Teaching Genre in Context: Fieldwork and "Hanging Out" in Appalachia and Bulgaria

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Abstract

Folklore classrooms often teach genre—a contested concept—as an introduction to the complexities of folkloristics. As folklorists interrogate the colonial legacies inherent to core concepts like genre, we must develop new teaching models that equip students to recognize cultural process while emphasizing how totalizing classification systems disenfranchise folk groups by obscuring cultural difference. This article juxtaposes experiments with sociality in East European folklife and Appalachian Ohio folklife, in which young people attempt to connect with older adults through culturally specific forms of sociality that do not easily fit within etic genre categories: the *sedianka* [work bee] in Bulgaria, daily bench talks, and "liars club" coffee meets in Appalachian Ohio. These examples illustrate the impact of intersectional identities on the legibility and usability of generic forms, while emphasizing how an understanding of genre framing can contribute to intergenerational relationship building. As Sabra Webber [2015] points out, emic genres that resist global classification can evade the totalizing, product-focused analysis that was built into colonialist systemization projects; attention to such forms can prioritize the agency of local cultural frameworks. Cross-cultural comparison offers fresh opportunities for examining how intersectional group dynamics are made visible through genre in our own folk groups.

Teaching Genre in Context

How—and should—genre be taught in introductory folklore courses as a core organizing concept for our field? One of eight keywords historicized in Burt Feintuch's [2003] edited volume, *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*, genre has long been a cornerstone of folklore studies. For the scholar, genre "remains the generally stable trampoline from which folklorists and budding folklorists can spring into the constantly changing future of folklore studies," providing folklorists with "a basic common terminology and a basic system of classification," as noted by Trudier Harris-Lopez in her contribution to the volume [2003: 116-117]. For the instructor, genre serves as a scaffolding to introduce the dynamic traditions we study, long enough for new students to grapple with text, texture, and context in the classroom and as encountered in their lives. Introducing folklore through lists of genres can simplify a notoriously difficult-to-define field, especially in distinguishing it from disciplinary cousins

like anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and area studies. With Lynne McNeill's [2013] helpful reframing of the major genre buckets of "verbal lore, material lore, customary lore, and belief," as the more approachable categories of "things we say, things we make, things we do, and things we believe," the task of convincing new students that folklore is, truly, all around us has never been easier. In this way, instructors can quickly move past the need to justify folklore as more than old stuff and onto the work of guiding students through key concerns: the different aesthetic parameters, skills, and knowledge of communicative and performative frameworks that shape the expressive forms we study. Attention to genre can reveal diverse expressions of meaning, value, and work done by expressive culture in the world; genre can serve as rhetorical resource, illuminate the complexities of performance, and be a mode of negotiating power and agency. (1)

Still, genre presents scholarly, classificatory, and ethical challenges that call into question the usefulness—and indeed, ethics—of this concept [Ben-Amos 1969; 1976; Harris Lopez 2003; N'Diaye 2021; Prahlad 2021; Shuman 1993; Webber 2014]. For many North American-educated students and instructors, genre lists make sense for the simple reason that mainstream education has already trained us to think generically. Most have been trained to separate and categorize from a young age through education systems heavily shaped by Eurocentric philosophies and canons, rather than to question classification systems as hierarchical constructions of power. As Enlightenment tools of mastery, collection and classification can represent and actively enact the suppression of contemporaneous traditions of knowing, exemplified by Tim Frandy's [2018] eloquent reflection on Western science pedagogies and indigenous knowledges and Zhang's [2020] discussion of the effects of implementing Eurocentric, Western ethnological models and classification systems in China.

This article explores how genre is entangled with systems of power and ways to retain the concept's capacity to elucidate how distinct communicative, rhetorical frames do work in our world through folk processes. It is not a defense of genre, nor is it a rejection of genre; it is an attempt to review how some of the complexities gestured at above might better be reflected and implemented in introductory folklore classes. Such work may lead to a decentering of genre, placing our emphases on other questions and concepts. Indeed, by setting out to write about the topics I present in this article, I found myself not only focusing on genre, but also expanding my reading to revisit the different meanings of genre that we evoke, and collapse, in our field, as well as entanglements between genre, performance, and context. Here, I think through how instructors can prepare students to leave our courses with the most crucial lessons learned and how we might captivate their interests without watering down the key ideas.

To do so, I reflect on the place of genre in my own pedagogy, particularly in courses geared toward undergraduate students new to the field. Using moments from fieldwork and personal life experience, I think about how different approaches to documentation and listening might be fruitfully employed in my

own classes. I first consider historical and contemporary discourse surrounding genre in folklore studies, revisiting the long legacy of genre discourse and efforts to negotiate the relationships between analytic categories and lore as it is lived and understood on-the-ground, especially in response to contemporary social justice issues. While scholarly responses to COVID-19 drew on genre to notice and process COVID-era folklore, texts such as the summer and autumn 2021 issues of *The Journal of American Folklore*, among others, point to the role of folkloristic concepts like genre in perpetuating systemic racism by imposing, for example, global categories and aesthetic priorities onto local traditions. Both topics have prompted me to revisit my approach to teaching our field, in and beyond the classroom. I draw on Sabra Webber's [2015] discussion of genres in context to examine a lived example of "genre trouble" that I encountered during fieldwork in Bulgaria with young urbanites invested in rural revitalization, who sometimes turn to folklore as bridge-building avenues to connect with villages, village-dwelling older adults, and cultural heritage. These encounters, in turn, illuminated my own efforts to strengthen intergenerational connections back home.

Together, these experiences resonate as cross-cultural, intergenerational encounters in unfamiliar settings. By discussing how they inform my understanding of the relationship between genre, intergenerational (mis)communication, and place, I offer several ideas for preparing students for more nuanced and meaningful fieldwork and data analysis. Further, I suggest that bringing such moments of miscommunication and blurriness [Geertz 1980] into the classroom opens opportunities for discussing the structural issues bound up in discussions of genres as sites of contestation about the authority to define systems of knowledge and ways of knowing [Shuman 1993]. This approach can help students more clearly see connections to folklore in their daily lives. I also believe that a deep understanding of genre has a crucial role to play in the teaching and reflexive mediation that folklorists regularly perform with community partners outside of the classroom in public-facing work and collaborative projects—including responding to lingering colonial and imperial legacies in our field.

