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Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi) and Public Imagination: Themes and Reception

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ABSTRACT

Climate fiction (Cli-Fi) has emerged as a significant literary and cultural genre that explores climate change and its socio-environmental consequences while shaping public understanding and engagement with ecological crises. This study examines the relationship between cli-fi and public imagination, focusing on the thematic structures and reception dynamics that influence how climate narratives are interpreted across different cultural and media contexts. The paper explores key themes including Anthropocene narratives and responsibility, environmental justice and vulnerability, technological mediation, temporal horizons, and the unequal impacts of climate change on diverse populations. It further investigates how cli-fi functions across multiple media forms such as literature, film, television, and interactive platforms in shaping collective perceptions of climate risks and future possibilities. Through the lens of reception studies, media ecology, and interdisciplinary approaches, the study analyzes the ways audiences engage with climate narratives and how these narratives influence climate awareness, public discourse, and policy considerations. The findings suggest that cli-fi operates not merely as a literary genre but as a cultural mechanism that facilitates critical reflection on climate realities and socio-political responsibility. The study concludes that cli-fi plays an important role in expanding climate consciousness, encouraging environmental engagement, and fostering new modes of imagining sustainable futures.

Keywords: Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi), Public Imagination, Anthropocene, Climate Change Narratives and Literary Reception

INTRODUCTION

Climate fiction (cli-fi) describes a literary response to climate change and environmental crisis that conveys narratives of personal lives and social responsibility [1]. At a time of unprecedented climate impacts and protracted public apathy, cli-fi shines a light on the workings of the public imagination, the mechanisms underlying the reception of climate messages across different media, and the factors affecting the uptake of climate content in cultural works [2]. As climate risks intensify, cli-fi clarifies how climate-related public narratives are shaped, negotiated, contested, and circulated; how they resonate or fail to resonate with different audiences; and how widely they inspire engagement with climate issues and motivate the adoption of specific attitudes and actions. Gramscian public imagination and reception are imperfect but useful starting points for researchers seeking to assess the climate field [1]. Both concepts address the interplay of cultural narratives, public sensibilities, and critical agency without requiring the heavy investment in publicly-stated positions on the climate issue that is characteristic of public opinion proper [2]. Gramsci defined common sense as the vast and diverse repertoire of beliefs, practices, and forms of action through which contemporary social agents navigate the world, while a more receptivist vein of analysis would treat climate, just like democracy or liberty, as an intermittently illuminated and contested element of the public imagination itself [3]. These notions therefore serve as appropriate preliminary reference points for exploring the distinctive relationship between narrative and responsibility that is at stake [1].

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Conceptualizing Cli-Fi: Definitions, Boundaries, and Theoretical Frameworks

Climate fiction (cli-fi) which synthesizes climate change and science fiction has become a prominent genre across multiple national literatures, geographical contexts, media formats, and cultural forms, such as literature, cinema, documentary, theatre, television, and gaming [4]. Climate change, climate crisis, and Anthropocene are widely used interchangeable terms to signal humanity's intervention in the Earth's geological cycle and the disproportionate impact of climate change on some communities, especially vulnerable groups including youth, women, racialized groups, in situ indigenous communities, and socio-economically underprivileged populations [2]. A moratorium on the term climate-change is advisable, owing to the incipient consolidation of climate-crisis as a new epic, geohistorical, geontological, and renders-culture -without formally disregarding climate-change and instead conceptualising it as a new paradigm; common denigratorisation links crisis with urgency and heightened state of exception[3]. Anthropocene-has arisen as I significant ear utilized in clime fiction and other culturally, artistically, lyrically locations, universal acknowledgements; furthemost, primary challenge posed by climate change lies in the politicising of climate grach and proffering excess sociocultural reading and wider-else from shared national agendas and of damage assessment systems, entirely state managed; clime change and crisis point to complex interaction between socio-economic adaptation, conservation, precarization, and decisive formative decades; climate-change and climate-crisis distinctive yet intimately interwoven mutually informing the integrity, coherence, and boundaries of the cli-fi domain [1]. A conceptual cartography of cli-fi-Four readings of a collaborative workshop on emeritus contemporary literature, calcutta, organised gathering of established international observers, welcomed protocols-climate change is specific interpolation of Anthropocene, climate-crisis represents emergent social contract-anthropocentric elaborations of the Anthropocene[3]; three leading thinkers of cli-fi agree with on scope defined by either climatic or crisis-schema proposes critical distinction among climate-calr and the incorporated climate-matter anthropocentrism renders climate change as the referent event, climate-crisis as the entrepreneurial-sociologically legible trend-clock-time deep time and temperature deep time[4].

