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Ecological themes in contemporary Croatian dystopian prose

The paper deals with ecological topics of the nine contemporary dystopic novels: *Battlefield Istria*[[1]](#footnote-1) (*Bojno polje Istra*, 2007) by Danilo Brozović, *Centimeter from the Happiness*[[2]](#footnote-2) (*Centimetar od sreće*, 2008) by Marinko Koščec, *2084: House of Great Misery*[[3]](#footnote-3) (*2084: Kuća Velikog Jada*, 2012) by Ivo Balenović, *Planet Friedman*[[4]](#footnote-4) (2012) by Josip Mlakić, *Romeo at the End of the History*[[5]](#footnote-5) (*Romeo na kraju povijesti*, 2015) by Aljoša Babić, *War for the Fifth Taste*[[6]](#footnote-6) (*Rat za peti okus*, 2015) by Veljko Barbieri, *Dedivination*[[7]](#footnote-7) (*Dedivinacija*, 2018) by Jelena Hrvoj and *Crab's Children*[[8]](#footnote-8) (*Rakova djeca*, 2019) by Dalibor Perković, and a short story "White Promenade"[[9]](#footnote-9) ("Bijela promenada", 2016) by Ed Barol.

Given the time of occurrence, these dystopias belong to the second wave of dystopian works in Hannah Matus's classification. Unlike the first wave, which is characterized by the following themes: constant surveillance and control of government over citizens, severe punishments and rehabilitation of the socially deviant, and government monopoly over knowledge, reality, and history (2009: 7), at the center of second-wave dystopias is "a state that is too inept to protect its citizens from terrors like global warming, biological warfare, economic crises, terrorism, and other such non-state terrors" (2009: 27). The number of dystopian works on ecological catastrophes has increased significantly in recent times, mainly because they are accentuated, somewhat caricatured images of reality, in which, like in Mlakić's interpretation, "the vision of the Earth's future is full of direct allusions to its present" (Beljan, 2013: 141). Therefore, the theoretical basis of the paper consists mainly of works in the field of eco-criticism, which is at its core "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty, 1996: XVIII) and "all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (Ibid: XIX).

All topics concerning nature are entirely in the spirit of anti-ecology. There are several works in which we witness an ecological catastrophe more than in others (Koščec, Mlakić, Barol). Picture is post-apocalyptic: nature is exhausted, devastation has already occurred due to neglect of nature as well as excessive exploitation of all natural resources, and the consequences are irreparable. However, ecological catastrophe has never been set as the central theme of the work ‒ it is more of a background effect. The focus is on the unstoppable capitalist hunger for profit, insatiability and profit as the ultimate goal of all actions, and thus, among others, "Mlakić's dystopia represents a critique of capitalism as environmentally harmful" (Ćirić, 2014: 63).

Karen Thornber lists most of the changes that have befallen the Earth: "climate change; mass extinctions of plant and animal species; and widespread pollution of sky, sea, and land make clear the extent to which humans have shaped global ecologies" (2014: 989), and we add significant theme of food to her division.

CLIMATE CHANGE ‒ Elements of cli-fi (climate fiction or climate change fiction or climate change science fiction), can be found in several represented works. Genre is named by Dan Bloom in 2007, using that particular term "to describe a set of texts, often including genre fiction elements, which present a storyworld changed by anthropogenic climate change" (Gourley, 2020: 752). Disturbing and alarm-raising cli-fi books mostly describe unwanted and uncontrollable human-induced weather changes, excessive warming or cooling. Thus, high temperatures in the country where Koščec's character Rolo lives three years ago directly killed almost 300 people, two years ago 382 people, and official data for last year were not published. Rolo wonders how many indirect victims are there. However, in some novels, climate changes are intentional: under a glass dome in the elite settlement of New World G 23 the climate is always the same, pleasant, there is no summer or winter (Hrvoj), after colonizing planets, people deliberately change their climate in order to adapt them for living (Perković). Each of the planets: Oktavija, Albatros, Alkatraz, Antareške komune (Communes of Antares), Tedesco ‒ has a different climate, and all the changes are result of human intervention. In some of them the conditions are adapted to man down to the last detail (controlled rains, cyclones, temperature, "terraformers" and geneticists even made carnivores harmless to humans). Despite tremendous changes, it rains constantly on Tedesco, and on Albatros there is much less intervention, only hurricanes and tropical cyclones were alleviated, which made the locals more adaptable to conditions on other planets:

