

Introduction **VIOLENCE IN TRANSLATION**

The Vampire Metaphor in the Age of Nationalism

At once part, cause, effect, example, what is happening there translates what happens here, always here, wherever one is and wherever one looks, closest to home. Infinite responsibility, therefore, no rest allowed for any form of good conscience.

—Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

Jacques Derrida's call for infinite responsibility envisions a horizon of translation beyond the liberal concern based on "good conscience," a convenient epistemological mask for the global hypocrisy constructed around a clear distinction between the *Heimlich* "here" and the *Unheimlich* "there." The responsibility of the translator is located "wherever one is and wherever one looks," both "here," in the secure hostility of the United States, and "there," in the chaotic multiplicity of ethnic wars that terrorize the global political scene with increasing intensity. The general failure of responsibility in answering the infinite call of ethics beyond the territorialized location of "our own" identity in the West has been the prime force for resurrecting the fantasy of the blood-thirsty other at the end of the twentieth century in Europe.

For Derrida, being may not be infinite, but responsibility must retain infinity as its ever present modifier. Each performance of cultural translation takes place against the shrinking horizon of humanist ideology envisioning the possibility of opening to the foreign and the other. There can never be enough responsibility for the weight of that task; neither "there," in the glorious ruins of Europe, nor in the colonial

extensions of the new global empire. There can never be enough responsibility “here,” in the very center of the U.S.-led West, closest to home, where the violence touches the American viewer by the mediated gaze worn out by the compassion fatigue of the Bosnian War (1992–95) and tired after the aggressive humanitarianism of the Kosovo intervention (1999) and the switch to the democratic invasion and unsuccessful pacifications of Afghanistan and Iraq initiated in 2001. The violence creating the burden belongs to the cultures both “here” and “there,” since the Yugoslav scene used to serve as a political backdrop for the replay of historical performances contrasting the identity of “new Europe” against that of the old one, still embroiled in the violent dramas of blood and soil. The sacrificial logic of identity outlined by René Girard for any type of communal becoming required a metaphysical justification for these violent conflicts, as well as for its surrogate victims. Contrary to that fatalistic view of culture, Derrida invokes the messianic orientation conceived as “a structure of experience,” opening up the disciplines of humanities and social science to transform the practice of thinking and writing against the infinite horizon of translation between the proper and the alien as particular cultural idioms and their singular locations undergo the inevitable process of displacement and translation.

In Werner Herzog’s film *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979), the real-estate agent Jonathan learns that the notorious bloodsucker lives in Geistschloß, the castle that not only is haunted by the ghosts of past centuries but also represents a virtual location where the contradictions of the emergent—one might even say post-human—identity are being articulated. The intangible location of that common chronotope tied to the vampire’s time and space is no less imaginary than the violence enveloping the post-Cold War realities of East Central Europe, the preferred residence of the bloodthirsty creature haunting the past of our common humanity. In fact, the literary genre of the fantastic, in whose horror subgenre the vampire continues its seemingly timeless haunting, has been gradually transformed into a cultural mirror held in front of the human being searching for its own elusive reality. Not unlike Lacan’s infant, the post-human subject has constructed its own sense of identity by developing an imaginary based on the reflections in this vast mirror of popular culture. Since the 1970s, fantasy has stopped serving the escapist impulse that characterized early Gothic

literature's fascination with the foreign, alien, and evil originating in those less than civilized territories of that other Europe one is tempted to call Oriental.

The postmodern turn provided the fantastic genre in literature and cinema with a new cultural function in defining the vampire's location in the glossary of global culture as one of the possible avatars of the human subject in its final dissolution under the violent assault of its own making. Plagued by the horrors of twentieth-century world wars, the post-human subject of civilization had already transformed its habitat into a spectral castle whose inhabitants accept violence as a necessary condition for the very survival of their particular national imaginary, rooted in common fantasies of blood and soil so dear to the Gothic revenant of past centuries. The exploration of the cultural parallels between the rhetoric of the nation and the shifting incarnations of the vampire's blood and soil is the main preoccupation of this work, inspired by the radical reevaluation of psychoanalytic theory initiated by the nomadic philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

