

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

VALERIJAN PIDMOHYL'NYJ'S

MISTO

by

JAROSLAW ZUROWSKY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC STUDIES

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

APRIL, 1979

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj's novel Misto by showing his vision and perception of the city and its people in Ukraine after the Revolution. Very little has been written about Pidmohyl'nyj. He was purged in the thirties; as a result Soviet critics generally ignore him or their comments about his works are generally negative. Western critics, on the other hand, comment very sparingly on him.

The first chapter of this thesis is an overview of the criticisms voiced about Pidmohyl'nyj's prose. Chapters II and III are devoted to the topic of the city in general. The second chapter deals with the city from a historical perspective, while the third chapter deals with the city as Pidmohyl'nyj perceived it. Pidmohyl'nyj's city is divided into two spheres -- the outer city and the inner city. The outer city is the city of the streets, parks, and alleyways. The inner city is found inside the buildings and represents the core of the city, a core that is degenerating.

Chapter IV presents the secondary characters of the novel, whom Stepan Radchenko meets in the city. They create a stagnant society geared towards mass escape from reality by means of alcohol, escapist film and literature.

Chapter V deals with Stepan Radchenko. He came to Kiev as an alienated individual and communist who, on the one hand, wanted to destroy everything he found in the city and, on the other hand, tried to become a member of the society and live like the inhabitants of Kiev. Finally, he rejected this society and decided to live his life in his own manner.

The novel points to the conclusion that the individual, if he/she wants to preserve his/her individuality, can survive only by rejecting society and by determining his/her own course. This is a drastic action because it leaves the individual in an isolated position, surrounded by forces that demand conformity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor N. Aponiuk for aiding me in researching the materials for the thesis, especially those materials found in libraries outside of Winnipeg. I would also like to thank her for assisting me in the writing of the thesis. I also want to thank Professor J. Rozumnyj for introducing me to Pidmohyl'nyj. Other people deserving gratitude are all those individuals who continually gave me moral support.

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CHAPTER I

Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj and His Critics

Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj was born in 1901, the son of a peasant family, in the village of Chapljakh. In 1918, he finished school in Dnipropetrovsk and then went on to university. His studies were disrupted due to the Revolution and the subsequent Civil War. To support himself he started teaching. During 1918 - 1919, he taught himself French, became knowledgeable in Western European literature, and started to write his first literary works. His first stories appeared in the magazine Sich in 1919.

In 1921, Pidmohyl'nyj moved to Kiev. At first he taught there also, but then he started to work for various publishing houses. In 1928, he became one of the editors of the Kievan literary monthly Zhyttja i revoljutsija (Life and Revolution), which was one of the more prominent publications of the era. He held this position until the early 1930's, when, according to Hryhorij Kostjuk, he lost this position due to an unofficial ban of him and of his works.¹ From this time on, his only source of income was that which came from his translations. He translated almost all of Anatole France, as well as works by Balzac, de Maupassant and Stendhal.

In 1932, Pidmohyl'nyj moved to Kharkiv, which was at that time the administrative center for the Soviet Ukraine.

1. Hryhorij Kostjuk, "Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj," in Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto (New York, 1954), p. 286.

In Kharkiv, however, Pidmohyl'nyj was unable to get quarters for himself and for his family, and therefore, was forced to live in the writers' building Slovo (Word).

In 1934, Pidmohyl'nyj was arrested and charged with being a member of the All-Ukraine Terrorist Borotbist Center. He was sentenced to ten years in the concentration camps. After July, 1935, his further fate is unknown.²

Pidmohyl'nyj's writings appeared in many of the journals and anthologies of the twenties including: Vyr revoljutsiji (The Whirlpool of the Revolution), 1921; Zhovten' (October), 1921; Shljakhy mystetstva (The Paths of Art), 1921; Nova hromada (A New Community), 1923; Chervonyj shjakh (The Red Pathway), 1924; Zhyttja i revoljutsija (Life and Revolution). Pidmohyl'nyj had many other articles published in both Chervonyj shljakh and Zhyttja i revoljutsija in the later twenties. Pidmohyl'nyj's first book of short stories was published in 1920. The book, Tvory (Works), contained the stories Starets' (The Beggar), Vanja, Vazhke pytannja (The Important Question), Prorok (Prophet), Hajdamaka, Dobryj boh (The Benevolent God), Na seli (In the Village), Na imeny-nakh (On the Nameday), Did Jakym (Granfather Jakym) and Sicheslav. In 1922, his book, Ostap Shaptala was published. Also in 1922, in Leipzig, a collection of his stories, V epidemichnomu baratsi (In the Barracks of Epidemics), made an appearance. This collection caused Pidmohyl'nyj some problems because it was published outside the Soviet Union.

2. Ibid.

In order to protect himself from the criticism leveled against him, Pidmohyl'nyj wrote a letter to the journal Chervonyj shljakh explaining the reasons for his actions and claiming that his work could not be published in Kiev due to the financial difficulties within the publishing houses.³ In 1924, another story, Vijskovyj litun (Army Pilot), came out. In 1923, Syn (Son) appeared and in 1926, it was followed by Tretja revoljutsija (The Third Revolution). In 1927, another book of short stories appeared. This book, Problema khliba (The Problem of Bread), included some stories that had been published earlier. New stories included Problema khliba, Sontse skhodyt' (The Sun is Rising), Istorija pani Jivhy (The Story of Mrs. Jivha), P'jatdesjat verstov (Fifty Versts), Sobaka (The Dog), and Smert' (Death). Pidmohyl'nyj published a number of stories including Nevelychka drama (A Little Drama), which was serialized in the magazine Zhyttja i revoljutsija in 1930. According to Jurij Smolych, just before his arrest, though Smolych never mentions the fact that Pidmohyl'nyj was arrested, Pidmohyl'nyj was working on another novel which was never published. Smolych claims that he read the first few chapters of this novel.⁴

3 Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj, "Lyst do redaktsiji," Chervonyj shljakh, No. 2 (1923), p. 281.

4 Jurij Smolych, Rozpovidi pro nespokij nemaje kintsja, Book Three: Shche descho z dvadtsjatykh i trytsjatykh rokiv v ukrajins'komu literaturnomu pobuti (Kiev, 1972), pp. 99-120.

During the twenties, Pidmohyl'nyj was a member of the literary group Lanka (Link), together with such writers as Hryhorij Kosynka, Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, Evhenij Pluzhnyk and Todos' Os'machka. Later this group attracted Ivan Bahrjanyj and Borys Teneta. In 1926, when the latter two joined, the name of the organization was changed to MARS (Majstry revoljutsijnoho slova, Masters of the Revolutionary Word).

Lanka was different from the other literary organizations of the time, such as Pluh (Plough) or Vaplite (Vil'na akademija proletars'koji literatury, Free Academy of Proletarian Literature). These latter organizations believed that the political message that they were preaching was the most important activity that they were engaged in. Lanka, on the other hand, emphasized artistic creativity first, while the political message was given a secondary place in their scheme of values.⁵ This, however, did not prevent Pidmohyl'nyj from becoming involved in the political and literary discussions that were going on. Though he was not as vocal as some of the other writers of the twenties, Pidmohyl'nyj did support Khvylyjovyj and his call for a romantyka vitajizmu, a literature of life, based on the writings of Plekhanov with heroes that fitted the description of Plekhanov's "live" person.⁶ The vitaist here had three major qualities. He/

5. O. Doroshkevych, "Literaturnyj rukh na Ukrajinі v 1924 r.," Zhyttja i revoljutsija, No. 3 (1925), p. 66.

6. Jaroslav Hordyns'kyj, Literaturna krytyka pidsovjets'koji Ukrajinj (L'viv-Kiev, 1939), p. 66.

she had to be able to think independently, possess talent, and be free.

Pidmohyl'nyj also was knowledgeable about all the new psychological discoveries and advances that were made, most notably those by Freud. This is shown very clearly in an article he wrote about Ivan Nechuj-Levytskyj.⁷ In this article, he analyzes Levytskyj from a purely Freudian point of view.

From the very beginning, critics have had problems in trying to deal with Pidmohyl'nyj and with his writings. This can best be seen in the wide spectrum of critical opinions that have been expressed about him, even by a respectable critic like Mykhajlo Dolengo. In 1924, Dolengo wrote at least three articles about Pidmohyl'nyj. In the first one, he claimed that Pidmohyl'nyj was similar to Khvyljovyj and Vynnychenko, and that Pidmohyl'nyj was an epic realist.⁸ In another article, only a few months later, Dolengo claimed that Pidmohyl'nyj was an expressionist and that his stories were made up of separate short, dry phrases. He also added that the essence of Pidmohyl'nyj's writings was the portrayal of the struggle between the conscious person and his/her surroundings, where the struggle accomplishes nothing, but

7 Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj, "Ivan Levyts'kyj-Nechuj," Zhyt-tja i revoljutsija, No. 9 (1927), pp. 295-303.

8 Mykhajlo Dolengo, "Impressionistychnyj liryzm v suchasnij ukrajins'kij prozi," Chervonyj shljakh, No. 1-2 (1924), p. 173.

only leads to the downfall of the individual.⁹ In a third article from that year, Dolengo claimed that Pidmohyl'nyj was the opposite of Khvyljovyj and that he was a naturalistic realist.¹⁰

Dolengo also considered Pidmohyl'nyj a writer who was neither revolutionary nor bourgeois. Pidmohyl'nyj can best be described, according to Dolengo, as an intellectual's intellectual. Dolengo saw in Pidmohyl'nyj the whole spectrum of human experience from the tragic to the tragicomic. Dolengo also wrote that there was a prevailing skepticism and pessimism in Pidmohyl'nyj's writings.¹¹

Yurij Lavrinenko supports Dolengo's first position, agreeing that skepticism and pessimism, comparable to that found in the writings of Andreyev and Pshybyshvskyj, are found in the writings of Pidmohyl'nyj. Lavrinenko, however, tries to make this skepticism and pessimism seem positive somehow with lines like, "This is the healthy skepticism and pessimism of a writer who sees the incapability, defeat and doom of man in his era."¹² The end result of this vision of mankind, according to Lavrinenko, is a society "that with

9. -----, "Trahedija nepotribnoji trahichnosty," Chervonyj shljakh, No. 4-5 (1924), pp. 264-272.

10. -----, "Notatky do istoriji zhovtnevoji prozy ta eposu," Zhovtnevyy zbirnyk (1924), p. 110.

11. A. Leites and M. Jashek, Desjat' rokov ukrajins'koji literatury (1917-1927) (Kharkiv, 1928), p. 375.

12. Yurij Lavrinenko, Rozstriljane vidrodzhennja (Munich, 1959), p. 446.

a cold, painfully developed peace will accept and will bless death ---- like an important law of life."¹³

Though Kostjuk writes that many of the critics from the twenties more or less shared the same views on Pidmohyl'nyj as did Dolengo,¹⁴ there were individuals who differed in this regard. Serhij Jefremov was one of these. Jefremov, fairly early in Pidmohyl'nyj's career, called him the most contemporary of all Ukrainian writers. According to Jefremov, Pidmohyl'nyj's literature was based on blind incidents or accidents of fate, where the individuals involved believed that they controlled their own insignificant lives.¹⁵ Jefremov disagreed with Dolengo, claiming that there was no pessimism in Pidmohyl'nyj's literature. "He is not at all a pessimist and his philosophy does not at all remind one of the graveyard moaning of the enamoured 'superfluous people,' Hamletized paralytics with, as Lesia Ukrainka put it, shining eyes."¹⁶ Jefremov believed that Pidmohyl'nyj's strength as a writer lay in the fact that he presented the contemporary individual as he/she really was.

He does not go off to the side for the actions, he does not wander among insignificant details, but goes straight to the point ---- to present the contemporary person with his uncertainty, waverings, infatuations, fatalism, inclination

13. Ibid.

14. Kostjuk, "Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj," p. 283.

15. Serhij Jefremov, Istorija ukrajins'koho pys'menstva, Vol. II (4th ed., Kiev-Leipzig, 1919), p. 398.

16. Ibid., p. 402.

towards mysticism ---- because even the Revolution has its own mysticism ---- with his apathy, even to a certain kind of deathwish.¹⁷

Burghardt saw Pidmohyl'nyj's characters as variations on the Quasimodo theme, or in other words, social rejects.¹⁸ Doroshkevych wrote that Pidmohyl'nyj "does not reflect life but recreates it, searching in it for some kind of final sense, some kind of distant, idealistic goal, which is hidden from us."¹⁹ In another article Doroshkevych wrote that Pidmohyl'nyj was basically a realist with a great deal of impressionism in his work. Doroshkevych also believed that Pidmohyl'nyj was influenced by Chekhov.²⁰

Feliks Jakubovs'kyj believed that Pidmohyl'nyj developed out of Chekhov and Vynnychenko, but he was critical of Pidmohyl'nyj, claiming that "with regard to subject matter, he is pallid and ideologically not clear."²¹

While discussing Pidmohyl'nyj's Problema khliba (The Problem of Bread), I. Lakuza wrote that the story was very well written, but that it did not capture life as it really

17. Ibid., p. 403.

18. O. Burhardt, Review of Vijs'kovyj litun. Opovidannja, Chervonyj shljakh, Nos. 8-9 (1924), p. 349.

19. O. Doroshkevych, "Literaturnyj rukh na Ukrajinii v 1924 r.," p. 66.

20. ----, Pidruchnyk istoriji ukrajins'koji literatury (3rd ed., Kharkiv-Kiev, 1927), p. 318.

21. Feliks Jakubovs'kyj, "Do kryzy v ukrajins'kij khudozhnij prozi," Zhyttja i revolujutsija, No. 1 (1926), p. 45.

was.²²

One of the more innovative articles about Pidmohyl'nyj and his writings was written by A. Muzychka. This article was written from a Freudian position and everything is seen in terms of Freudian symbolism. Muzychka also believed that there was a continuous pattern in Pidmohyl'nyj's work and that it can all be unravelled using Freud.