People from Albatros were at the very bottom of the scale of people suffering from various incidental diseases, viral infections, colds, flu, but also more serious illnesses. Maintaining immunity had its price and life on the space station may have been more comfortable, but it brought with it possible inconveniences every time a person left such a controlled and sterile environment. (Perković, 2019: 59)

In "White Promenade", climate change went in the opposite direction from the announced global warming:

Civilization will almost collapse in the next fifty years, climate change will become nasty, there will be a nuclear winter, whether because of wars or a bunch of ancient power plants that will collapse, they don't want to tell us that. Diseases that are already out of control will have a devastating effect and everything goes to hell. (Barol, 2016: 9)

Pandemics (solved by the principle of encirclement and waiting for the infected to die, and liquidation by fire of all who try to escape followed with disinfection of places with green foam) are a thing of the past ‒ the present are deadly diseases, but they are also "tickets" for hibernation tanks. After the crash, the Earth will rise from the ashes ‒ the terminally ill from the present will heal in the future and restore the nearly exterminated population of the Earth.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS ‒ In all zones of *Planet Friedman* the animals became extinct, due to lack of food the stronger ones devoured the weaker ones. It is understood that there are no fish in the ocean, they are raised in pools with filtered and detoxified seawater. Cranes have been exterminated as flu carriers, fireflies have melted due to adverse weather conditions. There are dogs left in zone B, but they are infected with rabies. There are no more dangerous animals in the woods so Paula reassures Gerhard: "'It's beautiful. The forest calms a man so much,' she said. 'It's also safe here. It wasn't safe before, there were beasts in it'". (Mlakić, 2012: 126). In addition to being safe now, the forests are slowly but surely dying, the mistletoe is pumping them out.

Koščec predicts a pandemic in the form of mutated bird flu that killed resident birds in the winter of 2010, a feline specialty, so cats, after US pressure and addressing the nation by their president Paris Hilton with the famous phrase "The cat has to go" were literally wiped off the planet (This is a counterpart to the cranes in *Planet Friedman*, with the difference that people, driven by consumerism, afforded cats all sorts of coffins, tombs, temples). After resident birds and cats, industrial poultry has quietly disappeared from the stage ‒ it has already been replaced by soy surrogates with the genomes of chickens, ducks and quails. Seagulls are carriers of H5N1, but they themselves do not get bird flu. They were saved from an international chase by the tropical winter of 2014 when the virus could not survive. At Rolo’s local level, fish have long been absent in rivers.

Fish are also dead in Balenović's novel, their bellies are glowing as they float down the river, and oil is dripping from the birds' wings. The protagonists do not even know what trees are:

Part of the wall is damaged by an ugly growth protruding from the ground. It is bumpy, curved and branches all the way to the green ends. The elders say it is a tree. Once upon a time there were many trees. United in groups, they formed forests, and forests covered large areas of the Earth. They were full of monstrous creatures. (Balenović, 2012: 9)

Babić approaches the issue of animal protection ironically and grotesquely: people who fight in UFC fights closes in cages, and due to reduced interest in animals in cages, zoos with giraffes and rhinos are closed, while parks with indigenous animals are opened: cows, bulls, goats, sheep because they are a complete exotic for young people in Croatia ‒ they don't even know what these animals look like. In Croatia, more and more homeless people live in nature, mostly in forests, which includes the "privilege" for women to pick mushrooms, blueberries and berries, and for men to hunt animals with the bow and arrow (both exclusively for personal use). The grotesque climbs to a new level by mentioning new fashions: fur coats worn by Davy Crockett and the Flintstones as well as excessive animal rights: bans on hitting a bee that has just stung, strong care for stork habitats, permissions for fish to live only in square aquariums (because round aquariums spoil their life perspective) etc.

SKY, SEA AND LAND ‒ Although an increase in CO2 has been observed since the 1940s, its impact on global temperatures has not yet been fully elucidated. What is certain is the huge negative impact of exhaust gases on air quality. The reality of several novels in focus is literally smoky. In Balenović's parody novel, smog obscures the sun that once caused skin cancer, and it has descended so low that the characters have to walk bent over. Due to the exhaust of the car, Brozović's protagonist Oliver Riemer feels a burning sensation on his skin as a result of polluted air, and he cannot see the Zagreb reference point Sljeme, and the solution devised by the rulers is not visionary or suitable for nature.