The burden of the national imaginary plagued by unacknowledged violence found an outlet in the realm of popular culture, especially in such lowbrow genres as horror. Beyond the parody of good conscience visualized by the global media news networks and the constant noise of violent explosions around the globe, horror literature and cinema seem more and more the only viable avenues for the subject to articulate its truth and reality in a postmodern universe marked by simulation and unreality. The vampire as a metaphor for the unacknowledged sinister side of post-human civilization becomes normalized under the new regime of mass cultural production. This new cultural hybrid speaks the truth in the habitually trivial formulas of the horror genre, while its discourse underscores the guiltless gaze from the secure distance of the only remaining empire, which tends to displace all of the responsibility for its violence "there," into the realm of cultural alterity, where the forbidden dreams and violent desires of Europe proper flourish unabated. Is the imaginary location of the Nosferatu not perhaps indicative of the post-human attempt to reflect on the monstrosity of the global civilization in its apparent impotence to contain the destructive forces it has itself unleashed through the technological taming of the biological habitat and the political hunger to dominate those outside the realm of its current power?

Personally, I was fascinated by the ability of the media's gaze to translate random acts of genocidal violence in the name of territorial identity throughout my own former home (the former Yugoslavia) into similarly trite formulas of "ethnic cleansing." This fascination was extremely painful, since the Gothic timbre of reporting from the Yugoslav war zones was also classifying its varied peoples as the reincarnations of the ancient creature residing in their own particular versions of the Geistschloß. The fantasy of the immaculate national body fed by the blood of those who stood in its way was projected by the media onto the events, fueled by the same global hunger for "one's own" territory and resources, as Yugoslav politicians abandoned the common socialist dream in favor of ruthless privatization that concentrated all of the wealth in the hands of a few post-communist clans and families. Focusing on a particular nation that marks my own belonging to explore the connection of identity and its multiple and often paradoxical representations, I examine the legacies of violence, blood, and soil to account for the shifting of these Gothic themes between the realms of culture and politics.

Redeploying the move of Jean-François Lyotard in his essay "Heidegger and 'the jews,'" I am using the common noun and quotation marks in an attempt to disarm the warring cultures in both their local and their global articulations. On the one hand, 'the serbs,' the largest Balkan ethnic entity, are called to surrender the cultural weapons imagined as the essence of its being and belonging during the national emergence from slavery to Islam during the course of the nineteenth century. On the other, the public within the U.S.-led West are called to comprehend the manner in which the military-media complex used the specter of the bloodthirsty 'serbs' as a simulacrum for the target practice of its own strategic performance of military humanitarianism. The use of the common noun and quotation marks to qualify the collective identity of an ethnic group marks my departure from any notion of the nation as an essential, monumental, and historically stable category. The use of these markers serves to distinguish 'the serbs,' an imaginary assemblage of dubious veracity, from the practice of everyday life of those humans who happen to be born under that particular sign of national belonging. Without attempting to excuse any of the real war crimes committed during the Wars of Yugoslav Succession in 1991-95 and the intervention in Kosovo by the North Atlantic Treaty Organiza-

tion (NATO) in 1999, this work analyzes different cultural mechanisms responsible for the framing of ‘the serbs’ as post-communist vampires after the end of the Cold War.

The global media identified the largest ethnic group of the former Yugoslavia as the biggest culprit for the ethnic violence in the Balkans, as well. It was ‘the serbs’ led by the vampire-in-chief, Slobodan Milošević, who enforced the rigid historicist model of collective identity by ensconcing the monumental past of the people as the very origin and essence of the linguistic, racial, or cultural origin of the nation. In fact, the largest appeal to each particular nation of the former Yugoslavia was not ethnic purity but “freedom,” a state imagined along the lines of the unspoken American-style consumer culture in its local Balkan articulation. But alongside freedom to consume and be consumed, ‘the serbs’ faced ethnic profiling as the war went on: the largest nation rated the worst in the eyes of the world, while the Croats, for example, were deemed to have suffered enough during the 1990s that the uncomfortable facts of their Nazi past could quite easily be overlooked. The Bosniaks and Kosovar Albanians were considered the greatest of victims in the conflict, but also the most prominent suspects because of their Islamic roots. The Gothic ingredient was present in every single one of these global imaginings, yet the most radical breach of the protocols of human dignity was assigned to ‘the serbs.’ To account for the complexities of communal becoming, the fantasy structure inherent in the global media’s gaze featured the communal identity as a monument erected through the blood of the people. Violence was the essential ingredient in enforcing the project of national emergency, inciting “the people” to commit acts of almost ritual violence to ensure their own survival. This mode of parasitic existence was previously characteristic of vampires, drawing fresh blood from their victims to sustain their life beyond death.