As Pidmohyl'nyj fell further and further into dis-favour with the Party, the Party critics started to criticize him more and more. Andrij Khvylja accused him of being a nationalist.²⁴ Korjak claimed that Pidmohyl'nyj's writings reflected kurkulizm.²⁵ The Bryhada group claimed that Pidmohyl'nyj was an anarchist and a Trotskyite and, therefore, an enemy of the State.²⁶

Because the Communist Party censors have banned Pidmohyl'nyj's writings, the articles in Soviet books written after his arrest and sentencing, are slanted to make him and his writings look as negative as possible. An example of

22. I. Lakyza, Review of Problema khliba, Zhyttja i revoljutsija, No. 12 (1926), p. 358.
23. A. Muzychka, "Tvorchyja metoda Valerijana Pidmohyl'noho," Chervonyj shljakh, No. 10 (1930), pp. 107-121, and Nos. 11 - 12 (1930), pp. 126-137.
24. Hordyns'kyj, Literaturna krytyka pidsovjets'koji Ukrainy, p. 77.
25. V. Korjak, "Khudozhnja literatura na suchasnomu etapi sotsijalistychnoho budivnytstva," Chervonyj shljakh, No. 5 (1931), pp. 69-77 and No. 6 (1931), pp. 83-88.
26. Bryhada, Review of Petro Kolesnyk's Review of Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj, Lim (Kharkiv, 1932), p. 32.

this is the discussion of Pidmohyl'nyj in the official Istorija ukrains'koji radjans'koji literatury (The History of Ukrainian Soviet Literature). The author of the article sees the influence of Andreyev, and the pessimism and the skepticism, as well as the "Tragedy of unnecessary tragedy."²⁷ Pidmohyl'nyj's writings are full of "individualistic incommunicativeness and subjectivism."²⁸ His main characters are essentially alienated beings that were created "in the spirit of sickly psychology."²⁹ Pidmohyl'nyj is graphic testimony to "how strongly certain writers held in their jaws the traditions of the bourgeois decadent, naturalistic method in literature."³⁰

Istorija ukrajins'koji literatury (The History of Ukrainian Literature) follows the traditional line in denouncing Pidmohyl'nyj, but does so for different reasons. Pidmohyl'nyj's major fault was that he "generally concentrated his attention on negative happenings (literary Bohemia, street people, unusual people, and so forth); he did not know how to see and recreate the positive processes that represented the face of the proletarian city."³¹

27. Akademija Nauk USSR, Istorija ukrajins'koji radjans'koji literatury (Kiev, 1965), p. 125.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. -----, Istorija Ukrajins'koji literatury, Vol. VI (Kiev, 1970), p. 336.

Western commentators on Pidmohyl'nyj, though they do not follow a strict line, do not shed any greater light on Pidmohyl'nyj and on what his writings are all about. Lavrinenko writes that in Pidmohyl'nyj's early works there are traces of expressionism which disappear in Misto.³² This is contrary to the beliefs of many critics of the twenties who refer to Pidmohyl'nyj as an impressionist.³³ Yurij Bojko alludes to Pidmohyl'nyj as a nationalist.³⁴ Ohloblyn-Hlobenko wrote that Pidmohyl'nyj is a neo-realist yet his early works are naturalistic with elements of impressionism and expressionism.³⁵ This is very similar to what Hal'chuk had written six years earlier.

Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj started with psychological stories where naturalistic elements were united with impressionistic fixations of separate sensations; the most descriptive features, here and there not without influence of the lyrical, as they called it, 'ornamental' prose (Works, 1920). The next stage in the development of this prose writer is marked with his putting on the first plane the solitary person in the world, that looks on everything through a prism of his/her pain, suffering (maybe under the influence of the German Expressionists).³⁶

32. Lavrinenko, Rozstriljane vidrodzhennja, p. 446.
33. Kostjuk, "Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj," p. 287.
34. Yurij Bojko, "Nevelyckha drama na tli disnosty 20-ykh rokiv," Vybrane, Vol. I (Munich, 1971), pp. 195-210.
35. M. Ohloblyn-Hlobenko, "Ukrajins'ka proza 1920 - pochatku 1930 rokiv," Istoryko-literaturni stat'i, Vol. CLXVII of Zapysky naukovoho tovarystva imeny Shevchenka (Munich, 1958), p. 93.
36. M. Hal'chuk, Literaturne zhyttja na pidsovjets'kij Ukrajinii, Vol. I: Proza 1920-30 (Munich-Paris, 1952), p. 27.

Generally, most of the commentators on Pidmohyl'nyj agree that his novel Misto was his best work as a writer. However, the opinions voiced about Misto are just as varied as those about Pidmohyl'nyj himself. Soviet Party commentators, in keeping with the policy of denouncing everything about Pidmohyl'nyj, denounce the novel whenever they deal with it. One of the first people to denounce the novel was Mykhajlo Mohyljans'kyj. He claimed that the novel had no redeeming social value because the characters were not convincing, while the novel itself had nothing to do with the reality that Mohyljans'kyj saw.³⁷

This is in direct contrast to what Nikovs'kyj wrote about Misto. He claimed that some of the characters are definitely based on real people that Pidmohyl'nyj and others knew in Kiev and that is how Pidmohyl'nyj's friends viewed the novel.³⁸ Nikovs'kyj also wrote that there is no basic difference between the people from the city and those from the villages. The only difference between them is that the village youth has a different political awareness.³⁹ The theme of the novel, according to Nikovs'kyj, is the illustration of how an organism that is removed from one set of surroundings and is placed into another set adapts itself

37 Mykhajlo Mohyljans'kyj, "Ni mista ni sela," Chervonyj shljakh, Nos. 5-6 (1929), pp. 273-275.

38 Andrij Nikovs'kyj, "Pro 'Misto' V. Pidmohyl'noho," Zhyttja i revolutsija, No. 10 (1928), p. 111.

39 Ibid., p. 106.

to the second set. Later the organism returns to the original set only to find itself alien there.⁴⁰ Stepan was this organism that totally adapted itself to the urban environment forgetting everything from the village. However, he did gain something in Nikovs'kyj's eyes. What he did gain was knowledge, which would be the basis for his novel about people.⁴¹ Nikovs'kyj also wrote that Stepan's career was totally accidental and unjustified, despite the fact that Stepan was a blind egotist and an unscrupulous careerist.⁴² He also claimed that Stepan was the new person that had no knowledge of traditional moral values and that everything he did was geared towards his own betterment. However, according to Nikovs'kyj, Pidmohyl'nyj did not want the reader to judge Stepan because, firstly, Stepan is still developing as a human being, and, secondly, because Stepan is a product of his era, that is the era of the twenties.⁴³

In Ukrajins'ka radjans'ka entsyklopedija (The Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia), there is only a one-sentence statement about the novel. "In the novel Misto (1927), he showed a misunderstanding of the New Economic Policy; he pitted the village against the city."⁴⁴

40. Ibid., p. 108.

41. Ibid., p. 108.

42. Ibid., p. 108.

43. Ibid., p. 109.

44. Adkademija Nauk URSR, Ukrajins'ka radjans'ka entsyklopedija, Vol. VII (Kiev, 1963), p. 191.

A more colorful description appears in Istorija ukrajins'koji radjans'koji literatury, where Stepan Radchenko is portrayed as a careerist and a materialist. All he did in the city, according to the authors was to procure for himself a comfortable life consisting of money, fame, soft job, and lovers. Pidmohyl'nyj delves into the turbid depths of Freudianism in order to come up with the philosophy that promotes "eternity" and the baser instincts of man, which the authors believe is pessimistic.⁴⁵

In Istorija ukrajins'koji literatury, Stepan is described in a similar manner as a "narcisstic egotist and a careerist, a person without morals and without responsibilities."⁴⁶

Holubjeva claims that the novel is a failure because Pidmohyl'nyj does not show the era more fully. She claims that Pidmohyl'nyj shows a fairly complete picture of Stepan, including his creative work and aesthetic views on the era and on the literature of that time, but she cannot find an adequate reason for Stepan's actions in the novel. Another fault that she finds in the novel is the fact that Pidmohyl'nyj does not make any sweeping generalizations that would describe the era in accordance with the political bias that she is echoing.⁴⁷ Stepan is a totally negative character in

45 Istorija ukrajins'koji radjans'koji literatury, p. 141.

46 Istorija ukrajins'koji literatury, Vol. VI, p. 336.

47 Z. S. Holubjeva, Ukrajins'kyj radjans'kyj roman 20-ykh rokiy (Kharkiv, 1967), p. 125.

her view. She describes him as a person "who is unbalanced, egotistical, a person of momentary moods far from the new life, a careerist, a person who adapts things for his own needs"⁴⁸

Western interpretations are much more diverse, but they are equally disputable. Hal'chuk compares Misto and Stepan Radchenko to Balzac's work.

The high point of Pidmohyl'nyj's creativity is his novel Misto (1928), with its graceful composition, serene and thrifty unfolding of the subject, with its refined selection of language (here are evident influences of the French realist school of prose). The hero, a village boy, the student Stepan Radchenko, fights for his fate in Kiev during the time of N.E.P. and Ukrainianization. He tries to conquer the city in the same manner Balzac's heroes did, and his career, like the path of Balzac's heroes, is not without sacrifices (Tamara, Zos'ka).⁴⁹

Ohloblyn-Hlobenko sees the novel essentially as a story about a poor, formerly oppressed, village boy who makes it big in the city after going through and surviving great obstacles. According to Ohloblyn-Hlobenko, the first obstacle that Stepan had to face was the fact that he was going to a city that was largely dominated by a foreign element; but in the end, after working hard, Stepan does become part of city life and, after becoming a writer, he is able to get recognition and material security. According to Ohloblyn-Hlobenko, Stepan's victory over the city is symbo-

48. Ibid., p. 147.

49. Hal'chuk, Literaturne zhyttja na pidsovjets'kij Ukrajinii, Vol. I, p. 27.

lized by his conquering of Rita.⁵⁰

George Luckyj sees Stepan Radchenko, at the end of the novel, as being a totally positive character. Stepan, in Luckyj's eyes, has been able to overcome everything he found in the city including the bureaucracy, prostitution, and corruption.⁵¹ This apparently symbolizes the triumph of the good village boy over the city and the inherent evil found there.

John Fizer echoes Luckyj's beliefs and adds some anti-Communism of his own in an attempt to make Stepan seem like a noble figure surrounded by a corrupt city.

Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj's The City (1928) is another tribute to the Ukrainian village, hence, to the peasants' moral superiority over the city corrupted by the Communist reforms. Stepan Radchenko, a young village lad, comes to Kiev with the intension of acquiring a higher education. His world view, his ideas about society, are a product of his peasant upbringing. He is limited in his speculative ability, his reaction to the problems he encounters are often naive, but his common sense judgment is always to the point. Kiev after the Revolution, instead of being regenerated, has all the signs of moral degeneration. Bureaucracy, bribery, prostitution are more widespread than ever. Yet, Radchenko, a symbol of the uncorrupted life in the village, heroically fights all such vices and thus demonstrates his moral superiority.⁵²

50 Ohloblyn-Hlobenko, "Ukrajins'ka proza 1920 - pochatku 1930 rokiv," p. 103.

51 George Luckyj, Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine (Freeport, New York, 1956), p. 117.

52 John Fizer, "Ukrainian Writers' Resistance to Communism," Thought Patterns, No. 6 (1959), p. 78.

The opposite view is held by Yurij Sherekh. The only victor, in his eyes, is the city and the victory that can be attributed to Stepan comes from the fact that Stepan had divested himself of everything that was related to the village. Stepan became a total urbanite. Sherekh also believed that Pidmohyl'nyj welcomes this triumph of the city.⁵³ He also believed that in the novel there is a "tendency towards irony, towards skepticism, but on the first plane appeared a greedy interest in life, in the diversity of people, and their feelings and reactions."⁵⁴

Lavrinenko claimed that the novel was written in a style similar to Balzac or de Maupassant. According to Lavrinenko, the novel proved that in a socialist city, the better qualities of the village character disappear, while the worse one of the city develop.⁵⁵

The problem with the criticism of Pidmohyl'nyj is that it deals with generalizations. Pidmohyl'nyj deals with basically "real" people and not with dogmas or stock storybook characters that can be easily divided into groups of black and white, or good and evil. His characters are individuals and not embodiments of broad generalizations. Pidmohyl'nyj's purpose in writing the novel Misto was an attempt to create an Ukrainian urban literature and in this way bridge the gap

53 Yurij Sherekh, "Ljudy i ljudyna," in his Ne dlja ditej (New York, 1964), p. 86.

54 -----, "Bilok i joho zaburennja," Ukrajinsk'ka literaturna hazeta, No. 9 (27) (1957), pp. 1-2.

55 Lavrinenko, Rozstriljane vidrodzhennja, p. 446.

between the village and the city in the Ukrainian psyche.

I wrote Misto because I love the city and I do not see myself nor my work apart from it. I wrote it in order to bring together the city and the Ukrainian psyche, in order to make it a concrete part of it. And when a group of critics accuses me of supporting the peasant hatred of the city, then I can accuse myself of ingratitude towards the village. But we have lived for too long underneath the thatched straw roofs to remain their romanticizers. 56

Pidmohyl'nyj, in rejecting the return to the villages, also rejected the return to nature. Only dreamers still believe that in going back to nature will happiness be found. These dreamers are individuals who want to avoid the reality around them altogether.

Nature is and will be one of the most welcome shelters, where those oppressed by reality seek appeasement. She seems far from the noisy wars, simple and at the same time wondrous. The root of this feeling ---- a deep atavism, flavored with a naive belief that the past was better than the present. And nature stands before the eyes of a dreamer, as a symbol of the most distant past, therefore, the happiest time of human life. 57

When Soviet critics write that Pidmohyl'nyj "pitted the village against the city," they fail to point out two important points. The first is that Pidmohyl'nyj castigated both the city and the village for essentially the same reason. They both promote alienation. Stepan, because he was

56. From an article published in Universal'nyj zhurnal, No. 1 (1929), cited by Holubjeva, Ukrajins'kyj radjans'kyj roman 20-ykh rokiv, p. 165.

57. Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj, "Bez sterna," Zhyttja i revoljutsija, No. 1 (1927), p. 42.

an orphan, was not given a place in rural society because he did not have any familial ties. As a result, he was continually left on the outside of this society. This developed anti-social feelings in him. In the city, he could not get rid of these feelings and, therefore, he continued to be alienated until he could start to relate to people and accept himself for what he was.

The second thing that the Soviet critics fail to point out is that Pidmohyl'nyj emphasizes people, rather than some political or socio-economic doctrine. The character of the city is determined by the type of people who live there. The same holds true for the village. The village is the type of place the villagers want it to be. Pidmohyl'nyj ends up comparing the people of the village and the city, not because they are both guilty of the same sort of actions, both groups look similar, and, therefore, no great distinction can be made between the two.

Pidmohyl'nyj rejected the rural option because he saw it as a return to the past rather than the building of the future. Village society is built on familial relationships, while the society of romantyka vitaizmu is based on strong individuals. The Soviet Party line is to promote a society based on the mass rather than a society based on the individual and, therefore, Pidmohyl'nyj has to be condemned.

Holubjeva seems to contradict herself when she says that Pidmohyl'nyj shows the reader his hero's inner thinking and life, but that there is no adequate explanation for his actions. Her second criticism is also one that lacks credi-

bility. Pidmohyl'nyj's novel is about his main character and how he relates to his surroundings. He relates to specific concrete events and people, rather than vague philosophical generalizations.

Essentially, she is criticizing Stepan Radchenko because he is human and not some mythical socialist realist worker who sticks to one job for forty-five years without questioning anything in life. Her accusations are either unfounded or meaningless. Condemning Stepan because he adapts things for his own needs, means that she is condemning everybody who is resourceful and innovative. She claims that Stepan is a careerist. To a certain extent this is true, but it is not Stepan's careerism that got him places. Stepan started out as a cultural worker who decided to improve himself and so went to the Institute in Kiev. Here he started to write and come into contact with other writers. They elected him secretary of the magazine because they felt he was competent enough to do the job. His talent got him there, not his careerism. Holubjeva totally avoids this side of his character and other intricacies of his character.