Genre: Persisting Problems

The year 2020 acted in many ways as a tipping point for already turbulent times. The collision of COVID-19 lockdowns and continued, unaddressed police brutality against Black Americans renewed attention to systemic racism, white supremacy, and imperialism entangled in many realms, including folkloristics. In our field, these colliding events produced instructive but oppositional ideas about the role of genre in the folklorist's toolkit and everyday life. COVID-19 bifurcated my dissertation fieldwork in Bulgaria into pre-and post-pandemic experiences, as I discussed in the 2021 special issue of *Folklorica* [Craycraft 2021]. From my vantage point abroad, I followed along as colleagues in the United States turned to our folkloristic toolkit to observe, process, and document responses to the pandemic. Articles and videos by Maribel Alvarez [2020], James Deutsch [2020],

Andrea Kitta [2020], and others effectively put genre to use, helping scholars and the public notice how forms like material culture, humor, legend, conspiracy theory, etc. were used to make sense of our shared, yet increasingly atomized, experiences of the pandemic. I still teach these pieces to demonstrate how folk groups use varied communicative frameworks in everyday life to different ends.

At the same time, global protests spurred by police brutality in the United States demanded a full-scale reexamination of structural marginalization and racialized violence. As mentioned above, the summer 2021 issue of *The Journal of American Folklore* published a transcription of the Francis Lee Utley Memorial Panel, "Race and Racism in the Practice and Study of Folklore" (delivered at the 2020 virtual meeting of the American Folklore Society). Other texts in the issue called upon folklorists to closely examine our field, methods, and contributions to structural inequality. Similarly, recent books such as *Theorizing Folklore from the Margins: Critical and Ethical Approaches* [Otero and Martinez-Rivera 2021], *Implied Nowhere: Absences in American Folklore* [Ingram, Mullins, and Richardson 2019], and *Advancing Folkloristics* [Fivecoate, Downs, and McGriff 2021] reiterate these calls. In particular, Anand Prahlad's [2021] essay, "Tearing Down Monuments: Missed Opportunities, Silences, and Absences—A Radical Look at Race in American Folklore Studies," renewed attention to these histories and presences. Prahlad invites us to revisit and reexamine how collection, classification, and erasure work in tandem with racialized violence. Prahlad writes:

> Closely connected to the practice of collection is the concept of genres. Is there any concept more critical to folklore studies or that more closely parallels Linnaeus' erasure of indigenous typologies and conceptual frameworks and the replacement of them with those of European colonizers? Similar to the centuries-old debates about the terms "folk" and "folklore," folklore studies has continued to revisit the notion of genres—but rarely in the interest of arguing that they are unnecessary, colonially inspired, or forms of cultural violence. [2021: 261]

Writings by Sabra Webber [2014] and Mary Hufford [2003] resonate with these views. Webber writes:

> Before [an] artistic "product" becomes an object of academic study or national pride, it has frequently been wrested from its folk community and fitted into one "etic" or "universal" genre or another… cut from its moorings by folklorists, sociolinguists, cultural anthropologists, historians, or any of the myriad scholars who study narrative today. [36]

> The trouble with genres is that when they are reified (concretized), they stultify dynamic processes. [40]

Hufford likewise agrees that genre can problematically decontextualize folklore and reorder it in a Western system of logic, inscribing traditional knowledge within global, rather than local, contexts (a threat of etic categorization), all while obscuring these frameworks.

Both Webber and Hufford use "genre" as a shorthand, but I believe both mean to refer to genre in terms of extraction and classification rather than the understanding of genre in which identifiable expressive forms make up everyday discourse and social life. This is a commonplace flattening that often happens in discussions about genre, a means of simplifying and indexing a complex history about which much has been written. When scholarship and classroom lectures conflate genre as an abstract concept with genre as a system of categories, though, we risk reifying these systems and obscuring the ways that power informs classification as a way of knowing. In collapsing this difference, the field faces two interlaced problems. First, we risk losing the memory of the centrality of genre study in producing the performance shift, in which conversations about genre were a key component of grappling with power, hierarchy, Eurocentrism, and Western perspectives in the development of contextualized folklore. Second, we lose the clarity necessary for distinguishing which aspects of genre study are harmful and which can be reappropriated for the development of a more liberatory, pluralistic study of folklore that makes space for the role of systemic issues like racism and the politics of culture.

Considering the heightened, though not new or unprecedented, racialized violence of the past four years, I briefly review here the familiar history of discourses about genre and context, both of which were key components of the reorientation toward performance in the 1970s. One of the most important contributions to this shift was Dan Ben-Amos's [(1969) 1976] essay "Analytical Categories and Ethnic Genres," which drew on debates about etic and emic genres to advocate for an approach that recognizes the difference between imposed analytic categories and "ethnic" or local/native categories. This approach emphasized the importance of fieldwork for understanding context and the stylization of social actors in cultural practice. As Joe Graham [1981: 12] writes, "studying native classification systems provides insight into the importance of the alternative, 'ground-level' ways of ordering and giving meaning and value to life."

The performance turn, or the turn to contextualism, transformed our field's earlier preoccupation with the analysis of decontextualized texts (itself a transformation from the earlier collection of popular antiquities), shifting attention instead to the contingencies of performance, the manipulation of audience attention by performers, and the importance of "local" categories [Ben-Amos 1971]. Close analysis of variants of texts reveals that context is a crucial element that gives shape to form. Through attention to framing devices, that which is framed, and the flow of everyday life from which the frame sets apart expressive culture, contextualists demonstrated how performers direct attention back and forth across these elements. Context, as Mary Hufford [2003: 168] describes it, "is a historically contingent framework that we generate, shape, contest, and

critique through our cultural productions… a frame of reference created in order to constitute and interpret an object of attention." This move did not displace the "text" component of "text, texture, and context" but instead drew attention to the interrelations between text and context as mutually constituting aspects of performance and practice, in which contexts are more than static backdrops [Ben-Amos 1993; Georges 1980]. Context can invoke contemporary frames and historical precedent, as well as physical but also imagined or "remote contexts."

While vital, these conversations often excluded marginalized perspectives that already held these views, and they have not necessarily led to a field-wide grappling with the ways we continue to center collection as a crucial task of folklore scholarship and teaching [Bailey 2021; N'Diaye 2021]. Feminist interventions as well as perspectives informed by critical race theory and postcolonial studies crucially argue that the notion of ethnic classification systems in and of itself rests on cultural relativism and homogenous "local" worldviews, an approach to performance that reproduces power hierarchies and fails to recognize distinctions within groups, not to mention unequal access to interpretive authority [Ryan 1981; Roberts 2009; Sawin 2002; Shuman 1993]. These interventions expanded the scope of the performance turn, as well as the fixation on an ethnography of communication approach to folkloristics and folklife.

