

## Conference Paper

# Summer Season in the Working Settlement: From Mushrooms to People and Back. Uralmash in Fiction and Non-fiction Literature About 1930s

**Natalia Gramatchikova**

Institute of History and Archeology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

### Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of several key concepts of texts on construction and the first years of Uralmashzavod work (1930s, 1960s-1970s). They are traced on the material of artistic and diary prose, memoirs and records, in which similar motives are found. Most of the texts are stored in the Museum archive and they are either introduced into the scientific discourse for the first time or it is the first time that they become the object of philological and anthropological studies. "Excluded" loci of Ovalov's novel are "filled" with memories about Uralmash, but the main memory of "first builders" involves a surprisingly large number of concepts presented in the majority of cases only by fiction. There is an attempt to trace how the chronotope and topography of the working settlement in fiction are reflected in the identity of "old-timers" corresponding to the deep needs and expectations of the factory workers. The reconstruction of the "anthropogenesis" of a "new worker", emerging from the meta-text about the giant plant is represented alongside with the paradox of the adoption of "wild space", which after being cleared of the forest for the construction of the plant, upon decades turned in one of the greenest areas of Sverdlovsk-Ekaterinburg.

**Keywords:** Uralmash, socialist city, first builders, Prishvin's diaries, A. Bannikov, E. Bannikova, L. Ovalov, V. Anfimov, "Zina Demina", Jiang Tsingguo

Corresponding Author:  
 Natalia Gramatchikova  
 n.gramatchikova@gmail.com

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### OPEN ACCESS

Large-scale socio-economic transformation during the Soviet industrialization was accompanied by a huge number of texts designed to create a certain canon of perception of what was happening, as well as to build an "ideal relationship model" between new main characters: the Factory and the Worker. The variety of surviving documents (newspapers, poems and stories, memories, etc.) gives us an opportunity to explore different modes of implementing of this grandiose project of social and

industrial transformation. The place of a specific text of the 1930s on a conventional scale of “documentary – fictionality” is often unexpected: the manager’s reports are full of bold promises, the diaries contain lacunas, the essays are “based on real events”, “corrected and carefully rewritten”, and a municipal engineer’s romantic intention turns out to be embodied in the green area project. If we do not understand first builders’ dreams, these invisible dreams on which their present is focused, resigning to total shortages simply because this “tomorrow” exists for them, it is impossible to assess and understand the daily routines of the 1930s.

## 1. Prishvin’s Diaries: “Horrors of the Urals” and “Cursed Life of Sverdlovsk”

Mikhail Prishvin (1873-1954) visited Sverdlovsk and Uralmashstroy in January and February of 1931, being “twice a stranger” both to the place and to the process of industrialization. His hard impression of what he had seen was exacerbated by his reflections and rejection of new practices of life construction: his trip coincides with his son’s short marriage, where the new formats of younger generation’s relations (which are free from the previous cultural “conventions”) cause the writer’s bitter bewilderment (“His ‘family life’ is, it seems, quite a hell, but it’s necessary to survive. If only it would not make him crippled” ([11], 06.03.1931)).

Prishvin’s trip to Sverdlovsk is interesting for its *dumbness of experience*: “I am so deafened by the cursed life of Sverdlovsk that *I have lost the ability to give myself the report of what I had seen*, though, there is *nothing to compare this horror to to realize what I have seen*” [11] (All emphases in italics in the quotations and in the article are mine, N.G.). The writer goes on this trip with a new “Leica” camera that was bought at a special resolution; it has three lenses behind which he could “hide” filling the photo archive but not the diary. Only a few weeks after his arrival, Prishvin managed to partially verbalize this “cursed life of Sverdlovsk”: “Only now, when I saw in the forest how the icicles grow on fur-trees, the understanding of the possibility of ordinary and accessible for everybody joys of life has returned to me, and at the same time the prospect of awful Urals has opened up” ([11], 11.03.1931).

Prishvin is mainly repelled by the focus shift from the person to the factory. He knew the merchant life well and perceived the development of the Urals in the historical perspective not only during the Soviet times: “But when they say ‘Factory’, then at least for me, it is formed in such a way that *people here, like caviar for a shop, are not for themselves, but for the Factory*” [11]. Prishvin described the seen in the logic of

an acute confrontation: "iron people" break the old world (and, possibly, the world in general); the writer at the same time feels both absolute alienation from these people and almost magical attraction of this alien world and its characters. A trip to the Urals becomes for him a business trip "to the war", "to the front" from the "Moscow rear" ("Moscow is still the rear in comparison to the advanced position of the construction of the Urals and the South..." ([11], 01.03.1931)). There is a war with the "inert nature's forces" in all their diversities, including human nature, with its "availability for all the joys of life". It is carried out by "truly iron people", "on whom the wilful attitude of this non-affair is entrusted" and who do not avoid violence ("The only possible position is admitting that at such an acute moment of life, state coercion to work is as necessary as during the wartime" ([11], 02.02.1931)). It leads to the changes in the emotional sphere of a person: "On these positions, as in an ordinary war, people laugh a little and then even less and less" ([11], 12.03.1931). Such are the verbalized components of the emotionally traumatic writer's experience in the Urals, and we can only make guesses about the remaining inconsistencies.

