

**THE STRANGER WITHIN:
CREATING IMAGINED COMMUNITIES
IN SETTLER CONTEXTS**

American New Orleans and Russian Odessa, 1803-1862



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Acknowledgements

“... identities are the names we give to the different ways to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.”

Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*.

Informal colonialism in the past continues to fuel disputes in the present, underpinning the legacies of successive occupations, displacements, and diasporic movements. The overlaying of contested identities within circumscribed spaces is a particularly vibrant feature of the afterlives of cities, especially those located at the nexus of different former settler empires. In this work, I wanted to compare the relevance and function of the reputation of New Orleans and Odessa as historically French or Frenchified urban centres. In New Orleans, a French lexicon transformed local race politics and the construction of historical categories. An uncritical narrative of the ‘Louisiana French’ has the potential to erase how identity and culture were manipulated in a historically divided city. In Odessa, the presence of French *émigrés* across imperial Russia finds new relevance in the post-Soviet world. The historical influence of non-Russian foreigners creates new geographies of power in the political contest between Ukraine and Russia. In both places, the social currency of these settler identities remains relevant to this day. At a time when references to the Russian Imperial era and the Early Republic are used to justify policies and ideologies, understanding the ways cultural identities were engineered is more crucial than ever.

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Throughout researching and writing this thesis, I followed the movements and documents of the diasporic groups under study, and to do so lived in three different cities, across several continents. This mobility would not have been possible without the generous and repeated support offered by Pembroke College in the form of various grants, including the Santander Scholarship. I also benefitted from financial support from the Beit Fund and the Rothermere American institute, who both granted me research and travel awards. The Oxford History Faculty further funded the presentation of my work in several conferences abroad, thus strengthening the transient nature of my research.

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Abstract

The nineteenth century was marked by imperial competition on a global scale, both through oversea trading ventures and movements of colonisation across continents. Diasporic communities played a central role in empire-making, and their participation in settler colonialism encourages historical inquiries from below. These communities also participated in the creation of informal empires: such was the case of French political and economic *émigrés*, who settled within the recent territorial gains of other nations and became in turn actors of colonisation. Strangers within their own host communities, they rose to prominence primarily in urban settings, where they could rely on political opportunities and networks that granted them power and influence. In the United States, the Louisiana Purchase and the opening of Western lands to American settlement transformed the formerly marginal role of New Orleans' francophone Creoles. They became an ambiguous internal other, both aiding and challenging American rule. In the Russian Empire, the conquest and settlement of the Black Sea shores was overseen by French administrators and traders. Most settled in the new city of Odessa and created an urban order that set the city apart from customary Russian rule. Early Odessa and New Orleans were both marked by the influence of francophone groups, located at the intersection with wider immigration patterns, logics of urban growth, and the combination of national politics with empire-building. All contributed to the creation of cities on the margin, estranged from their own nations. This thesis proposes a Francophone and Frenchified ethos as a valuable social currency, which directed the development of key urban institutions such as churches, schools, and newspapers. From the 1800s to the mid-century, that French paradigm was trialled through national and international events, which detached the purposes and meaning of Frenchness from France itself. French attributes – through language and practices – became transformative tools that were a central feature of early New Orleans and Odessa.

The two cities witnessed the development of a re-invented Frenchness outside of a formal French realm, which created a flexible category that was only valid within their respective cityscapes. This research points to the multiplicity of actors and scales in each urban context, as well as to the layering of meanings of concepts of Frenchness, historical agency, and empire. Ultimately, the findings of the thesis open promising avenues for the further study of diasporic imperialisms and the function of language and cultural institutions in both supporting and challenging state-driven colonial projects.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Abstract	5
Table of Contents	7
List of maps, tables, and graphs.....	9
A note on vocabulary.....	11
Introduction.....	12
PART I – FOUNDATIONS.....	29
Chapter 1 New Orleans and Odessa: the creation of maritime enclaves on two southern borderlands. 30	
1.1 Water logics: an ecological view of early New Orleans and Odessa.	32
1.2 Natural advantages and technical shortcomings: the limits of territorial integration.....	39
1.3 Life and death on the Black Sea and the Mississippi.....	44
Chapter 2 The invention of American Frenchness in nineteenth century New Orleans....	53
2.1 The Louisiana Purchase: an example of colonial emancipation?	56
2.2 The Louisianians: demographic transformations and spaces of [un]freedom...	63
2.3 Making the French Americans.....	78
Chapter 3 Constructing a new model of Russianness in cosmopolitan Odessa.	89
3.1 Creating a ‘new Russia’: the case for free labour and immigration.....	91
3.2 Advertising and attracting: The transformation of Novorossiyya into a Neo-European province.....	100
3.3 French <i>émigrés</i> and francophilia: The strange case of a French colonisation project without imperial design.....	116
Chapter 4 Divisions and solidarities in two fast-growing settler cities.....	127
4.1 New Orleans: (Re)-constructing Frenchness after the Louisiana Purchase....	130
4.2 Odessa: the improvisation of a cosmopolitan city.....	142
PART II – INSTITUTIONS.....	159
Chapter 5 Religious passing or cultural closeness: navigating places of worship in Odessa and New Orleans.....	160
5.1 Trade and civic rituals in early Odessa.....	162
5.2 Religious passing and Creole traditions in American New Orleans.	173
Chapter 6 Educating the cosmopolitan city: the reproduction of a French model in foreign lands. 186	
6.1 New Orleans: Education as a site of resistance.....	187

6.2	Odessa: Education as a site of transformation.....	206
Chapter 7	Imagined communities and the printed word: the creation of linguistic kinship in contested spaces.	224
7.1	Communicating the world: bilingualism and readership.	225
7.2	Printing and publishing: the creation of a local world of words.....	247
PART III – REPRESENTATIONS	265
Chapter 8	French denizens and the international system in the first half of the nineteenth century.	266
8.1	New Orleans’ battle for integration into the United States.	267
8.2	Odessa at the intersection between conflicting empires.....	279
Chapter 9	The ebb and flow of Frenchness in foreign settlements: from victory to defeat.	289
9.1	Contested loyalties on the Black Sea shores.	291
9.2	From ‘Créoles’ to Southerners: reshaping the identity of New Orleans’ residents.....	296
Conclusion	312
Bibliography	316

List of maps, tables, and graphs.

Maps

Map 1.1 - Territorial Water Logics of Odessa and South Russia	36
Map 1.2 - Water Logics of Orleans Parish and the city of New Orleans	48
Map 4.1 Plan of the City and Suburbs of New Orleans, from an actual survey made in 1815. <i>Showing the division of the early historical neighbourhoods.</i>	135
Map 4.2 New Orleans' Cultural Landscapes and Cityscapes - Municipal Era and Reunification. <i>Based on Norman's Plan of New Orleans & Environs, 1845.</i>	139
Map 4.3 Cosmopolitan Odessa: Cityscapes of an Improvised Multicultural Centre	146

Tables

Table 2.1 First census of the City of New Orleans - 1803.....	64
Table 2.2 Territory of Orleans – 1806	66
Table 2.3 Size and annual increase of the population of New Orleans, by racial group and condition, 1805 — 1820	68
Table 2.4 Population of New Orleans in 1850 - places of birth and shares of the different national groups	75
Table 5.1 Religious Breakdown of the 1897 Census. Odessa compared with other Russian cities and the rest of the Empire.	164
Table 6.1 Linguistic Survey of Students School District 2 (former 1st Municipality) 1852- 1853.....	203
Table 6.2 Nationality of Students - School District 2 (former 1st Municipality) 1852-1853	203
Table 6.3 Statistic of Odessa's educational institutions in 1833, by A. Skal'kovsky (Source: <i>Journal d'Odessa</i> , n.86, 1833).....	218
Table 6.4 Literacy and Gender Balance among Odessa's ethnic communities (1897).....	220
Table 7.1 Les Cenelles - Choix de Poésies Indigènes	253
Table 7.2 Volume of Book Trade in Odessa.....	257

Graphs

Graph 2.1 Quarterly abstracts of Passenger Lists of Vessels arriving in New Orleans, LA - Summary 1820-1849 [full years]	70
Graph 2.2 Ratio of French Men and Women among the French Immigrants arriving in New Orleans [1829-1849].....	73
Graph 2.3 Share of French Women among Female Immigrants [1829-1849 - full years].....	74
Graph 3.1 The Early Demographic Development of Odessa [1795-1861]	106
Graph 3.2 Russian Citizens and Foreigners (<i>Gosti</i>) in Odessa's Guilds [1837-1844].....	111
Graph 3.3 The Ten Largest Groups by Native Language in Odessa, 1897	114
Graph 3.4 Share of Men and Women among the Ten Largest Language Groups in Odessa	122
Graph 5.1 - Slaves Baptised at Saint Louis Cathedral - Breakdown by Age (1830-1845)...	181
Graph 6.1 Comparing the increase in number of students attending free Public Schools across the Three Municipalities of New Orleans, 1842-1850	201
Graph 6.2 Comparing the number of free Public Schools across the Three Municipalities of New Orleans, 1842-1850.	202
Graph 7.1 Creation year of US French-language newspapers and their place of publication [1800*-1860].....	243

Figures

Figure 7-1 L'Abeille de La Nouvelle Orléans, 17 November 1827, 1.4.	240
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A note on vocabulary

The thesis uses terms across several languages and several names and nouns are historically loaded. For the sake of clarity and fluidity, I have made some lexicon choices, but they do not necessarily reflect the modern nomenclature nor my personal views:

- Southern Ukraine (the region surrounding Odessa) is typically referred to as *Novorossiya* or New Russia, because it was the political terminology used in the nineteenth century.
- For the same reason, Odessa is spelled in the Russian manner, rather than using the Ukrainian spelling of Odesa.
- Creoles of colour, coloured Creoles, and *gens de couleur* are used interchangeably.

The body of the text is written in British English, but some quotes are in American English. When needed, I have left words in French or in Russian.

Introduction

Walking up the monumental Potemkin stairs from the port of Odessa to the elevated plateau where that city unfolds, the first figure that catches the eye is that of a man wearing Graeco-Roman attire, suggesting the city's close links with an ancient Mediterranean past. Yet, a closer look reveals the statue as belonging to a more recent epoch. It represents the Duke of Richelieu – a French émigré whose fortunes, entangled in the turbulent events bridging the eighteenth and nineteenth century, deeply marked the early history of Odessa. The statue of this aristocratic émigré is one of the most prominent spatial focal points in the city, welcoming the visitor climbing up the stairs from the sea. It gives credence to something one notices time and again when discovering the streets of Odessa, a new city created as an outcome of the Russian Empire's conquest of the shores of the Black Sea: that it was founded by French colonists, a Mediterranean enclave in the Euxine Sea. Today, Odessa is spelled *Odesa*, and it is part of the independent state of Ukraine, although the Russian language is still commonly spoken by most of its inhabitants. The statue of Richelieu, erected a few years after his death, remains a site of cohesion for its contemporary inhabitants – many of them Ukrainian, some Russian, mixed with groups from different regions of the Caucasus and the Balkans, and a returning Jewish minority.¹ More controversial, is the monument to the late Empress Catherine II of Russia, also known as Catherine the Great, standing less than 200 metres behind Richelieu's statue. Located in a central, although less symbolic, place, the monument commemorates the Tsarina as the other founder of Odessa, because it was her military campaigns against the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate in the 1770s and 1780s that conquered the lands on which Odessa

¹ Ruble, Blair A. "Odessa: Ukrainian port that inspired big dreams" April 16, 2014, ' *Building Inclusive and Livable Cities*' *Urban Sustainability Laboratory*, Wilson Center. Accessed on 26 November 2020.

was built in 1794. Below her stand several of her officers, including Russian Grigorii Potemkin, after whom the steps were named, and also the Dutch-Flemish city architect François de Wollant, and the first city governor, Italo-Spanish José de Ribas – a testament to the cosmopolitan origins of the city. This latter monument to the founders of Odessa was relocated into a museum in 1920, during Soviet times, replaced by a memorial to the mutineers of the battleship *Potemkin*. It was reinstalled in its central location after Ukraine became independent in 1991, but its removal was called for several times in recent decades, especially in the aftermath of the 2004-2005 Orange Revolution, and again since 2014-2015, following the protests of Euromaidan and the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia.² Out of two founding narratives, each implying the influence and authority of foreign individuals, one remains a site of division, while the other is more unifying as a symbol of Odessa's multi-layered identity.

A similar tension between founding narratives and personalities is replayed in another large and multicultural port-city. On a different shore, the public monuments of New Orleans celebrate a history which is likewise often contested, reflecting the complex evolution of its urban identity and demographics. The riverfront view of the old city faces the former *Place d'Armes*, the centre of colonial New Orleans, known since 1815 as Jackson Square. In 1856 a statue of former president Andrew Jackson was erected in the middle, attracting all gazes, sitting tall on a horse reared on its hind legs. The square is now separated from the Mississippi river by an elevated levee, protecting it from destructive floods, but the statue would also have been the landmark that visitors would first encounter when disembarking from boats and steamships in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Just as the postcard view of Odessa shows the Duke of Richelieu on top of the Potemkin stairs, the postcard view of New Orleans

² Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, Case Study: “ ‘Monument to the Founders / to Catherine the Great’, Odessa, Ukraine.” *Contest Histories in Public Spaces*, 2021.

is that of Jackson's equestrian statue at the centre of the city's iconic square. Today, the statue of Andrew Jackson is a site of controversy: his policies, through the 1830 Indian Removal Act, opened indigenous lands to settlers and forcefully removed Native American populations, causing several thousands of deaths.³ Yet in the mid-19th century, when the statue was erected, it commemorated General Jackson's military victory at the 1815 Battle of New Orleans, which saw Creole inhabitants of the city, white and coloured, join forces with their American fellows against a British invasion. Years later, during the Civil War, when New Orleans was occupied by Union soldiers, the phrase 'the Union must and shall be preserved' was inscribed on the base, rewriting the Battle's history. Jackson's statue was used to symbolise both the internal cohesion of the disparate elements of New Orleans' population and an outward support for a joint future within the United States.⁴ This statue also represented the tension, still alive today, between federal supremacy and state sovereignty – a tension that was constitutive of New Orleans' complex relationship with the American national narrative and stemmed directly from its colonial past. As in Odessa, another symbolic counterpoint exists in New Orleans, a stone's throw away from Jackson Square: it is a statue representing Joan of Arc, the "Maiden of Orleans." This statue is a replica of a series of eight to ten statues cast in 1872, at the start of France's Third Republic. One statue was inaugurated in the centre of Paris, while New Orleans' version made its way to the Crescent City in the mid-twentieth century.⁵ The reference to the fifteenth century French warrior, a maid defending her kingdom against the assaults of the English enemy during the Hundred Years War, was a narrative that also contributed to unite

³ Mitchell, Mary Niall. "We Always Knew It Was Possible': The Long Fight against Symbols of White Supremacy in New Orleans." *City* 24, no. 3/4 (2020): 580-593.

⁴ Stoltz, Joseph F. *A Bloodless Victory: The Battle of New Orleans in History and Memory*. Johns Hopkins Books on the War of 1812. Baltimore, Maryland, 2017.

⁵ The sculpture had remained for years in the Paris foundry, before being transported to New Orleans in 1958. There, it stayed in storage several more years, the city not being able to afford the \$35,000 cost to purchase it, until 1964, when it was gifted by France to the city of New Orleans. It was finally erected in 1972. "[Joan of Arc \(Sculpture\)](#)", [Art Inventory Catalogue \(Images only\)](#), [Smithsonian Institution Research Information System \(SIRIS\)](#), accessed 26 November 2020. In recent decades, the Parisian version of the statue has been the meeting point of far-right political party demonstrations.

New Orleans' inhabitants around a common ideal and identity. The constructed ideal of a shared Frenchness had been often called upon in the previous century, for a variety of political and social purposes. Yet through time, the statue also came to symbolise restrictive claims around a certain vision of French identity. Joan of Arc's statue thus epitomizes the usage of borrowed historical narratives and traditions that shaped American New Orleans.

Odessa and New Orleans, respectively in south Ukraine and the State of Louisiana, lay about 6,000 miles away as the crow flies, within distinct cultural and political realms. Yet, this thesis will engage with some of the strange parallels that pervade each city's early history and interrogate the long-lasting ramifications of the presence of a third-party foreign, but influential, settler group within another empire's project. Two young port cities created on the southern border of their national territories, both settled initially by external groups, they also both had their own, sometimes contested, relationship with a third-party country, France, and a shared group of immigrants, French settlers. The sixty years between the French Revolution and the beginning of France's second Empire represented a slump in the country's colonial ventures, with the occupation of Algiers in 1830 the exception rather than the rule. Both New Orleans and Odessa became unexpected receptacles for French settlers in quest for opportunities abroad. New Orleans had been previously 'La Nouvelle Orléans', a minor French settler colony, the home of an enduring francophone community despite decades of separation from France; while Russia had welcomed many French émigrés, especially those fleeing from their country's revolutionary troubles, a circumstance that led Frenchmen to take leadership of the new city of Odessa. When new settlers arrived, finding either established or influential Francophone communities, they coalesced around shared traits and linguistic practices, and produced new institutions and traditions that were the result of this encounter within a foreign-ruled milieu. They created what Eric Hobsbawm called 'invented traditions', as constructions

that emerge to signal membership in a community.⁶ These traditions were not necessarily pre-existent but invented in the face of a social or cultural competition. In American New Orleans, that competition was expressed by the post Louisiana Purchase migration dynamics that affected the population of a Creole city, triggering a sense of belonging that had not felt needed before.⁷ In Odessa, while the city's French genealogy was limited to narrow elite and commercial circles, the social currency of the French language and Frenchified institutions bolstered a sense of the city's uniqueness while integrating it into a wider, international, network.

The comparative study of those two cities indicates the development of a French empire of language, supported by settlement and institutions, which started informally at the turn of the nineteenth century, just as France itself turned inwards. While language alone did not create empire, it informed how imperialism operated across various scales and definitions, and how their overlap created unexpected power structures. In Odessa as in New Orleans, the French language acted as a tool of social interaction that brimmed over civic institutions, economic priorities, and political emulation. By mid-century, however, French nationals and speakers had become minorities in the cities where they once had leadership roles, and the advantages conferred by the French language and institutions were in decline. Instead, the cosmopolitan setting of New Orleans and Odessa was reframed according to the national imperatives of their respective polities. As this thesis will show, France's colonial hiatus did not mean an end for French settlement abroad. Both New Orleans, now part of the United States Republic, and Odessa, a thriving harbour of the Russian Empire, became spaces that embodied overseas migration opportunities for Francophone communities. These opportunities were shaped by the

⁶ Hobsbawm, E. J., and T. O. Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Canto ed. Past and Present Publications. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

⁷ In New Orleans, that sense of competition was also heightened by the impression that Americans were imposing their own colonial rule.

political, social, and cultural circumstances unique to each city, but they overlapped in their nurturing of French-aligned cultures. Because these cultures and traditions were invented abroad, outside of a formal French realm, they created a settler version of French identity, with a flexible demographic definition. Imagined Frenchified identities thus developed against the grain of national discourses.

The inspiration for this thesis originally stemmed from a series of papers published by the Kennan Institute in 2008, titled *Place, Identity and Urban Culture: Odesa and New Orleans*.⁸ The collection addressed issues of urbanism, identity, and history, with papers such as “How Ukrainian is Odesa” and “How American is New Orleans.” It brought together expert scholars of the histories of both cities, such as Emily Clark and Patricia Herlihy, alongside urban theorists. The publication called for further comparative research between the United States and Ukraine, and particularly on the comparable histories of New Orleans and Odessa. I read that publication a decade after it was first circulated, yet nothing seemed to have resulted from the initial call: this thesis seeks to fill the gap.

In researching the histories of those two distant port-cities, I followed Gareth Austin’s recommendations for works of comparative history, and attempted to look for, as much as possible, reciprocal comparisons.⁹ Though New Orleans and Odessa are both multicultural port cities located in settler milieux, their divergence is easily explained by their distinct national contexts and the contrasting political regimes in which they developed. Alternatively, the comparable presence and visibility of French diasporic communities and Francophone groups illuminates original processes of cultural amalgamation in each city, through the interaction between the ‘French’ and unique elements of each urban society. This foreign and transnational

⁸ Ramer, Samuel C., and Blair A. Ruble (eds), *Place, Identity and Urban Culture: Odesa and New Orleans*, Kennan Institute Occasional Paper - Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, n.301, 2008. The collection was born out of a conference panel presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in 2007.

⁹ Austin, Gareth. “Reciprocal Comparison and African History: Tackling Conceptual Eurocentrism in the Study of Africa’s Economic Past.” *African Studies Review* 50, no. 3 (2007): 1-28.

community thus incarnates Ginzburg's idea of a *spie* (spyhole) that would lead the work of historical comparison.¹⁰ Using the vast pre-existing literature on the history of New Orleans and Odessa, I was able to combine some of this geographically divided work by studying the two cities side-by-side, through the lens of Frenchness and Francophone presence. For instance, Thomas Barrett's work on the annexation of the Northern Caucasus by Russia was used to shed light on the integration of Louisiana into the United States, raising questions about the significance of shifting borders and allegiances and processes of in and out-migration in frontier spaces. This work itself had benefitted from scholarship on North America, as it was first inspired by Richard White's "Middle Ground", seeing the Great Lakes region as a region facilitating acculturation.¹¹ Similarly, comparing urban history scholarship on the Russian Empire and the South of the United States helped contrast how cities were perceived as an anomaly – despite their absolute numbers – in each national context, and how anti-urban discourse was used in political ideologies. As cities on the edge, Odessa and New Orleans were both recent creations or acquisitions, and their national affiliation was ultimately debatable, especially with the presence of influential foreign settler groups in their midst.¹²

Though the antebellum period in the United States and the Russian Empire's long nineteenth century both inspired a rich literature, at a more local level, studies of New Orleans outweigh numerically those devoted to Odessa, as scholarship about the Crescent city has grown significantly in recent years, especially following the bicentenary of the Louisiana

¹⁰ Wickham, Chris. *Problems in Doing Comparative History*. Reuter Lecture, 2004. Southampton: Centre for Antiquity and the Middle Ages, University of Southampton, 2005.

¹¹ Barrett, Thomas M. "Lines of Uncertainty: The Frontiers of the North Caucasus." *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (1995): 578-601; White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge, 1991.

¹² Lounsbery, Anne. *Life Is Elsewhere: Symbolic Geography in the Russian Provinces, 1800-1917*. NIU Series in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Ithaca, 2020; Martin, Alexander M. *Enlightened Metropolis: Constructing Imperial Moscow, 1762-1855*. Oxford Studies in Modern European History. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; Mironov, Boris N. *Russkii Gorod v 1740-1860-e Gody: Demograficheskoe, Sošial'noe I èkonomicheskoe Razvitie*. Leningrad: "Nauka", Leningradskoe Otd-nie, 1990; Ryan, Mary P. *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1997; Towers, Frank. *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War*. Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2004.

Purchase in 2003 and the tricentenary of the founding of the city in 2018. When possible, I have applied the insights and theoretical frameworks about New Orleans to the Novorossiyan context, and sometimes conversely. For instance, the familiarity of New Orleans' urban culture to Union troops during the occupation of the city, analysed by Michael Pierson, led me to examine how familiar – how Russian or not – Odessa's cityscapes were to the eyes of national and foreign visitors.¹³ The role of unfree labour was of crucial importance in New Orleans, as slavery was fundamental to its urban society and economy, in contrast with Odessa which was, alongside other Black Sea ports, a haven for fugitive serfs.¹⁴ By the nineteenth century, slavery and serfdom were deeply entrenched in the Russian and American political worlds, and bound labour had long been naturalized through the hardening of class lines, a parallel development analysed in detail by Peter Kolchin.¹⁵ However, contrary to the United States, Russia was not a slave society, and the scale and cultural significance of unfree status had deeper consequences in New Orleans – dubbed 'slavery's metropolis' – than in Odessa.¹⁶ A more significant basis for comparing the two cities was the existence of interstitial groups, such as 'free persons of colour' and Jewish communities who, while benefitting from unusual opportunities and influence, were typically defined as socially abject: their presence, advancement, and repression provide another basis for reciprocal comparisons of New Orleans and Odessa, as well as other cities across their respective national contexts.¹⁷

¹³ Slap, Andrew L., Frank Towers, and David R. Goldfield. *Confederate Cities: The Urban South during the Civil War Era*. Historical Studies of Urban America. Chicago, 2015.

¹⁴ Johnson, Walter. *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1999; Brower, Daniel R. *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850-1900*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990.

¹⁵ Kolchin, Peter. *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom*. Cambridge, Mass; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987.

¹⁶ Johnson, Rashauna. *Slavery's Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans during the Age of Revolutions*. Cambridge Studies on the African Diaspora. New York, NY, 2016; Berlin, Ira, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

¹⁷ Barnes, L. Diane. *Artisan Workers in the Upper South: Petersburg, Virginia, 1820-1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008; Dantas, Mariana L. R. *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in Eighteenth-century Americas*. Americas in the Early Modern Atlantic World. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Meir, Natan M. *Kiev, Jewish Metropolis: A History, 1859-1914*. Modern Jewish Experience (Bloomington, Ind.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press,

Nonetheless, some circumstances were unique to each city and necessitated independent engagement with geographically-specific literature. In the case of New Orleans, the edited collection *Empires of the Imagination* was an essential read to understand the national and international consequences of the Louisiana Purchase.¹⁸ Richard Campanella's abundant work on New Orleans bridged the gap between history and geography, and fed my more data-driven chapters, while Laurence Powell's *Accidental City* delineated the fortuitous character of the Crescent City's growth and social makeup.¹⁹ Paul Lachance's statistical research on Louisiana's early demographics served as a base to contrast later population growth with contemporary discourses about immigration – particularly to nuance the gender dynamics of New Orleans' settler environment.²⁰ Louisiana's francophones Creoles were a particularly fluid social group, and Carl A. Brasseaux's work on early French and Francophone settlers in Louisiana and their descendants pointed me towards many primary sources ahead of my own archival research.²¹ Julien Vernet's *Strangers on their Native Soil* contextualised the tensions and negotiations structuring the relationship between two of Louisiana's most visible political communities – the Creoles and the Anglo-Americans – interrogating the meaning of the end of colonial rule in this territory.²²

2010; Rockman, Seth. *Scraping by: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009; Weeks, Theodore R. *Vilnius between Nations, 1795-2000*. NIU Press: DeKalb, IL, 2015; Zipperstein, Steven J. *The Jews of Odessa: a cultural history, 1794-1881*, Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985.

¹⁸ Kastor, Peter J., and Françoise Weil. *Empires of the Imagination: Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase*. Jeffersonian America. Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2009. Also: Kastor, Peter J. *The Louisiana Purchase: emergence of an American nation*, Washington D.C. 2002, and *The nation's crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the creation of America*, New Haven, CT. 2004.

¹⁹ Campanella, Richard, *Bienville's dilemma: A historical geography of New Orleans*, Lafayette LA, 2008 and *Cityscapes of New Orleans*. LSU Press, 2017. Powell, Lawrence N. *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans*. Cambridge, 2013.

²⁰ Lachance, Paul. "New Orleans in the Era of Revolution: A Demographic Profile." Paper for symposium "Révolution et Contre-Révolution à la Nouvelle-Orléans et dans le Monde Créole" (1989).

²¹ Brasseaux, Carl A. *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma: A Primer on Francophone Louisiana*. Baton Rouge, 2005.

²² Vernet, Julien, *Strangers on Their Native Soil: opposition to United States' governance in Louisiana's Orleans territory, 1803-1809*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013. This question was also addressed in the context of imperial Rio de Janeiro by Kristen Schultz, who brought to the fore the contradiction created by the Portuguese authorities' urge to eradicate the vestiges of the colonial past at the same time as they re-committed to the colonialism of slavery in the present, a paradox that equally divided New Orleans' society in its own context. Schultz, Kirsten. *Tropical Versailles: Empire, Monarchy, and the Portuguese Royal Court in Rio De Janeiro, 1808-1821*. New York; London: Routledge, 2001. And for the tail end of this

A complex scholarship has been devoted to the creation of creolized or *métisse* identities and folkways in the Louisiana Delta, the Caribbean, and more widely in the Americas, which helped define the compound diasporic communities that made New Orleans.²³ The question of Creole identities was less evident in Odessa, as it was a part of Novorossiya – “Russia’s most successful, because most invisible colony.”²⁴ Many nomadic and semi-settled Turkic groups still lived in the eastern Black Sea and the Crimean Peninsula, whose memory was later submerged by the competing claims of Ukrainian and Russian settlers, yet the region around Odessa had a rather sparse population upon Tsarist conquest. Across the scholarship devoted to the Russian Empire, most of the comparable literature on processes of creolisation thus centred on Siberia rather than the southern regions.²⁵ The unique negotiation of creoles identities in New Orleans’ slave society was therefore an important point of contrast with Odessa, at the intersection of race, gender, religion, and class, themselves shaped by transnational and transoceanic movements of people. On that subject, Jennifer M. Spear’s work complexified New Orleans’ cultural genealogies through its uneven gender dynamics, while Jessica Marie Johnson’s research has redefined American understandings of freedom by emphasizing Black female agency.²⁶ In the realm of religion and education, similar gendered dynamics shaped the city, discussed in particular by Emily Clark in her work on Louisiana’s unique type of “feminine Afro-Catholicism”, which was supported by networks of francophone

research, Farid Ameur’s research on the involvement of French nationals in the American Civil War similarly highlighted a growing transatlantic political dichotomy. Ameur, Farid, *Les Français dans la Guerre de Sécession, 1861-1865* (Thesis) Paris-1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2010.

²³ Couti, Jacqueline. *Dangerous Creole Liaisons : Sexuality and Nationalism in French Caribbean Discourses from 1806 to 1897*. Liverpool, 2016. Domínguez, Virginia, *White by Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana*, New Brunswick, N.J., 1986; Fischer, David Hackett, *Albion’s Seed - Four British folkways in America*, New York, 1989.

²⁴ Morrison, Alexander: “What is Colonisation? An alternative view of *Taming the Wild Field*” Review Article in *Forum for Anthropology and Culture* no.4 (2007): 402-415; and Sunderland, Willard. *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2004.

²⁵ Morrison, Alexander: ‘Russian Settler Colonialism’ in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism* ed. Lorenzo Veracini and Ed Cavanagh (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016): 313-326.

²⁶ Spear, Jennifer M., *Race, Sex and Social Order in Early New Orleans*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009; Johnson, Jessica Marie. *Wicked Flesh : Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*. Early American Studies. Philadelphia, 2020.

nuns and priests – a characteristic which suggests a more intrinsic female agency in New Orleans than in Odessa.²⁷ On the other hand, the idea of racial passing, central to the work of Shirley Thompson, implied cultural and social aspects – such as language, education, or belief – which could be deployed across both urban centres through the lens of social endogamy and civic identities.²⁸

Just as New Orleans had its own specificities, on the eastern end of this comparative research a rich secondary literature engages with the ambiguous territorial expansion of the Russian Empire, particularly so towards the Black Sea and steppe regions, and the tumultuous history of young Odessa. Willard Sunderland's *Taming the Wild Field* is an essential work that addressed questions of mobility and serfdom on the steppe lands and argued for the inclusion of Russian in the history of European colonisation.²⁹ Sunderland provides a wide-ranging contextualisation of the settlement of the southern steppes, a perspective complemented by David Moon's work on agriculture and environmental control, Michael Khodarkovsky's overview of the previous three centuries of frontier expansion, and Mark Bassin's counterpoint analysis of eastward movement towards Siberia.³⁰ More discussions of the origins, nature, and modalities of Russian imperial creation and continental growth were found in the works of Jane

²⁷ Clark, Emily, *Masterless mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the development of a new world society, 1727-1834*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2007, and Clark, Emily, and Virginia Meacham Gould. "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1852." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59.2 (2002): 409-448. Also: Clark, Emily, *The strange history of the American quadroom: free women of color in the revolutionary Atlantic world*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013; Bell, Caryn Cossé. "French Religious Culture in Afro-Creole New Orleans, 1718-1877." *U.S. Catholic Historian* 17, no. 2 (1999): 1-16.

²⁸ Thompson, Shirley Elizabeth. *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2009.

²⁹ Sunderland, Willard. *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2004.

³⁰ Moon, David, *The Plough that broke the steppes: Agriculture and environment on Russia's grasslands, 1700-1914*, Oxford University Press, 2013; Bassin, Mark, *Imperial Visions - Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865*, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Khodarkovsky, Michael. *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*. Bloomington: Ind. 2004.

Burbank, Nicholas Breyfogle, Mark Von Hagen, and Abby M. Schrader.³¹ One of the unique features of Russian imperialism was the combination of difficult internal resettlement endeavours (*pereselenie*), limited until 1861 by the serfdom labour regime, and official policies of foreign immigration (*kolonizatsiya*) until the 1830s. In southern Russia, the latter mode of settlement was key to occupy the newly acquired territory, as outlined in Roger P. Bartlett's *Human Capital*.³² This situation differed from that found in Louisiana, which similarly combined internal migration from the American eastern seaboard and foreign transatlantic mobility but was devoid of the tensions stemming from the bond of universal service that linked Russia's peasantry, the nobility, and the state. Alexander Etkind's concept of 'internal colonisation' thus suggests that the Russian state was fully and equally alien to the diverse populations of the Empire, yet it does so without analysing the differential treatment of these populations. Such a view could be nuanced in the case of Odessa and Novorossiia at large, as a region that started off as an external site of colonization and was incorporated into the Russian metropole over time.³³

Some fascinating scholarship has been devoted to the history of Odessa, in particular Patricia Herlihy's seminal *Odessa: A History, 1794-1914*, and Charles King's *Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams*.³⁴ Evrydiki Sifneos' *Imperial Odessa*, which underpinned the transformation of a cosmopolitan port into an imperial metropolis, expanded the meaning of cosmopolitanism in both Odessa and New Orleans, questioning how, in each city, people

³¹ Burbank, Jane, Mark Von Hagen, and A. V. Remnev. *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1930*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007; Breyfogle, Nicholas B., Abby M. Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (eds), *Peopling the Russian Periphery - Borderland colonization in Eurasian History*, London; New York: Routledge, 2007.

³² Bartlett, Roger P, *Human Capital: The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia, 1762-1804*. Cambridge University Press, 1979.

³³ Etkind, Aleksandr. *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA, 2011; Morrison, Alexander. Review Essay on Alexander Etkind *Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience* in *Ab Imperio* 2013/3: 445-457; Bartlett, Roger P, *Human Capital: The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia, 1762-1804*. Cambridge University Press, 1979.

³⁴ Herlihy, Patricia. *Odessa: A History, 1794-1914*. Cambridge, Mass: 1986; King, Charles, *Odessa: genius and death in a city of dreams*, New York, 2011. See also: Herlihy, Patricia. *Odessa Recollected: The Port and the People*. Ukrainian Studies. Boston, MA, 2019.

navigated competing cultural contexts.³⁵ Soviet historian S. Kovbasiuk, writing in 1957, was a good source for factual material and detailed data on Odessa, using primary sources now difficult to access – notwithstanding an ideological framing that downplayed foreign influences and the very idea of a ‘cosmopolitan’ city (the term implying Jewish).³⁶ Foreign immigration was indeed essential to the early development of Odessa, and its many ethnic communities likewise inspired a vast scholarship. The presence of Greek populations since the founding of the city led to many studies of the Greek diaspora and their leadership role in Odessa’s local government, a group that also highlighted some of the gendered dynamics of immigration, settlement, and employment in the new port-city.³⁷ Odessa also had close links to Trieste and therefore Italian networks of traders; Anna Makolkin’s work provided a hundred-years overview of Italian culture around the Black Sea, illuminating the pull of foreign commercial associations in the region.³⁸ Odessa’s unique Jewish history – an uncommonly urban history within the mostly rural Pale of Settlement – complexified the implications of transnational mobility, especially in the face of rising nationalistic demands.³⁹ On the French and Francophone community living in Odessa, little has been done apart from a few chapters in

³⁵ Sifneos, Evrydiki. *Imperial Odessa: Peoples, Spaces, Identities*. Eurasian Studies Library 8. Boston, 2017. Benjamin Carp’s work on Quaker communities in Charleston also provides interesting insights on how cosmopolitan ideals help overcome cultural displacement. Carp, Benjamin L. “‘Fix’d Almost amongst Strangers’: Charleston’s Quaker Merchants and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (2017): 77-108.

³⁶ His work also asserts the existence of a native ‘Russianness’ in imperial contexts, and uses rigid Marxist categories of historical development Kovbasiuk, S. M. *Odessa: Ocherk Istorii Goroda-geroia*. Odessa: Odesskoe Obl. Izd-vo, 1957.

³⁷ Sifneos, Evrydiki. "Rentiers, Teachers and Workers: Greek Women in Late Nineteenth-century Odessa." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 34, no. 2 (2010): 182-200; Mazis, John Athanasios, *The Greeks of Odessa: Diaspora Leadership in Late Imperial Russia*, Boulder, Colo. 2004.

³⁸ Makolkin, Anna, *The Nineteenth Century in Odessa: One Hundred Years of Italian Culture on the Shores of the Black Sea (1794-1894)*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007.

³⁹ Kiev also hosted a large Jewish population in the late nineteenth century, however Jews were not allowed to settle in the city before 1859. Zipperstein, Steven J. *The Jews of Odessa: a cultural history, 1794-1881*, Stanford, 1985 and “Jewish Enlightenment in Odessa: Cultural Characteristics, 1794-1871.” *Jewish Social Studies* 44, no. 1 (1982): 19; Tanny, Jarrod, *City of Rogues and Schnorrers: Russia’s Jews and the Myth of Old Odessa*, Bloomington, Ind. 2011.

Leonide Ignatieff's 1963 thesis on French émigrés in Russia, and this research, in addition to its comparative framework, complements the wider history of Odessa's cosmopolitan past.⁴⁰

Beyond contrasting scholarships on New Orleans and Odessa to underscore divergences and similarities, I could also rely on several publications that directly compared the territorial expansion of the Russian Empire and the United States Republic through the shared lens of colonialism. Jane Burbank's "Empires across continents" in a collection on *Empires in World History*, analysed striking resemblances between imperial Russia and the American Republic, and their persistence as continental-wide state structures to this day.⁴¹ Parallel temporalities favour comparisons between American slavery and Russian serfdom, as mentioned above (Kolchin, 1987), but also comparisons in processes of expansion into indigenous territories. At a theoretical and macro-historical level, Mark Bassin's "Turner; Solov'ev, and the Frontier Hypothesis", contrasted the principles and justifications used to support American and Russian continental expansion, a discursive framework with local resonances in both New Orleans and Odessa.⁴² The Turnerian concept of the transformative 'frontier' – releasing Americans from European mindsets – was challenged in both South Russia and Louisiana with the centrality of the two ports and their situation as cosmopolitan enclaves. In no particular order, I also relied on Carl Nightingale's global history of divided cities, Mark Peterson's analysis of Boston as a city-state, which opened new ways of

⁴⁰ Ignatieff, Leonide. *French émigrés in Russia, 1789-1825: The interaction of cultures in time of stress*, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 1963. Contemporary sociological contributions, such as Tanya Richardson's *Kaleidoscopic Odessa*, helped me reconcile Odessa's Russian Imperial history with Odesa's present-day Ukrainian setting. While researching the creation of foreign imagined communities, it was important to reflect on how historical discourses about Odessa's past are utilized today, which the edited volume *Explorations of Urban coexistence* helped with. Richardson, Tanya. *Kaleidoscopic Odessa: History and Place in Contemporary Ukraine*. London: University of Toronto Press, 2008; Humphrey, Caroline, and Vera. Skvirskaja. *Post-cosmopolitan Cities: Explorations of Urban Coexistence*. Space and Place; v. 9. New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 2012.

⁴¹ Burbank, Jane, "Empires across continents: The United States and Russia," in Burbank, Jane and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton, NJ, 2010

⁴² Hine, William C. "American Slavery and Russian Serfdom: A Preliminary Comparison." *Phylon* (1960-) 36, no. 4 (1975): 378-384; Bassin, Mark, "Turner, Solov'ev, and the 'Frontier Hypothesis': The Nationalist Signification of Open Spaces," *The Journal of Modern History*, 65.3, 1993, 473-511.

understanding New Orleans and Odessa, and David Henkin's work on urban texts and the physical public sphere.⁴³

This thesis compares two cities whose histories, growth, and demographics warranted both awe and praise in their own country and abroad while creating striking parallels, some noted in passing by other scholars, some unsuspected. By focusing on identity formation in settler milieux, my thesis suggests that the presence of a third-party foreign, but influential, settler group within another empire's project had long-lasting ramifications in terms of imagined urban identities, with echoes reaching all the way to their present. These identities were articulated in cosmopolitan terms, contrasting with the agricultural values of most settler frontiers; but their cosmopolitanism was not that of all existing port cities, for Odessa and New Orleans were new urban creations. The pervasiveness of Frenchness – through linguistics and practices – also strengthens the idea that the most resilient empire was not that of political power and imperial dominion but an empire of language and culture.⁴⁴ Yet, however enduring that empire was, fuelling trade networks, immigration, and creating new institutions, it was also one that developed outside the colonial agenda of France, itself an inadvertent metropole. In New Orleans and Odessa, French was the second language of many, if only because their populations needed a shared world of words to perform their commercial functions. The invented traditions of Frenchness – semantic, cultural, or social – that developed in these two cities were less about population share, and more about power, influence, and urban hegemony. The memory of New Orleans and Odessa's early cosmopolitanism survived into the post-cosmopolitan world of America's 'manifest' isolationism and Russia's rising Slavophile self-interpretation. This research fits into a growing scholarship in global history and histories of

⁴³ Nightingale, Carl Husemoller. *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities*. Historical Studies of Urban America. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2012; Peterson, Mark. *The City-state of Boston: The Rise and Fall of an Atlantic Power, 1630-1865*. Princeton, N.J., 2019; Henkin, David M. *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York*. Popular Cultures, Everyday Lives. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

⁴⁴ Rothschild, Emma. "Language and Empire, C. 1800*." *Historical Research* 78, no. 200 (2005): 208-29.

Empire on the role of diasporic communities and loose networks, and the transnational implications of national discourses. Through the comparative analysis of Odessa and New Orleans, this thesis traces how their urban environment, the nature of their connection to France, and each metropolis's character as a sort of insulated city-state, all interacted to determine what Frenchness would be, what uses it would fulfil for those who claimed it as an ethnicity and identity, and what regard it was held in by both those living in the city and outsiders looking in.

The dissertation is divided into three parts, themselves unfolding across nine chapters. Following both thematic and chronologic principles, most analyse New Orleans and Odessa side by side. The first four chapters follow the theme of foundation, and open by considering in chapter one the human and environmental factors that presided over the founding of both cities. Chapters two and three focus individually on New Orleans and Odessa's exceptional demographic histories. In chapter two, I consider the demographic transformations of New Orleans following the Louisiana Purchase, and how those changes structured a new binary divide and reinvented a form of American Frenchness. In chapter three, I contrast the limitations of serfdom with the choice of foreign immigration to fulfil the settlement needs of the new Russian provinces, resulting in the leadership and influence of French governors and *émigrés*. Chapter four engages with the urban fabric of the two cities, highlighting how their fast demographic growth translated into changing groups and solidarities, visible spatially. Part Two considers the development of several key institutions – churches, schools, and newspapers. Over three chapters, I analyse how everyday practices fed into social kinship with a French group. Chapter five focuses on the role of Gallic religious affinities in New Orleans and civic rituals in Odessa. Chapter six turns to education, with the social significance of French-led school creations and their role for language dissemination. Chapter seven similarly examines the longevity of a francophone public sphere in both cities through the rise to

prominence of a competitive French-language press. Finally, the third and last part of the thesis focuses on the entanglement of Frenchness and its representations across the first half of the nineteenth century. Chapter eight considers what the role and agency of these French denizens was within an international system of allegiances and how they negotiated their integration into their adopted countries. Chapter nine closes on two conflicting events – the American Civil War and the Crimean War – as turning points that contributed to making the populations of New Orleans American and Odessa Russian.

In following the footsteps of these transient populations, the research for this thesis was conducted in four countries, across two continents, using extensive archives in French, Russian, and English, and occasional sources in Spanish and Polish.⁴⁵ I visited different archival repositories stretching between France, the United States, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. Primary sources used in this work range from immigration records, censuses, and commercial catalogues to municipal, regional, and state papers. Consular correspondences, local and international newspapers and gazettes, travellers' accounts, novels, and plays were also consulted. In analysing sources about New Orleans and Odessa, the search for worthy comparisons became sometimes subsumed in the vibrant history of the two cities: set side by side, they challenge historical understandings of identity and legacy and put locality at the heart of the project.

⁴⁵ Focusing on French émigrés and Francophone communities allowed me to use my mother tongue as a connector and entry point for a documentary research of the histories and destinies of these two far-flung cities. English remained a key language for archives and secondary literature on both New Orleans and Odessa. The geography of my research provided me with the opportunity to consolidate prior Russian language knowledge throughout my doctoral degree, allowing me to work directly with 19th and 20th century Russian printed sources. In New Orleans, I also worked on some archival material in Spanish, while in cosmopolitan Odessa, I encountered and used documents in Polish – although I could not access without an existing translation other sources in Greek, German, or Yiddish.

PART I – FOUNDATIONS

Chapter 1 New Orleans and Odessa: the creation of maritime enclaves on two southern borderlands.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the United States and the Russian Empire both experienced territorial changes that significantly impacted their further continental development. On the Pontic steppe, the Russian Empire ended three decades of armed conflict with the conquest of the northern shores of the Black Sea in 1789. These victories granted Russia access to a profitable maritime trade with European nations, a pathway to the Mediterranean, and a new fertile agricultural frontier on Ukrainian lands. Halfway across the globe, in 1803, the purchase of the Louisiana Territory by the United States virtually removed any serious direct competition from Spain and a fading French empire over American control of the Mississippi, and opened the way to westward expansion. In both cases the existence of maritime trade routes, and the desire to master them, dominated contemporary discourses in favour of either expansion or purchase. However, in both cases acquisition only marked the start of a complex historical process of territorial integration, with imperialist imperatives that went beyond sole commercial interests. While political and social challenges will be explored throughout this thesis, some more practical challenges – geographical, environmental, and technological – also shaped how these new southern regions negotiated their relationship with the national centers of their respective countries. In each case, a fast-growing urban centre became the focus of attention: the whole steppe-land region of Novorossiia was soon dominated by the new port-city of Odessa, founded in 1794, while New Orleans, a formerly French and Spanish colonial town, quickly became one of the most important harbours of North America.

By the middle of the 19th century, New Orleans had grown into the third largest city of the United States. Almost within the same timeframe, Odessa had become the third largest city of the Russian Empire. Although the two cities became thriving commercial ports, this steep demographic growth did not rely on trade alone. Rather, the rapid urban development of Odessa and New Orleans was characteristic of settler cities located on new agrarian frontiers, attracting many newcomers. In addition to cotton, Louisiana became a key transit space for Midwest cereal export, while Odessa was the main port through which Ukrainian and Polish grain was traded. Even though the two cities met with rapid economic prominence and success, becoming valuable centres for the national economy, they were both enduringly considered as atypical and alien, either inauthentically American or Russian. Both were extremely distant from the national capitals – an average of 1,500km. They also developed in different climates and were often more connected to the sea than to the national territory.

Before focusing on the settlement of these peripheries and the defining role of Francophone communities, this first chapter will discuss the comparable features that shaped the parallel growth of New Orleans and Odessa in the early nineteenth century, making a case for their joint study. This initial section aims at understanding how non-human factors affected the longer-term histories of both cities, with a consideration of geography, the environment and technology as agents of permanence and change. Ultimately, it was the combination of natural and human efforts that defined the two cities' fluctuating embeddedness into the imperial system that they were part of. From earlier concepts of the transformative frontier to the more dynamic lens of the borderlands – as spaces where distinct societies cohabited in fluid spaces of unclear dominion¹ – the urban microcosms of New Orleans and Odessa postponed the

¹ Hämäläinen, Pekka, and Samuel Truett. "On Borderlands." *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (2011): 338-61: "If older national histories emphasized the rising power of states and capital to control America, newer borderlands histories have dwelt on the limits of this control." (360).

merging of languages and cultures while transforming them, testing the Soviet historical notion of imperial sblizhenie (drawing together).² The cultural assimilation of distant lands was an instrument of national integration, but urban spaces embraced a dual role as centres of both ethnic rapprochement and consolidation. This chapter will analyze the physical challenges that framed the rise to prominence of the two ports: shared tensions between site and situation, questions of (im)mobility, and urban vitality or morbidity. Odessa and New Orleans developed from dynamic frontier settlements to relatively marginalized edges as power became centralized and trade more nationalized.

1.1 Water logics: an ecological view of early New Orleans and Odessa.

Water logics, conceived as both assets and constraints, were fundamental to the founding and development of New Orleans and Odessa. Water as an element suggests a porousness and liminality that could turn the two port-cities and their respective hinterlands into edge habitats, transition zones between distinct natural and social ecosystems, thus emphasizing the transnational character of their early histories.³ At a practical level, the abundance or scarcity of water, between floods and droughts, aquatic contiguity and landed isolation, were central actors for the growth of both New Orleans and Odessa. And indeed, La Nouvelle Orléans,

² “Peter Waldron suggests that Russia's rulers regarded all borderland regions ‘as areas to be assimilated into the metropolitan state, rather than colonies to be subdued.’ Waldron, *Governing Tsarist Russia*, 2007, 138, quoted in Morrison, Alexander. “Metropole, Colony, and Imperial Citizenship in the Russian Empire. (Essay).” *Kritika* 13, no. 2 (2012): 327-364.

³ The ecological idea of edge zones was used by Thomas Barrett to reassess the process of territorial extension of the Russian Empire beyond the American concept of frontier, to nuance it with the promise of greater biological diversity within natural edge habitats. When used in human terms, edges signify spaces of greater cultural complexity and mixing, social exchange, and stratification. Edges also echoes the idea of ecotones, used to denote a transitional area between distinct ecological communities: ecotones are similarly conceived as places where normally separate groups coalesced and became creolized. Barrett, Thomas M. *At the Edge of Empire - The Terek Cossacks and the North Caucasus Frontier, 1700-1860*, Boulder CO, 1999; Lacroix Thomas, Misrahi-Barak Judith, Morehouse Maggi. Program “Ecotones: Encounters, Crossings, and Communities, 2015-2020,” hosted by EMMA (Etudes Montpelliéraines du Monde Anglophone, Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, France) in partnership with Coastal Carolina University (SC, USA) and MIGRINTER (UMR CNRS-Poitiers, France).

initially a French colonial town, commanded the strategic Mississippi river and its porous delta, and thus virtually controlled the bulk of North American interior trade prior to the development of the railway – providing its eastern seaboard with supplies of food such as cereals and meat, and commodities such as cotton. The port also acted as an interface with the wealthy Gulf of Mexico and the high-capital Caribbean islands, directly trading such valuable commodities as sugar and tobacco, the traditional sources of wealth in the Atlantic. The strategic city was ensconced between the young United States, the Spanish American Empire, and vast distances of indigenous lands. In another seascape, Odessa offered a southern outlet towards the Black Sea, with further access to the straits of the Bosphorus and the Mediterranean, to the North-oriented Russian Empire. Its site had been known since the sixteenth century as Khadjibey, a Tatar fort and small port, later controlled by the Ottomans. There as well, interactions with traditional and populous trading routes and goods conferred primacy to the city's geographical situation. The proximity of water and its mastery were fundamental in choosing the location of both Odessa and New Orleans. Geographical situation was foremost while site or topography often came second.

Water, its overflow and abundance, or its scarcity and salinity, crucially affected the fate of both cities: it connected, but it was also the source of disruption. New Orleans' history is interspersed with episodes of often deadly flooding, bringing an array of diseases, and sometimes reconfiguring the map of the city itself.⁴ As for Odessa, the city had to contend with the demands of its port. While its location was ideal to establish a harbour, it presented numerous obstacles for the development of a large metropolis: droughts, dust storms, and failed forage operations significantly influenced its early history. Environmental control was essential to the expansion of both cities, but these requirements were not always compatible with the

⁴ Powell, *The Accidental City*, 2013.

needs of growing commercial ports embedded in transnational demands for trade, and the national ambitions of increasingly integrated national marketplaces, reshaped by the transport revolution. Water logics also mirrored distorted landed logics: the cities' seaward and transnational connectivity clashed with the inwards-facing demands of empire and nation-building. The practical difficulties of land connections made technological development a measure of their integration. Water transformed the landscape and significance of Odessa and New Orleans: it made them shapeshifting imperial watersheds, continental edges where porous societies were formed.

Both cities thus commanded fluid geographies. In New Orleans, urban identity had to contend with the territorial shifts that affected the Mississippi watercourse. In the past, the unpredictability of the Mississippi River had made it a porous and unreliable boundary. Crucially, the Louisiana Purchase changed the Mississippi's function from a natural border to an integrated transportation corridor, yet representations of its course as a territorial limit persisted. By 1803, most of the northern regions were only sparsely settled and belonged in fact to indigenous nations. However, in the Louisiana delta, the lands had been settled and cultivated by colonial subjects of two European empires: France and Spain. Suddenly, and with little warning, they joined in an independent Republic. At the time of the Purchase, questions of the imagined and concrete spatial integrity of the territory were raised by the French Ambassador, as Louisiana's boundaries were negotiated between Paris and Madrid.⁵ Because Spain had regained control of the Floridas during the American War of Independence, they were a part of Spanish Louisiana that was not included in the Purchase agreement. The issue of the control of West and East Florida (gained in 1810 and 1822), lying on the East bank of the Mississippi delta, created for a time another border, just across from New Orleans.

⁵ HNOC MSS_125, f.458, January 15th, 1804: Letter from Louis André Pichon, French chargé d'affaires, Georgetown, to Pierre Clément Laussat.

Consequently, the city’s position in relation to – and within – the United States shifted multiple times and was only stabilized in the 1840s, after the annexation of the southwestern lands of Texas (1845), at a tipping point when the focus on the Mississippi watercourse was displaced by further Western expansion. The centrality of New Orleans in the Caribbean trade and in the Mississippi Basin stood in contradiction with the city’s geographical marginality – first at the edge of the French and Spanish American empires, then of the United States Republic. On land New Orleans was a contested centre, subject to territorial shifts and reconfigurations; on water its significance was indisputable. Therefore, the contested prominence and situation of New Orleans was shaped by the understanding of water as both a boundary and an asset, informing its role and development within the United States.

Water thus exacerbated tensions between national and transnational networks, suggesting a water-focused reinterpretation of globalism and integration, which can also be observed in the case of Odessa. Located in a newly conquered southern Russia (also known as ‘New Russia’ or Novorossiya), the founding of the city was the result of the empire’s most recent expansion wars over the ‘steppe frontier.’⁶ A Russian frontier outpost on the site of a Tatar fort, Odessa was also only barely connected with the centres of imperial power, with no easy route over land, nor direct route by the sea. In an early account of the founding of Odessa, the *Marseillais* merchant Charles Sicard contrasted the city’s aquatic assets and human scarcity:

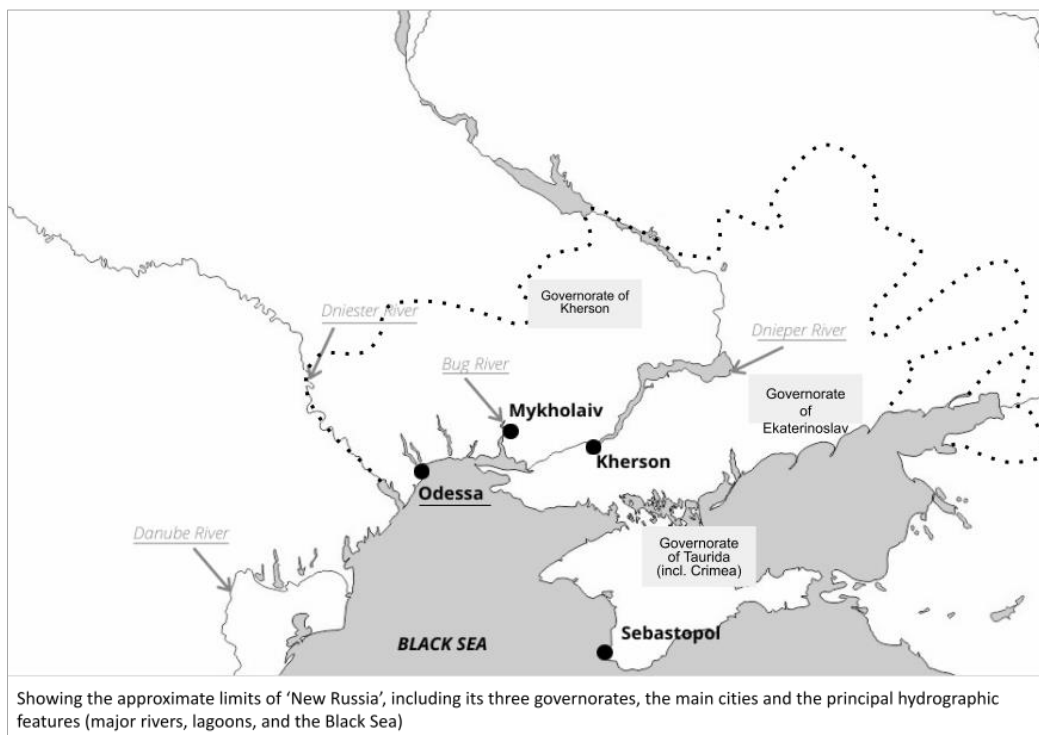
“The bay of a Tartarian village called Kodjabey was deemed eligible for this purpose [of setting up a port]. This bay is situated ... between the Dnieper and the Niester. All [of Odessa’s] possessions at this time consisted of a small Tartar fort, and a few miserable huts; but the bay had, from time immemorial, proved a secure haven to winter in, for vessels navigating these waters.”⁷

⁶ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 2004; McNeill, William Hardy. *Europe's Steppe Frontier: 1500-1800*. Chicago, Ill., 2011.

⁷ Sicard, Charles, and Stevens, Robert. *An Account of Odessa*, Newport, R.I.: Printed by William Simons, 1819, 5.

Odessa's site benefited from undeniable advantages, including a natural deep-sea harbour, stable banks, while its southern location provided it with ice-free waters for most months of the year. However, contrary to New Orleans, Odessa was not directly located on a river, making communications with the interior difficult until the completion of a railway system in the 1860s.⁸ About one hundred miles away, the nearest prominent river, the Dnieper, was shallow and not navigable by large boats. The Dniester remained a secondary watercourse linking back to western Ukraine, while the Danube, with its estuary further south on the Black Sea coast, favoured connections with Central and Western Europe rather than the centres of Russian government (Map 1.1).

Map 1.1 - Territorial Water Logics of Odessa and South Russia



⁸ Odessa's site had other advantages for a trading port – the city was strikingly located on a cliff 200 feet high, thus benefitting from a large and natural deep-sea harbour. The rival harbours (Kherson or Mykolaiv) had more problems of site and climate, and represented more costly options when compared with Odessa.

Because of these riverine connections and of the potentialities of maritime commerce, Odessa was viewed by traders as an interface between Europe and Asia: “[it would] then become the grand entrepôt” of an intercontinental system.⁹ A frontier city at the edge of the Russian Empire, Odessa was very much a crucial node for transnational trade.

The geographies of Odessa and New Orleans, both at their respective country’s border with other imperial formations and at the physical landed limits of their territories, could have preconditioned them to remain secondary urban centres or backcountry port-towns commanding subordinate hinterlands, poorly connected with the centres of powers. Yet their waterborne location widened the scope of their influence and located either city at the centre of inter-continental and inter-imperial systems. The growth of New Orleans and Odessa came as much from their trading activities as it did from the continuous settlement of individuals, which in turn created a growing local market and consumer base for their port.

Port and city were symbiotic: the success of one meant, in good measure, the success of the other. The ports of Odessa and New Orleans both worked towards the export of agricultural products harvested in newly acquired agrarian hinterlands, in an age when the scale and distances of trade were undergoing a radical transformation. The two areas also derived most of their revenue from trade with west-European states.¹⁰ Although the joint boom in cotton production and steamship navigation of the mid-1810s shifted New Orleans away from an export trade exclusively based on edible goods, the two ports were hubs for the redistribution of grain and other food products. The ports’ commercial roles shaped their urban and demographic development as cities.

⁹ Sicard, *An Account of Odessa*, 1819, 12.

¹⁰ United States National Archives (II) and Records Administration at College Park (thereafter USNA II), M459 - U.S. Consulate, Odessa, Russia (thereafter M459), vol.3, f.192. October [unknown], 1859.

New Orleans had relied on its command over the Mississippi as, in Jefferson’s words, “no such position for the accumulation and perpetuity of wealth and power [had] ever existed.”¹¹ Yet Jefferson, in the long run, proved to be wrong, and New Orleans’ economic and trade history demonstrated that relying solely on this natural advantage could not ensure the city’s long-term prosperity, as will be discussed in the next section. Odessa, lacking New Orleans’ temporary dominance over riverine routes, had to find additional methods to bolster its port: despite the superiority of its harbour, it was not directly located on a major river course, and trade with the hinterland relied on the ceaseless work of chumaks, wagon-carriers on foot, who brought produce from the agricultural depths of the Ukrainian steppes. Odessa’s government, before New Orleans, felt the need to develop non-natural advantages to get ahead of the other Russian Black Sea ports: the active pursuit and eventual establishment of a *porto franco* status provided it with a unique position in the Black Sea trade. From 1819 to 1859, the importation of all kinds of merchandise was authorized with a duty representing only one fifth of the usual amount paid in other ports of the Russian Empire.¹² In turn, this duty was then “employed to defray the annual expenses which [were] spent for the benefit of this City, such as pavements, footpaths, repairing streets, lights, government buildings, and for the expenses of all local administrations.”¹³ The port and its trade were thus instrumental to the development and improvement of the city. Many articles that were not allowed to be imported into the Russian Empire or were difficult to acquire because of high duties (such as tea, printed cottons, and silk), were consumed cheaply within the limits of the freeport, influencing the mixed type

¹¹ “With Boston, Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia on the left; Mexico on the right; Havana in front, and the immense valley of the Mississippi in the rear...” Thomas Jefferson, *House Executive Documents*, 185, quoted in Campanella, 233.

¹¹ Odessa received a free-port privileges in 1817, a unique status within the economically conservative Russian Empire. This status was renewed several times and lasted until 1859.

¹² Odessa received a free-port privileges in 1817, a unique status within the economically conservative Russian Empire. This status was renewed several times and lasted until 1859.

¹³ USNA II - M459, vol.2, f.195. 1 January 1854.

of urbanity and social practices that developed in Odessa.¹⁴ This legal apparatus offered undeniable advantages for local development. However, as in New Orleans, the delays in Odessa’s technical advancement eventually hindered the city’s chances at a long-term prosperity. While water logics were fundamental in shaping the foundation and early growth of the two ports, the natural advantages they conferred increased the cities’ spatial and social separateness, and probed their integration as territorial margins.

1.2 Natural advantages and technical shortcomings: the limits of territorial integration.

The port functions of New Orleans and Odessa connected them to urban archipelagos beyond their territorial anchor: their situation as continental edges ensured that, through water, the two cities became sites of friction and exchange. New Orleans’ economic boom is famously associated with the introduction of steamships on the Mississippi river. In 1812, steamboat activity on the Mississippi began, each vessel carrying up to 800 bales of cotton and 50 to 60 passengers: by 1817, with improved engines, they started reaching St Louis when navigating upriver.¹⁵ At last, steam gave New Orleans command over its hinterland just at the time when its previous outward colonial connections were replaced by internal and national demands. The development of steamships followed and complemented the cotton boom, and ensured New Orleans’ prosperity as the ‘Queen of the South.’ It was the mastery of water rather than that of the land that was key to the city’s early success.

¹⁴ *Ibid*: ‘The importation of all kinds of Merchandise is allowed even those articles which are prohibited at all other Ports of the Empire, but which are not allowed to be transported in the Interior from hence, as tea, refined sugars, strong spirits, cloths black and green, printed cottons, silks and wools.’

¹⁵ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris (thereafter AMAE), Nouvelle Orléans, Correspondance Consulaire at Commerciale (thereafter 227CCC) /01, 10 April 1812. Between 1815 and 1817, only ten steamers were built, “compared to sixty-nine in the next three years.” Belich, *Replenishing*, 98.

In southern Russia, the use of steamships developed later than on the Mississippi, with sail remaining the primary mode of transportation until the mid-century. By 1857 the United States Consul to Odessa reported that a Russian company, comprising 45 to 50 boats, started operating regular journeys to different ports of the Black Sea, to the main ports of the Mediterranean (including Constantinople, Athens, and Marseilles), and even beyond to London.¹⁶ The Russian government itself invested in the company to ensure the carrying of its own official mail. However, if steamships revolutionized transportation on the Black Sea and to the Mediterranean, they only fully developed after the expiration of Odessa's freeport privileges in 1859, as backup competitive advantages. While the free port status had provided Odessa with a unique position for international trade, the Black Sea was often subjected to sudden storms and cold winters, and only technological advancement could ensure a more regular prosperity across the calendar year.¹⁷ Odessa and New Orleans' technical control of their own waterways thus conditioned their success, while underpinning a growing disconnect from landed routes.

In that regard, the development of railroads in southern Russia was an equally slow and frustrating process.¹⁸ The US consul reported regularly on plans to build railroads in Southern Russia; in 1857, he conveyed the rumour "that the establishment is all arranged, and that the lines are to go through 3700 *versts* (...), and are to be finished in the course of ten years."¹⁹ Still, the city of Feodosia in the Crimean Peninsula was then in preference, and Odessa had to

¹⁶ USNA II - M459, vol.2, f.152, January [unknown], 1857 and f.192, October [unknown], 1859: "The Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company has [...] now Steamers running to all the Ports of the Crimea, to all the principal Ports on the East Coast of the Black Sea, one weekly on to Galtz, one weekly one to Constantinople, a line to Jaffa, a line to Marseilles (tho this is not yet regular) a line to London conjointly with an English Company, besides occasional Steamers running to Athens and other Ports of the Mediterranean."

¹⁷ The Black Sea trade, however, was always subject to the regulations of the Ottoman authorities over the Bosphorus straits, which at times altered free maritime navigation to Odessa.

¹⁸ Odessa National Scientific Library (thereafter ONSL), 971 - *Journal d'Odessa* (thereafter 971), 1844, n.58, 21 July/2 August: "The more the quantity of products has increased, the more sensitive becomes, year after year, the necessity to improve communications between the villages and cities in the interior and the ports of the Black Sea."

¹⁹ USNA II - M459, vol.2, f.152. January [unknown], 1857.

wait its turn to be integrated into the southern railroad network. The first section of the Odessa railway was finally completed in December 1865. However, it took an additional thirteen years for the Odessa railway to be integrated into a wider national network from its limited run.²⁰ By 1872, it was finally possible to travel all the way to Moscow by train, yet the delay in the building and integration of the railway system, and the earlier development of sail and steamship connections, meant that Odessa was initially more connected to its surrounding maritime region rather than to the Russian interior. The development of the railroads also meant that the port and water access, while remaining ‘key factors’ for Odessa, started losing importance and influence in the urban community.²¹ The expansion of railroads in Southern Russia also prompted the emergence of new ports, such as Batumi in Georgia. Technological integration brought Odessa closer to the continental centres of imperial power, enabling easier trade and communications with the interior, yet that connection underpinned the relative decline of the city. A similar transition transformed the shores of the Mississippi, its basin shifting from an economic and settlement highway of national importance to a subsidiary regional centre.

The port of New Orleans provided the best trans-shipment point before reaching open seas, and its location on the Mississippi river, the ‘Father of Waters,’ guaranteed its economic prominence.²² New Orleans was a central site for global exchanges (of goods and people, including slaves), a role that could suggest a water-focused reframing of the history of the United States. Yet because the port benefited from such an important natural advantage, it was not systematically complemented by back-up technical, infrastructural, or legislative assets.

²⁰ It then became part of the joint stock company Southwestern Railways.

²¹ Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 2017, 26.

²² New Orleans Public Library, City Archives (thereafter NOPL), *Daily Picayune*, “New Orleans and her trade” 8 Sept. 1850, p.2 c. 2: “We have been accustomed to look to the Mississippi as the protector of our greatness. We have thought that as long as the mighty.... Father of Waters continues to roll past our city, our superiority in a commercial point of view, never can be successfully attacked.”

The absolute reliance upon the Mississippi fostered a rather conservative approach to trade and business – the city, in the words of a local contemporary journalist, “[contenting itself] with contemplating the Mississippi.”²³ In other parts of the country, transport was undergoing tremendous transformations, with the Erie Canal opening in 1825, and other artificial waterways and railways built across the Eastern seaboard and in the Trans-Appalachian region. Therefore, relying solely on the Mississippi’s commanding course was not enough for the port of New Orleans to stay ahead, and the erosion of its natural advantages was soon visible. According to Richard Campanella, while in 1840 about 80 percent of the Western shipments went through New Orleans, by 1858 only 18 percent used that route.²⁴

New Orleans’ integration of water and landed routes suffered from delays because of the city’s over-confidence in the primacy of the Mississippi River. The first railway was eventually chartered in 1856, and construction began in earnest two years later. Although the construction of the railroad had only just begun, it was celebrated as a national event that would bring Louisiana closer to the national territory by making it the end point of a cross-nation journey: “The metropolis of the Nation has been linked to the metropolis of the South. The ‘magnificent distances’ of Washington terminate in the beaming ‘crescent’ of New Orleans!”²⁵ Although the port-city was equated with the nation’s capital, New Orleans, as Odessa, was also reframed as a peripheral city, a terminus at the edge of the continental nation. In practice, the railroad was first connected to Houston rather than to the East coast centres of federal power. The route of the railroad progressively isolated New Orleans by removing it from the main

²³ *Ibid.* “Time, the corrector of all errors, has demonstrated the fallacy of our belief. It has shown us that we are by no means impregnable; that our situation, unequalled though it may be, can be made useless to us, when railroads and canals, interesting the valley of the Mississippi in every direction, offer to the producer a cheaper and readier transit... In the meantime, New Orleans has contented herself with contemplating the Mississippi, boasting of their magnificent position and unbounded resources, and yet has done nothing at all to preserve the advantages which nature has conferred to her.”

²⁴ Campanella, *Bienville’s dilemma*, 2008, 229-232: “New Orleans controlled over 99 percent of trans-Appalachian shipping up to 1825, but only 80 to 90 percent in the 1830s, 60 to 70 percent in the 1840s, and around 50 percent in the 1850s.”

²⁵ Ayres, *George B. Descriptive Railroad Hand-book of the Great Southern Route between New Orleans and Washington...* Memphis, Tenn.: [G.B. Ayres], 1858.

axes of communication. If the Mississippi had been fundamental in the city's former pre-eminence, the river had also concealed the delays in acquiring railroad services by upholding momentarily the city's natural competitiveness. Nationwide, the development of railroads operated a cardinal change, with an East-West orientation supplementing the North-South natural axis of the Mississippi River basin. East coast urban centres could now be directly supplied with produce originating from the Mid-West and the Western frontier, and although New Orleans' trade remained important in absolute numbers, its pre-eminence declined comparatively.²⁶ By supplementing the traditional riverine and marine connections, the increased technological connectivity contributed to the relative geographical and economic demotion of New Orleans. The third largest city in the United States in 1840, New Orleans was only the sixth largest at the start of the 1860s, and never regained such a high rank.²⁷ Technological change thus brought increased mobility to both New Orleans and Odessa, but it eroded their unique features and position, making their waterborne location (the very same asset on which both cities had built their early commercial power) less relevant. The development of steam and railroads further emphasized the benefits and limits of aquatic milieux in performing integration into a broader region. Locally, environmental management also influenced the vitality and morbidity of the two cities and conditioned the successes and trials of human settlement in the two ports.

²⁶ Campanella, *Bienville's dilemma*, 2008, 230. According to Campanella, following the building of canals in the 1830s, an increasing percentage of western produce traveled on the canals directly to the East. Yet New Orleans' rapid rate of growth helped conceal its declining position. The divergence increased with the building of railroads, yet even the introduction of rail tracks in New Orleans could not fully compensate its geographical isolation and the complex web of railways integrating the Midwest and the East.

²⁷ To Campanella, the history of the relationship between the city and the port of New Orleans shows the "unusual pairing of absolute growth with relative decline": he describes New Orleans' economic dilemma as being caught between 'exploiting today's boom versus preparing for tomorrow's bust.' Campanella, 2008, 231.

1.3 Life and death on the Black Sea and the Mississippi.

Beyond such man-made pitfalls, the sites of Odessa and New Orleans had been chosen for the undeniable advantages they provided for trade, yet their waterborne location and geological structure created infrastructural weaknesses and endemic hazards that plagued their first decades of existence and impacted the lives of their residents. From the absence of nearby rivers and springs in Odessa to seasonal hurricanes and flooding in New Orleans, urban life had to contend with uncontrollable water imperatives, themselves creating new risk factors. The fast development of Odessa, predicated on proximity to the sea, ironically contrasted with the scarcity of water suitable for human consumption and use. As the city was not located directly on a river course, provision of clear water proved to be increasingly difficult as the city grew in size and population. The absence of satisfactory and close natural sources of drinkable water, combined with the dry and windy environment of the Ukrainian steppes, created droughts that were the source of constant worries for the municipal council and the government of the southern provinces. Contemporaries repeatedly mentioned dust storms and concurred on the general filth of the new city, describing, in the absence of water, “whirlwinds of dust exactly like waterspouts in all but the material composing them, [which] darkened the air every moment, and swept the ground with incredible fury.”²⁸

To remedy the drought, foreign experts were brought in to oversee countless inspections of surrounding lands in search of artesian wells, which would have solved many such water-related difficulties. Yet Odessa’s elevated site, 200 feet above sea level, made the drilling of wells an almost impossible endeavour. Throughout Odessa’s early decades, plans for grand infrastructural solutions to the city’s hydraulic problems were repeatedly announced in local

²⁸ Hommaire De Hell, Xavier and Adèle. *Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea, the Crimea, the Caucasus, &c.* Chapman and Hall, 1847, 6.

newspapers.²⁹ In the 1820s, the French merchant Anthoine reported that the emperor Alexander I, following his visit to Odessa, had made it his mission to provide the city with an aqueduct, since it “was lacking spring water, and [...] people would generally use water coming from public wells [...] which was barely sufficient for the needs of the inhabitants and the watering of the cattle that brought to Odessa numerous carts loaded with wheat.”³⁰ The lack of water was detrimental to both urban growth and trade, since for most of its early period Odessa relied exclusively on oxcarts to bring agricultural produce into the city. Any solution, as imperfect as it was, was welcome. In 1833 wells were finally discovered south of the city, prompting the immediate construction of a reservoir tank and pump on the premises.³¹ Yet these victories were short-lived, and regular provision of clear water was only achieved in 1861, when the Odessa Waterworks Company was created and a canal to the Dniester River was built. Despite its significance, such a victory was limited, as the rapid demographic growth of Odessa aggravated the problems caused by dust in the summer, mud in the winter, and lack of water to dispose of sewage.³² British traveler Mary Holderness, traveling to Crimea through Odessa in 1819, observed that the city was “in wet weather the dirtiest place [she] ever saw; and in summer the dust [was] as intolerable as the dirt in winter.”³³ These widespread environmental issues quickly became a matter of poor reputation for Odessa, as newspapers regularly

²⁹ ONSL, 898 - *Courier de la Nouvelle Russie* (thereafter 898), 1831, n.24, 24 March/ 5 April: “Historical notice about some of the attempts made to bring water to the city of Odessa.”

