

Reflection of the Diaspora in the Fantasy of a Totalitarian Society

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Abstract. This paper presents a comparative analysis of fantasy works from two distinct periods: the late Soviet (Vladislav Krapivin's *A Dovecote on a Yellow Meadow*, 1983–1985) and the post-Soviet period (Max Frei's *The Stranger*, 1996, and *The Master of Winds and Sunsets*, 2014). The portal-quest fantasy plot, which involves a character's transition from the mundane reality to a fantasy world, is marked in both works by reflective elements concerning the protagonist's potential interactions with their fellow compatriots encountered in the new reality.

The study identifies three models of such interaction. In the fantasy of the totalitarian era (V. Krapivin), there is a nostalgic idealization of homeland and immediate acceptance of the fellow compatriot, resulting in the formation of a cohesive and effective diaspora supporting the fight to save the world from the totalitarian ideological system. In contrast, Max Frei's post-Soviet fantasy initially portrays a sharp rejection of fellow compatriots, perceiving them as a threat to the other world (*The Stranger*). This perspective later evolves into a third model: acceptance and support of individuals who are kindred in spirit, regardless of their origin (*The Master ...*).

The study concludes that these narratives reflect the evolving perception of immigration and diaspora, from within a totalitarian society (V. Krapivin) to the perspective of an individual who has transcended its boundaries (Max Frei).

Keywords: diaspora models in literature, portal-quest fantasy, Vladislav Krapivin, Max Frei.

Diasporos atspindys totalitarinės visuomenės fantastikoje

Santrauka. Straipsnyje pateikiama lyginamoji dviejų skirtingais laikotarpiais parašytų fantastikos kūrinių – vėlyvojo sovietmečio rašytojo Vladislavo Krapivino romano „Balandinė geltonojoje pievoje“ (1983/1985), postsovietinio laikotarpio Makso Frajaus literatūros tekstų „Atėjūnas“

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(1996) ir „Vėjų ir saulėlydžių valdovas“ (2014) – analizė. Abu tekstus jungia fantastikos siužeto portalo paieška, kurioje veikejo perėjimą iš kasdienės tikrovės į fantastinį pasaulį lydi apmąstymai apie galimus susitikimus su tautiečiais naujojoje realybėje.

Tyrimas padeda išskirti tris sąveikų modelius. Totalitarinės epochos fantastikoje (V. Krapivinas) vyrauja nostalgiska tėvynės idealizacija ir tautiečių iš karto priimama bendrystė, sukurianti darnią bei aktyvią diasporą, kovojančią prieš totalitarinę ideologinę sistemą. Tuo tarpu Makso Frajaus postsovietinė fantastika iš pradžių vaizduoja ryškų tautiečių atstūmimą, laikant juos grėsme kitam pasauliui („Atėjūnas“). Ši perspektyva vėliau transformuojasi į trečią modelį – dvasios bendraminčių priėmimą ir paramą jiems, nepriklausomai nuo jų kilmės („Vėjų ir saulėlydžių valdovas“). Tyrimas parodė, kad šie pasakojimai atspindi požiūrį į imigraciją ir diasporą, juose pateikiamas žvilgsnis iš totalitarinės visuomenės vidaus (V. Krapivinas) ir atskiros žmogaus, jau išsilaisvinusio iš totalitarizmo gnaužtų, žvilgsnis (Maksas Frajus).

Reikšminiai žodžiai: diasporos modeliai literatūroje, fantastikos portalo paieška, Vladislavas Krapivinas, Maksas Frajus.

Introduction

The concept of diaspora involves two essential elements: a homeland and the dispersion of individuals beyond it. These elements imply a prior separation and a tendency to idealize the lost homeland. This idealization, in turn, fosters a sense of unity grounded primarily in shared origin.

The growing focus in contemporary literature on themes of fluid identity, characterized by freedom of mobility, has led to a shift in diaspora studies. In this context, fantasy literature offers an opportunity to explore how protagonists interact with unexpectedly encountered fellow compatriots in fictional realities. The experimental framework of fantasy literature makes it possible to identify the reasons behind the protagonist's escape, examine their willingness or reluctance to cooperate with fellow compatriots, interrogate the identity of the escaper, and analyse the conditions that contribute to diaspora formation.

