

REVENANTS AND REVOLUTIONARIES: BODY AND SOCIETY IN BOGDANOV'S MARTIAN NOVELS

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In Stanley Kubrik's 1964 black comedy *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, the psychotic General Jack D. Ripper (Sterling Hayden) orders a wing of B-52 bombers to attack targets in the Soviet Union, precipitating nuclear holocaust. Ripper believes he is thwarting a Communist plot to sap the bodily fluids of the Western powers. The Soviets, he explains, are polluting the water. "Water," Ripper tells a stunned Captain Mandrake (Peter Sellers), "water is the source of all life. Seven tenths of this earth's surface is water. Why, do you realize that... seventy percent of *you* is water." The global war of ideology is waged on the body. In fact, Ripper imputes his own impotence, which he describes as a "loss of essence," to Communist infiltration. He connects fluoridation to the scheme: "A foreign substance is introduced into our precious bodily fluids without the knowledge of the individual, and certainly without any choice. That's the way your hard core commie works." A threat to our physical borders stands for a threat to our ideological ones.

The vampire, a menace to borders, may be a universal figure of the ideological Other. In revolutionary Russia it symbolized political reaction. During the 1905 Revolution, critics of autocracy caricatured the cadaverous archconservative statesman Konstantin Pobedonostsev as a vampire; after 1917, Soviet leaders portrayed the bourgeoisie and the ideas they embody as revenants.¹ In a 1920 essay, commissar of enlightenment Anatoly Lunacharsky urged Soviet artists to arm themselves with "Russian revolutionary laughter," that is, satire with which to slay socialism's enemies once and for all. Laugh-

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1. Henryk Baran has examined the vampire motif in pre-Revolutionary polemics; and Eric Naiman has shown how Party leaders had to keep "reburying" class enemies during the New Economic Policy (1921–28), which represented a return to the market system and, many felt, ideological retreat (148–80).

ter, he says, is “an aspen stake driven into the dark sorcerer just killed but ready to rise from the grave; laughter hammers sturdy nails into the black coffin of the past.”² Humor is revolutionary hygiene: the way to destroy this vampire, whose values poison the new order, is “chemically.” “Laughter,” says Lunacharsky, “is the disinfectant that makes all this filth disappear” (1: 187). Relentless satire of the old order preserves the health of the new in a noxious atmosphere.

Dracula

Lunacharsky’s imagery may owe inspiration to Bram Stoker’s novel *Dracula*, which was published in 1897.³ *Dracula* was tremendously popular in Russia, where a translation appeared at least as early as 1902.⁴ Although social critics had portrayed aristocrats and autocrats as bloodsuckers before *Dracula*, Stoker introduced the image of vampirism as infection (“He have infect you,” Dr. Van Helsing informs the bitten Mina Harker (360)). Corpses were at the time widely believed to spread epidemic disease with miasma, toxic vapors released from putrefying organic matter. Although the miasma theory of disease proved wrong (and the germ theory correct), it helped propel sanitary reform. Stoker’s “Un-Dead” is associated with pollution. Entering *Dracula*’s Carfax lair, the vampire hunters are staggered by an odor, “an earthy smell, as of some dry miasma,” compounded by a stink of corruption. “Every breath exhaled by that monster,” writes Jonathan Harker in his journal, “seemed to have clung to the place and intensified its loathsomeness” (290). In the medical imagination, the vampire’s poisonous breath is worse than his bite; in fact, Van Helsing connects *Dracula*’s power to the volcanic gases of Transylvania, which “kill or make to vivify” (360). So, playing on popular fears, Lunacharsky conjures up a powerful image of ideological pollution.

Stoker’s book also did a great deal to eroticize literary vampirism. Blood and semen are equivalents in *Dracula*. Young Lucy is fed upon by the Count and reanimated by blood transfused from the veins of her suitors. The procedure has clear sexual connotations. Arthur, the first donor, is the man Lucy has chosen to wed, and the others are warned not to tell him they have also given blood; it would make him jealous. Indeed, after Lucy’s death, Arthur

2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

3. The Slavic world has a rich vampire tradition: *upyri* and *vampiry* are attested in Slavic manuscripts from the eleventh century. Socialism has a vampire tradition too: Karl Marx famously described capital as “dead labor which, vampire-like, lives by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks” (342).