³⁰ Anthoine de Saint-Joseph, A. *Essai historique sur le commerce et la navigation de la Mer-Noire, ou, Voyage et entreprises pour établir des rapports commerciaux et maritimes entre les ports de la Mer-Noire et ceux de la Méditerranée*. [Historical essay on the trade and navigation of the Black Sea, or, Journey and ventures to establish commercial and maritime relationships between the ports of the Black Sea and those of the Mediterranean.] Paris, 1820, 60.

³¹ ONSL 971, 1833, n.48, 16/28 June.

³² ONSL 971, 1832, n.19, 4/16 March: “We are not used here to follow the police rules and to keep the streets in the state of cleanliness needed for their upkeep; that the indulgence granted ordinarily to the inhabitants of a new city has spoiled us (...).” Odessa only started to benefit from running water from 1873, and acquired a sewage system in 1878, while New Orleans only began to lay down sewer pipes in 1903 (Herlihy, 2019, 107-8).

³³ Holderness, Mary, *New Russia. Journey from Riga to the Crimea, by Way of Kiev*, London, 1823, 78.

published similar travellers' accounts – the following humorously detailing the dramatic state of the city as late as 1840:

“Being exposed to the most sudden changes of temperature and to violent gusts of wind, the dust is intolerable at times, and other times the mud runs in rivers or lies like stagnant lakes. A wit sketched a coat of arms for Odessa, and wrote for the motto, *qui trotte se crotte* [*who trots about soils themselves*]. . . . not many years ago, individuals were drowned in the mud of the Greek Bazaar in winter.”³⁴

If the Black Sea steppe environment of water scarcity created the conditions for an enduring insalubrity, water had a contrasting effect on the banks of the Mississippi river. The city was built in an alluvial plain that was, in some places, below river level. Only a frail levy protected it from inundations. Cyclically, as snow in the northern regions melted away, accounts reported “the river [rising] higher than usual, and the levee not being able to resist the current and the force of the water, [bursting] and [inundating] the streets and houses to a height of more than four feet.”³⁵ New Orleans had to contend with the abundance and excess of water, most often because of regular hurricane-induced floods. This situation was made more complex by the absence of an efficient water management system.

The building of the successive city districts was shaped by reactions and responses to the difficult containment of these waters. Historian Lawrence Powell described New Orleans as an ‘accidental city,’ and contemporaries commonly referred to the city as ‘Orleans Island’ (*Île d’Orléans*) as it was more surrounded by water than by land (Map 1.2).³⁶ In practical urban terms, New Orleans had very little to do with its predecessor ‘Nouvelle Orléans’: little remained of the French colonial city following a widespread fire in 1788, and by 1803, large parts of the city had not yet been rebuilt. The population growth had also remained until then

³⁴ British Newspapers Archive, *The Atlas*, 26 July 1840: Excerpt from *Travels in Germany and Russia ...* by Adolphus Slave, Esq. Longman and Co, London

³⁵ Robertson, James Alexander, and Paul. Alliot. *Louisiana under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807...* Cleveland, Ohio: A.H. Clark, 1911.

³⁶ Powell, *The Accidental City*, 2013, 67.

quite modest, with only 8,000 inhabitants over eighty years after the founding of the city. The start of the American rule prompted a rising immigration from other parts of the United States, to ensure control of the newly acquired territories and take advantage of the economic opportunities provided by New Orleans. To this initial influx was added the sudden arrival of refugees coming from the Caribbean, most of them from Haiti, more than doubling the population of the city less than ten years after the Louisiana Purchase.³⁷

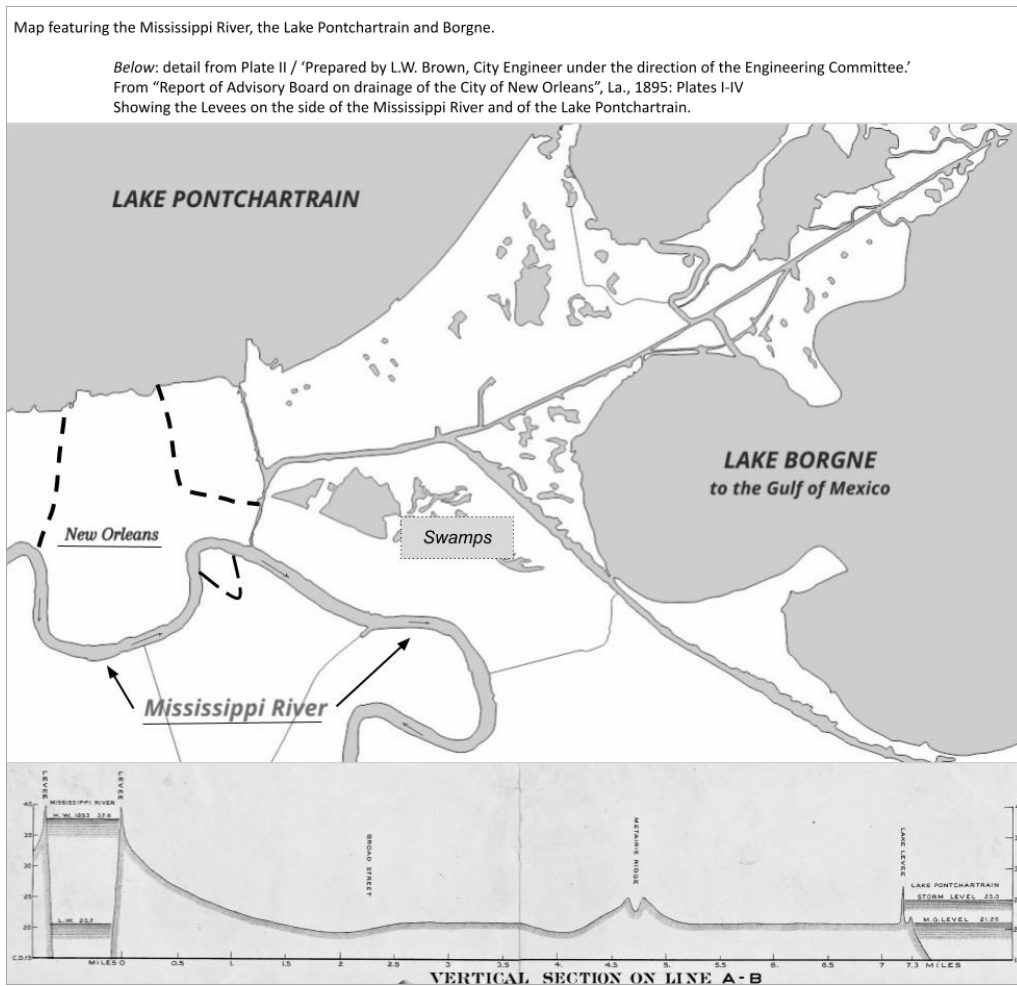
The rise of New Orleans as a metropolis put an unprecedented demographic pressure on the natural site of what had been up to that point a large town at best.³⁸ More than anything, it was water that seasonally endangered the city: the combination of heavy rains, hurricanes and floods brought chaos and death to the ‘Necropolis of the South.’³⁹ Time and again, the powerful Mississippi river and its dynamic delta inflicted heavy death tolls upon the growing metropolis. Most of those deadly episodes were the consequence of bank erosion, spring flooding and autumnal tropical storms. Further overbank flooding also originated from Lake Pontchartrain, located on the northern edge of the city. The city was partially inundated in 1791, 1799, 1816, 1849 and 1865. As a result, the development of new city boroughs, such as Marigny and the Garden districts, was heavily influenced by this pervasive water *milieu* and its demands. The traditional East coast houses that Anglo-Americans newcomers erected in the early nineteenth century were rapidly replaced by raised structures, built in higher density, and preferably on elevated ground.

³⁷ The population of New Orleans in 1803 was of about 8,000 inhabitants, with almost equal parts slaves, free coloured, and white people. By 1812, the urban population neared 25,000.

³⁸ Comparatively, Odessa already counted about 8,000 inhabitants ten years after its creation, even it is had been considered to have faced difficult beginnings. Yet a large portion of this number was made up of members of the garrison – while in New Orleans almost half of the urban population was enslaved.

³⁹ Campanella, *Bienville's dilemma*, 2008, 281.

Map 1.2 - Water Logics of Orleans Parish and the city of New Orleans



The tension between human occupation and water logics also durably impacted the cycles of life and death in both New Orleans and Odessa. New Orleans was sometimes described as a ‘wet grave.’⁴⁰ Paul Alliot, a French physician living in Louisiana at the turn of the century, observed:

“If New Orleans is not at all healthful, and if the bad air that its inhabitants breathe occasions fatal diseases, the reasons is due in part [...] to the abundance of stagnant water, which for lack of drainage, lies the whole year round in the cypress groves which surround the city, and corrupts the air;

⁴⁰ Sealsfield, Charles. *The Americans as they are: described in a tour through the valley of the Mississippi*. Vol.2 Hurst, Chance and Co., 1828, 144.

which becoming putrid, poisons all who live there. On the other hand, during the rainy season, the streets are in a frightful state.”⁴¹

Alliot reported that one year as many as 3,000 people perished from the rotten fish left on the streets following a flood episode.⁴² Eight yellow fever epidemics broke out just between the years 1796 and 1812.⁴³ The combination of floods and of the heat of the summer months created the ideal conditions for seasonal diseases of heightened intensity. Subsequently, a strict quarantine was enforced in many other American ports, which did not accept any cotton or other products coming from New Orleans. The economic destinies of the city were correlated with its physiological health.⁴⁴

The expansion of New Orleans increased sanitary and infrastructural problems; in Odessa, rapid urban growth made the need for fresh water more acute, while worsening the existing problems caused by drought, dust, and by the subsequent absence of a sewage system. More than anything, the water carted into the city from outside wells was expensive and often of dubious quality, and the high concentration of humans in crowded living quarters increased health risks. Among waterborne illnesses, tuberculosis was one of Odessa’s prime endemic diseases.⁴⁵ Although the southern situation of the city attracted people who hoped to find a cure in this more favourable climate, Odessa’s seaport functions facilitated the spread of lethal illnesses such as cholera, , which claimed many victims in the city’s overpopulated buildings with limited access to clear water. Cholera was a recurring cause of urban morbidity, especially

⁴¹ Robertson and Alliot. *Louisiana*, 1911, 63.

⁴² “The quantity of fish brought there by the water and which were left in the streets when the water subsided, rotted and more than three thousand inhabitants present during the years.” *Ibid.* 63.

⁴³ “Quelques réflexions faites sur la Nouvelle Orléans par le Citoyen Alliot médecin adressées au Citoyen Laussat, préfet colonial de la Louisiane” in *Historic New Orleans Collection*, New Orleans LA. (thereafter HNOC), MSS.125 - Pierre Clément de Laussat Papers (thereafter MSS.125), f.128, 14 April 1803.

⁴⁴ AMAE, 227CCC/1 f.194 – New York, 18 June 1816.

⁴⁵ In 1895, tuberculosis was responsible for 10 percent of all the deaths in the city (Herlihy, 2019, 105).

during the 1830s second cholera pandemic, while the city famously also endured some of the last major plague outbreaks in Europe.⁴⁶

The 1812 plague left 4,038 people infected and 2,632 dead out of a population of 20,000. This episode remained a haunting communal memory for the inhabitants of Odessa, who referred to it as one of the city’s foundational hardships. Despite slow infrastructural improvements, the 1829 plague still claimed 2,458 victims.⁴⁷ These epidemics and diseases, while remaining a hallmark of Odessa’s frontier identity, distinctively did not trigger pogroms. Yet the drawback of Odessa’s prosperity was very much the reason for its existence – the sea and the port brought diseases in, but the absence of water springs and drainage facilitated contamination. Despite high death rates, sanitary and economic goals were often in tension: year after year, representatives of the merchant guilds demanded the abolition of the strict quarantine rules, considered too conservative.⁴⁸

Odessa’s local dearth of water and dry marine environment meant that the city’s mortality rates were higher than in most other sizable cities of the Russian Empire, including St Petersburg and Moscow.⁴⁹ As in New Orleans, the physical extension of Odessa’s districts was conditioned by the levelling of the risk factors associated with water and diseases and the improvements of its urban infrastructure.⁵⁰ For example the whole Peresip district, located beyond the lagoons to the north of the city, was built in the second half of the century to

⁴⁶ These epidemics inspired the composition of a large-scale medical report in 1834.

⁴⁷ Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 100-113.

⁴⁸ “The advantages, however, to be so gained would be but trifling, and the disadvantages numerous: among which an increased tendency to the propagation of contagion cannot be considered as the least: for it should be constantly borne in mind, that Odessa, from its locality, is always liable to the introduction of the plague (...).” Morton. *Travels in Russia*, 1830. 198

⁴⁹ ONSL 971, 1843, n.7, 22 January / 3 February: “Odessa (...) unites the North and the South, the Occident and the Orient, childhood and civilization [as a result] the movement of its population, public health, and mortality in this city must present something unique and characteristic, which distinguishes them from analogous phenomenon in other cities, in a word an Odessa type. (...) You will see that mortality is much greater here than in many capital cities, because while in Petersburg the proportion of deaths in the population is about 1 to 25, in Moscow 1 to 32, in Berlin 1 to 36, in London 1 to 39 etc. in Odesa, 1 resident out of 24 dies annually.”

⁵⁰ In 1832, the Odessa council of physicians found that about a third of deaths were newborns under a month old. ONSL 971, 1832, n.37, 6/18 May.

accommodate the surge in population and developed through the draining of nearby marches (which reduced the breeding areas of disease-carriers such as *anopheles* mosquitoes). The planting of trees became a systematic policy to protect the soils from wind-induced erosion.⁵¹ In 1856, quarantine regulations were abolished to facilitate business, and reflected a new epoch in the city’s development and its mastery over its natural site.⁵²

Water commanded the early histories of Odessa and New Orleans and shaped the uneasy and evolving connection between their sites and situation. This ecological overview illustrated how each city’s geographical remoteness from their northern and eastern centres of political power provided them with a relative independence, which the proximity of open water enhanced. Sharing comparable early trajectories, New Orleans and Odessa remained, for at least a half-century, somewhat peripheral to the solid national core. This remoteness, combined with heightened interactions with foreign nations and cultures, contributed to the transformation of these border cities into regional centres, cosmopolitan models in an age of increased national awareness.

*

This chapter has underscored the environmental and technological factors that shaped the early development of Odessa and New Orleans, while also driving a disconnect between the two ports and their respective imperial centres. Additionally, Novorossiya and the United States alike allowed pockets of foreign settlement to be excluded from nationalizing rules, and these legal exemptions enhanced the preservation of cultural diversity while translating into administrative distinctiveness in urban settings – such as the use of a French-inspired Civil

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 1834, n.26, 30 March/18 April. “Plantation of trees on the Peresip to strengthen it – Notice.”

⁵² USNA II - M459. vol.2. f.147 – 30 September/ 12 October 1856: “The abolition of the Quarantine regulations has greatly facilitated business, and if not imposed again, and when the projected railroads are also established, I look forward to Odesa reaching a very high rank among the Commercial Cities of Europe.”

Code in New Orleans, and free-port privileges in Odessa. This differential rule reinforced existing geographic separateness and challenged demographic and cultural *sblizhenie* (rapprochement). Odessa and New Orleans also shared a common group of settlers, which contributed to characterize them as cities on the margin of their own nation.⁵³ New Orleans, through its historical foundation by French colonists in 1718, retained Frenchness and the use of the French language as an enduring characteristic. Once New Orleans became part of the United States, its imagined identity was apprehended as a potential obstacle to assimilation, a troubling sign of otherness. Odessa, governed by French *émigrés* during its two foundational decades and deriving its early growth from foreign immigration, cultivated a lasting Francophile and ‘Western European’ identity that transpired in its population, its institutions, but also in its self-presentation – making it a French cultural colony in the midst of a Russianizing empire.⁵⁴ Both Odessa and New Orleans derived their otherness from the layers of history and geography they were established in, but in both cases that otherness meant different things – Europeanness in Odessa while New Orleans representing the sum of its colonial past.

The next two chapters will individually focus on New Orleans and Odessa’s populations, highlighting how their demographic composition evolved over the first half of the nineteenth century, and telling the stories of the invention of an American Frenchness on the banks of the Mississippi and of a new model of Russianness in between land and sea.

⁵³ Ramer, Samuel C. "[Meditations on Urban Identity: Odessa/Odesa and New Orleans.](#)" *Kennan Institute Occasional Papers*, 202 (2008)

⁵⁴ Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994. More broadly, French was an elite language of high culture used not just by Odessa’s Francophone founding governors and officials (a few of them French *émigrés*), but across the Russian empire.

Chapter 2 The invention of American Frenchness in nineteenth century New Orleans.

“New York, Nueva Leon, Nouvelle Orléans, Nova Lisboa, Nieuw Amsterdam. Already in the sixteenth century, Europeans had begun the strange habit of naming remote places (...), as ‘new’ versions of (thereby) ‘old’ toponyms in their lands of origin. Moreover, they retained the tradition even when such places passed to different imperial masters.”¹

The early nineteenth century history of the nation – people sharing a language, history, ethnicity, or culture, overlapping with a state – has been generally Euro-prone, because it reflected criteria and dividing lines more directly applicable to European populations. Feelings of national identity were disseminated through a growing print culture, on par with literacy levels, and nationalism was often expressed through armed struggles against multinational polities, as it did during the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 (or ‘Spring of Nations’). Yet that epoch directly followed – and sometimes coincided with – an earlier movement for independence that had taken place in lands mainly colonized and settled by European powers, in which that concept of nationhood played an ambiguous part. The American war of Independence (1765-1804) was followed by the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), itself followed by a series Latin American revolutionary movements and wars (1808-1833) across the vast Spanish America.² In Canada, the province of Québec tried to rise against British rule in the 1790s, and again during the Patriot’s War in 1837-38. In these early revolutions, grievances were articulated around ideals of freedom, representation and equality, and a

¹ Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, London, 2006, 191.

² Other conflicts, this time more directly linked to national consciousness, happened at the same time: the Serbian Revolution (1804-1835), the Greek War of Independence (1821-1832), revolutionary uprisings in Spain, Italy, and Portugal in the 1820s, the ‘romantic’ nationalist revolutions of the 1830s in Belgian and Poland, as well as later revolutions in Congress Poland, the Italian states, Portugal, and Switzerland, and finally the Taiping Revolution against China’s Qing dynasty (1850-1864).

criticism of the hierarchical and exploitative nature of the imperial structure. While anti-colonial feelings would grow into nationalisms, these struggles were not unlike situations of civil war between members of a shared polity.³

Therefore, when independence was achieved in some of the American settler colonies - British, French and Spanish - the idea of nationhood had not yet matured and was framed from the settler European perspective. What did it mean to be American, as opposed to European? What did it mean to be a U.S. citizen, and no longer an Englishman, in the neighbouring northern provinces of Canada? Lastly, how did such identities relate to those of other national groups present in the newly independent territories? Although the United States claimed to be a land of equal opportunity, or at least a more liberal political space now that it had shed colonial rule, late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Americans had grown up in a world of privilege and difference, and were attached to preserve them, in particular through the enforcement of categories organized around skin colour and gender. That was particularly applicable to New Orleans once it became part of the United States since its port was the main marketplace for the sale of slaves; yet its location at the heart of imperial borderlands and the enduring legacies of its settlement history would postpone its transformation into an American city.

This chapter focuses on the consequences of the Louisiana Purchase on ethnicity and language, and the creation of new social categories in the context of contested and maturing concepts of nationhood and identity. In 1803, the United States of America were still composed of the initial thirteen East Coast colonies, as well as a few new states and western territories. Contrary to the social world of the British Caribbean, the East coast American mindset did not have any ready concept equivalent for the Latinate ‘Creole’ – as the second-generation born in

³ This was not the case of all colonies: when Haiti became independent, there was a willingness to cut ties ideologically and legally from France, as the Haitian Constitution of 1805 illustrates.

the Americas, of European and African origin, often (but not always) mixed, a legacy of the lasting relationships of these colonial societies. This denomination was commonly used across the French and Spanish Caribbean as well as in the wider Spanish Empire (with the term ‘Criollo’), and remained a flexible category designating both people and language. Emerging from decades of alternately French and Spanish rule, Louisiana belonged to a predominantly Caribbean and Latin social structure. Therefore, its purchase, and with it the coveted port of New Orleans, meant bringing into the United States social groups at odds with a lexical and conceptual vacuum. How was the American State, and the American settlers, to deal with the Creole inhabitants of New Orleans – of foreign origin, and speaking a foreign language? Since the American typology had little room for hybridity, these inhabitants could only be either French or American. How were Creoles, then, to be understood as both? This dichotomy was further complicated by the fact that French Creoles straddled a colour line that independent Americans defined increasingly rigidly. If the French Creoles could not be made Americans, would they be considered foreign settlers – competitors rather than fellow North Americans? This also questions the relationship that both groups developed with non-creole French migrants, who continued to arrive to New Orleans at least until the 1850s. From a reverse point of view, how were French Louisianians considered by France? Had they become Americanized Frenchmen? How was the ideological rationale of the sale of Louisiana articulated in terms of Frenchness and Americanness by the authorities of both Republics?

Understanding who the Louisianians were, and what they represented in this newly acquired space, will provide a more grounded basis to contrast discourses, fantasies, and historical realities. Firstly, this chapter will consider how the Louisiana Purchase and its fallout raised questions regarding the relationship of the former colony with its previous colonial governance, but also with the American continent. Then, a close study of demographics in antebellum New Orleans will underpin the changes in the concrete realities behind such porous

terminologies as ‘Creole,’ ‘Louisianian’, or even ‘French,’ and how they often included other ethnic and cultural groups. Ultimately, the transformation of the ‘French’ (Creole and foreign) inhabitants into Americans in this demographically changing context raises the question of the invention and alteration of the ‘Louisiana French’ category, as a response to the demands of the American milieu that created a third, hybrid and essentially trans-local identity.

2.1 The Louisiana Purchase: an example of colonial emancipation?

The city of New Orleans was founded by the French crown in 1718, thirty-six years after the 1682 formal declaration of French sovereignty over the vaguely defined land of Louisiana by Cavalier de la Salle, as part of the even less defined colony of New France. Eighty-five years later, the city, along with a territory that was to constitute fifteen individual states, was sold to the young United States. New Orleans had experienced a series of false starts and discontinued debuts; starting off as French, the city remained under Spanish rule for three decades, before being transferred back to France for less than a month, and finally being purchased by its recently independent American neighbour. Recurring novelty permeated the identity of the city, through its re-creation of European societies and its multiple baptisms: La Nouvelle Orléans, Nueva Orleans, New Orleans.

New France – *La Nouvelle France* - encompassed a vast stretch of sparsely settled land stretching across the American continent, with large indigenous groups, that was to be co-opted by Anglophone – and Anglo-prone – societies. In Canada, the province of Québec had been ceded in 1763 to the British Crown as a consequence of the Treaty of Paris that concluded the Seven Years War. This transfer of sovereignty was a military conquest, and the subsequent interactions between the English and French settlers in the Canadian province were antagonistic at best, neither side pursuing active assimilation with the other. On the contrary, a

clear and unrestricted opposition existed between the two communities, both parties implementing tactics of enforced and voluntary segregation – spatially, legally, and socially. More than in the United States, these relationships were also by-products of chains of events unfolding outside of the Province on a transatlantic scale: for historian Hilda Neatby, the continuing Anglo-French duel in Europe prevented the possibility of peaceful coexistence during the revolutionary decades, as it represented a potential direct challenge to the British political regime.⁴

This was not the case further south. As Quebec was surrendered, New Orleans and the lands composing French Louisiana had been ceded to the Spanish Crown through the secret treaty of Fontainebleau, signed by the allied powers during the Seven Years War. This helped restrain British ambitions in the Mississippi valley and allowed France to re-centre its efforts towards the protection of its valuable Caribbean possessions. There too, the possession-taking process was not without rallying cries of loyalty to the lost French sovereignty. Although the war ended in 1763, and the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau itself dated from 1762, in practice the Spanish Crown only took possession of the territory in 1768. This event was met by a popular rebellion across the city of New Orleans, followed by a severe and bloody repression at the hands of Governor and Captain-General Alejandro O'Reilly. The event has been described as the first uprising of Atlantic world Creoles against imperial intrusions.⁵ However, this revolt was also backed by discourses that emphasized what bound the French colonists together: their 'patriotic name', their 'laws', and their 'privileges:'

“And as resolved [as we are] to live and die under its dear domination as we are determined to do whatever the prosperity of its arms, the extension of its

⁴ Neatby, Hilda. *Quebec: The revolutionary age, 1760-1791*. Vol. 6. McClelland & Stewart, 1966.

⁵ Powell, *The Accidental City*, 159.

power, and the glory of its reign will require, we are begging her [France] to let us keep our patriotic name, our laws and our privileges.”⁶

In 1803, when the same sparsely populated territory, as well as its urban centre, were purchased by the United States, its inhabitants’ loyalties were widely different. In the four decades between 1762 and 1803, both France and the United States had gone through a revolution. While the latter was experimenting with republicanism and wrestling with the meaning of continental expansion for democratic rule, the situation in France was more unstable. Over a decade of military conflict at home and abroad, as well as several changes in government and an increasingly powerful First Consul had made France an unpredictable, if not inconstant metropole. French Louisianians were still attached to their transatlantic homeland, and at the turn of the century, they had embraced its republican ideals, which they shared with the Anglo-Americans. The end of Spanish rule was welcomed with joy, and festive celebrations accompanied the prospect of a reunion with the distant French metropole. In their address to Pierre-Clément Laussat, the French *préfet* in charge of the retrocession, seventy-six Louisianians from the Attakapas trading post west of New Orleans, celebrated what they saw as the fulfilment of Louisiana’s destiny: “Louisiana, finally incorporated into the French Republic, governed by a hero, guided by wise men, will then reach the level of prosperity that nature has intended for her.”⁷

A few months later, news of the Louisiana Purchase, putting an end to French rule before it even began, were received locally with bitter disappointment. Laussat reported on the diverging reactions of the three main portions of the population: the Anglo-Americans were ‘extravagant with joy,’ while the Spaniards were torn between happiness about seeing the territory escape from French hands and sadness at losing it themselves. However, the local

⁶ ANOM, FM f/3/25, Moreau de Saint-Méry – f.302-317: ‘Mémoire des habitants et Négociants de la Louisiane, sur l’Évènement du 29 8bre 1768.’

⁷ HNO, MSS.125 f.161 - 20 May 1803: Letter by the inhabitants of Attakapas.

francophone Creoles – second or third generation settlers, most of them middling traders or planters – experienced the Purchase as a betrayal: “The French, that is to say the nine tenth of the population, are stunned and devastated: they are only talking about selling and leaving [...] far away from this country.”⁸ The whole process of cession, retrocession, and purchase was commonly described as labyrinthine, and Louisianians felt abandoned.⁹ While the circumstances guiding these territorial transactions were above all geopolitical, based on economic and military calculations about France’s future in the Caribbean and especially the fate of Haiti, from within Louisiana these negotiations were perceived through a mostly emotional lens. A lexicon of affect, outrage, and lament recurred in letters and statements by old and new francophone residents of the colony. For instance, a priest at St. Martin des Attakapas (an Acadian community), Etienne Viel, thusly proclaimed his intentions, if Louisiana was no longer to be French,

“to go spend in France the few remaining days that Providence is still granting me. What would I do here but shorten my life, or sadly vegetate, which would be worse than death?”¹⁰

Anguished personal statements by the local population contrasted vividly with official discourse. The dispatches sent from Paris or Washington highlighted the similarities between the Louisianians and the Anglo-Americans, and the successful peacekeeping that both governments expected would result from the Purchase. The French *Ministre du Trésor Public* (Minister of Finance) Barbé-Maurois, emphasized in his letters to Laussat the common republicanism of both France and the United States, and saw in the strong relationship between France and its former colony a strong foundation for mutually beneficial exchanges between

⁸ HNO, MSS.125 f.161 - 8 August 1803.

⁹ HNO, MSS.125 f.239 - 13 August 1803.

¹⁰ HNO, MSS.125 f.239 - 13 August 1803. He did not hold on to his promise because he came back to France in 1812 to teach at the Jully academy near Paris.

the two republics.¹¹ The inhabitants of Louisiana, because they embodied the fusion of both countries, were deemed to represent and even personify a token of this renewed amity.¹² Denis Decrès, minister for the Navy and the Colonies, repurposed discourses about Louisiana's destiny to argue that it was actually inevitable for the territory to become American, and that the Purchase had ensured that France would relinquish its former colony in a peaceful manner:

“the situation of the French colonies, the need that they have of men, of culture, of help; finally the influence of the circumstances, foresight for the future and the intention to compensate by an advantageous agreement the unavoidable loss of a country that the war was about to put at the mercy of another nation; all these reasons have determined the government to transfer to the United States the rights they had acquired from Spain regarding the sovereignty and ownership of Louisiana.”¹³

France had moved away from a monarchical regime and had experimented with successive forms of republicanism over the previous fifteen years. From a rhetorical point of view, the transfer of the territory to a newly founded nation whose independence had been supported by France, and which had a political system promising more agency to the local population, could be presented in a rather positive light. Even more so, the Americans were an allied nation. They had opposed the British Crown themselves at a time when Anglo-French animosity was at its peak, as Britain was undermining France on multiple fronts throughout Europe but also across the Atlantic, and more acutely in the Caribbean. On the other hand, the United States' response to the French Republic, in the context of the ongoing insurrection in Saint Domingue, was gradually becoming more ambivalent. In the early years of the uprising, the US government actively supported the French colonial planters, sending \$726,000 to suppress the rebellion under George Washington's presidency (1789-97). During the next administration (1797-1801) this stance had started to soften, with growing support for

¹¹ HNOC, MSS.125 f.169 - 5 June 1803.

¹² HNOC, MSS.125 f.323 - 30 November 1803.

¹³ HNOC, MSS.125 f.174 - 6 June 1803.

Toussaint L'Ouverture's leadership and President John Adams' recognition of his government.¹⁴ Although, at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson's presidency was more reluctant towards St Domingue, the risk of losing the support of the United States in the Caribbean was too great, especially in the face of the threatening presence of British forces. The geopolitical context, in particular the precariousness of France's position towards Great Britain, was thus for the most part accountable for the hastiness of the Louisiana transaction.¹⁵

Amid general warfare, the diplomatic and commercial exchange of the Louisiana Territory between allied nations could thus be nuanced and presented as a strategic decision: rather than waging war all over the world, the French government felt the imperative to focus on its own homeland, and on the colonies whose destinies directly impacted its economy. Although Louisiana was considerably larger, it was scarcely controlled and little-known, while St Domingue's sugar plantations had made the fortune of France.¹⁶ Furthermore, as revolutionary disquiet and warfare spread over the French Caribbean possessions, anti-colonial discourses had started to gain ground. While being mindful of Louisiana's advantages for France, Laussat was aware of its geographic situation at the edge of lands that had broken free from their colonial status.

As a result, in his proclamation of 30 November 1803 to the 'Citizens of Louisiana', Laussat deliberately emphasized tropes of independence and self-determination. Rather than focusing on France's multiple frontlines, the debacle of its troops in Saint Domingue, or even American pressure to use New Orleans' port facilities (and continue the "Right of Deposit"

¹⁴ Matthewson, Timothy M. "George Washington's Policy Toward the Haitian Revolution." *Diplomatic History* 3.3 (1979): 321-336. The United States had deep commercial interests in Saint Domingue. At the outbreak of the insurrection in 1791, 16% of all the American exports were shipped to the French colony, with five hundred US ships involved in trade with Saint Domingue.

¹⁵ HNOC, MSS.125 f.239 - 13 August 1803: "But the war that is being heralded, the capture of St. Lucy, the blockade of the Martinique, from the Cape to St. Domingue, all of this was made to trouble my joy. [...] Good God! Cursed be England and its hellish manoeuvres! Let all the sorrows of this war fall upon its head and put it forever off its bad faith." (Etienne Viel to Laussat)

¹⁶ HNOC, MSS.125 f.323 - 30 November 1803.

granted to them by Spain in 1795), he chose to depict the Purchase as a coherent and progressive change of status. In his proclamation, Laussat claimed that the “sole consolation” he felt regarding the alteration of the initial mission that had brought him across the ocean (being a French *Préfet*) was that his new mandate (overseeing the transfer) would bring “even more advantages” to the inhabitants of Louisiana.¹⁷ In a syllogistic twist, Laussat became an advocate of colonial self-determination and independence – an ultimately rather ironic rhetoric, since the end of Louisiana’s colonial status was co-determined by the loss of the very profitable sugar-island of St. Domingue, soon to be the independent republic of Haiti. He argued in favour of the creation of an alternate and independent France on the shores of America: a neo-France, which would grow parallel to, but not be subjugated by, the Republic of France.

“Your Children, Louisianians, will be our children, & our children will become yours: you will send them to perfect their knowledge and talents in our midst, & we will send ours among them to increase your strengths, your work, your industry and to extract with you from the still untamed nature its tributes.”¹⁸

The terminology chosen glorified the Louisiana Purchase as a peaceful colonial self-emancipation process, opening up the territory of Louisiana to new opportunities beyond metropolitan monopoly: taking part in the American project would offer Louisiana “infinite freedom.”¹⁹ Akin to Ancient Greece, France was the “first [nation] in the modern centuries to give the example of a colony that she voluntarily emancipates.”²⁰ Like in the olden Greek Mediterranean world, a French Atlantic world would outlive the colonial Empire, in which a Frenchman and Louisianian would always recognize and acknowledge one another wherever they would meet. Laussat’s speech was steeped in eighteenth century ideals of Frenchness,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

embodied by the French language, as a symbol of gentility, civility, and cosmopolitanism that went beyond what a formal colonial empire could ever achieve.

On April 30, 1812, the State of Louisiana became the eighteenth state of the United States Federation, and its first constitution was promulgated. Had Louisiana (or at least the Territory of Orleans, which formed its geographical basis as a state) truly managed to altogether remove itself from its former colonial entanglements, and achieve independence? Could Louisiana be considered, anachronistically, ‘post-colonial’? Or was its purchase by the United States an act of imperial sovereignty? If we pursue this latter narrative over the tale of self-emancipation promoted by the French republic, new dynamics and power struggles emerge. Was the state of Louisiana the result of the colonization of the Mississippi delta by the Anglo-Americans, with its specific processes, acts of resistance, and strategic alliances forged along the way?

2.2 The Louisianians: demographic transformations and spaces of [un]freedom.

The definition of Louisiana’s population was not straightforward for contemporaries, who often failed to consider the overlaying of racial categories, the effects of a rising foreign immigration, the persistent gender imbalance, and the demographic evolution of a distinct Creole group. During the first ceremony of transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France, French official Laussat stated that “the domination of the Republic has been established in full right in the part of Louisiana that essentially forms its population and its culture: Louisiana only really exists there.”²¹ To him, that part of Louisiana was New Orleans - the territory’s northward expansion, host to no more than two dozen soldiers in the upper stations, was, at best,

²¹ HNOG, MSS.125 f.369 - 12 December 1803.

subsidiary. He dismissed these military settlements as quite forgettable and the native and slave populations remained secondary, if they were mentioned at all.²² Knowledge about the settler and indigenous population of Louisiana was not comprehensive spatially, nor were surveys conducted systematically. When the Louisiana territory was purchased by the United States, the latest demographic surveys had been carried out by the Spanish authorities, replicating the fluid *casta* system already in existence in other parts of the Spanish American empire. Most of the time, they focused on the Territory of Orleans – modern-day Louisiana – and the city of New Orleans. Therefore, in a mental synecdoche, the part was taken to represent the whole: although the Louisiana territory comprised a vast portion of land with ill-defined boundaries, statistical and physical knowledge of it was generally limited to its southernmost and deltaic area.

When new demographic charts were completed at the start of the American rule, they further simplified the description of the population of Louisiana by focusing mostly on New Orleans. While Spanish archives had established a complex system to record ethnicity and freedom, the American census divided the population into three set categories: whites, free people of colour, and slaves, as evidenced in Table 2.1

Table 2.1 First census of the City of New Orleans - 1803

Quarters	Whites	Free people of Colour (FPC)	Slaves	Total
First Quarter	745	203	546	1,494
Second Quarter	891	n/a*	951	1,842
Third Quarter	722	787	579	2,088
Fourth Quarter	440	219	225	884

²² HNOG, MSS.125, f.192 - 24 June 1803: “Louisiana, within the borders in which it was ceded to us, has a population of 50 thousand souls: half is black and enslaved, one fifth lives across Upper Louisiana, and the other four fifths are in Lower Louisiana from the Arkansas River until the sea.” In another letter from 1803, Laussat makes of list of “Indian” villages, counting about 84 settlements, inhabited by tribes of the “Choctaws, the Chickasaws, and the Alibamus.” HNOG, MSS.125 f.418, [1803, date unknown].

Quarters	Whites	Free people of Colour (FPC)	Slaves	Total
Suburb of St Charles	70	-	170	240
Suburb of St Louis	380	126	302	808
Sub-Total	3,248	1,335	2,773	7,356
White persons not domiciled	700	-	-	700
TOTAL	3,948	(1,335)	2,773	8,050
Percentages	49.4%	16.5%*	34.45%	100%
Free population (Total 5283)	74.7%	25.3%		

* data missing for the Second quarter; the proportion is likely to be slightly higher, although there were fewer FPC in this predominantly Anglo-American neighbourhood.

The tripartite American system did not accommodate overlapping categories, and the urban ethnic ratio was a matter of concern, as the number of white and non-white inhabitants was roughly equal when the Purchase took place, as revealed by the first census.²³ Further, the number of free people of colour, some of them long and well-established in the city, represented at least one fourth, but probably more, of the free population of New Orleans at the start of the nineteenth century.²⁴ The ratio between free coloured and white inhabitants starkly differed from that of the other states – especially in large cities – in both the North and the South.²⁵ This specific demographic breakdown also distinguished Louisiana from the counterpart it was often compared to: Québec. While in Québec exoticism and difference were strikingly embodied in the presence of a francophone and catholic population, in New Orleans the presence of important numbers of a well-integrated, wealthy, and urbane free-coloured

²³ Spear, *Race, Sex and Social Order*, 2009: Chapter Seven, ‘Codification of a Tripartite Racial System in Anglo-Louisiana’, 178-214.

²⁴ The number of free people of colour in the second quarter is missing, thus underrating the share of the free-coloured population.

²⁵ According to the U.S. Census, by 1810 there were as many as 100,000 free blacks across all the southern states – about 5 percent of the free population, but that share varied depending on the states.

population, who happened to speak French and whose ways of life stemmed from traditions coming from previous foreign rules, embodied the alien and foreign nature of the city.

By contrast, the demographic looked quite different when it did not focus on the city, but encompassed the whole Territory of Orleans (roughly the size of the present-day state). It similarly used ethnicity as its most significant category, and only broke down gender ratio among white residents (Table 2.2.):

Table 2.2 Territory of Orleans – 1806 ²⁶

<i>White men of 21 and upwards</i>	<i>White males below 21</i>	<i>White females of every age</i>	<i>Free men, women, and children of colour (FPC)</i>	<i>Slaves of every age and sex</i>	<i>Total</i>
6,884	7,166	11,443	3,350	22,701	55,534
12.4%	12.9%	20.6%	6%	40.9%	100%

In this graph the share of the free-coloured population is much more modest. Out of the 55,534 individuals recorded in this census, only 3,350 or 6 percent fell into the category of ‘Free men and women and children of colour.’ This discrepancy in numbers shows that the presence of – and tolerance for – free persons of colour was mostly an urban phenomenon. The two charts also indicate some of the distinctive features of the motley group Americans called the ‘Louisiana French’: they were only partially divided across lines of race and freedom, and they still lived in a settler environment, in which men far outnumbered women, free or unfree. Soon after the purchase, the definition of the Louisiana French was also further transformed by the immigration of other outsider groups.

In 1809, the arrival *en masse* of francophone St Domingue refugees, chased away by the Spanish from the island of Cuba, greatly impacted the demographic profile of the city and

²⁶ LaRC, 16, Box 6, f.14.

entrenched its tripartite order. 9,059 refugees arrived in New Orleans in one year, increasing the population of the city two-fold – to 17,242 in 1810. Historian Paul Lachance shows that, as a result, the city’s population increased at a rate of 15.3% between 1805 and 1810, instead of a previous rate of 4.1% between 1791 and 1805.²⁷ In January 1810 the mayor of New Orleans, James J. Mather, addressed a report on population distribution to Governor Claiborne, which revealed that two thirds of the newcomers were non-white, and that the free-coloured outnumbered white refugees in absolute numbers.²⁸ Despite the 1808 federal statute forbidding the introduction of foreign slaves into the United States, this rule was circumvented in the case of the St Domingue refugees: to Lachance, the retention of their slaves was one factor that helped the social and economic integration of the francophone refugees into Louisiana, and explained why large numbers permanently settled there rather than leaving for other colonial spaces or returning to France.²⁹

Beyond the St Domingue influx, population increase in New Orleans generally originated from outside immigration rather than from natural demographic growth. Throughout the late eighteenth and the early decades of the nineteenth century, regular epidemics, especially of yellow fever and smallpox, contributed to an increased morbidity among young adults (Chapter 1). However, the frequent arrival of passenger boats to New Orleans ensured a regular, and at times steep, population increase, which sometimes concealed the high mortality rates among immigrants. If the francophone refugees from St Domingue had contributed to a peak in immigration at the beginning of the 1810s, starting in the 1820s many white European immigrants, particularly from Ireland and Germany, started arriving in the city. Beyond the

²⁷ Lachance, “New Orleans ... A Demographic Profile”, 1989, 9.

²⁸ NOPL, *Moniteur de la Louisiane*, 27 January 1810: Mayor’s report to Governor Claiborne, January 18, 1810. Out of 9 059 refugees, 2 071 were white (22.9%), 3 102 were free persons of colour (34.2%), and 3 226 were slaves (35.6%) – 660 additional individuals were not accounted for in this statistic.

²⁹ Another reason that might have facilitated such a state of exception was that Louisiana was not yet a state in 1809-10, which allowed more space for negotiation and compromise than would have otherwise been possible after statehood.

demographic increase, this change in origins contributed to the transformation of population distribution in New Orleans’ tripartite racial system, because whiteness itself was ramified along religious and linguistic divides. Talking about ‘Louisianians’ therefore referred to a group muddled in contradictory tendencies: one of Anglo-Germanic immigration, which was typical in other places in the United States, and one of Afro-Creole demographic persistence.

Building on Paul Lachance’s data on the size and increase of New Orleans’ population by race and condition, the table below illuminates the shifting shares of the different population categories in a context of general demographic growth for the 1805-1820 period (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Size and annual increase of the population of New Orleans, by racial group and condition, 1805 — 1820³⁰

Year	Whites	%	FPC	%	Slaves	%	Total	Annual rate
1805	3,551 41.9%	↗ +78%	1,566 18.5%	↗ +216%	3,105 36.7%	↗ +91%	8,475*	4.1%
1810	6,331 36.7%		4,950 28.7%		5,961 34.6%		17,242	15.3%
1820	13,583 50%	↗ +114.5%	6,237 23%	↗ +26%	7,355 27%	↗ +23.4%	2,7176**	4.7%

*253 missing from the count; ** 1 missing from the count.

These figures show the free-coloured population of New Orleans tripling in the 1805-1810 period, as a result of the significant arrivals from St Domingue and Cuba. However, in the following decade the white population more than doubled, whereas the free-coloured population only increased by a quarter. The divergence in growth was caused by a series of factors: first, Louisiana and in particular New Orleans experienced a surge in white immigration from foreign countries – rather than from within the United States. Secondly, the United States’ 1807 federal prohibition on slave importations was only strictly applied after Louisiana obtained statehood in 1812. Thirdly, there were fewer legal possibilities for free

³⁰ Lachance, “New Orleans ... A Demographic Profile”, 1989, 3, 9.

persons of colour to settle in the State of Louisiana, or for slaves to obtain and secure a free status, leading to a stagnation in numbers, and then a decline due to emigration.³¹

Cutting across the categories of these early censuses, those who were called the ‘Louisiana French’ (ie. not a statistical category but a group loosely composed of native-born Creoles, foreign French, and after 1810 St Domingue refugees, all black and white) were difficult to classify. These were all historically and demographically distinct groups, subsumed into one category of Frenchness. The Louisiana Creoles were the descendants of French, Spanish, and Africans who had settled on the shores of the Mississippi one or two generations before; the foreign French had continued to live and trade in New Orleans but had been born across the Atlantic and were often sojourners; other French speakers included free coloured and slaves; while the St Domingue refugees were themselves a mix of French, Haitian Creoles, and Africans, free and unfree. The liminal character of the ‘Louisiana French’ thus circles back to some of the key questions of this chapter: where did this ‘French’ community fit? How did they frame their own Americanness, and how did they co-opt (or not) other social and ethnic groups? Tellingly, when we look at these different charts and surveys, the Creole community is not outlined, because it goes across categories.

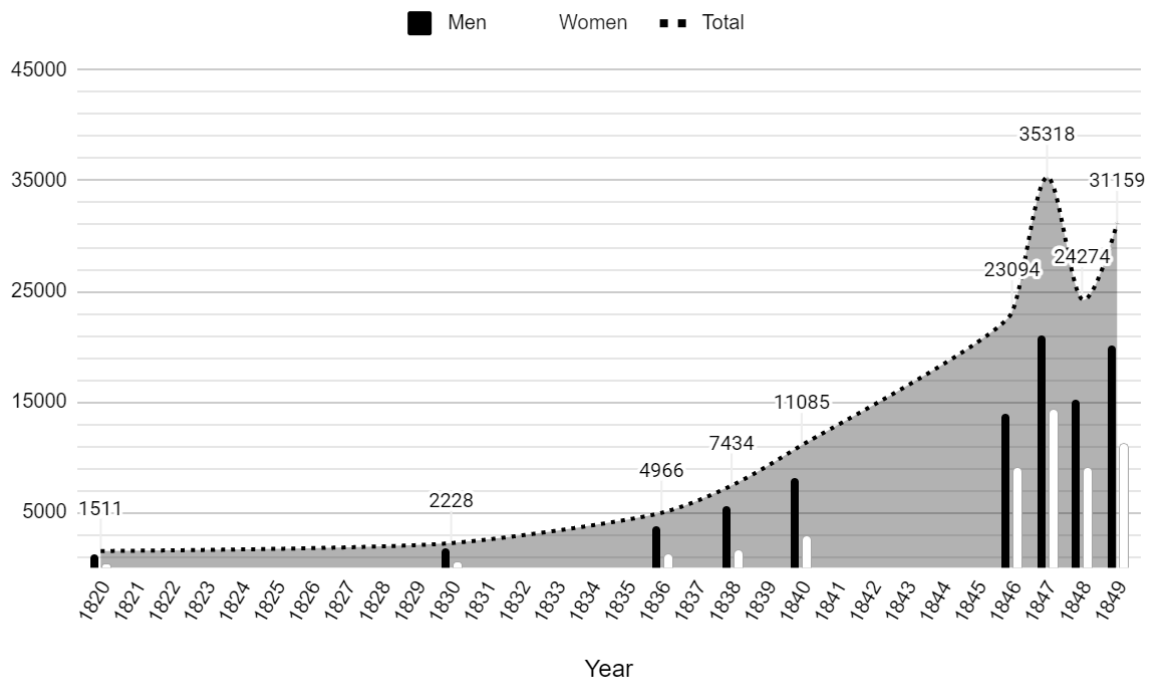
On the other hand, what was much more systematically recorded from 1827 onwards was the national origins and gender of passengers arriving to New Orleans, many of them coming as migrants – and most importantly as free settlers.³² These abstracts illustrate the rise – and later demise – of French immigration to New Orleans, which somewhat contrasted with

³¹ Quigley, Bill, and Zaki, Maha. “The Significance of Race: Legislative Racial Discrimination in Louisiana, 1803-1865.” *Southern University Law Review* 24, no. 2 (1997): 145-205.

³² Between 1820 and 1875, the city of New Orleans recorded quarterly abstracts of passenger lists, which were provided by vessels docking in New Orleans. The information that was recorded fluctuated across the decades, and several of the quarterly reports are now missing. Nonetheless these abstracts provide interesting insights into the diversity of passengers arriving to New Orleans. Although it might sometimes be unclear whether the country recorded is the one from which they originally embarked, the records regularly specify: ‘country to which they belong.’ More rarely, mention is made of the ‘country of which they intend to become inhabitants.’ The systematic recording and statistical compilation of the abstracts ceased after 1850, probably because of a change in methodology or personnel.

the overall trend of immigration (Graph 2.1). Across all national groups, the total numbers of passengers increased steeply between 1820 and 1850, especially in the second half of the 1840s. Further, when focusing on the gender ratio, the abstracts suggest the continuation of a migration pattern typical of settler environments, with a majority of male immigrants, constituting the two thirds or more of the incoming population. The general share of female immigrants remained more moderate throughout the period, even though figures for women increased in absolute numbers.³³

Graph 2.1 Quarterly abstracts of Passenger Lists of Vessels arriving in New Orleans, LA - Summary 1820-1849 [full years]³⁴



³³ Not all migrants stayed in New Orleans, but some of that tendency remained.

³⁴ Figures from USNA, M(0)272 – ‘Quarterly Abstracts of Passenger Lists of Vessels arriving at New Orleans, LA, 1820-1851.’ This graph reflects figures for years that provided abstracts for all four quarters, and in this case, they conveniently frame almost three decades and contribute to show significant evolutions in immigration patterns over twenty years. The other abstracts, although they only provide an incomplete calendar view, also tend to confirm this gender divide and the steep increase in numbers.

Graph 2.1, while also reflecting an increase in worldwide mobility, demonstrates that American New Orleans displayed demographic characteristics typical of booming settler cities. Between 1820 and 1840, the absolute number of passengers increased by 86.4%. Between 1840 and 1849 only, it increased by 181%. In 1820, women constituted 25% of the passengers arriving by vessel; in 1830 they represented 19.2% of all passengers (partly because a wave of refugees from Mexico tipped the balance towards men). In 1840, their share came up to 26.4% and in 1849, they represented 35.7% of the incoming migrants, showing a slow move towards a greater demographic balance. Yet, despite an undeniable increase in numbers, immigration to antebellum New Orleans remained primarily a man's business.

To see the impact of this immigration on the population of New Orleans, it is interesting to note that while the proportion of white males increased from 52% of the male population in 1805 to 70% in 1820, the proportion of white women in the general female population remained at 33% for the same period.³⁵ This discrepancy indicates that if there was female immigration, it was only enough to compensate for the high death rates of New Orleans' disease-prone environment. The tripartite shares in the female population remained surprisingly stable, especially when compared with the evolution of the male population. However, the imbalanced sex ratio among white immigrants and residents was paralleled by an inverse ratio among free persons of colour and slaves of New Orleans. Among the free coloured population, women regularly outnumbered men - and represented 25% of the whole female population in 1820, while their male counterparts comprised only 10% of the men.³⁶ Even when the arrival of the St Domingue refugees in 1809 caused a free-coloured population surge of 216% while the slave

³⁵ Lachance, "New Orleans ... A Demographic Profile", 1989, 21

³⁶ *Ibid*, 21. The female majority among the coloured population was enhanced by the ban from entry into the Louisiana territory of all men of colour older than 15 in 1806, and of all free persons of colour in general in 1807.

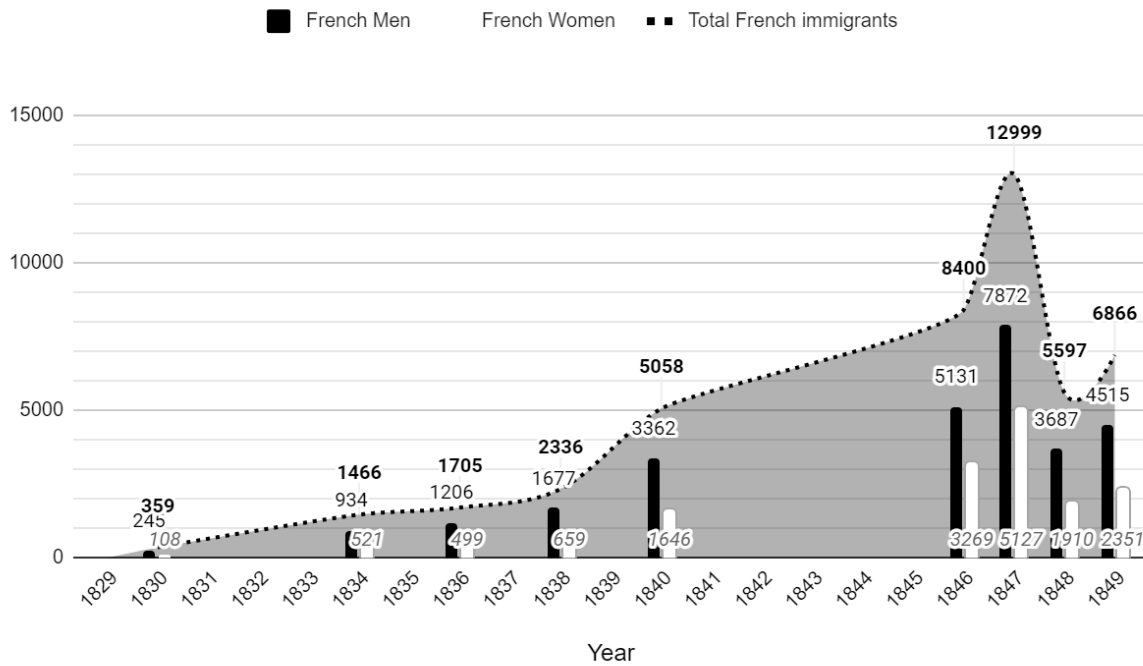
population augmented by 91%, the sex ratio of the coloured newcomers was in favour of women: according to D. Everett, there were only 311 adult men for 1,000 adult women.³⁷

A second period started in the 1820s, with growing immigration, restrictions on free coloured population, and changing gender divides. In this transformation, the group of foreign French contributed to a widening of the definition of the Louisiana French, because of their social potential. Carl A. Brasseaux found that French indigents, both urban and rural, contributed a significant portion of French immigration to New Orleans in the decades after the Louisiana Purchase, with a sharp increase in the 1820s and 1830s, followed by a relative decline up to the Civil War.³⁸ Although the gender imbalance remained an enduring feature, the absolute numbers in women also kept increasing, and these numbers can be nuanced when put in perspective across the different national groups of migrants.

³⁷ Everett, Donald, “Emigres and Militiamen: Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1815,” *Journal of Negro History*, 38 n.4 (1953), 384-85.

³⁸ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, 25-26.

Graph 2.2 Ratio of French Men and Women among the French Immigrants arriving in New Orleans [1829-1849]³⁹



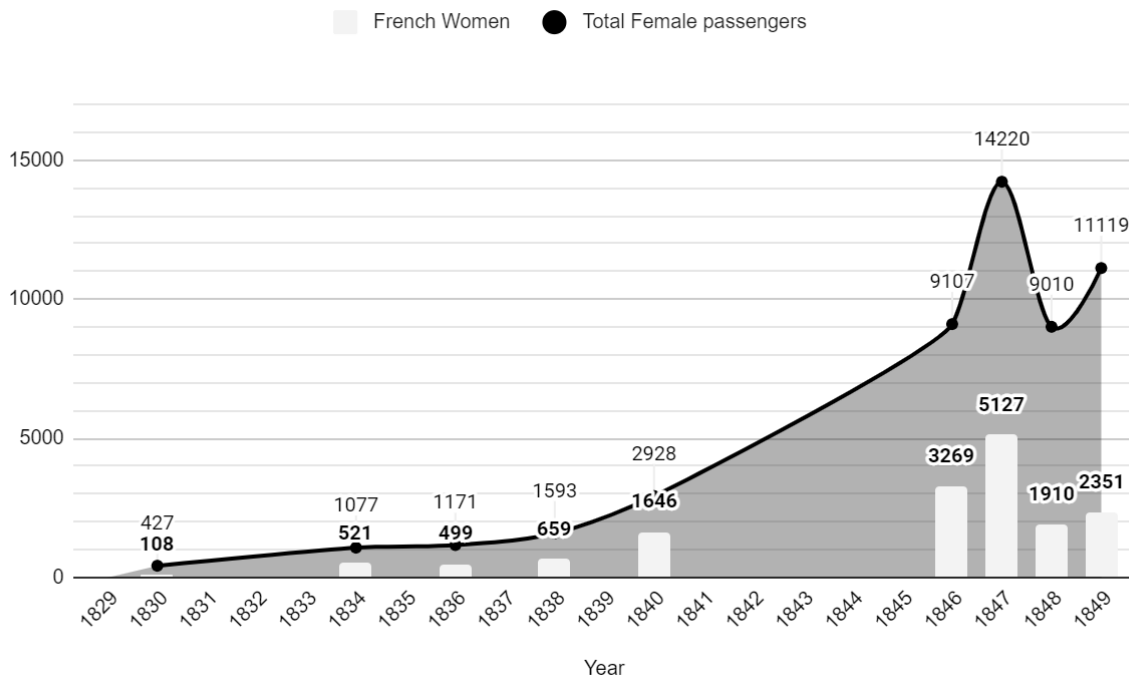
Among French passengers, Graph 2.2. shows a more balanced gender ratio between men and women. The share of French female immigrants was systematically more important than the average gender ratio observed among the total number of passengers: in 1830 French women represented 31% of the French migrants; this share increased to 32.5% in 1840, and 39.7% of all French passengers in the peak year 1847. In addition to being well represented among their national group, Graph 2.3 shows that French women represented a relative – if not always absolute – majority among female migrants.⁴⁰ The share in French female passengers represented between two-fifths and two-thirds of all the women coming to New Orleans from abroad. In 1830, French women counted for 25.3% of all female immigrants; they were 48.4%

³⁹ Figures from United States National Archives I, Washington D.C. (thereafter USNA I), M(0)272, Quarterly Abstracts of Passenger Lists of Vessels arriving at New Orleans, LA, 1820-1875 (thereafter M(0)272).

⁴⁰ The figures provided only represent years for which all four quarterly abstracts were available, but in some individual quarters the share of French women in the total number of female immigrants was even more important.

in 1834, 56.3% in 1840, before dropping to a more modest share – 36% in 1847 and down to 20% on the eve of the 1850s.

Graph 2.3 Share of French Women among Female Immigrants [1829-1849 - full years]⁴¹



Such a stability in numbers indicates that the French-speaking population remained relatively homogeneous; despite a larger number of males, French immigrants tended to be more prone to social reproduction and endogamy than other migrant groups. The considerable number of French women arriving in New Orleans also suggests that this migrant group might have included more families or pairs travelling together across the Atlantic or from the Caribbean. The migration of family units and extended networks, rather than individual passengers, would also further encourage, once in New Orleans, encounters and sociability within local francophone circles, particularly the native Creoles.

⁴¹ Figures from USNA I, M(0)272.

In absolute numbers, French immigrants were not the largest national group emigrating to New Orleans, but the high number of French women and the relatively stable gender ratio that existed among their group were factors that contributed to the persistence and re-creation of pre-Louisiana Purchase tendencies in the realms of socialization and culture. Some other national groups (Germans or Irish) had similarly balanced gender ratio, but their absolute numbers remained modest for the 1820-1840 period, only exploding demographically in the late 1840s and early 1850s. The largest groups of migrants in absolute numbers came from the regional Caribbean world, with contingents of Cubans and Mexicans disembarking in New Orleans – yet among them, women were scarcely found.

By the mid-century, the demographic dynamics at play in New Orleans had been transformed, as illustrated by the seventh census of the United States (Table 2.4). This census systematically recorded the place of birth of the city’s inhabitants and indicates that the population was composed mostly of Louisianian and foreign input; on the other hand, the city’s demographic Americanisation remained moderate.⁴² In 1850, only 53% of the population of New Orleans was US born, when 47% was foreign-born. Among the US-born population, the majority was made of local Louisianians and only 17% of its inhabitants came from outside the state. Internal migration across the United States was therefore limited, and most of the immigration to New Orleans came from abroad. By 1850, the three largest foreign-born groups were the Irish (21%), the Germans (12%) and the French (6%).

Table 2.4 Population of New Orleans in 1850 - places of birth and shares of the different national groups⁴³

Origin	TOTAL	Absolute total	Share in the total population
US Born	50464*	95072	53.08%
Of which LA born	34101		35.87%

⁴² De Bow, J. D. B. *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*. Washington, D.C: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, 1853, 399.

⁴³ Based on *Ibid.* 399.

Origin	TOTAL	Absolute total	Share in the total population
Born outside of LA	16363		17.21%
Foreign born	44608		46.92%
Of which French	7522		5.91%
Of which Irish	20200		21.25%
Of which German	11220		11.80%

* inclusive of 97 Arkansans, 21 Iowans, 164Texans

Regrettably, these statistics do not provide detailed information about the gender breakdown in the different foreign-born groups. The large proportion of Irish and German-born residents reflected the acceleration of wider immigration movements of indigents and agricultural workers from these two regions. However, immigrants from Irish and German lands also settled across the United States as a whole, and not New Orleans specifically, although many arrived there since it was at the time the second most important port of entry into the country. On the contrary, the Crescent city attracted a larger share of French migrants than its main rival – New York – during the antebellum period, welcoming between 30 and 65 percent of all French immigrants to the United States.⁴⁴ Contrasting with the homogeneous social composition of migrants arriving from Germany and Ireland, French-born residents were also a more complex assemblage moulded by the ripple effects of the French revolutionary troubles (which caused the influx of Saint Domingue refugees in the 1810s), but also of the end of the Napoleonic Empire in 1815 and the Bourbon Restoration, as well as the revolutions of 1830 and 1848.⁴⁵ However, fifty years after the Louisiana Purchase, while New Orleans had not become predominantly Anglo-American, it was no longer a French city.

⁴⁴ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, 26.

⁴⁵ Building on figures from the port authority records, Brasseaux concluded that most of the French immigrants to the Crescent City throughout the 1820s and 1830s were ‘merchants, artisans and professional people,’ with at least 51.8% of all French immigrants employed in the mercantile sector. However, Brasseaux points out, this professional breakdown did not last, and in the latter part of the antebellum period, the share of French farmers grew steadily: between 1848 and 1852, farming was the occupation of 74% of all French immigrants who had disclosed their profession. Brasseaux, 2005, 27.

To sum up, the Saint-Domingue migration of 1809 had been a key factor in shaping the antebellum demographic composition of New Orleans: it solidified the basis of the existing three-caste system and made it last a lot longer than was intended by the American authorities, whose plan had been to encourage white and anglophone migration to the new American territory. It also created a versatile Gallic community that went across the colour line and states of freedom and unfreedom and was willing, for a time, to join forces in competing, if not resisting, the influx of English-speaking and Germanic immigrants. The later persistence of French-speaking passengers coming into the harbour of New Orleans, some of them taking up residence in the city, built upon an already existing Franco-Gallic presence. If, in 1850, the seventh United States Census solely counted 7,522 French-born inhabitants, it did not mean that the offsprings of previous generations of migrants did not carry on the linguistic and social traditions of this group despite their categorisation as Louisiana-born (more on the cultural traditions and institutions in chapters 5, 6, and 7). The insalubrious environment of New Orleans, with endemic yellow fever and regular cholera epidemics, also took the lives of many newly arrived migrants. Equally, some of the newcomers were only transient and made their way to the Midwest or the Louisiana countryside. Yet the greater majority remained within the city, either because of a lack of economic means, or because it offered more appealing opportunities, creating an enduring Louisiana Creole and French community – across different nationalities.⁴⁶ The evolving demographics of the antebellum Crescent City show that, far from constituting a breaking point, the Louisiana Purchase marked the start of a re-definition of New Orleans' popular identity – as a 'French', or at least non-American city. Contemporaries were

⁴⁶ Until the early twentieth century, there was no naturalization requirement in the United States; such a procedure was only necessary if a foreign individual wished to run for office or vote - and this, again, only concerned the male population. For women to be naturalized, no court action was needed: they would get the citizenship of either their husbands or fathers. Prior to 1906, the question of nationality is therefore a difficult factor to assess, as citizenship and what it entailed was still being debated among Americans.

well-aware of this incongruity, and they debated time and again the problem of making the French Louisianians American.

2.3 Making the French Americans

The purchase of Louisiana immediately raised concerns across the United States about the territory's French-speaking population – even though the newly acquired land had been under formal Spanish jurisdiction for almost four decades. Most of the disquiet was articulated around the deeply foreign characteristics attributed to the French settlers. The 'Louisiana French' themselves defined their Creole identity in contrast with the Anglo-Americans, and it was this need for comparison that triggered identity creation. Carl A. Brasseaux argues that the French language was used as a tool of "cultural synthesis" in the face of greater alterity, and this synthesis was very much an American product.⁴⁷ The creole frame of reference unified three demographic categories, otherwise defined as separate in the American jurisdiction: white Creoles, coloured Creoles, and black Creoles.

The first category, white Creoles, was essentially composed of the descendants of French and Spanish settlers, as well as more recent immigrants coming from the wider Caribbean, and South European newcomers of Latin origins. Some of them engaged in commerce and in the plantation economy, while a substantial portion worked in urban trades – mainly printing, newspapers, or the municipal and (later) state administrations. The second group, the Creoles of colour, were often the descendants of mixed-race couples who had gained freedom or were born free. Most lived in the city, and sometimes owned property in land and slaves.⁴⁸ Lastly, black Creoles were often descendants of French-speaking slaves. Culturally,

⁴⁷ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, 32-33.

⁴⁸ Aslakson, Kenneth R. "Owning so as not to be owned," in Aslakson K.R. *Making Race in the Courtroom*, New York, 2014 127-152.

they were akin to the Creoles of colour, being almost exclusively francophone and baptized Roman Catholics: not all of them were slaves, although bondage was still the condition of the majority. In the territory of Orleans, freedom and slavery followed dividing lines more fluid than in the other slave societies of the South. The existence of land-owning and slave-owning Creoles of colour also meant that the framing of social class along racial lines was called into question. In New Orleans as in Louisiana, ‘French’ or ‘Creole’ started acting as an epitome for all that was Catholic, but also Latin, in a mixture of a Mediterranean-Caribbean world and trans-Atlantic migrations. The Creole identity also revolved around the shared preservation of a non-Anglo dialect, before the category was reframed more narrowly towards the mid-century.

On the other hand, ‘American’ was rarely defined as a Creole identity, in the sense of settler-born generations, and it explicitly othered neo-native Louisianian inhabitants, regardless of background. More importantly, ‘Creole’ in the American period did not encompass the same populations and individuals as in the colonial times, and it became a fluid identifier of what was un-American in Louisiana. Because ‘Creole’ initially grew as a more encompassing identity, it provided an alternate crucible or melting pot for a different and imagined Americanism. Creole identities have a long historiography in the North American and Caribbean context, and in this space being a Louisiana Creole did not mean the same as Haitian or Jamaican Creole, especially as creole slaves born in the Americas were the minority in Louisiana.⁴⁹ In New Orleans, Creole delineated a new social category that challenged notions of race and freedom. That category would be deeply transformed by the consequences of the Louisiana Purchase and the Haitian Revolution. In 1803, the assumed demographics of the Louisianians fueled contemporary discourses about their character, underscoring the

⁴⁹ See Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, Bethencourt, Francisco. *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*. Princeton; Oxford, 2013; Johnson, Jessica Marie. *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*. Early American Studies. Philadelphia, 2020. Similarly, Creole has a different meaning when it is used by historians and applied to the colonial era, or when it is deployed by people of colour in the Atlantic world to describe themselves.

intersections of race and politics, and how they related to the divisive question of language. Writing at the time of the transfer, Pierre-Clément Laussat perhaps foresaw the impending animosity that would befall both sides:

“Do not fool yourself: the Louisianian has a profound antipathy for the Anglo-American, this is due to wide-ranging differences in essence, customs and prejudices.”⁵⁰

Laussat was also aware of the prejudices held by the Anglo-American population against a number of ideas and moral flaws associated with Frenchness; by extension, these ideas directed how they related to the Louisianian settler population. Overlooking shared experiences of settling and living on the North American continent, Anglo-Americans focused instead on exacerbating discourses of inherent difference. From the American point of view, such differences were not to be accommodated, and could only be overcome through a settlement policy that would Americanise the foreign land of Louisiana. Just two years after the Purchase, in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, political philosopher Thomas Paine expressed serious concerns about granting statehood to Louisiana. He believed that it was only “when the Emigrations from the United States into Louisiana becomes equal to the Number of French inhabitants [that] it may then be proper and right to erect such part where such equality exists into a constitutional state; but to do it now would be sending the American settlers into exile.”⁵¹

Louisiana, and especially the French-prone Territory of Orleans, thus had to be Americanised, and for this purpose it needed settlement policies. Paine had a very clear vision of the ideal settler he wished to bring into Louisiana. In his words, “the people of the Eastern States [were] the best settlers of a New Country.” Their movement towards the Mississippi valley was already ongoing, going back to before the purchase.⁵² Aware that the majority of

⁵⁰ HNOC, MSS.125 f.282 - 10 October 1803.

⁵¹ Thomas Paine to Thomas Jefferson, 25 January 1805, in McClure James P. and J. Jefferson Looney (eds.) *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008–2018, accessed 7 May 2018.

⁵² Thomas Paine to Thomas Jefferson, 25 January 1805, *Ibid.*

the demographic growth of the United States still proceeded from foreign immigration, Paine also considered “German peasantry [to be] the best,” whereas he condemned the Irish for being dissolute, and “more fitted to live in Cities than to be cultivators of new lands.”⁵³ Yet a large-scale input of non-Gallic foreigners seemed to him the most favourable and expedient option to transform and integrate Louisiana - and to make an American land out of it.

“These would be the best people, of foreigners, to bring into Louisiana, because they would grow to be Citizens. [...] the present French inhabitants would soon be a minority, and the sooner the better for they give symptoms of being a troublesome set.”⁵⁴

But why was there such an animosity, or at least a flagrant wariness, against the French population? And how was the immigration of foreigners from other European countries – Germany, Ireland – going to help Americanise the land? This apparent contradiction highlights the conceptual confusion that the French Louisianians as a group represented to the Americans. As previously mentioned, East Coast American modes of thinking had no concept of Creole identity and could not grasp the implications of the American Frenchness of the inhabitants of New Orleans and its surrounding territories. Although processes of Creolisation were familiar and accepted in the wider Caribbean region – be it Spanish, French or even British – this fluidity did not fit well in the dichotomic mindset that presided over the early American Republic national discourse. Most often, individuals such as Creoles would be considered alien. The formation of ‘American identities’ stemmed from the tension between an Atlantic-imperial affiliation and a North-American identity that relinquished that link and was constructed on the ground – a distinction needed to solve the Revolutionary crisis of

⁵³ Thomas Paine to Thomas Jefferson, 25 January 1805, *Ibid.* 193. French Préfet Laussat also recommended bringing German labourers to Louisiana, praising the colonists of the German Coast (*Côte des Allemands*) as the best in the colony and asking that 1,000 to 1,200 families be recruited annually. HNOC MSS.125, 25 June 1803. The preference for German settlers was shared in Russia, as the Duke of Richelieu facilitated the creation of many German ‘colonies’ or villages, especially around the Molotchna River (*Molochnaya reka*).

⁵⁴ Thomas Paine to Thomas Jefferson, 25 January 1805, *Ibid.*

identification.⁵⁵ For this reasons, American identity – and by extension nationality – was born out of evolving inclusionary and exclusionary characteristics.⁵⁶ That issue of identification explains why, increasingly, Americanness did not allow for any exceptions; an Americanized Frenchness was perceived as a challenge to the United States’ sovereignty.

At the core of the blossoming (white) American civic identity was the idea of voluntary choice: the independent Republic welcomed all new members, easing their affiliation into the American polity. But French Louisianians – the Creoles – differed from this group of voluntary migrants: they were already white residents in Louisiana at the time of its purchase, while Americans were the settlers moving in. This tension meant that they could not possibly, in the American mind, be thought as both French and American. In turn, the ‘Louisiana French’ settler identity also stemmed from this tension, and seemingly emerged more as a response to the Louisiana Purchase and the attendant project of Americanization, than as the expression of a prior sense of belonging. The sense of connection to France that had existed through colonial times cannot be equated to the neo-Frenchness that was constructed in response to assimilation narratives. ‘Louisiana French’ was not a pre-existing identity, but its emergence amongst Creole Louisianians enabled more cultural commonality between them and the flux of French national and colonial immigrants in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Old inhabitants and new settlers coalesced in an imagined community, which only revealed its own contradictions when new discourses emerged that were less accommodating of hybridity. The Louisianians, as a Francophone settler group, fitted uneasily within greater American narratives of integration, assimilation and melting pot.⁵⁷ In 1803, the existing French Creole

⁵⁵ Huffman, John, Chaplin, Joyce E., Armitage, David, and Johnson, Walter. *Americans on Paper: Identity and Identification in the American Revolution*, 2013, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

⁵⁶ Gerstle, Gary, “The Contradictory Character of American Nationality: A Historical Perspective,” in Nancy Foner and Patrick Simon, eds., *Fear, Anxiety, and National Identity: Immigration and Belonging in North America and Western Europe* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2015), 33-5

⁵⁷ The “melting pot” metaphor first emerged in the United States in 1782, in the *Letters from an American Farmer* by J. Hector, St. John de Crèvecoeur, a settler of French origin himself: “What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European,

population was perceived, from the American point of view, as interlopers - or as the ‘troublesome set’, as depicted by Paine.

This tension prompted an uneasy relationship surrounding the idea of assimilation. Although French Louisianians, or Creoles, were more American than European, they were from the outset antagonized by the Anglo-Americans as foreign competitors, who had to be replaced, or at least superseded numerically and culturally. On the other hand, because most French Louisianians had been born in the colony, many felt that their own fate and livelihood were linked more directly with the American continent than France. They were American, and they were French, but the definition of the French Louisianians before, during, and after the Louisiana Purchase became a story of disruption – the end of colonial rule – rather than a story of continuity. However, while the territorial Purchase failed to challenge the political, cultural, and economic hierarchies of empire, especially through the continuous commitment to the colonial institution of slavery.⁵⁸ This begs the question: was the purchase the end of the colonial framework for Louisiana? And did these shifts at the centre really make a difference to the people living in New Orleans, through changes in demographics, political rule, and economic activities?

The Americanness of the Louisianians was a fact from the French point of view. Pierre-Clément Laussat characterized the Louisianians as ‘*Franco-Américains*’ in his letters to Paris: although the “inhabitant, that is, the landlord, the colonist, the real Louisianian” had very unhappily welcomed news of the transfer, Laussat was also astonished by the deeply American

or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds (...). Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.” (St. John De Crèvecoeur, J. Hector. *Letters from an American Farmer*, London, 1782)

⁵⁸ For a similar discussion, Kristen Schultz (*Tropical Versailles*, 2001) offers an interesting study of the transfer to the Portuguese court to Rio de Janeiro (1807-1820), which ‘denaturalised’ Brazil’s colonial status.

character of these formerly French subjects: “It is difficult to imagine to what extent the native French becomes in these lands an Anglo-French.”⁵⁹ He further contrasted the French Louisianans - or French Americans - with the French settlers in the Caribbean. To him, the Louisianians were nothing like the Caribbean planters, who were “endlessly enriched by their activities and their climate, and always miserable in their own prodigality and development.” Rather, the majority of the Louisianians were seen as either urban or trading with indigenous populations, and few of them, beyond the direct vicinity of New Orleans, were planters. To these urbanites were also added the descendants of the Acadians, a group of French settlers forcibly removed by the British from eastern Canada’s maritime provinces after they were surrendered in 1763 – this French-speaking group, mostly rural, settled in Western Louisiana and parts of Texas. This distribution suggested that their colonial society was initially not as mixed as that of the Caribbean, and more scattered. Part of Laussat’s knowledge of Louisianians came from his sustained correspondence with individuals from all corners of the territory. In a letter received from New Madrid (present-day Missouri) in what was known as the Creole Corridor that connected rural areas outside of the bustling economic life of New Orleans, his correspondent, Mathurin Michel Amoureux, a recent settler from Brittany and trader, encouraged the further settlement of free cultivators.⁶⁰ He described the French families already living in the areas as “almost all living in villages, very few of them engaging in agriculture” because they were busy with “trade with the savages, navigation on the Mississippi and the neighboring rivers.” Writing when he believed France would reclaim Louisiana, Amoureux nonetheless echoed Paine: to settle the territory, he expressed a preference for

⁵⁹ HNOG, MSS.125 f.282 - 10 October 1803.

