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Introduction[1]

Mirja Lecke and Efraim Sicher

Cultural archaeology

Since its founding on the shores of the Black Sea by Catherine II in 1794 as the major port city of what the Russians called Novorossiia (New Russia), Odesa has been an object of fascination and nostalgia for visitors and scholars alike. However, Odesa has long become a place of non-encounter, that is to say, it has little in common with the Odesa myth that many travelers expect. Fanconi is no longer the bourgeois café where merchants and speculators used to hang out. De Ribas Street (Deribasovskaia in Russian) is not the smart shopping street it once was. The Odesa stairs, remembered from Sergei Eisenstein's movie *Battleship Potemkin* (USSR, Mosfilm, 1925), were blocked off from the port by an elevated main road on concrete pillars. The Brodsky synagogue, closed down in 1925, does not reverberate with the harmonious voices of Cantor Pinkhas Minkowsky and his boys' choir. Misha Yaponchik no longer roams the streets mugging well-dressed and bejeweled ladies in fur coats. The vibrant cosmopolitanism that thrived before World War I is no longer there.

Cosmopolitanism in Odesa, however one defines it, is difficult to recover. This is partly due to its morphing into the Odesa myth, which existed from the 1890s and subsequently developed according to various ideological narratives during the Soviet period and after the fall of communism. How cosmopolitan, indeed, was Odesa before the revolutions of 1917 and the civil war, and how unique was Odesa with its history of foreign mayors, architects, and political émigrés? Was the modernism of the 1910s merely an echo of the artistic and literary avant-garde in Moscow and St. Petersburg or did it develop its own artistic, musical, and literary talents and an aesthetics of its own? How much did Odesa's multiethnic make-up of Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, Greeks, Italians, Germans, French, Poles, and Turks, among others, provide a model of cosmopolitanism similar

1 Research for this chapter was funded by Efraim Sicher's grant #438/17 from the Israel Science Foundation.

to Trieste or Czernowitz (Chernivtsi) in the Habsburg Empire, or Saloniki (Thessaloniki) under the Ottomans?

In their work as scholars of culture and history, the contributors to this volume seek to reconstruct the spaces of cosmopolitan, multiethnic cultural life that existed before the Bolsheviks repressed it altogether, along with the bourgeoisie and the criminal underworld. The romance of prerevolutionary Odesa was conscripted to a counterculture that romanticized the gangsters and sang underworld songs accompanied by Leonid Utiosov's jazz band. The memory of prerevolutionary Odesa and its postmemory (passed on by later generations overseas) eclipsed much of the city's history and was largely based on self-perception and myth.

From the beginning, competing narratives circulated in the various language communities and cultural groups. Odesa is the cradle of modern Hebrew literature, which emerged in the nineteenth century as an outgrowth of the Haskalah, the secular Jewish enlightenment. The Jewish intellectuals who created modern Hebrew culture, the "Sages of Odesa" (*khakhmey odesa*), represented a closed elitist group of continually sparring intellectuals, but they nonetheless contributed to the wider heated debates about the revival of Jewish national culture (the *tekhiyah*). Their heritage was carried over into the canon of Hebrew literature, and one architectural vision of Mayor Meir Dizengoff's Tel Aviv was modeled on his native town of Odesa.[2] The Jewish national poet laureate Haim Nahman Bialik and the "Sages of Odesa" are, nonetheless, largely absent, or figure only incidentally, in the "Jewish" Odesa conjured up by Jarrod Tanny and other chroniclers of the city.[3] The myth that Odesa was a "Jewish city," as Brian Horowitz has shown,[4] is built on contradictions that conceal a complex history of the city and its perception by Jews and non-Jews. In the Russian, Yiddish, and Hebrew texts of Russian Jewish culture, and most famously in the Yiddish prose

2 See Joachim Schlör, "'On the third hand . . .': News from a Rediscovered Civilisation in Memories of Odessa," *Jewish Studies at the Central European University* 3 (2002–03): 159–74. On the Sages of Odesa, see "Rav tsa'ir" (Chaim Tczernowitz), *Mesekhet zikhronot: Partsufim veh'arakhot* [Memoirs: Portraits and Appraisals] (New York: Va'ad hayovel, 1945), 1–194; Dan Miron, "'Al khakhmei odesa / The Odessa Sages," in *Mekhvah leodesa* [Homage to Odesa], ed. Rahel Arbel (Tel Aviv: Beit Hatfutsot, 2002), 33–37.

