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Negotiating the Boundaries of Solarpunk Literature in Environmental Justice

Imagine a world where climate change issues are solved. Societies have begun a green reformation, and postponed other endeavors to focus solely on creating a sustainable planet. Different nations make use of green technology and alternative energies, while still allowing citizens to live a relatively similar lifestyle to people today. Global green quotas are met by major nations, and the climate catastrophe is pushed far ahead into the future. Now imagine a world where climate justice issues are also solved. Along with achieving sustainable restructuring of environmental ecosystems, societies have undertaken a serious upheaval in their social ecosystems as well. People have begun to recognize and act on the internal contradictions in creating a sustainable and equitable relationship with the environment without also creating sustainable and equitable relationships and power dynamics with each other. This is the bridge that the environmental justice movement is trying to make between the interconnected dimensions of imperialism, racial and economic exploitation, and the broader environmental movement. The opportunities for justice in a sustainable future are endless, and solarpunk, an emerging genre of literature that focuses on the relationship between human societies and the environment, seeks to explore these possibilities. Many solarpunk stories delve into matters beyond what is traditionally considered the environment, and explore the interrelationships between gender, race, class, and other alienated groups which begs for an analysis of solarpunk literature from an environmental justice lens. The intersections between these alienated groups, the umbrella environmental movement, and capitalist systems of power create tensions that sometimes are not optimistic, which is why I'm arguing that stories should not be defined on

their ability to be utopic in their classification as a work of solarpunk. More importantly, these stories are cultural texts that provide blueprints to the creation of a sustainable future for social ecosystems.

Solarpunk, briefly, is an exploration of what creating a sustainable society means. For example, in the anthology *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers*, edited by Sarena Ulibarri, the introduction explores the fluidity of the solarpunk genre, which is still in its infancy. Ulibarri explains that “a lot of the tropes and requirements of solarpunk are still being negotiated, among both the writers and artists producing solarpunk works and the bloggers and critics discussing it” (“Introduction,” *Glass and Gardens*, location 56). She explains that she wants to be fairly inclusive of everything in the solarpunk genre, but her criteria for what constitutes a solarpunk narrative contradicts this assertion. The two criteria she uses to determine whether a story can be considered solarpunk or not is if it touches on “environmental issues and/or climate change” and has an “overall optimistic tone” (“Introduction,” *Fantastical Stories* location 64). The notion that solarpunk requires an overall optimistic tone is blasted away by the fact that the first solarpunk anthology, *Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World*, contains many pieces that depict the horrors of green capitalism. Many of the stories in this anthology show through their materialist-based contradictions that working towards environmental sustainability does not guarantee environmental justice. Without examining and reconstructing the underlying economic and social systems that perpetuate violent systems of exploitation, sustainability will not extend to the human elements of the environment—the treatment of agricultural workers, imperialized nation-states, and the toxified communities of oppressed groups.

The first solarpunk anthology mentioned above did not begin in America. It began in Brazil. Sarena Ulibarri, the editor of the previously quoted introduction to the *Glass and*

Gardens: Solarpunk Summers anthology, worked with translator Fábio Fernandes and original editor Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro to publish an English edition of *Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World*. This translation is crucial to understanding the literary context in which solarpunk takes place. Ulibarri states in the introduction of *Solarpunk* that it was “essential that these early examples not be erased from the conversation simply because they were written in a different language” (location 45). The translation is very useful because it serves as a glimpse for Anglophones into what another culture and language is defining as solarpunk literature. Looking at how the two anthologies—one published for English speakers and another for Portuguese speakers—diverge from each other is useful in understanding the diverse possibilities in understanding what a sustainable, optimistic future for humanity and the environment looks like to different authors and communities.

