



# Clade

*James Bradley*

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On a beach in Antarctica, scientist Adam Leith marks the passage of the summer solstice. Back in Sydney his partner Ellie waits for the results of her latest round of IVF treatment.

That result, when it comes, will change both their lives and propel them into a future neither could have predicted. In a collapsing England Adam will battle to survive an apocalyptic storm. Against a backdrop of growing civil unrest at home, Ellie will discover a strange affinity with beekeeping. In the aftermath of a pandemic, a young man finds solace in building virtual recreations of the dead. And new connections will be formed from the most unlikely beginnings.

*Clade* is the story of one family in a radically changing world, a place of loss and wonder where the extraordinary mingles with the everyday. Haunting, lyrical and unexpectedly hopeful, it is the work of a writer in command of the major themes of our time.

## Clade Details

Date : Published January 28th 2015 by Hamish Hamilton

ISBN :

Author : James Bradley

Format : Paperback 239 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Dystopia, Speculative Fiction

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# From Reader Review Clade for online ebook

## Kate says

Powerful and elegant - quietly terrifying.

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## Stuart Dunstan says

Literary science fiction at its best. This book might draw comparisons to David Mitchell's *The Bone Clocks* (following connected characters over decades) or Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (near-future/environmental theme), but it lacks the flashy, over-the-top SF elements and length of *Bone Clocks*, and that's a good thing.

The writing is so wonderfully succinct, grounded, and elegant that it most reminded me of Ursula Le Guin. A really great read to kick off 2015.

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## Susie Munro says

reviewed with the benefit of bookclub input. some mild spoilers

I wanted to enjoy this much more than I did, I enjoy Bradley's critical work and was quite looking forward to this novel. The best I can say for it is that it is accessible and decidedly more hopeful than the vast majority of climate change/dystopian fiction.

Clade is more a loosely tied together short story sequence about surviving catastrophic climate change than it is a novel and suffers for its brevity - there's not really any space to explore in detail the themes raised, and there are a lot of them on Bradley's list of concerns. The novel is a very ambitious attempt to tack a quite literary multi-generational unhappy family saga on to a 'cli-fi' framework - perhaps in an attempt to add some gravitas or mainstream the story? It didn't work for me at all, although I suspect I am not the target audience.

The characterisation is rather soft and the various narrators rarely peek outside their bubble of great privilege which set my teeth on edge. The allusions to deep time were confusing mapped against only three generations of the family who link the narrative together, and the structure isn't sufficient to deal with numerous plot gaps - e.g. how does the immersive internet still work if there is no power? Enough said.

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## Phrynne says

Well it must have been a good book because I read it in one afternoon. I really liked the way the author approached the topic of climate change, not as one horrific event but as a background of constant changes against which life carried on as best as it could. What I did not like though was the constant picking up and putting down of characters. Just as I was starting to get to know someone a new chapter started featuring

someone completely different. Occasionally I even had to read back to find out who the new character was or even which country we were now in. Maybe I read too fast. However it is an original approach to climate change presenting the possibilities in quite a feasible way and is also an entertaining read. Four stars I think:)

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### **Jenny says**

A better title would be: Snapshots because this is essentially snapshots of various characters lives. I generally dislike books that are written to an agenda - and this author has plenty of those. Global warming is his main bugbear, as is immigration - and while he does do a reasonable job of creating characters to showcase his views, I couldn't help feeling lectured to at times. Also a point of irritation for me is that the sections of this book I enjoyed and the characters I began to connect with never reached any kind of resolution. Imagine picking up any book and only reading a chapter or two then having it taken away. I'm left with the sense that Clade could have been developed into two or three good novels if the author could have been bothered. Instead he chose to dump all of his opinions and ideas in one place.

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### **Sandy Papas says**

4.5 - Kinda like David Mitchell meets Richard Flanagan. Great book, very thought provoking , partly terrifying but ultimately reassuring as well.

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### **Figgy says**

#### **Actual Rating 3.5 Stars**

You're looking for a novel that is an epic, sweeping story of many generations, but at the same time not boring or dull? A novel that covers everything from the birth of a child with asthma to the relationships between a woman and her late father's ex-wife, all the way through to climate change and bee colony collapse disorder, while not exceeding 250 pages?

Ha, yeah right!

Oh, hold up a minute, this is exactly what James Bradley has managed to do in this short epic novel.

