

LETTERS

From the Editor:

Slavic Review publishes letters to the editor with educational or research merit. Where the letter concerns a publication in *Slavic Review*, the author of the publication will be offered an opportunity to respond. Space limitations dictate that comment regarding a book review should be limited to one paragraph; comment on an article should not exceed 750 to 1,000 words. The editor encourages writers to refrain from ad hominem discourse.

D.P.K.

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to the review of my book *Ethnic Vision: A Romanian American Inheritance*, by G. James Patterson (*Slavic Review*, vol. 57, no. 4). Patterson appears unfamiliar with methodologies in material culture and oral history. He fails to ascertain that it is the art of the Romanian-Americans itself (a total of 130 Romanian-American and Romanian informants were interviewed for this study) that forms the analytical basis of the book. His insistence that statistical analysis, i.e., his writings, be employed is inappropriate and is as fallible a method as he assumes my informants' responses to field questions were. Patterson states that a discussion of assimilation is lacking. Yet the theme that Romanian art and culture is transformed by the American environment, especially in chapter 5, dominates the book. Patterson's lack of fieldwork experience is obvious in the mistakes he denounces that are really his own. *Pui* is not mistranslated. It literally means chicken, but it is a dialectical term used by many Romanian village women for the embroidered flowers they sew on their costumes. Also, the black-and-white costume worn by Romanian people has its origin in the pastoral culture of their ancient Dacian ancestors. Made from the wool of the black-and-white sheep the shepherds tended, the homespun costume is a manifestation of a visual tradition that existed long before the Germans set foot on Romanian soil in the twelfth century. He misleads the reader by citing a discussion of the similarities between Hungarian and Slavic embroidery as evidence that I am referring to the ethnic origins of the Hungarians. Finally, Patterson has ignored Romanian sources, which document the earlier arrival of Christianity in Romania.

JOANNE BOCK
North Haven, Connecticut

Professor Patterson replies:

Joanne Bock may have interviewed 130 Romanian and Romanian-American folk activists, but this does not mean there is nearly as much active and viable Romanian folk culture in the United States as she and her informants suggest. Her "your statistics are no better than my informants' responses" is simplistic relativism. I repeat: she not only ignores extensive social science literature about the assimilation of white ethnics in North America, but she also does not seem to be aware of most of the studies by anthropologists and historians on Romanians in America, of which mine only constitute a part. Equally disturbing are the book's many factual and compositional errors, which led me to assume, wrongly, in this one case, that *pui* was mistranslated. I stand by my previous assertions that the book has misspellings, lists a nonexistent village, and says, incredibly, that Hungarians are Slavs. It does not distinguish between Dacian and German black-and-white clothes, has a plate printed in reverse, lists a caption for a plate that is not illustrated, and, for the origins of Christianity in Romania, quotes a journalist who lacks credibility even among journalists. This is a sloppy book with a misleading thesis and serious mistakes.

G. JAMES PATTERSON
Eastern Oregon University

Slavic Review 60, no. 2 (Summer 2001)