A model for ecoliterary analysis from an environmental justice slant is essential to understanding the importance of both dystopic and utopic visions of sustainable societies. In the essay “From Environmental Justice Literature to the Literature of Environmental Justice,” found in the anthology *The Environmental Studies Reader*, Julie Sze models how to critique literature from an environmental justice perspective. Regarding the importance of an environmental justice critique of fiction, she says that “it is key to understand what the literature of environmental justice looks like, and to teach individual texts to raise key themes and issues of the environmental justice movement” (Sze 2). Sze is arguing that by understanding what environmental justice literature looks like critics can use the patterns showing up in the texts to raise issues related to the environmental justice movement. Taking this a step further, it’s just as important to read literature does not stem from an environmental justice lens as well, including solarpunk and other literature that explores environmental themes, because it can point out the

materialistic contradictions that occur in those stories. Another point Sze argues is that those interested in environmental justice do not have to look to only real-life examples of “community-based struggles, environmental justice activist/organizations and multiracial coalitions” to develop a greater understanding of the social phenomenon of the environmental justice movement, but that critics and researchers can also look to “narrative analysis of cultural texts” (Sze 3). Many authors writing in the emerging solarpunk genre are indirectly establishing a late literary movement within the broader environmental justice movement as they imagine what sustainable communities look like. An environmental justice critique that analyzes what types of stories are emerging in the solarpunk movement, looks at who is producing them, and considers narrative elements such as characterization, setting, and other literary devices that work to portray the broader material conditions of that future imaginary society for all of its inhabitants is much needed.

From an environmental justice perspective, the solarpunk genre provides a glimpse into who and how people are imagining what sustainability is. Environmental justice critics might argue that a story like “Grow, Give, Repeat,” analyzed later in this essay, would not fit into the literature of environmental justice. However, like I said before, any story that critically engages with environmental issues, like solarpunk stories do, is important to understanding how people are conceiving material conditions that achieve sustainability. Solarpunk is a broad genre, and stories have been written by entities ranging from anarchist collectives to Brazilian scientists. My goal is not to appeal to the widest swathe of authors and readers in the budding solarpunk genre, but to instead discern and explain the larger importance of solarpunk works in the context of how they fit in to the wider environmental justice movement and lens. How do the relational dynamics between characters show the type of power systems that ecological visionaries are

imagining? Do these ecological visionaries fit into the broader environmental justice movement? If they do or even if they do not, how does their work affect the environmental justice movement and cultural understandings of sustainability? What can critical readers learn through solarpunk about future possibilities for sustainability and equity by reading it through an environmental justice lens?

Since I have spent so much time explaining some of the background of the environmental justice and solarpunk movements, it might be apparent that I believe that the solarpunk movement is a part of the environmental justice movement. This is true. The solarpunk movement did not appear out of a vacuum. Hopeful stories about underrepresented populations finding ways to achieve economic and environmental sustainability and justice do not appear out of nowhere—they grow out of social movements and support structures that already exist. Mainstream environmentalism today essentially amounts to green individualism through choices of how to spend wages, such as veganism, banning of commodities like plastic bags and straws, electric personal vehicles, and other individual financial choices. Powerful media companies will promote the benefits of individual consumer choices in creating a better world and a better self, but will purposefully ignore the root issues that ultimately outweigh the impacts of individual consumerist practices in maintenance of capital accumulation. Countless solarpunk stories run against the social grain that corporate media promotes and show characters and entire communities working together to solve root causes of environmental problems. Some of these stories even lay out the contradictions inherent in ignoring the systemic causes of environmental collapse while promoting individualist messages. In many cases, the author poses these environmental issues as inextricably linked to social and economic issues being faced by oppressed groups. Solarpunk stories are visionary, expansive mirrors of a sort, then, to real-life

case studies of the “community-based struggles” occurring in environmental justice studies. “Caught Root,” like many optimistic solarpunk stories, models what community-based struggles can and should look like to be successful in fighting for environmental justice. However, the inverse is just as important. The failure of community struggles, like what occurs in “Breaking News!”, are important in modeling what an unsuccessful fight for environmental justice looks like.