4. In a 1908 letter to his friend E. P. Ivanov, Aleksandr Blok reports having read the novel, in a 1902 translation, at Ivanov’s urging: “I finished *The Vampire, Count Dracula*. I read for two nights and was deathly afraid” (8: 251). Blok notes that the novel influenced his 1908 essay “Sun over Russia,” a tribute to Lev Tolstoy. There, Tolstoy’s humanism is the sunlight that keeps the vampire of reaction from rising from the grave (5: 301–3). For a history of Russian translations (and imitations) of *Dracula*, see Odessky.

comforts himself with the notion that the “transfusion of his blood to her veins had made her truly his bride” (213). On the one hand, giving blood is a display of male power; however, Stoker also plays on Victorian anxieties over gender roles. The sexually assertive female vampires in the novel are figures of the New Woman, a social phenomenon to which Stoker refers. The New Woman, a type depicted in the novels of liberal authors such as Sarah Grand, George Egerton, and Thomas Hardy, rejects the traditional roles of wife and mother. From this standpoint, giving blood is a depletion of male strength. Four transfusions from “strong” men cannot satiate Lucy, whom Dracula has turned. And Jonathan Harker, who is attacked by three voluptuous vampires in Dracula’s castle, admits feeling “impotent” (225). Ultimately, the novelist resolves the crisis of masculinity: Lucy is impaled and Dracula, who has been freeing women from conventional roles, is destroyed by Harker and one of Lucy’s erstwhile suitors. Stoker drives a stake through the heart of a threatening ideology.

This paper examines, in a similar vein, ideology and the exchange of fluids in the work of Aleksandr Bogdanov, who was obsessed with blood (in 1926 he founded the world’s first institute of blood transfusion), and whose fiction features vampires.⁵ Bogdanov was among the original Bolsheviks and became an influential theorist of the new proletarian culture after 1917. Before the Revolution, he wrote two Martian novels: *Red Star* [1908] and *Red Star’s* prequel *Engineer Menni* [1913]. *Engineer Menni* is a historical novel. It tells the story of the Martian class struggle that prepared the way for the social utopia described by *Red Star’s* hero and narrator Leonid, a visitor from Earth. The novels are a vehicle for the social and scientific theories that Bogdanov worked out in many books and essays.

New World

Early in his account of his mission to Mars, Leonid portrays himself as a new Columbus. First, he compares the Martian craft to “Columbus’s egg,” neatly suggesting both the ship’s spheroid shape and his part as a Bolshevik culture hero (1979 [1908], 30). (The proverb has its origin in the story that Columbus, vexed at being told his voyages were easy, challenged the guests at a dinner to stand an egg on end. After all had failed to balance the egg, the explorer simply flattened one end and stood it up: it is easy to *follow*, not to show the way.) As the ship draws near Mars, where the revolution has already taken place, Leonid calls himself the “Columbus of this world,” crossing the ocean of outer space (66). Bogdanov had pictured this New World, the future socialist society, in three essays of 1904 (published together in 1905 as the

5. For a history of the institute see Huestis. Odessky demonstrates Bogdanov’s familiarity with *Dracula* by comparing the vampire in *Engineer Menni* (1913) with Stoker’s *Dracula* in Nina Sandrova’s 1912 translation.

book *New World* [*Novyi Mir*]). There, the discovery of America is a prime example of how the struggle with nature is the real engine of evolution.

In the struggle with nature, the great common foe, Bogdanov saw an inexhaustible source of raw material for creativity. Only when we test ourselves against nature, he argues in *New World*, do we truly progress. America thus transformed human life, confronting it with a “mass of new vital content” (1924 [1904], 75). Explorer, hunter, scientist, and inventor wage a constant, lonely, direct struggle with nature. This struggle taps primal productive and creative forces. Profit does not motivate such men; adventure, risk, and wonder are stimuli enough. Their reward is more rapid, more intense self-development—growth that will be transmitted to future generations. Although Bogdanov acknowledged Mendel’s theory of heredity, rediscovered in 1900, he adhered to the Lamarckian notion of the inheritance of acquired characteristics.⁶ Lamarckians believed that environmental changes caused behavioral changes. Changed behavior leads to more or less use of a structure or organ; use causes a structure to enlarge over several generations; disuse causes it to atrophy or disappear. All these adaptive changes, the theory goes, are heritable.