## 2. "Pressed Time": Invisible, But Real

The forces of nature have marked the passing of time. In the beginning of Uralmash "the past" - "the present" - "the future" are combined, tied to the limit, superimposed on each other, and in other cases - they are interchanged. The speed of transformation is as such that people live their allocated time faster focusing more on planned terms rather than on any current situation. Those who follow "natural" speed of life are often mistaken and as a result they get into the "yesterday" of the Factory and the settlement. These are usually animals from surrounding forests and "outside" observers (like Prishvin). The higher the degree of involvement in the construction process is, the higher the social status of a person is (and vice versa): ordinary participants are surprised at the pace of construction but they fall in step: "Only a year ago there was a forest. And what a forest! *The engineer and the accountant now working on the construction of the plant, which is now like a city, will tell you how they collected mushrooms here last year and lost their way*" [11].

Here is a large fragment from Prishvin's diaries illustrating the characteristic aberration of the present-future: "This aspiration is so huge that *the future becomes more real than the present*. It's true that the engineer got lost in the woods last year. Now here is a city, and the forest stands in the distance. But what kind of forest it is; it is doomed as it *will not be here tomorrow, this forest is almost an unreality. But here is a*

*mechanical shop which doesn't exist at the moment but yet is real.* After we inspected all the snow-covered shops and told the director our impressions, he said:

'It's all nonsense! But a mechanical shop is really a large thing!'

'How could we not have seen it?' we said. 'We went all around, but we did not see the mechanical shop.'

The director laughed: '*It cannot be seen so simply. There's nothing on the ground yet.*'

And he sent us to the projection room, where many engineers sat and thought on the plans. *And here we entered the mechanical shop, which is not in the reality we are accustomed to.* And we gradually began to understand that *the future mechanical shop represents a greater reality than the forest standing in the distance*" ([11], 01.03.1931).

Later, the feeling of high speed transformation will prove to be a significant motive for self-identification in Uralmash old-timers' memoirs, where they define themselves as first participants in the construction. The engineer V. Anfimov (1900-1991) begins his memoirs about his arrival at Uralmash with the description of "the office of the forester P.A. Saburov, which was standing among pines on the place of a newspaper kiosk at the beginning of Ordzhonikidze Street". The building looked "like a hunting hut in the taiga: low ceiling, 'seni' with a single door, 3 small windows and simple office equipment: a table, stools, a simple wardrobe"; "there was firewood constantly burning in the stove" [3]. Here, a bright picture from the past is superimposed on the non-existent at that time topography of the settlement (Ordzhonikidze Street and kiosks). Prishvin records his movements not only in space but also in time: "*We walked in the place where one engineer had lost his way in the forest last year.* Now here some forgotten trees (what is left from the whole forest) stick out among the city..." ([11], 01.03.1931).

### 3. Prophecies of the "Dream-time"

Non-linear current time, its "confusion" and even its seeming lack is a sure and irreplaceable sign of "*dream-time*", time of the great beginning. Its presence does not negate the possibility of constructing a historical, linear time, but some elements of the "beginning of the world" cannot be ignored in the early Uralmash history. It should be noted that at the same time "new chronology" of Uralmash ([7], 70-72) is developed. It is based on historical yet mythologized events and fixed in the factory newspaper "For heavy engineering" ("Za tyazheloye mashinostroyeniye"). We also can note the calendar, historical time in the records of that period.

The starting point of the time flow, a pause in its passing is extremely attractive for any prophecies and predictions. The conjuring magic of words designed to create a new reality or at least to “push a pendulum” in the desired direction is heard in most official documents of that era.

In Prishvin’s diaries, a peasant, the master of the “underground hut”, where it smells of “pancakes and women”, is called a prophet. (Here it is difficult not to avoid any allusions to the analogous scene in the “Matrix”, where Pythia calms down fighters’ tearing and selflessness through baking cookies). “Talking, we gently asked the owner:

‘Do you think it will be possible to complete this huge plant?’

The owner answered vaguely, *like Pythia*, in the sense that, of course, it will be possible if nothing hinders, and it will not be possible if there is a hindrance.

‘Now you have moved here and are settling in, what will happen if this plant does not succeed to be built?’

‘We will return to the village,’ replied the master calmly. <...>

My friend asked:

‘But maybe they will complete it?’

The owner replied readily:

‘Yes, maybe they will.’” ([11], 01.03.1931).

## 4. People, Plant and Forest

The plant does not simply destroy the forest around itself. Thousands of people flock to the construction, and their pattern of life will soon be changed radically. Prishvin describes how those who settle in in the forest under the trees, at the roots bring death to the forest by using its gifts (wood, wildfowl, mushrooms and berries). “Approach this forest, and you will see earth houses there, smokes flow between the trunks of pine trees, a cow wanders around, the sleigh are lying around... People who came here from the village with a horse to earn their living live in these earth houses there. Poor harvest, devastation, extreme need drove them here, and while working the majority do not believe that the plant will ever be built” [11].

