

Endings and Sustainability

Caroline Levine (Cornell University)

Abstract:

Most critics read narrative endings—and especially happy endings—as points of closure where the instabilities of the plot come to conservative resolutions. Yet, endings are often in fact moments of transition where narratable plotted action shifts into the promise of stable and predictable routines extending forward. This prospect of stability is politically important right now, as fossil fuels radically disrupt longstanding ecosystems and millions of people struggle for reliable food, clean water, and safe shelter. Arguing for the importance of revaluing stability and routine as the climate catastrophe worsens, this essay rethinks happy endings as thresholds to sustainability.

The happy ending has seemed to many readers like the most static and most conservative of aesthetic forms. It is where the dynamics of plotted instability and social contradiction go to die. The standard critical name for the ending is closure, as if it walled or sealed off action. Critics also commonly refer to the ending as a resolution, with connotations of both harmony and firmness. It's all about settling down, tying up loose ends, bringing action to an end.

The most influential critics have theorized endings as conclusive. For Walter Benjamin and Frank Kermode, narrative closure is a figure for death, the ultimate ending. Peter Brooks argues that it is only from the clear-eyed vantage point of the end that we can look back and make sense of the middle: “[We] are able to read present moments—in literature and, by extension, in life—as endowed with narrative meaning only because we read them in anticipation of the structuring power of those endings that will retrospectively give them the order and significance of plot” (94). Critics in the Marxist tradition, including Franco Moretti and Terry Eagleton, have read endings as illusory but final, ideological strategies that seem to resolve social, economic, and political contradictions, while in the world beyond the text these remain painfully unresolved. As the traditional plotted novel wraps up with bourgeois domesticity or career success for the individual protagonist, it lulls us into acceptance of the status quo.

In our own moment, most critics read endings—and especially happy endings—as politically conservative and have sought out texts that trouble or elude conventional resolutions. Feminist critics like Deanna Kreisel, for example, have shown how women’s stories leave loose ends that belie and unsettle dominant patriarchal ideologies. And queer and disability theorists have launched especially powerful arguments against teleological stories that impose a normalizing linearity to contain or ‘straighten’ queer, trans, and disabled lives (Cheyne; Funke).

In short, if we turn to liminality because we are interested in disruptions and transformations, the ending seems like exactly the wrong place to look. But what if endings are less closural, and more liminal, than critics have understood them to be? I will argue here that even the most teleological narratives do not in fact bring all action to a close. Rather, they show us stable routines that extend predictably into the future. They are moments of transition when dramatic, exciting, and unstable plotted action turns into the promise of sustainable life. This essay will read happy endings as thresholds to sustainability.

And so, I will make the case here that happy endings are politically valuable, even urgent, as climate catastrophe rushes upon us. Predictability and security have been bad words for artists and intellectuals, but they have also been much too easy for the privileged to take for granted. Right now, as neoliberal economics undoes hopes of secure work and as fossil fuels radically disrupt longstanding ecosystems, the most terrible threat facing people around the world is not oppressive stasis but radical instability—intensifying poverty and food insecurity, floods and droughts, violent conflicts over resources and the rapid extinction of species. For the poorest and most vulnerable, that is, instability and unpredictability are not exciting sources of disruption, but massively unjust daily hardships. In literary and cultural studies, we have been so focused on open-endedness and unsettling that we have developed few resources for desiring, understanding, and working to guarantee the most basic conditions of ongoing survival.

I turn to the term sustainability in this essay, though it has been roundly criticized by humanists. Taken up by corporations, sustainability has often implied the continuation of life as we know it, including capitalism, which brings with it the devastating effects of continued extraction, exploitation, competition, and wealth disparity. ‘Sustainable growth’ fantasizes a global economy that can continue to expand forever. As Leerom Medovoi argues, “sustainability seeks to gauge the kind and amount of life that must not be killed now so that the process of surplus value extraction can continue indefinitely into the future” (142). And yet, current rates of extraction and emission are making all current systems dramatically unsustainable. Severe weather, mass migrations, and escalating violent conflicts caused by climate change are likely to bring about “institutional breakdown and population collapse,” which will radically destabilize all aspects of life as we know it, including capitalism itself (Burke et al. 584).

