

Ondřej Daniel: *Bigbít nebo turbofolk. Představy migrantů z bývalé Jugoslávie* [Big beat or Turbofolk. Imaginations of Migrants from the Former Yugoslavia]

AntropoEdice, sv. 3.

Praha: AnthroWeb 2013, 155 pp.

Ondřej Daniel's book "Big beat or Turbofolk" seeks to explore the topic of imagination among migrant communities from the former Yugoslavia across several countries, namely, Austria, the Czech Republic and France. In order to capture these imaginations along with a complicated "web" of connections among several spaces of different nation-states, the author fittingly chose a strategy of multiple-site research (see pp. 15–23). This places Daniel's work in the area of transnational migration studies and (postmodern) social theory, which is also reflected in the chosen theoretical framework and bibliography (e.g., Anderson, Appadurai, Bhaba, Said and others). The author also seeks inspiration in cultural studies, namely, the Birmingham school as well as authors influenced by Marxism, including Gramsci, Harvey, Wallerstein and Žižek (p. 153). Moreover, not only does such research ask for specific theoretical and methodological anchoring but, as Daniel claims, also a specific style of writing – the author himself strives for an "experiment." He suggests that the best way of representing research that puts an emphasis on human imagination, memories and dreams can be found in Deleuze's and Guattari's rhizomatic style of writing (see p. 11). In this manner,

Daniel's book opens up the truly fascinating topic of migrants' imagination, which certainly deserves the attention of the social sciences.

The question of what impels so many persons to be on the move is indeed a relevant question to the increasing world's population – in an era that has been referred to as the "age of migration" (e.g., Brettel and Hollifield 2001). "Big beat and Turbofolk" is a contribution to the growing area of migration studies that reflect on these trends. Understanding migration indeed matters. People have migrated for thousands of years, but the "modern" form of migration is of a different character and it is the one Daniel elaborates on. In his book he locates and focuses on various economic, political and demographic aspects enabling and determining migration. However, despite the title and the overall goal to follow migrants' imagination, what the book misses is that the moving force behind many of the journeys can be traced precisely to the realm of imagination. Daniel's book sets out on an ambitious path, but, unfortunately, not all the goals that the author sets are successfully tackled. So what are the "benefits and drawbacks" of "Big beat or Turbofolk"?

Formally, "Big beat or Turbofolk" fulfils all of the standards of an academic text – when it comes to the methodological premises, the interpretation line and the textual representation of the data. Daniel's research entails both synchronic and diachronic dimensions. Thus, he explains the phenomenon in its historical context while including other social forces present. The major drawback of Daniel's book is that it does not exhaust

the full potential of the topic. Despite the author's call for anthropological research – the “bottom to top approach” which he himself seems to implement – the final textual representation as well as the interpretation line fail to bring a deeper understanding of the world of the insider. Unfortunately, the reader rarely gets a better picture of the *emic* view and migrants' understanding of both their old and their new homes. This is more than surprising as the author applies the research methods of social anthropology – participant observation in particular (p. 153). This restricts reader's understanding to one of an outsider's eye – informed indeed, yet blind to certain movements of the “soul” and “heart.”

Certainly, an *etic* account is as relevant as an *emic* one; different research suits various strategies. Yet when it comes to the endeavor of comprehending migrants' imagination, it becomes limiting if not counter-productive. The insider's view generally appears in the form of interview and blog quotes that rarely offer the reader deeper insight into the individual perceptions of complicated Balkan identities. Daniel follows an approach similar to Appadurai's, in which macrostructural focus – an *etic* perspective – prevails, which inevitably leads to shifts in meaning and generalizations, while the *emic* dimension is, so to say, “lost in translation.” For instance, in the chapter devoted to Turbofolk, Narodna muzika (national music) and Novo komponovana narodna muzika (newly composed folk music) genres Daniel quotes an interview with “one informant from Paris” from January 2007: “...I don't like folklore very much. I like traditional music but the real one. The

new one [folk music] is kitsch, it's terrible, I fear it! It's for the villagers. It's the game of money...” (p. 109).