Peasants bring a habitual way of life with them, but factory life is gradually grinding it. Prishvin sees “new people” as destroyers of the old, natural, reliable and correct: “Now the working settlement is a whole street of stone several stories buildings. And

hurrying they did not leave any single little tree for the joy of a future new man. The new man strives forward so irresistibly that in this extreme zeal he is ruthless towards the past, towards the forest" [11]. The first-builder engineer V. Anfimov, who had also been keeping a diary for 40 years and later wrote an essay on its basis about Uralmash settlement's history, emphasizes gradual changes in life patterns of workers (pay attention to the traditional epithet of the horse): "In the summer, children were always on the street, they played simple games, picked berries and mushrooms, there was an abundance of them around. Near the earth house there was a heated stall for the horse-breadwinner of the family and a small haystack" [3]. An essay by E. Bannikova (born in 1899), the wife and the widow of the Uralmashinstroy director, is in the mainstream of mature Soviet discourse and is focused on the official history of Uralmash. She recalls the "successful labor recruitment" for the construction of Uralmash, mostly from peasants, among them "carpenters, bricklayers, loggers and people of other specialties", all of whom "began to cut down the forest to clean the construction site of the forest". "Working conditions were very difficult. Housing conditions were also difficult. There was nowhere to live. Many of the first builders first lived in tents then built themselves earth houses and only a few months later some wooden barracks appeared. But many workers lived in earth houses for a long time; the number of barracks was inadequate. There was more than enough of the forest for the construction of barracks, but the financial plan did not allow to develop housing construction in due measure. The food supply was not the priority at first... Yes, the life of the first builders of the plant was hard. Some of them could not stand the difficulties and went home to their village or looked for a better place to live. There were cases when entire teams left the construction site. <...> But it must be said that there was no great turnover of labor from the construction site. The majority of workers were not afraid of difficulties and worked responsibly" ([4], 8-9).

The image of living creatures originating at tree roots, in the shadow of tree crowns, who are destined to come to light transformed, is indicative of the artistic and conceptual history of Uralmash. If Bannikova's memoirs emphasize the difficulties of the living conditions of the first builders (note how through several sentences her "peasants", "loggers", "carpenters" are becoming "first builders" and "workers"), then Ovalov's artistic projection in the novel about the working settlement offers a much more ambitious project submitted not directly but through the self-identification system of its character Zina Demina.

## 5. Topography of Dream

Lev Ovalov (pseudonym of Lev Shapovalov (1905–1997) is well-known to Soviet readers as the author of the cycle about Major Pronin. He wrote the novel “Zina Demina” (1937), which was based on real events and author’s personal observations. The novel tells us about Faina Vakhreva’s life (1916–2004, in the novel she was named Zina Demina, in Taiwan she was named Jiang Fanliang), who worked at Uralmash and married Jiang Tsingo (1910–1988, in the novel – Zhou), the son of the Chinese President Chiang Kai-shek and the president-to-be of Taiwan, who under the name of Nicholas Elizarov worked at Uralmash (1932–1937) first in the machine shop and then as a factory newspaper editor.

Ovalov’s novel is a genre model modification of the “bildungsroman” in a new industrial environment. The text is in the trend of the all-Union project in the late 1920–1930s on the creation of “History of factories and plants”. It turned out to be biased with elements of utopia, but still quite alive and rather charming; specificity of this charm is what we would like to define here. Real events for Lev Ovalov are only a basis that must be “rewritten” in an ideologically correct way: Ovalov’s hero of the novel sees her husband off to China but she herself stays at home not wanting to change the life of a “full-fledged person” to the poor role of a “husband’s wife”. As it is known real Faina Vakhreva did not part with her husband: after leaving abroad with him, she did not return to her homeland any more. The analysis of the novel’s chronotope allows us to see the realities of construction in a different perspective than that of Prishvin.

In the novel, the boundary between the settlement and the surrounding forest is conditional. Houses and streets are gradually and dynamically released from the dense forest, which still constitutes a more attractive alternative to the park, where it is “dusty and crowded”. Young people are more likely to walk in the forest along a railroad, where there are “logs of firewood scattered around the sides”; and they perceive the clearing as the future “most beautiful” street. In the forest lake workers often swim, row on boats, fish to diversify their menu; in the forest they hunt in the morning before work; even the parachute girls board the plane with a handful of ripe strawberries. Then the forest parts yielding to the settlement; the path turns into an alley; wooden houses, into stone four-story ones; the settlement becomes a city. The factory shops perform the function of giant trees: “The heavy prodigal buildings surrounded by a lawn cast thick shadows, and therefore it was not very hot even on the asphalt factory yard” ([10], 9). The forest wraps the working settlement up with an

endless unstructured space: "Do you see this forest? One can walk a day, and a night, and another day, and another night, and the forest will still drag on" ([10],18).