The problem with Ohloblyn-Hlobenko's commentary is the fact that the novel is somewhat more complicated than he makes it out to be and also in the fact that Stepan does not conquer Rita. In fact, he is afraid of her and he is glad that she is not staying in Kiev for very long.

Fizer claims that Stepan is morally superior to the other people of the city. Nevertheless, Stepan is just as cruel and as heartless as the others. He jilts Zos'ka after

leading her on and still expects her to be waiting for him. The only difference between Stepan and the other people in the novel is that Stepan feels guilty after he learns of Zos'ka's suicide, while nobody else seems to care.⁵⁸ This is not the basis for any moral superiority.

Stepan's victory, if there is one, is not that he gets rid of the village in himself, but that he has gone through the whole spectrum of human experience, which nobody else in the novel can say that he/she has done. The city has not triumphed because it is still populated by people who are essentially non-creative beings and who strive to avoid all responsibilities while living in their own escapist fantasies.

Both Lavrinenko and Fizer fail to realize that for a long time before "socialism" was established or even thought of, writers, especially the early nineteenth century romantic writers, had been claiming that the industrial city was an evil place, and that only in the pastoral villages and countrysides was "good" revered. Pidmohyl'nyj wanted to get rid of this romantic vision of life in the villages and this is especially evident in his early short stories.

Lavrinenko and Fizer also fail to realize that the city that Pidmohyl'nyj is presenting is a direct continuation of the czarist city. The social problems are still the same. The alienation which caused people to remain solitary beings in Artsybashev's Sanin and in Kuprin's Yama (The Pit), both of which were written before the Revolution, is

58 Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 254.

also found in Pidmohyl'nyj's city. The city, itself, has not changed at all. The same establishments are still open, emphasizing the continuation of the same lifestyle. The most graphic example of this is Maxim's,⁵⁹ a cafe open before the Revolution and still open after it, frequented now by NEP men.⁶⁰ The political implications that Lavrinenko and Fizer raise are nothing more than a attack against the Soviet Union.

The major problem with the criticism of Pidmohyl'nyj is that nobody deals with the intricacies of his characters or of his writings. The critics generally deal with his writings very superficially and emphasize whatever suits their needs instead of dealing with the whole work. Not one of the commentators mentioned dealt with the topic of romantyka vitaizmu in Pidmohyl'nyj's work, yet he was one of the first supporters of this doctrine.

When dealing with the main characters in Misto, the same is seen again. Stepan is categorized as either good or

59 At Maxim's cafe a plump, fascinating Roumanian made his violin whistle like a nightingale; his gorgeous eyes sad and languorous with bluish whites, and his hair like velvet. The lights, shaded with gypsy shawls, cast two sorts of light ---- white electric light downwards, orange light upwards and sideways. The ceiling was draped star-like with swathes of dusty blue silk, huge diamonds glittered and rich auburn Siberian furs shone from dim, intimate corners. And it smelled of roasted coffee, sweet vodka and French perfume. Mikhail Bulgakov, The White Guard, translated by Michael Glenny (London, 1971), p. 52.

60 Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 211.

evil. Everything that Stepan does in the novel cannot be justified, but he does do some positive things. Condemning him for just one side of his character, or praising him for one side of his character is only a partial evaluation. Stepan is a much more complicated character than that and should be treated as such.

CHAPTER II

The Ukrainian City in the 1920's

The Soviet Ukraine in the 1920's was trying to rebuild and recover from the devastating war of the previous decade and the subsequent Civil War, as well as trying to build a socialist state. War Communism, as it had been practised during the Civil War, had not stimulated the economy. Farmers produced only what they needed for themselves and did not produce for trade. Industrial production, due to a shortage of raw materials, also fell. In order to stimulate industrial productivity in the cities and agricultural productivity in the countryside, N.E.P. (New Economic Policy) was instituted.

N.E.P. was geared to help the small private entrepreneur in the city (who employed less than twenty people) and the family farm operations and cottage industries in the villages. Because N.E.P. was geared to pacify the peasantry, a debate raged within the Communist Party about the validity of the program and how it was going to help build the utopian socialist state. Those in favor of the program argued that this was the only way to build the socialist state. They believed that the only way to have a strong industrial capacity would be first to have a strong "grassroots" industrial base. This could be achieved only through N.E.P. The small entrepreneur would buy the raw materials necessary from the state and produce finished products which would be distributed through the various state-owned outlets. As the

small entrepreneur would start to expand, he/she would become more intertwined with the state-owned industries until the two would finally merge. In this way, stronger, large-scale industrial development would take place. The problem with this sort of development was that it was a long time in coming, while the opposition to N.E.P. wanted large-scale industrial development to take place immediately, bypassing the development of the grassroots.

N.E.P. was also frowned on by some of the Party members because it was a policy first promoted by the Menshevik faction. The Party hardliners also disapproved of N.E.P. because it guaranteed a set price to the agricultural producers, but did not guarantee a price to the industrial producers. This was seen as a sell-out to the peasantry because it placed them in a privileged position.

N.E.P., however, did succeed in getting industry going again in the Soviet Union, but it did have some negative side effects. All the felons and the speculators, who had gone underground during the Revolution, surfaced again, hoping to make large speculative profits and live like the rich had done before the Revolution. They succeeded. This, in turn, led to fairly widespread corruption. The NEPmen, as they were called, propagated this corruption, not caring about what would happen to them if the government ever decided to clamp down on N.E.P. Most NEPmen never expected N.E.P. to last for any great length of time, so they were making the best of the situation, spending their profits as soon as they came in. This, in a roundabout way, helped to streng-

then the economy because it kept the money moving. People were buying and selling rather than hoarding their money, which was now Soviet paper money instead of czarist gold. People, leery of paper money, knew from past experiences with czarist paper currency, that commodities were much more valuable in times of crisis and this became another reason behind the great spending spree.

The second task of N.E.P. was to bring the peasantry and the urban proletariat closer together by showing them that by working together they would be able to create the utopian socialist state where they would be equal partners. This did not take place. The split between the two groups widened during N.E.P. as the urban and the rural economies were being reorganized. The guaranteed price that the agricultural producers received created a scissors effect on the economy. In the beginning of N.E.P., the rural populus was in a better economic position, but as N.E.P. progressed, the urban proletariat's standard of living rose.

Real wages of the workers in terms of purchasing power were only 69.1 percent of the 1913 level in 1923-4. Thereafter, there was a steady rise to 85.1 percent in 1924-5, to 108.4 percent in 1926-7, and 111.1 percent in 1927-8. Moreover, in the latter years of N.E.P. the worker was eating more than in 1913, and his working day fell from 8.5 hours in 1921 to 7.46 hours in 1927-8. ¹

1. Leonard Schapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, (London, 1960), p. 332.

There was a similar increase in the standard of living for the peasantry. Grain production in 1926 - 1927 was 62 percent greater than the grain production in 1913. However, there was only a 26.3 percent increase in the grain marketed in 1926 - 1927 over 1913.² Schapiro claims that the peasant used the rest of the grain for his own purposes, thus increasing his own standard of living.

Private industry went the road that the supporters of N.E.P. claimed it would. In 1923 - 1924, roughly one-third of the industry was in private hands. By 1926 - 1927, this percentage had slipped to 20.8 percent.³ With N.E.P., many new job opportunities opened up in the cities and because of this, many peasants left their subsistence farming operations to come to the city in search of work. Joining them in the search were those workers who had earlier left the cities during the war years. Unfortunately, there were not enough jobs for all the work force. In 1927 - 1928, there were about one million unemployed, most of whom were peasants who had come to the cities.⁴

The influx of peasantry to the cities created a whole new series of problems in the Soviet Ukraine. Although ethnic Ukrainians were in a majority position throughout the country, they were predominantly a rural group. Less than

2 Ibid., p. 339.

3 Ibid., p. 332.

4 Ibid., p. 332.

10 percent were found in the cities. The Russian community living in the Ukraine, however, was generally an urban group, and though they were only a minority, they dominated the urban scene. They made up 44 percent of the urban population compared to the Ukrainians who made up only 36 percent of the urban population.⁵ These are figures from the 1925 census. The influx of the peasantry into the cities was so great that according to the 1926 census the balance had shifted to favor the Ukrainian element. Ukrainians accounted for 42 percent of the urban population in Kiev, while the Russian element accounted for only 24 percent. In Kharkiv, the Ukrainian element made up 38.3 percent and the Russian 37 percent. In Dnipropetrovsk, the Ukrainian element made 35.9 percent while the Russian element accounted for 31.5 percent.⁶

Such a rapid change in the population did not help to improve the relationships between the peasantry and the urban population. This was not aided by the fact that due to a stringent Russification program instigated by the czarist regime, culminating with the banning of the Ukrainian printed word in 1876, Eastern Ukrainian cities were fairly extensively Russified. Russian bureaucrats had been imported from Russia, while Ukrainian bureaucrats who wished to advance in the czarist regime allowed themselves to be Russified. Despite this, there was a strong and continuous pro-

5. Robert S. Sullivant, Soviet Politics and the Ukraine (1917 - 1957) (New York, 1962), p. 24.
6. V. Kubijovych, "The National Groups on Ukrainian Ethnic Territory", Ukrainian Concise Encyclopedia, Vol. I, p. 216.

Ukrainian movement in the late nineteenth century. Though it developed through many different stages, its effectiveness and support among the proletariat and the peasantry has to be questioned. Jevhen Chykalenko's reminiscences give witness to this in a joke.

If the train from Kiev to Poltava which carried delegates for the unveiling of the monument to the poet Kotliarevsky in 1903 had crashed, this would have meant, it was said jokingly, the end of the Ukrainian movement for a long time; nearly all the leading personalities of the movement travelled in two cars on the train. ⁷

The city was seen as a symbol of domination by the peasantry, and, therefore, it was a negative place. This led to a feeling of ill will on both sides and a hatred of the other. The peasantry, partly jealous of what seemed to them to be a better material life in the city and partly antagonistic towards the urban dwellers because they saw their lives being run and controlled by the cities, developed an antagonism towards everything and everyone associated with urban life. An example of the antagonism between the peasantry and the urban population can be found in the writings of Peter Skorevetanskii from 1919.

The city rules the village and the city is "alien". The city draws to itself almost all the wealth and gives the village almost nothing in return. The city extracts taxes which never return to the Ukrainian village. In the city one must pay bribes to be freed from scorn and red tape. In the city are warm fires, schools, theaters, and music plays. The city is expensively dressed, as for a holiday; it eats and

7. Ivan Rudnytskyj, "The Role of the Ukraine in Modern History," Slavic Review, Vol. XXII, No. 2 (1963), p. 201.

drinks well; many people promenade. In the village there is nothing besides hard work, impenetrable darkness, and misery. The city is aristocratic, it is alien. It is not ours, not Ukrainian. 8

The feelings of the city dwellers, especially those of Russian ancestry, towards the peasantry was equally harsh. An example of this is found in Bulgakov's The White Guard, where Bulgakov describes life in Kiev in 1918 during the Civil War.

They neither knew nor cared about the real Ukraine and they hated it with all their heart and soul. And whenever there came vague rumors of events from that mysterious place called 'the country', rumors that the Germans were robbing the peasants, punishing them mercilessly and mowing them down by machine-gun fire, not only was not a single indignant voice raised in defence of the Ukrainian peasant but, under silked lampshades in drawing-rooms they would bare their teeth in a wolfish grin and mutter:

Serves them right! And a bit more of that sort of treatment wouldn't do 'em any harm either. I'd give it 'em even harder. That'll teach them to have a revolution ---- didn't want their own masters, so now they can have a taste of another! 9

The peasants were coming to a Russified city, and they did not like this. They wanted a Ukrainian city since the cities were on Ukrainian territory. The Ukrainian Communist Party agreed with this, and it instituted a program of Ukrainianization. This program was supposed to make the cities more Ukrainian and to ease the tensions between the urban prole-

8 Sullivan, Soviet Politics and the Ukraine (1917-1957), p. 332.

9 Bulgakov, The White Guard, p. 56.

tariat and the rural peasantry. This program involved items like changing the language of government from Russian to Ukrainian to teaching factory workers Ukrainian. This program was readily accepted by the Ukrainian side of the population, but it did not meet with a great deal of enthusiasm from the Russian side. The program also brought into question what kind of Ukrainian language should be brought to the cities. Of the two options that were open, one was the language spoken by the peasantry, generally an illiterate lot, speaking a dialect understood only in specific locales, while the other one was a literary language, spoken by almost no one.

The rural-urban problems were responsible for the rise of another debate in the Soviet Ukraine. Various literary groups were arguing among themselves about what the ideal future Ukrainian Communist was going to be like and where the starting point for the development of this ideal being was. Some groups like Pluh (Plough) claimed that the ideal future Ukrainian Communist should be based on the Ukrainian peasant because the peasant, they argued, best retained the traditional Ukrainian characteristics. Other groups such as Hart claimed that the peasant was not superior to the factory worker. They included everyone in their formula for the creation of the ideal Ukrainian Communist. The AsPanFut (Association of Pan Futurists) stressed the concept of a world revolution rather than merely a purely Ukrainian one.¹⁰

10. Clarence Manning, Twentieth Century Ukraine, (New York, 1951), p. 172.

During this debate many different manifestoes were written with various writers signing them and proclaiming their allegiance to this or that concept.

Western influences did not help to unite the rural and the urban groups. In Western Europe, industrialization was more or less complete in the twenties and the debate centered on whether the industrial city was a positive element in life or not. The two most vocal personalities in this debate were F. T. Marinetti and Oswald Spengler who took opposing sides. The irony about this debate is that both ended up supporting fascism.

Marinetti and the rest of the Italian Futurist movement welcomed the new industrial city with open arms. They accepted everything that the industrial city had to offer and called on the poets of the future to write about the wonders of the industrial world.

We will sing the great masses agitated by work, pleasure, or revolt; we will sing the multicolored and polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capitals; the nocturnal vibrations of arsenals and docks beneath their glaring electric moons; greedy stations devouring smoking serpents; factories hanging from the clouds by the threads of their smoke; bridges like giant gymnasts stepping over sunny rivers sparkling like diabolical cutlery; adventurous steamers scenting the horizon; large-breasted locomotives bridled with long tubes, and the slippery flight of airplanes whose propellers have flaglike flutterings and applauses of enthusiastic crowds. 11

11 F. T. Marinetti, "The Futuristic Manifesto," in Theories of Modern Art, ed. Herschell B. Chipp (Los Angeles, 1973), p. 286.

Spengler saw the city in a totally negative light. His ideal person was the pastoral villager, who did not stray beyond the confines of his rural existence. The industrial city, on the other hand, was a haven for nomadic beings who were part of the faceless mass that resided there. The city dweller was an unproductive being with no respect for any of the traditional things of life like religion or the class structure. Spengler saw the city dweller as an atheist and a sly individual with nothing to offer anyone.¹² Spengler also proclaimed that Europe was dying and that it was in need of a new order. However, this new order was going to be essentially the restoration of the old class structure.