As Valerie Lee's [1996] work demonstrates [Bailey 2021], the same is true of genre classification systems, which can obscure and reject expansive notions of folklife that do not center around genre study. Amy Shuman [1993] helpfully distinguishes between genre as an abstract concept and genres as a system of categories, noting that genres are not neutral, fixed objects, nor are systems of genre classification. Genres may be coherent at specific moments, but they are contingent forms subject to change. As she writes, "genre classifications are themselves cultural artifacts or constructions, positioned in historical and political situations" [Shuman 1993: 77]. The classification systems scholars use to organize and study genres reveal ideological questions: what are the grounds for "privileging, canonizing, or authenticating particular kinds of texts?" [Shuman 1993: 73]. Genres are shaped by ideology, but they can also be ideology-shaping forms that express and encode different orientations toward community, belonging, and identity [Cashman 2007]. Recognizing the ideological weight of communicative forms that different actors wield or appropriate is a valuable task, and one that must be done with the politics of classification in mind. Neutrality in collecting, classifying, and describing genres will always be interpretive, and interpretations are ideological. Yet, contemporary critiques of genre also point out that the central focus on an identifiable text limits the scope of what folkloristics can address.

In short, not all groups understand genre in the same way, and not all studies of folklore need center on genre or classification to be taken seriously by our field. As folklorists know, our shared language of genre is not always legible to nor appropriately descriptive of lore as it is lived, and etic genre categories do not easily capture the nuances and meanings of culturally specific, or emic, forms. Because of the nuances of group and the authority granted by interpretive power,

the liberating idea of emic forms becomes tricky. Indeed, imposing outsider, global categories can mask important distinctions and locally understood boundaries between modes of expressive culture. They can impose boundaries that do not exist at all. There exists a long, reflexive history of folklorists thinking critically—and skeptically—about genre and context. These are practices we should continue to foster and histories we should continue to teach.

Rather than fully reject genre, Webber, for example, points to exemplary, eloquent studies of locally grounded forms that she explains as emic understandings of "hanging out": forms of sociality that are directly shaped by cultural and societal contexts. These include Henry Glassie's [1982] and Ray Cashman's [2008] studies of the *céilí*, Dwight Reynolds's study of the *sahra*, Richard Bauman's [1972] study of general store gatherings on La Have Island, Nova Scotia, and Webber's [1991] own study of similar gatherings among Tunisian women. Webber also points to "strolling events" described by Giovanna Del Negro and Harris Berger [2001]. We might also include retirement to the porch in Appalachia [Lozier and Althouse 1975]. These practices share similarities: spontaneity, unspoken rules for behavior and boundaries of participation within the group, and communicative expectations of "speech situations" [Bauman 1972: 333]. Further, Webber points out that these practices resist global classification precisely because of these specificities, and for the simple fact that they're so ingrained into the everyday flow of life as to not be easily extractable. She emphasizes that these practices are sensual forms that engage all our senses, producing affective meaning and often manifesting in tangible outputs (adorned bodies, the production of folk objects). Langston Collin Wilkins's [2023] study of hip hop culture also productively grapples with questions of context and the production of heritage. Indeed, through the example of slab car culture, Wilkins exemplifies how attentive noticing during fieldwork can illuminate the importance of an emergent tradition once immersed in place. These examples synthesize and make clear the sorts of situated, familiar traditions students are likely able to find in their own lived experiences.

Understanding how folklore constitutes reality is an important goal for any student of folklore. Both etic and emic genres shape our realities, either by reinforcing dominant narratives or by expressing in-group meanings and points of view, in correspondence to the contexts prompting and texturizing the lore. While students often come to folklore classes for the "stuff," a crucial goal for our courses must be to help them deconstruct text and context as fixed entities. The task, then, is not to train our students to find folklore and delineate its forms according to etic systems of classification. Instead, it is to train students to recognize when, how, and to what ends aestheticized communication is used in everyday life and specially marked moments—and indeed, how those moments and flows are formed through performative framings. The above conversations inspire me to refocus my teaching efforts on the development of keen observational skills: where, when, and how do people spend time together? How do these contexts set the stage for, and shape, expressive culture? How might

disruptions to context impact the cultural flows of everyday life? How might lore resist or adapt to such disruptions?

Ideally, attention to context can raise questions of power, agency, identity, and structural inequality. For example, attention to the dynamism of context must reckon with the ways race, class, religion, gender, and age inform who spends time where, the expressive repertoires they draw upon to communicate value and meaning in these contexts, and the discursive frames that situate places and performances vis-à-vis modernity. Contextualism recognizes that place, too, is not a fixed reality [Lefebvre (1974) 1991], but rather a production or construction to which folklore contributes and even mediates [Bauman 1992; Hymes 1975; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1975]. Attention to context addresses the ways in which folklore "powerfully constitutes reality" [Hufford 2003:154].

These topics suggest a need for more attention on the relationship between text and context. With this view in mind, I present below two intriguing cases that negotiate form, group, and context and which I plan to bring into my own introductory folklore classroom.

Reactivating the Sedianka

A difficulty—or pleasure, depending on your perspective—of teaching genre is that genres are not a-priori fixed forms. They are frameworks negotiated and utilized in context. When young people attempt to use culturally familiar genre forms to connect with older adults—self-consciously invoking traditional folklife—these efforts do not always yield desired results. In my fieldwork with intergenerational village revitalization projects in Bulgaria [Craycraft 2022], I noted several occasions in which younger group members tried to mobilize traditional forms in new ways, with varying degrees of success. In what follows, I discuss old and new meanings of the *sedianka* (plural sedenki)—a festive work gathering centered around some form of labor—as used historically and in the contemporary moment by young urbanites who seek to connect with villagers via traditional lifeways. (2) I point to the effects produced by new usages and suggest that part of the difficulty they experience hinges on a mismatch, or misperception, of form and context.

Simultaneously an occasion for handwork, singing, dancing, courtship, ritual, friendship, and competition, the sedianka is both a recognizable social form and a context that produces and is produced by the performances of many genres. The traditional sedianka is a mostly archaic working party that takes its name from the verb *sedia*, to sit. As Angel Goev [1984] writes, the sedianka was more than a working party; it was a way of life. Lyuben Karavelov and Dimiter Marinov document the seasonal and gendered nature of the traditional sedianka [Goev 1982]; its arrival marked the conclusion of harvest work and the coming of slower moments. When used now, sedianka is often glossed to indicate a women's sewing circle or is sometimes used to simply mean the afternoon hangout sessions of the elderly, but the traditional form had many complexities and variations, in which naming conventions followed the specific task at hand. A sedianka referred

to a gathering where participants completed their own handiwork, while a *tlaka* or *medzhia* referred to a gathering in which participants worked on a collective task for their host (like stringing tobacco, shucking corn, and other agricultural tasks). Naming conventions can differ from region to region, and similar practices appear throughout the Balkans, with locally specific naming conventions and differences.