**The rest of this review can be found [here](#)!**

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### **Christopher Wright says**

I delved into this marvellous novel two nights ago and was immediately seized by the characters and narrative. What a brilliant visualization of our troubled future brought to life through the perspectives of three generations of an extended family. The story begins in the near future as we follow a young scientist during his fieldwork in Antarctica, musing on the state of the planet while waiting for news from his wife

about the latest round of IVF. We then fast forward to this family's future in a city straining at the first signs of climate disruption and a marriage falling apart, before future chapters take us further forward. Each chapter provides a vivid and beautifully crafted vision of characters we are connected to and care about, trying to deal with events beyond their control. Climate change is the constant backdrop to this narrative; not a simple one-off cataclysm from which we recover, but a constant movement of the baselines we now take for granted. The depiction of the catastrophes that intersperse this decline are well developed from small asides to cities and countries no longer in existence to the graphic first-person observation of how the niceties of society crumble in the face of a category 5 hurricane or a global pandemic. This is a very human telling of how people and families try to cope in the face of existential threat through love, art, science and wonder. It is also ultimately a very optimistic tale in a context of horror and the nature of human existence in a timeless universe. Highly recommended.

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### **Jane says**

I read a lot of dystopia and I write a little too, and this is by far the most realist - and realistic - of all the stories I've read (or written). Bradley resists the urge to get apocalyptic and instead shows us how the world and lives we've loved will slip away from us like polar ice, sometimes in a trickle, sometimes in giant calving chunks. Clade is not a warning, it's a eulogy.

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### **Claire says**

I bought this book as a 'blind date'. It came wrapped in brown paper and string with the words 'dystopic', 'climate' and 'unsettling' written on it. I was pleasantly surprised by this novel. It held my interest and is very nicely written. My only gripe is that it jumps around just a little too much for my liking and I would have like to know a bit more about each section than I ever did. However, I have just finished it this moment and that may settle when a bit of time to mull over it has passed.

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### **Rose says**

Not really dystopian, not really post-apocalyptic, because the apocalypse, most realistically, extends over a lifetime and occurs as a series of bangs and a long, drawn-out whimper. Yet, despite that, the book was strangely hopeful. A very internal examination of how people respond to crisis, set within a very realistic and non-melodramatic vision of how the Anthropocene may go.

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### **Carina says**

Quiet, melancholic, beautiful writing. Enthralled by the flood chapter. Not convincing in it's "every ending is a beginning" theme surfacing hesitantly towards the end, but perhaps that's the point - it's a possibility rather than a promise.

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## Keith Stevenson says

This review originally appeared in <http://newtownreviewofbooks.com.au>

A near-future novel that uses the devastating effects of climate change as its setting and yet isn't a complete downer: that's quite an achievement, particularly as it also avoids resorting to the kind of Hollywood, gung-ho 'Hey, we saved everyone, anyway' device to make it all better. If I had to sum up James Bradley's *Clade* in one word, it would be 'unexpected'.

A 'clade' encompasses all the members of a species alive and dead that share a common ancestor. In the novel it refers most strongly to the entire human race, a clade that is in danger of being wiped from the face of the planet it has so egregiously damaged, although other clades are also being destroyed due to climate change in the book.

*Clade* is not so much a novel as a series of connected stories, time-hopping forward and centring for the most part on a single family and how they survive, or fail to survive, when faced with the myriad effects of a warming atmosphere. It's an important point made by the book – but in a subtle, non-preachy way – that an increase of a couple of degrees globally doesn't just mean we have to wear shorts all year round. It means increasingly destructive weather events, power 'brownouts', drought and crop failure, starvation and pandemics, not just as one-offs but as the norm, hammering at humanity again and again, killing millions: fathers losing daughters, wives losing husbands, not just statistics, but individuals. You, me and people just like us. And yet this is not a depressing novel.

Adam, a climate scientist, is worried about bringing a new child into the world with his partner because out on the Antarctic ice shelf, he can already see the end of the world accelerating towards them. Still, when Summer is born she is a gift, and her parents bring her up the best way they know how, even though it's getting more and more difficult to pretend the world around them is normal. Fast-forward and Summer and her parents are estranged, with Summer living in England, which is being pounded by storms when her father tracks her down and finds she has a child of her own: Noah.

Now, though, the sea is returning. In recent years these fields and towns have flooded more than once, and although the windmills that drive the drainage systems testify to people's determination to keep the water at bay, it is really only delaying the inevitable.

Those who live here know this, of course. Hence the signs of preparation, the rowboats in driveways and on lawns, the canoes and kayaks propped against walls.

There was a time when people talked about boiling the frog, arguing that the warming of the planet was too gradual to galvanise effective action, and although in recent years that has changed, delay having been replaced by panic, resistance replaced by more effective solutions, Adam still suspects that at some level people do not understand the scale of the transformation that is overtaking them. Even if it hasn't happened yet, the reality is that this place is already lost, that some time soon the ocean will have it back, the planet will overwhelm humanity.