In this paper, I compare how the image of the fellow compatriot and the potential for diaspora formation are perceived in the fantasy worlds of two authors, each connected to the late Soviet era in different ways. The first is Vladislav Krapivin (1938–2020), whose creative and social activity consistently resisted the totalitarian regime, even though he remained confined behind the Iron Curtain. The second is contemporary fantasy writer Max Frei (the pen name of Svitlana Martynchyk, born 1965), a Ukrainian citizen currently living in Vilnius, an author with a fluid postmodern identity. From an early age, she rejected totalitarianism and the very idea of the Iron Curtain, viewing passage beyond its borders as a release from the ideological constraints of her late-Soviet youth.

Although the basic conditions in their stories are quite similar, the two writers take contrasting approaches to the concept of a fellow compatriot and the formation of diaspora. These similarities and contrasts provide a strong foundation for a comparative analysis of how diaspora is reflected in their works: Krapivin's *A Dovecote on a Yellow Meadow* (1983–1985) and Max Frei's *The Stranger* (1996) and *The Master of Winds and Sunsets* (2014). This comparison allows to examine the shift from defining identity through territorial origin, as in the classic diaspora model, to the identity through creative kinship, shared worldview, imagination, and understanding of the conditions shaping the compatriot's personality.

Accordingly, the conclusions drawn from the analysis of such fantasy models can serve as a starting point for further research on diaspora in the context of either declarative (*a priori* fixed) or fluid identity. By applying the theory of fantasy escape (J. R. R. Tolkien), I examine the concept of a fellow compatriot in both authors' works, specifically through the lens of rejection of totalitarian ideology. I also incorporate the poetics of portal-quest fantasy (Farah Mendlesohn) to clarify the elements of the plot of immigration to the fantasy world.

Escape and Fantasy

The propaganda discourse of Soviet totalitarian society created a sharply negative image of a person who left the country in search of a different life. These narratives were promoted both by official propagandists and by ordinary citizens. Those who emigrated were commonly branded as 'fugitives', a label that easily slid into 'traitor'. Supporters of the fantasy mode in literature faced similar forms of ostracism, though of varying severity. Works that deviated from the dominant themes of space exploration and technological progress were marginalized. Academic institutions dismissed both social fiction and fantasy as unworthy of serious study, while propaganda reinforced the notion that fantasy is an escape from reality. But such ostracism is not unique to this totalitarian context.

Throughout the 20th century, the perception of fantasy as escapism dominated much of the discourse in the humanities, particularly in debates surrounding the core principle of the fantasy mode: search for an alternative for mundane reality. These debates, rooted in the spiritual quests of modernism, treated reality as fundamentally unsatisfying due to its subordination to the imperatives of progress, tending to suppress individual freedom and personal development.

The foundational idea of fantasy as escape for personal freedom draws directly on the principle articulated by G. K. Chesterton in *Orthodoxy* (1908), where he compares purely materialist thinking to the prison of 'one thought' (Chesterton, 1908, p. 40).

This metaphor of the prison, the prisoner, and the jailer is further developed by Tolkien in his essay *On Fairy-Stories* (1939), where he underscores the individual's fundamental right and need to transcend the confines of materialist thought (Tolkien, 1966, pp. 58–61). This departure from the material world into the realm of fantasy is presented not as retreat, but as a restoration of freedom. Those who oppose such a movement logically take the form of prison guards.

The assumptions of modernist thinkers about fantasy as release from imprisonment were developed further by Andrzej Sapkowski, for whom, the material world is not only restricted to a single idea, but is also defined by spiritual absence and alienation, which the author, the protagonist, and the reader seek to overcome. Sapkowski evokes the reader's growing urge to flee from a hideous and oppressive everyday life, from surrounding soullessness and apathy, from pervasive alienation. (Sapkowski, 1993, p. 66). This kind of escape serves as a counterweight to the routinized, formalized, ideologically saturated world of late socialism. Sapkowski opposes the false, artificial values of materialist everydayness with a fantasy realm built on "adventure, quest, solidarity, and friendship", on "justice, nobility, tolerance, and the ability to forgive" (Sapkowski, 1993, pp. 71–72).