⁶⁰ HNOG, MSS.125 box 6, f.234, 4 August 1803. The term ‘creole corridor’ was first used by Gitlin, Jay, and Lamar, Howard R. *Negotiating the Course of Empire: The French Bourgeois Frontier and the Emergence of Mid-America, 1763–1863*, 2002, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. See also: Villerbu, Soazig. “Trois âges d’une migration française au coeur du continent de la Haute Louisiane espagnole des années 1790 au Missouri de 1860.” [*Three ages of French migration at the heart of the continent: from the Spanish Upper Louisiana of the 1790s to the State of Missouri in 1860*] *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 73.1-2 (2019): 71-101.

German cultivators and American migrants in addition to the French, not to replace these communities, but to help limit slavery and transform Louisiana into a ‘whiter’ territory, less prone to the social mixing that could be observed in the city of New Orleans.⁶¹

Laussat concurred with this vision: although the diplomat expressed a clear preference for Louisianian settlers over French Caribbean planters, he remained, similarly to his American counterparts, reluctant when seeing the demographic mixing of New Orleans’ city dwellers. Laussat depicted a city engulfed in a complete state of moral vegetation or inactivity; he thought its inhabitants were corrupted by the climate and its heightened interactions with the Caribbean region. While the Louisianians praised France and swore allegiances to the Republic, they were thought of as French people of a different stock – Creoles of the French kind – and the city of New Orleans epitomized this hybridity.

“This city is a bad mix of many corrupted beings, of any blood, any colour, any nation.”⁶²

Yet Laussat also described these Americanized French inhabitants as unprepared for a full transfer to the rule of the United States. In doing so, he distinguished the Louisianians from the political habitus of the American Federation and the French Republic alike: Louisianians were portrayed as still accustomed to other, perhaps older, habits of subjecthood. Separated from France for too long, they inhabited an anachronistic political temporality that distinguished them from the contemporary French metropolitan individual. The Louisianian individual was not used to being involved in the public realm, and the transition to a republican regime - French or American - would be highly disruptive.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* and HNO, MSS.125, 21 October 1802 - Report of Pierre Clément Laussat on matters pertaining to Louisiana: “If it is good to encourage for a few years the importation of negroes to Lower Louisiana, the Government will probably follow the principle of transforming this possession into an essentially white colony, and for this purpose to favour through methods at the same time wise and efficient European immigration.”

⁶² HNO, MSS.125, f.282 - 10 October 1803.

“Therefore, there is no other empire in the world in which the truism of ‘keeping to one’s business’ is better established, and the Louisianian will therefore have to learn [...] how to meddle in public business.”⁶³

However, to Laussat, there was no doubt that Louisianians would swiftly adapt to this new realm of politics. Unaware of the American reticence in granting immediate statehood to the lands constitutive of Lower Louisiana, Laussat argued that this part of the ceded territory already had a large enough population to form a distinct state, and was ready to benefit from the United States Constitution. At a crossroads between France and the United States, the transformation of the Louisianians into Republicans could only follow two mutually exclusive routes: to become French again, but leave their real homeland, or grow into full Americans. Laussat dismissed criticism of the hasty sale by stating that Louisianians, unaware of the benefits enclosed with this transformation of status, were unwittingly complaining that “France [had] put back their happiness into their own hands.”⁶⁴ They would only require “six months in partaking in the U.S. Confederation [to] congratulate themselves” for this change and feel that they would not trade it off for their previous situation.⁶⁵

Ideally, this transition into the American Republic would free them from the monopolistic imperial economy they had been subjected to under colonial rule, limiting trade opportunities and forcing some into piracy. By becoming a full State, Louisiana would benefit from market competition and secure its inhabitants’ individual prosperity locally, rather than depending on a remote, oversea power. The development of a new Frenchness, or a French-Americaness on the other side of the Atlantic, could only have been achieved by relinquishing their colonial status. But that separation did not mean the complete severance of old colonial ties: Laussat expected about thirty million French people to be living on the soil of Louisiana

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

within a couple of centuries, and for this land to become an outlet for France's growing population – which it eventually did, throughout the 1820s and 1830s. In Laussat's position as an official French envoy, he was placed at the junction between France's interests, protecting the interests of the Louisiana Creoles, and convincing them that the best path was to embrace the promises of the United States republic. Little did Laussat expect that it would take nine more years for Louisiana to achieve full statehood, and that growing tensions between the Creole Louisianians and Anglo-American settlers coming into the new territory would create and set the terms of an enduring divide.

What was then the civic identity of the Louisianans? From the French standpoint, they were no longer French. From the American standpoint, they were profoundly foreign, and it was deemed better to replace them than to transform them into Americans. Yet how did they define themselves? The fluid and negotiated process of self-definition initiated by the Louisiana Purchase evolved throughout the nineteenth century. Despite the persistence of immigration, French-speaking individuals became a minority compared to the other language groups, but they remained socially, politically, and culturally a constant and visible feature of the urban landscape.

The tension emerging from the impossibility to conciliate both French and American identities and allegiances was structural to the early urban history of American New Orleans, and fed the development and endurance of an imagined French community. Antagonized by the two groups from which they stemmed, and unable to solely belong to either, the French Louisianians constituted themselves from within. Following the 1803 Louisiana Purchase and up to the American Civil War and the defeat of New Orleans in 1861, this definition was negotiated against demographic pressure and political interests. Imagined and articulated out of necessity, New Orleans' French Louisianian was a group fluid in its definition, and numerically shifting. Looking at this community as a self-invented group, the following

chapters will consider the different strategies they adopted to exercise their agency, and how they impacted the narratives about their shared space of residence, the city of New Orleans.

*

The French-speaking residents of New Orleans corresponded to a very composite population, a mixture from widely different regions of France and its colonies, refugees from the Caribbean, and second or third generation Louisianians. Yet, the transition to American rule and attacks against an overarching idea of ‘Frenchness’ contributed to creating new commonalities among these divergent groups, while reinforcing a language-based identity. In Chapter 3, the history of immigration and settlement in Odessa will likewise show how the active presence of communities deemed foreign affected the representation of the city and tensions with the centres of Russian imperial power. There, French-speaking groups were an absolute minority, but their influential role enabled a different cultural synthesis to take place around one language and affiliated institutions, which gave Odessa its foreign reputation. In both New Orleans and Odessa, the groups under study were engaged in a creative process that touched upon all the fields of social and cultural life. Settling within foreign continental nations in the making, they crystallized tensions about identity, belonging and nationality in the early nineteenth century.

Chapter 3 Constructing a new model of Russianness in cosmopolitan Odessa.

‘Russia has been both the subject *and* the object of colonization and its corollaries, such as orientalism. The state was engaged in the colonization of foreign territories, and it was also concerned with colonizing the heartlands.’¹

The Russian imperial project pre-dated its American counterpoint by more than half a century, but Russia’s claim to sovereignty over peoples and territories it had yet to conquer initially took the form of an informal administrative network, with few movements of colonists between the imperial core and the new territories. It is only with the conquest of the Black Sea that such long-distance settlement projects developed, combined with foreign immigration. In this, Russia mirrored other contemporary empires – Britain, Spain, and now the United States. Russia’s expansion also happened at a time when the definition of Europe started to slowly shift towards a division between West and East, between Occident and Orient, just as the idea of ‘eastern’ Europe was being imagined by the intellectual work of western Europe’s Enlightenment.² While the traditional conceptual division of Europe had been between North and South, starting in the eighteenth century kingdoms such as Russia and Poland (previously considered North European powers) slowly came to be associated with the East. This transformation made them embody a negotiated space between a self-proclaimed Western civilization and the perceived barbarism of the Orient. At an intellectual level, Russia was

¹ Ètkind, *Internal Colonization*, 2011.

² Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 1994, 15: “Eastern European defined Western Europe by contrast, as the Orient defined the Occident, but was also made to mediate between European and the Orient. One might describe the invention of Eastern Europe as an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization.”; (7) “The idea of Eastern Europe was invented in Western Europe in the age of Enlightenment, and Russia was included in that idea. Russia was subjected to the same process of discovery, alignment, condescension and intellectual mastery, was located and identified by the same formulas: between Europe and Asia, between civilization and barbarism.”

subjected to a process of [re]discovery akin to the one that had been applied to other ‘newly found’ lands and civilizations, from the Americas to the shores of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. Yet the discovery and invention of Eastern Europe was a double-sided process, and one system’s periphery was another’s centre: striving to be a dominant European power, the Russian centre looked at the rest of its domains as spaces that were, at heart, deeply non-Russian. The history of the settlement of ‘New Russia’, and at its centre Odessa, further complicated this vision: although the Black Sea steppes were described as Asiatic, the great majority of the early generations of settlers came from South and Western Europe.

Population movements towards the Ukrainian black earth and steppe region had started in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, yet official incorporation and settlement was achieved during the reign of Empress Catherine II (1762-1796) with the progressive subjugation of different nomadic groups (Zaporizhian Cossacks and Crimean and Nogai Tatars) in the Pontic Steppe region, and the new bureaucratization of Russian rule (after Mikhail Speranskii’s administrative reforms of 1822).³ In order to make the surrounding lands economically productive and to take advantage of the new geographical boundaries of the Russian empire, settlers – who would be respectful of the tsarist rule – had to be brought in to populate, harvest and integrate the new regions into the imperial system. The city of Odessa, founded in 1794 on the site of the old Tatar fortress of Khadjibey, following Russia’s victory over the Ottomans at Yeni-Dunai in 1789, would become the main hub for settlement and the focal centre of attraction in southern Russia. Several factors contributed to the arrival and settlement of a numerically modest, but socially significant, French community: while New

³ The Zaporozhian Cossacks, who had initially lent their swords to the Russian armies, were crushed in 1775 and their lands taken away. The Crimean Khanate was defeated by the Russian Empire in 1783. The whole region was successfully subdued in 1792 after one more decade of warfare against the Ottoman Empire, an ally of the Tatars in the region. This defeat followed the subjugation and conquest of the Khanate of Astrakhan in 1558, of the Nogai Tatars in 1634, and of the Khanate of Kazan in 1681. Despite these appellations, no unitary Kazakh Khanate ever existed. The extension of Russian influence and control over the three Kazakh hordes was a lengthy process that began in 1731 and only really concluded with the steppe statute of 1868. *See also: Khodarkovsky, Russia’s Steppe Frontier, 2004.*

Orleans' fate was decisively determined by the French response to the Haitian revolution, Odessa was, throughout its foundational decades, led by foreign *émigrés*, some of whom had left France for political reasons and were averse to the Consulate and Napoleon's Empire.

This chapter aims at understanding the settlement logics that supported the rise to prominence of foreign French groups at the head of 'New Russia,' and their visibility in Odessa. Firstly, settling the Black Sea steppes contradicted Imperial Russia's system of servile labour, which reduced the mobility of its own nationals, and consequently favoured the immigration of foreign settlers. To remedy that, immigration policies and benefits were put in place to advertise settlement and attract such foreigners to Novorossiia. Finally, the national origins of the settlers flowing into the growing city of Odessa founded its Europeaness, and among them French *émigrés*, transformed the alien nature of this periphery into something new. French immigration and enduring presence were not, as in Louisiana, perceived as problematic from the start, but it eventually contributed, through language and institutions, to the definition of a composite, neo-Russian, identity.

3.1 Creating a 'new Russia': the case for free labour and immigration

Controlling mobility had framed earlier Russian expansionism, serving distinct purposes and priorities depending on its geography: while expansion to the East was driven by economic motivations (such as the profitable fur-trade), expansion to the South, and particularly towards the Black Sea steppes, was dominated and limited by defense imperatives.⁴ The Black Sea regions were perceived as an "Asian" environment, "an alien and empty frontier" populated by

⁴ Lantzeff George V. and Richard A. Pierce, *Eastward to Empire - Exploration and Conquest on the Russian Open Frontier, to 1750*, Montreal, 1973. To Alexander Etkind, expansion towards Siberia was carried by 'fur colonization' and 'fish colonization', according to the 'zoological economy' conceptualized by Afanasii Schapov. (Etkind, 2011, 65-66)

enemies – The Zaporozhian Sich, the Nogai Hord, and the Crimean Tatars, with Ottoman encroachments to the South.⁵ In official discourses as in the Russian imaginary, the southern steppes represented both a *terra nullius* and a *tabula rasa* – uncontrolled and empty spaces.⁶ The steppe-lands were also seen as dangerous, because of the mobility of the nomadic populations who lived there, and for this reason serfdom became widespread in regions near the southern frontier, as a reward to high-ranking soldiers fighting on the Tula defense line. By the early eighteenth century, the potentialities offered by access to the coast and to the Mediterranean trade transformed the perception of that area, and Peter I (1682-1725) established some short-lived colonies on the open steppe.⁷ To Brian J. Boeck, the steppes “need[ed] to be re-imagined as a place of opportunity for the Russian state, rather than a threat to its existence.”⁸ Grafting Novorossiia onto the Russian empire required re-imagining it as Russian, and the consolidation of tsarist authority relied on settlement. From their former denomination of ‘*ukraina*’ [borderland], the northern Black Sea steppes were rebranded in the second half of the eighteenth century as ‘*Novorossiia*’, a New Russia with endless possibilities and the logical offspring of its Northern motherland.⁹ To re-envision the steppe as a space for opportunity, transformation had to accompany formal annexation.

While New Russia received its name in 1764, and the region was fully conquered in 1792, its territorial control remained uncertain with just military garrisons. The practical solution was the creation of Russian settlements, but it faced practical challenges that reflected

⁵ Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, 2006, 53.

⁶ This is not true of the whole territory of Novorossiia: Crimea was in fact very urbanized, with the large city of Jaffa, developed under ottoman influence, which was sometimes called the second Istanbul. The idea of Novorossiia as a wasteland was instrumental to the propaganda and myth-making that accompanied Russian territorial expansion. In the steppes outside the Crimean Peninsula, the largest population group was the Nogai Tatars.

⁷ This initial project was abandoned as early as 1711; a great majority of the colonists died from diseases, many other fled.

⁸ Boeck, Brian J. “Containment vs. Colonization: Muscovite Approaches to Settling the Steppe,” in Breyfogle, et al. *Peopling the Russian Periphery*, 2007, 41-60.

⁹ One of the words that define borderland in the Russian language is ‘*ukraina*.’ It was used to designate the steppe spaces because they bore the transition from woodland areas to arid steppe lands, with scarce water and non-sedentary populations. Notwithstanding the implications of this terminology for modern-day Ukraine, it positions this space philologically and conceptually as essentially alien or foreign.

the Russian Empire's structural problems: as Russia grew territorially, the ratio between available land and population became increasingly imbalanced, and that disproportion between territory and population was also exacerbated by the effects of serfdom.¹⁰ To the mobility of the nomadic populations that inhabited the recently conquered New Russia was opposed the relative immobility of the Russian peasantry.¹¹ The serf population remained bound to the lands they worked on, trapped in the central areas of the Russian Empire where their landlords lived.¹² Possessing too much land and not enough people, Russian state policies became favourable to foreign settlement.¹³ Many foreigners lived in St Petersburg, notably Germans invited by the Academy of Sciences, and a growing number of French *émigrés* in the years following the 1789 revolution. Catherine II herself, brought up in Germany, encouraged foreign immigration and invited colonists to settle wherever they wished in the Russian Empire by a series of *ukaz* (decree) that defined land allocations and the rights and obligations of settlers. Several 'Imperial Manifestos' were published in the early 1760s, prompting large-scale and state-sponsored programmes of recruitment, colonization and settlement, which relied on Russian diplomats abroad and professional recruiters.¹⁴ These policies targeted a wide range of people: foreign colonists, Old believer refugees and even fugitive Russian subjects –

¹⁰ Like many contemporary European states of the late eighteenth century, the Russian empire was also anxious about the evolution of its demographics.

¹¹ The system of serfdom was central to the significance of the southern border in the Russian empire: it emerged as a mode of state-regulated migration control at a time when the Black Sea steppes were conceived as spaces to be contained. The Law code of 1649 solidified this limitation on internal mobility by binding serfs to estates and masters, and preventing free movement for the militia and townspeople. Quite early on, the relationship of the Muscovite state with the Black Sea region developed in tension between the option to either enforce these migration restrictions, tied to the consolidation of serfdom, or expand settlement to the south. The earliest settlement experiments, before the conquests of Catherine's reign, had already been delegated to either non-Russian, or semi-Russian, populations: the Ukrainians and the Don Cossacks. The idea of the Black Sea steppes as a quintessentially non-Russian environment had been from the start at the heart of the Russian state's settlement policies in the region, because of the tensions between free movement and bound labour. See Brian J. Boeck, 'Containment vs. Colonization' in Breyfogle et al. *Peopling the Russian Periphery*, 2007, 41-60.

¹² Some were displaced from the central areas to the new territories by the landed aristocracy. For instance, in the 1820s Count Vorontsov transferred a few thousands of his serfs from central Russian estates to Novorossiia once he became the governor of the region.

¹³ Bartlett, Roger. "Foreign Settlement in Russia under Catherine II", *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* 1 (1974): 1-22

¹⁴ Catherine II's manifesto were banned in France, and were welcomed with circumspection with other countries, fearing a loss in population.

with the promise of amnesty – were all encouraged to populate the imperial borderlands, receiving in exchange financial help and lands.¹⁵

In 1774, the treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji ended six years of Russo-Turkish war, and the recruitment of foreign settlers started focusing almost exclusively on the southern region, offering advantageous conditions and privileges to those willing to settle in New Russia.¹⁶ This was an urgent task: the southern steppes were often described as a demographic and cultural desert that had to be cultivated and civilised through settlement.¹⁷ Fortunately, these steppes benefited from a higher degree of attractiveness for foreigners than the lands east of the Ural Mountains: they were deemed closer to the Russian interior, and their southern location made them promising for both agriculture and cattle-raising. For imperial officials, this new border was strategically important, because it was gained after lengthy decades of fighting.

Because of the existing settlement policies, the population of the southern steppes region grew rapidly. It is difficult to assess population growth as a whole, because until 1858 most national censuses only accounted for men ('male souls') in their population surveys.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the demographic growth was steep: from the end of the eighteenth century to 1897, the population grew from 290,026 such male souls in 1782, to 875,640 in 1815, and 1,347,265 in 1857.¹⁹ This means that the rate of growth was steeper in the earlier 'boom'

¹⁵ Burbank, Jane, and Mark Von Hagen. "Coming into the territory: uncertainty and empire," in Burbank et al. *Russian Empire*, 2007, 1-29.

¹⁶ The treaty, which shifted power relationship in the region, was also at the origin of an interpretation controversy between Russia and the Ottoman Empire that eventually led to the breakout of the Crimean War over the protection rights of Orthodox Christians in Turkish territories. Davison, Roderic H. "'Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility': The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered." *Slavic Review* 35, no. 3 (1976): 463-83; Duran, James A. "Catherine II, Potemkin, and Colonization Policy in Southern Russia." *The Russian Review* 28, no. 1 (1969): 23-36.

¹⁷ A summary of the settlement conditions will be provided in the second part of this chapter, 'Advertising and attracting.'

¹⁸ This was due to the 'soul tax' that had been implemented since the reign of Peter I, which only comprised males – making it more complex to measure the gender ratio and demographic trends in early Novorossiya, two factors rather important in this settler context.

¹⁹ Kabuzan, V. M. *Izmeneniia v Razmeshchenii Naseleniia Rossii v XVIII-pervoĭ Polovine XIX v.: Po Materialam Revizii*. Moskva: Izd-vo "Nauka", 1971. We can find slightly different numbers across authors, but they tend to confirm this trend. Moon, David. "Agriculture and the Environment on the Steppes in the Nineteenth Century," in Breyfogle et al. *Peopling the Russian Periphery*, 2007, 84: for David Moon, the regional male population went from less than 20 000 in the 1700s to 1.85 million in the 1850s.

period. After 1861, the abolition of serfdom facilitated – to some extent – internal peasant mobility across all regions of Russia. According to the 1897 census, the male peasant population of South Russia was of 4.9 million on the eve of the 20th century.²⁰ This rapid growth illustrates how the settlement of free individuals was key to the colonization and integration of Southern Russia. Soon after the formal conquest of the territory, the creation of an urban centre, for the seat for the government of New Russia, became needed. Yet, Odessa was not the only new city founded on the Black Sea nor the first choice of the Russian Government (Chapter 1). However, as early as 1803, the French Consul Mure wrote to his superiors that he thought he would be better employed if he was allowed to be based in Odessa:

“Since the Trade of our merchants seems to have a preference for Odessa, I do not doubt that the good of the service would demand quite often my presence in this fort (...) I beg you, in consequence, to agree to give me orders so that I would be authorised to travel to this place, and even to settle there as often as I will believe it beneficial for the service.”²¹

Just a few years after its foundation in 1794, Odessa became the most successful and fastest-growing of Catherine the Great’s New Russian creations: it was, in Patricia Herlihy’s words, an ‘instant city.’²² In 1803 French *émigré* Armand-Emmanuel du Plessis, duc de Richelieu, was appointed by Alexander I as governor of the city of Odessa. In 1805 he became Governor-General of the three territories composing Novorossiia - the *oblasts* of Kherson, Ekaterinoslav and Taurida.²³ Richelieu had left France during the Revolutionary years and had been a close supporter of the Tsar’s grandmother Catherine II, fighting in the Tsarina’s armies

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ AMAE, Odessa, Correspondance Consulaire et Commerciale (thereafter 230CCC) /1 (Microfilm P15565), f.5, Toulon, 26 November 1803 (6 frimaire An XII).

²² Herlihy, *Odessa*, 1986, 9.

²³ The roles of Governor of Novorossiia and city chief of Odessa were to remain joint position until the end of the rule of the Comte de Langeron, in 1822, who had complained that the two positions put together were too big a task. He explained this in a memoir: “All the territory entrusted to me is as large as all of France and is populated by ten different nationalities and by many foreigners. There are to be found also the different religions and all ten are practiced freely. One can judge the work which burdens me and the absolute impossibility of my doing it all.” in AMAE, *Memoires et Documents, Russie*, XXI, ff.211-215: ‘Reflections on the necessity of concentrating and of reducing the immense administrations given to the governor-generals in Russia.’

in the 1790s. The Duke is to this day considered one of the main founding figures of the city of Odessa. Whilst Novorossiya was a frontier territory, characterized by a rural economy and small towns, the rise of Odessa was fundamental to the development of the region as a whole, and to the attention and privileges it received from the imperial centres of power. The Duke's close ties to the governing elites and his steadiness in ensuring the growth of Odessa and of the territories he had been entrusted with contributed significantly to their early and steep growth. Richelieu also brought with him liberal ideas about demography, economics, and labour, transforming New Russia into an experiment in government that diverged in many respects from the usages and laws of Old Russia. To Herlihy's 'instant city' could be thus opposed the vision of Odessa as a city that grew against the tide, thanks to targeted and specific settlement efforts.

The mission of finding settlers for Novorossiya was largely in the hands of the governor-general. The task of recruiting foreign settlers was first instigated by Prince Potemkine in the early 1790s, but foreign settlement only really got underway with the governorship of Richelieu. When the Duke arrived to Odessa in 1803, there were barely 8,000 inhabitants living there, mostly men; the scarcity of women was another indicator of the unstable frontier conditions of Novorossiya.²⁴ According to Leonide Ignatieff, Alexander I gave special instructions to Richelieu to find 'suitable' settlers for Odessa's vast and uncultivated agrarian lands.²⁵ In a memorandum written in 1813, after ten years of service in Novorossiya, Richelieu pointed out that "the problem was to attract settlers by every means possible, [as] people would settle on virgin land only if they were offered special inducements such as exemptions, franchises and privileges."²⁶

²⁴ In 1802, an Imperial decree provided up to 50 dessyatins of land to settlers for farming or similar usage. However, some of these lands had already been taken by people living in the city.

²⁵ Ignatieff, *French émigrés in Russia*, 1963, 112-113.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 125.

Richelieu's concerns about the peopling of Novorossiia were twofold. First, he considered that trade was crucial to the development of the region, and he preoccupied himself with the strengthening of trade relations and commerce that converged in Odessa. Richelieu was particularly assiduous in pursuing close contacts with the merchants who came to the city from various ports of the Mediterranean.²⁷ He was in favour of free trade, and the architect behind the modernisation and eventual transformation of the harbour into a freeport (1819-1858), a daring move in a Russian Empire that was still economically conservative and privileged protectionism and high duties.²⁸

Secondly, this liberal attitude towards trade and commerce, and the emphasis on freedom of movement, also applied to the Duke's views regarding immigration and settlement. Repeatedly, in his public and private letters, Richelieu insisted on the advantages of bringing in free labourers, and his repugnance towards serfdom. Serfdom had been extended to the Ukrainian territories in 1783 and to Crimea in 1796, yet runaway serfs were tolerated, and quickly a double-standard system was established. The *ukaz* of December 12, 1796, was promulgated by Paul I shortly after the death of Catherine II to give satisfaction to the landed aristocratic class, while its application effectively extended the laws regulating serfdom to the new Russian territories.²⁹ This law forbade the migration of peasants – meaning serfs – to the territories of New Russia, unless it had been decided by their landlord. In practice that edict was not systematically enacted, and represented a sort of formal compromise between southern administrators, who continued to welcome runaway serfs because of the labour shortage in New Russia, and northern landlords, who wanted traditional fugitive serf laws to be enforced. It also illustrated the government's ambiguous attitude towards runaway serfs: their escape was

²⁷ Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 2017, 31-32.

²⁸ The freeport of Odessa was only inaugurated in 1819, five years after Richelieu's departure from the city to take up the role of Minister for Foreign Affairs in France, although he received all the due credit for this achievement.

²⁹ Duran, James A. "Catherine II, Potemkin, and Colonization Policy," 1969.

generally accepted once they had arrived in the southern steppes.³⁰ The *Journal d'Odessa* reported retrospectively that in the year 1797, an estimate of 647 “Russians, originating from different governments, [who] had left their homes [without any legal authorisation] to settle to Odessa.”³¹ There is no indication that any specific measure was taken to remove them. Historian S. Kovbasiuk notes that in the last years of the eighteenth century, at least three thousand serfs had found freedom in the “desert of Ochakov” that surrounded Odessa. Although the tsarist government at the time strictly observed the “inviolability of serfdom” in the rest of the empire, the urge to settle the Novorossiyan steppe regions sometimes “forced them to turn a blind eye at the subsidence of runaway serfs there.”³² This system generally made the southern steppes attractive for Russian peasants, yet the tolerance towards the modest influx of illegal internal migrants did not solve the overarching problem of lack of manpower in Novorossiya.

The durable alteration of the system of serfdom in the Black Sea steppes faced political backlash, so it was a lot easier to offer privileges and exceptions to foreigners coming to Novorossiya instead. The Duke of Richelieu did not hide his personal preference for free labourers over modifying labour laws and customs. In his letters to Samouil Contenius, the Chief Judge of the Tutelage branch for Foreigners of the Committee of the Colonies, Richelieu explicitly shared his views on the topic:

“In general, I must admit that I hate all these forced processes, they are as contrary to the good principles of Government as to humanity. I am not saying that necessity will not force us to resort to these means, but we would need to attempt to stimulate this industry among the class of free people, in Poland

³⁰ Kovbasiuk, (1957, 30).

³¹ JO 971 - 1834, n. 103, 25th December 1834/6th January 1835 - taken from an article by J. Hagemester titled: ‘Statistiques - Métiers à Odessa.’ According the Hagemester there was a total of 115 women among these runaway settlers.

³² Kovbasiuk, (1957, 15). Even though trials happened, they were infrequent enough to fail to invert this tendency.

and in little Russia. It is the only way to achieve anything solid, and major for the state.”³³

Instead of welcoming serfs, Richelieu preferred to encourage international migration, because he considered it more practical, but also because of the personal beliefs he held with regards to good government.³⁴ His main concern was finding suitable and useful settlers, no matter where they were from. In Leonide Ignatieff’s words, “availability was a far more important consideration than nationality.”³⁵ Richelieu was also less autonomous when it came to attracting Russian settlers, as their servile status meant they either belonged to the government or to private landlords – if resettled to Novorossiia – or that they had escaped from their estates. Eventually, when the Duke's governorship ended in 1814 and he returned to France to support the Bourbon restoration, his successor, the Count of Langeron, tried to secure some legal alteration to support Russian peasants and serfs coming to Novorossiia. He managed to set a two-year limit after which the serfs that had settled in the territories under his command would be safe from reclamations by their former landlords.

Questions of mobility were fundamental to the settlement of Southern Russia. If in Louisiana demographic replacement (of the ‘French’, but also of slaves by free labourers) had been the initial impetus for movement across the United States, on the Black Sea shores the limited mobility of the Russian population meant that only foreigners could settle there – either on empty spaces or to displace previous nomadic populations. The settlement policies for Novorossiia explicitly did not target Russian nationals, and as a result, the region around

³³ Richelieu, Armand-Emmanuel Du Plessis, Elena Polevchtchikova, and Dominique Triaire. *Lettres D'Odessa Du Duc De Richelieu : 1803-1814*. Ferney-Voltaire, 2014. Letter 46, 21st July 1809.

³⁴ Leonide Ignatieff points out that during the Soviet period, the government of the Duc de Richelieu was retrospectively criticized for having favoured foreign colonists over Russian settlers. A key example is Kovbasîuk, (1957, 23), who attributed Richelieu’s success to “favourable objective historical conditions (...)” to minimize the importance of foreign influence.

³⁵ Ignatieff, *French émigrés in Russia*, 1963, 125.

Odessa grew in dichotomy with the Russian interior, and opposed peripheral freedom to traditional serfdom.³⁶

3.2 Advertising and attracting: The transformation of Novorossiia into a Neo-European province.

The Committee for the Colonies, based in the New Russian city of Ekaterinoslav, was in charge of translating into laws and edicts the advantages and privileges offered to prospective settlers. The settlement policies were based on the Imperial Manifestos of 1762 and 1763, which provided the basis for most laws regarding the immigration of foreigners for the next four decades. Potential migrants were at first recruited through an existing network of Russian diplomats abroad, but these did not prove to be very efficient. Later, private recruitment agents were sent around Europe, armed with a list of benefits to be provided to individuals and families willing to settle in New Russia: each household would receive a house, a plough, a pair of oxen, a cow and a monetary grant during their first year of settlement.³⁷ Further, after ten years of cultivation, settlers would become full owners of their holdings, a prospect that was extremely attractive even outside servile Russia, in western European nations that were still emerging from a feudal land-tenure system. The prospective settlers were given fourteen years to repay the initial grant, with an interest of five percent. Finally, foreign settlers coming to New Russia were exempted from military service for at least twenty-five years.³⁸ Because the

³⁶ David Moon emphasizes that one of the main explanations for the rapid population growth in the southern and eastern regions was that they had less oppressive variants of serfdom or avoided unfree labour altogether, in addition to favourable environmental conditions, fertile lands, and on average younger populations. In Moon, David. "Peasant migration and the Settlement of Russia's frontiers, 1550-1897." *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 4 (1997): 859-93.

³⁷ Those recruiting agents were professionals, often former military officers in need of money. This practice was common in Europe at the time. Ignatieff, *French émigrés in Russia*, 1963, 100-104.

³⁸ This exemption was for life for Mennonite émigrés.

need for settlers to cultivate the land was more important, the advantages were greater for those who did not stay in towns and cities.

The recruitment of foreigners to New Russia started with the governorship of Prince Potemkin (1775-1791), a favourite of Empress Catherine's, and pre-dated the foundation of Odessa. Potemkin sent his own private agents abroad to recruit foreign settlers, to the effect that colonists from any part of Europe were indiscriminately welcomed.³⁹ However, the short-lived reign of Paul I (1796-1801) and that of Alexander I (1801-1825) saw gradual alterations to immigration policy that limited those financial and landed privileges, as the Russian state spent money in wars and felt wary of foreign immigration. The next decades were marked by the negotiations and struggles of the administrators of New Russia to secure the privileges and guarantees necessary to encourage, sustain, and protect settlement.

The governorship of the Duke of Richelieu, an *émigré* himself, coincided with that conservative change in imperial policy. He repeatedly complained in his letters of the unwillingness of the Russian government to fulfil the financial promises made to foreign colonists, especially at a time when Russia was more and more involved in continental warfare. In March 1810, for instance, he wrote an acerbic denunciation of the decision to suspend monetary support for colonists who had left their homes before news of the budget cuts could have reached the recruiting agents:

“I do not approve at all this measure touching the colonists, a million employed every year as we had been doing, was money perfectly well employed, and placed at a high interest rate. [...] In French we call deductions of this sort *being penny-wise and pound foolish* (*des économies de bout de chandelles*).”⁴⁰

³⁹ Bartlett, “Foreign Settlement”, 1974, 15: ‘[Potemkine] continued to encourage the traditional Balkan and Transdanubian immigration, as well as looking to Southern and Western Europe for settler material. The Westerners who responded to the overtures of his recruiting agents, [...] were a very varied collection. Swedish peasants from an island in the Baltic; Greeks and Corsicans driven from their homes in Minorca; Danzigers facing economic decline; even British convicts offered for deportation - all were considered suitable.’

⁴⁰ Richelieu, Polevchtchikova, and Triaire. *Lettres D'Odessa*, 2014. Letter 60, 30 March 1810.

Richelieu concerned himself personally with the arrival, settlement, and success of the settlers after their arrival to Odessa. As the generous conditions outlined by Catherine’s Manifestos were starting to fade away, on par with the imperial preoccupations with conflicts against the Napoleonic armies in western Europe, it was the governor-general’s responsibility to ensure the successful development of New Russia. His very prerogatives illustrated the hybrid status of the new territorial acquisitions, half-way between a colonial status and a territorial extension of the Russian realm.⁴¹ Because of the limited presence of the state and its administrative apparatus on newly conquered lands, most governor-generals, especially in those early years, had an important discretionary power and remained quite independent. Odessa’s changing situation, initially beyond and eventually part of the European Russian metropole, illustrates its transformation a tsarist outpost. As the governor of the Odessa region during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Richelieu was often almost personally involved in the development of the lands under his rule and took a profound and benevolent interest in their success: “the lack of money in which we are left,” he confessed, “worryes me to the point that I have not had a moment of rest.”⁴²

Richelieu might have been a strong advocate of the rights of settlers, but he was also aware of what they owed to the Novorossiyan government, and ultimately the Russian crown. When faced with complaints from his colonists, he was the first to remind them that they should be thankful for the privileges that had been granted to them:

‘[...] but if they have not received anything from the Crown in terms of money, they have at least received lands from it, and it seems to me that by

⁴¹ There was no real distinction in the Russian empire between, on the one hand, ‘colonial’ administration and internal policy, and on the other, ‘colonial’ administration and external policy. Burbank et al. *Russian Empire*, 2007, 478. However, across the Russian Empire, areas could be either under military or civilian rule, marking the distinction between those peoples considered sedentary (and therefore deemed civilised) and nomadic or hunter-gatherers (the origin of the *inorodtsy* category). Odessa’s very position underpins that change, initially beyond and eventually within a putative European Russian metropole.

⁴² Richelieu, Polevchtchikova, and Triaire. *Lettres D’Odessa*, 2014. Letter 60, 26 March 1810. Or again, on 2 March 1810 (Letter 58): ‘We are in the greatest predicament for want of money (...). If they do not want to receive colonists, they are the master of it, although I have not yet heard anything on that topic; but in any case, those who have arrived want to be saved, and established.’

making such a present, the government has the right to demand a little bit of obedience and docility on the part of the colonists, especially when what is demanded from them is for their best interest.⁴³

Richelieu, like the other administrators sent to New Russia, was ultimately preoccupied with the development of the province. This meant the ability to attract settlers, and to ensure their collective success. Diseases were often deadly enemies for the new comers, especially in the early years. Richelieu often reported about entire villages succumbing to contagious outbreaks, and the harshness of the winters alone took a heavy annual toll. The season during which colonists arrived in Southern Russia was often critical for their chances of survival, whether they settled in the countryside or the urban environment of Odessa. In 1806, in the midst of a particularly cold and deadly winter, the Duke lamented that the city's inhabitants were "destitute", and that "the diseases [had] exhausted them." For that reason, he decided to pay back some of the tax money that had been previously levied.⁴⁴ Therefore, the task of developing the Novorossiyan provinces was double-edged. On the one hand settlers had to be attracted by advantageous conditions and supported on arrival. On the other hand, they had to become economically independent as quickly as possible. To that end, the best potential cultivators needed to be recruited, and the target migrants were agrarian settlers first and foremost. Some settlers came from neighboring Moldova, Bulgaria, and Albania. Large groups came from further away, and particularly from Germanic lands, as was the case for the Mennonites communities.⁴⁵ Most migrants arrived first to Odessa, but many only stayed there

⁴³ *Ibid.* Letter 36, 9 May 1808.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Letter 26, 27 January 1806. It was an amount of ten kopecks.

⁴⁵ Among this latter category, a significant number came from the eastern French border. In 1808, Richelieu mentioned that the Russian Consul to Frankfurt, M. Bethman, had promised the arrival of four hundred families from the Rhine region and the lands of Alsace. Despite fears that the French and German governments might prevent these migrations, this heavily populated west European border region remained a breeding ground for future settlers to Novorossiya. *Ibid.* Letter 43, 22 May 1809.

for a few months, until they were assigned to a village of cultivators, often grouped by nationality.

Urban settlers in Odessa were of a different mix. Don Joseph de Ribas, a Neapolitan who acted as Odessa’s chief administrator during the early development of the city, oversaw the building of the first houses to welcome prospective migrants. Along with the promised houses came farming lots outside the city, grants, the right to transport possessions and merchandises free of duty, and tax suspensions, not dissimilar to the advantages provided to the foreign farmers moving to the agrarian colonies.⁴⁶ The largest groups of early urban settlers had been historical travellers to the region, and often came from maritime nations: Italians, Greeks, and Armenians were among Odessa’s first residents. They arrived to establish commercial houses in the city, to ensure that they would have an easy interface to trade in the Black Sea region and benefit from the grain outlet that Odessa was promising to become. Additionally, Novorossyia was conceived as an extension of the *Pale of Settlement* – circumscribed areas of Western Russia, Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine where Jews could reside.⁴⁷ This prompted long-range travel within the Pale, sometimes to provincial market towns (*shtetls*), but with large numbers settling in Odessa. There, Jews worked predominantly as middlemen and brokers between the foreign traders and the agricultural villages.⁴⁸ Rumours of religious toleration, economic opportunities, and financial support from the Russian government thus transformed the steppe regions of Southern Ukraine, a change that attracted foreign attention. In 1803, upon departure to his initial posting in the city of Kherson, the French Consul wrote to the French government:

“I have the pleasure to notify you that during the short stay I have made in Marseilles I was surrounded by several traders from this city, who seriously

⁴⁶ Ignatieff, *French émigrés in Russia*, 1963, 123.

⁴⁷ Catherine II’s manifestos officially excluded foreign Jews, but she allowed the settlement of some Jewish traders in Riga, and they were the ones who financed the further settlement of Jews in South Russia.

⁴⁸ The 1897 census found 700,000 Jewish residents across ‘New Russia’, in lands where very few Jewish settlements had existed at the end of the eighteenth century.

think about forming commercial institutions in my department. [...] It is mostly Odessa, a good fort of the Black Sea that is located only at about thirty miles from Cherson, [...] that has caught their attention.”⁴⁹

Therefore, if settlement to the steppes of Novorossiia was largely dependent on opportunities for farming and appealed to populations with the relevant skills, settlement to Odessa was highly dependent on the trade and business opportunities that the booming city offered. Consequently, urban settlers displayed social features that differed from the less intensely settled agrarian lands. Although a village and a fort had pre-existed its Russian foundation, Odessa was a new urban creation. As such, it had the characteristics of a border boomtown: located in a newly conquered territory, at the continent’s maritime edge, it was a fast-growing, shape-shifting, frontier city. The instructions given to the Odessa mayor in 1803 specified that “one of the main things proposed in the development of Odessa must be to increase the population of this city with foreigners.”⁵⁰ However, previous recruitment campaigns had mostly focused on agrarian workers, promising that national homogeneity would be maintained across villages. The same ethnic or religious homogeneity could not be offered in Odessa. As a city, it displayed a combination of all the national groups that were also redistributed across New Russia, as well as other migrants involved in seafaring – with substantial numbers of traders from Greece, Italy, and southern France. From a village in the 1790s, Odessa became a regional and international hub.

Rapid population growth was a characteristic of contemporaneous colonial boomtowns, embodied by the numerous ‘mushroom cities’ sprouting in the American West – but also by the port-city of New Orleans, as discussed in Chapter 2.⁵¹ From about 2,000 inhabitants reported in the first years of Odessa’s existence (a large part of which resided in the military

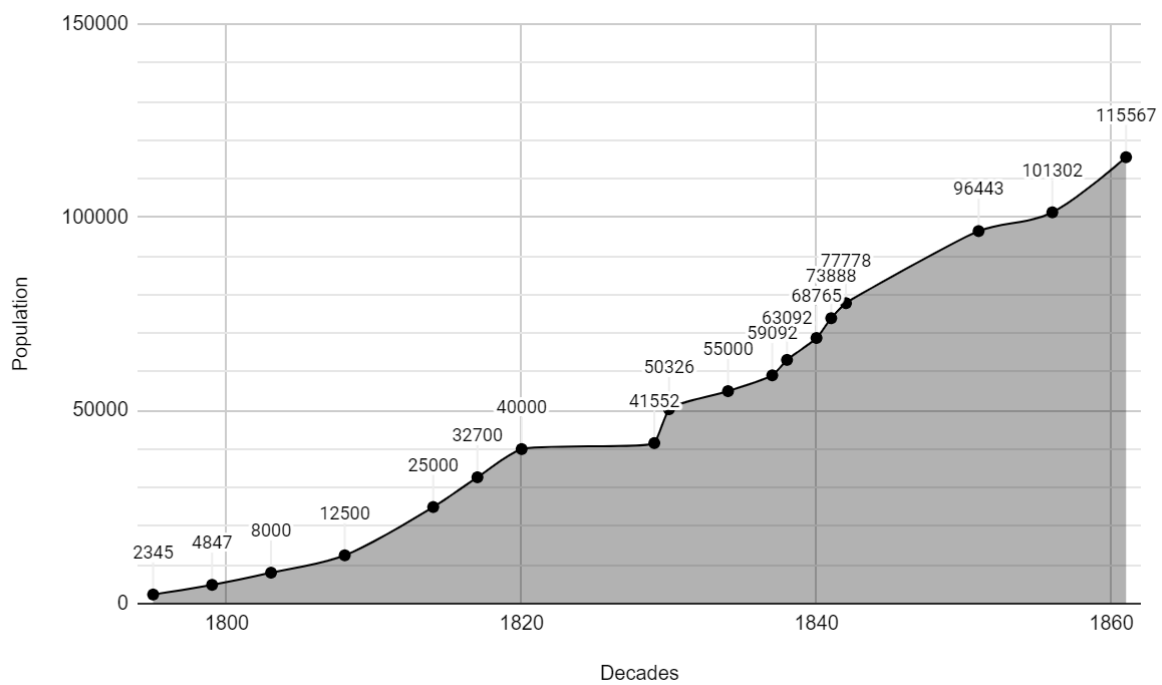
⁴⁹ AMAE, 230CCC/1 (Microfilm P15565), f.5, Toulon, 28 November 1803 (6 Frimaire An XII).

⁵⁰ Kovbasjuk, *Odessa*, 1957, 19.

⁵¹ The population of New Orleans grows from 8,000 in 1803 to 90,000 by 1837. More widely, the state of Louisiana’s population increases from 42,000 in 1803 to 352,411 by 1840.

garrison), the city had grown to around 8,000 people when Richelieu took over its administration in 1803. That number almost tripled by the time he left Novorossiia in 1814. The population of Odessa reached 50,000 in the 1830s and went beyond the 100,000 threshold at the time of the Crimean War (Graph 3.1).⁵²

Graph 3.1 The Early Demographic Development of Odessa [1795-1861]⁵³



Between the founding of Odessa in 1794 and its first half-century of existence in 1844, the city had gained more than 60,000 inhabitants. Two moments of acceleration impacted the city's growth: first in the 1810s, after the end of the Napoleonic conflicts, followed by the opening of the free-port and, second, in the 1830s, when improved relations between the

⁵² By the 1860s, Odessa had become the third largest city in the Russian Empire in terms of population. At the end of the nineteenth century, that number had quadrupled, with 403,815 inhabitants recorded in the 1897 census.

⁵³ The numbers in this graph have been compounded from various sources. The main ones are: *Journal d'Odessa* (for years 1830, 1834, 1837, 1838), Skal'kovskii (1840, 1841, 1842, 1851), Olberg (1856), Kovbas'uk (1799, 1808, 1817), Herlihy (1795, 1814, 1820). Since there are contradictory figures for the year Richelieu arrived in Odessa, I have picked a median value. Some values are missing, and some statistics do not specify whether they only account for the city population within the limits of the freeport, or also beyond.

Russian and Ottoman Empires facilitated movement across the Black Sea (Graph 3.1). A later steep surge (not shown in the chart) came after 1861 and the abolition of serfdom, with an increase in internal migration from other parts of the Russian Empire.

Because the first wide-ranging census of the Russian empire only took place in 1897, it is difficult to collect systematic data about the diversity of this growing population, both in terms of gender or ethnicity.⁵⁴ Most of the available information comes from secondary literature or newspapers rather than official reports. However, two patterns emerge distinctly in most sources. First, Odessa displayed a gender balance typical of frontier cities, with men largely outnumbering women, although to different extents depending on their national and religious groups.⁵⁵ The gender ratio was relatively balanced among natives of the city, especially during childhood, while women were more numerous among the older age groups.⁵⁶ The gender gap widened during young adulthood – an indication of the large number of single male immigrants coming to find work in Odessa, and staying in the city on a transitory basis.⁵⁷ In these circumstances, female settlers from different nationalities were even more difficult to differentiate, because of their absorption into larger family units as young girls or married women. If they were visible in records, it was through their belonging to the professional or occupational sphere, as governesses, instructors, students, artists, or prostitutes.⁵⁸ This shortage

⁵⁴ It is quite difficult to get systematic statistics for women before 1857, because they were usually ignored by official censuses, which only accounted for individuals paying the ‘soul’ tax - and those were exclusively men.

⁵⁵ Interestingly, although there were more men than women in Odessa, by the end of the century its sex ratio was significantly better than in the northern capitals of the Russian Empire: in Odessa, the ratio was 116/100, while it raised to 122/100 in St Petersburg and 133/100 in Moscow. A defining reason for this was the sizable Jewish population that lived in Odessa, which contained more women than men (98/100). Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 119. More specific figures for women can sometimes be found when looking at a particular community or professional group. Sifneos, “Rentiers, teachers and workers” 2010, 182-200; and Bernstein, L, *Sonia's daughters: Prostitutes and their regulation in imperial Russia*. Berkeley, 1995.

⁵⁶ Patricia Herlihy points out the variations in gender divide in Odessa across the different age groups: ‘Females nearly equal males in number during childhood, fall well behind them during young adulthood, and dominate the ranks of the elderly.’ (Herlihy, 2019, 120)

⁵⁷ Herlihy (2019). In addition to a large male population of sailors and traders, there was a military garrison and numerous *chumaks* (cart drivers) bringing harvested products from the interior.

⁵⁸ Information about individual female names was more frequent within these professions. For example, the French consul writes of fellow French Madame Amet, who worked as a governess for the Vorontsov couple, and had watched over the education of their daughter. AMAE, 230CCC/6, 29 November 1839.

of women had a direct effect on the demographic growth of Odessa. During the city's first half-century, the urban population could not rely upon natural increase; it depended substantially on foreign immigration.⁵⁹ The *Journal d'Odessa* reports that for the year 1834, there was about 1 birth for 22 inhabitants, while deaths numbered at 1 per 20 inhabitants, out of a population of 55,000. The *Journal* itself interpreted the higher death rate as a specific feature of large commercial cities, due to their attraction of many adult male foreigners, employed in disease-prone professions and in low-income situations.⁶⁰

The second pattern is the recurring mention of the diversity of the ever-increasing population of Odessa, in terms of nationality, ethnicity, and religion. In 1799, there were only 4,847 inhabitants registered as living in the city; among them about 400 foreigners, or 8.2 percent of the population.⁶¹ Several dozens of Greek families moved to Odessa as early as the 1790s, and in the 1800s they were followed by other national groups from Mediterranean port cities. In 1836, Russian historian and statistician Skal'kovskii provided a breakdown of the urban population: out of 53,803 residents, he counted 1,365 male and 1,948 female foreigners, for a total of 3,313 foreigners— or 6 percent of Odessa's population.⁶² At first look, the larger number of women among the foreign population would contradict the tendency for colonial milieux to be male-dominated, yet this breakdown is easily explained: the statistics did not include in the 'foreign' category those male foreigners who were already counted in the groups of merchants. Therefore, the total number of Odessa residents holding a foreign passport likely

⁵⁹ This existing imbalance was amplified by the presence of a military garrison. For instance, in 1838, among civilians there were 31756 (54%) men for 27336 (46%) women. When adding the military garrison, the number of males raised to 35756 (57%). Imbalance would also have been much higher in earlier decades Source: JO - 971, 1838 n.26, 1/13 Avril 1838. As late as 1877, Odessa was included among the world's cities which were not maintaining their own numbers through natural reproduction. Herlihy (2019, 112).

⁶⁰ JO 971 - 1835, n. 16, 22nd February / 6th March 1835.

⁶¹ Kovbasīuk, *Odessa*, 1957, 19. Kovbasīuk considers that 8% is a low number; however, it is out of a population that was largely composed of military troops - single males who were not settled in Odessa.

⁶² Skal'kovskii, Apollon Aleksandrovich. *Pervoe Tridtsatilietie Istorii Goroda Odessy, 1793-1823*. V Gorodskoi Tipografii, 1837. This number did not include the garrison of quarantine guards and students enrolled in educational institutions.

accounted for a share larger than 6 percent of its population, because they were represented (but not counted twice) across two statistical categories.⁶³ Among the total female population, foreign women counted for 7.5 percent, yet again statistical reports blurred categories, because most women were systematically tallied with the professional categories to which their partner or family belonged, and did not feature in the foreigner category. Consequently, the visibility of foreign women in this survey may have been subsumed within other groups.⁶⁴ Finally, other ethnic and linguistic groups (such as Poles and Jews) were considered internal migrants, and did not count as foreigners. The confusion in the data suggests that the number of non-Russians residing in Odessa was in fact larger than the occasional statistics reveal, a situation that made “so-called patriots” uneasy, wrote Skal’kovskii in 1845.⁶⁵ Local authorities, and Skal’kovskii himself, had also a vested interest in downplaying the number of foreigners living in Odessa.

Because Odessa was a fast-developing port, its most dynamic and international population group was the diverse merchant class, who founded numerous commercial houses and integrated the city into far-ranging networks. To be allowed to trade, they had to belong to a merchant guild.⁶⁶ Three existed in Odessa but until 1860, foreigners were, with some exceptions, forced to belong to the first one – which had more expensive fees, and did not allow commerce with the Russian interior.⁶⁷ Across the three guilds, the ratio between Russian

⁶³ *Ibid.* The foreign men who were not merchants were often artisans or manufacturers.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Otherwise, we would have to account for 1,881 female merchants (against 1,754 men in this category), or 98 female retired soldiers.

⁶⁵ ONSL 971, 1845 n.28, 6/18 April. According to Patricia Herlihy, as late as 1892 only 45 percent of the urban population had been born in Odessa, suggesting an important adult work migration, both from within Russia – since serfdom had been abolished – and from abroad. Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 34.

⁶⁶ Merchant guilds (*kupecheskaya gil'diya*) membership was compulsory since the late 18th century. There were three categories: *gosti* (guests involved in international trade, often foreign merchants); *kuptsy* (local merchants), and *torgovtsy* (dealing small commodities), each requiring a different minimal capital. Only male family members could have that status, while their relatives were counted as ‘merchant relatives’. “The guild reform of 1824 ... required [foreign industrialists] to join one of the three guilds and to pay the tax obligations of guild membership. Foreign *gosti* were ... permitted to trade only in port and border cities and at three major fairs and could conduct trade only with Russian citizens of the first and second merchant guilds. Dowler, Wayne. “Merchants and Politics in Russia: The Guild Reform of 1824.” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 65, no. 1 (1987), 48.

⁶⁷ USNA II - M459, vol. 2, f.195. January 8/20 1860: “(...) by the obligation in which Foreigners were formerly of inscribing themselves only in the 1st Guild, it necessarily resulted that he who had not the means of paying the 1st Guild (the lay of which

nationals and foreigners (*gosti*) was generally of one to five (Graph 3.2).⁶⁸ But this number was, once again, possibly more important, as foreigners frequently abandoned their nationality to become Russian subjects and gain access to wider trade privileges – including the other guilds. Patricia Herlihy finds that it became increasingly common for foreign merchants to adopt a Russian citizenship, because that allowed them to enroll in the second guild (with a yearly fee of ₴401) or the third (₴116) against ₴1,000 (almost Fr400) in the first guild.⁶⁹ While the share of foreign-owned firms seemed to be diminishing, numbers did not account for the number of foreigners who had assumed a Russian citizenship solely for business purposes. By all metrics, Odessa hosted many alien merchants, who all had access to foreign capital, which led several consulates to open, with no less than seven founded during the governorship of Richelieu alone. It was a mark of considerable international attention for such a young city, and reflected the commercial interests at stake, but also the diversity of the population and foreign nationals that lived and traded there.⁷⁰ François Sauron, who acted as French consul in Odessa, noted that by 1832 the city counted over a hundred foreign companies, in addition to forty permanent firms.⁷¹

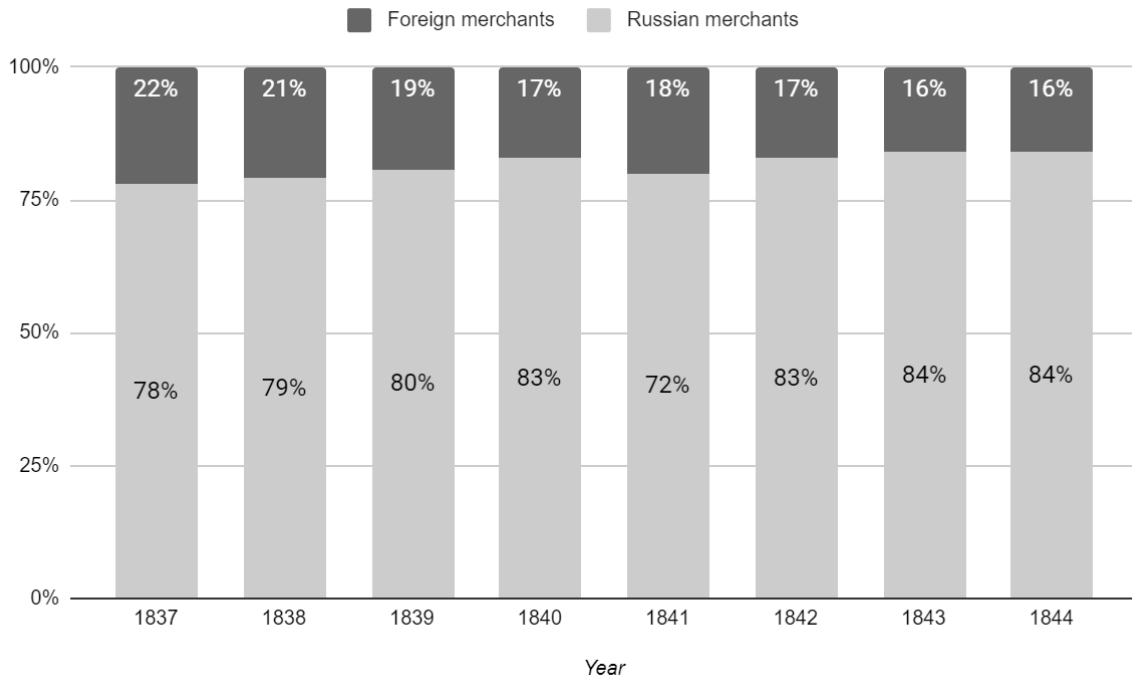
is not always at the command of every one) could not establish himself in Russia as a Merchant, or Broker, or Shopkeeper, unless he abandoned his Nationality and became a Russian subject, whereas now all Foreigners, whatever may be their means, can [enroll] themselves in any of the aforementioned Guilds, and enjoy the prerogatives accorded by law to each of them.”

⁶⁸ Skal'kovskii, Apollon Aleksandrovich. *Opyt Statisticheskago Opisanīa Novorossiiskago Kraia*. V Tip. L. Nitche, 1850. Numbers for years 1837 to 1844.

⁶⁹ Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 140-141. Herlihy highlights that the procedure to become a Russian citizen was very simple, requiring only a declaration of intent before the appropriate authorities.

⁷⁰ Herlihy, *Odessa: A History*, 1986, 38. In addition to a French consulate established very early on in 1803, and several other consulates representing European powers (England, Austria, Spain, Naples, the Republic of Ragusa, and the Ionian Islands), an American consulate was established in 1832, headed for almost three decades by a Greek American, John Ralli.

⁷¹ AMAE, *Mémoires et Documents, Russie*, vol. 44, fol. 24.

Graph 3.2 Russian Citizens and Foreigners (*Gosti*) in Odessa's Guilds [1837-1844]⁷²

Beyond its commercial population, the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Odessa was visible in every stratum of the urban population, up to the governmental level. De Ribas, a Neapolitan who was half-Spanish and half-Irish, was the first administrator of the city, Francis De Wollant (or De Vollant), a Dutchman, was its early architect, and the administrators of the city until 1822 were Richelieu and Langeron, both French *émigrés*. When Prince Vorontsov was appointed governor of New Russia, the nomination led a Russian nobleman to comment that “finally, they wanted New Russia to become Russified, and in 1823 they sent a Russian gentleman and a Russian soldier to control it.”⁷³

The debatable ‘Russianness’ of New Russia, and especially of Odessa, was prominent in contemporary discourses. In an age predating the development of railways by several

⁷² ONSL 971, 1845 n. 27 (13/15 April) and 28 (6/18 April): A.A. Skal’kovskii, “Population commerciale d’Odessa” (Odessa, Gorodskaia tipografiia, 1845). For the year 1839 and 1841, there are each time ten individuals missing from the total recorded (ie. not tallied in either the Russian or Foreign category).

⁷³ Filipp Filippovich Vigel commenting on the nomination of Vorontsov, quoted in Kovbasîuk, *Odessa*, 1957, 23.

decades, Odessa was better connected to the exterior, communicating faster and more closely with the rest of the Black Sea region and the Mediterranean, than with the Russian interior (Chapter 1). Because of technical limitations, but also because of the conservatism of the Russian laws regarding foreign merchants, the bulk of the city's trade and produce was destined for foreign partners. Quite often, news from international events first reached Odessa through foreign newspapers rather than through the official *Gazette of Saint Petersburg* and later the local *Odesskyi Vestnik*. The city was often portrayed in contemporary literature as an internal other, an urban ‘Eldorado’⁷⁴, full of riches and possibilities, a space for freedom and daring enterprises. In 1823, the poet Aleksandr Pushkin, then in exile in Odessa, marvelled at a noticeable diversity he had not previously encountered elsewhere in the Russian Empire: “The tongue of golden Italy resounds along the gay street where walks the proud Slav, Frenchman, Spaniard, Armenian, and Greek, and the heavy Moldavian, and the son of Egyptian soil, the retired Corsair, Morali.”⁷⁵ The poet himself could not travel outside of Russia and Odessa was as close as he could get to an experience of foreign life, a metaphor that informed his ideas about Europe – and an impression that, on the other side of the globe, many visitors had when coming to New Orleans. Pushkin was so fascinated by the diversity he encountered in Odessa that he celebrated its spirit of freedom in his famous verse novel, *Eugene Onegin*. He nicknamed the city ‘Ausonia’ and provided it with a mythical Italian past, thus defining Odessa as an essentially non-Russian, or rather a freer and cosmopolitan city.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Hommaire De Hell, *Travels in the Steppes*, 1847, 6.

⁷⁵ Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeevich, and Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov. *Eugene Onegin : A Novel in Verse*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, 340.

⁷⁶ Makolkin, Anna. ‘City-Icon in a Poetic Geography: Pushkin's Odessa.’ In Preston, Peter, and Paul Simpson-Housley. *Writing the City: Eden, Babylon and the New Jerusalem*. London: Routledge, 1994: 99-103.

This freedom was particularly valuable when it came to religious tolerance: Odessa was by far the largest Jewish city in the Pale of Settlement.⁷⁷ The settlement of Jewish families in the southern regions – often treated as other foreign communities, since large numbers were transferred to the Russian Empire through the partitions of Poland – had been tolerated as early as the reign of Catherine II. While a few Jewish families already lived on this site when the Khadjibey fort was taken in 1789, who witnessed Odessa’s foundation in 1794, later groups came far and wide from all parts of the Pale, with large numbers from Galicia in western Ukraine and Poland. Jewish communities in Novorossiia were mostly urban: few prospered as cultivators, and most left their lands or settled directly in the city to engage in trade. Being Russian speakers, many became brokers for the foreign traders of Odessa. Toleration was so great that by the early 1830s, Odessa hosted several Jewish schools, and in 1856 three synagogues as well as thirty-six Jewish houses of prayer (Chapter 5 and 6).⁷⁸ In Odessa, Jews had more rights than in the rest of the Russian Empire; for example, in 1838, a law was passed authorising Jews with Russian diplomas to practice medicine, but it was exclusive to the territories of Novorossiia.⁷⁹

While Odessa’s ethnic diversity had been recognized from its early decades, surveys were not systematic, and nationality was often an economic strategy. Approaching nationality through the lens of language, allows for a more precise insight into Odessa’s demographic breakdown.⁸⁰ The 1897 census was the first comprehensive census of the Russian empire, and

⁷⁷ The Pale of Jewish Settlement was the name of a region with varying borders in the west of the Russian Empire (Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Poland, Ukraine, and Moldova) where Jewish permanent residency was allowed – yet heavily regulated – from 1791 to 1917.

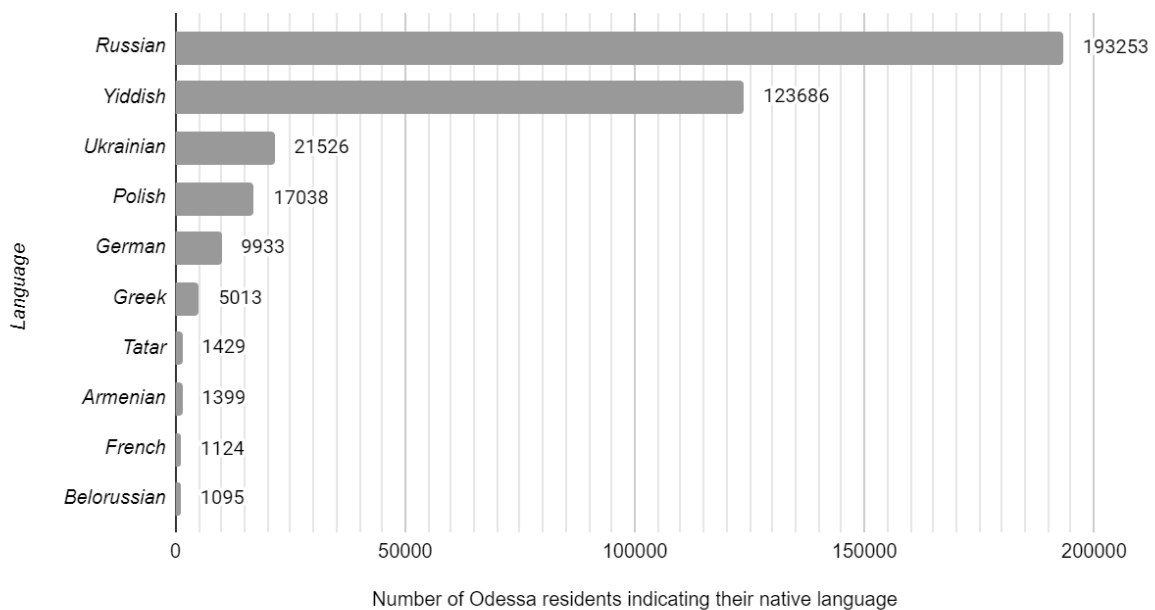
⁷⁸ USNA – M459, U.S. Consulate, Odessa, Russia. vol.2, f.143. June 30/July 2, 1856. By 1856, the Jewish community represented 10.3% of the population of Odessa, as well as 46% of the merchants’ guild members.

⁷⁹ ONSL 971, 1838, n. 96, 2/14 December.

⁸⁰ Soviet historian Gozulov wrote on the intersection between nationality and mother-tongue in 1970: ‘The formulation of the question of nationality in the USSR was adopted in the first census program of 1920. (...) The 1897 census bypassed this issue, which was mainly due to the fear of the manifestation of centrifugal national forces in Russia and the desire to conceal data on the number of each nation.’ in Gozulov, A. I. *Perepisi Naseleniia Zemnogo Shara: khronologicheskie Tabliitsy*. Moskva: Statistika, 1970.

it was the only all-Russian census until 1920. Most of Odessa’s early foreign settlers were recorded as Russian subjects, as many had acquired a Russian passport at this date. That census strictly followed nationality lines; consequently, by 1897, the foreign non-subjects living in Odessa officially amounted to only 7 percent – a number which shows a share similar to the one recorded by Skal’kovskiĭ in 1836.⁸¹ However, if language is used as a proxy for nationality, at the end of the nineteenth century at least 58 percent of the population of Odessa was ethnically non-Russian.

Graph 3.3 The Ten Largest Groups by Native Language in Odessa, 1897⁸²



Throughout the early history of Odessa, statistical accounts blurred demographic categories between non-Russian nationals, foreigners, and different occupational and professional spheres, creating frequent overlaps. In Willard Sunderland’s words:

⁸¹ Even with 7%, Odessa’s share of foreign population was still much larger than in the two major Russian cities, landlocked Moscow (0.75%) and capital city St Petersburg (2.35%). Skal’kovskiĭ, *Pervoe Tridtsatiliētie*, 1837.

⁸² Data taken from Troiñitskiĭ, N. A. *Pervaĭa Vseobshchaĭa Perepis’ Naselenĭa Rossĭskoĭ Imperĭi 1897 g.* [*The First General Census of the Population of the Russian Empire in 1897*], vol 47. Leningrad, 1897 and Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 131.

“Russians lived all across the Russian state, but this state was also home to many people who were clearly not Russian as well as some Russians who had apparently forgotten about their Russianness.”⁸³

As Western Russia went through a process of conceptual Europeanization, the populations of Southern Russia and the Black Sea steppes sat awkwardly at the junction of between the conceptual domains of the Orient and the Occident, a position becoming central to their self-definition. The inhabitants of these southern lands were meant to be New-Russian, but what this would entail in practice was difficult to define. How Russian were the Novorossiyan? And more importantly, because of the settlement policies that dominated the early decades of the region, how European could Novorossiyan be?

While the shift in definition had a lot to do with the nascent idea of Europe, one distant country contributed more than others to this geopolitical transformation. Napoleon’s military campaigns had turned the public’s attention eastward, especially as the relationship between France and Russia soured. On the other hand, the government of the Duke of Richelieu, whose fame stemmed from both his family name and his personal achievements in France and in Russia, embodied that process and shed a peculiar light on the newly founded Odessa. In France, his name inspired departures and attracted business ventures.⁸⁴ Although Richelieu was zealous in developing the territories he had been entrusted with by casting as wide a net for prospective immigrants as possible, he also kept a privileged relationship with nationals of his mother country. In trader Charles Sicard’s words,

“expeditions [were] directed to Odessa on the basis that the then young Duc de Richelieu was governor there. It was for the same reason that I myself

⁸³ Sunderland, Willard. "Imperial space: territorial thought and practice in the eighteenth century." in Burbank et al. *Russian Empire*, 2007, 33-66.

⁸⁴ AMAE, 230CCC/2, 24 September 1820: The French consul to Odessa contrasted the city’s reputation for wealth and modernity and the harsh practical realities of a frontier town: “The reputation that Odessa had acquired [in France] a few years ago and which attracted there so much speculation from every country continues to dazzle, especially in France, many people who find their hope bitterly disappointed upon their arrival here. (...) We must abandon the illusion that one just has to come to Odessa to become rich; we must know that today the time when one could become rich without having any money has passed.”

decided to go ... but then I settled there. That is, in a word, the history of nearly all the foreigners established in Odessa.”⁸⁵

The latter part of this chapter will focus on the French presence in Odessa and its contribution to the specific non-Russian – or European – character of the city’s early population and development.

3.3 French *émigrés* and francophilia: The strange case of a French colonisation project without imperial design.

The relationship between France and the Russian Empire had taken a new direction a few years before the French Revolution. The Comte de Ségur, minister plenipotentiary to the court of St Petersburg between 1785 and 1789, initiated changes that set the conditions for an opening of South Russia to international trade, in particular with France.⁸⁶ The minister’s rationale was that the geographic distance between France and Russia would ensure that no open conflict could ever exist between the two nations – a short-sighted view – and that their balance of supply and demand were ideally complementary.⁸⁷ Therefore, as early as the 1780s, plans were laid out for a preferred relationship and increased exchanges between French Mediterranean ports and the new Russian ports on the Black Sea.⁸⁸ Such treaties would prevent the use of foreign go-betweens, and instead favour direct contact between French merchants and South

⁸⁵ Quoted in Herlihy, *Odessa*, 1986, 38.

⁸⁶ Ségur, Louis-Philippe, Barrière, François, and Ligne, Charles Joseph. *Mémoires, Ou, Souvenirs Et Anecdotes*. Paris, 1859.

⁸⁷ “Russia was France’s best customer for wines, sugar, and coffee, while the French navy required masts, hemp, salted meat and other goods which could well be furnished by Russia.” Ségur also convinced the Russian government of the advantages in developing new ports on the Black sea, which could trade directly with French ports in the Mediterranean: the series of port creations was partly due to the 1787 treaty. Ignatieff, *French émigrés in Russia*, 1963, 43-45, 107-108.

⁸⁸ Murphy, Orville Theodore. *Charles Gravier, Comte De Vergennes: French Diplomacy in the Age of Revolution, 1719-1787*. Albany, 1982, 449: “Many French observers [...] believed that France could increase her trade with Russia, if she ceased trying to block Russian expansion southward.” France had previously requested that Russia returned some of her land gains to the Ottoman Empire.

Russians. In 1787, a treaty granted the right to trade in Russia to French merchants - a right that had previously only been granted to English merchants.

To these commercial advantages, conferred in the last years of France's *Ancien Regime*, was added a generally welcoming attitude on the part of the Russian authorities with regards to the French *émigrés* fleeing to Russia in the aftermath of the raid of the royal Tuileries palace in 1792. When news of the execution of Louis XVI reached St Petersburg, fearful of the ripple effects of the revolution, Catherine demanded that all French people living in Russia took an oath condemning republican principles. Initially, the bulk of these refugees was made up of members of the nobility, such as Richelieu, who had lost his estates in France but found easy employment serving in the imperial armies. Some *émigrés* were employed in the Russian military sent to conquer, and later organise, the Southern steppes, even obtaining the command of regiments.⁸⁹ Catherine II even drafted plans to found two French colonies on the shores of the Sea of Azov, foreseeing a larger arrival of refugees from Revolutionary France: in 1792, the Empress approved a detailed project that would have created at least two 'military' colonies of *émigrés* coming from the French high society. The projected colonies would have been large enough to host a population of no less than 6,000 individuals.⁹⁰ Richelieu himself, along with the Prince de Condé, was involved in supervising the project's execution. Although it never actually came to fruition, as most French aristocrats moved directly to the northern capital, the project was an interesting indicator of a positive Russian disposition towards a French permanent settlement. It also revealed Richelieu's prior familiarity with the idea of welcoming French nationals to Southern Russia. In 1802, a new commercial treaty was concluded with

⁸⁹ Capefigue, Baptiste. *Les Diplomates Européens. T1 / Par M. Capefigue*, Paris, 1843, 249: "After the unfortunate outcome of the 1792 campaign, the Prince de Condé requested asylum in the estates of the empress for the exiled Frenchmen. Catherine sent the Duc de Richelieu by the prince's side to arrange the execution of the plan of a colony that was to be formed on the shores of the Azov Sea, entirely, composed of gentlemen, and this thought was not useless to the great foundation of Odessa."

⁹⁰ Sirotkin, M.V.G. "Le renouvellement en 1802 du traité de commerce franco-russe de 1787" in *École Pratique Des Hautes études, La Russie Et L'Europe : XVIe-XXe Siècles*, Paris, 1970, 74. See also: Druzhinina, E. I. *Severnoe Prichernomor'e v 1775-1800 Gg.* Moskva: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1959.

Napoleonic France, which liberalized trade and renewed the conditions of the treaty of 1787.⁹¹ This treaty strengthened the previous testaments of benevolence on the part of Imperial Russia towards business with France. Additionally, Napoleon's ban on export trade from Hungary, while paralysing commerce elsewhere, turned the Black Sea into one of Europe's main suppliers of grain and prompted Odessa's rise to prominence.⁹² For French merchants, this trade offered crucial benefits: at a time when war with Britain made trade increasingly perilous, especially at sea, direct access to the Russian interior through the Black Sea market provided a lucrative alternative to the British-controlled northern routes.

This combination of circumstances and agreements contributed to the development of a preferential relationship between France and South Russia, and brought the city of Odessa into an informal sphere of French influence. This influence could be felt on two levels: first, the role of French *émigrés* in the administration of the new Russian territories acted as a magnet for the immigration of further fellow countrymen and women. Second, the privileged relationship of these *émigrés* with the centre of Russian power granted them a relative independence and personal sway over these territories. As a rule, before the constitution of a municipal government and the rise of more local figures to positions of authority in 1863, the early governor-generals of Novorossiia and the city chiefs of Odessa had been on friendly terms with the ruling Tsars, communicating closely with them. This helped them obtain an array of preferential conditions for the development of the region and the city, whether these were more flexible settlement policies, increased funding, or a free-port status. In the case of

⁹¹ Although Napoleon would become an enemy of the Russian Empire, initially his accession to power was seen positively by Imperial Russia and some of the noble *émigrés*, because he represented the return of a form of stability and sovereign power in France, after over ten years of political and military strife.

⁹² Herlihy, *Odessa*, 1986, 56.

Richelieu and Langeron, their Frenchness was secondary to the quality of their connections in Russia.⁹³

Because of the personal power that came with the role of governor-general, the two French governor-generals left a distinct and individual imprint on Novorossiia, particularly on the city of Odessa. Most importantly, the function of governor-general was merged with that of city chief only during the governorships of Richelieu and Langeron. After 1822, the role and mission of the governors no longer required the administration of Odessa itself.⁹⁴ Therefore, it can be argued that the French decades were pivotal in shaping the city’s identity and myth.⁹⁵ Richelieu was proficient in many languages, but after his mandate the Count of Langeron never bothered to learn Russian, and spent the seven years of his administration governing in French, without facing much resistance. The successive French administrations were foundational to the cultural genesis of Odessa: Richelieu was extremely conscientious in his mission to develop the city, taking a personal interest in the people settling there and in ensuring their economic success. Because of his progressive and tolerant administration, Odessa came to be characterized as “[the Russians’] Paris.”⁹⁶

This cosmopolitan reputation was intrinsic to the attractiveness and demographic success of the city. Odessa’s worldly reputation remained even when its government was transferred to Russian nationals. Count Mikhail Vorontsov was a very European cosmopolitan, educated at Cambridge and the son of the Russian ambassador to London.⁹⁷ During his long governorship (1823-1854), Vorontsov further extended the city’s demographic diversity, by

⁹³ Even when Richelieu came back to France in 1814 to serve as Louis XVIII’s Prime Minister, his opponents called him the “Western Minister for Russia.” (Herlihy, 1986, 47).

