

## Review of Patricia Herlihy. *Odessa Recollected: The Port and the People*

J.-Guy Lalande

Volume 8, numéro 1, 2021

Empire, Colonialism, and Famine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1077133ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.21226/ewjus651>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies University of Alberta

ISSN

2292-7956 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Lalande, J.-G. (2021). Compte rendu de [Review of Patricia Herlihy. *Odessa Recollected: The Port and the People*]. *East/West*, 8(1), 257–258.  
<https://doi.org/10.21226/ewjus651>

**Patricia Herlihy. *Odessa Recollected: The Port and the People*.** Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University / Academic Studies P, 2018. Ukrainian Studies, edited by Vitaly Chernetsky. x, 258 pp. Illustrations. Tables. Maps. Notes (end of chapters). Index. \$42.00, cloth.

**W**ho does not remember the baby carriage bouncing down a long flight of steps in the 1925 classic film *Bronenosets "Potemkin"* (*Battleship Potemkin*), directed by Sergei M. Eizenshtein (Eisenstein)? Well, besides this technically brilliant movie scene, one can find many more unique aspects about the city of Odesa. Empress Catherine II ordered the city's construction in 1794, on the spot where a small fortress had once stood, in the wake of her army's victory over the Ottoman Turks. Odesa recalled the name of the wandering Greek mariner Odysseus. In order to consolidate Russia's position in southern Ukraine, the empress encouraged landlords, merchants, craftsmen, officials, and creative spirits in literature and the arts to move to the port city by granting them tax exemptions, land, and religious freedom. Her bold strategy quickly paid off. The frontier city grew by leaps and bounds—from 2,345 inhabitants in 1795 to 450,000 in 1900 (103). This astounding growth rate, largely attributable to natural reproduction, a reduction in death rates (linked to major improvements in public health), and the rapidly expanding trade between Odesa and Western Europe, turned the city into the premier port on the Black Sea's north shore.

*Odessa Recollected*, as the title implies, is a collection of articles—thirteen pieces that were previously published between 1973 and 2014. They are the result of more than fifty years of research into government reports, contemporary newspapers, travel and imaginative literature, official and unofficial histories of Odesa, census reports, almanacs, university records, city directories, consular letters and reports, life histories, and genealogical tables. These well-written articles depict a city replete with opportunities, as well as a small world with many contrasts—from its enterprising and prosperous industrialists, bankers, merchants, and real estate and insurance agents to individuals who too often turned to violence, as happened during the pogroms of 1871, 1881, and 1905.

Although the book has some inevitable repetitions, its format lays the underpinnings for what is a brilliant outline of the many peculiarities of this energetic, vibrant, and cosmopolitan oasis of beauty and freedom. First, one can observe Odesa's ethnic diversity (Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Albanians, Belarusians, Tatars, Bulgarians, Germans, and Swiss, French, and English people) and the accompanying multitude of languages that were heard on the city's streets. Then, one notes Odesa's vibrant economy, centred on the export of wool, tallow, and especially grain (in particular, wheat) to European cities undergoing

significant changes at a time of accelerated industrialization and urbanization. Finally, one can see the city's unique architectural fabric, with its classical and Italian Renaissance styles, and its rich artistic life expressed through drama, comedy, opera, movies, and the circus.

The Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, and Academic Studies Press are to be congratulated for their decision to honour the memory of Patricia Herlihy (Brown University), a productive scholar and, *au surplus*, both a wife and a mother of six children—no small feat! Readers looking for a comprehensive general history of the city should refer to Herlihy's more standard monograph—*Odessa: A History 1794-1914*.

J.-Guy Lalande  
St. Francis Xavier University

#### Works Cited

- Eizenshtein, Sergei M., director. *Bronenosets "Potemkin."* Goskino / Mosfilm, 1925.  
Herlihy, Patricia. *Odessa: A History 1794-1914*. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1986. Distributed by Harvard UP. Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies.