

# A Deep Ecological Perspective: Challenging Anthropocentric Views in *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge*

**Name of 1<sup>st</sup> Author: Jahnvi Jasmin**

Designation of 1<sup>st</sup> Author: Research Scholar

Name of Department of 1<sup>st</sup> Author: Humanities

Name of organization of 1<sup>st</sup> Author : Sarala Birla University, Ranchi, Jharkhand

**Abstract:** This chapter analyses with a deep ecological lens to analyze how Michelle Min Sterling's *Camp Zero* (2023) and Stephen Markley's *The Deluge* (2023) critiques anthropocentric ideologies amid ecological collapse. It analyses the novels depictions of technocratic enclaves, social inequalities, and the intrinsic value of the non-human world, revealing how human exceptionalism perpetuates environmental devastation and moral decay. Through textual analysis, the discussion highlights the novels rejection of redemptive narratives, emphasizing ethical humility and coexistence in the Anthropocene.

*Index terms :* Deep Ecology, Camp Zero, The Deluge, Anthropocentrism, Ecological Collapse

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses *Camp Zero* (2023) by Michelle Min Sterling and *The Deluge* (2023) by Stephen Markley in the context of a theoretical approach to deep ecology that will pre-empt how the two novels critically challenge anthropocentric ideologies that situate human beings as being above and essentially outside the physical world. The large-scale exploitation of ecosystems through industrial capitalism, technological rationality, and modern systems of governance is legitimised through the lens of anthropocentrism, which presents nature as a resource that is created to be used by people. This worldview justifies the destruction of the environment in the guise of economic development, productivity, and human survival. Deep ecology, which is most eloquently presented by Arne Naess, denies instrumental thinking of nature and holds that all living organisms inherently have value, whether they are helpful or harmful to human society or not. It demands an ethical and philosophical transformation where human beings perceive themselves as a part of the ecological systems instead of being the rulers of the ecological systems (Naess 95). The modern climate fiction is more aggressively critical of human-centred environmentalism by revealing the disastrous consequences of this hierarchical view of the world. The novel *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge* can be considered a symptomatic shift. *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge* are symptomatic shifts in the emerging climate fiction: instead of a climate catastrophe being a fast, one-time disaster, both novels present ecological breakdown as a means of systemic political, technological, and ethical breakdowns. The climate crisis should not be discussed as an external shock, but as a situation embedded in governance, capitalism, and everyday life that has been historically constructed.

As a technocratic, gendered, and fragmented dystopia due to climate collapse, the novel by Sterling. *Camp Zero* (2023) is written by American author and former technology journalist Michelle Min Sterling. It examines the intersections of climatic collapse, technocracy, and gendered labour. This is informed by the fact that Sterling works in the field of techno-solutionism reporting and has been critical in her writings about the elite survivalism during the Anthropocene introduces enclosure, exclusion and ecological denial as the survival tactics of the upper classes. Markley, by comparison, broadly realist, follows the politics, psychology, environmental fallout of a long history of inaction and system denial in response to the climate crisis. When taken together, these novels show that anthropocentrism is more than a simple philosophical stance that is abstract; it is a system that

is deeply ingrained and creates social inequality, ecological destruction, and fragmentation of morality. By analyzing the text closely and spending considerable time in the domain of deep ecological thinking, this chapter stresses that both novels find it necessary to destroy the illusion of human exceptionalism and anticipate the dire necessity of ecological humility, moral responsibility, and renewed understanding of the relationship between humanity and the more-than-human world.

## 2.2 Literary Critique of Anthropocentrism and Deep Ecology.

Deep ecology is a radical philosophical reaction to so-called shallow ecology in the 1970s, a more environmental philosophy, in which these factors mainly focused on pollution control, resource management, and conservation to benefit human welfare as opposed to nature itself (Naess 96). Shallow ecology functions on an anthropocentric platform, where technical or policy based remedies are sought, in which ideological systems that cause environmental degradation are not abolished. Deep ecology, in its turn, undermines the principles of modernity by putting into question the perceived human superiority over the natural world. The principle of biospheric egalitarianism, which holds that every type of life be it being human or non-human has intrinsic value regardless of its utility to human society, is at the core of it. Such a postulate requires an ethical realignment where human beings forget exploitative and instrumentalist attitudes towards nature and instead appreciate their intractable embeddedness in the multifaceted ecological systems.

