

## When the Floodwaters Recede

### Exposing the Line between Human-Made and Natural Disasters through Contemporary Mass Media and Southern African American Literary Narratives

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Following NBC's Concert for Hurricane Relief, broadcast on September 2, 2005, many found Kanye West's proclamation that "George Bush doesn't care about black people"<sup>1</sup> rather comedic, until months later when mangled and bloated black bodies continued to surface on their television screens. Although depictions of discarded black bodies predate Hurricane Katrina, a fervent façade of a "post-racial" South veiled the human implication in times of disaster labeled "natural." And although this is not intrinsically a Southern phenomenon, if we consider regions as not merely images of inhabitants within a setting but as a way of experiencing built and natural environments, African American literary depictions of nature and dwelling below the Mason-Dixon line offer a glimpse into how the South has developed a powerful mythos regarding how we talk about natural disasters in American literature and culture.

Depictions of environmental experiences expressed in mass media as well as works of fiction and autobiography contribute to the shaping of public perception by largely influencing economics, politics, and social mores. The field of eco-criticism in general

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<sup>1</sup> Kanye West, "A Concert for Hurricane Relief," *NBCUniversal*, 2 Sept. 2005.

focuses on this relationship between humans and their environment; the third wave of eco-criticism specifically “explores all facets of human experience from an environ approach to ecological subjects which reveals the disparities in the experience of human being” for people of color.<sup>2</sup> Reading African American literature through a third-wave ecocritical lens reconfigures mainstream media’s and popular culture’s role in constructing the Southern mythos regarding narratives of black bodies that dismisses their hardship in times of disaster as “natural.” Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and Jesmyn Ward’s *Salvage the Bones* (2011) explore how literary depictions of natural disasters expose the underlying perceptions that perpetuate institutional environmental racism, including the relationship between black bodies and the systems that render them disposable.

Most eco-critical work has, from its inception, focused largely on white authors’ evolving views on nature from naturalism to pastoralism to environmental justice, an evolution which lacks the complexity of American environmental representation. The 2012 issue of the *African American Review* directly addresses this concern, by suggesting that “[i]ncluding African American texts in the canon of environmental literature expands the contours of nature writing by reflecting the natural world in culturally specific ways [... that] underscore the complex interweaving of freedom and slavery, as mapped onto social and physical topographies.”<sup>3</sup> Whereas nature writing, more broadly, helps identify blackness by exhibiting how drastically black environmental experience differs from white environmental experience, literary representations of natural disasters, in particular, showcase how environmental racism is institutionalized through political and economic place-making practices.<sup>4</sup>

African American literary representations of natural disasters, such as Hurston’s depiction of a fictional Florida hurricane and

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<sup>2</sup> Joni Adamson, and Slovic Scott, “Guest Editors’ Introduction the Shoulders We Stand On: An Introduction to Ethnicity and Ecocriticism,” *MELUS* 34, no. 2 (2009): 4, 7, and 13.

<sup>3</sup> Anissa Janine Wardi, “The Cartography of Memory: An Ecocritical Reading of Ntozake Shange’s ‘Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo,’” *African American Review* 45, no.1/2 (2012): 131.

<sup>4</sup> To read more about the role of politics and economics in physical and cultural place-making, see Lawrence Buell, “Toxic Discourse,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no.3 (1998).

Ward's re-telling of Hurricane Katrina in Bois Sauvage, Mississippi, more clearly showcase the underlying institutional racial practices that mainstream media and popular culture narratives reduce. Ward's nature writing in *Salvage the Bones*, for instance, details the action and aftermath of Hurricane Katrina within her Mississippi Gulf Coast town, illustrating the outcome of the environmental policies that provide monetary benefits to whites while shifting costs to people of color who have little or no access to environmental policymakers.