Core Themes in Cli-Fi and Their Cultural Significance

The Anthropocene condensation enables examination of cli-fi's conceptual trajectory. Aesthetic investigations of societal responses to the planetary predicament address blame allocation, temporal management, uneven exposure, and technocratic mediation [1]. Narrative formations probe deep-seated yet troubled notions of justice, resilience, and adaptation, as chronicled across race, class, gender, and geographical axes [2]. These cartographies expose anthropogenic vulnerabilities and spectrum-wide contested descriptors, culminating in research defining cli-fi, the public imagination, and reception within a structured discourse of climate-related narratives and praxis [3].

Anthropocene Narratives and Responsibility

The Anthropocene is a term that has gained considerable traction since its introduction in 2000. It stands for a new epoch characterized by the significant and pervasive impact of humans on the Earth[4]. Set against a backdrop of ongoing anthropogenic climate change, raging Arctic fires, and floods that engulf entire cities, these existential and unfinished questions about responsibility, who is to blame, and why, when, and how to act? Haunt today's public imagination. As the settler historian Irene V. G. Martin put it: "The problems we experience today were created by generations before us and are thus not purely our responsibility to solve. Blame one generation and the others will gleefully point fingers back [3]." Climate change is often regarded as a collective, global, albeit unevenly distributed problem caused and shaped by distinct yet interlinked forms of inequitable power 2. The notion of collective responsibility varies across cultures; for instance, protestors against fracking and fossil-tar pipelines in Canada claim that the target is not the industry itself but the economic and political system that allows the drastic exploitation of resources [4]. The language of blame, however, is frequently absent in contemporary climate discussions be it in coproduction exercises, narratives, or visualizations of citizen engagement. Blame is displaced by "steewardship" ethics, which focus on the future of the Community rather than a justice-oriented redistribution of the present. Climate justice is determined not so much by blaming actors for their past emissions or unequal contribution to future emissions as by understanding the varying impact of climate change across spatial, social, and gender scales [4].

Unequal Impacts: Justice, Equity, and Vulnerable Populations

Inequities based on race, class, gender, location shape climate risk and impacts, giving rise to environmental-justice frameworks that identify vulnerable populations and seek equitable solutions [2]. Narratives centred on responsibility, vulnerability and justice shape climate-change discourses in many nations, encouraging reflection about inequalities and underscoring the need for equity in decision-making processes [3]. In the Global North, cli-fi largely arises from dominant white, male, and economically privileged perspectives that shape narratives, limit engagement with climate impacts, and fail to reflect the lived realities of marginalized groups [4]. Mainstream cli-fi published in these regions also addresses popular concerns, increasing readership and cultural capital while

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distancing texts from individual climate-fiction discourses. Vulnerability appears largely in Southern framing; within Northern texts, justice emerges obliquely through mobilizations and media inaction on urgent global suppression narratives [5].

Technological Narratives: Mitigation, Adaptation, and Innovation

Technological narratives epitomize the hope of technological fix, revealing how the securities provided by technology in the Anthropocene can also be an individual rather than a collective security [3]. Scholarships on this complex relationship concur with the view that techno-optimism regarding environmental technologies is conducive to postponing effective climate measures through public indifference. Thus, although climate fiction encompasses diverse narratives with differentiated techno-optimism, innovation, and a strong belief in the capacity of technology to overcome ecological threats is extensively observed [4]. A dominant view within climate science is that mitigation targeted at carbon reductions, along with adaptation in infrastructures to withstand violent climate extremes, is the most realistic scenario [5]. Mitigation narratives present global corporations, influential politicians alluded to in negative contexts, or wealthy individuals as sycophants and opportunists promoting quick carbon capture. Societal adaptation through geo-engineering, bioengineering, and energy transfer constitutes a second category of characterization [6]. Climate fiction is rich in both techno-pessimistic and techno-optimistic narratives. Technological utopias, on the other hand, signify not only a cultural terminal in descendent civilizational pivots and thus a certain form of technological pessimism but also embody socio-anthropological conduct of the dead historical legacy to hold back revitalization by the mixture of those who dwell within the sombre and those who inhabit the enlightened condition [7]. Ettinger's extraordinary effort with the conglomerates delivers a picture in which the shelter privilege maintained by the elite renders the affluent in the lofty society more careless, if not cynical, in regard to readily available adaptation options [8]. Under the ex-nihilo mentality, it is the race among different socio-attitudes to the end that the former denounces the climate concern dimension; thus one can argue that this very minute portion of a folktale panorama emerges among mega multinationals and non-multinationals with regard to climage, adaptation cycle, and localism in any surviving down-scaled society [9].