Thus, the escape from a totalitarian system can be seen as analogous to the escape from the confines of a materialistic, mundane world, governed by the ideology of technological progress, which levels individual identity through the alienation of meaning and the erosion of humanistic values. If we consider the cognitive function of fantasy as a tool for renewing one's worldview, then we may also reframe its escapist function: not as avoidance, but as a means of entry into an alternate space of meaning and possibility. The following section moves from the reasons to the ways of the fantasy escape.

Portal-Quest Fantasy (Farah Mendlesohn's Typology)

Farah Mendlesohn, in her typology of fantasy narratives, identifies four primary modes of interaction between the mundane and the magical realms. For the purposes of this study, the most relevant is the *Portal-Quest Fantasy* (PQF), in which, the protagonist transitions from an ordinary, realistic world into a fantastic one. This type is characterized by the following features:

1. The existence of a primary world, where the fantastic is either unknown, distant, or inaccessible.
2. A protagonist who acts as the connecting link between the two realms and serves as the plot's driving force. This character:
 - 2.1. leaves behind a familiar environment;

- 2.2. passes through a portal (a literal or metaphorical threshold) that marks the boundary between the worlds.
3. Upon crossing, the protagonist enters into direct contact with the fantastic and interacts with it personally, not as an observer but as an agent.
4. In such narratives, the reader's perspective is structured through the protagonist's experience. The reader:
 - 4.1. observes the events through the protagonist's focalization;
 - 4.2. functions simultaneously as an audience and a companion, learning about the fantasy world alongside the protagonist (Mendlesohn, 2008, pp.1–7).

This model invites an analogy with immigration: the protagonist's crossing into the fantasy realm can be interpreted as a form of existential migration (Madison, 2006). In this context, the reader functions as a representative of the homeworld, interpreting the new world through the lens of their primary experience. The decoding of the fantasy realm, its laws, inhabitants, and systems, is mediated by the protagonist and grounded in the reader's familiarity with the real world.

A clear example of this decoding process can be found in Max Frei's Echo series. There, the protagonist's new acquaintances are described through analogies with cultural icons familiar from the primary world; Max repeatedly compares idioms or jokes. Krapivin's protagonists compare superstitions, childhood games or rituals, buildings or garden sculptures. The fantasy world becomes legible through references to the everyday; the secondary is understood via the primary.

Mendlesohn identifies three basic phases of the PQF plot: *entry*, *transition*, and *exploration* (Mendlesohn, 2008, p. 2). The final phase, *exploration*, often entails the protagonist's active involvement in the fate of the fantasy world, frequently framed as a mission to resolve a major threat. In many cases, the hero is invited into the world by its inhabitants and tasked with its salvation (e.g., D. W. Jones's *The Merlin Conspiracy*, etc.).

According to Mendlesohn, the structural logic of PQF resonates with the architecture of epic tragedy. It includes the stages of reversal, recognition, and calamity. To these are added elements more specific to the genre, such as glorification and nostalgia (Mendlesohn, 2008, p. 3). The saviour-hero is often rewarded with the highest honours from the fantasy world's inhabitants (cf., C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*), yet continues to feel longing for their original world. This tension produces a narrative of dual belonging and lingering displacement.

Mendlesohn also notes that the protagonist's intervention in the fantasy world often carries imperialist overtones (Mendlesohn, 2008, p. 9). Probably, drawing in part on insights from G. K. Chesterton (Chesterton, 1908, pp. 40–41), she observes that

the protagonist alone is empowered to change or save the world, while fantasyland is frequently rendered as a timeless, orientalized space, the unchanging past, in need of transformation by the *Stranger*. In the context of diaspora studies, this approach correlates with the ideas of imperial-colonial chronotop as Madina Tlostanova regards it (Tlostanova, 2007).

