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New Maps of Hope: Common Motifs and Narrative Structures in Solarpunk Stories

Abstract

The article seeks to identify common motifs and narrative structures in the emerging genre of solarpunk. The research presented covers short stories from five anthologies: *Sunvault: Stories of Solarpunk and Eco-Speculation* (2017), *Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World* (2018), *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* (2018), *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Winters* (2020), and *Multispecies Cities: Solarpunk Urban Futures* (2021). Based on the ideas and methods of formalism and structuralism developed by Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss, the analysis allows for a systematic description of the common elements of the stories. The purpose is to determine the properties of the emerging genre of solarpunk in terms of story types and relations between them, types of plots and their varieties, constellations of characters, and the recurring motifs. The analysis shows that a range of common elements can be identified across the stories in the anthologies. The most obvious is the ubiquity of solar imageries, spanning from descriptions of sunshine to the technicalities connected with solar panels. The issue of sustainability is also omnipresent, with frequent criticism of consumerism, and the strife for ecological solutions to the problems of waste management, recycling, durability of materials, and energy production is one of the main catalysts of the stories. The research established typologies of solarpunk plots and character types.

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There is today a frightful disappearance of living species, be they plants or animals. And it's clear that the density of human beings has become so great, if I can say so, that they have begun to poison themselves. And the world in which I am finishing my existence is no longer a world that I like.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

1. We are solarpunks because optimism has been taken away from us and we are trying to take it back.
2. We are solarpunks because the only other options are denial or despair.

Solarpunk Manifesto

Notes on Methodology

The study borrows its tools from Bert Fridlund's PhD dissertation *The Spaghetti Western: A Thematic Analysis* (2016). The cinema scholar based his analysis of the Italowestern films on ideas developed by Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss in the course of the latter's research on preindustrial narratives. Fridlund was inspired by a similar endeavour — that of Will Wright, who had used the structuralist method to study the basic properties of the classic American Western and presented the results in his landmark study *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (1975).

The purpose of the analysis is to determine the properties of the emerging genre of solarpunk in terms of story types and relations between them, types of plots and their varieties, constellations of characters, and recurring motifs. The scope of research includes the following anthologies:

- *Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World* (Brazil: 2012, US 2018)
- *Sunvault: Stories of Solarpunk and Eco-Speculation* (2017)

- *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* (2018)
- *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Winters* (2020)
- *Multispecies Cities: Solarpunk Urban Futures* (2021).

Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss were representatives of Russian formalism and structuralism, respectively. The main goal of these paradigms is to uncover the structures behind literary works, abstracting both from the content (Klarer 2004: 81) and from the historical, sociological, biographical, or psychological context (Klarer 2004: 82). It should be noted, however, that the abovementioned scholars neither dismissed the importance of these dimensions of literature, nor refrained from analyzing them, leaving thus the narrow confines of the formalist/structuralist method, as exemplified by Propp's *Istoricheskiye korni volshebnoy skazky* (*The Historical Roots of the Fairy Tale*), where he investigates the connection between the folk tales, religion, and social structure (Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson 1968: xxi). This should not come as a surprise, since he admitted himself in *Morphology* that the formal analysis in any given genre should be followed by a historical one (23). Apparently, some of the scholars were not aware of these developments, as exemplified by Dundes, who claimed, in his introduction to Propp's seminal *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, that the formalist 'made no attempts to connect' the folk tales with 'Russian culture as a whole' (1968: xiii).

As a result of his formalist studies, Propp developed a typology of characters in Russian folk tales, described in his *Morphology of the Folk Tale* where a multitude of possible agents in a story was limited to the basic types of hero, false hero, donor, helper, princess, and villain, and determined the basic patterns of plot, divided into basic units called 'functions', along with possible varieties (1968, original issue 1928, first English translation in 1958). One of the important observations of the Russian Formalist was that patterns in the story can be inverted, for example a common function can turn into its negation in a given tale (27).

Claude Lévi-Strauss conducted an analysis of the tales of the South American peoples, where he focused on the relations between different elements of the stories ordered in dimensions based on binary oppositions, such as life/death or male/female (1969). While the abovementioned study was inspired by Propp's ideas (Klarer 2004: 84), the basic principles of Lévi-Strauss's structural analysis were presented in 1955, three years before the English translation of *Morphology* (Dundes 1968: xii). French structuralism, along with post-structuralism that acknowledged the metafictional experiments of postmodernism formed the foundations of contemporary narratology (Dundes 1968: xi; Klarer 2004: 41).