Spengler's and Marinetti's proclamations were heard in the Soviet Union. One of the individuals who listened was Mykola Khvylyjovj. Khvylyjovj wrote that there were two sides to Europe, a positive side and a negative side, and that it was this negative side that was dying. He also wrote that Europe would be revitalized by the azijats'kyj renesans (Asian Renaissance) as proclaimed by Zerov.¹³ Essentially, what all this meant was that the new Soviet culture that was being created, after absorbing the best elements

12 Oswald Spengler, "Organic Logic of History," in Modern Tradition, ed. Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr. (New York, 1965), p. 492.

13 Mykola Khvylyjovj, "Pro Kopernika z Fraenburgu abo abetka azijats'koho renesansu v mystetstvi (Druhyj lyst do literaturnoji molodi)," in Dokumenty Ukrajins'koho komunizmu, ed. Ivan Majstrenko (New York, 1962), p. 105.

of Western European civilization, like Marx, Darwin, and Goethe, would create a new culture in Western Europe. Nothing, however, was mentioned on how to bring the Ukrainian peasantry and proletariat closer together. Khvylyjovyj, in fact, had a running battle with the peasant writers that belonged to the literary organization Pluh (Plough).

A new type of literature and a new type of hero were needed for the evolving Soviet culture, and so Khvylyjovyj proclaimed his romantyka vitaizmu, a literature of life, based on the writings of Plekhanov. This new hero was an independent individual with his/her own thoughts, freedom, and talents.¹⁴ Though he generally avoided the manifestoes and the politiking that was going on, Pidmohyl'nyj did support Khvylyjovyj in his call. In Khvylyjovyj's vision, there was no difference between the proletariat and the peasantry because he dealt with individuals; however, that was still not enough to bring the two sides together. Everywhere the gulf between the urban and the rural populus was widening.

As has been stated earlier in the opening chapter, Pidmohyl'nyj wanted to bridge the gap between the city and the village in the Ukrainian psyche with his novel. Pidmohyl'nyj does not write anything positive about the industrial city, but he does not condemn it either. However, he does reject the pastoral option by showing it to be just another escapist dream. In the novel he shows this through Levko

14. Hordyns'kyj, Literaturna krytyka pidsovjets'koji Ukrainy, p. 62.

who wants to go back to the villages and watch the Cossacks riding the steppes again. This is an extremely naive idea because in the age of the machine, the horseman has been left behind.

Pidmohyl'nyj's city and life in it are not something that can be seen in simple clear-cut terms like black versus white, where the village is the white part as the Populists saw it. It is a much more complicated place where everything can be found and experienced, both good and evil. The same is true of the people. They are also complicated individuals that cannot be placed into simple categories.

The issues that Pidmohyl'nyj deals with are not the same political and economic ones that the manifesto writers saw as being important. However, they are just as relevant, if not more relevant, because they are the issues of a contemporary society rather than the society that has yet to be created. Pidmohyl'nyj deals with alienation, the conflicts between the individual and society, and life in the twentieth century. It is because Pidmohyl'nyj deals with the issues plaguing the twentieth century that Jefremov claimed that Pidmohyl'nyj was the most contemporary of all Ukrainian writers.¹⁵

15. Jefremov, Istoriija ukrajins'koho pys'menstva, Vol. II, p. 398.

CHAPTER III

Pidmohyl'nyj's City

The character of the city as presented by Pidmohyl'nyj can be summed up very simply. The city is full of contradictory elements that somehow are able to co-exist. On the surface at least, the city is a continually moving, active place, full of excitement. It is full of energy and life, with everything going on at a very fast pace. This is the first impression that Stepan has as he arrives.¹ The city is swirling around with one action leading into the next one. What Stepan essentially sees is a kaleidoscope of images and sounds that seem to be going on in a totally chaotic fashion; yet at the same time, these images do have an overall structure and meaning.

This view of the city can be attributed to the fact that this is Stepan's first contact with one, and he does not know what to expect. Because of this, everything goes by so quickly that he is only able to grasp certain elements rather than a whole image. But even after Stepan does become accustomed to the city, Kiev is still the same, even at night, when everybody is supposed to be resting in preparation for the upcoming day. Kiev seems to have so much energy that the people and the city never have to rest or, rather, recharge. Everywhere the city is just sounds, movement, parts of bodies, actions and reactions, lights, colors and

1. Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 16.

garbled conversations. It is a continual chemical chain reaction without a beginning or an end.²

Pidmohyl'nyj's vision of the city, as seen through the eyes of Stepan, is not a unique vision. A similar vision of the city was held by the German Expressionists, who were almost an exclusively urban group. One of the best examples of the German Expressionist city, depicted as total movement, is found in the films of Walter Ruttmann. These films were very popular, indicating that many people shared the same view of the city and that it was not just the view of an intellectual elite. A night scene in Ruttmann's Berlin: Symphony of a Great City looks like this.

A kaleidoscope arrangement of shots surveys all kinds of sports, a fashion show and a few instances of boys meeting girls or trying to meet them. The last sequence amounts to a pleasure drive through nocturnal Berlin, luminous with ruthless neon lights. An orchestra plays Beethoven, the legs of girl dancers perform; Chaplin's legs stumble across a screen; two lovers, or rather two pairs of legs, make for the nearest hotel; and finally, a true pandemonium of legs breaks loose; the six-day race going on and on without interruption.³

Ruttmann's vision of the city shows a much more disjointed city where everything that goes on is part of a whole (a day in the life of a modern city), but each action is not directly influenced by the previous action. In Pidmohyl'nyj's city, on the other hand, everything is somewhat

2. Ibid., p. 37.

3. Siegfried Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler (Princeton, New Jersey, 1947), p. 184.

more organized with one action directly influencing the subsequent action, as in a chemical reaction. The actions are still somewhat random, but they are much more ordered than those of Ruttmann's city.

This idea that life in the city is part of a molecular structure involved in a chemical reaction is further emphasized in the novel when Stepan admits that he saw the city as being at the center of a solar system with all the villages rotating around it.⁴ The city can also be looked upon as a dying sun or supernova. It is expanding its brilliant outer limits and is drawing smaller objects/people towards it, while the center is dead. Pidmohyl'nyj's Kiev, on the surface, is full of energy, drawing people to itself, but in the inner city, there is a total vacuum. It is a cold dark place without any sparks of life. It is almost like the calm in the center of a storm. This is the area that has to be revitalized by people like Stepan who have come to the city in order to change it.

The outer city is a very deceptive place and provides only a very superficial view of the city. The inner city, on the other hand, is the city that is behind the exterior facade, and it is here, where the individual is shown as he/she really is, rather than in the role he/she takes on in the outer city. The surroundings that a person is found in are a direct reflection of that person's character. Kiev's

4 Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 160.

inner city, as portrayed by Pidmohyl'nyj, therefore, is a direct reflection of the people that shaped the inner city.

The inner city is not full of life, energy, and sensuality like the outer city is. It is dark and stagnant. This is the part of the city that is rotting away, and nobody is doing anything about it. The inhabitants accept it and leave everything as it is. An example of how the inner city looks at its worst can be found in the private dining room that Zos'ka takes Stepan to.⁵ The dining room, itself, was hidden as part of an underground tunnel system. The waiter who leads them to their room is described as being perfectly comfortable working among all the decay around him. The waiter is also described as being a figure without any recognizable characteristics. The air of the dining room, because it had nowhere to escape to, is stifling.⁶ The dining room, which was essentially a hole beneath the surface of the earth, had not been cleaned, or so it seemed, since the establishment had been built. It was rotting away inside and smelt of vomit, excrement, and spilt wine. The filth of the establishment, which had been collecting over a period of many years, had penetrated the brick walls in layers of burnt dirt.⁷ Stepan was repulsed by this place, while Zos'ka, a person who had lived totally in the inner city,

5 Ibid., p. 150.

6 Ibid., p. 150.

7 Ibid., p. 151.

accepted it as being nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, she wanted to spend her whole life there.⁸

Vyhors'kyj shows Stepan more of the inner city. He introduces Stepan to the way the inner city operates. In the beer cellars he points out to Stepan how the prostitutes go about their business, even though prostitution is against the law. This shows that the people, in their essential selves, have not changed at all. Even though the Revolution was supposed to have freed people from prostitution and the need for people to become prostitutes, the prostitute is still there and so is the customer.

Everything associated with the inner city is negative because it stops all development and creative progress. The Institute is a prime example of this. The fact that it is an institute shows that it is limited, with set boundaries. At first, Borys was not allowed into the Institute because he was the son of a priest. This has nothing to do with his abilities and his capabilities. Because Borys was outside the Institute's frame of reference, he was not tolerated. Only a select group is tolerated. In the end this means a select class of people. The Institute also deals exclusively in statistics and in numbers, totally avoiding the human aspect in its program of studies. The Institute has only one goal, which is to create good Party members and workers who will follow Party directives without questioning them.

8. Ibid., p. 151.

This is another example of how limited the establishment is. No new ideas can be created here because the Institute is set up only for the regurgitation of ideas of the Party instructors.

The outer city/inner city conflict is found in the everyday lives of the people of Kiev. For example, it is found in Musin'ka's house. The facade of the house shows at first that a happy family lives inside, but what is found inside is the exact opposite.

Musin'ka's house has to be looked upon as a museum. It serves only as a place where articles like stamps and books can be collected and stored. Nobody in the household had developed fully when Stepan arrived. Musin'ka's development stopped with her first experience with her father's servant, Stepan, and only after her meeting with Stepan Radchenko does it continue. Maksym is an individual who never grew up. Everything has to be the way he wants it to be. Maksym could not face up to anything that seemed unpleasant to him and so he became an escapist living at first in a world of opiated dreams and later in a world colored by alcohol. Musin'ka's husband just "faded into the woodwork" and is no longer a factor in the novel or in the household itself, even though at one time he was an extremely domineering person. He is just a harmless artifact from the pre-Revolution era. When Stepan comes to the household, he is a village boy and this village-boy concept is carried on there. He does all the village/household chores, but this does not limit him to being just a village boy. He writes his first



stories here, thus continuing his development.

Nadja's and Borys' apartment (discussed at the end of the novel) is another example of the inner city. The apartment is full of bourgeois bric-a-brac and is similar to Musin'ka's house before Stepan came. It is like a museum because of the collection of various articles, which had never before been a part of their lives. This is evident in Nadja's attitude to and reception of Stepan. She starts talking in the formal manner rather than in the personal, as they had earlier when they first arrived to the city. She is behaving like a high class lady would behave before a poorer individual that she was trying to impress.

Another contradiction arises in Pidmohyl'nyj's outer city. In the continual flow of the outer city, the people are faceless and appear as members of a crowd, but they still possess certain distinctive features that separate them from the rest of the crowd. They are separated from the crowd, not as individuals, but because of the roles that they are acting out. The identification of these people does not go any deeper than the role that they are acting out. One is a streetHamlet; another is a businessman; while a third is a tramp. No further, deeper or more personalized identification is made. There is also a sense of great camaraderie on the streets where no one seems to be out of place and where there seems to be a place for all.⁹ But the people

9. Ibid., p. 37.

still seem to be very indistinct and depersonalized, playing out roles assigned to them. One person's action is dependent on another's reaction to someone else's action. In other words, the process is almost similar to a chemical reaction with none of the participants possessing or controlling any energy or free will of his/her own.

Sherekh wrote that in Nevelychka drama, there were elements of existentialism comparable to Sartre's view of life.¹⁰ Pidmohyl'nyj's vision of the outer city can also be called existentialist. The individual is in a totally powerless position; his/her life is controlled by the community and he/she cannot change the situation nor can he/she change the community.

Traditionally, the city has been looked upon as an evil place where people are corrupted, while the countryside was seen as the only place where goodness and righteousness have been preserved. Pidmohyl'nyj shows that this is untrue. Pidmohyl'nyj places the emphasis on people and says that they make the place, rather than the place making the people. The most notable example of this is when Stepan goes to the private dining room with Zos'ka. Here, he comments that the same type of cell, that was used by the monks of the Lavra Monastery for meditation, prayer and generally for the spreading of good, can also be used as a filthy dining room, where people can behave as they please without anyone taking notice

10. Sherekh, "Bilok i joho zaburennja," Ukrajins'ka literaturna hazeta, No. 9 (27) (1957), pp. 1-2.

of them or as a place where a prostitute takes her customers. It all depends on the people and on what they want to make of the place which they inhabit. The cell itself is an inanimate object and has no free will of its own, and, therefore, it accommodates itself to whatever purpose it is used for.¹¹

The same goes for the rest of Kiev. It is, and it will be, the city that the inhabitants of Kiev want despite official regulations to the contrary. In the picture that Pidmohyl'nyj presents the reader, Kiev is the city that the people of Kiev wanted and created. This is shown best in the beer cellars and the dining establishments. They are packed with people. If the people of Kiev had not wanted these establishments, they would not have gone there in the first place, and the establishments would have had to change whatever was necessary to entice people back again.

Pidmohyl'nyj destroys another myth about the city. The nineteenth-century Romantics, who believed that the pastoral life was better, also believed that the industrial city was trying to barricade itself against nature and, using the new technological advances, was trying to create an artificial environment that would be subservient to the machine and under its control. The only positive thing about this new environment would be that it would be pleasing to all. In the ideal city of the Romantics, as Ruskin wrote, "you will be able to breathe in their streets, and the 'excur-

11 Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 150.

sion' will be the afternoon walk or game in the fields around them."¹² Ruskin's vision of the ideal city is basically a continuation of the pastoral vision. It is also the vision of life as seen by the idle rich.

Pidmohyl'nyj's city is just as open to the natural elements as the pre-industrial one was. The city cannot escape from nature and its elements. Nature can be found everywhere. It can be found in the underground dining rooms, causing the various components of the dining rooms to rot.¹³

The effects of the natural elements can be seen in the outer city much more readily than in the inner city. Everything in the outer city moves much faster and so do any changes to the environment. Here the people of the outer city and the city itself have to come into contact with nature and its elements. With every change in the weather, the people are forced to change their accustomed manner of behavior. The autumn rains force all the people off the streets, showing their insignificance in the face of something that is much more powerful than they are and beyond their control.¹⁴

Man has no control over nature, nor will he get any in Pidmohyl'nyj's city. Man cannot even predict the weather

12. Lewis Mumford, The Culture of the Cities (New York, 1938), p. 222.

13. Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 150.

14. Ibid., p. 143.

precisely. Any of his attempts at predicting the weather become the butt of a joke, and show man's fallibility in the face of forces he cannot control.¹⁵

The outer city does not live in opposition to nature. It is able to live alongside it without any great problems. It adapts to seasonal changes and orders its life to match these changes. Seasonal changes are a part of the city's existence, but the main element of any urban life is still man. Man is at the heart of the city and when the city adapts to seasonal changes, it is actually man changing along with the elements. He cannot escape from nature no matter how he tries. Nature will catch up with him even in the beer cellars and in the dining establishments.

