

Abstract (EN)

Over the past three decades, ecocritical studies have undergone a marked shift from an emphasis on thematic and ethical engagement with environmental content to a more sustained attention to form and mediation. While early ecocriticism was not indifferent to questions of form, it tended to privilege moral and thematic readings, defining itself in opposition to poststructuralist pantextualism and wary of approaches that seemed to abstract texts from their ecological referents. By the turn of the millennium, however, scholars began to foreground how narrative structures and aesthetic patterns participate in ecological understanding, emphasising the reciprocal interplay between nature and text. Building on this formal turn, the present thesis investigates how literary form mediates the representation of climate change, foregrounding its epistemological and affective dimensions. In line with new formalist criticism, form is approached not as an autonomous aesthetic container but as a relational structure that shapes perception, organises meaning, and connects textual experience to material reality. The study thus addresses a critical gap in ecocritical discourse by examining how epistolary forms in contemporary climate fiction translate the complexity of climate change into embodied and narratable experience.

Although eco-narratological and eco-cognitive approaches have productively explored issues of form and reader response, they have tended to overlook the narrative (experiential) significance of epistolarity. This thesis seeks to redress this omission by analysing how epistolary and partially epistolary forms contribute to the formal configuration of the climate change novel, mediating between individual perception and climate change as a vast and complex system. It asks: how do contemporary British novels formally and thematically render climate change thinkable, perceptible, and affectively

resonant? More specifically, how do epistolary and partially epistolary forms enable experiential engagement with climate complexity and epistemological instability? Combining eco-narratology, second-generation cognitive narratology, and epistolary theory, the present study examines how the narrative forms of selected twenty-first-century British climate change novels—David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* (2004), Amy Sackville’s *The Still Point* (2010), Guinevere Glasfurd’s *The Year Without Summer* (2020), and Naomi Alderman’s *The Future* (2023)—mediate the multiscalar, heterogeneous, and cognitively challenging dimensions of climate change.

The findings demonstrate that epistolarity functions both as a narrative strategy and as a central structuring principle in shaping the novel’s formal design, operating alongside other devices to mirror the epistemologies of climate change. Through fragmentation, multispatial and multitemporal polyphony, and self-reflexive mediation, these novels re-enact tensions between local experience and global abstraction, engaging with temporal dislocation, nonlinearity, and superimposition to foster embodied reader engagement despite the conceptual abstraction of climate change. Ultimately, the thesis argues that these works reactivate the novel’s historical function as a site of epistemological experimentation and moral imagination, revealing that literary form, far from merely representing environmental transformation, actively participates in shaping the cultural cognition of a world in the throes of climate crisis.