What I want to propose, then, is what I call a *genuine* sustainability, a set of conditions to maintain collective life over time with some degree of equity and mutual care. Any vision of social justice demands some version of sustainability: material conditions for sustaining living bodies over time, including adequate nutrition, clean air, clean water, and stable shelter. The thinker who best captures the urgent political work before us, I think, is indigenous philosopher Kyle Powys Whyte, who coins the term “collective continuance” (355). Whyte argues against the common stereotype that indigenous societies are static. All collectives, he points out, have to develop strategies for adapting to new conditions. Food systems, for example, are both integral to the survival of both bodies and communities, while they are also always subject to external forces, such as storms and floods. “Collective continuance,” he explains, “is a society’s overall adaptive capacity to maintain its members’ cultural integrity, health, economic vitality, and political order into the future and avoid having its members experience preventable harms.” Some adaptation, some transformation, will always be necessary, and this means not an opposition between conservation and innovation or between traditional and modern societies, but a requirement to think justly about what and how to maintain in the face of inevitable change. Integral to this approach is the prevention of foreseeable future harm—a basic political responsibility to try to ensure the conditions for intergenerational flourishing.

What would it mean for literary and cultural studies to embrace the vast and urgent project of collective continuance in the face of the existential threat of climate catastrophe? I want first to revalue routines of daily maintenance and conditions like stability and security as goods necessary to social justice. And then I will argue that endings can help us to recognize and mobilize politically for these conditions.

Rethinking Routine

Embracing routine is not an easy task for literary studies, since the resistance to routinization and habit has for many thinkers since the late eighteenth century been central to the very characterization of art itself. From Percy Shelley up through the Russian Formalists, to Zora Neale Hurston and the Frankfurt School, critics have defined art against the routines of industrial modernity. Literature’s value lies in its “evasion of rules and definitions”—in its innovation, uniqueness, and alterity (Attridge 1). Euro-American criticism for two centuries has valorized—and canonized—the artist who invents new forms, experiments with generic conventions, subverts norms, or surprises us with fresh images and ideas. “What we really mean by originality is the modification of ideas,” writes Hurston: “So if we look at it squarely, the Negro is a very original being. While he lives and moves in the midst of a white civilisation, everything that he touches is re-interpreted for his own use”

(27-28). Paradoxically, perhaps, it has become routine for artists and critics to celebrate art's rejection of routine.

And yet, routine is not always oppressive. Around the world today, millions of people are desperately longing for reliable, regular provisions of food, water, safety, and rest. Adults in the US who do not have enough to eat report that they suffer not only from faintness, pain, and weakness, but also from excruciating, ongoing anxiety: "I am worried. Worried each day where the next meal is going to come from," "[a]lways there's a sense of anxiety I am feeling" (qtd. in Dutta et al. 651, 656). There are few universals, but when it comes to food, water, and sleep, the vast majority of human bodies benefit from some measure of repetition and regularity. Our bodies return, day in and day out, to face these same necessities. Of course, it is possible to survive with unpredictable food and radically disrupted sleep, and many people have done so, but for most the irregularity is painful—and it can be tortuous, even catastrophic.

For decades, feminist thinkers—including Luce Giard, bell hooks, Silvia Federici, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles—have argued that the emphasis on the excitements of innovation and revolutionary disruption have meant too little respect for the routine labor that is crucial to keeping bodies alive. This includes maintenance and caretaking, from literal reproduction to the ongoing work of preparing food, hauling water, nursing, sweeping, mending, and washing. Often dismissed as monotonous and dreary, trivial and tyrannical, the daily work of keeping lives going has drawn little enthusiasm from thinkers or artists. It is also largely done by women: "Women do two-thirds of the world's work, produce roughly 70 percent of its food, and are responsible for over 80 percent of its domestic (socially reproductive) labor" (Gahman 82). Much of this is so routine—so non-narratable—as to be unrecognizable. As Susan Fraiman writes, "[t]he illusion of sameness—bodies still breathing, food still edible, rooms salvaged from the forces of entropy, goods flowing in, waste flowing out—actually requires a never-ending expenditure of effort, tireless running simply to stay in place" (123).

