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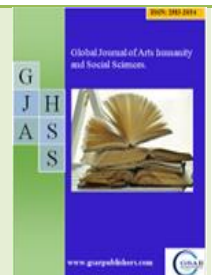
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READING ECOCRITICAL CLIMATE CHANGE FICTION (CLI-FI) IN *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

By

Jennifer Anulika Umezina



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Introduction

The Great Hurricane Okeechobee of September 19, 1928 (known as San Felipe II in the Islands) was the second and one of the most disastrous hurricanes in the United States. In literary art, the climax of a story presents the highest point of tension in dramatic tragedy, the point where the protagonist reaches their goal, and the best action is saved for the last. The history of Hurricane Okeechobee inspires Chapters 18 and 19 of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) to introduce and create the climax. The hurricane is archived to have developed as a category 5 storm, the highest ranking of hurricanes. It rose from the West coast of Africa, hit Puerto Rico, struck Palm Beach Florida, and eventually dissipated in Canada. The intensity of the storm brought twenty feet deep of water into Belle Glade, told in the story as Everglade. Man's attitude to environmentalism is fundamental to negotiating the relationship between human and nonhuman nature. In this paper, the hurricane represents a literary chronotope to discuss the sociopolitical issues of climate change. This paper thus posits that in the novel, time and space negotiate the unification, limitation, and interdependence between man and nature in the face of climate change or natural disasters.

Mikhail Bakhtin theorized the Chronotope to demonstrate literary representations of time and space through language and discourse. The artistic chronotope in the novel, the hurricane, provides the spatial and temporal indicators that reveal how human and nonhuman nature assume a concrete whole, take on similar characteristics and assume qualitative/quantitative significance over the other. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Mikhail Bakhtin conceptualized the intrinsic inseparable connectedness of time and space artistically represented in literature as the chronotope. Thus, the literary chronotope shows the intersectionality between time and space in human and nonhuman nature as a formally constitutive category of literature. As Bakhtin puts it, "the chronotope as a formally constitutive category

determines to a significant degree the image of the man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic" (85). I argue that the hurricane symbolizes Hurston's literary artistic chronotope that reinforces the constitutive relation between man and nonhuman nature in time and space. Bakhtin successfully lays the foundation for discussing chronotopes in the literary imagination as authors began to pay interest in how mankind is implicit in concrete chronotopes, I believe, one greater than the other. Spatial and temporal constituents are realized by the concept of change and movement. Keunen citing Deleuze argues that everything in the world is connected to change and movement (35).

The characters, plot, and setting move and change in ways that signal real-world motion. Man's motion is reflected in experiences in the past/present, from ways of thinking in one ideology to another. What becomes constant is movement and changeability throughout dynamic space and time.

Their Eyes Were Watching God is a classic story of love tailored toward the African American social realities of the Harlem Renaissance. Chapter 19 of the book chronicles the experiences of the hurricane as Janie sets to end her search for love and circle back to her hometown, Eatonville. The Lake Okeechobee of the city of Pahokee historically provides irrigation for the crops that provide most of the nation's vegetables and fish in the winter season.

Okeechobee means big water from "okee (water)" and "chobee (big)". Teacake's unexpected appearance in Janie's store can be likened to the category 5 hurricane strike with no significant warning. Janie Crawford, later Starks, and later Woods married three times. Under two circumstances relating to illnesses, she watches both husbands die. While the penultimate relationship does not end at her hands, in the context of time, space, and most immediate reality, Janie's final dialogue with Jodie seems to incite



a euthanasic passing that released Jodie Starks of his painful suffering. Janie shoots Teacake to save herself. This event also brings the relationship and entire story to an end, marking what seems to be the apocalypse of Janie's love evolution. All these events have four factors in common: change, movement, time, and space. The hurricane also embodies Deleuze's perception of change and movement and heightens the climax. Just like a hurricane moves, it is unpredictable that Janie will shoot Teacake after two failed attempts to fire shots in her direction. Janie's movement is likened to the eye of a storm in a category 5 hurricane. When the eye strikes open, it causes wanton destruction before dissipation. As a literary chronotope, the eye of the storm sets precedence for the tragedy to come and foreshadows Janie's murder of Teacake. It becomes evident that *Their Eyes Were Watching God* transcends the story of love to lay a foundation for Climate Fiction authors today.

