

“informants” while becoming part of the researcher’s life, can even enter researcher’s dreams with vivid and vibrant sounds.

The fascinating textual mosaic of the book is thoughtfully intertwined with the author’s enigmatic black-and-white photographs. While focusing on the imponderabilia of everyday (Jewish) life among the decaying buildings of 1970s Budapest, the images metaphorically communicate the meanings in Niran Frigyesi’s work, highlighting its gentle, intimate and somewhat mystical feeling. As such, the book is a sort of a play of different types of unrivaled verbal and visual representations. I have to admit that for me, personally, it represents the single most important title on Jewish music I have ever read, and a reminder of why I actually practice ethnomusicology in the first place.

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## **Maria Sonevytsky** ***Wild Music: Sound and*** ***Sovereignty in Ukraine***

Wesleyan University Press, 2019

Maria Sonevytsky’s book *Wild Music: Sound and Sovereignty in Ukraine* is a distinguished achievement of contemporary ethnomusicological scholarship. It deals ethnographically with various Ukrainian “ethno-music” (*etno-muzyka*) phenomena that can be considered *borderline*, not only in their geographic and cultural designation (Hutsul and Crimean Tatar), but also in their conceptual and political characterization. Namely, Sonevytsky is predominantly interested in analysing the ambiguous terrain that exists in the space between concepts and orientations such as nationalism/anti-nationalism, exoticization/empowerment, femininity/feminism, apolitical/political, rural/urban, pro-Russian/pro-European, and

East/West. She therefore follows Alexei Yurchak's maxim to "refuse all reductionist diagnoses of the current situation, whichever side they come from" (72), and in this way refrains from succumbing to any simplistic binary interpretations, which too often take a leading position in both popular and academic discourses. Instead, Sonevytsky offers a nuanced and multidimensional glimpse into the complexities and contradictions of the Ukrainian cultural and political landscape of the last two decades, which she analyses through the lenses of various musical and "sounding" phenomena. The result is both ethnographically rich and theoretically compelling, and exceedingly timely and relevant in its thematic and conceptual delineation.

Maria Sonevytsky, a Ukrainian-American scholar with a PhD in ethnomusicology from Columbia University, and now an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley, scrutinizes in her book a variety of musical examples from Ukraine that are in one way or another related to West Ukrainian Hutsul, rural Ukrainian, or Crimean Tatar people, identities, and sounds: music performances at protests (Orange Revolution, Maidan Revolution), songs and performances from the Eurovision Song Contest, festival performances (ArtPole, Dreamland), radio soundings (Radio Meydan from Crimea), the Voice of the Nation (Holos kraïny) singing competition, the Ukrainian *avtentyka* movement, and singers and artists such as Ruslana, Dakh Daughters, DakhBrakha, Oleksij Zajets, Suzanna Karpenko, Jamala, and DJ Bebek. Sonevytsky's main goal in bringing all these disparate examples into

one book is to discuss the interrelatedness of two concepts crucial for understanding the current Ukrainian political situation, which are also two common denominators of all the given examples listed above: Wildness discourse and the notion of political sovereignty.

With Wildness, Sonevytsky refers to practices of exoticization and stereotyping in music and performance that represent Ukraine or its constituent people (Hutsuls, Crimean Tatars, rural Ukrainians, or Ukrainians in general) as exotic, wild, uncivilized. However, these same exoticizing and self-exoticizing tropes are often also used by various Ukrainian musicians as tools for self-empowerment (i.e., Wildness refashioned as local epistemology), but in a way, as Sonevytsky argues, that does not neatly or inherently resolve the problematic aspects of such approaches. The author of the book in this way ties the notion of Wildness to the concept of political sovereignty, as it is often through practices of musical and artistic (self-) exoticization that many Ukrainian musicians construct and imagine new cultural and political alliances, and new political possibilities that could potentially liberate Ukraine from its problems and failures. Sonevytsky herself articulates these goals in the following way:

My aim in this book has been to center various local Ukrainian epistemologies through various iterations of "wild music", to witness how Ukrainian musicians and audiences strategically remediate tropes of exoticism in order to imagine the future of sovereignty in Ukraine. Wildness rebels against the constraints – both musical and political – imposed on it, but is nonetheless articulated within these constraints,

at times at the risk of reinscribing forms of essentialism, exoticism, or nationalism. Unable to break its frame, Wildness nonetheless consistently operates as a technology of escape, as a future-orientated promise that might finally release an imperilled state such as Ukraine from the “colonial matrix of power” that situates it on the perpetual limen of either the authoritarian East or the liberal democratic West (177).