Psychotype of the PQF Protagonist

The PQF protagonist is typically a unique individual (or a distinct group, cf. *The Chronicles of Narnia*) who becomes the sole representative of their world within the fantasy realm (Mendlesohn, 2008, p. 30). They are alien elements in the secondary reality, strangers to the world they enter. Such role in a story *a priori* excludes the possibility of forming a diaspora in the classical sense. Yet these protagonists are also, crucially, alienated within their own world. They do not fully belong to the society from which they come. Instead, they are marked by a sense of displacement, marginality, or misfit, and they fail to conform to dominant social expectations or norms.

In V. Krapivin's *A Dovecote...* trilogy, Yaroslav (Yar) gradually loses all emotional ties to his childhood world: his friends, his beloved, and the meaning of life on Earth. His only passion is the mystery of space. His long space missions frustrate his wife: "No one on Earth knows where this drummer is" – she retorts when asked by their son, whose very birth she hides from Yar (Krapivin, 1993, p. 686).

In Max Frei's *The Labyrinths of Echo* cycle, the protagonist is alienated from society due to a seemingly trivial but deeply symbolic trait: he is an 'owl' in a world of 'larks'. His inability to sleep at night from childhood isolates him from every social institution. This temporal asynchrony renders him useless to a society obsessed with diurnal productivity: "It is usually much easier to do without me" (Frei, 2017, p. 552). Max is a loser in the eyes of the world: an unnecessary, unnoticed presence whose potential is never recognized.

For both characters, the transition into the fantasy world is not merely an escape from an unsatisfying reality. It is a path toward full self-realization, a form of what might be termed existential migration (Madison, 2006), a deep relocation of identity and purpose. In contrast to *popadanets* or *progressor* characters¹, portal-fantasy protagonists undergo a double movement of emigration and immigration. They do

¹ *Popadanets* (literally, 'the fallen') – a character functioning in Russian speculative fiction involving rewriting historical narratives out of dissatisfaction with real-world outcomes; *progressor* – a term coined by the Strugatsky brothers to describe Earth-based agents sent to accelerate the development of other civilizations, a kind of Soviet missionary or colonial figure.

not merely visit the secondary world, they accept it, leave behind the primary world, renounce it, and begin building a new life in the fantastic realm. Their old world becomes something to escape, not preserve.

Elements of the Plot of Immigration to the Fantasy World

In the PQS of both authors, the existence of **multiple worlds** and the presence of connecting **portals** or transitional paths are central to the narrative. These secondary realities are named with generalised self-designations: 'the Planet' (Krapivin) and 'the World' (Max Frei), which signals both autonomy and inward orientation with cultural identity that distinguishes 'us' from 'others'.

Krapivin constructs a complex multiverse system of parallel worlds, with each bearing some resemblance to Earth, evoking a tone of nostalgia for childhood in the protagonists. These secondary worlds include magical elements (metamorphoses and spells) that distinguish them from strictly science-fictional settings and qualify the works as fantasy (Kanchura, 2022). The worlds in this system are physically connected by a railroad track, which becomes a literal and symbolic conduit between the dimensions. Gleb, another Earthling, arrives by train, while Yar enters from a starship, passing through the portal of an old dovecote.

Max Frei's protagonist learns to navigate a corridor between worlds, a liminal realm without fixed time or space with the infinity of alternate worlds, governed by radically different physical and social laws. Max first encounters the world in a dream and later reaches it physically via a tram starting from the street with no tram tracks.

In both narratives, the formal reason for the protagonist's transition is an **invitation** from local inhabitants. Yar is invited by four teenagers from the Planet, who require a grown-up fifth to stabilize a unity capable of resisting hostile invaders (Kanchura, 2022, p. 72). His passage through the portal is mediated by a guide.

Similarly, Max accepts a job offer in the *Secret Investigative Service*, an organization that maintains balance in a world infused with magic. He reaches *Echo* by following detailed instructions from his would-be employer.