⁹⁴ Which does not mean that they did not influence Odessa – for instance Count Vorontsov (1823-1854) initiated numerous infrastructure projects, but he was also active in the conquest of the Caucasus.

⁹⁵ Especially as Richelieu and Langeron were also the only Governors-general of Novorossiia to have been foreigners.

⁹⁶ Hommaire de Hell, Xavier and Adèle, *Travels in the steppes of the Caspian Sea, the Crimea, the Caucasus, etc.* London, 1847, 7.

⁹⁷ He received criticism for the time he had spent in Britain, as being “more an English Lord than a Russian dignitary.” in Herlihy, 2019, 35.

facilitating the visibility of various national and religious groups and supporting their efforts to create their own cultural institutions, such as faith and language schools, museums, libraries, and clubs.⁹⁸ However, unlike his predecessors, he was not directly responsible for the administration of Odessa.

Because Odessa was a boomtown, it attracted all kinds of immigrants and French nationals were but a minority in a more motley and complex immigration surge. To permanent residents was also added the seasonal arrival of French traders and sailors, many coming from the Provence region in the southeast of France – and derided for their frequent willingness to winter in Odessa at the first sight of cold weather.⁹⁹ By 1836, the French consul in Odessa reported a ‘colony’ of about 400 French nationals of both sexes, out of a population of almost 59,000 for that year.¹⁰⁰ French influence was not equivalent to its numbers: their visibility and social status underscores the intersection between nationality, mother tongue, and language of use. The pre-eminence of the French language was, indeed, quite disproportionate to the number of French individuals. Whilst many French émigrés had left Russia after 1814, the number of French nationals living in Odessa had further decreased throughout the 1820s, as pressure was exerted to force them to either take up a Russian passport, or leave the country.¹⁰¹ By the 1840s, many French nationals had therefore either moved away or become officially

⁹⁸ Before him, the previous governors had established a bank (1804-1806), a commercial court (1808), parish and secondary schools, and a theatre (1809).

⁹⁹ AMAE, 230CCC/2, 17 October 1817: “But what really bothers me (...) is that the *provençaux* sailors, and almost all the French people in this province, have shown in this circumstance and especially afterwards not much firmness and use of the sea. If there is in the harbour a captain who first speaks of wintering, it is a *Provençal* (...).” 230CCC3, 31 October 1822: Our *provençaux* sailors are losing in these waters the reputation of the French Nation, first because of their extreme shyness which does not allow them to sail in winter on the Black Sea, whereas for a long time now other nations do not make a difference between seasons, (...) giving ground to much sarcasm.”

¹⁰⁰ AMAE, 230CCC/5, 6 May 1836, f. 266. This is a much lower share than the 0.3% reported in 1897; however, it is possible that the initial generations of French early settlers (such as the traders from Marseilles, or the Sicard family) had at this point adopted a Russian passport, which would bring the numbers up in terms of number of people for whom French was a mother-tongue.

¹⁰¹ AMAE, 230CCC/3, 26 January 1823: “There is in Odessa a rather large number of French people who came there to work in different trades and who, until now, had been left free to work without asking from them anything more than the tax imposed upon the different professions. This year, when came the time to renew their insurance card, they encountered a thousand difficulties, and it was insinuated that they had to become Russian. (...).”

Russian – to an extent that was difficult to assess, even by the French authorities, who spoke of ‘*peine de mort civile*’ (civilian death penalty), because they were erased from French records.¹⁰² However, measures against the presence of foreigners across the Russian territory did not mean that the influence of their languages and cultures diminished proportionately. The French nationals living in Odessa usually occupied privileged positions within the local urban society; they worked as “doctors, private tutors, milliners, booksellers, clockmakers, cabinetmakers, upholsterers, wine traders.”¹⁰³

French, especially during the Russian Imperial period, was the second language of most of the Russian educated class, in addition to their Russian mother-tongue: French was therefore a social language, which denoted education.¹⁰⁴ By contrast, although there were many German settlers, their language was understood as a heritage language, and did not carry the same social ramifications and value. In the higher spheres, French was also associated with a gendered division of society: while Russian was used in the military (and thus considered inherently male), French was used in the household, and was tied to women and the family. Because women were the bearers of linguistic and cultural reproduction, their proportional numerical significance within Odessa’s different foreign groups requires further attention.¹⁰⁵

Contradicting traditional settler gender balance, French female nationals largely outnumbered the men in Odessa in the 1897 population census: with 701 women and 423 men, the sex ratio was of 164/100 in favour of women (Graph 3.4). A century after the founding of Odessa, the French presence in the city was minimal (less than 1%) but the imbalance indicated

¹⁰² AMAE, 230CCC/6, 27 October 1842: “We count in Russia many Frenchmen who are in this situation. (...) Did all these persons thus incurred a civilian death penalty?”

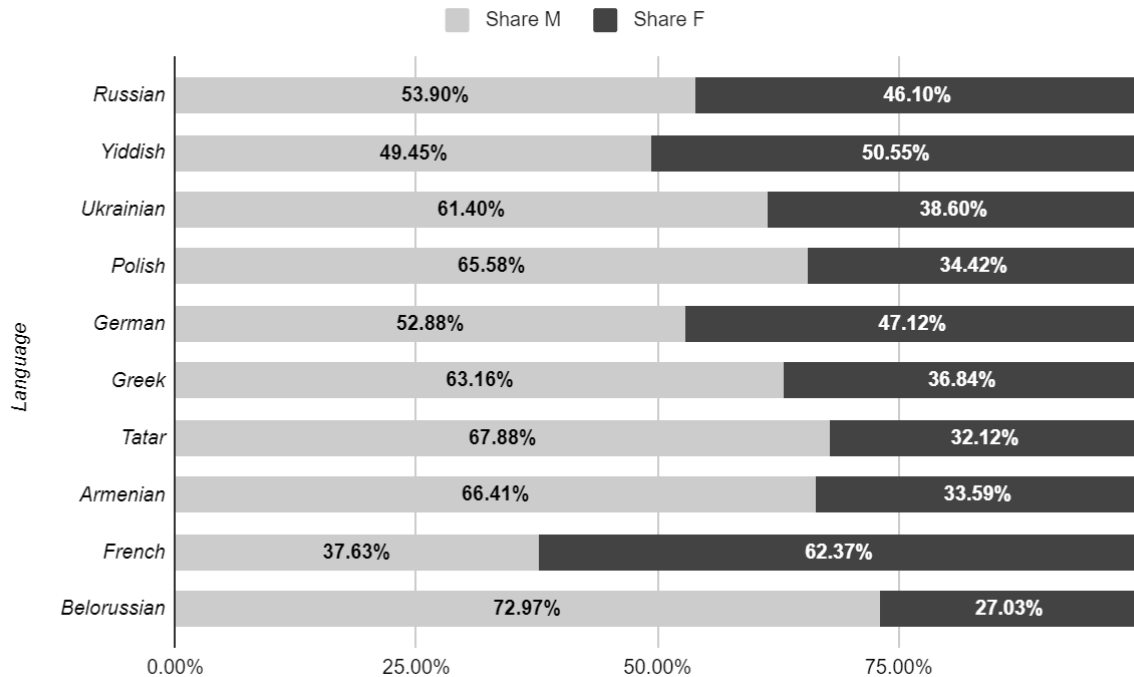
¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Ètkind, Aleksandr. *Internal Colonization : Russia's Imperial Experience*. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA, 2011.

¹⁰⁵ When the balance was roughly equal or favoured women, social and linguistic endogamy was maintained, but when it favoured men, they either found partners outside of their group, did not marry, or did not stay in Odessa.

French’s enduring value as a social language: one that was taught and learnt to engage in the cultural life of the city.

Graph 3.4 Share of Men and Women among the Ten Largest Language Groups in Odessa ¹⁰⁶



For some, French was a mother-tongue; for many others it was a stepmother language, acquired through education and socialization.¹⁰⁷ French women often did not come to Odessa to settle long-term: like other German or Italian female migrants, they came for professional reasons and left the city after a few years to get married. They had the highest literacy rate among female migrants of any national origin, and were in general better educated than their male counterparts.¹⁰⁸ French female migrants were employed as governesses by wealthy households, or as instructors in the numerous schools of the city. They were therefore not

¹⁰⁶ Data taken from Troiñitskii, N. A. *Pervaia Vseobshchaia Perepis' Naseleniia Rossiiskoi Imperii 1897 g.* [The First General Census of the Population of the Russian Empire in 1897], vol 47. Leningrad, 1897 and Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 131.

¹⁰⁷ A spin-off from the idea of Russian nature as Russia’s stepmother. Solov'ev, Sergei Mikhailovich. *Istoriia Rossii S Drevnieishikh Vremen*. 1873.

¹⁰⁸ Sifneos, “Rentiers, teachers and workers” 2010, 182-200.

secluded in the home and devoted to the domestic sphere, but they gained visibility in the public space, having access to a network of well-off families and, most importantly, establishing direct contact with Odessa's younger generations.¹⁰⁹ The cultural reproduction rooted in maternal care and the mother-tongue was thus displaced by a more civic 'stepmothering' that did not reflect numerical realities in terms of national and ethnic breakdown. Of course, the presence of French women was not the only reason why French language and institutions took root and lasted in another nation's colony: governance, education, newspapers, and international events all contributed to varying degrees, and will be appraised in the next chapters.

In 1843, the French consul commented on the overwhelming dissemination of the French language in the Odessite society:

“Odessa has borrowed from France more than from any other country; of all the foreign languages ours is the most widespread. It is spoken not only in salons, but also in all the stores, in most of the shops, and workshops. Our customs, our habits, our tastes have become those of the area and everything which comes from France, and from Paris especially, is well received.”¹¹⁰

The initial French imprint on the city's foundational decades contributed to the crystallization of an informal French cultural dominance, as a hybrid product of settlement and maritime exchange dynamics. The Frenchness and Francophilia that developed in Odessa was a form of neo-European Russianness: it resulted from the impossibility for Russia to integrate its new territories without recourse to foreign immigration and from the sustained attention and interest on the part of French Mediterranean ports towards the Black Sea trade. Odessa embodied both a Russian reinterpretation of Frenchness, and a Frenchified version of Russianness. As a cultural creation, this melding of cultures derived from an accidental and unplanned colonial encounter on the southern Russian steppes, amplified by the rhythms of a dynamic trade and rapid urban development.

¹⁰⁹ 208 out of 383 working French women were governesses in 1897. Herlihy (2019, 129).

¹¹⁰ AMAE 230CCC/6, f.293, 4 March 1843. Translation by Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 135.

Was the French language therefore competing with Russian for cultural hegemony? How did such foreign influence translate into practice, and how did it relate to Odessa's other cultural groups? Was this influence frowned upon, and therefore singled out? Or, rather, did it coalesce with the cosmopolitan character of the city to imagine Odessa as a not-fully Russian city, a social experiment that rejected its peripheral location to become a centrifugal force? Odessa's links to the Russian Empire and its centres of power were, as previously outlined, on occasion tenuous. The aquatic world united, while land divided and remained a demanding obstacle to overcome. Odessa, for the most part, looked seawards and the Russification of New Russia was not a straightforward process, just as much as its Europeanization could only be understood as the end-result of a similarly complex assortment of circumstances and conditions, on a land that was neither European nor Russian to begin with.

*

Novorossiia, and particularly Odessa, exemplified the foreign character of territories that had just been baptized neo-Russian. As the Ukrainian steppes were developing into one of the most populated areas of the Russian Empire and Odessa was becoming a fully-fledged southern Russian capital, the question of the homeland, or rather of the motherland, was a dividing one: was it Russia, and if not, could France, who contributed Odessa's founding fathers, fulfil that role? In his essay on Pushkin's semi-biographical character, historian Vasyli Kliuchevskii claims that, although Eugene Onegin still lived within the limits of the Russian empire, he was "foreign to the society in which he moved."¹¹¹ Exploring Odessa and its complex multiplicity as a contemplative city-dweller, Onegin was fascinated by what he saw as a microcosm of Europe; at an age when it was unimaginable for Pushkin to be allowed to

¹¹¹ "Evgenii Onegin i ego predki", in Kliuchevskii, V. O. *Kurs Russkoĭ Istorii*. Moskva; Peterburg, 1921. Translated in Etkind (2011, 61).

travel outside of Russia, Odessa epitomized what non-Russian surroundings could mean. Odessa was not just, like any large urban centre, a city inhabited by many foreigners. In Odessa, the foreigners made the city.¹¹² Because it was also a frontier boomtown, it was deprived of timeless historical traditions: its foundational moments were contemporary, and the myth-making process upon which its identity was to be created stemmed from its unique composition.¹¹³ Odessa was being invented as it developed - and foreigners played a crucial part in that development. The French community alone did not encompass the complexity involved in this self-definition, however this national group significantly and durably contributed to Odessa's identity, whether it was being self-defined, or surveyed from the outside. As in New Orleans, the visibility of Odessa's 'French' population, whether it designated French nationals, French-speakers, or Frenchified Russians, meant that they became one of the city's distinctive traits. Odessa and New Orleans were places where the French influence occupied different positions, with the necessarily different implications of slavery to the latter city's cultural order – which will be discussed in Chapter 4, 5, and 6. Yet as Odessa sprawled physically, a hybrid form of identity developed that was tied to its cityscape: the new port embodied characteristics of the enlightened Russian metropolis.¹¹⁴ Its urbanity was more malleable than that of other cities in the Russian Empire, the *stolitsa* Moscow or St Petersburg, as Odessa's city planners experimented with new forms of urbanism. At a cultural level, this process was not a re-invention and a re-affirmation of Russianness, triggered by the confrontation with a new frontier environment. Rather, it created a liminal space that did not

¹¹² Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 2017, 30: "Odessa was a city of foreigners."

¹¹³ To the local historian Simon Dubnow, Odessa was even "the least historical" of cities, quoted in Herlihy, 2019, 84.

¹¹⁴ Brower, Daniel R. *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850-1900*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990. Martin, Alexander M. *Enlightened Metropolis: Constructing Imperial Moscow, 1762-1855*. Oxford Studies in Modern European History, 2013. Mironov, Boris N. *Russkii Gorod v 1740-1860-e Gody: Demograficheskoe, Sotsial'noe i ekonomicheskoe Razvitie*. Leningrad: "Nauka", Leningradskoe Otd-nie, 1990.

abide to imperial designs, but accommodated external actors, who defined their own multiple and complex identities.

Chapter 4 Divisions and solidarities in two fast-growing settler cities.

“When travelers arrive at New Orleans and see the beautiful houses which are on the Mississippi, they believe that the citizens enjoy great wealth (...). But after having entered the city ... one sees there many others whose construction and roofs show a depth of poverty which is surprising.”

(Paul Alliot, 1803)¹

“Was this really that Odessa which had seemed so brilliant when we saw it from the lazaret, and which now presented itself to our eyes under so mean and wretched an aspect?”

(Xavier and Adèle Hommaire De Hell, 1847)²

Reactions of surprise or sense of deceit were common tropes in most travellers' accounts of their first arrival to New Orleans and Odessa, no matter whether they were foreigners or came from other parts of the same country. The extraordinary situation and site of the two ports, their rapid development, and their spatial remoteness had brought fame upon them, and quite often visitors came with minds full of expectations. New Orleans and Odessa's separation from the national core and from unifying historical narratives was based on their remote geography, on their environmental context and its unique constraints (*see* Chapter 1), but also on the outstanding internal development of each cities' demographics, urbanism, and social concerns. The two cities presented a terrain for conflicting social cohesion and exclusion: in both cases the overlaying of mental maps upon human geography reflected local concerns and the effects

¹ Robertson and Alliot. *Louisiana*, 1911, 67.

² Hommaire De Hell, *Travels in the Steppes*, 1847, 6.

of sudden economic prosperity. The intersection between origin, religion, ethnicity, and occupation dictated how spatial occupancy unfolded in practice, often in a manner that differed from what could be observed in other contemporary large cities, such as New York and Baltimore, or St Petersburg and Kiev.

Odessa and New Orleans also represented abstraction at a time when national politics were shaped by anti-urban legacies: by the start of the nineteenth century, only 3 percent of Americans lived in town larger than 8,000 inhabitants, while Russia suffered from urban stagnation and even decline, with the share of townspeople decreasing from 11 percent in the 1740s to 7 percent in the 1860s.³ Their fast population growth had thus the potential to heighten pre-existing divisions at both the local and national level. In New Orleans, the tensions that had been imported by the successive American and Creole generations settling in the city became more acute with the demographic increase. On the ground, the response to these tensions was the re-arrangement of living patterns alongside national groups, but also cultural groups: the spatial translation of social divisions contributed to setting New Orleans apart from other southern and northern cities. Odessa's ethnic and religious composition was just as diverse as its American counterpart, yet in that city, processes of amalgamation and accommodation compromised Russian-wide determined social estates (*soslovie* or *sostoianie*): Odessa's urban growth reflected local priorities first. Being both a part of and apart from the rest of the Russian Empire was fundamental to the Odessite urban identity and the port's prosperity justified the exceptional rules in place in the city, juxtaposing the freeport regime onto Odessa's urbanity.

In a comparable manner, these successful ports were also unfinished urban projects. In New Orleans, the population surge through external non-Louisianan immigration streams put

³ Towers, Frank. *The Urban South*, 2004; Mironov, Boris N. *Russkii Gorod*, 1990.

pressure on existing French and Francophone residents, who felt that they were being drowned by competing Anglo-American, German, and Irish settler groups (Chapter 2). At the same time, the African American share of the population was on the rise just as skin colour became an increasingly important social marker – among them, free and francophone Creoles of colour owned property and mixed with white Creoles. As a result of those demographic shifts, Frenchness as a cultural and social identity was re-constructed in the space of the city, challenging ideas of whiteness, shaping informal boundaries. These changes translated into occupancy practices: it divided who dwelled before or after Canal Street, up or down the Mississippi River. In Odessa, the French population, although foundational to the city's ethos, was never dominant nor strong in numbers, contrary to Italian or Greek groups. However, on the streets of this multi-national city, French principles of government and architectural classicism turned into key attributes. In the central freeport area, Odessa's diverse population was dissolved in a single Frenchified socio-cultural environment, while separate residential patterns only became apparent on the spatial and economic margins of the city.

This chapter re-inscribes New Orleans and Odessa in their local urban environment, and considers how the two cities operated as sites of *sblizhenie* (rapprochement) and cultural consolidation. While the situation of Odessa and New Orleans within their national system was unusual from the outset, a closer look at their urban development highlights local logics at play, themselves challenged by the external pull of foreign urban models. The reputation and influence of each individual group of migrants impacted the local process of cultural synthesis differently, but in both places French people's visibility led to new social divisions and the spatial transformation of these two southern capitals.

4.1 New Orleans: (Re)-constructing Frenchness after the Louisiana Purchase

A few years after the Louisiana Purchase, the 1811 survey revealed that, contrary to the situation observed in most of the states belonging to the South, Louisiana was predominantly urban.⁴ With a significant Euro-American population concentrated in the Orleans Parish, no less than one third of the inhabitants of Louisiana lived in New Orleans – when the population of New York city only comprised ten percent of the inhabitants of the State of New York by 1800. New Orleans was therefore, incontestably, the dominant metropolis of its hinterland.

Despite that gravitational pull, until the late 1850s, the relationship between New Orleans and the rest of the American territory was characterized by physical isolation and separateness (Chapter 1). Yet on a more local level, New Orleans's growth revealed tensions that were both extrinsic and intrinsic. In Louisiana, the introduction of American rule prompted a self-redefinition among its inhabitants, who desired to shake off the negative associations ascribed to them and claim their new rights. They complained in 1804 that “political axioms on the Atlantic [became] problems when transferred to the shores of the Mississippi,” and that the Americans did not consider them their equals.⁵ Julien Vernet argues that the Louisianians even started to feel like “strangers on their native soil.”⁶ While Louisiana's native populations were rather the Houma, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Natchez nations, Louisianians felt that they had seniority rights in the Mississippi delta compared with the Anglo-Americans. This very sense of strangeness, displacement, and privation durably impacted spatial occupation and political strategies in the later development and usage of the city. These strategies could go along strict national or linguistic lines but, in practice, they were often coopted by compound

⁴ Bailey, Richard W. *Speaking American: A History of English in the United States*. New York, 2015, 99.

⁵ “Remonstrance of the People of Louisiana Against the Political System Adopted by Congress for Them, May 1804,” *American State Papers*, Class X, Misc. 1:396-99; *Annals of Congress*, Senate, 8th Congress 2nd Session, 727-28.

⁶ Vernet, *Strangers on Their Native Soil*, 2013.

interest groups, and gave birth to new practices, institutions, and urban geographies. Rather than being imposed from above by the federal government or the city administration, patterns of spatial occupancy in New Orleans and Louisiana were often the result of choices made by the inhabitants themselves – free and unfree.⁷ Multiple urban geographies were super-imposed onto each other: black and female spatialities challenged the Americanizing geography of the city, with Francophone Creoles straddling the dividing lines according to their group interests.⁸ They made formal rivalry more visible by transcribing it in the physical features and the urban grid of ‘la Nouvelle Orléans’ turned New Orleans.

Public image also played an important role in the lasting urban divisions, and articulated in the public sphere the tension between ‘French’ groups and Anglo-Americans (Chapter 2). The contemporary tension built upon the previous negative reputation of the Louisiana colony during the successive French and Spanish rules. Throughout the colonial decades, the men of the military garrison had made up most of the territory’s population, since Louisiana remained a strategic buffer zone between different competing empires. However, in terms of settlement prospects, Louisiana was rather considered a backwater outpost, an inhospitable land that did not hold enough economic promise to stimulate voluntary settlement. During its years under the rule of the Mississippi Company (1718-1720), Louisiana was a de facto penal colony, dotted with indentured servants, prisoners, and women of ill-reputation (such as the ‘filles à la cassette’), who were sent there to increase the civilian population.⁹ The colony gained a

⁷ Enslaved people and the institution of slavery itself influenced the shaping of urban spaces; see: Dantas, Mariana: *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in the Eighteenth-Century Americas* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Johnson, Jessica: *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Penn Press, 2020); Johnson, Walter: *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Harvard University Press, 1999); Rockman, Seth: *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Ryan, Mary: *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the City During the Nineteenth Century* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997)

⁸ “Moving their bodies with gravitas, the women carved space for embodied pleasure, spiritual connection, and time with kin out of the Americanizing geography of the city, and they brought a swath of women, men, and children of diasporic origins and bonded statuses with them in their black geographic project.” Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*, 2020, 224.

⁹ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, 8-11.

negative reputation, exemplified by fictions such as L'Abbé Prevost's *Manon Lescaut* (1731), which conflated the exotic distance of this colonial new France with ideas of exile and redemption, and that connotation outlasted changes in Louisiana's demographic composition and the termination of the Company's rule. Yet, the francophone population of Louisiana was transformed several times throughout the eighteenth century, with an influx of French subjects (with great numbers from the regions of Île-de-France and Brittany), the arrival of Acadian exiles from a Canada turned British, and the continuous importation of African and Caribbean slaves.¹⁰ The four decades of Spanish rule (1762-1801), although disruptive, did not Hispanicize the demographic composition of the settler population. French rather than Spanish remained the most useful instrument of social cohesion.

In short, in the 1800s' the category of 'French speaker' in American Louisiana was protean and diverse, and in the face of such uncertainty, it often elicited uncomfortable reactions that were at times perceived as hostile or antagonizing. The local population claimed that the new laws and territorial reforms imposed by the American federal government were unjustly discriminatory. French settlers felt that 'gallic' groups were sometimes criminalized and scapegoated to justify a stricter rule. Some criminal cases were even highly publicized to feed into larger controversies and discourses about Louisiana. The trial of French man Louis St. Julien in 1803-1804, who had been accused of murdering his wife and subsequently attempting to terminate his own life, was one such popular and divisive case. The defendant's innocence quickly became peripheral to the debate surrounding the trial as public attention turned towards the perceived criminalization of Frenchness: when he was freed, the official statement took into account the fact that, "the attachment of Sir St. Julien to France, to his Fatherland, (...)

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 15-17, 22, 27: During the early American period, these demographics changed, with the two largest continents of immigrants coming from Guyenne (South West of France). Other represented provinces were Brittany, Ile de France, Normandy, Aunis, Languedoc, and Béarn (two-thirds of Louisiana's late 18th c, non-Acadian, French immigrants).

was knowingly used to make him seem suspicious and to encourage his punishment as a criminal.”¹¹ This example illustrates the ideological links between criminality and immigration, a few years after the *Alien and Sedition Acts* (1798) had limited the freedoms of foreigners in the United States, in a backdrop of rising tensions with France.

Therefore, the transition to American rule and the alleged attacks against an overarching idea of ‘Frenchness’ created new commonalities among the local population while reinforcing a language-based identity for cultural synthesis. The various demographic groups composing the Gallic population of Louisiana were therefore re-ordered and categorized as ‘French.’ Illustrating this semantic shift, an 1819 article published in the local francophone newspaper *L’Ami des Lois* commented on the newly precarious balance preserved in Louisiana.

“The Government is as yet in equilibrium between the French and American party... The Governor, Treasurer, and Secretary of State are French. In the superior Court two judges are French, one American by birth. Of the district judges six are Americans and only one French. In general, the Americans are in majority in the other offices.”¹²

Over fifteen years after the Louisiana Purchase, and seven years after statehood, the cohabitation and rivalry between two groups characterized as fundamentally distinct had erased the previous diversity that existed across the Gallic communities of Louisiana. Spatially, those changes affected the area of New Orleans more drastically: the population density, passenger movements through the port, and residential patterns meant that these neo-French Louisianans were more visible in an urban setting. Louisianians were now only known as ‘French,’ and had been re-imagined as French largely because of the territorial transfer. How did this cultural synthesis translate physically into New Orleans as a city? And how did urban structures reflect the rapid and drastic changes happening at an ideological and demographic level?

¹¹ LaRC, 660 (Laussat Proclamations), f.14, 3 December 1803: Decree of Pierre-Clément Laussat freeing Louis St. Julien.

¹² “L’Ami des Lois et Journal du Commerce”, Issue June 24, 1819 ‘Topography – Louisiana’ by Francis H. Martin, quoted in NOPL – Youngman, Charles F. *Historic Sketch of L’Ami des Lois, or The Friend of the Laws*, 1938, 5.

For most of the antebellum period, the development of the city did not follow a binary division along racial groupings, just as it did not always segregate new and old migrants, or the poor and wealthy. By 1803, New Orleans was still very much a new and minor city, still rebuilding its central areas, ravaged by a fire in 1788. The growth of New Orleans out of the original French Quarter (the area of the original colonial town) accelerated with the start of the American rule, initially because the increased demographics put pressure on a still limited urban grid. This growth was reflected in the street names: the older areas bore French colonial (Bourbon, Dauphine, Royal) and Catholic (Ursuline, Annunciation) names, later extensions were named after Spanish individuals (Ulloa, Galvez) and French revolutionaries and republicans (Napoleon, Austerlitz), while American rule brought in new numbered “Yankee” streets.¹³ However, less than a decade into American rule, the St Domingue humanitarian crisis of 1809-1810 doubled the urban population and transformed New Orleans into a Franco-Creole city. With the arrival of thousands of refugees in 1809, as well as the continuous influx of Anglo-Americans, the expansion of the city became necessary.

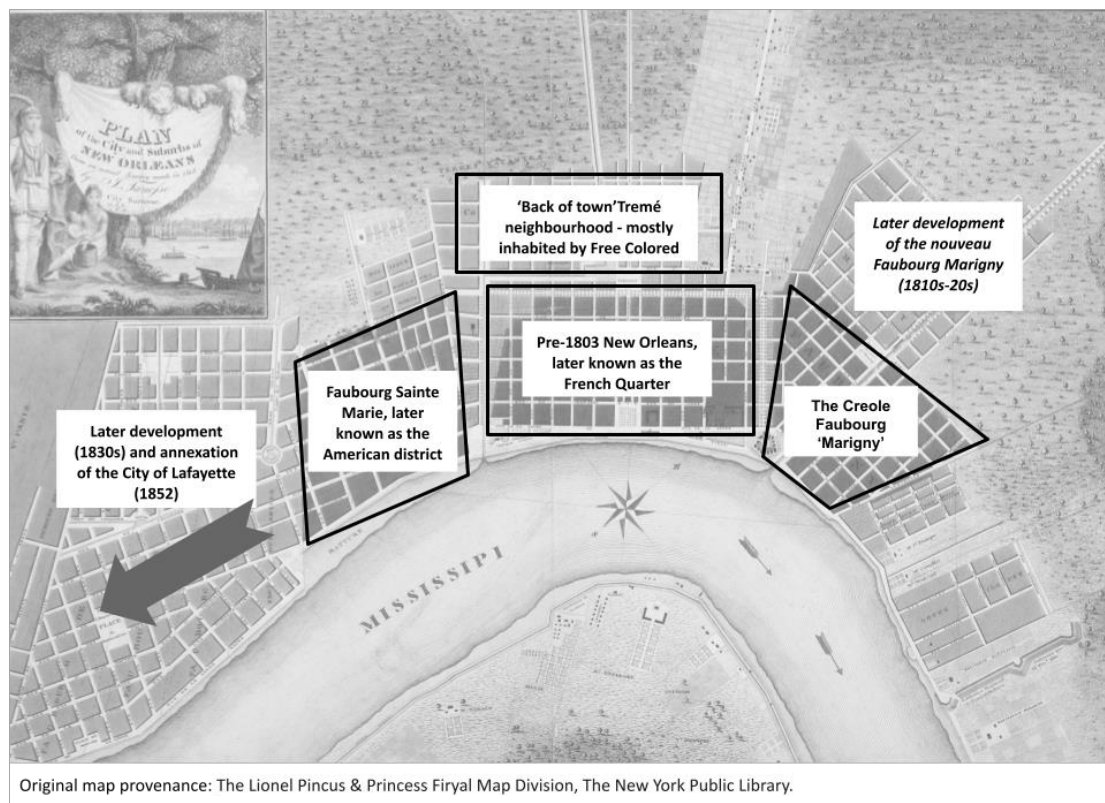
The first significant extension took the form of the *‘faux bourg’* (false town) of Sainte Marie, upriver from the planned city centre (the so-called French Quarter), a new neighbourhood that was built as an emergency housing solution after the 1788 fire destroyed large segments of the old city. The term *‘faubourg’* itself came from France’s designation of (inner) suburbs, a prominent feature of Paris since the sixteenth century, as urbanized areas grew outside the city wall and were thereafter annexed to the city.¹⁴ Burgeoning Sainte Marie was initially intended for the local inhabitants, but it became particularly popular among the Americans, who struggled to find convenient space to settle in the center. (Map 4.1). The Sainte

¹³ LaRC M-71: New Orleans Street Names essay, Undated.

¹⁴ In New Orleans, *‘faubourg’* also described “the subdivisions of old plantations beyond the limits of the original city starting in 1788 and was commonly used into the early 1900s.” Campanella, Richard. *Time and Place in New Orleans : Past Geographies in the Present Day*. Gretna, La.: Pelican Pub., 2002, 10.

Marie neighbourhood was first and foremost English-speaking and reflected both a desire on the part of the newcomers not to mix extensively with the creole inhabitants, but also the want for housing and space in the cramped original quarter. This faubourg quickly came to be known colloquially as the American Quarter, and as the city expanded upriver to the West, subsequent neighbourhoods – including from 1833 the semi-independent City of Lafayette – became part of an American New Orleans, populated by East-coast businessmen and a variety of Irish and German immigrants.

Map 4.1 Plan of the City and Suburbs of New Orleans, from an actual survey made in 1815.
Showing the division of the early historical neighbourhoods.



However, post-Purchase New Orleans did not just develop as an American city isolating its old colonial centre. In the 1800s, the young Louisiana Creole Bernard de Marigny inherited the large plantation his family possessed on the shores of the Mississippi, directly downriver from the historical centre of New Orleans. Not a planter himself, he preferred to invest in urban development to diversify the financial basis of his estates. This move away from an essentially

slave labour-based income was not necessarily philanthropic, and many saw in this decision the desire to counterbalance the rising Anglo-American demographic advantage and influence over the urban spaces. As the city grew in population, several owners of neighbouring plantations likewise weighed up the comparative financial advantages of real estate and agriculture. Marigny's development site, directly adjacent to the old centre, while being physically separated from the Anglo-American faubourg Sainte Marie by the original quarter (Map 4.1), was particularly advantageous. In fact, Marigny explicitly encouraged the settlement of French Creoles and immigrants from St. Domingue in his new neighborhood, alongside poorer working-class newcomers from Ireland and Germany. Contrary to the American Quarter, the new faubourg also welcomed free people of colour: the 1810 federal census shows that the population of the Faubourg Marigny reflected the tripartite society of colonial New Orleans.¹⁵

After just five years of existence, the faubourg counted about two thousand inhabitants: almost half of them were free people of colour, up to a third were white, while slaves represented a small quarter of the population.¹⁶ The housing lots were presented as affordable, with a few boarding houses headed by free women of colour, and Marigny often extended credit to those whose economic circumstances were less fortunate. In addition to the Caribbean migrations, the faubourg also attracted French immigrants from a working-class background, especially in the later 1820s and 1830s. The affordability of the faubourg meant that most first-time arrivals to the city settled in this cosmopolitan and creole area, a space where commonality was found through shared practices and mostly a syncretic language – French. With its large

¹⁵ Walter Stern points out that three-quarters of the lots in Marigny had at least one free black owner during the first half of the nineteenth century, and many of those owners were women. In 1810, free blacks also composed 43 percent of the population in Quartier Marigny, outnumbering both whites and enslaved blacks. Stern, Walter. *Race and Education in New Orleans: Creating the Segregated City, 1764-1960*. LSU Press, 2018, 21.

¹⁶ Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis*, 2016, 91.

free coloured population, it was a space that was pre-dominantly Francophone, Catholic, and Creole – in the sense that many residents had been born in Louisiana.¹⁷

To the north of the original French quarter, further away from the Mississippi (Map 4.1), developed yet another ‘faux-bourg,’ Tremé, where the largest proportion of the free coloured lived. It had as its central gathering place Congo square, a space of limited freedom for New Orleans’ slaves but also of continuous contact and sociability between the different members of the New Orleanian tripartite society. Most of the urban slave population was composed of domestic slaves, and most of them were women, in contrast with the gender balance that prevailed on Louisianian plantations. Working in the household and in the city afforded domestic slaves more possibilities for contact and mobility – socially and spatially. Less mixed than Faubourg Marigny, Tremé nonetheless acted as a nucleus for encounters with the populations living further away in the rural Louisianian plantations, in particular the field slaves.¹⁸ The development of urban spaces and social networks such as in Tremé and Marigny reflected the tension between an effort to impose a rational ethno-linguistic regime in New Orleans, and the city’s mental maps, which contributed to its enduring reputation for promiscuity and disorder.

As the urban population grew, the city grid developed further away from the river. Faubourg Marigny was extended into a ‘New Marigny’ towards Lake Pontchartrain (1810-120). This also demonstrated that water-related risks were better understood and controlled, as the ground level in these spaces was lower than in the older neighbourhoods (Chapter 1). Where once only “wooden huts” were seen now stood “superb brick buildings,” while the quaysides

¹⁷ Although the use of French created new solidarities across ethnicities, the existence of a class of free *gens de couleurs* was a consequence of the Spanish colonial rule: the Spanish had cultivated a class of free blacks as a check against both French speaking whites and slaves. Stern, *Race and Education*, 2018, 23.

¹⁸ There were a few plantations in the city itself (the lands on which Faubourg Marigny was built being one such example). However, the 3,226 slaves brought by the Saint Domingue refugees themselves were not field workers, which increased the number of domestic slaves in the city.

extended over more than one league (5km) and were protected by a thick layer of shells taken from the neighboring lakes.¹⁹ The lakeward development of the city was not without challenges: as late as 1857, newspapers described New Orleans’ surroundings as “inhospitable”, being merely a “reservoir, that the rain and the river floods feed.”²⁰ Despite these practical difficulties, the urban extension into more hazardous spaces was necessary to respond to the rising numbers of immigrants coming from Europe in the wake of social strife and economic challenges. Until at least the 1840s, the ‘foreign French’ constituted a consistently large portion of such migrants. They found upon arrival creole communities of kin and tongue dictating where to settle, and which patterns of sociability to form. The creation and continuation of creole spaces for at least two generations after the Louisiana Purchase, and despite a rise of internal Anglo-American immigration, shows some of the failures of Americanization to encompass both older and newly arrived groups. Creole New Orleans more than American New Orleans achieved this objective, by connecting multiple allegiances and channeling them into “a singular identity with deep roots in a particular context.”²¹

Rather than slowly fading over the years, the differences between the different neighbourhoods and faubourgs increased starkly. In 1836, the city of New Orleans was subdivided into three, semi-independent, municipalities, “each with distinct municipal powers.”²² The original 1805 municipal charter for New Orleans was amended by the State Legislature, splitting the city into sections, to which was added the neighbouring the city of Lafayette, an urban extension upriver from the American quarter (Map 4.2). This schism was fuelled by the previous cultural divisions, but also by the power contest over the city’s

¹⁹ AMAE, 227CCC/4, 22 April 1827, f. 65

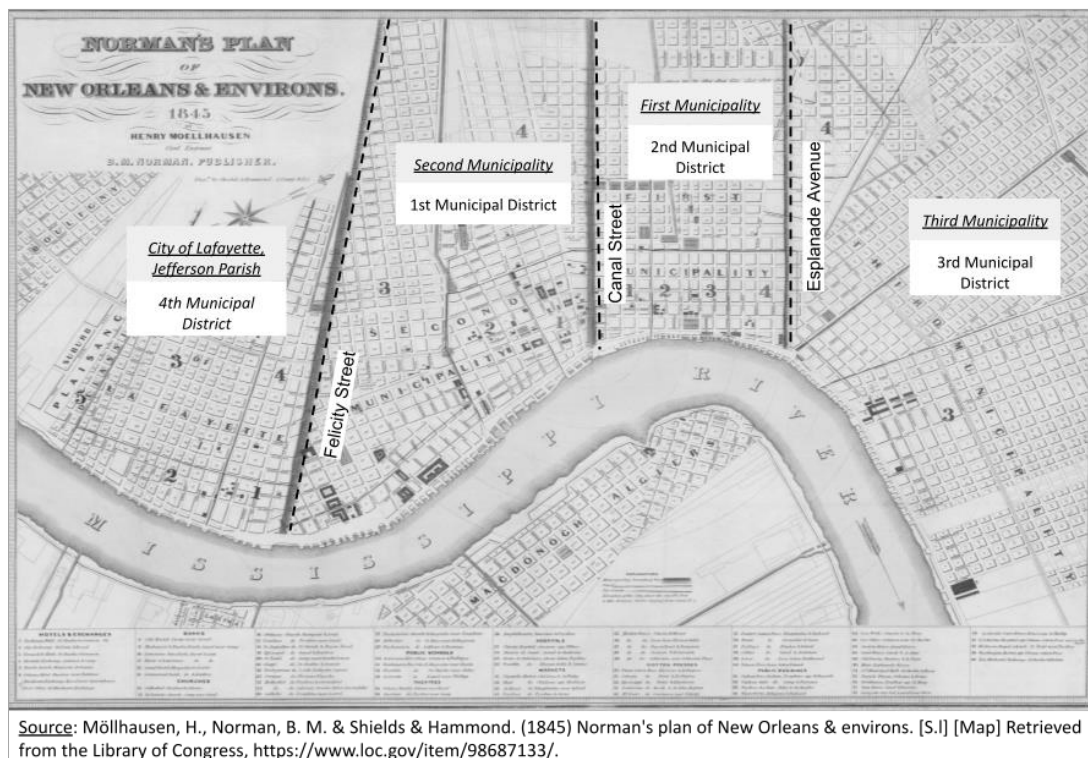
²⁰ NOPL, *L'Union*, Friday 6 February 1857, ‘The question of drainage in Louisiana.’

²¹ Thompson, *Exiles at Home*, 2009, 8.

²² Jewell, E. L. (Edwin Lewis). (1882). *Jewell's digest of the city ordinances: together with the constitutional provisions, acts of the General Assembly and decisions of the courts relative to the government of the City of New Orleans*. New Orleans: [L. Graham & Son].

governing institutions. The former neighbourhoods and faubourgs were renamed ‘municipalities’, each with its own board of elected aldermen, and all boards answering to a General Council that met annually, in a system mimicking the federal government.²³ Every municipality fully controlled its local affairs as well as the improvements and maintenance of its infrastructure; it could also raise taxes and issue bonds. Map 4.2 shows how the three municipalities espoused the geographies of the central French Quarter and back-of-town Tremé (First Municipality), the upriver Faubourg Sainte Marie (Second Municipality), and the Creole and working-class Marigny estates (Third Municipality). To Richard Campanella, “the system was egregiously divisive in both its effects and its root cause: an ethnic rivalry ongoing since the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.”²⁴

Map 4.2 New Orleans' Cultural Landscapes and Cityscapes - Municipal Era and Reunification.
Based on Norman's Plan of New Orleans & Environs, 1845.



²³ City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, Records of the City Councils (retrieved on 28 December 2020).

²⁴ Campanella, Richard. *Cityscapes of New Orleans*. LSU Press, 2017, 162-163.

Former informal dividing lines became official under this system, and a few streets (such as Canal, Esplanade, and Felicity) became actual administrative borders and the basis for tax collection – thus explaining some of the disparities in infrastructure and economic health between the three sections. The First Municipality was still mostly populated by a largely Catholic population, a mix of Creoles and migrants originating from the Caribbean and Latin America in addition to steady numbers of foreign French, all groups being referred to uncritically as ‘the Creoles.’ According to Carl Brasseaux, most of the First Municipality ‘Creoles’ worked in government, in the legal and medical professions, and as educators, and very few engaged engaged in trade.²⁵ Contrary to the New Orleans creole society prior to 1800 – primarily composed of businessmen – the Antillean Creoles who later came to the city had often owned land for cultivation or plantation work and used to be part of the social elite of St Domingue. As such, commerce was deemed an undignified occupation, and it allowed the Anglo-Americans and later immigrants to dominate the business sector, letting them slowly ascend to status and political power. ‘The Americans’ of the Second Municipality were at this point economically predominant and reinforced by growing numbers of recent Irish and German migrants, who shared their Protestantism and quite unproblematically eased into the English language. Less diverse in their origins, they were generally occupied with trade and commerce, and offered a much wealthier tax base for their own municipality. While the First and Second Municipalities benefitted from prime lands and an active economy, the “Poor Third” Municipality suffered from ill-reputation for its poverty and bad urbanism.²⁶ The division isolated its mixed and coloured population and the area, whose economy was less dynamic, remained mostly residential. It also endured numerous structural and infrastructural issues, such as inadequate roads and bad drainage. Because the city services were not unified,

²⁵ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, 98-99.

²⁶ Campanella, Richard. *Cityscapes of New Orleans*. LSU Press, 2017, 162-163.

municipalities boundaries – such as Canal Street – displayed sharp contrasts, and the general quality of life kept steadily declining. While the Second Municipality grew wealthier during this period, the division into municipalities impoverished New Orleans as a whole.

The division of New Orleans eventually got the city in too much debt and the municipality system was abandoned in 1852. However, after sixteen years of controversy, the status quo between the different groups had been transformed and power dynamics had shifted. As local newspaper *Daily Orleanian* wrote, “the system had created a war of races, to make distinction between Creole and American.”²⁷ The three municipalities were reunified, with the addition of the adjacent ‘faubourg’ city of Lafayette (formerly located in Jefferson Parish), which was more densely populated by Anglo-Americans, German, and Irish voters. The Anglo-Americans became therefore the largest demographic in the culturally divided city, gaining political power as their economic weight and spatial occupancy expanded. The city started developing faster upriver and away from the Creole faubourgs, which lagged because of the economic legacies of the Municipal era. Tellingly, the former First Municipality became the Second Municipal district just as the American sector became the First. Similarly, City Hall, located from colonial times in the Cabildo building at the centre of the French Quarter, moved upriver after 1852: it was then re-established in Gravier Hall, at the heart of the former faubourg Sainte Marie.

Ultimately, spatial separation in New Orleans highlighted “an overlaying of ethnic geography upon urban geography,” a phenomenon equally imposed from the top and generated from below.²⁸ As New Orleans expanded outside of its original quarter, social seclusion and categorization became a striking feature of the Crescent City’s urbanism. While it could have confirmed the existing stereotype of strict racial separation present in most of the southern

²⁷ Quoted in Campanella, 2017, 163.

²⁸ Campanella, Richard, “Neutral Ground”, *64 Parishes*: accessed 6 January 2020.

cities, New Orleanians had different motives in residing in specific parts of the city. These spatial choices followed diverging dividing lines, commonalities, and allegiances which reflected the consolidation of imagined communities stemming from a unique local context.²⁹ Wealthy Anglo-Americans, white and coloured Creoles alike owned slaves, yet they all lived in different areas of the city.³⁰ Class divides also fell on both sides of the initial ethnic and cultural divisions and were translated in the urban geography by the proximity of water – the poorer sections of the population living in the back of town. As a result, a mental colour line and cultural affinity gave rise to new mappings of the city. They dictated residential patterns along shared institutions, social association, race, and class, while imposing boundaries across the cityscapes of New Orleans. Because of those divides, under early American rule ‘Creole’ became a more encompassing identity, loosely centering on the practice of a shifting French language, and spatially manifested by self-constrained physical presence and isolationist strategies.

4.2 Odessa: the improvisation of a cosmopolitan city.

The destinies of nineteenth century Odessa as a sprawling urban space and port-city were also articulated around narratives of exclusion and difference. A centre of immigration and trade encountering similar pressures to rapidly expend its urban grid, the cosmopolitan city was the stage of economic rivalries between ethnic and religious communities. Yet Odessa differed from New Orleans in important ways: although there was unfree labour in Russia, Novorossiya

²⁹ Charleston was another southern port-city that had a substantial population of free persons of colour, however the dynamics in place differed widely from New Orleans. The population in the city did not share the same Caribbean and Creole demographic component, and its three-tiered society originated more from the demands of the port than a blurring of the lines prompted by a native/newcomer antagonism. More in Hirsch, Arnold R., and Joseph Logsdon, eds. *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*. LSU Press, 1992.

³⁰ New Orleans was also near the site of the German Coast uprising, led by Charles Deslondes in 1811. It was the largest slave revolt in US history. In its aftermath, the bonds of slavery became even more strict in Louisiana.

represented a space of freedom more akin to the Western lands of the United States, while Louisiana reinforced racially based social and civic distinctions. Odessa's sparse local population prior to the Russian rule was native to the land, Turkic nomadic and semi-sedentary. There were no similar second generation settlers such as the Creoles, only small groups of runaway serfs, Cossacks and Jewish families, whose numbers were modest enough not to exacerbate tensions comparable with the competition between Louisianans and Americans.³¹ The foundation of Odessa, just like the Americanization of 'La Nouvelle Orléans', was the result of a series of substantial boundary shifts in the region, augmenting the size and political importance of the Russian Empire and setting different population groups into motion.³² Russia itself was not yet actively engaged in the construction of a national ethos; its imperium was translated into military campaigns and cultural emulation. The Russian Empire was political first and the centring on ideological Slavonic values developed later. It was only from the 1830s onwards, and increasingly after the Crimean War (1853-1856), that a distinct Slavophile movement would emerge, with the aim to put forward the Russian language and culture as a norm and a goal.

Yet even before the mid-century, Odessa as a cosmopolitan port fitted uneasily within the imperial aims of St Petersburg's policy makers. The urban history of the capital of Novorossiia reflects the evolving amalgamation, cohabitation, and rising tensions between its different ethnic and linguistic groups – a history that, in turn, gave Odessa a heterogeneous identity. Located thousands of miles away from the centres of power, on the other side of the Ukrainian 'wilderness', Odessa as an urban centre was intrinsically provincial – while at the same time becoming a major multicultural port-city. Odessa's function as a *porto franco* made

³¹ By 1803, the native American presence in southern Louisiana and particularly around New Orleans was no longer contentious – most of the tensions revolved around the upper Mississippi valley.

³² During the reign of Catherine II, the Russian empire initiated no less than six boundary changes in the regions in contact with Poland, the Ottoman Empire, and the Crimean Khanate. The 18th century was Russia's 'westernizing century', while the 19th century saw the emergence of Russian-centered ideological frameworks and literature.

it an enclave, and the city can be described as heterotopic, juxtaposing different spaces, populations, and frameworks of analysis.³³ Just as New Orleans, Odessa's spatiality was characterized by the overlaying several contradicting geographies onto its urban grid. In her sociological study of Odessa's heterogeneity, Tanya Richardson characterizes the city as a 'non-place,' or even a 'space of over-complexity' that contradicted any attempt to break its urban fabric down into clearly-defined categories. However, while New Orleans displayed contested geographic projects along identity groups, Odessa's parallel cultures intersected physically through the spatial overlap characteristic of its urban fabric.

The sharp contrast between the complex ethnic composition of urban Odessa and its rural, Ukrainian hinterland originated in the city's port activities. Odessa's limits created an enclave around a space that was officially Russian but culturally cosmopolitan and foreign. The Russians were already outsiders in the southern Black Sea steppes; Odessa acted as a counter-site and reframed discourses of difference on its own terms. For decades, recruitment campaigns brought international traders and migrants, shaping the city's differing demographics. Odessa's share of foreign-born population was proportionately larger than that of the other main Russian cities: by the time of the 1897 census, even after Russia had long abandoned its immigration policies, the Black Sea port still boasted 7 percent of foreigners, against only 2.35 percent in the capital, St Petersburg, and 0.75 percent in fast-growing Moscow.³⁴

Contrary to New Orleans, the important share of non-Russians in Odessa did not necessarily trigger a sharp division and competition between a national Russian group and a motley combination of native and foreign 'Odessites.' Those immigrants who settled within

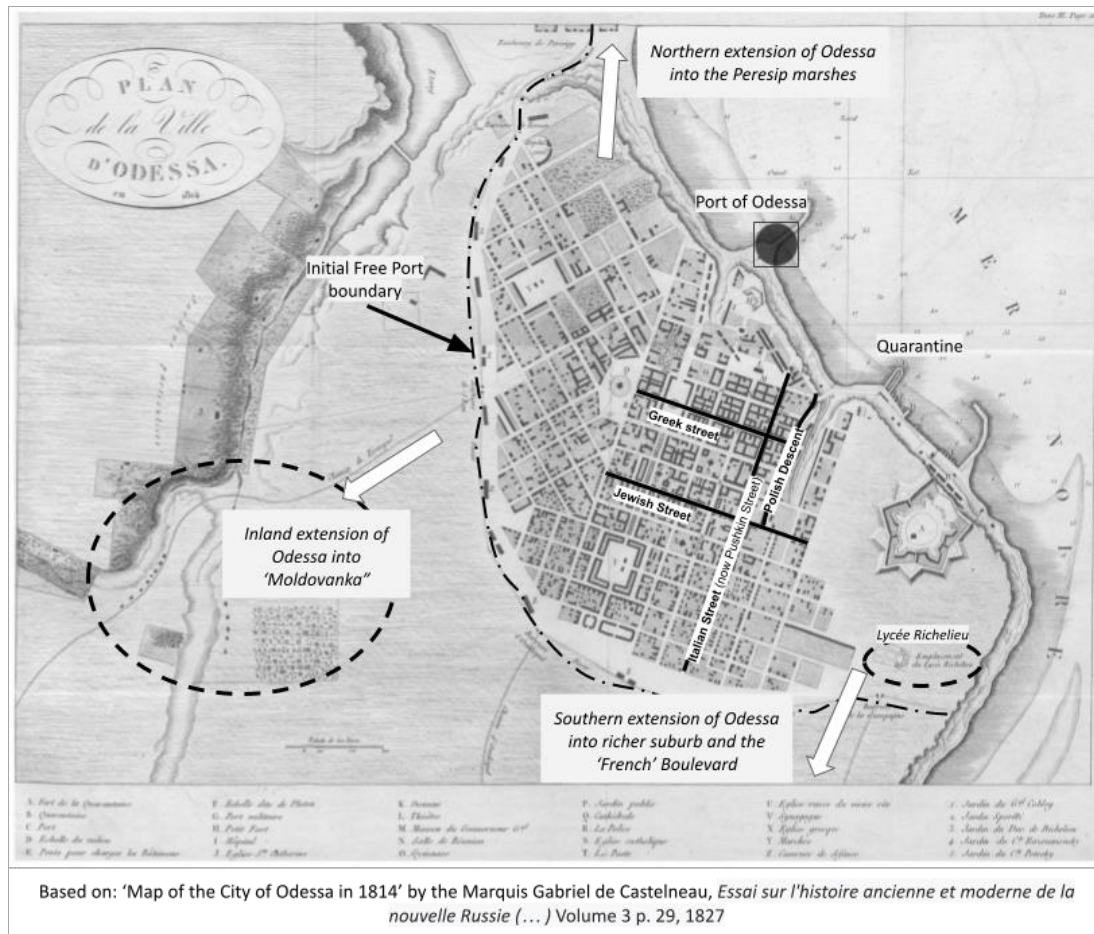
³³ Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa*, 2008, 172.

³⁴ Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 34. Again, there was no comprehensive all-Russian census before 1897, which makes any attempt at wide-ranging comparisons more difficult for the previous decades.

the city sometimes followed national and religious residential logics. However, Odessa was a newer creation, and the arrival of most demographic groups coincided with the city's foundational decades. The priority was first the development of the city and the establishment of a thriving Black Sea port, and internal divisions between cultural groups remained secondary.

As in New Orleans, the first challenge to the physical extension of the city was the geographical features of the landscape: dust, drought, and mud (Chapter 1). These environmental and practical priorities shaped the physical growth of Odessa more than national and religious differences. Further, demographic pressure and the accumulation of capital called for an urgent extension of housing, away from the coastline and the port. As it grew, the city became organised on a north-south axis, with the main waterfront and the harbour located on the north side, protected by the bay of the Gulf of Odessa (*Odeska zatoka*). From the old Turkish fortress of Khadjibey the city initially extended southward, along the Black Sea coast and on an elevated limestone plateau, rather than northward around the bay, which was pierced with ravines and marshy lagoons (Map 4.3).

Map 4.3 Cosmopolitan Odessa: Cityscapes of an Improvised Multicultural Centre



However, the city could not expand as fast as its population grew, because of the lack of infrastructure and sometimes of resources. The sandy marshes around the bay made the construction of buildings and roads an engineering challenge, and provided a breeding-ground for mosquitoes. Excess of water complicated urban expansion northwards, while the difficulties in accessing salubrious water compelled many residents to stay within the city centre, near the markets where water was delivered. When new migrants arrived in Odessa, they often had to co-habit in cramped houses for several years before new accommodations were made available. This was particularly salient for the important male population employed by the numerous commercial houses, who were often single and transient. While this social reality increased the spread of diseases, it also facilitated the development of transversal social encounters, across linguistic boundaries and economic status. According to Patricia Herlihy, “Odessa did not have

neighbourhoods in the sense of ethnic and social self-segregated residential areas. [...] the centre city housed some of the wealthiest of the town and some of the poorest.”³⁵ Not unlike Faubourg Marigny in New Orleans, the Odessa’s central areas developed as a space of increased social mixing across economic and nationality lines. Such cultural and class mixing was uncommon in Russia, and contributed to the divergent urbanity of Odessa. The geographic and environmental challenges that prevented Odessa’s harmonious physical expansion, combined with a steep population growth and unique foreign immigration patterns, all contributed to the early transformation of the new city into a vibrant cosmopolitan centre.

Because ethnic mixing was normalized, the naming of one street after a specific ethnic group was more an homage than a sociological description and did not necessarily delimit the spatial borders of a community. *Evreyskaya ulitsa*’ (Jewish street) highlighted the early presence of Jewish communities within the city, while some of the oldest streets, *Hrets’ka* (Greek) and *Italianskaya* (Italian), paid tribute to the early maritime merchants who had established trading posts around the Black Sea and in Odessa as early as the 1790s. *Polskaya ulitsa*’ (Polish street) and *Polskii Spusk* (Polish descent) likewise reflected the presence of numerous members of the Polish aristocracy, as well as an increasing number of Polish refugees, especially after the third partition of Poland in 1795.³⁶ Yet toponymy did not translate to an exclusive usage of space in the way it did in New Orleans, and ethnic and religious groups shared the streets, overlaying histories more complex than could have been expected. Regardless of the name of the street, a mix of nationalities, languages, and religions cohabited in each building, sometimes in the same household, fostering the idea of a unique urban “porosity.”³⁷

³⁵ Herlihy, Patricia. *Odessa: a history, 1794-1914*. Cambridge, MA, 1986, 272.

³⁶ “Evolution of the landscape, historical planning and elements of Odessa.” *Budownictwo i Architektura* 3.2 (2008): 119-130.

³⁷ On this topic, read “Residential Porosity: The Mikhel’son Apartment Building in Aleksandrovskaia District”, a close study of social mixing in nineteenth century Odessa, in Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 2017, 49-51.

The presence of, and tolerance for, a variety of devotional centres also dictated how such informal agglomerations were formed – pre-revolutionary Odessa was famously the only major city in the Russian Pale of Jewish Settlement without a Jewish ghetto. This meant that its large Jewish population, mostly commercial and secular, did not live isolated from the rest of the city. The absence of formal spatial separation benefitted the growth of the city as a whole, since the Jewish community funded the building of essential civic institutions, such as schools, clinics, hospitals, and shelters. To acknowledge its services to Odessa, the city’s administration supervised the building of a new synagogue. Where New Orleans differed from other American cities in its visible urban divisions, Odessa differed from other European ports and Russian cities in not confining its ethnic groups to restricted areas. By 1856, the city boasted “thirty three churches, of which twenty-eight Greek Russians, one Dissenting, one Catholick (sic), one Lutheran, one Reformed, and one Armenian Gregorian, [but also] two monasteries, two Jew synagogues, thirty six Jew houses of prayer [and] one Karait synagogue,” some of them along the same street.³⁸ Mapping the location of these nodes of sociability and residence also maps the coexistence of Odessa’s different ethnic and national groups, and their frequent overlap reveals the city’s entangled cultural landscape. Most tellingly, the main organizing principle was based on wealth – how close one could live to the port, and what one could afford – and seniority of settlement. Because of that, early Odessa was a city unintentionally accommodating interaction rather than division.

In a city full of economic opportunities, money logics and occupational priorities often trumped ethnic and religious frameworks. Most of all, because trade was central to Odessa’s growth, the proximity and access to water dictated the patterns of sociability of the city’s early population. The port had a prevailing sway on settlement patterns and urban growth: the city

³⁸ MSS459, vol. 2 f. 143 - June 30/July 2, 1856.

faced the waterfront, and turned its back to the hinterland, where the poorest and least-developed parts of Odessa were located. The closer to the waterfront, the more cosmopolitan the city was. Conversely, later inland developments reversed the social interpenetration of the city centre and followed stricter ethnic and economic logics. The rural settlement of ‘Moldavanka,’ to the south-west of the old centre, was largely composed of rural migrants, especially from the bordering Moldovan and Bulgarian regions. Moldavanka grew outside of the freeport limits and was seen as a space disconnected from the activities of the harbour and lacking cosmopolitan virtues. It was also a depot for contraband and hosted military barracks and some early country houses. As the city expanded, it was incorporated as a suburb, but was never fully integrated: for most of the nineteenth century and a great part of the twentieth, Moldavanka, mythologized in the work of Jewish Odessan writer Isaac Babel in the early twentieth century, remained one of poorest and most working-class neighbourhoods of Odessa, as opposed to the more bourgeois and commercial central areas of the city. The former limit of the free port became *Staroportofrankaia* (Old Free Port) boulevard, an informal internal boundary between the classical geometrical grid of the old city centre and a more organic urban growth beyond. Paradoxically, Moldovanka was perhaps the part of Odessa that was the most tightly and harmoniously integrated with its local hinterland, while the core of the city increasingly diverged.

While its port was the reason for Odessa’s ethnic pluralism, mixing, and mobility, it also contributed to the framing of Odessa as an un-Russian city, a city of foreigners. Its *porto franco* status turned the city into an enclave within Russia, creating a symbolic boundary. In the words of contemporaries, “the situation of the port of Odessa and its relationship with Russia have always raised the difficult task of conciliating the existence of the freeport with

the general interests of the national industry.”³⁹ Whatever manufactures were produced within the limits of the freeport were treated as foreign goods, subjected to high tariffs in the Russian interior – or even just outside the city centre, beyond the limits of the *porto franco*. This double legislation divided the city into two sections, while restricting access to the imperial market. The freeport might have attracted foreign buyers and ensured Odessa’s rise to prominence as a commercial outlet, but the legal limitations durably prevented it from becoming an important industrial city. The situation also encouraged smuggling, as merchants tried to avoid high taxes on their cargo beyond the limits of the free port. The city’s underground became pierced with a labyrinthic network of tunnels, initially created by limestone mining for the construction of the city – it was not long before these passages were used as hideouts by local smugglers and traders seeking to circumvent the high duties. Odessa’s disconnect from the Russian interior was also attributed to the influence of foreigners, especially those governing the cities. In his memoirs, Russian observer Filipp Vigel sneered that “this colony born under Richelieu, and raised under Langeron, was a democratic republic.”⁴⁰ Tellingly, the two governors-general were the architects of the freeport status granted to the city, and Richelieu had inspired a construction boom through his successes at raising money.⁴¹ In Odessa, social separateness was not so much internal – through demographics, toponymy, or urbanism. It was framed by the actual and perceived divergence of early Odessa, as a cosmopolitan city, from its own hinterland, and for that it had to combat accusations of disloyalty from ‘national writers’:

“who complain[ed] and assure[d] that Odessa [was] a city completely foreign, outside of the great Russian unity. Perhaps they consider[ed] that the boundary of the freeport [was] a border between the city and the empire.”⁴²

³⁹ ONSL 971, 1833, n. 26, 31 March / 12 April.

⁴⁰ Vigel, Filipp Filippovich. *Zapiski. Izd. Dopolnennoe*. 2 Chast. Moskva, 1891.

⁴¹ Herlihy, *Odessa*, 1986, 35. “In 1813, Baron Stieglitz donated 100,000 rubles to the city to meet the costs of construction.”

⁴² ONSL 971, 1845, n.28, 6/18 April. The author added that the total number of foreigners only made one sixth of Odessa’s population, an effect of the pressure by the authorities to take up Russian nationality throughout the 1820s and 1830s.

The freeport never covered the full extent of the city, and the spatial and economic division became more acute as Odessa expanded into new neighbourhoods to welcome a growing population. By 1849, after three decades years of existence, the boundaries of the *porto franco* had been renegotiated to encompass four out of five of the city's administrative sections (*chasti*). The city and two suburbs (Peresyp, founded initially by Zaporozhian Cossacks, and Moldovanka, with a majority of Moldovan and Bulgarian residents) were enclosed within the free-port limits, but the neighbouring villages and hamlets attached to Odessa's territorial division (*'régence urbaine'*) were not.⁴³ The freeport privileges were eventually abolished in 1858, after the Crimean War. This change, which marked a changing tide in the history of Odessa, has been described as the transition from the period of the Europeanized port-city (1794-1856) to that of the imperial city (1857-1905).⁴⁴ The enclave of the *porto franco* had facilitated the fast progress of its urban institutions, promoting an eighteenth-century vision of an ideal classicist city, while delineating the centrality of the port functions in generating this growth. Writing about the transition from a cosmopolitan to an imperial city, Evrydiky Sifneos considers that the port of Odessa became “the threshold over which modern ideas of city governance and the way a port-city should operate entered the empire.”⁴⁵

Odessa also presented to the contemporary onlooker the different stages of urban growth taking place within a few generations – a phenomenon common in American boomtowns, but unusual on the shores of the Black Sea. A French architect writing about the impressive pace of construction in Odessa demarcated three main phases.⁴⁶ In the first period,

⁴³ *Ibid.* 1849, n. 16, 25 February/9 March.

⁴⁴ Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 2017, 11.

⁴⁵ Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 2017. See also: Jarvis, Adrian, and W. Robert Lee. *Trade, Migration and Urban Networks in Port Cities, C. 1640-1940*. Cambridge Core. St. John's, Nfld., 2008; Hein, Carola, ed. *Port cities: dynamic landscapes and global networks*. Routledge, 2011.

⁴⁶ ONSL 971, 1852, n.99, 12/24 December.

1796-1818, he noted that most private houses only had a ground floor, while the only existing public buildings were the cathedral, the former Catholic church, the Greek church, the hospital, and the theatre. Private builders received a free site on the city's new streets to build their house, provided they did so within two years. The second phase, 1814-1845 coincided with the start of the freeport privileges but also the energetic governorship of Prince Vorontsov, who oversaw the building of palaces, bridges, the city's first statue representing the Duke of Richelieu, but also a bank, a commercial court, a stock exchange, and a customs house, all necessary for the support of trade and commerce. Odessa's great staircase or 'Richelieu steps' (built 1837-1841), better known today as the Potemkin steps (a name it received in the 1920s, following Eisenstein's film featuring the 1905 insurrection), also dates back to this second phase, marking a formal and symbolic entrance into the city from sea.⁴⁷ The third, from 1845, was marked by Odessa's rise to international prominence, with the 1840s representing record-breaking years for the grain trade, creating a new kind of wealth that translated visibly in the city's architecture.⁴⁸

Most foreign traders and travelers judged Odessa a modern city, despite some noticeable infrastructural defaults. Edward Morton, a British physician who had lived and worked for some time in the Russian Empire, noticed the speed at which "the taste for having fixed property at Odessa arose, and soon spread among Russians and Poles but also primarily foreigners of various nations."⁴⁹ In his account as in many others, the Duke of Richelieu was characterized as a transformative agent of the city; while he had found Odessa "a desert, he left it a flourishing city."⁵⁰ The city attracted foreign populations, with large numbers of Greeks,

⁴⁷ Battleship Potemkin (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*) is a 1925 Soviet silent film directed by Sergei Eisenstein, presenting a dramatized version of the mutiny that occurred in 1905 when the crew of the Russian battleship Potemkin, docked in the harbour of Odessa, rebelled against its officers.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 1852, n.100, 16/28 December.

⁴⁹ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 194.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Italians, and Bulgarians, as well as smaller groups of French, Germans, and British residents. Many Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Tatars also came from within the enlarged boundaries of the Russian Empire, in addition to native Russian speakers. If the city was sometimes compared to a number of Mediterranean trading counterpoints, it was also known as a Petersburg in miniature, thus placing Odessa within an imperial comparative framework.⁵¹ Unlike old Kiev and most European centres founded in the Middle Ages, Odessa was a new and planned city, an epitome of modern urbanism: more than Petersburg, itself a relatively recent enterprise, its ‘rectangular plans’, spacious streets bordered by rows of trees and large, square-angled buildings translated a feeling of social order.⁵² The predominant impression was that unlike older cities, Odessa was not an organic and entangled urban entity, but that its organization was steered by rational city planning. Yet, on the ground, improvisation and juxtaposition prevailed:

‘When [the streets were] first laid out, as it could not at that time have been anticipated that the place would become, in so comparatively short a period, what it is at present, they were preposterously large when contrasted with the scattered huts which then constituted Odessa.’⁵³

Improvisation and adaptability governed Odessa’s growth: what had been delineated as a model of classical urbanism to be followed, demonstrated instead patterns typical of settler towns in volatile frontier environments. In the city’s foundational decades, residents witnessed “in every corner ... the demolition of the little houses of modest appearance, which were built when no one could foresee yet the future prosperity of a city that was just born, and witnessed their replacement by grand and sometimes splendid homes...”⁵⁴ In this pre-industrial Odessa, the port functions and their symbiotic relationship with the city generated trade and

⁵¹ St Peterburg and Odessa were often seen as each other’s counterpoint, both being recent and planned cities: the former was sometimes nicknamed Northern Palmyra, while Odessa was the Southern Palmyra.

⁵² Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 198.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 198.

⁵⁴ ONSL 971, 1852, n.99, 12/24 December.

prominence. Conversely, in the second half of the nineteenth century, trade became disconnected from the city, as were the port's activities, while the city businesses diversified and became gradually cut off from the port.⁵⁵ This reciprocal growth of Odessa and its port was mirrored by its urban sprawl, its street names painted both in Russian and in Italian, and the disproportion between the number of houses built and the rising number of inhabitants and trading visitors, which caused an increase in real estate prices.⁵⁶ The favourable laws governing the free-port also contributed to the physical growth of the city: the goods and products consumed within Odessa's limits were only subjected to one-fifth of the usual duties, and this levied money would go towards the further embellishment and development the city.

Yet in imperial Russia more than in the United States a regime of local exception and preference was common in the autocratic structure of the tsarist Old Regime, which normalized the existence of multiple legal categories: the social mingling in Odessa thus differed from the rule of (unequal) law existing in New Orleans.⁵⁷ In Odessa, citizenship was less of proxy for identity, and nationality was used interchangeably as a tool for commercial purposes, regulated by locally entrenched sub-groups such as trade guilds. The absence of a notion of larger Russian citizenry beyond Odessa might have facilitated its relative local social cohesion. As a result, foreign consuls as well as trading guilds were the authorities and representatives who mattered at a practical level. These representatives were diverse and business-oriented enough to help initially diverging groups come together under an 'Odessian' umbrella identity, which differed from that of the internal Russian visitors and frequent West European and American travelers journeying through the southern port. Slowly, a locally-embedded and porous Odessite reference framework emerged, which was visible in its built environment, while distinctively

⁵⁵ Palmer, Sarah. 'Ports,' in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 133-150.

⁵⁶ Anthoine de Saint-Joseph, A. *Essai historique*, 1820, 66.

⁵⁷ Burbank, Von Hagen. "Coming into the territory," in Burbank et al. *Russian Empire*, 2007, 1-29.

setting the city apart from the imperial center. Yet this apparent harmonious and thriving system, the most positive of omens for the young city, contrasted with the chaos and improvisation on the ground. Corrupt authorities regularly took the blame, and because Odessa was replete with non-Russian nationals, alien groups and communities, they likewise became a scapegoat for the city's disorder.⁵⁸

Because the city was as un-Russian as could be, it also became commonplace to suggest that the city suffered from a lack of loyalty and had become a magnet for seditious minds, leading one mayor of Odessa to observe that “such a combination of people require[d] active vigilance and great severity in the city police [...] Relief that can be allowed in other cities and for other residents is not possible in Odessa.”⁵⁹ Odessa also troubled the tsarist government: Tsar Alexander I wrote that many Odessites “[engaged] in some unreasonable rumours [that] have a harmful influence on weak minds.”⁶⁰ Radical thinkers were often banished to South Russia, and in 1825, a few days before the failed Decembrist uprising, Nicholas I noted “Odessa's authorities should pay a visit to the conspirators.”⁶¹ External visitors similarly saw the port-city as “one of the chief seats of the conspiracy against Russia,” a place “viewed with proportionate suspicion by the government.”⁶² Grudges against Tsarist rule were not limited to domestic thinkers, and other national groups under the yoke of the Russian Empire also found in Odessa a good place to retreat and organise their fight for independence. From the mid-century, Ukrainians formed there one of the seats of their *Hromadas*, a network of nationalist secret societies. Many prominent members of the Polish liberation movement also lived in Odessa – former landowners and aristocrats who had turned to trade. According to a Russian

⁵⁸ “But the grand cause of these glaring imperfections has not yet been explained; Roguery has done much more towards retarding the progress and improvement of Odessa than ignorance. (...)” in Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 207.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Kovbasiuk, *Odessa*, 1957, 30.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Quoted by Kovbasiuk (1957, 30): The uprising took place on 14/26 December 1825. Kovbasiuk also provides an extensive list of the Odessa-based Decembrists and the connections that they had with the city.

⁶² Webster, *Travels through the Crimea*, 1830, 42.

newspaper, that city was “the chief operational base of Polish activity and the international centre for communications with all the revolutionary centres of Europe.”⁶³ In the spring of 1861, Poles came all the way from the Black Sea shores to Warsaw’s barricades to support the Polish Uprising, and many came back to the city in exile.

This radicalism went beyond the Pan-Slavic sphere: with its large settler population from the Balkans and its strategic position on the Black Sea shores, Odessa was an ideal location for international liberation movements to develop. In 1814, Greek residents founded in the city a secret society, ‘*Philiki Eteria*’, which played an important part in laying the ground for the Greek war of Independence (1821-1829). In the 1850s, a Bulgarian liberation movement also gained momentum, revolving around the promotion of Bulgarian culture, the local printing of books in the Bulgarian language, and fundraising campaigns.⁶⁴ The co-existence of many radical and revolutionary groups within the same city had lasting effects on Odessa’s urban culture and reputation: those movements were porous in their ideals and individuals who were involved with one group often supported other like-minded causes. Odessa’s streets favoured social propinquity, turning the city into a breeding ground for international revolutionary thought. In the eyes of contemporaries, Odessa became “the refuge and the asylum of the worst of society from the neighbouring countries.”⁶⁵

This nexus of international political discourses and movements dwindled during the second half of the nineteenth century: Odessa lost its *porto franco* status, and ceased to be an enclave, while railways connected it more closely to the Russian interior. After 1860, the later imperial period marked the transition from Odessa’s model of urban coexistence to more Russian-centric standards, a change that was embodied spatially. ‘Italian’ street was renamed

⁶³ Quoted in Herlihy. *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 54.

⁶⁴ Kovbasiuk (1957, 30) refers to that organization as “The Bulgarian Colony.”

⁶⁵ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 185.

Pushkinskaya, in celebration of the famed poet who had been exiled to Odessa in the 1820s. The University of Novorossiya was founded in 1865 on the site of the French-sounding *Lycée Richelieu* – an institution which had opened in 1817 and commemorated its namesake, the celebrated foreign founding figure and city governor of Odessa. Education itself started relying less on private schools based on ethnic and religious affiliations, and merged with the Russian system as higher education was being normalized to fit the imperial standards. Until the mid-century, Russians themselves considered that Odessa was “a city revered as a foreign one.”⁶⁶ In the aftermath of the Crimean War, statues and memorials to Russian heroes and artists were erected, and the street names themselves slowly lost the bilingual quality that had caught the eye of Odessa’s early visitors.

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Concluding the first part of this thesis on the complex foundations of New Orleans and Odessa, this chapter has focused on the spatial expression of these two cities. Moving away from geography (Chapter 1) and demographics (Chapters 2 and 3), the preceding pages have shown how both cities developed as enclaves within their own countries, based on the interplay between their unusual environmental and human features. In Odessa, the free-port boundaries on land created a very tangible border with the rest of the Russian territory, while the sea created greater porosity and cohesiveness at a local – and particularly urban – level. New Orleans’ urbanity was an unusual – but not unique – feature within an agrarian South, illustrating the struggle between competing social groups but also between political models for

⁶⁶ Vigel, *Zapiski*, 1891, 293.

democracy.⁶⁷ New Orleans' status as a political centre was also shaped by the question of slavery, as growing numbers of white propertyless workers expanded the urban electorate and supported the institution, while trying to curtail whatever rights and privileges free coloured workers had.⁶⁸ At a local level, the city itself grew into contrasting spatial enclaves, each expressing a hypothetical model for the southern metropolis, with the American side eventually taking the lead. Frenchness meant different things in either city: in New Orleans, it was used as a broad, permeable identity that contrasted with the Americanness of English-speaking newcomers, and ultimately justified spatial division. In Odessa, Frenchness was sometimes used as a synecdoche or an explanation for the city's cosmopolitanism, and became embodied in place names, buildings, and statues. In different ways, until the 1860s, both cities acted as countersites of their respective national entities, while locally, that divergence was expressed through spatial occupation practices. Settler towns turned metropolises, early Odessa and New Orleans could also be characterised as erstwhile urban models, suggesting roads non taken. Part II will centre on the institutions that developed out of those models, and how they expressed the unique social life of their inhabitants. Here too, the performance of Frenchness – in language and through institutions – served as a backbone for these diverging models and manifested the temporary but visible resistance to national models.