3 For example, Jarrod Tanny, *City of Rogues and Schnorrers: Russia's Jews and the Myth of Old Odessa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Roshanna P. Sylvester, *Tales of Old Odessa: Crime and Civility in a City of Thieves* (DeKalb, IL: North Illinois University Press 2005). See the portraits of leading Odesans in Charles King, *Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams* (New York: Norton, 2011).

4 Brian Horowitz, *The Russian-Jewish Tradition: Intellectuals, Historians, Revolutionaries* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017), 38–52.

fiction of Sholem Aleichem and Mendele Moykher Sforim, Odesa was represented as a site of opportunity and moneymaking as well as modernity, but also a fool's paradise that lured unwary shtetl dwellers.

The place of Odesa in Ukrainian culture is no less mythicized. Although the Ukrainian peasants who came there from the surrounding steppes to sell their produce immortalized the city in folk songs as the site of a luxurious and idle life,[5] Odesa remained an important, yet marginal, city on the map of Ukrainian national consciousness. In imperial Russia, Ukrainians were generally denied cultural autonomy, but whereas in Kiev (Kyiv) or Kharkov (Kharkiv) Ukrainian nationalists could rely on strong support from cultural networks, in Odesa there were far fewer like-minded individuals. A number of important Ukrainian writers, from Lesia Ukraiinka in the fin-de-siècle period to the avant-gardist Iuryi Ianovs'kyi, lived for a while in the city and reflected on Odesa in their literary works. As a rule, however, Odesa was not a prominent space in Ukrainian culture.

By contrast, the Russian myth of "Old Odesa" drew on the exceptional status of this relatively new and modern multiethnic city, which was known as "Iuzhnaia Palmira" (Southern Palmyra)—to match St. Petersburg's epithet, "The Northern Palmyra" (named after the ancient trading city in Syria). Odesa offered a rival text to the Petersburg tradition in Russian literature that sometimes inverted the relationship of center and periphery in literary and artistic modernism.[6] Yet at the same time, Odesa's Russian poets in the 1910s revered Pushkin as an icon of a Russian national poet who, in the early 1820s, was exiled to Odesa and praised the city's European spirit. Cosmopolitan Odesa was a self-conscious mediator of Western and other foreign influences in Russian culture, while its European models of local government and urban architecture, introduced by the city's planners and administrators, some of whom were French or Italian émigrés, encouraged a more relaxed and relatively free political and cultural environment. Nevertheless, Odesa never became a truly liberal city, and in the early twentieth century it was notorious for having one of the most reactionary and antisemitic city councils in Russia.

From the outset, the city's Western outlook and lifestyle earned it the suspicion and resentment of the conservative "patriotic" Russian elite. Some blamed Odesa's multiethnicity for the perceived outranking of the Russian nation that threatened its assumed cultural superiority; for example, in a statistical report in 1863, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Schmidt wrote:

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5 Doroteia Atlas, *Staraia Odessa, ee druz'ia i nedrugi* (Odesa: Tekhnik, 1911), 165–177.

6 Rebecca Stanton, *Isaac Babel and the Self-Invention of Odessan Modernism*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 4, 17.

> . . . русское население, т.е., великороссияне и украинцы, занимают здесь весьма невидные места [. . .] русские играют последнюю роль работников-тружеников. . . . Это ли русская столица, этим ли можно гордиться, и представительницу русского рабства называть столицею южной России?[7]
>
> (The Russian populace, that is the Great Russians and the Ukrainians, occupy only unimportant positions here. . .. the Russians perform the lowest tasks of workers and toilers. … Is this really a Russian capital, is this something to be proud of, to call the representative of Russian slavery the capital of southern Russia?)

