Serhiy Bilenky. *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations.* Stanford Studies on Central and Eastern Europe. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012. xiii, 389 pp. Maps. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Cloth.

Every scholarly book is—or, rather, should be—a collaborative effort that involves author, readers, and editors at the respective stages of the publishing process, from the initial evaluation of the submitted manuscript to proofreading the final copy. The skill and care with which each member of this team executes his or her task is in many ways as important for the success of a publication as the quality of the scholarship, especially when the submitted manuscript is a dissertation by an author whose command of English is not native. To be sure, in an enterprise plagued by a scarcity of resources a well-edited scholarly volume has become something of a luxury these days, the province of only a few, well-situated academic presses (and surely Stanford University Press should be counted among them). Unfortunately, the book under review is evidence that, even among the latter, standards might be slipping.

The good news is that as far as simple typographical errors are concerned, the proofreader(s) of *Romantic Nationalism* has proven to be more than up to the task; indeed, considering that the volume ranges over three Slavic languages and is heavily annotated, remarkably so (although "midnineteenth-century" is a form of the adjective new not only to me). On other, more substantive levels, however, the editorial process has decidedly come up short. Where, one might ask, was the copyeditor when confronted with "Livland," "Estland" (throughout the volume) instead of Livonia, Estonia; "ethnography" (ditto) when what is meant are folkways; "local colors" (25) instead of the singular; maps "*equipped with* long-lost […] lands" (29) instead of incorporating them; thinkers who "*exposed* ideas" (167, 250) instead of espousing them; "unconsciousness" (275) instead of unconscious; or "notoriously famous poems" (33)? These are random examples, but nonetheless just a few of the numerous linguistic gaffes to be found in the volume. But it is in (what pass to be) English translations of passages from the Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian that the editor's truancy is most painfully evident. I mean really: (quoting Count Aleksei Orlov, who "urged 'scholars' to be sensitive about these issues"…)

> 'So that they [scholars] debated as careful as possible when it concerns nationality or language of Little Russia and other subject tribes, without giving preference to the love for native country before the love for the fatherland and getting rid of everything that can harm this latter love, especially [ideas] of putative current sufferings and of their extraordinary happiness in the past; so that all conclusions of scholars and writers tended to elevate not Little Russia,

> Poland, and other countries separately but the Russian Empire in the complexity of its constitutive nations.' (197)

As egregious as this example may be—and there are analogous ones aplenty—its effect is ostensibly mitigated by its appearance as a block quote. How much more disruptive, then, when such renderings are woven into the author's own text, as in, for example, "Unlike the events of 1768, the Galician massacre had all the signs of a civil war, as it was perpetrated by a 'fairly Polish, the most and by the highest right national folk' that spoke the 'pure' and 'beautiful' Polish language—the very source of a Polish literary culture" (130). As the son of a scholar whose native language was not English, I understand Serhiy Bilenky's predicament and sincerely empathize; but as a native speaker of English who as a consequence was corralled into editing said father's work, I also understand that being less than exacting in this regard renders a profound disservice to the author, that rickety English not only distracts but detracts from the substance of the argument. In this respect, Bilenky's gratitude "to production editor Mariana Raykov and to Jeff Wyneken for his excellent copyediting" should be tempered: it may indeed be the case that "they both transformed an often tedious process for an author into a pleasure of new learning" (xiii), but clearly not his way of articulating it.

After a few dozen pages of this, might it not, then, seem reasonable to begin suspecting that something else is afoot? It would be unfair to blame a copyeditor for not flagging mistranslations from the Russian, Ukrainian, or particularly Polish: "social order" (instead of sovereignty) for "*udzielność*" (134); "concrete" (instead of particular) for "*szczegółowy*" (135); "inbred" (instead of ancestral) for "*rodowy*" (171). I too may have let these pass had Bilenky not provided in these instances the original in parentheses. But by the same token, what is one to make now of the accuracy of the mass of renderings left unglossed—and hence, perhaps, of the conclusions Bilenky draws on their basis? When in a summary of Vissarion Belinskii's views on the subject the text has the word "nation" and its various cognates ("nationhood," "nationality," "nationalities," "national") ten times in a single paragraph, some in quotes, others not (241), does not Bilenky's stated aim of exploring "the patterns by which" "the East European intelligentsia in the 1830s–1840s" "*imagined* communities known as nations or nationalities" (vii) require at least some indication of the actual terms—народ? нация? народность? национальность? народный? национальный?—that constituted these imaginations, or are we to simply take his word for it? Judging by the note Bilenky appends to a table of ostensible English equivalents "of key terms from primary sources," the latter would indeed seem to be the case: "The particular difficulty represents the Russian and

Ukrainian word *narod*, which can be translated as *nation* and as *people.* If it is provided with a clear political meaning, the term will be rendered in English as *nation*" (xi). Precision here does make a difference, even at the expense of a cluttered text, just as it does, for that matter, when discussing the use of the ethnonyms Russian, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Little Russian, etc. in a study analyzing "what the names 'Ukraine,' 'Poland,' and 'Russia' (with their respective adjectives) meant for those who debated Romantic nationalism and how the intelligentsia spoke about the communities it claimed to represent" (viii). To be sure, Bilenky glosses these as well as other potentially ambiguous terms on more than one occasion, but he does so so haphazardly that again one cannot help but wonder whether there might not be a method to his inconsistency.