On the surface, the city looks like an energetic place that is all-powerful, but beneath this facade, the city is crumbling and dying. Stepan seems justified in believing that the city is full of decaying material that has to be removed.¹⁶ In Kiev, as in any other city, the most important element are its people. They are the ones that decide what type of character the city is going to have, and Pidmohy'nyj realizes this. He does not try to hide behind some great intellectual truth in describing the city, but rather, he just presents the city in the way it appears to him. The problems that are found there are not caused by the city, but

15. Ibid., p. 107.

16. Ibid., p. 21.

by the people who live there.

Pidmohyl'nyj was not the only writer who dealt with life in the Ukrainian city in the late twenties. Mykhajl Semenko, one of the more prominent members of the Ukrainian Futurist movement, also wrote about life in the city. He believed that the essence of city life revolved around the cabarets and parks. The city was also a place where perversions could be satisfied.¹⁷

Another writer who dealt with the topic of the city was Victor Petrov (V. Domontovych). In his two-part novel, Doktor Serafikus, he also describes the city, the people, and life in general in the late twenties. The novel itself was written in 1928 - 1929, but was not published until 1947 in Germany. In the novel, Domontovych claims that the people were living under the illusion that they were self-sufficient. This illusion was partly fostered by what seemed to be the good life approaching during the N.E.P. years.¹⁸

According to Domontovych, the majority of the people who lived in the cities had come from the villages and were being urbanized in one way or another. However, they still regarded the "old world landowner" lifestyle as the highest form of life. They lived a life as if nothing bothered them, buying carpets, furniture, gold and buildings. There was also another group of people in the city who, reading about

17. A. Shamraj, Ukrajins'ka literatura (Kharkiv, 1928), p. 157.

18. V. Domontovych, Doktor Serafikus (Munich, 1947), p. 95.

the impending outbreak of war that was supposed to engulf the Soviet Union at almost any time, started to panic. This group started to hoard sugar, salt, gas and gold.¹⁹

According to *Demontovych*, the major change in life was caused by industrialization and the conveyor belt. The worker, instead of building an auto or sewing a pair of pants, performs only one action over and over again. The worker loses control over the object that he is making. His work, therefore, is without purpose.²⁰ In the days before industrialization, each person was an artisan (tailor, carpenter, glassblower) who could take pride in his work. Contemporary man, according to *Demontovych* is only a worker who completes details.²¹ Contemporary man has no goal in life. Contemporary man is a person who is locked in a schematic existence with no way out.²²

Some agreement between *Demontovych* and *Pidmohyl'nyj* can be found. Both believe that man in the twentieth century is in trouble. Both believe that man is trapped in an existence he/she cannot get out of. However, *Demontovych* believes that man's success can only come from returning to the past. *Pidmohyl'nyj*, on the other hand, believes that man's success has to come from the rebuilding of the old society and creating a new future. *Pidmohyl'nyj* rejects returning to the past.

19 Ibid., p. 98.

20 Ibid., p. 99.

21 Ibid., p. 100.

22 Ibid., p. 101.

Pidmohyl'nyj's city may not be the ideal haven, but it is certainly not as negative a place as Semenko portrays. Pidmohyl'nyj's city does encompass the cabarets and the parks but it also includes the business offices and the various schools. This leaves Pidmohyl'nyj's city as a fairly unique phenomena in Ukrainian literature because nobody else sees the city in the same terms that he does.

CHAPTER IV

The People of Kiev

Pidmohyl'nyj believed that man was essentially a very insignificant being whose fate was not in his own hands, but in the hands of forces beyond his control. Life, for Pidmohyl'nyj, was something that was frightening and uncertain, similar to a lottery where the final outcome is not controlled by man, but by some uncertain and uncontrollable force like fate. Life is hard, cruel, and shows no mercy to anyone.¹ Also, according to Pidmohyl'nyj, life is a well-advertised lottery where nobody tells you that there is only one winning ticket for the thousands that are involved. Nor do they tell you that you can enter it only once.²

Pidmohyl'nyj believed that man is a complex being that cannot be categorized into good or evil, no matter how desirable this would be for society.³ Pidmohyl'nyj also believed that man once possessed a complex vision but gradually lost it. This is evident through the gods that he created.

Man could not have thought up of multipersonned gods had he himself not been a diverse being because, perceiving himself as a strange union of blatant opposites, the need for finding a place for every one of them, and the desire to create one great god with a small devil, signifies the normalization of the human being, that

1. Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 71.

2. Ibid., p. 108.

3. Ibid., p. 117.

is, the drying up of its imagination.⁴

Pidmohyl'nyj's city has developed a new class structure, no longer based on names and titles, but on dress. Pidmohyl'nyj carefully listed the members of this new class structure while describing Stepan's first impressions of nightlife in the city.

He was pushed by girls in sheer blouses whose fabric unnoticeably united with the nakedness of their arms and backs; women in hats and veils, men in coats, boys without caps, in shirts with sleeves rolled up to the elbows, armymen in heavy oppressive uniforms, maids holding each others' hands, marines from the Dniprofleet, teens, the bent caps of the technical workers, the light coats of the dandies, the greasy jackets of the tramps.⁵

The people that Stepan meets are the same ones that Pidmohyl'nyj is describing. In the time that the novel is set, the people were enjoying the highest standard of living that they had ever had. This was still before the repressions, and there was a carefree attitude among the people. The people that Stepan meets in the course of the novel form a cross-section of Kievan society. They are not very significant beings in that they do not possess wide reaching powers, but they do have the opportunity to do many different things. Whether they take advantage of this opportunity is another problem.

Nikovs'kyj claims that some of the characters were

4 Ibid., p. 117.

5 Ibid., p. 37.

modelled on actual people who lived in Kiev at the time.⁶ If we accept this statement as true, then the vision Pidmohyl'-nyj presents of Kiev and its inhabitants also has to be accepted as being fairly accurate in its appraisal of life at that time.

1. Levko

Levko is a village boy who is working for and who believes in the Revolution. The problem here is that his vision of the Revolution is an extremely romanticized one, in which the Cossacks are brought back as the rulers of the steppes. Levko has not accepted industrialization and he constantly avoids dealing with it.

Levko came to the city with only one goal in mind and that was to get an education and then return to the village to live. There he would live in the style of the new utopia. He would be free from daily troubles because they would have been eliminated by the Revolution. Everything that he does is done for the betterment of all the people around him so that they could more easily fit into his vision of the future. Levko was totally good and could not think evil about anyone or anything.

Pidmohyl'nyj gives a clear description of Levko's attitude towards life.

6. Nikovs'kyj, "Pro 'Misto' V. Pidmohyl'noho," Zhyttja i revoljutsija, No. 10 (1928), p. 111.

To be able to smile and be in a good humor were his main attributes, the criteria of his attitude to the world. Neither poverty nor schooling were able to kill in him his good will, that had been developed beneath the quiet willows of the village.¹

This good will of his that borders on the totally naive made him the target of everyone, including Stepan. Levko lent Stepan some books that he needed in his studies, but having taken the books, Stepan never went back to see Levko. He completely forgot about him until their chance meeting later on. Stepan had changed greatly, while Levko was still basically as he had been earlier. Levko was happy in his line of work while Stepan, at this point in time, was disillusioned with what he was doing and was not sure of what to do next.

Levko is an example of what Stepan would have been like if he had followed the path that he had planned, going to the Institute and then returning to the village instead of looking for something else in life. Levko is not really an escapist. He is more of a romantic, but at the same time he is limiting his field of experience. Because of this, he is a stunted individual similar to all the other people of the city.

2. Nadja

Nadja came from the same background as Stepan, yet they both ended up going their separate ways. Stepan came to the city with a definite goal and had a definite plan of action

¹ Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 14.

that was going to help him conquer the city and create a new lifestyle in it. Nadja never had a similar goal in mind. Her coming to the city was more like a tourist trip for her. At first she was full of enthusiasm as she approached the city, but once she was inside the city, she gradually lost her enthusiasm as she became conscious of the fact that she was alone in a foreign environment and that she was going to have to make do by herself. Stepan was not affected by the city as much as Nadja was, mainly because as an orphan he had had to make do by himself for many years. The city overpowered Nadja from the very beginning.⁸

The need for security in a foreign environment was something that plagued Nadja and became the only goal in her life. Right from the start she was overwhelmed by the city and developed a fear of it. To combat this fear, she tried to find a sense of security with someone. The first person that she turned to was Stepan. She asked for love or at least some sort of compassion from Stepan, but he was unable to respond to her need. He was caught up in his own ruthless drive to conquer the city, and Nadja became an article that he conquered along the road to what he believed would be success. He conquered her, or to be more precise, committed an act that bordered on rape. Neither of them was satisfied. She started to cry, while he was angry. Stepan was unable to face up to her crying and left her alone in the park and did

8. Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 16.

not return to see her until near the end of the novel.

Nadja, however, did find the sense of security that she was looking for with Borys. Here, she was no more than an object in a museum with no responsibilities other than being one of Borys' possessions. From a youthful figure and a person full of life, in a few years under Borys' protective shield, she had degenerated into looking like an old lady, who happened to be pregnant. The vitality that she had when she was on the boat on the way to the city was now gone. The most important point to be made here is that Nadja seemed to be happy in her role. She had found the security that she was striving for, but to attain this security, she had to stop functioning as a total human being. Therefore, she is a negative character at the end of the novel. This is an example of the stunting process that is seen in Pidmohyl'nyj's city that turns people into something less than total beings.

3. Maksym

Maksym is a city dweller and is representative of the escapist facet within the urban population. As in all the urban dwellers, there is a duality in his character. When Stepan first encounters him, Stepan compares him to a young lord from the old aristocracy, who is arrogant and vain. Stepan was not all that far off the mark in his comparison because Maksym did come from a formerly well-to-do family. As Stepan gets to know Maksym better, his attitude towards Maksym changes and he sees a different being, similar to the type that Stepan wanted to become.

Maksym was older than Stepan. He had graduated from the Institute and was working, at the beginning of the novel, in a fairly respectable position. The work that he actually did entailed the shuffling of paper and working with figures, generally avoiding contact with people and daily life. This position suited his alienation from people very nicely because the people that he did come in contact with saw only his facade of being well-adjusted. This facade even fooled Stepan. Maksym appeared to be quiet, gentle, and cordial. He gave the appearance that he was satisfied with his life and with his work. He seemed to be certain of himself and of everything that he did. This was the reason why Stepan was so attracted to him.⁹

In reality, Maksym was completely different. He was an insecure being who was trying to create his own world with himself at its center. Everybody was relegated to a specific role that he/she had to play for him. Maksym believed that he was superior to Stepan because Stepan was an orphan, while Maksym had a family with a heritage. He even told this to Stepan in an attempt to make Stepan feel small, which he succeeded in doing. He also agreed to let Stepan stay in his mother's house because he believed that now he had an inferior being who would do the chores for his mother. When Musin'ka and Stepan started their affair, Maksym felt threatened by the fact that his mother dared to have a life outside of the

9. Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 79

one that he had set out for her. He could not face up to the fact that his mother was an individual with her own desires and was not his personal servant. In order to avoid this fact, Maksym ran away from home, just like a little child.

When Maksym is seen next, he has become a drunk, refusing to go to the Ukrainian lessons given by Stepan. Later, he is seen rolling around on the floor of the beer cellar, drunk and causing a commotion. He slowly becomes worse and worse, until in the end he is reduced to going to borrow money from Stepan, so that he can go on and do some more drinking.

Maksym is essentially an escapist. He is constantly using one means or another to run away from the reality that surrounds him. When Stepan first meets him and gets to know him, he is smoking opium and living in a world surrounded by his books and his stamp collection. He tries to convince Stepan that his way of living is better. He says, "Someday you will see, that it is much more interesting to read books, than to do what is written in them."¹⁰ This shows Maksym's cynicism and apathy towards life and how he has barricaded himself in his own little world.

Maksym is the exact opposite of Levko. In post-Revolutionary society, Maksym is also searching for a utopia, but his ideal is based on himself and not on a social one. Maksym wants to keep that which is good and pleasant for him and avoid the rest by refusing to admit that it exists. If he

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

cannot have what he wants, he runs away and hides in some beer cellar, like thousands of other people. The only difference between Maksym and the other patrons of the beer cellars in that Maksym is still basically a child that has not developed fully past the temper tantrum stage.

4. Musin'ka

If Vyhors'kyj represents the intellectual consciousness of the city that refuses to develop further and limits itself, then Musin'ka represents the intellectual consciousness of the city that was not allowed to develop. From her youth, Musin'ka was cast into one role or another that she did not want by the people around her. Unfortunately, she neither had the strength nor the opportunity to cast these roles off.

Musin'ka came from a rich family with a lot of servants who did everything for her. Her lifestyle was that of the idle rich, which left her with a lot of free time to read. Her reading covered a very large spectrum from cheap pulp to the latest writings in psychology. Subsequently, she became quite well read and aware of the different things going on in the world, though not always understanding them.

Her marriage was one that had been arranged by her parents in an attempt to consolidate their wealth with that of another wealthy family. She did not want this marriage and neither did her husband. This did not make for ideal marital relations, and a hatred towards her arose in him. He wanted to see her dead and out of his way, even though he

behaved as he pleased anyway, and she knew about it. He had all the doors and the windows locked so that she could not escape from his house. Only the windows on the fourth floor were left open so that she could jump to her death. When her husband was at home for any period of time, she became the victim of his constant beatings which were an attempt to drive her to take her own life. To keep herself from going over the brink, she created her own fantasy world.

I only lived on this earth because of other people. Do you know what a dream is for those who are in pain? It is damnation. But how I dreamed! The harder it was for me, the happier I was. I knew the most wonderful worlds. I transported myself to the star that rises every night ---- there are the most fantastic orchards there, quiet streams, and the warm autumn never passes. I dreamed only about the autumn. And how they loved me there! II

The Revolution ruined her husband, both financially and psychologically. He was forced to abandon his large mansion and move into the decrepit house that he now inhabited, on the outskirts of the city. Here he was not able to exercise the same type of control over his wife that he had previously. For the first time in their marriage, he had to deal with her on even terms. This made him afraid of her and, for the first time in their marriage, because of his fear of her, she had power over him. Because she never exercised this power, he became even more afraid of her.

II Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 104.

Musin'ka was not affected very much by the Revolution. She adapted to the new life that she had to live. Instead of being a member of the idle rich, she became a housewife, learning a new occupation that she had not been trained for. Her husband, on the other hand, retreated further and further until he was no longer a factor in the house.

Maksym was the only thing in Musin'ka's life that she had some control over, in the sense that she was in charge of his upbringing. In an attempt to retain this control while trying to avoid alienating herself from her son, she spoiled Maksym. Later, she allowed him to dominate her, so as not to lose him. Because she was weak and alone, she allowed herself to be cast into the role of housewife/servant/maid, most nobably by Maksym, without objecting. Until she met Stepan, Musin'ka's life had been joyless, except for the time when she was small.