Deep ecology holds that the environmental crisis is not a technical issue but an outcome of a more profound crisis of values, which lies with human exceptionalism, consumerism, and the unregulated technological development. Naess claims that ecological sustainability demands consciousness transformation and a call to humans to become an ecological self, to identify with the more-than-human world instead of being separate from it (Naess 98). The change discredits the mastery, progress, and control narratives and replaces it with the philosophy of humility, coexistence, and environmental accountability.

Literary ecocriticism has also recently been drawn to a deeper ecology to challenge cultural discourses that naturalise domination of the environment. According to Lawrence Buell, environmentally attentive texts should not be content at a scenic background to nature, but must portray it as a presence, an active force defining the meaning of narrative (Buell 87). In a profoundly ecological view, literature is the important place of revealing the anthropocentric assumptions and envisioning the other forms of human-nature interactions. The deep ecological literary analysis is thus attentive to the aspect of non-human agency, ecological interrelationships and the ethical impact of environmental exploitation.

The two novels present cultures that prioritize human interests in the short run, at the expense of the ecological integrity, which leads to permanent destruction of the environment. Foregrounding the material agency of climatic weather, landscape, and non-human forces, these texts follow along the lines of deep ecological critique of contemporary civilisation and prompt the readers to think about the moral principles of human interaction with nature.

## 2.3 Transformation in the anthropocentric technocracy in Camp Zero

Camp Zero takes place in an Arctic region, in a near future, altered by the collapse of the climate, high temperatures, and systemic scarcity of resources. The organisation of social life is based on displacement, enclosure, and inequality, especially in the unequal distribution of the protection of technology and risk to the environment. "Camp Zero" stands out for its ability to tell a story that is both hauntingly prophetic and transporting. The notion of a society on the verge of collapse is a sobering reminder of how vulnerable we are right now. The following line is very relevant-

*"Our collective future lies in securing the North," our sergeant told us. "And your job is to monitor our presence here and prepare for the future."* (Camp Zero ,37) The book is filled with a sense of togetherness and the

resilience of the human spirit, but it doesn't sugarcoat the hard facts of life. The story also discusses the fascinating idea of White Alice, an elite cadre of female warriors who work out of a climate research station during the Cold War. Their enigmatic presence heightens the suspense and begs the question of what these organizations should do in a world where the laws have changed. Camp Zero is pegged in a climate-stricken apocalyptic future that is defined by the ecological collapse where extreme temperatures, environmental instability, and extreme shortage of resources are a common way of life. The White Alice women are the ecofeminist views of the gendered ecological labour and exploitation. Their involvement in the survival infrastructure reveals the escalation of the social inequality and commodification of the female body and the nature. They lack agency showing that the environment is under patriarchal and capitalist control of survival systems. They are the signifiers of environmental injustice and emphasize how anthropocentric climate adjustment is unfairly and unjustly impacting marginalized groups, and perpetuating ecological and gender-based exploitation. The aspects of social life in this world are characterized by fragmentation, displacement and inequality which is expressed by the unequal allocation of both the environmental harm and the privilege to technology. Also in this setting, the titular Camp Zero is a technocratic enclave of the highest level of control that is meant to house the elites who will rebuild civilisation following ecological disasters. The camp is a highly anthropocentric ideology, which is based on the assumption that human creativity, technological skills, and rationality of science can eventually break the ecological barrier. Instead of adjusting to the environmental facts, Camp Zero aims at shielding itself against them, which strengthens the delusion that it is possible to ensure human survival without the help of larger ecological structures.

*“These women wielded a kind of power that she had never been exposed to. They were longed for, and desired, but they also seemed at ease in their bodies and in control of their destiny. Most important, they had chosen to work on the peninsula; it hadn't chosen them.” – (Camp Zero, 99)*

This criticism revolves around the spatial organisation and governance of the camp. Its design focuses more on enclosure, monitoring and control and alienates the residents of the Arctic land, and the external environment is seen as an existential danger. In a profoundly ecological sense, such division is an ultimate ecological moral failure: the rejection of the ecological entrenchment of humanity. The camp replicates the anthropocentric logic of perceiving nature as something to be surpassed or avoided instead of coexisting with by erecting barriers (physical and ideological) between humans and the non-human world. This reasoning is the very reason that it is arguing to make sure that people survive. Sterling reveals one of the violence of this approach to the world by the direct experience of the characters who are marginalized, especially women, whose labour supports the camp, but who are systematically undervalued and hidden. Such women do all the physical, emotional and reproductive labour required to make the camp run, but they are not included in making decisions of the camp. One of the main characters of the novel, Rose, explains the emptiness and meaninglessness of the project by saying that the camp offers a new start but she senses that it is like a tomb that is closing to the world (Sterling). Rose signifies new environmental awareness in the technocratic dystopian Camp Zero. She sees the camp as an artificial survival machine that alienates human beings to the natural ecosystems. The state of her emotions indicates that this is the ecological self-realisation that Arne Naess reported when he realised the interdependence of the environment. Rose challenges climate capitalism and social inequality that are concealed within the survival technologies and can be seen as the sign of the moral opposition to the anthropocentric power of the environment and the promotion of ecological coexistence instead of technological domination.