As we can see, Ovalov completely removes the conflict of the plant ("iron people") and nature, which horrified Prishvin. Their harmonization in fiction is achieved by a different method rather than in a newspaper style. Compare: in Soviet history the start-up of Uralmash is described as a triumph of harmony over the chaos left by the White Guard. The concept of "liberation of the Urals from Kolchak" is insurmountably inscribed in the history of the plant, being marked on its foundation stone. One of the official texts about Uralmash history begins with such words: "The Kolchak gangs rolled across the Urals carrying with them monstrous disasters and devastation". Kolchak is the main enemy of future industrialization, an opponent to the very possibility of a happy "tomorrow"; for the sake of which, for example, the Bolsheviks literally "snatch" the future chief engineer of Uralmash (Vladimir Fidler) from the train that was taking him to the "wrong" (emigrant) future ([6], 16-17).

In Ovalov's novel human relations are inscribed in natural rhythms. The consistency of the periods of human life and seasonal changes is reinforced by the fact that the action of the story begins in the spring forest and ends in the early autumn with a withering bouquet of wild roses, recalling the classic chronotope of Turgenev's love stories. In general, the traditional form of Ovalov's novel is designed to soften the perception of unprecedented transformations. Ovalov's forest accepts and supports everyone: the sceptical engineer Gruz likes to meditate in it, unhappy Tamara finds consolation here. The nights in the settlement live a poetic deep life: "Night has come. The grass became completely black. Only single trees loomed in the darkness. From the ditches there came a smell of cold dampness. In the distance electric lights were lit. It was time to return home" ([10], 21), etc.

The settlement's infrastructure is represented by streets, a stadium, an airfield, a "music" dormitory-commune, a park, an industrial goods store, a library, "stone houses" and rooms of an engineer and a young family of Zhou-Demina. The huge factory world is concentrated in one shop with an imported machine which Zina works with. Although all the machines are from Germany, the "human community" in the novel is seen through the eyes of the Chinese communist for whom the lack of "separate rooms" where you can for example study is rather a whim than a real human necessity. The quality of work determines the amount of "personal space": Zina was awarded a separate room for her excellent work ([10], 18). At weekends, the mass of people "spreads" from the center (the factory) to the natural periphery (in Ovalov's world there are no earth houses and barracks): "There was always more

activity on the outermost streets at weekends. The people dispersed from the center into the forest, to the lake, to the guests, and everywhere in the suburb the gardens greened and fields started right behind the houses, and in some places the forest approached almost to the windows. Children were playing near small front gardens, children's voices rang at all crossroads". ([10], 61).

Open spaces of the settlement are spaces of collaborative actions: forest / park, stadium. Life, death and love in the novel are set in natural scenery: the scenes of Gruz's reflections, Zina's rescue of a drowning young man, Tamara's absurd death, the farewell of Zina and Zhou. The intimate spaces of personal rooms in the novel have a special function: it is there that the spies are exposed. The internal space of personal rooms (Gruz, Zina, Zhou family) is extremely ascetic in all cases.

But the factory and the settlement space equally echoes the lyrical intonation of nature: "A weak breeze rustled in the bushes of hawthorn planted in front of the shop. Warm bluish rays poured through the glass ceiling. Rhythmic noise filled a spacious room" ([10], 50). "A soft northern breeze at the dawn swept the earth and the sky and rushed away. There was not a cloud in the sky; polished cobblestones gleamed on the highway. Everything was still covered with a touch of purity, which is inherent in nature in the morning" ([10], 63).

In the memories of Uralmash old residents, this shimmering exchange "nature" – "plant" – "green Uralmash settlement" became the dominant intonation (texts of the late 1960s and 1970s). The poem by V. Anfimov which he included in the essay about UZTM consistently reproduces all the above-mentioned concepts:

Here, here sometime about thirty years ago  
There was a forest everywhere, roads ran,  
There were, probably, bear lairs ...  
Even the elk walked there, they say.

All this was about 30 years ago,  
Well, now instead of the forest – the boulevards,  
Parks, houses, shops, stadium ...  
All these streets, squares, gardens,  
We made, we planted  
Our works were put  
Here when we raised our city!

E. Bannikova in the conclusion of her notes writes: "... The whole Uralmash makes a good impression on every person, especially... in terms of the abundance of greenery here. And we, Uralmash people, love our Uralmash not only because we live here, because our house is here, but we love it for the fact that our Uralmash is really a nice, beautiful and cosy place" ([4], 35).

## 6. Uralmash Daily Life in Documents and Ovalov's "Excluded Spaces"

The daily life of first builders was different than it is shown in novels. Prishvin sagaciously wrote that "to us who were brought up as humanists it is extremely difficult to imagine that very life in a socialist city. It is difficult for us to tolerate with this purely material construction when it passes under the pressure of the entire state press. We see how morally low young people are, so coercion will be there in the realm of the spirit, so it will reach the last secrets of personal of any person, everything will be revealed" ([11], 12.03.1931).

Practically all the surviving evidence suggests that the works on the improvement of the environment for "first workers" were made on a "residual principle": short construction time, limited funding, etc.