And yet, the ongoing work of daily care can also be pleasurable. As bell hooks puts it, "[h]istorically, black women have identified work in the context of family as humanizing labor, work that affirms their identity as women, as human beings showing love and care, the very gestures of humanity white supremacist ideology claimed black people were incapable of expressing." Far from being a source of oppression, ordinary daily tasks like cooking and childcare promise a joyful corrective to the "stressful, dehumanizing, and degrading" work many African American women must perform outside of the home (133-34).

Literary and cultural critics have been quick to dismiss not only routines of daily maintenance, but also the value of stable shelter. We have closely associated home with the heteronormative bourgeois family and private property. But human bodies do need spaces protected from violence, involuntary dislocation, and

extreme weather. In *Extreme Domesticity*, Fraiman argues for revaluing the benefits of stability for those on the margins. She focuses on examples of what she calls “extreme domesticity,” where queer, economically insecure, homeless, and displaced people fight to create shelter under inauspicious conditions.

Even if we make the political case for stability and security as necessary to collective continuance, however, we still have an aesthetic problem to solve. Predictability is monotonous. Ongoing daily routines lack drama, innovation, and complexity. In this sense, sustainable life poses a major challenge for literary studies, which has been so relentlessly drawn to breaks, surprises, and innovations.

Rob Nixon argues that it has been difficult for us to register the violence of climate change because of the unexciting narrative forms it takes:

Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and erupting into instant sensational visibility. We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales. In so doing, we also need to engage the representational, narrative, and strategic challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence. Climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation, the radioactive aftermaths of wars, acidifying oceans, and a host of other slowly unfolding environmental catastrophes present formidable representational obstacles that can hinder our efforts to mobilize and act decisively. (2)

Being gradual and imperceptible, climate change does not lend itself to the shock and excitement of the news story, the spectacle, or plotted narrative. My own argument here is that *sustainability* does not lend itself to thrilling or sensational forms, either.

The problem for literary studies, then, is not only that sustainability is politically and economically difficult, but that it also presents us with a specifically narrative problem. D. A. Miller famously defines “the narratable” as being dependent on “a logic of insufficiency, disequilibrium, and deferral” (265). Stability and security are boring. Plot depends on unsustainability.

Sustainable Futures

Until—that is—the end. What I want to suggest here is that the most comfortable endings typically offer not the conclusion of all action, but rather stable routines that will extend predictably and indefinitely forward. Anthony Trollope gently mocks his readers’ desire for a happy ending in the last chapter of *Barchester Towers*: “The end of a novel, like the end of a children’s dinner-party, must be made up of

sweetmeats and sugar-plums” (266). But if we look closely, what actually ends this novel is ongoing, repetitive labor: Mr. Arabin “lives constantly at the deanery, and preaches nearly every Sunday” (270). Meanwhile, Mr. Harding “does such duties as fall to his lot well and conscientiously.” Here, narrative closure does not entail the end of all action but specifically the end of uncertain, sensational, *plotted* action in favor of regular and predictable routine.

Of course, Trollope was no radical, and his ending might seem to exemplify the most conservative impulses of the realist novel. But I want to suggest here that the routines that govern narrative endings can also point to a more promising politics of justice. Take, for example, George Moore’s 1894 novel about an illiterate servant, *Esther Waters*. For most of the novel, we follow this economically precarious character through numerous moments of crisis, including a pregnancy out of wedlock, a spell in the workhouse, unemployment, gambling wins and losses, trouble with the police, and a long struggle to raise an illegitimate child. The novel ends, however, with Esther falling into a life of regularity with her employer. In the final pages, they settle into a pattern of sewing, reading, sharing regular meals, and going to Sunday meetings. Esther’s employer asks her if she would like to marry, and she responds: “Marry and begin life over again! All the worry and bother over again! Why should I marry?” (324) In place of the “worry and bother” of the marriage plot, the two women agree to “[w]ork on, work on to the end,” the exact duplication of the phrase conveying the sameness of the sequence to follow (325). This is not the stuff of narratable adventure, but it is for Esther the first genuine prospect of a sustainable life—reliable food, regular labor, and religious observance. In explicitly refusing the marriage plot, here, Esther draws our attention away from the illusion of stability promised by marriage and points instead to the actual material routines that sustain bodies and communities. This seems especially valuable in a moment of radical precarity. This is art that invites us to appreciate the importance of routine for those who live with the constant risk of hunger and homelessness.