The vivid imagery breaks down the borders between life and death, a future built on seclusion and domination is lethal in nature. According to deep ecological perspective, the enclosure of the camp is ecological and moral entrapment rather than protection.

*“We never saw the inside, but we knew even then that there were prisoners trapped alone in each cell without air-conditioning or insulation to keep out the elements. Our sergeant told us that being inside the Box was like living on a hot plate perpetually turned on.” (Camp Zero 123)*

The anthropocentric and colonial conjectures of the planners of Camp Zero go a step further with the way they view the Arctic landscape as an expendable guinea pig. The land is conceived as something aggressive, sterile, and dead, an empty field where human desire could be exerted. These kinds of representations destroy the

inherent worth of the environment and deny that the environment is a living system with the rhythms and agency of its own. Ecological harmony demands identification with the more-than-human world and not separation as Arne Naess insists (Naess 99). *Camp Zero* eloquently shows the repercussions of denying this categorization, displaying the ways in which the ecological devastation and social injustice and extreme ethical depletion are recreated through technocratic survivalism. The design of the camp is an anthropocentric belief in the protective power of technology over the ecological systems, strengthening the illusion of human survival as an independent process of human-centred ecological systems.

## 2.4 Ecological Absence and the Non-Human Silencing in *Camp Zero*.

Among the most overwhelming and disturbing aspects of *Camp Zero*, there is the consistent representation of the ecological emptiness. The surrounding of the novel is scarcity, not abundance: fauna is virtually non-existent, flora seem stunted or destroyed, weather conditions are severe, drastic and unreliable. This ecological emptiness does not just frame human suffering but it is a narrative strategy that focuses on exposing the effects of anthropocentric exploitation. The non-human world silence is a kind of a silent but devastating reproach towards all human-centred worldviews, which in the past had given the priority to progress, survival, and technological dominance over ecological balance. Instead of providing a picture of a strong or healing nature, Sterling gives the view of a world torn apart, with the wounds of the centuries of environmental exploitation and disregard.

At some point, the Arctic landscape is characterized as white and endless and the impression is a date rape had erased everything living (Sterling). This bleak imagery does not call to account purity or transcendence but absence, loss, and erasure. The white colour, which is usually equated with something fresh or pure possibility, in this case indicates environmental emptiness and deadness. In deep ecological terms, this erasure is the final result of the refusal of intrinsic worth to non-human life: a world that is ecologically diverse and meaningless. The scenery turns into the place of mourning, but not survival, pointing to that which has been lost forever. This ecological sorrow is closely associated with the notion of slow violence provided by Rob Nixon, according to which destruction of the environment is a slow, sometimes unnoticeable phenomenon that accumulates over time and disproportionately impacts both the ecosystems and marginalised groups of people (Nixon). The delayed but fatal outcome of such slow violence in *Camp Zero* is the lack of animals and plant life, which is revealed only when it is too late. This environmental desolation is more of an anthropocentric indictment story than a dystopian landscape. The silence of the non-human life records the long-term effects of refusing intrinsic values to the ecological systems. The gradual extinction of plants and wildlife is an example of the so-called slow violence: the environmental harm that happens progressively, is mostly invisible, and has a disproportionately large impact on ecosystems as well as on marginalised populations.

Most importantly, the ecological silence of the novel is also an indicator of the moral implications of anthropocentrism. In a deep ecological perspective, the lack of non-human voices highlight the failure of human systems to be morally accountable, which only appreciates value in what satisfies the immediate needs of human beings. The fact that non-human life is virtually disappearing serves as a prompt to the reality that the destruction of the ecosystem is not a far-off event but a tangible problem in the present that is informed by human decisions. The silence of the environment is not a neutral one, and it reflects the history of exploitation, extraction, and neglect.