#### Exemplary Violence and ‘the serbs’

Until the Bulldozer Revolution in October 2000, global media networks and the public relations industry profiled ‘the serbs’ as avatars of post-communist violence in the Balkans. Despite the burden of all too real war crimes committed during the 1990s in the name of collective survival of their own territorial identity, global media excessively emphasized ‘the serbs’ as the incarnation of an exemplary and exceptional

form of evil not proper to Europe, a vision that gradually excluded this imaginary assemblage from the sphere of civilization. Despite the fact that ‘the serbs’ belong geographically to the very core of Europe, symbolically and territorially, their borderline position was constructed as a projection of the Eurocentric fantasy about a cruel Orient in Europe.

In fact, since the nineteenth century, leading Romantics (Goethe, Scott, Pushkin) have recognized a vast array of literary and cultural practices in ‘the serbs’ to ensure that the communal becoming of that nation paralleled the similar processes of identity formation in Europe proper. To transform themselves into a recognizable nation after the proverbial “Ottoman yoke” was crushed with a medieval vengeance, the literate classes set out to write down their nation. It is instructive how the trajectory of their self-representation, just like that of the vampire in the postmodern universe, has gradually become a medium for self-reflection in the West. Yet, the process of discovering the vampire as the dark other of the Enlightenment during the eighteenth century is exactly the reverse from the emergence of ‘the serbs’ as a national formation; while the vampire was gradually normalized as a medium for self-contemplation along the lines of Werner Herzog’s *Nosferatu*, the global media representation of ‘the serbs’ has been defamiliarized to exemplify the violence that presumably is no longer tolerated by the Western understanding of civilization.

By connecting the European legacy of modern nationalism as a foundation for the territorial notions of identity to the ancient bloodsucker, this work explores the role of violence and its cultural representations in the narratives provided by oral tradition, literature, and cinema. The central role of affect in generating and assimilating particular cultural practices replaces the emphasis on the rational and transmissible meaning of certain texts and performances. The primal bond to the national community is rooted in the imaginary relationship between identity as property and position, paired with the vague but real anxiety related to threatening others who are poised to rob the precious blood and drain the communal wellspring of imaginary unity. In fact, the writing down of this imaginary assemblage is constantly mediated by the cross-cultural movement between ‘the serbs’ and an array of imperial powers that took part in their invention—first, as the scientifically classified vampires of the eighteenth century; then as the glorious people fighting Islam in the nineteenth century; and finally,

as the last European vampires in their return to the global scene at the end of the twentieth century.

### Other Europeans

The implosion of Yugoslavia has turned ‘the serbs’ into a population without a common territory, since their position as the “ethnic glue” of the Yugoslav federation was no longer possible in the global political imaginary after the end of state communism in Europe. Since 1991, ‘the serbs’ have been tried in the media and found collectively guilty of ethnic intolerance; forced displacement of their enemies; mass rape, torture, and massacres of civilians; use of detention camps; and the creation of an endless stream of refugees. These crimes were often spiced with an excess of meaning worthy of the best of the horror genre, creating a collective image of the vampire nation in the new world order. Serbian adversaries were most often excused of crimes, due to their projected smallness and weakness when compared with ‘the serbs’ and their seemingly superhuman capacity for violence and evil. Within the community of ‘the serbs,’ the transformation of ethnic pride into a tool of neo-nationalism, coupled with an undecided cultural status of a border region between the “Orient” and Europe proper, resulted in real political, economic, and cultural isolation from the global community before the overthrow of Milošević in October 2000.

Within the context of the former Yugoslavia and its tragic end, the global media complex has constructed the specter of ‘the serbs’ as a doubly Orientalized other of the U.S.-led West, a nation that thwarted the aspirations for independence of other Yugoslav ethnic groups due to their propensity for the indiscriminate use of violence. The strategic decisions of NATO were based on Samuel P. Huntington’s phantasms about the “clash of civilizations,” whereby ‘the serbs’ have been treated as if they were miniature Russians, a nation that has never departed culturally or politically from the imaginary monolith of Orthodox Christianity. Serving as a metaphor for the bloody past Europe proper is striving to forget, this marginal population was transformed into a cultural mirror reflecting past traumas of the old continent. ‘The serbs’ were relegated to the East, both communist and “Oriental,” after the end of Yugoslavia, where they were assigned the role of European civilization’s other within throughout the 1990s.

