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Appositions: The Future in Solarpunk and Post-Apocalyptic Fiction

ABSTRACT

The essay discusses images of the future in solarpunk and post-apocalyptic fiction, focusing on their distinct approach to the narratives of progress, science, and individualism. The dystopian perspective of post-apocalyptic fiction is juxtaposed with the hopeful stance of solarpunk stories in order to outline the attempts to move beyond environmental pessimism and to imagine a liveable future. A reading of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), Erik M. Conway and Naomi Oreskes's *The Collapse of Western Civilization* (2014), and Omar El Akkad's *American War* (2017) provides an overview of early 21st-century dystopian motifs and visions, while the ideas and development of solarpunk fiction are discussed on the basis of three anthologies of short stories: *Sunvault: Stories of Solarpunk and Ecospeculation* (2017), *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* (2018), and *Multispecies Cities: Solarpunk Urban Futures* (2021). The aim of the essay is to argue that apocalyptic and solarpunk fiction stand in a relationship of apposition to one another, representing dominant and emergent structures of feeling.

Keywords: solarpunk, post-apocalyptic fiction, future, dystopia, Anthropocene.

“[T]o imagine other forms of human existence is exactly the challenge that is posed by the climate crisis: for if there is any one thing that global warming has made perfectly clear it is that to think about the world only as it is amounts to a formula for collective suicide. We need, rather, to envision what it might be.”
(Ghosh 128)

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In numerous critical accounts, the Anthropocene has been described as a period of disturbed and disturbing time when the conventional links between the past, the present, and the future have been thoroughly unsettled. Donna Haraway begins her *Staying with the Trouble* with the declaration that “all of us on Terra” live in mixed-up, “troubling and turbid times” (1); Dipesh Chakrabarty claims that the current crisis produces “a sense of the present that disconnects the future from the past by putting such a future beyond the grasp of historical sensibility” (197); and Amitav Ghosh states that the Anthropocene is marked by the reversal of the socio-temporal order of modernity, when “those at the margins are now the first to experience the future that awaits all of us” (62). Marked by the collapse of the hierarchies and concepts central to the modern project, such as the belief in science, progress, and the primacy of the individual, the Anthropocene is predominantly the time of climate crisis, which is, as Ghosh argues, “also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination” (9), manifested by the inability to imagine a non-dystopian future.

The challenge that climate crisis poses to the imagination is largely due to the fact that as a hyperobject, climate is “so vast in both temporal and spatial terms” (Morton, *Being* 125) and “massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” (Morton, *Hyperobjects* 1) that it cannot be fully grasped or apprehended. Similarly, the effects of climate change are so diverse and far into the future that they are hard to imagine, especially when they are presented through statistical data and scientific accounts: rendered in numbers, “climate change is real but doesn’t ‘feel real’ to a public whose senses are dulled by psychic numbing and who are prey to feelings of inefficacy” (Slovic 117). In the postscript to their book on *Information, Emotion, and Meaning in a World of Data*, Scott Slovic and Paul Slovic argue that in order to “trigger in audiences the impulse to act individually or collectively,” abstract information about climate change must be transformed “into viscerally, experientially meaningful discourse” by writers and artists who become “sensory translators” (219). Accordingly, how climate change is translated into fiction is important as it not only shapes the readers’ understanding of the present crisis but also determines their response to it, working to instigate change or to justify lack of action—as Bill McKibben states, global warming is “essentially a literary

problem” of finding the language capable of grasping and communicating what is happening (156).

This essay explores two literary attempts at communicating climate change, solarpunk and post-apocalyptic fiction, to discuss the images of the future they offer and their approach to the narratives of progress, science, and individualism. While not all post-apocalyptic stories are dystopian and not all solarpunk works are progressively utopian, I view the focus on the climate crisis and the lack of an image of a livable future in post-apocalyptic texts as reinforcing a sense of powerlessness in the audience, and approach solarpunk fiction as offering a more optimistic but realizable vision of the future. In other words, if post-apocalyptic fiction invites the readers “to think about the world only as it is,” solarpunk asks them “to envision what [the world] might be” (Ghosh 128), without, however, negating the reality of the present crisis. In what follows, I offer an overview of early 21st-century dystopian motifs by referring to some of the best known and most frequently discussed post-apocalyptic texts: Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006), Erik M. Conway and Naomi Oreskes’s *The Collapse of Western Civilization* (2014), and Omar El Akkad’s *American War* (2017). To illustrate the main features of the developing genre of solarpunk, I turn to selected texts from three anthologies: *Sunvault: Stories of Solarpunk and Ecospeculation* (2017), allegedly the first Anglophone collection of solarpunk short fiction, art, and poetry; *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* (2018), an early self-conscious exploration of what “solarpunk” can mean against the tropes associated with dystopian fiction; and *Multispecies Cities: Solarpunk Urban Futures* (2021), a recent and theoretically informed example of the genre. By juxtaposing post-apocalyptic and solarpunk fiction I wish to describe the dominant ways of looking at climate change and argue for the emergence of a new structure of feeling reflected in stories that value empathy, community, social justice, and action over a sense of loss and grief for a dying planet.

