Lettres d'Odessa du duc de Richelieu 1803-1814. Ed. by ELENA POLEVCHTCHIKOVA and DOMINIQUE TRIAIRE. Ferney-Voltaire: Centre international d'étude du XVIIIe siècle. 2014. vi+ 297 pp. €40. ISBN 978-2-84559-109-7.

This collection of letters by Armand Emmanuel de Vignerot du Plessis, duc de Richelieu (1766-1822), offers not only a picture of the intensive development and colonisation of the southern provinces of the Russian Empire in the early nineteenth century, but also a glimpse of the political and cultural life of the transnational European elite of the Napoleonic era. An *émigré* and a representative of one of the most illustrious noble families of the French *ancien régime*, Richelieu fought on the side of the Russians against the Ottoman Empire in the early 1790s; he was invited back to Russia by Alexander I to take up the responsible administrative posts of governor of Odessa in 1803 and then, in 1805, governor-general of all Novorossiya. The volume opens with a detailed historical essay on the many Frenchmen who contributed to the establishment of the governmental, agricultural, trade, and educational infrastructure of a city founded in 1794 by Catherine the Great. Some of Richelieu's correspondence was published in the nineteenth century by the Imperial Russian Historical Society; the present edition supplements these materials with three sets of letters by Richelieu currently preserved in archives in Odessa, Kiev, and St. Petersburg. The edition adheres to modern standards for editing letters, reproducing original spelling, addresses, and endorsements, and indicating crossings-out and other corrections or gaps in the text; it also contains two sets of fine colour illustrations, including images of three letters. The first and largest correspondence was addressed to Richelieu's subordinate Samuil Khristianovich Contenius: both expatriates in Russian service, the Frenchman and the Silesian worked tirelessly to attract and support a stream of primarily German, Bulgarian, and Russian colonists settling in the region. The letters record the very practical problems they faced, such as the constant struggle to build enough houses, as well as the challenges of seeking patronage from the emperor and avoiding personal conflicts in an often corrupt bureaucratic environment. Far more personal, the second group of letters was sent to Sophie Potocka, a former Ottoman slave whose extraordinary destiny made her a Polish aristocrat of scandalous reputation. With the third series of letters, written to the dowager empress Maria Fedorovna, Richelieu maintained political ties with the court at St. Petersburg via an apparently personal exchange. An appendix contains letters from Richelieu to Viktor Kotchubei, sent after the former had returned to Paris to become first minister of France under the Restoration: these four letters provide a snapshot of Richelieu's life after Odessa and of the complex political situation he faced in France.

In Richelieu's commentaries on his role in Odessa we see an afterlife of Enlightened governance beyond the eighteenth century and the Revolutionary years: he writes of his task as that of 'creating' a new country (p. 16), expresses willingness to 'save by force' colonists who refuse to work for their own survival (p. 94), and gives assessments of the degree of 'Enlightenment' shown by arriving peoples (p. 137), in a manner thoroughly reminiscent of Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, and Voltaire. The letters to Sophie Potocka combine salon-style gallantry with the Sentimental cult of friendship to exemplify an aristocratic form of sociability that survived and evolved after the Revolution. Richelieu's language also deserves attention for the interpenetration of different languages and for his epistolary style combining a direct and businesslike manner with ethical maxims and elegantly dry irony. Besides being of topical interest for today's world, revealing as they do the early years of a region that has been much in the news of late, these letters open a rich domain for future research in multiple fields, from economic and cultural history to literature and linguistics.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD KELSEY RUBIN-DETLEV

Kelsey Rubin-Detlev
The Queen's College
High Street
Oxford
OX1 4AW
kelsey.rubin-detlev@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk