have been useful to the reader. This study is an example of meticulous scholarship, however, and an important contribution to the body of work in English on Hungarian folklore. It is a worthy companion volume to works by Linda Dégh, Vilmos Diószegi, and Gyula Ortutay.

*Therese Bissen Bard*

*University of Hawaii at Manoa*


By its nature, a scholarly monograph purports to bring to its readers at least one, or some useful combination, of the following: 1) new or little-known data pertinent to some recognizable field or subject of learning; 2) a meaningful problem and a resolution of it; and 3) a new theorem, or correlates of theory, to advance understanding of matters beyond as well as within the confines of the monograph itself.

In the present instance, it is an embarrassing but evidently necessary function of a reviewer to reiterate these elementary requirements, because neither the author of this monograph nor his editors in the East European Monograph series that has published his book have remembered to meet them. As a result, they have brought into the world what is certainly the most useless little fizzle of would-be scholarly discourse that this reviewer has encountered in thirty years of reading in and about the subjects which it attempts to treat.

The factual kernel of the book is situated, of all places, in forty-odd pages of appendices. These comprise a pot-pourri of about one hundred and fifty short “legends” and popular beliefs reported from various villages in Romania. Harry Senn collected some of them himself, and some came from other collectors; but nowhere in the book are any of the other collectors’ names revealed, nor is any other information given about them. Some of the legends and beliefs are in fact related to Senn’s ostensible subject of were-wolves and vampires, but numerous others are mere padding of no evident pertinence to anything (e.g., “a toad cooked in sheep’s butter and fed to the sheep will protect them from flies and the sores that attract flies.” —p. 121). Furthermore, no information whatever is given about any of the Romanian villagers from which the material in the appendices was collected, regardless of whether Senn or his anonymous (unwitting?) collaborators collected it. The beliefs and legends are also presented entirely in English translations, and there is no indication as to who the translator(s) may be. Given the serious difficulties of factual accuracy that pervade the rest of the book, the question of how accurate the translations may be is unavoidable, if also unanswerable on the evidence provided by the book itself. No competent Balkanologist will however be inconvenienced by any of these difficulties, since there is nothing in Senn’s appendices (or in the book as a whole) that cannot be readily found more fully and more exactly set forth in other published sources. Senn tacitly agrees that his own primary data is superfluous, for nowhere in the entire volume does he either discuss or make cross-reference to any specific item in the appendices. Like strangers misfortunately benighted in a poor and inhospitable place, Senn’s own exposition about were-wolves and vampires in his first eighty-odd pages and the primary data in his appendices are obliged to sleep together in the same bed, but are otherwise not on speaking terms with each other.

The book’s frontispiece is a thumb-nail outline map of Romania entitled “Villages Represented in the Collection,” but the map shows the name of not one single village. Instead, there are some fifty tiny score-marks, like an artist’s hatching, in various quarters of the map. The natural inference, that the author has plumbed the cultural depths of these
many villages for his data is however quite wrong. One finds disconnectedly dispersed in
the Foreward a much more modest reality: “The following chapters are, for the most
part, based on the . . . period of [my] field research in Romania in 1977. . . (p. xi). In
three months, we stayed approximately a week each in four different villages. . . . The
intervening periods between field trips were passed in the villages that encircle . . . Bucha-
rest” (p. xv). The latter villages being only three in number, and the former but four, the
sum of the Romanian villages where Senn has actually worked ethnographically for as
much as a week is at most only seven—a far cry from the nearly fifty alluded to in the
Frontispiece and elsewhere in the book.

And what were the memorable acquisitions of learning for Senn in those seven places?
Harker, Bram Stoker’s hero of Dracula, travelled on his way to the infamous vampire’s
castle, was memorable for the hot indoor bath we enjoyed . . . and rooms with ample
beds. . . . Several villagers took turns creating the dinners for us, and the three-day stop
in that community was disappointingly short.” Or again, in another of Senn’s four Tran-
sylvania villages, “we were invited to a picnic-barbecue at the mayor’s summer shep-
herd’s cabin. We drove about ten miles past the limit of the town into the mountain
valley where he sheltered his herd [sic], and there a sheep was slaughtered, skinned, and
roasted over a wood fire. The effect of witnessing the entire drama of choosing, killing,
and dressing the sheep’s meat was indelible [sic] to inexperienced city-dwellers like
ourselves, and caused us to seek some comfort in the liberally supplied vodka, with later
pronounced discomforts.” A reader may be forgiven for wondering whether he is reading
a serious scholarly disquisition or a parody about A California Yankee at Dracula’s
Castle. Apart from a few lines of extraneous misinformation about the “Slavic cultures
of Poland and Russia,” the entire Foreword consists only of more such banal and touristic
observations by Senn about what he did during his summer vacation of 1977, interspersed
with quaint vignettes of paradisically happy Romanian peasants.

The author’s basic conception of his purpose in writing this monograph mistakes his
audience and insults its intelligence. Worse, it assumes in a readership of trained, exper-
enced, and for the most part professional East Europeanists with a knowledge of Eastern
Europe and an understanding of its cultures and their histories as anemic as Senn’s own.
In the opening paragraph of his Introduction, he notes the existence in irrelevant places
among inexpert persons of an opinion that Bram Stoker’s Victorian Gothic novel Dracula
constitutes the “fullest account of all that is believed on the subject (of were-
wolves and vampires) in Romania.” What contempt Senn has for such learning as his East
Europeanist audience may have been capable of acquiring before his own advent he shows
again in his next proposition: “In as much [sic] as our knowledge of vampires comes ex-
clusively from the commercial media . . . an investigation of the pertinence of Bram
Stoker’s novel with [sic] Transylvanian lore is seriously needed.”

A new Quixote, Senn has thus set himself the task of combatting and reforming our
vulgar misconceptions, and of prevailing upon us to comprehend that the Romanian nation
is much nicer and more sensible than we should have supposed them to be were Bram
Stoker’s representation of their beliefs true. But no, Mr. Senn, we did not suppose for a
moment that Victorian English Gothic novels and the popular beliefs and legends of East
European peasantry were even ideological manifestations of the same order, not to men-
tion your entirely contrived and imaginary problem of how to choose between them. We
do know the difference between literature (even penny-dreadful, sub-literature) and life.
Nor can we indeed believe that southern California is really such an unredeemed cultural
hinterland as to make these matters normally capable of such confusion by a professor in
the Claremont Colleges, where Senn teaches.

But even if this imaginary disease of our understanding which Senn has set out to cure
did exist, the cure he offers would be worse still. It is in fact a piece of quackery. Recog-