The analysis of solarpunk stories presented in the article is based on the main ideas of Propp and Lévi-Strauss, in the manner proposed by Fridlund. Basic types of protagonists and plot patterns, as well as the relations between them are identified. Some elements of the formalist/structuralist are omitted, for example Propp's notation borrowed from algebra and logics, or his painstaking efforts at establishing the exhaustive list of possible functions. The author borrows from Fridlund the term 'constellation', denoting a "set of generalized characters, occupying a position [in the structure]" (Fridlund 2006: 16). Unlike in Propp's research, the analysis presented in the article is not purely inductive. The first phase of the project, covering all the stories, involved the identification of common themes. The second phase involved a close reading of fifteen stories which the author considered most representative for the anthologies, which provided the basis for establishing the basic categories for the analysis of narrative structures. Due to its limited scope, the

article focuses on the basic elements and types of plots, leaving aside issues of style, focalization etc. Before proceeding to the results of the analysis, let us now elaborate on the basic qualities of the emerging subgenre of solarpunk and its place within the wider genre of science fiction.

What is Solarpunk?

The goal of solarpunk is to encourage hopeful visions of the future while acknowledging the grim reality of global warming (Williams 2019: 5). In 2012, the first anthology of short stories in the proposed genre was published in Brazil under the title *Solarpunk: Histórias Ecológicas e Fantásticas em um Mundo Sustentável* (American edition: *Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World* 2018). The collection was followed by the American *Sunvault: Stories of Solarpunk and Eco-Speculation* (2017), and two anthologies published by World Weaver Press: *Grass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* (2018), and *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Winters* (2020). In 2019, the anonymous Solarpunk Community published *A Solarpunk Manifesto*, expressing the basic principles of the movement (Solarpunk Community 2020).

In 2021, a new anthology was published by World Weaver Press, *Multispecies Cities: Solarpunk Urban Futures*, this time with a clear agenda of advancing the movement in a specific manner — as the editors admit in the Introduction, stories were commissioned from specific writers living in the Asia-Pacific region, and, as they claim, consulted with regard to their plausibility with “futurists, scientists, geographers and sociologists” in an attempt to improve both the literary quality and the applicability of the solutions presented in the stories in the real world (Rupprecht et al.) Judging from the calls for papers (vide World Weaver Press’ website 2017, among others), from the introductions to the anthologies and editorial notes, most of the stories were probably written as a response to the demand from the publishers, which is quite telling with regard to the cultural politics of the emerging subgenre. While there is a whole social movement of solarpunk, more or less grass-root in character (Williams 2020), literary production in the field seems to be shaped, to a large extent, by a single publishing company.

While some publishers and researchers postulate the emergence of solarpunk as a literary genre, the movement is not limited to that field but includes areas as diverse as art, attempts at creating communes in ecological farms, or other forms of social activism (Williams 2020). With regard to political stance, *A Solarpunk Manifesto* combines ecological thought with anarchism and an anti-capitalist stance: “solarpunk is a vision of a future that embodies the best of what humanity can achieve: a post-scarcity, post-hierarchy, post-capitalistic world where humanity sees itself as a part of nature and clean energy replaces fossil fuels” (Solarpunk Community 2020). Tolerance and inclusiveness are among the most important values of the movement: “[s]olarpunk culture involves all cultures, religions, abilities, sexes, genders and sexual identities” (Solarpunk Community 2020). With regard to literature, fiction is seen in close connection with praxis: “[s]olarpunk is a movement as much as it is a genre: it is not just about the stories, it is also about how we can get there” (Solarpunk Community 2020), in the spirit evoking the ideas of ecocriticism (Buell 2005: 5). The anarchistic approach might be one of the reasons why the well-known author Kim Stanley Robinson does not consider himself a part of the movement, although the members and the editors consider him a major source of inspiration — while sharing

many elements of the solarpunk worldview, the Californian writer acknowledges the role of the state in energetic transformation and mitigating the effects of climate change (*confer* Klata 2021).