Musin'ka's attraction to Stepan is much more complex than his attraction to her. He wanted to prove to himself that he was not afraid of anything, let alone making love to an older woman. They both had one thing in common in that they were both solitary beings with no one to confide in. Part of the reason Musin'ka was attracted to Stepan resulted from an experience in her youth. When she was twelve, her father had had a servant named Stepan. Once when she was half-asleep, this servant had carried her to her room. This was the awakening of her sexual self and she wanted to be carried by the servant again. Only shame of her own feelings

prevented her from asking him to carry her again!¹²

However, this fascination with Stepan did not stop there. She was so wrapped up with a "Stepan" that she wanted her son to be called Stepan, but her husband and others did not allow her to do so. This fascination with Stepan carried over into her relationship with Stepan Radchenko. In him, she found the ghost of the servant as well as the opportunity to make her dream world come true. This was also the first step in her breaking out of the role Maksym had cast her in, as well as being the reawakening of her sexual self, which was not allowed to exist during her marriage and during her pampering of Maksym.

At first, Stepan rejected her because he had not foreseen any such relationship as possible, but "when she finally did come, the boy accepted her with all the force of a youthful passion and the gigantic reserve of strength that he had brought with him to the city."¹³ Stepan did two things differently from the other people that Musin'ka knew. He accepted her for what she was and he did not try to cast her into a role that she did not want, as Maksym did. The other thing that was different was that for the first time Musin'ka was not involved in a one-sided relationship. Her existence with her husband was a constant battle for her physical and psychological survival. Her relationship with Maksym was one-sided because she had no real response from him. However, with Ste-

12. Ibid., p. 104.

13. Ibid., p. 88.

pan, she was able to open up and expose the side of her that had been hidden from everybody for so many years. This was the side that thought and felt. Nobody had wanted to listen to what Musin'ka had to say because her husband did not want to have anything to do with her, while Maksym was in a world where he was the only person that mattered. Stepan was willing to listen and so Musin'ka opened up to him. Musin'ka was very much involved in the relationship with Stepan because she trusted enough to confide in him.

Their affair started out in a very nonchalant way. Pidmohyl'nyj writes that at first Musin'ka was never serious about anything nor did she let her innermost feelings be known. Stepan liked it like this because, as Pidmohyl'nyj mentions in the same section, "to know a strange soul is too great a burden for your own soul."¹⁴ Once Musin'ka was sure that Stepan was not about to reject her and that he was in many ways similar to her, she started to open up.

Their affair was a secret one. During the day, they behaved as if they barely knew each other. During the night, however, they were intimate. It was during the night that Musin'ka allowed her secret self, the Musin'ka that was totally repressed by others, to come out. It was during the night that Stepan really got to know her and what she believed in.

A sort of split personality exists in Musin'ka. There is one Musin'ka for the day and another Musin'ka for the night. This is a duality that is found in many of the characters of

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 92.

the city. It was found in Maksym and later will be found in Vyhors'kyj and Zos'ka. In each case there is a difference between what the character pretends to be on the surface and what he/she really is inside.

Their affair lasted until Stepan became dissatisfied with his position as a choreboy. This dissatisfaction first arose when he started his job as a lecturer. He started acquiring money. This made him more independent as well as making him more selective. His attitude towards himself and towards the things around him changed as he started to look at everything more critically. Subsequently, he saw Musin'ka in a new light, forgetting what she had been for him in the past.

He also observed Musin'ka from the stature of his European dress, seeing in her just as much decline, as she saw in him flowering. Never did the thin cheeks, embroidered with tiny wrinkles, seem so unpleasant to his eyes as now, the anaemic lips, and the flabby breasts that implacably drifted apart. The happy girlish smile was a grimace on her aging face....¹⁵

Two important things happened during their affair. The first was that Musin'ka started to break out of the role she was in, while the second thing was that Stepan started to become conscious of people other than himself. He came to realize and understand Musin'ka and what she believed.

Musin'ka did not believe in happiness any more. She was very cynical in this regard, though in terms of her own experiences this belief is probably justified. "Do you know

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 115.

what happiness is? It is ether. It evaporates after one minute. But the pain lasts and lasts without end¹⁶

Probably due to her own unhappy life, her outlook on life in general was equally bleak.

They say that life is a bazaar. It's true! Everyone has his wares. Somebody profits on it, another subsidizes it. Why? Nobody wants to die. You have to sell, even at a loss. After this, everybody has the right to call you an idiot, -- the one who miscalculates is called a fool. And people are so frightfully dissimilar. In books they write -- here is a human being, he is such and such. There are all sorts of proverbs about people, about all people, and you may think -- how well we know a human being! There is even a study about the soul, psychology -- I read, I don't remember whose it was. He concludes that a person runs not because he is afraid, but is afraid because he runs. But what difference is it to the person who was frightened? He doesn't know anything either.¹⁷

Her religious convictions are superficial and are not based on a conviction or belief, but on a need that must be satisfied. "I didn't believe in God that is I once believed. But when I saw you, I started praying again."¹⁸ Stepan's appearance gave her some hope for a better life and the fulfillment of her dreams. This is what she was looking for in her religion.

Musin'ka's philosophy of life is derived from a sense of entrapment as well as from an actual entrapment. Whether

16 Ibid., p. 102.

17 Ibid., p. 102.

18 Ibid., p. 122.

it was the role that her parents and society imposed on her, the prison of her husband's mansion, or whether it was what Maksym demanded of her, she was constantly being required to be subservient to someone else both physically and intellectually. She could not get out of her predicament, and after a while accepted it, believing that she could never get out of it. Only after both Stepan and Maksym leave her, when she has no crutch to fall back on, does she begin to live her own life, mainly because she is now forced to do so in order to survive.

Musin'ka does not give up on life. When the servants went away, she adapted to the change. She became the housewife. When she is left alone, she does not fade into the woodwork like her husband did. She is enticed out of her house to follow the lights. They lead her to the lottery parlors and casinos -- gambling establishments where she will try her luck at life. The first time Stepan sees Musin'ka after he leaves her (actually the only time he sees her), she is sitting in one of the casinos looking like someone who is very much out of place. She is a solitary figure in the casino. Because Musin'ka has been kept away from life, she lost all contact with it. Whereas she stayed the same little girl who could not forget the servant Stepan, the world pushed forward thirty years, leaving her behind. She is sort of a freak in this new world. In order to succeed in this new world, she has to adapt to all the changes that have taken place. She does not know any people beyond the walls of her house, but this does not stop her from going out. She goes

out and tries to develop new acquaintances. Though it is not shown in the story proper, it seems that she has succeeded in branching out. In the casino, she appeared to be a pathetic figure who had no one who would listen to her. This was partially caused by the fact that the people of the city do not care to listen to someone else. However, near the end of the novel, when Stepan returns to Musin'ka's house, there is a party going on. The house has become alive and is full of life and light. It is no longer just a museum for the collection of books, stamps, and private opiated dreams. The question that arises here is whether her new life is any more meaningful than the one that she had experienced earlier. The answer to this can be found in Musin'ka's philosophy of life. A person has to live his/her life irregardless of how it is going. Musin'ka may be no luckier now than she had been earlier, but she is trying and that is what counts.

With Musin'ka there is also the same problem that be-sets all of the people of the city, and that is they cannot develop any meaningful relationships with anybody else. Musin'ka's relationship to Maksym was a failure. She became his servant. Maksym did not respect her as a human being with her own wishes and desires. He only saw her as his servant and nothing more. Her marriage was a failure, and the affair with Stepan could not have been anything greater than just a passing thing until Stepan, in order to advance himself in his quest for power, chose to leave her for someone else who had the contacts that Stepan needed.

In terms of the vitaist hero, the reader sees in Musin'ka a person who had great potential for development, but who was not allowed to develop. She had the ability to think and she possessed enough talent to adapt to two radical changes in lifestyle. However, she lacked the freedom to develop in a natural progression. Musin'ka's lack of freedom, or to be more properly put, oppression, started in the pre-Revolutionary era, but it was not remedied in the post-Revolutionary era. The oppression that she faced was not financial or political, but rather it was personal. It was a lot harder to change it in the post-Revolutionary era. Instead of her husband's domineering, her son took over the position. Only after she was free of both of them was she able to expand her horizons and attempt to live in the way she wanted to. The question that remains unanswered is whether her new life is any better than the previous one she had experienced.

5. Borys

If Levko is the naive, romantic revolutionary, then the opposite of him is Borys, who is the pragmatic realist, representative of the direction that the Revolution took in creating a new class structure identical to the one it was supposed to replace.

Borys, while trying to get an education, had to fight off all sorts of narrow-mindedness because, as Pidmohyl'nyj puts it, "he had the carelessness to be fathered by a priest..."¹⁹

¹⁹ Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 94.

His social roots caused him many problems in trying to get through the Institute. Twice he was excluded, and each time he had to prove himself worthy of being allowed back into the Institute. When he finally was able to get a job as a night watchman, he saw himself as truly successful. All of his problems, however, did not put a damper on his ambition, and he succeeded in graduating from the Institute.

However, once installed in a position of power, Borys changed completely. Instead of remembering the prejudice levelled against him and trying to do something about it, Borys slowly became more and more bourgeois, imitating the bureaucrats that the new youth was supposed to replace. Borys gathered objects that helped to raise his social stature and his material well-being. This could be anything from a new apartment complete with a maid to a wife. Nadja is only a possession that serves a specific purpose, that of bettering his social stature.

From his background as a priest's son, the receiver of a moralistic, humanitarian upbringing, he took a drastic turn. When Stepan saw the apartment where Borys lived with Nadja at the end of the novel, he realized that Borys could not afford such an apartment on his salary. Therefore, it was obvious, to Stepan at least, that Borys was either embezzling funds for his own use or else was involved in some other illegal activity. Borys had submitted to the temptation of abusing power, showing that he was no different from the bureaucrats of twenty years before, despite his socialist re-education in the Institute.

6. Zos'ka

After breaking off with Musin'ka, Stepan was looking for someone who would introduce him to the life and people of the city. This is where Zos'ka fits in. Her major accomplishment is that she introduced Stepan to the beer cellars, movie houses, theaters and the darkness associated with them. She is also the person who, more than anyone else, brought Stepan into direct contact with the people of the inner city. Vyhors'kyj may have brought Stepan into the world of the inner city, but because Vyhors'kyj himself was an alienated being and unable to communicate with the people there, Stepan did not get to know the people as well as he got to know them through Zos'ka.

Zos'ka can also be looked at as the pinnacle of modern urban youth that has been raised totally within the confines of the industrial city. Because she was raised within the confines of a limited environment, she was not able to develop all the facets of her character. She cannot expand her own horizons and is, therefore, a very limited person.

As a person she is not very significant. Pidmohyl'nyj describes her simply as a "child's figure,"²⁰ emphasizing the fact that she has not developed fully and is a limited being. She does not take up much space in comparison to Stepan because she was "short in height -- just, beneath his armpits --- slim in a flat hat."²¹ She behaved like a child, contin-

20 Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 138.

21 Ibid., p. 133.

ually demanding gifts from Stepan such as candy and other sweets. She wanted only things in life that were pleasing to her and that could not hurt her. Her natural tendency was to escape from the reality around her and this is shown most vividly through her continual trips to the theaters and the movie houses.²²

Just like Maksym, her whole life is built upon escaping from the real world into an illusionary world. This escapist tendency allowed her to avoid pain and all the unpleasantness that are found in life. Pain is a part of life, and when she avoided pain, she stopped growing and developing and stayed a child. When she is finally forced to confront pain, after Stepan breaks off the engagement with her, she cannot take it and so decides to take the ultimate escapist trip.

The suicide shows the duality of her character. Throughout her relationship with Stepan, she portrayed herself as a modern city girl who was hard and cruel. This facade covered the Zos'ka who was fragile and vulnerable -- a person who could be hurt. This is the Zos'ka that Stepan never saw.

There was no substance to Zos'ka or to her actions, and Stepan was able to see through her quite early in their relationship and through the kind of games that she was playing.

....for it wasn't very hard for him to realize that this girl was a capricious cheat, who doesn't know herself what she needs, and this gives a wide range of action to a person with a set goal. He was especially pleased with her habit of saying, "I forbid!", when something had al-

22 Ibid., p. 140.

ready been done. Such a ban, as is obvious, does not present an obstacle.²³

Zos'ka is very similar to all the other people that Stepan meets in the city. She does not believe in love, claiming that it is something that was created by people through their imaginations.²⁴ She also does not want to get to know Stepan any better than she already does. She knows that he is a writer, but when he starts talking about his past, she changes the subject. She does not want to know his inner thoughts, fearing that she may become too deeply involved.

The only thing that Zos'ka really has to offer Stepan, other than the satisfaction of his sexual desires, is to show him another form of existence that was associated with the inner city, which Stepan had not known or experienced before. Stepan quickly realized that this type of existence was not what he wanted and so he broke away. He broke off the engagement with Zos'ka because he did not want to be trapped in a life of domesticity.

During their affair, Stepan came into contact with cinema. Rather than being a means of escape, as it had been for Zos'ka, Stepan was able to channel his creative abilities into this medium. This was the most important thing that stayed with Stepan after the breakup of the affair. His memories and the guilt after he had learnt of Zos'ka's sui-

23 Ibid., pp. 139-140.

24 Ibid., p. 144.

cide, were soon forgotten, and he was able to keep on living.

Zos'ka is a stereotype of the urban youth found in Pidmohyl'nyj's vision of Kiev. She is very limited in her capabilities and in her range of activities. She seeks only to escape. She has stopped growing and has remained a child emotionally, intellectually, and physically. She cannot break out of this mould because she is afraid of what she has no control over. When it comes to the point where she has to get over her affair with Stepan, assimilate the experience, and go on living, she refuses to go on living and kills herself.

7. Rita

From the very beginning, Rita is presented as a person who is a unique individual. Though her parents live in Kiev, she lives in Kharkiv where she is a soloist with a ballet company. She is also very mobile, commuting between Kharkiv and Kiev. She has no roots and does not want any, but wherever she goes, she constantly finds herself among friends. She is the opposite of Vyhors'kyj who travels a great deal and who has no roots, but wherever he goes, he always is and always will be the stranger.

Rita is in a very unique position because while she is an artist, at the same time, she is her own artwork. Her name is also not a Slavic one. Everything points to the fact that she is not an ordinary person. Stepan even comments that she reminded him of an ancient Egyptian woman of the kind who would have followed a pharaoh.

That woman had a serene, almost unmoving, elongated face, that in the rectangular frame of the smoothly cut hair, with even bangs above the eyes, reminded him of something ancient, refined and hardened, unchangeably young, sure of its beauty and solemn, like the faces of ancient Egyptian women, who followed with fans after the Pharaoh. But on the other hand, her eyes were alive, moved and laughed for the whole face, --- large, shining eyes, that glistened in the darkness, like a cat's. 25

Rita is an exotic and sensual woman and as such is the first real woman that Stepan had run into. Nadja and Zos'-ka are referred to as girls, while Musin'ka, though she is a lot older than Stepan, stopped in her development when she was still a child. Rita, on the other hand, is the idealized dream woman. She is beautiful and intelligent as Stepan later finds out in conversation with her. Stepan is almost at a disadvantage with her. He cannot play any of the roles that he knew in front of her because she has seen them all and has a rebuttal for each act. Stepan is forced to be just plain Stepan in front of her.