⁶⁷ This competition was particularly visible through the contrast between southern State Legislatures often at the hands of the Democratic Party, and opposition parties systematically elected in large cities, including New Orleans. As the share of non-property white male workers grew in New Orleans, the tension was articulated at the state level between the democratic principle of majority rule, supported by the constitution, and the reality of a southern hierarchical society supported by racial slavery. See: Ryan, Mary, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the City During the Nineteenth Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997; Towers, Frank, *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War* University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2004.

⁶⁸ Towers, *The Urban South*, 2004. Slap and Towers, *Confederate Cities*, 2015.

PART II – INSTITUTIONS

“Indeed, a striking feature of port cities was how often their merchant elites were drawn from distant locations and had few cultural ties with the local community. Since they traded in knowledge (including religious knowledge) as well as in goods, alongside their banks and exchanges, go-downs, and counting-houses, could be found centres of learning or religious instruction (...).”¹

¹ Belich, James, John Darwin, and Chris Wickham. “Introduction: The Prospect of Global History,” in *The Prospect of Global History*. Oxford University Press, 2016, 19.

Chapter 5 Religious passing or cultural closeness: navigating places of worship in Odessa and New Orleans.

In New Orleans and Odessa alike, urban identities were formed through adopted linguistic and cultural traditions, which relied on the reproduction of models that went beyond the national realm. This chapter highlights how both cities' religious institutions contributed to their identity. Just like their commercial establishments and actors, the religious groups and orders that flourished in the two cities imposed new norms of inclusion, separation, or tolerance. Both cities were as confessionally divided as they were linguistically divided, but the imperfect overlaying of language, religion, and occupation contrasted with the ambivalent categorization of social groups along ethnic lines. In Odessa as in New Orleans, churches, their administrations, and the overlapping between faith and social matters crystallized the connections between ethnic and religious divides. The growth of religious institutions extended the opportunities offered by linguistic pluralism: religious association, just as linguistic association, created new boundaries that facilitated a form of cultural passing.

The literature on antebellum Louisiana provides unsuspected analytical tools for comparing the two cities: Rashauna Johnson's concept of 'confined cosmopolitanism' is illuminating in both New Orleans and Odessa.¹ Johnson builds on the divide between the wealth, education, and mobility associated with New Orleans' cosmopolitanism, and the limitations imposed upon its enslaved and free coloured people. The same underlying paradox can be found in Odessa, with a dichotomy between Russian citizens and a mix of foreigners

¹ Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis*, 2016, 3.

and Jews, both groups with limited rights, yet representative of most of the city residents. In the two cities, cosmopolitanism was confined between a national context and local practices, each differently empowering and restricting their populations. Linguistics divided but could also act as a tool of amalgamation; similarly, religious affiliation or degrees of religiosity measured the integration of different groups into the urban citizenry. The cosmopolitan reputation of both Odessa and New Orleans thus stemmed from this paradox, in a performance of everyday life that rearranged and blurred state-defined cultural and social categories.²

Among those practices, passing is typically associated with racial transgression – the assuming of a white identity – a topic particularly relevant to the study of the antebellum US South. New Orleans historian Shirley Thompson characterized this process as the “loss of one’s boundaries,” or the performance of another identity.³ Beyond physical appearance, language and religion were the tools of such a performance. In New Orleans, the French language tied together Creole and foreign communities, much more than in other parts of the United States. This linguistic community was also united through shared cultural practices, namely affiliation to the Catholic Church. The institution blended otherwise separate cultural, racial, and class categories, and eased the co-optation of Black people into white circles. This cultural and religious framework was equally valid on the shores of the Black Sea, where overlapping diasporas were fundamental to creating Odessa’s local culture. There, cultural passing reflected a process of integration into elite commercial and governing circles, through practices that crossed traditional religious boundaries. It did not mean, as in New Orleans, the assuming of a white identity but rather the performance of a cosmopolitan and liberal identity, despite denominational divisions.

² Certeau, Michel De. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1984.

³ Thompson, *Exiles at Home*, 2009, 97-102. For a further discussion of passing, see Pease, Donald E. *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*. Duke University Press, 1996, 300.

This chapter analyses how and why shared religious practices related to the use of the French language as an identity marker. In Odessa, the imperatives of trade eroded religious categories and fostered urban propinquity. They unified the local population through Frenchified civic rituals, which originated from the city's unique context. In New Orleans, the redefinition of the Creole category was not just linguistic: it was extended to membership in the Catholic church. Religious affiliation created kinship networks unique to the Creole population and supported a lasting social endogamy.

5.1 Trade and civic rituals in early Odessa.

When travellers arrived to Odessa by sea, they often noticed that the vessels' masts outnumbered the golden domes and spires of Orthodox and Catholic Churches.⁴ In 1803, when the Duke of Richelieu first came to the city, he was troubled by the underdevelopment of the city's churches, so secondary to commerce were religious concerns.⁵ However, his administration (1803-1814) transformed Odessa's religious landscape: he created a uniquely liberal climate in the city, which went beyond the aims of trade. Many of the colonists who settled into Novorossiia during these foundational decades had fled from religious (and political) persecutions in their respective countries. In the countryside, communities congregated in villages along ethnic and religious affinities, but in urban Odessa, religious coexistence became a fact of life. Although harmony did not always prevail, the city became known for its toleration, which featured prominently in attracting next generations of settlers.

By 1833, Odessa featured six Orthodox churches and one church respectively for Greek, Catholic, and Lutheran faiths, along with singular places of worship dedicated to

⁴ Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 2017, 43.

⁵ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 192.

Eastern Christian Old Believers.⁶ To these were added four synagogues and two Jewish houses of prayer. Some twenty years later, at the end of the Crimean War, Odessa's religious plurality was even more striking, as the city government strove to accommodate the spiritual and cultural needs of its motley and growing population. Christians could frequent 33 churches, most of them Greek-Russian in denomination (but not all: Odessa's religious landscape included one Catholic, one Lutheran, one Reformed Protestant, and one Armenian-Gregorian church).⁷ On just one street, Ekaterininska, a Catholic church coexisted with a Greek-Orthodox and an Armenian place of congregation. The city's cathedral, founded in 1794, and still unfinished when Richelieu arrived, and was eventually consecrated in 1809. Two Orthodox monasteries – Dormition (1834) and St. Michael (1835) – reinforced the presence of the Russian Church in the city. In 1839, a progressive women's educational convent, attached to St. Michael's monastery, was founded under the name of 'Sisters of the Charity.' Devoted initially to the education of young orphan daughters of the clergy, it counted 68 pupils by 1848.⁸

The growing Jewish community could congregate in three synagogues, in addition to 36 smaller houses of prayer scattered across the city.⁹ This diverse religious landscape reflected Odessa's demographic composition, but also the adjacency of traditionally conflicting groups.¹⁰ Odessa held a mirror image to the religious complexity of the Russian Empire (Table 5.1). The Russian Empire's self-presentation offered the contrasting image of a multi-

⁶ ONSL 971, 1833 n.85, 24 October / 5 November 1833. Robert Pinkerton, an Englishman having travelled several times to Odessa, further detailed the state of the Church within Odessa. Pinkerton, Robert. *Russia: Or, Miscellaneous Observations*, 1833, 152. Old Believers maintained the practices of the Russian Church prior to the 17th century.

⁷ Among the oldest churches were the Transfiguration Cathedral (1809), the main Orthodox Church of the city, the Holy Trinity Cathedral (1804) the oldest church in Odessa, St. Paul's Lutheran Church (1825) the main Protestant church, and the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1848) the main Roman Catholic church in Odessa.

⁸ ONSL 971, 1844 n.15, 22 February / 5 March and 1848 n.35, 30 April / 12 May. This institution was considered "the first of its kind" across the Russian Empire. The institution eventually welcomed young girls of poor backgrounds and orphans.

⁹ USNA II, MSS459, vol.2 f. 143 - United States Consulate, Odessa - 30 June / 2 July 1856.

¹⁰ The first recorded 'pogroms' in the Russian Empire took place in Odessa in 1821 after the execution of the Greek Orthodox patriarch Gregory V in Constantinople, and the bringing of his body to Odessa for burial. Between 14 and 17 Jews were killed. Most of the other pogroms happened after the Crimean War, from 1859 onwards, moving away from trading competition to the result of official anti-Jewish policies.

confessional Orthodox State, making religious toleration a central trait of imperial rule.¹¹ In the context of Russian expansion into the North Caucasus, this local accommodation of religious diversity was not incompatible with the extension of a ‘Pax Russica’ into Asiatic or oriental regions of the Empire, as Russia took the role of defender of the Orthodox State. Tsarist authorities thus granted protection and significant collective rights to official religious groups, with foreign faiths comprising up to 30 percent of the imperial population in 1897. In Odessa, religious diversity remained essentially within a Judeo-Christian sphere, regarded as more familiar than the perceived radical otherness of the Muslim world of the central Asian steppes.¹²

**Table 5.1 Religious Breakdown of the 1897 Census.
Odessa compared with other Russian cities and the rest of the Empire.**

Religion	Odessa			Proportion		
	Men	Women	Both sexes	Odessa city	Russian cities	Russian empire average
Orthodox and fellow believers	124,316	101,553	225,869	55.93%	60.64%	69.34%
Old Believers and those who deviate from Orthodoxy	795	570	1365	0.34%	1.26%	1.75%
Armenian-Gregorians	950	570	1,520	0.38%	1.63%	0.94%
Armenian Catholics	30	12	42	0.01%	0.05%	0.03%
Roman Catholics	15,248	8,971	24,219	6.00%	9.42%	9.13%
Lutherans	4,936	3,841	8,777	2.17%	4.51%	2.84%
Reformed	217	284	501	0.12%	0.08%	0.07%
Baptists	68	68	136	0.03%	0.03%	0.03%
Mennonites	4	one	5	0.00%	0.00%	0.05%
Anglicans	72	80	152	0.04%	0.02%	0.00%
Persons of other Christian denominations	19	12	31	0.01%	0.01%	0.00%
Karaites	499	550	1,049	0.26%	0.07%	0.01%

¹¹ Proselytization was even banned in Central Asia. Werth, Paul W. *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia*. Oxford Studies in Modern European History. Oxford, 2014.

¹² Although Odessa was at the intersection between Christian and Muslim worlds, soon after its founding it did not have a large Tatar and Muslim population. On the other hand, its acceptance of numerous Jewish religious institutions became more complex with the rise of nationalism claims in different parts of the Empire, with religious institutions becoming resources in emerging nationalist projects. See: Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths*, 2014, and Khodarkovsky, Michael, *Bitter Choices: Loyalty and Betrayal in the Russian Conquest of the North Caucasus*, Ithaca NY, 2011. In the Pale of Settlement, that type of diversity remained rare, as shtetl villages hosted the largest part of the Jewish population, and Kiev/Kyiv, the capital of the southwestern Ukrainian region, was off-limits to Jewish settlement until 1859. Meir, Natan M. *Kiev, Jewish Metropolis: A History, 1859-1914*. Modern Jewish Experience (Bloomington, Ind.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Religion	Odessa			Proportion		
	Men	Women	Both sexes	Odessa city	Russian cities	Russian empire average
Jews	68,619	70,316	138,935	34.41%	15.64%	4.15%
Mohammedans	1015	195	1,210	0.30%	6.49%	11.07%
Buddhists and Lamaites	2	0	2	0.00%	0.14%	0.35%
Persons of other non-Christian denominations	2	0	2	0.00%	0.01%	0.23%
TOTAL	216,792	187,023	403,815			

13

Judaism was a recent religion in the Russian Empire, the result of the annexation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the eighteenth-century. At the tail end of this conquest, the Russian Empire contained one of the largest Jewish populations in Europe, but most Jews did not live in the central parts of Russia and remained in western and southern provinces, generally in towns and cities. In the early nineteenth century, Jews were subjected to the same nationality regulations as other ethnic group, in a mix of integrationist and segregationist policies. On the other hand, Muslim populations had first dealt with Russian authorities through sovereign polities, such as the Khanate of Kazan or Crimea. However, conquest by Russia often meant the forced conversion to Russian Orthodoxy, the targeted oppression of practitioners of Islam, and the displacement of their populations through the sale of Muslim lands. Non-Orthodox Christians benefitted from more tolerant policies: foreign colonists in Novorossiya, who came from southern and western Europe, were granted special privileges, including ‘spiritual rights.’¹⁴ It was the reason why most of the early settlers to the North of the Black Sea were religious minorities in their own homeland (hence a great number of Mennonite Germans). In the Novorossiyan provinces, the social gap between Russians and non-Russians or non-Orthodox of the same class or profession remained less important than the difference

¹³ Data taken from Troĩniĭskĩ, *Pervaĭa Vseobshchaĭa Perepis*, 1897.

¹⁴ These religious rights were specifically offered to foreign colonists and were re-affirmed by Catherine II in her 1763 ukaze encouraging foreign settlement into newly conquered Russian lands.

between urban dwellers and peasants.¹⁵ Odessa’s hybrid cityscape encouraged cultural and social mixing through the imperatives of trade, which overcame most of the divisions resulting from religious differences.¹⁶

The centrality of trade in advancing urban cohesion was vividly felt by contemporaries: A.A. Skal’kovskii, the first to publish extensive scholarly work on Novorossiia, determined that “the commercial history of Odessa *is* the history of Odessa.” Since commerce was the “soul of Odessa” and the purpose for its existence, the quest for money-making and profit became paramount to any other earthly or otherworldly pursuit.¹⁷ This supersession of class nurtured a greater degree of cosmopolitanism, which could be overlooked when focusing on ethnicity or religion only. While religion was arguably a lesser dividing factor than class, fragmentation along religious lines was particularly visible in metropolises. Yet in Odessa, because the population was based almost exclusively on immigration, religiosity balanced the effects of uprooting and with social propinquity. Cosmopolitanism was not just a juxtaposition of various groups side by side, but their interpenetration, despite structural and legal inequalities. Most importantly, cosmopolitanism helped to navigate the wide array of competing cultural contexts present in these urban centres – a characteristic equally valid in Odessa and in New Orleans.¹⁸ Such a situation diverged from other colonial societies, where the religion of the colonists opposed that of the native groups, or in which settlements were created along a single faith. In both cases, this could mean a tendency to counter-identification, making religious identity plastic and malleable. However, cosmopolitanism did not mean the

¹⁵ Malitska, Julia. *Negotiating Imperial Rule: Colonists and Marriage in the Nineteenth-century Black Sea Steppe*. Diss. Södertörns högskola, 2017, 38.

¹⁶ Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 84.

¹⁷ A.A. Skal’kovskii, quoted in Zipperstein, Steven J. “Remapping Odessa, Rewriting Cultural History.” *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, 2, no. 2 (1996): 22. Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 193. Morton also pointed out the corruption present at all levels of the local administration, attributing “roguery” to salaries “much too low.” (207)

¹⁸ Carp, Benjamin L. ““Fix’d Almost amongst Strangers”: Charleston’s Quaker Merchants and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (2017): 77-108.

complete amalgamation of ethnic and religious groups, nor social endogamy. Historian Mazis writes that Odessa might have been cosmopolitan, but it was not a melting pot: most of the exchanges between its diverse communities happened in the marketplace. Zipperstein confirms that while interfaith business partnerships were frequent between Jew and non-Jews, close friendships and shared social practices remained unusual.¹⁹ Although religion did not segregate Odessa's residents, members of each religious groups kept their interactions to the public and commercial sphere.

While religion was not a decisive dividing factor, religious deficiency was worrisome. Odessa and Novorossiya's early administrators agreed that the dearth of clergy, especially of non-Orthodox faith, was a cause for concern regarding the moral guidance of the foreign colonists. Richelieu wrote that he feared, without such guidance, that the colonists would become "savage" or "native" (*sauvages*). He contended that more clergymen were needed for the villages: "we would only need to have good priests, but it seems to me that this task is almost impossible."²⁰ The city itself was framed as having a nefarious influence, with loose morals that could spread to the agrarian colonies. It was recommended that newly arrived colonists should not spend their first winter in the city, lest they become contaminated by idleness, drunkenness, and liberal ideas.²¹ The government thus invited Roman Catholic and Lutheran clergy from abroad to help establish new churches and meet the demands of the colonists' religious diversity – in particular those coming from France and from German lands. Just like the settlers, foreign ministers were offered advantageous conditions: travel expenses, a governmental salary, exemption from taxes, and a loan for their accommodation.²² However, the intake of clergymen did not match the significant increase in migrants that followed Western

¹⁹ Mazis, *The Greeks of Odessa*, 2004, 25; and Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa*, 1985: 65, 189.

²⁰ Richelieu, 1 January 1808, and 13 April 1810, in Richelieu, Polevchtchikova, and Triaire. *Lettres D'Odessa*, 2014, 112, 137.

²¹ Quoted in Lavenant, Meryl. « Gouverner les colons en Nouvelle Russie. Théories et pratiques de l'administration coloniale dans le sud de l'Empire tsariste (1803-1814) », *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2020, 146.

²² Malitska, *Negotiating Imperial Rule*, 2017, 141.

Europe's geopolitical upheaval. To meet this need, a branch of the non-denominational Russian Bible Society was founded in 1816. The organisation was tasked with distributing and translating the Bible into Russian and the various languages of the colonists, with great concern for Roman Catholics and Lutherans: "several hundred Bibles and Testaments have already been circulated among these foreigners, in the immediate neighbourhood of Odessa, by the Society; but these are few, when compared with the wants both of their families and of their schools."²³

Religion was superseded by more secular concerns. A Scottish catholic missionary, Robert Pinkerton, recounted his conversation in 1816 with one of the city's richest merchants. Upon being invited to assist with the creation of an Odessa branch of the Foreign Bible Society, the man "turned round upon [him], and, with that infidel freedom in his manner and address which one sometimes meets with, in those who suppose that the tower of their fortune and their philosophy stands strong, said:

– Indeed, Mr. Pinkerton, I have so much to do with the present world, that I have no time to think of a future one!"²⁴

In a landscape dominated by secular concern, religion had a worldly purpose as much as it was concerned with people's souls, supporting the development of a civil religious landscape. The combination of the influence of Odessa's early foreign governors and French traders increased the visibility of the Catholic Church, for which French became a marker, despite larger numbers of Italians or catholic Germans. Until 1820, French Jesuits were also favoured by the French local administration (the director of the Lycée Richelieu, for instance, was the Jesuit Abbot Nicolle).²⁵ In 1824, the city's only Catholic Church held a well-attended

²³ Pinkerton, *Russia*, 1833, 142.

²⁴ Pinkerton, *Russia*, 1833, 139. M. C___ subsequently suffered misfortune after misfortune and died soon after. His house of commerce was nowhere to be seen when Pinkerton came back in 1819.

²⁵ While Jesuits were being suppressed everywhere in Western Europe, they had been defended by Catherine II and later Paul I, attracting more Jesuits who travelled from across Europe to Russia to join this order. Alexander I expelled the order in March 1820.

funerary service for king Louis XVIII.²⁶ Shortly after, another service celebrated the accession of Charles X. Both events attracted many traders and consuls of all nationalities to the city's Catholic Church, the newspapers suggesting a sense of civil kinship with events unfolding in France.²⁷

The Count of Langeron, during his tenure as governor-general, played a pivotal role in operating that semantic transformation: through the element of Frenchness, Catholicism became an unofficial but de facto civic religion of Odessa. In a manner devoid of piety, the Catholic Church became a site of celebration of a local and blended yet still markedly Frenchified identity, rather than a place of merely religious worship. Upon the death of the Duke of Richelieu in 1822, Langeron raised funds to build a monument in his honour, completed in 1828 under the governorship of Count Vorontsov. Odessa's first public monument and the first statue honouring an individual, it remained in its prominent seafront location, through empire and revolutions, as a federative testament to the city's history and identity.²⁸ When the Count of Langeron died in 1831, he was still revered as unifying figure in Odessa, and the funeral service in his memory federated once more the whole city around Odessa's Catholic Church.²⁹ If Odessa's real religion was trade, Catholic rituals, under the disguise of Frenchness and cosmopolitanism, had the symbolic power to gather together rather uncontroversially different sections of the urban community.

Catholicism thus acted as a proxy for federative 'French' identifiers, but it also served as extension of French influence. In 1804, the French government had set aside some funding for Odessa's Catholic Church, a tradition that declined in the 1830s and 1840s, when French presence in the region waned. The Church, benefitting from a close relationship with the French

²⁶ ONSL 971, 1824, n.81, 8/20 October.

²⁷ AMAE 230CCC/3, 25 October 1824.

²⁸ Savchuk, Ivan. "Significance of Main Monuments in Historical Districts of Odessa and St. Petersburg for perception of these cities." *Geography, Environment, Sustainability* 3.3 (2010): 14-31.

²⁹ ONSL 971, 1832 n.54, 5/17th July.

government, played an officious role in overseeing French nationals.³⁰ The parish registered most of their births and deaths, often more regularly than the French consulate, and celebrated weddings without authorization from the French State. About a third of Odessa couples lived out of wedlock, and priests regularly complained of low attendance in churches – a situation that both Catholic and Orthodox religious authorities sought to rectify.³¹ The role of the Catholic Church as an organ of the State – neither French nor Russian – was still debated in the 1830s, as reports of French men and women living together in matrimony in Odessa regularly surfaced, and the legitimacy of their children in France remained debated.³² The Catholic Church thus brought together the religious and the secular, and it highlighted French influence in an idiosyncratic manner, through civil ceremonies and the supervision of French nationals. Catholicism was also representative of Odessa’s ability to transform influences and symbols into its own transnational character.

Religious diversity and accommodation were among Odessa’s distinctive traits, this cosmopolitanism was also marked out by new constraints, as the case of Odessa’s Jewish population illustrates. Odessa’s Jewish community faced challenges unlike those of any national group settling in the city. Its members shared one faith, but they came from distant regions across Russia and Ukraine, and beyond from Belarus, Poland, and as far as Germany or Lithuania. The wealth and mobility created by commercial activities prompted the introduction of liberal reforms into their religious practices and an increased social exogamy (*Haskalah*, or Jewish Enlightenment³³). Although religion was a strong instrument for group

³⁰ The upkeep or suspension of this funding, amounting to 600 francs, was regularly debated: AMAE 230CCC/2, 18 January 1820; AMAE 230CCC/5, 3 January 1834; and AMAE 230CCC/6, 19 March 1846.

³¹ Malitska, *Negotiating Imperial Rule*, 2017, 255.

³² AMAE 230CCC/5, 30 December 1833.

³³ Odessa was a privileged locus for the development of the *Haskalah* (Jewish ‘Enlightenment’) movement: at its core was the idea that Judaism was compatible with the modern world. The *Haskalah* thus rejected orthodox ritual and integrated foreign and interreligious cultural practices – mostly language, names and literature or music. Read: Zipperstein, “Jewish Enlightenment in Odessa”, 1982: 19-36; Humphrey, “Odessa: Pogroms in a cosmopolitan city,” in *Post-Cosmopolitan Cities* (2012): 17-64; and chapter 4: ‘Jewish Writers of Odessa, 1800-1840,’ in Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019

cohesion, the accelerating secularization of the more progressive Jews made French rather than Yiddish the language of integration, especially in Odessa. The city's commercial culture encouraged laxity about ritual, and acculturation into the larger community. Recalling his first arrival to Odessa in 1869, Hebraic scholar Moshe Lilienbum admitted, albeit with more wonder than concern:

“My attachment to religion weakens daily and I now find myself transgressing laws I never would have even imagined transgressing in the past.... Though in the past I heaped curses on the day that I arrived in Odessa, I now appreciate that this change opened for me a new epoch, a bright and vibrant epoch.”³⁴

The synagogue, in existence at least since 1819, was maintained by foreign Jewish families, newly established in the city, who brought reformist ideas from Vienna, Berlin, and Munich.³⁵ The streams of money circulating across the city encouraged the creation of a Jewish urban culture and its array of institutions – theatres, schools, and local museums, as well as festivals and celebrations. Steven Zipperstein mentions that Odessa Jews, including the community's more traditionalist members, were eager to integrate non-Jewish cultural forms into their lives. The opera, in particular, became an important site of cultural belonging.³⁶

Because Odessa was far, and separate from, the traditional centers of Jewish culture – such as Vilna, Lvov (modern-day Lviv), Krakow, or Prague – the role and shape of its religious practices was the result of these migratory movements, making Odessa an ‘unsettled city of newcomers.’³⁷ The migrant nature of the city ensured that, in its early days, no dominant culture and religious norm took over. This diversity, in tandem with the relative laxity of other religious practices in the public sphere, ensured Odessa’s atmosphere of religious toleration. In this urban context, Zipperstein argues that segments of “the Jewish youth came to view European

³⁴ Mosheh Leib Lilienblum, *Hat'ot Neurim: Ketavim Otobiografyim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1970), vol. II, 126-28, quoted in Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa*, 1985, 147.

³⁵ ONSL 971, 1843, n.6, 19/31 January.

³⁶ Zipperstein, “Jewish Enlightenment in Odessa”, 1982, 26-27.

³⁷ Zipperstein, “Remapping Odessa,” 1996, 24.

culture as their primary affiliation,” as demonstrated by their links to French-prone schools and institutions (Chapter 6), a growing disinterest towards religion, and emulation of their non-Jewish neighbours.³⁸

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Odessa became infamous for a rise in pogroms and religious persecutions against these same secularized Jewish communities, which triggered a wave of emigration towards Western Europe and the United States.³⁹ Some of these pogroms were linked to wider political events across Russia, such as the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, but others originated from the residents of the city themselves and reflected local tensions – often closely linked to trade competition. Caroline Humphrey has characterized the rise of religious violence in Odessa during the late nineteenth century as ‘post-cosmopolitanism’, implying the slow dislocation of an original urban cultural synthesis across religious and ethnic lines.⁴⁰ Humphrey points out that by positing the Jewish population as alien, pogrom crowds were aware of cosmopolitanism, and that the two phenomena (pogroms and cosmopolitanism) were coexistent and relational. The rise of violence in Odessa hinged on both religious and racial tropes, a discord that existed, although in different ways, in the context of New Orleans.

The Jewish example illustrates the faultiness of Odessa’s cosmopolitanism, but its existence and persistence remain nonetheless extraordinary in the context of the Russian Empire. Among members of one religious, ethnic, or national group, class and social status

³⁸ Zipperstein, “Jewish Enlightenment in Odessa”, 1982, 27.

³⁹ The first recorded attack against Jews had taken place as early as 1821, but attacks became more systematic and deliberate later in the century: the pogroms of 1859, 1871, 1881, 1900 and 1905 created lasting structural fractures in a social fabric that had for decades accommodated urban coexistence.

⁴⁰ Humphrey and Skvirskaja. *Post-cosmopolitan Cities*, 2012, 21: Humphrey explains that “pre-existing social categories, such as ‘the Russians’, ‘the Greeks’ or ‘the Jews’, did not determine who were the acting subjects. Rather, during pogroms such named categories, together with representations and symbols of them, were some of the key vectors (i.e. ‘content’) that temporarily linked people – people who otherwise had quite variegated and multifarious identities.”

remained the main dividing factor.⁴¹ Recentring on the cultural attributes of Frenchness, as a middle ground between Jewish identity and Russian Orthodoxy, participation in broader civic ceremonies created counter-identities, and provided a pragmatic adjustment to Odessa’s local realities. However, no matter how well-integrated secular Jews were into the social fabric, unlike other ethnic or religious groups, they could not transform their social currency into actual political power and became gradually ostracised. Likewise, in New Orleans, free people of colour could own property and benefitted from social opportunities unparalleled in the South of the United States, yet they were systematically barred from official roles and denied access to full citizenship. Odessa and New Orleans were cities where the juxtaposition and imbrication of otherwise distinct categories could develop, although with some structural limitations.

5.2 Religious passing and Creole traditions in American New Orleans.

In New Orleans, religious practices reinforced intersecting divisions of the urban citizenry. Contrary to Odessa, where trade imperatives had eroded divides and made the co-presence of distinct religious groups possible for a time, in New Orleans religious proselytism contributed to the blurring of racial categories. Catholicism was integral to creating Creole institutions, and became central to the constant redefinition of who was Creole and what it meant. Since colonial times, south Louisiana had been under the influence of the French Capuchin friars and their Spanish successors, as well as the Ursuline nuns. Their sway on the city lasted long after the Louisiana Purchase. While the Ursulines’ impact was predominantly in the realm of education

⁴¹ Humphrey, Caroline. “Odessa: Pogroms in a cosmopolitan city,” in *Post-Cosmopolitan Cities*, 2012, 28-30: “A chasm separated bourgeois German-speaking Jewish magnates and intellectuals from the swarms of poverty-stricken Jews streaming into the city from the shtetls. (...) The ‘ethnic communities’ were virtual signs hanging over associations whose edges were hazy and whose make-up was internally fragmented and changing.”

(see Chapter 6), the Capuchins were entrusted with conversion and the strict application of the *Code Noir* of 1724, even after the end of the French colonial rule.⁴² The *Code* was designed specifically for the colony of Louisiana, and regulated the status of enslaved and free Blacks, and the relationships between slaves and slaveowners. It also recognised Roman Catholicism as the only legitimate religion, thus prompting the expulsion of Jews from the colony.⁴³ The *Code* created barriers to the development of a *métissage* resembling that in existence in France’s Antillean colonies by regulating marriage and sex between Blacks and Whites. One of the code’s requirements was the conversion, baptism, and religious instruction of slaves. In practice, the code’s restrictive clauses were not always followed closely, but the Capuchins themselves cultivated a close relationship between the Church and both the enslaved and free black population of New Orleans.⁴⁴ The *Code* was briefly abolished in 1764 under Louisiana’s first Spanish Governor Antonio de Ulloa, then re-established by General Alejandro O’Reilly, eventually leading to a mixture between a stricter French legislation and the more lenient laws of Castille and the Indies, which gave birth to the mixed and Creole Catholic society that the Americans encountered in 1803.

The invention of a unified ‘Creole’ society through place, religion, and language, was a new thing in New Orleans. By 1803, the term ‘creole’ had only been applied to the descendants of European pioneers in North America, almost exclusively in Louisiana, and was more commonly used elsewhere in the Caribbean and the Iberian American colonies.⁴⁵ Yet in

⁴² The Louisiana *Code Noir* of 1724 differed from the Saint Domingue *Code Noir* of 1685 in more strictly prohibiting interracial marriages, even among Catholics.

⁴³ A Jewish presence remained in New Orleans from the early colonial decades, even after the proclamation of the *Code Noir*. Jews were once again expelled after the 1762 Treaty of Fontainebleau that handed over the colony to Spain, without lasting success, and Jewish settlement became easier under American rule. As in Odessa, New Orleans Jews were not overtly religious.

⁴⁴ Bell, Caryn Cossé. “French Religious Culture in Afro-Creole New Orleans, 1718-1877.” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 17, no. 2 (1999), 6-7

⁴⁵ Bethencourt, Francisco, *Racisms. From the crusades to the twentieth century*, Princeton ; Oxford, 2013, particularly Chapter 10, “Ethnic Classifications,” 163-180: “[Creole] was used to designate the descendants of French settlers in North America, especially in Louisiana, where after the [United States] took over the colony, they had to deal with a different language spoken by the white, slave and native populations.”(172)

New Orleans, the Creole society was not understood as exclusively white until after the American Civil War. It was shaped, according to Carl A. Brasseaux, by the “[Francophone and] French crucible in which it was formed”, and in which Catholicism played no small part.⁴⁶ Creole identity came to be first equated with linguistic traditions through a set of social and religious practices, language itself becoming an epiphenomenon of cultural identity. This also created a divide across the wider African American community of what became the state of Louisiana, as black Creoles were from the start set apart from the growing English-speaking and Protestant Black majority.

Colonial Louisiana had relied on religious institutions to produce censuses and implement legal frameworks such as the *Code Noir*. Religious authorities, however, did not always abide to the official legislations, well into the American rule. Friars systematically baptized enslaved and free children, white and black, including the infants of illegitimate and interracial liaisons. Religion further bound the Creole population together through the practice of having white slaveholding godparents present at the baptism of Black children. This role was later taken over by the women of the free coloured community, who saw in their proselytism on behalf of the Catholic Church a manner to claim their place in New Orleans’ society.⁴⁷ While New Orleans became an American diocese after 1803, its European power structure, between the secular and the sacred, remained.

Travelling across the United States in 1835, British writer Harriet Martineau observed the effects of the intersectional role of the Louisiana Catholic Church, which united through a shared denomination separate strands of the population. While in New Orleans, she devoted many pages to the depiction of Sunday religious gatherings, starting from the slave and free coloured market at dawn, followed by the Catholic mass at the cathedral, “a place which the

⁴⁶ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, 94.

⁴⁷ On this topic, see Clark and Gould. “The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism”, 2002, 409-48.

European gladly visits, as the only one in the United States where all men meet together as brethren.”⁴⁸ Martineau reported that New Orleans’ Anglo-American Protestants considered Catholicism best-suited for people of African descent: it was a “great blessing to the ignorant negro” because its ritualistic aspects made it “a safe resting-place between barbarism and truth.”⁴⁹ As an abolitionist, Martineau disagreed with this simplistic view, but her difference of opinion also stemmed from a personal critique of the “worship of things without meaning” that she ascribed to the Catholic faith. Nonetheless, Martineau was adamant about attending services at the Saint Louis Cathedral to report the effects of interracial interactions through shared Catholic rituals:

“Within the edifice there is no separation. Some few persons may be in pews; but kneeling on the pavement may be seen a multitude, of every shade of complexion, from the fair Scotchwoman or German to the jet-black pure African. [...] During the preaching, the multitude of anxious faces, thus various in tint and expression, turned up towards the pulpit, afforded one of those few spectacles which are apt to haunt the whole future life of the observer like a dream.”⁵⁰

Martineau wrote in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, so it is likely that her testimony purposely stressed examples of peaceful coexistence. However, despite extensive travels across both the South and North of the United States, the interracial religious endogamy of New Orleans’ Catholics was new to her, starkly contrasting with the strict racial endogamy enforced elsewhere. To other Protestant Anglo-American newcomers, New Orleans appeared as a foreign land and its interracial Catholicism was equated with a lower form of religiosity that “[desecrated] the Sabbath.”⁵¹ Sundays were commonly dedicated to socializing in New Orleans: at dawn people of all backgrounds would first meet at markets,

⁴⁸ Martineau, Harriet, *Retrospect of Western Travel in Three Vols.*, London: Saunders and Otley, 1838). Vol. 2, 128.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 130.

⁵⁰ Martineau, *Retrospect*, 1838, 129

⁵¹ Nichols, *Forty Years*, 1864, 193.

and after the religious service crowds would, soon after leaving the pews, meet in cafés or even in theatres.

By the 1830s the francophone Catholic Church had to contend with newly established anglophone Protestant churches. However, they struggled to establish competing cultural and cultic practices across the city. The frequency of yellow fever epidemics deterred many Protestant ministers from within the United States, who did not come back to the southern city after going home to recover. This scarcity had an impact on both religious habits and on linguistics; contrary to other frontier spaces, English could not be disseminated widely through gospel-reading practices. Catholic newcomers, just like their protestant counterparts, suffered from the disease-prone climate: out of eighty new missionaries in the 1820s, thirteen had perished and six had left the country within a decade.⁵² However, a number of Catholic priests and nuns, who had been established in the delta for generations, were able to ensure continuity within the parishes.⁵³ By 1845, the tide had changed: with an increase in Catholic immigrants from new countries, religious community became more important than linguistic rivalry. Creole Catholics wished to attract non-Francophones for fear of seeing the Protestant Church replace Roman Catholicism, especially as younger generations of Creoles grew disinterested in religious matters and poorly attended church services.⁵⁴ New Orleans' French Archbishop decided to only admit new priests from France if they knew the English language.⁵⁵ Catholic

⁵² « Mémoire sur le diocèse de la Nvelle Orléans, États-Unis d'Amérique, présenté à son Eminence le cardinal M. Capellari ... Rome, 20 mai 1829 », SCPF, AUND, quoted in Geneviève Piché. *À la rencontre de deux mondes : les esclaves de Louisiane et l'Église catholique, 1803- 1845*. Histoire. Université Toulouse le Mirail - Toulouse II, 2015, 156.

⁵³ Bailey, *Speaking American*, 2012, 110.

⁵⁴ HNOG, MSS.100 - Ste Gême Family papers (thereafter MSS.100), Letter of Jean Boze: f. 161, p.7-8

⁵⁵ Lettre de Mgr Blanc, Nouvelle-Orléans, au Conseil central de Lyon, sans date, mais entre le 15 oct. 1845 et le 1 juin 1846, CCPF, AANO, quoted in Piché, *À la rencontre de deux mondes*, 2015, 170.

institutions also gradually stopped accepting free and enslaved black populations, or segregated their religious services.⁵⁶

Throughout the early American rule, Church records had documented the creolization of descendants of European and African settlers and slaves: through them, racially exogamous relationships had become religiously and culturally endogamous.⁵⁷ Officially, the Catholic Church never supported the practical consequences of interracial religious endogamy – the same consequences that had puzzled Protestant visitors. In 1808, the Territory’s first *Civil Digest* of laws (based on the French *Code Civil*) tried to reform that status quo by regulating sex along racial lines, offering contending criteria for what endogamy meant. The *Digest* banned interracial marriages and made children of racially exogamous relationships illegitimate.⁵⁸ These new criteria went against previous Catholic practice, which did not recognise marriage as a secular right. Among the New Orleans Catholic community, the clergy remained in charge of validating marital unions and registering births and baptisms, as well as deaths and inheritance. The Roman Catholic Church was thus at the heart of this legal and social transition: it had to straddle the new legislations while not antagonizing its demographic base.

Three main positions emerged: the American legislation, the Church at leadership level, and the preferences of the clergy. In practice, religious priorities (marrying and baptizing rather than allowing families out of wedlock) often took precedence. The Church also sought to keep strong numbers to compete for influence with the Protestants: allowing racially exogamous unions and baptisms helped with that purpose. Sacramental registers indicated the continuation

⁵⁶ In reaction to these changes, free coloured Henriette Delisle founded in 1842 the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family, an all-black Catholic congregation for the religious and educational training of free-coloured girls, with the practical support of the Ursulines.

⁵⁷ Spear, *Race, Sex and Social Order*, 2009. Spear highlights how the “idea of incorporating cultural or racial ‘others’ into the colony through marriage had come up early on, as soon as the French established themselves in the Gulf Coast in 1699 (216).

⁵⁸ Spear points out that the 1808 ban on interracial marriages partly failed in practice as the legislature did not devise specific penalties, while failing to account for nonmarital sex (*Ibid.* 201-202).

of previous practices to maintain a religiously endogamous – while racially exogamous – Creole Catholic community.⁵⁹ In the 1830s, when the legislation became more restrictive, some couples circumvented local laws by going abroad to get married, especially to France.⁶⁰ Jean Boze (1753-1842), a famous New Orleans chronicler and Saint Domingue refugee, regularly mentioned such occurrences: a Maurice Abat left for France with his coloured partner Emerile Giraudeau, mother of his two children, intending to marry her; Antoine Carraby's estate in New Orleans was disposed of after his death in France, where he had gone to legitimize the children of coloured Coralie Le Roi of St. Domingue; and the young and pregnant 'Olympe' Dudart was abandoned by her French husband Mr. Bordier for a coloured woman from St. Domingue.⁶¹ Because some individuals were French nationals by birth, the French state, aware of a practice that American authorities often condemned, asked the consul to New Orleans to approve these unions when needed.⁶²

Most of the time, extra-racial unions were labelled as concubinage, despite their lasting and committed quality. External onlookers thought that quadroons and free women of colour “[could not] marry; that is to say no ceremony [could] render a union with them legal or binding.”⁶³ Visiting New Orleans in 1834, John H.B. Latrobe – the future president of the American Colonization Society (1853-1891) – directly linked the fascination many travellers had for New Orleans to the prominence of racially exogamous couples, both on the streets of

⁵⁹ “There is little difference between the entries for whites, slaves, and free persons of color. With the exception of a surname, the name of the person receiving the sacrament, date of birth, date of baptism, the parents, and godparents are recorded.” Leumas, Emilie Gagnet. “The Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.” *American Catholic Studies* 125, no. 1 (2014): 54.

⁶⁰ Spear, *Race, Sex and Social Order*, 2009, 202-203: Spear gives the example Pierre Henon and the free woman of colour Agathe Fanchon who got married in France in 1830. However, eventually even such marriages did not offer a secure solution, as the Louisiana Supreme court started to systematically not recognize and invalidate such unions in the 1850s, even retroactively.

⁶¹ HNOG MSS.100, f.183, 5; f.180, 7; f. 223, 5.; f. 188, 4.

⁶² AMAE, 227CCC/4, 2 November 1826, f.54.

⁶³ Trollope, Frances Milton. *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. 5th ed. Bentley's Standard Library of Popular Modern Literature. London: Richard Bentley, 1839. 9.

the city and in the privacy of the houses they were invited in: “New Orleans would have far less of the picturesque if it had more of morals to recommend it.”⁶⁴ From the outside looking in, foreign and domestic visitors exoticized the city and saw ‘lax’ morals as an essential feature of the Creole population. Thirty years earlier, while overseeing the transfer of Louisiana, Pierre Clément Laussat described similar living arrangements as commonplace among French Creoles. As a guest of the Hazeur de Lorme family, Laussat commented that they were, as many other planters, not officially married to their coloured partners: “that was their shameful side, their colonial weakness; children, whose colour betrayed their origins, surrounded them.”⁶⁵ Catholic religious traditions were critical to this social arrangement: the Hazeur de Lorme used baptism to legitimise seven children, and white siblings from that family regularly acted as godparents for their nieces and nephews.⁶⁶

Similarly, during the first decades of American rule, Jean Pierre Cazelar, a wealthy sugar planter established on the opposite bank to the French Quarter, maintained a prominent multi-racial family, although he could never marry his life-long partner Charlotte Wiltz, a free woman of colour.⁶⁷ Church records designated Cazelar as the father of all his coloured children, indicating the practical limits of the new legal regime, and how religious rites created opportunities for alternate social regimes.⁶⁸ The *de facto* legal authority of the Catholic Church thus went against the letter of the 1808 laws and persisted through most of the antebellum period, as explained below in 1857 by Pastor Duquesnay:

⁶⁴ Latrobe, John H. B., and Samuel Wilson. *Southern Travels: Journal of John H.B. Latrobe, 1834*. 1st ed. New Orleans, La.]: Historic New Orleans Collection, 1986.

⁶⁵ Laussat, Pierre-Clement, "Mémoires sur ma vie à mon fils pendant les années 1803 et suivantes." (1831) 87-88, and Gillian Mays, "Romance or Power Imbalance? The Hazeur Family," *New Orleans Historical*, accessed September 24, 2019.

⁶⁶ The son Louis bought a slave woman, Félicité, from his brother's widow, Marie, after Félicité had given birth to their child, Helena. He thereafter married Félicité, who became Félicité Hazeur, and recognized and baptized all the children who were born out of this marriage, to whom he left bequests. Spear, *Race, Sex and Social Order*, 2009, 149, 212.

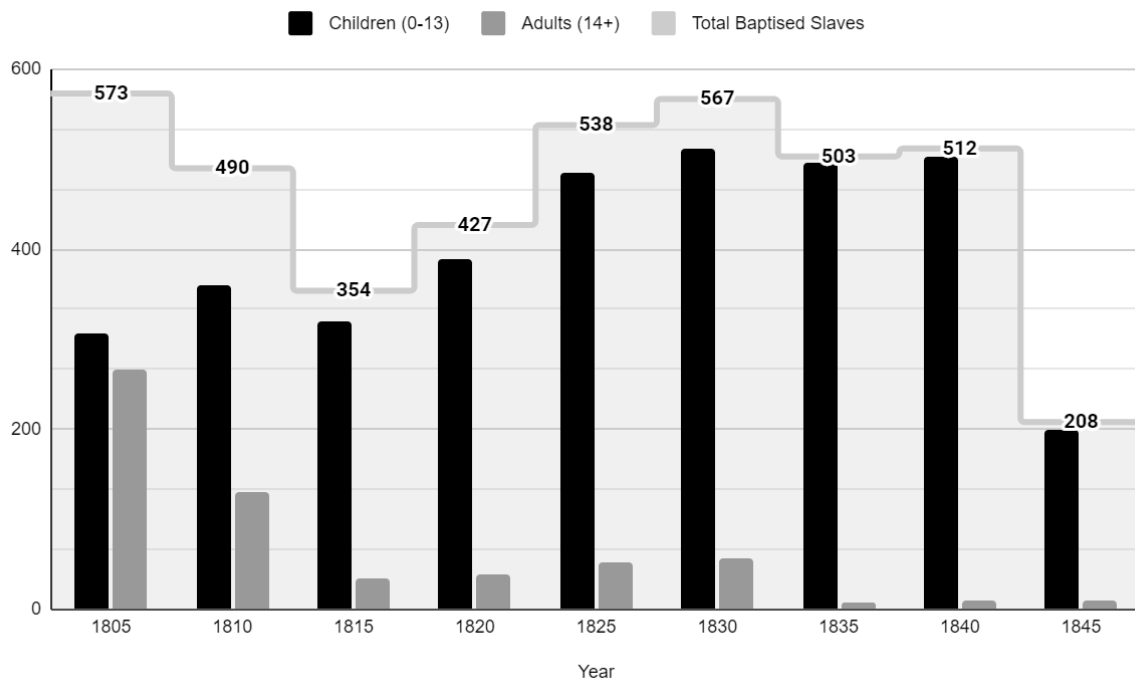
⁶⁷ Caitlin Rudin and Kate Mason, editor, "The Cazelars: Wealth Preservation in a Racially Mixed Family," *New Orleans Historical*, accessed January 6, 2021.

⁶⁸ HNOCC MSS.100: f.265, 9.

“I, the undersigned, Pastor of the Parish Church of St. Louis, of New Orleans, do certify that it is, and that it has always been, the constant practice at New Orleans, since the adoption of the code of 1808, ... that the acts of Baptism of Catholics are received and retained by the Priest Minister of the Sacrament, ... the signature of whom has ever been recognized as sufficient for proving the validity and the authenticity of the acts which are admitted as proof by all civil tribunals of the state.”⁶⁹

Religious (Catholic) baptism became a popular course of action, the only way to recognise mixed-race children and a steppingstone towards emancipation. Before 1808, the number of enslaved adult baptizands was equivalent to the number of children, but the adult share dramatically dropped shortly after implementation of the *Civil Digest* (Graph 5.1) It suggests that Catholic baptism became a recourse mostly used by mixed families, when one of the parents (primarily the mother) was enslaved.

Graph 5.1 - Slaves Baptised at Saint Louis Cathedral - Breakdown by Age (1830-1845)⁷⁰



⁶⁹ Quoted in Leumas, "The Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans," 2014, 54.

⁷⁰ Built on a combination of data collected in Piché, *À la rencontre de deux mondes*, 2015: Tableau 24 p. 302 and Tableau 26 p. 306.

The persistence of Catholic rituals and their popularity had a profound effect on New Orleans' Creole society: religious ceremonies entrenched existing interracial situations, while destabilizing power dynamics in the city. In the public realm, two sets of criteria (one Anglo-American and one Creole) competed to define group affiliation. Different record takers attributed variable labels to the same individuals, and individual priests became important agents in the development of an alternative social order. The Catholic Church perpetuated mixed-race clusters within a francophone and catholic sphere, and the blurring of categories created space for invented traditions and identity creation – as Creoles.⁷¹

In the face of rising Protestant Anglo-American immigration to New Orleans, Catholic religious solidarity and cultural association between white, coloured, and black Creoles had received a renewed impetus. However, towards the mid-century, Catholicism lost some of its appeal among the free coloured population: Afro-Creole spiritualism was on the rise from the 1850s onward. Groups such as the 'Cercle Harmonique' revitalized French and Haitian revolutionary ideals, in an Atlanticism inspired by Catholicism but resolutely anticlerical.⁷² At the same time, American authorities attempted to resolve this racial overlap by making the Creoles an administratively irrelevant category. The free coloured population, previously categorised as Black, was re-organised into the new category of 'mulatto', illustrating wider changes in what Creoles meant.⁷³ White Creoles were no longer recorded as Creoles, but were merged with the rest of the Anglo-American population of Louisiana.

From the 1840s on, the category of 'Creole' became much narrower: in place of the earlier racially exogamous but culturally endogamous Caribbean-inspired definition, who and

⁷¹ See also: Nash, Gary B. "The hidden history of mestizo America." *The Journal of American History* 82.3 (1995): 941-964.

⁷² Clark, Emily Suzanne. *A Luminous Brotherhood: Afro-Creole Spiritualism in Nineteenth-century New Orleans*. Chapel Hill, 2016; Daggett, Melissa. "Spiritualism among Creoles of Color in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: The Life and Times of Henry Louis Rey." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 55, no. 4 (2014): 409-31.

⁷³ On the eve of the American civil war, the free coloured population of Louisiana was also on the decline because of increasing legal restrictions and rising emigration to Mexico and Haiti.

what Creole meant in New Orleans was radically transformed as a reaction to changing legal restrictions in the U.S. South and rising immigration. The redefinition came from within, but it was also influenced by Anglo-American observers. Creoles were misconstrued as the sole descendants of French émigrés, in a straight line from the European Middle Ages, thus implicitly evading the realities of the colonial period:

“The ancestors of the Creoles were mostly French, and they brought with them to the colony of Louisiana the opinions of the Gallican Catholic Church... The distinction between the Gallican Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church proper has been known and has prevailed in France since the days of Charlemagne.”⁷⁴

Because Creole Catholicism had a history of interracial endogamy, an anti-Catholic rhetoric developed across the South. Thomas Haddox provides an interesting analysis of the efforts made by southern Catholics to invert this reputation, who drew on conservative and gallic ideals, medieval and patriarchal sources, or references to Joan of Arc and the Hundred Years War.⁷⁵ This reframing of southern Catholicism gained momentum in the 1850s, as the ‘Know Nothing’ nativist party became temporarily prominent in Louisiana, echoing growing anti-immigrant, and especially anti-Catholic, sentiments. Although the old Creoles were characterized by their Catholicism and still vied with Anglo-Americans for political influence in New Orleans, anti-Catholicism also targeted recent Irish immigrants. Creoles thus sought to remain distinct from that group, even though the Catholic Church welcomed the increase in parishioners.

A Know-Nothing Catholic newspaper published from 1854 to 1857, the *New Orleans Semi-Weekly Creole*, denounced populations “A little too Irish,” while reporting that “native

⁷⁴ NOPL, *Semi-Weekly Creole*, n.71 - Wednesday 18 October 1854

⁷⁵ Haddox, Thomas F. *Fears and Fascinations: Representing Catholicism in the American South*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, 81.

Catholics are joining the Know-Nothings by thousands.”⁷⁶ The Creoles and their allies – mostly the foreign French – were depicted as liberal Catholics, whose Americanism was incompatible with deference to the Pope’s foreign authority over “their rights and duties as native-born citizens of the [American] Republic.”⁷⁷ Although other francophone news outlets were wary of forging alliances with the nativist party, the *Semi-Weekly Creole* compared “our Creoles” to “Boston Puritans” and boasted their “spirit of ’76 – the spirit of Washington and Lafayette.”⁷⁸ In the wake of anti-immigrant feelings, New Orleans’ white Creoles defined themselves more narrowly around a national form of Catholicism, fully distinct from the practices of other ethnic groups – whether these were Irish migrants, or the long-lasting Afro-Catholic community of New Orleans.⁷⁹ Eventually, it helped entrench an identity that was rooted in a shared Americanness beyond sole references to France and its past colonial ventures, a transition that was made easier by the declining role of the Catholic Church.

*

Religious affiliation and performance in New Orleans and Odessa complicated the traditional criteria used to classify people in their respective countries, while offering for a time models facilitating co-existence. Targeted discrimination or violence on racial, ethnic and/or religious grounds happened simultaneously with the development of a cosmopolitan cultural synthesis. New Orleans’ divided religious landscape enabled the existence of subaltern and interracial communities in the Creole world – a confined cosmopolitanism that challenged civil laws and the constraints of bondage. The transformation of religious identity towards the

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* n. 67 - Wednesday 4 October 1854. Also, in the issue n. 70 of October 14th, 1854: “The question made is whether Rome belongs to the Romans - whether this is our country or the country of strangers settling among us.”

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* n. 67 - Wednesday 4 October 1854

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* n.68 - Saturday 7 October 1854. The main anti-Catholic papers of antebellum New Orleans were the *Semi-Weekly Creole* and the *American Exponent / L'Explicateur Américain*.

⁷⁹ According to Emily Clark, New Orleans’ multiracial Catholic Church “did not know congregational [racial] segregation until the era of Jim Crow in the late nineteenth century.” In Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 2007, 187.

exclusion of designated groups was a historical process that unfolded over half-a-century, a phenomenon equally valid in Odessa. There too, religious practices were reconstructed by the local circumstances of a multi-national port-city, and by the borderland realities of the Black Sea. Religion, once relatively marginal to urban life, became a central identity and a proxy for ethnicity when violent mobs attacked people on religious grounds, because they were reframed as alien or competitors. In Odessa as in New Orleans, churches created categories and networks that competed against other forms of classification, and went against the creators of norms, such as the state. Among them, the design and implementation of a school system became a critical endeavour to ensure the visibility of imported and invented urban identities.

Chapter 6 Educating the cosmopolitan city: the reproduction of a French model in foreign lands.

For historian Emma Rothschild, a virtual French empire based on the superiority of French ideas and principles (as opposed to the English empire of commerce) spread during the post-Napoleonic decades, when France itself had halted its colonial ventures.¹ This model, based on culture and civilization, was ideological as well as economic. It was particularly visible in port cities, shaped as they were by the “world of words” created by the letters of their transitory and settled populations, but also by visas, passports, customs declarations, and trade contracts.² A world apart, New Orleans and Odessa provide privileged sites in which to observe the informal power of such imperial afterlives. In 1766, French economist Anne Robert Turgot declared that “the true value of colonies for a nation [was] the advantage of extending its language in a large space.”³ The diffusion of French was envisioned as a tool of soft power, at a time when France started to systematically demote its own regional languages through educational policies. Language thus encapsulated ideologies, principles, and political affinities. That French was the language that took precedence in both Odessa and New Orleans shaped, to some extent, the identity and perception of the two cities. Language instruction and translation became flourishing industries, and bilingualism acquired an unparalleled social and economic value. This French empire of language, during a colonial interval between the close of France’s American ventures and a rekindled conquering spirit under the Second Empire, was more

¹ Rothschild, “Language and Empire,” 2005, 225.

² *Ibid.* 225.

³ Letter of 20 Feb. 1766 to Dupont de Nemours, in Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, *Œuvres de Turgot et documents le concernant*, ed. G. Schelle (5 vols., Paris, 1913–23), ii. 512, cited Rothschild 2005, 218.

resilient than direct political power in imperial dominions. By the 1820s, although English was spreading to many parts of the world formally colonized by Britain, “only French, in a world of bilingualism, was the second language of almost everyone.” On the border zones of the Mississippi Delta and on the Black Sea shores, the use of French, an imported language, was a useful medium for community-building. However, because that language was often equated with imported ideas, its rise to prominence created a challenge to nativist rule, reframing political ideologies around linguistic rivalry.

Issues of linguistic supremacy, and their destabilizing power, crystallized in Odessa and New Orleans around the education of young urbanites, as their numbers started growing under the weight of continued immigration and natural increase. Linguistic choices reflected the rise of an empire of French language and principles, providing an education that could test state-led initiatives and become transformational. This chapter will examine the rationale behind the development of literacy and educational institutions in these two port cities, focusing on the challenges and strategies embedded in the teaching of the youth.

6.1 New Orleans: Education as a site of resistance.

In early New Orleans, education and religious practices had been closely intertwined. From its years as a French colony, the question of educating future generations created controversies. In 1727, just nine years after the founding of the town, twelve nuns, belonging to the order of Saint Ursuline, arrived in New Orleans. Colonial New Orleans’ Capuchin friars were few in number, while the Jesuits were banned from proselytizing in any French possession after 1764. The colonial administrator, Jacques de la Chaise, originally intended to invite the Daughters of Charity, who specialized in nursing, to come and take care of the sick. However, that order could not spare members, and the Ursulines, already present in French Canada since the 1630s,

were sent to the Mississippi Delta in due course. The Ursulines were not primarily a nursing order: their central mission was the universal education of women. Where male missionaries had failed to create a durable model of religious education, the twelve nuns and their successors swiftly diverged from their task of administering a colonial military hospice, and shaped an educational regime that became central to the Franco-Spanish colony and persisted into American rule.⁴ They created a school that was open to all free girls, regardless of their social or ethnic background, and established an orphanage. As early as 1728, Marie-Madeleine Hachard, the youngest of the covenants, wrote in her journal:

“we have twenty boarders (...) we have also seven slave boarders to teach and prepare for Baptism and First Communion, besides a large number of Day-Scholars & Negresses & Savages who come two hours a day to be instructed.”⁵

By the mid-1740s, the Ursulines numbered 85 women and girls, a mix of nuns and students. Because female catechesis and conversion to Catholicism was central to the Ursulines’ mission, their activities systematically cut across categories of freedom and bondage, thus contributing to creating a large, essentially feminine, Afro-Catholic congregation in New Orleans.⁶ They had slaves themselves, who received religious training and a basic education. As a result, the Ursulines were greatly responsible for New Orleans’ uniquely literate black population.⁷

⁴ Hachard, Marie-Madeleine, and Emily Clark. *Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madeleine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727-1760*, Baton Rouge LA, 2007. Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 2007, especially chapter 5 and 7.

⁵ Hachard, Marie-Madeleine, *Relation Du Voyage Des Dames Religieuses Ursulines De Rouen a La Nouvelle-Orleans, Avec Une Introduction Et Des Notes Par Gabriel Gravier*. France: Maisonneuve Etc, 1872, 97. Clark, and Gould. “The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism”, 2002, 417.

⁶ Clark, and Gould. “The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism”, 2002, 413: “The development of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans was particularly inflected by gender [...]. Women of colour dominated Catholic congregations and led propagation efforts by initiating adult enslaved women from Africa and from Protestant areas of the United States into Catholicism.” The Ursulines were the first order of teaching nuns to have been established in the Catholic Church.

⁷ Stern, *Race and Education*, 2018, 25.

On the eve of the nineteenth century, the state of education in the vast Louisiana Territory was both atypical and extremely unbalanced: educational institutions remained in New Orleans and, as no plan had been devised regarding public instruction, they were essentially private initiatives. Further, an unusually large number of women had benefitted from a primary education at the Ursulines' institution. Before the Louisiana Purchase, plans for the instruction of the young male population were dismissed as superfluous: in a settler environment, boys' education in practical skills and knowledge seemed more important. Clark finds that on average more women than men were able to read and write – and Louisiana Creole girls were almost twice as likely to be literate than newly-arrived French girls.⁸ In the face of such an educational vacuum, the families who could afford it used pre-existing transatlantic networks and sent their offspring away, often to France – but this was only the case for a very limited number of households.

After the Louisiana Purchase, literacy levels and provisions for public education became a matter of influence and competition between the different sections of the urban population. The language of instruction became a particularly salient point in the rivalry between Francophone and Anglophone settler groups. In Walter Stern's words, educational divides and uneven literacy quickly translated into a 'reputation problem' for New Orleans.⁹ Looking at schools, we can better understand how the linguistic logics of the Americanization of New Orleans translated into a contest for influence, a process that was neither hegemonic nor smooth.

The Louisiana Purchase triggered wide-ranging anxieties among the Creole population that their linguistic rights might be overlooked under the new regime. If anything, the perceived threat prompted a more dynamic debate about instruction and educational initiatives. Beyond

⁸ Clark, Emily. *Masterless Mistresses*, 2007, 115.

⁹ Stern, *Race and Education*, 2018, 14.

the formal *Remonstrances* addressed by prominent Louisianians to Congress in 1804 (Chapter 4), this pressure also translated into a more methodical approach to the teaching, transmission, and visibility of the French language, especially in densely populated New Orleans.¹⁰ Even when those French speakers were neither part of the economic elite nor of the free population, the use of a shared language acted as a powerful tool of cohesion in the midst of demographic divide. The Francophone group itself was divided linguistically, and even French expatriates used a diversity of regional languages. As the work of ‘normalizing’ the French language became a priority in France, Louisianan children sent across the Atlantic for their education were in turn influenced by the transformation of the idiom, contrasting with a ‘colonial’ form of Louisiana French that accommodated diverse linguistic traditions.¹¹ Further, if French was still composed of motley sorts of dialects, English remained equally divided between different vernaculars, and lacked the cultural institutions that could disseminate a single form of American English.¹² In 1845, the city still had no English-language public library: a previous one had been sold due to indifference to reading, cementing American New Orleans’ reputation as a cultural desert.¹³

The earliest project for a comprehensive education scheme originated with the first territorial governor of Louisiana, William C. C. Claiborne.¹⁴ Claiborne was determined to Americanize what he considered to be a largely foreign and antagonistic population, and his plan focused on the education of the youth. In 1805, the Legislative Council of the Territory adopted, upon his suggestion, a proposal for an extensive educational system, called

¹⁰ Another petition was addressed by American English-speakers to Congress, praying that “when it [Louisiana] first be taken as a State into the Union, that they (“whose language is English”) may be indulged in having the Legislative and Judicial proceeding conducted in their ‘mother tongue.’” Bailey, *Speaking American*, 2012, 101.

¹¹ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, 33.

¹² On that subject Bailey, *Speaking American*, 2012, 106.

¹³ Norman 1845, 79–80, quoted in Bailey, *Speaking American*, 2012, 110.

¹⁴ Noble, Stuart Grayson, “Governor Claiborne and the Public-School System of the Territorial Government of Louisiana”, *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, v.11 n.4, 1928: 535-552. With Claiborne’s Plan, Louisiana was at the vanguard of the movement girls’ education when it proposed to establish academies for girls in 1805. (541)

misleadingly the University of New Orleans – the University being an education network combining elementary and secondary education, rather than a single institution.¹⁵ It was inspired by French philosopher Diderot’s *Plan for a University*, originally prepared for Catherine II of Russia. The system centred on the College of Orleans, located in New Orleans, with at least one boys’ academy in each parish of Louisiana. Provisions were made to establish academies for girls when possible, and to provide one library per parish.¹⁶ The academies were to offer tuition in both French and English, reflecting the State’s bilingualism. The schools did not explicitly exclude free coloured pupils, but remained predominantly white. The necessary funds would be raised through taxes but also two public lotteries – a funding model that originated from France, and was employed by Napoleon for his Imperial University (1808) and by the University of the State of New York (1787).

The scheme proved quite unsuccessful, as the responsibility for developing and funding public education was placed on local parishes and their residents. Among them, wealthy families continued to send their children away, while cost seemed high for poorer residents, for the most part refugees. Few people subscribed to the lotteries and the taxation system faced criticism. In parallel, Louisiana witnessed an increase in the number of private schools, demonstrating the lack of appropriate educational institutions.¹⁷ Only in 1811 was appropriate funding obtained, starting the ‘beneficiary period:’ public funds were granted on the condition that schools would educate a few students for free.¹⁸ This measure was the last legislation of

¹⁵ ‘An Act to Institute a University in the Territory of Orleans’, April 19, 1805. Claiborne had also requested from the Congress in 1804 an annual budget of \$100,000 to support education; the final act provided financial support through two lotteries to raise a sum of up to \$50,000 each year.

¹⁶ It was one of the earliest instances of state legislation for women education. Suarez, Raleigh A. “Chronicle of a failure: Public education in antebellum Louisiana.” *Louisiana History* (1971): 110.

¹⁷ It was Claiborne’s desire to establish schools in which no fees should be charged, even though fees could have helped finance the University and avoided the ensuing delays in its establishment.

¹⁸ The legislature appropriated \$39,000 for education and to establish the ‘University of Orleans’ plan from 1805.

the territorial government, before Louisiana was admitted into the Union. The ‘University of Orleans’ opened its doors to seventy students – across the College and the parish academies.¹⁹

The central College of Orleans illustrated the structural weaknesses that prevented the creation of a lasting public education system prior to the 1840s. Its limited curriculum only covered some elementary subjects and languages, as well as practical skills such as book-keeping or navigation, a useful knowledge for local schoolboys. The name of ‘College’ was a direct reference to the French nomenclature, indicating at best a secondary school education, and its first director, Jules Davezac, was a Saint Domingue Creole. By the 1820s, the ‘University’ system was no longer the integration tool that Claiborne had envisaged to unite the younger generations of Louisianians. French speakers, who controlled both the State legislature and the Municipality, appointed exiled French scholar and politician Joseph Lakanal head of the College and president of the entire University of Orleans network. Lakanal was an educator who had previously worked to reform France’s educational system during the French Revolution. He was, notably, a proponent of free elementary schools for boys and girls, and of public secondary schools.²⁰ He brought with him his experience and views on education, and he attempted to give a new momentum to the college in autumn 1822. Modeled after the French *Lycée*, the College nonetheless took local circumstances into account. Instruction was to be bilingual, “according to the needs of the students,” and focused on the management of Louisiana’s resources: its rivers, its agriculture, as well as trade activities and navigation.²¹ The small teaching body also reflected the demographic realities of New Orleans, with only one

¹⁹ Winters, John D. "William C. C. Claiborne: Profile of a Democrat." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 10, no. 3 (1969): 189-209.

²⁰ These schools were originally named *écoles centrales* but became the better known *lycées* during the Napoleonic Regime. In France Lakanal had been a member of the Committee of Public Instruction of the Convention, and he had presented an unsuccessful bill proposing a state-sponsored free education for boys and girls (*Project d’éducation nationale*). He was president of the education committee from 1794 and started the ‘*école normale*’ training for teachers. Source: Joseph Lakanal Papers, MSS. 244, 1312, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.

²¹ AMAE 277CCC/3 – f.50, 1822, Supplément à la Gazette de la Louisiane, n°4491.

American, two French citizens – including Lakanal – and two Irishmen, as a testimony of the changing tide of immigration.²² Yet the absence of a real university to pursue higher education qualifications placed Louisiana in a low position within the intellectual hierarchy of the States, especially in comparison with the North-East. In his inaugural address of 1822 Lakanal echoed public concerns about the State's second-rate education system:

“And what! The state of Kentucky [...] entirely deprived of circulating cash, will have a grand and richly-endowed University, while wealthy and beautiful Louisiana [...] would not be able to have a College, positioned in the educational hierarchy lower than the Universities. And why will Baltimore, decimated so often by the scourge of yellow fever, get a flourishing College, and New Orleans not have one that would be able to claim its literary laurels?”²³

This unfavourable comparison with other states – some older like Maryland, and some more recently created, like Kentucky – stressed the lag that education suffered from in Louisiana. While New Orleans was the only large city in an otherwise mostly rural South, it lacked the institutions that would give it pre-eminence, and Louisiana's brightest minds had to leave the state to go to university.²⁴ This educational migration caused concern, as many feared that the children sent away – to France or to the North – would fail to return to Louisiana.²⁵ Nor did a stunted education system help with New Orleans' growing negative reputation, as a place where ignorance and decadence reigned. Lakanal's public appeal followed the departure of several students, who complained of a lack of instructors: barely ten years after receiving funding from the legislature, the institution supposed to be the educational pinnacle of

²² They were Mr. Guillot, Mr. Chapelin, Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Karaher in addition to Mr. Lakanal.

²³ AMAE 277CCC/3 – f.50, 1822, Supplément à la Gazette de la Louisiane, n°4491

²⁴ Transatlantic educational journeys increased in frequency at the start of the American period, not necessarily as a sign of protest against Anglophone rule, but as a reaction to the complete absence of a local structure.

²⁵ AMAE 277CCC/3 – f.50, 1822, Supplément à la Gazette de la Louisiane, n°4491: “What was, perhaps, useful once upon a time, is no longer needed today, and only creates damages without any silver lining. We won't even mention the inconveniences stemming from the transplanted youth, who draws from the old world and imports into the new contrary political principles [...].”

Louisiana was already in decline.²⁶ A former priest and known atheist, Lakanal was a controversial public figure in New Orleans' Catholic society. Unsuccessful in reviving the College, he left three years before the institution shut down.²⁷ In 1825, the College's annual state appropriation was transferred to a new institution, the College of Louisiana, located in East Feliciana Parish near Baton Rouge. The College of Orleans finally closed its doors in March 1826, due to lack of capital to pay its staff and a general lack of interest in the institution, and was replaced by two primary schools, one in the American Quarter and one in the downtown Creole sector. Louisiana historian, Alcée Fortier, attributed the failure to "French influences, as opposed to English, [which] had prevailed in the College of Orleans," sparking jealousy among the English-speaking representatives of the country parishes in the legislature, who also resented the influence of New Orleans.²⁸

The failure of Governor Claiborne's public-school system indicates several of the key issues surrounding education in New Orleans. His plan had been conceived not just as an education scheme, but as a "key agent of Americanization of the polyglot population of Louisiana." It was meant to support the promotion of democratic values through a free public school system and encourage friendships across different population groups.²⁹ The need for Americanization was controversial in itself: from their standpoint, the Creoles saw the Anglo-Americans as newcomers who needed to adapt to the local culture, language, and traditions. That only could have deterred the Francophone population from sending their children to the

²⁶ By 1825, about \$150,000 were appropriated by the state toward the support of the University system, but attendance was deteriorating, and private institutions multiplied in parallel to the public-school system.

²⁷ AMAE, 227CCC/3, 24 September 1822. After the restoration of monarchy in France, Lakanal was considered a regicide because he had voted for the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, and he lived in exile in the South of the United States. He left his College of Orleans office because he was asked to take an oath that would cost him his French citizenship. His successor was his son-in-law Chavet, who had himself studied at the Polytechnique school.

²⁸ Fortier, Alcée. *Louisiana; comprising sketches of parishes, towns, events, institutions, and persons*. Wisconsin: Century Historical Association, 1914, 240-242.

²⁹ Devore, Donald E., et al. *Crescent city schools: Public education in New Orleans, 1841-1991*. University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 1991, 7.

state schools. Yet, in addition to language, religious differences also determined many Creoles to keep their children away from Protestant academies. Finally, class prejudice also prompted some families to send their children to private schools, for fear of being labelled as poor if they sent their children to cheaper but underfunded institutions. The same was true for Anglo-Americans, who worried that in creole institutions their children would be associated with undesirable social strata – especially coloured Creoles. In 1829, a report from Louisiana’s State Treasurer, considering the money appropriated for public education, acknowledged that “it [was] impossible that the indigent, for whose benefit the appropriations were made, [could] derive the solid advantages intended to be placed within their reach.”³⁰ Since the local government was falling behind in creating an efficient and comprehensive public school system, education was often a matter of private initiative. Historian Stuart Grayson Noble noted that Claiborne’s model anticipated how the federal government could use education as a tool to prepare a dependant territory for self-government.³¹ In Louisiana, however, early efforts at building a state-wide school system failed because of economic prejudice and ethno-linguistic divisions, stemming from a mutual fear of Americanization and Creolization of the younger generations.

Some sections of the population, such as the Creoles, decided to devise an education plan for their own community. After the failure of the College of Orleans, Creoles were apprehensive about sending their sons to Northern universities, from which they often returned as “strangers to their own families, by language as much as by the loss of their affections and habits.”³² As a remedy, they established a subscription for the establishment of a ‘*Collège National*’, fundraising 300 francs across New Orleans and neighbouring towns, and receiving

³⁰ AMAE, 227CCC/4, f.333 – Finances of Louisiana – Report of the State Treasurer for the year 1829.

³¹ Noble, “Governor Claiborne and the Public-School System,” 1928, 549.

³² AMAE, 227CCC/4, 3 September 1830, f.229.

an additional endowment from Louisiana’s legislature. The French Consul himself offered to support this endeavour. To him, the creation of the *Collège National* could be a strategic asset for France, paving the way to a monopoly on Louisiana’s foreign trade through the preservation of the French language, habits, and tastes.³³ The idea of an economically valuable empire of French language foregrounded this approach, particularly in the absence of other formal colonies. Because of the foreign policy implications of this plan, the consul personally offered to recruit instructors directly from France and became in charge of the drafting of the constitution of the *Collège* and its general regulations.

These private initiatives also complicated existing social divisions. Alongside Baltimore and Saint Louis, New Orleans was a large urban centre which fostered new forms of southern life, in sharp contrast with the agrarian model defended by propertied planters.³⁴ While Baltimore, a slaveholding border state, had the largest urban free black community across the United States, New Orleans was an equally uncommon place in the Lower South. Half of Louisiana’s free black population lived in the port-city, amounting to 12 percent of the urban population on the eve of the Civil War, a share eight times superior to that in all seven states of the Lower South.³⁵ New Orleans thus had to manage unique tensions: urbanism on an agrarian frontier, freedom and commerce in the midst of slave plantations, and cosmopolitan traits in a society trying to definite itself around one race, one language, and one national ethos. Like prominent white creoles, wealthy free coloured families sent their sons across the Atlantic to French institutions for education or training. Louisiana authorities looked anxiously at their mobility and threatened the *gens de couleur libres* with losing their citizenship if they travelled outside of the United States, with little result. Ultimately, because only the upper layers of the

³³ AMAE, 227CCC/4, 26 March 1831, f.263.

³⁴ “Up until the Civil War New Orleans attracted over a half million immigrants through its port, more than any other American city, except New York.” (Devore, 1991, 3)

³⁵ Towers, *The Urban South*, 2004, 22.

free coloured society could afford to send their children abroad, the law left scope for exceptions.³⁶

When mobility proved difficult – financially or legally – the overwhelmingly Francophone population of free coloured could rely on a network of private schools run by their peers. Walter Stern maps out at least eight schools in the downtown neighbourhoods of New Orleans that were open to free blacks in the 1840s and 1850s.³⁷ Their location followed the spatial divide between Anglo-Americans and Franco-Creoles: all the schools of the Second (American) Municipality were for whites only, while the First Municipality (covering the French Quarter and Tremé) counted two black schools, and the Third Municipality (comprising the old Faubourg Marigny) tallied six of them, as well as a lower number of white institutions. These schools educated both boys and girls, provided that their parents were wealthy enough to meet the cost of the private tutors.³⁸ One of the oldest schools was Michel Séigny’s *Académie Sainte Barbe* which was founded in the early 1830s and operated for many years; in *The Negro in Louisiana*, Marcus Christian points out that “[at the *Académie*] the tutor or his students might belong to either race.”³⁹ In 1836, the Ursulines gave lands to the Sisters of Mount Carmel to establish a *Pension* (boarding school) *des Demoiselles de Couleur*, kept in a separate and distinct section of the convent. Conflating education and religion, the instruction of coloured children was closely linked to the Catholic ethos of the Creole generations. All but one of the antebellum black schools of New Orleans were under Catholic influence, and all kept French at the centre of their curriculum. Yet all these initiatives were also private, and

³⁶ With the exception of travels to the West Indies, where the specter of the Haitian Revolution was still potent. Spear, *Race, Sex and Social Order*, 2009, 193.

³⁷ Stern, *Race and Education*, 2018, 34.

³⁸ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole*, Houma, 2005, 110.

