

Stranger Things: Rethinking Defamiliarization in Literature and Visual Culture
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“Defamiliarization for a Sustainable Planet”
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Artists and critics have long committed ourselves to disruption—to the dismantling of dominant structures and systems. But as neoliberal economics undoes hopes of secure work, and as fossil fuels radically disrupt longstanding ecosystems, our greatest threats to a just world come not from static institutions but from the onrush of rapid and destructive change. The steady provision of food, clean air, shelter, and water, is by definition unexciting. But it is one of the core goals of a leftist politics, and one that is increasingly out of reach for most of the world’s population. So: what art forms might help us to appreciate social forms like food security? This paper will argue for the importance of realist defamiliarization to global climate justice. Many critics have argued that realism seeks to naturalize the status quo. I will argue, instead, that realist fictions defamiliarize the ordinary work of keeping life going. They are interested in exposing and exploring the mundane forms necessary for sustaining collectives over time—that is, the project of sustainability.