, where ideas and methodologies rise, shift and overlap, allowing readers to navigate the content as a layered and multidimensional experience, much like traversing the ever-changing strata of the sky.

41:22

And I love that — an author who's alive, present, critiqued. Last year, at the Perth Festival, Winton used his platform to *directly attack* the big mining companies funding the festival. It was unapologetically political, yet he's so unassuming.

Maybe Winton gives a wider audience license to read and to think with the urgency he is modelling.

42:10

Yes. But also, the *atmosphere* of the book contributes something important — to the public, to politics.

42:19

Right. Winton is *deeply* invested in the environment and place.

42:30

When he describes Perth, Boorloo, and the South West of WA, we recognise the places he's referencing. What he describes as *the past* — our *present* — it feels like he's foretelling a future. And that's important.

43:43

Clouds are dynamic; they form, dissipate, reassemble.

The transcript of the podcast contributes to what we propose as polyphonic creative work (a creative nonfiction), presenting weather as a shared interest and experience across different forms of human and more than human consciousness, creating complimentary dialogues that can work together to challenge traditional narratives about meteorological interpretation. As a research-creation process, such polyphonous formatting reveals how practice-led methodologies can generate alternate modes of weather-thinking within educational weather conversations, transcending traditional academic boundaries. The podcast's speculative nature — existing in a future that hasn't yet materialised — allows for radical reimaginings of human-weather relations. Through this analysis, we argue that climate fiction's potential lies not in its predictive capacity but in its ability to generate porous spaces where multiple ways of knowing weather can coexist, cross-pollinate and activate change.

44:36

So, the instability was of our own making. He's right. And it's interesting — we chose a book by a *popular* author, but most of us usually read much more experimental work. By focusing on a book that appeals to a broader audience, we're engaging with something that will be read by *many*.

46:01

I wouldn't have read it on my own, just for pleasure. But knowing there'd be a discussion around it — that was energising. And it feels relevant. Like the sky, we don't want to place ourselves *above* popular reading, that's part of the problem.

46:55

why does it matter to engage with a local, West Australian author? That section in the book about *down south* — we talk about *down south* as this amazing place. But now, when I think about people going down to Margaret River, how expensive it's become... We've *trashed* it. And that passage — it's clearly written from the perspective of a surfer who's upset about how things have changed.

47:58

listening to the book on Spotify as a form of reading, I found myself jotting down fragments on whatever was nearby — a receipt, a scrap of paper — scattered scrawled lines with no reference points that emerged like microclouds:

Cataclysms of absence. Black sky.
 Days fall prey to heat, fever.
 Spine of the range bristling with ornaments and implements.
 I felt unmoored.
 We are the rain.
 The weather went bad, the people went bad with it.

48:37

The atmospheric...

48:47

Yeah, when it undoes itself...

48:55

Unbounding...

49:00

And where thinking can become — proposing *atmospheric unbounding* — a methodology that deliberately disestablishes traditional disciplinary containers.

49:37

Thinking about that in terms of the *ecosophic object*.

At its heart is transition. Guattari says change happens when it feels like it was always already there. You can't pinpoint the moment it changed, because before that moment, there was already a build-up, a perpetual accumulation of shifts.

50:15

For texts or encounters to be *ecosophic objects* — to produce change — they need to linger. They need to have an impact on the agent in the situation.

Running out of Juice

The podcast discussion of the notion of clouds running out of juice aligns with speculative questions about the commodification of weather and atmospheric resources. How might human interventions in weather systems — geoengineering, cloud seeding, or even microcloud investments — reshape these “becomings”? Do these actions stabilise or disrupt the delicate cycles of formation and dissipation, and at what cost?

The hosts discuss the episodic nature of the book, its lack of chapters, and how it mirrors the transient nature of clouds. They explore the idea of the “ecosophic object” as a catalyst for change and the importance of the reader's experience. They consider the implications of their work for popular culture and the value of their collective, interdisciplinary reading process in offering an unfixed perspective that makes room for deepening cloud gazing.

The podcast presenters highlight how the book frames extremes of weather in a starkly binary manner — either extreme heat or extreme cold — with no space for conditions in between. This binary representation compels the characters to go underground, reflecting a broader critique of binary thinking. The presenters suggest that clouds, in contrast, embody a more fluid and expansive logic, existing simultaneously as “both” and “and,” traversing the spectrum of possibility without settling into fixed categories. This perspective invites the question: what does this fluidity offer us, conceptually and practically?

