

## Cultural Trauma and Climate Catastrophe in Contemporary Cli-Fi:

Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the representation of cultural trauma and climate catastrophe in Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140*, situating the novel within the expanding field of contemporary climate fiction (cli-fi). While much scholarship on cli-fi focuses on environmental collapse and speculative futures, this study argues that Robinson's narrative foregrounds climate disaster as a prolonged cultural and psychological rupture rather than as a singular apocalyptic event. Set in a partially submerged Manhattan transformed by rising sea levels, the novel depicts not only infrastructural adaptation but also the reshaping of collective memory, urban identity, and social relations in the aftermath of ecological crisis. Drawing upon trauma theory and environmental humanities, this paper explores how recurring floods in the novel function as both material catastrophe and symbolic marker of cultural dislocation. The persistent presence of water destabilizes historical continuity, redefines spatial belonging, and challenges neoliberal economic structures embedded in late-capitalist urban life. Rather than portraying total civilizational collapse, Robinson imagines resilience emerging from communal cooperation, alternative economies, and ecological consciousness. The narrative thus reframes climate catastrophe as an ongoing condition that generates

new cultural formations. By analysing narrative strategies, spatial metaphors, and representations of collective memory, this study demonstrates how *New York 2140* complicates apocalyptic discourse. It positions cultural trauma not merely as a loss but as a transformative process that reshapes identity and ethical responsibility. Ultimately, the paper argues that Robinson's cli-fi envisions climate catastrophe as a site of contested futures where trauma becomes both a warning and a possibility.

Keywords: Climate fiction, Cultural trauma, Climate catastrophe, Collective memory, Urban ecology.

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