Gleb, in *A Dovecote*, reaches the Planet without an invitation. An unrepentant wanderer, he also stumbles into Yar's homeworld and, while seeking a way back to his own Earth, instead finds himself on the Planet. Ultimately, he accepts the fantasy world and devotes himself to its preservation.

All three characters undergo a form of existential migration, embracing the fantasy world as their own. Their roles involve not only adaptation but active protection or salvation of their new home.

Despite these commonalities, the treatment of the characters' former reality and their potential return diverges significantly between Krapivin and Frei. So too does the representation of compatriots from the primary world appear in the secondary realm. These differences are key to understanding how the connection to the home-world is imagined and how (if at all) a diaspora is constructed within the narrative framework.

Meeting with a Fellow Compatriot, Krapivin: The Same Earth

From the very first pages of the trilogy (Book 1: *A Dovecote in Orekhovo*), the reader is introduced to the protagonist, Yaroslav Igorevich Rodin (Yar), an astronaut tasked with searching for inhabited worlds. Yar becomes the primary focalizer of the narrative: the Planet is perceived through his eyes and filtered through his emotional and cognitive experience. In Book 2 (*Summer Feast in Starogorsk*), another character reaches the Planet: Gleb Sergeevich Vyatkin, who, in the Book 3 (*A Boy and a Lizard*), reemerges as Gleb the Wild or Shooter. While in Krapivin's trilogy, many teenagers also travel between worlds, their experience is portrayed more as a natural extension of adolescence. Thus, the current analysis focuses specifically on the adult characters as figures relevant to diaspora formation.

A key to understanding their immigrant status lies in how they perceive the secondary world and its internal conflicts. In Krapivin's fictional universe, and especially on the Planet, reality is controlled by a parasitic civilization known as *Those Who Give Orders* (*Те, которые велят* – *Those*). These entities represent a form of consciousness-based imperialism, seeking to systematize and sterilize what they perceive as chaotic human life. For the protagonists, *Those* are alien in essence, worldview, and ethical orientation; the Planet, by contrast, is immediately perceived as native.

Yar first learns about the existence of a fellow Earthling from the enemies themselves. *Those* hope to neutralize his resistance and manipulate him. Yar's emotional response, however, reveals a diasporic paradigm. He is overwhelmed at the prospect of meeting a compatriot: his heart beats "chaotically and dully", "the back of the head ached from excitement, and the throat seized up". Despite his attempts to calm himself, anticipation is clear: "I really, really want to [meet him]! But, of course, not of the same reason as you do" (Krapivin, 1993, p. 667).

The encounter is deeply affirmative. Gleb and Yar immediately recognize one another as allies and like-minded individuals, sharing not only insight into the world's core conflict but also values, strategies, and a common moral framework; their com-

patriot status generates trust and partnership. This solidarity is rooted in a shared idealization of the homeland. Despite originating from different parallel versions of Earth, Gleb and Yar conclude that they have come to “the same Earth”. For them, the differences between realities are merely dimensional, not existential. Thus, the idea of coming back is rejected as never wanted. In their first conversation, the compatriots even contemplate returning to Earth to bring landing parties that could restore justice to the Planet (a motif echoing the *progressors*). However, this idea is immediately rejected as the wrong strategy: “Aliens could not change the world. They could probably blow it up, but they could not save it” (Krapivin, 1993, p. 682). Eventually, this bond becomes the foundation of a micro-diaspora: a small, ideologically unified group living outside its homeland yet defined by shared memory, moral orientation, and spiritual continuity. Gleb and Yar form what may be called a cognitive and ethical diaspora. They act by applying their homeworld’s humanistic principles to save a world that they now claim as home. Their strength lies in their shared background, mutual recognition, and collective memory. This model echoes classical definitions of diaspora as a dispersed but coherent group, united by a common origin and sustained by a shared vision. In this case, the PQF heroes become catalysts of change (Mendlesohn, 2008, p. 9), whose mission is only possible through the formation of a stable, principled diasporic alliance. Considering, that *Those* are a multifaceted metaphor for the total ideological control, it is crucial that the protagonists fight against them not in their own, but in the parallel world, as the homeworld is marked with nostalgic idealization: it cannot be the source or stronghold of Evil, though it is also marked with the presence of *Those*.