We believed the stability was of our own making
 Spine of the range
 We're the rain

Just as “True Crime” podcasts meticulously examine historical cases through investigative storytelling, the Ecosophic Generator proposes and pioneers a novel genre termed “True Weather,” whilst simultaneously questioning the very possibility of “truth” in meteorological narratives. The hosts systematically unravel — and often deliberately tangle — complex narratives behind climate events and atmospheric phenomena, challenging the notion that weather can be understood as a singular, verifiable phenomenon in our hyper-mediated reality. Akin to “True Crime’s” focus on uncovering motives, evidence and patterns of criminal behaviour, True Weather forensically examines the interconnected factors leading to weather events, whilst acknowledging the inherent uncertainties in a world of information overload and competing weather “truths.” Through their analysis of *Juice* and the reality of unfolding climate catastrophes, the hosts position themselves as both atmospheric detectives and epistemological provocateurs, questioning not only the evidence trail of current climate crises but also the very nature of what constitutes “weather” in an era of fake news and algorithmic predictions. Each weather event is treated simultaneously as a case file and a question mark, connecting threads between early warning signs, missed opportunities for intervention, and the problematic notion of an environmental “crime scene” in a world where the boundaries between mediated and immediate weather experiences have become increasingly blurred.

51:32

Winton’s speculative work and this conversation of clouds (and the absence thereof) blurs the lines between ecological, economic, and atmospheric systems, questioning the very nature of ownership, value, and investment in an increasingly interconnected world. As clouds come and go, they propel us to imagine a future where even the weather itself becomes a commodity — where the ephemeral beauty of a fleeting sky is both an artistic and economic asset.

52:48

Every time you breathe in, you breathe in the atmosphere. Every time you exhale, you contribute to it. It’s collaborative. That’s the whole feminist weather approach — it’s about *being with*. We’re not separate from the atmosphere.

53:20

That’s what eco-critic Stacy Alaimo calls *trans-corporeality*. We are porous. The sky doesn’t just surround us — it’s within us. We are constantly making the sky as we transpire.

Ultimately, this podcast suggests that weather itself must be read not as a singular phenomenon but as a plurality of interconnected atmospheric, economic, and imaginative becomings — each contributing to an ever-evolving meteorological dialogue. The Spotify “wrapped AI podcast”⁴ delivered by “two dynamic AI hosts” in the summer of 2024 provides the following summary of Episode 9:

Pivoting to themes of climate fiction, the conversation dissected the book’s vivid portrayals of extreme weather. The binary extremes of heat and cold stand in stark contrast to clouds, which embody a fluid, in-between state. This fluidity, they suggest, mirrors the book’s structural instability, underscoring a sense of perpetual transformation. Interestingly, the absence of the word *cloud* in the text becomes a compelling

⁴For further details, see Spotify Newsroom, Your Spotify Wrapped AI Podcast Is Here to Help You Reconnect With the Music That Defined Your Year, 4 December 2024, available at <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2024-12-04/your-spotify-wrapped-ai-podcast-is-here-to-help-you-reconnect-with-the-music-that-defined-your-year>.

silence—one that invites reflection on the future of climates and how absence itself can become meaningful.⁵

Theoretical Framework: “It Takes a Lot of Juice to Perform”

As Paul Giles notes in his review of *Juice*, the novel’s titular term is used to refer to both fossil fuels and one’s personal resolve or courage (2024). The notion of the overloaded signifier—when a term is associated with multiple meanings or interpretations—echoes the intricate and complex layering of “ecosophy” and “atmospheric becoming,” which are theoretical framework(s) animating the understandings of the role Climate Fiction and *Juice* at play in this piece of experimental pedagogy.

Felix Guattari developed his ideas of ecosophy in the late twentieth-century (circa 1990s), arguing that only through radical changes to the ecologies of the mind, society and the environment — which become interconnected through capitalist ideologies that value individualism and profit, and which have colonised all three ecologies — could wicked problems such as poverty, racism and environmental degradation begin to be addressed and resolved (2008, pp. 44–45). Changing mental ecologies, how individuals see themselves in relation to others and their environments (i.e. not instrumentalised as resources for their own accumulation of wealth) is key to activating radical change, and artistic works can contribute here as a kind of cultural artefact uniquely suited to this outcome (Guattari, 1995, pp. 14–15, 2008, p. 31).