Consider the following passage recounting the youthful memories of Linka Gekova Gergova, a celebrated elder and folk singer from a village in western Bulgaria, as recorded and narrated by Martha Forsyth:

> In the fall, after the harvest was in, the girls began to gather for sedenki (and of course, where the girls go, the boys go too…). Working by the light of that flickering *vidale* (kerosene lamp), spinning or embroidering or making lace—Lord, what lace they made to deck themselves out when they went to the dance! Even in those poverty-stricken years they somehow managed to find thread to make lace—extravagant lace that showed beneath their heavy outer garments, almost from the knee to the ankle! They vied with each other, hiding the full splendor of their handiwork until Christmastime or Easter came, when they would unveil their newest finery. Whose sleeves were the best? Who had discovered the most wonderful lace pattern, set in beads or sequins or tiny coins in the most ingenious way? "Oh, at those sedenki we'd just sing and sing and sing—the boys would come, every boy would sit down next to the one he liked, we'd knit and crochet, and spin and do our work… They do this in the fall, and they keep it up all winter long. They like to get together at houses where it's quiet, where there aren't a lot of menfolk around, where there aren't so many men in the house—they get embarrassed if there's a lot of men around. And the boys come too—or if they don't show up, 'C'mon, let's go out and sing something—they'll hear us, and then they'll come!' so we'd sing one of those good rousing ones (*na búčeno*)—maybe 'The small village had supper early'. And then the boys would come …. One would sit down beside one girl, another beside another, and they'd chatter away. Oh, it was so much fun! You'd sit there and you'd work, and your boyfriend would sit beside you—All evening long, we'd tell jokes, and then we'd get up and dance a little, and then we'd sit down and work some more." [1996: 63, 393]

Gergova's memories demonstrate the dynamism of the sedianka and its flexibility in relation to the social situations of the moment. At a time when young people had limited agency regarding choice of marriage partner (especially young women), the sedianka served as a context for interaction, flirtation, and, for young women, demonstration of one's capabilities as an efficient, skilled worker. Young women claimed some agency in the courtship process through the collective lighting of a secretive *zaklazhdane* [sedianka fire]. The zaklazhdane is held without the presence of young men to both mark the beginning of the season and

manifest their partner of choice, through ritual invocation. By performing a series of tasks, chants, and rites, they hoped to draw their preferred suitors to the ensuing season's sedenki [Goev 1979].

Older, married women, too, participated in sedenki, but not always with the younger generations. While for older women, working parties were more often intended to enliven obligatory work while keeping good company, for younger girls the obligation of completing work and producing an enviable dowry doubled as occasions for courtship and socialization. The activities of the moment—when to dance, when to sing, and when to tell jokes and chatter amidst the work—would arise fluidly as a dynamic of the performances typical for the sedianka, in response to the contexts and configurations of performers in each new gathering. The sedianka also demonstrated a playful twist on surveillance: though youth were less surveilled by older adults, peers (both boys and girls) observed one another closely, as simultaneous instigators and audiences for collective performances of song, dance, verbal play, and craft.

As a genre and context that produced lore, then, the sedianka can be understood through several overlapping temporal frames: the folk calendar as shaped by seasonal labor rhythms, courtship, and ritual rites of passage. This complexity is clearest in the song repertoire associated with sedenki. In the Bulgarian folk song catalog, songs performed at the sedianka are sedianka songs—those sung and collected at or recalled from sedenki. These might include songs with meta-themes related to sedenki, e.g., making, courtship, marriage, and love, but sedinki also include songs that young people wish to sing and dance to, pulled from other seasons, exemplifying the dynamic relationship between individual and situational contexts and tradition in performance [Bauman 1983]. Song selection and performance were based on who was present, their preferences and singing abilities, and desires to entice participants to the event due to their resonance and musicality. Song choice, timing, and location depend on contextual elements: who was in the house, where were the boys and was their presence desired, and which songs would produce the context most desired for their performances of both song and sewing and, one imagines, gossip and storytelling, joke telling, dancing, and of course the pretense and/or reality of work. Sedenki songs often offered meta-narrations, both contextualizing what happened from moment to moment and also producing the moments depicted. Put in Hufford's [2003] terms, song performances were framed by the sedianka-as-context but also drew attention to and created the frame, invoking other remote contexts and reminding participants of the many layered meanings of this form. (3)

The sedianka as described above has largely faded from practice, save for demonstrative performances and self-conscious revival performances that bring new meanings and goals. As villages and everyday performance contexts shifted during the socialist period, so too did the cultural practices of everyday life [Silverman 1983; Kaneff 2004; Buchanan 2006]. *Bitova kultura* [everyday or household customary culture]—the interwoven practices of folksong, verbal lore, material lore, and courtship with shucking parties, sewing circles, and the lore that animated these already dynamic contexts—was spliced and separated from above

by state actors who sought to reframe aspects of everyday life within the framework of national heritage, as staged performances that undergirded the socialist modernity project. Traditional textile production was industrialized, professionalized, and eventually traditionalized and heritagized, as well. The full-scale production of textiles and handiwork at home became somewhat superfluous and was relegated to free time, separate for most from their production for the state. (4) For example, one villager showed me a bureau filled with textiles—doilies, table runners, and handmade socks—all produced during work breaks at the factory where she was employed before retirement.

For older adults in the present, the sedianka can represent both collective and individual, site-specific memories. One older woman I know, for example, locates the sedenki of her youth under a specific walnut tree, such that the landscape evokes and holds memories, akin to Keith Basso's [1996] discussions of lore and place. Many recall stories of dynamic sedenki as narrated by their mothers and grandmothers, if not as living memories of their own. Though the pieces of the sedianka remain, they are fragmented and distributed across life in the postsocialist, capitalist village arrangement, relegated to new contexts of creation. Practices like sewing, knitting, crochet, and embroidery are still performed by women in villages, in the winter months especially, but for most the social aspect is absent from their making. Older women explain that nowadays, they generally produce textiles alone while watching television, such as their beloved Turkish soap operas. Folk singing and dancing still occur in many villages, but in choirs composed of small groups of mostly pensioners. And of course, young people are more likely to court using cell phones and café meet-ups than in sedinki.

Because handwork has become less common amongst young women as a necessary occupation, it has likewise ceased to be a prominent occasion for hanging out in their everyday lives. For this reason, sedenki are more easily associated with older women and villages, as the actors and contexts most often linked in collective memory to traditional practices. Curiously, though, young urbanites are increasingly drawn to villages and presocialist lifeways (both real and imagined). Sometimes, those engaged with village revitalization projects draw on the concept of "sedianka" in new ways that gloss the above history and selectively focus on the aspects that are useful to young people in the present: the display or discussion of traditional skills, memories of craft and making, and time spent in community, especially with older adults. These new uses invoke contexts of the present but also the remote contexts of the older sedianka, in which the gathering is more than simply a hangout, part of a growing repertoire of traditional forms used in new ways in contemporary life. (5)

I have most prominently observed this in my work with *Fabrika za Idei*, or Ideas Factory, an NGO that hosts the annual village residency program called *Residentsiia Baba* [Granny Residence]. This program facilitates urban-rural intergenerational relationship-building by placing young urban-dwelling Bulgarians in the homes of older adults living in villages. The residencies prompt young participants to draw on art and folklore as ways to improve rural life and

revitalize desirable cultural practices that have dwindled over time. Sometimes, these involve planning meetings that invite locals and project facilitators to think about village livability together, events that Fabrika za Idei sometimes refers to as "sedenki," though the purposes of the meetings are to generate ideas and share information for upcoming cultural programming, rather than spin yarn or embroider a tunic. The facilitators occasionally weave traditional forms and language into their contemporary practices in this way.