With the beginning of the Jim Crow era in 1877,<sup>5</sup> Southern cities began "racial zoning," which by the early 1900s had resulted in segregated housing, parks, schools, and public transportation, thereby widening economic disparities and prohibiting economic mobility.<sup>6</sup> These segregation practices continued to be federally legal until the passing of the Fair Housing Act (FHA) of 1968, which protected buyers from such seller discrimination practices as housing covenants that banned minorities from moving into suburban neighborhoods. The FHA demonstrates one of the discriminatory practices that positioned minority communities into low-lying and toxic environments. Much of the South's mapping and zoning practices that perpetuate these conditions become spectacle during times of crisis. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina's resulting destruction of coastal towns along the Gulf of Mexico demonstrated the lingering effects of the Jim Crow era by highlighting Southern poverty's continuing disproportionate impact on African American communities. A drive through the rural areas of Southern states will show the differences in communities involving elevation of home location, materials used to build housing, as well as proximity to levees, oil rigs, landfills, or even to cell phone or cable network towers. The parallels between the case study of Hurricane Katrina and literary representations of hurricanes begin with portrayals of preparations for the storm: as evacuation warnings spread to the economically disadvantaged parts of town, not everyone could, nor presumed it in their best interest that they should, leave their homes.

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<sup>5</sup> To read more about the major historical works on legal segregation in the South, see Matthew T. Corrigan, *Race, Religion, and Economic Change in the Republican South: A Study of a Southern City*, Tallahassee: UP of Florida, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Carolyn Merchant, "Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History," *Environmental History* 8, no.3 (2003): 385.

Hurston's portrayal of victims unable to flee before a massive hurricane showcases the effects of Southern poverty with deeper complexity, depicting explicit and implicit purposes for not evacuating that extend beyond the lack of access to transportation. Written in 1937, *Their Eyes* is set in the 1890s, representing the beginning of the oppressive separation tactics that would define the era of Jim Crow. When protagonist Janie and her lover Tea Cake retreat to live and work on "the muck" (the Everglades), they enter a site populated mostly by fellow laboring black people. Hurston's explicit example as to why Janie and Tea Cake decide to remain on "the muck" during the storm follows the quandary of their friend and neighbor, Lias, regarding whether they will evacuate with him and his uncle. Tea Cake responds that the money he makes on the muck is "too good," and when the storm wears off, Lias will be sorry he didn't stick around for the profit opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

The discussion between Lias and Tea Cake demonstrates Tea Cake's priorities; he finds a few days without work and pay more threatening than the impending storm. Hurston then provides an implicit reason for staying that examines the systemic social hierarchy, represented in Janie's false sense of security in relying on the experience of white people as the hurricane begins:

It woke up old Okeechobee and the monster began to roll in his bed. ... The people felt uncomfortable but safe because there were the seawalls to chain the senseless monster in his bed. The folks let the people do the thinking. If the castles thought themselves secure, the cabins needn't worry. Their decision was already made as always.<sup>8</sup>

By constructing the beginning of the hurricane to foreshadow shattered assumptions of safety, Hurston implements eco-critic Lawrence Buell's idea of the "pastoral betrayal."

Buell describes how minority communities invoke the "pastoral betrayal" to show how they are "disproportionately threatened by hazardous waste facility sites"<sup>9</sup>; this term also works to represent other facets of environmental racism, such as shoddy

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<sup>7</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing 1937), 156.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>9</sup> Buell, 649.

infrastructure, unregulated land-use practices, and social hierarchical place-making. Hurston's "pastoral betrayal" begins by anthropomorphizing the hurricane as a "monster" who could presumably be held by "seawalls." While Hurston anthropomorphizes a natural disaster, this pastoralized language becomes immediately ruptured by the realities that the "people were uncomfortable but safe" was only true for white people. Hurston pairs the distinction between "people," meaning whites, and "folks," meaning blacks, when she writes the following: "The folks let the people do the thinking." Hurston's introduction to the fortification of the seawalls and comparison between housing highlights not only the unequal stability of infrastructure, but also the illusion that black people can rely on the same securities as white people. "Their decision was already made as always"; ultimately, the plight of the blacks in Hurston's novel is defined by their lack of agency. Janie and Tea Cake's security lie neither with those for whom they labor, nor with the natural environment in which they live.

