The jewel in the crown of the study is undoubtedly Sarah Apetrei's chapter concerning mystical theology in early-Enlightenment England. It is here that the aim of the volume to display the impact of mystical theology 'across confessions and between cultures' (p. 24) is most obvious. Apetrei presents a nuanced analysis of the variety of attitudes towards the mystical 'way of knowing' (p. 201), which counterparts Cameron's earlier chapter in the volume. When read together, Cameron's theoretical framework compliments Apetrei's exploration of the consequences of such a theory in the polemical clashes between Anglicans, Catholics and Philadelphians in England. There is undoubtedly more work to be done in this interesting area of research.

The volume should be applauded for its attempt to offer a 'reassessment of medieval mysticism' (p. 5). But the reader should be aware of the dangers of carrying the concept of 'mysticism' itself forward into Reformation studies, as it is just as artificial and imaginary a construct as the one this volume seeks to dispel. Thankfully several scholars within this collection recognize this hazard, although a greater discussion of exactly what is meant by 'mysticism' in the introductory remarks would have been preferable. It is only through an ongoing awareness of the dangers of imposing artificial constructs onto the past that fruitful research into the role of mystical theology in early modern religion will emerge.

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Ian Haywood and John Seed, eds., *The Gordon Riots: Politics, culture and insurrection in late eighteenth-century Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; paperback edn. 2014, pp. xiii + 288, £19.99, ISBN: 978-1-107-47984-5

'The outrages which have been committed … were so unexpected and so unaccountable, that one would be inclined to believe one's senses had deceived one'. Samuel Romilly's verdict on the Gordon Riots was echoed by a generation of Londoners. The prevailing sentiment among observers confronted with the trail of destruction was one of stunned bewilderment. The tumults that tore through the City, leaving the Bank of England bombarded, parliament shielded by soldiers, and Newgate gaol in flames, smashed through the certainties of Enlightenment England and unlocked traumas stored away within the kingdom's past. For Edward Gibbon, no admirer of the Catholic Church, it was as though 'forty thousand Puritans,

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such as they might be in the time of Cromwell, have started out of their graves.'

In this impressive collection of essays, Ian Haywood and John Seed show how the shock and awe of the moment served for generations to occlude the historic significance of the riots, and left the event with an uncertain place in a late Georgian narrative dominated by the more familiar phenomena of Wilkesite agitation, the re-surfacing of constitutional radicalism and the loss of America. Should the riots be construed as the fury of a bigoted mob steered by serpentine hands, or a form of rationally-contrived social banditry? Did they represent a last rehearsal of the *charivari* tradition or the first stirrings of a revolutionary proletariat? As Haywood's chapter indicates, contemporaries depoliticised the event by reaching into the language of the sublime, with its imagistic resources of burning cities and natural tempests: elemental forces blowing apart the structures of reason and modernity. Lengthier eye-witness accounts, as illustrated in Brycchan Carey's study of the African author Ignatius Sancho and Miriam Wallace's chapter on Thomas Holcroft, were inflected by a process of self-fashioning, as individuals sought to define their own position on the tilting, twisting ground of a kingdom threatened with domestic and imperial crisis. Latterly, descriptions of Lord George Gordon's handiwork were obscured by images drawn out of the French Revolution: shades of 1780 and 1789 merged thrillingly if confusingly in Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge*.

The eleven essays contained within this volume bring political and social history together with literary scholarship to offer a sharp and persuasive set of insights into the riots. Together, they confront the old perception of eighteenth-century England as an age of stability entrenched by reason. Tim Hitchcock captures the riots as one manifestation of the urban discontents shaped by the evolution of a more remote, efficient and unsparing state apparatus, feeding popular images of the loss of the subject's liberty. John Seed explores the contribution of Dissenting congregations to the Protestant Association, deftly demonstrating the way in which the politics of the street gave expression to Nonconformist fears over their own civil and religious freedoms. Following on from Nicholas Rogers' masterly survey of 'The politics of war', Dana Rabin locates the events within the quotidian cultural and religious tensions created by an expanding global empire. Colonial acquisitions called upon British governments to manage diverse subject populations; the need to defend outlying frontiers created military and demographic pressures incompatible with the narrowly Anglican foundations of the public realm. Through the 1770s, the combined effect of these concerns - the allocation of liberties to Catholic Quebecois and a push to free up their British co-religionists for military service

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overseas – brought the imperial and Protestant identities of the state into head-on collision.

The difficulty in interpreting the riots springs in part from the ambivalent or overtly hostile responses engendered among the whiggish, self-appointed guardians of the constitution. Many of the essays in this work probe the conflicting impulses within the Whig and radical tradition, and show how these were cast into sharp relief in June 1780. Mark Knights demonstrates how the claims of the Protestant Association exposed deep-seated uncertainties over the power of the petition, and the rights that its signatories could claim from the settlement following the 1688 Revolution. Miriam Wallace shows how Thomas Holcroft shifted uneasily between romantic and revolutionary readings of the events, as he meditated in his *Plain and Succinct Narrative* on the balance of power between rulers and ruled. Dominic Green argues that many of the competing instincts of English radicalism were embedded within the politics and personality of Lord George Gordon: at once a freethinker and a demagogue; an aristocrat and a populist, a libertine and a Puritan. The Whig ideal wedded the preservation of the people's liberty to the defence of Protestantism against a sketchily defined force of 'popery': a term applied as much to the despotic state as the Catholic Church. The crisis of 1780 forced Whig authors and statesmen to define the meaning of their Protestant affinities, and to trace the limits placed upon the liberties of the people. Many struggled in response.

On its own terms, this volume works very effectively, and certainly becomes the freshest and foremost analysis of the Gordon Riots, their context and their consequences. Where the work suffers is in the absence of one vital perspective – that of the Catholics themselves: whose role within the politics that led up to the crisis, and whose responses once it broke out, are strangely muted in an otherwise comprehensive portrait of the events. The riots represented a climactic moment for a recusant community on a point of transition between Jacobite and Hanoverian politics, its elites themselves caught between rival pulls towards Whig or Tory standpoints. Growing, visible Catholic activism played a part in the pressures brought to bear on the British state in the 1770s. Relegating the community to a more marginal place risks rejuvenating the old perception of Catholics as the passive victims of a Protestant realm; or at least, a scholarly habit of seeing *anti-Catholicism* as more absorbing than recusancy itself.

This concern aside, the book is nonetheless to be recommended. Together, its contributors succeed in presenting a vibrant, original and wholly engrossing anatomy of a precipitous point in British politics.

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