54:05

I love the connection to atmosphere. “Read the air” is an expression that suggests someone is out of touch with a situation. How do we read atmospheres?

54:40

Like “reading the room.”

54:51

What is the juice in a cloud? In a body? In an ecosystem? My best friend is undergoing chemo, and her body’s capacity to process the chemicals fluctuates. It’s a constantly shifting and interrupting atmosphere.

55:20

That resonates with historical concepts of bodily humours — phlegm-bile-blood-sweat processes that interrupt “business as usual” processes—like early weather diagnostics but for the body. And then there’s Earth’s “juice” — fossil fuels, energy, resources...

55:43

Juice is liquid; it moves, emerges, disappears.

56:14

There’s just memory — like a brain cloud.

We are the archive — your archive, my archive, Juice as a generator — and these archives feeding into the project.

56:58

So, in a sense, we’re the algorithm. We’re the data that’s been scraped — this is weather forming and dissipating.

57:14

Totally.

What is now recognised as Climate Fiction cannon has been with us since the mid-2000s (Death, 2022, p. 445). Guattari’s idea is not so straightforward as input (artistic work) / output

⁵Excerpt from the AI-generated summary from the transcribing website Otter.AI of the Ecosophic Generator podcast episode.

(radical change). Rather, the artistic work is part of an ecosophic object, a multilayered assemblage of a multitude of diverse components that come together in such a way and at such a time and in such a place that they open up new ways of thinking, being and doing, what we, the authors of this podcast refer to as “atmospheric becoming” (1995, p. 125).

Throughout Episode 9 micro catchments of concrete clouds containing short phrases from *Juice* in re-ordered arrangements punctuated the conversation as poetic portals that brought the novel directly in to make space in the conversation:

Falling out of love with the world
The weather went bad and the people went bad with it
Black sky days
Fall pray to heat fever

Climate Fiction can play vital in environmental education. Climate Fiction directs understanding not only towards understanding the physio-chemical mechanism involved in climate, but also the political, emotional and experiential components that sustain the practices and systems that exacerbate rather than mitigate climate change (Death, 2022, p. 443). This can develop young people’s capacity to comprehend, navigate and potentially intervene through their own behaviours. As an interdisciplinary team, we the authors consider the value of theorising Climate Fiction as a key part of the ecosophic object and ask — “what does Climate Fiction do?” And importantly from here we ask, “If artistic works activate change, why haven’t the ecologies of mind, society and environment radically changed already?”

Writing about Science Fiction, the broader genre to which Climate Fiction is aligned, Darko Suvin argued in his seminal work theorising Science Fiction from a literary perspective that the tropes and conventions of the genre portray alternative, economic and physical condition in a way that encourages readers to compare and assess their own lived reality against the imaginary reality of the text eliciting “cognitive estrangement” in the reader (1979, pp. 3–15). Suvin’s point is that the imagined futures in Science Fiction literature can elicit readers’ critical reflection and engagement, which are essential tools for change. Given that Climate Fiction is written for the purpose of imagining what the future will be like if our current climate trajectory continues, it more precisely has the power to elicit such ecological cognitive estrangement.

55:52

It’s about drawing attention to the weather-like quality of the text. What lingers? It’s not the whole text — it’s the part that sticks with you. The fragment that comes back when your mind wanders in the shower. That’s the catalyst for the *ecosophic object*.

58:20

Maybe you’re looking at the clouds and suddenly recall a moment from the book. You think about the heat described in the book, then feel the coolness of the clouds above you. And that contrast — between now and an imagined future — sparks something. *I need to do something*.

59:03

It’s those unplanned, uncontrollable moments. You can set the conditions for them to arise, but you can’t force them. Like clouds — they emerge, shift, dissolve.

59:02

And who’s reading? Different flints will catch for different people.

59:13

Change is not external to us but something we are embedded in, participating in, and continuously co-creating. The dynamic, ever-morphing quality of clouds, weather, and existence itself calls us to

embrace the uncertainty, to navigate the shifting landscapes of time, and to redefine our relationship to the processes of becoming, vanishing, and remaking. This is the future of clouds — a space where the only certainty is that transformation will be interconnected.

59:59

Clouds come and go, fleeting in their presence, shaping and reshaping the sky in their transient dance. They serve as a metaphor for change, for impermanence, and for the constantly evolving nature of both the atmosphere and our understanding of it. The momentary arrival of a cloud marks a temporary transformation, while its disappearance is just as integral to the process, leaving behind only the imprint of its passage.

