

Old Song in a New Tune: Fieldwork at Home and Abroad

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(Summary)

This paper is a reflexive study of my fieldwork experience in Bulgaria, in the Balkans, and in the U.S.A. It examines dynamics of the self in the field and the various ways of using reflexive capacities for re-assessment of field strategies and for validation of fieldwork material. The role of the researcher as a topic for consideration is presented in the paper from several perspectives: 1) The Introductory words focus on the researcher's role as part of the academic discourse in the constant process of re-thinking and re-defining folklore, folkloristics, and folklorist; 2) The Trajectory of My Fieldwork Experience traces my professional development as a folklorist in the course of more than 25 years at various places and among various communities; 3) Who are the Others? Dynamics of the Relative Perceptions of Own and Foreign Culture describes different challenges that I have encountered while working with different social, regional, ethnic, religious and political communities at home and abroad. It also gives recognition of the fact that my fieldwork activities have always placed me on a continuum between self and other, familiar and unknown, domestic and foreign, so that no rigid dichotomy of own/foreign can describe the true nature of such an experience; 4) Who am I? Dynamics of the Researcher's Identities in the Perceptions of the Others comments on those identities of mine, which have had a considerable impact on my fieldwork practice – ethnic, national, gender, political, religious, immigrant, and professional; 5) The Concluding part of the paper opens up a discussion about the researcher's reflexivity as a topic in general, and about the identities of our professional community as folklorists.

Keywords: field research, reflexive approach, multiple identities, professional identity and fieldwork experiences

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