As a relatively emerging field, Cli-Fi researchers and authors concern their works with arguments on the politics, economics, ethics, cultural history, and legacy of climate change within literary frames Clark (2010), Stark (2010), Clarke (2013), Mossner (2017), Frelick (2017). Of particular concern to these authors is whether Cli-Fi and Sci-Fi are interrelated fields and should be subsumed into one another. Cli-Fi authors agree that they merge with Sci-Fi authors to predict an apocalypse in a dystopian world. However, Cli-Fi authors situate the uniqueness of their literary works within the anthropological account of actual natural disasters, the environmental effects of climate change, and their impacts on human experiences. Timothy Clark in his notable article, "Some Climate Change Ironies: Deconstruction, Environmental Politics and the Closure of Ecocriticism" (2010) evaluates the deconstructive force of climate change and its limited adaptation into Derridian arguments. It posits that Derridian thinking seemingly evades environmental questions while the traumatic experience of climate change remains politically discounted. This politics of closure, in the words of Clark, "exterminates ethical issues and environmental problems such as personal identity, social justice, animal rights, the claims of the future generations, the value of the non-human, U.S.-centric fantasy. It addresses the limits of classical economics that have been reduced to a question of better management and improved efficiency that benefits industrial capitalists" (133). What becomes problematic is that Cli-Fi authors are aware of their limitations in resolving the systemic problems of climate change. Thus, they may attempt to exploit the emotional impacts of natural disasters in a supposed attempt to facilitate coping strategies and solutions to climate crises or archive accounts of climate change. Cli-Fi became popular in the 2010s. Arguably, Hurston's notable work could have been intended as a proposition for a new field that intersects climate studies in art and history. Nonetheless, Cli-Fi is evident in earlier novels that directly or indirectly address climate change and help to sharpen focus on the problems of differentiating the fields of Cli-Fi and Sci-Fi, as well as the specific scientific problem of bringing climate change into fiction.

Frelick argues that climate fiction is science fiction emphasizing

that Margaret Atwood's distinction of genre boundaries, speculative science fiction, and pedestrian science fiction is narrow-minded. Frelick posits that science fiction in the U.S. has been themed around questioning America's value for freedom, equal opportunity, tolerance, space, time, and progress. Yet, Cli-Fi authors are opposed to aligning with Sci-Fi authors so as not to inherit its maligned classification. With rising occurrences of natural disasters and climate crises, most science fiction authors have incorporated climate issues in their message to the world. As a new and growing field, Cli-Fi faces the challenge of being considered a theoretical tool, an apparatus for thinking - or like science fiction - a mere prediction. In order not to reduce the scientific rigor associated with climate change, Cli-Fi authors may need to collaborate with marine scientists to mark the scope of the field and contribute to solving real-world problems on climate change. The two environments depicted in the story are Everglades and Eatonville.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, we first meet Everglades in chapter 14, an environment that strikingly differs from Eatonville, where Janie and Teacake go to experience and explore a different type of love marked by a return to nature. Eatonville is an urban city of black citizens with self-governance, independence, and a growing capitalist economy. Everglades is a subtropical wetland with a unique ecosystem that provides a natural habitat predominantly occupied by early colonial settlers, wildlife, plants, animals, and microorganisms. Zora seems to be pitching Eatonville in direct contrast to Everglades. Unlike Eatonville, Everglades appears to be less capitalist with less tussle for financial wealth. The "ideal" wealth is an excessive celebration in the open air, partying, drinking, and being happy. This Everglades that we meet in chapter 14, where Janie and Teacake are the centers of attraction, becomes a nightmare by chapter 18, where all eyes begin to watch the destructive force of nature. The Indians were the first to predict the hurricane though they are not taken seriously. In modern society, the National Hurricane Center in Florida is responsible for identifying a coming storm, its mileage, and expected arrival to target and reduce its intensity. The Indians, as Hurston puts it stated,

"'Hurricane coming' amidst a blue sky and clear weather" (155). Typical of Everglades residents to continue partying while the Indians were moving to safety in their mass number days before the eye of the storm strikes open. Current statistics show that hurricane Hurston describes was a category 5 storm that brought 20-foot water offshore and traveled 220mph, 200 times greater than category 1. The closest to this 1928 storm was Hurricane Dorian of 2019.