³⁹ University of New Orleans Library, Marcus Christian Collection, “The Negro in Louisiana” Ch.20, 11-13.

state provisions to encourage the education of coloured children of the poorer classes were inexistent.⁴⁰

A comprehensive public school system was finally devised in 1841, under the auspices of Bostonian Horace Mann, yet it excluded all coloured and black children, even from the free population. The schools that Mann introduced to Louisiana were based on the Boston grammar schools (for lower-level schools) and on the Boston Latin School (for high schools), and offered a good educational standard. Yet, Mann turned a blind eye to the question of slavery and New Orleans' local tripartite society, and education was designed for a white society instead. This exclusionary public education regime stemmed from two main causes: in Louisiana, the education of slaves was forbidden by law, and the children of free coloured people represented a blind spot, since most northern schools were still segregated.⁴¹ Ordinance No. 159 launched the public schools programme in the Second Municipality of New Orleans. Attendance was unambiguously limited to “all children of proper age, of white resident parents.”⁴² While the wealthier and most prominent coloured Creole families made the decision to send their children away, often to Northern States such as Ohio, or abroad to France or to Haiti, limitations on mobility further increased educational disparities among the different Creole sections of New Orleans.⁴³ The creation of a wider public-school system deepened educational divides: while white children started attending public schools, private free black

⁴⁰ In 1838, millionaire John McDonogh had left a large bequest for the education of poor white and free black children. He died in 1850, but litigations paralysed the funds until the eve of the Civil War.

⁴¹ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts only banned segregated schools in 1855.

⁴² City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, (AB310, 1836-1852, 2nd Mun, microfilm roll n.90-133), Ordinance No. 159, Second Municipality Council, Ordinances and Resolutions, No. 1-545, Vol. 4, May 5, 1840 – March 28, 1843, 63-64. This built on Act 154, Sec. III, approved by the state legislature on March 16, 1830, which stated “[t]hat all persons who shall teach, or permit or cause to be taught, any slave in this State, to read or write, shall, on conviction... be imprisoned not less than one month nor more than twelve months. Act 154, Sec. III, *A New Digest of the Statute Laws of the State of Louisiana, From the Change of Government to the year 1841, Inclusive*, Compiled by Henry Bullard and Thomas Curry, (New Orleans: E. Johns & Co, Stationers' Hall, 1842): 271-272. Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

⁴³ Kennedy, Al, “The History of Public Education in New Orleans Still Matters” (2016). *History Faculty Publications*. Paper 5; and Devore (1991, 38-40)

schools continued their work, despite increased police inspections after the 1852 reunification of the Municipalities that aimed, in particular, at verifying no slaves were educated in them.⁴⁴

State-led education reflected an informal American imperial agenda that was white, Protestant, and Anglophone. The republican education envisioned by the state of Louisiana was to be taught in English, with the aim to promote the ethos of the American republic. To Donald Devore, “New Orleans was the young republic’s first experiment with trying to impose its institutions, not only of education but also of language and democratic government, upon an essentially foreign society” – whether this foreign society was of the earlier Francophone stock or more recently arrived from other European nations.⁴⁵

This public-school system, established five years into New Orleans’ municipal era, mirrored and crystallised some of the infighting that had led to the separation of the city into three municipalities (Chapter 4). It was in the English-speaking American section of New Orleans that public education first developed – the Second Municipality, where the creation of public schools raised real estate value.⁴⁶ A year after the scheme was implemented, about a thousand students between age six and sixteen were in attendance.⁴⁷ By the start of 1844, there were nine elementary schools. Two high schools, one for boys (1843) and one for girls (1845), opened to cater to further educational needs and to train future teachers. Even wealthy families considered these free high schools the educational pinnacle that their children had to attain, and many abandoned private institutions in their favour.

⁴⁴ University of New Orleans Library, Marcus Christian Collection, “The Negro in Louisiana” Ch.20, 18-19.

⁴⁵ Devore et al. *Crescent city schools*, 1991, 3.

⁴⁶ Although the very first public school opened in the Third (Marigny) Municipality by taking over the private Harby’s Academy in 1841. Stern, *Race and Education*, 2018, 31.

⁴⁷ By 1844, about 1,500 children were registered at these public schools: this represented the 2/3 of the white children in the Second Municipality aged between 6 and 16. There are no clear numbers about the number of free colored children. DeVore, “Launching the System,” 1998, 96.

Despite being barred from public education, free coloured families continued to be taxed year after year to support an exclusively white public school system. This situation was not accepted without public complaints in city newspapers:

“It seems we are making them suffer another grievance, in taxing them for the support of public schools, only giving them back a bagatelle, ‘qu’on leur jette an manière (sic) d’aumone’ (‘thrown to them like alms’).”⁴⁸

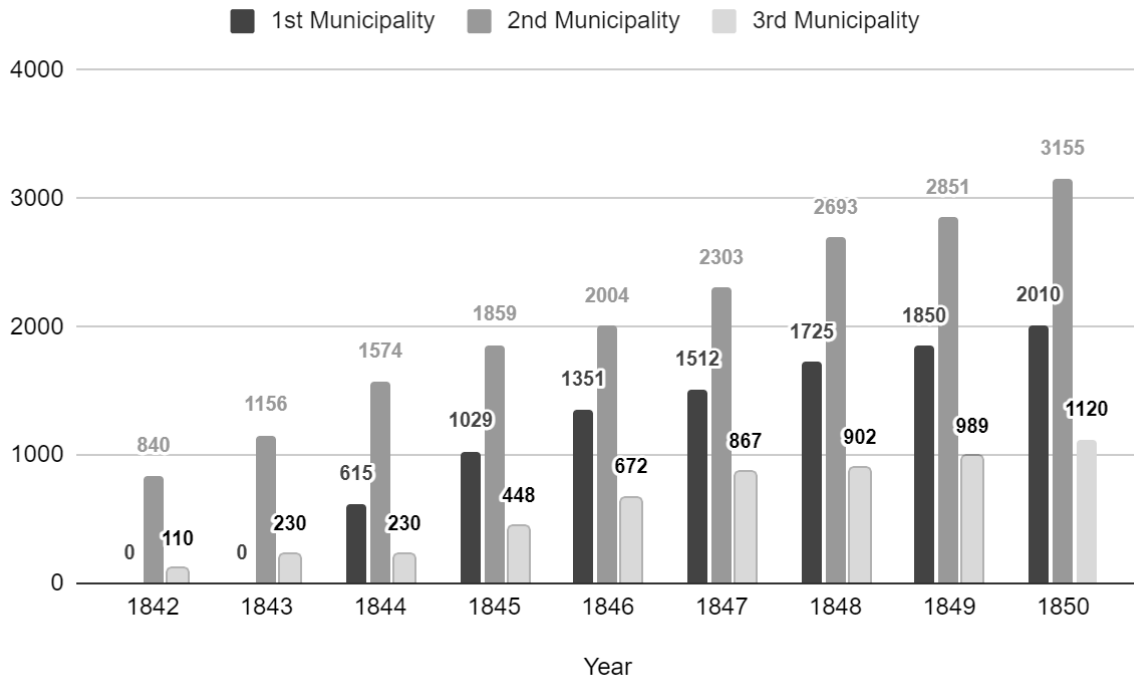
It was this caveat that the free coloured population used to open, in 1848, the *Institution Catholique*. The school was supported by the provisions of free coloured Marie Justine Sirmir Couvent’s 1832 will. A former slave herself, Marie Justine Sirmir Couvent wished to provide for the instruction of poor black orphans (‘Orphelins Indigents’). The *Institution Catholique* was the first free school open to black students in the United States, offering free tuition for orphans and subsidies for other students. Using the tax debate, the school’s directors secured the first governmental appropriation for the education of blacks in the South, whose sum was negotiated each year. Due to persistent campaigning by black instructors and activists, nearly 60 percent of the free black population of New Orleans was literate in 1850, and about one third of the city’s school-aged free black children were enrolled in schools. It was much more than in Baltimore, another city with a substantial free black population, where only 41 percent were literate, and one sixth of the free black children had access to schools.⁴⁹ The *Institution*, providing education in both French and English, worked together with the local black Catholic order of the Sisters of the Holy Family, and was also associated to wider political and geographic networks: it had connections to schools in Haiti, France, or Mexico, which contributed to sustain an Atlantic Afro-Creole community.

⁴⁸ NOPL, *The New Orleans Sunday Delta*, 1 March 1857, p. 5, col.4, article “The Free Colored class – Further proof that it is a dangerous element.”

⁴⁹ All figures from Stern, *Race and Education*, 2018, 34-37. The *Institution Catholique* itself, with 240 pupils in 1853, accounted for one-quarter of the free coloured students of New Orleans.

The New Orleans public school system did introduce some radical innovations: free schoolbooks, evening classes for adults of both sexes, and a free public library.⁵⁰ The successes of this seemingly Anglo-American cultural invasion, first limited to the Second Municipality, prompted some Creole leaders to devise a schooling system for the First.⁵¹ Because of the divided municipalities system, each of the three municipalities developed a public-school system in its own time, catering to a different number of pupils, with varying degrees of success (Graph 6.1 and 6.2).⁵²

Graph 6.1 Comparing the increase in number of students attending free Public Schools across the Three Municipalities of New Orleans, 1842-1850

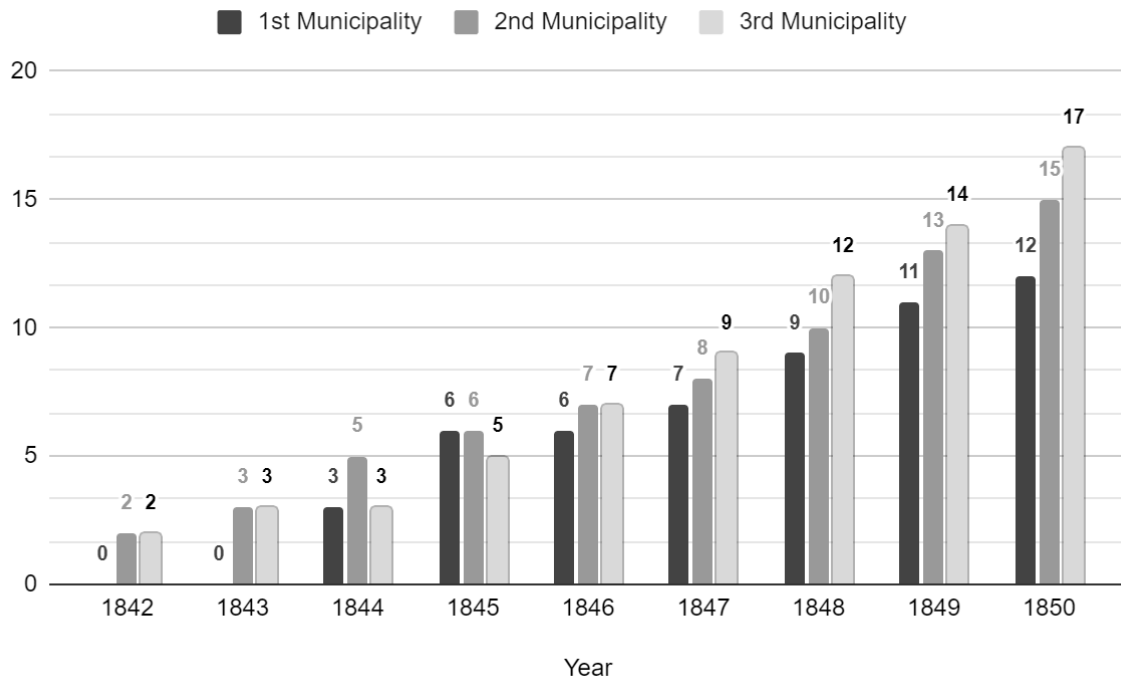


⁵⁰ The New Orleans Public Schools provisions were extended to other parishes by the legislation after 1845, and it became the model of education for most of the Lower South.

⁵¹ NOPL, 'New Orleans Public School District Historical Collection.'

⁵² For in depth information about the different public-school structures in antebellum New Orleans, see: Peterson, Alma Hobbs, "The Administration of Public Schools in New Orleans, 1841-1861." (1964). LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses. 994.

Graph 6.2 Comparing the number of free Public Schools across the Three Municipalities of New Orleans, 1842-1850.



In the First Municipality, language became a site of contention, as the English-speaking minority of the Creole Quarter did not want schools that taught exclusively in French. Linguistic pluralism therefore became an enduring feature of the First Municipality until 1852, and later of the Second School District.⁵³ Looking at Table 6.1, in 1852 half of the First Municipality students (aged 6 to 16) indicated French as their mother tongue (51.9%), while English came in second (39%). As the administrative boundaries between the municipalities were removed, these figures tended to evolve towards parity between the two mother tongues. By 1853, pupils recording French as their mother-tongue amounted to 40.8% while 40.4% recorded English. The growing share of native German speakers (from 5.8% to 16.2% within just one year) indicated the increase of other language minorities in New Orleans, breaking the

⁵³ “Both the English and French languages shall be taught to such pupils whose Parents or Guardians may desire it; but the English language shall be taught to all children indiscriminately.” New Orleans Board of Directors for the Public Schools of the First Municipality, “Minutes and Proceedings”, 1841-1847.

French-English dyad. It was also the sign of a greater fluidity in settlement and residency patterns across the different districts of New Orleans.

Table 6.1 Linguistic Survey of Students School District 2 (former 1st Municipality) 1852-1853

Mother Tongue	%	1852	%	1853
French	51.9	1288	40.8	1122
English	39	968	40.4	1109
German	5.8	141	16.2	446
Spanish	1.7	42	1.6	44
Italian	1.6	40	1	27
TOTAL*		2479		2748

Interestingly, only about one fifth of the native French speakers registered a birthplace in France (Table 6.2). This underpinned how the use of French had persisted through generations of Louisiana Creoles. Contrary to the monolingual system that had developed in the American district, the First Municipality school board experimented with bilingual education, training teachers who would be able to teach in both languages and producing textbooks in both French and English. This proved costly: there were not many bilingual teachers available, and the hiring of dual staff added to the cost of the schools’ operations.

Table 6.2 Nationality of Students - School District 2 (former 1st Municipality) 1852-1853

Birthplace	1852	1853
Louisiana	1408	1712
Other U.S.	307	236
France	232	255
Germany	184	246
Ireland	162	173
Spain	49	16
Italy	44	19
Great Britain	11	60
Mexico	7	6
West Indies	4	21
Others	9	4
TOTAL*	2417	2748

As the public-school system developed from the 1840s onwards, increased immigration from Ireland and Germany further complicated the linguistic and religious landscape of the city, and the rationale for education. The Irish constituted the best religious partners for Creoles, being likewise Catholic. They initially settled equally in the French (1st) and American (2nd) municipalities. However, as English speakers, the tensions around linguistic agendas did not make them suitable allies. New arrivals tended to strengthen the American constituency within New Orleans' political sphere. That section was also more dynamic economically, and the influx of new students was easily accommodated. After 1850, the Second Municipality abandoned Protestant religious rituals and created a more secular structure, suitable for the education of Catholic as well as Jewish students alongside their Protestant, Anglo-American peers.

Education in ante-bellum New Orleans thus followed a history of compromises and reconfiguration. To the extent that the Anglo-American schools eventually accommodated the cultural and religious diversity of newcomers, language remained a divisive issue. This increased the isolation of the French-speakers within their own section of the city, but also, out of the challenge they were facing, enabled their bilingual model to persist until the American Civil War despite plummeting numbers. In 1852, when New Orleans was re-consolidated into one city with four districts, debates about the unification of the different school systems under one administration crystallized, once more, around the issue of language. The Board of School Directors for the Second (Creole) District received several petitions making the case against such integration and advocating the use of French as the language of instruction:

“We have always carefully maintained in our Public Schools the French language, not as a relic of the past, but as an active and living element of our social and political life.”⁵⁴

On the eve of the Civil war, the Louisiana Creoles, who had been American citizens for two generations, continued to frame their prerogatives around their language rights.

“If that language, the perpetuation of which in our State was guaranteed by the most solemn stipulations, is destined to perish, let its death be the work of time, and not the result of premature legislation, let it disappear only when those interests to which it owes its preservation shall have ceased to exist.”⁵⁵

Petitioners demanded the creation of two separate school districts, along the old municipalities boundaries, that would be built on either side of Canal Street – with an Anglo-American system upstream and a Franco-Creole system downriver. During the American Civil War, the Union occupation of New Orleans ultimately forced the complete transition to English-language education: French schools were closed, and French instruction was banned, imposing a new linguistic order.

Education in ante-bellum New Orleans had developed along deepening linguistic divides, which interrogated the means and purposes of the Americanization of Louisiana. As Louisianan nativity became a proxy for ethnicity, ‘Frenchness’ and the defense of the French language were used to resist the language and power of Anglo-American transplants, as well as later immigrant groups. Language competition thus expressed political factionalism more than cultural values.

⁵⁴ NOPL, Minutes of the Board of School Directors, Second District, 1852-1856, February 8, 1856, 525-26. Also, Peterson, “The Administration of Public Schools”, 1964.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

6.2 Odessa: Education as a site of transformation.

How did this divided educational landscape compare with that of Odessa? The motley demographic composition of the Black Sea port presented similar challenges: the diversity of languages, origins, and religions in a circumscribed space. The idea of the state and of its responsibilities to its population was also layered by the hierarchy of administrative governorates and provinces, with varying degrees of autonomy. At the end of the eighteenth century, there was no public-school system, nor any comprehensive project to develop public education. To quote Soviet historian Kovbasiuk, “as everywhere in ... Russia, in Odessa (...) education, even basic, was available only to a small part of the population.”⁵⁶ Class remained a defining factor, and the instruction of younger generations was mostly a private initiative, only available to families belonging to the nobility and the administration.⁵⁷ Beyond the elites, only the children of *raznochintsy* – a term referring to merchants and educated non-nobles – could receive some form of basic education, and quite often that education did not go beyond primary-school level. Because of the institutional vacuum in a new and growing multinational city, instruction was a very profitable business and a reason in itself to immigrate to the distant shores of Odessa. “Under such conditions,” Kovbasiuk continued, “the vast majority of the population remained illiterate. Even wealthy Russian merchants could not read and write.”⁵⁸ A reputation for ignorance developed alongside Odessa’s fame for recreation, pleasure, and entertainment, and the curriculum of the few institutes that developed after 1800 was criticized for its inadequacy and lack of ambition. Decembrist Alessandro Poggio, a former pupil at one

⁵⁶ Kovbasiuk, *Odessa*, 1957, 28.

⁵⁷ AMAE, 230CCC/6, 29 November 1839.

⁵⁸ Kovbasiuk, *Odessa*, 1957, 28.

of Odessa's earliest schools, described it as "the most insignificant with respect to the sciences and to the education of the mind and morality obtained in it."⁵⁹

Odessa, as New Orleans, became the site of experiments in primary and secondary education, before being integrated into a state-led and centralized school system. It initially developed from the outside in, with imported models shaping what education would look like in this very new and modern city. Education began as a local experiment, stemming more from the port's interface role than from national policies. It comes as little surprise that the creation of education institutions was mostly the doing of foreign groups. Odessa's first school, established as an alternative to home-based tutoring, was the short-lived Vretto Academy (1800-1803), named after its Greek founder. Devised for the education of young boys from trading families, the school had two teachers and taught in Greek, Italian, and Russian, thus mirroring the city's early demographics. The institution taught between 40 and 70 students, but it did not survive its third year.

The Vretto academy, multilingual and focused on the children of the trading classes, laid the foundations for later schools. 1803 marked a turning point for Novorossiia and Odessa alike: with the start of the Duke of Richelieu's governorship, an era of stable political and administrative leadership created a favourable climate for educational initiatives. During Richelieu's administration, the number of French nationals living in Odessa increased quickly. In addition to large numbers of merchants coming from the South of France, the second largest group of French nationals was composed of well-educated tutors, men and women alike, who came to work for Odessa's most prominent families. Quite fittingly, the start of Richelieu's administration coincided with the 1803-1804 Russian educational reform, which encouraged the formation of gymnasiums, as well as more privileged educational institutions, such as

⁵⁹ He had attended the boarding school for young men of the nobility – opened in 1811. Quoted in Kovbas̆uk, *Odessa*, 1957, 28-29.

lyceums, and ‘Institutes for Noble Young Ladies.’ Between 1802 and 1820, the government of Alexander I would establish four new *lycées* and five universities across the empire. In this spirit Richelieu sent a request to Alexander I to formally establish an official educational institution in Odessa: in 1804, a ‘Commercial Gymnasium’ opened. The Gymnasium’s target audience was once again the sons of traders, attendance was extended to the sons of Jewish merchants, after an entrance examination. Tuition fees were subsidised by private donations. German-born Jewish educator Leon Elkan was appointed to teach his own language as well as history, geography, statistics, and commerce.⁶⁰ Alongside the Gymnasium, a Noble Education Institute opened in 1805 for the sons of the nobility, with high tuition fees. From their inauguration, the two schools shared the same building, and were governed by one general director – a French nobleman called Wolsey or Valsey, who taught French, geography, and history.⁶¹ Wolsey also founded in 1806 an Institute for girls of the nobility (or ‘Noble Maidens’), attended by the daughter of British-born Thomas Copley, the Military Commander and Mayor of Odessa. However, no such provision was initially made for the daughters of the commercial class. The noble *Institut Blagorodnykh Devits* was supported by Richelieu, but it operated as a private school and lacked a fixed income: it was only in 1821, following requests by Governor-General Langeron, that scholars were employed by the institute at the expense of the Russian crown.⁶²

After 1811, the two boys’ schools – the Gymnasium and the Noble Institute – were officially recognised by the Russian state, gaining the same rights and privileges as other

⁶⁰ Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa*, 1985, 46. In 1826, Leon Elkan would go on to become the first director of Odessa’s Jewish School.

⁶¹ Volkova, Yana, “The Role of Diasporic Communities in the Development of the Odessa region,” in Gutmeyr, Dominik, and Karl Kaser (eds) *Europe and the Black Sea Region: A History of Early Knowledge Exchange (1750-1850)*, Studies on Southeast Europe vol.22, 2019: 278.

⁶² Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 291.

government institutions elsewhere in Russia.⁶³ The schools prepared for entrance in the military and civil service, but the curriculum of the commercial gymnasium also integrated new subjects inspired by local concerns, such as bookkeeping and modern languages (especially Modern Greek and Italian). Eventually, the two schools were integrated into one larger institution. In May 1817, an *ukaz* created the most sophisticated educational institution of the city, the *Lycée Richelieu*, named after Odessa's early Governor.⁶⁴ Although Richelieu himself had left the country, he followed the creation of the *Lycée* with attention, and gifted his private library as well as the annual pension of over 3,000 thalers he received from the Russian government. The Lyceum was devised as a higher education institution whose status would be analogous to that of a university – a distinctive example, since in the early nineteenth century, very few such institutions existed across the Russian Empire. Its aim was to merge the branches of study of the Gymnasium with those offered at the Noble Institute. The Lyceum was, to some extent, equivalent to what the College of Orleans had been for a time in New Orleans and Louisiana. It was loosely modelled after the French *lycée* system and constituted the pinnacle of local education. It had authority over a network of primary schools, themselves a mixture of parish, community, and district schools.⁶⁵ The students who attended the *Lycée Richelieu* received the distinguished rank of cadet in the navy or the army.⁶⁶ The Lyceum welcomed students aged ten to sixteen and offered additional preparatory classes from age eight.⁶⁷ Situated in the centre of the city, the Lyceum officially opened on 19 January 1818,

⁶³ “The course of study at the institutes lasted eight years. Children were taught Russian, Greek, French, Italian, German, English, and Latin; the Law of God, Geography, History, Arithmetic, Mathematics, Physics, Architecture, Fortification, and Military Exercise.” In Volkova, “The Role of Diasporic Communities,” 2019, 273.

⁶⁴ The *Lycée* also laid the ground for the future University of Novorossiia, which opened in 1865 – modern-day Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University.

⁶⁵ In 1830, a special Odessa School district was established, which placed the director of the Richelieu Lyceum at the head of its steering committee. Education itself remained segregated by gender, providing different institutions and different teaching staff for boys and for girls.

⁶⁶ Holderness, *New Russia*, 1823, 78.

⁶⁷ A parish and district schools that were attached to the gymnasium were transformed into a primary school, attached to the lyceum.

with a grand ceremony attended by Governor-General of Novorossiia Langeron, whose speech was given in French rather than in Russian – Langeron having never learnt Russian extensively despite his political appointments. The ceremonial discourses reflected the motley composition of Odessa’s population, with “another [speech] in French, (...) two in Russian, one in Greek, Latin, and Italian, delivered by different professors.”⁶⁸

The first head of the *Lycée Richelieu* was himself of French stock. Abbot Charles Dominique Nicolle (1758–1835), a Jesuit, had resided in Odessa since 1811 and acted as Richelieu’s delegate to oversee the educational business of the city. In 1812, the abbot became the director of the Noble Institute for boys and started searching for the best way forward for Odessa’s public education. Above all else, he wished to reconcile the benefits of private instruction with the esteem that stemmed from public education. Thanks to Richelieu’s support, Nicolle’s 1814 educational treatise, the *Plan d’éducation pour les deux instituts nobles d’Odessa*, eventually became the basis for the opening of the *Lycée Richelieu* in 1817.⁶⁹ Nicolle had a long history of founding educational institutions and designing curricula, first in France at the Collège Sainte-Barbe, and from the 1790s onwards in Russia, where he opened several private schools in Saint Petersburg. His action in Odessa was, as Lakanal’s in New Orleans, inscribed in a long history of experiments with education, which he would pursue for one more decade after his return to France in 1820 – and with the patronage of the same Duke of Richelieu, then Prime Minister of King Louis XVIII.⁷⁰ Yet, where Lakanal had suffered from some disaffection because of his open atheism, Nicolle’s religiosity and Catholicism fitted uneasily among the more Orthodox population and administration of Russia. The Lyceum nonetheless provided a Catholic place of worship and a Greek church, and admitted “children

⁶⁸ AMAE, 230CCC/2, 23 January 1818.

⁶⁹ Volkova (2019, 278-279): This is considered to have been the first printed book (or brochure) published in Odessa. Frappaz, [Z.]. *Vie De L’abbé Nicolle: Vicaire Général Et Chanoine Honoraire De Paris*, Etc. Paris: J. Lecoffre et Ce., 1857: 280-282.

⁷⁰ Nicolle, Charles Dominique, Abbé, *Plan d’éducation ou projet d’un collège nouveau*, Paris : C. Gosselin, 1834.

of all religions”, including Jewish pupils before the creation of denominational schools, an acknowledgement of the diversity of Odessa’s religious landscape.⁷¹

However, the presence of a foreigner and a Catholic at the head of Odessa's main educational institution vexed some spirits. The *Lycée*'s early curriculum was also criticized: although Russian language was taught from the start, it was only one among other languages, with French taking the lead in the teaching of most subjects.

“The Jesuit teacher ... organized this educational institution in a spirit completely foreign to Russian culture. In the early years, almost all the subjects were taught exclusively in the French language.”⁷²

The 1817 statutes of the *Lycée* promoted French as a language on par with Russian and Classics and proposed to use it to teach history and geography, in addition to French literature.⁷³ Such perceived foreign infiltration was also noticeable across the teaching staff. Most wealthy families kept relying on a constant influx of foreign tutors, and Nicolle could count on an accessible pool of highly literate foreigners to recruit for the Lyceum. Among this group, French nationals represented a stable minority, and Nicolle used his personal connections and national kinship for recruitments. Consequently, the early years of the Lyceum were shaped by the language and customs of this existing and qualified workforce. With a French director, and a French Assistant Director (Prof. Remi Gilles, who became Nicolle’s successor), as well as a mix of elite foreign lecturers, the Lyceum was a remarkable institution – different from anything previously observed in Russia, but also distinctly removed from a national Russian model of instruction.

⁷¹ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 291. Jewish schools for boys and girls opened in 1826, but promising male Jewish students continued to attend the Richelieu Lyceum if they pursued their studies, as its education level was considered equivalent to that of universities before 1865 and the opening of a University of Novorossiia on the site of the Lyceum.

⁷² Kovbasjuk, *Odessa*, 1957, 28-29.

⁷³ “Etablissement du Lycée Richelieu à Odessa, fondé par un Ukase de S.M. L’Empereur de Toutes les Russies” Paris, 1817, 25.

To quote Soviet historian Kovbasiuk, “it is only after ... Nicolle left for France [that] the lyceum started acquiring a slightly different character.”⁷⁴ Nicolle’s stay in Odessa came to an end in 1820, with the expulsion of all Jesuits from the territories of the Russian Empire. This expulsion was also a pendant of the pan-Slavic movement developing across Russia in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, particularly the French invasion of 1812. Russian elites started pressing for the cultivation of their own language and literature over that of strangers, and the replacement of foreign (and especially French) tutors in both private and public instruction.⁷⁵ This change was marked by the arrival of Ruthenian (or Rusyn) educators from Subcarpathia, Orthodox Slavs who had attended the universities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But unlike the College of Orleans, the Richelieu Lyceum survived the departure of its founders and figureheads, and its teaching and membership evolved according to the trends of Odessa’s demographic composition.

In the late 1820s a new director, Dr. Ivan Orlai, a Ruthenian himself, commented that upon receiving his appointment, he had found “the whole establishment in confusion... while the funds were embezzled and squandered.”⁷⁶ He immediately discharged half of the professors, effectively starting a reform of the institution, and renewing its teaching body. The completion of the lyceum building itself took many years, for lack of money.⁷⁷ Because it was funded on equal parts by government appropriation and taxes on the merchants class, the growth of the port eventually sustained the growth of the school.⁷⁸ From 1834, Russian expansionism also started to benefit the Richelieu Lyceum, which became the recipient of taxes imposed on Crimean Tatars, as well as 10 percent of the revenue of the province of

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Pinkerton, *Russia*, 1833, 323.

⁷⁶ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 290.

⁷⁷ AMAE, 230CCC/2, 15 September 1819.

⁷⁸ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 288.

Bessarabia.⁷⁹ Until 1850, French remained nonetheless among the important taught subjects, and the attached middle school – preparing students for entrance to the *Lycée* – was provided with a ‘maître extraordinaire’ for the teaching of French, in addition to the ordinary French language teacher.⁸⁰ Eventually, in 1864-65, a decree from Alexander II founded the Imperial Novorossiysk University on the premises of the old *Lycée Richelieu* – the French-sounding name was the last vestige of the foundational decades to go.

Was the *Lycée*, then, a successful instance of public education? There were still more children than opportunities for education in Odessa, and the Lyceum, with its limited capacities, mainly taught the sons of the nobility and the children of the most prominent traders. Although two dozen bursaries were made available, most families could not cover its costs. In its first twenty-five years of existence, 1,501 students graduated, a modest number in light of the growing population of Odessa.⁸¹ Further, this ‘public’ education was not mandatory, and it was for boys only – middle and upper-class girls were habitually enrolled in a growing number of private institutes and boarding schools, or taught by private tutors. Yet, the Lyceum, devised as it was as an institution for secondary education (and from 1837, higher education), became the scholarly culmination for talented children who pursued a more academic training and attracted students from across Novorossiya and beyond. During his time as governor, Richelieu had attributed the delays in opening an institution of this kind to the disinterest of the merchants, who only wanted their children to become clerks: the parents took them out of school as soon as they were literate.⁸² In 1842, the introduction of a faculty of economics at the

⁷⁹ ONSL 971, 1834, n.73, 11/23 September.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 1850 n.76, 22 September/4 October.

⁸¹ ONSL 971, 1843 n.59, 23 July/4 August.

⁸² Ignatieff, *French émigrés*, 1963, 116.

Lycée answered local needs and boosted attendance, providing an option better suited to the trade careers that most families wanted for their children.⁸³

In addition to the cost that primary and secondary education represented, community and occupational imperatives often took precedence. Odessa's Jewish population was fast-growing and thriving, and its members fulfilled key positions in trade and banking. Just as the group was becoming more secularised, it also gained more freedom to create Jewish cultural institutions. Among them, schools became a salient feature. Although the Commercial Gymnasium associated to the *Lycée* had provisions for Jewish students to enroll, the great majority of them remained privately tutored. In 1826, an elementary school was founded specifically for Jewish children – at the initiative of Leon Elkan, who had previously taught at said Gymnasium. Prominent Jewish traders sponsored the institution and shaped its development: the school was more secular than religious, reflecting the importance of commercial and banking activities, in contrast with more traditional and spiritual institutions in other major Jewish cities of the Pale of settlement.⁸⁴

Education in Odessa was not structured around religion, as was usually the case elsewhere in Europe. In the city's commercial context, with trade reaching new peaks year after year from the late 1830s, education became a matter of economic success and social mobility. This was visible in the program offered by the Jewish schools: their main subjects related to commerce and bookkeeping, and students learnt French rather than Hebrew. Students were thus able to take the entrance examination for Odessa's secondary education establishments, such as the prestigious Lyceum. The Jewish school was soon divided into two schools, one for boys and one for girls. The *Journal d'Odessa* reports that by 1842, almost 500 students were

⁸³ ONSL 971, 1842 n.56, 14/26 July.

⁸⁴ Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa*, 1985, 39: "Jewish youth here were less likely to imbibe a well-integrated body of traditional teachings and were, at the same time, exposed to the newest cultural institutions and trends."

enrolled in the school across both its boys and girls branches.⁸⁵ Considering an average Jewish population of 9,000 individuals in the early 1840s, it meant that almost 70 percent of its 750-800 children went to school, a promising attendance rate.⁸⁶ Odessa's Jewish schools consequently became a model to follow: in November 1842, Rabbi E. M. Lilienthal visited the city from his post in Riga, on a mission for the Russian Minister of Public Education. Dr. Lilienthal was to use the example of the Odessa schools to "organise Israelite schools" in other places of Jewish settlement across Russia.⁸⁷ Odessa's Jewish schools eventually closed down in 1852 after a quarter century of existence and merged with the government school system (in place until 1873). By that point, it had trained no less than 3,000 children from all classes.⁸⁸ On average, about a quarter of all the Jews in attendance in gymnasiums across the entire Russian Empire studied in Odessa.⁸⁹

The existence of Jewish schools was celebrated as a marker of the city's initial liberal attitude towards minority groups. The city's main newspapers reported on examinations, identified promising students, and commented approvingly on the teaching methods employed.⁹⁰ Odessa's Jewish community also continued to make use of the city's other institutions. In 1804 and 1833, two imperial decrees on public education entrenched both the right of Jewish children to attend existing non-Jewish schools and that of Jewish communities

⁸⁵ ONSL 971, 1842, n.27, 3-15 April.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 1841, n.55, 11/23 July. The children estimate is based on an average ratio of children to 100 women was of 16.87 (according to the 1897 first All-Russian census).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 1842, n.89, 6/18 November.

⁸⁸ As a point of comparison, the sixty or so state-sponsored modern Jewish schools elsewhere in the Pale had a total attendance of no more than 4,800 students. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa*, 1985, 49-50.

⁸⁹ Zipperstein provides contradicting figures, but they all emphasize the weight and significance of Odessa for Jewish education. In an article (Zipperstein, 1982, 29), he writes that "by 1863, out of a total of 547 Jews in attendance in the Empire's Gymnasiums, over 120 were students in Odessa, and at least 766 Jewish children attended non-Jewish elementary schools. In his book (Zipperstein, 1985, 108), the total is 990, with 252 students in Odessa. About 25 percent of all Jewish students were in Odessa.

⁹⁰ ONSL 898: 1831 (n.72); ONSL 971: 1836 (n.70) and 1842 (n.27).

to create their own.⁹¹ By 1863, at least 766 Jewish children were enrolled as students in non-Jewish elementary schools.⁹²

Religious concerns thus did not necessarily divide the education of Odessa's children. However, questions of language and cultural preservation remained important factors among some diasporic groups. The Greek community in particular was concerned about cultural preservation and the education of its children in the Greek language and history, an endeavour even more crucial at a time when Greece was seeking its independence from the Ottoman Empire. Their first experiment in school creation was led by a Greek immigrant, Vretto. While the school was short-lived, the idea of creating cultural institutions for the Greek community remained. Two small private Greek schools opened in 1811 and, following the creation of a Greek theatre in 1814, a Greek commercial gymnasium was established in 1817, the same year the Richelieu Lyceum opened its doors. Just as the Lyceum drew large numbers of its teaching staff from France, the Greek Gymnasium employed mostly Greek teachers.⁹³ And just as the opening of the Richelieu Lyceum had been a city-wide event, the opening of the Greek Gymnasium was surrounded by festivities, with Governor-General Langeron attending the ceremony, the Greeks representing one of the largest foreign groups of Odessa. Within a year, over 250 students attended the school, a mixture of children of Greek and Russian descent. For ordinary traders and artisans, it remained a more affordable and accessible option than its Francophile counterpart. The Greek Gymnasium had a good reputation, and soon it became the second-best school in Odessa.⁹⁴ The school was also important as a cultural centre for the Greek diasporic community: Greek books published in Moscow, Venice and Vienna were traded and

⁹¹ ONSL 971, 1844, n.100, 12/24 December.

⁹² Zipperstein (1985, 108)

⁹³ Prousis, Theophilus C. "Dēmētrios S. Inglezēs: Greek Merchant and City Leader of Odessa." *Slavic Review* 50.3 (1991): 672-679. The curriculum was composed of classes in commerce and navigation; geography and world history; ancient and modern Greek, Russian, Italian, and German; religion; and natural sciences.

⁹⁴ Herlihy, Patricia. "Greek merchants in Odessa in the nineteenth century." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3 (1979): 399-420.

exchanged in Odessa, and turned the city into a crucial node in the making of a modern Greek world. Schools therefore became signifiers of urban appropriation by different resident groups, but they were also spaces where parallel cultures could intersect.

Despite the Lyceum's French and Jesuit roots, from the late 1820s it was taken over by a Russian-speaking administration and teaching body, which re-affirmed its links with the city's Orthodox Churches and promoted pan-Slavic values. In 1828, some students issued a magazine titled 'Aeropagus', which reaffirmed the value and richness of the Russian culture.⁹⁵ Catholic students were never barred from attending, but most Catholic families – composed of French, Polish, Italian, Spanish and Austrian emigrants – turned away from that institution. In 1846, the French consul observed with worry that Catholic schooling was in decline, while other minority religious communities (i.e. non-Orthodox) had made strides in education a lot earlier and faster than the Catholics:

“We have been forestalled in this respect by the Protestants and the Jews, but I have the hope that we will not delay in becoming their equals.”⁹⁶

Challaye, the consul, associated this decline with the French Government's withdrawal of its initial funding of Odessa's Catholic Church. From the Napoleonic Empire through the early Bourbon Restoration, that Church had received a yearly stipend of 600 francs, a donation later extended by the consulates of Austria and Spain. However, the 1830 revolution created a strain on the finances of the French state, and the funding of a Catholic church in distant Odessa became a superfluous expense. According to Challaye, this decision deprived the church of the means of organizing primary schools for Catholic boys and girls. Lack of funding affected not only lower-class French children, but also German, Italian, and Polish families who could not afford to send their children to the main institutions of the city such as the schools preparing

⁹⁵ Kovbasjuk, *Odessa*, 1957, 28.

⁹⁶ AMAE, 230CCC/6, 19 March 1846.

for the gymnasiums and the *Lycée*. Consul Challaye pleaded that, should the stipend be renewed, this money would “exclusively be applied to the needs of the Catholic Schools depending on the Church, and not to the Church itself.”⁹⁷

Odessa’s educational landscape therefore remained uneven, with few secondary schools and underfunded primary schools. Despite that imbalance, Odessa’s educational sector in numbers and variety was remarkable in the Russian Empire, and especially in such a new region and city. It justified the creation, in 1830, of a special Odessa School district, with the director of the Richelieu Lyceum at the head of its steering committee.⁹⁸ With the backdrop of the conquest of the Caucasus, a new school for Oriental Languages was founded in 1828, because Odessa possessed “means of establishing Oriental schools which [did] not exist elsewhere in the empire; it [was] easy there to find good masters and pupils.”⁹⁹ Odessa’s diversity thus prompted the creation of more educational institutions than on average, shaped by Russia’s imperial designs.

Table 6.3 Statistic of Odessa's educational institutions in 1833, by A. Skal'kovsky (Source: *Journal d'Odessa*, n.86, 1833)

Educational institutions for boys				Educational institutions for girls			
Type	Name	Number students	Number institutions	Type	Name	Number of students	Number of institutions
Lyceum	<i>Lyceum Richelieu</i>	470	1	Institute	<i>Institute for Noble young ladies</i>	79	1
School/ Gymnasium	<i>Greek School</i>	236	4	School	<i>City school</i>	132	1
	<i>'Oriental' School of Eastern Languages</i>	6		Boarding / private school	<i>Boarding school of Mrs. Schédeuvre</i>	62	4
	<i>Evangelic School</i>	107			<i>Boarding School of Mrs. Boucher</i>	43	
	<i>Jewish School</i>	267			<i>Boarding school of Mrs. Piller</i>	55	
Hospice	<i>Hospice of the Orphans</i>	85	1	<i>Boarding school of Mrs. Satow</i>	26		

⁹⁷ AMAE, 230CCC/6, 19 March 1846.

⁹⁸ ONSL 898, 1831, n.78, 29 September / 11 October.

⁹⁹ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 293

Educational institutions for boys				Educational institutions for girls			
Type	Name	Number students	Number institutions	Type	Name	Number of students	Number of institutions
Boarding / private school	<i>De Repey boarding school</i>	43	6	TOTAL		397	6
	<i>Vladimirow boarding school</i>	25					
	<i>Appel boarding school</i>	51					
	<i>Zolotow boarding school</i>	44					
	<i>Tritten boarding school</i>	20					
	<i>Ruggieri boarding school</i>	20					
TOTAL		1374	12				

The challenges faced by Odessa's education system were only magnified when it came to the instruction of the female population (Table 6.3). Institutions that catered to boys vastly outnumbered girls' schools, with a 2:1 ratio (12 for boys, and only 6 for girls). This divide deepened when comparing the number of children enrolled: in 1833, 1,374 boys received a formal – or recorded – education, against only 397 girls. Only 22.4 percent of the 1,771 children officially enrolled in schools and institutes (at a time when the population of Odessa was already close to 50,000) were girls.¹⁰⁰

A city school for girls opened around 1816-1817, welcoming the daughters of the middle class. From modest beginnings, it welcomed 120 to 140 students per year by 1835. In this girls' school, primary-level instruction was free, funded by the city, but the financial support was not nearly enough to create enough places to match the high admission numbers of the Richelieu Lyceum.¹⁰¹ Female literacy remained circumscribed to the daughters of the higher classes, or reflected the number of professional foreign women who were employed in

¹⁰⁰ In 1827, Odessa's ratio of male students to the population was 1:22; it was 1:77 for female students. ONSL 971, 1842, n.53, 3/15 July.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Odessa (Table 6.4). Among foreign women, high literacy levels were often related to transience: few settled and had families in Odessa.¹⁰²

Table 6.4 Literacy and Gender Balance among Odessa's ethnic communities (1897)

Mother Tongue	Males	Share M	Females	Share F	Total	Literate women*	%
Yiddish	61156	49.45%	62530	50.55%	123686	22002	34.94
Greek	3166	63.12%	1847	36.84%	5013	1105	58.77
German	5253	52.88%	4680	47.12%	9933	3763	77.81
French	423	37.63%	701	62.37%	1124	662	93.76
Russian, Ukrainian or Belorussian	118195	n/a	97679	n/a	215874	n/a	27.56

*There is a slight discrepancy in the total amount of women between the All-Russian census of 1897 and the figures on female literacy taken from *Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis naseleniya Rossiskoi Imperii*, 1897g. vol 47, Odessa (Moscow 1903). However, the difference is minimal enough for the proportions to remain relevant.

Unlike New Orleans, where the existence and dynamism of the Ursuline nuns had created a safe space for the development of female literacy (at least among the Catholic community), in Odessa the larger a community was, the less likely its women were to have received a primary education. The Greek community was among the first settled in the city in the 1790s and one of the largest in numbers. However, the first school for Greek girls, *Rodokanakeion*, only opened in 1872: as a rule, in groups where women became housewives from an early age and had children, literacy rates tended to be modest. In the 1897 census, the children to 100-women ratio across the Russian (13.35) and Jewish (16.97) groups indicated that they had a more settled population and were thus starting families in Odessa.¹⁰³ The average number of children was correlated by lower female literacy among East Slavic

¹⁰² For more on marriage patterns in Odessa, Evrediki Sifneos provides useful insights into the marriage practices of Odessa's Greek community. "Marriage seems to be related to the ability of the husband to support his wife and children financially, which suggests that marriage may also be related to some kind of respectability that derived from the possibility of affording a woman exemption from participation in the workforce." Sifneos, "Rentiers, teachers and workers" 2010, 194.

¹⁰³ Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected*, 2019, 131.

language speakers (27%) and Yiddish-speakers (35%). The more children a woman had, the less likely she was to receive an education, with many pregnancies starting at an early age.

At the other end of the spectrum, the women with the highest literacy level were less likely to have children: in this sample, a large portion of the German women worked as governesses in Odessa – the trend being different in countryside German colonies. Among this group, the children to 100-women ratio was 7.6, and literacy levels rose to 78 percent. The 1897 census did not indicate how many children Frenchwomen had on average, the group being too modest at the end of the century, but they had nonetheless an almost optimal literacy level (94%). Like German women, many came to Odessa for work, and more rarely settled. The share of Frenchwomen (62.37%) was much higher than that of Frenchmen (37.63%), revealing a transformation of this national group. If male traders had found opportunities in Odessa in the early 1800s, a hundred years on it was female tutors who did. Throughout that century, Frenchmen and women had worked at all levels of Odessa society, from governor to labourers. In 1832 local laundresses (*blanchisseuses*) placed an item in a local gazette. The note, signed ‘Louise Lempoi, Terese Passefer, Blanche Duplis,’ gives an idea of the literacy level of lower-class Francophone women. They directed their note expressly to the single men of the city, and criticized the new masculine fashion of wearing black ties instead of white to balls, which undermined the economic interests of the laundresses.

“A present on ataque les cravate ; si les chauses continues à aller de ce trin, il n’i aura bientôt plus un fil de blan dans la toilette d’un omme et la profezion des soussignées ne donnera plus de l’eau à boire.” [original spelling]¹⁰⁴

The spelling errors reveal the extent and limitations of the education of labouring French women, whether they had attended the city schools or were newcomers to Odessa.

¹⁰⁴ ONSL 971, 1832, n.5, 15/27 Janvier. “And now, ties are under attack; if things go on in this fashion, soon there will be no more white in the attire of men and the profession of the laundresses will not be enough to quench their thirst.”

In between literate minorities and uneducated majorities, Jewish women stood apart, as they reconciled numbers of children and education levels. The early opening of Jewish schools for girls ensured that a larger section of Jewish women was able to read and write, if only at a primary school level. Although foreign French or German governesses and tutors tipped the balance in their own group, Jewish women were more numerous in the city.¹⁰⁵ With a literacy rate of 35 percent, the 1897 census suggested that over 20,000 of them qualified as literate by the end of the century. In nineteenth-century Odessa, education remained uneven across national groups, religious communities, and gender divides: before the reforms of 1863-4, which expanded primary education and created secondary schools for women, education was above all a matter of wealth, private initiative, and communal interest.¹⁰⁶

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In Odessa as in New Orleans, the role of French speakers and of the French language helped shape some of the early educational institutions of the city, of which religious groups were the principal driving forces. Although these early institutions did not provide durable solutions and were often transformed by the wishes and requirements of their local communities, they enhanced the visibility of the French language and of the social attributes ascribed to its usage. In Odessa, the *Lycée Richelieu* bore a Jesuit legacy, and was a reliable purveyor of secondary education, influenced by traditions imported from France, even as the curriculum and teaching body became slowly more Slavic. That Odessa's teaching personnel was made up of foreign governesses and tutors reflected its unfulfilled educational needs, but also shaped the city's academic ideals, which looked towards Europe rather than Russia. In New Orleans, the College of Orleans, despite its failure, still foregrounded the public education

¹⁰⁵ In 1897, Odessa counted over 60,000 Jewish women, while the combined number of Greek, French, and German women in reached about 7,000.

¹⁰⁶ The reforms, aimed to provide primary education to all children, were seldom or unevenly implemented across the Russian Empire.

model of revolutionary and Napoleonic France. The endurance of bilingual education within public and private Creole schools, both white and coloured, signified the social currency and political potential of an education in French. Eventually, raising literacy levels also created a sense of intellectual, cultural, and ideological community. In the American context, the slow demise of this community of language reflected new alliances across white sections of New Orleans' populations, particularly in the decade leading to the Civil War. In Odessa, the growing distrust towards Western European ideas and influence, culminating in the Crimean War, shifted the balance towards a Russian, Slavic, and Orthodox model.

Chapter 7 Imagined communities and the printed word: the creation of linguistic kinship in contested spaces.

When Odessa-born Jewish author Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880-1940) recollected his childhood in that city, he noted that “if it were possible to listen in, you could hear the finest song of mankind: one hundred different languages.”¹ On the other side of the globe, architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe used a similar lexicon when, upon arriving in New Orleans, he wrote of “a most incessant, loud, rapid and various gabble of tongues of all tones that were ever heard at Babel.”² Cosmopolitanism, real or idealised, have become handy truisms to describe these port cities. Some of the cultural, ethnic, or religious groups that contributed to their deserved cosmopolitan reputation established firm roots across the urban landscape. They did so by creating structures and strengthening institutions that brought cohesiveness to the dominant pluralities of New Orleans and Odessa. These religious and educational structures, analysed in Chapter 5 and 6, directly defined a local cultural sphere that differed significantly from that of other cities in their respective countries. Yet cohesiveness also relied on shared modes of communication, both within the city and outside of it. In an age mostly pre-dating the telecommunication boom, who was in control of the printed word had a lot of weight in the matter.

¹ Jabotinsky, Vladimir, and Michael R. Katz. *The Five: A Novel of Jewish Life in Turn-of-the-century Odessa*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005, 198. Jabotinsky was born in Odessa in a middle-class Jewish family, and wrote profusely in Russian, Yiddish, and Hebrew. A proponent of a form of right-wing militant Zionism, he founded the Jewish Legion in the British Army after the outbreak of the First World War, and later spoke out against the partition of Israel, advocating for mass immigration of Eastern European Jews.

² Latrobe, J.H.B. 1986:160-61. Latrobe was one of the first professional architects of the United States. He designed the Federal Capitol in Washington D.C., rebuilding it after its destruction during the War of 1812, as well as the Old Baltimore Cathedral, the first cathedral constructed in the United States for any Christian denomination.

The rise of a bilingual – and often multilingual – press soon became one of the most visible features of that power struggle in New Orleans and in Odessa. In both cities francophone newspapers' early influence was discernible in numbers and reach: news from the world first reached Odessa and New Orleans in the French language, and only later in Russian, in English, or in any other idiom. The economic activities and rising demographics of New Orleans and Odessa gave an impetus for a sudden and intense production of newspapers, notices, and advertisements, which were meant to be read and shared, within and outside the cities. The vitality of these foreign-language print outlets contrasts with their ever-postponed demise, the long survival of francophone news organs far exceeding the demographic transformations of each city. In fast-growing urban contexts, the central role played by contested linguistics – French and English, and French and Russian – and their infiltration of public spaces made the definition of urban citizenry even more fluctuating as the cities gained prominence. This chapter will engage with the development of newspapers, printing, and bookshops, to question how the existence of a divided readership revealed the enduring role of imported languages in these two rising metropolises.

7.1 Communicating the world: bilingualism and readership.

In both Odessa and New Orleans, the rise and slow demise of a Francophone cultural sphere echoed the debates over the development of public (and private) education and the links between language and the religious plurality of the two cities. What schools had done in ensuring New Orleans' importance in the U.S. South and Odessa's pre-eminence in New Russia, the press would pursue in making the two cities not just receptacles but producers of information and knowledge. The development of the written press was contingent on the rise of an appropriate and interested readership, and it followed closely debates surrounding

education and literacy. With the acceleration of settler expansion, it also became a feature of successful boomtowns and cities. The diffusion of newspapers, and the hypothesis of a growing readership, was devised as an answer to the perceived volatility, if not criminality, of the often-illiterate working classes, composing the bulk of newly arrived immigrants and settlers. Born out of practicality, local newspapers quickly became central interfaces for the residents of New Orleans and Odessa, and in that role, they remained divided between newspapers in the national tongue and French-language outlets.

Although the development of each press took place in different political contexts, the Odessa and New Orleans shared some patterns and outcomes. As recently arrived foreign *émigrés* – some of them in exile – developed their local newspapers, both cities witnessed the development of a bilingual information sphere centred on the city itself. It took a few decades for Odessa to produce its own news – until 1820, the only broadsheets found in the city had been brought by foreign ships or were issues of the Journal of Saint-Petersburg and other official dispatches, often received with a few months' delay.³ The first original paper to be published in Odessa was distributed in 1820, with the French title of *Messager de la Russie Méridionale* – the 'Messenger of Southern Russia.' The French occupation of Trieste in 1805 reinforced the commercial links between the South of France and Odessa, through trading houses and new commercial outlets along the way (even as many Odessa French, including Richelieu, had left the country as *émigrés*, and felt ambivalent toward Napoleon). The need to share accurate information about the state of trade and political affairs thus gave the impetus for the creation of a French-language news outlet – benefitting both the French traders and the

³ A French-language *Journal de Saint-Petersbourg* also reached Odessa: it was the longest-running French-language newspaper of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published in Saint Petersburg, Russia, with varying periodicity and some interruptions, from 1825 to 1914. For at least some of this period it was an official or semi-official organ of the Russian Foreign Ministry. Its other publications were addressed to the public, with a focus on literary and artistic pieces.

French-speaking governors of the city.⁴ For a short time a Russian version was also printed, titled *Vestnik Iuzhnoi Rossii*, but it had only seven subscribers among the Russian merchants and quickly disappeared.⁵ The French version of the *Messenger* was published by a Frenchman named Duvallon and under the auspices of the Count of Langeron's governorship, at a time when plurilingualism in the administration and in trade was the norm. It comprised articles both in French and in Russian, without any precise rule regarding their complementarity or similarity. However, the publication of articles on national and international political topics was under strict constraints: they had to be replicas of the official northern newspapers. Nevertheless, because of the leeway offered by this bilingual format, with diverging translations and separate readerships, the editors of the *Messenger* soon started writing independent articles. Some commented on the political events of the early 1820s, as well as local matters more relevant to Odessa and its surroundings. The Greek War of Independence, starting in 1821, inspired the writers, as Odessa was an important centre of Greek anti-Ottoman revolutionary activity.⁶ These opinion pieces led to the closing of the *Messenger* in 1823 for violating the official prohibition.⁷ Yet, in the thriving commercial context of the port, this vacuum did not last. In 1824 another French-language newspaper appeared, the *Journal d'Odessa*, or 'Odessa Gazette.' The *Journal* was advertised as encompassing

“the most interesting political and commercial news; the text or abstract of all Government acts regarding trade, according to the official gazettes; the promotions and graces; charts of the movement of trade and navigation; the

⁴ Because of these established connections, the poor harvests in the South of France in 1816-1817 critically contributed to the steep rise in wheat export trade from New Russia.

⁵ Herlihy, *Odessa*, 1986, 339.

⁶ In the background of the Greek revolutionary activities, the first pogrom recorded in Odessa happened also in 1821, as Jews were accused of sympathizing with the Ottoman authorities. It gained momentum when the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople Gregory V was murdered, and the Odessa Greeks claimed his body for burial in Odessa. Rumours were spread by sailors that the corpse had been previously dragged through the streets by a Jewish mob.

⁷ Kovbasîuk, *Odessa*, 1957: 28-29. Another short-lived newspaper in French also existed for less than a year, *Le Troubadour d'Odessa*.

ordnances and decrees by the city authorities; the current price of the importation and exportation goods; the exchange rates (...).”⁸

In sum, the *Journal d’Odessa* was meant to provide all the information relevant to a flourishing regional merchant centre, the newspaper itself acting as a sign of growth. For many years, the *Journal* remained in keeping with the strict censorship applied to news outlets across Russia, simply replicating official notices, providing figures on trade, and publishing local adverts. A commentator observed that, from “a little more than a register of the commerce of Odessa,” the *Journal* took off under the administration of Count Mikhail Vorontsov. The governor,

“wishing to assimilate it in some measure to the nature of a general newspaper, at the same time that its prominent object should be the diffusion of intelligence immediately concerning, or which might be productive of advantage to Odessa and New Russia, applied to the Emperor Alexander for permission to introduce political notices in addition to its usual contents. His Imperial Majesty accordingly authorised the insertion of extracts from the ‘Gazette de Petersburg’ or any other of the existing Russian journals: but as there is no censor for the ‘Journal d’Odessa’, it was added that whatever else might be inserted should be on the *personal responsibility* of the Governor-general. In consequence of this regulation, the general impression [print] is not struck off until a proof sheet has been read to His Excellency, and has received his approbation or such corrections, additions, and erasures as he may think proper. The ‘Journal d’Odessa’ is therefore the dictum of the Governor-general for the time being.”⁹

The tide did not really change over the years, although more original pieces started being published, often reviews of theatrical productions, travellers’ accounts of the Black Sea and the Caucasus, as well as reports on infrastructure and scientific work in Odessa.¹⁰ The *Journal* was described as “the very washiest of French flippancies” by an Englishwoman.¹¹ However, the gazette did not just target the French-speaking population of the city but used

⁸ ONSL 971, 1824, n.94: 22 November/4 December.

⁹ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 298.

¹⁰ On censorship in Russia, see Ruud, Charles A. *Fighting Words : Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906*. Toronto, Ontario; Buffalo, New York ; London, England, 2009.

¹¹ Brooks, Shirley, *Russians of the South*, London, 1855, 19.

French as a medium accessible to the largest sections of its literate population, while also publishing pieces and information in Russian. By 1831, a fully parallel Russian-language edition was created. Articles were translated to and fro between the *Odessa Vestnik* and the *Journal d'Odessa*, although the two editions increasingly differed from each other.¹² The French consul to Odessa, Mr. Challaye, noticed some “substantial difference” between the French and Russian version, even when both languages had shared unevenly the same paper before 1831. The contents of the two editions of the *Journal d'Odessa* followed a similar structure: first came excerpts from any new imperial *ukaz* relevant to Novorossiya or to trade in the Russian Empire; after came notices from local authorities pertinent to the city or its districts, finally commercial statistics for Southern Russia. The greater part of the paper was otherwise devoted to news bulletins from abroad, reprinted from other press organs.¹³ In both publications, most articles remained customarily in line when it came to politics: in 1833, just as rumours of an imminent resurgence of the war against the Ottomans were rustling along the streets of Odessa, carried into town by imported foreign gazettes, most of the local newspapers complied with the established censorship and remained completely silent, focusing instead on charity balls and the social calendar of the city.¹⁴ This lack of information was often the subject of complaints, and many accused the publication of being so “shackled” that they could not expect to find in it “much novel or interesting intelligence.” The general view was that it contained too little politics, while updates about military operations were too sparse.¹⁵

¹² In 1831, for just one year, the newspaper adopted the French name of *Courrier de la Nouvelle Russie*, but was still referred to as *Journal d'Odessa*. The French version was slightly more expensive: P30 in Odessa and P35 via mail, against P25 and P30 for the Russian version.

¹³ AMAE 230CCC/6, 2 April 1841. The prices of the newspaper ranged from 8.50P for the city of Odessa itself, 10P elsewhere in the Empire, and 8 Spanish piastres through Constantinople. To receive the newspaper outside of Russia, it had to travel by way of sea, as there had been no postal arrangement on land with the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

¹⁴ AMAE 230CCC/5, 25 November 1833.

¹⁵ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 299.

Accounts of the *Journal*'s readership vary, although numbers remained on par with the low literacy levels across Russia.¹⁶ An English visitor to the city, Edward Morton, observed that while the “extent of its *real circulation*” was impossible to ascertain, officially the number of subscribers by the end of 1828 was “*near two thousand.*”¹⁷ Decades later, Soviet historian Kovbasiuk asserted on the contrary that the French version of the newspaper never had more than a few dozens of subscribers – but he was at the same time disparaging foreign influence in Odessa's early history. Ultimately, there must have been a large enough number to keep the French paper going, as its publication continued on a bi-weekly basis until 1881. The Russian version of the gazette only outlived it by about a decade and went out of print in 1893. The *Journal* and its *Vestnik* counterpart were recognized as reliable sources of information on the Black Sea, the Pontic, and Caucasus regions, perhaps for lack of an alternative. For foreign policy as for trade purposes, the bilingual newspaper represented a much-needed information outlet. As early as 1828, the French Foreign Office considered contracting a subscription to get more detailed information about the Black Sea, and in particular Russian operations in the Caucasus.¹⁸ As Odessa gained prominence, becoming the premier European port for the exportation of grain, the French Minister of Trade also sought to obtain up-to-date figures on trade, the price of commodities, and movement through the different ports. The deal was sealed in September 1842, and the *Journal* was forwarded by the French Ambassador to Constantinople, who received the paper through the offices of the Black Sea Steamboat Company (*Compagnie des Pyroscaphes de la Mer Noire*).¹⁹ Given the dynamism of the Black Sea trade – with the 1840s constituting a record-breaking decade of ever-rising revenue and

¹⁶ In 1857, within ‘European Russia,’ only 16.8% of the men and 14.5% of the women were literate on average - 42.5% and 36.9% in urban settings. Mironov, Boris N. “The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries.” *History of Education Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1991): 240.

¹⁷ Morton, *Travels*, 1830, 298.

¹⁸ AMAE 230CCC4, 18 September 1828: it was decided that the price of the yearly subscription was too high (500 to 600 francs) when only about a quarter of the issues would be relevant to the French Foreign Office.

¹⁹ AMAE 230CCC/6, 6 May, and 9 September 1842.

exports – it might seem surprising that Odessa only counted four locally edited and published newspapers and periodicals.²⁰ A more thriving press would emerge in the second half of the nineteenth century, with Jewish publications and an array of dissenting papers, but throughout this first cosmopolitan period, information originating from Odessa was strictly bilingual and various censorship laws and committees limited its output to emulating existing models, and avoiding polemics.

The linguistic division of the press did not mean that the French version of the *Journal* was aimed exclusively at Odessa's French nationals, nor was it conceived as a news organ for use by the French consulate. To continue existing, the paper had to follow local guidelines, and sometimes failed to be an allied of the local French community. Following France's 1830 Revolution, the new 'Monarchie de Juillet' regime issued an ordinance to grant amnesty to all the individuals who had taken part in the uprising, but also to those condemned for political offenses prior to the 1830 revolution, throughout the fifteen years of the Bourbon Restoration. Many of these individuals had left France to escape prosecution, and a few of them had settled in Odessa, attracted by the city's expatriate community. Yet, when the consul to Odessa asked the editor of the *Journal* to publish that Ordinance, the latter did not grant the request, claiming that this sort of information would imperil the gazette.²¹ The thorough following of Russian censorship rules was crucial to the paper's survival, especially as most articles re-printed from foreign papers could be taxed with anti-Russian sentiment. Similarly, in 1825, the gazette refused the consul's request to reprint a formal letter of thanks from the king of France to the

²⁰ AMAE 230CCC/6, 2 April 1841: These were the *Journal d'Odessa*, published in French twice a week (Tuesdays and Wednesdays); the *Odessa Vestnik*, closely similar to the French version, but a bit more extensive and published thrice weekly; and the *Bulletin de la société d'économie rurale de la Nouvelle Russie* (Bulletin of the Rural economy society of New Russia), a volume only published once per trimester, with articles in Russian, in French and in German on topics relevant to the agrarian business of Novorossiia. An Almanach (*Odesskii al'manah*) and a Calendar (*Novorossijskii kalendar'*) in Russian were also published annually, containing selected articles, and could be added to the list of regular publications originating from Odessa.

²¹ AMAE 230CCC/4, 25 October 1830: It was the August 26th Ordinance.

French residents of Odessa, who had congratulated him upon his accession.²² The *Journal d'Odessa* walked the thin line of being a home-grown and dominant regional press organ while having most of its editorial board and initial readership composed of foreigners. On the other hand, the *Journal* was sometimes ahead of the curve, and published French official royal ordinances and decrees that the consul himself had not been informed of first-hand, because it replicated information encountered in foreign newspapers. In February 1834, the gazette broke the news that all French nationals living in Odessa and its wider circumscription had the duty to register anew with the consulate to receive diplomatic protection from the consul, M. Challaye.²³ This was news to the said Challaye, who learnt about the decree from French readers of the gazette inquiring about the new requirement. The consul patiently waited to receive confirmation from France to little avail.

In a typical manner, the destinies of Odessa's newspapers were closely linked to the port and its trade. In the words of the editors of the *Journal d'Odessa*, the city benefited from an ideal situation: it was one of the “most interesting locations of Europe,” facing Constantinople and benefitting from fast connections with “the entire Orient.”²⁴ It was no mere coincidence that press outlets were established in Odessa shortly after the creation and expansion of its *porto franco* in 1819, with the port-city becoming a regional and eventually semi-global node. By the 1820s, more than half the freight of the Black and Azov Seas passed through Odessa; less than fifty years later, its port was the largest wheat-exporting centre in Europe.²⁵ The rapid development of trade also brought about the advancement of other institutions (such as a grain stock exchange and insurance companies) that aimed to facilitate

²² AMAE 230CCC/4, 10 February 1825.

²³ AMAE 230CCC/5, 10 February 1834: This registration was also a means for the foreign French to make their nationals “justify their spirit of return, and the enjoyment of the rights and privileges already attributed or that could be granted by the treaties, the laws or the ordinances, solely to these French who had been registered (...).” According to Challaye, the notice had been published by the French Minister for Foreign Affairs on November 28th, 1833.

²⁴ ONSL 971, 1832, n.101, 16/28 December.

²⁵ Volkova, “The Role of Diasporic Communities,” 2019, 273.

commerce and communication. From 1835, issues of the *Journal d'Odessa* were not only read in the port, but across New Russia and beyond. Subscriptions were available in a Constantinople office, a city that received even more maritime traffic.²⁶ The gazette's pages provided unique insight into the grain trade, the state of harvest, but also the spread of diseases. The *Journal* emphasized the mutual benefits that a wide range of individuals, from cultivators to local traders and foreigners, could receive by remaining faithful readers of the paper:

“The landlords of all of New Russia and adjacent provinces will find in this paper some exact and fast data about the movement of the port, which is the sole outlet for their produce; as for the traders it will become a precious means of publicity, helping to narrow the enormous distances that disconnect the different provinces of southern Russia; finally from abroad, this paper will offer the convenience of its vicinity and of being a rich source for precious and uncommon details.”²⁷

However, the bilingual nature of Odessa's main press organs did not reflect the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the city's communities and their role in the public sphere. The Greek community relied on the dense network of Greek-language newspapers that circulated across the many ports of Greek settlement around the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The second-largest group, the Jewish community, also relied on the publication of various Jewish newspapers, written in Russian, Hebrew and Yiddish, which were tolerated during the early decades of the nineteenth century – and were sent through the mail to Odessa from Galicia or the Kingdom of Poland.²⁸ In addition to these papers, the greater secularisation of the Odessa Jews, and their education in Russian and in French on top of Yiddish and Hebrew, meant that they too could constitute a section of both the *Journal* and the *Vestnik*'s readership. The first Greek and Yiddish-language newspapers were only founded in the second half of the

²⁶ ONSL 971, 1835, n.27, 2/14 April.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Zipperstein, “Remapping Odessa,” 1996, 25.

nineteenth century, just as new gazettes were created, in a movement towards a greater division of Odessa's public sphere.

The *Journal d'Odessa*, despite its chronological precedence, also became an uneven twin of its Russian counterpart: its readers asked for more original articles and often complained that Russian readers benefitted from richer and more diverse content.²⁹ The Russian *Vestnik* also acquired a reputation for having radical sympathies, while over time the *Journal* became more conservative, closing ranks with imperial policies and censorship.³⁰ Twenty years after the linguistic division of the paper was initiated the editorial boards split into two as well: from January 1852, the *Odessa Vestnik* would continue under the direction of M.A. Troinsky, while Florian Weiss, who had worked at the gazette for twelve years, would be the sole editor of the French version.³¹ Therefore, over half a century after the foundation of the city, and almost thirty years after the launch of the *Journal d'Odessa*, the local world of news indicated a greater linguistic fragmentation, rather than a progressive amalgamation or erasure of the city's multilingualism. By 1852, as the population of the city had crossed the hundred thousand threshold, it did not seem incongruous to continue the publication of a French gazette with a separate editorial board, as the sole serious alternative to the *Vestnik*. This decision was economically sound, supposedly reflecting the demands of an existing readership for cultural notices, political and commercial news, and local stories. Yet the population of French nationals living in Odessa never amounted to more than a few hundred individuals; for the continued publication of the *Journal* to make sense, French had to constitute a valid alternative to Russian among the literate population. While it was not the first language of

²⁹ ONSL 971, 1839, n.18, 3rd / 12th March: "Won't you write about this lovely Odessa almanac to us, French readers, who do not understand anything in Russian?"

³⁰ Herlihy, *Odessa*, 1986, 284.

³¹ ONSL 971, 1851, n.94, 27th November/9 December 1851: 'Prospectus du Journal d'Odessa pour 1852.'

many, it was a second language to most literate Odessites, even more so with the development of local primary and secondary schools (Chapter 6).

Looking at the early development of the press in Odessa, we can draw a few conclusions: first, the existence of only two major newspapers was unusual in a bustling port and booming town, but it can be ascribed to the pervasiveness of censorship in the Russian Empire, a situation very different from New Orleans' context. Second, the domination of these (connected) news outlets illuminated an ongoing contest between French and Russian as languages of power, culture, and identity. Their lasting coexistence, during Odessa's first seventy years, skewed the actual demographic composition of the city. The enduring presence of a bilingual Russian/French readership for over half a century, beyond the variety of languages spoken by Odessa's residents, leads to a different understanding of the southern metropolis as foreign. While the limitation of the press to only two dominant newspapers was framed by the context of Russian censorship, their longevity indicates that there was a large enough readership for their survival. In the case of the *Journal*, its language was the consequence of the early French leadership in the city, but it remains surprising that no Greek nor Italian-language paper (for the two largest foreign communities) developed until after the Crimean War. This situation suggests that despite the modest numbers of French residents, French language remained the main medium for Odessa's foreign populations. Odessa's age of cosmopolitanism was thus marked by the learning, practice, and diffusion of non-Russian languages and institutions.

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Although New Orleans predates Odessa’s foundation by seventy-six years, its press took a long time to develop, and only slightly predates that of its Black Sea counterpart.³² When Louis XV ceded Louisiana to Spain through the 1762 Treaty of Fontainebleau, no literary essay nor newspaper had ever been printed locally during the decades of French colonial rule: it is only in 1764 that the local printing of records began. After the first transfer of territory to Spain, Louisiana still had to wait twenty-seven years to get a local newspaper: to Edward Larocque Tinker, this delay or “strange anomaly” was due to Spanish authorities’ distrust of the printed word, especially in a colony still largely inhabited by settlers loyal to France, who had staged a rebellion in 1768.³³ It was during the Spanish period that local presses became active, but because of the demographic composition of New Orleans, they did so in the language of their former metropole. The impetus for publication and news-reporting was born out of the regional political turmoil: in early 1794, the city’s first paper, *Le Moniteur de la Louisiane*, was founded by a Saint Domingue refugee, professional printer Louis Duclos. This was a clear indication of the language of the local readership, notwithstanding Spain’s official authority over the territory. The newspaper was New Orleans’ only journalistic publication founded during the Spanish period. *El Misisipi* (1808-1810), the first Spanish-language newspaper in the United States, was eventually published in New Orleans after Spanish rule ended: it was created by Hispanic intellectuals in exile following Napoleon’s intervention in the Iberian Peninsula. Yet before that, Napoleon’s other endeavours – namely the sale of Louisiana and Saint Domingue expedition – had prompted the creation of more papers. New French-language publications were founded by Frenchmen or Saint Domingue refugees, many of them having been previously involved in publishing, printing, teaching, or theatre.

³² Writers, Federal. *The WPA Guide to Louisiana: The Pelican State*. Trinity University Press, 2013. Printing had only come to New Orleans in 1764, and irregular publications can be traced back to two early printers, Denis Braud and Antoine Boudousquie, the latter being *Imprimeur du Roi et du Cabildo*.

³³ Tinker, Edward L. "Bibliography of the French newspapers and periodicals of Louisiana." *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*. Vol. 42. American Antiquarian Society., 1932, 249.

The sudden flow of population from Saint Domingue durably altered the demographics of New Orleans, not only linguistically and ethnically, but also because, contrary to the previous colonists living by the Mississippi, the newcomers were often well integrated in existing networks of information. The new gazettes were *Le Télégraphe*, *Le Courrier de la Louisiane*, and *L'Ami des Lois*.³⁴ Of all three, only *Le Télégraphe* remained strictly published in French alongside *Le Moniteur*: the other two soon adopted bilingual versions.³⁵ The choice of bilingualism proved fruitful, as *Le Courrier* became one of the city's longest-lasting early publications, only going out of press in November 1860.³⁶ The paper was founded in 1807 by two French men, Mr. Dacqueny (a printer) and Mr. Thierry (a friend of the Republicans), and was later owned Mr. De St. Romes (1815-1843), a native of the West Indies of French noble ancestry. Thus, the city's press distinctly represented a certain category of New Orleans' population: French and Creoles émigrés and refugees, whose lives were essentially transatlantic, as illustrated by *Le Courrier*'s equal division between French and English sections.³⁷ *Le Courrier* had an urban readership of about 900, as well as many countryside subscribers, and it played a central part in the early history of the local press: in 1809, its editors Mr. Thierry and Mr. Dacqueny were appointed 'Official Printers' to the government of the United States of America. From 1817 the paper's new owner and editor, Mr. St. Romes, also became the printer of the laws of the State of Louisiana.³⁸ Through him, *Le Courrier* received a contract for the printing of New Orleans's City Ordinances, with St. Romes becoming State

³⁴ For a brief year, *The Union, or New Orleans Advertiser and Price Current* (1803-1804) was published in English, French, and Spanish, focusing on commercial news.

³⁵ The monolingual *Télégraphe* only lasted until 1812, when the newspaper went out of business: this turn of events reflects some of the wider demographic and cultural changes at play in New Orleans almost ten years after its purchase.

³⁶ *L'Ami des Lois* was eventually transformed into *L'Abeille de la Louisiane* in 1827.

³⁷ NOPL – Youngman, Charles F. *Historic Sketch of Le Courrier de la Louisiane or the Courier*, New Orleans, 1938. Mr. Thierry was born in Paris, France, circa 1770, and left when he was twenty-two for Saint Domingue - as many of his compatriots did. After spending some time on that island, he came to New Orleans for business, which eventually led him to establish *Le Courrier de la Louisiane* (1-2).

³⁸ Their appointment as official printers was announced in 1809, but the notice confirming it was only published in 1812. *Ibid.*

Printer in January 1818.³⁹ These privileges continued more intermittently during the next decades with the competition of new gazettes. During the Municipal era (1836-52), and the division of New Orleans into three sections, *Le Courier*'s editor became the printer for the Third Municipality, as a tribute to the paper's Antillean and Francophone origins, overlapping with the demographics of that section of the city (Chapter 4).

The need to accommodate political and linguistic changes in Louisiana, and especially in a central place of trade like New Orleans, was felt early on. With the continuous arrival of Anglo-Americans from other States, the English-speaking readership quickly became large enough for entrepreneurial businessmen to establish the first newspapers published exclusively in English: *The Orleans Gazette* and the *Louisiana Gazette* were both founded in 1804. The two gazettes were designed to be complementary (like the *Journal d'Odessa* and the *Odessa Vestnik*):

“The *Orleans Gazette* will be published on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the *Louisiana Gazette* on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, so that the public will still be presented with a paper in the English language every day in the week.”⁴⁰

Both newspapers were established by a Pennsylvania native, John Mowry, with the main objective of reprinting articles and notices from Northern papers, for greater dissemination in the South. Since 1803, the Northeast, and particularly New York, had contributed money and merchants to Louisiana, while becoming in turn a growing market for the cotton exported from New Orleans, even for those shipments destined for Britain.⁴¹ When he created the *Orleans* and *Louisiana Gazettes*, Mowry knew of the climate of linguistic

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ NOPL – Youngman, Charles F. *Historic Sketch of The Louisiana Gazette*, New Orleans, 1938, 6.