Conservative Russians resisted the liberalism and modernity, along with the multiethnic cosmopolitan culture of the early twentieth century; for example, they objected to the futurist artists and poets who performed their work in provocative shows on the eve of World War I. On the other hand, some leaders of ethnic and religious groups struggling for their rights saw cosmopolitanism as Russification in disguise. The tsarist administration, in turn, suspected the non-Russian population of sedition and disloyalty and at various times implemented vigorous Russification or issued discriminatory edicts.[8]

Although Odesa changed hands no less than nineteen times during the civil war, avant-garde Russian, Hebrew, and Ukrainian poets continued to be active and publish, and Odesa's bourgeois life of *cafés chantants* and theater performances endured despite the anarchy on the streets, the blockade, and famine. The Bolshevik reoccupation of Odesa in February 1920, however, put an end to the city's bourgeois lifestyle. The communists expropriated private property, repressed personal freedom, and enforced the proletarianization of cultural institutions. The Cheka (the Soviet secret police) rounded up bandits, synagogues were closed, and Zionist cells went underground. The printing press of Bialik's Hebrew publishing house Moriah was dismantled, and the *Evsektsiia*, the Jewish section of the Communist Party, waged war on any Jewish cultural activity that did not conform to communist ideology. Eduard Bagritsky and other poets in the "Zelenaia lampa" (The green lamp) and "Kollektiv poetov" (The poets' collective) continued the prerevolutionary traditions of Odesa modernism, while the internationalist group "Potoki oktiabria" (Streams of October) dedicated their multilingual poetry collections to the new era, although satirists such

7 Quoted in Atlas, *Staraia Odessa*,138–39.

8 See Evrydiki Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa: Peoples, Spaces, Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 28–29.

as the early Ilia Ilf or Evgeny Petrov mocked some of the excesses of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the mid-twenties.

Ivan Bunin and Semyon Yushkevich emigrated from Odesa, and in the mid-1920s most of the surviving Odesa writers moved to Moscow, where they made their name in Soviet literature and came to be known as the *Odesskaia shkola* (Odesa School). Viktor Shklovsky labeled it the "Southwest School" in 1933, after the title of Bagritsky's poetry collection,[9] acknowledging their combination of a Western literary heritage with a Levantine orientation; he was soon forced to retract the idea as an ideological error out of keeping with Stalinist monolithism, signaled by the inauguration of Socialist Realism. In the Thaw, rehabilitation of repressed writers and the publication of memoirs restored the "Odesa School," yet the term remained contentious.

After the destruction in the Holocaust of most of Odesa's Jewish community, the postmemory of Odesa cosmopolitanism remained a significant component in the ethnic identity of Soviet Jews and their descendants. For Russians, *Odessit* became a moniker for "Jew." Postwar and post-Soviet Russian cultural memory viewed Odesa largely as a source of a folk humor that was associated with "Jewish" anecdotes or "Odesa" types and became popular in the stand-up comedy of Mikhail Zhvanetsky and others.[10] Odesan music and humor thrived in Soviet popular culture. In the post-Soviet period, the work of Odesa writers from the 1920s and 1930s provided a foundation for a tertiary memory in Russia and émigré communities abroad. A hybridized cultural memory evolved that built on nostalgia for a vanished world.[11]

Odesa's cultural history became increasingly contested after Ukrainian independence in 1991. Stalin's elevation of Odesa to the status of a "hero city" after World War II later rankled with some post-Maidan Odesans because it perpetuated the Soviet incorporation of Odesa into the orbit of the Kremlin. Odesa was declared a Ukrainian city in 1926, but despite the official policy of *korenizatsiia*, the Soviet nativization campaign, Odesa remained a Russian-speaking city under Moscow's control. Indeed, local writers have debated whether Odesa's

9 Viktor Shklovsky, "Yugo-Zapad," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, January 5, 1933. See Rebecca Stanton, *Isaac Babel and the Self-Invention of Odessan Modernism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 2012).

10 See Alice Nakhimovsky, "Mikhail Zhvanetskii: The Last Russian-Jewish Joker," in *Forging Modern Jewish Identities: Public Faces and Private Struggles*, ed. Michael Berkowitz, Susan L. Tananbaum, and Sam W. Bloom (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 156–79.