This isn't a book about apportioning blame. And as the characters slide into the apocalypse and things get worse, the focus isn't on all-or-nothing survival. *Clade* is not emulating *The Walking Dead*. If anything, it

shares some DNA with the BBC docudrama *Threads*, which was banned by the BBC at the height of the Cold War because it showed what a stupid idea nuclear war really was. Certainly the survival element is here and the characters suffer loss, but they are still identifiably human despite what they've suffered. They try to understand what has happened to them. And, most importantly, they still have the capacity to hope, and find that hope in the most unexpected places:

It was sort of sad, all the trees there in the water, but it was also weirdly beautiful. The water was dark brown – tannin from the eucalypts, Dr Leith told me later – and so still you could see the grass and leaves and branches scattered in the shallows.

I would have stayed there longer, but after a while I began to feel uneasy, like somebody was watching me. Looking around I couldn't see anybody, but then again if there was somebody it would have been dead easy for them to hide. Just like realising people had been in the house last night, it creeped me out, so I headed back.

Noah had his lenses on when I got there, his face twitching and his hands opening and closing. I watched him for a while, wondering how long the software agents and AIs would keep running if we all died. Would the games continue on without us? It was a strange thought, all those worlds left empty, waiting, their only inhabitants things of bits and light.

As I said, James Bradley has created something unexpected in *Clade*. He's stripped the politics from what has become a very political issue and shown us the humanity that lies beneath it. He hasn't made the apocalypse palatable, but he has made it something grounded and relatable to you and me. That's quite an achievement.

I hope people read *Clade*. I hope they're not scared by the world it portrays but that they see it for what it is: a future that grows more possible day by day. A future we should do everything in our power to avoid. And I hope that understanding makes it easier for them to press for change in their own lives and in whatever government represents them.

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## **RitaSkeeter says**

I first became acquainted with Bradley's work through his short story *Beauty's Sister*, that was published a kindle single. That was so utterly wonderful that I placed him on my list to watch out for future works. Which brings us to *Clade*. The blurb for *Clade* didn't grab me, I have to say. The worry I had was whether a book could adequately do justice to multiple generations of a family in only 240 or so pages?

The book is set in a not so distant future where climate change has brought both the earth and the people who live on it, to their knees. We follow multiple generations, starting with Adam and Ellie, who live in a world not so very different to what we have now, with Adam - a scientist - experiencing frustration that the warning signs of irrevocable change to the earth's climate are not being heeded. As we follow Adam through his life, and follow his descendants, we see the world's Eco-system collapsing as extreme weather events become more severe and more frequent. Accompanying this is the inevitable collapse of society as we know it.

So the question I had about whether the book could do justice to so much in so few pages? The answer is yes, it does. Bradley is a master of sparse prose and being able to say a great deal with very few words. This is a theme driven novel, but that is not to say the characters are not developed because they are. Bradley took me through a range of emotions in the book. The first half of the book I had a sense of claustrophobic panic. Climate change is a topic I feel strongly about, and Bradley's vision was both realistic and my worst nightmare. I resonated strongly with Adam's concern about having brought a child into such an uncertain world, and what theirs and their descendants futures might look like. The second half of the book I felt sadness. Bradley leaves his book with a bittersweet note of hope. Despite all that occurred during the book, people endured.

This is a very strong novel. It is easily the best novel I've read in January (this is number 20 for the month), but I'm going to take an early punt that it will be one of my best reads for the year. Sparse, emotive, and sophisticated.

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### **Mary says**

This is a plausible, unnerving, and highly pertinent climate change dystopian novel that you should be reading during these troubled times. Clade explores the ways in which we have and will continue to destroy our planet, our relationships, and ourselves, and it does so not with a sudden apocalyptic event, but over time, with a steady downward self-inflicted spiral of mass natural disasters, refugee and immigration crises, wars, crop and species extinction, anti-science leadership and ineffectual media. If you're reading this in 2018, this will all feel frighteningly familiar to you. It's written beautifully and with that lonely, disconnected atmosphere that we're destined to remain in as long as we're determined to be obsessed with our gadgets and ignore reality.

If you're into this kind of thing, Clade is superior to Red Clocks and The Power.

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### **Carol Ryles says**

I found myself quickly caught up in this entirely plausible plot and the interconnected lives of the numerous point-of-view characters. There were some gaps caused by the lengthy time spans between chapters that left me wondering, especially regarding how order returned after the chaos caused by each successive disaster; and most notably allowing a scientific project that even in these wealthy times is considered by many to be of low priority. Having said that, I enjoyed the symbolism and sense of hope that this single wide-reaching project allowed. By the time I reached the end, I wanted to keep reading to see what happened next.

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### **Glitterbomb says**

This was epic in every sense of the word.

Imagine a tale spanning several generations. One that explores the destruction and devastation of climate change, from the very beginning to its end. All in under 250 pages. You would imagine it would be rushed and underdeveloped - lacking in detail. That is not the case here. Clade is an incredibly well thought out, and executed book.



The characters and plot are developed *just enough*, and you're not bogged down with unnecessary details. Think of a sketch; a minimum of strokes used to maximum effect. Everything was efficient in its delivery and the results were powerful.