I take an environmental justice approach to the solarpunk genre, as a tool for understanding capitalism’s exploitation of the environment and those who work closest with it, along with demonstrating examples of alternative economic and power structures in lieu of capitalism. The narratives being formed in solarpunk are visionary glimpses like all science fiction is, but the unique characteristic of solarpunk is that it is grounded in the reality of climate change. This reality brings with it a need to recognize the contradictions in our current economic system and, to make a society that is realistically sustainable, create a new one that focuses on human need and sustainable production. To do a fruitful analysis of this I need to examine how characters interact with and understand capital. Every single story explores how class dynamics shape the way people interact with and understand the environment around us, including, as Sze argues, our social environments. In fact, I argue that individual’s relationship to capital and commodities produced from the environment, along with their own cultural knowledge, shapes their perception of what constitutes the environment and what their lived ecosystem is. Unconsciously or not, every single narrative of solarpunk is an exploration of the distribution of goods—because without an equitable distribution of goods produced through the environment human societies cannot be sustainable.

The setting of solarpunk is variable and shows that various communities' constructions of the environment are not always the same. T.V. Reed, another contributor to *The Environmental Justice Reader*, wrote in his essay "Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism" that the trend in traditional ecocriticism of separating flora and fauna from human society is harmful and reductionist. Reed explains that critics who are gatekeepers of what can be considered natural are doing themselves a disservice because nature has to be understood in relation to human societies (6). Here, Reed is arguing that the material connections that human societies make with nature and natural resources are more important than the immaterial connections that human societies make with nature and natural resources. Solarpunk literature is an interesting intersection of material and immaterial. Solarpunk stories work in the realm of ideas as is normal for the medium of narrative. However, within that narrative there is usually careful attention brought to the material aspects of character's environments, such as technology, processes of labor, and resource distribution. There are countless more material aspects of any social ecosystem, imagined or real, but these are the main ones I will be focusing on in my analysis of the three stories below. By analyzing how these material aspects interact within the social ecosystems posited in solarpunk stories, environmental justice critics can deconstruct how these visionary texts relate cultural phenomena and structures—such as the different economic systems analyzed in the two first stories below—to explore more imaginatively what environmental justice means and can mean in the future.

In "Caught Root," an apt opening piece to the *Glass and Gardens* anthology mentioned earlier, Julia K. Patt weaves a narrative about what post-capitalist societies engaged in sustainable practices might look like. "Caught Root" is set in New-Ur, a city that "seems born from the very rock, all adobe and stucco and low-sitting buildings" (Patt location 86). The story

is an examination of two cities with two different models of sustainability. New-Ur uses permaculture techniques and reclaimed materials to achieve sustainability without much use of new technology, while Hillside, a city that is only mentioned by name, uses new technology to achieve sustainability. The ideological differences between the two cities about how to create sustainable communities led to them not exchanging information about sustainable practices with each other out of suspicion of betrayal. In Patt's story, it seems that the way technology is used becomes the main source of dispute for the two sustainable cities.

The conflicts that occur in "Caught Root" are a plastic-littered ocean away from the conflicts happening in the environmental and urban planning communities of today. Patt's story leans heavily on solarpunk's comfortable location within science fiction, and uses those expanded parameters to create a sociological scenario where two completely different city-states are able to survive without imperialism or other forms of exploitation occurring from a larger body of government. There is still some moderate monetary influence that a larger body of government has in "Caught Root," and this might compound the distrust that the two city-states have for each other. It is hinted that Hillside, the community that uses cutting-edge technology to achieve environmental sustainability, gets financial aid from a larger governmental body. However, the aid they receive does not seem to be extended to New-Ur. It's unclear whether this is voluntary on New-Ur's part, because they do not agree to use new technology to receive funding for their sustainable community, or for another reason.

The dichotomy between the two places is characterized at the beginning of the story by the narrator. "Where Hillside's shining towers reach for the blue sky, New-Ur seems born from the very rock, all adobe and stucco and low-sitting buildings" (Patt location 86). The narrator, Ewan, is a researcher from Hillside, sent on a mission to mend relations between the two city-

states. Patt gives readers many glimpses into Ewan's mind to understand the pessimistic viewpoint he has for relations between New-Ur and Hillside. Ewan explains that "I told Arthur this was a fool's errand, that New-Ur and Hillside would never trust one another" (Patt location 86). This viewpoint is further accentuated by the distrustful actions that Bari, the leader of New-Ur, takes to protect the intellectual property they have cultivated through their plant selection processes.