11 See for example, Adrian Wanner, "'There Is No Such City': The Myth of Odessa in Post-Soviet Immigrant Literature," *Twentieth Century Literature* 65, no. 1–2 (2019): 121–44.

culture belongs to Russia or whether it has an independent cultural identity in its own right.[12] Tensions and ambiguities with regard to Russian and Ukrainian language usage in Odesa persisted in the early twenty-first century.[13] The cultural identity of Odesa was disputed, and there was further political appropriation of the Odesa myth at the time of Russia's annexation of Crimea and intervention in the Donbas in 2014, when it was conscripted as Russia's third literary capital (after Moscow and St. Petersburg), as we can see in the publication sponsored by the Moscow municipality of an anthology of Odesa Russian literature *Odessa – Moskva – Odessa* (2014). To give just one example of the Kremlin's struggle to reclaim Odesa from Ukraine: when, in accordance with the de-russification of Ukraine that followed the Russian invasion of the Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the city council decided in November 2022 to remove the statue of Catherine II symbolizing the colonization of "Novorossiia," the pro-Russian press bolstered the claim that Odesa could only be considered a Russian city by pointing to its place in Russian culture (not least the "Odesa School") and its "international" character.[14] The future of Odesa's relationship with Russia and Russian culture remains unresolved, and the port city is but one of several contested ideologically loaded and strategic spaces in the post-Soviet era. In fact, we write these lines as the Odesa Opera House and other public buildings are sandbagged against Russian bombardment, and its citizens seem ready to repel any incursion.

Below the palimpsest of narratives and counternarratives lies buried, in archives, newspapers, and literary texts, a forgotten history of intercultural activity and cosmopolitan spaces that deserves to be recovered and studied. Leaving aside the oft-repeated commonplaces about Odesa's commercial prosperity in the first half of the nineteenth century as a *porto-franco* and as a refuge for Greek and Italian nationalists, or the unavoidable evocation of sun and sea, we should remember that Odesa was one of the first cities in the Russian Empire to

12 See Amelia Glaser's chapter in this volume.

13 On the unresolved language conflicts in Odesa and in general in Ukraine, see Abel Polese and Anna Wylegala, "Odessa and Lvov or Odesa and Lviv: How Important Is a Letter? Reflections on the 'Other' in Two Ukrainian Cities," *Nationalities Papers* 36, no. 5 (2008): 787–814; Paul Robert Magocsi and Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *Jews and Ukrainians: A Millennium of Coexistence*, 2nd rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 137–47; Svetlana L'nyavskiy, "Odesa in Diachronic and Synchronic Studies of Urban Linguistic Landscapes of Ukraine Conducted Between 2015 and 2019," *East / West* 9, no. 2 (2022): 93–143. See also Abel Polese's chapter below.

14 Sergei Ivanov, "Ukrokhamy v Odesse – okkupanty, unichtozhaiushchie kul'turu," *Eurasia Daily*, November 11, 2022 https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2022/11/28/ukrohamy-v-odesse-okkupanty-unichtozhayushchie-kulturu

confront modernity: not just electricity, factories, streetcars, the early cinema, and aviation pioneers, but also the social problems of urbanization, pogroms, and class tensions.

Odesa cosmopolitanism: theories and practices

Cosmopolitanism is a contentious concept that, since the ancient Greeks first formulated it as world citizenship in opposition to citizenship solely of one's own *polis* (city), has catalyzed discussions of self-identification and dual loyalty. Implicitly, the term "cosmopolitanism" juxtaposes two spatial trajectories, a larger and a smaller one, and charges them with emotional valence regarding strangers. Should individuals belong and owe loyalty exclusively to their immediate surroundings and their political order? Or should individuals feel part of a larger whole, all of humanity, and prioritize this larger belonging over particular interests? The second choice would be cosmopolitan.[15]

Cosmopolitanism is a relational concept that changes in meaning with the spatial and temporal situation of its usage, expressing at times an ideal aim, at others a political and ethnic accusation or a nostalgic longing. The entangled notions of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, which Odesans hotly debated in the period around 1900, are rooted in Enlightenment philosophical debates about a just international order. Immanuel Kant's concept of cosmopolitanism is tied to the simultaneously emerging idea of the nation-state. Kant posited that nations were the only source of sovereignty, but because nations and states compete with each other and engage in international conflicts, Kant argued (drawing on Cicero and others), rationally thinking people, "world citizens," would perceive the overarching common good and work for peaceful coexistence, contributing to perfecting mankind, and ultimately transcending narrow understandings of national and territorial belonging.[16]

Postmodern and postcolonial criticism of Kant has laid bare his Eurocentrism and questioned the underlying universalist claim that the same meaning is

15 Janet Lyon, "Cosmopolitanism and Modernism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 391; Martha C. Nussbaum, "Kant and Cosmopolitanism," in *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*, ed. Garrett Brown and David Held (Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press, 2010), 27–44.

