Advancement of Environmental Concerns Through Cli-Fi: 
James Bradley’s *Clade* as a Prototype

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Abstract. Climate Change due to anthropogenic factors and its repercussions in the form of 
disastrous environmental calamities is the burning issue in the current scenario. People of 
different fields are trying every possible means to bring awakening in the populace. The field of 
literature is also making contributions to this noble cause. Cli-fi or Climate Change Fiction is the 
newfangled branch of Ecocriticism from the field of literature, which is entirely dedicated to 
dealing with and bringing up climate change problems, global warming and likewise. The impact 
of this genre of literature has brought up the positive impact on the wider range of the population 
in simple language as compared to that of the technical language. Thus, this research study aims 
to bring forth the advancement of environmental concern employing Cli-fi or Climate Change 
Fiction by analysing James Bradley’s work *Clade* as a prototype and inclusively quoting other 
key literary works in this genre and their primary contributions made in this field of operation. 
The narrative technique with vivid descriptions, the mapping of the psychological awakening of 
emotions towards environmental concern and the portrayal of environmental calamities will pave 
the way and establish the advanced approach of literature for environmental concern and climate 
change.

Keywords: Climate change, Cli-fi, ecocriticism, environmental concerns, Clade

1. Introduction

On September 23, 2019, Greta Thunberg; a young girl from Sweden roared in the UN Climate Action 
Summit organized in the city of New York against the Government and non-government entities for

‘Stealing her hopes and childhood with mere false words leading to suffering of the people and death 
of the people. The entire ecosystem is collapsing. We are on the point of annihilation, and all you 
can speak about is wealth and unending economic expansion’, ‘How dare you!’ [1]

Baffled over the non-fulfilment of the promise of reducing the carbon emissions by the government 
and non-government entities, she emphasized to recall their commitment and highlighted the purview 
of the aftermath which is approaching soon. Ever since the attention of the global population surprisingly 
again focused on the existential conundrum of Climate Change, to which Mr. Guterres; the UN 
Secretary-General supported exclusively by reaffirming it to be of anthropogenic nature by articulating 
‘We are putting life itself at jeopardy if we do not immediately alter our way of life’ [1].
This saga of ‘to do or not to do’ is not new. The concern for climate change dates back to 1988 when the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was formalized after facing the ramifications of greenhouse gases [2]. The Kyoto Protocol was adopted on December 11, 1997, and it mandated the UNFCCC to restrict and reduce GHG (Greenhouse Gas) emissions in accordance with agreed-upon targets. Main thrust was given in The Paris Agreement was signed at COP 21 on December 12, 2015, with the intention of achieving global warming below 2°C, optimally 1.5°C, compared to pre-industrial levels. Discussing Climate the first question arises what does one mean by this terminology? According to United Nations, ‘Climate change refers to the long-term temperature variations and changes in weather patterns…due to the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, gas and oil’ [3]. They are defined as ‘changes in the atmosphere, as well as interactions between the atmosphere and several other chemical, biological, geological, and geographical variables within the Earth system, generated by periodic variations in planet Earth’s climate’ [4]. We, the humans are the primary culprit behind these major alterations resulting in Global warming, massive pollution, species extermination and biodiversity erosion, hazardous methane emissions, thawing icebergs, flooding, severe droughts, wildfires, and forest degradation [5]. So Climate Change has caught the eyes of researchers, political leaders and writers as well.

2. Ecocriticism & Cli-Fi

The field of literature as being the counterpart of the processes and events happening in the Society didn’t remain untouched by the fire of environmental studies. It grew a new branch – Ecocriticism: ‘an investigation into the connection between literature and the physical environment’ [6]. Although William Rueckert came up with the term in his Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism, but Cheryll Glotfelty is accredited for ecocriticism. This ecocritical branch gave birth to a new shoot specially dedicated to the Nobel cause of Climate change named ‘Climate Change Fiction’ in short popular as ‘Cli-Fi’. This term was introduced by Dan Bloom; a journalist. According to him, ‘Cli-fi’ is a new name for novels, short stories, and films dealing with climate change and global warming issues: ‘Cli’ is from the word ‘climate’, while ‘fi’ is from the word ‘fiction’ forming ‘Cli-fi’ [7].