Temporal Horizons: Distant Futures and Immediate Presentities

In scholarly and literary discussions of climate change, Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi) is often associated with narratives situated in the near or distant future [3]. Safe for several proposals to the contrary a realist aesthetic or modes of speculative imagination are thought to be the defining characteristics of the genre [4]. For example, Margaret Mullineaux Sparks identifies, as the field's core temporal horizon, climate catastrophes occurring somewhere between two and six decades hence represented through an emphasis on terrestrial ecologies undergoing irreversible transformations [5]. A small number of works reflect on ongoing environmental degradation through stories set in the present, which radically depart from an otherwise firmly entrenched system of aesthetic convergence [6]. The argument underscored is that fiction inhabiting the present without speculative elements underscores the urgency of addressing environmental issues. Society is thus an object of study as a situation rather than a future utopia or dystopia, and within this extended discussion the imagining takes on the singular drift of now [1].

Public Imagination: Reception, Reception Studies, and Media Ecology

Public Imagination issues a general call for interdisciplinary collaboration through broad definitions of its core terms [8]. Understood as climate fiction (cli-fi) and media ecology, the first pair of terms allows the investigation of cross-media adaptations and transnational reception, linking narratology and framing analysis, and extends climate-change imaginings beyond anthropocenic dilemmas [9]. The second pair introduces the reception studies of film, television, and gaming. Although conventional print-based literary studies address single texts at a time, these works increasingly circulate nationally and internationally through multiple media. Media-analytic approaches overcome such limitations by treating adaptation as a form of intermediality, enabling a far-reaching survey of cli-fi reception and its public implications [2, 3].

Reading Practices and Literary Reception

Across cultural, temporal, and disciplinary contexts, cli-fi narratives constitute a focal point for climate-related framing. Local climate sensibilities filter international portrayals, producing location-specific narrative circuits, genres, and forms [5]. Diverse narrative forms and climate epistemologies stimulate awareness of these demarcations; cli-fi enables critique of the broader public imaginary and climate injustice. Climate inaction depends on compromised public imagination [6]. The prospect of misfiring planetary climate-stabilization technologies spurs fears of catastrophe. Narrative modes, framing devices, and content serve as indicators of climate significance, revealing differing social constructions and historical contingencies [7]. As a frame for media-ecological analysis, public imagination examines the circulation of narrative forms, reception logics, and figurative languages depicting climate change [8]. It prioritizes reading practices and interpretive communities, monitoring

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how media-carrying artefacts shape climate representation and engagement [2]. Attention to pausing and to the role of cli-fi in longer attention is also relevant: climate perceptions transcend the present temporal horizon [4]. Public imagination, reception studies, and reading practices, three disciplines through which cli-fi signals systemic climate, overlap with socio-technical regimes lacking climate significance. Disciplinary boundaries have blurred with regard to climate [5]. The Anthropocene epoch, marked by anthropogenic global warming, breaks through the imminent catastrophe discourse as environmental management supplants environmental governance. The figures of Anthropocene discourse, Deborah Cowen's "wounded," "dirty," and "open" world, extend into the Anthropocene epoch, continuing to frame media accountings, even in regional catechisms. Anthropocene discourse is therefore positioned elsewhere; cli-fi does not enter through it [6]. Climate has been described as a "hyperobject"; cli-fi, alongside related boundary-clearing genres, has emerged as a countable "climate fiction" [7].