Many of the factors that made Katrina the most destructive natural and human-made disaster in U.S. history originated with "[t]he destruction of the wetlands, the growth and exploitation of the oil industry, a deeply rooted legacy of racism, and ineffective governance."<sup>10</sup> The inefficiencies of governance continued in the response after the floodwaters receded when FEMA left many minority communities, including New Orleans and Bois Sauvage, in squalor. In *Salvage the Bones*, Jesmyn Ward similarly notes the illusion, noted above in the discussion of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, that governmental systems are in place to protect both black and white equally; here, Ward exposes FEMA when examining another common false sense of security. As the protagonist Esch and her family mull over their inventory of supplies for Katrina, her father demonstrates a faith in FEMA:

"I got enough money in case it's an emergency after the storm. Never know what will happen."

"But what about—"

"It's just a few hundred, son," Daddy wheezes. He has only ever called Randall that and has only

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<sup>10</sup> Paolo Galizzi and Alena Herklotz, eds., *The Role of the Environment in Poverty Alleviation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 188.

done so a few times. “I made sure we had enough can goods to last us a few days. No more, no less.”

“I don’t think it’s enough.”

“FEMA and Red Cross always come through with food. We got that much. If it’s not too bad, might still have gas.”<sup>11</sup>

Hurston’s and Ward’s imagery depict a false sense of hope and showcase how ideologies become imbedded within a social consciousness, which perpetuates how individuals internalize restrictions from upward mobility. Yet, this doesn’t stop the main characters in both novels from fighting to survive. In *Their Eyes*, when the water level inside their home surges high enough for swimming, Tea Cake and Janie attempt to take agency against the hurricane and travel toward safety. Hurston’s depictions of black environmental experience suggest that nature is a force that renders people part of who they are, and that Florida, in this case, crafts not only a backdrop for the setting of the novel, but also an integral part of her characters; Janie and Tea Cake’s encounter with black bodies becomes part of their landscape as they are caught outdoors during the hurricane.<sup>12</sup>

Fleeing into waist-deep water, the duo “saw other people *like themselves* struggling along”<sup>13</sup> until they spotted high ground. “But it was crowded. White people had preempted that point of elevation and there was no more room. They could climb up one of its high sides and down the other, that was all.”<sup>14</sup> Forced to leave sanctuary and trudge on, only encounters with carnage awaited. In *Salvage the Bones*, as water rises in their home on “the Pit,” Esch and her family climb up to the attic. Similarly, to Janie and Tea Cake, once the floodwaters begin to surge into the attic, they notice that their white neighbors’ house is on a hill and know that they are out of town, so they swim and climb over the tops of trees to get to that high point for safety.

Recent scholarship on Katrina points to news-casted images of neglected dead bodies and the sickness, hunger, and dispossession

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<sup>11</sup> Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 195.

<sup>12</sup> Hurston, 161.

<sup>13</sup> Hurston, *ibid.* (italics my emphasis).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

of the living as awakening the public, “destroy[ing] the cherished official story that a shiny, prosperous, color-blind ‘New South’ had flowered in Dixie, taking the place of squalor, hatred, segregation and injustice,”<sup>15</sup> suggesting that media coverage of Katrina’s carnage has “laid bare the direct link between environmental degradation, economic inequities, and the impact of natural disasters.”<sup>16</sup> Public perception hinges on *how* these images are portrayed: “The disposable African-American in the South should not be seen as a trope or empty signifier, primarily for the reason that these bodies are literal embodiments of region and its past.”<sup>17</sup> Merely viewing media depictions of bodies leads to representations of “de-specified or empty vessels,” whereas Hurston’s rendition of a similar environmental experience shows “lived, material, textured bodies that are the substance of regionalism...exemplified through the image of the discarded black body.”<sup>18</sup> Some scenes witnessed during Katrina echoed those described by Hurston, such as her depiction of a

man [who] clung to a cypress tree on a tiny island. A tin roof of a building hung from the branches by electric wires and the wind swung it back and forth like a mighty ax. The man dared not move a step to his right lest this crushing blade split him open. He dared not step left for a large rattlesnake was stretched full length with his head in the wind.<sup>19</sup>