‒ The botanical garden is fenced with barbed wire ‒ he said ‒ and wickedly armed guards pass through it twenty-four hours a day. That someone would not steal genetically modified plants from the city. The guards have weapons better than his military unit. Satellite surveillance cameras, network of infrared lights. Genetically modified plants are more expensive than Rembrandt and Da Vinci canvases.

‒ The only way to preserve the permanent greenery of plants in the midst of smog ‒ she said. Just like on Zrinjevac. (Brozović, 2007: 83)

Although both air and soil are poisoned in Koščec's dystopian world, there is still a difference between the more polluted West and Eastern Europe, where there are still remnants of once unpolluted nature and cleaner air than elsewhere:

Outside, the horizon was gripped by twilight redness. As every day, because it is his spiritual exercise, Kix is overwhelmed with pleasure. Gratitude. A deep reverence for that scene, which the West can no longer experience. Here the sky is still alive, its changes are accessible to the eye, they are not obscured by a lead mantle of smog. (Koščec, 2011: 259)

Although *Planet Friedman* does not belong to the genre of petrolfiction (Macdonald, 2017: 290), the background in it fits the description of petrolnarratology, which compels writers to challenge "the narratives that help perpetuate the modern world's catastrophic addiction to fossil fuels" (Welling, 2018: 442). But as fuel is no longer available on *Planet Friedman*, Zone B residents are once again using tar collected on the ocean surface. In the words of Michael Thompson who thinks that "waste is best understood as a product of the fluctuation of value within any given culture, in accordance to the authority of different social groups", tar would not be among "objects that have lost their value ('rubbish')" or those "that will accrue value ('durables')" rather, we might first consider it an object "that will eventually lose their value ('transients')" (1979: 7). On the same track is Rachel Dini’s thinking that the human role is in the aftermath of a man-made disaster "fundamentally irrelevant" (2021: 209): what matters is the material itself that remains and what happens to it when a producer of that material does not exist no more.

We testify to that Petrolium Age (Age of Oil) leaves a rather traumatically destructive traces in environment. Still, the time of traditional energy sources is over. In the analyzed dystopias, the authorities did not choose nature-friendly energy sources: sun, water and wind. Koščec’s protagonist Kix, though not particularly environmentally conscious, as prime minister faces the inevitability of choosing the energy that will save the country from the crisis, and equally knows that destructive radioactive synthetic material or sewage pools are an equally bad solution. On the other hand, his son, educated in the West, is much less troubled by his conscience: he is blackmailing his father to accept fourth-generation nuclear power plants as a strategic way out of the energy crisis.

In almost all selected dystopias societies are segregated, in Mlakić's novel even by wire, fences, and guards, primarily in order for the rich to keep all available resources for themselves, mostly water and land. Regardless of the division according to socio-economic status (only the rich in zone A got an expensive and sophisticated vaccine against superinfluenza, and in zones B and C millions of people died) and attempts to implement ecological racism, the division of nature failed. Although rich corporations from zone A in *Planet Friedman* tended to create zonal pollution in zones B and C, it is equally distributed to the entire territory and population. First of all, the ocean: despite of the fact that privileged residents of zone A drive only electric cars (as well as privileged in Deltacor area in Babić's novel while rare petrol cars are considered environmentally unacceptable), they inhale as stinking tar from the surface of the ocean as the inhabitants of zone B: no matter how hard they try to cover it with the scent of a freshener, they can't get rid of the ubiquitous "perfume distillate" of tar. The only difference is the existence of refineries along the ocean in zone B where tar collected from collectors (including children under the age of ten) is processed into fuel for obsolete cars (with thick, almost black smoke). Furthermore, barren "dead earth" is spreading unstoppably throughout Zone A, despite the enormous amount of money being invested in research into the phenomenon. That's why Blue Water company "scans" zone B to create arable land in zone A (actually kills the population there and then demolishes the houses and huts in which they lived).