On the one hand, the struggle of ‘the serbs’ to hold on to the chimera of Yugoslavism has linked them to the legacy of communism; on the other, by using the rhetoric of sacrifice, which will be explored in detail later, their own irresponsible leaders dragged the civilian population into a confrontation with the most powerful global force: the U.S.-led NATO. Since the role of the Western other usually implies stereotypical representations driven by the psychological-warfare guidelines supported by the global news networks and the mainstream press, ‘the serbs’ were often profiled as less-than-human subjects whose actions stemmed from the automatism of irrational hatred and intolerance of their own ethnic others. This approach tended to obscure the guiding principles of territorial domination and military rationality that operate universally as part of the modern logic of any state organization. This common logic based on the sanctioned deployment of violence inspired the performances of both ‘the serbs’ and the U.S.-led West in their collective actions but were represented through the strategic use of mass media in a different and diametrically oppositional manner as a struggle between barbarity and humanism. Using the vampire as a shared metaphor between the opponents occupying different locations in the hierarchy of Western civilization, I intend to show how the reach of this Gothic creature of imagination undermines the Eurocentric notion of the nation based on blood and belonging.

### Western Interventions

The unraveling of the Yugoslav state saw a confrontation between two returning versions of totalitarian politics. On the one hand, the separatist declarations of the non-Serbian republics saw the triumph of the return to one’s own religious and ethnic heritage as a foundation of new national identity. Although not in the vanguard of ethnic separatism, ‘the serbs’ merged their own messianic propensities with the logic of the decaying post-communist state embodied in the leadership of Slobodan Milošević, who died in prison while being tried for war crimes in The Hague. Trying to preserve remnants of the common state, the military-party apparatus of the common state lingered under the shield of “Yugoslavia” and ‘the serbs’ as a metaphor for an undying desire for community based on avenging past injustices.

Since Milošević’s brutal yet doomed effort to patch together a nation-state out of the ruins of communist Yugoslavia has been countered



effectively by the U.S.-led West and by local separatist movements based on anticommunist nationalism (Slovenia in 1991; Croatia in 1991–95; Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992–95; and Kosovo in 1999), the weapon of “ethnic cleansing,” which supposedly belonged exclusively to ‘the serbs,’ has been used against them as a nation of latent war criminals and crazed gunmen riding a war machine powered by other civilizational outcasts—or, in the words of George Bush Sr., a pariah nation. Indeed, underlying the pariah was the specter of the vampire nation ready to feed on others’ blood and territory to sustain itself.

The acts of violence against ‘the serbs’ during Operation Storm in Croatia in 1995 and after the bombing of Kosovo in 1999 largely have been ignored or downplayed by a media complex guided by the vampire metaphor. In early 2001, the *New York Times* quoted an internal United Nations document that openly stated that the human rights of ‘the serbs’ in Kosovo after NATO’s occupation of the region were not to be taken too seriously: “Human rights principles should not be viewed as operating to dogmatically bar action which must be taken to address urgent security issues.”<sup>1</sup> It is needless to say that Milošević shared this ethical standard by invoking security concerns that obscured the infinite dimension of responsibility and transformed the idea of universal human rights into a selectively used political weapon determined by the national interest of the global player with greatest ability strategically to inflict violence on its weaker opponents.

Both the self-glorification of the nation in the writings of a large number of Yugoslav intellectuals and politicians during the 1980s and the political principle of “ethnic balkanization” applied to the entire population of the former Yugoslavia by the Gothic imaginary of the U.S.-led West have participated in imagining ‘the serbs’ as a vampire nation that began to haunt Europe during the 1990s. This phantasm emerged simultaneously as a figure and as a reflection of a new form of localized racism that demands distance and separation between the protagonists of different cultural currents within the common (European) territory of the former Yugoslavia. Between the struggles for independence from Islamic rule of the nineteenth-century and the current impasse in the Balkans in the wake of ongoing military tensions and conflicts, this construct altered significantly within the context of imaginary networks of signification structuring both the local and the global narratives about a particular national articulation of ‘the serbs.’

