



The Finno-Ugrian Vampire

Noémi Szécsi , Peter Sherwood (Translator)

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An entertaining story of a Budapest vampire dynasty. Jerne Voltampere's grandmother doesn't look her age, but she is 284 years old. She looks like a young woman. No wonder, as every night she sucks the blood of assorted men. She is a vampire and wants her grandchild to follow the family tradition.

Her granddaughter, Jerne, has just returned to Budapest after a posh education at the English college Winterwood. Reincarnations of the Brontë sisters taught her to write fairy tales. Jerne writes children's books, but they are considered too bloody to be published. Grandmother is adamant: Jerne will have to give up her literary ambitions and become a vampire. In the meantime, she takes an undemanding job as an editor. But the married couple who run the publishing house behave more and more suspiciously.

This is a story of a death and the afterlife told by a witty and irresistible narrator. It is the first Budapest vampire story from the home country of Béla Lugosi.

The Finno-Ugrian Vampire Details

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Author : Noémi Szécsi , Peter Sherwood (Translator)

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From Reader Review The Finno-Ugrian Vampire for online ebook

For Books' Sake says

"One of the first books published by the recently established Stork Press, dedicated to championing Central and Eastern European voices, The Finno-Ugrian Vampire is also Noémi Szécsi's first novel (published in Hungary in 2002), and her first translated into English (by Peter Sherwood).

It's very funny – but if you're expecting a parody of modern vampire novels, then this isn't it." (Excerpt from full review at For Books' Sake.)

Strega Del Crepuscolo says

la mia recensione potete leggerla qui:
<http://www.letazzinediyoko.it/recensi...>

Peter says

Set in Hungary - check

A novel partly about a vampire family bloodline, namely grandmother and granddaughter. Two kinds of bloodline - check.

Neither vampire sparkles or twinkles - check.

Sardonic Hungarian humour & superb one-liners- check, check.

Not a comic novel - check.

So what's not to like?

Korrie Hutchison says

the beginning was great, but it lost me in the middle. I was glad to finish it.

Zoe Brooks says

It has been suggested to me that magic realist books cannot include books that are part of a sub-genre, such as ghost stories or in this case vampire novels. But then not all books conform to genre memes, even if they

have ghost as an essential element or in this case a vampire or two. This book is so many things - it's a coming of age tale, it's about following one's calling and ignoring the demands of family tradition, it is political and social satire, it plays with words, language and literature. One thing it is not is a conventional vampire story. If you are expecting lots of blood, thrills, and sharp teeth, then you will be disappointed in this book. This is very different to the books of Stephanie Meyer and Anne Rice. And as I am not a great reader of those books, that's fine by me. In fact this book was fine by me in all sorts of ways.

The book is as the blurb says funny and intelligent and had me giggling and snorting in an embarrassing way in a Prague cafe, as I waited for my husband to arrive from England. But then this book is a very central European in its references to history, to literature, fraught national identity and dry humour.

Jerne is the most wonderful narrator. She may have been born into a family of vampires, but she wants to write children's stories about rabbits. Admittedly, being a vampire, she has none of the empathy or saccharin needed by a successful children's author - her first collection of stories is called *Rotten Animals*, the problem with which, as the editor points out, is "These rabbits, foxes, wolves, polecats, moles and gophers—they're all cynical and evil." There are lots of jokes and wry comment on the world of publishing in the first half of the book, as Jerne works for a publisher which produces self-help books. Jerne is always comparing herself with her literary hero, Hans Christian Andersen, but her dry sadonic style is as far from Hans Christian Andersen as you can get.

Jerne's vampire grandmother is also a wonderful creation. She keeps rats as pets (and to annoy the neighbours), decorates the walls of her flat with bullet holes, chops up grandfather and puts him through a meat mincer and (appropriately for a vampire) makes huge amounts of money on the financial markets: *'For two hundred years I lived in the lap of luxury but I have realised its vanity. Then I moved into a run-down block of flats in Pest and I have been happy ever since. The flat leaks, the cockroaches roam free, but I know my money is in a Swiss bank account and I can get the hell out of here anytime I want. Knowing this, you too can go and work. Treat work as your spiritual exercises.'*

'You're telling me this as my grandmother?'