16 Martha Nussbaum, "Kant and Cosmopolitanism," in Brown and Held, *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*, 27–44.

accessible to all.[17] Cosmopolitanism, additionally, has been criticized for covering up persisting global colonialism.[18] In our Odesan local context, moreover, Kant's implication that the cosmopolitan aligns with an Other from a faraway nation proves to be problematic, because the states of Central and Eastern Europe were empires and so was prerevolutionary Russia, an autocratic, multiethnic state that privileged Russian Orthodoxy as the state religion. This complicates the appearance of not only nations, but also nation-states. In addition, there were competing notions of what comprises a nation and citizenship—civic principles or cultural characteristics. Therefore, a re-evaluation is needed of cosmopolitanism as both a descriptive and normative concept. Self-identification on the grounds of nationality until well into the twentieth century remained only one of many options (along with religious affiliation, social/estate, ideological, gender, and local descent as categories); it was occasional and ambiguous. Additionally, the Russian Empire was not pluralistic, individuals were not equal, and evident hierarchies existed among Odesa's many ethnic groups, with Russians ranking higher than Greeks, Ukrainians, or Jews.[19] In studies of the global South, researchers have coined the term "translocality" for such multiethnic constellations in order to evade the Eurocentric connotations of cosmopolitanism.[20] But because Odesans have since the late nineteenth century often, although by no means consistently, let alone theoretically, referred to their personal experience as cosmopolitan, we decided to retain the term while concentrating on social practices in specific spaces and situations of ethnic, religious, and cultural contact. Following Henri Lefebvre,[21] we understand space as a socially constructed phenomenon that can be a lived environment as well as a symbolically represented entity (in a city map, for instance), or that can emerge and be transformed in aesthetic production.

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17 See Daniel Chernilo, "Cosmopolitanism and the Question of Universalism," in *Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*, ed. Gerard Delanty (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 47–59. Jessica Bermann, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–27.

18 Walter D. Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism," in *Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Dipesh Chakrabarty, Homi K. Bhabha, Sheldon Pollock, and Carol A. Breckenridge (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 157–89. See also Amelia Glaser's chapter below.

19 On local and regional patriotism, see Dmitry Shumsky, "An Odessan Nationality? Local Patriotism and Jewish Nationalism in the Case of Vladimir Jabotinsky," *Russian Review* 79, no. 1 (January 2020): 64–82.

20 Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, "Translocality: An Approach to Connection and Transfer in Area Studies," in *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 3.

21 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 32.

In the growing metropolis of Odesa, modernity opened multiethnic spaces in mixed neighborhoods, at the port, on balconies, on the streets, in theaters, and in cafés, so that the exposure to ethnic, religious, and class differences formed an integral part of everyday experience. Mutual recognition or feelings of solidarity with strangers and members of other local groups thus did not necessarily denote mobile elites and a large spatial framework as implied in the Kantian understanding of cosmopolitanism. It could also be a matter of local patriotism, for instance. On the other hand, those calling for unity within their own particular group employed cosmopolitanism as a euphemism for treason. Sander Gilman has argued that the status of the Jews has always been a litmus test in these debates, which often reveal antisemitic attitudes in the criteria for inclusion or exclusion in citizenship rules and state formation.[22] "Cosmopolitans" became a derogatory term for those whom the regime labeled as internationally oriented "rootless" intellectuals (predominantly Jews) during Stalin's last years. This connotation of the term persisted throughout the rest of the Soviet period.