Yet more than merely a portrayal of a physical state of affairs, here Hurston more clearly demonstrates the Scylla and Charybdis this man faces, representing the varying forms of environmental racism that threaten him from either side. This passage reminds readers that these characters are running from the custodial chokehold of their circumstances—not merely running for safety from a storm

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<sup>15</sup> Diane Roberts, “Loving That Briar Patch: Southern Literature and Politics,” *The Global South*, 1, no. 1 (2007): 128.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Lloyd, *Rooting Memory, Rooting Place: Regionalism in the Twenty-First-Century American South* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 155.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Hurston, 164–165.

but from the discriminatory practices that originally placed them in this environmental experience.

As Janie and Tea Cake gain closer ground to Palm Beach, “[t]hey passed a dead man in a sitting position in a hammock, entirely surrounded by wild animals and snakes. Common danger made common friends. Nothing sought a conquest over the other.”<sup>20</sup> “A dead man in a sitting position” paints an entirely different portrait than video footage of bodies faced down; this man represents a “lived, material, and textured” body in that he is momentarily preserved in the manner in which passersby would have found him on any other day—sitting in his hammock on his southern porch, embodying the lifestyle even in death. It could be argued that conflating wild animals with African Americans, finding “common friends” in “common danger,” surrounding the dead man, illustrates nothing more than the use of simple nature writing to appease the prejudicial collapse of African Americans with wildlife; however, by noting the prospect of “conquest,” Hurston offers readers a different collapse—the systemic tie between conquest of black bodies and conquest of land. Hurston represents this dual conquest by conjuring imagery of how the institution of slavery “caused both the destruction of black bodies and the rapid degradation of southern soils, as tobacco, rice, sugar, and cotton became cash crops in an expanding world market.”<sup>21</sup> The aftermath of hurricanes in impoverished areas mirrors conquest in the destruction of people and places.

Ward likewise subverts current notions of anthropomorphizing when the protagonist, Esch, compares her family’s preparation for Katrina with that of the surrounding woodland critters: “Maybe the [squirrels] don’t run. Maybe the small pause on their branches, the pine-lined earth, nose up, catch that coming storm air that would smell like salt to them, like salt and clean burning fire, and they prepare like us.”<sup>22</sup> Esch and her family’s cultural narratives are largely linked to their rural surroundings: “The ways in which humans are likely to respond in the face of a catastrophic event are conditioned by the meanings that they attribute to it on the basis of inherited cultural

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>21</sup> Merchant, 384.

<sup>22</sup> Ward, 215.



narratives.”<sup>23</sup> Throughout the novel, Esch aligns her and her brothers’ character to varying animals, including her connection to their dog China as mother and, in Esch’s case, soon-to-be mother. Considering that their mother has passed away, Esch learns about motherhood by watching China and her puppies. The complex intricacies of these characters’ lives demonstrate the many immediate, everyday trials and tribulations that impoverished communities face, further demonstrating the obstacles that stop families from fleeing. “They hear water lapping above and below while they sit safe in the hand of the earth” suggests that the Claude family remain rooted in the ground.<sup>24</sup> Daddy, Randall, Skeetah, Esch, and Junior Claude cannot leave “the pit.” Daddy recently lost most of his fingers, Randall and Skeetah cannot get their only vehicle to work properly, and Esch is pregnant. “The pit,” like Hurston’s “the muck,” lie in the rural swampy outskirts of coastal towns. Let’s consider how these rural communities continued to be pushed into the margins:

The rise of the South intensified land-use conflicts revolving around “use value” (neighborhood interests) and “exchange value” (business interests). Government and business elites became primary players in affecting land-use decisions and growth potentialities. The “growth machine,” thus, sometimes pitted neighborhood interests against the interests of industrial expansion. However, economic boosters could usually count on their promise of jobs as an efficient strategy of neutralizing local opposition to growth projects.<sup>25</sup>

Like current district-creating practices, minority communities tended to be relegated to the lowest-lying land. Following the “coincidental order of injustice” and the period of Reconstruction, emancipated blacks had to pay for the land they had once tilled and toiled, land that white people had subsequently neglected so that they could instead settle unspoiled land in the West.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Kate Rigby, “Confronting Catastrophe: Ecocriticism a Warming World,” In *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, edited by Louise Westling, 212-25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 217.