'No. I am giving you knowledge from a higher spiritual plane and as a sadistic old woman.'

Grandmother is also proudly Hungarian. Before she leaves for a stay abroad Jerne describes her grandmother in a frenzy buying up Hungarica. It is Jerne's grandmother who uses the phrase Finno-Ugrian Vampire. Finno-Ugrian is a family of languages of which Hungarian is one. I am sure I missed out on all sorts of jokes about Hungary and its language, but it doesn't matter.

These two are the main characters in the book, but there are other characters (human and vampire) that are shown to be as self-centred and amoral as Jerne and Grandmother. Oscar, the gay guardian appointed by Grandmother to keep an eye on Jerne, appears to be dedicated to culture and Marxism, but is waiting for his grandmother to die and leave him a fortune. There is O - Jerne's preening female love interest - and there's the xenophobic vegetarian cook. Is the characters' cynicism because we are seeing these people through the eyes of a vampire? Or is it because people really are that way? Whatever the answer, this book is a delight.

I received this book from the publisher in return for a fair review.

This review first appeared on the Magic Realism Book blog - <http://magic-realism-books.blogspot.com>

Charlotte says

In the first half of the novel, Jerne has a boring job in a small publishing house; she edits yoga handbooks and neuters old folk tales so that they can be sold to children.

She is obsessed with writing allegorical animal stories, but she doesn't understand human morality, and she doesn't properly remember or respect the twisted versions of folk tales that her grandmother taught her as a child – "I could never be bothered to wait for the end of the story. It was as boring as hell."

The book is witty and bleak, and in the first half in particular it's tightly drawn together. The second part is more absurd and defiant in its refusal to become what readers might expect.

Any of the small plots that start to build tension become shaggy dog stories, as Jerne simply walks away instead of finding any sort of satisfying resolution. Characters are introduced and never really do anything – Edward is a prime example of this – then leave as inconsequentially as they arrived.

This isn't a criticism of the book, as this is exactly what it seems that Szécsi intended. Jerne's grandmother is obsessed with her becoming the sort of vampire who meets notable historical figures and has her way with attractive young men, while Jerne is uninterested in this type of existence.

She longs for a more literary life – but she wants no real trajectory here, feeling that any book that attracts 'a vast reading public' would be something to be ashamed of – such popularity would reveal her as not 'as uniquely spiritual a story writer as I considered myself to be'. All she wants is publication and a handful of readers.

more here:

<http://forbookssake.net/2012/11/30/th...>

Stacia says

3.5 stars because I felt parts of the story were 3 stars & other parts were worthy of 4 stars.

A sardonic, dark comedy (in the ancient Greek definition of comedy) of a vampire book, one of the few vampire stories written by a Hungarian author (& maybe one of the only ones then translated into English).

Eileen says

I'm not really sure what to say about this one. Certainly it's very different from any of the more standard fantasy vampire lit. The tone is really different--abrupt, matter-of-fact, wry, exhausted, almost bored. Very minimal black humor. This was originally written in Hungarian, so that combined with the overall strangeness of the text makes me wonder how much the translation differs from the original. There are definitely a few immediately apparent cultural differences too; socialism jokes, for instance, are not the same in Budapest as they are in California.

Giorgia Urbani says

Ho letto questo libro poiché pensavo potesse essere interessante leggere una storia di vampiri in chiave moderna. Purtroppo il libro ha deluso le mie aspettative... L'ho trovato privo di contenuti, dialoghi praticamente senza sostanza, di una superficialità imbarazzante. Forse tutto è dovuto alla traduzione dall'ungherese all'italiano.. Forse.. Ad ogni modo ho letto le ultime 50 pagine saltando alcune parti e facendo zapping... Non vedevo l'ora di terminarlo per passare ad altro!

{Wild Night In} Cat says

First things first: this book was anarchically fun, and put the most brilliant twists on the Vampire genre.

The book follows Jerne, a reluctant soon-to-be vampire, who attempts to break free from the path her grandmother has set out for the rest of her immortal life. Starting out in a publishing house, Jerne quickly disgraces herself by writing a little too well, and... a few other spoiler-y things I'll leave out. After a career change, and a family friend's windfall, Jerne finally sees the chance to take her un-life back into her own hands. But will she ever be able to break free from her grandmother's clutches?