In an interview with a Florida resident experiencing Category 1 Hurricane Nicole of 2022 traveling at 75 mph, they shared thus, "Jennifer, this is so devastating. I can't work. I can't cook. I am just doing everything to be safe. My daughter. You know. She just graduated from high school; she has anxieties about the whole situation. I am so done with Florida. After this whole mess, I am looking to buy a house somewhere else outside of here where my children can be safe. Because. You know. You can't control the

hurricane”.

This conversation highlights the relevance of Cli-Fi and emphasizes Hurston's theme with Janie's evolution that Man's nature is like a natural disaster. Although human nature seems to portend so much power, human is in limitation by the force of nonhuman nature. The participant's account, however, appears more intense than Janie's story, as Hurston did not experience the hurricane. Did Hurston use the chaotic nature of the storm to increase the market consumerism of her book? Did Hurston exploit the story of the storm to heighten the intensity of Janie's changing relationship with Teacake? As Bakhtin puts it in his argument for space and movement, does Hurston emphasize the inevitability of spatial and temporal movement in Janie's evolution using the hurricane as a chronotope?

Mikhail Bakhtin postulated the theory of the literary chronotope to describe the unity of time and space inherent in a narrative. Currently, in national geography, marine geographers use specialized cameras to target the eye of a storm, predict its travel route, and gauge the hurricane intensity with the possibility of lowering the pressure, with an overall goal to minimize the estimated impact on America's economy. Miami port is one of the largest ports in the United States, with an estimated \$100,000,000 generated daily in revenue. In its fierceness of 20 miles wide, the eye of the storm historically moves resources from the seaport and everything it possesses. This dangerous wind results in massive loss, bringing down trees, throwing roofs down, moving whole buildings, and killing fishes and other nonhuman natures that survive through irrigation. Weather analysts, authors, and Hurricane survivors use metaphors associated with toxic masculinity to describe the storm. Some examples are the hurricane as a monster, roaring like a lion, almost like all the demons in hell are screaming at us, provocative attack, scary, strange, eerie, catastrophic, battering, violent, molestation, and devastating. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston equally describes the wind as “marching forth against the world, violent, a monster, strange, the screaming wind crashing things hurtling, and dashing with unbelievable velocity. A baby rabbit, terror-ridden, squirmed through a hole in the floor and squatted off in the shadows against the wall, seeming to know that nobody wants its flesh at such a time. And the lake got madder and madder...” (158-9). More figurative devices that describe the storm include monstrous, messy, dark, dangerous, frightening cattle, dodging flying missiles, and growling and screaming. Hurston describes, “It woke up old Okechobee. The monster began to roll in his bed. Began to roll and complain like a peevish world on a grumble” (158). The metaphors paint a picture of the hurricane as “God”.

Another concept emphasized in the novel is the movement and change of the power to control. Significantly, these metaphors above also described, draws a parallel between most Sci-Fi and Cli-Fi archetypes described in this paper as the Narcissistic individualism archetype (NIA). We can examine J.G. Ballard's Dr. Rober Kerans in *Drowned World* (1962), Octavia Butler's Rufus Weylin in *Kindred* (1979), Margaret Atwood's Commander in *The Handmaid Tale* (1985), and Teacake; Vergible Woods in

Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In all instances, all NIAs are made subject to change, movement, and the natural progression of evolution. While attempting to play Janie's savior, Teacake gets bitten by the dog. This bite incidence is significant as it introduces the rabies illness that changes the dynamic perception of Janie's symbol of love and perfection, Teacake on the sickbed that eventually becomes his deathbed. After the storm, Teacake aligns with Mrs. Turner's realist argument that questions Janie's loyalty and commitment to Teacake. In the face of a changing climate, Hurston is convinced that lives are changing, as should the ideology of love. Janie, however, insists on her idealist argument that if she dies, she is fulfilled because she has experienced love. Janie claims, “if you kin sees de light at daybreak, you don't keef if you die at dusk. it is so many people never seen de light at all. Ah wuz fumblin' round and God opened the door” (159). As a realist, Teacake disagrees with Janie's idealist convictions on love. He becomes jealous of Janie's shifting attention to Mrs. Turner's brother. Teacake attempts to kill Janie before she kills him. This scene becomes a turning point in Janie's evolution because we see her choose to save herself regardless of what the world thinks for the first time, which we do not see in her past two marriages and her relationship with Nanny.

