



From Infertility to Ecology: Blending Family, Climate Crisis and the Call for Change

ABSTRACT

Clade by James Bradley offers a profoundly humane exploration of the intersection between family, environmental crisis, and the moral imperatives of our time. Through the intimate lens of Adam and Ellie, an Australian couple navigating the emotional terrain of infertility amidst escalating climate catastrophe, Bradley crafts a narrative that renders the global realities of ecological collapse immediate and personal. Adam's scientific work and Ellie's artistic journey are not just individual struggles but metaphors for humanity's fraught relationship with a rapidly changing planet. The couple's anxieties about parenthood echo a collective fear for the future, as the novel deftly parallels the challenges of family planning with the urgent need for environmental stewardship. Bradley critiques the modification of nature, highlighting the dangers of viewing the environment as mere resource. The narrative's episodic structure captures the cascading effects of climate change-rising seas, biodiversity loss, and societal unrest-while grounding these crises in the everyday realities of love, loss, and resilience. Ellie's fertility struggles become a powerful metaphor for the Earth's own diminishing regenerative capacity. Yet, *Clade* is not without hope. Through Ellie's alliance with Amir, a refugee-the novel suggests pathways toward healing that honor both human and ecological interconnectedness. *Clade* offers a compelling call to action for a sustainable and compassionate future.

Keywords: *climate catastrophe, family, resilience, environmental crisis, biodiversity*

James Bradley: The Dual Legacy

James Bradley was a renowned English astronomer whose groundbreaking discovery of the aberration of starlight in 1728 provided crucial evidence for the heliocentric model of the solar system. Appointed Astronomer Royal at Greenwich Observatory in 1742, Bradley was recognised as one of the first major observational astronomers to follow Newton, advancing the precision of astronomical measurements and leaving a legacy of improved observational techniques and highly accurate star charts that have had a lasting influence on the field. Despite his significant scientific achievements, much of Bradley's work was published only after his death, delayed by disputes over ownership between his heirs and the British Admiralty. In addition to his scientific contributions, Bradley is also celebrated as an accomplished author. He has written five novels—*Wrack* (1997), *The Deep Field* (1999), *The Resurrectionist* (2006), *Clade* (2015), and *Ghost Species* (2020)—and edited two anthologies. His literary output further includes *The Change Trilogy* and a poetry collection titled *Paper Nautilus*. Bradley's writing has earned him numerous accolades, including being twice named Best Young Novelist by *The Sydney Morning Herald*, receiving *The Age* Fiction Book of the Year Award, and the Fellowship of Australian Writers Literature Award. His works have been nominated for several prestigious honors, and his short stories have appeared in a variety of literary magazines. Beyond fiction, Bradley contributes reviews to newspapers and magazines and was awarded the Pascall Prize for Australia's Critic of the Year in 2012. His first nonfiction book, *Deep Water: The World in the Ocean*, is scheduled for publication in 2024.

James Bradley's *Clade* stands as a compelling exploration of the intersection between personal and planetary crises, blending the intimate dynamics of family life with the far-reaching consequences of climate change. The novel opens with Adam, a climate scientist working in Antarctica, while his partner Ellie anxiously awaits the results of her IVF treatment in Sydney. Their struggle with infertility is rendered with sensitivity and nuance, serving as a microcosm of the broader uncertainties that define their lives and the world they inhabit. The eventual arrival of their daughter, Summer, marks not only a resolution of personal longing but also the beginning of new anxieties, as Adam and Ellie confront the daunting responsibility of raising a child in an environment increasingly shaped by ecological instability. Bradley's narrative technique is notable for its episodic structure, which traces the fortunes of Adam, Ellie, and subsequent generations across several decades. This approach allows the novel to mirror the gradual and cumulative nature of environmental decline,

as the characters' lives unfold against a backdrop of melting ice caps, rising sea levels, mass extinctions, and intensifying storms. Climate change in *Clade* is not a distant or abstract threat; rather, it is a pervasive force that shapes every aspect of the characters' existence, from their most private moments to their public actions. The novel's depiction of environmental crisis is thus both immediate and immersive, compelling readers to consider the tangible effects of planetary change on individual lives.