More significantly, Sterling is resistant to the urge to anthropomorphise nature or to give it redemptive or pedagogical control. There is no environment in the novel *Camp Zero* to punish or give moral lessons or spiritual transformation. Such a story denial is quite in line with the opposition of deep ecology to sentimental and anthropocentric visions of nature. Nature is neither evil nor vengeful; it just exists on the basis of its laws, without taking into consideration human hopes. In denying the centrality of human redemption to ecological collapse, Sterling makes a major point of deep ecological understanding, namely that ecological systems are not about human needs, human stories, and human strategies of survival. Rather, *Camp Zero* challenges readers with the disconcerting truth that the anthropocentrically constructed world might proceed or end completely without any care about the human significance or any moral solution.

Although there are many dystopian or climate-related books, *Camp Zero* stands out for its subdued strength. It has nothing to do with uprisings or great conflicts. It's about how systems fail women, how power is used subtly, and how small acts of disobedience may have a big impact. Sterling takes a literary approach, more akin to Margaret Atwood than Suzanne Collins. Her writing is reflective and has a sense of both beauty and melancholy. Additionally, *Camp Zero* communicates in whispers, which might be even more eerie in a genre that is frequently characterised by loud sadness. *Camp Zero* by Michelle Min Sterling is a clever, emotionally complex, and eerie book that lets you sit with its message rather than shout it out loud. It is a tale of reinvention, monitoring, and subdued resistance through the frozen environment of northern Canada. Grant explains- "Canadian air is different than Kiwi air. It's colder and drier. Less salt because we're so far inland," Meyer says. "We're in a subarctic climate, you see. Although 100 million years ago, this region used to be the ocean floor. If you dig far enough down, you can find the bodies of sea invertebrates trapped in their mineral graves. The locals used to mine the ammonite and turn it into jewelry." (*Camp Zero*, 27).

Grant's explanation on the history of Canada's climate and geography shows his understanding of the science behind the environment, yet at the same time shows his anthropocentric disengagement. Grant understands the environmental transformation and the deep time of ecology, yet his mentioning of fossilized organisms as resources shows a utilitarian approach toward the environment. His understanding is more cognitive than it is ethical, which shows his technocratic faith in the domination of humans over ecology. Therefore, Grant represents some form of climate governance that shows some understanding of the delicate nature of the environment, yet still exploitatively uses the environment as a means of survival.

## 2.5 The Deluge and Anthropocentric Politics and Institutional Failure.

The *Deluge* by Stephen Markley is a multi-perspectival, grand overview of the climate collapse not brought about by ignorance, but due to political inertia, institutional paralysis and an institutional system of denial. With a time frame between 2013 and 2040, the novel follows the progression of the destruction of social, political, and ecological structures, where governments and corporations constantly fail to act in a way that would address the increasing scientific evidence. Central to these failures is a rooted anthropocentric view of the world which places the short-term human interests of economic growth, national security and political stability ahead of the ecological integrity and the overall long-term survival of the planet. The climate crisis in this system is treated as an inconvenience that can be managed, rather than an existential threat, thereby reinforcing the illusion that human systems can remain unaffected by the environmental crisis.

Such an anthropocentric reasoning is best represented in the way scientific knowledge is treated. At the beginning of the novel, climate scientist Tony Pietrus urges on the direness of the fact that the system is breaking faster than we can quantify it. His words reflect the accelerated rate of environmental disturbance, although it is still constantly disregarded, diluted or strategically shunned by politicians who want to avoid economic backlash or political unrest. The truth of science is haggling and is subject to the rules of the market and voting periods. In a profound ecological view, this reaction is a high-profile example of what Arne Naess criticizes as short-term and human-focused calculus - a method that measures ecological damage as either a direct gain or loss to human beings in the here and now (Naess 98). In its turn, deep ecology requires long-term ecological thinking that takes into consideration intergenerational responsibility and interspecies justice, both of which are systematically missing in the political institutions of the novel.

Markley also supports this criticism by showing the climatic disasters as not a standalone event of natural disaster, but as the result of political decisions and moral failure. Cities are flooded, areas become uninhabitable due to heat waves, and mass migration changes the world's demographics, but they are always presented as something unexpected or inevitable. The novel reveals this story as a purposeful escapism. Even the title *The Deluge* suggests biblical visions of Godly retribution, yet Markley disrupts this comparison by making ecology disaster purely man-made. The flood is not a divine intervention but the physical result of decades of neglect, exploitation, and arrogance.