The growing knowledge about climate change and the experience of its effects in recent decades have been accompanied by a rising number of texts offering dystopian visions of the collapse of the modern way of life. In story after story, global warming has been depicted as leading to the end of the world as we know it, with the climate apocalypse resulting in the breakdown of the institutions that hold the modern society together: the government, the police, medical care, economy, and science. The post-apocalyptic world is almost invariably imagined as a wasteland, where the abiding rules are the survival of the fittest and might is right, and where the existing social systems are replaced by pre-modern tribal structures, whose primitivism is manifested through cannibalism or other forms of radical violence. Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) provides one of the best-known examples of such a vision of a dying civilization. The novel presents the story of

a father and his son journeying by foot to the sea in search of rescue, across a land devastated by an unidentified climate catastrophe. On their way, they pass remnants of the bygone world: abandoned cars and houses, covered with ash and littered with corpses; a deserted city with “[t]he mummied dead everywhere” (23); and farmhouses in a land “gullied and eroded and barren,” full of “bones of dead creatures sprawled in the washes” (189). This is a slowly disintegrating world, whose inhabitants are not survivors but the walking dead: as the protagonist’s wife states before she commits suicide, “We’re not survivors. We’re the walking dead in a horror film” (57). The images of decay and death, and the stories of cannibalism and human cruelty, vividly demonstrate the collapse of Western civilization, and although the novel ends with the boy continuing the journey after his father’s death, an overall sense of powerlessness and mourning predominates, throwing the possibility of a new beginning into doubt.

A similar image of a dying world appears in Omar El Akkad’s *American War* (2017), which points also to the circularity of historical processes by highlighting the repetition of apocalyptic events. The title uses the reference to the American Civil War (1861–65) over slavery to describe the Second American Civil War (2074–95) fought between the Union and the secessionist states, over the use of fossil fuels. The war breaks out because of Southern resistance to the Sustainable Future Act, which prohibits the use of fossil fuels in the United States in response to severe climate effects (23). As the narrator-historian states in the prologue to the novel, this is not a story about war but about ruin (6), documenting the damage to the land and the people, including forced migrations, refugee camps, and deaths that result from the business-as-usual attitude to ecological disaster. The novel depicts the refusal to change as the obstacle which makes it impossible to move forward and produces a sense of overwhelming powerlessness which prevents any progressive action. This sense of resignation is described in the book as a characteristic feature of the South, the region where “there is no future, only three kinds of past—the distant past of heritage, the near past of experience, and the past-in-waiting” (316), but it also illustrates the overall melancholia of contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction, whose focus on the present leaves hardly any space for imaging the future.

James Berger argues that apocalypse as revelation works to “clarify and illuminate the true nature of what has been brought to an end” (5). By depicting the catastrophic event, post-apocalyptic literature aims to take readers beyond their present, and, by doing so, help them to make sense of their world and time: “We project ourselves . . . past the End, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle” (Kermode 8). Post-apocalyptic fiction can have a didactic and/or reformatory effect as the images of human-made apocalypse may

make readers attend to and deal with the problems in their immediate environments, so that, as Claire Colebrook convincingly argues, “[a] new humanity [may be] constituted by the threat of its disappearance” (86).¹ This is the explicit aim of *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* (2014) by Erik M. Conway and Naomi Oreskes, who in the book “imagine a future historian looking back on a past that is our present and (possible) future” in order “to understand the present” and to answer the question “how we—the children of the Enlightenment—failed to act on robust information about climate change and knowledge of the damaging events that were about to unfold” (ix). Conway and Oreskes present the climate crisis from the perspective of a historian living in the 24th century, to draw attention to such 21st-century problems as “the frenzy of fossil fuels” (11) and to castigate “positivism and market fundamentalism” (35). Yet, although the book successfully explains the problems of our present, it fails to present an image of the future that might inspire change (Heise) and provide the basis for the development of a new humanity.²