Despite the initial distrust Bari and Ewan have for each other, they quickly come to realize that their sustainable city-states have a lot more in common than they first thought. Ewan gives Bari a sample seed that they engineered at Hillside as a demonstration of friendship and future coordination. "We're not some hard-hearted corporation, Dr. Khadir, just because we're well-funded. We have the same goal as New-Ur: to re-imagine civilization" (Patt location 111). This lofty exchange ends up well for the two researchers, and Bari invites Ewan to stay for three weeks over a communal dinner. The nearly utopian setting that Patt's narrative is set in creates the conditions necessary for easy cooperation. They have no imperialistic or exploitative pressures destabilizing their sustainable, human-centered projects unlike what continues to occur around the world today. Given the optimistic nature of this story and the material conditions of the setting that guide the conflict, it is really easy to see the 'justice' of environmental justice playing out for the characters of New-Ur and Hillside. In other solarpunk stories, justice seems nowhere to be found.

Despite what Ulibarri said earlier about the boundaries of solarpunk including an "overall optimistic tone," many of the stories in the Brazilian-published translation present as dystopias. They play heavily with the idea that sustainability, renewable energy, and even cooperation do not necessarily lead a story to have an optimistic tone. One story in the Brazilian anthology, for

example, is in all ways contrasted with the pastoral, idealistic, and optimistic setting presented in “Caught Root.” Romeu Martins’ “Breaking News!” is dystopic in setting, plot, and character because of the overwhelming specter of imperialistic capitalism present throughout the story. Through showcasing the exploitative nature that capitalism requires of individuals to maintain power over the most oppressed and poor of society, Martins is asking readers to critically assess the ability to create a truly just and sustainable society for the environment and the people in it while still maintaining capitalism as the primary global economic system.

Given the story, Martins seems to believe that environmental justice is impossible without a transition to socialism, and “Breaking News!” is an all-encompassing emblematic treatise of the exploitative potential of green capitalism. Martins frames the majority of the story through a fictional radio network, called Tribuna Central, which is used in the beginning to distance readers from the action being described on the radio and later suffocating them with the knowledge that the radio station’s parent company is the same conglomerate that created the conflict readers are experiencing. The radio broadcast is formatted in script format, and within the first few lines we hear the radio network’s jingle, “Teeeeeeee-Cee, Aaaaaaaaay-Em! The radio that listens to you” (Martins location 964). This is repeated at the end of the radio broadcast, to haunting effect because of what occurred in between the two jingles.

Directly after the first jingle, readers experience the news broadcast in relative confusion, as they hear the breaking news as it happens. The news anchor states that “we are again reporting directly from the interior of Paraná, where the laboratory of a company in the agricultural research sector risks being invaded at any moment now by a mob of landless rural workers” (Martins location 964). Martins uses the breaking news form of storytelling to obscure the reasons of why the landless mob is there, and what they’re there to do. In effect, readers are

listening to the broadcast, not able to know any other version of the story than that which is given to the general public through the broadcast. In Martins story just as in reality, media plays a critical role in conceptualizing and distributing outcomes of justice or injustice for the public.

The role of corporate-owned media's willingness to cooperate with capital comes into play throughout the story, mostly as a way to critique it and its consequences. The reporter explains that they have "exclusive, live coverage at the place where the news happens" which cannot be verified by anyone but the radio broadcasters, but because of the nature of radio broadcasting becomes truth to the listeners (Martins location 1077). Then, they get a scientist, Orson Wellmann, on the radio broadcast to explain TransCiência's side of the story. As is natural of corporate media, they do not get a representative from the landless workers to explain their side of the story, instead being mediated through the reporter's interview with Wellmann. Through this, Martins illuminates how corporate-owned assets, such as media, are used to protect the capital that these parent companies own. Under capitalism, it's what's expected, and even applauded of businesses to do. Businesses must maximize their profits as much as possible or else they will be outcompeted by someone who uses their resources and assets better than their competitor.