To speed overall human development, says Bogdanov, we must multiply the experience of this behavior-changing struggle with nature. It follows that forms of social organization that allow us to join forces and to share experience are the most progressive. Competition, by contrast, is the mechanism of “anarchic” or “spontaneous” [*stikhiinyi*] development. Social and cultural forms that enshrine individualism are inefficient, entropic. Competition wastes talents of mind. Struggle for profit or ego “dissipates *force* and scatters creative *attention*,” ultimately doing more harm than good (1924, 75). Under conditions of competition, overall life experience is either negligible or hopelessly divided. Risking one’s life in a fight against wild beasts will evolve the human race faster than taking business risks. The perfection of the self goes hand in hand with the perfection of society.⁷

Red Star and *Engineer Menni* treat the problem of progress that Bogdanov had worked out in his 1904 essays. The essays and novels ask whether somebody bred in the Old World of competition can live in the New World of cooperation. *Red Star*’s Leonid is a sort of limit case of earthly potential: young yet experienced, hardened yet adaptable, educated yet actively engaged in life, he represents the highest level of development possible under current

6. Although Bogdanov accepted Darwinian evolution in general, he believed that acquired characteristics were inherited. In *Tectology* Bogdanov writes that “modern science has to accept” the inheritance of acquired characteristics as a mechanism of evolution (1989 [1913], 2: 87).

7. Petr Kropotkin (1842–1921) is usually credited with the idea that intraspecific cooperation—not competition—in the struggle for existence is the more efficient mechanism of evolution. Kropotkin advanced his theory in the 1902 book *Mutual Aid*. Bogdanov may have known Kropotkin’s work but, as Daniel P. Todes has shown, such ideas were widespread among Russian scientists and social thinkers at the time. See also Adams (8).

earthly conditions of competition. Accordingly, the Martian scouts choose him to try to make the transition from one planet, that is, one epoch, to another. But Leonid fails: he suffers a nervous breakdown and is sent home. I will consider Leonid's breakdown in light of Bogdanov's theories. Leonid's failure to adapt, we shall see, is both ideological and physiological.

New Wine

A physician by training, Bogdanov mixed his medicine with his Marx. In Bogdanov's writings, sociology informs biology. He drew analogies between organisms and forms of social organization. Everywhere Bogdanov perceived "the *real* unity of organizational methods—in mental and in physical systems, in living and in dead nature, in the work of elemental forces and in conscious human activity" (1989 [1913], 1: 79). But the prevailing condition of human evolution—competition—prevents us from establishing these organizational principles and using them to control the world. As long as we compete, as long as human experience remains divided, we cannot perfect society or the body. Capitalism and the specialization of knowledge perpetuate individualism, which hinders social progress and, we shall see, practical immortality.⁸ "The disorganization of life," states Bogdanov in *New World*, "means the unproductive waste of its forces, the conflict of its forms, the incongruity of its manifestations. This applies to all spheres of life" (1924 [1904], 43).

Bogdanov dreamed of a universal science of organization that would maximize the efficiency of all life systems, from the circulation of goods to the circulation of blood. His theory of organization, which he called tectology, guides the regulation of the body and society. Put into practice, tectology would maintain social and bodily equilibrium as humans evolve. Its creator envisaged a lossless system, life without waste, without, ultimately, death. He called for the "collecting of the human" [*sobiranie cheloveka*], the integration of the forces of society and self (1924 [1904], 13).

Bogdanov laid out his organizational science in the 1913 book *Tectology*. In a section titled "The Tectology of the Struggle with Old Age," Bogdanov examines various solutions to the problem of aging, which he sees as the ultimate organizational challenge. (The struggle with nature, we remember, is the real engine of progress. In making common cause against nature, we evolve socially as well as physically.) A few sections earlier Bogdanov had drawn an analogy between capitalism and the perishable body: like the market struggle, aging is a result of systemic contradictions, gradual divergences in the tempo and strength of vital functions. For example, in the market struggle, the branches of production develop disproportionately; some fall behind,

8. The childhood deaths of two younger brothers—and God's apparent unconcern—formed Bogdanov's resolve to combat death. In a memoir, Bogdanov comments, "Thus arose my first, childish ideal—life without pain and death" (1995 [1925], 1: 32).

others outperform. In aging, the kidneys, which filter wastes from the blood, may fall behind metabolism. In both cases, contradiction leads to crisis: cyclical overproduction in the first case, chronic renal failure in the second (1989, 2: 24–27). Both in the economy and in the blood, waste builds up. The exchange of goods and the exchange of fluids are analogous processes.