This framing is very consistent with deep ecological ethics, which attribute the cause of ecological damage to human systems and not to fate or natural processes. Markley emphasises the extent of anthropocentric failure by rejecting redemptive stories or the presence of redemptive moments. The Deluge, therefore, represents a very strong literary denunciation of the contemporary rule, and it shows the way the denial of decentment of the human domination results not only in the ecological disaster but also in the catastrophic moral and political disintegration. The Deluge does not dismiss scientific knowledge but organises it strategically, diffusing it, pushing it aside, and subordinating it to the electoral process, which demonstrates the anthropocentrism of the institution of knowledge instead of the personal, ignorant neglect.

Some climate fiction books find it difficult to provide a comprehensive, captivating, and highly persuasive portrayal of even one or two distinct ways to address the global catastrophe. For instance, they might tell a straightforward story about a brave protagonist or group of climate heroes battling to survive climate disasters or vanquish one-dimensional climate villains. In contrast, *The Deluge* has a large ensemble of morally nuanced, well-developed characters with a wide range of, frequently contradictory, motivations and worldviews. The following lines are very relevant-

“Yeah, well, time marches on. Getting caught up in causes don’t interest me. Not anymore. Especially when you see the scope of what this is.” He removed the bottle of Heinz ketchup from the condiment container. “That’s the thing: Most people don’t understand this. The ingredients, what it goes on, where the energy comes from to create it, the ways the world’s gotta be directed and coaxed and violated and controlled to get this one little fucked bottle. And once you see how ketchup relates to imperial maintenance, it’s tough not to get an overwhelmed quality to your thinking. Like one of them Magic Eye thingamajobs—hard the first time, but once you get it, you’ll never unsee it.” — (*The Deluge*, 19)

## 2.6 Human Exceptionalism and Moral Collapse in the novel *The Deluge*.

One of the main issues of *The Deluge* (2023) is the process of systematic degradation of human exceptionalism, the deep-rooted belief that man is in a privileged situation in the natural order, and he has intellectual, technological, and moral means to dominate the future of the planet. Human exceptionalism in the novel means the view of mankind having a special moral and technological power to control the planetary futures, which fails when the ecological structures disintegrate out of institutional control.

Nevertheless, regardless of the unprecedented scientific informativity and technological progress, the story by Markley is repeatedly indicative of the fact that humanity is still very vulnerable to the ecological forces it released. The cities are flooded as a result of the rising sea, infrastructure collapses during extreme weather, supply chains are broken, and political authority is being weakened in the face of mass displacement and lack of resources. It is through these instances of collapse that the vulnerability of social, economic, and governmental structures, which seemed solid and invulnerable, is revealed. Through these, the novel breaks the contemporary myth of human control over nature and displays the shortcomings of anthropocentric assurance.

Markley highlights this failure of exceptionalism by using moments of reflective desperation and existential retaliation. Tony Pietrus complains that at some point, mankind used to think **that he was** the master of the future, only to find out that we are mere footnotes in the history of the Earth. This highly eye-catching confession sums up the philosophical connotation of the novel.

“Future Coalition, and that’s a joke, and you all are a joke (*The Deluge*, 154).”

Tony Pietrus is a representation of ecological activism being a response to ethical responsibility towards environmental protection. His personality promotes profound ecological values of biospheric equalities and environmental citizenship. He sees climate change as a moral crisis, and he is an active critic of institutional inaction. Nevertheless, his emotional tradition displays his mental weight of ecological consciousness. Tony is a symbol of defiance against ecological disregard as well as the fight of personal activism against the ecological elimination of the system.

The entire human race, which is used to seeing the world as a sphere of human desire and development, finds itself placed in the periphery of processes of a huge ecology that cannot be governed by humans. This view is closely aligned with deep ecological philosophy that denies the belief of human unquestioned exceptionalism or central ontological stance in the biosphere. Rather, deep ecology claims the essential equality of all forms of life and focuses on the contingency of human life in an ecological system.

The novel also indicates that a greater crisis of meaning is instigated by ecological breakdown. With the destabilisation of the environmental systems, the cultural narratives that traditionally have served to explain exploitation, narratives of progress, technological salvation, and moral superiority, are destabilised as well. The economic growth cannot promise its development, political power cannot offer its legitimacy, and even the scientific knowledge, as correct as it may be, cannot influence the process of changing anything significant. In this respect, *The Deluge* does not introduce climate crisis as merely an environmental crisis, but as an existential crisis, wherein the nothingness of anthropocentric values is revealed. The future, which was originally conceived as the land of endless human progression, turns to be unpredictable, fractured and basically decentralised.