In Babić's novel, a separate elite ghetto consists of employees of the leading company Deltacor, whose president is also the president of Croatia. (We can see that the rich look down on the poor from heaven when his girlfriend Britany's father orders Romeo to take a shower after visiting the slum then to wear new clothes, and throw away the old one.) On the other side of the spectrum are inhabitants of the slum ‒ on 50 kilometers from Zagreb, fenced with wire, but by the will of the inhabitants, so that everyone would leave them alone ‒ to whom Deltacor's agents under the motto: "water is an economic category and not a fundamental human right" (Babić, 2015: 115) do not allow to digg wells. Although in Koščec's novel the part of society in which Kix lives is not divided by wire (while fences are very present in the countries where Maša and Taša live) the poor do not have access to real water:

Nevertheless, the anticipation tightens the old woman's shoulders. The glass that Kix filled her, she accepts piously, between her palms, as if it was alive. She brings it to her face, smells it, takes a small sip with his eyes closed. A tear slid down her cheek. 'I'm sorry, I haven't drunk real water in a long time.' (Koščec, 2011: 255)

In Rolo's close circle, the symposium on ballast water was turned into a joke by bloggers, the importance of the protest was reduced by revealing the pedophile affair of one activist, then data on plankton RN-2011, the cause of severe allergies, was published, and everything calmed down. In his world, the river stinks even when it's not hot, and global air pollution has brought a useful custom of wearing a mask over your face.

In Jelena Hrvoj's novel, the main character Aurora Blue lives in a capsule of perfect life. Also, there is (already mentioned) elite settlement within a privileged society, the New World G 23, under a glass dome, and outside the society are exiles, an endangered species of genetically unmodified people. There are generally accepted uncritical truths in society that water in nature is heavily polluted, that rainwater causes burns (sometimes death), that for the most necessary needs (drinking and irrigation) it must be purified with a large amount of chemicals, and showering is possible only with sonic waves:

She imagined how wonderful it must have been thousands of years ago when people bathed their bodies in clear water in the morning. She imagined it as a wonderful experience she will never experience because previous generations were to blame for destroying that wonderful experience. (Hrvoj, 2018: 21)

Fleeing from the police, Aurora Blue accidentally ends up in a settlement of outcasts from society, and one of them bathes in a lake in front of a horrified Aurora:

In my life I have often faced people prone to suicide, but this was too much even for me. I imagined his bare bones floating on the surface, but when his smiling head emerged a few feet from the surface, I breathed a sigh of relief. (Hrvoj, 2018: 210).

At that point she realizes that stories of resource pollution are really just a control mechanism of the rulers.

FOOD ‒ Food is a common topic in dystopia, often because the population faces shortages. In Barbieri's novel, food is an extremely important motif, since it is a conflict of worldviews, it is understood as a sign of identity in the relationship between "our" (domestic) and "their" (foreign) food. Binary catalogues are extensive and frequent: the menus of local, healthy food are true gourmet anthems of tradition (after the word "food", "tradition" is second in representation in the novel), and catalogues of artificially grown food are funny and scary at the same time, crowded with "the nascent germ of a species about-to-become", each of them represents "an unprecedented mutation" (Milburne, 2003: 604): "Those self-farmed Norwegian lobster tails mingled with fish without head, scales and entrails, with frog legs that also jumped without the rest of the body... shellfish without shells, fish roe that hatches only fish roe, headless cephalopods and self-farmed plankton the size of dolphins, were interflowing in the kitchens of the New World restaurant." (Barbieri, 2015: 153) Such monsters "are the embodiment of broken boundaries, confusion and chaos that define ecophobic notions of nature" (Estok, 2011: 83), and, even worse "they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration" (Cohen, 1996: 6). If we define ecophobia as "pathological aversion toward nature, an aggravated form of anthropocentrism expressed variously as fear of, hatred of, or hostility toward nature at least in part motivated by a sense of nature's imagined unpredictability" (Estok, 2011: 128) or, in a softened interpretation of Estok's words, as "cultural tendency to relate antagonistically to nature" (Brayton, 2012: 226) then it is obvious that ecophobia is the life principle of the members of the "New World", while the group gathered around the Arka restaurant respects the principles of ecophilia or biophilia, that is "nature-friendliness or love of nature" (Hensley, 2015).

Barbieri and Babić share the concept of criticism of invasive GMO producers who unscrupulously suppress natural cultivation, and impose plants that they sell themselves and that are nurtured by means produced only in their stores.

The final part of the process was the most demanding and important. In the rear of the machine, a mixture of fertilizer, herbicide and accelerator was added to the minced human flesh. This resulted in the finest fertilizer that was thrown into the field, plowed in the meantime by other machines, with the addition of GMO seeds from which a salad will sprout in just a few days, which will be sold on Deltacor's shelves for something plus ninety-nine[[10]](#footnote-10).