The solution, like the problem, is social: *mutual* blood transfusions. Bogdanov emphasized the procedure's commonality of purpose. The blood of the young would replenish the blood of the old with infection-fighting leukocytes and metabolism-regulating hormones; the blood of the old would fortify the blood of the young with its acquired or induced resistances to infection. Blood, notes Bogdanov, is living tissue; for him, mutual transfusion is transplantation, the "adding of an individual to an individual." It is like the grafting of skin but with the advantage that it is not "one-sided" [*odnostoronnii*], a term the author uses to characterize lower forms of organization. The promise of mutual blood transfusion lies in going "beyond the bounds of individuality." If aging is an analogue of the market system, then immortality is an analogue of the future socialist system. Bogdanov called mutual blood transfusion "physiological collectivism" (1989, 2: 78–89). Aging, he suggests, is simply a symptom of the class struggle.⁹

Most important, by multiplying the individual organism's struggle against nature—in this case, disease and deterioration—we speed overall human development. Bogdanov supposed that blood carries the stamp of the tissues with which it comes in constant contact. And, accepting the theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, he suggested that blood is the means by which adaptive changes are transmitted to embryonic cells.¹⁰ Therefore, mutual blood transfusion, by circulating adaptive changes through the gene pool, cannot but increase the "sum of elements for evolution."

Bogdanov's theory of evolution minimizes the role of reproduction. He held that the "exchange of life," in all forms, is the more efficient mechanism of evolution. In addition to the exchange of blood, people can apparently spread adaptive changes through the "intercourse of experience" [*obshchenie opyta*], that is, through conversation and mimicry. This "conjugation of experiences" [*kon'iugatsiia perezhivanii*] can replace sexual reproduction. Bogdanov af-

9. Bogdanov's ideas, and, it seems, his imagery, were adopted by his ally Leonid Krasin, an Old Bolshevik who became the commissar of foreign trade. Krasin attempted to cure his anemia with regular blood transfusions, a procedure in which he placed hopes for immortality. His primary donors were his three daughters, whose "young blood" he liked to say he, a "real vampire," was drinking (O'Connor 290). Several scholars have noted Krasin's faith in the possibility of scientific resurrection (Masing-Delic 15, O'Connor 278–79, Tumarkin 181).

10. Bogdanov's theory resembles Charles Darwin's abandoned theory of heredity, pangenesis. Darwin believed that particles called gemmules reside in the limbs and organs. Adaptive changes are imprinted on the gemmules; the gemmules then travel in the blood to the reproductive cells, to which they transfer information about the changes; the reproductive cells, in turn, transmit acquired characteristics to offspring.

firmed that years of communication, as, for example, between spouses, cause people to resemble one another *physically* as closely as brothers and sisters—or more (1989, 2: 78–89). It turns out that the exchange of fluids is the model for this (initially) psychic form of union. Bogdanov notes that several languages reflect a sense that our interactions are *liquid*: the French word *influence* (from Latin, “a flowing in”) and its Russian calque *vliianie* represent the effect of one system (a social group, an ideology, or an individual) on another as a mixture of fluids, an “infusion [*vlivanie*]” (2: 57). “Transfusion” in Russian is the related word *perelivanie*.

Bogdanov was fixated on puberty, the onset of which he deemed a terrible shock to the system. The collapse of the body, he writes in “The Tectology of the Struggle with Old Age,” starts with the sex organs and their functions (2: 79–80). In the *New World* essays, he compares human puberty to capitalism. For systems growing wild, like our body and society, sudden acceleration creates crisis: the excessive production of hormones and sperm, like the excessive production of goods, creates enough waste to outweigh development, moving the race “one step forward, two steps back” (1924, 50). Lower forms of biological and cultural organization—animals and agricultural society—do not suffer as acutely from growth; the more complex the forms of life—humans and industrialized society—the graver the crisis. As they now stand, body and society grow in a state of sickness.