The narcissist archetype always shows extraordinary strength and power. They hold the solution to the pressing problem throughout the novel until a force strikes and changes the readers' perception of the narcissistic archetype as a hero. They are depicted to have made a significant change for a positive purpose that affects or improves society. Inherent in their trait is a selfish ambition to control, exert influence, or a sense of entitlement. When they fail in the game of control, they manipulate the narrative and become the victims by emotionally blackmailing the actual victim. Teacake represents the narcissistic individual Cli-Fi archetype.

He appears in Chapter 10 right after Jodie Stark dies and provides all the fantasies that Janie craved from the beginning of her search for love. She does not see him coming but falls head over heels in love with him. When she is mourning, Hezekiah takes the day off. He storms the store like a hurricane because he is unfamiliar with everyone. Janie is overwhelmed by the idea of affection. Also known as Vergible Woods, Teacake is a witty charmer with an attractive and engaging personality. He gives her what she wants and encourages her to try different experiences.

He takes her away from Eatonville to the Everglades, where she experiences disaster and the most enjoyable moments of her life in the novel. He offered to play a game with her when all the men had gone to the ball team, where only men were considered witty enough to play games. He cooks for her. He sings her to sleep while he continues playing the guitar. He combs her hair. (Hurston, 101-105). Then, he disappears and gets her worried enough to think about him while he is gone.

On their wedding night, he steals from her to gamble. The \$200 that Teacake steals is synonymous with the money given to Zora Neale Hurston by her godmother, Charlotte Osgood Mason for research into African American life and history. If Hurston's last



husband was the man she met in Haiti, she described this love relationship in Teacake's character, although we cannot tell how much of the story is fictional and how much happened on her trip to Haiti. Janie discovers that gambling is Teacake's weakness and feels guilty for holding him accountable.

Shortly after, he teaches her how to shoot with a gun, equipping her to kill him. He also flirts with Nunkie. He beats her like Jodie Starks does, only that this time, Janie fights back. It becomes hard to tell who the hero or villain is between Teacake and Janie. When Hurston introduces Teacake's character, he becomes fundamental to the beginning and end of Janie's evolution. Like other narcissistic archetypes, he assumedly becomes the solution to the problem Janie tries to solve throughout the novel while still being the problem.

Teacake is not the only controlling character in the novel. Janie's relationships with Nanny, Logan, Jodie, Phoebe, Hezekiah, Mrs. Turner, and the women on the porch seem to center on her life. The characters have an opinion on what Janie should do, as opposed to what she wants to do. Nanny attempts to control Janie's life by telling her who, when, and how to marry. Nanny eventually marries Janie off to Logan to secure her financial freedom. Logan treats Janie like a slave and makes her work on his farm to assert his Big Voice. Joe "worships de work of his own hands" (82). Janie tells Phoebe, "Ah'd ruther be dead than for jody tuh think Ah'd hurt him"

(82). Phoebe convinces her to act according to tradition when mourning her husband and navigating the situation on the porch talk culture. Hezekiah tells Janie to stay away from Teacake. Mrs. Turner advises Janie to leave Teacake for her brother because Teacake is too dark-skinned for Janie. Control and manipulation become enormous that Janie begins to see Jodie as the victim. When he accuses her of being mouthy because she tries to speak, Jodie beats her to feel more masculine and powerful. Logan, Jodie, and Teacake usher in layers of toxic masculinity and control over Janie's life. The three men determine her career, where she lives, how much she can say, what type of work Janie should do, where Janie can work, and even what she should wear. As illness, divorce, or death come upon Nanny, Logan, Jodie, and Teacake, we see the shifting nature of control from these characters into Janie's hands.

Control is evident in the porch talk and rumor culture that we see in most of Hurston's works as a part of the African American culture and lore of black people of the Harlem Renaissance.