In the main chapters of the book, Sonevytsky analyses multiple manifestations and uses of “wild music”, as she attempts to interpret them through various overlapping and sometimes conflicting – mainly local and occasionally non-local – perspectives gathered through ethnographic research. In this way, she is able to unearth multiple layers of signification behind each specific instance of “wild music” – a method reminiscent of Geertz’s thick description (1973), but which she actually calls “interpretive moves” (borrowed from Steven Feld, 1984), an approach particularly suited to analysing musical texts and performances. In this way, she compares and juxtaposes statements by musicians, managers, festival organizers, radio owners, journalists, music audiences, Western commentators, Ukrainian ethnomusicology students, villagers, urban cosmopolitans, and intellectual elites, all of them coming from various regions, classes, ethnicities, genders, and religions. In addition, Sonevytsky skilfully interweaves most of the chapters with rich and telling ethnographic vignettes that bestow the whole book with a sense of grounded and experiential immediacy, and in this way they successfully tie theory with practice.

Sonevytsky’s principal chapters, where she elaborates most succinctly and compellingly on the issues of Wildness and sovereignty, are Chapters One through Four. In Chapter One, the author examines Ukrainian ethno-pop star Ruslana, and her diverse uses of Hutsul sounds and images in music videos at different points in her career. Sonevytsky in this way demonstrates the singer’s move away from her early ethno-nationalist leanings (“Znaiu Ya,” or “I Know”), through her auto-exoticism phase (“Wild Dances”), and finally to her eco-activist stage of “pragmatic patriotism” (“Wild Energy”). Sonevytsky argues in this way about Ruslana’s potentially empowering and supposedly non-binary (pro-EU/pro-Russian) expressive strategies (although the non-binary part is not among the strongest arguments in the book), while she simultaneously critiques Ruslana’s (self-)exoticizing and self-eroticizing gestures. Particularly valuable in this chapter are the author’s interviews with Hutsul villagers, who comment on Ruslana’s representations of them as “wild” people, many feeling “shame” in this regard, but some also “pride” (44–48).

Sonevytsky proceeds in Chapter Two to a discussion of Ukrainian “freak cabaret” group Dakh Daughters, and their uses of Hutsul sounds and narratives in their 2013 Maidan performance in Kyiv. The author’s rich textual and ethnographic analysis in this chapter deftly demonstrates that the group’s incorporation of Hutsul elements as sounds and images of Wildness and sovereignty cannot be pinned down to simplistic and binary interpretations of Dakh Daughters’s music and performance. For example, some of their members stated they imagine Ukraine’s future

not in binary terms, as either Western or Russian, but as something else (60). Furthermore, the chapter also offers an important and multi-layered examination of the status and role of political art in a post-socialist and revolutionary context, as it shows how Dakh Daughter's videos and performances from before until after the Maidan Revolution advanced from "a privileged stance of political ambivalence to a position of ambivalence as political conviction" (82).

Chapter Three then moves away from the examination of Hutsul sounds (in Chapters One and Two) as sounds of Wildness and sovereignty to a deliberation in this regard of Ukrainian rural vocal timbres, as presented in the Voice of the Nation (Holos kraïny) competition / TV reality show (for example, by singers Oleksij Zajets and Suzanna Karpenko). These "wild" timbres, often described by their practitioners as sounds of "bloating goats", and "on the border of yelling", and nourished through the Ukrainian *avtentyka* movement, are usually rejected from the competition, and therefore from being the "voice of the nation", but their failure, as Sonevytsky argues, is a productive one. With their performances of rural sovereignty, singers like Zajets and Karpenko establish a critique of a restricted model of the "nation" as advocated through these kinds of competitions and TV shows, and call for a more heterogeneous and inclusive one that would give space to disenfranchised rural voices. It would be relevant in this regard, if the author would also show how much space these kinds of rural voices and constituencies are allocated in a broader Ukrainian media space (national and private), and therefore how

well incorporated or marginalized they are in general (because the Voice of the Nation competition is mainly dedicated to pop, and not to *ethno-muzyka* or *avtentyka* performers, who might instead find more welcoming space in some other Ukrainian TV or radio shows).