The fiction could simply exclude a number of loci from its image: for example, in Ovalov's novel such "excluded spaces" are not only canteens (not to mention toilets), but also kindergartens and day nurseries, schools, hospitals and cemeteries. The latter two are contrary to the logic of the plot: Tamara, Zina's friend, makes an abortion and then being depressed, dies as a result of either a suicide or an accident; and contrary to the reality. See A. Bannikov's report (1931): "The deadlines for the construction of public buildings are defined: we should pass the polyclinic by the 1st of August, a bathhouse and laundry in the 4th quarter, a club in the 3rd quarter, a factory kitchen by the 1st of November and mechanized bakery in the same year" ([4], report).

Documents and memories allow us to restore what was "excluded" from the official historical discourse (see Efremova on criticism in the newspaper "For heavy engineering" as a source of information about everyday life). These were, for example, problems with the nutrition for workers. The orders of A. Bannikov (1895–1932), the director of Uralmashinstroy and one of the main actors of the plant construction process, No. 22 (from 08.01.31) and No. 41 (from 14.01.31) draw an unsightly picture in the canteen No. 9: "There is dirt in the canteen and in the kitchen, an abundance of cockroaches on the walls, on the floor, on clean and dirty dishes. There are sewage

and excrements outside around the dining room" (Bannikov); the superintendent of these buildings had been drinking for five days, disrupted the repairing and caused "partial destruction of the barracks". In general, the theme of the "corporeal bottom" generated from official discourse finds its refuge in the oral tradition and in the specific genre of "Uralmash old stories". See more on canteens, dining rooms, toilets, suicides, in [1]; on marginal zones significance in the memories about the childhood in 1930–1940 from Uralmash residents see [5, 8]. Even the most positive authors E. Bannikova (1899–?) and V. Anfimov (1900–1991) give examples where context says more than their authors would sometimes like it to. Such is, for example, the episode of checking the Uralmash canteen by the "secret buyer" who was Bannikov's wife, as the director was well known for everyone and "if he comes to the working canteen, then they *of course* will not give him from the common stock" (Bannikov). The results of the inspection showed that in the unpretentious interior, "people eat well", their portions are large. However, Bannikova's story also includes the description of the entrance system in the canteen, dirty whitewashed walls, and the fact that "it was hot to eat, since there was no cloakroom in the canteen, so everyone sat at the table without taking their outdoor clothes off," and the routine according to which "on leaving the canteen one had to return the spoon". This rule became a surprise for the director's wife, who calmly left her spoon on the table. "I was accused by the janitress that I stole the spoon. The guys tried to prove to her that I could not have done this but she did not want to listen to anything and did not let me out of the canteen. My guys rushed to search for the spoon in the distribution department, finally, they succeeded and we were released from the canteen with peace" (Bannikov). Deficiency of household utensils and cutlery did not become news for the director, who was amused by the incident and "his soul calmed down on this issue" (Bannikov).

In those rare cases when Bannikov takes a step outside the official discourse, she feels extremely insecure; as a result her text acquires great liveliness. In the episode about Uralmash mud we can observe how her gradual detailing reveals a layered manifestation of memory and how the ideological correction of the emotional background of memories is carried out: "Yes, since 1929 the settlement of the plant has grown, solid houses have been built, beautiful straight broad streets have appeared, but the appearance of the settlement did not particularly please the eye. This was due to the fact that there was a lot of dirt in the streets, and it gave a messy uncomfortable appearance for the whole of the settlement. However, there were wooden sidewalks laid near the houses and the main street were even asphalted. But the streets were not paved and among them there was, as they say, knee-deep mud, especially in spring

and autumn. Because of the dirt almost all men walked in boots, of course, only those who had them, and some women walked in boots. And those who walked in galoshes were forced to tie them with strings, because otherwise they were sucked into the mud and stayed there. And to find the galoshes in the mud is not so easy, as you are standing on one leg like a heron among an endless mass of dirt. Bannikov, the chief of construction, also wore boots. His boots were big marsh boots, which were tailored particularly for him in Tyumen. <...> Undoubtedly, the construction manager look was very, very unpresentable. But there was no time for beauty and grace as health was on the forefront, so it was necessary to get dressed in such a way that your feet stay dry all day long" (Bannikov). Next goes the inner dialogue between a biased witness and an "outsider": "Of course, the first thing for the outside person would be to think why the construction administration allowed such dirt on the settlement streets and on the construction site so that people walked knee-deep in mud. Why the administration did not take good care of the needs of the workers. But, dear comrades, this question again rested on financial shortages. The plant administration set the main task of providing builders with decent housing, so that having come home from work, the tired worker could rest properly. And the worker received good housing, but there was no more money to improve the streets. The workers and the administration both had to walk through the mud. <...>. And it was necessary to have a special resourcefulness and tactics, in order not to allow the building die and provide it with at least the most vital things" (Bannikov Memories of Uralmash, 22-24).