Visual and Interactive Media: Film, Television, and Games

Climate change narratives circulating in the public arena shape what it means to be human in the Anthropocene. These narratives influence how officials, scientists, and citizens identify problems and weigh potential solutions [3]. Attention to climate change informs political discourse, drives policy debates, shapes artistic production, and inspires grassroots and institutional activism. Public perceptions of climate change are influenced by dominant narratives, storylines that frame public understanding of complex issues by granting insight into who is responsible and what is at stake [4]. Perhaps the dominant narrative informing the public imagination today insists that humankind is locked into the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch defined by human-induced planetary change [2]. Anthropocene narratives often depict ever-accelerating impacts of climate change and an associated rise in the frequency of climate- and weather-related disasters [3]. Yet these narratives sometimes seek to lay blame for Anthropocene impacts at the feet of specific individuals or groups, narrowing the focus to atmospheric carbon emissions while neglecting concomitant physical, chemical, geological, and biological changes caused by extraction, pollution, and a host of unsustainable practices [4]. Anthropocene narratives trigger specific questions about responsibility: Who, precisely, is responsible for the multifarious impacts of climate change and other forms of planetary degradation? Is responsibility confined to culpable individuals or groups, or does it extend to earlier, unconscientious generations? [3] Is responsibility proportional to the perpetrators' total contributions to the problem, their contributions after scientific awareness, or their contributions after the constraining of consumption through the monetization of carbon release? Is there a distinction between awareness of a problem and the ability to do anything about it? [4] Should the wealthy be held to a different standard than the poor? What constitutes culpable inaction? Should a different emphasis be placed on people, nations, or corporations? Are vernacular concepts of agency, responsibility, or stewardship relevant? Is the distinction between industrial and non-industrial societies meaningful? Are such considerations culturally specific? The public imagination is as much a site of socio-political construction as climate science and physical geography, and these questions compel careful examination [5, 6].

Public Policy Perceptions and Climatic Risk Communication

The unprecedented warming of the planet and its consequences for life in general have led to a series of mediatized narratives that connect climate change with an uncertain future, triggering fears of environmental deterioration and societal disintegration, and, resultantly, elicit existential anxieties about loss of life, livelihood, and quality of life across the world [2]. In such contexts dystopian or apocalyptic narratives utilized the aesthetic framework of science fiction to present near-future, dystopian scenarios characterized by severe environmental challenges, catastrophes, or crises with exaggerated narrative speeds at different spatial and social scales [5]. Climate change, which has profoundly impacted the global environment and humanity, particularly in the Global South, has inspired numerous narratives in multiple literary forms, with the accompanying societal risks and uncertainties reflected primarily in societal leisure forms such as cinema and television, rather than in literature, in the Global North, where the cli-fi movement originated [6]. In addition to discursive dynamics of climate change and Anthropocene narratives often centered around questions of responsibility and assignments of blames across the Global North and Global South, or reflecting social inequalities across race, ethnicity, gender, class, and geographic dimensions [7] there have been heavy concentrations on mediatized climate change globally while significant gaps or absences still remain in sociological studies of climate fiction, as well as of mediatized narratives cross other thematic dimensions such as disaster, risk, apocalyptic, end-of-the-world, and extinction, both in literary studies and in environmental humanities studies of climate rhetoric, civics, and literatures in these regions in both the Global North and Global South [8,9].

Case Studies: Representative Cli-Fi Works and Their Public Reception

Literary texts receiving critical acclaim, and public engagement, epitomize a significant and widely-discussed genre. Case studies survey selected works considered of particular media, thematic, or cultural interest [4]. Some go beyond cli-fi classifications to enhance understandings of climate change's past, present, or future. Despite

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commitment to define core terms early in this study, this broad scope renders direct designation of cli-fi premature. Consequently, relevant metrics and debates surrounding each case inform the overall landscape [5]. Varying between social media activity, traditional reviews, translation, and adaptation processes, these reception parameters operate according to diverse temporal rhythms [6]. Each study addresses distinct reception configurations according to geographical and literacy disparities. By contrast with the Global North's rapidly-accelerating publication, readership, and critical attention across multiple genres, the Global South prioritizes distinct local contexts, regional narrative forms, and landscape-governance articulations [7]. Attention to transnational networks layered over cross-media format extensions augments these configurations. Analysis of cross-media adaptations and transnational audience mobilities pairs with examination of Global South perspectives underscoring regionally-situated cli-fi vernaculars, governance imaginaries, and universalizing narrative frictions [8].