Other sources of inspiration for solarpunk are the critical utopias of the 1970s. There is obvious utopian sentiment in the stories, with the ideals of tolerance and freedom harking back to Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1975) or Samuel R. Delany's *Triton* (1976), and solutions for sustainability resembling those proposed by Callenbach in his two volumes of *Ecotopia* (1975 and 1981). There is still conflict in the utopian societies, the newly gained freedom needs to be protected from the greedy villains, dictators, and corporations, and there are motifs borrowed from post-apocalyptic novels and environmental dystopias — ruins of the old cities, scarcity of resources, or prospectors wandering the wastelands. The editors are conscious of these connections and encourage solarpunk writers to follow the lead of the critical utopians of the 1970s (without, however using the term 'critical utopia' itself; *confer* for example Andrew Dincher 2018).

Solarpunk Motifs

The study shows that a range of common motifs can be identified across the stories in the anthologies. The most obvious is the ubiquity of solar imageries, spanning from descriptions of sunshine to the technicalities connected with solar panels. The issue of sustainability is also omnipresent, with frequent criticism of consumerism, and the strife for ecological solutions to the problems of waste management, recycling, durability of materials, and energy production is one of the main motors of the plots. From the political point of view, most of the stories contain elements connected with queer, feminism, and social justice. It is worth noting, however, that they are not present in all of the stories, and even when they are, a range of different approaches is present, from overt criticism of capitalism and patriarchy, through more ambiguous approaches, to the idea that Green Capitalism could be the proper solution to environmental problems, and cooperation with business is a necessity. One of the tools for conveying the value of tolerance is the choice of characteristics for the protagonists — white heterosexual men are the minority here, and the stories feature a wide range of characters: little girls, elderly ladies, homosexuals, humans living in symbiosis with aliens, and non-human characters, for example a mechanical, conscious 'tree', producing electricity from solar power.

Last but not least, many stories feature a motif which could be seen as somewhat surprising in supposedly optimistic collections — namely a post-apocalyptic setting. It is worth noting, however, that it takes the form of 'cosy catastrophe' as defined by Brian Aldiss (1973) rather than apocalyptic scenarios from popular science fiction. Humanity survives, and a new world is built on the ashes of the old. Some stories include solutions which could be seen as a symbolic representation of resistance to the climate change and hope for preserving what little remains of the world as we know it today, such as domed cities struggling with raging elements or desert heat (Mok 2018). Most of them include imageries of a hopeful future (for example a dancing girl whose braids twirl like the blades of a wind turbine (Rossmann 2018) or an orbital station full of vegetation, surrounded by 'octobots' based on spider biology, which clear space of debris (Mok 2018).

A comparison of the anthologies reveals that the Brazilian collection differs from its American counterparts. On the back cover, the following motto is printed:

Imagine a sustainable world, run on clean and renewable energies that are less aggressive to the environment. Now imagine humanity under the impact of these changes. (Lodi-Ribeiro 2017)

While some of the contributors followed the utopian spirit, others decided to go against the grain and brought the message conveyed by the quote above to its logical extreme, deconstructing the connection between social justice and human wellbeing on the one hand, and sustainability on the other (for example ‘chlorophyll people’ eat the protagonist’s girlfriend — Marçal 2017; there is a scheme of extracting energy from the souls of African American convicts — Dutra 2017; greedy corporations want to destroy Rio de Janeiro with the use of an orbital solar plant to achieve more power and profit from rebuilding the city — Cantareira 2017). The American anthologies, on the other hand, tend to be didactic and convey a clear, motivating message.

A number of motifs connected with hope can be identified in solarpunk stories. The first is the perseverance of ecologically-motivated individuals in pursuing their goals even in the face of adversity (for example a quest of Del in *The Spider of the Stars* by D.K. Mok for understanding the biology of insects and using it to help life colonize the space, who finally managed to build a movement around those ideas despite the long-lasting lack of social support and a failure to win the Solaria Grande Prize for innovative ideas; 2018). The second is individual development in the spirit of Bildungsroman (for example the parallel paths of the scientist Jamie towards accepting the need to cooperate with business and of the businesswoman Fernanda to find love and start a family in *Solar Child* by Camille Meyers 2017). Another important source of hope is individual agency (for example Mariana’s decision to steal the file with the plans to destroy Rio and her sacrificial death for the cause in Gabriel Cantareira’s *Escape*, where the proactivity of the main character is juxtaposed with the attitude of ‘apathetic’ ‘good citizens’; 2017).