The post-apocalyptic texts discussed above present the world as it is rather than as what it might be, even when their focus is the future. As Ursula Heise argues, referring to *The Road* and *The Collapse of Western Civilization*, among others, the preoccupation with uncovering the problems of the present and the failure to outline “a persuasive alternative” deprive contemporary dystopias of political power and take away their potential to unsettle the status quo. Heise points also to the popularity of the genre as responsible for weakening its critical impact through habituating the readers to its defamiliarizing effects: constructed on the basis of the same formula, the texts offer visions of apocalypse known from earlier science-fiction and work “to reconfirm well-established views of the present” instead of questioning them. Accordingly, rather than empowering them to make necessary changes, such books may numb the readers, creating a feeling of hopelessness, inefficacy, and apathy.

In contrast to these dystopias, solarpunk fiction tends to focus on the future, offering more optimistic scenarios of scientific and social progress. Made famous by a Tumblr community around 2014, solarpunk is “a movement in speculative fiction, art, fashion and activism that seeks to answer and embody the question ‘what does a sustainable civilization look like, and how can we get there?’” (Solarpunk Community).³ Solarpunk

¹ I have presented (and endorsed) this perspective on the function of post-apocalyptic fiction in “The End of the World and After” (2021).

² Ursula Heise writes that the book simply reinforces “present-day perspectives.”

³ One should also add companies to the list of areas affected by the movement; see Nicola K. Smith’s “What Is Solarpunk and Can It Help Save the Planet?” for a description of the impact of solarpunk on the technology industry.

combines environmental sustainability with social justice, with “solar” referring to new environment-friendly technologies, as well as “the idea of brightness and hope” (Ulibarri, Preface 1) and “punk” pointing to the importance of resistance, enthusiasm, and the desire for radical societal change that would enable a move toward societies that are anti-capitalist and de-urbanized, post-scarcity and post-hierarchy, based on compassion and acceptance (Solarpunk Community). Solarpunk is defined in opposition to cyberpunk and steampunk, which are linked with nihilism and “potentially quasi-reactionary tendencies” respectively,⁴ and bases its futurism on “ingenuity, generativity, independence, and community” (Flynn). Resistance and inventiveness play a key role in the movement: as Jennifer Hamilton claims, “[t]o be solarpunk . . . is to mount a resistance to the *mainstream* present by imagining an alternative future,” including the resistance to the dystopian mood of mainstream climate fiction. Accordingly, the Solarpunk Community begins its 2019 manifesto with the declaration that “[w]e are solarpunks because optimism has been taken away from us and we are trying to take it back,” and because “the only other options are denial or despair”; science fiction is enlisted in this rebellion against the dominant pacifying pessimism as “a form of activism” which helps present a future that is not merely alternative but primarily possible (Solarpunk Community).

In line with the declarations in *Solarpunk Manifesto*, solarpunk fiction is inclusive and activist, trying to reach out to readers and inspire them “to seek out solutions for social and environmental problems in their communities” (Wagner and Wieland 9) and on their own. The literary roots of solarpunk can be traced back to the second half of the 20th century and novels by Ursula K. Le Guin, Ernest Callenbach, Kim Stanley Robinson, Frank Herbert (Ulibarri, Preface 1; Dincher 8), and Octavia Butler, but the first anthologies that explicitly identified themselves as solarpunk appeared in the 2010s: *Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World* (2018), presenting stories that were originally published in Brazil in 2012; *Sunvault: Stories of Solarpunk and Ecospeculation* (2017); and *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* (2018). In an effort to decolonize literary production, the collections offer stories by writers from various parts of the world, often not very well-known or not professional, many describing themselves as activists engaged with environmental and social justice issues. The stories, poems, and art included in *Sunvault*, for

⁴ In contrast to steampunk and cyberpunk, solarpunk presents environment-friendly technologies that help avoid the damage associated with industrial modernity and stresses the importance of communal trust and a shared system of values, beliefs, and principles as the basis for building sustainable communities.