Stepan, in order to be with Rita, has to get up to her level, a level far above the mundane consciousness of the rest of the party where they first meet. Rita is similar to the stars in the night sky and this is accentuated by her shining eyes. She is so much above Stepan during the party, that after she pricks him and awakes him from his cynical thinking, she tells him that he will never be able to inflict a similar revenge on her.

The second time that they meet is in the middle of the night and Stepan recognizes her through her shining eyes and not through the rest of her physical self.²⁶ The fact that she can see in the dark emphasizes the visionary talent that she possesses and uses. Stepan always was attracted to the light and this is shown once again here.

Pidmohyl'nyj wrote that only through creativity does a person fulfill him/herself.²⁷ Rita is an example of a fulfilled person both according to Pidmohyl'nyj's beliefs and according to the beliefs of romantyka vitaizmu. She is a talented person who is involved in a creative activity. She is also independent and can function on her own, and she does not need anybody to think for her.

Rita has attained the level of life that Stepan is striving for. She can function in all three spheres of life -- the physical/concrete world, the intellectual/rational world, and the imaginary/irrational/creative world. Rita has been able to combine these spheres of life within herself, which no one else, except perhaps Stepan, was able to do. Rita accepts the distinction between herself and the rest of society because she realizes that she is different from them. Stepan, at the end of the novel, also finally accepts the differences between himself and the city below him.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 279.

²⁷ Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj, Introduction to Tretja revoljutsija (L'viv-Kharkiv, 1942), p. 5.

8. Vyhors'kyj

The best example of Pidmohyl'nyj's urban dweller is probably Vyhors'kyj. He is constantly on the run from people and from responsibilities. He is unable to complete anything from start to finish, like the modern industrial worker. He gives up teaching factory workers Ukrainian in the middle of the term. The reason that he was teaching Ukrainian in the first place was to make enough money so that he could travel and in this way avoid getting stuck in one place for any length of time. He has to be on the move constantly, not because he is energetic, but because if he stays in one spot for too long a period, he just might get to know someone else's problems. His trips are not excursions where he tries to get to know another part of the country better. They are escapist jaunts where he tries to avoid people. To be a participant in someone else's problems is too great a responsibility for Vyhors'kyj. In order to avoid having to make a serious acquaintance when he is in a given locale, Vyhors'kyj hides in the beer cellars. Vyhors'kyj is totally alone, incapable of and not desiring to relate to other people.

Vyhors'kyj is very similar to the city itself. He possesses a dual nature similar to that of the city. On the surface, Vyhors'kyj is the poet/artist who is supposed to possess vision and vitality. Vyhors'kyj's interior, however, reveals a person who is very shallow and who possesses no vision or vitality.

Vyhors'kyj has a very great influence on Stepan and passes his views and opinions on to him. One of the first

pearls of wisdom that he passes on to Stepan is that, "It is too great a responsibility to sign your own name. It almost obliges you to live and think as you write."²⁸ This is especially difficult for Vyhors'kyj because he tries to avoid responsibilities. Therefore, he uses a pseudonym. His writings, therefore, can say one thing, while he can say something else. Most notably is that most people know Vyhors'kyj by his pseudonym Vyhors'kyj rather than by his real name Lans'kyj. This shows that most people know only the exterior man rather than the interior man which Stepan gets to know.

Vyhors'kyj is cold and cynical. His cynicism about knowledge and the Revolution echoes a character from Anatole France, a writer who influenced not only Pidmohyl'nyj but other people from the twenties like Alexander Dovzhenko²⁹ and several of whose works Pidmohyl'nyj later translated. Citizen Gamelin, in Bohy zhazhdut' krovy, states that man should not place any hope in the French Revolution because no matter how hard people try to create change, no change will ever come. She also goes on to say that she does not see the practical equality of all men. She believes that after every revolution a new class structure will develop because people were never equal, nor will they ever be equal.³⁰

Vyhors'kyj is like an existentialist hero who believes that nothing can be changed and, therefore, gives up on life.

28 Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 115.

29 Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Ja vybyraju krasu, (Kiev, 1968), p. 117.

30 Anatole France, Bohy zhazhdut' krovy, translated by O. Pashuk (Winnipeg, 1921), p. 15.

Vyhors'kyj can be compared to Albert Camus' character Meursault in The Outsider. Meursault believed that all life was headed towards death, and therefore, he saw no point in postponing the inevitable.

Every man alive was privileged; there was only one class of men, the privileged class. All alike would be condemned to die one day; his turn, too, would come like the others'. And what difference would it make if, after being charged with murder, he were executed because he didn't weep at his mother's funeral, since it all came to the same thing in the end? ³¹

Vyhors'kyj may be an existentialist, but he is also apathetic. This is revealed to Stepan after Zos'ka's suicide. Stepan, after overcoming the traumatic shock of Zos'ka's suicide, tells Vyhors'kyj about the nightmares in which he sees himself surrounded by all sorts of villainous beings like gallows-birds and hardened criminals. ³² Here, Stepan begins to question the existence in the beer cellar by wondering if he is not like the people around him. Stepan was talking about the fantastic beings in his dreams, but he was correct to a certain extent. The beer cellars are full of prostitutes, pimps, NEPmen who do not enjoy the best of reputations, and other low life. In response to this, Vyhors'kyj's apathy appears. He accepts the situation. He remains where he is mainly because he believes that there is no such thing as change for the better. Furthermore, Vyhors'kyj does not have

³¹ Albert Camus, The Outsider, translated by Stuart Gilbert (London, 1976), p. 119.

³² Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 257.

anywhere to go because he does not have any friends, nor does he want to find any. He just wants to be the solitary person that he is.

A very good example of how far removed from society Vyhors'kyj is, can be seen in how he is referred to. Stepan, reasonably close to Vyhors'kyj, refers to him only as Vyhors'kyj or else as the poet. Nowhere in the novel is he called by his first name.

Vyhors'kyj's hair is cut in the manner of a convict.³³ Stepan wondered if a person is not like the people around him. Vyhors'kyj's haircut shows that this is possible because, though Vyhors'kyj does not partake in any criminal activities, he is found continually in the place where the criminal element is found. Also, in the private dining room to which Zos'ka takes Stepan, there is a painting of convicts feeding pigeons from a barred train.³⁴ This dining room is a part of the world of the inner city where Vyhors'kyj spends his time, and so the painting is appropriate for describing the character of the establishment and its patrons. Vyhors'kyj has nowhere to escape to because, wherever he goes, he will find his prison. His prison is not a physical prison, but rather it is an intellectual/psychological one. The fact that he still keeps his prison haircut shows that Vyhors'kyj's development as an individual stopped with his entrance into a prison, where he probably first got his hair cut.

³³ Ibid., p. 223.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 151.

From the very beginning there are differences between Stepan and Vyhors'kyj that show the different roads that the two will take. Vyhors'kyj accepts the same gallows-birds which are the cause of nightmares for Stepan. Vyhors'kyj does not try to change his surroundings, which is something that Stepan does. Literature for Vyhors'kyj is a means of material support --- a livelihood from which he is able to get money in order to live his life according to his rules. Literature is not a creative act for Vyhors'kyj. Literature for Stepan starts out as a means of expressing himself and his experiences. Later on, however, literature does become a means of support, but Stepan overcomes this aspect in his writings. He ends up trying to write something that is meaningful.

According to Vyhors'kyj, the artist has no responsibility towards society whatsoever. The artist, as he sees him, is apart from society. He tells Stepan that if he wants to help people and change society, he should join one of the organizations that provide aid to cripples or to children.³⁵

This is the rejection of one of the basic Christian dogmas. Christian philosophy preached that the individual was responsible for the well-being of those around him/her.

Vyhors'kyj, the poet, is not at all respected by the literary and intellectual community. People refer to him as being a spineless intellectual.³⁶ He is called that with good

³⁵ Ibid., p. 189.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 192.

cause because he does not take a stand on anything and he is constantly avoiding getting involved.

Vyhors'kyj is also somewhat contradictory in that he tells Stepan that his reason for leaving the city and dropping his Ukrainian lessons was because, "This stupid city has become repugnant to me."³⁷ He goes on to say, "Do you know what our city is? A historical graveyard. It has been stinking for years. You really want to air it out."³⁸ Yet, instead of trying to do something about the situation that he is describing to Stepan, Vyhors'kyj leaves the city and upon his return to it, he tells Stepan how he missed the glorious city. Vyhors'kyj also writes a book of poetry about the city, describing all the various activities that go on in the outer city. The vision of the city as portrayed in the book, Misto i misjats' (The City and The Moon), is similar to the vision of the city that Stepan had when he first came to the city.³⁹ When Stepan became a part of the city and accustomed to the flow of the outer city, this flow did not stand out as anything to be noticed. Vyhors'kyj, despite the fact that he has been a resident of the city for so many years, still sees the flow, emphasizing his detachment from his surroundings. Vyhors'kyj's contradictory stance is consistent, however, with the duality of his character. He denounces the city yet he returns, praising it to the same person he had

³⁷ Ibid., p. 116.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 116.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 209.

denounced it to earlier.

Vyhors'kyj, at the same time, can be perfectly candid and realistic in describing the beer cellars where he continually hangs out and the other patrons of the establishment, revealing his ability to read people and their problems. He admits that the beer cellar is a place where people come to escape from their everyday problems and to allow themselves to live out some magical fantasy world in their imaginations without anybody bothering them. Vyhors'kyj knows exactly what all the people are thinking and dreaming about and why. An insignificant serviceman dreams about being a superhero and taking part in all sorts of heroic exploits while gaining for himself fame and the love the beautiful women. Vyhors'kyj knows that the NEPmen, who are celebrating a successful business transaction now, will probably end up in Maksym's cafe later on in the evening and carry on with the celebration. Vyhors'kyj can identify everyone and what is on everyone's mind.⁴⁰ This is an example of the talents that Vyhors'kyj has that he does take advantage of because he does not want to get involved with people.

All the people of the beer cellar, especially Vyhors'kyj, are utterly alone. Vyhors'kyj and all of the people of the beer cellars do not live --- they merely exist from day to day in a state of stagnation and of apathy. They all live in their own isolated little worlds, unable to communicate with anyone. Vyhors'kyj tries to justify this sort of exis-

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 211.

tence by referring to the new social structure that abolished religion, declaring it evil. "After the supernatural was denied, the unnatural was left as our only joy." ⁴¹ The official loss of religion did not have that great an effect on Vyhors'kyj because he had rejected religion earlier. What it did give him was to give him a justification for his apathy.

Vyhors'kyj sees knowledge as a meaningless search and believes that it does not provide mankind with any gains. According to Vyhors'kyj, the only thing that knowledge provided mankind with was the Revolution. All the Revolution amounts to, in his eyes, is humanity moulting blood like a snake moults its skin, but only much more painfully. Vyhors'kyj does see progress in the world, but he sees no reason for it because progress does not increase human happiness. In his example of how "progress" has not accomplished anything, he compares a man condemned to the wheel three centuries ago, and a man in front of a firing squad today, saying that they both suffer just as much pain. ⁴² Because Vyhors'kyj does not believe in progress, he has stopped trying to change his life.

Vyhors'kyj tries to justify his mode of existence by claiming that man is heading for his own self-destruction anyway and that nothing can be done about this. This self-destruction is going to be caused, according to him, by the path of development that man has embarked upon. Man, as Vyhors'-

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 191.

⁴² Ibid., p. 178.

kyj sees him, entered on the path of doom the moment he started to think in abstract terms. This caused him to leave the natural life in the caves. Even man's first creations, such as huts, are the products of an artificial world. The only way that man can return to the natural world, according to Vyhors'kyj, is to cut off his own head or, in other words, to commit intellectual suicide. Vyhors'kyj also believes that after man's extinction no new race of supermen will follow. Man is a dying organism which could have survived longer had he conquered his greatest enemy, and that enemy, according to Vyhors'kyj, is his brain.⁴³

Negation of the brain succeeds in accomplishing two very important things. The first is the negation of consciousness, while the second is the negation of the thinking process itself.

Vyhors'kyj wants to return to the past, to the primal world before consciousness set in, where everything was accepted without question. Vyhors'kyj's living with the "low lives" and accepting their type of existence is part of his attempt to return to the primal state. However, this can only be accomplished through the negation of the conscious element within the individual. Unfortunately for Vyhors'kyj, he cannot return to the unconscious state because he has been conscious.

Vyhors'kyj sees himself as a pathetic being that is

⁴³ Ibid., p. 191.

caught between two distinct eras. Because of his position, he is able to see what the past was and what the future will be. Because of his vision, Vyhors'kyj believes that he is an enemy of both sides. The only people both eras like are people who are either blind or weaksighted because these people do not see; they only imagine what they see. The only time that these people see something new is when they want to see something new. Ultimately, Vyhors'kyj sees life being controlled by the blind and not by those who possess intellect.⁴⁴

Vyhors'kyj also believes that in the twentieth century love is not possible and claiming that it was only an illusion that was passed from one age to the next one by tradition. Vyhors'kyj sees love as being possible only in a civilized age, and since he refers to the twentieth century as an age of enlightened savagery, love is impossible. Love was possible in other ages and Vyhors'kyj cites the example of the twelfth and nineteenth centuries. In the twelfth century, the woman gave her body to her husband and her soul to her lover. In the nineteenth century, the woman gave her body to her lover, while she gave her husband her soul. According to Vyhors'kyj, in the twentieth century, women have totally forgotten the differences between these two roles.⁴⁵ Vyhors'kyj also believes that because love no longer exists in the twentieth century, the true poets of this era should not sing

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 259.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 258.

about love, but rather they should sing about work. Vyhors'kyj is partially consistent with this view in his poetry, at least in the last book of it that Stepan reads. Here he does describe various occupations as they are being performed, but they are there as a part of the city and not specifically as poetry about work.

Vyhors'kyj is incapable of loving another person and he does not even try to. He cannot extend any emotion to anyone because he is a dried-up individual. The only thing that he can get emotional about is the cutlet that he gets served in the beer cellars. As far as he is concerned, the cutlets are the only things that are deserving of any emotion. Vyhors'kyj sees love as being only a fleeting thing because it takes an effort to love another person, while no effort is required to love a cutlet. Vyhors'kyj wants to avoid having to extend some emotion towards anyone. "It seems to me that one cannot love a person as much as one can love a dead object. How many of us have loved tens of women and picked through still more friends, but love cutlets all our lives?"⁴⁶

Other than when he is drinking or eating, the only other time that Vyhors'kyj finds satisfaction in his life is when he is working. But since he rarely works, he mostly travels or drinks, living off his earnings as a writer, he finds little satisfaction. It does not matter to Vyhors'kyj that he cannot find any satisfaction in his life because he

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 177.

believes that happiness is an illusion anyway. Vyhors'kyj also claims that he is repulsed by the idea of total satisfaction because, as he sees it, it is the most natural of all human illusions and most bestial.⁴⁷ Vyhors'kyj rejects the bestial.