As in *Barchester Towers*, the end of *Esther Waters* does not bring all action to a close but rather offers us the expectation of the same actions, repeated over and over again into the future. Or to put this another way: Closure often marks precisely the *transition* from precarity to sustainability. It is the liminal moment—the hinge—between plotted instability and the ongoing. I want to suggest that there is something politically productive in the very movement between plotted instability and the routines implied by the ending. Narratable disequilibrium, or plot, is well suited to conveying experiences like hunger and homelessness—these are exactly the kinds of instabilities that can easily propel a plot forward. And if the narratable is a logic of “disequilibrium, insufficiency, and deferral,” then the *logic of the narratable* is also the *logic of precarity*: an instability, a yearning, an ongoing lack. Closure has the potential to offer not only false or illusory resolutions, but also the necessity and desirability of reliable ongoing material conditions. *Esther Waters* is

particularly insightful in this regard, pointing out explicitly that it is not marriage that provides this stability for women, as many other plots would suggest, but the ongoing repetitive labor of daily maintenance.

The relation between narratable upheaval and the stability implied by the end seems especially important for those of us, like me, who enjoy the benefits of both adequate food and stable shelter. After all, it is easy to crave instability when your basic needs are being met, and it is easy to find security boring or oppressive when you are not facing the daily struggle to find food and shelter. As a form, plotted narrative may be particularly good at pushing even the most comfortable among us to yearn for a settled resolution to the distressing insecurity of hunger and homelessness. I have learned this lesson in part from the Victorian novel, which is famous for its ideologically troubling resolutions, but equally famous, too, for drawing our attention to the hardships of hunger and poverty.

There may be no more well-known example than Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. The whole plot of this novel is sparked by the condition of ravenous hunger:

Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months: at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook-shop), hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age. (13)

This threat of violence prompts Oliver, himself “desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery,” to make his famous request: “Please, sir, I want some more” (14). This statement is a classic example of narratability—what captures the logic of insufficiency and deferral better than hunger?—and it is what gets the plotted adventure going in earnest. Oliver is forced into exploitative and criminal labor in order to survive. Drawing public attention to the cruelty of the Poor Laws and the workhouse system, Dickens uses Oliver's story to make poverty appear innocent—the angelic Oliver is certainly not at fault for his hunger—and also intolerable: a boy so hungry that he threatens to eat another instigates a whole novel's worth of excitement. The plot will only come to an end when Oliver is adopted by the wealthy Mr. Brownlow and settles into a life shaped by the promise of ongoing plenty.

One could certainly argue that Dickens fails badly when it comes to structural solutions to poverty. Oliver's own situation is resolved by a combination of unlikely coincidences, Mr. Brownlow's personal kindness, and his own saintly goodness. Dickens does not imagine for us an entirely different economic system that would guarantee food and shelter to all. *Oliver Twist* is hardly revolutionary in this respect.

And yet, although Oliver's singularity as a virtuous protagonist focuses too much on individual solutions, Dickens does deliberately broaden the frame briefly near the end, when Oliver tries to use his newfound wealth to save Dick, a child-

hood friend from the workhouse. “We’ll take him away from here, and have him clothed and taught, and send him to some quiet country place where he may grow strong and well” (418). As it happens, Oliver arrives too late to save him. Dick’s brief mention reminds us that the novel has failed to change the world beyond its immediate protagonist and implies an untold number of similar stories that it has not been able to tell. The ending does therefore hint at the need for a structural solution. And the very narratability of Oliver’s story has affirmative affordances for a leftist politics: It invites us to crave resolution to the ups and downs of unjust scarcity and to replace them with a sustainable life.