In addition to encompassing everyday contact among diverse Odesans, cosmopolitanism also existed in a way closer to the Kantian sense with its larger scale spatial implications and consciously elitist West European orientation. Especially in the fin de siècle, the bourgeoisie, as will become clear from our case studies, possessed a wide-ranging European identity, a sense of belonging to what was believed to be the civilized world, which for them set Odesa apart from tsarist Russia but also helped cultivate a certain openness among the emerging multiethnic elites. Cultural meanings could be negotiated and exchanged in spaces that provided what Janet Lyon calls cosmopolitanism's "liberatory set of ideals."[23] This is what the Hebrew-language writer Ben-David (Y. L. Dovidovitz) celebrated when he sat proudly at the public commemoration of the centenary of the taking of Hadzhibey by Russian forces in September 1789; of all the cities in the Russian Empire, he wrote, only in Odesa did the Jews enjoy freedom and "cosmopolitanism."[24] Precisely in this milieu of cross-cultural encounter, various nationalisms thrived and interacted, as we can observe, for instance, in the early writings of the Russian Jewish intellectual Kornei Chukovsky and of the Ukrainian novelist Ivan Nechui-Levyts'kyi, who each condemned cosmopolitanism as a default social practice of acculturation instead of Jewish or Ukrainian

22 Cathy S. Gelbin and Sander L. Gilman, *Cosmopolitanisms and the Jews* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

23 Lyon, "Cosmopolitanism and Modernism," 394.

24 Ben-David, "Mikhtavim meodesa" [Letters from Odesa], *Hamelits*, October 9, 1889, 2. We are grateful to Jörg Schulte for this reference.

nation building. At the same time, the cosmopolitan openness towards foreign cultures created a fertile ground for innovations in literature, art, music, and science that impressed incoming visitors or migrants from abroad or from other parts of Russia as cosmopolitan and were disseminated by departing Odesans.

Importantly, in Odesa the ambiguity between national and broader imperial or cosmopolitan identities also pertained to language. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Russian was the dominant official language and functioned as a universally accepted medium for "civilized" intellectual exchange among Odesans, though any transnational neutrality was illusionary at best. Yet Odesan Russian, with its many Ukrainian and Yiddish elements, preserved a local identity that marked its significant difference from Russia proper, especially during the political reaction after 1905. The Russian language was at this time perceived by Ukrainian nationalists as a means of the Russian imperialist policy of Russification and marginalization of ethnic groups. That policy also affected ethnic groups and languages that were less visible in Odesa's multicultural history and demography, such as Moldovans or Turks.

Thus, cosmopolitanism or rather cosmopolitan spaces offer us a critical lens for reassessing Odesa's plural religious, ethnic, and political constellations around the turn of the twentieth century; when observed from an interdisciplinary perspective, Odesan cosmopolitanism is a complex phenomenon with its own *Begriffsgeschichte* in a multiethnic transnational society. In fact, cosmopolitanism is not only an apt critical tool for analyzing late imperial Russian and early Soviet ideas about multiethnic coexistence, but, as we see from Caroline Humphrey's and Vera Skvirskaja's published research, it also allows us to follow debates into the Soviet and post-Soviet period. This is because cosmopolitanism, or rather post-cosmopolitanism, still informs the troubled relationship between local Odesan self-presentations and loyalties, whether owed to the Ukrainian nation or Russian culture.[25]

Beyond "Jewish cosmopolitanism"

The local preconditions for Odesa's multiple religious, ethnic, and political life cannot be explained without taking into account Odesa Jewry. Jews in the premodern and modern period were attracted to port cities such as Odesa and

25 Caroline Humphrey and Vera Skvirskaja, "Introduction," in *Post-Cosmopolitan Cities: Explorations of Urban Coexistence*, ed. Caroline Humphrey and Vera Skvirskaia (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 7–8.