## Global Vampires

The first chapter of this book focuses on the vampire as a figure of Gothic imaginary in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, which set the stage for later perceptions of the entire Balkan region. The discourse of stolen blood reveals how the imaginary lens crafted by Stoker persists in the West as a cultural filter that defines alterity: Eastern Europe is a location where sex and violence know no limits. The image produced in British popular culture at the end of the nineteenth century has traveled to the end of the twentieth century to establish political discourses that the U.S.-led West sustains when it deals with new yet old types of revenant nationalisms: the specter of 'the serbs' as the global vampires who deserve a well-guided stake of democracy.

This Gothic vision defines the boundaries of proper identity and its civilizational other within Europe, a location where bad but sharp teeth, carnage, and fornication abound. The other Europe is an extension of the notorious count's ruined castle, where excessive passions and "old centuries" conspire to halt the progress and enlightenment proper only to the superior technology of the West. One of the most symptomatic returns of this Gothic vision is the mediated emergence of 'the serbs' as a phantasm of a vampire community governed by an excess of malignant historical imagination that is alien to the values of Europe and the "civilized world."

Firmly rooted in political and cultural ideals inherited from the best European traditions of nationalism and liberalism, 'the serbs' share military rationality and territorial logic of the nation-state with Europe proper. In fact, the Yugoslav tragedies of the 1990s are a legacy of the violence that formed the foundation of modern Europe: the political and cultural ideals made flesh and blood in the uncanny law binding the nation-state. The temporal disjunction between the "other" Europe steeped in old centuries of its historical imagination and the hyper-modern amnesia of the U.S.-led West is at the root of this interpellated subjectivity structuring the Gothic emergence of 'the serbs.'

## Kosovo as a Metaphor

The second chapter traces the invention of 'the serbs' as a collective national re-territorialization during the transition from the dominantly oral popular culture of the common folk to the edification of literacy

based on local interpretations of a belated but volatile mix of Enlightenment and Romanticism. The writing down of the nation centralizes the notion of “sacrificed blood” as a historical legacy of externally imposed victimization as torturers and victims continue to switch places in the reinvention of the legacy of Kosovo.

The sense of proper identity is gained through perpetual sacrifice, as a violent rupture with the values in the immediate temporal and spatial proximity. Vuk Karadžić’s transcription of the oral tradition into the newly reformed Cyrillic alphabet monumentalizes the popular literacy emerging among ‘the serbs’ as a vision of the past that constantly overwhelms the present and directs the future backward. The aura of holiness that surrounds writing in Church Slavic is transferred from the evangelical to the everyday as Europe is regained and Turkey is expelled from the native realm. The emergence of secular culture through the newly founded educational system is marked by a simultaneous displacement of the aura of holiness and the internalization of the post-Oriental wound. The force of national progress is envisioned as the triumph of dominant masculinity over its treacherous others.

I do not discuss the life and work of Vuk Karadžić, a peasant’s son who transformed himself into a founder of modern literacy and who is often credited with creating modern culture for ‘the serbs.’ Instead, I analyze the consequences of his cultural reforms assimilated by the common folk to what he imagined to be a properly European identity. By expunging the Islamic master, ‘the serbs’ emerge from slavery through the discourses of domination and submission, continuing to motivate their struggles for “the honorable cross and golden freedom” through this binary logic of the *ethnos*. The agonistic vision is performed by the “singers of tales” (*guslars*) as a ritual catharsis of the collective burden meant to tell the story of the injured yet heroic masculinity of the people. This ritual lamentation mourns the past glory of the medieval empire before the Kosovo defeat of 1389. The heavenly realm of the national imaginary is suffused with the eternal mourning of those who died for the glory of the nation, marking each of ‘the serbs’ as dead from birth. The inability to mourn this symbolic loss of life after deliverance from Islamic domination properly prepares the national males to actualize this death in life through the endless repetition of the ritual sacrifice of both the self and the designated others on the altar of the nation.

Going beyond the earlier “civic models” of communal identity developed by Dositej Obradović among the exiled middle classes in the Habsburg empire, Vuk’s emphasis on the Herderian model of collective identity as a populist construct developed around the “spirit of the people” (*Volksggeist*) triumphs through its appeal to the “organic” existence of the nation. This vision of illiterate peasant culture as the foundation of modern national identity is paired with the memory of “old centuries” before Kosovo to mobilize ‘the serbs’ in their struggle to reinvest the newly re-conquered national territory with a sense of belonging to the world beyond the grave. This affinity with death and its perpetual return in life lays the foundation for the cult of the masculine war machine that does not respond to the boundaries of mundane life and its laws, but acts as a vampire in search of fresh blood and territory to sustain itself.