Chapter Four switches to yet another marginalized and minority group, Crimean Tatars, and to their sounds of Wildness and sovereignty. This chapter also brings a nuanced and multidimensional discussion of layers of meaning behind the concept of "Eastern" sounds, which Crimean Tatar musicians and radio personnel often use in their self-designation, and are often simultaneously read as either "validating" or "intrusive" by different actors in the Crimean public space. Moreover, the "Eastern" designation can similarly often connote (self-)exoticizing or threatening "wildness". By analysing different "Eastern" sounds and public soundings coming from the Crimean Tatar Radio Meydan (which existed until 2015), or through the music of singer Jamala or DJ Bebek, the author astutely shows how the trope of "Eastern" can signify a multiplicity of intersecting meanings: exotic otherness, counterpublicness, indigenous sovereignty, sonorous capitalism, and/or aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Sonevytsky extends the analysis of the Crimean Tatar sound sovereignties and Crimean Tatar-Ukrainian music solidarities also to most of the other chapters in the book (Introduction, Chapter Two, Chapter Five, and Conclusion). This also corroborates her main arguments about the future of Ukrainian sovereignty, which should be based on heterogeneous civic publics (a point to which I will return at the end of the review). Chapter Five,

about the Ukrainian “ethno-chaos” group DakhaBrakha, is the least engaging chapter, as it offers very thin and monologic textual and cultural interpretations, without giving much attention to the ethnographic multiplicity of local meanings that are otherwise so well elucidated in previous chapters.

Nevertheless, the book as a whole makes an important contribution to the contemporary ethnomusicological scholarship, and it does so in many senses: ethnographically, theoretically, topically. Moreover, it provides a compelling examination of the current Ukrainian cultural and political situation, as well as the related questions of nationalism, patriotism, imperialism, and the role of minority and marginalized groups in the shaping of the future Ukrainian sovereignty. The only issue that could further solidify Sonevtsky’s main arguments in the book would be a discussion of other important Ukrainian minorities and their music and cultural expressions (e.g., Russian ethnic and language groups, Roma people), which would – together with Hutsul, rural, and Crimean Tatar constituencies – probably be pivotal for any deliberation of a viable Ukrainian civic state.

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**Susanna Trnka**  
***Traversing: Embodied Lifeworlds in the Czech Republic***

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*Traversing: Embodied Lifeworlds in the Czech Republic* is the title of the recently published book written by an anthropologist Susanna Trnka (of Czech origin, currently based in New Zealand). This impressive monograph provides the reader with fresh, and for many, also unexpected, perspectives to contemporary Czech society as well as to Czech history, with a focus on the construction of national identity. *Traversing* is based on thirty years of anthropological/ethnographic research in the Czech Republic (and the former Czechoslovakia). Moreover, Trnka’s overall theoretical approach in the book is interdisciplinary. She masterfully combines anthropological knowledge with philosophy. This makes her work genuinely exceptional, and her book is a significant contribution to both disciplines.

As the title suggests, the key concept that Trnka’s book introduces is “traversing” – “ways of seeing, experiencing, and moving through the world and the kinds of persons we become through them” (3). Trnka coins the term “traversing” to expand on the philosophical thought of Martin Heidegger and Jan Patočka, and to thus emphasise and examine embodiment as crucial to our understanding of being-in-the-world. In particular, Trnka pays attention to three movements that we make as embodied actors in the world: (1) how we move through time and space, (2) how we move toward and away from one another, and, finally, (3) how we move