Through an ecocritical lens, *Clade* can be read as a meditation on the reciprocal relationship between humanity and the environment. The diseases, wildfires, and extinctions that punctuate the narrative are not merely background events but are emblematic of the environment's response to human actions. Bradley's portrayal of these crises invites reflection on the ways in which everyday choices and behaviors contribute to broader ecological outcomes, emphasising the interconnectedness of all living things. The very title of the novel, *Clade*, highlights this theme by referencing the evolutionary concept of a group of organisms descended from a common ancestor, thus situating the family's story within the larger context of life on Earth. Despite the pervasive sense of loss and uncertainty that characterises the novel, Bradley resists the temptation to descend into despair. Instead, *Clade* foregrounds the resilience of its characters, who continue to seek connection, meaning, and beauty even as the world around them deteriorates. The persistence of love, the formation of new relationships, and the adaptation to changing circumstances are depicted as acts of quiet defiance in the face of overwhelming odds. In this way, the novel articulates a form of hope that is neither naïve nor escapist but is grounded in the recognition of shared vulnerability and collective responsibility. Ultimately, *Clade* serves as both a reflection on the human condition and a call to action. By intertwining the personal journey from infertility to parenthood with the broader narrative of ecological crisis, Bradley challenges readers to acknowledge the inseparability of the personal and the planetary. The novel's enduring message is that hope and responsibility must coexist, and that the future, however uncertain, can be shaped by acts of care, resilience, and foresight. In doing so, *Clade* invites its audience to imagine new possibilities for coexistence and survival in an era defined by environmental change.

Literature Review

James Bradley's *Clade* is a profoundly moving and thought-provoking exploration of climate change, family, and survival. Spanning generations, the novel weaves together personal stories against the backdrop of escalating environmental catastrophes—rising seas, pandemics, and societal collapse. Through its episodic structure, Bradley masterfully portrays the fragility of human connections amidst a crumbling world. Critics praise *Clade* for its understated prose and nuanced character development, which balance the bleakness of its apocalyptic setting with moments of resilience and hope. From Adam's scientific reflections in Antarctica to his grandson Noah's search for meaning in a fractured future, the narrative captures humanity's struggle to adapt to a changing planet. Ultimately, *Clade* is both an intimate family saga and a chilling meditation on the consequences of inaction, urging readers to confront the realities of our shared ecological crisis. (BookPage)

James Bradley's *Clade* is a masterful work of climate fiction that offers a deeply personal lens on the unfolding ecological crisis. Through the lives of three generations, Bradley captures the relentless march of climate change—floods, pandemics, extinctions—while grounding the narrative in intimate human experiences. The novel's episodic structure and understated prose make the devastation feel both immediate and hauntingly familiar. Critics praise *Clade* for its ability to balance stark realism with moments of resilience and hope. It avoids apocalyptic sensationalism, instead portraying climate collapse as a gradual, insidious force that reshapes lives and relationships. With its poignant critique of humanity's failures and its exploration of adaptation and survival, *Clade* is both a cautionary tale and a call to action—a striking reminder of what's at stake for our planet and future generations. (Locus)

James Bradley's *Clade* is an evocative and thought-provoking exploration of climate change told through the lens of one family across generations. Structured as interconnected vignettes, the novel captures both the intimate struggles of its characters and the sweeping devastation of environmental collapse—floods, pandemics, and societal upheaval. Bradley's sparse yet lyrical prose brings a haunting realism to this near-future world, where humanity's resilience is tested against a crumbling planet. Critics praise *Clade* for its balance of emotional depth and ecological critique, offering a compelling narrative that avoids apocalyptic sensationalism. Instead, it portrays climate change as an insidious force reshaping lives in gradual, devastating

ways. Both entertaining and insightful, *Clade* is a poignant meditation on survival, connection, and the urgent need to confront humanity's impact on the Earth. (Gamers Sphere)

James Bradley's *Clade* is a gripping and multifaceted exploration of climate change, blending action-packed sequences, political intrigue, and deeply personal reflections. Told through interconnected vignettes spanning generations, the novel follows an Australian family navigating a world unravelling under the weight of global warming, floods, pandemics, and social collapse. Critics praise Bradley's unique narrative style, which shifts between visceral, cinematic moments and quieter, introspective passages. The result is a richly textured story that captures both the global scale of ecological devastation and its intimate impact on human lives. With its diversity of tone and setting, *Clade* is an entertaining yet sobering meditation on resilience, connection, and humanity's role in shaping the planet's future.