Endings for Collective Flourishing

Dickens fails to imagine a collective solution, but he does get us much of the way there. I want to end, myself, with a recent narrative that combines the narratable instability of plot with structural solutions for collective continuance. Matthew Desmond’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Evicted* is a sociological nonfiction intended to expose the injustices of rental housing in poor areas of Milwaukee and the huge rise in evictions in the US over the past two decades. It includes data and the history of housing policy. These sections are interwoven with a series of stories that feature precarious central characters. These narratives have led reviewers to praise the book for its ‘novelistic’ qualities (Schuessler). What I want to suggest here is that *Evicted* shares some crucial forms with the novel—including gripping plot lines organized around precarity—while it also manages to combine these with prescriptions for large-scale structural change.

Desmond organizes the text around eight struggling renters, some Black and some white, some in a trailer park and others in rundown urban neighborhoods. Arleen, a mother of two boys, is evicted because a stranger has broken down her front door, and the landlord holds her responsible for the damage. As she struggles to keep her children under a stable roof, she has to choose between food and rent, and between rent and school clothes. Vanetta, a mother of three, falls behind on her rent and electricity bills and is threatened with eviction. Worrying that her children will be taken away from her, she participates in a robbery to cover her bills. She is then arrested, fired from her job, evicted from her apartment—and loses her children.

Perhaps surprisingly for a social scientist, Desmond gives us not only a set of sympathetic victims, but also a villain. One of *Evicted*’s most compelling characters is a landlord named Sherrena. She is determined to make as much money as possible from her tenants in the poorest neighborhoods in Milwaukee. She evicts anyone who reports her failures to keep up the property, including broken plumb-

ing. After a fire that kills an eight-month-old baby, she celebrates the fact that she is not liable for any monetary damages.

Sherrena's personal greed and selfishness are not the root cause of her tenants' woes, however. *Evicted* carefully tracks the legal and economic structures that allow landlords like Sherrena to make money from the poorest and most vulnerable people. For example, landlords can refuse to rent to tenants who have been evicted before, which means that renters who have eviction records often become desperate to settle for any housing at all and can be coerced into paying high rates for poor conditions. Arleen, wrongfully evicted in the first place, is then rejected eighty-nine times in her search for an affordable apartment. With precious few alternatives, she becomes easy prey for landlords like Sherrena who can readily profit from her desperation.

Evicted, like *Oliver Twist*, spends pages detailing the heartrending precarity of its vulnerable and innocent protagonists. But what most clearly differentiates Desmond from Dickens is the focus on structural causes: *Evicted* shows in detail how government programs, the collapse of the industrial sector, and a history of segregated housing law together afford the shape of the lives of both the mean-spirited rich and the deserving poor. It moves between novelistic forms—like scenes of wrenching grief for characters we have come to know—and accounts of structuring social forms—like the history of US eviction law—to give us both painful individual stories and a powerful analysis of the relations between individual agency and large-scale structures.

It is not surprising that *Evicted* shares so much with the realist novel. Desmond's eight protagonists, like so many classic characters of the realist novel, yearn for a stable home. Suspenseful scenes of narratable instability revolve around the threat of homelessness. For example, when Arleen falls behind on rent, we wait anxiously as Sherrena prepares to evict her. But then chance intervenes. Sherrena shows the apartment to a young woman named Crystal, who says she will take it and agrees to allow Arleen to stay there with her. Here begins a new plot: the complicated story of Arleen and Crystal, which ends in physical violence and another eviction. Along the way, Arleen loses everything she has ever owned because she cannot afford to store her things between evictions and is robbed of all that she has. Rents rise; her children move in with relatives and she borrows money to bring them back to her.

How does Desmond bring his plots of precarity to a close? Here is where *Evicted* seems particularly shrewd. Arleen's story comes to a surprisingly conventional end, though it is an explicitly illusory one. In the final pages of the book, as the family settles into a new apartment without a stove or refrigerator, Arleen's son fantasizes about becoming a carpenter so that he can build her a home. Arleen says:

I wish that when I be an old lady, I can sit back and look at my kids. And they be grown. And they, you know, become something. Something more than me.