example, have been selected from two hundred submissions from across the world; the most recent anthology, *Multispecies Cities: Solarpunk Urban Futures* (2021), presents stories from the Asia-Pacific, which the editors targeted because the region's exposure to climate change and its history of past colonialism make it "fertile ground for asking deep questions about what our urban future will look like, how and where we will be living and whose company we will be keeping" (Rupprecht et al., Introduction 2). In various ways, solarpunk stories stand in opposition to dystopian and post-apocalyptic climate fiction, rejecting the focus on individual achievement, emphasizing the importance of hope and interaction with communities and the environment "rather than merely survival in a decaying world" (Wagner and Wieland 9), as well as focusing on the representation of "adaptation and compromise rather than destruction and conquest," and on empathy and cooperation rather than greed and competition (Ulibarri, Introduction 8).

The themes and plotlines of the solarpunk stories in the anthologies listed above coalesce around the significance of community, respect for difference, cultivation of heterogeneity, social justice, and the use of science for sustainable development. Many of these ideas can be traced back to Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), particularly the emphasis on degrowth to achieve sustainability and the belief that resistance to a corrupt government may be successful.⁵ In Callenbach's book, Northern California, Oregon, and Washington break away from the United States to create Ecotopia, a country based on "stable-state" ecological systems that follows "cooperation- and biology-oriented policies" (87). The ultimate goal of Ecotopians is to live in balance with nature as part of the "web of living organisms" so as to ensure future survival (50). This future-oriented society follows the principles of equality, tolerance, and cooperation; its political system is based on transparency and citizens' participation; and important decisions are reached collectively, through a practice of "cooperative criticism" (48). *Ecotopia Emerging*, the 1981 prequel to *Ecotopia* that presents the events prior to the secession, illustrates the importance of collectives and grassroots activism by describing the beginnings of the Survivalist Party in a small group of ecological enthusiasts whose actions eventually lead to the creation of a new nation that puts into practice their ideals of sustainability. Importantly, these acts of civil disobedience, including the secession, are driven by the belief that a government should embody the ideals of the people and that the failure to

⁵ *Ecotopia* has been described as "the bible for ecological sustainability" and has been credited with inspiring the creation of the Green party in Germany and similar movements in other countries (see Margolin 7).

do that justifies rebellion: as they declare in their secession act, “A suicidal national government, a government that seems bent on devouring its people rather than nurturing them, forfeits our allegiance” (397). Equally importantly, what makes the creation of the new nation possible is the discovery of how to generate electricity from solar energy. The faith in the possibility to change political systems through collective action and the conviction that science can help build a sustainable society are central to solarpunk narratives, visible in their focus on the transformative potential of communities.

The shift of emphasis from individual to collective achievement is evident in T. X. Watson’s “The Boston Hearth Project,” which describes a successful rebellion in the name of the socially disadvantaged. Framed as a submission for an essay competition on “When have you worked well as part of a team?”, the text describes the takeover of the Hale Center, a smart building and first-class hotel for business people and politicians. The story takes place in early-21st-century Boston, where the rate of death of homeless people has been increasing because of erratic weather patterns caused by climate change and the closure of homeless facilities by the city authorities. To redress the negligence, a group of young activists decides to take control over the Hale Center and repurpose it into a homeless shelter. The takeover is orchestrated by Andie Freeman, the narrator of the story and a computer expert, and Juniper Berg, an “urban explorer” (17) who breaks into the building but whose actions are monitored and controlled from a distance by Andie working from zir⁶ wheelchair. This guerilla action involves no violence as the activists use the building’s advanced technology to disarm the police by raising the temperature high enough to make the officers take off their uniforms and abandon weapons. Andie and zir friends are gradually joined by a growing number of volunteers from the city and occupy the building for over a month until it is officially recognized as The Boston Hearth Homeless Shelter. Following their actions, the authorities of New York and Portland give building projects to activists out of the fear of hostile takeovers, thereby demonstrating that social inequalities can be redressed by collective action.