⁴¹ Belich, *Replenishing*, 2009, 245-6.

antagonism in which he was launching his enterprise: in an early issue, the *Louisiana Gazette* reported that the publisher had ordered new font material from Philadelphia to write in French as well. In practice, this effort towards bilingualism mainly appeared in the short advertisements placed by local businesses and individuals on the last page of the paper, and not in the main news articles.⁴² However, the tide of New Orleans demographics – with a continuous arrival of French-speaking refugees and émigrés until the mid-1850s – meant that the economically sound choice was to accommodate the linguistic plurality of the city. After the death of Mowry in 1815, a new editor, William Bruner, took over of the *Louisiana Gazette*, and he was determined to ensure the paper would get as wide a readership as possible. While remaining primarily published in the English language, the Tuesday issues started to have both a French and an English version, and the gazette embraced the double title of *Gazette de la Louisiane*.⁴³ Ten years later, in 1826, the newspaper had become fully bilingual. This tendency towards bilingualism, rather than the competition between a French and English-speaking press, was a development that occurred after statehood was granted to Louisiana and much later than could be expected.

The accommodation of bilingualism rose in the late 1820s, indicating that this model was economically advantageous. *L’Abeille de la Nouvelle Orléans*, or *The Bee*, marked the start of a new era in New Orleans’ press.⁴⁴ The thrice-weekly gazette was founded in September 1827, and was initially published in French, in English and briefly in Spanish (Figure 7.1). It

⁴² *Louisiana Gazette*, November 11 and 30, 1804, 3; NOPL – Youngman, *Historic Sketch of the Louisiana Gazette*, 1938, 2; and Bailey, *Speaking American*, 2012, 101.

⁴³ Youngman, 1938: This change took place in April 1817. Quoting editor William Bruner’s editorial of 12 April 1817: “A Gentleman whose capacity we trust will prove satisfactory, has been engaged to undertake the care of translating for and revising the French Department. The English reader, however, may rest assured that this arrangement will not diminish the quantity of matter usually given in our column. (...)”

⁴⁴ The Bee was the symbol of Napoleon I, which was used as the name of several French-language newspapers outside of France: in Philadelphia, St. Domingue refugees had founded *L’Abeille Américaine* (1815-1818), imitated in Québec with the creation of *L’Abeille Canadienne* (1818-1819) in Montréal, while in Russia, there was a *L’Abeille du Nord* (*Severnaya pschela*: 1825-1864) in St. Petersburg.

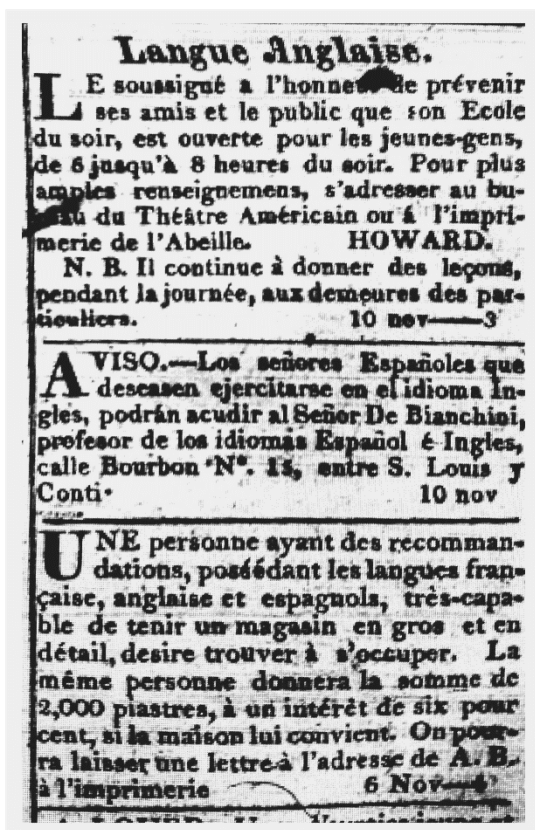


Figure 7-1 L'Abeille de La Nouvelle Orléans, 17 November 1827, 1.4.

was founded by Mr. Jerome Bayon and his associates, Mr. Delaup and Mr. Duclere. After 1830, the main title of the paper became *The Bee*, the former French title being used as a subtitle only.⁴⁵ From 1833, and throughout the 1830s and 1840s, *The Bee* became the official gazette of the State of Louisiana, as its editor Mr. Bayon became the State Printer – taking the privilege away from the *Moniteur*. The newspaper went through a series of changes in management, but most of its owners and editors kept close ties with France, some of them settling on the other side of the Atlantic upon their retirement. This enduring Gallic influence

made *The Bee* the newspaper of reference for the city's francophone elites and officials. By 1872, in the aftermath of the American Civil War, the English edition could no longer compete with the increased competition from Anglophone newspapers, and only the French edition remained: it resumed its original title of *L'Abeille de la Nouvelle Orléans*. Even before that downsizing, the French edition had kept the whole publication economically afloat and had provided the *Bee* with the financial resources necessary to contend with its new English language counterparts. When the gazette became monolingual, *L'Abeille* also significantly re-adjusted its content and editorial line, to target the Francophone Louisianian population. By

⁴⁵ The Spanish edition was terminated on September 20th, 1830. After that, Mr. Jerome Bayon likely became the sole owner. NOPL – Youngman, Charles F. *Historic Sketch of L'Abeille or The New Orleans Bee*, 1938.

1910, it was one of only two surviving French-language newspapers, and the last one to close in 1923.⁴⁶

Although the initial steps of New-Orleans' home-grown journalism had been uneasy (when *L'Abeille* was published in 1827, the city only counted about five regular publications, and just one in English), the 1840s decade was a golden era for Louisiana's French-language journalism and literature.⁴⁷ Despite a mushrooming of local press organs, reflecting the frenzy of commerce and the rise in immigration, the golden age of French newspapers also coincided with the aftermath of the 1837 financial panic, which brought a temporary economic depression to New Orleans.⁴⁸ The crash of 1837-1842 repelled Anglo-American investments and influence: the number of merchants appearing in the 1841 city directory fell abruptly, with over 400 bankruptcies in 1842 and fourteen New Orleans banks suspending or losing their charters.⁴⁹ Yet by 1842, trade had picked up, with an increased demand for and export of food products such as pork and flour, both shipped downriver directly from the productive North-West. By that point New Orleans had not only diversified its core products but started trading directly with commercial partners across the Atlantic, especially Britain, without the previous broker role of the north-eastern ports.⁵⁰ As trade along the Mississippi river developed at a fast pace, and before railroads superseded river shipping, New Orleans became a major global

⁴⁶ It lost a lot of its financial basis after 1916, when the state of Louisiana ceased publishing legal announcements in French, which had ensured *L'Abeille's* nearly centenary survival.

⁴⁷ "L'apogée de la littérature française en Louisiane" (the zenith of French literature in Louisiana) according to literary historian Auguste Viatte, and "the golden era of French journalism in Louisiana," in the words of Edward Larocque Tinker. Tinker also commented that French-language newspapers and periodicals "sprang up in Louisiana like mushrooms and died like flies during the nineteenth century." Quoted by Clint Bruce, 'Caught between Continents - The Local and the Transatlantic in the French-Language Serial Fiction of New Orleans' *Le Courier de la Louisiane, 1843-45*", in Okker, Patricia (ed.) *Transnationalism and American Serial Fiction*, Routledge, 2011, 15.

⁴⁸ New Orleans was a central city for the first (1815-1819) and second (1825-1837) 'booms' of the 'Anglo Wests' according to James Belich, reflecting the important role of steam in developing both export and most importantly import into its own hinterland. New Orleans became peripheral in the later booms, because they benefitted from the construction of canals and the development of East-West railroads, which lowered the importance of the Mississippi trade. Belich, *Replenishing*, 2009, 88 and Chapter 1.

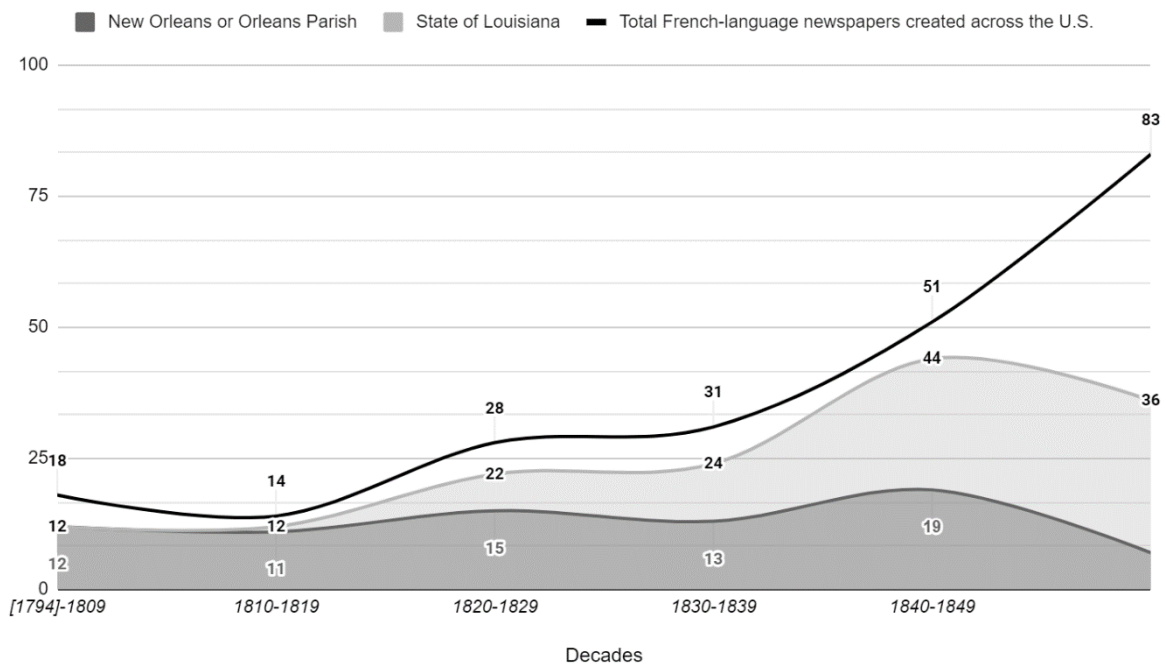
⁴⁹ Belich, *Replenishing*, 238.

⁵⁰ Northern holdings of Louisiana bank stocks halved between 1837 and 1857, which would go against the idea of an absolute Northern American dependency in New Orleans. Belich, *Replenishing*, 246.

centre for commerce. Its cultural sphere thus also boomed, due to the need to quickly inform and communicate about commodities, trade, and events that might impact their steady development pace. From a dozen publications in the 1820s, close to seventy French-language newspapers were created between 1830 and 1849, most of them short-lived (Graph 7.1).⁵¹ As the graph below suggests, French language news developed not just in New Orleans but also across the state of Louisiana, with publications in other cities and parishes, indicating the continued practice and intergenerational transmission of that language. It is therefore very possible that Louisiana's relative downturn between the booms of 1825-37 and 1846-57 was a period of lower inflow of Anglophone settlers and capital, which in turn made it sustainable for a mainly commercial French press to fully develop almost two generations after the Louisiana Purchase. This flourishing was not accidental: it was assisted and encouraged by New Orleans' division into three separate Municipalities (1836-1852).

⁵¹ Bruce 'Caught Between Continents', in Okker, *Transnationalism*, 2011, 15.

Graph 7.1 Creation year of US French-language newspapers and their place of publication [1800*-1860]



Source: US Newspapers Directory: Newspapers 1800 to 1860, indicating the French language as one of their language of publication. The graph reflects newspapers creation, not their continuous existence.

* Although the timeline starts in 1800, I have made the choice to include the 1794 ‘Moniteur de la Louisiane’.

The steady development – rather than demise – of a French-language press in American Louisiana was not a neutral process: it happened over more than half-a-century of demographic, political, and linguistic competition between French and English, which transformed the role and status of each language. Yet the sole study of the French printed word might obscure the even more complex linguistic landscape of the Mississippi Delta which was, in Richard Bailey’s words, “the most compactly multilingual place in the country.”⁵² French and English constituted the visible façade of this linguistic mix, noticeable through the laws and in the press, but Amerindian and African languages, an array of distinct Caribbean Creoles idioms, as well as Spanish and German were also spoken on a daily basis by the residents of

⁵² Bailey, *Speaking American*, 2012, 100.

New Orleans, both in their private homes and in the pursuit of routine business.⁵³ The creation and disappearance cycle of non-English newspapers reacted to transformations in the city's demographics, and offered glimpses of its social transformation.

As mentioned above, *L'Abeille* briefly offered a Spanish edition [1829 to 1830], with the title *La Abeja*. It did so in the context of an increasing influx of information coming from Mexico following the war between the independent Republic and Spain. That conflict also led to a great number of Spanish refugees to seek a haven in New Orleans.⁵⁴ Many of these refugees, eager to receive regular news of the political situation of their conflict-ridden homeland, personally approached the owner of *L'Abeille/The Bee* to add a Spanish section to the newspaper. Yet, unlike the Saint Domingue refugees, these Mexican-Spanish refugees were only temporary residents of the Crescent city, and *La Abeja* was discontinued in July 1830, after the departure of most of them towards Europe or other Spanish-speaking places in the Americas. A few years later, *El Correo Atlántico* (1835-36) was initially published in México in Spanish, English, and French, and was later distributed and published in New Orleans itself, relying on the connections created by the previous migration networks. In the context of the 1840 election, *L'Abeille* briefly regained a Spanish section to carry the paper's pro-Whig sentiments to the Hispanic population of New Orleans.⁵⁵ In total, twenty-eight Spanish language publications (single language or in a bilingual edition) were published in Louisiana between 1803 and the American Civil War.

Another short-lived journalistic endeavour took place in the mid-century at the *Moniteur du Sud - Organe des populations franco-américaines*. The first thirteen issues of the newspaper (Aug. 5-Oct. 28, 1849), initially published weekly, comprised an Italian edition.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ New Orleans, Comité De L'Exposition Française De La Louisiane. *Exposition Française De La Louisiane*, St. Louis, 1904. L. Graham, 1904, 13

⁵⁵ Source: 'Bibliography: Spanish Language Press in New Orleans', Find Latino and Spanish Newspapers, Tulane University Libraries Guide (consulted the 16 January 2021).

This brief endeavour was directed by Dr. Auguste Natili and adopted the double-title of *Il monitore del sud - Organo delle popolazioni italo-americane*. Decades before the main period of Italian immigration to New Orleans (1884-1924), the Italian population of the city was already on the rise, with the creation in 1843 of the *Società Italiana di Mutua Beneficenza*. The demise of the Italian edition of the *Moniteur du Sud* might be attributed to the absence of an adequate readership – poor literacy levels meant that the Italian-speaking audience was too narrow to meet the publication’s expenses.⁵⁶ Other such publications existed in New Orleans’ urban context, characterized by either trilingualism or a bilingualism exclusive of English, most of them also short-lived.⁵⁷ With the increasing arrival to the city of immigrants speaking only their native tongue, foreign language newspapers developed to serve their needs, or were co-opted within existing publications. Between 1800 and 1860, about twenty Spanish-language newspapers were published in New Orleans itself (evenly throughout the period), thirteen German gazettes (most after 1845), and one Italian newspaper.⁵⁸ On average, the duration of each of these publications varied between one and three years, following the pattern of linguistic assimilation or re-migration. Most would disappear after that group had learned English, or when a particular migration wave ended. Therefore, it is telling that these fluctuations did not seem to affect the French language publications just as much, despite a decrease in numbers.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ The numbers of German and Irish were also on the rise; however, the latter turned naturally to the English-speaking press while the Germans tended more naturally to assimilate linguistically into the Anglo-American population.

⁵⁷ Records from the US Newspaper Directory only list a few similar publications in the antebellum period: *The Union, or New Orleans Advertiser and price current* (1803-04, in English, French, and Spanish, published by printers of US origins); *Der Pelican* published in Philadelphia (1805-07, in German, French, and English); *Triglot* published in New York city (1829-18?, in English, French, Spanish, and misc. Italian articles); *Le Figaro* published in New Orleans (1838-?, in French, Spanish, and English); *L’Avenir du peuple* published in New Orleans (1840-1841, in French, Spanish, and English, the ideological opponent of the short re-lived *La Abeja*); *L’Omnibus* published in New Orleans (1840-41, in French and Spanish); *L’Echo du Pacifique* published in San Francisco (1852-1865, in French, Spanish, and English); and *La Revue Icarienne* published in Nauvoo, Illinois (1855-18?, in English, French, and German).

⁵⁸ According to the US Newspaper Directory of the Library of Congress.

⁵⁹ Pinson, Guillaume. “Pour une histoire littéraire et médiatique de la presse francophone de Louisiane au dix-neuvième siècle.” *Quebec Studies* 70, no. 1 (2020): 57-77.

The creation of new press organs in competing languages was a serious and sometimes divisive matter because it provided legitimacy and visibility to local linguistic communities while offering a medium for the dissemination and use of their language. The unconventional parallel rise of English and French-speaking newspapers in New Orleans until the late 1850s also contributed to fuel the divide between the two linguistic factions, giving credence to the role played by language in widening the social gap, as outlined in Chapter 4 and 6. Until 1850, more than the four fifths of all French language newspapers created across the United States were founded in Louisiana. Yet, the regular publication of short-lived trilingual newspapers was also typical of the ‘Louisiana French.’ This wider trend of multilingualism originated from the Creole rather than the Anglo-American population and suggests that Louisiana’s Francophone press was not so much an act of resistance than one of accommodation in the face of linguistic diversity. If linguistic segregation had marked New Orleans’ early newspapers, from the 1820s on the development of bilingual papers suggests a reframing of what ‘Creole’ meant.

Although multilingual prints were also found in Northern states, in places such as New York and Philadelphia, it was a phenomenon much rarer in the South. Yet New Orleans’ newspapers, as most commercial ventures, sought first and foremost to find as wide a readership as possible in order to remain economically viable. Until the late 1820s, publishing bilingual newspapers seems to have been the answer to these imperatives, and when necessary, extra languages were occasionally added to monolingual editions. Between 1800 and 1860, 171 French-language newspapers were founded in New Orleans, all after that city ceased to be French – and a sum much more important than Odessa’s handful of gazettes.⁶⁰ However, the

⁶⁰ Numbers taken from the US Newspaper Directory of the Library of Congress, accessed on 16 January 2021. The number of English language newspaper was greater (501), but both totals would need further analysis to see how many publications survived their first year.

American context was much more conducive to the creation, rise, and often quick disappearance of many broadsheets. What the two cities had in common was the development of a foreign language public sphere, followed by an age of bilingual accommodation, itself eventually leading to the gradual division of news outlet along two separate linguistic options: symbolically, the language of the nation and the tongue of the city. These transformations were visible both on the shores of the Mississippi and of the Black Sea. As locally produced texts were becoming the norm, newspapers had to target transplant and domestic audiences and markets: looking at the apparatus behind print culture helps us to better understand the people who produced and consumed them.

7.2 Printing and publishing: the creation of a local world of words.

Who were the individuals behind the scenes? In New Orleans as in Odessa, printing and publishing were private business ventures, representing opportunities for financial gain, but also social status and visibility. In Louisiana, the role of the French-speaking Saint Domingue refugees cannot, once more, be underestimated. Most of these refugees had previously worked as planters and farmers on the island and belonged to the social elites of their colonial societies. When they arrived in New Orleans throughout the 1790s and 1800s after losing their fortunes, very few were able to purchase lands and return to farming occupations or to the plantation life, unless they had some pre-existing networks in place. According to Carl Brasseaux, many Antillean Creoles, like the French elites, considered commerce somewhat beneath them.⁶¹

⁶¹ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, 99.

Many of these Creoles newcomers used the one skill that set them apart: their education. As a result, most gained employment in the city and state administration. They worked as lawyers – being particularly fluent in the unusual mix of Common and Civil Law that made the legal apparatus of the State of Louisiana –, as medical doctors, or else as instructors in the various private schools of the city. Others turned to journalism: most often than not the founders of the early newspapers in this French-speaking city were recent émigrés from the Caribbean. New Orleans’ first regular publication, *Le Moniteur de la Louisiane*, was founded by professional printer Louis Duclos, who left Saint Domingue following the upheaval that led to the first abolition of slavery act of 1794: by February of that year, Duclos was already in business in New Orleans as the owner of *Le Moniteur*. He continued to work as a printer and engraver at least until 1811. To assist him in his activities, another French man – Jean-Baptiste Le Suer Fontaine – became the director of *Le Moniteur* after 1796. Le Suer, formerly an actor and theatre director, was also a Saint Domingue refugee, who had left the destruction of Cap-Français. He managed the newspaper until his death in 1814, at which date the paper ceased publication. The trend of Franco-Caribbean networks taking over the development of New Orleans’ printed press continued for several decades. François Delaup, who founded *L’Abeille* in 1827, was a Creole from Saint Domingue who came to the city in 1809 following the slave revolution; Jérôme Bayon was a Louisiana Creole and one of the original owners of *L’Abeille de La Nouvelle Orléans* (the sole owner until 1839, and thereafter joint director of the French-language catholic newspaper, *Le Propagateur Catholique*)⁶²; Numa Dufour, a Louisiana

⁶² Following Bayon’s departure in 1839, the next owner of *L’Abeille* was another Frenchman established in Louisiana, Jean F. Magne – until 1850. Anti-Catholic newspapers also existed, that directly attacked *Le Propagateur Catholique*: the *Semi-Weekly Creole* was the most virulent, and to some extent the *American Exponent / Explicateur Américain*.

Creole born in New Orleans in 1821, became director of the French section of *L'Abeille* from 1846 to 1860.⁶³

To this collection of French-speaking and Creolized editors and publishers, the generations of the Haitian Revolution and Louisiana Purchase, were later added new French immigrants who came directly from France, oftentimes in the aftermath of political turmoil. Waves of transatlantic migration heightened after the fall of Napoleon in 1815, later in the 1830s during the July Monarchy, or again with the stream of French expatriates after 1848, in political exile. Such was the last director of *Le Louisianais et l'Ami des Lois*, baron René de Perdreauxville, a man who belonged to France's old nobility and had initially left his country during the Terror. After returning to serve under Napoleon, he had to flee again following the destitution of the emperor. Perdreauxville ran the newspaper from 1822 until its 1824 shuttering; he then became the editor of *L'Argus* – a very similar gazette that recycled the old fonts of the previous paper – before leaving in 1827 to take the direction of *L'Abeille*, although just for a short year. The same pattern of French political migrants getting involved in local newspapers continued later in the century. Products of the French-borne migrations of the 1830s, the brothers Dupaty, Charles and Joseph, worked as printers at various newspapers before creating a model of typographers' union in 1855, to publish a weekly French gazette called *Le National* (1855-1856). This newspaper, targeting the French-speaking population of New Orleans, explicitly aimed at rekindling the so-called “feelings of mutual affection” that had existed between France and the United States, from the American Revolution to the historical ties between American Louisiana and the past rule of France. At the same time, *Le National* was critical of the recently established Second Empire, as its manifesto indicated:

⁶³ Tinker, Edward Larocque. *Les écrits De Langue Française En Louisiane Au XIXe Siècle : Essais Biographiques Et Bibliographiques*, Évreux: Imprimerie Hérissey, 1932, 151. Jérôme Bayon was also the nephew of Bayon de Libertat, an overseer on Saint Domingue's Bréda Plantation, whom Toussaint Louverture protected during the early uprisings.

“To the Americans, we will remind how essential it is to separate the French people from their government (...).”⁶⁴

Beyond the dissemination of information, the printed word also bolstered the emergence of a local literary scene. Clint Bruce helpfully highlights the influence of the local and of the transatlantic contexts on Francophone serial fiction published in New Orleans newspapers. He indicates that the peak of French-language fiction among the Gallic population of New Orleans in the early 1840s also coincided with a surge in newspaper-creation at a time when the numerical and political dominance of French speakers was not only challenged, but displaced through the Municipal system.⁶⁵ More specifically, Bruce focuses on the editorial model that Jérôme Bayon developed after becoming director of the *Courrier de la Louisiane* in 1843: adding to the initial format, he chose to showcase fictions written by local authors under the heading “Feuilletons du Courrier.” The adoption of the feuilleton feature was specifically a French import that serialised short stories and novellas, a feature absent from American newspapers.⁶⁶ To Bruce, “there can be little doubt that the *feuilletons du Courrier* were intended to foster the imaginary coherence of the Francophone community, torn at that time between the pull of nostalgia for France, American nationalism (i.e., Jacksonian democracy), Southern sectionalism, and Gallic Creolism.”⁶⁷ Beyond the world of the press, Bayon’s innovation contributed to the emergence of a local *littérature louisianaise*.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ NOPL, *Le National*, n.1, 1 October 1855.

⁶⁵ Bruce ‘Caught Between Continents’, in Okker, *Transnationalism*, 2011, 13-14.

⁶⁶ The French typographical convention also devoted the ‘ground floor’ (*rez-de-chaussée*) of a given page to their literary varieties. This feature is also present in the layout of the *Journal d’Odessa*, halfway across the globe.

⁶⁷ Bruce ‘Caught Between Continents’, in Okker, *Transnationalism*, 2011, 17.

⁶⁸ In the case of *Le Courrier*, the ‘feuilletons’ stories were written by white and free-coloured Creoles, as well as foreign French authors. The content of the ‘roman feuilletons’ resembled what we know as soap operas: many adopted the genre of historical fiction, sometimes looking at key episodes of the history of Louisiana, such as the 1815 battle of New Orleans, while others tended towards the ‘*étude de mœurs*’ genre – the study of human nature. Bruce’s research features two individual *feuilletons*: “Les Mystères des Bords du Mississippi” authored by Charles de la Gracerie, and freely inspired by Eugene Sue’s *Mystères de Paris*; and Louis LeFranc’s “Une Enigme.”

Literary expression – in French – through a very public medium was an attempt to find cohesiveness among an otherwise quite divided group – between white and coloured francophones, Louisiana, and Saint Domingue Creoles, or between different generations of subversive ‘foreign French.’ It is not accidental that this creative outburst happened at a time when the Francophone population was undermined demographically and politically, secluded in the First and Third Municipalities. The socio-economic choices made by French-speakers, who mostly avoided trade, underpinned those changes as the commercial sector quickly became dominated by Anglo-American and other European immigrant groups. This evolution precipitated the economic downfall of the most prominent New Orleans Creoles, who stood increasingly isolated within the limits of the city’s First Municipality, despite their alliances with foreign French immigrants. The Municipality’s small tax-base meant that the living conditions in the ‘French Quarter’ rapidly declined (*see* Chapter 4). Although this social and spatial endogamy of the late 1830s throughout the early 1850s is nostalgically coined as a golden era, the Francophone population lived in fact in a “glorified slum” and was becoming an increasingly marginal and disempowered group.⁶⁹ Their fall from grace and political standing was somehow shrouded by the avid development of a French-speaking press and literature, giving rise to “a body of mythology regarding a golden age that never was.”⁷⁰

The serials published in the French-language newspapers, which drew from local imaginary and tropes combined with cultural symbols and literary trends from France, helped

⁶⁹ Brasseaux, *French, Cajun, Creole, Houma*, 2005, 100.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 102. Arguably, the Third Municipality (based on the Quartier Marigny) was even more endemically poor and was the place of residence of many of the recent immigrants to the city. The apogee of this revisionist and glorifying narrative was embodied in the founding in 1861 of *La Renaissance Louisianaise* by Emile LeFranc and E. Lamulonière: “The population of Louisiana has come to claim its share of sacrifices and triumphs. It seeks its plate amid political upheaval. It has conceived, on top of ruins, the magnificent idea to re-establish its nationality. (...) Pulled forward by the greatness and the material results of our fellow American compatriots’ all-consuming activities, called in the opposite direction by the memories and the affections that brought it back to its crib, it hesitated in its march.” - n.1, 5 May 1861 ; “Thus the first phase of our nationality, which was wholly French, must be followed in a not-too-distant future by a nationality of a second age, made of the French element but also of the other elements that have joined it.” - n.2, 12 May 1861.

the French-speakers of New Orleans and greater Louisiana imagine themselves as a Creole community that had a role in the American ideological landscape. By doing so, the serials and novels increasingly insisted on whiteness, and entrenched the racist and dual social order prevalent elsewhere in the Southern States. The pieces written by white Creoles and foreign Frenchmen either antagonized the free-coloured population through deceitful and malicious characters, or simply erased their participation in key historical events of Louisiana, such as the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 (*see* Chapter 9). Yet the explicit exclusion of the *gens de couleur libres* from such narratives did not mean that they were not themselves producers of literary texts that engaged in the creation of a Gallic and Frenchified culture.

The most prominent coloured francophone writers were New Orleans-born teachers, who organised private schools for children of colour, but also sometimes artisans and shopkeepers who took up writing during the newspaper boom of the 1840s. From this decade onwards, and until the eve of the American Civil War, texts authored by Creoles of colour were published in newspapers and engaged with a variety of local and literary themes. Because many writers were teachers and tutors, some had the opportunity to travel to France where they engaged with new literature trends deployed by such authors as Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Alphonse de Lamartine, or Alfred de Musset, who regularly used newspapers to publish their own work. The social and cultural permeability between white Créoles, immigrant Frenchmen, and *gens de couleur* had the effect of creating a cohesive Francophone literary production. This does not mean that a coloured press existed during the pre-Civil War decades, since anti-abolitionists laws were becoming increasingly strict. Rather, New Orleans' *gens de couleur* contributed to the white Francophone newspapers of the city.

The most supportive of these newspapers was *Le Courier de la Louisiane*, which was looking for more writers to contribute to its literary pages. Writers of colour were entirely reliant on the white press for publication, but some of their writings also made their way to

Paris, using the pre-existing literary networks that had inspired them. In other instances, the white francophone press would also routinely publish ‘communications’ by coloured authors, but they were either only initialled or anonymous. The 1840s also saw the publication of two collections expressly dedicated to the works of New Orleans’ *gens de couleur*. In 1843, *L’Album Littéraire, Journal des Jeunes gens amateurs de Littérature* was published twice a month under the editorial rule of a white schoolteacher, J.L. Marciacq – himself a foreign French, or at least French-born. Although it was short-lived, *L’Album Littéraire* became the first journal of its kind in Louisiana – and possibly in the United States. More literary than political, it clearly stated its pride in using and perpetuating the French language.

Two years later, in 1845, the first collection of poems written exclusively by Creoles of colour was published by Armand Lanusse – who had probably also been involved unofficially as an editor of *L’Album*. The new publication bore the title *Les Cénelles, choix de poésies indigènes*, and is considered the first anthology of Black American poetry ever published in the United States.⁷¹ The collection was made up of eighty-four poems composed as early as 1828 by seventeen authors (table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Les Cenelles - Choix de Poésies Indigènes

<i>Author's name or Pseudonym</i>	<i>Number of Poems</i>	<i>Year of earliest poem (if available)</i>
A. Populus	3	
Armand Lanusse	16	1836
Bo...s.	1	
Camille Thierry	14	
Desormes Dauphin	1	
J. Boise	1	
Joanni	3	1841
L. Boise	1	
M.F. Lioteau	8	
Michel St. Pierre	6	
M. Sylva	2	

⁷¹ “Cenelles” mean holly berries: they were taken to be representing the collected fruit or work of the Creole community. Johnson, Jerah. “Les Cenelles: What's in a Name?” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 31, no. 4 (1990): 407-10.

N. Riquet	1	
Nelson Desbrosses	1	1828
Numa Lanusse	2	
Pierre Dalcour	12	1844
Valcour	11	1838
Victor Séjour	1	
<i>TOTAL</i>	84	

The most famous of them was Victor Séjour, who alone would make a career for himself as a playwright in Paris; the most prolific were Armand Lanusse himself, Camille Thierry, M. F. Liotau, Michel St. Pierre, P. Dalcour, and Valcour. In a short introduction, Lanusse wrote about the aims of the collection and presented its contributors:

“A great need for instruction is felt from every part. We are starting to understand that, in whatever position fate has placed us, a good education is an aegis against which the bolts launched against us by contempt and slander become blunted. It is thus with a feeling full of pride that we see each day increase the number of those among us who now roam resolutely the very difficult route of the sciences and the arts (...).”⁷²

References to the obstacles facing Louisiana’s free coloured Creoles were only veiled: while non-whites were expressly barred from education by the state authorities, private schools were still developing relatively unchecked amongst the French-speaking population of New Orleans (*see* Chapter 6). As in *L’Album*, quite a few of the poets writing for *Les Cénelles* worked in these schools. Some of the writers had also previously written for *L’Album*.

Among the white Francophone population and even beyond, it was common knowledge that these publications existed, and that they were the work of *gens de couleur libres*. That they were able to continue despite the increasingly prohibitive laws of Louisiana seems remarkable, but the content of both *L’Album* and *Les Cénelles* was not particularly radical, and in most poems the writers turned a blind eye to the question of slavery and abolition.⁷³ Contrary to the

⁷² Lanusse, Armand, *Les Cénelles: choix de poésies indigènes*, Nouvelle-Orléans, H. Lave et Compagnie, 1845 : Introduction.

⁷³ After 1840, severe sanctions were put in place to discourage any criticism of slavery.

literature and press that emerged during and after the Civil War, Francophone publications of both white and coloured Creoles remained substantially similar and gravitated towards common themes. Brotherhood and male friendship were at the forefront, in addition to romance. Some also adopted a local colour genre, for instance in ‘Carnaval’ ‘Le Retour au Village des Perles’ and ‘L’Ouvrier Louisianais’, while others made explicit references to the French past of Louisiana (‘L’Amante du Corsaire’, ‘Le Retour de Napoléon’).⁷⁴ This choice of themes was shaped by the class divide that pulled the literate *gens de couleur libres* towards the Francophone Créoles: the imitation of literary tropes, the display of good education and wealth as well as mundane concerns were tactics to subsume differences and foster a greater group endogamy. Indeed, the use of French and the possession of a Latin culture was what had distinguished the *gens de couleur libres* from the ‘American’ free blacks, especially in the realm of education: at least 80 percent of black French speakers were literate by 1850.⁷⁵ These educated *gens de couleur* performed Frenchness as a socio-linguistic identity; by joining the literary and cultural circles of the white Créoles, they collectively distanced themselves from English-speaking freed individuals and slaves. Yet, their work was still inspired by some of the more specific social circumstances and stigmas that the *gens de couleur* encountered in their daily business, which they distilled through the poems. Most of these poets of the 1840s died during or right after the Civil War, and soon there was no generation of French-speaking poets *de couleur* to take up the torch. As English became the standard language across Louisiana, writings by francophone Creoles of colour became sparser. English-speaking Black Americans

⁷⁴ Napoleon’s figure is a common trope in New Orleans, but so were the local Baratavia Pirates, especially the French-speaking Lafitte Brothers, whose help was instrumental during the Battle of Orleans – they are being referred to in *L’Amante du Corsaire* (Privateer).

⁷⁵ Fabre, “The New Orleans Press,” in Sollors, *Multilingual America*, 1998, 29. By 1850, at least one thousand children of the *gens de couleur* attended schools that were staffed by teachers born in France, and some parents even sent their children to France to pursue their studies.

became more prominent, while at same time white Francophone Creoles embraced an ethnically focused definition of their cultural group.⁷⁶

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In Odessa, the relatively modest number of publications was proportional to the small number of printers and bookshops, both of which were quite limited when compared to the dynamism of the United States' print culture at the same period. However, against a Russian backdrop, Odessa was becoming a fast-growing centre for culture: if its soundscape was reminiscent of Babel, its bookish culture was more clearly suggestive of Paris. The development of a local Novorossiyan book industry had been directly linked with the development of local presses, and both centred on Odessa. The city's first newspapers (*Le Messenger*, *Le Troubadour*, and the *Journal*) had been edited in French, following a failure by the 'Bureau of Russian and Foreign Subjects' to create official papers in Russian, French, and Italian for southern Ukraine.⁷⁷ Their publication was dependent on a number of French émigrés who owned appropriate fonts: quite often, these individuals were already involved in the book trade and were themselves book sellers. The *Journal* was initially distributed by the 'Librairie Miéville' – a bookshop run by Swiss émigré D. Mieville from 1829 – offering subscriptions both locally and across the Russian Empire. But this was not Odessa's first bookshop. In previous decades, a few others had existed and faded away following the tides of immigration and business: according to I.M. Dolgoruky, "before other bookstores, a shop for French books was opened here by Mr. Roubaud."⁷⁸ Jean (also known as Ivan) Roubaud was among the

⁷⁶ *L'Athénée Louisianais*, founded by Dr. Alfred Mercier, became the main cultural association for New Orleans' French-speakers, but its participants were essentially white Creoles.

⁷⁷ Herlihy, *Odessa*, 1986, 142.

⁷⁸ Dolgorukov, I.M. Slavnyi bubny za gorami ili putesthestvie moe koe-kuda 1810 goda. [Glorious are the tambourines beyond the mountains or My journey somewhere in 1810]. Universitetskaya Tipografiia. 1869, vol. 2, n.4-6. ch. 3, 143, quoted in

Marseillais who had arrived in Odessa by 1803. He settled on the shores of the Black Sea with his wife and daughter and became a prominent merchant of the first guild. By 1819, he had taken an oath of Russian citizenship, and was one of the first former foreigners to receive the title of honorary citizen of Odessa. His good fortune only lasted until 1828, at which point the sale of his bookshop was announced in the *Journal d’Odessa*.⁷⁹ Other early booksellers included Shiraev for Russian books, and another Swiss émigré Jules Collin, who started trading from 1819-1820.⁸⁰ From the early decades of the book business in the city, Gallic-centred literary works and networks outweighed Russian-speaking ones.

Table 7.2 Volume of Book Trade in Odessa⁸¹

Year	₽ Value (roubles)	Number of books
1828	*9623	-
1831	-	25000
1832	-	43000
1833	-	40000
1835	-	***30000
1836	50,913	-
1838	**59773	-

* while only 830 ₽ through other ports of the Black Sea and the land border of Bessarabia.

** Odessa residents bought books for more than 54,000 ₽ and re-exported from the free-port to Russia only 5113 ₽ worth of books.

*** exclusive of “atlases, maps, brochures, magazines, newspapers, almanacs, prints, etc.”

Early bookshops generally offered a reading room and a library where, for a fee, customers could get recent issues of newspapers as well as borrow books to take home.

Polevshchikova', E. V. "Frantsuzy v knizhnoi torgovle Odessy v pervoi polovine XIXv. (po materialam knigotorgovykh katalogov)." [French people in the book trade of Odessa in the first half of the nineteenth century, according to materials from book trade catalogues] *Visnyk Odes'koho natsional'noho universytetu*. (2011): 95.

⁷⁹ Roubaud had also attempted to obtain the title of bookseller for the Richelieu Lyceum, because of his connections with all the major European booksellers. This goes to show how important foreign books were in the development of Odessa's civic society, and how much they were influenced by a French-centred cultural world.

⁸⁰ Bel'skii Miron Romanovich. *Knizhnaya torgovlya v dorevoliutsionnoi Odesse: spravochnik* [Book trade in pre-revolutionary Odessa: a reference book], Odessa, 2007, quoted in Polevshchikova (2011, 96).

⁸¹ Source: "Statistique d'Odessa" (1833), and Polevshchikova', E. V. (2011).

Alongside them, different reading clubs, such as the Khadzhibey and the Resursy clubs, were created for the purpose of perusing periodicals. This attracted large sections of the literate population of Odessa – foreign traders but also displaced aristocrats and artists: Aleksander Pushkin, for example, regularly frequented the Roubaud and Collin libraries to satisfy his yearning for non-Russian literature during his exile (1823-24). Historian Kovbasiuk attributes this development of bookshops and the printing industry to the fast progress of international book trading. An increasing number of foreign books were imported from abroad through the port of Odessa: as many as 25,000 were recorded in 1831, rising to 40,000 in 1833.⁸² Importation continued despite the imposition, in 1848, of heavy duties and rights on imported books and publications: five silver kopecks per volume.⁸³ While the value of imported books more than quintupled within a decade, they were mostly consumed locally and sold in the bookshops of Odessa, rather than shipped to the interior. In 1838, out of 59,000P worth of books, only 5,000P left the free-port, the remainder 54,000P being bought by Odessa residents (Table 7.2) This divide also highlights the importance of the boundary of the freeport, and how it created a cultural enclave around Odessa.

Most existing studies of Russian and French bilingualism in imperial Russia have focused extensively on the elites of Moscow and St Petersburg, where the coexistence of the two languages created a situation of diglossia – each being used under different conditions by a community.⁸⁴ In Odessa, a peripheral space populated by many non-ethnic Russians, the persistence of a Francophone literary culture was underpinned by the dominance of French

⁸² ONSL, 1833, 971 86, 27 October/8 November. “Statistique d’Odessa.” This figure is to be considered cautiously as the newspaper printed ‘1831’ as a reference for both figures. I have inferred that the second one might be the current year, 1833, and result from a typographic error. However, it is still possible that the increase in foreign books imports happened over a longer duration.

⁸³ ONSL 971, 1848, n.57, 16/28 July and 1846, n.75, 17 / 29 September. The Decree of June 14, 1848, imposed a duty of five silver kopecks on “foreign books brought from abroad,” exception being made for books for diplomats, universities and academies, and books in Hebrew or printed in the Kingdom of Poland.

⁸⁴ Offord, Derek et al. *French and Russian in Imperial Russia*. Russian Language and Society. Edinburgh, 2015 and *The French Language in Russia: A Social, Political, Cultural, and Literary History*. Amsterdam, 2018.

books and bookshops. In that respect, Odessa’s bilingual sphere adheres to wider trends in Russia. Knowledge of French could be passive or active, and in this port-city French embraced both spoken and written forms. However, Odessa’s originality was that bilingualism extended to non-noble classes as well: it was a feature of the trading communities of foreigners who resided in the city. Politics of language also infiltrated book trade: French books were imported for instruction, although with strict censorship, while Russian books were translated into French for European dissemination.⁸⁵

Despite the closing of some of the early bookshops, new ones kept opening and by 1833 Odessa had four bookshops redistributing an increasing number of imported books. As before, only one of them was Russian (de Klotschkow), one was German (de Stürz), while two were run by French speakers – Swiss De Miéville and French Sauron.⁸⁶ Joseph Sauron temporarily acted as substitute French consul, and his bookshop was a magnet for the international population of traders and consuls. All four bookshops relied on a network of subscribers, and these subscriptions soon came to encompass locally-printed newspapers and books, in addition to imported ones. Together, the French-run bookshops Sauron and De Miéville tallied about 175 subscribers, while only 55 clients had contracted a subscription at the Russian bookshop, highlighting an enduring linguistic disparity among the reading population of Odessa.

In 1833, the “Catalogue de livres à la lecture” (*Catalogue of French books on offer*) published by the Sauron bookshop advertised a total of 804 books. They were mostly by French writers, while works in Russian, German, English, or Spanish were offered in translation. By 1835, the same catalogue offered 1,722 titles in French, as well as 100 titles in English, 90 in Italian, and about 50 French-speaking periodicals.⁸⁷ Sauron, as Collin before him, received the

⁸⁵ The Alexandrine age (1801-1825) saw an increase in the translation of Russian works into French: French was used as a medium to represent the Russian Empire in Europe. French translations became a tool to promote a positive image of Russia.

⁸⁶ ONSL 971, 1833, n.86, 27 October/8 November. “Statistique d’Odessa.”

⁸⁷ Catalogue de la librairie de Joseph Sauron, à Odessa. – Odessa, 1835. – 87 p, in Polevshchikova, 2011, 103.

bulk of his inventory through the port of Marseilles. Miéville also received many books published in Brussels, which prompted him to create a special “Catalogue des livres en Editions de Bruxelles” in 1837. As interest in the Black Sea region grew, Miéville also ensured the publication of works directly relevant to Odessa’s cultural life: the *Novorossiysk* (Novorossiyan) calendar, the Odessa Almanac, and the Proceedings of the Society for Agriculture of Southern Russia. The Almanac, a scholarly publication, promoted local poets and acclaimed Russian authors. Miéville also published a series of books on the history of Odessa and Novorossiya at large. Of note were G. de Castelneau’s *Essai sur l’Histoire de la Nouvelle Russie*, the popular *Voyages en Circassie par le Chevalier Taitbout de Marigny* (a different Marigny from the one in New Orleans), and other guides to Crimea and the Caucasus.⁸⁸ Short news items about new releases and updated catalogues were published by the booksellers in the local press – the *Journal d’Odessa* and the *Odessa Vestnik*.

Works printed and published locally reflected the demographic composition of the city. Although they mostly focused on Odessa and southern parts of the Russian Empire, they were often written in French as well as in Russian, and sometimes in Italian, Greek, and German. M. Villietty, who took over De Miéville’s bookshop in 1840, published practical guides to the French language, with the aim to facilitate “the work of the merchants” of Odessa, while new Franco-Russian conversation books were regularly announced by the city’s printing press.⁸⁹ Although most people in Odessa could speak, if not often write, several languages, this division of publications along language-based networks stimulated the rise of new commercial

For comparison, an 1820 catalogue from the library of Plaviltshikoff, one of the principal Russian booksellers of Petersburg which contains 7,657 works of different sizes, all in Russian. Because of the difficulties in importing copies of foreign and prohibited work, four fifths of the books printed in Russia were translations from European languages, especially French, German, and English. Pinkerton, *Russia*, 1833, 325-326.

⁸⁸ Castelneau, Gabriel. *Essai sur l’histoire ancienne et moderne de La Nouvelle Russie*, [Essay on the Ancient and Modern History of New Russia] 1827 ; Taitbout De Marigny, Édouard. *Three Voyages in the Black Sea to the Coast of Circassia*. Lond, 1837.

⁸⁹ ONSL 971, 1848, n.95, 26 November/ 8 December.

publishers. A Greek printinghouse opened in 1829 on the premises of one of the Greek schools, for the purpose of “regenerating the modern Greek language.”⁹⁰ By the end of 1834, the city needed a Russian, French, German, and Italian printing press to meet the needs of the administration and of the different papers and publications of the city.⁹¹ Even in the midst of Russianization policies, as imported schoolbooks were replaced by government textbooks in Russian, many communities continued to locally publish manuals in their own language. By the end of the nineteenth century Odessa hosted the largest foreign language publishing houses of Southern Russia.⁹²

Yet as with the newspapers, censorship also constituted a significant barrier to the sale and reproduction of many works of fiction and essays. In a decree to civilian governors in June 1837, the heads of provinces were instructed to ensure that domestic and foreign publications not approved by censorship would not be printed or sold in the region entrusted to them. The police were to supervise the sale of books: all foreign books had to be sent straight from the customs house to the censorship offices before being allowed on the market. De Miéville’s bookshop bypassed the approved circuit by placing special orders and receiving controversial books directly from travellers. The most sensitive parts of his stock were not stored in the shop but in a private apartment.⁹³ In 1839, the police discovered foreign publications banned in the Russian Empire in the stocks of Joseph Sauron. The books were subsequently removed from the bookshop’s reading library because they promoted ‘republican thoughts’ or ‘godlessness.’⁹⁴

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 1832, n.5 – 15/27 January. Kovbasiuk also points out that the students of the Richelieu Lyceum had also started publishing a handwritten magazine called the *Aeropagus*, which was supposed to illustrate the changes in the demographics and in the curriculum of the institution. Through the magazine, the lycéens would have defended the value, richness, and uniqueness of the Russian Culture. Kovbasiuk (1957, 29).

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 1834, n.100 14/26 December 1834.

⁹² Friesen, Leonard G. *Minority Report: Mennonite Identities in Imperial Russia and Soviet Ukraine Reconsidered, 1789-1945*. Tsarist and Soviet Mennonite Studies. Toronto;Buffalo;London, 2018: 95.

⁹³ Polevshchikova (2011, 97).

⁹⁴ Grinchenko, N.A. and N.G. Patrusheva, “*Nadzor za knizhnoi trgovlei v kontse XVIII — nachale XX veka*” [*Supervision of book trade in the late XVIII - early XX centuries*], accessed on 3 April 2020 on opentextnn.ru. In 1850, following the 1848 revolutionary events across Europe, all batches of books and other types of printed matter sealed at customs were sent immediately to censorship institutions, where they were opened in the presence of the owners.

Among French-language books, Enlightenment works were the most controversial, such as Voltaire's *La Pucelle d'Orléans* and *Histoire des deux Indes* by Abbot Raynal – both works, for widely different reasons, had also been subjected to censorship throughout Europe.⁹⁵ Beyond that, memoirs by French revolutionaries such as Mirabeau, or partisans of Napoleon such as the Duchess d'Abrantès were equally forbidden. The “Alphabetical List of Books Forbidden by the Foreign Censorship”, published from 1815 to 1853, had a special section of forbidden French books.⁹⁶ A Briton living in Russia remarked that from the 1830s, “the regulations of censorship have become very strict, in every department of literature, whether moral, political, scientific, or religious.”⁹⁷

Under the 1828 Charter of Censorship, whenever censored books were found, it was booksellers rather than traders who were held responsible for breaching the law and smuggling forbidden material. This proved costly: for a first offense, all copies were taken away; for a second offense, the store was sealed for two years; for a third, the owner was deprived of the right to engage in the book trade. By the fourth offense, they would be subjected to trial or expelled from Russia. When Sauron and Miéville were caught in possession of forbidden books, they were first delivered to Kiev, and by the end of the year were sent abroad “with the prohibition to re-enter empire, consequently their bookstores in Odessa and Simferopol were immediately closed and auctioned.”⁹⁸ By June 1840, the *Journal d'Odessa* advertised the sale

⁹⁵ *The Maid of Orleans* was an unfinished satirical poem, first started by Voltaire in 1730. It was an epic and scandalous satire about the life of Joan of Arc: the poem was outlawed, burned, and banned, but its contraband status made it an extremely popular text. Abbot Raynal's history had also been censored in France in 1781, and publicly burned. Its critics complained that it attacked all governments and religions.

⁹⁶ “For the guidance of the customs inspectors, the Foreign Committee published monthly ‘The Alphabetical List of Books Forbidden by the Foreign Censorship’. This bulletin listed about 150 titles each month, until the 1848 revolutions in the West caused the committee to ban about 600 titles monthly.” In Ruud, Charles A. *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906*, University of Toronto Press, 2009: 55.

⁹⁷ Pinkerton, *Russia*, 1833, 326.

⁹⁸ Varvartsev, M. M. *Ukraina v Rossiisko-ital'ianskikh Obshchestvennykh I Kul'turnykh Sv'iazakh : Pervaia Polovina XIX v.*, 1986, 203.

of the ‘*Librairie Miéville*,’ which was taken over by an Italian and became the ‘*Librairie Villetti/Villietty*.’ Sauron’s nephews retained his bookshop until the 1860s.

The development of the book industry in Odessa was a combination of the progress of its educational institutions (with the French-centred Richelieu Lyceum), the increase in readership, and the concentration in one place of an international and multilingual crowd with an unusually high level of literacy – by contemporary standards. By the mid-century, there were six bookshops, three printers, one lithographer, in addition to forty-one educational institutions.⁹⁹ Because the bookshops were mostly owned by foreigners, they facilitated the reproduction and transfer of popular European books to New Russia, most of them being consumed in Odessa itself. French booksellers' leading role in this sector was a testimony to the importance of French-language literature in Russia and of the translation of Russian books into French, but also of the commercial ties to French ports. Their relative decline throughout the 1830s and 1840s reflected both the rapid growth of Odessa, with French-speakers only being one of many foreign communities cohabiting in the port-city, and the development of the book sector itself, with many more Russian, German, Polish and Greek (and after the 1860s Jewish) competitors.¹⁰⁰

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The creation of press outlets in New Orleans and Odessa was critically shaped by the use of the French language. A medium used as a tool of communication with a local readership, it also faced outward, projecting the French character of either city onto the world. While literacy was limited to a section of the urban population – elites and commercial classes,

⁹⁹ Herlihy, *Odessa*, 1986, 143.

¹⁰⁰ Bel'skij, *Knizhnaya trgovlya*, 2007, quoted in Polevshchikova (2011, 96).

predominantly male – reading in the French language created new forms of transversal communities. As David Henkin suggested in his study of New York City, the legible landscape both presumed and reflected the circulation of people who were “complete strangers to one another.”¹⁰¹ City reading thus was an important tool to disseminate competing visions and versions of the urban community. The language in which these urban texts were published (and more narrowly in this chapter newspapers and books) could create inclusivity while advertising difference. In the case of New Orleans and Odessa, networks of language and information posited a rival authority that differed from the national tongues of the United States and Russia. French-language printing and press supplied a medium that created community locally among distinct social groups, reinforcing the divergent religious and educational solidarities discussed in Chapter 5 and 6. Print culture, the physical expression of the cultural question, supported the creation of a new kind of public in Odessa and New Orleans: in both places, the public sphere and spaces were shaped by politics of language.

¹⁰¹ Henkin, David, *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York*, Columbia University Press, 1998, xi. Henkin characterises the often-discussed public sphere as a physical space, in which urban texts offered political access to those who were disenfranchised and marked the possibilities and limits to understanding a new environment in cities shaped by migration.

PART III – REPRESENTATIONS

“Odessa offers the vision of a world born out of the ashes of a world in ruins; she takes hold and grows rapidly on a soil half classical, half barbaric Seeing for the first time this city so estranged with the past, so alive in the present, so rich in prospects, it looks like a lighthouse built in haste in between two solitudes: the steppes and the flood. Contemplating all these manifestations emerging from a dawning society, one can believe to have been carried either to the crib of civilizations, or to the shores of Northern America ; there too the creation of a new world is happening on wider scale. There can be found the disillusioned ambitions, the depleted wealth and health, those who still preserve a spark of activity and would like, after the misfortunes and the disasters of public life, give the agrarian life a try, without however completely renouncing to the advantages of civilization, to the pleasures of intellect and society.”¹

¹ ONSL 971, 1842, 27 Mars/8 April, n. 25 : A. de Stourdza « Odessa - Quelques traits de sa physionomie et quelques-uns de ses souvenirs »

Chapter 8 French denizens and the international system in the first half of the nineteenth century.

In the early 1800s, Louisiana was no longer a French colony, and New Russia never was. Yet, the origin stories of both sites, amid expanding continental powers, was marked by the distinct influence of groups of immigrants from France. Often a demographic minority, these Gallic settlers gained power for a time, then yielded it, but durably transformed the main institutions of each city, inventing traditions while producing a sense of trans-local identity. These two concluding chapters will explore the presence and role of the French and French-speaking communities through key events in the early histories of Odessa and New Orleans, as well as their remembrance.

In New Orleans, the transition from a neo-French island to an American city was articulated not only with treaties, but also through discord and symbolism. The battle of New Orleans in January 1815 proved pivotal for the integration of the old population of the city – but its memory was marred by debates about the interpretation of the event. The divided loyalties surrounding key figures – particularly Napoleon, Lafayette, and king Louis XVIII – underscored the uneasy transatlantic transition from monarchy to republicanism, from colonial status to democracy. Finally, the ebb and flow of ‘Frenchness’ – its flexible characteristics – became a determining factor in the settler environment of antebellum New Orleans: it was a contending identity, which eventually broke apart in the American Civil War. On the shores of the Black Sea, the uneven inclusion of Odessa within the Russian Imperial project was shaped by its position as an interface of empire and religion. At about the same time as New Orleans was proving its allegiance to the American Union, Odessa – under the governorship of a Frenchman – did not take arms against the Napoleonic armies. Tensions surrounding

allegiances to the Bourbon dynasty, Napoleon Bonaparte, and the memory of Richelieu crystallized an outward-looking tendency that reached beyond the modest foreign French population of Odessa. There too, the successive leaderships of Richelieu, Langeron, and Vorontsov were marked by Western European models of government, which carved a distinct sense of urban citizenship. The bombardment of Odessa at the start of the Crimean War closed an era, marking a breakdown of the trust in Western European models. Ultimately, this chapter and the next aim to address, from victories to defeats, how cosmopolitan identities related to national projects and how they were themselves, in turn, transformed.

8.1 New Orleans’ battle for integration into the United States.

The making of American New Orleans and Russian Odessa was a protracted process, and both territories were treated for a time as colonial possessions. In New Orleans, the move from European colonial rule to full participation in the American democracy only materialized after a transitional Territorial Period (1803-1812). Statehood normally required reaching a certain demographic threshold: as Chapter 2 shows, Americanization was defeated from the start, with the most significant input of new inhabitants initially coming from outside of the United States and the Anglo-world.¹ The arrival of almost 10,000 refugees from the island of Haiti and the circum-Caribbean region in 1809-1810 created a situation in which the legal trigger for integration – plain numbers – contradicted the American vision, with a population that was

¹ According to the Ordinance of 1787, a territory needed a population of 60,000 to send delegates to a convention to vote on statehood and send a petition to the United States Congress. Such petition was sent in 1810, but it took another two years for the Territory of Orleans to become the State of Louisiana.

mostly Gallic, Catholic, and of mixed heritage. Conversely, in Odessa, the new Russian territories on the Pontic steppes were treated as colonies in their own right, with largely autonomous governors-general, whose powers were sometimes described as on par with the might of the Tsars.² Because foreign immigration was desired, it created a space divergent from other regions of the Russian Empire.³ Unlike the assorted population in the western provinces controlled by Russia – a combination of Slavic groups, living contiguously in a shared landscape – the populations that settled on the shores of the Black Sea were from regions geographically separate from southern Russia. The native populations of Tatars were also religiously and ethnically distinct. This spatial gap reinforced the unique character of the southern colonies, with Odessa epitomizing a new form of urbanity that was both awe-inspiring and troubling. When push came to shove, the ambivalent loyalty of the populations of both Odessa and New Orleans towards their respective adopted nations seemed dangerously uncertain. However, when the United States and the Russian Empire faced invasion, these populations took the opportunity to stand their ground and used battle as a tool of integration. In 1803, the year New Orleans was transferred to the United States, large portions of the Gallic population – Creoles, French, and Spanish– expressed hopes to soon see the territory gain statehood, or at least a “second degree of government”:

“It is the continuous object of our hopes and of our conversations among all that exists which is Louisianian. Our fathers have discovered, populated, cleared this country (...). Worthy now of a better fate, we expect from the United States that they will appreciate the acquisition they have made, and

² AMAE, 230CCC/3, 8 August 1823: When announcing that the Count of Vorontsov was named Governor General of New Russia, the French consul Challaye commented that his arrival marked a return to Odessa’s privileged status with the imperial authorities, the new governor having “an authority greater than anyone had had before him,” even Richelieu. When, in 1845, Vorontsov obtained the supreme command over the Caucasus, Challaye further added that he was “more than a lieutenant of the Emperor, but an alter ego.” (AMAE 230CCC/6, 17 January 1845)

³ Foreigners still comprised about one sixth of the city’s population by 1845 – ONSL 971, 6/18 April 1845: “The Commercial population of Odessa.”

will strive to make it dear to us: ... by granting us a constitution suitable to our wishes and our rights.”⁴

The delays in obtaining full participatory rights in the United States fed resentment among Louisianians, while the federal government remained wary of what it saw as an essentially alien population, which it could happily have done without during the land transfer. It is important to emphasize the difference in this respect between New Orleans and Odessa: Louisiana had been previously colonised by two rival European powers before its purchase by the United States, while Novorossiia was under the nominal authority of the Ottoman Empire, but mostly inhabited by Tatar populations. That the United States would have preferred to acquire a territory inhabited solely by Native Americans was salient during the Territorial Period, because such a demographic power dynamic would have been familiar. Further, the presence of ‘alien’ settlers created new territorial undercurrents, with a looming threat of foreign intervention that did not exist when treating with indigenous groups.

The delays in obtaining statehood for Louisiana fuelled hopes among the local population for a reversal of the Purchase agreement, wishing to be reunited with the French metropole – a wish that was much more outspoken in the 1800s than during the years of colonial rule.⁵ Within a year of the purchase, incendiary publications invited the population of New Orleans to rebel against Americans – and these handbills were attributed to foreign infiltration.⁶ James Brown, the U.S. District Attorney for Orleans Territory, blamed the “sources of discontent” on French and Spanish emissaries residing among Louisianians, who

⁴ Carter, Clarence Edwin. *The Territorial Papers of the United States. Department of State Publication*, vol IX. Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1934. Etienne Boré to the President (Orleans Terr. Papers), 185, Feb. 10th, 1804 - In French and Translated

⁵ In 1768, French colonialists had rebelled once against Spanish authorities and the rule of Alejandro O’Reilly. One of their complaints was about the neglect shown by the Spanish Crown – with a delayed transfer that had been expected since 1762.

⁶ Governor Claiborne to the President (Jefferson Papers) [223] New Orleans, 15th April 1804: “the stile of the writing is such as was used in France during the Revolutionary War, and envinces that these wicked Attempts do not originate with any of the Natives of Louisiana.” HNOG, MSS.125 f.576, 1804, April 8: Laussat noted posters parodying Antoinette Ligier de la Garde Deshoulières’s ‘Idylle des Moutons’ (1674), inviting insurrection.

continued “to alienate the affections of the French citizens from their new brethren, and to inspire the hope of a renewed incorporation into the Nation from which they are descended.”⁷ However, the discontent had more pragmatic causes. Brown determined that, “twice sold by their parent country, they are become infidels as to national honor ... ignorant of the true principles of government.” Louisiana was thus neither the natural extension of the United States, nor a potential neo-France, but merely a bargaining chip to counter Britain’s ambitions and naval superiority. Therefore, the long-term allegiance of the Louisianians to the United States, and the allegiance of the United States to Louisiana, was dubious at best.

“Why, it is asked, if this is not the case, has not more pains been taken to organize the Government, and to encourage emigration? (...) Why has not this Governor endeavoured, during his stay, to acquire the language and gain the esteem of the inhabitants?”⁸

Interestingly, while the Louisiana public felt lukewarm towards young Governor Claiborne, there had been initial plans to accommodate the sentiments and traditions of the local population and bind Louisianians to the American Revolutionary narrative. In the immediate aftermath of the Louisiana Purchase, President Thomas Jefferson admitted that the office of governor of the Louisiana Territory was “originally designed for a person whose great services and established fame would have rendered him peculiarly acceptable for the nation at large.”⁹ The person he had in mind was the Marquis de Lafayette, who had distinguished himself on the side of the American rebels during the war of Independence, and had been an active revolutionary in France thereafter. Jefferson saw him as a perfect compromise between the Louisiana colonists’ attachment to France and the Marquis’ good standing among the American public. Lafayette declined the offer, busy with his own affairs in the French political

⁷ James Brown to John Breckinridge (Breckinridge Papers) [508] German Coast, 17 September 1805.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.* The President to Governor Claiborne (Jefferson Papers) [281] August 30, 1804

sphere, especially his souring relationship with Napoleon Bonaparte.¹⁰ Yet this original intent indicates how Louisiana was treated differently from territories inhabited by indigenous nations. Because of its European settler component, the Federal Government paid more attention to its characteristics.¹¹

In this climate, the sense of political distrust was layered with enduring social isolation, with old and new Louisianian families marrying and mixing primarily within their ingroups. A creole writer argued that the 1810 “influx in New Orleans of the Saint Domingue refugees brilliantly reinforced the numbers and the power of our colonial ladies,” extending for at least one more generation the strength of the matrilineal lineages that bonded the local Creole society together.¹² Rather than a time of Americanization, the territorial period saw a revival of French colonial identities: it was, this writer thought, “what was to come twelve years later... the battle of New Orleans,” that represented the threshold that turned Louisianians into Americans.¹³

The Anglo-American War of 1812 was heralded as the United States’ Second War of Independence, a conflict that was concluded by the Louisiana campaign of 1814-15. Although the Louisianians did not fight as Americans in the 1775 revolution, they had fought under Spain against British forces in the Floridas, and the new conflict provided them with an opportunity to partake in the nation-making process of the young republic.¹⁴ Statehood was granted to the

¹⁰ Lafayette feared that if he left France for America, the imperial government might prevent his return.

¹¹ However, Louisiana did not have the same value as a European province obtained through conquest or territorial exchange, because it kept changing hands. For the United States, the ultimate bargaining chips were the Caribbean islands, and while New Orleans was important for the American internal trade, it was not (initially at least) quite as important as them.

¹² LARC, 905: Joseph Roger Baudier Papers, 1935-1961, folder 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Spain was initially neutral and hoped for an independent America that would weaken Britain. From 1777 the new Spanish governor of Louisiana Bernardo de Gálvez provided military aid to the Americans in the form of medicine, clothing, and weapons. After 1779, with Spain openly at war against Britain, Louisiana fought against English intrusions, and Spain regained control of both East and West Florida (lost in 1762).

Territory of Orleans in 1812, and three years later the Battle of Orleans reconciled American Creoles with a joint effort to end colonial rule on the North American mainland.¹⁵

Bernard de Marigny, the influential white Creole who developed a whole neighbourhood of New Orleans (Chapter 4), wrote one of the reference accounts of the campaign, condemning how Anglo-American narratives had misrepresented his peers.¹⁶ He claimed that the 1815 battle bolstered the historical grudges of Creoles of French descent, because “such [was] the character of the men of Southern Europe: they like[d] to wage war, especially against the English.”¹⁷ To him, the Louisianians’ enthusiasm for statehood and the enjoyment of full rights within the Union (at least for those who were white and male) was a crucial factor that other authors had disregarded. What he wanted to counter was the idea held elsewhere in the United States that the military victory was due solely “to the Anglo-Saxon race,” while New Orleans’ militiamen would have demonstrated an unsteady loyalty or simply refused to fight.¹⁸ That perception stemmed partly from the unwillingness of the Creoles to volunteer to fight for the United States a few years earlier, during the 1806 Burr Conspiracy, which sought to create an independent Southwestern country. By 1815, the situation had changed, and Marigny emphasized that even disenfranchised sections of the Louisianian population – such as the Baratavia pirates – remained faithful to the American Republic:

“Lafitte and the Baratarians (among whom were people of colour from St. Domingue), although they had neither property nor family in Louisiana, and gold was their only religion ... Lafitte and his companions, numbering more than 800, refused the gold of England; and, reminding themselves that they

¹⁵ The peace treaty was already signed on December 24, 1814, but news of the treaty arrived after the battle – and in some places news of the battle also arrived before the treaty.

¹⁶ HNOC, MSS.557 - The William C. Cook Collection: The War of 1812 in the South, Folders 1-100 (thereafter MSS.557) – 8.12., f.19: Marigny, Bernard, ‘Réflexions sur la campagne du Gal Jackson en Louisiane en 1814 et 1815.’

¹⁷ HNOC, MSS.557.8.12, f.19: Marigny, ‘Réflexions sur la campagne.’

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 10.

were almost all French, came to valiantly fight against the English, the eternal enemies of France.”¹⁹

To the 800 Baratarian pirates and outlaws were added about 600 white Creoles, and more than 400 Creoles of colour – a mix of men born in Louisiana, Saint Domingue, and France, not all having American citizenship.²⁰ Collectively, they represented a substantial contribution to American numbers at the decisive battle of January 8th, 1815.²¹ The Battle of New Orleans thus marked an important shift in the integration of the population of Louisiana by directly involving them in the defence of their homeland. The war also provided the former colony with an opportunity to participate in its own fight for independence, without questioning its own historical allegiances. The war was not a fight against former rulers, France and Spain, and these two nations could therefore remain positive references and useful cultural ties. At the same time, the war created a sense of cohesion and shared struggle between Louisianians and their new American brethren, while demonstrating that the American identity needed not be defined around exclusively Anglo-Saxon criteria to be valid. Just like the American literature about the 1775 conflict, post-1815 rhetoric could exalt the unity demonstrated in this common struggle across distinct sections of the population – rich and poor, men and women, white and black.

Comparing the women of New Orleans to the women of South Carolina during the war of independence, Marigny described the “nobility of their character” and managed to insert

¹⁹ Pirates, privateers, and smugglers, led by the pirate Jean Lafitte, used as their base Baratavia Bay – an indented and marshy bay of the Gulf Mexico, with many islands. The name derives from the fictional territory of Baratavia island, governed by Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote*. HNOG, MSS.557.8.12, f.19: Marigny, ‘Réflexions sur la campagne,’ 23.

²⁰ Nell, William Cooper. *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*. RF Wallcut, 1855.292 “The report ‘No. 8,’ from the American Army, corroborates the following interesting statements ... that there were 150 men in the ‘battalion of the St. Domingo men of color’, and 280 in the ‘Major Lacoste’s battalion of Louisiana Men of color’, so no less than 400 men of colour.”

²¹ *Ibid.* 292. The American side counted a total of 4,732 men, including three volunteer battalions fielded by Orleans Parish to the final engagements: the Orleans Volunteers (and the City Militia), and the First (Louisiana Free coloured) and Second (Saint Domingue black creoles) Battalions, a total of about 1,000 men.

tropes that were intrinsically French within this American narrative, establishing a common cause and destiny against the English enemy:

“If, by misfortune, the front line – the Jackson line – had been blown away, more than one damsel would have dressed themselves an Amazon side-saddle rider and taken up a spear. Joan of Arc, named the *Maiden of Orleans*, rallied in olden days the troops of Charles VII, and forcefully contributed to bring him back on the throne of France. In this hemisphere, too, Orleans-the-New had its Joan of Arc.”²²

The other side of the story however, ever less celebrated by the white creoles, was the involvement of coloured troops in the New Orleans militia and of enslaved men in the federal troops – many among the latter group having been falsely promised freedom.²³ In September 1814, General Andrew Jackson addressed “the Free Colored Inhabitants of Louisiana”, calling them to take up arms to defend the American nation, while intimating that the civic divide between white and coloured creoles should not be maintained:

“Through a mistaken policy, you have heretofore been deprived of a participation in the glorious struggle for national rights, in which our country is engaged. This no longer shall exist.”²⁴

Jackson called Creoles of colour ‘sons of freedom,’ the ‘adopted children’ of America. The urgency of the conflict compelled him to offer “the same bounty, in money and lands, now received by the white soldiers of the United States.” However, these freemen companies remained separated from white soldiers, and their leadership, composed of Creoles and Frenchmen, was white. A second proclamation, issued in French on December 18, 1814,

²² HNO, MS.S557.8.12, f.19: Marigny, ‘Réflexions sur la campagne,’ 27-31

²³ Roberts, James, *The Narrative of James Roberts...: ‘a Battle which cost me a limb, some blood, and almost my life’* Chicago, 1858. Recruited from countryside plantations to fight at the Battle of Orleans, James Robert, as many others, was promised freedom from slavery in exchange for his participation and potential sacrifice. However, after victory was gained, Jackson did not fulfil his word and sent the surviving troops back to their masters and lives of servitude.

²⁴ Nell, *The Colored Patriots*, 1855, 286. In this speech, Jackson used a language very similar to that used in the French National Convention when proclaiming the abolition of slavery on February 4, 1794, in a context of escalating conflict with Britain in Saint Domingue – in Dubois and Garrigus. *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents*. Second ed. Bedford Series in History and Culture. Boston, 2017, 122-25.

praised these companies for having “done more than expected” to defend their “native country.”²⁵ All mention of division and difference was removed as the federal troops prepared for the battle. In New Orleans, the situation was not exactly new, since coloured militia had existed prior to the Louisiana Purchase, organised in small ‘Corps of Volunteers’ after 1804. These Corps were limited in numbers, led by white majors, and only composed of residents of New Orleans and its vicinity.²⁶ All coloured volunteers had to be taxpayers and real estate owners.

After the Battle of Orleans, Creoles of colour themselves eventually resorted to the same narrative devices as the white Creoles to frame that event: they justified their feat of arms through “the French and Spanish blood from which they are sprung.” This blood, they argued, had “preserved the primitive warmth and generosity which distinguish those two chivalric nations.”²⁷ As time went by, they also emphasized their ties to a French revolutionary tradition, a distinction differentiating them from the English-speaking black population. However, in the decades that followed, the commemoration of the battalions of colour went from celebratory to discreet, if not fully neglected.²⁸ In 1851, the *New Orleans Picayune* reported the presence of 90 coloured veterans at the anniversary of the Battle of Orleans, who were “for the first time called to assist in celebrating.” Underlining a divided public opinion about the exclusion of these coloured veterans, the newspaper continued:

“During the thirty-six years that have passed away since they assisted to repel the invaders from our shores, these faithful men have never before participated in the annual rejoicings for the victory which their valor contributed to gain. Their good deeds have been consecrated only in their memories or lived but to claim a passing notice on the page of the historian.”²⁹

²⁵ *Ibid.* 289.

²⁶ Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order*, 2009, 183.

²⁷ ‘A letter from New Orleans, addressed to Le Republican’ in Nell, *The Colored Patriots*, 1855, 305.

²⁸ From 1825 to 1851, January 8th was commemorated as a nation-wide public holiday, on par with July 4th.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 289. The author continued his article by stating “We were not too exalted to mingle with them in the affray; they were not too humble to join in our rejoicings.” However, the reality of Black Americans’ perilous situation soon caught up: “Yet, if

While Louisianians fought for the United States during the War of 1812, their allegiance continued to be debated, but with a shifted paradigm, following the transition in France from the Napoleonic Empire to the Bourbon Restoration in 1815. Most French migrants to New Orleans were once again considered suspect – refugees, runaways, or potential recruiters. Surveillance was extended over all the ships coming directly from France. Guillemin, the local French consul, called this measure “indispensable in a city in which the residents profess so openly an insane fondness for a foreign tyrant, who (...) still happens to reign intermittently in the very capital city of one of the States (this one) composing the American Republic.”³⁰ He reported an incident in the harbour of New Orleans, caused by a small tricolour flag kept on the mast of an English ship – the symbol of Napoleonic France, which had since been replaced by the restored French monarchy’s white flag, dotted with gold fleur-de-lys. Other smaller boats followed suit, raising the republican and imperial flag and attracting a vast crowd, who turned confrontational: “[French sailors] climbed to the top of the masts and there, with irrational shouts, repeated by the crowd, of ‘Long live Napoleon!’ they took off flags and weather vane.”³¹ This display of the flag of revolutionary France on board an English ship felt offensive to most French and Creoles residents of New Orleans, rekindling at the same time their hostility towards their historical enemy and a sense of loyalty and nostalgia for the former metropole. It also enhanced the lasting attachment that the inhabitants of that country felt towards the man who had facilitated their transfer into American hands. Yet many Bonapartists were penniless and trapped on the American shores, and when one of these ‘filibusters’ committed suicide in 1817, he was inhumated at the Saint Louis Cathedral of New Orleans with military honours and cries of loyalty to Napoleon:

five, even of these veterans, should at any time be seen talking together, they are liable to be arrested for conspiracy, according to the laws of Louisiana!”

³⁰ AMAE, 227CCC/2, 30 mars 1817.

³¹ *Ibid.* 19 mars 1817.

“The name of a foreign tyrant, of an usurper fallen from the throne receives here honours and commendations, and the arches of a holy temple resound with the praises given by the impious, to the suicide triumphally carried to the altars of the Very High.”³²

If New Orleans felt more like a French than an American city, it was nonetheless a particular kind of French city, stuck in time, akin to a “provincial town during [Napoleon’s] Hundred Days.”³³ When Bonaparte died in 1821, a prisoner on isolated St. Helena island, the residents of New Orleans raised money to hold a memorial service at the Saint Louis cathedral in January 1822.³⁴ Later that year, at public dinners hosted by New Orleans Mayor’s office, toasts honoured ‘*l’Empereur Napoléon*’, sometimes Lafayette, but never the King of France.³⁵ For that reason, when Louis XVIII died in 1824, the French consul, jointly with the Bishop of Louisiana, felt compelled to organise a great and pompous memorial ceremony at the Cathedral, inviting all the State representatives in an express effort to counterbalance the enduring local partisanship towards Bonaparte.³⁶ However, the city of New Orleans continued to long uphold that nostalgia, for instance by receiving a rare bronze death mask of Napoleon in 1833 – an object still exhibited in the old Cabildo.³⁷

In a sense, that longing for the French Empire, just as references to an idealized medieval France fighting its English enemy, was antiquated. The image of France that Louisianians called for was out of touch with the country that had come into existence – and

³² *Ibid.* 19 April 1817. Again, a few weeks later, Guillemin writes about the production of a play titled “*La Journée des Trois Empereurs, ou la veille de la Bataille d’Austerlitz*” (The day of the three emperors, or the eve of the Battle of Austerlitz) during which the imperial flag and cocardes were worn by many members of the public (7 May 1817).