After the broadcast is over, Martins transitions readers to the living room of the scientist who spoke on behalf of TransCiência, where he has a conversation with a figurehead for the same company. They immediately change the station since Wellmann's interview is over. The figurehead asks Wellmann, "Did you have any questions at all, Orson? My organization gives a hundred percent guarantee on the services offered to the contractors" (Martins location 1086). Wellmann is a scientist who worked on behalf of TransCiência, but only as part of a contractor

partnership, which continues the line of exploitation down even through the ranks of the scientists involved with creating a gas that can affect the mood and actions of humans.

Orson Wellmann's name is also important to analyze in relation to the plot of "Breaking News!" His name is a direct allusion to Orson Welles, most famous for his stirring reading of "The War of the Worlds" over radio in October of 1938 (Memmott). In the same way that Orson Welles deceived thousands of listeners on the radio because of the form of broadcasting along with the believability of the content, the same goes for Orson Wellmann in Martins' story. Wellmann, acting as a spokesperson for TransCiência, deceives listeners into believing that the rural landless mob is in the wrong. He says, that protestors of TransCiência are "stopping the work of genetic scientists, they are creating difficulties for discovering new medicines, new food sources, new products that may be fundamental for the future of humankind and for the Brazilian economy" (Martins location 1025). Wellmann's confusing a global company, such as TransCiencia, with environmental research. It's as if Wellmann is arguing to his audience that without TransCiencia, not only would environmental research be happening in Brazil but the economy would become uncompetitive as well. However, that's not the only option for doing research. There's plenty of other options for funding research, but through what is presented on mainstream, corporate media become narrowed down to options that protect and expand capital before the interest and freedom of human lives.

The reporter and the scientist's conversation also explains what really caused the landless mob to become violent towards each other: "that greenhouse served us as a field of evidence in the last necessary experience: the areial application of the neurotoxin to humans in a real situation. To that end, those rabid workers that their organization manipulated to attack our solar laboratory of Telêmaco Borba were a bit useful" (Martins location 1147). They created a hate

gas, given off through the neurotoxins of certain plants. They then converse on how they can use the hate gas they now have successfully manufactured and used in a real-life situation to interested entities. Their “network has already contacted Hamas and Hezbollah, along with the Farc” (Martins location 1156). Ironically, the same plant that produces this hate gas takes carbon out of the air, de-polluting it. This plant is then being bottled and commodified for a new market, as is expected in a system of global capitalism. While “Breaking News!” is the apex of a global society that participates in green capitalism, it serves as a warning to readers. It shows that sustainability does not necessarily mean a just transition of environmental justice for oppressed groups, because the underlying base economic structure that these sustainable technologies are produced in does not value commodities for their service to human life more than it values commodities’ ability to produce profit.

In these two stories, the solarpunk society that is capitalist showcases the contradictions inherent in achieving a sustainable and equitable capitalism, and solarpunk stories that organize and understand labor and production differently showcase alternatives to an exploitative, imperialist environmentalism. The alternative presented in “Caught Root” is shown to be more effective at combating and reversing oppressive systems of colonialism, imperialism, and finally environmental racism that was showcased in “Breaking News!” This shows a sizeable trend in solarpunk work—that reconciliation of human lives with each other and the environment is possible—but only through the dismantling of the capitalist system of exploitation that marginalized communities experience the brunt impact of. This could perhaps explain why the first solarpunk anthology, *Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World*, comes from Brazil, a country of the Global South that has experienced some of the worst of colonialism, imperialism, and racism that comes with our current economic system of capitalism.

Indeed, this is why the Brazilian anthology is on a whole much more dystopic—because it seeks to show that just having green sustainable capitalism is enough. Instead, there needs to be a reconstruction of social and economic structures that create sustainable and equitable connections between people and the environment, and people to people.

These two stories force readers, in juxtaposition, to ask deep questions about the limitations of green capitalism and the relationship solarpunk has to representing economic systems in its stories. While I haven't given them any mention yet, there are many stories that position their societies within some type of economic mode of green capitalism without blatantly critiquing it like Romeu Martins does in "Breaking News!" Like most anthologies, the *Glass and Gardens* anthology provides a survey of solarpunk material including pieces that do not criticize green capitalism and even embrace it. One of these stories is "Grow, Give, Repeat" by Gregory Scheckler, a narrative that explores a society dealing with food scarcity and the possible solutions and proponents of those solutions being represented.