And we'll all be together, and be laughing. We be remembering stuff like this and laughing at it. (292)

Here, Desmond gives us the husk of the happy ending without its actual fulfillment. That is, Arleen imagines what it might be like to conclude her own story happily—laughing together in a house built by her sons—while in fact she ends very close to where she began, in uncertain shelter with inadequate food. Desmond uses insufficiency and instability to structure the story around the *desire* for security, but as Arleen's endlessly precarious story makes clear, that desire cannot be satisfied under current conditions.

But this is not quite the end of the story, after all. Desmond writes an epilogue, which offers a second ending. Here he proposes that a well-designed universal housing voucher program could change the shape of all of the lives *Evicted* has unfolded for us. He uses the narrative arcs of the book, with their multiple quests for stable shelter, to set us up for a *structural* solution. Or to put this another way, Desmond borrows narratable insufficiency and desire from plotted narrative, and then, cannily, he doubles the experience of the happy ending: In the first ending, he reveals the conventional novelistic ending cannot be more than a fantasy. The scene of the family at home, rewarded for the mother's sincere hard work and love, is tragically impossible given conditions now. In the second ending, Desmond shows how the happy ending could still be fulfilled, though this time we see it take shape through large-scale social reform rather than the image of a single family at home.

The plot of *Evicted*, then, is not just an entertaining form borrowed from popular novelistic plots to make the book appealing to a broad audience. Like conventional storytellers, Desmond structures the propulsive forward movement of his text around precarious protagonists on a desperate quest to find a stable home. It makes sense for the domestic novel to be a good model for a book about housing injustice. But in order to convince us that home should be a universal condition—a human right—Desmond teases us with the desire for a conventional family ending, only to switch it for the large-scale political goal of stable shelter for all. Brilliantly, he has it both ways: He trains us to desire the security of regular food and protective shelter by showing us how precarity hurts individual people we come to care about, without encouraging us to double down on the separation of some lives at the expense of others. He proposes stable shelter as a collective happy ending.

Sustainable Futures

We might seem to have wandered far from the question of sustainability, but I want to suggest that collective happy endings are precisely the aesthetic form that we

need most urgently now, in this age of mass precarity. It is estimated that 690 million people went hungry in 2019 (Kretchmer). Extreme weather, including droughts and forest fires caused by climate change, are increasing the numbers who suffer from acute hunger. Homelessness and violent conflicts over water are predicted to intensify over the next few decades. There are predictions that there may be a billion environmental migrants in the world by 2050 (Bassetti). In this context, I am arguing for a revaluing of stability, predictability, and routine—which are precisely the opposite of our usual values in the arts and humanities.

A little to my own surprise, then, I have begun to turn back to the consoling and repetitive forms critics have so often dismissed as conservative and especially those associated with the uncritical passivity of mass culture, including pop songs, rhyming poetry, and the most formulaic plots. Increasingly, these seem to me generative for a newly sustainable aesthetics. If we set aside our longstanding insistence on rupture and innovation in literary and cultural studies, we can begin to see that the repetitive formulas of popular culture bespeak a longing for predictability and routine that has an untapped affirmative political potential in this time of rapid and destabilizing change. To revalue formulaic mass culture of course means turning away from the Frankfurt School's understanding of the 'culture industry' as a top-down purveyor of a self-serving ideology. It means interpreting mass audience pleasures as indexes of authentic desires.

I understand my own work in the traditions of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, beginning with E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall. Those critics argued for taking working-class people seriously, not as passive dupes of the culture industry, but as thoughtful agents working through cultural materials, which they translate into a range of dynamic social practices. Publics do not need to be shaken into a new and unfamiliar consciousness to recognize the importance of stability and security, and in this respect they may be more savvy than most artists and intellectuals have been. Precarity is the stuff of global injustice, and it might even mobilize large numbers to political action. Not all popular forms will encourage the making of just worlds, to be sure, but they can and some—already, sometimes—do.