Here, once again, the capitalist market's focus on ecology and nature protection was demonstrated, as well as the justification of the slogan that waste, even human waste, is not garbage. (Babić, 2015: 322)

Koščec also condemns experimentation with nature: Kix in no way justifies his son's position that he justifies GMO production as a necessity because of completely changed climate (warming) and completely poisoned soil and air. His son Vuk wants to destroy all the flora and fauna, divide the agricultural area into 2-3 geometric figures, grow one GMO crop on each, which he will fertilize to the point of unconsciousness with artificial fertilizers. Although half the world suffers from malaria and plague, and the other half from allergies and reduced immunity, he thinks this is an opportunity for pharmacy to prove itself. Although a third of plant and animal species are extinct, he believes children need to be exposed to emulsifiers, stabilizers and phosphates from an early age to strengthen them. Vuk's capitalist and nature-opposite option seems to have prevailed, over time natural products can no longer be bought: visiting his young assistant (actually a lover) Kix buys bad wine at a gas station, advertised as state-of-the-art technology, and so-called milk chocolate with milk from alpine pastures, actually from dehydrated raw materials from the Chernobyl area, but still gives up on buying homemade, actually Chinese cookies that sparked a revolt by European health organizations and ended up on a store shelf next to a gas station.

Balenović's derision elicits a sour smile from the reader:

Dr. Eko's food differed not only in color but also in physical state. The taste was constant. The old man mixed all the ingredients in a large yellow basin before we started grabbing.

The good side of Dr. Eko's food was that, in addition to nutritional purposes, it could be used as a shampoo, shaving foam, universal glue, and DVD player. (Balenović, 2012: 13)

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

And what awaits us in the future? Perspective in some novels is indeed very depressing: in the novel *Planet Friedman*, cannibalism is predicted when insatiable zone A leads to the disappearance of food and then: "Civilization will inevitably come to an end. The sun will shut down, or the planet will turn into a desert before that, it will be covered by *dead earth* ... Life will one day leak from this planet. All our attempts to prevent it are in vain." (Mlakić, 2012: 219). The "White Promenade" predicts a nuclear winter due to wars or ancient power plants, devastating diseases and the almost collapse of civilization in fifty years.

Ecological justice, the availability of a healthy and safe nature to all regardless of class affiliation or equality for all oppressed groups according to socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, etc. (Adamson, 2001; Buell, 2005) could not be achieved because there is almost no preserved nature. There are no resources either: Barol sees the solution for depleted resources on Earth in the hibernation of the terminally ill in order to revive in the future, Brozović in the colonization of asteroids, and Perković in conquering other planets.

Some solutions, even if limited, are imposed in the present time of the novels shown. It is characteristic of the genre of dystopian criticism that it does not accept misery and passivity and "includes at least one eutopian enclave or holds out hope that the dystopia can be overcome" (Sargent, qtd. in Baccolini and Moylan, 2004: 7). Ecological utopias were very popular in the 1970s and 1980s, and after the publication of Callenbach's novel *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston*, published in 1975, the genre was also called "ecotopy". Therefore, in some works, in the general ecological collapse there is also a place resembling an oasis, a bucolic niche. In *Dedivination*, part of the population lives in nature, respecting coexistence with it, traditionally growing food and organic products. Because the intervention was needed, main protagonist of Mlakić's *Planet Friedman* Gerhard Schmidt and his newly created family retreat (defeatistically) to such a paradise space, their own "communal space of utopian resistance" (Jones, 2020: 698) they went to arcadian Crane's springs (Ždralovi izvori), out of pollution, out of civilization, out of the reach of power. Although it is not an escape to nature, we also talk about the rebel enclave in Barbieri's novel: main protagonist isolates in a healthy food restaurant and cooks organically grown food with a group of supporters.

The fate of utopian places, kind of "lost paradises" is not the same: we do not know the fate of the community of exiles genetically unmodified in *Dedivination*, Barbieri's chef-narrator and his helpers from his small restaurant manage to preserve healthy eating habits and then rebuild the world destroyed by GMO food, and Schmidt goes to Crane's springs to find peace, but the never read messages in the bottle mentioned earlier in the text still leave the possibility that the end may not be ideal.