In one instance, the NGO hosted a neighborhood intergenerational get-together in the capital city of Sofia, inviting older residents of the neighborhood to join for a meal and a sharing of memories about the local neighborhood. When older locals failed to join the evening's events, the young people turned to reflection. Collectively, they pondered whether generational social expectations for gathering (such as bringing a dish or gift for the host) may have impacted locals' decisions not to attend the event. The group discussed the use of sedianka as an open possibility; perhaps inviting people to join for the common purpose of completing handiwork and story-sharing together could open new possibilities for intergenerational exchange. To the young urbanites, the sedianka-as-frame offered a tantalizing possible bridge between generational systems of meaning.

Months later, I was able to test this potential bridge during my fieldwork with Residentsiia Baba, in the northwestern village of Deleyna in the Vidin province. In this border village, life revolves mostly around the rhythms of pensioners, their yards and housework, and the two establishments remaining in the village: the *krŭchma* [café/bar] and *magazinche* [small shop]. Locals gather in the central square each morning for coffees and groceries, and they return in the late afternoons for a second coffee or beers. Each day, groups of women gather for afternoon chats on shady neighborhood benches around the village.

Along with six other participants in their twenties and thirties, I was tasked with creating an interactive arts project for the village residents. My collaborator, Elena, and I decided to document the textile collections and stories of six women and showcase them in a photography exhibit. We photographed their individual pieces—handwoven *pristilki* [traditional aprons] and towels, crocheted socks and lacey doilies—as well as the women who had inherited and added to these multigenerational collections. We also planned an interactive story circle inviting women of all ages to share their memories connected to these textiles and explained this event as a "малка седянка за разказване" [a small sedianka for conversational sharing]. We spread news of the event by word of mouth and by distributing handmade invitations, pictured below, to ensure that the women would clearly understand our intent.

Figure 1: Handwritten invitations to a village story circle. Photograph by author.

The invitations read as follows:

> Каним те на малка седянка за разказване: Кои са текстилните ръкоделя, които се крият в къщата ти? Кои са историте, свързани с тези ръкоделия? Моля, избери едно ръкоделие, което носи история, която искаш да споделим с малка група слушатели.
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> Кога: Сряда 17:00 ч. Къде: Пред Читалището
>
> Донеси твоето ръкоделие, твоята история, и твоята прекрасна усмивка!
>
> [We invite you to a small storytelling session: What are the textile crafts that hide in your house? What are the stories connected to these handcrafts? Please choose one handcraft that carries a story which you would like to share with a small group of listeners.

When: Wednesday at 5pm. Where: In front of the chitalishte (cultural center)

Bring your handcraft, your story, and your wonderful smile!]

The event was well and cheerfully attended by about fifteen local women. Together, residency participants sat in a circle with the older generations, poised to listen to one another's stories. However, very few of the women came to the event with a handcraft in hand. They explained that they rarely sew anymore—why would they bring a piece they'd already finished to a sedianka? We quickly pivoted, and the women took turns sharing somewhat stifled memories about sewing circles of the past with some coaxing from us facilitators. Eventually, our "story circle" became a jolly conversation, in which the women talked to us and each other about old production techniques and treasured items they used to have.

Despite a shared identity as part of the national body of Bulgarians (for all but myself), nested layers of insider and outsider much more complex than the insider/outsider binary allows for, and the generational positioning of each participant all shaped how they oriented to this moment. We, the young guests from the city, had invoked "sedianka" as a frame for memory sharing about practices in which the women used to participate; this use of the sedianka-as-frame asked the women to move back and forth temporally, recognizing a continuity between storytelling in the present and making in the past. This framing omitted other aspects of sedenki that the older women may have associated with the form, such as courtship, sociality, making, singing, joking, and other emergent forms. We had come to this moment, "the situational context," with different "contexts of meaning" in mind, or perhaps unspecified ideas of what the context of meaning for a contemporary sedianka could be [Bauman 1983].

As outsiders hoping to learn about and animate folklife, we were less attentive to the living traditions that are part of the daily lifeways of older adults in the present. (6) But insofar as we created an occasion to spend time with these women, the event was a success. We had gathered an intergenerational group, and we had spent time thinking about handwork together. In hindsight, we recognized that there was already a context in the village for hearing memories and stories: the daily coffee gatherings the women were already participating in served as the emic form of socialization in the present and the local context for story-sharing. This is rather backward from the typical etic/emic situation, in which outside scholars try to impose a global category on a local context. Our experience suggests that emic, living genres will shift as all living forms do, and that revitalization contexts might produce different meanings for familiar forms. By overlooking the ways that generational position differently situated group members, memory, and proximity to tradition, we also overlooked the contexts and frameworks that participants brought to our story circle and, thus, the frameworks for interpreting a new invocation of the sedianka. The momentary confusion we all experienced was produced by intersecting positionalities and the ways they impacted genre production and reception.

More than anything, this moment revealed the slippery nature of group, reminding us that the esoteric meanings of lore will take on new significance when groups are heterogenous (which they almost always are) and thus the ways they interact with tradition must be understood through an intersectional lens [Borland 2021]. Attention to context can lead students to more nuanced understandings of genre and group, as illustrated here by presumptions of shared identity that are complicated by the revitalization context. I point to this example because it was highly instructive for me as a budding ethnographer attempting to understand shifting intergenerational relationships to people, places, and traditions in Bulgaria. This is not to say that lore-contexts cannot be reimagined, reanimated, and recontextualized, nor that there is a problem with performing forms like the sedianka in new ways; as many scholars have demonstrated, tradition entails change. Being knowledgeable about, and showing appreciation for, the practices in which people used to participate can be interpreted as a kind of caring and a way to build relationships based on trust. (7) Rather, it is to emphasize that new uses can create confusion when the framing and keying are not made clear. Like scholars, everyday actors often operate with appropriate categories in mind, an aspect of adapting performances to context [Bauman 1975].