The porch talk culture we also see in *Mules and Men* and several other Hurston novels is the center of society. The porch talk culture serves a communication platform for African American women that inspires conversations around religion, family, and interpersonal relationships. The porch represents the center stage of the black voice as an emerging scene yet to take full scale in the media today. In "The Porch couldn't talk for looking": Voice and Vision in their eyes were watching God" (2001), Deborah Clarke explains that Hurston's porch talk is "how identity is constructed: by skin and color. With this claim, she invokes new avenues into an African American tradition that has a privileged voice as its

empowering trope" (600). Porch talk and rumor culture serves multiple functions as a legal system for interconnected layers of society, including the church and families, a platform for representation, and an avenue for community building. The Everglades porch talkers are equally powerful as we see them appear in mass numbers in the Everglades courtroom, where they testify against Janie based on their assumptions about her. Although, their voice is stifled by the white majority who defend Janie. Hurston describes their screaming voices and body movement as "wind among palm trees, like a pack of celeries, only much darker than that" (185-186). Similarly, the Eatonville porch women attempt to control the narrative of Janie's life based on their assumptions and apriori clues. Janie then decides to tell the true story to Phoebe that makes up the whole book and circles back to where it all began.

Consequently, the hurricane as a literary chronotope shows the highest level of control as we see all of mankind and nonhuman nature subjected to the control of a changing climate. The dog incidence, the falling trees, the sun, the buzzards, the deer, snakes, rattlesnakes, panthers, and the rabbits moving from their natural habitats through forces unknown also signals Hurston's devotion to Cli-Fi. The focus is to include the impact of climate change on nonhuman nature as a part of the victims of climate change. "Hurston states, "snakes and rattlesnakes began to cross the quarters. "The men killed a few, but they could not be missed from the crawling horde"

(155). The dog also creates a sense of Hurston's inclusion of the tremendous impact of nonhuman nature. It exemplifies how Hurston contributes to the argument that humans, as well as nonhuman nature at the mercy of the fierce winds, heavy rainfall, and tumultuous sea. Amid the devastation, nonhuman nature is also deprived of its natural habitat and are categorized as trapped species forced to move with the torrential eye of the storm, unusual chemical, and temperature that leaves all vulnerable. Hurston attends to the Cli-Fi concern of animal rights by including the dog to emphasize the impact of domestic non-human nature in the changing and moving of the wind. "The dog stood up and growled like a lion, stiff-standing hackles, stiff muscles, teeth uncovered as he lashed up his fury for the charge...They fought, and somehow, he managed to bite Teacake high up on his cheekbone once. Then Teacake finished him and sent him to the bottom to stay there" (166). This event is significant so much that it is the dogfight Hurston uses to end the chapter of the storm. The dog bite also takes down Teacake, the NIA, the symbol of Janie's idealism of love, and based on the story, marks the end of Janie's search for love and a return to her natural habitat, Eatonville.

In the article, "All These Things He Saw and Did Not See": Witnessing the End of the World in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2013) Hannah Stark considers *The Road* as climate fiction to examine environmental anxiety created through the depiction of a catastrophic earth. In its prediction of dystopia, a human is the only witness to the chaos of climate change due to human actions and inaction. It discusses vision, sight, and blindness that allow man an omniscient witness of the devastation. It asserts that the



book persistently portrays the ideology of liberal humanism. However, the humanism described here is associated with a male, white, Christian middle class that represents the United States and the whole world. Stark concludes with the argument that humans are not the center of all things in the world, but nonhumans should be represented in Cli-Fi. Although *The Road* received multiple awards as one of the best climate change fictions, even though the catastrophic is unnamed, Hurston better aligns with the climatology narrative than McCarthy in the assessment of climate fiction.