Literary Texts in the Global North

The present section seeks to elucidate the publication and readership dynamics of cli-fi in the Global North, examining how these contexts shape the thematic concerns and reception of the texts [1]. A recent bibliometric survey reveals the emergence of cli-fi as a distinct literary category, viewing the genre through the lens of narrative science that probes the representation of climate change across narratives to reveal climate change imaginaries, a recent historical trajectory that reveals early awareness of climate change leading to anthropogenic effects and a painstaking pathway towards a scientifically rendered modern climate change narrative [2]. Climate fiction (cli-fi) anticipates the devastating impacts of climate change on the environment and humanity and reconfigures public imagination [3]. The designation cli-fi delineates a subset of climate narratives that converge around texts published since 2000. In the Global North, some cli-fi works serve as cautionary tales centred on mitigation efforts undertaken to avoid catastrophic climate consequences; these narratives focus on the effort to curtail greenhouse gas emissions and the limits of present mitigation initiatives [4].

Global South Perspectives and Local Contexts

Climatic disturbances have profoundly affected the Global South and continue to shape the region's climate-related narratives. Both local and transnational flows between the Global South and the Global North have been pivotal in framing those narratives [3]. The Global South, though well-versed in tales of dystopia and climate catastrophe, possesses its own peculiar climate-related stories that diverge from transnational circuits and are specific to national contexts and political economies [2]. Such variations in representation reflect different governance imaginaries, reinscribing local dynamics that the term "cli-fi" overlooks [1]. They also includes the excesses and follies of a range of actors from first-world colonizers and domestic tyrants to shattering undertones about the monopolization and alienation of land [2]. Critique and narrative experimentation in the Global South do not necessarily advocate climate technology or other mitigation measures that bypass social equity and justice [1]. The folly of resisting mitigation and adaptation, which follows were primarily based on social equity instead of technological advancement, is also elaborated. Adaptation and mitigation frameworks, despite their awareness of potential bias, do not equate to standardized practices [3]. The uniform anticipation of climate catastrophe and technologically mediated utopia, characteristic of certain transnational narratives, fails to materialize in regional or even national chronicles. Just as the art of climate representation in the North rests on bedrock of propertied culture, circulation patterns and governance radars classify Southern stories outside the cli-fi gradient depicted and assessed [2]. Impact encompasses climate-related narratives tying floods to land and productive incapacity, severe droughts to mismanagement or daily violence, intense heat to unnecessary growth and accelerated desertification, and rising sea levels to the plunder of natural wealth [3]. Records, including publications, dramas, and audiovisual contents accompanying practical recommendations, have also begun to glitter. Many bibliographies overlook cli-fi or climate fiction designation despite abundant mentions of "climate" or "climatic" and droves of simple narrative threads. Flows to the Global South travel chiefly through fiction [4]. Narratives belonging to "cli-fi," climate fiction, or climate disturbance instead communicate the collapsing of water orders and the proficient yet reckless assertions about climate published since 1993 [3]. Disturbance voices have also emerged under climate projection and science sensitivity. Apart from pastoral recollection, vivid narrativization of weather beasts in cultural studies and biographies attending to unearthly attributes chronicle further ordeal under epochal advances [5]. Narrative adaptations frequently resonate poetry, chronicle recoveries, document material mechanisms, and record where lie actually streamed. Representations circulating alongside water, ocean, river, wet, moist, and vapor restate basic concerns [2].

Cross-M-media Adaptations and Transnational Audiences

Climate change impacts various aspects of everyday life through social constructions, inspiring many contemporary novels to reflect on climate-related anxieties and societal changes [2]. The increasingly sharp

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socio-cultural and civilizational tensions arising from the Climate Crisis encourage authors to develop climate fiction (Cli-Fi) themes [3]. Polymedia, an extension of media ecology, probes how various media formats are used together on the interlinked internet platform. While modern-day relationships with the media ecology are more ubiquitous, direct habits like watching a film, reading a book, or playing a game remain valuable for discerning how environmental mechanisms develop in a narrative, and the imageries projected by various formats [4]. Cross-media adaptations increase transnational visibility, introduce culturally specific problems at global latitudes, and propel effects beyond borders. When reading a global narrative, contrary expectations may occur between the intimate experience at the specific locality and the perceived universality [5]. To popularize less industrious and more isolated regions, domestic re-narrations extend articulations of diverse socio-environmental issues. Simultaneously, venues such as the Kindle and Graphic M novel develop through self-translation, re-address the global market, and engage audiences beyond the original narrative [6]. The gap between climate fiction and public perception turns out that debates go metropolitan-centric while representation of global narratives continues to a broader audience, incorporating the aesthetic function of transnational literature into convenor [7].