The performance of this version of masculinity has continued among the peasants of the Dinaric highlands, marked with violent returns of the submission and domination narratives. While the developing city dwellers take the written, monumental version of oral epics as a source of ethnic pride and identity, those who inhabit the rural and transitional zones of the nation nurture the burden of past injuries alongside their desire to emerge from backwardness.

The process of mourning tied to oral performance of the epic is repressed as the melancholic sense of recurrent victimization by the great powers is reinforced through the cultural production of the pre-Romantic and Romantic periods. Petar Petrović Njegoš’s epic drama *Gorski vijenac* (The mountain wreath; 1847) narrates the conflict between ‘the serbs’ of Montenegro and Slavic converts to Islam, with the messianic logic of Christians fighting for emancipation by all means necessary. Those who convert to Islam become “Turks” and are cast in the role of traitors to their birth community through service to their imperial masters. ‘The serbs’ see themselves as defenders of Europe and Christianity who rebel against slavery as they exterminate their own brothers who have converted to Islam. The pain of this choice between being a proper European and collaborating with the imperial Islamic ruler constitutes the tragic ethos of *The Mountain Wreath*. Both Vuk and Njegoš see themselves as doing their best to rejoin the West, using the Kosovo legacy to fight against the “backwardness” imposed by Islamic suzerainty. Modernization through literacy comes to ‘the serbs’ as a

transcription of a fluid oral tradition into a fixed national narrative that features permanent violence, genocide, and de-territorialization imagined as a traumatic network that forms the web of national identity.

This perception of victimization creates a collective identity with a communal torturer–victim complex at its core. Ever since the emancipation from bondage to the Islamic master, ‘the serbs’ nurture the righteous privilege of the liberated slaves to lash out against injustice and avenge past suffering. This shifting between the slavish and the imperial, as well as the ability to alternately see oneself both as a small nation victimized by the great powers and the greatest of Balkan nations, manifests the disjunctive temporality of the ‘the serbs’ as a national construct. When they are not in the position of the victims, ‘the serbs’ apply the imperial codes of domination assimilated through liberation and are quick to lash out against surrogate victims who remind them of the death they are already living.

### Brothers No More

Chapter 3 explores transformations that the collective identity of ‘the serbs’ underwent during and after the creation of the two common South Slavic states—one after the First World War, and the other after the Second World War. The discontents of Yugoslavism as a civilizational framework are made visible in the ways Vladimir Dvorniković, a self-styled Yugoslav ethno-psychologist, imagines a common Yugoslav identity based on the unrecognized superiority of the Dinaric race. The “heavenly” dimension of oral epics is transferred from ‘the serbs’ onto the raw power of the newly imagined Yugoslav masses, whose origins are visualized as the pagan foundation of the nation’s vitality in popular culture. The artistic avant-garde largely approximated this neo-pagan turn from the social sciences and incorporated it into its vision of the nation. Dvorniković posited the triumph of the “Dinaric race” within Yugoslavia as a counterweight to the emergent discourse of Nordic superiority among the Germans. During the Nazi-sponsored extermination of ‘the serbs’ as a lower race within Yugoslavia in the Second World War, the collective identity once again endured the trauma of extermination, re-establishing the victim within as a fundamental category of national identity.

Freud’s postulations on the repressive function of civilization were made fully visible as Yugoslavia continued to implode and crumble. The

cross-cultural construct of the citizen-warrior of the National Army fell apart along ethnic lines, especially in the Slovenian north, where Janez Janša began his successful cooperation with the West to put an end to the common South Slavic state. Other symptomatic theoretical figures of the latest Yugoslav end, such as Slavoj Žižek, provided a cultural apology for the breakup of the post-Tito Yugoslavia with a new species of performance art philosophy and theory.