Bogdanov believed that Marxism and science can bring about a human condition that is the same in quality, if not in kind, as primordial forms of life. Originally, we were natural communists, he explains in *New World*. Simple agriculturalists instead of nervous intellectuals, we did not experience change as crisis. Originally, humans “merged organically with the whole—the group, the community—as cells merge in living tissues” (69). So too, he predicts, will humans merge tomorrow, but through science—mutual transfusion—not nature. Disharmonious development will give way to harmonious development; the divided body and society will give way to the integral body and society. I have shown that for Bogdanov the future “collecting of the human” involves the regulation of energy flows—goods, blood, sperm, and more. On Bogdanov’s Mars, this future is now.

Engineer Menni

Engineer Menni narrates the shift the Martians, who are humanoid, make from “spontaneous” to harmonious development, from struggle with one another to struggle with nature. On pre-revolutionary Mars, the social vanguard strives against the forces of reaction. In the novel, vampires, living corpses, are symbols for reactionaries, old men whose dead ideas threaten to sap the strength of new ones. In a chapter titled “The Legend of the Vampires,” the author’s mouthpiece, the Martian engineer Netti (Menni’s son) explains that the enemy of revolution, a “vampire,” “is not only a parasite but an active

hater of life; he drinks its sap in order to live; he does not want life to live, to move forward" (1979 [1913], 122).

Bogdanov had introduced the figure of the bloodsucking reactionary in a 1910 essay titled "Vampires." In a continuation, "The Great Vampire of Our Time," he writes that "legends about vampires, the evil dead, figuratively express a widespread social phenomenon—those cases where what is obsolete [otzhivshee], unwanted, and socially sterile diminishes the strength of what is developing, creative, and socially useful. And by no means are 'vampires' only people; they may also be groups, classes, institutions, ideas, principles" (1995 [1910], 1: 68).¹¹ Bogdanov's vampire, like Lunacharsky's, pollutes the new world: Netti points out that a vampire is "not a person, because the human, socially creative being in him has already died; he is the corpse of such a being. An ordinary dead body is also harmful: it must be removed or destroyed; otherwise it infects the air and spreads disease" (1979, 122–23).¹²

While the "vampires" compete, the progressives struggle with nature. The book's eponymous hero labors to irrigate the desert planet by means of a gigantic system of canals. Bogdanov may have been inspired by the work of the American astronomer Percival Lowell (1855–1916), who believed that the straight lines on early telescopic images of the surface of Mars were irrigation canals dug by the planet's inhabitants. Lowell published his findings in three popular books: *Mars* (1895), *Mars and Its Canals* (1906), and *Mars as the Abode of Life* (1908). Menni, a master of efficiency, strives to regulate the flow of the planet's vital fluid: water. By contrast, Menni's political opponents, blood-drinkers, drain life to survive. A real person, a "human-worker," says Netti, "lives for himself as a physiological organism, and lives for society in his activity. His energy goes into the common stream of life and strengthens it, helping to defeat that which is hostile to it in the world. At the same time, he doubtless costs society something, lives by using the labor of others, takes something from the life around him. But as long as he gives life more than he takes, he increases the sum of life; he is a plus, a positive quantity." In the healthy system, the ratio of output to input is high. By contrast, a former person, a vampire, "reduces the quantity of life," taking more than he gives (1979, 121–22).

To borrow the terms of the book *Tectology*, which appeared in the same

11. "Vampires" was published July 19, 1910, in the radical Kiev newspaper *Kiev Thought* [*Kievskaiia mysl'*] (Bogdanov 1995, 1: 143n1). The undated continuation was published only recently (1995, 1: 68–75).

12. Bogdanov's use of "vampire" anticipates the epithet "former people" [*byvshie liudi*] used after the Revolution to characterize members of the old exploiting classes. The German essayist and critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), who visited Moscow in 1926–27, reports hearing the term, which had currency in the 1920s and 30s. In a diary entry dated January 14, 1927, Benjamin writes, "That evening I learned another strange term, namely the expression 'have beens' [*byvshie liudi*], applied to those citizens who were dispossessed by the Revolution and who have been unable to adapt to the new situation" (85).