Trieste, where there were communities of strangers, bound more by commercial than religious and ethnic ties.[26] The question of whether the multiethnic context of Odesa is substantially different from the situation of the acculturated Russian-speaking Jews in other cities of the Russian Empire, or, for that matter, assimilated German-speaking Jews in the Habsburg Empire, cannot be a matter of simple comparison, as in Zipperstein's example of Odesa and Vilna, or Herlihy's example of Odesa and Trieste.[27] Odesa's Jews have also been compared to the "Port Jews" of the western Sephardim in the Mediterranean; yet, in the second half of the nineteenth century, they were not transient merchants but largely grain dealers, bankers, and middlemen, a privileged class, distanced from the elitist intellectuals who formed one of the first modern Jewish cultural centers in Eastern Europe.[28]

Cosmopolitan spaces arose in the unique conditions of cultural plurality and hybridity that obtained in Odesa, but this is also something that Jews brought to modern cities—for example, Warsaw or Czernowitz—peripheral cultural centers in multiethnic empires that played important roles in literary and artistic movements of the early twentieth century. The Haskalah had a major impact on secularized and modernized urban Jews in the Russian Empire, but the legal and social situation did not always match conditions in Germany or Austria, largely because the mass of Jews in the Pale of Settlement, the regions where Jews were allowed to reside legally in Russia, were isolated from the rest of society and lived traditional religious lives. In the late nineteenth century, at a time of pogroms and political reaction, nationalism and cosmopolitanism became accepted terms for describing a complex situation in which Jews were labeled as quintessential cosmopolitans and at the same time called upon to become a unified nation.[29]

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26 See Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

27 Steven Zipperstein, "Remapping Odessa," in *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 63–86; John D. Klier, "A Port, Not a Shtetl: Reflections on the Distinctiveness of Odessa," *Jewish Culture and History* 4, no. 2 (2001): 173–78; Patricia Herlihy, "Port Jews of Odessa and Trieste: A Tale of Two Cities," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 2 (2003): 183–98; see also David Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550–1950* (Southampton: Frank Cass and the Parkes Centre, University of Southampton, 2001); Lois C. Dubin, "'Wings on their feet . . . and wings on their head': Reflections on the Study of Port Jews," *Jewish Culture and History* 7, nos. 1–2 (2004): 14–30.

28 See Steven Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

29 Michael L. Miller and Scott Ury, "Cosmopolitanism: The End of Jewishness?" *European Review of History* 17, no. 3 (2010): 337–59.

Whereas St. Petersburg opened a window to the West, Odesa strategically and culturally provided an opening to the Bosphorus and the eastern Mediterranean. We could equally zoom out into the larger perspective of Black Sea trading routes, which go back to ancient times, when Greek colonies could be found on the Black Sea's shores and Near East civilizations brought goods and cultures, as well as agrarian settlement. While the Black Sea region throughout the centuries was an arena of commercial and cultural exchange, it was also as a place of shifting populations. These groups mixed but also fought with each other and were often dominated by conquering or neighboring empires. As Neal Ascherson notes in his travelogue *Black Sea* (contemplating the region's history of violence, pogroms, and ethnic cleansing):

> Peoples who have lived in communion with other peoples, for a hundred or a thousand years, do not always like them—may, in fact, have always disliked them. As individuals, "the others" are not strangers, but neighbors, even friends. But my sense of Black Sea life, a sad one, is that latent mistrust between different cultures is immortal. Necessity, and sometimes fear binds such communities together. But within that binding—they remain a bundle of disparate groups—not a helpful model for the "multi-ethnic society" of our hopes and dreams.[30]

Odesa's history is certainly not characterized by innate interethnic hatred, but it was an outcrop of territorial and mercantile competition, and its story of growth and prosperity is tainted with authoritarianism and bloodshed.

In order to extricate ourselves from the limitations of talking about an exclusively "Jewish cosmopolitanism" or slipping into the easy cliché of Odesa as a "Jewish city," we must remove the disciplinary blinders of the various national historiographies and we must cross disciplinary boundaries into social and cultural history. Evrydiki Sifneos, in *Imperial Odessa*, helps us shift the focus to multiethnicity by looking at class and the economic histories of ethnic minorities—such as the Greeks, who settled in Odesa from the early nineteenth century and became Russified. Sifneos concludes that in modern cities "diverse ethnic groups coexisted and interacted primarily through commercial

30 Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea: The Birthplace of Civilisation and Barbarism*, new ed. (London: Vintage, 2007), 9; see also Charles King, *The Black Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

and maritime economic activities rather than cross-community socializing."[31] International trade encouraged entrepreneurs with kinship and ethnic networks of business acquaintances.