There are two ecocritical perspectives to Cli-fi literature: one is to conceive of ways to deal with climate change, whereas the latter is concerned with understanding climate change as a cultural phenomenon [8]. Translations of many works around the world like Iceland, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Germany and Finland have contributed to the expansion of the Cli-Fi, which efficiently illustrates the ecological, societal and psychological effects. Some of the great works in this series are Clade by James Bradley (2015), The Island Will Sink (2016) by Briohny Doyle, Cat Spark’s Lotus Blue (2017) Cli-fi is the fiction which depicts utter annihilation of the future and portrays dual perspectives: to begin it exhibits the societal, economical, and ecological life deteriorating, and the next exhibits the potential to withstand them and acclimatize to the new environment [9]. The goal of the Cli-fi is to assist the readers to comprehend the effects of the changing climate on individuals and communities by providing real information that will help them better understand what will happen in the future. As it reflects humanity’s difficult relationship with the earth, Climate change fiction must address the human-caused component of global warming. It also discusses the role of humans in dealing with this unusual calamity [10]. Yet ultimately it teaches and entertains simultaneously.

3. James Bradley’s Clade: As a Prototype

James Bradley, a novelist and critic of Australian origin has devoted his major concern to climate change. His Clade (2017) is analysed on the scale of Cli-fi as a prototype that depicts the story from the present to the future. It tells the narrative of Adam Leith, a scientist of climatology. Adam’s friends and family members who are stuck in a world ravaged by the changing climate, including coastal floods, general flooding, wildfires, droughts, massive devastation, and worldwide pestilence. The title of the novel Clade is derived from Klados which signifies a faction of animals and plants that have a shared ancestor and all that descends from it. In this novel the common ancestor of his family and friend is
Adam. The novel resembles honeycomb structuralism as it exactly has ten chapters like ten compartments, which gives it an ecological linking. Further, the root of the climate change issue is defined by Adam’s coworkers: ‘We don’t change because we don’t believe in the problem, at least not at the deep, intuitive level we need to,’ he would add. ‘When it’s right in front of us, we can see it and understand what it implies; we know we have to change. But as soon as we’re away from it our old thinking reasserts itself, our desire to reproduce, to build power’ [11].

3.1. Vivid Depictions
Bradley powerfully shows the current and future effects of climate change. When Adam goes to see his daughter, Summer, he tells her about the flood that has swept England:

‘At first, all that is visible is the rising water, the refuse floating by. But then he hears a rushing noise, accompanied by creaking and grinding like the wind. And then, at the street’s end, he sees it. It seems so improbable it’s difficult to be afraid, for it is as if the water is pouring towards them in a sloping wall, a liquid hill that moves faster than any of them could run, a wave that does not end but comes and comes and comes’ [12].

In a chat between Amir, a Dhaka-based physician and beekeeper, and Ellie, Adam’s former better half, Bradley brings up the topic of crumbling of the honeybee colony and states that ‘None of the other collapses has been comparable. It started in Europe and expanded in less than a year to America and Asia. We were safe for a while, but now the colonies here are also withering’ [11]. Bradley also addresses the issue of population displacement. Amir’s residence in Australia is unlawful; he and his wife and children were moved to camps after Bangladesh’s government fell, but he fled following the demise of his spouse and daughter. Ellie is his narrator, and he tells her her narrative as she spent a long time in the camps and managed to evade one day. She had no idea where to go. She was ‘heartbroken, depressed, and almost catatonic’ [11]. Then Bradley describes a pandemic that starts in China and is triggered by the Acute Viral Respiratory Syndrome (AVRS) virus by stating that the media blackout in China remained in force, but the images that were leaking out were utterly horrifying consisting of overcrowded hospitals, corpses in the streets. This condition continues all over Asia, as well as America and Europe [11]. Furthermore, many species declined Birds/Bananas/Tigers/Frogs/Bees/Coffee/Polar bears/Coral and many got saved: Seeds/Elephants/Dolphins/Each other [11]. Climate change’s terrible implications are accurately depicted.

3.2. Surfacing of Emotions
Climate Change triggers the emotional aspect of the characters in the novel Clade. This emotional surfacing enircles the key point that the Reader-Response Connection ties the audience to the central concern of the effect of climate change. The emotions of the characters are being felt by the readers and it creates a cognitive effect on the minds of the readers. This emergence of psychological feelings in the context of the characters in the novel lay a Cathartic effect leading to purgation and moral awakening towards Environment and nature. Several instances support the psychological emergence of emotions. Summer seems to be upset. She and Noah are found moving to England after leaving Australia. She appears to be uneasy and worried in a chat with Adam as a result of the impacts of the changing climate. When Adam inquires as to whether they have suffered any serious losses as a result of the flood. Her answer is, ‘Stuff? Some. But people died, Dad. A lot of them. Or had you forgotten that?’ [11]