Notably, Markley opposes the traditions of heroic individualism that usually prevail in climate stories. Despite the efforts of activists, scientists, policymakers, and radicals, there is no one person who comes out as a saviour and can stop the ecological collapse. The attempts are divided, undermined, or consumed by the inertia of the system. This plot device is intentional to shatter anthropocentric myths that believe in super-heroic leadership, technological invention, or one heroic act. Solutions that do not transform underlying values are also shown to be inadequate by the novel by its refusal to accept redemption through individual agency. Markley deconstructs anthropocentric myths of redemption by relying on individual agency, a feature that erases the connection of redemption to a singular saviour, as well as by insisting on structural and value-based change, as deep ecology has done.

Rather, *The Deluge* is pointing out to a need to have people held responsible and structural change. Wherever it is present, change manifests itself in an unequal way in the collective struggle, in the awakening of ethics, painful loss instead of triumphant success. This focus is very similar to the demands of deep ecology, which entails a transformation on the value level as opposed to tactics. According to Arne Naess, the ecological survival does not rest on superior tools but on a radical reconsideration of the relationship between human and nature. Markley has therefore made the novel a strong literary expression of profound ecological vision that until the renouncement of human exceptionalism, the technology of sophistication and scientific advancement will be meaninglessly inadequate.

“Human mind is dead set on resisting regression to the mean. Even those who are secular reject it at all costs (*The Deluge*, 71)”.

## **2.7 Comparative Deep Ecological Reading of the *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge*.**

Compared to each other, *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge* provide both complementary and convergent critiques of anthropocentrism, showing the extent to which anthropocentrism affects the ecological devastation, social inequalities, and moral decay. Even though the two novels address the issue of climate catastrophe, they have different methods of narration and focus on different themes. Spatial enclosure, gendered labour, and the silent haunting of an ecologically depleted world is the focus of *Camp Zero* by Sterling, but of *The Deluge* by Markley, the future is time-scaled, political paralysis and the gradual moral disintegration of societies that cannot or will not face ecological reality. The invisibilisation of women labour in *Camp Zero* is similar to the non-human world: they are both instrumentalised, exploited, and not valued per se. A deeper ecological point of view is that, based on the same hierarchical view of the world, domination over nature emerges in parallel with domination over marginalised people. Collectively, these readings indicate that environmental devastation cannot be disconnecting with the systems of authority, exclusion, and value systems that control human existence.

The critique of space by Sterling is an extreme spatial critique. Camp Zero is an enclosed and fortified place on its own, representing anthropocentric separation-based fantasies of survival. The spatial logic of the camp relies upon exclusion, namely, of the environment, of marginalised bodies, and of ethical responsibility to the non-human world. The impact of this enclosure is strengthened by ecological silence, especially the lack of animals and flourishing vegetation. Invisibility of women labour is akin to nature, both are exploited, manipulated and lack the value of their own existence. The *Deluge* by Markley, in its turn, works within an enormous time frame, decades of ecological degradation and policy collapse. His story reveals the manner in which anthropocentrism operates within not just the physical space but also time since the short-term political interests time and again take precedence over the long-term ecological responsibility. In either situation, anthropocentrism does not manifest itself in the form of an ideology, but rather as a system of living with catastrophic consequences.

“Embarrassed, I shook my head. “No one deserves anything or anyone. That’s not how it works.” “I’m only saying—maybe you don’t want to hear this, but—Kate is a manipulator. She’s a user. I’ve known women like her my whole life. She takes endlessly from you. Charms you when she needs to, and then goes back to using you” (*The Deluge*, 339). Kate Morris is an example of institutional environmental governance over scientific knowledge and political constraints. She recognises environmental degradation but works within bureaucracies that give priority to economic and political stability. Her personality portrays half-baked ecological consciousness held by institutional pragmatism. Kate is a metaphor of the workings of contemporary climate policy, which underscores the contradictions between ecological moralities and political realities and shows how hard it is to bring radical environmental change into the current political institutions.

