Michael Demson and Regina Hewitt, eds., *Commemorating Peterloo: Violence, Resilience and Claim-making during the Romantic Era.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019. Pp. xii + 300. £85. ISBN 9781474428569.

Published in 2019, this remarkable collection of essays not only seeks to preserve the remembrance of Peterloo but also to provide new perspectives on the event, as well as a historical reappraisal of its violence. In their perspicuous introduction to *Commemorating Peterloo,* Michael Demson and Regina Hewitt artfully address 'the question of what is being commemorated' (2): although the massacre is often deemed representative of a culture of violence, it should be widely remembered as 'the ultimate triumph of the people over repressive violence' (2). As Demson and Hewitt define the three notions highlighted in the subtitle of the volume ('violence, resilience, and claim-making'), they single out 'resilience' as the key term of the book and as a symbol of the reformers' 'continuing resistance to violence in all its forms' (3). Crucially, Peterloo was about identity shaping, and the gathering demonstrated 'the ability of the people to carry out normative contention' and to maintain a non-violent identity (10). Carefully articulating rather than partitioning these three notions, the twelve essays of this ambitious collection provide multi-perspectival and fresh reinterpretations of the 1819 massacre and its posterity.

The first essay by Stephen C. Behrendt appropriately extends the reflective dimension of the editors' introduction by analysing the 'moral ambivalence of the divergent responses' to Peterloo (33) and by showing how this 'collective public experience' was sometimes manipulated (35). Like many others in this volume, this essay is interspersed with various sources such as poems, satirical prints, and press articles which scripted the political identity of the people while sometimes giving a biased representation of this identity. In an ambitious essay, Ian Haywood draws attention to the 1819 massacre in an innovative way – while most accounts make us eyewitnesses of the event, Haywood recreates its politically charged soundscape. Relying on an analogy between 'the swelling crescendo of popular protest' (58) and the sound of a volcanic eruption, Haywood's reconsideration of the aural sublime of the protestors' voice as 'bad sublime' (59) subverts Burke's anxiety about the vox populi in his *Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757).

Other contributors explore different perspectives on the event, laying emphasis not only on well-known authors and political figures, but also on understudied artefacts and symbols. Murray Pittock retraces the genealogy of Henry Hunt's white hat as a non-verbal sign of sedition symbolising 'allegiance to the radical cause' (84) which complemented, but also confused the message of the more traditional red cap of Liberty. Frederick Burwick shifts attention to drama and unveils the hidden posterity of Peterloo on stage by demonstrating how the historical figure of Guy Fawkes was turned into 'a hero of the oppressed' (100), covertly spreading radical ideas despite censorship.

What makes this volume a perfect addition to the 'Edinburgh Critical Studies in Romanticism' series is its awareness of Scottish and Irish responses. Gerard Carruthers focuses on responses to Peterloo in Scotland from 1819 to 1822, underlining how 'enduringly heartfelt was the response to Peterloo and to Henry Hunt in the West of Scotland' (136). Conversely, James Kelly shows the widening gap between Ireland and England after Peterloo, as the massacre reactivated memories of 'Tory coercion' on the island (141), but also stimulated Irish eloquence. Michelle Faubert focuses on the Irish response to the massacre by contrasting Castlereagh's suicide with Peterloo as both self-sacrifice and 'ultimate betrayal' of the body politic (170), raising the issue of public sympathy. Katey Castellano's chapter brings an international dimension to the volume by considering claim-making in the United States, foregrounding William Cobbett's ambition to counter the 'animalisation of the working class' (184) in public discourse by creating a memorial for Thomas Paine in England.

The last four chapters show how Peterloo disturbs the cultural narrative of a diminishing violence in Britain by uncovering a hidden or 'dispersed' violence. John Gardner reveals how Peterloo was more important than church scandals in 'widening the rift between reformers and religion' (224). Victoria Myers analyses Jeremy Bentham's 'complex notion of violence' in his *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* (1817) and underlines his insight that 'non-legal (but hidden) violence was the real *modus operandi* of the governing class' (246). Philip Shaw argues that the massacre indirectly spurred William Wordsworth to reflect on 'the place of conflict in civil society' (252) in his post-Peterloo poetry.

Michael Scrivener's suggestive reading of the work which became the most famous denunciation of Peterloo – Percy Bysshe Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy* – finally highlights the poet's call for empathy, but also for 'a repetition of Peterloo' in the future (282). This final essay aptly echoes the cover image of the volume – J. M. W. Turner's *Death on a Pale Horse* – which is sometimes considered a representation of the fall of Anarchy (a figure modelled after Benjamin West's earlier painting with the same title) in Shelley's poem.

By bringing together these fresh perspectives on a seemingly well-known topic, the book makes an important contribution to scholarship and to the understanding of Peterloo.

Pauline Hortolland
Université de Paris