## 7. Anthropogenesis-2: Version by Ovalov

One of Ovalov's main tasks as a writer was to show the appearance of a "new working man", which he presents on the example of Zina Demina ("her biography was like the biography of most familiar girls"). The leading tendencies of her transformation are associated with the appearance of the Factory and Zhou in her life. However, the artistic solution to this "remaking" is much wider than these foreground tendencies (note that Ovalov does not offer the translation of experience through children education: as we remember, there are no children, no kindergartens, and no schools in this novel). Zina's path is much more impressive than the transition from a "peasant woman" to a "worker".

The first meeting between the reader and Zina happens on the lake: "Suddenly he (engineer Gruz) heard a splash, thought it was a fish, and looked back. Downwards, across from Gruz, a girl in a bright red dress squatted on one of the large coastal

stones and was slapping her hand on the water with all her might" ([10], 4). "Fishiness" will remain in Zina later: she swims well and saves a drowning young man. Her own autobiographical narrative begins even "earlier", from the realm of mushrooms: "As mushrooms," Zina suddenly said. "We were growing and growing! Here I am, for example. I came from the village, bore the earth, and studied, and now here I am in the shop. My life is the simplest. I would like to tell you about myself, but there is nothing to say." She indeed did not find anything remarkable in her life" ([10], 18). Zina's novel biography contains obvious anachronisms and ideological clichés designed to create a recognizable image of the "old world": her birth "in old believers' village where wives did not dare talk with their husbands"; joining the Komsomol "secretly", unclear relations between her family members, etc. On the other hand, these contradictions of this autobiographical narrative are evidence of the heroine's unaware consciousness. Any memory building her own biography (be it personal or cultural) still does not have any value for her.

In Ovalov's novel, "then" and "now" are regularly contrasted, but the use of memory to construct a personal narrative is sharply condemned by the author: the stories of Prishvin's diary (the difficulties of the first wintering, the wood-grouse that mistakenly fly into barracks built on the places they have lived in the forest) are invested in the mouths of "self-lovers" (Khalansky, Gruz), turning them into the chapters of their personal heroic poem or an "anecdote". Zina, on the other hand, does not know how to talk and does not like to talk about her past: "It seemed to her that the incessant ongoing troubles were not so unpleasant, when she and her friends had to bestrew the barracks with earth, store the stoves, and freeze despite all their efforts. Now she remembered that winter with mild irony" ([10], 18). Zina goes through different periods of her life, like a child, whose memory structures are only being formed and requires separate educational efforts (Zhou did a lot for it).

The Plant creates its builders: here their births take place not only in professional but also in actual human aspect. The way of "our people" looks like this: "Most of them came when people were still cutting down the forest here. This tall man just worked at a brick factory as a laborer and lived in a barrack two years ago. And now he became an excellent turner, got married, got an apartment. This planer worked as a carpenter, he could use only an axe. <...> That blond girl, coming here from the village, saw the train for the first time here, started in the same shop as a cleaner, and now she commands the most complicated German machine..." ([10], 10). *The factory, like the forest, accepts everybody*. Zhou knows: "Among his acquaintances there were also illiterate girls from remote villages, and experienced masters who left large well-organized cities for the

sake of the common good and silent nomads who grew up in steppe yurts" ([10], 20-21).

Anyone who does not understand the reasons and speed of such a transformation is a stranger here ("Zhou still wondered how these people could have been transformed from illiterate adolescents into skilled craftsmen in such a short time" ([10], 17)). Nevertheless, it is Zhou who is a cultural hero for Zina: following the traditions of Russian classical literature, "simple girl" Zina through conversations with her hero reveals the richness of culture and geography in general and Russian literature in particular. Having begun with "Anna Karenina", "fearing to alienate her husband with her uncultured nature, she began to hastily fill up her knowledge, reading dozens of different books, and every day she understood Zhou better" ([10], 41).

Zina's marriage falls on her "pre-reflective" period: "Zina married somehow unperceivably for herself. Her relationship with Zhou developed so simply and easily that Zina, without much hesitation, submitted to her feelings and gave herself with all her mediocrity to the natural course of events. When friends asked how she got married so quickly to a stranger, and even more to a foreigner, Zina laughed. But thinking about this, she could not give herself an accurate answer of how it turned out that Zhou became her husband" ([10], 39). But in the future, the motive of gender equality is important for the development of this storyline: "... Zhou treated her with real respect. He thought of her better than she really was, and she wanted to justify this trust and become smarter, more courageous, and more cultured" ([10], 40-41). Zina's social activity is expanding, she has to master the practice of time-management, which was previously unnecessary for her (it is not accidental that Zina sets the alarm in the final phrase of the novel); her self-consciousness grows up to her own assessment of her actions, whereas "before she was satisfied with the praises from others" ([10], 110).

Nevertheless, Zina's "simplicity" (a synonym for "naturalness" and "integrity" in the novel) remains her leading characteristic, being highlighted by Zhou's "ancient" and "complex" cultural codes. So Stalin's and Lenin's speeches seem to her "simple and clear", she feels "more confident and intelligent" after them.