Despite these distinctions, both novels affirm ecological breakdown as it cannot be seen without social injustice and moral decline. The vulnerable groups that include women, migrants, the poor, and future generations, suffer the impact of environmental degradation, which leads the powerful to hold on to an illusion of power. Such a common worry highlights a fundamental, deep ecological intuition, namely the fact that the subject of domination of nature is inseparably linked to the subject of domination of human others. Environmental destruction and social injustice are two-way outcomes of a worldview based on an upholding of hierarchy, mastery, and exploitation.

In both novels, nature is also an adversary of the narrative. The floods, ice, rising seas, and extreme weather are not used as isolated metaphors of human emotion or moral inadequacy, but rather as literal agents that act to determine the lives of humans. The cities are submerged, the scenery is uninhabitable, and the places of seclusion cannot cover their residents. Such focus is highly consistent with material ecocriticism that sees matter itself as an agent and as storied, able to form meaning other than simply recounting it (Iovino and Oppermann 83). This material ecocritical reading is reinforced by deep ecology, which holds that such agency requires ethical consideration. In case the non-human forces are actively participants in forming the results, they should be recognised as something inherently valuable. Nature does not heal the harmony or reward awakening of morals; it continues to follow its own reasoning. There are moments of rebellion in both novels, albeit feeble and brief. Cares, solidarities, and ecological thinking appear here and there: in the personal contemplation of an individual, in a general strike, and a transient sense of ethics, but are systematically drowned by the anthropocentric structures. Resistance in *Camp Zero* is limited by containment and surveillance; in the novel *The Deluge* it is watered down by the politics of compromise, weariness, and stagnation. Both novels do not provide a hopeful ecological deliverance. Rather, they both describe resistance as partial, precarious and frequently inadequate.

Such common narrative pessimism is, however, not a nihilistic one. Instead, it also constitutes the insistence of deep ecology on humility and limitation. Deep ecology is not an assurance of simple solutions or technological redemption; it is a request for an essential change of values that can be either untimely, or unfulfilled. *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge* challenge the readers with the unpleasant truth that ethical awakening is not a sure way of surviving. What is left is, rather, the ethical requirement to recognise responsibility, interdependence, and value of the more-than-human world even where it is irreversibly lost.

Collectively, a combination of these novels serves as a potent deep ecological intervention to reveal the destructive nature of anthropocentrism and force the readers to think about the role of humanity in a biosphere that is becoming more and more unstable.

## 2.8 Deep Ecological Intervention Deep ecological fiction.

Climate fiction is a profound intervention of an ethical nature because it makes visible the abstract, deferred, and hidden effects of anthropocentric thinking. When the climate fiction challenges the readers with lived experiences of environmental breakdown, it interferes with the narratives that flatten ecological exploitation and makes the readers start to reflect on the human-nature relationship ethically. An example of this intervention is *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge* in that both compel the reader to deal with uncomfortable truths regarding the role of complicity, privilege, and irreversible ecological loss. Instead of placing the issue of environmental destruction as alien or remote, both novels demand that the climate crisis is profoundly entangled with people making daily decisions, political institutions, and values. Literature, as is believed by Lawrence Buell, has a certain ability to develop environmental awareness through its ability to restructure perception, promote empathy and disrupt established structures of value (Buell 92).

Ethical intervention in the *Camp Zero* works by spatial confinement and social exclusion. Readers are placed in a world where survival is based on enclosure, privilege and the systematic marginalisation of human existence as well as a non-human existence. The novel reveals the role of environmental crisis in enhancing the already existing inequalities, and safeguarding the elite, leaving other people expendable. By predetermining the invisibility of female labour and the lack of ecological life, Sterling provokes the readers to realise their individual place in systems that feed on and conceal their expenses. The moral accountability in that regard is not an abstract one, but is connected to the aspects of daily consumption, reliance on technologies, and ignorance of the environment. The following lines are very relevant-

“One came to understand that we all purchased, voted, worshipped, and loved in unconscious obedience to narratives we thought were original, but which were largely dreamed up in sterile boardrooms like the one in New York. Then we went and called these stories our passions and dreams.”— (*The Deluge*, 261)

*The Deluge* protracts this moral questioning both in time and in politics. Markley does not only accuse individual actors, but whole societies also in ecological ruin by recounting the decades of passive, denial and compromise. The readers see the cumulative effect of small choices made by both postponing legislation and watering down policies, economic prioritisation and resulting in irreversible disaster. This plot structure does not allow moralising down to simple, and discloses the fact that complicity is more often diffuse and normalised than objectively vicious. In this way, the novel makes the readers look at themselves and realise that they are also a part of systems that support comfort and stability at the expense of environmental responsibility. According to the author, “Violence against nature always goes hand in hand with violence against people.”(82)

Both novels strongly oppose the stories of green capitalism or technological salvation. Solutions, such as innovations, policy reforms, and market-based solutions, are presented and fail to stop the collapse due to their functioning on the same anthropocentric logic that led to the creation of the crisis. In these writings, sustainability cannot be linked with perpetual growth, consumptionism, or extractivism. Through rejecting both idealistic accounts of adaptation without change, *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge* are consistent with the critique of consumerism and insistent demand of deep ecology that environmental survival depends on a diminished human factor in the natural world. Conventional understanding of progress turns out to be a destructive illusion.