There are different cosmopolitan spaces here: the port, for example, must be factored into the socio-economic changes of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. Sifneos and other scholars regard the port area as a "stage" of cosmopolitanism or alternatively as a site of a distinct cultural space where foreigners and residents came together for socializing, entertainment, and job opportunities.[32] Yet the harbor could also be a site of ethnic conflict imported from Constantinople, as in the fights between Armenian and Turkish dock workers in 1897. Sifneos contends that tensions between Greeks and Jews were partially transferred from Constantinople due to the two populations' heritage of tense coexistence with Ottoman Turks, whom the Jews saw as benign protectors and whom the Greeks saw as oppressors.[33] Sifneos demonstrates that the main cause of ethnic conflict in Odesa was economic. With the coming of the railroads, Greek merchants began to lose their preeminence to Jewish traders who could purchase grain and goods from middlemen in the towns and villages of the Pale of Settlement, instead of relying on Odesa's market fair.[34] The transition to middlemen and the railways changed the structure of the wheat trade, to the advantage of Jewish small venture capitalists in the Ukrainian interior, who could stock up on grain during a slack period for future sale.[35] The statistics show that by the end of the nineteenth century there was a sharp increase in Jewish traders in the grain market and a decrease in Greek traders; figures for factory ownership show a similar pattern. Although the animosity may have been motivated by religious dogma, the Greeks and later the Russians were provoked by the prospect of competition from Jews who dominated a number of manufacturing and trade sectors in Odesa.[36] Moreover, because of economic changes and the expansion of the Russian wheat market, Greek traders turned their attention to the Azov Sea or shifted their investments to real estate, which was enjoying a boom in Odesa from the 1870s, thanks to new, cheap construction and conversion of mansions into rented apartments.[37]

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31 Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 27. On the Greek community in Odesa, see also Patricia Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected: The Port and the People* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018), 137–67.
32 Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 33.
33 Ibid., 177.
34 Ibid., 117.
35 Ibid., 118–20.
36 Ibid., 176–77.
37 Ibid., 120–23.

Multiethnic interaction in Odesa occasionally erupted into urban riots. There had been violent clashes between the Greek and Jewish communities, including the 1871 pogrom. Rapid urbanization combined with an increase in the Jewish population (approaching a third of the city's inhabitants by the end of the century), many of whom were poor. With regard to the ethnic violence of 1871, 1881, and 1886, Sifneos highlights the participation of the unemployed, under-employed, and the unskilled, and, for the first time, marginal populations such as street urchins, orphans, and social outcasts. Newspaper coverage indicates that the attacks were driven not only by ethno-religious motivation but also significantly by class factors. Jewish property and homes were attacked and looted almost with impunity, but the homes of Greek merchants were also damaged, and windows of both Jews and Christians were smashed indiscriminately.[38] The violence, in Sifneos's assessment, vented the frustration of the unemployed and seasonal workers; the Jews served as scapegoats for the effects of modern capitalism.

The 1905 pogrom, by contrast, was fueled by right-wing and monarchist reactions to the promise of a constitution and emancipatory measures for minorities in the October Manifesto, as well as what Robert Weinberg calls the combustibility of the demographic and economic situation.[39] At the same time, the actions of some non-Jews to safeguard Jews from harm and the efforts of organized groups of workers to stop or prevent pogroms in Odesa require a nuanced view of ethnic relations in the context of the political changes wrought by the 1905 revolution.[40] Caroline Humphrey proposes that class was significant after 1905, rather than ethnic affinity, in the way these political changes affected interethnic relations. Members of different ethnicities in Odesa tended to affiliate with revolutionary or political movements across communities. Indeed, there were instances of revolutionary activists' collaboration or solidarity with Jews.[41]

Ethnic violence, however, should not be considered in opposition to cosmopolitanism; rather, diverse forms of sporadic and historically specific cosmopolitanism played out in the same space as interethnic violence. Humphrey notes: "Cosmopolitan networks and pogrom crowds created their own separate

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38 Ibid.,181–82.

39 Robert Weinberg, "The Pogrom of 1905 in Odessa: A Case Study," in *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, ed. John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 248–89. See Robert Weinberg's chapter below.

40 Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 188–89. See the documents in *Pogroms: A Documentary History of Anti-Jewish Violence*, ed. Gene Avrutin and Elissa Bemporad (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

41 Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 193–94.