While Dvorniković imagined a Yugoslav cultural prototype inspired by the avant-garde vision of the Balkan *Barbarogenije* (Barbaro-genius) at the end of the 1930s, Žižek intentionally misreads ‘the serbs’ as a centrifugal factor that has ended the common framework of the Yugoslav community. In fact, the Slovenes led the move away from the common state, motivated not only by the simplistic vision of the superior “Central” Europe dominating the lowly Balkans, but as a calculated cover-up for the responsibility of separatist intellectuals for pulling the plug on the common South Slavic state. This narrative was never presented in the West, as Slovenes became one of the best allies in the strategic vision of a “new Europe” based on ethnic rather than workers’ solidarity.<sup>2</sup> The multiplicity of interests and narratives surrounding the most recent Yugoslav end was reduced to a schematic vision of a good nationalism that was inherent in Central Europe and a very bad one that was embodied in the specter of ‘the serbs’ as the postmodern vampires of the new world order.

### Destroying the In-between

Chapter 4 presents the works of Ivo Andrić and Meša Selimović, the two most prominent Bosnian writers of the twentieth century. Analyzing the literary representations of hybrid identities and their violent destruction, the chapter traces the manifestations of sacrificial logic that underlie the conflicts between different geopolitical formations inside the peripheral territory of Bosnia. Finding themselves at the edge of the “Oriental” world, due to its Ottoman heritage, and of the equally elusive European West, these writers engage literary modernity by seeking metaphors for the loss of proper identity inherent in their post-Oriental predicament. Without the framework of the Yugoslav state, Bosnia has been transformed into an independent republic under international protectorate since 1995, a process that is strangely remi-

niscent of its past traumas under the domination of the Ottomans and the Habsburgs.

Representing incommensurable alterity of hybrid identities born on the boundaries of major civilizations, Bosnians are transformed into the most prominent example of a nation's inability to tolerate ambiguity. The imaginary identity of Bosnia as the land of perpetual transition was countered in the political practices of both local and global leaders. The post-Yugoslav leaders, led by Milošević, attempted to insert themselves as replacements for the authoritarian socialism of Josip Broz Tito, by dealing a decisive blow to the hybrid identity of this most indeterminate republic of the former Yugoslavia. The recycling of the Kosovo covenant to end the endless suffering of 'the serbs' appropriated national myths to pre-empt the dangers embodied in the rise of specters that belonged to the ethnic others: Croatianism and Islamism. The rendering of its own imperial myths has turned 'the serbs' into a local version of the vampire nation prone to feeding itself on the body of the disappearing South Slavic state.

Bosnia, as a metaphor for the limitless fall of humanity, raises the question of identity as an entity that constantly needs to overcome the simplified political forms that appropriate narratives of a nation sacrificed for the sake of differentiation between its dominant ethnicities. The literary process of national articulation present in the works of both Andrić and Selimović does not envision a Bosnia with a defined ethnic profile; instead, it appears as a fiction whose homogeneity can be achieved only at the expense of one or the other of its constituent groups. The projects to form various ethnic homelands that have haunted Yugoslavia in the aftermath of communism appear to bear the mark of a common European obsession with the eternity of communal blood and soil, parallel with the vampire's insatiable hunger for life that will never have a natural ending. The appropriation of the Kosovo myth by 'the serbs' of Bosnia and other Yugoslav lands is part of that imaginary heritage, rooted in the fear and hatred of those others who could endanger the boundaries of the proper identity by ruining the dream of eternity for the nation and its bloody being.

One of Selimović's characters calls Bosnians "the most complex people in the world" exactly because the scars of history have left them with a less-than-clear sense of belonging to such a community. Their

self-destructive tendencies are tied to a certain repetition compulsion engendered by past injuries that one has to relive to remember. This scar tissue of identity, always in transition from the torturer to the victim, marks the body and life caught up in the narratives of submission and domination. Always between the destiny of the slave and the memory of the king, the identity of those who inhabit and share diminutive territorial domains such as Bosnia find in their literary flights a means of reaching for the soiled legacy of “universal humanism.” The predicament of the nationalist is much simpler and requires only war and violence to enforce the vision and terror of common blood on those who dare separate from it.

### Memoriscapes of Hope

The overwhelming need for truth and reconciliation among the Balkan nations must begin with a candid apology for the crimes committed during Milošević’s rule. Since no politician will risk his masculine image by bowing in front of the former enemy, the process must begin with those who dare to take the position of intellectuals after the disaster caused by the Academics (which I capitalize to denote the concerned intellectual body of the Serbian Arts and Sciences), who imagined ‘the serbs’ as a race modeled on vampires to survive, and who sustain monolithic narratives about the ancient sacrifice of and for the people. The Academics have acted as neo-guslars attempting to mobilize their ethnic collective in a struggle against the rest of the world.