Furthermore, Jim Clarke's "Reading Climate Change in J.G. Ballard" (2013) also explores two of Ballard's novels of the 1960s as providing a bedrock for apocalyptic dystopia. Clarke claims that *The Drowned World* (1962) and *The Crystal World* (1966) survey the process and aftermath of climatic devastation" (7). The author echoes Trexler and John – Putra's research that mapped out two phases of Cli-Fi; one before the end of the twentieth century and a millennial Sci-Fi-oriented period that birthed the works of Atwood, Winterson, and Kingsolver. Implied, Cli-Fi precedes Sci-Fi as opposed to the notion of being a branch of it with Ballard and Hurston. Also worthy of note is that both Ballard and Hurston do not capture the anthropogenic debate in their novels. Both authors do not address the cause of the catastrophic disasters, although they are both pre- and post-apocalyptic. In theology, we can say that Noah's ark is plagued by climate change as an act of God. In science, the anthropogenic debate proposes that certain human activities affect nature and cause environmental changes, such as metalliferous mining and smelting, industrial contamination, atmospheric deposition, agriculture, and water disposal responsible for the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Although anthropogenic activities release toxic gases that cause natural disasters like hurricanes, they are intentionally non-malicious by the industries that oversee these human activities. Cli-Fi authors thus avoid the cause of these disasters till the present day but claim to discuss the narrative of climate change. This insufficiency answers the question of the difference between science fiction and climate fiction. In his inner over-outer space, Clarke states Ballard that "if climate changes, we too must change" (16). A similarity between Ballard and Hurston is that they both agree that if the climate changes, human psychology, and ideological perspectives must also change because man and nature share similar characteristics. Similarly in *Dust Track on a Road* (1942), Hurston lets us into a chronotopic movement. We see the changes in Hurston herself as she moves from childhood to adulthood. In John Hurston, we also see a role change from a controlling husband to a submissive man with the death of Hurston's mother and a coming of age for both Zora and John Hurston. At the end of the autobiography, humans are a product of their changes and movement, not their idea of a utopia which science fiction authors hope to actualize by creating a hypothetical dystopic world.

Bakhtin's literary chronotope is developed in Keunen and Deleuze (2011), who explain the science of chronotopes in narratives by describing various types of chronotopes. The hurricane falls within Keunen's teleological conflict chronotope that emphasizes and

explain the artistic fusion of time and space into changes and movements throughout the plot. Keunen, in mapping out the theory of the chronotope asserts that "everything in everyday knowledge about the world is connected to change and movement" (35). According to Keunen, static only exists in mathematics and theoretical knowledge. He likens the permanence of change and movement to a Cinema. He opines thus.

Everything in cinema circles around movement and change because the art form only uses everyday material. In addition, cinema emphasizes that the observer of dynamic experience is also moveable and continually changing. Cinema's aesthetic set of instruments is wholly commanded by moveable perception; camera movements, alternating camera positions, and editing generate a perception of change (36).

Hurston agrees with Keunen that art is born because artistic elements, including characters, are in a circle of change and movement. When Teacake questions Janie's loyalty to him, he not only projects his reaction if the roles are reversed in his favor, but he also creates a similitude between the reality of a climatic change and the constancy of human change. Just as a heavy landfall of a stormy wind is characterized by menacing and destructive movement, so does Teacake's troubling movement cause a change from his perception of Janie as his lover to a murder target.

Religion and Race in Climate Fiction

Also significant is the belief in Everglades in the changing or transformation of the physical body and the movement of the spirit in the afterlife. One of the Bahaman boys tells Teacake as he moves to find shelter, "If Ah never sees you on mo' in the earth, Ah'll meet you in Africa"

(156). Chronotopic movement is not only symbolic of the physical and cultural beliefs among the African diasporan tradition of death rituals in Africa that Africans who die in the diaspora will transport their spirits back to Africa after death. Throughout the Christian and Muslim religions, the belief in the power and role of deceased ancestors in preserving the next generation is rooted among almost all African tribes. Thus, life and death are in a continuum of changing ways of existing from flesh to spirit, irrespective of one's race, color, tribe, or nationality; Bahaman, Indian, or American.

The aftermath of the hurricane intensifies racial marginalization in the healthcare sector of the Harlem Renaissance, also subject to change and movement within time and space but persists till the present day. Janie's two husbands both die of ailments either because of late diagnosis or limited access to medical care. Before Jodie Starks died, he had a kidney disease for a long time that made his tummy swell. From Janie's description, water may have been trapped in his body for too long (86). Lack of movement of water and change through urine or sweat after drinking would require dialysis for exfoliation. In modern medicine, his failing kidney may need a transplant to save his life. In addition, Jodie relies on a fake root doctor in the wake of disparity in the health care system. In this case, the care facility would still require

sufficient time to find a matching donor when Dr. Simmons offers the diagnoses for Teacake (176). Dr. Simmons goes based on Janie's story that since the dog had rabies, Teacake's illness must have been rabid. He offers to order medicine from Palm Beach but warns that it will be late, and Teacake may not survive. The two doctors that attended Jodie Starks and Tea Cake were both white. If African Americans who died because of the hurricane were not considered a priority for a befitting burial, Dr. Gordon and Dr. Simmons possibly invested minimum effort in Teacake and Jodie's health conditions. It could also be interpreted that the doctors did the best they could, given that both conditions were reported late and at the time, Everglades did not have access to modern technology as it is in modern society to facilitate emergency communication to call an ambulance or 911.