While “The Boston Hearth Project” describes communal resistance to social injustice exacerbated by climate change, “Midsummer Night’s Heist” depicts collective actions against another major problem of the early 21st century, namely forced migration and the rise of nationalistic, neo-fascist

⁶ The use of gender-neutral pronouns—such as “zir” instead of “him” or “her”—is common in solarpunk fiction and can be seen as fulfilling the claim that “solarpunk culture includes all cultures religions, abilities, sexes, genders and sexual identities” (Solarpunk Community).

movements. The story takes place in Milan, on the night before a far-right rally against the threat of “ethnic substitution” (118). The protagonists are members of *Commando Jugendstil*, “a gang of dreamers” (113) made of people of various ethnicities, abilities, and genders, who want to “empower more young folks like them and mobilize local communities for ever larger and more impactful actions” (113). In cooperation with other antiracist and antifascist groups, they organize a number of happenings in the whole city and redesign the square where the rally is to take place into a garden decorated with stained glass panels depicting events from the past to remind the inhabitants of the city’s multi-ethnic history. The banner that they hang from the Mayor’s balcony, with the message that “Milan Welcomes Everybody,” goes viral, mobilizing people all over the world. Importantly, the story is authored by *Commando Jugendstil*, a real-life collective of Italian solarpunk creators, and by *Tales from the EV Studio*, a group of emigrant Italian writers “who specialise in historical fantasy, archanepunk and scriptwriting for comics” (132–33). Accordingly, “*Midsummer Night’s Heist*” stresses the role of both fictional and real collectives, as well as illustrates the activist and inclusive character of solarpunk communities.

Unlike dystopian climate fiction, in which science is usually put into the service of consumer capitalism, solarpunk stories present scientific discoveries as a necessary path into a sustainable future. The protagonists of “*The Boston Hearth Project*” are digital activists and computer experts and the team in “*Midsummer Night’s Heist*” includes a chemist, an engineer, a botanist, and a structural biologist. In solarpunk fiction, however, science and technological progress are presented as not only fostering activism, but also significantly extending human capabilities to make it possible to live on a damaged planet. “*Solar Child*” by Camille Meyers depicts the hot and toxic earth of the future, torn by the fight between the Revelationers, religious fanatics who see spreading desertification, coastal flooding, and rising infertility as God’s punishment to be patiently endured, and scientists who believe that climate change should be combated and that humanity must evolve through genetic modification in order to accommodate to the changed world. The protagonist of the story, Jamie, is a genetic engineer responsible for creating *solarsaurus*, providing living, solar-powered transportation, and a co-creator of *Ella*, the first photosapien. The story’s focus on the relationship between Jamie and *Ella*, whom she treats like a daughter, stresses the fact that assisted evolution requires knowledge and also “takes love” (193), and by depicting Jamie’s refusal to abandon *Ella*, rewrites the dominant narrative of rejecting one’s creation famously depicted and critiqued in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

Solarpunk fiction seems to adopt an overall optimistic, at times even techno-optimistic tone, yet this is balanced by stories that emphasize the

extent of the damage caused by anthropogenic climate change and present technological progress as restricted both by the limits of human ingenuity and by ethical rules. If “Solar Child” points to the ethical side of the relation between scientists and their creations, D. K. Mok’s “The Birdsong Fossil” presents the question of human responsibility for species extinction. The story is narrated by Doctor Yuzuki Alvarez, a climate-change refugee and an Ethnographic Bio-Roboticist who wants to replicate animal culture in robots—to create not a robot that looks like a bird but a bird that has the body of a robot (297). The world depicted in the story is plagued by catastrophic climate change, spreading pandemics, and mass extinctions, yet it is also marked by backlash against science and the closing down of research centres. After the institute where he works loses funding, Yuzuki secretly continues his research until a nuclear war breaks out that destroys the whole region. Years after the war, with the world slowly being rebuilt through small communities, his work is continued by other researchers who manage to bring back the robot animals that have been lost. Although the story finishes with a promise of rejuvenation, it also includes the recognition that “[t]he world would continue to change, and we would have to change with it. Species would come and go, and perhaps come again” (295). Rather than romanticizing the possibility of resurrection and the human power of creation, the ending points to the need to accept contingency and vulnerability, and to come to terms with the fact that humans are also a species that can come and go.