Meeting with a Fellow Compatriot, Max Frei: Death, Sleep, and the Kindred Soul

Max Frei’s *Echo* series (1996–2019), composed of three major cycles², follows a single protagonist and focalizer, Sir Max³. Thus, the reader perceives the fantasy world through the lens of a person from our reality, who embraces it with immediate and profound love, rises in social status, and acquires near-unlimited agency.

Max’s rejection of his original world is total and irreversible; any forced return to it (his greatest fear) is painful. He finds beauty in the physical world but does not

2 *The Labyrinths of Echo* (1996–2000, LE), *The Chronicles of Echo* (2004–2013), and *The Dreams of Echo* (2014– introductory article 2019, DE).

3 In *The Chronicles*, the narrators take turns as Max is temporarily exiled from the *World*.

tolerate society. The series frequently contrasts Max's reverence for the *World* with his contempt for his former reality, which is described with words like 'bizarre/weird/odd' by Echo's inhabitants, suggesting absurdity, cruelty, and alienation. For example, in *The Stranger*, we read: "But it [the homeworld] is really odd! [...] Are you glad you escaped from there, Max?"

"Now I can't even think that it could have been any other way" (Frei, 218, p. 306).

There are two key episodes in which Max encounters a fellow compatriot: *The Stranger* (1996, LE) and *The Master of Winds and Sunsets* (2014, DE). The first encounter is marked by fear and disgust, whereas the second encounter is noted by admiration and empathy. Yet, in both, Max recognizes in the other someone 'like me', a sort of double, though the meaning of this recognition evolves.

In *The Stranger*, Max is investigating a series of brutal murders and eventually concludes that the maniac comes from his own world, having entered Echo via the very tram route Max once used. His deduction is based not on superficial similarities like clothing or speech, but on the killer's style and behaviour: madness and unprovoked cruelty. The killer is detected due to his physiological reaction: a local, mind-expanding delicacy, harmlessness to Echo's inhabitants, toxicity to Earth-born minds, both for Max and the maniac-killer. Thus, the very idea of consciousness expansion is dangerous for Earthlings, pointing to the spiritual and psychological toxicity of Max's primary world. The motif of the dark double intertwines with those of sleep and death. The killer meets Max in his nightmares, and he seeks death as a form of release. Max, in killing the murderer, experiences a profound psychic rupture: "I seemed to see – no, I felt – a short corridor stretching between me and this dying madman. And I very much doubted that he and I were two different people. We were Siamese twins, terrible fairground freaks" (Frei, 218, p. 327).

Max kills a dark projection of himself, a personification of rejection, impotent rage, and self-destruction. A similar motif recurs in *The Volunteers of Eternity* (1997), where Max destroys the memory of his former self by orchestrating the death of a tram driver who has taken on his face. If *The Stranger* is the murder of the double, *The Volunteers* is the symbolic death of memory. Both acts sever ties to the meaningless, dehumanizing world Max has fled.

In *The Master of Winds and Sunsets*, the second encounter with a fellow compatriot is wholly different. Max is searching for a dreamer whose artistic creations manifest in *Echo*. While the artist's body lies in a coma in Max's original world, she creates wonders in *Echo*'s skies.

This time, the connection is rooted in shared sensitivity, poetic memory, and a common language of beauty. Max recognizes an Earthling through a line by Juan

Ramón Jiménez: “*Cuando yo era el niñodios*”⁴. The line functions as a shibboleth: it reveals that the unknown dreamer not only comes from Max’s world but shares his inner cultural landscape.

Their dialogue, conducted in the sky through poetry and imagery, becomes a metaphysical encounter, culminating in Max leading Anna, the artist, through the corridor between worlds, saving her life both physically and spiritually. He performs the role of guide, opening the portal to full self-realization: “I was once again amazed at the strength of her spirit: the further, the louder, gradually drowning out the horror and sorrow in this choir sounded the unyielding will to continue to be – against all odds” (Frei, 2014, p. 374). Where Max once severed a bond with a dark double, here he rescues a kindred soul, affirming her artistic life and offering freedom in a world where expression is possible. The fellow countryman awakens empathy, solidarity, and the drive to protect the living.