Happiness for Vyhors'kyj consists of being able to move about from one place to another anytime he chooses to do so. It also consists of the ability to be able to drink beer in his favorite beer cellar. Life is only sufferable for Vyhors'kyj when he has no responsibilities. In his logic, when a man has responsibilities, he is not free. Neither is a man free if he is tied down to a city, or to a village, or any other permanent location because he, in Vyhors'kyj's view, becomes plantlike. The only time when Vyhors'kyj will consider a man free is when the individual has the funds to do as he/she pleases. Only then can the individual be happy. Vyhors'kyj has not got the funds to do as he pleases and, therefore, he is unhappy.⁴⁸

The authors of the Literaturnaja entsiklopedija claim that Vyhors'kyj was the character that Pidmohyl'nyj portrayed most sympathetically in the novel as well as claiming that he is the positive character in the novel.⁴⁹ This is a statement that is debatable for two reasons. The first is that

47 Ibid., p. 191.

48. Ibid., p. 215.

49 "Pidmogil'nyj, Valer'jan", Literaturnaja entsiklopedija, Vol. VIII (Moscow, 1934), p. 631.

Pidmohyl'nyj was a supporter of romantyka vitaizmu and Vyhors'kyj is hardly a character that could be described as a textbook example of the "vitaist" hero. Vyhors'kyj does have talent and vision, but he does not use them. Vyhors'kyj is imprisoned everywhere that he goes, and his philosophy is a tangled web which rejects all aspects of life. Vitaism was supposed to promote life rather than negate it as Vyhors'kyj does. Vyhors'kyj rejected the intellectual and bestial side of life and claimed that the emotional side of life was not possible in the twentieth century.

The second reason is that Pidmohyl'nyj rejects individuals like Vyhors'kyj. In his review of Maksym Ryl's'kyj, a writer that in many ways is similar to Vyhors'kyj, Pidmohyl'nyj takes a very negative stance towards him and his poetry. He writes that the major "complex" behind Ryl's'kyj is wine and that Ryl's'kyj uses this wine to drown the unconquerable differences between the dream and reality.⁵⁰ Pidmohyl'nyj concludes his attack on Ryl's'kyj by saying that there is no point in blindfolding Ryl's'kyj because he is already blind.⁵¹

The worst elements of the city are not found in Vyhors'kyj's character, but only the characteristics of an individual who has given up on life and who promotes the negation of life. As his name suggests, Vyhors'kyj is a burnt-out individual without any ambitions or goals to strive for. He is

⁵⁰ Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj, "Bez sterna," Zhyttja i revoljut-sija, No. 1 (1927), p. 49.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 53.

suffering from stomach pains which he blames on the pate that he ate.⁵² This is a very important image of Vyhors'kyj. His stomach, the convertor of food into energy, does not work, and he cannot tolerate liver which provides him with iron or, to be more specific, the strength to live on. He is at the end of his road and even admits to Stepan that Stepan may never see him again. This could be partly caused by the fact that he has begun to know Stepan much more intimately than he wanted to, or by the fact that he did not want to have Stepan see him as a sick man who needs help from other individuals; but whatever the reason may be for his belief that he may never see Stepan again, it is still a running away from life. Vyhors'kyj, according to his own outlook on life, has only one option open to him, and that is death. He has tried to achieve an intellectual death, but has failed. Physical death is then the only option left open for him. It does not matter whether the death is self-inflicted or not, because only in death can absolute non-existence be found.

The people of Kiev are not a positive lot. Instead of getting better, their problems are becoming worse and worse. Nobody is doing anything to improve the situation which they are in and nobody cares. The people of Kiev are apathetic, cynical individuals who lack vision. This lack of vision,

⁵² Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 212.

not only prohibits them from being creative, whether it be artistically or intellectually or just being able to rebuild old delapidated structures, but it also prevents them from perceiving the situation as it really is.

Their lack of vision also shows up in their need for artificial stimulants in all forms, from alcohol and opium to the escapist films, theater, and literature that the people flock to. The people are dependent on someone or something else for their dreams. They cannot dream themselves. Vyhors'kyj claimed that the best servants of life were blind, and in this way, the people of Kiev are ideal servants of life.

The people of Kiev are stunted individuals. For whatever reason, they have not developed fully. They have all stopped somewhere in their development --- some in the days of the czarist regime and others in the post-Revolutionary era. The best examples of this can be found in Zos'ka and in Musin'ka. Their names refer not only to children, but also to a diminished person, something less than a total being. Their actions, especially those of Zos'ka and Maksym, point towards their being childlike. As children, the world will always seem to be a nice place to live in. As children, they do not have to face up to the realities and responsibilities of life.

Rita is the only person who may be positive, but even with her there are problems. Rita is a stage performer and the only way that she could influence the people would be for them to perceive her performance as it is intended to be

perceived. Unfortunately, the people cannot do so because they lack the necessary vision. The other problem with Rita is that since she has no roots, if she comes across something she does not like, she can always leave and move elsewhere and in this way avoid the problem.

The people of the city cannot communicate with each other. They need to be stimulated by alcohol or some other substance in order to start the communication process. Even then, the communication process becomes one-sided with one person ending up lecturing the other as in the case of Vyhors'kyj and Stepan, or in the other conversations of the beer cellar where both individuals talk, but nobody listens or wants to listen. When Stepan wants to listen to the prostitute and learn more about her, she is totally unprepared for such an action and does not know what to do.

There is no one capable of rejuvenating the city. Therefore, any rejuvenation is going to have to be done by outside elements from the countryside and the villages; but on closer examination of the rural populus, Pidmohyl'nyj shows that the villagers are not capable of providing the stimulus needed. The villages are filled with people like Levko, who refuse to face up to the realities of life in the twentieth century. They are also filled with people who shunned Stepan because he was an orphan. The countryside itself needs a stimulus to help it rejuvenate.

The situation in both the city and the countryside is static. This places the spotlight on the individual who must provide the stimulus needed to revive life in both the city

and the countryside.

CHAPTER V

Stepan Radchenko

He ---- the new force, summoned from the villages for creative work. He ---- one of those who should replace the decayed of the past and courageously build the future. ¹

That is how Stepan envisioned himself and his role in life when he first came to the city. Full of youthful pride, energy, and a sense of power that had followed the Revolution, he believed that he was able to take on everything and everyone and change things in order to create a new world, a new utopia promised by the Revolution. Stepan came to the city with the new revival of life during the N.E.P. years. His motto was, "Do not hate the city, but conquer it."²

Everything was clear for him. He knew exactly what had to be done and what he was going to do to accomplish the dreams of the future. Nothing was going to stop him, or others like him who had come to the cities with the same ideas in mind.

A minute ago he was downtrodden, but now he saw the endless perspectives. Thousands like himself were coming to the city, crowding into cellars, barns and dormitories, starving, but working and studying, imperceptibly undermining its rotten foundations, in order to put in new and unshakeable ones. Thousands of Levko's, Stepan's and Vasyl's are laying seige to these NEPmanic havens, squeezing them, and finally toppling them. Into the city flows the new blood of the villages.

1. Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 21.

2. Ibid., p. 40.

that will change the city's appearance and essence. And he ---- one of the changes, that fate has appointed to take place. City-garden, village-city, prophesized by the Revolution, ---- these wonders of the future of which books left only a vague impression ---- at that moment seemed to him near and conceivable. ³

Stepan was influenced by the orators and the propagandists of that time, especially those who were doing a variation on the ninth point of the Communist Manifesto (1848) that proclaimed that the differences between the cities and the countryside would be gradually abolished through the unification of agriculture and the manufacturing industry and through the redistribution of the population. ⁴ All Stepan is doing is regurgitating somebody else's thoughts and visions. He does not have any thoughts or visions of his own, nor does he have the personal experience needed to develop his own vision of life. ⁵

The passage also shows how much faith Stepan had in the Revolution and in the success of all the utopian plans. He is so idealistic that he is naive. He believes that he can pinpoint who and what the enemy of the Revolution is. In his eyes, or rather in the eyes of the orators and propagandists that he had listened to or read, the enemy is the

3. Ibid., p. 40.

4. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in Values in Conflict, ed. Victor Comerchero (New York, 1970), p. 258.

5. This is exactly what Khvyljovyj criticized the activists for in his pamphlets. According to him, they are capable only of following orders, aping others, especially their Russian superiors. Hordyns'kyj, Literaturna krytyka pid-sovjets'koji Ukrajinny, p. 63.

city and everything that the city represents. The city for him is like the sun in a solar system. Eventually, it draws everything into itself and through a very painful, though unseen process, forces everything to conform to the standards of the city.⁶

Historically, the city was much more powerful than the village. N.E.P. was an attempt at bringing the village materially to the same level as the city and Stepan supports this. "Is it the eternal fate of the village to be an ignorant, restricted slave who sells himself for positions and food, losing not only his goal, but also human dignity?"⁷

Stepan blamed the people of the city for this state of affairs. From the very beginning, he possessed a great hatred towards them even though he had never encountered any of them personally. From the boat, as they approached Kiev for the first time, Stepan, Levko, and Nadja saw the crowds on the beaches along the river. Nadja was enraptured by them and became very excited. Stepan was not. He thought that the sight of all those people was very unpleasant and believed them to be ridiculous looking. He was also put off by the fact that Nadja was enthusiastic about their behavior. Levko, who was not as critical as Stepan, tried to justify their behavior by claiming that they roamed about the beaches the way they did, in an attempt to regain their sanity after a rough week.⁸

6. Valerijan Pidmohyl'nyj, Misto, p. 160.

7. Ibid., p. 46.

8. Ibid., p. 16.

Even Levko's attempt at justifying their behavior did not have any affect on Stepan. He did not like the city dwellers and had a very simple solution for dealing with them.

And his whole soul engaged in an uncontrollable animosity towards this mindless, laughing stream. What are all these heads good for except for laughter and for flirting? Is it possible to assume that in their hearts lives an idea, that their dear blood is capable of spontaneous action, that in their consciousness there are assignments and responsibilities?

Here they are --- city dwellers! Shopkeepers, silly teachers, troublefree dolls in posh costumes. It is necessary to sweep them away, to squash these licentious maggots, and in their place, others will come. ⁹

There is only one problem with Stepan's philosophy here. He does not know who or what the others will be that will take over the positions of the city dwellers that will be eradicated. All Stepan wants to do is to totally destroy everything that he finds in the city and then build his utopian society. He has no respect for the people that he finds in the city, nor for any of their accomplishments. He does not see them as people with human emotions. They are just something that is in his way and in the way of the Revolution as he understands it and, therefore, they have to be eradicated. This is essentially the emergence of the anti-city bias in Stepan that was prevelant among Ukrainian villagers like Peter Skorevetanskii and that was continuing during the N.E.P. era.

⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

Stepan came to the city with a cold, cruel, rational head on his shoulders. He knew exactly what he wanted to accomplish and how he was going to do it. He was full of that vibrant energy that was needed to rebuild the city. This energy is part of his existence and it is emphasized very clearly in the way Stepan decided to start off the first day in the city. Full of energy, he has to get rid of it by exercising, as he says, in the manner of the city dwellers, not knowing that except for a few athletes and athletically-inclined individuals, city dwellers do not exercise at all. This is Stepan's first attempt at trying to integrate himself into the system of the city. By doing these exercises, he also wanted to create some kind of pattern that he could follow, because at this point in time, he believed that, "the norm and order are the first guarantee of success."¹⁰ This also shows how dependent he is on external controls to provide him with the means of living. It also shows that Stepan upon his first arrival in the city only has his physical side developed fully. His rational side is slowly developing as he is becoming more and more experienced in life.

Stepan has one characteristic that is common to all of the people of the novel and this is duality of character. At the beginning of the novel, Stepan's duality is caused by the combination of his activist beliefs and his alienation. Stepan the activist wanted to destroy the city dwellers,

10. Ibid., p. 22.

while Stepan the alienated, wanted to become integrated into city life. This duality does have a positive side to it. It allows him later to experience urban life and compare it to the kind of life that he led in the village and, as a result of this comparison, come up with his own philosophy of life at the end of the novel.

One of the first things that does make an appearance in Stepan's life is his cold rationalism. Everything has a place and a purpose and if it is not practical, then there is no point to it. Stepan cannot understand the need to study Latin.¹¹ The world around him is a totally rational place. "Fairies and good wizards do not exist today, nor did they ever. Only through suffering and work can something be attained."¹²

Stepan's practicality and his coldness can be seen in his early view of the city. In the night, while he is wandering aimlessly among the marquees and the downtown displays, he stops by an electrical display.

The electrical store suddenly stopped him. Behind its mirrorlike glass, colored lamps lit up continually and went out, and the crystal of the mirrors on display for a second reflected weird dead flowers. And Stepan thought to himself bitterly -- why not take these lamps to the village, where there could be some gain from them, and not entertainment. O insatiable city.¹³

11 Ibid., p. 35.

12 Ibid., p. 27.

13 Ibid., p. 39.

Stepan's response, from the point of view of a revolutionary, is a positive one because the city is using up energy in a purposeless fashion, energy that could be put to good use on a village somewhere. It also shows that Stepan has a very shallow and limited knowledge of people and of their ways. People cannot be practical all the time. The sequence also shows that Stepan has very little knowledge of himself. He does not notice that he was attracted to that shop window, just like other people, and that he had been wandering around Kiev aimlessly before that.¹⁴ Stepan has a very limited view of life at this time. This is a very important problem in his life. He can see the events of the past, but he cannot see what is going on around him in the present. His vision of the future is not his, but somebody else's, and it is this vision of a glorious future that keeps him going.

Yet despite Stepan's positive attitude and his belief in himself and in the Revolution, a doubt begins to creep in. This forces him to reevaluate what he is doing and why. This takes place beside a shop window also, but this time the shop window is that of a bookstore. All the books on display in the window were new ones, except for one, and this intimidated him because he did not know where all these books would lead him. He was not sure what would be revealed in them; whereas he was certain of what the Revolution had promised him. All this previous planning seemed to have been

14. Ibid., p. 37.

wasted, and he started to question everything, including his motives for coming to Kiev and what would eventually happen to him.¹⁵

Even after all his doubts, Stepan tried to rationalize why he was feeling that way, and he avoided the obvious. He wanted to believe that his doubts were brought on by tiredness, and not by the fact that he was human. This is one of Stepan's major problems. He cannot relate to other people, or see himself as a human capable of making mistakes and being attracted to flashing lights. Stepan sees himself as infallible. Because of this, he believes that he is superior to the people around him. He sees people, not as people, but as part of a great plan that he has to follow. If the people fit into this plan, then they are allowed to remain in their positions. If not, then they are removed.¹⁶

When Stepan was by the bookstore window, the bookstore seemed to him to be almost blind. The blindness of the bookstore can be interpreted in a number of ways. The first is that the knowledge that is found in the bookstore leads nowhere and should be avoided. Stepan followed a similar course later when he decided not to return to the Institute. He realized that he was not acquiring any new knowledge, or at least not the type of knowledge that he wanted at the Institute.

15 Ibid., p. 17.

16 Ibid., pp. 38 and 40.