Both novels preempt vulnerability, loss, and moral accounting rather than providing solutions that are based on efficiency or innovation. The issue of human suffering is not presented in exceptional or redemptive terms; it is a part of a myriad of destabilised biospheres. This story focus upsets anthropocentric beliefs of human survival being the final gauge of success. According to a profound ecological view, this kind of destabilisation is required to break down hierarchies whereby human interests are given the forefront. Even though *Camp Zero* condemns anthropocentrism by enclosing and silencing space, *The Deluge* condemns it by delaying time, inertia of

institutions, and political concession. As a systemic form of governance and not an abstract belief, they all exhibit anthropocentrism.

More importantly, these novels have an ethical power in the fact that they do not comfort the reader. The avenues to redemption are not visible, it is not certain that awareness would result in change, and neither is it certain that ethical recognition will remove disaster. This rejection indicates the humility and realism of deep ecology. The *Deluge* and *Camp Zero* confirm the ability of climate fiction to act as moral provocation, not moral teaching, through their disturbing stories.

## 2.9 Conclusion

As has been shown in this chapter, *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge* provide long-term and powerful critical evaluations of an anthropocentric ideology due to their depictions of ecological disaster, social inequalities, and moral decay. Through the application of deep ecology as a critical approach, it has been demonstrated through the analysis that the two novels have been quite systematic in their effort to shatter the myth of human exceptionalism, which forms the basis of modern capitalist, technological and political structures. By refuting the idea that human interests can line up with all other kinds of life, the novels anticipate the intrinsic worth of the non-human world and reveal the morality of its centuries-old exploitation.

By depicting nature in its manifestations as indifferent, materially agentic, and in most cases irrevocably damaged, these works make the reader rethink the position of man in the biosphere. The nature of the two novels does not want to play the role of a redemptive power or a passive background of human action; it just follows its own reasoning, not being concerned with human goals or ethical stories. Such a presentation is in opposition to anthropocentric thinking habits that have been comfortable with controlling, recovering, or advancing. *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge* require ethical humility, responsibility, and an understanding of ecological limits, instead of providing reassuring solutions or technological solutions. The writer, Stephen Markley says in his novel *The Deluge* “I plan on never being surprised by what this country’s capable of ever again.” ( 743). When placing the ecological collapse and social injustice and ethical failure in context, the novels demonstrate the impossibility of thinking of environmental crises outside of the context of domination and exclusion. Being climate fiction, *Camp Zero* and *The Deluge*, therefore, add to the recent discourse of ecocriticism, proving the usefulness of the deep ecology as an essential tool to access the literature of the Anthropocene and rethink the more ethical ways of coexistence within an ecological system that is fragile and becoming more and more unstable.

Both novels, rather than offering assurances through technology or technological redemption, request something from us that is far more uncomfortable: an honest recognition of our ecological limits and the ethical humility that accompanies it. They also insist that deep ecology be considered a fundamental, and perhaps even a prerequisite, form of critical analysis of climate fiction during the Anthropocene.

## Works Cited

### Primary Sources

Markley, Stephen. *The Deluge*. Simon & Schuster, 2023.  
Sterling, Michelle Min. *Camp Zero*. Atria Books, 2023.

### Secondary Sources

Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard UP, 1995.  
Iovino, Serenella, and Serpil Oppermann. “Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity.” *Ecozon@*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2012, pp. 75–91.  
Markley, Stephen. *The Deluge*. Simon & Schuster, 2023.  
Næss, Arne. “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary.” *Inquiry*, vol. 16, nos. 1–4, 1973, pp. 95–100.  
Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard UP, 2011.  
Sterling, Michelle Min. *Camp Zero*. Atria Books, 2023.

### Copyright & License:

© Authors retain the copyright of this article. This work is published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), permitting unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.