Family, Environment and Resilience in *Clade*

James Bradley's *Clade* is a powerful meditation on the intricate ties between family, environmental crisis, and the urgent need for change. Through the lens of one Australian family, Bradley weaves a narrative that is both sweeping and intimate, chronicling how the climate crisis infiltrates not only landscapes and societies, but also the most personal corners of human life. The novel unfolds in a series of interconnected vignettes, each capturing a different generation as they navigate a world increasingly shaped by rising seas, pandemics, species extinctions, and social upheaval. Yet, instead of focusing solely on the scale of global disaster, Bradley grounds these crises in the everyday struggles, hopes, and losses of his characters. What makes *Clade* especially compelling is its ability to blend the epic with the personal. The environmental catastrophes that form the backdrop of the novel are never abstract—they ripple through marriages, parent-child relationships, and friendships, reshaping the very fabric of family life. Bradley's prose is both beautiful and devastating, rendering altered landscapes with a sense of awe and terror while never losing sight of the humanity at the story's core. The episodic structure of the novel allows for a nuanced exploration of how ecological disaster is experienced not as a single event, but as a series of disruptions that accumulate over time, affecting how people love, grieve, and endure. At its heart, *Clade* is a story about loss—of habitats, species, and the certainties that once anchored human existence. Yet it is also a critique of humanity's negligence and a call to recognise the moral responsibility we bear toward future generations. By focusing on one family's

journey through a collapsing world, Bradley transforms the overwhelming reality of climate change into something immediate and relatable, urging readers to see themselves in the characters' struggles and choices. Ultimately, *Clade* is both a cautionary tale and a testament to resilience. Amidst the devastation, Bradley offers glimpses of hope—moments of connection, adaptation, and quiet acts of care that suggest the possibility of renewal. In blending the story of a family with the broader narrative of environmental crisis, Bradley not only humanises the climate emergency but also issues a heartfelt call for change, reminding us that the future depends on our willingness to confront the challenges of our time and to care for one another and the world we share.

Bridging Humanity and Ecology through the life of Character in the Novel

James Bradley's *Clade* masterfully intertwines the themes of infertility, family, ecological crisis, and the urgent call for change, presenting a narrative that is both academically rich and deeply humane. The novel opens with Adam and Ellie's intimate struggle with infertility, a challenge that is rendered with remarkable sensitivity and nuance. As Bradley writes, "Six years ago, when he and Ellie met, the idea of children seemed impossibly remote, the question of whether he might one day want them so removed from his life as to be irrelevant" (5 Bradley). This personal uncertainty is mirrored in Ellie's arduous journey through fertility treatments: "For while over the past fortnight Ellie has been to the clinic almost daily..." (5 Bradley). The couple's longing for a child and the anxiety that accompanies each stage of their journey foregrounds the fragility of human hopes in a world marked by unpredictability and loss. Ellie's struggle with fertility, particularly after years on the pill, becomes emblematic of broader challenges of regeneration and recovery in the Anthropocene: "it seemed reasonable to assume she would not return to fertility immediately..." (12-13 Bradley). The novel thereby situates the intimate experience of infertility within the wider context of environmental degradation and the slow, often painful process of renewal. This narrative choice resonates with Arne Naess's deep ecology, which emphasises the "unity of all life" and the interdependence that binds ecosystems together (4 Biswas). The difficulties faced by Adam and Ellie in conceiving a child echo the larger difficulties humanity faces in restoring ecological balance, highlighting the interconnectedness of personal and planetary well-being.

The commodification of nature and its consequences are central to both the novel and contemporary ecological critique. As Biswas observes, “the legacy of this transformation is that nature came to be conceived as a commodity in the West and this was a sign of progress and modernisation and at the same time a sign that other civilisation stagnated and were falling behind the West” (4 Biswas). Mignolo’s analysis further underscores that the commodification of nature in the West, while seen as progress, also signalled stagnation for other civilisations, revealing a dangerous mindset that treats Earth as expendable (4 Biswas). This perspective is evident in *Clade*, where the characters’ struggles are set against a backdrop of environmental collapse, rising seas, pandemics, and species extinction—crises that are never merely distant but intimately connected to the family’s evolving dynamics. Bradley’s prose skillfully blends beauty and devastation, grounding the global crisis in the tangible realities of love, loss, and hope. The episodic structure of the novel enables an exploration of how ecological disaster is experienced not as a single cataclysm, but as a series of disruptions that reshape daily life and relationships. The sense of loss in *Clade* is not limited to habitats and species but extends to human connections and the certainties that once anchored existence. Pregnancy, for instance, transforms women’s bodies into public entities, often stripping them of privacy and autonomy. Ellie’s experience captures this discomfort: “she recoiled from it, so that even in the later months... she avoided social events, affecting a brightness that was not hers, but armour” (58 Bradley). This personal vulnerability parallels the environmental damage caused by human actions, where attempts to recover from pesticide use have led to devastating consequences, such as increased cancer rates in affected regions, symbolised by the grim reality of the “Cancer Express” (7 Biswas).

