Serhiy Bilenky. *Imperial Urbanism in the Borderlands: Kyiv, 1800-1905*. U of Toronto P, 2018. xxii, 490 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Tables. Chart. Notes. Selected Bibliography. Index. $95.00, cloth.

While historians have produced a wealth of literature on imperial Saint Petersburg and Moscow, nineteenth-century Kyiv has been neglected as a field of study until recently. Fortunately, this information gap is beginning to be filled. The last ten years have seen the publication of important English-language monographs by Natan Meir (*Kiev, Jewish Metropolis: A History, 1859-1914*, on the Jewish community) and Faith Hillis (*Children of Rus': Right-Bank Ukraine and the Invention of a Russian Nation*, on Russian nationalists), and historians in Ukraine and elsewhere are further developing the topic. Serhiy Bilenky's book is, thus, very timely.

Approaching Kyiv from the perspective of urban history, Bilenky argues that the changes that it experienced in the imperial period were at least as dramatic as those that it saw in the twentieth century. Three formerly separate settlements (Podil, Old Kyiv, and Pechersk) grew into a unified city, which was marked by the imperial aspirations of the Romanov empire as well as by the advent of capitalism. Even as the imperial power asserted its claim to Kyiv as an unambiguously Russian city, the formerly Ukrainian and Polish population became increasingly multi-ethnic and socially diverse.

Building on Henri Lefebvre's distinction between "perceived," "conceived," and "lived" spaces, Bilenky's book devotes lengthy sections to the perception of Kyiv in literature and academic research, to various stages of urban planning, and to the city's "sociospatial form" and "psychogeography." As Bilenky convincingly shows, the perception of Kyiv was governed by the myth of an ancient and Orthodox metropolis, "the mother of Russian cities"—a myth that, more often than not, clashed with the reality of a peripheral commercial town, where cows and pigs roamed for much of the century and where the Orthodox population mixed with Polish aristocrats and Jewish traders. Archaeologists and historians helped make Kyiv's antiquities increasingly visible, but at the same time, urban modernization, mass immigration, and the rise of Ukrainian nationalism challenged the narrative of the ideal, purely Russian Holy City.

Part 2 (131-236) deals with the construction of a "regular" modern city out of an agglomeration of pre-modern settlements. The most important period in urban planning, according to Bilenky, was the reign of Tsar Nicholas I, when the autocrat himself and his loyal governor general, Dmitrii Bibikov, dictated the building of fortifications and broad streets, turning Kyiv into a "'fortress city'" (131-32). In the process, the city's centre shifted from the commercial Podil toward the Palace district and Old Kyiv, where the

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imperial authorities constructed several symbolically important buildings, such as St. Vladimir University and the Institute for Noble Maidens. Architecture was, thus, directly linked to power, and the urban modernization of Kyiv was a function of the complete assumption of control by the imperial state. Only the last years of the nineteenth century saw a construction boom fuelled by capitalist interest rather than state initiative.

Inserted between the second and last section of the book is a thorough discussion of demographic change and municipal elites. Making critical use of the often-unreliable statistics, with their inconsistent social categories, Bilenky demonstrates how Kyiv's population diversified with the influx of a large peasant workforce in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As the city's traditional self-government was abolished (in 1835) and later reintroduced (in 1870), its ruling elite changed as well: the sceptre passed from a corrupt local oligarchy to Russian merchants and bureaucrats and, ultimately, to a new class of cosmopolitan professionals and academics. One question that remains somewhat unclear is the role of industry in Kyiv's development. Why was it weaker than elsewhere? And what identities did the immigrant workers from the Ukrainian-speaking countryside embrace? After all, Kyiv's role as a stronghold of Russian nationalism in the early twentieth century begs the question as to why alternative ideologies, be they Marxist or Ukrainian nationalist, had relatively weak mass appeal in the city.

The analysis that follows of the social makeup of various parts of the town is perhaps a bit too detailed for non-specialists, but the conclusions are convincing: while Kyiv was never a completely segregated city, the central parts of Old Kyiv and Lypky became increasingly socially (though not ethnically) exclusive, while peripheral Ploska and suburbs like Shuliavka became associated with crime, poverty, and disease (328-34). A last chapter ("What Language Did the Monuments Speak?" [335-55]) shows how the Russian state tried to mark its imperial master narrative in Kyiv's urban space through monuments, thus linking the history of the built environment with the myths discussed at the beginning of the book.

"Imperial [u]rbanism in the [b]orderlands," Bilenky concludes, is characterized by massive state (often military) intervention in urban planning; by a delicate balance of power between local and central authorities; and by the tension between perceived geopolitical threats and a multi-ethnic urban population (356). Bilenky's book, thus, contributes not only to the history of an understudied Eastern European metropolis but also to the study of how the Russian Empire worked on its periphery. While more research on imperial Kyiv is desirable—for instance, on its Polish nobility and Ukrainophile milieu and on its military population and working-class

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suburbs—this well-researched monograph is an excellent starting point for all further work and will be of great interest to both specialists and the general public alike.

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