In both stories, Max is searching for someone like him, but in radically different ways. One is identified through his inability to tolerate a world of openness and magic; the other through the artist’s capacity to co-create it. The recurring image of a guide, or key-keeper, who opens the path to another reality⁵, suggests that Frei’s broader artistic project hinges on the possibility of redemption through portal passage (cf. Madison, 2006, pp. 248–250).

What emerges from these episodes is a new model of perceiving the fellow compatriot: not one based on geography or origin, but on shared inner experience, worldview, and soulful aliveness. “‘We don’t leave our kindred behind.’ ‘What kind of people are your kindred?’ ‘Living,’ I said. ‘All living people are my kindred’” (Frei, 2014, p. 377). Max never meets Anna again. No diaspora is formed, nor does he need one. He needs to fulfil his role: to recognize, protect, and release. The concept of diaspora tied to a mother region or collective identity is dissolved. In its place stands an ethic of spiritual kinship. What matters is not where you are from, but whether you are awake and alive.

Conclusion

The comparison of the two models is visualized in Table 1, which demonstrates the elements of the PQF plot applied to the protagonists of both writers:

4 When I used to be a divine child [*Когда я был дитя и бог*] (tr. by N. Gorska).

5 See Frei Max, *The Encyclopedia of Myths* (2002).

Table 1. The protagonist enters the fantasy world

Krapivin (diaspora formation)	Max Frei (diaspora refusal)
The same Earth, alienated by an unjust social order (dangerous).	A radically different world, where every detail delights (the initial danger fades).
Gleb: lost his place and role in the familiar world.	Max: existence in the world of 'extras' is meaningless (Frei, 2014, p. 290). He is a stranger to his homeworld.
Yar: invited for help.	Max: invited for a job.
Reality is unacceptable due to the presence of <i>Those</i> and the ignorant locals.	Immediate feeling of love and belonging.
Nostalgia for the land of childhood. Return is impossible, but thoughts of it persist. Self-identification as part of the new world grants legitimacy.	Rejection of the primary world, trauma of previous socialization. Self-identification as part of the new world brings spiritual rebirth.
The compatriot is <i>a priori</i> a person of the same worldview. A mini-diaspora is formed to fight for the world's salvation.	The compatriot is described as «just like me», a bright or dark double. A search for inner kinship. No need for diaspora formation.
'The same Earth'. The kinship is defined by the homeland.	Kindred in spirit, creativity, and openness to the world. 'All living people are my kindred'.

A comparative analysis of the fellow compatriot motif in portal-quest fantasy of the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods reveals that, despite significant similarities in the plot structure of immigration into a fantasy world, substantial differences emerge, evidently rooted in the authors' distinct worldviews. For the writer representing the late Soviet era, the connection with the homeworld forms the foundation of the protagonist's worldview; the formation of a diaspora cluster appears as a natural and necessary condition for victory over the soulless forces seeking to reduce the multiplicity of worlds to a lifeless totalitarian structure.

By contrast, for the author shaped in the 1990s, an era of open borders and expanding opportunities, departure from the maternal region becomes a prerequisite for self-development, the search for existential meaning, and the release of creative potential. In the later work, Max Frei introduces a renewed concept of 'My kindred', understood not as someone from a shared homeland, but as someone alive: open to creativity, engaged in dialogue with a living world that seeks transformation, and committed to self-expression. In this framework, fellow compatriot function not as a basis for forming a diaspora, but rather as a catalyst for empathy. It does not limit personal freedom or bind the individual to their origin; instead, it aids in the rec-

ognition of kindred spirits, those who are alive in spirit and capable of change. The comparative study demonstrates a shift in worldview toward prioritizing individual, fluid identity, based on freedom of choice and kinship in spirit.

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