Methodological Considerations: Analyzing Reception and Cultural Impact

The methodological design for a study of cli-fi reception and cultural impact reflects these considerations. The analysis draws on reception studies, risk communication, and media ecology to trace how cli-fi shapes scientific concerns and public engagement with climate change [3]. Such work aligns cli-fi with public debates about anthropogenic global warming and provides a comparable foundation for exploring its influence within and beyond the literary domain [5]. Reception studies analyze how texts, images, sounds, and performances are interpreted and valued in different cultural contexts. Environmental narratives, whether fiction, non-fiction, or science, effectively shape perceptions of risk, inform the public about socio-political implications, and stimulate activist responses [2]. An emergent sensibility accompanies anthropogenic concentrates attention on human agency and responsibility while signs of hope and despair coexist. A significance of cli-fi lies in articulating and addressing global warming as a systemic risk with profound implications for planetary habitability and well-being [3]. The Anthropocene designates a new geological epoch in which social and environmental systems are intertwined and planetary conditions are irrevocably altered. Independent of ecological circumstance, the future remains uncertain; questions of justice, responsibility, urgency, and mapping occur across time horizons [4]. Cli-fi interaction with public imagination extends across cultural disciplines. The concept denotes the material mechanisms facilitating creativity across media (broadly defined) as well as the parameters shaping imaginative thought (valued, anticipated, and desired futures) [5]. Meaning-making engages processes of sense-making that design spatial and temporal boundaries, consequently the capacity to imagine the future depends on how attention is extended and how the past is understood, preserved, and narrated i.e., memory-work [6].

Qualitative Approaches: Interviews, Focus Groups, and Discourse Analysis

Climate fiction (cli-fi) focuses on climate change and its effects on human life. Climatic elements can appear in a wide range of literary and non-literary forms, including newspapers, stage and screen adaptations, and many children's books [4]. Climate change references can also appear alongside more general environmental issues, such as pollution. However, cli-fi is typically understood as narratives that prominently feature climate change, climate change impacts in contemporary society, individuals' space and time choices of climate mitigation/adaptation actions, and societal challenges for climate governance [6]. Words associated with cli-fi and climate change, such as Anthropocene, resilience/adaptation, or Justice, Governance, and Mitigation has specific meanings beyond their general use [2]. Public imagination pertains to how individuals and collectives envision the present and future. It denotes various forms of imagination, including social, political, and economic, and represents a notion of the foreseeable future that can encompass the ideal, utopian, and catastrophic [6]. Reception encompasses the relation between cultural products and their audiences, alongside the perspectives audiences bring to their experience of culture [3]. Reception studies examines how the public relates to a word, concept, and image within a specific cultural environment and analyses how various groups see issues articulated in the works they read, watch, play, and otherwise interact with [7]. The five themes of anthropogenic narratives, disparities, technologies, horizons, and governance inform a holistic multi-semiotic conception of cli-fi reception and public imagination [8]. The Anthropocene is both a geological epoch and an artifact of recognizes climate change as major by-product of humans' increasingly-intensive geological practices. As a result, it emerges in narratives that address anthropogenic risk, and accompanying notions of justice, mitigation, and adaptation [6]. Narratives and accompanying topics influence what publics consider relative to a specific concern. Anthropogenic risk relates to 'loose' environments exposed to climate impacts and narrates how a global problem differentially affects able urban middle- and upper-caste lives compared to less-privileged ones. A predominant account depicts anthropogenic climate change as a political failure, ignoring existing governing arrangements of accumulation and asset [8]. Discursive articulation of climate change within cli-fi operates as spaces through which distinct publics

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form collective imaginaries of a socio-ecological system [9]. Such articulation emerges in diverse regimes that clarify the collective of concern, deems actors responsible, and specifies the actions regarded as appropriate. Specified collectives and concerns trigger different types of yet correlated governance-forthcoming invitations to popularly engage within wide-ranging socio-political domains involving persuasion, support, participation, and epistemic engagement [9].

Quantitative Approaches: Surveys and Cultural Analytics

Climate fiction (cli-fi) explores imagined worlds informed by existing or proposed responses to anthropogenic climate change [5]. The public imagination encompasses creativity and idea circulation that shape collective visions of the future, interaction with cli-fi, and the articulation of climate-related concerns. Reception studies investigate the way cultural materials are encountered and responded to [6]. To date, the cli-fi public imagination has scarcely been empirically investigated. A multi-pronged methodological approach addressing a wide spectrum of materials has therefore been devised [7].