At the social level, one of the sources of hope is community and teamwork (for example cooperation of the activists taking over an office building to turn it into a homeless shelter during freezing winters caused by the global warming shifting polar vortices in T.X. Watson’s *The Boston Hearth Project* 2017). Another important factor is that of social and political institutions (for example state and schools supporting intercultural communication, egalitarian attitudes and democracy in Jerri Jerreat’s *Rules for a Civilization* 2020). One of the important sources of hope is a certain kind of ‘solarpunk philosophy’ which can be traced across a number of stories, including elements like respect for individual freedom, seeing humans as part of nature while respecting their agency and dignity, preference for cooperation and transformation in accordance with ‘nature’ (be it the environment or the ‘nature’ of individual human being, for example their individual characteristics) over conflict and use of force, and seeing human beings as a whole where all the existing drives and attitudes could be used for a good cause (for example when Julie Leung in Holly Schofield’s *Call of the Wold* comes to the conclusion that she requires both ‘peopling and solituding’ — 2020 — or when the bully’s bossiness turns into her determination in providing first aid or fairness in following the rules as a referee in *Rules for a Civilization* — Jarreat 2020).

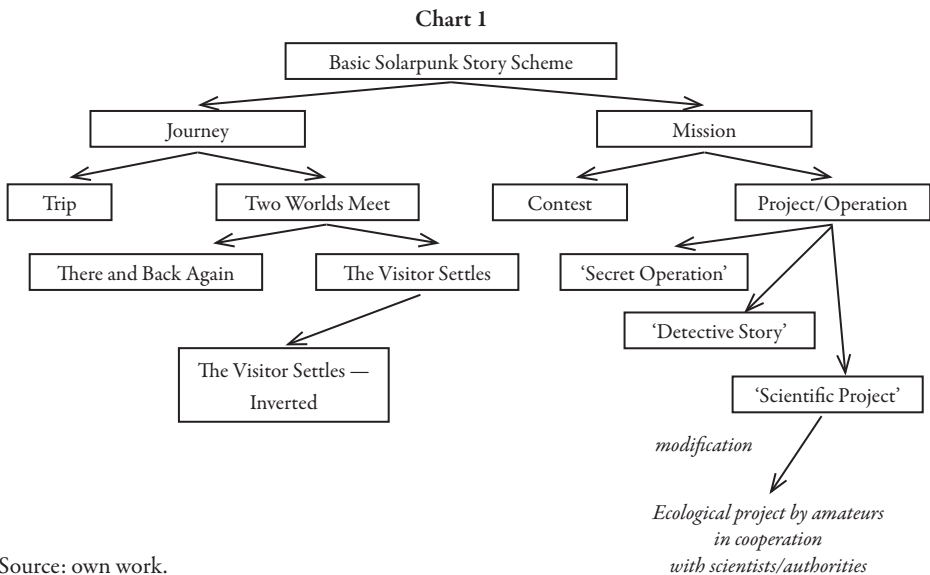
A recurring motif in a number of stories is an underlying belief in the necessity of proactivity, which often constitutes the main plot drive: if we do not act, others will, and one must stand for one’s values, as the solarpunk order is always threatened by human greed, evil corporations, and authoritarian politicians (for example in Cantareira’s *Escape* 2017).

Apart from the institutional and organizational solutions in a society based on the set of values described above, a number of stories present technological innovations, spanning from genetically engineered organisms (for example solar-powered flying solarsaurs for transportation — Meyers 2017 — or brainless plant-animals that supposedly do not suffer when bred and killed; Scheckler 2018), to renewable energy.