60:14

A cloud is formed, and then wind pushes it through, and it dissipates as well...and there is something with the recount format of the momentary crystallization or capturing of an idea that's then gone, but captured in that moment of listening, it's, it was with me.

Theorising intentional reading of Climate Fiction (who is reading, why they are reading), we ask — “what can intentionally reading Climate Fiction through a critical-creative lens do?” We read for many reasons, to learn, to escape, to enjoy, to reflect. When we engage with texts in educational settings, we tend to read for a particular purpose. Elaine Auyoung theorises that “doing a reading” — as the practice is commonly referred to in Literary Studies — is a process that “values the discovery of new patterns for organising textual information as an end in itself” (2020, p. 94). When reading intentionally, we are doing more than trying to simply understand the plot, we are attending to particular aspects of the text for particular reasons. This attentional bias makes some words, phrases, paragraphs, chapters resonate, which in turn generates new patterns, creating a new text that is stitched together from textual fragments — like water vapour forming a cloud (an “atmospheric becoming” of this piece and as seen in the work of our colleagues Strange Horizons podcast: <https://strangehorizons.com/masthead/>).

This “new text,” formed through the creative-critical reading practice, opens the poetic potential of the text to create in the reader a “feeling of movement in which the whole organism together with the activity and soul of the words [to be] swept along in their concrete unity” (Guattari, 1995, p. 15). That is, it generates new, alternative ways of knowing, being and doing in the reader. Nicoletti's experience as a high school and tertiary English teacher is supported by recent research in Climate Fiction and education by scholars such as Sarah E. Truman and others. Their work suggests that reading Climate Fiction in educational settings helps students engage with speculative futures by building relatable stories and characters in worlds extrapolated from current social and environmental realities, fostering critical-creative meaning-making (Archer-Lean *et al.*, 2024; Phillips *et al.*, 2022; Truman, 2023). It is this coming together of context, Climate Fiction text and purpose that has the potential to ignite a change in students' mental ecologies — how they see themselves in relation to others and their environments.

Through this papercast we explore what it means to read Climate Fiction in this moment in history. How does a reader's lived experience shape the meaning they take from these stories? How does it affect whether the fictional world feels like a real future if nothing changes? Drawing from our own lived experience as an interdisciplinary team reading *Juice* in a hot Perth summer of 2025, as Los Angeles confronts catastrophic wildfires, with 25 dead, 200,000 evacuated, curfews mandated and looting on the rise, the intensely hot, dry and dangerous world depicted in *Juice* reads more like a documentary of the future than a speculation. Indeed, Mike Davis's 1995 infamous essay “Case for Letting Malibu Burn”, warned about inevitable fire cycles in Southern California proves grimly prophetic. The Palisades and Eaton fires, which have destroyed over 12,400 structures, exemplify exactly what Davis foresaw: predictable disasters in areas where expensive development continues despite nature's clear fire cycles. While Winton has recently

gained attention for his environmental predictions, he follows in the footsteps of earlier prophets like Davis, along with climate scientists and ecologists who have long warned about the repetition of disasters and disaster scenarios. The convergence of a reader's lived experience with the dire situations encountered by the characters in the extrapolated futures featured in Climate Fiction novels has the power to convert a warning into a call to action.

Combining the components of Climate Fiction novels, critical-creative reading and the reader's lived experience, we can see how artistic words such as *Juice* can work as ecosophic objects that can open up new ways of thinking, being and doing that can intervene in current trajectories and forestall catastrophic environmental futures. This framework conceptualises the fluid and evolving interplay between physical atmosphere, human consciousness, and speculative futures embedded in Climate Fiction. By challenging static, bounded views of the atmosphere, this approach embraces its dynamic and transitional nature as a site of perpetual transformation and interconnection.

The long steady year cataclysms of absence

Born of quicksand I felt unmoored

Atmospheric becomings

"Atmospheric becomings" speaks to the transformative potential of clouds themselves — forming, dissipating, reforming — mirroring the instability of climate systems and the precarious balance humans and the more-than-human faces in navigating/surviving the Anthropocene; "But the dissembling comrade - doesn't that burn you up?" (p. 282). These shifts echo themes in Winton's works, where extreme weather events and ecological crises force characters to confront the fragility of their environment and the illusion of control.