year as *Engineer Menni*, vampirism is a one-sided blood transfusion, a struggle of old and young; it does not “increase the sum of elements for evolution.” Menni, by contrast, puts his energy into the “common stream of life,” literally. His canals are like veins in which mutual blood transfusions flow to strengthen all life. In the novel, Bogdanov hints that the projects to replenish the heavenly body and the human body are analogous. Menni’s first two canals are named Ambrosia and Nectar, the food and drink of immortality in Greek mythology (Gk. *ambrotos*, immortal, immortalizing; *nektar*, overcoming death). Bogdanov seems to have picked Ambrosia and Nectar from a list of nearly 200 canals named by Lowell and his precursor, the Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli (1835–1910).¹³ Mars’s capitalist vampires drain life to satisfy their constant craving; the engineer, however, endeavors to replenish the aging planet, which is “twice as old as Earth” (1979 [1908], 61), with the stuff of life eternal. The gods eat the dishes of immortality, yet their immortal bodies know no hunger and have no need of food. As Jean-Pierre Vernant argues, the paradox is a way of saying that whatever forces the human body may have, the gods possess these in a pure and unlimited state (Vernant 27). The divine body is defined in opposition to a body whose forces ebb and flow. By this definition, the vampire, though it is a reanimated corpse, precisely embodies *mortality*, constant fluctuation; one may say that the vampire “lives” only to be subject to death, the decline and increase of force.

Red Star

Menni is building a world in which vampiric cycles of decline and increase no longer apply. On the Mars of *Red Star*, where socialist and scientific-technical revolutions have already taken place, the problem of energy flows has been solved. The Martians’ ability to regulate force is revealed in *Red Star*’s first few pages: the Martians have succeeded in synthesizing “minus-matter,” a substance that is repelled by celestial bodies. The Martian emissary Menni, a descendant of the great engineer, shows Leonid a bottle of the marvelous liquid. To travel space, the Martians counterbalance the weight of their ships with just enough minus-matter to overcome gravity. Menni has put just enough in the bottle to make it weightless. The bottle of minus-matter is the sign of the regulated systems Leonid will find on Mars. The right balance of forces, of “pluses” and “minuses” to use Bogdanov’s terms, results in equilibrium. This balance is Bogdanov’s recipe for harmonious development: “The more adaptable—that is, the more organized—[biological and social

13. In 1877 Schiaparelli detected markings on the planet’s surface that he called *canali* [channels], later misinterpreted as “canals,” that is, proof of intelligent life. Lowell adopted Schiaparelli’s names, many of which were taken from mythology; for newly discovered canals, Lowell used Schiaparelli’s mythological nomenclature. A list and map of 183 canals, among them Ambrosia and Nectar, appears in Lowell’s 1895 book *Mars*.

forms] are those that unite a greater sum of flows-resistances [*aktivnostei-soprotivlenii*] in more harmonious combination” (1995 [1922], 1: 111).

On Mars, self-correcting systems and moving equilibria solve all problems of supply and demand. Statistics make it possible for an individual suddenly to eat two or three times his normal amount of food, or to wear a different suit every day. In utopian consumption, goods flow without surplus or shortage (1979 [1908], 78–79). Economic equilibrium is paralleled by equilibrium of bodily energy flows: on Mars, everyone’s life is perpetually renewed by mutual blood transfusions, “the comradely exchange of life not only in ideological, but also in physiological existence” (108–9). The Martian body and society are godlike; they possess perfect plenitude. As Leonid’s Martian guide and, later, lover Netti¹⁴ explains, the failure of the earthly science of blood transfusion to produce the same rejuvenating effect seems to have to do with its private, philanthropic character: “one who has a lot [of blood] gives it to another who needs it badly” (108). On capitalist Earth, with blood, as with wealth, the gap between the haves and the have-nots is great. The one-sided nature of blood donation indicates systemic crisis. Its political analogue is the blood being shed in the revolutionary struggle (13, 49, 188). On Earth, goods and blood spill; force dissipates. Netti will later argue that the real difference between the cultures of Earth and Mars lies in the “general wastefulness [*ras-tochitel’nosti*] in the process of development” that characterizes all earthly life (158).