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1. Brozović's dystopian cyberpunk novel focuses on Istria's war for independence from the rest of Croatia. We follow the war and post-war events from the perspective of Oliver Riemer, a returnee from the German diaspora to Croatia, and then a fugitive on the side of the Istrian separatists. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. We follow the fate of four characters, Rolo, Kix, Taša, and Maša, over thirty years, from the time of their studies in Paris in 1990 to maturity. Through discontinuous depictions of their lives from four narrative perspectives, we witness social decay (consumerism, hunger, corporate ethics, alienation, human trafficking, pornography, genetic modification, pollution, ecology, bird flu, pharmacology) and personal stumblings of characters: Rolo took part in the war, Kix became a corrupt politician, Maša became a careerist, only Taša tried to preserve humanity ‒ but it is not a valued quality in society. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The title of the novel parodies Orwell's *1984*, and the content of the show "Big Brother". The autodiegetic narrator is Vladimir, he is one of inhabitants of the House of Great Misery, together with: General, Isus (Jesus), Milovan Ugor (colon), Jersinia (plague bacteria), Čebutikin (a character from Chekhov's play), Hitler's father Alojz, General, Tycoon, Blonde. Conversation between characters is full of sarcasm, irony and grotesque, and beneath allusions and jokes there is often talk of serious problems in society. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The world of the novel is divided into zones. Zone A is ruled by large corporations, survival is guaranteed by "the solvency threshold", and the only goal is money. Emotions are stifled by medication, people are not intimate. Zone B is a resource for the remnants of arable land and the recruitment of gifted children. Privileged encourage the spread of diseases in Zone B that reduce humanity and maintain a monopoly on food sales in well-guarded shopping malls. There are hopeless people in Zone C, and the land is completely exploited and destroyed. Dr. Gerhardt Schmidt, an employee of a powerful pharmaceutical company with athlete Paula Bolt, heads to Zone B to uncover the identity of Bluetooth, the leader of the revolution. Gerhard learns that his father smuggled the vaccine into zones B and C and became the Savior, and over time his life values and attitudes change, and with his son and girlfriend he goes to one of the last oases of preserved nature in zone C. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Deltacor company manages Croatia’s economic and social life in 2035, parents go to correctional facilities, retirees fight bloody games, and the UFC is the most important subject in schools. Robots deliver subpoenas, prostitution becomes the most important export branch, religions unite, the radical left and right march together, and former enemies in the Homeland War plan joint actions. After the death of a child from a slum caused by an American drone-killer, boyfriend of an Deltacor's important manager's daughter idealistically tries to start a revolution to change the ugly reality. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The war is fought between two diametrically opposed gastronomic armies: the superior international, which seeks to destroy national cuisines and all naturally grown groceries and advocates GMOs, and the weaker, which survives at the end, gathered around a restaurant symbolically named Arka that fights for the survival of traditional cuisine. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The year is 3154. Aurora Blue has been assigned four personalities: a negotiator, a forensic analyst, a professor of ancient human knowledge, and an active member of special regulatory units. She lives in a world devoid of crime. Every day she is assigned a new personality, the computer gives her the necessary dose of feeling, and when she gets annoyed, a computer called B.O.G. injects her without question with a small dose of tranquilizer. Although innocent, Aurora is blamed for the murder of her colleague Deon Brown, so she runs as far away from the city as possible. Among isolated members of society, she begins to realize how she lives in a false and manipulated world. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. It is time before the wedding of Jan Kerenski and Nastasja Bergen. After Judgment Day, the destruction of the Earth, the genocide of the people, and the millennial slavery under the Ksandria, the human race is now divided into Families, based on family ties and ownership, and more creative Freelancers. Jan Kerenski's parents belonged to the Families, but then they decided to go to the Freelancers. They took with them the vast property that belonged to them. They died while working on terraforming one planet when Jan was little. Jan was returned to the Families and raised by his uncle, Kieven Kerenski. While preparations for the wedding are underway, three mercenaries: Baha, Alba and Gyerek are trying to prevent the possible murder of the groom. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. On Earth, civilization has come to an end, the pollution is huge, and a third of the population is terminally ill, but desperate to survive. A connection has been established with the people of the future: although the conditions are ideal, there are only a million people due to genetic diseases. That is why they offer the option of hibernating terminally ill people who will defrost and recover in the future. 30 million hibernated are kept at the South Base Ice Chamber at the North Pole. They are guarded by elite Intergard soldiers, and the narrator, Mat, is one of them. His sister is one of the hibernated. Mat is deceived by a group of people from the future who are afraid that with the arrival of the hibernated they will be the minority, they lie to him that the people of the future will eat the hibernated, so he breaks the chambers, and all the frozen people, instead of thawing and coming to life, float out into the ocean. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. "Something" means the amount in kunas, Croatian denomination money and "ninety-nine", the amount in lipas, one hundredth of a kuna. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)