Bilenky's exploration of the romantic political imagination of the three Slavic peoples consists of two complementary parts. The first is devoted to an examination of the "mental maps" that Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian intellectuals devised for their shared geopolitical space; the second, borrowing from Rogers Brubaker, to the "idioms of nationality" that these intellectuals used to speak about their own and about their neighbouring Slavic others. The two parts are linked through the figure of "imagining," that by now somewhat worn approach to conceptualizing nation building which nonetheless continues to attract "ethnic" Slavists, eager to demonstrate their liberation from essentialist (read: nationalist) thinking. However this may be, part one constitutes an original and stimulating contribution to the field, particularly insofar as it literally illustrates how ideological prisms—largely historical in the case of Poland, imperial in the case of Russia, and ethnocultural in the case of Ukraine, according to Bilenky—contributed to the process of "imagining communities" in geographical terms. It is a pity, then, that instead or alongside of the three modern maps of the space in question (xiv–xvi) Bilenky did not include examples of actual maps from the period; just as it is surprising in this connection that there is no mention of Pavol Šafárik's hugely influential 1842 map of the Slavic world, particularly in view of the fact that it was the subject of a critique by Mykhailo Maksymovych, one of the heroes of Bilenky's study.

Maksymovych, however, is but one of the several dozen Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian thinkers whose respective "idioms" of nationality— "ethnolinguistic," "mental or spiritual," "ethnic or natural," "religious," "social" (11)—Bilenky summarizes in part two of *Romantic Nationalism.* As in part one, he confines himself to the "intellectual discourse" of the 1830s–40s, not strictly, however, since in at least one case—that of the Decembrists (but not, for some reason, their Polish revolutionary contemporaries and, briefly, collaborators)—he recapitulates an earlier

take on the question; conversely, the time frame also serves to preclude consideration of possible evolution in a given thinker's views on the subject (for example, that of Panteleimon Kulish). Bilenky's decision to restrict his study to the two decades between the Polish November Uprising and the arrests of the Cyril-Methodian Brotherhood in 1847 is thus surely questionable insofar as "the period of Romantic nationalism in Eastern Europe" (xi) extends by at least a decade on either end. But then too, doing otherwise would have forced him to consider the process of "reimagining" Eastern Galicia in 1848, something that might have unduly problematized his categories.

This said, the arbitrary narrowness of the book's time frame is perhaps all for the better. For the purposes of his discussion, Bilenky categorizes his thinkers according to what he calls "fields of political imagination": "conservatives, loyalists, progovernmentalists"; "liberals, centrists, democrats"; "radicals, leftists" (11). These positions were nonetheless to some degree still inchoate at the time and hence fluid enough that summarizing them now results in far too much overlap and repetition. Add to this the sheer quantity of material Bilenky insists on including in order not to leave any of his categories empty and one can only feel grateful for the time frame. But here, Bilenky's criteria for selecting which "personalities and texts" to include for consideration are no less questionable: "major national thinkers" (Wacław Jabłonowski? Stepan Burachek? [or should it be Burachok?]) whose views he deems to be "most representative of a certain intellectual trend" or "strikingly original" but who "had to be perceptive about the Russo-Polish-Ukrainian encounter," and whom he then "squeeze[s] into a particular national circle" on the basis of their "ethnic background" (14). In a study that explores the imagined nature of nationalities, this strikes me as a failure of imagination on Bilenky's part.

All of this is unfortunate since the conclusion of Bilenky's tenacious, well-researched study is apposite and certainly thought-provoking. Emerging as it did in the wake of what he terms (after Roman Szporluk) the "unmaking" of "the historic 'Polish nation'" by Russians and the "unmaking" of "the 'all-Russian nation'" by Ukrainians (303), "The Romantic project of a separate Ukrainian nationality, based for the most part on history, language, and ethnography, proved to be the most successful" (306). One can only assume that Bilenky is measuring success here strictly *qua* romantic project, although by this same token, the modern Polish nation is just as much a "successful" product of the latter, and, one might add, much like the Ukrainian case, for better or worse. But Bilenky's conclusion also betokens what I believe is at once the central weakness of *Romantic Nationalism* and its unrealized potential. Bilenky's study could have been

far more effective—and surely more navigable—had he narrowed his focus and organized his book explicitly around the question that in fact informs his conclusion, namely, how the "Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian political imaginations" conditioned the emergence specifically of a modern Ukrainian nation. (After all, Bilenky shows little interest in, say, how the Polish "historical imagination" regarded Silesia or the place of Georgia in its Russian "imperial" analogue.) Put another way, *Romantic Nationalism* could have been more compelling had its author exerted the requisite effort to revise more conscientiously a doctoral dissertation into a readable book—and just as importantly, had his publisher exerted a concomitant effort to see to it. Both must therefore be held responsible for a finished product that is somewhat less than satisfactory.

Roman Koropeckyj, *University of California, Los Angeles*