The belief in the power of science and the human ability to shape the world places solarpunk close to the concept of “the good Anthropocene,” as presented by Erle Ellis in “The Planet of no Return” (2012) and elaborated in *An Ecomodernist Manifesto* (2015). Arguing against the idea that there exist planetary boundaries that constrain human development, Ellis claims that the Anthropocene should not be seen “as a crisis, but as the beginning of a new geological epoch ripe with human-directed opportunity.” Accordingly, ecomodernists describe the good Anthropocene as a chance for engineering and transforming the planet in a process of modernization that would result in “radical decoupling of humans from nature” and lead “human societies toward vastly improved material well-being, public health, resource productivity, economic integration, shared infrastructure, and personal freedom” (Asafu-Adjaye et al. 24, 28). While they affirm that humanity must reduce its impact on the environment, ecomodernists reject the claim that humans should live in balance with nature to avoid economic and ecological collapse, thereby negating the reality of climate change and refusing to accept responsibility for its effects.

Unlike *The Ecomodernist Manifesto*, solarpunk fiction presents human societies and nature as interdependent and in need of harmony;

as the editors of the latest solarpunk anthology argue, “we can only truly understand the world if we look at the many ways humans and other life forms are entangled, in a way that cannot be easily separated” (Rupprecht et al., Introduction 3). If ecomodernists stress resilience, arguing for Earth’s ability to resist damage and recover swiftly, solarpunk texts point to the need to care for the planet through devising sustainable futures. Outlining the goals and strategies of solarpunk fiction, the editors of *Multispecies Cities* emphasize the importance of acknowledging close connections “with our more-than-human kin” (9) in order to “learn to negotiate, coexist, and flourish together” (4). As they claim, to adequately represent such multispecies entanglements and to narrate more-than-human tales, the old conventions of “progress-based narratives, stories of the individual, the lone hero, people against people” (7) have to be thoroughly revised. Accordingly, the texts in the collection focus on multiple encounters between humans and other species and attempt to narrate them from perspectives other than human, so as to bring forward the realization that people are not a separate species and that the stories of animals are just like the human ones.

Solarpunk claims to be “at once a vision of the future, a thoughtful provocation, a way of living and a set of achievable proposals to get there” (Solarpunk Community). This goal of combining ideas with practice is realized in *Multispecies Cities*, which is both a collection of stories and a research project supported by the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, established in 2001 by the Government of Japan to promote “integrated cooperative research toward the solution of global environmental problems” and to create the field of global environmental studies (Research Institute). A part of the project is a survey that readers are invited to take before and after reading the book that includes such questions as whether they consider human and non-human life interdependent, whether they believe that climate change is primarily a social issue, and whether stories can change their beliefs and values and inspire them to action. By asking readers to help “understand how stories might contribute to building better futures for humans and nature alike” (Rupprecht et al., *Multispecies Cities* 325), the survey points to the importance of solarpunk writers as builders of a better future (Rupprecht et al., Introduction 10), whose task is to provoke their readers to action by helping them understand and feel climate change.

Ursula Heise finishes her critique of contemporary dystopian fiction with a call for new utopian visions that would resist pervasive social pessimism. In a similar manner, focusing on the problems with telling pessimistic stories about climate change, George Marshall ends his book on ignoring the climate crisis with the statement that we need

“narratives of cooperation” in which aggression, competition, blame, and denial are replaced by acceptance, compassion, and empathy (234–38). Solarpunk may be an answer to these requests since it “can be utopian, just optimistic, or concerned with the struggles *en route* to a better world, but never dystopian” (Solarpunk Community), although, as Andrew Dincher warns, it is still an evolving genre, whose development and influence cannot be fully predicted (8). Post-apocalyptic fiction and solarpunk start from the recognition that “[w]e are living in a world that is dying” (Hickel 17), but while the former dwells on the loss of the modern world and focuses on the traumatic and traumatizing present, the latter attempts to move beyond that loss, into a hopeful and inclusive future and a new modernity of multispecies kinship. Both are responses to the hyperobject of climate change, each offering a perspective on a different “slice of it,” but neither presenting it in its totality or telling the whole story. Accordingly, instead of opposing the pessimism of post-apocalyptic fiction to the hopefulness of solarpunk stories, it might be more productive to place them side by side, as dominant and emergent structures of feeling that stand in a relation of apposition,⁷ where they modify and build on each other, depositing successive layers of meaning and pointing to different futures, making it possible to both stay close to and move beyond our trouble.

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⁷ I build here on the definition of apposition in *The Collins English Dictionary* as: 1. a putting into juxtaposition, 2. a grammatical construction in which a word is placed after another to modify its meaning, 3. *biology* growth in the thickness of a cell wall by the deposition of successive layers of material.

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