Scheckler's story sets a tension between the public and the private right from the start, and through the character's interactions with their government and with each other their distrust of the public sphere becomes obvious. The catalyst that sets off Alex's demise and eventual triumph stems from the city taking chickens from their family for the city farm. It's stated that this happens pretty regularly, and occurs to keep the animals "'safe and healthy'" (Scheckler location 3292). Through this, Scheckler is showing that this city farm is not democratically run and that despite people paying with their animals and goods towards the city farm they do not receive many benefits from it. If the distribution and production of these community public goods were democratically chosen by the community that put labor and time into them, then the conflict in this story would be nonexistent. Scheckler seems to believe that new technology is

and will be required to stave off food insecurity, because Alex's technique of solving food insecurity is renewing and inventing cheap systems that can support Blockies. This is where our present reality raises a contradiction in this perception of understanding food insecurity. Global agriculture systems have become incredibly efficient and there's more than enough food produced to feed everyone in the world. In fact, everyone in the world could be fed sufficiently and nutritiously and there would still be enough food for nearly 3 billion people. Food insecurity is an issues of inequality, not scarcity, while the latter is posited as the problem in Scheckler's story (Holt-Giménez et al. 595). Pinpointing where these stories differ from the material reality of real life is important because it shows where the methods for solving these environmentally-based issues might be utopian or unrealistic.

Solarpunk authors writing from a perspective that doesn't value or include the intersectionality and materiality that the lens of environmental justice operates in have an incomplete understanding of how environmental problems occur. These stories are still valuable, however. They often contain many of the same material contradictions relating to labor and resource distribution as those that occur in our current reality because they remain entrenched in a capitalist economic structure. While "Grow, Give, Repeat" has a happy ending, the path it takes to get there reveals many of the contradictions in maintaining a capitalist mode of production when it comes to achieving environmental justice. Inadvertently, stories like Scheckler's that ultimately have a bourgeois understanding of justice and materiality are just as useful in an environmental justice lens as stories like "Breaking News!" and "Caught Root" are. They demonstrate visions of the future that contain the contradictions that capital creates in the world today by showing how much harder it is to create just economic and environmental systems under capitalism.

Alex's character development and role in the plot of "Grow, Give, Repeat" is a great case study for analyzing these needless hurdles in producing a system of environmental justice under capitalism, in this case the elimination of food insecurity. Alex tries to save her chickens that were taken by the city, and accidentally causes an accident which damages the city farm and greenhouse, making the food insecurity issue in her community worse. She is then socially pressured to reassign her "schoolwork as service to the city farm" (Scheckler location 3337). As no one in the community is organized or trusts the government because its distribution and production are not decided democratically by the community, there is no one besides her and a couple city farm employees to take on the role of fixing the city farm and greenhouse. Instead, there are eco-terrorist protestors constantly outside the farm, but I'll get to them and their significance later. In the end, all of the responsibility of fixing the city farm system falls on Alex and her individual ingenuity and hard work ethic, instead of a community struggle. Many nights in the story Alex, an 11 year old, stays up late into the night working "until exhausted, sleeping on the floor surrounded by her drawings" (Scheckler location 3355). The current economic system in Alex's world, which is capitalist and relies heavily on an underfunded and undemocratically-run welfare state, creates a situation of material necessity where a child is heavily exploited without pay for her labor.

The main character, Alex, works to fix and reinvent the water system so products from the company Blockie Technologies can be used in the city farm. Blockie Technologies produces Blockies, which are a type of meat that is grown as a plant and often called planimal meat throughout the story. These creatures were genetically engineered by Blockie Technologies to grow meat in an ethical and sustainable way, but because of the nature of being developed by a private company they are then commodified into something that is bought instead of being

distributed and produced in an ethical manner. For example, in the beginning of the story Alex wants to win a contest that would give her family “five Blockies per year” (Scheckler location 3390). The Blockies are so efficient and self-regenerating that five Blockies per year would be enough to sustain the meat that her entire family would need for that year. However, they are inaccessible to the majority of her community because of their cost as a commodity.