This echoes the patterns that introductory folklore students often encounter as they begin grappling with the nuances of performance, genre, and living traditions in context. When instructors guide students to look for lore, we often send them out into the world with a metaphorical butterfly net of sorts, tasked with extracting an item from their everyday lives to examine through the microscope of the fieldnotes journal or the short reflection paper. In my experience, this sometimes produces confusion and lackluster results. Careful analysis by sharp students will attend to the nuances and dynamism of context, but often their understanding of context stops at the level of a flat stage upon which lore is performed. They don't gain a deeper understanding of the robust interplay of the elements and positionalities that produce reality-shaping, living traditions in all their complexity.

A deeper understanding of the interactions between genre, context, and group might make sense of missteps, without mapping typologies and hierarchy onto groups and their lore. These skills can also be instructive for organizations like Fabrika za Idei. Despite coming from an entirely different cultural background, I can share fieldwork tools and folkloristic concepts that are helpful for community engagement between Bulgarians of different generations. I have observed that training young Bulgarians to first notice how life works in rural spaces, in order to build projects alongside the practices of older villagers, can produce more meaningful intergenerational connections and more thoughtful community programming.

Understanding not only form and aesthetics, but also the parameters producing and shaping which elements of tradition will resonate across space and time, is a crucial skill that most instructors want their students to glean from folklore courses. The skill of noticing allows us to think about, for instance, structural challenges to intergenerational bonding in rural spaces, and to devise

ways of venturing across those boundaries for meaningful interaction. We can appreciate that certain contexts facilitate gathering more than others, the ultimate prerequisite for other forms of sharing and the sensible stage upon which vernacular verbal lore lives in the everyday lifeworld. We can appreciate, too, that young people in very different places attempt intergenerational connection in similar ways. As such, we might have lessons to learn from one another, beyond revitalizing named genres of folklore.

Illuminating Home: The McMen of Southern Ohio (8)

Engaged teaching goes hand in hand with self-reflection about ongoing projects of one's own. My immersion in Deleyna prompted significant reflection about my own home region and my relationships to the older generations in my life. Likewise, these reflections have inflected my teaching. My fieldwork especially prompted me to consider more carefully the habits and hangouts of my father, Ralph. I have always thought of my dad, a former farmer and telephone line repairman, as a witty joker, a clever storyteller, and a keen observer of everyday life, someone at the ready with proverbs and quick one-liners. Though I have recorded a small number of his stories, it was not until I returned from fieldwork that I began to recognize his regular participation in a conversational context all its own: near-daily morning meetups at a local McDonald's, with a group that refers to itself as the "McMen." In fact, this is where he met his now-wife, Suzy, the honorary "referee" of the McMen and one of the few women who participates in these meetups. Throughout my childhood, my dad would go uptown in our small community for a coffee with the friends he had accumulated throughout his life in southern Ohio. His regular "coffeeshop" visits, as he refers to them, were, for me, a facet of what Dorothy Noyes [2016: 148] refers to as the surround: "Aspects of practice that are not sought out as unusual experiences but taken for granted as already present and, at least in the modern West, devalued as trivial," and that entails various "frameworks of social interaction." Dad likes his coffee, and he likes to shoot the breeze with his old buddies. He returns in the late morning. From my perspective as a busy youth, this was just an insignificant part of life's rhythms.

Later attending university in a large city—Columbus, Ohio—I was socialized into a different sort of adulthood than that of my parents and older friends, one filled with happy hours, hip restaurants, museum visits, and bookshop browsing. The one thing my dad and I easily shared was our perpetual coffee drinking. Upon arriving home from college for a weekend, I would be greeted with the announcement that "coffee's on the pot." We'd catch up over cups of Folgers and non-dairy powdered creamer, or we'd grab a cheap cup of McDonald's coffee and drive around the county doing errands. As I grew into adulthood and began to travel, I'd occasionally bring my dad a souvenir of local ground coffee or a mug, because coffee felt like a shared language for us. However, my dad was not impressed by my high-priced "mud coffee." With my immersion in different spaces, our tastes had diverged.

Graduate study as a folklorist reframed my understanding of some of these attempts to bridge intergenerational, spatial gaps. With my ethnographer's eye, as well as the lens one develops after leaving home and returning regularly for occasional visits, I began to pay more attention to the rhythms of my childhood home. The adult rhythms and preferences shaping the daily lives of those who had raised me were a mystery of sorts, and it took fieldwork with young people and older adults in Bulgaria to turn my eyes intentionally back to questions of sociality in my own region.

Such realizations, of course, are not processed on one's own, but with one's cohort. I have been lucky to discuss these slow revelations with a friend and colleague, Jordan Lovejoy, who shares with me a small-town, working-class Appalachian upbringing. Among other insights, our ongoing conversations about folklore, home, and region have revealed significant overlaps in our fathers' habits. Jordan's father hangs out with his buddies not at a local McDonald's, but instead in front of a local gas station. He is a member of the gas station's "Guard Shack," a group of local men who are recognized locally by a lighthearted name (in reference to their regular presence by the door), and members gather for socialization at places not intended to facilitate deep hanging out. Despite differences in locale, the groups are similar in member demographics and activity. Jordan and I have compared their patterns of moniker, class, gender dynamics, and the presence of a fluid flow of verbal lore produced by, in, and about these groups and the contexts in which they gather. (9)

Bauman [1972: 340] reflects on similar speech situations among the La Have islanders in Nova Scotia, in "talk situations of the general store as a culturally defined scene," situations in which talking is enjoyed for its own sake as a form of sociality, not for specific performative aesthetics. Both the men of the West Virginia Guard Shack and the McMen of Mt. Orab gather for sociality, as do the women of Delyena, Bulgaria. Their "lies" or tall tales, jokes, stories, and ruminations on daily life arise as part of the aesthetic flow of conversation. As Webber [2015] writes, such emic gatherings are resistant to global classification yet resonate cross-culturally with local, situated flair. To know where to go to encounter living tradition, we must spend time in the flow of sociality. As dynamic contexts that produce, and are themselves, lore, we can see parallels between the bench-sits, café conversations, and bar sessions of Bulgarian villages, the McDonald's and gas station hangouts of older men in West Virginia and Ohio (among other places), and the ways of "hanging out" familiar to contemporary young people.

I recently attended my very first meetup of the McMen; at least three decades younger than the most junior member of their regular circle, not to mention a woman, I was certainly an anomaly. With my stepmom, Suzy, and my dad as mediators, I met the people who have populated the surround of my life for years. Rising earlier than I normally would, I joined them for coffee and breakfast at a set of tables farthest from the cash register. I was nervous, not knowing exactly how to position myself in relation to this group of jokesters. What stories had been shared about me, the liberal-voting, world-traveling daughter with a career my

father struggled to describe to his friends? I needn't have worried, as the most awkward conversations took place between my dad, stepmom, and me. The McMen were on their best behavior and more subdued than I'd anticipated. Perhaps we were all a bit bashful.