Some of the reviews took issue with the fact that this book was originally written in Hungarian, and translated into English. Whilst Hungarian is unknown to me, translation is not. I can say with a hand on my heart that this translation sparkles in places- the acerbic wit of Jerne's grandmother, the pretensions of O, and the detachment of Jerne herself are apparent throughout.

Overall, I thoroughly recommend this to anyone who wants a break from the derivative paranormal romance-fest that has been leaching the fun out of recent vampire literature.

La Fenice Magazine says

Mmmm...devo dire che questo scritto ha prodotto in me varie reazioni. Ironico e cinico al punto giusto. Questo romanzo lascia il segno. (o due buchini sul collo)

Le parole posson essere fuorvianti ma è una specie di grande metafora sul genere più amato da tutti i lettori, il vampirismo. Grandi temi si incentrano su questo piccolo sfondo che si viene a creare tramite Jerne Voltampère, l'ultima discendente di una stirpe di vampiri che vive a Budapest con la nonna centenaria, donna maliarda e sensuale di giorno e spietata cacciatrice di notte, che tenta invano di spingere la nipote verso la tradizione di famiglia.

Un libro ambiguo e pieno di doppi sensi, intriso del sapore amaro della libertà. A tratti ho degustato l'astio e la freddezza con la quale le parole erano scritte, a tratti ho annusato il sapore agrodolce della vendetta.

Smanie di potere per la giovane Vampira che diverrà ma dimezzate dalla nonna che la riporta a una vita normale, il gusto bisogna guadagnarselo.

Il racconto è intriso di acidità, stravaganza e grande incomprensione ma il tutto rende lo scritto piacevole e surreale a tratti, forse, anche banale. Si legge con fervente velocità e lascia un briciolo di sarcasmo nei

confronti della stirpe ormai nota a tutti noi.

Languido, nelle parole e veriterio riesce a penetrare a fondo nella questione, anche se ambiguo. La struttura è regolare e fluida. I capitoli medi, scorrono facilmente. La storia è un misto di delirio e ipocrisia. BUONA LETTURA!

Thomas Fackler says

The Finno-Ugrian Vampire is not an enjoyable book, though the person who reads it may find enjoyment beyond the pages. Overall the story is a fairly quick one that will most likely dangle you within a page of letting go, and you just might.

Regardless of my firm lack of enjoyment I liked the book both by finishing it and by consuming it. I learned some things about Eastern Europe and waltzed my way through walls of literary pretense. Fortunately there were vignette's of coarse children's literature (not middle school) interspersed to make the transitions from the Googleable realm to the semi-secret and yet still Googleable academic style more manageable.

MissM says

ARC Copy

My problem with this story is that it's translated from Hungarian. So you always feel like you're several steps behind in understanding what's going on. It was 50 pages or so before I realized the main character was a girl. The writing was awkward and there was no use of pronouns so how was I supposed to know "Jerne" was a girl's name? It's that kind of thing which is frustrating when reading a poorly translated book.

I don't know the social customs, or insider jokes, or cultural references that are made in this book. So I can't relate to what's going on in anyway. And things I get the impression are supposed to be witty or a commentary on life don't have any impact to me since they don't make any sense. I have no frame of reference to relate to.

I got through the first half of the book and intended to take a break but then push through the second half. But I just found myself not wanting to finish it. I don't think it's a bad book - if you read it in the native language. But I do think that it's awkward and unrelatable for the general vampire-fiction loving public of English speakers. It's just a case of being too foreign to truly enjoy.

GONZA says

Strange book in two parts that I both appreciated even if I'm partial to the first one. Do not think about the usual vampire book, because this one has nothing to share with twilight or similaria and the grandmother was one of the funniest character I recently came along.

Strano libro in due parti, che mi sono piaciute entrambe, ma la prima un po' di più. Non il solito libro sui vampiri e scordatevi twilight o cose simili, inoltre la nonna è uno dei personaggi più divertenti nei quali mi

sia imbattuta ultimamente.

THANKS TO STORK PRESS FOR SENDING ME THE BOOK!

Kai says

Bleak, witty, clever, and absurd. I expect I'd have gotten a lot more out of it if I was Hungarian, but it has much to offer the frustrated artist.