<sup>24</sup> Ward, 216.

<sup>25</sup> Robert D. Bullard, “Race, Class, and the Politics of Place,” In *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, edited by Ken Hiltner, 154-58 (New York: Routledge, 2015), 154.

<sup>26</sup> Merchant, 381.

Demonstrating the persistence of these building and zoning practices, the outcome of hurricanes Harvey and Irma in 2017 continue to remind Americans of the racial economic disparities that keep African Americans at an environmental and economic disadvantage. Environmental justice advocates and scholars contest “the disproportionate burden of toxic contamination, waste dumping, and ecological devastation borne by low-income communities, communities of color, and colonized territories” by supporting “social policies that uphold the right to meaningful, democratic participation of frontline communities in environmental decision making” and by “redefin[ing] the core meanings of the ‘environment’ and the interrelationships between humans and nature.”<sup>27</sup> In works of fiction, this is represented by African American authors who typically set their protagonists in low-lying areas, such as Hurston’s “the muck” and Ward’s “the Pit.” Politicians and business leaders have historically exploited these lowland communities, turning their neighborhoods into toxic dumping sites and rendering them some of the hardest places to flee in times of danger.

African American literary representations of low-lying land help not only develop plot, but also characterization. In *Salvage the Bones*, Ward explicitly ties segregation place-making practices to the disproportionately fatal aftermath of hurricanes on the economically-depressed parts of town, where many racial minority communities live:

Ms. Dedeaux told us once that [St. Catherine’s] elementary school used to actually be the black school for the district before the schools were desegregated in 1969, after the last big hurricane, when people were too tired finding their relatives’ uprooted bodies, reburying them, sleeping on platforms that used to be the foundations of their houses, under tents, biking or walking miles for freshwater, for food, to still fight the law outlawing segregation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Giovanna Di Chiro, “Environmental Justice,” in *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, edited by Joni Adamson, William A. Gleason, and David Pellow, 100-105 (New York University Press, 2016), 100.

<sup>28</sup> Ward, 140.

Limited access to upward mobility proves twofold when disaster strikes: natural devastation stripping away the few physiological resources African American communities previously had and laws prohibiting African Americans from crossing segregated lines to seek access in fulfilling these essential needs. During these segregationist practices, Jim Crow laws restricted African American families from access to basic physiological needs: clean water, fresh produce, secure building structures, and high ground.

An awakening of the relationship between human communities and physical environments is necessary in altering public perception. In an interview with NRP, in which she discusses the writing of *Salvage the Bones*, Ward was asked, “why did you want to write about Hurricane Katrina?” Her response highlights the importance of scholarship and literature to continue portraying scenes of natural disaster:

I lived through it. It was terrifying, and I needed to write about that. I was also angry at the people who blamed survivors for staying and choosing to return to the Mississippi Gulf Coast after the storm. Finally, I wrote about the storm because I was dissatisfied with the way it had receded from public consciousness.<sup>29</sup>

Ward’s work adds further complexity to the Southern natural disaster experience through her first-hand account of hurricane Katrina that helps dismantle the monolith of a single Southern African American environmental experience. Where Hurston’s “pastoral betrayal” in *Their Eyes* offers a more general account of “water full of things living and dead. Things that didn’t belong in water,”<sup>30</sup> Ward’s “pastoral betrayal” offers a close-up of an intimate personal relationship with a natural disaster:

We picked our way around the fallen, ripped trees, to the road. We were barefoot, and the asphalt was warm. We hadn’t had time to find our shoes before the hand of the flood pushed into the living room. The storm had plucked the trees like grass and scattered them. We knew where the road was by the feel of the stones

