

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

VALERIJAN PIDMOHYL'NYJ'S

MISTO

by

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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.

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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 (Grandfather 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 disfavour 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, "Tvorcha 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 ukrains'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 ukrains'koji radjans'koji literatury (Kiev, 1965), p. 125.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. -----, Istorija ukrains'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, "Nevelychka 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," Cher-vonyj 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.