Findings

Hurston's Message of Cli-Fi to Florida today, the Americas, and the world is to show how control for humanity, race, gender, class, and sexism amounts to nothing in the face of a human disaster. Hurston, like Ballard, set precedence for Cli-Fi authors, although Cli-Fi officially gained grounds in the literary scene in 2010. Hurston also calls attention to the veracity of climate change which was not as prevalent as today. Everglades represents Janie's return to nature and signals her rebirth, and a distraction from capitalist Eatonville money was considered as wealth as opposed to the richness of the soul. An opposition to studying *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as Cli-Fi or Sci-Fi is an observation of the anthropogenic activities that cause climate change. Most Sci-Fi and Cli-Fi authors avoid addressing the causes of climate change. Much of it owe to the political implications of attacking the corporations that cause excessive environmental pollution in certain parts of the hemisphere that pose a potential danger to human and non-human nature around those parts. However, Cli-Fi and Sci-Fi authors manifest the capitalist ideology of storytelling by exploiting the authenticity of Cli-Fi narratives to heighten the tension and climax their story when they fail to address the causes of heavy industrial activities of corporations that benefit from mining, deforestation, fossil fuel, smelting, use of pesticides, farm fertilizers and bioremediation. Another problem discussed is that Hurston did not experience the hurricane. If the account of the story is purely anthropological, who did she interview since the book was published nine years after 1928? Also, the hurricane provided freedom for individualism; the choice to stay in the face of adversity or run-in search of shelter (Janie and Motor Boat). As a literary chronotope, the hurricane is compared to Bakhtin's thought on human behavior, using the characters in the novel as a specimen.

Conclusion

This paper has proposed that Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* set precedence for the genre of climate fiction today. The essay asserts that time and space negotiate the unification, limitation, and interdependence between man and nature in the face of climate change or natural disasters. Hurston's work goes beyond a search for love by a black woman but is a significant contribution

to setting the pace for a Cli-Fi scholarship. Hurston's relevant marriage of human and nonhuman nature as subject to change and movement emphasizes that life is transient, thus further establishing her as a Cli-Fi author. Hurston also invests in environmentalism as she planted the tree at the end to address deforestation and environmental degradation for commercial gains. The hurricane as the literary chronotope serves as the unifier of all of mankind and a reminder that all humans are subject to the control of a higher force. As a literary chronotope, the hurricane is compared to Bakhtin's thoughts on human behavior. Within chronotopes, whatever we do and however we choose to do it, we are constrained by specific constraints of time and space constellations that forces us to act in prescribed ways. Chronotopic behaviors are identity markers prescribed within time and space. Amid the tussle for control, all eyes moved from watching Janie to watching the uncontrollable force of nature that changed the trajectory of all human activities. Although Janie is not convicted of murdering Teacake and thrown into jail, so her journey probably continued after the story ended. This paper thus clads Hurston with her Cli-Fi artistic hat yet, questions the ecocritical approach to discussing the impact of climate change on the United States. More recent Cli-Fi authors owe a debt to Hurston as she lays a foundation upon which Cli-Fi authors can map out a genre that traverses the psychological and the physical aftermath of climatic crises. Hurston may have included Hurricane Okeechobee to address the global threat of climate change, to archive the experiences of the surviving Caribbean community after a decade, or to increase the market consumerism of her work. It is debatable that *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is Sci-Fi, but on the premise of prior conversations in this essay, the novel is Cli-Fi, as Hurston did not just make predictions about the hurricane but included anthropological information that she similarly documents in her short story, *Hurricane in Five Harlem Short Stories* (2010) based on the story of the hurricane in Lake Okeechobee in 1928. I propose that *Their Eyes Were Watching God* be read as Cli-Fi also because it addresses the questions posed by Cli-Fi authors on diversity, freedom, power/control, animal rights and representation. Hurston tells the black man's perspective on the aftermath of climate change cum potential post-apocalypse social conditions after a natural disaster. Human nature, however, shares a similar fate of losing control amid a storm within space and time.

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