In *New World*, Bogdanov argues that without coercive norms, especially the right to possession, our unsound social system, fraught with contradictions, would collapse completely. “It would spill [*rassypalos*’],” he says, “like a barrel without hoops; it would disintegrate, like a human body without the integrative and regulatory action of the nervous system.” Norms organize our disharmonious development, but not efficiently. They can stanch the outflow of the “elements of life,” but not bring them into balance. In fact, the human history of civil war indicates how frequently these elements boil over. Custom, law, and morality prove unavailing, and earthly conditions of competition become carnage: “So it all is in reality, when life’s contradictions, temporarily intensified to an extreme, break through the shell of norms and play freely, spontaneously. Then the enormous destruction of the elements of life—not only those becoming decrepit but also those arising—reveals with stunning clarity the real meaning of ‘development in contradictions’” (1924, 46).

Blood and minus-matter are not the only liquids stably bottled up on Mars. Menni, we learn from his ex-wife, “developed from boyhood to manhood too late, and too early began to live the intense life of a scientist and thinker”

14. She is the namesake of the engineer in the prequel. Significantly, the latter is male. Androgyny, as we shall see, represented an ideal for Bogdanov.

(1979, 132). A checkup reveals that excessive brain development has choked his reproductive function. Moreover, explains the doctor, Menni must minimize his sex play [*liubovnye laski*] in order to make the most of his brain activity (132–33). Menni did not go through puberty, that stage, Bogdanov believed, of wasted life force. That force is diverted into self-development: Menni devotes himself to solving the problems of travel to new worlds, such as Venus, where Martian expeditions, led by Menni, struggle with a hostile nature—stormy oceans, high mountains, burning sun, hurricanes, disease, and giant lizards (88–89). Menni is explorer, hunter, scientist, and inventor. The spread of his adaptive changes through transfusion or mimicry may do far more for evolution than his sperm.

Menni's arrested sexual development was exceptional, but the ability to channel energy flows is a trait all Martians inherit. On Mars, Leonid visits a children's home, where the stages of Martian growth are pointed out: capitalism in childhood and adolescence; communism at maturity. Leonid's guide, a teacher, after reproving a small child for possessiveness, reflects on the grip of the race's past:

One would think our communism is complete; we practically never have to refuse the children anything. So where do they get a sense of personal property? [...] But it cannot be helped. It is a general law of life: the development of the organism repeats the development of the species in abbreviated form; in the same way, the development of personality repeats the development of society. In most cases a child's self-determination has this vaguely individualistic character. The approach of sexual maturity at first intensifies it. Only in late adolescence does the social environment finally conquer the remnants of the past. (85)

This “general law of life” corresponds to the “biogenetic law” of the German biologist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919).¹⁵ Haeckel's law, which has come to be known as the theory of recapitulation, states that an organism passes through successive stages resembling the series of ancestral types from which it has descended. As Haeckel formulated it, “Ontogeny,” the development of an individual organism, “recapitulates phylogeny,” the evolutionary development and history of the species.

Though now discredited, recapitulation theory strongly influenced late nineteenth-century social and educational thought. Its impact is apparent in Bogdanov's concept of the adolescence of the humanoid race and individual. At puberty, Martians go through the Martian epoch of anarchic individualism (the epoch of class struggle in *Engineer Menni*); at maturity, they acquire the ability to regulate force (the epoch of communism in *Red Star*). The play of the children hints at this nascent power. Leonid observes groups of children

15. Mark B. Adams has presented a good case for the influence of Haeckel on Bogdanov. As Adams points out, Haeckel's works were widely available in Russian translation at the time Bogdanov wrote (10–12). For a discussion of Haeckel's reception in Russia, see Vucinich (186–96).

digging ditches [*kanavki*]; these are embryos of Mars's canals [*kanaly*], the marks of the adulthood of the race (85).

Old Wineskins

Leonid's adulthood is only a Martian adolescence. A child of the Old World, Leonid experiences the shock of the New like the onset of puberty. As noted above, his growth cannot help but be wild and sickly. He is the most complex form of life created under earthly conditions of disharmonious development, and, for that reason, the most unstable. Aboard the spaceship Menni tells Leonid to expect "palpitations of the heart, dizziness, and even nausea." The disorder is weightlessness, but the symptoms are topoi of young love. Menni immediately goes on to say that Leonid will have trouble handling "water and other liquids, which will slip out of their vessels at the slightest jolt" (34–35). In other words, Menni can restrain his sex, Leonid cannot. The "barrel" bursts; he spills his seed. On Mars, Leonid visits the Art Museum. Looking at statues and paintings of beautiful Martian female bodies, he experiences a "strange sensation" unlike the feeling of aesthetic appreciation to which he is used: "it was more like those vague premonitions that disturbed me on the border of boyhood and youth" (93). All grown up on Earth, Leonid is a pubescent boy on Mars. The Old World drags him down; he falls apart. His stay on Mars ends in a hospital, and his return to Earth begins in one.