In the aspect of a "new man" formation, the most important and estimated characteristic is the clothing of the novel heroes (it means, this is almost the only truly personal choice which is available to them, unlike housing and its furnishing). Suits are worn by "strangers": engineer Gruz, Zhou ("In his grey, well-tailored suit, in a starched collar, with a neatly tied dark tie, he reminded of the eastern diplomats" ([10], 8)) and Khalansky who turned out to be a traitor (he bought "overseas brown woollen suit with a pomegranate tie" from a Korean spy). But at the same time, "new beauty" is

the beauty of civilization. While dressing for work, friends Zina and Tamara choose the outfits corresponding to the day and the mood: "Ahead was a freshly watered lawn, rare curly clouds wandered in blue sky, the asphalt road was carefully swept, and the glass roofs of shops in the distance blindingly shone under the sun". Tamara finally chooses a "pink blouse, cream skirt, silk stockings and fashionable beige shoes" ([10], 22). Zina is committed to her simple style: her "white blouse, blue skirt and old slippers could not stand comparison with Tamara's elegant clothes" ([10], 23). There is an ambivalence of the author's position: Tamara, who is too caring for herself, falls victim of unhappy love, but Ovalov expresses the bright impression of a "new factory morning" primarily through the aesthetics of clothes, through Zhou's eyes of "old" cultural tradition who considers people hurrying in the morning to the factory: "He recalled dozens of descriptions and sketches devoted to the beginning of the working day. A monotonous picture appeared in his mind: a grey leaden sky, smoke and soot escaping from factory pipes, drooping hunched figures, tired faces with an earthy tinge on their cheeks and hollow eyes. And here he saw quite different people, quite another morning. Pedestrians were approaching with liveliness, cyclists crossed the square from different directions, and cars came occasionally. Almost all men were in light-colored shirts, and some dandies, despite the windy spring weather, hurried to dress up in white trousers; girls in motley dresses were making merry noise before the patterned cast gates" ([10], 20-21). This picture is radically different from galoshes tied with ropes and unavoidable high boots in E. Bannikova's story, from sandals on the wooden sole in Uralmash workers' memoirs and from the factory photo archive where the first workers wear bast shoes. But without their "beautiful tomorrow", which was already thought by them as to be almost at hand, it is impossible to understand their patience for "today".

The main point of application of Zina's own activity is her relation with the foreign machine, on which she started to produce a double and triple norm contrary to engineer's recommendations.

The "man-machine" relationship was reflected also in Prishvin's diaries. He notes their connection and the similarity of evolution: the reduction in the size of machines also means the grinding of the human and his dreams [11]. The "man-machine" competition (the key phrase of this agon is addressed from workers to the engineer ("Are our people not fit for your machines?") is described in the novel as having a start but no end: in the end, Zina left Zhou and hurried to work. Zina parted with Zhou, finding a new herself ("the simplicity has gone, her facial features have become thinner" ([10], 138) "The sensation of life overwhelmed Zina, it was a new sense of force unknown to her,

faith in oneself." ([10], 144). Her new face has a clear social projection of a "advanced worker": "Demina dared to establish a regime that had been not foreseen by any professors! Did she have to show less courage than a border guard or a polar pilot?" ([10], 114) It is important that the heroism of the worker is rhetorically formulated as accessible to everyone and expected from everyone: "The Motherland is counting on you! She gives you everything and we wait for you to give her tomorrow..." ([10], 129) It is a Soviet way and the people's destiny here: "There's nothing to be done, this is our country, everyone is famous for something".

## 8. "Urban Land Improvement Was Amazingly Quick"

The formation of a "new man" in Ovalov's novel is the process of awakening consciousness, the transition from organic, plant life to "fully human", through mastering of all practices, including the ability to manage time not only by seasons but also by hours.

An essay by Viktor Anfimov, a housing and communal services engineer, presents a slightly different aspect of the widest development of space and time by first-builders. "Socialist city UZTM" is becoming a meeting place for materials and technologies of very different origin and time. Their natural properties are crucial for builders: engineers, unlike the ideologists of industrialization, are much less likely to "break the worlds". The sphere of housing and communal services, described by the language of Anfimov's essay, is surprisingly organic, commensurate to a man, subordinated to common sense. Thus, among the building materials of Uralmash there is special trefoil clay from Bogdanovich ("In the distant geological epoch there was a sea, and the deposits of diatom water plants formed this trefoil clay". The experimental bricks made from trefoil were made amazingly light and "warm" [3]. The first houses are built from the local forest; much attention is paid to the sawdust, to its heat-saving properties.

One of Anfimov's dramatic stories of the first years of construction is connected with mushrooms – or rather, with house fungi, a dangerous disease of wood, which nearly destroyed the entire housing stock built by that time. To fight against them, Professor Slutsky from Moscow was specially invited, the necessary countermeasures were taken (strong airing of the basement for several months); Anfimov describes the species of fungi ("merulius" and "noria") that are turning wood into "white coal", and the main reason for their appearance refers to the "echo" of the forest life of newly built houses ("infected wood in the presence of not cleared stumps in the dark and

warm underground, created exceptionally favorable conditions for the revitalization of the life of fungi" [3]).