Noah also has autism. He’s always worried concerning the climatic conditions. According to Summer, matters of the flood, water and storm, stresses Noah out and makes him worse. He becomes quite agitated and ‘cannot stop talking about it’ [11]. After the flood, Adam, Summer, as well as Noah are confronted with the following terrifying images. They stumble upon the bodies in the wreckage on several occasions. A guy is stuck against a wall by an automobile, a lady is down in a pit, and a girl is entangled in a toppled tree. They initially tried that Noah shouldn’t see all these gruesome sights, but
later on, confronting the next corpse, they abandoned the idea of covering his eyes as it would be in vain [11]. Even Bradley acknowledges his desire to create emotional upheaval, stating that he sought to express a sense of loss associated with the extinction of landscapes, species, and possibilities of mankind.

3.3. The Portrayal of Environmental Calamities
The Environmental calamities have been depicted in their cruellest form with their resulting aftermath creating a deep reflective concern on the minds of their reader. As Bradley puts it,

‘The rainfall that tends to arrive in July or August certainly didn’t come, leaving the subcontinent in severely hot weather. The crop crisis resulted in food shortages and it led to severe hunger. Then, in November, horrific rains and floods killed over a million people and forced another 100 million to flee from their homes. Ultimately, the economy crumbled in the sequel, leading to severe joblessness, which has recently ignited rioting in Calcutta and Mumbai’ [11].

He is able to sketch the climate-related generational transitions. Within four generations, the narrative universe shifts from a familiar location to one in which eco-collapse which has harmed both biological and adoptive generations descended from scientist, Adam. The story begins in Antarctica, where he is concerned about his artist wife, Ellie, and their in-vitro fertilisation procedure. Bradley wisely employs the circumstances with which the 21st-century readers are acquainted. The climate becomes a global level intimidating component in every topography: the absent monsoon, the melting of glaciers at Antarctica, the increase in asthmatic attacks, the abrupt deaths of birds and fish, the unsuccessful international climate talks and so on [11]. It generates contemporary apprehensions in the psyche of the readers, linking them to the real world resulting in didactic outcomes [13].

3.4. The Ramified Beauty in Destructed Environment
The scenarios of environmental degradations are portrayed in the sense of denial-acceptance. A literary and psychological style of depicting human nature of not taking seriously climate change and its after-effects is by shedding off themselves of the bitter reality of the havoc which was fruition of their deeds. The characters tend to find beauty in changes caused by the destruction. Maddie, Ellie’s step mum, sees elegance in the wrecked seashore, despite the fact that the high water has dragged away constantly most of the portion of the sea beach. She believes that the beach’s obliteration contains something exquisite [11]. Summer also mentions the beauty of the stars after the storm that rips England apart, stating, ‘They are incredibly bright,’ on which his father (Adam) affirms, ‘With the power off, there are no lights to interfere with them’ [11].

The cacophony seems amazing to Li Lijuan, Noah’s nurse’s daughter. She articulates that things were moving in the foliage, birds shouting and singing. Even the light had changed, becoming thicker and more oozing with smoke and colour. It was incredible [11]. This controversial beautification of the ruins of the wrath of climate change, puts one to ponder, really is it possible to find light in darkness or life in death? The contrast created by Bradley reveals the true human nature of being more selfish and less optimistic as instead of curating the anthropogenic measures, humans try to find out their profits. Akin to those steps of the developed countries in context to carbon emission reductions i.e. hearing everything but doing nothing.

4. Conclusion
Humans urged for development to sustain the continuity of their species but they never thought of the repercussions. Industrial development brought climatic developments but in a negative way. The periodicity of natural events changed, nature changed, the atmosphere changed, and changed the climate. What has not changed is the long sleep of ignorance of human beings. Thus, writers of literature took this noble aim of breaking this prolonged sleep by writing Cli-Fi to enlighten the audience on the
intricacies of climate change and the disastrous outcomes and finally alarms the reader by giving an imaginary glimpse into the upcoming future. Bradley masters this aim as well as this genre and his *Clade* becomes a masterpiece of this forte. We have everything in it. The byzantine relationship of the characters with the environment, the physical and geological dilemmas, the emotional hullabaloo emerging out of the havoc caused by climate change and enjoyment of beauty in destruction and aftermath are such features that draw a cautionary note for the public: Beware! and establishes Cli-Fi as the literary tool that advances environmental concerns. Cli-Fi reiterates the words of Ms Greta Thunberg – ‘We (Environment) will be watching you (human)’ of the anthropogenic injustices caused on us by you and avenge by all means.

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