Because of the artificial scarcity that capitalism creates for the purpose of accumulating capital for the owners of the means of production and, in the case of Scheckler’s story, owners of intellectual property, an artificial solution is created that is significantly more excessive in labor-time and material used than is necessary. The alternative is to reform the economic and social structure to meet the needs of the community rather than owners of companies such as Dr. Nancy Corvalier of Blockie Technologies or arbitrarily undemocratic imposed social orders such as that upheld by Mr. Hank who runs the city farm. To reiterate what I said in the first paragraph of this essay, to achieve environmental justice and remove all forms of exploitation humans cannot just achieve environmental sustainability—they must create social ecosystems that are sustainable as well. Imagine if the citizens of Alex’s community organized and created a more just distribution and production of their food, allowing members of the community to produce in whichever way that they decide is best for them. They would not even need Blockies to rid their community of food insecurity—they could do it with the resources they already have!

However, in Scheckler’s story the protestors at the city farm are “busted into factions,” with anti-planimal activists arguing with pro-planimal activists, and pro-city farms activists arguing with anti-city farms activists (Scheckler location 3417). Given the dire situation of food insecurity that the community is in, it’s dubious at best to assume this is how a community would organize around a common struggle. Unless these divides were being fueled and distorted by

corporate media in an attempt to obscure the roots of environmental, material, and social issues like what occurs in “Breaking News!,” it seems most plausible given previous proletarian uprisings that the most oppressed members of society would band together out of material necessity. How likely is it that a community facing something as dire as food insecurity would argue over the minutiae of whether planimal meat is ethical or not? Not very, which is where Scheckler’s story stops being practical as a way of envisioning future economic and social conditions—but is still a great piece for reading as entertainment because of the expertise and time put into creating it!

By analyzing this story in tandem with “Caught Root” and “Breaking News!” from a lens of environmental justice, critics, readers, and fans of solarpunk alike can use these imaginative visions as models to build off of for achieving a just future which ensures that both environmental and social ecosystems are sustainable and equitable. In “Grow, Give, Repeat,” visionaries of a sustainable, equitable, and non-oppressive future see how *not* to structure community-based struggles. “Breaking News!” is important for understanding the role that imperialism and corporate media has in maintaining capitalism in its exploitation of the environment, communities, and workers. “Caught Root” dares its readers to imagine how post-capitalist societies would manage themselves, their environmental surroundings, and their relationships to other differing groups. Through analyzing these three disparate stories as a brief survey of solarpunk, the need for more in-depth analysis of these pieces from all different critical lenses is very necessary because of the growing complexity of the genre as more is added into it.

The diverse perspectives of solarpunk authors imagining how to best create a sustainable, equitable future through “community-based struggles” are creating the “cultural texts” that Sze argues allow for a “more flexible representation of environmental justice, one with a global view

and historical roots” (Sze 1). Sze describes the insights that can come from expanding beyond a purely sociological understanding of environmental justice and including literature of environmental justice, which “[enhances] our understanding of the experience of living with the effects of environmental racism... and [connects] environmental justice with other intellectual and activist fields” (Sze 1). By describing these community-based struggles in an imaginative medium—that of fiction—many solarpunk authors are doing the work that Sze argues is required in the literature of environmental justice. This is why future solarpunk critics must be willing to analyze from a material understanding of how economic, social, and environmental systems operate in the real world as a way of inferring how they could operate in future conditions and situations. This is shown, for example, in how Scheckler’s story might operate differently in a real-life situation. The same could be true of the other stories in this essay as well—in fact it probably is!

Gleaning these stories and comparing them to real-life examples of similar situations is important to generating models of social ecosystems that promote environmental justice in future material conditions. Many solarpunk stories bring abstract concepts of imperialism, exploitation, and many more ideas together because solarpunk is attached to sustainability and materiality—and through narrative makes them tangible in the imaginative realm for its readers. Establishing a dialogue between the variety of cultural texts being produced under the umbrella of solarpunk is essential to examining and expanding the possibilities and methods for implementing policy that is centered around meeting the needs of not just the exploited environment, but the people who work with, depend on, and ultimately need to be an active part of creating sustainable social ecosystems.

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