A first, risky step was taken in 2007 by Serbian President Boris Tadić, who apologized to the Croatian nation during a television interview. The ongoing struggle for truth and memory of the violence committed is best analyzed through the actions of different artists and activists whose works are gradually transforming the vampiric burden caused during the Age of Slobism. Starting with the first attempts to “quiet the vampire” in the 1978 novel *Kako upokojiti vampira* (How to quiet a vampire) by Borislav Pekić, countercultural movements within the former Yugoslavia have been struggling to redefine the national identity away from narratives of blood and soil.

In randomly selecting different strategies of cultural resistance to the rigid and unforgiving logic of ethnic terror, the concluding chapter locates voices of difference who were struggling to redefine the collective memory and rectify its abuses by abandoning the lure of the Gothic



imaginary. The loss of Kosovo in 1999 opened a new trajectory in the national imaginary of ‘the serbs,’—one that still relies on some trace remnants of Yugo-nostalgia, as well as on different forms of both the national and the transnational identity. Note the uncanny appearance of the number 9 in the timeline leading from one loss to another—1389–1989–1999—with Milošević and the Academics briefly resurfacing during the late 1980s to incite the final destruction of the symbolic core of the national imaginary. The need for an identity without Kosovo as its figurative source requires non-sacrificial forms of everyday life motivated by performances founded on a culture of responsibility, trust, and even laughter.

The literary imagination reborn from the latest diasporic movements has yielded new work from David Albahari, one of the Yugoslav writers who chose to leave his native realm as a consequence of the country’s implosion. His *Kanadska trilogija* (Canadian trilogy) rethinks the entire notion of time and identity and interrogates the limits of alterity after immigration from the disappearing homeland. His time in the new country is measured by the calendar of horror from the old one: bombings of religious buildings, shelling of civilians, and proclamations of neo-Nazi states. Memories travel along the unpredictable trajectory of the immigrant as identity is placed in the process of constant translation between the native and the adopted culture. The core of the national is transposed into the new semiotic environment, forcing a redefinition of community based on blood and its territorial extensions.

Besides flight, there are those who invent new forms of nationalism as they watch in horror the moral and material decay of their own people. Goran Marković, a film director who wrote a testimonial about the last gasps of Slobism, confronts the legacy of the perverted mass media with a vision of his own grandmother and her irreducible civic goodness from a pre-communist epoch. The imaginary excess of Professor E., whose patriotic fervor prompts him to conclude that all Indo-European races originate from ‘the serbs,’ causes the narrator of the testimonial to wake up from his passive posture of moral voyeurism and imagine his nation in a different framework of civilization. Marković’s ironic comparison of nationalism to pornography reveals the common ground of the shameless performance of those aspects of identity better left disguised.

The last segment looks at the uses of the new media to parody the

vampire nation and its state institutions. Cyber-Yugoslavia is an electronic country constructed around an interactive website launched after the NATO intervention in 1999 to enact a different form of collectivity. Reaching beyond narratives of blood and soil, this electronic form of communication gathers people around the world who have never given up on the ideal embodied in the cultural promise of Yugoslavism. Positioning both 'the serbs' and their multiple others in a global interaction, this state moves between the native realm of the truncated state, the diasporic communities, and those subjects who chance on it in their cyber-navigation. This imaginary state offers possibilities for overcoming the extreme patriotic figuration of the native ethnoscape by ridiculing the political organization of the nation-state as such. The fact that each citizen of Cyber-Yugoslavia must choose his own ministry upon joining the website parodies the morbid hunger for power embedded in contemporary political practices witnessed by those misfortunate former Yugoslavs.

This type of less-than-serious movement away from the rigid forms of national identity posits Internet surfing as a substitute for a lost homeland. The nostalgic dimension is not conflated with violent appropriations of the other, since the computer-literate generations resist easy assimilation by the sacrificial forms of identity. Both the local and the global resistance to the vampire as a metaphor of an undying past whose life depends on the blood of real humans will be the primary task of those who would help 'the serbs' resist the phantasm of the eternal life of the nation, as well as that of the global victims of the new imperial power.