As Loren Graham has noted, Bogdanov does not shrink from pointing out the problems of socialist construction (Bogdanov 1984, 242–43). Leonid fails to "collect" himself. But he has learned a lesson: he is not the Columbus he imagined himself to be. Back on Earth, he now sees the revolutionaries from the long perspective of Mars: they are children. By the book's end, readers, too, have the distance to reconsider the image of the revolutionary given in the first few pages.

Leonid's manuscript begins in the bloody first months of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Leonid relates his surprise at the tenacity of the old order. He says that the bony hands of its corpse squeeze the living in a convulsive embrace (13). Leonid would seem to be immune to the past; he rejects the prevailing morality, in particular its gender roles. Leonid espouses polygamy and is sure the future has it in store. He is correct. On Mars, women change husbands and lovers freely. There, gender boundaries are almost completely blurred: unlike Leonid's Russian, the Martian language does not have the grammatical category of gender; and, in accordance with the theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, the convergence of social roles has all but erased the physical differences between the sexes: since the men are no longer hunter-gatherers, and the women no longer stay-at-home wives, the respective atrophy and hypertrophy of structures and organs has led to a kind of bodily mean. On Mars, far from being a social threat (Stoker), the ex-

change of fluids, in free love and mutual blood transfusions, is the hope of human perfection; more sexual partners and more donors mean that more adaptive changes are spread.¹⁶

Leonid would seem to be immune to the past, but he is not. The vampire seizes Leonid in ways that he, and the reader, could not see until he is transplanted into the future. He turns out to be an unregenerate earthling. The poison of individualism runs in his veins, and he threatens pollution. A professed polygamist on Earth, Leonid is a jealous suitor on Mars. He is clearly not the “amoralist” he believed himself to be (14). Indeed, he cannot cope without the norms he spurns. In his mad embrace [*ob'iatiiia*]—the same word Leonid used to describe the vampiric grip of the past—his Martian lover feels the whole of the old order, “its despotism, its egoism, its desperate thirst for happiness.” “Your love,” she tells him, “is like murder” (121).

Leonid can be a hero of *his* time, but not of another. In *Red Star* Bogdanov has diagnosed the “sickness” of modern man, very much like Lermontov in *A Hero of Our Time* (Lermontov 6: 213). Bogdanov invites comparison between the novels by giving his sick hero a doctor named Werner for a companion, just as Lermontov gave to Pechorin.¹⁷ By the end of *Red Star*, Leonid might say with Lermontov’s cruel hero, “There are moments when I understand the Vampire” (Lermontov 6: 327).¹⁸

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16. Leonid himself offers this justification, a “greater variety of hereditary combinations,” for polygamy (15).

17. The title of Bogdanov’s essay “The Great Vampire of Our Time” [*Velikii upyr' nashego vremeni*] may also be an allusion to Lermontov’s novel. Bogdanov, whose real name was Malinovsky, used the pseudonym “Werner” as well.

18. Pechorin has in mind the diabolical title character of John Polidori’s 1819 novel *The Vampyre*.

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Абстракт

Дуглас Гринфильд

Упыри и революционеры: тело и общество в марсианских романах Богданова

В его фантастических романах «Красная звезда» (1908) и «Инженер Менни» (1913), Александр Богданов изображает коммунистическую утопию на Марсе. Романы являются популярным изложением его социальных и научных теорий, в особенности понятие о взаимосвязи социальной и физической эволюции: более «организованные», то есть, эффективные, общества производят более организованные тела. Значит, экономическому равновесию соответствует равновесие жизненных сил; обмен товара и обмен жидкостей— кровь, сперма, гормоны— аналогичны. Причины надлома землянина Леонида— представителя старого мира конкуренции— оказываются и идеологическими и физиологическими. Неспособность Леонида приспособиться к марсианской обстановке проявляется в его неумении регулировать жидкости. В этой связи, я рассматриваю образы вампиров, прорывтия каналов, и переливания крови.