

***Vampire Nation: Violence as Cultural Imaginary.* By Tomislav Longinović. *The Cultures and Practice of Violence Series*, eds. Neil Whitehead, Jo Ellen Fair, and Leigh Payne. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011. x, 212 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Paper.**

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The word “vampire” conjures up all kinds of references to American popular culture, seemingly without allusion to any political or nationalist identities. In his new book *Vampire Nation: Violence as Cultural Imaginary*, however, Tomislav Longinović draws back the vampire’s cape to reveal a very real danger lurking behind the Hollywood fangs: autochthonous nationalism. The imagined links between native soil and blood are not just the work of Bram Stoker, they are also, Longinović argues, key elements of national identity in the Balkans. Part review of Serbian literature, part review of Serbian history, at the same time philosophical and grounded in personal experience, Longinović’s comprehensive monograph resists easy categorization. He pursues the question of Serbian nationalism across boundaries of time, place, and even cyberspace to make his insightful argument that concepts of vampiric identity are a continued phantasm reifying “ ‘the serbs’ ”— from within and from without— as Europe’s other. Using the techniques of comparative literature and psychoanalysis, Longinović provides a perceptive analysis of not only the ways in which Serbians have imagined national identity in a region often viewed as the borderland between Europe and the Islamic Orient, but also the ways in which the U.S. and European media have imagined “ ‘the serbs.’ ”

From Belgrade himself, Longinović uses the quotation marks and common noun format of “ ‘the serbs’ ” to remind the reader that national identity is always imagined, whether through narratives of heroes defending against an Ottoman invasion or through media representations of “a nation of latent war criminals.” (p. 9) To deconstruct these imagined identities using the concept of vampirism, he begins by drawing nuanced connections between Bram Stoker’s famous gothic novel and media coverage of the Balkans conflicts in the 1990s, revealing that vampirism is not only a metaphor for the violence of nationalism, it is also a form of othering. The celebrated Dracula, after all, is not an urbane Londoner but a native monster of the Balkans, stuck in the past and thus unable to understand modernity. In his discussion, Longinović highlights how the U.S. and European media focused on “ ‘the serbs’ ” as their main scapegoat during the wars following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, with news reports dividing the entire region into victims and torturers, demonizing every individual Serb by implicating them as an ethnic group in not only the contemporary violence but also historical violences. Though concepts of victimhood and violence are more complex than good versus evil, “the global media were preoccupied almost exclusively with ‘the serbs’ and their ‘vampiric’ desires to appropriate both blood and soil of their ethnic others.” (p. 181)

Next, Longinović ties these external imaginings of vampirism to more internal concepts of identity, which he traces through 19th and 20th century Eastern European literature, touching upon the shifting role of Kosovo as well as the influence of Vladimir Dvorniković's "Dinaric narrative." (p. 58) Tying folklore and songs to literature and the Balkan region's geopolitical history, Longinović elegantly reveals how shifting constructions of South Slavic and Serbian identity repeatedly return to a "torturer-victim complex" (p. 13) based in concepts of masculinity, sacrifice, and autochthony. Drawing on literature ranging from Petar Njegoš's (1847) *The Mountain Wreath* to Ivo Andrić's (1945) *The Bridge*, Longinović contrasts these authors' portrayal of Serbian men as defenders of Europe in the face of the Islamic Orient with the U. S. and European media's orientalization of the Balkans.

To conclude, Longinović turns his focus to the contemporary Balkans, revealing the overlapping influences of the internal and external representations of Serbian identity described earlier in the book. In the post-socialist, post-war, post-NATO intervention context, new concepts of identity can be found in literature and on the internet as authors, activists, and eggheads explore methods for "quieting the vampire," (p. 154) meaning literally to kill a vampire and figuratively, as Longinović argues eloquently, to overcome the media reification of Serbs as vampires and to step out from Slobodan Milošević's dark shadow. David Albahari's *Canadian Trilogy* (1997) deals with the vampire of violence through an exploration of migration's effects on memory, while the website Cyber Yugoslavia presents a parody of autochthonous nationalism, existing in cyberspace but not in reality, drawing "citizens" from all over the world. In the end, Longinović's psychoanalysis of what it means to be Serbian is also an analysis of what it means to be human. He neatly ties his conclusions together, moving from vampiric violence, to vampiric other, to the vampiric us. After all, humanity is transitioning "to a new stage of development in which it gradually accepts and covertly celebrates the violence whose origins remain hidden by the ruins of Dracula's castle." (p. 188)

Vampire Nation does not draw its strength only from comparative literature, however. Throughout the monograph, Longinović adds valuable historical and political context to his arguments, moving neatly between novels, political rhetoric, and events of the wars and NATO interventions in the 1990s. He is careful to connect his philosophical and psychoanalytical emphasis on vampirism to on-the-ground experiences and direct quotations, even describing the performance of a vampire "quieting" (p. 154) ritual, by an opposition-party member artist, at Slobodan Milošević's grave on the anniversary of his death in 2007. This monograph makes an important contribution to the Duke University Press series *The Cultures and Practice of Violence*. Not only does Longinović successfully analyze constructions of violence through both internal and external imaginings of Serbian identity, he also reveals without a doubt the continued power of blood and soil in an era when the status of nation-states is a question rather than an assumption. While some readers might find fault in the tight focus of the monograph, as concepts of autochthonous nationalism are not unique to " 'the serbs' " or to the Balkans, Longinović adeptly interweaves his varied sources to not only reflect the exciting broader implications of his perceptive arguments; he also concludes *Vampire Nation* with both a hopeful

note and a warning, something anyone researching violence can appreciate. Hope comes in the form of the shifting concepts of Serbian identity Longinović discusses in his final chapter, since it appears that contemporary artists are trying to move away from vampiric imaginings of homogenized nationalism. The warning, though, is what Longinović leaves the reader: the recognition that the contemporary popularity of vampires may reflect “a new model for the global order of being— an order that is all too (post)human.” (p. 189)

Tomislav Longinović’s focus on nationalism makes his work invaluable to anthropologists and other academics interested in exploring the links between identity and violence. Coming from the field of comparative literature, he may refer to Jacques Lacan and Gilles Deleuze rather than Michael Taussig or Veena Das, but anthropologists are no strangers to theories of psychoanalysis. Scholars of Eastern Europe, in particular, will find fresh insight in Longinović’s use of the concept of cultural translations as well as his vampiric analytic lens. The only disappointed readers will be those looking for another *Twilight* novel.