Quantitative approaches include surveys and cultural analytics. Online surveys on public perceptions of climate-related themes and climate fiction reception were conducted in 2013 to 2014 and again in 2021 to 2022, targeting audiences in North America, Western Europe, and India [2]. Reception metrics captured readership, discussed works, and perceived themes [8]. Survey instruments also probed related topics and wider interest in speculative narratives across other media. Cultural analytics examined large datasets of Twitter interactions in 2011, as cli-fi emerged as a term and movement, and hashtag usage across multiple platforms during the second half of 2019, after the climate march and prominent media coverage [9].

Interdisciplinary Integration: Media Studies, Climate Science, and Urban Studies

The cli-fi field spans across humanities research on climate change narratives in literature, cinema, and other art forms, and climate communication literature examining public reception and engagement, practices essential for societies to grapple with climate change as an urgent and human-caused global problem [6]. To illuminate cli-fi's implications for public imagination and reception, the analysis draws from three disciplines. Media studies explores Anthropocene representations and their unevenly shared impacts across socio-natural systems and peoples [7]. In climate science, the research systematizes narratives about mitigation, adaptation, and technological innovation and discusses accompanying optimism and techno-solutionism [8]. Urban studies engages temporal perspectives and the articulation of urgency and present-ness connected to care, responsibility, and memory [7, 8, 9].

Implications for Education, Policy, and Public Discourse

Climate fiction (cli-fi) has grown as a genre during the last decade, driven by climate-related crises, and is framing relevant themes for the Anthropocene [7]. Despite its rapid spread, a rigorous and comprehensive understanding of cli-fi remains absent, particularly regarding its themes and reception. Scholarly engagement is fragmentary and uncoordinated, with a critical need for synthesis. Drawing on a systematic review, cli-fi is defined broadly as literature about climate change and its implications [8]. A thematic scan identifies core concerns—narratives of anthropogenic responsibility, unequal impact, technological mediation, temporal horizons, visualization, and dystopian futures [9] which shape and reflect public imagination. Attention to these concerns and their interrelations illuminates both cli-fi's climate imaginary and the socio-ecological systems that climate change jeopardizes [9]. The Anthropocene brings narratives of human-induced change and responsibility across various media. These include anthropocentrism, blame avoidance, stewardship, and collective accountability 2. Such narratives reflect and reform collective identities while framing adaptation strategies and intergenerational equity. Narratives of unequal impact analyze vulnerability, intersectional disadvantage, and representation. Addressing mitigation and adaptation, technological mediation influences perceptions of climate agency, capacity to avert direct impacts, and the feasibility of equitable change [8]. Regulation of industry emissions and exchange of passive consumer controls therefore remain crucial. Temporal horizons contrast distant futures with the present. Pacing signals immediacy and urgency; memory-work engages past and future. Dystopian futures that simultaneously facilitate imaginative exploration and graphite engagement promote both disciplinary insight and speculative enactments [9, 10].

CONCLUSION

Climate fiction has developed into a powerful medium through which contemporary societies interpret and negotiate the realities of climate change and environmental crises. This study demonstrates that cli-fi extends beyond literary representation to function as a cultural and communicative tool that shapes public imagination and influences perceptions of environmental responsibility. Through narratives centered on Anthropocene realities, environmental justice, technological mediation, vulnerability, and future uncertainty, cli-fi provides frameworks through which audiences engage with complex climate issues. The analysis further reveals that public reception of cli-fi is shaped by cultural contexts, media platforms, and socio-political realities. Different audiences interpret

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climate narratives according to local experiences, historical conditions, and existing social inequalities, creating varied forms of climate understanding and engagement. The emergence of cross-media adaptations and transnational circulation also broadens the reach and impact of climate narratives, enabling climate concerns to transcend geographical and disciplinary boundaries. Furthermore, cli-fi contributes significantly to public discourse by encouraging reflection on responsibility, collective action, and sustainable futures. While some narratives may reinforce fear and apocalyptic perspectives, others generate hope, resilience, and critical engagement with potential solutions. Consequently, the role of cli-fi in education, policy discourse, and climate communication continues to expand. Ultimately, climate fiction should be understood not simply as speculative storytelling but as an important cultural space for negotiating environmental anxieties, imagining alternative futures, and stimulating meaningful public engagement with one of the most urgent challenges of the contemporary world. Future research should continue to explore the evolving relationship between climate narratives, audience reception, and social transformation within increasingly interconnected global contexts.

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