A striking line from *Juice*, "we believed the stability was of our own making" (p. 24), underscores the precarious illusion of control over the climate. The hosts reflect on this as a poignant commentary on the human condition — living in a state of perpetual and increasingly pronounced instability. This recognition opens possibilities for reimagining stability not as human-generated but as a fiction that is contingent, dynamic and collaborative.

This dynamic interplay resonates with the notion of rethinking the page or narrative format itself, proposing a structure where clouds form, cluster, dissipate and re-form — mirroring atmospheric processes. Such a format resonates with feminist approaches to weather, which reject human separateness from the environment (Alaimo, 2010; Bakke, 2011).

Instead, this perspective emphasises our embeddedness in a collaborative atmosphere, where every breath taken contributes to and is shaped by the surrounding air. This view reframes the atmosphere as a shared, co-created space, continuously shaped by the interplay of human and non-human forces.

60:35

So, the agent is the reader, the cloud-gazer?

60:40

Yes, the reader. Or whoever is interacting with it. They're the agent of change. They sit at the nexus of a Venn diagram — made up of their environment, their embodied relation, their experiences. And in this instance, the novel brings all that together — this understanding of *weathering throughout the novel*.

60:58

And what of the idea of "blue sky" projects — visions and initiatives that focus on idealistic or ambitious goals, often disconnected from immediate practicalities? These projects are typically funded by those

with a long-term view, who invest in concepts that may seem abstract or distant but hold potential for future growth or transformation. The “blue sky” is, in this sense, a canvas upon which these grand ideas are projected, unbounded by the constraints of present-day realities. But the question arises: who funds the sky? Who are the backers of these lofty, sometimes utopian visions? These entities are usually large investors, government bodies, or foundations that see the potential for global or systemic change, whether that be in environmental sustainability, technological innovation or social restructuring.

61:30

From the point of view of cloud future-proofer and atmospheric economist, in this speculative landscape, *microclouds* could be introduced as future investment credits. Imagine a market where individuals or organisations can purchase local clouds, essentially buying into a small-scale atmospheric phenomenon that might hold value in the future. These microclouds could become a form of currency or investment, tied to local weather patterns, ecological health, or even the climate policies of a given region. The purchase of a cloud might be a metaphorical investment in environmental stewardship or a tangible stake in the fluctuating weather patterns that shape local landscapes. Just as one might buy carbon credits or invest in renewable energy stocks, you could soon be able to “buy a local cloud today,” securing your share of the atmosphere as part of a broader vision of weather-related economic systems.

This podcast discussion captures the evolving spirit of atmospheric unbounding, particularly in its call to reinvent and expand the vocabulary of the atmospheric. The idea of using the paper as an active depository — both for writing in the moment and for imagining the future — feels particularly resonant. Reflecting on earlier thoughts, such as the concept of “cloud futures,” reveals how this speculative inquiry continues to unfold, shaped by the ephemeral nature of clouds themselves. Their transient coming and going becomes both a metaphor and a methodology, inviting us to think about temporality, memory and the interplay between past and future.

Conclusion

Clouds emerge and disperse, come and go, but memories, traces and trajectories of them remain in both atmosphere and imaginary. As reiterated by the creative non-fiction podcast *Ecosophic Generator*, this *papercast* has grown at the intersections of podcast media, climate fiction, and academic discourse. Through this *papercast*, we have contributed to emerging discussions on the role of speculative literature in environmental education and climate change communication.

Through the interplay between the fictional podcast episode and essayistic writing, this *papercast* reflects the power of interdisciplinary dialogue and asynchronous reading practices in shaping speculative inquiry. By examining this hybrid form of academic engagement, we argue that such approaches act as catalytic forces, fostering new ways of thinking about climate futures while simultaneously challenging traditional boundaries between creative and analytical methodologies in environmental scholarship.

As clouds shift and dissolve, their impressions linger — just as the ideas explored in this work extend beyond the confines of the episode or the page. This *papercast* demonstrates how experimental scholarship can reimagine the intersections of climate fiction, academic discourse, and research translation, offering creative and pedagogical possibilities for understanding and engaging with the increasing climate instability.

Scholars, resistors, ordinary grafters. Most of what these folks set down was widely known at the time. What was happening in The Dirty world, and what it meant for those coming after, none of that was secret. The science of it. The politics of it. The moral implications. They knew something obscene was taking place. And they captured it. Shared it if they could. And stored it away and any way they could think of. (Winton, 2024, p. 116)

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