This was a thought provoking and compelling read. It explores climate change, from the very first "*Oh crap, we are at the point of no return here.*" moment right through to the end. It outlines the utter devastation and the repercussion it would have on our lives. It also tells a tale of human endurance and resilience, and how we are versatile and able to adapt. I particularly enjoyed how the characters intertwine and overlap each other, how they are all linked in some (sometimes unexpected) way. Its a story about humanity and our relationships with each other in the face of an increasingly unstable world.

This really was brilliant and clever. A book that makes you take a good long hard look at who we are as a species, and the impact we have on our environment.

5 Stars, and I cant recommend this enough!

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### **Regina says**

I was totally into Clade, however around the 80% mark it all unraveled for me and became quite a chore to read.

First 80% 4 stars. Last 20% 2 stars. So I'll give it 3 stars overall.

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### **Sally906 says**

Opens: *...As Adam steps outside the cold strikes him like a physical thing, the shock still startling after all these weeks...*

I have to confess I had never heard of the book CLADE or its author James Bradley until it was discussed on the Sunday Book club on ABC recently. CLADE is an unusual book in that it looks the scenario of the possible effects of climate change and how it impacts on the world through the eyes of three generations of one family, the Leith family, and some characters who come into contact with them. Bradley's scenario is frighteningly plausible.

Starting around 2016 the story moves through in a series of 10 narratives (or chapters) that are not linked in any real way except that a member of the family appears in it. There can be years between chapters before Bradley decides to pop back into the story and give the reader a snapshot of where the family, and the world, is at now.

CLADE opens with Dr Adam Leith and his artist wife Ellie trying to conceive a child – he is a scientist and is down in the Antarctica and she is in Sydney waiting to hear if this time the IVF process has been

successful. He hears the ice beneath him creaking and groaning and understands this is the ice loosening up as the earth warms up. He worries about whether they should bring a child into the world. And the book continues each chapter jumping through history and gives a snapshot of what the family is doing against the background of a rapidly escalating global meltdown. The Earth is dying. Changing weather patterns result in hurricanes hitting Europe and Monsoons failing. Fish and birds start dying, massive floods kill thousands and a flu like virus kills millions. The temperatures steadily rise, civil unrest increases and world economies fall. Yet the day to day activity of the characters remain the same, they just get on with living as the earth throws yet another challenge at them. The reader gets to see snapshots of events through Adam and Ellie, their daughter, their grandson, a Chinese teenager Adam sort of adopts and a refugee from Bangladesh that Ellie connects with. This makes the story very personal, as the reader experiences the events as they affect the characters making it all very, very believable.

On the whole I liked the way the story progressed as a series of snapshots as the world deteriorated. I have to confess that sometimes it took me a while to get the connection to the family and it left me slightly adrift until I did, but as soon as I clicked I was off again. Was left a bit bewildered over the 'Sim' section and still not sure I have fully got that part. Overall though despite the steady decline in the conditions of the earth there is hope at the end of CLADE – it's a bit out there – but why not, nothing else was working to stop the planet's deterioration. In the end CLADE is not all doom and gloom – although there is a lot of it, it is more a story about how the human race is determined to look for solutions, adapt and fight to live – it is life but not as we know it.

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## **Carolyn says**

A clade is defined as "a life-form group consisting of an ancestor and all its descendants"(wikipedia.org). In this novel, James Bradley follows not only three generations of one family as they grapple with climate change but also the past and future of the human race as we must adapt to the changes we have wrought on our planet.

The novel opens in Antarctica with Adam Leith, a climate change scientist finding out that his wife Ellie is pregnant with their daughter Summer after two years of IVF. Adam is concerned about the changes in climate that he sees all around him - the melting of the polar ice, the increase in sea levels, the increase in acidity of the oceans, increased storms and floods and forest fires - are being ignored by politicians and the situation is spiraling out of control.

The book is written as a series of moments in the lives of Adam and his descendants so that instead of seeing climate change as a gradual effect we see more abrupt changes and are more aware of what is happening than the characters living their lives. This is particularly unsettling as we currently live with the early signs described by Bradley yet are doing little to take them seriously. Visiting Summer who is now an adult with a son of her own living in Cambridge, Adam reflects on the boiling frog syndrome where "warming of the planet was too slow to galvanise effective action" so that "people do not understand the scale of the transformation that is overtaking them".

Bradley describes an escalation in the devastation caused by warming on the planet. Parts of India and Bangladesh under water, massive storms and floods occurring regularly, vegetation changing and birds and bees disappearing. By choosing to show the effects of all this on one family he has somehow made the story

more personal and real rather than something abstract. Through all this, Bradley imagines mankind continuing to adapt and survive and in the end his message is one of hope for our future.

*With thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for a copy of the book to read and review*

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