In this context, endings offer us a range of intriguing possibilities—opportunities to reflect on the project of keeping life going beyond narrative instability. It may seem surprising to find radical political potential in the happy ending, which we have so long dismissed as conservative, but which I prefer to call conservationist. The liminality of the ending is crucial: It marks the threshold to ongoing conditions—including the promise of food security and stable shelter. It is doubly liminal, in fact, marking not only the shift from precarity to stability but also the boundary between narratability and the non-narrative beyond. And it may be the best form we have for provoking us to recognize and desire the urgent need for collective continuance.

Works Cited

- Attridge, Derek. *The Singularity of Literature*. Routledge, 2004.
- Bassetti, Francesco. "Environmental Migrants: Up to 1 Billion by 2050." *Foresight*, 22 May 2019, www.climateforesight.eu/migrations-inequalities/environmental-migrants-up-to-1-billion-by-2050.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Storyteller." *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt, Schocken, 1969, pp. 83-109.
- Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Harvard UP, 1984.
- Burke, Marshall, et al. "Climate and Conflict." *Annual Review of Economics*, vol. 15, no. 7, 2015, pp. 577-617. NBER, doi:10.3386/w20598.
- Cheyne, Ria. "Character and Closure: Disability in Crime." *Disability, Literature, Genre: Representation and Affect in Contemporary Fiction*, Oxford UP, 2019, pp. 53-80.
- Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Crown, 2016.
- Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. 1839. Oxford World's Classics, 1986.
- Dutta, Mohan Jyoti, et al. "Narratives of Food Insecurity in Tippecanoe County, Indiana: Economic Constraints in Local Meanings of Hunger." *Health Communication*, vol. 31, no. 6, 2016, pp. 647-58. Taylor and Francis, doi:10.1080/10410236.2014.987467.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës*. 1975. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Fraiman, Susan. *Extreme Domesticity: A View from the Margins*. Columbia UP, 2017.
- Funke, Jana. "The Case of Karl M.[artha] Baer: Narrating 'Uncertain' Sex." *Sex, Gender and Time in Fiction and Culture*, edited by Ben Davies and Funke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 132-53.
- Gahman, Levi. "Food Sovereignty in Rebellion: Decolonization, Autonomy, Gender Equity, and the Zapatista Solution/Insurgency." *Solutions*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2016, pp. 67-83.
- hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Routledge, 2015.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. "Characteristics of Negro Expression (1934)." *Negro: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Cunard, Continuum, 2002, pp. 24-31.
- Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. Oxford UP, 2000.
- Kreisel, Deanna. *Economic Woman: Demand, Gender, and Narrative Closure in Eliot and Hardy*. U of Toronto P, 2012.
- Kretchmer, Harry. "Global Hunger Fell for Decades, but It's Rising Again." *World Economic Forum*, 23 July 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/global-hunger-rising-food-agriculture-organization-report>.
- Medovoi, Leerom. "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Ecology: Sustainability as Disavowal." *New Formations*, vol. 69, no. 7, 2010, pp. 129-43.

- Miller, D. A. *Narrative and its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel*. Princeton UP, 1981.
- Moore, George. *Esther Waters*. 1894. Oxford World's Classics, 2012.
- Moretti, Franco. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. Verso, 1987.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard UP, 2011.
- Schuessler, Jennifer. "A Harvard Sociologist on Watching Families Lose Their Homes." *New York Times*, 19 Feb. 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/20/books/a-harvard-sociologist-on-watching-families-lose-their-homes.html>.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "A Defence of Poetry." 1821. *The Prose Works*, vol. 2, edited by Richard Herne Shepherd, Chatto and Windus, 1906, pp. 1-38.
- Trollope, Anthony. *Barchester Towers*. 1857. Oxford World's Classics, 1998.
- Whyte, Kyle Powys. "Food Sovereignty, Justice, and Indigenous Peoples: An Essay on Settler Colonialism and Collective Continuance." *The Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics*, edited by Anne Barnhill et al., Oxford UP, 2018, pp. 345-66.