Clad in a uniform they surely must have agreed upon beforehand—button-up plaids and trucker hats from our county fair—they earnestly asked me to tell them about what I was up to in life, told me about their connections to one another and even to me, e.g., "Your mom used to babysit my son." Most interestingly, they narrated their relationship to McDonald's, noting its changes in management and décor over the years and the ways this had shifted their group's meetups. For example, chairs and tables bolted to the floor hindered their ability to gather closer together. I realized that for the group, McDonald's offers a space for sharing stories about life in this community and the lives that pass through and around it; with the decline of public life in my community and the closure of other local "greasy spoons," as my dad calls them, options are limited. Thus, retooling a corporate environment that serves affordable coffee and doesn't rely on customer turnover for tips is a good option for this group. What's more, they are attuned to similar groups who meet up at McDonald's franchises around the Ohio Valley, even noting redecorations and top-down changes to some of the stores. Beyond the genres of verbal lore that pass among them—jokes and stories, yes, as well as nicknames and personal narratives—my brief first introduction to the McMen gave me a new way of imagining my hometown, its neighboring communities, and my elders. It left me curious to better understand the meetups of different social groups who call my county home, to know more about how people communicate and perform for one another in their daily lives.

In first noticing the places for "hanging out" characteristic of my own intergenerational folk groups—in contexts I now know play host to lore—I can then begin to pay more attention to the aesthetics of expressive communication and cultural practice that arise in spaces that have not been heritagized or raised to attention as "art" or "occasion" [Noyes 2016]. This kind of noticing illuminates what is important to this group: not just coffee, nor McDonald's per se, but an accessible "third space" for gathering for everyday modes of sociality outside the home [Oldenburg 1989]. In societies that largely do not prioritize weather-safe, not-for-profit spaces in which aging adults may gather and in which community infrastructure does not offer comfortable places to gather (as in Bulgaria, where benches and village centers are plentiful even in small villages), third spaces like community cafes and chain restaurants become sites of sociality deeply ingrained in daily rhythms. This initial noticing opens possibilities to entertain the questions and observations that scholars like Prahlad [2021] and N'Diaye [2021] have urged folklorists to consider more deeply in the wake of 2020: who is or is not present and why (gender dynamics, class, race, and traditions of whiteness); that is, the layers of context situating lived experience and emergent expressive culture.

Conclusion: Thinking With and Beyond Genre

As Maribel Alvarez and Selina Morales [2022: 164] write, "Cultural expressions are always embedded in contexts of power." So, too, are our tools for conceptualizing and unpacking forms and contexts. Responding to the above, my introductory folklore lectures attempt to introduce the histories shaping the study of folklore alongside the stuff itself, but I have also been slow to overhaul my methods and pedagogies. I still organize my course units and weekly lectures according to genre, and my assignments still ask students to identify and describe folklore in the world using mock fieldnotes exercises: look for jokes, proverbs, festivals, coming-of-age rituals in your everyday life. What might the genre be? What does this generic framing tell you about the messages conveyed by the lore? I have explained how and why folklorists have used genre as a tool, while making clear that genres, like other classification systems, can deprioritize and even erase local systems of meaning. My intent is to help my students notice and understand both the nuances of the forms that folklorists study, as well as the history of folklore's shifting approaches to and understanding of genre. I try to make clear that the field itself is grappling with these challenges, and I invite them into these conversations; for example, I leave space for them to debate whether we should carry on using genre as an organizing heuristic for the field of folklore studies.

In the most recent iteration of my class, I introduced genre along with a lecture providing background on the Enlightenment and folklore's role in nation-building projects. One question in their midterm exam asked students to discuss the affordances and consequences of using analytic categories or "universal genres" to document and study folklife. One student's response reflected on discrepancies between the messages I taught in lecture, the assignments I asked students to complete, and the syllabus that I had constructed. As the student replied:

> At its core, folklore is totally fluid and examines all of what makes the folk the folk, and what makes the group the group. So, when trying to set up the contexts within which we study each type of individual folklore, it would make sense that some sort of fluidity would be carefully noted, but instead, the class, which serves as Harvard's introduction and therefore probably an accurate introduction to the subject, separates each genre into its own module. This is totally valid, and makes the study of folklore easy to follow, but… the rigid classification [can] also detract from the value, and ultimately, from the fun and connectedness of folklore… genres of folklore are helpful in distinguishing what exactly is being discussed, but they generally are overly restrictive when it comes to highlighting the importance of the forms, and can actually detract from the goal of folklorists, which is generally to note, analyze, and understand interaction. Rigid genres cannot have space for notes about interaction, and while the genres are not inherently rigid, studying

> folklore within any boundary holds back the holistic study of the folk that should be key in the field. (10)

In many ways, I am proud of, and take some credit for, this student's capacity to evaluate and critique the frameworks the course presented, even as I recognize from this reply that I, as an instructor, and the student, as someone new to the field, still have some learning to do when it comes to conveying the material I want my students to glean from our time together. (11) By asking my students to find and classify folklore as an entry point to the field, I replicated some of the very problems I drew to their attention. Instead of dwelling on the complexities of living lore in all its richness and even capacity for harm, I find myself policing boundaries. This leaves me and my students collectively unsatisfied, even as I believe we are thinking deeply about the role of genre in folkloristics and our lives. Many of our discussions end up focusing on genre leakage and what is and is not traditional.

But these are conversations that should be happening in the classroom, and conversations that we can and should build into our course designs. By doing so, we set students up with the tools to make connections between difficulties with identifying ideal types vs. the reality of lore as it is lived and problems of boundary marking and categorization in broader realms (such as national boundaries). I am very much at the drawing board, so to speak, as I test out new ways to convey genre, context, and performance to an introductory folklore class. For my part, I will not be eliminating genre from my instruction, but I will be rethinking how I approach, and ask students to approach, its complexities alongside other core concepts. I offer the following recommendations for instructors, me included, to try the next time we teach an introductory folklore course. The below list does not offer novel approaches, but suggests subtle shifts guided by the analytical insights of our field put toward the questions about power and systemic injustice students must be prepared to grapple with today:

1 Introductory courses should address how genre systems are implicated in political questions and how they carry colonial and imperialist legacies.

2 Our courses must differentiate between genre as an abstract analytical system, abstract types for thinking with, and existing forms as they are lived, named, and recreated in context.

3 For those of us who organize our syllabi around genre groups, we might revisit and reframe our courses around, instead, the crucial questions for the study of everyday life that our field addresses or problems/situations that specific genres address well. If I may extrapolate from my own experiences and that of fellow graduate students alongside whom I moved through my studies, new instructors can feel the pressure to cover the wide range of genres that our field can address at the expense of the pressing questions exemplified by some forms. Moving away from a class plan structured around genres gives some freedom to explore these topics without ticking off a genre checklist.