Apart from hope, there is also room for doubts in solarpunk stories — to the point where the very labels of ‘optimism’ or ‘utopia’ become doubtful with regard to the emerging genre. The obvious motif here is the grim consequences of the climate change: rising temperatures and sea levels, extreme weather events, and drought. While the stories are usually set in a world of slow decline rather than a typical post-apocalyptic setting, they do not follow an optimistic scenario where the climate crisis could be avoided by some miraculous solutions or mass action taken at the last moment possible. Solarpunk communities might live in a world of tolerance and ecological technologies, but there is still a danger of oppressive ideologies (for example Revelationers in *Solar Child*; Meyers 2017), and as already mentioned, the new solutions often have unexpected negative side-effects. What is more, the mood of a number of stories is that of mourning the old world — in some of them protagonists roam amidst the ruins with a feeling of loss (for example in *Cable Town Delivery* by M. Lopes da Silva, 2018). It is worth noting that some stories do not seem to leave any room for hope at all, as exemplified by Lavie Tidhar’s *The Road to the Sea*, where the protagonist lives in the post-apocalyptic world and muses on the futility of the efforts of ‘the ancients’ to save the world at the time of climate crisis (2017).

Solarpunk Plots and Characters

The names of the types of plots and characters are the author’s own. The limited scope of the article allowed only for brief descriptions of each, with the main characteristics and a few examples. The study revealed the set of typical story types presented in the chart below.



Source: own work.

BASIC SOLARPUNK STORY SCHEME

Ideal type of a solarpunk story (in the meaning assumed by Max Weber, 1949), skeleton of a typical structure, to which most stories covered in the study conform. Specific story types can be considered modifications of that basic scheme.

Journey

The category of stories with the protagonist(s)'s journey as an organizing principle of the plot. Can be divided into the following story types:

Trip

The story starts with the protagonist embarking on a trip and finishes when they reach their destination. The traveling scenario allows the author to present the setting of a solarpunk world (ranging from postapocalyptic dystopia to utopian continuation of the current trends of Green Capitalism). The protagonist travels to a place in the wilderness or to the ruins of a civilisation based on fossil fuels.

Examples: *The Road to the Sea* (Tidhar 2017).

Two Worlds Meet

The Protagonist belongs to a community more technologically advanced and/or more detached from nature than the Local Community, to which they travel. In the most typical version, the Local Community is coded positive, and the protagonist goes there to learn something. Effectively, the story is a *Bildungsroman*, in the course of which the protagonist 'becomes whole' and learns to live closer to nature. Some of the features might be inverted, for example there might be a plot twist, where it turns out that the Local Community is in fact dystopian.

There are two subcategories:

There and Back Again

The Protagonist travels to a Local Community, where they learn something important about the world they live in. Back home, they try to use the knowledge gained during the journey.

Examples: *When Kingdoms Collide* (the story can be also considered a hybrid with Secret Operation and Detective Story; Marçal 2017).

The Settling Visitor

In the Local Community, the Protagonist meets a Local Partner, who is usually a love interest (possible modifications: romantic relationship only suggested or replaced by friendship). The Local Partner asks the Protagonist to stay, they agree, and thus the story finishes.

Examples: *Caught Root* (Patt 2018), *The Tiger, Deer, and the Witch* (Bui 2021).

The Settling Visitor — Inverted

Modification of the Settling Visitor Story told from the perspective of the Local Community. In the end the Visitor leaves taking with themselves a member of the Local Community as a Romantic Interest or adopted child.

Examples: *Under the Northern Lights* (Ray 2018), *Solar Child* (Meyers 2017).

Mission

The plot revolves around a task the Protagonist has to complete. If travel occurs here, it is only one of the many elements of the story, which starts before the journey and continues after that. The task is what really matters. There are three subcategories:

Contest

The Protagonist takes part in a contest. They do not win the main prize, but their efforts bring about unexpected positive results in another area.

Examples: *The Exuberant Vitality of Hatchling Habitats* (Spires 2021), *The Spider and the Stars* (Mok 2018).

Project/Operation

The Protagonist has a goal connected with creating a more sustainable world, where people live closer to nature. The story starts with defining the goal (or alternatively a vaguer vision of the future, which crystallises in the course of action), and finishes when the goal is achieved. There are three subcategories:

Secret Operation

The Protagonist is a member of a group conducting an undercover operation, defending the status quo threatened by greedy corporations or taking an action of civil disobedience to help the oppressed.

Examples: *Escape* (Cantareira 2017), *Viam Inveniemus Aut Faciemus* (Tales from the EV Studio and Commando Jugendstil 2020), *Midsummer Night's Heist* (Tales from the EV Studio and Commando Jugendstil 2018).

Detective Story

The Protagonist is a detective / government agent, conducting an investigation. Alternatively, they might be searching for a friend who disappeared.