Even though Daniel puts this quote into the context of a so-to-say fitting analysis of the Turbofolk genre, it does not become explicitly clear in the text why this informant would dislike it. We can only wonder whether she is a Serb from Bosnia, Croatia or Serbia or some other nationality, what her socio-political views are, her social status, etc. Thus, the reader, especially one who is not familiar with the *ethnoscapes* of the former Yugoslavia, cannot understand the meaning. Moreover, the author does not attempt to explain why she would fear the music genre and fails to highlight the tight relation between Turbofolk, extreme nationalism and direct linkages to people like Željko and Ceca Ražnatović and some of the worst atrocities that took place in the latest war (see Slavkova 2011). Overall, the author tends to treat the former Yugoslavian diaspora as a relatively unproblematic unit of social cohesion as if the identities drawn on national and religious bases didn't matter.

Further problems develop around the structure of the text and the final style of writing. As previously mentioned the author attempts to provide the reader with more of an experimental form of “rhizomatic writing” (p. 11). He claims that: “*the reader can start reading this work at any point and continue to another arbitrary point*” (ibid.). Clearly, this goal is daring and unfortunately it doesn't quite meet the practice. The book is overall structured as a classical academic manuscript conforming to general conventions and is, thus, far from an organic, tree-like structure of rhizome. It starts with an

introduction, has a clearly defined body of the text and ends, “instead of a conclusion,” with a closing chapter titled “Big beat or Turbofolk” (for the rhizome has neither a beginning nor an end). However, it is true that in order to read individual chapters one doesn’t need to follow their order. Each of them represents a separate chapter reflecting on a related yet independent topic. The result is a cross between a classic academic text and an encyclopedia – partly an examination of social theory relevant to the studied problematids, partly a handbook of emigration from the Balkans to chosen destinations and partly an overview of studies of lifestyle and popular culture.

The synopsis of “Big beat or Turbofolk” on the back cover begins: “*Tell me what music you listen to and I will tell you what kind of a person you are. And also the films you like, how you describe your journey from work and which interpretation of history you believe...*” Alas, Daniel’s book manages only partly to answer these questions. On the other hand, Daniel’s work needs to be appreciated as a valuable contribution to larger research endeavors concerning Balkan and migration studies. “Big beat or Turbofolk” explores the intriguing topic of migration, identity, lifestyle and nationalism and serves as a valuable overview and source of information of the phenomena. Furthermore, it can be recommended as an interesting read to every expert on the former Yugoslavia.

Markéta Slavková

Zuzana Jurková (ed.): *Pražské hudební světy / Prague Soundscapes*¹

Praha: Karolinum, 2014, 304 pp.

The book *Prague Soundscapes* is the successful result of at least two years’ work of a team of music anthropology seminar students at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague under the leadership of Zuzana Jurková. The title of the publication reveals its authors’ aim to introduce our capital as perceived by *ethnomusicological ears*. Ethnomusicology (music anthropology) conceives music in a complex way: not only as a sound phenomenon, but also as a social one. Music is, first of all, the people who play it and those who listen to it – it’s the world around sound, the *music world*, the *soundscape* (p. 8)! And that was exactly one of the authors’ goals: to introduce ethnomusicology as a discipline that seeks to understand people through music and music through people (p. 293) – to further link anthropological theoretical concepts with a particular musical world, or *soundscape*.

The 304 pages of the book contain a symbiotic combination of two genres: impressive “snapshots” on one hand and a theoretical part on the other. A total of twenty-four snapshots – original inside views of music events – very well portray the authors’ experience of musical events, including a detailed description of the music, place, musicians, listeners, and

¹ The book was published in two language versions, Czech – *Pražské hudební světy* – and English – *Prague Soundscapes*. The page numbers refer to the Czech version.