The adjacent peat bogs were supposed to provide with fuel the thermal power station being built, Lake Shuvaquish supplied clean and tasty water to the settlement. Anfimov's inspection trips to the settlements of seasonal workers were unusually poetic. Along a winter forest road, on horses with a bell, "in a sled with a bearskin", where "the trees are covered with hoarfrost and snow. Just beyond Pyshma – a century-old pine forest, on the long paws of the trees there are sitting wood grouses and they are not afraid of anything. Somewhere the river is flowing, and on the hill on the sunny side there is a forester's house, cut down from good logs. The facade is decorated with a mezzanine. The dog is barking loudly, the rooster is singing, there is a cow outside chewing fragrant hay" [3].

Anfimov's notes are evidence that the revitalisation of the place with transfigured nature was just one of the goals of those involved in the social sphere. So, for example, the forest massif was preserved from cutting down; it was fenced around and planted with flourish bush. The favorite place of summer recreation for staff was the Pyshminsky ditches, where gold mining was continued by the same Uralmash workers ("Golden Sand was taken to Torgsin, and there they took some products" ANF). Near the remaining after panning of golden sand lakes, "people rested, bathed, picked berries and spent the weekend in the bosom of nature. In the 30s there were always a lot of people, because the cleanliness of the air and the beauty of the landscape were arranged for rest". This surprisingly coincides with Ovalov's lyrical intonation in some pages: the space of his novel is densely populated by birds (swallows, orioles, stone-curlews, and capercaillies) and other forest and lakeside livestock.

Paradoxically, planting of greenery in Uralmash turned out to be very difficult to perform: there were no nurseries in Sverdlovsk; seedlings of lindens, ash trees, oaks had to be brought from the banks of the Volga. The huge need for a transformed natural environment existed. Prishvin, lamenting about a "new man", quite rightly remarked that "it is often said that time for people is merciless. No, this is not entirely true. Time puts forward new people, but does not immediately destroy the old ones: they live very long" [11]. Their habitus lives together with the "old people".

Thus, the study of the entire genre palette of texts of the 1930s and about 1930s shows that although the logic of sharp confrontation dominates, it does not exceed to be the entire diversity of practices describing that reality. So Anfimov's essay contains an expressive fragment where the "natural", "cultural", and "industrial" are surprisingly complementary: "Surprisingly, the urban land improvement proceeded surprisingly

fast, for example, in the morning all who went to work saw the piles of the ground near the department of technical education and returning home, everyone admired the landplaning, planted lindens that were stretched for better engraftment, warm asphalt which has just been laid on the sidewalk, and fenced lawn which was leveled and covered with humus. The installation of balconies on apartment houses with metal fences and handrails on them was especially spectacular: when dozens of welders welded pre-prepared railings and a fiery rain of sparks poured from all floors – the spectacle was truly enchanting, as if an unusual illumination was being carried out on the facades of the houses along Ilyicha Street” [3]. Here the speed of transformation is marked exactly in the way that is organic and joyful to a person, and “warm asphalt”, “stretchers for young linden”, “fiery rain of sparks from welding” create not an image of a utopian future, but of the past, transformed by the memory of the actor of this process [12].

## 9. Conclusion

A look at fiction and non-fiction texts as equal ways of understanding the reality reveals their intersections as in a complex and heterogeneous network. High speed of changes and their scale, a special type of managers in demand in a new social context, all these actualize the symbolism of cosmogonic myths (“iron people”, “age of heroes”). The sensation of the changed perception of temporal flow strengthens the feeling of “breaking the world”, “the beginning of time”, etc.; the construction of a “new history” goes at the same time, which includes a number of mythological episodes. Actors of transformations use the spellcasting functions of the public word with different levels of awareness. Those who watch the process with apprehension fix “prophetic statements” of “common people”.

Since the “iron people” in this new world precede the “generation of heroes” (“You can do nothing, this is our country, everyone is famous here for something”. ([10], 113)), we can talk about the “reverse course” of history where the “golden age” (= “a beautiful tomorrow”) is not thought of the past, but of the future. At the same time, the “former” “golden” and “silver” epochs (19th and the turn of the 20th century) turn out to be not acute and “taken out of brackets”. The previous world is thought to have reached a certain exhaustion, as a result of which a “reset” of anthropogenesis takes place: the emergence of a “new man”, born in the old world, but recreated by a new reality is inevitable. “New people” appropriate “forest and land” (and the geological

heritage is more in demand than archaeological, because the antropogenesis-1 leads to a "dead end", to "old people").

However, radical managerial strategies could be embodied only with the support of engineering technologies, the carriers of which sharing the spirit of changes were inclined to more moderate, material-dependent steps. The "physical", "natural" in human again turns out to be a "point of reference", a reliable base. And if the focus on the synchronic plan shows us the logic of irreconcilable confrontation, then a long distance makes it possible to see how practices which seemed to have been rejected forever sprout being saved by "old people" and find their life in a transformed form in a new world.

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