Examples: *Wings of Glass* (Nikel 2020), *Grover: Case #C09 920, "The Most Dangerous Blend"* (Edmonds 2018).

Scientific Project

The Protagonist is a scientist carrying out an ecological project.

Examples: *The Spider and the Stars* (Mok 2018).

Modification: ecological project by amateurs in cooperation with scientists/government, for example *A Rabbit Egg for Flora* (Yachim 2020).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF FUNCTIONS AND CHARACTER CONSTELLATIONS IN SELECTED STORY TYPES

Basic Solarpunk Story

Plot

1. Introduction

In medias res introduction: The Heroine enjoys time in connection with nature in a location described with hopeful imagery.

Alternative introduction: description of the place where the story is set and then of ‘the bigger picture’, for example explanation how humanity managed to survive and arrive at this point of its history.

2. Series of episodes bringing the heroine closer to her goal/destination — can be connected with the travel of the Heroine or her task. The episodes might progress in a logical order, making up part of a bigger process, or they can be unrelated.
3. Problems — the Heroine experiences a setback, finds herself in a dangerous situation etc.
4. Solutions — the Heroine is saved, problems are solved etc.
5. Final Imagery of Hope — the story ends with a hopeful imagery presenting the results of the efforts of the Heroine, conveying solarpunk values (for example closeness to nature, community, sustainability etc.), optimistic and full of symbols and metaphors.

Character Constellation

Main Character — belongs to a category that would be underprivileged in patriarchal society (usually a woman, sometimes a non-binary person, very often queer, with one of the following qualities added: elderly, child, disabled, juvenile delinquent, polyamorous, living in symbiosis with aliens or photosynthetic organisms, or otherwise non-normative) — the identity is often revealed gradually, playing with the expectations of the reader (for example it is already half into the story when it is mentioned in passing, as an unimportant detail, that the character is disabled).

Modifications: there can be a dyad of main characters (a couple, mother and daughter etc.), or a whole team, often with shifting focalisation, for example by switching between characters in different parts of the story in *It Is the Year 2115* (Chng 2021) or using communication between the characters by means of augmented reality to create condition of ‘double focalisation’ in *The Boston Hearth* Project, where the narrator explains what the Main Protagonist can see, and those images are transmitted live from their Partner’s glasses — therefore the reader has access to the perspective of the two characters at once (Watson 2017).

Other characters — usually divided into two groups along the lines such as rural vs. urban, land- vs. sea-dwellers, high- vs. low-tech, military vs. civilians, scientifically-minded vs. conspiracy theorists etc.

Modification: some characters can be non-human (however, the position of the Main Character is mostly reserved for humans). Most of the stories in the *Multispecies Cities* anthology feature important non-human characters. The task of the Main Character is often to help the non-Human characters or learn how to communicate with them. They do not have to be animals but can be for example stars or the Moon.

Examples of frequent motifs: bioluminescent lights, bio-engineering, child protagonist, child scientist, communicating with animals, connection with / disconnection from nature, delayed exposition of identity, domes, drones, dystopia, elderly protagonists, gardens, history of the future (how did we get there?), female role-model environmentalist (famous in-story for her achievements in making human civilization more sustainable or ethical), opposition nature/culture deconstructed, metaphors connected with nature, overarching metaphor (the whole story is based on a single metaphor which conveys its main message), queer, references to the classics of cyberpunk, references to the classics of science fiction, settling visitor, solar panels, solutions inspired by nature, space, stars, teamwork, unintended positive outcomes of social action, opposition urban vs. rural (often deconstructed), opposition wandering vs. settlement.

Settling Visitor

Plot

1. Introduction

In medias res: The Heroine enjoys time in connection with nature a location described with hopeful imagery.

Alternative introduction: description of the place where the story is set and then of ‘the bigger picture’, for example explanation how humanity managed to survive and arrive at this point of its history.

2. Arrival and meeting the Local Partner — usually there are suggestions of attraction at this stage, at least unilateral.
3. Series of Episodes — the Heroine learns about different aspects of life in the Local Community; the relationship with the Local Partner gradually develops.
4. Problems — the Heroine experiences some difficulties (this stage is omitted in some stories).
5. Solutions — the Problems are Solved, usually in cooperation with the Local Partner (this stage is skipped in some stories).