4 Craft classroom assignments that guide students to spend less time collecting and more time hanging out. Folklorists sometimes place more emphasis on text and texture than context. I believe this sets students up to treat context as the last step in folkloristics, rather than the one that so many folklorists actually begin with in their own work. Students stand to gain deeper learning when we craft assignments that place less emphasis on collecting and more on first grappling with already-existing contexts for group expression and the relationships within and between groups. (12)

5 Alternatively, set students up to collect "ideal type" examples of a particular genre and build in class time to unpack their experiences. Were they successful, or did they struggle to locate ideal types? What might we learn from these experiences of "failure" in the field about the relationships between categories, the everyday flow of expressive forms, and the relationships between analytic categories and folklore on-the-ground? Such an approach emphasizes the tensions around the edges and places their focus on process, not product, setting the stage for performance and practice frameworks to further enliven their thinking.

6 Introduce genre later and context first. Maybe this actually looks like situating genre in historical context, or maybe it means assigning walking tours, trips to the city library, or a guest visit with an extension agent to understand the politics of the place in which they are learning about expressive culture. Undergraduates need more guidance in keeping both the contingencies/emergences of the present and structural power dynamics in mind. A context-first approach might help them bring these crucial aspects of performance to the forefront, rather than simply tacking them onto a genre analysis at the end of the semester.

7 Model this kind of contextual approach by teaching messy examples, like those described above. While they do not perfectly exemplify an ideal type of a genre, they illustrate the sorts of complexities young people are more likely to encounter in their everyday lifeworlds and can be pathways toward learning how understandings of old forms can be illuminating in emergent contexts.

When done well, a folklore class provides a guide for, and an approach to, a more observant, empathetic life that recognizes the everyday artistry and knowledge all around us, underacknowledged by other sorts of institutions and dominant histories. In my current introductory class, I plan to use the two situations described above midway into the semester as case studies that illustrate how concepts like group, genre, and context might morph and change in the present moment, as experiences I have lived through and collaboratively shaped. They are not the clearest examples of group, context, and genre; they are actually quite messy as introductory examples. For me, this is part of their appeal, as they are examples that ask students to think critically about the ways social actors try to negotiate complex layers of belonging: spatial boundaries, generational boundaries, and temporal boundaries. They usefully illustrate what can happen

when people with different positionalities within a group try to engage with "insider" practices or try to use an older form in a new way.

The Bulgarian case gets us to the meat of the matter: why young people might turn to (dormant) traditions and what happens when they do. It also provides a peek at collecting that we can interrogate together, under my guidance, by pointing out the sorts of documentation sessions that rarely yield lore as it is lived. This, I hope, will be instructive for them as they think about folklore in their own groups. With the proper framing, it can subtly introduce them to the complexities of public-facing work, heritage, and self-conscious tradition. The example from my hometown, on the other hand, demonstrates the sort of hanging out that I'd like them to participate in, as well as my own willingness to be uncomfortable to more deeply understand the life of someone close to me. By guiding them first to think about contexts of sociality, then through the nuances of noticing framing devices and the work of genre in moments of interaction, and finally to make links between structural change, profit, and the ways our everyday lives are entangled with both, I hope to overcome some of the barriers to understanding the value of attention to living lore that my student and our colleagues have noted.

A folklore education that is committed to the dynamic role of context in cultural practice and performance can better demonstrate the relevance of our discipline, while simultaneously furthering the goal of reckoning with the inherent harms of our core concepts. While I still view genre as an important aspect of folklore for students to understand, either as part of our field's history or one tool of many in our tool bags, my challenge, and ours, is to adjust our work—assignments, examples, syllabi, class exercises, and applied practice—such that it aligns with the narratives we craft about the field of folklore's own meta traditions of continuity and change.

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NOTES

1 A robust folkloristic literature explores the relationship between etic and emic genres, intertextuality among genres, and genre, power, and ideology. See Briggs and Bauman [1992], Graham [1981], Cashman [2007], Gilman [2009], and of course the rich overview by Harris-Lopez [2003], among others.

2 *Sedianka* is often transliterated in English-language scholarship as *sedyanka.* Indeed, it is a vernacular word transcribed as eye dialect; pronunciation

and transcription, let alone transliteration, appears differently throughout the country and publications about the form.

3 Most scholarly mentions of sedianka discuss the event as the setting for folk song with a brief discussion of the dynamics of the form beyond its place in the seasonal round. See Donna Buchanan [2006], Mercia MacDermott [1998], and Timothy Rice [1994; 2000] for examples. Angel Goev [1984] and Martha Forsyth [1996] are notable exceptions, providing deeper illustration of the dynamism of sedianka as context and complex genre.

4 The professionalization of textile production is an exception, especially in the case of *dantela* [shuttle lace], *Chiprovtsi chergi* [carpet runners from Chiprovtsi] and *kilim* [carpet] production that have been outsourced to villages throughout southern and southwestern Bulgaria [Pisancheva 2022]. The production of some textiles, like lace, once connoted modernity. Other textiles have been relegated to the realm of the past—appropriate for staged performance, but no longer part of the modern home or adorned modern body. Textile production deemed consequential to national memory became reframed as heritage. Textile production as economic enterprise underwent a different story. Today, Western European clothiers relegate their clothes production to rural Bulgaria. See Kapka Kassabova [2023] for creative representation of the impacts of these processes in southwestern Bulgaria.

5 For another, though different, invocation of sedianka, see Iva Kyurkchieva's [2018] discussion of *SedyankaTA,* a craft meet-up meant to support the transmission of dwindling textile craft knowledge, founded in 2011 and still active today.

6 I, the outsider from a different cultural background, was coincidentally the only young person participating in the residency from a rural community. Nonetheless, I was an outsider to the sedianka-as-frame.

7 I am grateful to Danille Christensen for pointing out the value of showing others we care about their practice.

8 I thank my father and stepmother, Ralph and Suzy Craycraft, as well as the McMen of Mt. Orab, Ohio, for welcoming me kindly into their group on an early December morning, and I thank my father for putting up with my continued efforts to draw connections between tradition and everyday life in our shared southern Ohio experiences.

9 Ongoing personal communications, 2023-2024. I am grateful to Jordan Lovejoy for our generative sharing, and I thank her for permission to note our discussions of her father's sociality practices.

10 I thank my student, Malachi, for permission to include and attribute this portion of his exam response and to cite him by name, at his request. Malachi is a second-year student at Harvard University.

11 For example, I would have been more satisfied if my student had expressed that folklore is not just present in a romanticized "flow of life" but is actually situated within multiple contexts, set apart from the "flow" by aesthetics and framing devices. Both student and instructor have lessons to learn.

12 See Morales and Alvarez [2022: 162].

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