³³ *Ibid.* 227CCC/2, 27 Juillet 1817.

³⁴ NOPL, *Courrier de la Louisiane*, 15 October 1821; *Louisiana State Gazette*, 11 and 20 February 1822. There were debates, between the Creoles and the Americans, about how ‘imposing’ the ceremony had really been.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 22 October 1822.

³⁶ AMAE, 227CCC/3, 16 December 1824, and 20 January 1825.

³⁷ HNOG MSS.100, f.734, ca.1833. The mask was presented by his former physician, Dr. Antonmarchi. Previously, there had been plans to help Bonaparte escape from St Helena to New Orleans, and a house was set up for him by a former mayor, at the corner of Chartres and Saint-Louis streets.

their spatial separation from the theatre of revolutions, reign of Terror, imperial rule, and continental warfare created an additional temporal distortion.

“This circumstance and the commonly bad spirit which reign in this country, where people care a lot about France, but in the wrong way, to praise and regret what is no more, and to revile and slander what exists today (...).”³⁸

Yet, while in the United States, these same French citizens seemed completely indifferent to the representatives of the French state – ambassador and consuls alike. The consul to New Orleans, Guillemin, inferred that should they go back to France they would only do so “under the disguise of foreigners.” His view was that the French government should keep a close watch on those individuals leaving Louisiana to return to their homeland. Between the demise and the death of Napoleon, some of these French American ‘renegades’ sought opportunities to prove their value: the Mexican War of Independence (1808-1821) provided just that. Because Joseph Bonaparte, the brother of Napoleon, had been briefly placed on the throne of Spain, rumours abounded that the insurgents of Mexico might recognise him as a king and establish there a new Bonaparte dynasty if he helped them thwart colonial rule. For a time, New Orleans became a meeting point for companies of exiled Frenchmen, coming there to join the fight.³⁹ Guillemin thought Bonapartists supported the struggle to “exchange their denomination of rebels against titles, rank, and honours”.⁴⁰

However, what the consul worried about most was the increasing rivalry between local Francophones and Anglo-Americans: while the former initially maintained a numerical majority in most public and political offices, the growing power of the latter group threatened

³⁸ AMAE, 227CCC/2, 15 April 1817.

³⁹ AMAE, 227CCC/2, 26 February 1818. Joseph Bonaparte would have been leading that project. After the Sale of Louisiana, the Isla del Carmen, near the Yucatan, where several French families still lived, was France’s last chance for lucrative trade in the Gulf of Mexico.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 227CCC/2, 19 April 1817 - The French ambitions in the Gulf of Mexico would only unfold under Napoleon III, but Guillemin nonetheless wrote: “Saint Domingue, which was for France what Mexico could be for Spain, owed from the beginning to these ... buccaneers, the creation of its first establishments [...] wouldn’t it be possible to bring today’s buccaneers ... to be the main instruments of the restoration of this beautiful colony.”

to shift the balance. The spirit of discord and division between the ‘French’ and the American contingents of the population eventually contributed to unmaking the spirit of union symbolized by 1815. Twenty years after the Louisiana Purchase, and less than a decade after the Battle of Orleans:

“the discord has leaked all the way into the ranks of the militia, and we saw recently the very men whose blood had been spilled together in the defence of their shared motherland [...] now estranged, walking in separate troops and under different leaders, at the same time as they were celebrating through a military parade the glorious anniversary of their victory.”⁴¹

The fear of a civic conflict was embedded in the Louisianian social landscape, because two distinct nations coexisted in its midst, used to competing against each other for centuries – since, before the Franco-American alliance, there had been the lasting rivalry between the French and the English. That division was eventually enacted for a time through the Municipal division of New Orleans (1836-1852), after more than a decade of intense lobbying and rallying cries of ‘no taxation without representation.’

8.2 Odessa at the intersection between conflicting empires.

In Odessa, the integration of the city and of the Black Sea region also revolved around discourses on identity and military conflict. For half a century, the city was led almost continuously by men who were either foreigners, or who had been brought up abroad. The Duke of Richelieu, the first in this series of strong leaders, was an ‘aristocrat on the lam’⁴²: the heir of a premier noble French family, a descendant of the famous Cardinal of Richelieu (the prime minister of King Louis XIII), he had fled his homeland at the start of the revolutionary

⁴¹ AMAE, 227CCC/3, 22 January 1823.

⁴² King, *Odessa: Genius and Death*, 2011, 57.

turmoil. Richelieu eventually joined the Russian imperial army, becoming a supporter of Catherine II, and a close friend of her grandson Alexander, who became emperor in 1801. The new Tsar trusted the duke with the development of Odessa and the new Russian provinces. His trans-European career embodied the uprooting experience shared by many of his upper-class compatriots, split between a hostile and republican French nation and an ambivalent Russian imperium. Far from the aristocratic world of Saint Petersburg, where only the well-introduced could thrive, Richelieu rose to fame on the shores of an Eurasian ‘new world’, the remote steppes of Novorossiya – almost as distant from the centres of Russian power as from the ports of France. Russia’s southern expansion at the turn of the nineteenth century was comparable to the westward movement observed in Northern America decades later. The advantages of the two continental powers in the making were comparable in the eyes of contemporaries: vast lands that were populated by scattered groups, numerous rivers for trade and travel, and a great variety of climates to fully develop its agriculture.⁴³ And just as the United States appealed to foreign settlers to expand over the continent, the Russian Empire called in refugees, nationless groups, and communities in need of free land to settle its new southernmost regions (*see* Chapter 3).

This nation of immigrants – the south and west European settlers who came to inhabit Novorossiya, displacing its native populations – created a form of Russianness which was very different from what could be observed in other parts of the empire.⁴⁴ The bulk of the trading population was pan-Mediterranean, the rulers French, and the administration only sparsely Russian. The Novorossiyan identity had to be constructed through the unmaking of other

⁴³ Pradt, D. *Parallèle De La Puissance Anglaise Et Russe Relativement à L'Europe , Suivi D'un Aperçu Sur La Grèce* , Paris, 1823, 147-148. Another contemporary writer, reflecting on the Louisiana Purchase, noted that it would have been preferable for Spain to either gain the money that France ended up receiving for the sale of the colony, or for Spain to wisely pick the less threatening neighbour – in that regard, Russia was regarded as an ideal candidate. Fortia De Piles, Alphonse-Toussaint-Joseph-André-Marie-Marseille. *Coup D'oeil Rapide Sur L'état Présent Des Puissances Européennes*, Paris, 1805: 245, 267, 271.

⁴⁴ Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa*, 2017, chapter 1.

identities, their mutual erosion fostering a sense of local pride and belonging. Although Odessa did not single out French inhabitants as Americans had done in New Orleans, the wide-ranging troubles wrought by revolutionary France, and the changing tide in the Franco-Russian amity made this prominent and powerful segment of the population look suspicious, if not subversive.

The year 1812 provided a crucial turning point, with the French invasion of Russia by Napoleon's *Grande Armée* – and its subsequent expulsion, through scorched-earth tactics, guerrilla warfare, and with the help of the unforgiving Russian winter. Odessa was far from the seats of power, and indeed the Napoleonic armies had their eyes set on Moscow. The new city, growing at a remarkable rate, was still of a relatively modest size – in between 20,000 and 25,000 inhabitants. However, soldiers and apt generals were mobilized from all sides, including the Duke of Richelieu, who had proven his military command in earlier campaigns under Catherine II, especially at the siege of Ismail. The city had previously been close to the frontline of another conflict, the Russo-Turkish War (1806-1812). The conflict began as a response to French political pressure, and Novorossiia at large became the rear of the warring armies.

With the invasion of Russia by Napoleon, Odessa turned against its French population – unsurprisingly since their own country was attacking Russia. Hostility targeted more particularly French traders, who were refused the right to load ships and send their cargo out, as rumours of an attack from the Black Sea spread.⁴⁵ The French ship captains were torn between their national duty and their economic interests, some taking refuge in Constantinople to wait out the conflict. Yet tensions escalated quickly, leading the French consul in Taganrog to concede that “the Russians abhor the French more than ever and take every opportunity to cause them troubles.”⁴⁶ He gave the example of a French trader named Lagorio, established in the Crimean city of Feodosia, who had been expelled by the Russians, given only two days to

⁴⁵ AMAE, 230CCC/2, 17 and 24 March 1812.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 18 April 1812.

settle his affairs and gather his belongings.⁴⁷ Similarly, the French consul to Odessa, Mr. Mure, was soon sent to pack, not without exchanging a few bitter words with Richelieu, disappointed by the duke's lack of solidarity with his own nationals. Yet the Governor was powerless in supporting French émigrés living in his jurisdiction, and sternly replied to the consul that there was nothing to do but to “resign ourselves.” Mure eventually fled to Warsaw, and cast doubts on the future of French settlers in Russia:

“The minds are much more divided than during the previous war. Nonetheless, I have not been sheltered from the insults and vexations that these barbarians exert against the French.”⁴⁸

Before leaving the city, he had noticed that the local opinion assumed that the French troops would submerge the Russian army, and that New Russia would be taken over by Napoleon. These rumours were met hopefully by some foreign groups who wished for a prolonged French occupation and even rule.⁴⁹ Mure did not use the lexicon of colonisation but noted that the idea was popular among sections of the almost 30,000 foreign colonists living in New Russia and coming from different west European nations. German settlers seemed to welcome “with pleasure” the prospect of a new rule, because it might exempt them from the debts in money and lands that tied them to the Russian government.⁵⁰

However, if the Battle of Orleans marked a turning point for Louisiana, and entrenched its loyal participation to the War of 1812, the French invasion of Russia was almost a non-event for Odessa. The reasons for it were two-fold: first, the governorship of the Duke of Richelieu put the city in an uneasy position as a maritime border of the Russian imperium that was under the leadership of a Frenchman. It was public knowledge that Richelieu told Tsar

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 12 September 1812.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 9 September 1812.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 12 September 1812

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Alexander I that “he would never wage war against the French” – and that, following that principle, he might only fight against the Austrian army.⁵¹ The closeness between the Duke and the Russian emperor ensured that this position did not endanger him, although other Russian ministers took umbrage at this behaviour. Conversely, consul Mure reproached Richelieu with being “too devoted to Russia,” the Duke using his own influence in France to bring trade deals to the Novorossiyan provinces and encouraging the departure and settlement of French merchants.⁵² The second reason was the arrival, in the fall of 1812, of a devastating plague epidemic – one of the last outbreaks of the ‘Black Death’ in Europe. The epidemic killed over 10 percent of the city’s 25,000 inhabitants, with the incredible rate of 50 people dying each day. If the engagement in the 1812 campaign could have tarnished the local memory of Richelieu, the plague became one of the major events for which the duke is remembered in Odessa. Trying to prevent the widescale contamination of the province and of the empire, Richelieu established strict *cordons sanitaires* across the city, isolating whole neighbourhoods with 500 Cossack soldiers watching over a population fifty times larger, and forcing the inhabitants to stay within their houses for sixty consecutive days.

The epidemic also removed Odessa from the war against Napoleon: the city did not send any soldiers. Instead of participating in the war against France, Odessa as a city proved its value to Russia by fighting off and containing the deadly epidemic to the Black Sea shores. Richelieu also raised donations for the army, giving 40,000P out of his own pocket. This event became the bedrock of the city’s self-perception – while Richelieu entrenched his reputation as one of the city’s foundational figures. Yet in a city of foreigners, led by a representative of the French enemy, loyalty had ultimately not been tested. This point was raised time and again by Russian critics and nationalists accusing Odessa of being a fully foreign city, politically

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

outside of Russia. Odessa’s inhabitants fought off the accusation in arguing that the trade interests of the city had always been sacrificed on the “altar of the homeland”:

“Let us remember the plagues of 1812, 1829, 1837, the cholera... and most of all the national struggle of 1812, when, prompted by the voice of the Duke of Richelieu, this city which only counted a total of 25,000 residents offered to the country 100,000P from the Greek traders, 94,000P from the Russian traders, and 18,250P from foreigners...”⁵³

After the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in France, the Duke left the city to become France’s Prime Minister and continued to keep a keen eye on Odessa’s interests and prosperity. Consequently, to next two French consuls, Mr. Doriol (1814-1821) and Mr. Challaye (1817-1846), directly corresponded with Richelieu when reporting about Odessa’s economic and social situation. Although France never ruled New Russia, the career of the Duke of Richelieu brought an unusual focus to this frontier region: this attention was visible in France’s foreign affairs and in Richelieu’s own remote supervision of Odessa. His role in negotiating the conditions of peace at the congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818 also ensured France’s entry in the Holy Alliance Treaty, and thus the returned respectability of French nationals within the Russian territories.⁵⁴ Odessa’s French inhabitants welcomed the news with joy and even “euphoria”, feeling relief at the resuming of their good standing in Russia.

In Novorossiya, the duke’s successor in the role of governor was another French émigré from the revolutionary years, the Count of Langeron – and he too continued to create an auspicious climate for French settlers coming to Novorossiya. Reports even suggested that Langeron bent existing Russian immigration laws and official documentation requirements when it came to French visitors, showing a public preference for his fellow countrymen.⁵⁵ However, the representatives of France in Odessa also expressed doubts about the loyalty of

⁵³ ONSL 971, 1845, n.28, 6/18 April.

⁵⁴ AMAE, 230CCC/2, 10 November 1818.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 8 Mars 1816.

the French nationals to their motherland, because most of their economic and social interests had become embedded within the destinies of Russia. A prominent Odessa merchant, Charles Sicard, who was by birth a Frenchman from Marseilles, eventually endeavoured to prohibit the import in Russia of all French products: a strategy to compel France to alter its own laws and duties on imported grains, Odessa’s prime commodity, of which Sicard was one of the main suppliers.⁵⁶

But not all foreign residents were so supportive of Russia, and eventually foreigners and particularly French nationals felt they overstayed their welcome, as local laws and regulations put pressure to either surrender their nationality or leave. By 1823, rumours that no foreigner would be allowed to work in Odessa in any trade or profession unless they had renounced their nationality proliferated. Consul Challaye worried about the future of Odessa’s French nationals and warned that they might altogether abandon the city, thus undermining France’s commercial involvement in the Black Sea:

“The French artisans [...] live like birds on a branch, because most of them seem to be decided to leave this country rather than forsake their nation, and they fear that, later, the publicity given to that order might become a weapon used against them, either to coerce them to become Russian, or to inflict punishments they would seem to deserve for not having complied earlier.”⁵⁷

The situation of French nationals, who had been so privileged and protected during the first two decades of the nineteenth century by positive immigration laws, and further shielded by the governorships of two Frenchmen, slowly degraded throughout the 1820s and 1830s. Although foreign residents brought wealth to the city, the threat of expulsion and illegality loomed large, without any decisive confirmation nor denial of that measure – all living in a state of “exceptional mercy and singular favour.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 6 mars 1821.

⁵⁷ AMAE, 230CCC3, 15 July 1824.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 25 July 1824.

The end of Langeron’s governorship in 1822, the year of the death of the Duke of Richelieu, represented the dawn of a new age in the relationship between the French state and the provinces of New Russia. Without an advocate to defend their interests at the heart of the French government, the French émigrés had to navigate a new situation, in which their demographic minority could no longer count on political pre-eminence. At the same time, Odessa’s foreign residents faced an administration a lot less amenable to accommodating in-between status. Some Russians blamed the perceived “decadence of Odessa” on Richelieu’s past views on commerce, which drove him to “grant great advantages, use an extreme indulgence, and thereafter turn a blind eye onto many little abuses.” These abuses were double-edged:

“On the one hand, it is true that they hurt a little the interests of tax authorities and the general laws of the empire, but on the other hand too, they greatly compensated these inconveniences through the immense advantage of attracting into an empty country population, industry, and foreign capitals.”⁵⁹

The new local government, composed of Russian officials unfamiliar with Novorossiia, decided to launch large-scale reforms across the province to regulate the trading community. This set of reforms made the situation more difficult for foreign merchants, while contributing to the growing lack of interest of France in Southern Russia. While it had previously been easy for Frenchmen to settle on these shores, remaining there became increasingly complicated. Southern Russia’s rapid development had been supported by the human settlement and financial investments of foreigners, yet their role was only recognized with suspicion of corruption and abuses. In the 1820s, the erosion of the advantages granted to foreigners prompted a rise in departures, while causing an economic slump. By 1825, almost 200 shops and boutiques had closed, and over 2,000 passport requests were received by

⁵⁹ AMAE, 230CCC/4, 28 February 1825, « Rapport sur le commerce d’Odessa pendant l’année 1824. »

Odessa's police.⁶⁰ The first age of Odessa's multicultural and cosmopolitan history risked a premature ending, with stricter rules on the mobility and opportunities of foreigners. South Russian cosmopolitanism thus seemed to have an expiration date. However, these changes also marked a transition period in which the aspirations and fantasies of enlightenment-era cosmopolitanism were adjusted to practical realities, creating identities that were hybrid and complex, embedded in locality rather than only transnational associations.⁶¹

“This emigration is starting to scare the administration, who cannot take it upon itself to revoke the orders regarding foreigners and does not dare yet to refuse them the possibility to exit Russia. However, it seems that many of them are decided to do it, it is no longer the time when the perspective of the great advantages which were ensured upon settlement in this country could make them overlook all the charges and the inconvenience of naturalisation, it is only those who will be completely out of choice who will resolve themselves to becoming Russian. Unfortunately, a rather large number of French nationals are in the latter category.”⁶²

The initial absorption of the early French community of Odessa into Russia was therefore both the result of a change in law and of the end of an early period of benevolence. French nationals could no longer make use of the preferential treatment that administrators like Langeron had provided them, while the pursuit of a privileged trading and diplomatic relationship with France ended with the resignation of Richelieu. In 1830, during the events of the French July Revolution, an *ukaze* forbade the presence of the tricolour flag in all ports of Russia, with a second order preventing the entrance of French nationals into the Russian Empire.⁶³ As a result, safeguarding French nationality became gradually a burden for the Gallic inhabitants of Odessa, as the initial premise of their settlement – the possibility to be French nationals and live and trade in South Russia – failed to match the new diplomatic and political

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 12 May 1825.

⁶¹ As an interesting counterpoint to French and foreign traders in Odessa, we can look at American historiography on the transformation of Quaker communities in late eighteenth-century Charleston. Carp, Benjamin. “‘Fix’d Almost amongst Strangers’ (2017).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.* 6 September 1830.

reality. When in the 1800s, French émigrés had been welcomed and even entrusted with high offices, by the mid-1830s being French ceased to confer any significant advantage.

The growing tensions in the European international order and the renewed expansionists ambitions of France created an irksome situation for French nationals in Russia, marking them as suspect.⁶⁴ The case of a Mr. Léon Leconte, who came to Odessa with a passport containing all the necessary paperwork, infuriated the local consul, as said Leconte was refused entry into Russia. He saw in it a treatment that singled out French citizens among all the foreign nations transiting through the port, despite the official state of peace between Russia and France.⁶⁵ On a different occasion, the consul complained about the difficulties encountered by another Frenchman, a regular trader on the Black Sea, who was prevented from moving across the different provinces of Novorossiya to conduct his business. When the consul asked governor-general Vorontsov to facilitate the obtention of an internal passport for this trader, Vorontsov had to admit that “if [he] were of any other nationality, I could maybe do what you wish, but being French, this is absolutely impossible to me.”⁶⁶

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the French-speaking populations of New Orleans and Odessa had learnt to live with the ebb and flow of history in both their adopted country and their motherland. Historical turning points regularly questioned their loyalties, as well as their sense of belonging and their future role within lands that were undergoing a radical national transformation. Ultimately, the accommodation of hybrid communities on the shores of the Black Sea and of the Mississippi river resulted in the slow erosion of the double allegiance that had characterised the early history of the Gallic groups residing in the two port-cities.

⁶⁴ AMAE, 230CCC/5, 17 July 1835.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ AMAE, 230CCC/6, 16 May 1844.

Chapter 9 The ebb and flow of Frenchness in foreign settlements: from victory to defeat.

The Russian Empire and the United States had faced military conflicts in 1812, both pushing back an invasion by a different Western European power. The American and the Russian wars of 1812 ended in victories for the powers under attack: in each case the position of the Franco-Gallic populations of Odessa and New Orleans came under scrutiny as they found opportunities for acceptance, promotion, or redefinition. These conflicts characterized and articulated Frenchness in local terms. But as the century unfolded, the role of these groups as internal others – whether they were foreign nationals or were part of creole generations – became more intricate, especially where their actions were shaped by developments happening in France, an estranged motherland. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, the spectre of the French empire created a tempting backdrop, hinting at a possible further mobility into France's new colonial possessions – something equally valid in Odessa and New Orleans.

In New Orleans, hopes for the recolonization of Saint Domingue by France persisted among the Louisiana Creole and French population, backed by France's dispute with Haiti, and fuelled French activities and interventions in Mexico. New Orleans became a hub for French colonial ventures, with the transit of soldiers and goods into the wider Gulf region. The Franco-Mexican 'Pastry' War (1838-1839) focused on the rich harbour of Veracruz, with the hope of turning the Gulf seas into a French lake, connected through a network of islands in the Caribbean, land-based colonies such as Guyana, and the high mobility of French-prone communities of Creoles. The dreams of claiming Mexico for France were agitated as late as Napoleon III's unsuccessful military campaign of 1861-1867 – parts of which coincided with

the Civil War tearing apart the American Republic. From the viewpoint of Odessa, the rise of a French Mediterranean colonial landscape provided alternatives for eager settlers and enterprising merchants, especially when the economic opportunities that had prompted their initial move to the Black Sea suddenly became accessible in an official French sphere of influence. From the 1830s onwards, the French consul to Odessa repeatedly dealt with demands by French – and Swiss – families to facilitate their departure from New Russia and relocate to Algiers.¹ The virtual absence of French overseas colonies between 1790 and 1830 had played an important role in earlier migrations to the Black Sea and Louisiana. The new interest for France's colonial possessions was concomitant with the erosion and eventual write-off of the favourable policies that had initially attracted French settlers to Russia's southern frontier (Chapter 3). The Russian government wanted foreign settlers to become Russian nationals to prevent capital from seeping out of Russia: the advantages in land, grants, and tax relief promoted by the initial administrations were no more. Those settlers who had not taken up a Russian nationality felt that their livelihood was becoming increasingly insecure, and the promises made by the French government to further colonise Algeria, such as land concessions and financial loans, were more than appealing.²

In Odessa as in New Orleans, the wider development and renewed dynamism of the French state's colonial ambitions created an alternative to national assimilation, while those who chose to stay relinquished their former allegiances. The effects of the Crimean War and Civil War on the French populations of these two cosmopolitan cities reframed their loyalties as they found their national identity questioned and challenged by those conflicts.

¹ AMAE, 230CCC/4, 17 June 1831.

² Ibid.

9.1 Contested loyalties on the Black Sea shores.

French citizenship had been for years a site of contention in the provinces of Novorossiia, particularly in the trading world of Odessa. As consul Challaye noticed over his decades in the service of France, French nationality was more problematic than other foreign nationalities, and time and again pressure was exerted on all foreign settlers to become fully and legally Russian. The military escalation leading up to the Crimean War, pitting France and its British and Ottoman allies against the Russian Empire, provided the final breaking point between old and new national allegiances. The Crimean conflict itself was the culmination of a variety of political tensions that had accumulated over the previous decades. Yet, it was imperial in essence: a territorial contest in the Danube estuary between Tsar Nicholas I and Sultan Abdulmejid I, a colonial rivalry between Britain and Russia over Central Asia and northern access to the Indian peninsula, a trade competition in the Mediterranean with the imminent creation of a canal across the Suez isthmus, and a political competition with Napoleon III seeking to impose himself as a strong contender among European imperial powers, but also as a legitimate emperor at home.³ In this contest between empires, the causes and outcomes of the Crimean War have long shown that it was waged not so much in defence of the Ottomans, but against Russia's ambitions. In 1853, soon after the beginning of the war, Mikhail Pogodin, Slavophile professor of history at the University of Moscow, sent a memorandum to Tsar Nicholas I, expressing the colonial character of the conflict:

“France takes Algeria from Turkey, and almost every year England annexes another Indian principality: none of this disturbs the balance of power; but [it

³ Taylor, A. J. P. *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918*. Oxford, 1954: 60–61. “In some sense the Crimean war was predestined and had deep-seated causes. Neither Nicholas I nor Napoleon III nor the British government could retreat in the conflict for prestige once it was launched. Nicholas needed a subservient Turkey for the sake of Russian security; Napoleon needed success for the sake of his domestic position; the British government needed an independent Turkey for the security of the Eastern Mediterranean ... Mutual fear, not mutual aggression, caused the Crimean war.”

does] when Russia occupies Moldavia and Wallachia, albeit only temporarily.”⁴

The conflict entered the vicinity of Odessa in April 1854, when three steamships – two English and one French – were seen cruising in the harbour of the city.⁵ Odessa had avoided real military conflict for its first sixty years of existence, left out of the 1812 campaign as it was battling the plague. The vision of warships blocking its harbour was a complete novelty, coming as a shock to a population used to the open character of the merchant city. This spectacle also brought under their eyes the flags of the warring nations, to which many of them still belonged:

“We have then also seen, we inhabitants born in Odessa, this flag that dominates the oceans, the flag of Abukir and Trafalgar, we have finally admired the tricolour flag, which went around the world carried in glory, saved by a poet, for the benefit of a republic, and fortuitously fallen in the hands of an Emperor. [...] Thus, we saw this crowd of spectators, in the greater part composed of strangers, buckle under the weight of a profound humiliation.”⁶

If ties to the foreign motherland had previously induced a sense of pride, these ties now physically endangered the residents of Odessa and elicited embarrassment and shame. The ambiguous loyalties of the French population, a source of internal conflict and official disputes, decisively turned in favour of Russia. An Odessa French wrote a public letter to share the dismay of his fellow national residents, which he sent for publication to a Belgian journal. Starting his letter with an introduction about the value of the port, he insisted on Odessa’s essentially commercial and cosmopolitan character, a “defenceless city without fortifications” that was more of a blessing than a curse to Europe, since it had “fed the Occident during the

⁴ Figes, Orlando. *Crimea : The Last Crusade*. London, 2011, 134. See also Tsygankov, Andrei P. “The Crimean War, 1853–1856.” In Tsygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor in International Relations*, 195–215. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

⁵ ONSL 971, 1854, n.37, 2/14 April.

⁶ *Ibid.* 5/17 April 1854, n.38.

entire previous winter.”⁷ The author of the letter expected that the city had nothing to fear from self-proclaimed liberal and commercial nations. When Odessa was eventually bombarded, the shift in allegiance was palpable among the French:

“During the action, all the foreigners, and above all the many French who live in our city, were filled with sadness and indignation when faced with this furious attack against a commercial and almost unprotected city.”⁸

Some had considered France the natural ally of the city, going back half a century to the rule of the Duke of Richelieu, his nation taking the role of a benevolent relative. This sense of kinship was shattered by the attack, and it was the participation of France, much more than that of Britain, that provoked outrage:

“The merciless history should have reminded us that while the English flag carried wickedly more than one indelible stain for actions (...) we still relied on the forced assistance of the French squadron; we thought that a bad blow (*mauvais coup*) is always easier to achieve when one is on their own than when it must result from the agreement and thoughts of two individuals, especially when that second individual is responsible for representing what was commonly known until now as noble and chivalresque France!”⁹

The author dismissed suggestions that the city had not been bombarded intentionally and insisted that the French attack was an accident. He condemned the enemy’s decision to open fire on a commercial port, which, unlike its close neighbour Nikolayev, did not have an arsenal and was not fortified. The day-long bombardment of a defenceless city marked a symbolic end to its early commercial openness, since after the war, Odessa lost its freeport privileges, and with it some of its outward-looking features. Incensed, this Odessa French commentator insisted on the human losses within the city, which included French and English nationals as well as members of neutral nations. The irreligious timing of the attack, over the Easter weekend, brought additional moral contempt upon the two western European powers,

⁷ *Ibid.* 3/15 May 1854, n.48.

⁸ *Ibid.* 3/15 May 1854, n.48.

⁹ *Ibid.* 3/15 May 1854, n.48.

which had allied themselves to the Ottoman Empire. If in New Orleans references to the Hundred Years War abounded, in Odessa it was references to the age of the crusades:

“Since the sons of the Crusaders fight for the Crescent and the Quran against the Cross and the Gospel, words too have changed meaning: moderation denotes now cruelty, and humanity indicates barbarity!”¹⁰

Although participation in the Crimean War did entrench Louis-Napoleon’s position as ruler of France, in Odessa Frenchmen blamed him for leading the country to disaster and shame.¹¹ Odessa was never an important war target, located as it was far from the main theatre of war, the Crimean Peninsula. The attack nonetheless tested tactics later repeated at the siege of Sebastopol, Russia’s naval firepower. In Odessa, the Russian authorities insisted that “the sending of a flag of truce was only a pretext for examining their works of defence.”¹² And indeed in Odessa the ship *Furious* was sent on April 9 into the port to demand the surrender of all commercial ships and fetch the French and English consuls, who had long left the city. This event started off the skirmish that would turn into a fully-fledged bombardment on 22 April 1854.¹³ Despite its short duration, the offensive on Odessa and the differing accounts of its causes received much popular attention at the time.

Part of the interest came from the presence of French nationals within the city and its close commercial links with Marseilles, as well as Odessa’s entanglements with great names and prominent individuals hailing from France. In *Le Bombardement d’Odessa*, a French play heralded as a “military drama”, the governor of Odessa was mocked for outright denial of the defeat, pretending that the religious services celebrated in the city were in celebration of the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ ONSL 971, 1854, n.48, 3/15 May.

¹² Marx, Karl (16 May 1854), “The Bombardment of Odessa,” *New York Daily Tribune*. Retrieved 12 August 2020.

¹³ ONSL 971, 1854, n.65, 14/26 June: « Feuilleton: Impression de la soirée du 10 April. »

city's victory rather than to commemorate the fallen and the damages suffered by the port.¹⁴ This mockery illustrated two differing interpretations of the bombardment: because the attack was brief, it did not bring much damage to the city, itself too high up the coast. The attackers presented it as a sign of magnanimity, while to the Russians it was a sign of the enemy's weakness.¹⁵ Odessa was not occupied but it remained blockaded at sea by its enemies, and isolated from Russia – in a sort of inversion of the cordon sanitaire of the 1812 plague. A neutral protagonist during the three years of conflict, the city was used to keep French prisoners of war, some of them receiving secret help from French residents of the city.¹⁶ After the war, when repairing the damaged pedestal of the statue of the Duke of Richelieu, hit by a kernel, a cannonball was added to commemorate with irony how the French had fired on a monument to their former Prime Minister.¹⁷

Ultimately, the bombardment of Odessa was not what sealed its destinies, but rather the deeper changes that were triggered by the immense cost in lives and resources over the whole course of the Crimean War. The signature of the Treaty of Paris in March 1856 ended the war, and one of its clauses forbade Russia from basing warships in the Black Sea, thus shifting the geopolitical landscape of the Russian Empire away from its southern shores. Odessa had never been a military port, but the wartime measures also caused lasting damages to its trade. While waging war against two of its principal commercial partners, France and Britain, the Russian government had imposed an embargo on all grain exports, a measure that was prolonged by the blockade. The strategy backfired, because by the end of the conflict, the enemy nations had

¹⁴ British Library MS52947 V, 'Bartelemy' [Barthélémy Deville], « Le Bombardement d'Odessa » (2 June 1854, Soho Theatre.).

¹⁵ ONSL 971, 1854, n.65, 14/26 June, « Feuilleton: Impression de la soirée du 10 April »

¹⁶ The help provided by the 'Turkish subject Raphaël Hava' to Frenchmen imprisoned in the city was commented on lengthily after the war by the French consul, who recommended that rewards should be bestowed upon him for his "generous assistance." He was eventually made Chevalier de l'Ordre Impérial de la Légion d'Honneur. AMAE, 230CCC/7, 15 December 1856, and 23 February 1857.

¹⁷ Pingaud, Léonce. *Les Français En Russie Et Les Russes En France: L'ancien Régime, L'émigration, Les Invasions*, Perrin, Paris, 1886. 449.

found new suppliers – the United States – and in France the main grain harbour was no longer Marseilles but Le Havre on the Atlantic. In Odessa itself, the development of Russian nationalism and the increase in internal migration or re-settlement (*pereselenie*) from within Russia changed the demographic balance of the city, whose population continued to increase at a steep rate, but with a widely different makeup.

After coming back to Odessa in 1857, the French consul observed the serious financial crisis hitting the country and its effect on the once-thriving city, noting how it altered the commercial relations between Frenchmen and Russians. French colonists, who had before been torn between keeping their national identity and embracing their new home, no longer hesitated after the shared experience of the bombardment and blockade alongside the rest of the urban population. The consul even indicated a decline in the number of French nationals in his charge, since “today (...) the assimilation between Russian and French traders is so complete that the French now enjoy, when it comes to commerce, all the privileges, immunities, and favours, which nationals enjoy or will enjoy.”¹⁸ Six decades after the founding of the city, the immigration of Frenchmen and other foreigners from western Europe dropped significantly. In the Crimean War, cosmopolitan Odessa had been defeated, prompting the age of a Russian and imperial Odessa.

9.2 From ‘Créoles’ to Southerners: reshaping the identity of New Orleans’ residents.

New Orleans’ reign as Queen of the South was also nearing its end, and the city’s decline had some ties with the consequences of the Crimean conflict, from which Louisianians – Creoles and Anglo-American alike – derived economic advantages. Because military operations

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 15 December 1857.

prevented the export of Ukrainian and Polish grain, the war had prompted an increased demand for agrarian goods produced in the Mid-West. While New Orleans was for a few years the main port of shipping, the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War boosted the latitudinal use of railways and canals from the North West to the North East, leading to the demise of the Mississippi river trade.

Yet in the 1850s, the city still leaped from one economic success to the next and the conflict that animated New Orleans remained mostly internal. Adolphe Biarnès, a Frenchman long resident of Louisiana, observed that the “[American] republic acted like a boa, smothering [nationalities] like a boa, hugging them against its freedom tree, up until they had lost their self-awareness, until they had drawn their last breath.”¹⁹ He ascribed this process to a fear of the decentralization and disunion of individual states, which was not wholly imaginary. The public-schools programs that developed from the 1840s onwards in Louisiana (Chapter 6) contributed to this remoulding of New Orleans’ younger generations: it reversed local linguistic dynamics and reflected Creole politicians’ lost prominence in both the city and state politics.²⁰ At the same time, white Creoles shared several American (and particularly Southern) values, and these values drove an ideological wedge between them and France. In 1825, when Lafayette visited the city on his grand tour of the United States, he was more feted by northerners than by the French and Creoles of New Orleans. The latter group hissed at him amid cheers and applauses from crowds of coloured Creoles.²¹ Lafayette might have been the most famous Frenchman in America, but his criticism of slavery made him an ambiguous hero

¹⁹ Biarnès, Adolphe. *Le Droit Des Gens: La France Et Les Yankees*. Nantes: V. De Courmaceul, 1866, 85-96.

²⁰ NOPL, *La Renaissance Louisianaise*, n.3, 19 May 1861: The newspaper blamed the public schools, but highlighted the risks of cutting their funding, because it would only lead the sons of rich Louisiana families to go to the North to study: “The Southern American, raised in the North, too often learned there to hate the institutions of this country that were blamed the re – they then brought back prejudices, or at least antipathies, which won them to the cause of the negrophiles.”

²¹ AMAE, 277CCC/3, f. 249, 25 April 1825.

for the Creoles.²² Decades later, when the tensions leading to the civil war escalated across the United States, questions of national allegiances remained fraught, delineating the divided character of the population of Louisiana.

La Renaissance Louisianaise, a new French-language newspaper (1861), openly Creole and Confederate, provides an idea of how the debate was framed. In its second issue, the paper published a long article articulating the conflict as an opposition between two races, one “Celtic and Mediterranean”, the second one being “Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon”.²³ In the early 1860s, the memory of the centuries-long rivalry between France and England, used in the War of 1812, continued to pervade the vocabulary of the ‘Louisiana French’ to help them clarify their allegiances in the imminent civil war. Their animosity for the Anglo-Saxons was “native”, and it echoed “within the hearts of almost every Frenchman.” This hatred for England had been revived under France’s First Republic, “pushed to delirium”, and it was in turn feeding into the hatred that the populations of the South had for Northerners.²⁴ The authors delineated a succession between two distinct “ages” among the Louisiana French:

“Thus, to the first phase of our nationality which was entirely French, must succeed in a future more or less near a nationality of a second age, composed of the French element as well as the other elements that have come to join it.”²⁵

This chauvinistic stance was born out of a newfound solidarity within the southern population, against a greater, more threatening enemy – the northern states of the Union. As war approached, eyes in Louisiana turned towards France for support, inspiration, but most importantly for approval. The emperor of France, Napoleon III, had promulgated a decree prohibiting French nationals living in the United States from taking up arms in favour of either

²² Lafayette had acquired a plantation in the French colony of Cayenne (Guyana), where he planned the gradual experiment of nearly seventy slaves attached to the property. He also paid slaves for their labour and provided them with schools.

²³ NOPL, *La Renaissance Louisianaise*, n.2, 12 May 1861.

²⁴ *Ibid.* n.11, 14 July 1861.

²⁵ *Ibid.* n.2, 12 May 1861.

belligerent party.²⁶ On the other hand, a Louisiana law compelled those foreigners who had been living in the state for more than 60 days to enrol in the militia, unless they were already part of another military group. A widely reprinted article by New Orleans' Creole newspaper *Le Propagateur Catholique* suggested that the imperial decree left room for interpretation and only forbade Frenchmen from joining an armed corps that would “march everywhere against the enemy and enter its territory.” It was allegedly irrelevant if those same Frenchmen took up arms “to defend their properties, their establishments, their families, and themselves.”²⁷ The article thus encouraged them to join “in good conscience” either the state militia or special corps organised by fellow Frenchmen. These corps were legally authorised by governor Moore for the defence of the city – in a direct reference to the Creole battalions of 1815.²⁸ Because the French were still numerous and affluent among the inhabitants of Louisiana, and shared interests and histories that equally attached them to that land, they could not possibly “remain neutral in this great conflict.”²⁹ These calls for arms were eventually backed by the advice of the French consul to New Orleans, Count Edouard Méjan, who assured them that they would not lose their citizenship rights in France if they only joined the companies that were devoted to the defence of their city. By June 1861, the ‘Légion Française’ counted five companies, seven by August, all organised for active service “within the limits of the city of New Orleans”.³⁰ Méjan would later be removed from his consular appointment because of his active collaboration with the Confederacy, and his leniency towards French nationals’ participation in the war.³¹

²⁶ *Ibid.* n.11, 14 July 1861.

²⁷ *Ibid.* n.11, 14 July 1861

²⁸ NOPL, *Propagateur Catholique*, quoted in *La Renaissance Louisianaise*, n.11, 14 July 1861.

²⁹ *Ibid.* n.5, 2 June 1861

³⁰ Yet these foreign militia would for a long-time struggle to obtain uniforms and equipment, which went first to the Confederate Army. They often had to furnish their own uniforms. Reinders, Robert C. "Militia in New Orleans, 1853-1861." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 3, no. 1 (1962): 38.

³¹ HNO, MSS.287 - Consulat de France à la Nouvelle Orléans Records (thereafter MSS.287), 23 July 1861: (in French) “Thus the dispatch, in my opinion, does not contradict your article in *The Bee* (L’Abeille) about the obligation of serving in

Free coloured veterans of 1815 similarly advocated for the formation of black militias for the defence of the city. In a letter sent to the *Daily Delta*, some indicated their desire to fight and support their native state, declaring:

“they have no sympathy for abolitionism, no love for the North, but they have plenty for Louisiana; and let the hour come, and they will be worthy sons of Louisiana. They will fight for her in 1861 as they fought in 1814-’15.”³²

By the 1860s, the free coloured population of the state of Louisiana had seen their rights and numbers increasingly curtailed, but within the city of New Orleans they still benefitted, primarily among the Creole population, from an uncontested social capital. Most of them owned lands and property, some owned slaves too. The editor of the *Daily Delta* thus purposely differentiated coloured Creoles from the free Blacks, who were seen as distinct because they were not creole, and had come “to this city from the North and form[ed] a class of people who require[d] watching.”³³ Their northern origins implied that many free Blacks were abolitionists, while Louisiana’s *gens de couleur* were portrayed as mere advocates for the advancement of their own group, some fearing that the end of slavery would destroy the interstitial space of opportunity they had managed to preserve.

Historian Arthur W. Bergeron Jr. traced repeated offers from sections of New Orleans’ free coloured population to lend their arms to the war effort, on the side of the Confederacy,

the militia, and I continue to believe that presently this service cannot be considered to be a taking of the arms in favour of one of the warring parties against the other, but only as the fulfilling of the duty of protection and safety due to any State.” Some French citizens also protested against the limitations imposed on their military involvement, seeing it as a continuation of the restraints imposed on foreign nationals in the United States, as a consequence of the *know-nothing* movement – as shown in this public letter by a Mr. Lefranc: “We talk about the fanaticism of the abolitionists with regards to the enslavement of the blacks. We could say even more about the fanaticism of the *know-nothings* with regards to the freedom of the whites, whose only misfortune is to be foreigners. Here are, Sir, the real germs of civil wars which, if we are not cautious, will destroy the South after having destroyed the North.”(NOPL, *La Renaissance Louisianaise*, n.24, 13 October 1861)

³² NOPL, *New Orleans Daily Delta*, 28 December 1860. The editor wrote as a response: “The native free colored people of Louisiana have never given grounds for any suspicion, or distrust, and they have frequently manifested their fidelity in a manner quite as striking and earnest as the white citizens.”

³³ *Ibid.*

but with little official support from the State government.³⁴ In their argument, they contrasted their tried and tested loyalty to Louisiana and to the Confederacy with the uncertain allegiance of both the white Northerners who had only recently settled in New Orleans and the large numbers of foreigners.³⁵ Bergeron notes that these veterans' foremost demand was to have coloured officers, echoing past debates about the coloured battalion of 1815. The *New Orleans Daily Crescent* reported a large meeting in April 1861, where the "Creole free colored population downtown had taken the war question into consideration, and determined to offer their services to Gov. Moore, for home defence."³⁶ The meeting, held at the New Orleans Catholic Institute, counted around 1,500 men, and comparable militia groups were formed in Natchitoches, Baton Rouge, and Pointe-Coupée. In New Orleans, they gathered in a voluntary regiment known as the 'Native Guards' that was devoted, like the militias of foreigners, solely to the defence of their city.³⁷

During the first year of the war, on the anniversary of the Battle of Orleans, the Regiment of Louisiana Native Guards took part in military processions and review: while such regiments were used mostly for propaganda and parading purposes, they had managed to obtain black company commanders.³⁸ At their height they counted more than 1,300 men. Local newspapers paid "a deserved compliment to the companies of free colored men, all very well

³⁴ Bergeron JR, Arthur W. "Louisiana's Free Men of Color in Gray" in Lawrence Lee Hewitt, et al. (ed) *Louisianians in the Civil War*, University of Missouri Press, 2002, 102-103.

³⁵ By 1860, 38 percent of the city's residents were foreign-born. Gerald M. Capers, *Occupied City: New Orleans Under the Federals, 1862-1865* (Lexington, 1965): 5-7. On the accusation that foreigners had a questionable allegiance, see 'A.L.M.' to Thomas O. Moore, January 20, 1861, Letters Received by the Executive, 1860– 1865, Louisiana State Archives, quoted in Hewitt, *Louisianians in the Civil War*, 2002, 102.

³⁶ NOPL, *The New Orleans Daily Crescent* (1851-1866), April 27, 1861.

³⁷ NOPL, *Daily Picayune*, December 9, 1861, January 10, 1862. "Most of these companies quite unaided by the administration, have supplied themselves with arms, without regard to the cost and trouble."

³⁸ Their regiment commander was a white Creole, Felix Labatut. Later in January 1862, a law by the Louisiana State legislature reorganized the militia so that only free white males would be able to bear arms; the Native Guards disbanded on February 15, but they were reinstated by Governor Moore on March 24 when the Union Navy entered the Mississippi River.

drilled, and comfortably uniformed.”³⁹ The soldiers of 1814-’15 were present “at the post of honor”, leaving just before the inspection started, and taking with them “that glorious shred of a flag which [was] their greatest pride. “The 1815 flag was described, alongside an old French flag kept at Quebec, as one of the “most glorious flags in North America.”⁴⁰ On the eve of New Orleans’ downfall, attachment to a French genealogy remained a criterion that set the Louisiana Creoles apart and justified a sense of birth right that cut across the colour line.⁴¹

For that reason, the idea of support from France emboldened both white and coloured Creoles, as well as the foreign French nationals of New Orleans and Louisiana. References to the French patriots who fought in the American War of independence, especially Lafayette (who after his death, was revered once again), and of their ideals of freedom were popular among the local Gallic population. They helped frame the cause of the South as a fight against Northern tyranny and military despotism. For that reason, many hoped for a renewed Franco-American alliance – but on the side of the Confederate states this time.⁴²

Looking at Napoleon III, his previous military campaigns indicated a willingness to intervene whenever nations fought for their independence or freedom, or so was the impression given by his siding with the Ottomans during the Crimean War, and his defence of Italian unification. The Confederacy’s claims for autonomy and self-determination were also compared with the struggles of Greece or Poland to emphasize the morality of the southerners’

³⁹ NOPL, *Daily Picayune*, December 9, 1861; January 10, 1862. However, about three companies (ca.200 men) of the Native regiment did not participate in the parade on that day because there were not enough uniforms. Bergeron “Louisiana’s Free Men of Color in Gray” in Hewitt, et al., *Louisianians in the Civil War*, 2002: 105-6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* December 9, 1861, January 10, 1862.

⁴¹ During the occupation of New Orleans by Union troops, General Benjamin Butler raised the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Louisiana Native Guards as regiments of infantry partly from these previous black militia. These units were called the ‘Corps d’Afrique’ and had black officers. However, only about 10 percent of the new regiments came from the Confederate Native Guard; most coloured militiamen were replaced by newly freed slaves. See Hollandsworth, James G., *The Louisiana Native Guards*, LSU Press, 1996. See also a testimony from an ex-Native Guard in The New York Times archive: 5 November 1862, ‘Our New Orleans Correspondence.’

⁴² NOPL, *La Renaissance Louisianaise*, n.13, 28 July 1861, « L’opinion publique en France – Relativement à la crise Américaine » : “I have the intimate conviction that the sympathy, awoken in favour of the South by so much dishonourable cruelty, is such that the officers of the [French] Empire would pay the high price of harsh sacrifices for a single opportunity to confront troops and officers guilty of such outrages.”

cause. However, New Orleans' francophone newspapers worried that public opinion in France did not support the South, and a Mr. d'Arabelle announced publicly his plans to travel to Paris to create a gazette and promote the cause of the Southern Confederacy in France and Europe.⁴³ Rumours about Napoleon III's own views abounded too, fostered by the Emperor's indecisiveness in adopting a clear stance about the conflict. Some commentators suggested that Louis-Napoleon's delay stemmed from his wish to let the North and the South weaken each other, before "stepping in, recognizing the independence of the South, [and] assuming a sort of protectorate in America, (...) [establishing] on this continent French colonies on the very same spaces where France once had them."⁴⁴ The American civil conflict was for some a potential rebirth of a French Empire in the Americas:

"Once [Napoleon III's] legions would have obtained a pied-a-terre in provinces which had in times past recognized in France their motherland, he would not remove them, unless the entire American people would rise *en masse* and chase them away (...)."⁴⁵

Amidst the deepening divide between North and South of the United States, it seemed unlikely that the Anglo-American population would be able to unite and resist if that scenario unfolded. An independent South, on the other hand, could rely on its recognition by France, whose commerce and networks were intertwined with the Confederacy's economic prospects. The general belief was that the secession of the southern states had cut out New York's influence on the commerce of the South, so that France could take up its place and develop more transatlantic steamer routes, to challenge Britain in the cotton industry.⁴⁶ Of course, the war had also the effect of circumventing New Orleans' foreign trade altogether.

⁴³ *Ibid.* n.3, 19 May 1861.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* n.16, 18 August 1861

⁴⁵ NOPL, *La Renaissance Louisianaise*, n. 17, 25 August 1861.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* n. 16, 18 August 1861.

Hopes for French patronage continued to be expressed publicly, despite no official backing. In the summer of 1861, the 600 men enrolled in the ‘Légion Française’ congregated in the city centre by the Saint Louis Cathedral, for a flag benediction service. Their speeches celebrated the symbolic family reunion of France and Louisiana: in this family Louisiana was described as a long-lost daughter of France, ready to follow her footsteps, with the confidence that, “the formidable sword of France [would] rise in its defence.”⁴⁷ Louisiana’s Gallic and Catholic roots allowed her to adopt France’s claim to be “god’s champion”, a supporter of “the divine right of nationalities.”⁴⁸ This ideological framework engaged common tropes, partly by calling once more on a fantasized medieval past:

“Here is your flag! Carry it high and far, and, when you will have helped our friends to chase the common enemy, bring back its glorious shreds: like Joan of Arc’s flag, the heroic and saint patron of our France, you will offer it its share of the reward, because it will have struggled.”⁴⁹

Joan of Arc, the Orleans Maiden, was the symbol that ideally united the inhabitants of old France and of this ‘new’ Orleans, a figure that symbolised both the joint defence of the territory and the hope for a god-sanctioned victory. Yet the presence across both the North and the South of French nationals remained a concern for native Louisianians.⁵⁰ The Gallic solidarity they could elicit within their own territory was more problematic beyond its borders, as it put at risk the actual allegiance of New Orleans’ foreign French. Some felt uneasy at the prospect of facing Frenchmen residing in Northern States and begged them to reconsider fighting in the “criminal war premeditated by Mr. Lincoln,” while defending their own participation in defence of the Confederacy:

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* n. 14, 4 August 1861.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ There were about 110,000 French Born living in the United States in 1860, 2,66% of the foreign population, the fifth most important minority group in the country. United States Census Office. *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Returns of the 8th Census*. Washington D.C., 1864.

“Whereas the French from the South fulfil a natural and sacred obligation, by taking up arms to protect their household from invasion and stain, it would be a crime for the French from the North to violate a territory where they would find patriots standing for the defence of threatened liberties, fellow citizens, brothers even, determined to support a country which offered them such a guileless and generous hospitality.”⁵¹

After much deliberation, the New Orleans ‘Légion Française’ was formed, alongside coloured companies, all dedicated to the defence of the city. Across the state of Louisiana, additional foreign militias were assembled, some exclusively French as well, alongside mixed companies of Irishmen and Germans. Yet, the limited use of these companies, their repeated parading drills, and their mostly decorous presence in balls and social events created frustrations and resentment, just as Louisiana started suffering from food shortage – a dearth of provisions felt acutely in a large city like New Orleans.

On January 8, 1861, the state government took control of Louisiana’s Federal forts (Forts Jackson, St. Philip, Pike, Macomb, and the New Orleans Barracks), in a pre-emptive move leading to its secession from the Union on January 26. Independent for a couple of months, Louisiana pledged allegiance to the Confederacy on March 21 and joined the war. Yet, New Orleans itself was a commercial city poorly equipped for defence (just like Odessa had been), and it remained a participant in the conflict only as long as the war avoided its shores. The major difference between 1815 and the 1860s was technological: in the latter conflict, steamships could reach New Orleans upstream from the Mississippi delta, which they could not have done fifty years before. Further, while Odessa’s best protection had been the city’s elevated position, on top of cliffs overlooking its harbour and the trading facilities, the low site of New Orleans was extremely vulnerable to attacks, with most of its habitations only protected from high waters by levees. This meant that while the “swamps, marshes, and bayou” surrounding New Orleans created natural obstacles to a heavily loaded marching army, if an

⁵¹ NOPL, *La Renaissance Louisianaise*, n.3, 19 May 1861.

“enemy possessed a good navy and powerful means of action” the Mississippi river would provide “the best and easiest” strategy.⁵² Ships could arrive in a position more elevated than that of the city, giving them ample space and visibility to fire down the streets. When Union ships did reach the southern metropolis in April 1862, they were indeed above the city, and their attack of the river-front buildings risked creating breaks in the levees – which would in turn cause large-scale flooding, potentially destroying the then sixth-largest city of the United States.

In reaction to the attack, residents of New Orleans took to the streets, many traders burning their stores of cotton and goods to prevent their capture by Union troops. Faced with pressure from the Union forces and a growing anger on the part of the population, outraged that a place mostly inhabited by civilians had been bombarded by the enemy’s navy, John T. Monroe, the mayor of New Orleans, relied on the foreign-born militia to restore peace to the city and help the police. The ‘Légion Française’ in particular was entrusted with keeping law and order during these days of warfare.⁵³ Eventually, on 29 April 1862, after four days of fighting and rioting on the streets of New Orleans, the city conceded defeat to the Union troops.

New Orleans passed under Union rule and spent the remainder of the civil war under martial law, something resented by most of its inhabitants. During the first seven months, General Benjamin Franklin Butler commanded the garrison.⁵⁴ He became infamous for his General Order No. 28 that treated any female New Orleanian showing contempt for a Union soldier as a “woman of the town,” but Butler’s rule was also particularly adverse to the Crescent City’s many foreigners. Butler showed open distrust for alien residents and their consuls and

⁵² NOPL, *La Renaissance Louisianaise*, n.28, 10 November 1861.

⁵³ Aneur, Farid. “« Au Nom De La France, Restons Unis ! »: Les Milices Françaises De La Nouvelle-Orléans Pendant La Guerre De Sécession.” *Bulletin De L’Institut Pierre Renouvin* 28, no. 2 (2008): 81-106.

⁵⁴ Jackson, Joy J. “Keeping Law and Order in New Orleans under General Butler, 1862.” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 34, no. 1 (1993): 51-67. However, the rule of General Butler was not exclusively negative in its effects: he revived the commerce of New Orleans, cleaned up the city and expanded its sewer system which saved many from anticipated deaths during the summer yellow fever season, and set up social programs through wealth taxes.

saw their houses and institutions as “asylums where rebels are harbored and rebellion fostered.”⁵⁵ He accused foreigners of helping the Confederate cause economically and looked with suspicion at those wealthy individuals who had been trading for many years with Southern partners. He seized the funds held at the consulates of France and of the Netherlands and retracted the French consul’s mandate in 1863, forcing him to leave New Orleans.⁵⁶ Now only represented by the Consulate’s chancellor, M. Fauconnet, the foreign French of Louisiana felt increasingly abandoned by France, while the Second Empire gradually lost interest in their fate just as it was getting more involved in Mexico – taking advantage of the American Civil War to intervene without being challenged.⁵⁷

The occupation of New Orleans was both a humiliation and a transformative experience. Most of the city was preserved from destruction, a different fate from that of other Southern cities. New Orleans also served as a node of resettlement and immigration: French nationals from Louisiana and elsewhere in the South came *en masse* to seek refuge in New Orleans, whereas some French and Creole New Orleanians thereafter chose to leave for Mexico or Texas.⁵⁸ While the 1840s and 1850s decades had been marked by an increase in French immigration to Louisiana, the prolongation of the civil war and the renewal of the French colonial ambitions led the imperial authorities to discourage departures to the United States, preferring instead to secure settlers for its own colonies:

“Instead of encouraging emigration from France to the United States, I would prefer to redirect it, as much as possible, towards other countries, where it

⁵⁵ Quoted in Egan, Clifford L. “Friction in New Orleans: General Butler versus the Spanish Consul.” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 9, no. 1 (1968): 44-45.

⁵⁶ On Méjan’s support for the South: “The war of conquest undertaken by the North (...) is meant much less to maintain the union than to defend its threatened and greatly imperilled financial and commercial interests.” Quoted in Wright, Gordon. “Economic Conditions in the Confederacy as Seen by the French Consuls.” *The Journal of Southern History* 7 (1941): 197.

⁵⁷ Hanna, Kathryn Abbey. “The Roles of the South in the French Intervention in Mexico.” *The Journal of Southern History* 20, no. 1 (1954): 3-21. On the other hand, sharing the destinies of their fellow Louisianian Creoles, as well as of the remainder of the inhabitants of New Orleans, the French nationals’ previous transatlantic identity was reconstructed, through the shared experience of military occupation, at a trans-local level.

⁵⁸ Ameur, Farid. *Les Français dans la guerre de Sécession: 1861-1865*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 266.

would find a better employment. The situation of French nationals who want to keep their citizenship has become rather delicate in the United States.”⁵⁹

That ebbing tide in French immigration to the United States, for which New Orleans had been the prime port of entry, mirrored the evolving political trends in France itself. Most of the mid-century migrants had left their homeland as political or economic *émigrés*, resentful of the Second Empire, and with mixed feelings about the democratic prospects of their country of origin. The many foreign French who joined the militia (in the South as in the North) despite the risk of losing their citizenship also signalled that this emigration was, for most of them, definitive.⁶⁰ The question of naturalization, which had pushed French nationals in Russia to leave Odessa when they had the means to do so, created less heartache on the other side of the Atlantic. An imagined community, the “Louisiana French” of New Orleans had come to terms with being first and foremost Franco-Americans, and the tenuous links with France were only rekindled when they could be put to practical use, not when they became a hindrance.

During the occupation of New Orleans by the Union Army, the French government was reluctant in offering support to its own nationals, especially when asked for financial assistance for repatriation, and that attitude was bitterly resented. Historian Farid Aneur’s thesis on French citizens’ participation in the American civil war highlights how this conflict marked a turning point – even a cutting point – in the long-standing relationship between French settlers and their motherland. While France still prided itself in being the first ally of the United States, it could not officially take sides in this internal conflict. Aneur argues that those French citizens and descendants felt that their historical nativism had become more inconvenient than their allegiance to their adoptive nation. Loyalty to the latter offered a viable solution to the conundrum of Frenchmen from the North and the South fighting each other. The common

⁵⁹ AMAE, CCC, New York, XXII, Gaudrée-Boileau à Drouyn de Lhuys, 13 août 1864, quoted in Aneur (2019, 266).

⁶⁰ Aneur, *Les Français dans la guerre de Sécession*, 2016, 14.

affinity – that of speaking French, having been born in France or being of French descent, and a shared emigration to the United States – lost its significance, in the face of local and regional commonalities.

In New Orleans it took the shape of a shared solidarity with the Confederate cause and resistance to occupation. The seven months of Butler’s administration were marked by specific anti-French policies, with the suspension of French newspapers, suspect of printing subversive information, the closing of most French and bilingual schools, and the abolition of French language instruction (Chapter 6).⁶¹ The option of returning to France was less meaningful than the need to defend their new homeland and cultural group. Experience in the armed corps also accelerated the learning and everyday practice of English among the Creole and French males of New Orleans, the use of French slowly becoming a private matter, upheld in family circles and gradually practiced and transmitted gradually more through the female population.⁶² Some French soldiers also adopted a more English-sounding name, or adapted their spelling, an identity that was preserved after the war in administrative records, to receive military pensions and for census purposes.⁶³

With this visible erasure of French markers also came a stagnation and then decrease in immigration, to the United States in general, but also more significantly to New Orleans. From 1860 to 1870, the number of French-born in the Crescent City went from 10,047 to 8,845;

⁶¹ NOPL, *Le Courrier des États-Unis*, 27 novembre 1865 ; AMAE, CPC, États-Unis, XIV, Fauconnet à Drouyn de Lhuys, La Nouvelle-Orléans, 23 May 1863: “What an unfortunate city ! French until now by its mores, language, religion, she has just lost to conquest her original character, and now more than ever, she is transforming into an American city. In the schools the teaching of French is no longer mandatory, and provided the current occupation becomes a *fait accompli*, this language will cease, within a few years, to be spoken, maybe to be understood, and Louisiana, a land that had remained French within the United States of America, will then really have ceased existing.” Quoted in Aneur (2016, 281). With a new constitution in 1868, Louisiana became a monolingual state: the use of English became paramount in public life, in particular in the realm of instruction.

⁶² “Young people who have come back from the war have taken the habit of speaking in English. The language that they had learned on the lap of their mothers was no longer the one they conversed with.” in LARC, 108, 2 juin 1886, box 3, 124. Quoted in Aneur (2016, 276).

⁶³ Ibid.

fifty years later, in 1910, they were only 3,727.⁶⁴ Reconstruction-era New Orleans was plagued by poverty, yellow fever, and ethnic tensions: for prospective migrants, it was no longer an attractive destination.⁶⁵ After the Second Empire collapsed, France’s Third Republic fully developed its colonial ambitions, and migration to Louisiana became an afterthought, making New Orleans fade away from France’s imaginary geographies.

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The established place of New Orleans and Odessa within an imagined geography of Frenchness and Gallicism could not survive the rapid transformation of their population, and the breaking points created by military conflicts. Their situation at the periphery of French colonial ambitions – the transformation of the Mediterranean into a “French lake” under Napoleon III, and the Second Empire’s ambitions in the Gulf of Mexico – provided those French and Gallic settlers with new options. Located at the intersection between distinct imperial entities, they could also call on the distant patronage of yet another empire in the making to secure a privileged and sometimes shielded position among the settler societies of Novorossiya and Louisiana. Ultimately, military conflicts and international tensions gradually impaired their advantageous position, just as the image of the French nationals and their descendants in Odessa and New Orleans was becoming tarnished.

In both cities, French speakers were on the wrong side of their host country’s history. In the Crimean War, Odessa was soon neutralised, and the Anglo-French coalition ultimately defeated Russia, after a war that cost almost a million lives. This defeat provided further impetus for the rise of Russian nationalism, a nationalism which explicitly rejected Western

⁶⁴ From 1841 to 1851, 77,262 French nationals emigrated America, or 4.51% of all entries into the United States. From 1851 to 1860, they were 76,358 – about 2.94% of this migratory flow. From 1861 to 1870, they numbered only 37,749, or 1.53% of all immigrants. According to federal census figures, the French population had doubled its numbers from 1850 to 1860, from 54,069 to 109,870 souls. In 1870, it amounted to 116,240 individuals, an increase more akin to stagnation. In 1900, 104,197 people declared under oath that they were born in France. Figures taken from Aneur (2016, 280).

⁶⁵ Parham, Angel Adams. *American Routes: Racial Palimpsests and the Transformation of Race*. New York, 2017.

European models, including the cosmopolitan ideals that some of the early French émigrés, and the French language, had previously embodied. In the case of New Orleans, its demise was that of the entire South of the United States, at the end of an equally deadly conflict. The shared humiliation of defeat and antagonism to the Union meant that French Louisianians felt more kinship with fellow Southerners, in opposition to Americans of the Northern states. Throughout their early history, New Orleans and Odessa had come to embody a form of bourgeois frontier, the largest cities in newly settled spaces, two outward-looking ports at a distance from the centres of power.⁶⁶ Ultimately, their evolving destinies, from multicultural centres to spaces of national significance, provided a microcosm in which the multi-ethnic, multireligious reality of the United States and the Russian Empire could be manifested more fully. Those two cities of superlatives thereupon became tinged with nostalgia, as cities that no longer existed in their ideal cosmopolitan forms: this sense of loss revolved around the practical and symbolic erasure of their founding imagined communities.

⁶⁶ To borrow the phrasing of Gitlin, Jay. *The Bourgeois Frontier: French Towns, French Traders, and American Expansion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Conclusion

The movement of French settlers and sojourners to Russia and the United States is an overlooked event in French colonial and transnational history. That movement was both trans-peripheral in character and spontaneous. Unfolding during a pause in France's official colonial ventures, the immigration of those French communities within other countries' territorial acquisitions exacerbated the differentiation of the lands they settled in. However, the imperial nature of the parallel involvement of Frenchmen and women in two distant continental empires appeared evident to nineteenth century contemporaries, who compared what "Frenchmen were doing in Russia," with "what they had just done in America."⁷⁶⁷ In Odessa and in New Orleans, the number of French citizens remained modest, and many adopted the nationality of their respective host country. Other national groups – Russian, German, Greek, Italian, and Ukrainian on the one hand, and Anglo-American, Spanish, German, Irish, and African American on the other – were demographically dominant. However, the influence of these small groups was disproportionately pervasive in the realms of local politics, culture, and language. They became the strangers within, the national group through which the foreign character of either city was defined. What accounted for the lasting imprint of Frenchness in both New Orleans and Odessa was the unique visibility of that group, through political influence and cultural dominance, and the strength of the loose networks created by an informal French Empire of language.

In comparing Odessa and New Orleans, two cities that were not only part of separate political systems, but also established in separate geographical realms, this thesis sought to

⁷⁶⁷ Pingaud, Léonce. *Les Français en Russie et les Russes en France : L'Ancien Régime, l'émigration, les invasions*, Perrin (Paris), 1886, 449-50.

analyse the features of such an empire of language. It has done so through the lens of invented traditions and imagined community-formation in spaces that were comparable bourgeois frontiers, with the fast development of these two cosmopolitan cities on imperial borderlands. The dissemination of French language and Frenchified institutions went against the grain of national discourses and shaped the urban identity of New Orleans and Odessa. However, that Frenchness was a settler version of French identity: it owed a lot more to local circumstances and to the interactions with other allied or rival groups. For this reason, the transnational value of Frenchness displayed contrasting features on the Black Sea and on the Mississippi, just as it informed historical discourses in the past and in the present differently.

Despite being major economic centres for international trade, Odessa and New Orleans laid at the geographic margins of their respective political orders - a marginality further reinforced by discourses of foreignness and exoticism that shrouded the perceived Frenchness of both cities. In New Orleans, Frenchness was a creative process, stemming from a composite population made up of Black and White Creoles, Haitian refugees, and foreign French residents. Because all came from disparate cultures and traditions, they found new commonalities as a reaction to an invasive American rule, producing a language-based identity. In Odessa, the foreign character of the rising 'new Russian' Southern capital questioned affiliation to Russia as a motherland, especially since the city's first leaders were French, among a population coming predominantly from southern and western Europe. Because Odessa was invented as it developed, Frenchness became a visible trait in the realm of politics and culture, which lingered long after most French nationals were gone. Both Odessa and New Orleans became national countersites, places that were estranged demographically and culturally from their own polity. Within the cities, patterns of spatial occupation also diverged from national models: in New Orleans, the division of the city between three municipalities, organised along language and wealth rather than race, created parallel urban orders, while in

Odessa, the traditional separation of the Jewish population in ghettos did not take place, but the city itself became isolated by the limits of its freeport. Consequently, Odessa's importation of French and west European ideas of governance and urbanity shaped the streets of the city, while in New Orleans, French language became a recognizable pattern of urban geography.

Institutions played a determining role in establishing the French reputation of the two cities, by blending imported religious, educational, and cultural models to their advantage. Religious affiliation cut across categories in Creole New Orleans, especially through the medium of the Francophone Catholic Church. Odessa's urban life was distinctly secularised, and religion's lack of prominence promoted cosmopolitan practices formed around French symbols and civic religious rites. Similarly, imported models shaped education and the development of the press. In both cities, education more widely benefitted from the involvement of French religious orders, such as the Ursuline nuns in New Orleans or the Jesuits in Odessa, and municipal educational structures mimicked the French *Lycée* model of secondary education. The two cities relied on instruction in French to establish their local education system, and the decline of French-language instruction from the 1830s in Odessa and the mid-century in New Orleans was a sign of the decline of French-prone elites' cultural influence. Francophone newspapers followed a similar cycle of life and death, reflecting the evolution of their readership. In New Orleans, French-language newspapers steadily declined after the 1840s, while the foundational *Journal d'Odessa*, one of only two main gazettes, disappeared exactly at the time when other national groups in each city started founding their own newspapers.

The prominence of those early institutions influenced how Odessa and New Orleans were represented, but also conceived ideologically from within Russia and the United States, but also by external observers. Both cities occupied a particular place within an imagined geography of Frenchness, which persisted in spite of the tensions brought by their rapid

demographic transformation. And yet, the two cities remained at the periphery of France's colonial ambitions, remembered but not supported, with official policies more preoccupied with neighbouring concerns: war in Crimea and the defence of the Ottoman Empire, or plans to conquer Mexico for France. Nevertheless, the thought of the distant benevolence and patronage of another empire was often what gave the edge to a locally grown Frenchified culture, until its practitioners themselves became subsumed into nostalgia.

To conduct this research, this thesis relied on archival research across France, Ukraine, and the United States, using both personal and official papers, from consular letters, censuses, and municipal records to local newspapers, memoirs, correspondences, and literature. Most of the primary sources accessed were in French, English, and Russian, and further research would benefit from materials in German, Greek, Ukrainian, Italian, or Yiddish. Further research could expand the chronology and integrate other cities to the existing comparison, such as Beirut in Lebanon, or Buenos Aires in Argentina. Similarly, it would be equally interesting to add other national groups to the comparison, such as German settler communities, present in both Louisiana and Novorossiia, but whose presence had a different influence of their place of emigration. Ultimately, this research points to the multiplicity of actors and scales in each context, as well as to the layering of meanings of concepts of Frenchness, historical agency, and empire. The research is not so much about New Orleans and Odessa individually, but how they fitted into wider power structures, geographies, and time frames. In the end, the findings of the thesis open promising avenues for the further study of diasporic imperialisms and the function of language and cultural institutions in both supporting and challenging state-driven colonial projects.

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UKRAINE

Odessa

- **Odessa National Scientific Library (ONSL)**

- 887 Bulletins de la société d'économie rurale de la Russie méridionale, publiés par cette société. Année: 1832, 1834-1836. Od.
- 898 Courrier de la Nouvelle Russie, 1830, Od.
- 923 Feuille de commerce de la Nouvelle-Russie. 1830, Od.
- 953 Journal de Saint Pétersbourg. Année: 1830-1831, 1834-1859.
- 971 Journal d'Odessa: 1824; 1832-1881
- 1073 Mémoires de la société d'économie rurale, de la Russie méridionale. T. 1. Od. 1833
- 1093 Notices sur la Russie, publiées sous le titre de suppléments d'intérieur au 'Journal de St Pétersbourg'. 1840-1845. SPb.
- 1118 Revue commerciale. 1884-1895. Od.

- **Odessa Oblast Archives**

Charles Sicar Papers

1804 : 59.1.5
1806 : 59.1.20
1807-1808 : 59.1.24
1809-1810 : 1.218.6
1820s : 59.1.165
1829 : 147.1.64.
1832-1833 : 6.1.2685

Memo : Familles Françaises Commerçantes à Odessa.

UNITED KINGDOM

London

- **British Library**

IOR/F/4/1079/29439: Cotton and tobacco cultivation in the United States of America (India Office Records and Private Papers): 1827-28.

MS 52947 V, 'Bartelemy' [Barthélémy Deville], "Le Bombardement d'Odessa" (2 June 1854, Soho Theatre,).

MS 53008D: 'Cora, or, The octoroon slave of Louisiana', drama in five acts by J. T. Douglass. (Western Manuscripts): 25 October 1861.

MS 53044 H: 'The confederate's daughter, or, The tyrant of New Orleans', by C. H. Hazlewood. (Western Manuscripts): July 1865.

MS 52968 T: 'Quadroon, the slave bride, or, The tree cavern', drama in two acts. (Western Manuscripts): 15 October 1857.

MSS Eur D1165/11: Miscellaneous Foreign Office papers (India Office Records and Private Papers): 1836-1839.

British Newspapers Archive:

The Atlas, 1840.

- **The National Archives**

FO 352: Yeames, James, Consul General at Odessa: correspondence with Sir. S. Canning (1826-52).

FO 581: Foreign Office: Consulate, New Orleans, United States of America: General Correspondence and Various Registers (1850-1938).

UNITED STATES

Baton Rouge

- **Louisiana State University Library**

MSS. 244, 1312, 2107: Joseph Lakanal Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.

New Orleans

- **Historic New Orleans Collection (HNOC)**

MSS 26 : Consulat de France à la Nouvelle-Orléans

MSS 54: Free Persons of Color in Louisiana Collection

MSS 55: Dominique You Papers (1812-1813)

MSS 56: Pierre and Jean Lafitte Collection (1813)

MSS 100: Ste Gême Family Papers (1799-1904)

MSS 125: Pierre Clément de Laussat Papers

MSS 170: Constitution ou Forme de Gouvernement de l'Etat de la Louisiane.

MSS 194: James Stirling Memorandum (17 March 1813).

MSS 196: Edward Nicolls and William H. Percy Letters.

MSS 208 [49-12-L] : General T.L. Butler, "To the Citizens of New Orleans" (15 December 1814).

MSS 279 : 1861, New Orleans – 'Republic of Louisiana.'

MSS 287 : Consulat de France à la Nouvelle-Orléans Records.

MSS 421 : Antebellum School Collection

MSS 557.8.12 : Réflexions sur la campagne du Général André Jackson, en Louisiane, en 1814 et 1815.

- **Louisiana Research Collection (LaRC) at Tulane University.**

16: New Orleans Municipal Records, 1782-1925.

23: Land surveys and applications, 1785-1835.

47: Société française records, 1849-1937.

55: Louisiana Historical Association collection, 1773-1985.

60: Marguerite M. Fortier papers, 1821-1957.

108: L' Athénée Louisianais records, 1834-1987.

416: De Marigny family papers, 1736-1917.

503: Slavery documents collection, 1758-1865.

506: Land Transactions collections, 1721-1935.

535: Southern Writers collection, 1826-1972.

541: War of 1812 collection, 1813-1965.

660: Laussat Proclamations, 1803.

746: James Wilkinson collection, 1788-1819.

905: Joseph Baudier Papers, 1935-1961.
 M-13 : Riot in New Orleans letter, 1851.
 M-21: Peter (Pierre) Derbigny papers, 1800-1824.
 M-30: Colonial Ladies of Louisiana essay, undated.
 M-71: New Orleans Street Names essay, undated.
 M-91: French Benevolent Association record, 1843.
 M-1030 : Place d'Armes, plan – 1798.
 M-1173 : Plan of New Orleans, the Capital of Louisiana, 1761.

- **New Orleans Public Library (NOPL): City Archives.**

HC300, 1841-1847, 1st Mun: New Orleans (La.) Board of Directors of the Public Schools of the First Municipality. Minutes and Proceedings, 1841-1847.
 HC205, 1849-1851, 2nd Mun: New Orleans (La.) Board of Directors for the Public Schools of the Second Municipality. Reports of the Committee on the Second Ward School, 1849-1851.
 HC300, 1859-1862, New Orleans (La.) Board of Directors for the Public Schools of the First District. Minutes of Board meetings, 1859-1862.
 HC300 1841-1847, City of Lafayette (Jefferson Parish, La.). School Board Proceedings of the board of directors of public schools, 1841-1847.
 HQL, New Orleans (La.) Lyceum and Library Society. Records, 1854-1870
 AB320, 1804-1835 New Orleans (La.) Conseil de Ville. (City Council). Letters, petitions, and reports, 1804-1835.
 AB310, 1840-1852, Gen: New Orleans (La.) General Council. Ordinances and resolutions, 1840-1852.

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(L')Abeille de La Nouvelle-Orléans / The New Orleans Bee / La Abeja
 (L') Ami des Lois
 (Le) Courrier des États-Unis
 (Le) Courrier de la Louisiane / (The) Louisiana Gazette
 Daily Picayune
 (L')Explicateur Américain/ The American Exponent
 Moniteur de la Louisiane
 (Le) National
 (The) New Orleans Daily Crescent
 (The) New Orleans Sunday Delta
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Washington D.C.

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