6. Local Partner asks the Visitor to stay
7. Visitor agrees to stay
8. Final Imagery of Hope — the story ends with hopeful imagery presenting the results of the efforts of the Heroine, conveying solarpunk values (for example closeness to nature, community, sustainability etc.), optimistic and full of symbols and metaphors (this stage is skipped in some stories).

Character Constellation

Main Character

- **Local Partner** (usually lives closer to nature; modification: more partners with differing functions, for example the Daughter Figure and the Romantic Interest in *The Tiger, Deer, and the Witch*).
- **Local Community Members** (usually friendly; very often in close relation to the Local Partner; some of them might be coded negative, for example the men in *The Tiger, Deer, and the Witch*, who are useless and spend their days playing cards and drinking beer; Bui 2021).

Possible modifications: in *Untamed* (Yam 2021) the Main Character cooperates with the Local Partner reluctantly, and realizes how important he is only when the latter suffers from heat stroke, goes to hospital, and does not appear later in the story (that is not in person, but he still has some influence on the course of action for example by asking a friend to buy the Heroine dinner, or by the instructions he had given her about the operation of the city farm where they work). In *Vladivostok* (Balwit 2021) there are two main characters who are visitors; the male character decides to go back home and the female character decides to stay; one of the purposes of the romantic relationship between the main characters is to contrast their qualities (she enjoys nature, he spends most of the time in VR), another is to create dramatic tension by the dissolution of a couple that slowly drifts away from each other.

Examples of frequent motifs: those already mentioned in the description of the Basic Solarpunk Story + a) the heroine discovers denied/lacking parts of her personality and assimilates/develops them; b) romance; opposition wandering vs. settlement becomes of paramount importance.

Abbreviated description of the Contest Story

Plot: Introduction (in medias res) → Exposition (information about the Contest) → Preparation (the Heroine prepares for the Contest in a series of episodes) → The Contest (apparent failure: the judges and most of the audience are unimpressed) → Alliances (the heroine enters them with some of the audience members, and together they start a project involving practical application of the heroine's ideas presented during the Contest) → Teamwork

(the solutions are developed) → Final Imagery of Hope (the story ends with a hopeful imagery presenting the fruition of the efforts); modification: in *The Spider and the Stars*, where the story starts with the 4-year old Heroine learning that her mother loses the Solaria Grande Competition for ecological solutions, follows her following her mother's footsteps only to lose the contest as a young adult, and finally witnessing the fruition of her ideas as a mature woman. Not all her allies are people she met during the competition — one of them is her childhood friend Ziad (Mok 2018).

Character Constellation: Main Character (modification: two friends working together, like in *The Exuberant Vitality of Hatchling Habitats* (Spires 2021), where equally important for the story, with complementary features, one representing the creative, the other one the practical side, with focalisation on one of them), Judges, Allies, Critics.

Examples of frequent motifs: those already mentioned in the description of the Basic Solarpunk Story + perseverance, non-conformism, networking, sustainability, and increased prominence of child scientist and unintended positive outcomes of social action.

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Conclusions

It seems that we are witnessing the emergence of a new genre with crystallizing patterns of plot, character constellations, and sets of motifs. The general impression of the author of the research is that the stories become less diversified with subsequent anthologies, which might suggest that the authors of the newer stories follow the lead of those already published, consciously or not. It remains to be seen whether common patterns will emerge with regard to stylistic features, and if novels will be added to the genre.

Due to the preliminary character of the research presented in the article, which focuses on the most typical story patterns, special attention needs to be put to the stories not mentioned here, which might represent types not described yet. Since the proposed genre is still in its infancy, new stories will have to be analysed. As Propp puts it, “the accumulation of material can be suspended as soon as it becomes apparent that the new tales considered present new functions” (1968: 23). Apart from short story anthologies, the analysis should cover those presented in the publications such as *Solarpunk Magazine* (2021). It would be also worth analysing the connection between solarpunk and speculative fiction publications resulting from projects involving writers and scientists at the Centre for Science and the Imagination, Arizona State University (csi.asu.edu/books 2021). Obviously, research regarding solarpunk literature is not to be limited to short stories — as soon as the first solarpunk novels emerge, they need to be analysed as well, and constant attention should be paid to the parallel evolution and possible overlapping of works in the genre and those by Kim Stanley Robinson.

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