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>30</sup> Hurston, 165.

wearing through the blacktop under our feet; the trees I had known, the oaks in the bend, the stand of pines to the long stretch, the magnolia at the four-way, were all broken, all crumbled. The sound of water running in the ditches like rapids escorted us down the road, into the heart of Bois Sauvage.<sup>31</sup>

The language of catastrophe after a natural disaster adopts apocalyptic rhetoric, depicting a world undone from civilization. Literary works that employ apocalyptic rhetoric can be framed either as “comic” or “tragic,” and this frame will determine “the way in which issues of time, agency, authority, and crisis are dramatized.”<sup>32</sup> The characterization within the “tragic” frame must choose between a clearly defined good or evil; in the “comic” frame, characters have agency but are flawed.<sup>33</sup> Comparing the two frames, eco-critic Greg Garrard insists that “environmental problems, whilst they certainly should not be seen in isolation, might seem more amenable to solution if they are disaggregated and framed by comic apocalyptic narratives that emphasize the provisionality of knowledge, free will, ongoing struggle and a plurality of social groups with differing responsibilities.”<sup>34</sup> Through the stories told by *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Salvage the Bones*, Hurston’s and Ward’s characters showcase resiliency, strength, and adaptability. They are not simply classified as passive victims against the villainous hurricanes or institutionalized racism that placed them in harsher experiences of these hurricanes.

One reason why Kanye West’s reading off script during the Concert for Hurricane Relief may have rattled viewers involved his rupturing of the mainstream natural disaster narrative. While CNN and Fox News broadcasted images of a neglected New Orleans, the narrative constructed for such images quickly steered the conversation toward “Why didn’t they evacuate when they were warned?”<sup>35</sup> The History Channel’s website still refers to storm survivors as “refugees,” as if a destroyed home equates a lack of

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<sup>31</sup> Ward, 242.

<sup>32</sup> Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 95.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>35</sup> To hear this sentiment and other conversations involving the victims, see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHcyC5sc\\_so](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHcyC5sc_so).

citizenship. When videos surfaced of families taking food and supplies from closed-down stores, the white families were referred to as “scavengers” while the black families were deemed “looters.” These media representations continue to construct hierarchical placemaking through naturalizing environmentally racist language and ideologies. “The term ‘environment’ can enable a questioning of relations of power, agency, and responsibility to human and nonhuman environments,” therefore the voices that represent and retell of disasters need to consider how the rhetoric for talking about the adjective “natural” conceals human involvement, distorting our understanding of natural disasters.<sup>36</sup>

When third-wave ecocritical scholars speak of environmental justice, the movement emphasizes “justice for people of color [and attempts to] reverse past environmental injustices disproportionately experienced by minorities.”<sup>37</sup> To grapple with institutionalized environmental racism, “ecojustice” must “entail the redistribution of wealth through the redistribution of environmental goods and services.”<sup>38</sup> In analyzing the nuances of the term “natural,” scholars and literary writers must continue to redefine the language of public perception:

The evidence suggests that the sheer eloquence—the affect—of testimony of ordinary citizens’ anxiety about environmental degradation can have substantial influence on public policy, especially when the media are watching. Against the parsimony and procedural conservatism of legislative and regulatory bodies, and their susceptibility to lobbying by vested interests, not just individuals but communities have begun to develop what some environmental anthropologists call ‘disaster sub-cultures’ (whereby community ethos and social rituals get shaped by the recollection and/or anticipation of environmental disaster).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Vermonja R. Alston, “Environment,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, 101-102 (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 101.

<sup>37</sup> Merchant, 390.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Buell, 665.

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The connotation of the term “natural” emphasizes phenomena outside of people’s control—responsibility for the carnage of a “natural disaster” is shifted from human constructs to external forces. The blame is cast on the geological or climatological event for destroying human life and property because the natural world is wild and indifferent. Eco-critics should navigate renditions of natural disasters in African American literature to help rupture the narratives constructed by mainstream media that perpetuate systemic environmentally racist policies.