The novel also critiques the passivity and frustration that can accompany both personal and collective attempts at restoration. Adam’s unwavering love for Ellie, even as she resists seeking help, mirrors humanity’s frustration with the slow pace of environmental recovery: “It isn’t fair, but her passivity, her refusal to engage with him, to react, infuriates him” (37 Bradley). As Biswas notes, the Anthropocene validates humanity’s forceful domination of nature, treating vital forces that sustain life as commodities (6 Biswas). Yet, amidst these challenges, the characters in *Clade* persist, clinging to hope even when the future is uncertain: “For what else is there to do except hang on and hope?” (23 Bradley). As the narrative unfolds across generations, Bradley transforms the abstract and often overwhelming issues of climate change into an immediate and relatable story. By focusing on one family’s journey, he compels readers to confront the realities of our

changing planet through the lens of familial bonds and generational continuity. The novel's humane portrayal of resilience and the possibility of renewal is graded by Bradley's own words: "It seems to me that the essential experience of humanity is that we continue, that even in the midst of disaster, life goes on—people fall in love, have children, fall out of love, fight with each other and the children grow up... I wanted to show that the future can be all kinds of things." This perspective infuses the novel with a cautious optimism, suggesting that hope and responsibility must coexist if we are to navigate the uncertainties of the future. In blending the themes of infertility, family, climate crisis, and the call for change, *Clade* stands as both a cautionary tale and a call to action. Bradley's narrative reminds us that the personal and the planetary are inextricably linked, and that the future of both depends on our willingness to confront ecological realities with compassion, foresight, and an unwavering commitment to care. Through its humane and academically resonant portrayal of one family's journey, the novel invites readers to reflect on their own responsibilities and the possibilities for change in an era defined by environmental uncertainty.

Justifying the Journey from Infertility to Ecology in *Clade*

In conclusion, the title "From Infertility to Ecology: Blending Family, Climate Crisis and the Call for Change" is profoundly justified through the intricate narrative and thematic structure of James Bradley's *Clade*. The novel's opening focus on Adam and Ellie's struggle with infertility is not merely a personal ordeal, but a powerful metaphor for the broader anxieties of regeneration, continuity, and hope in an uncertain world. Their longing for a child and the eventual arrival of Summer encapsulate the universal human desire for renewal and legacy, even as the world around them is increasingly shaped by instability and loss. This intimate family journey becomes a microcosm for the larger ecological crisis, as Bradley deftly blurs the boundaries between private and planetary struggles. As the narrative unfolds across generations, the family's experiences are continually shaped and reshaped by the escalating consequences of climate change—rising seas, pandemics, species extinction, and social unrest. These environmental crises are not distant backdrops but immediate forces that permeate every aspect of the characters' lives, demonstrating how deeply interconnected human fate is with the health of the planet. Through an ecocritical lens, *Clade* reveals how everyday choices, relationships, and aspirations are inextricably linked to broader ecological outcomes, emphasising the unity of all life and the shared vulnerability that binds us together.

Bradley's refusal to succumb to despair is crucial to the novel's impact. Instead, he foregrounds resilience, adaptation, and the quiet acts of care and connection that persist even in the face of overwhelming odds. The persistence of love, the forging of new relationships, and the determination to find meaning amidst chaos serve as acts of hope and resistance, suggesting that transformation is possible both within families and across societies. The novel's episodic structure, moving from infertility and personal longing to the collective challenges of ecological survival, mirrors the journey from individual struggle to communal responsibility. Ultimately, *Clade* stands as both a reflection on the human condition and a call to action. By blending the personal journey of family with the urgent realities of climate crisis, Bradley compels readers to recognise the inseparability of the personal and the planetary. The title is thus wholly justified, as the novel moves from the private pain of infertility to the public urgency of ecological stewardship, urging us to respond to crisis with empathy, foresight, and a renewed sense of responsibility. In its humane portrayal of resilience and the possibility of renewal, *Clade* invites us to imagine new ways of coexisting and caring for one another and the world we share, reminding us that hope and change are not only necessary but also possible, even in the most uncertain times.

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