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978-0-521-19542-3 - The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain

Edited by Ian Haywood and John Seed

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## THE GORDON RIOTS

The Gordon riots of June 1780 were the most devastating outbreak of urban violence in British history. For almost a week large parts of central London were ablaze, prisons were destroyed and the Bank of England attacked. Hundreds of rioters were shot dead by troops and for many observers it seemed that England was on the verge of a revolution. The first scholarly study in a generation, this book brings together leading scholars from historical and literary studies to provide new perspectives on these momentous events. The essays include new archival work on the religious, political and international contexts of the riots, and new interpretations of contemporary literary and artistic sources. For too long the significance of the Gordon riots has been overshadowed by the impact of the French Revolution on British society and culture: this book restores the riots to their central position in late eighteenth-century Britain.

IAN HAYWOOD is Professor of English at Roehampton University, London.

JOHN SEED is Honorary Research Fellow at Roehampton University, London.

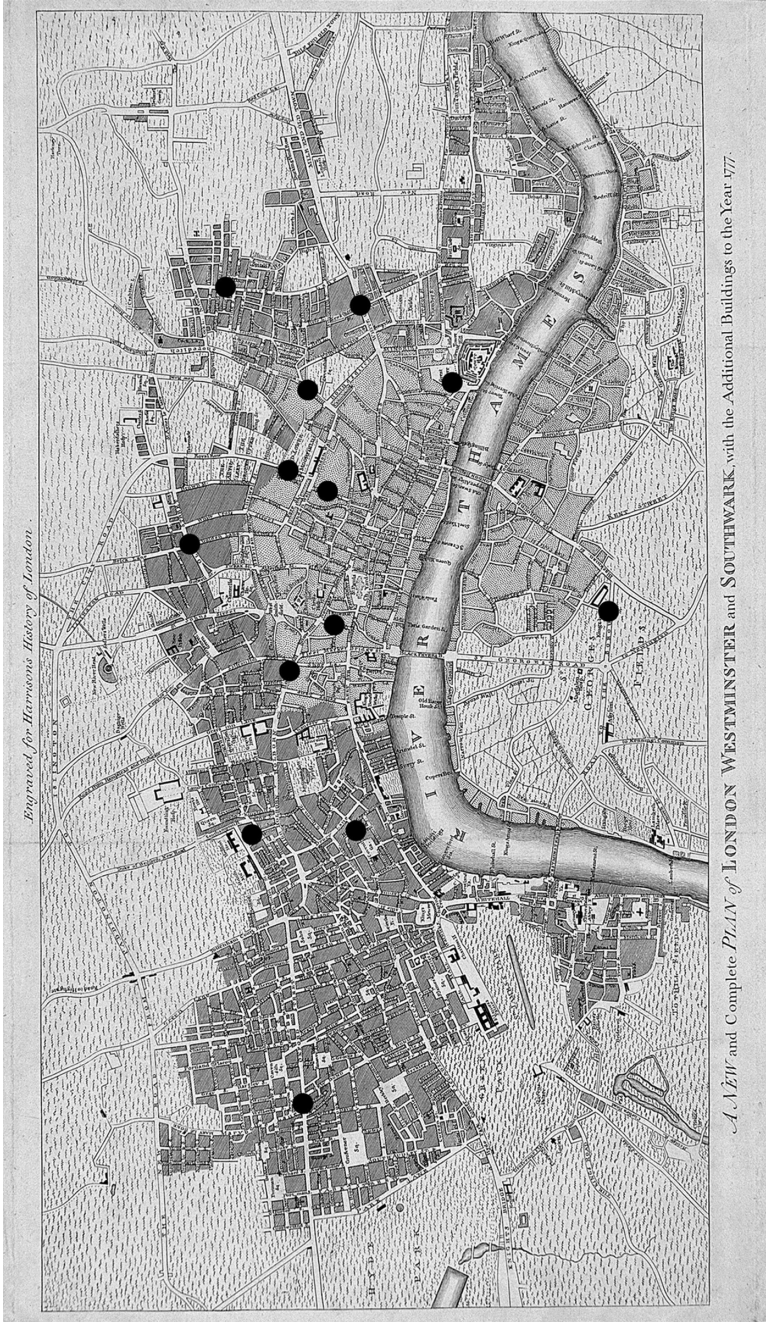
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In July and August 1780 over twenty Gordon rioters were executed close to the sites where their offences against property were committed (the sites are marked by the dots). This map therefore indicates the geographical spread of the riots across central London.

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# THE GORDON RIOTS

*Politics, Culture and Insurrection in  
Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*

EDITED BY

IAN HAYWOOD

AND

JOHN SEED

*Roehampton University, London*



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'Indolence, interruption, business, and pleasure, all take their terms of retardation', as Dr Johnson helpfully explained Pope's slow progress in his translation of Homer: 'Perhaps no extensive and multifarious performance was ever effected within the term originally fixed in the undertaker's mind.' This particular 'multifarious performance' began in July 2008 as a one-day conference at Roehampton University, London, and most of the essays in this book began their life as papers delivered on that occasion. Thanks to Roehampton University for providing the facilities for the conference, and to speakers who are not represented in this book, particularly Ronald Paulson, John Bowen and Michael Wheeler. Thanks to our editor Linda Bree for inviting us to consider a collection of essays for Cambridge University Press, and for her continued support and enthusiasm. Other colleagues who have given advice and encouragement include Joanna Innes and Katrina Navickas. Further support has come from the Centre for Research in Romanticism at Roehampton University and the Institute of Historical Research, London. Finally, we must acknowledge the commitment and staying power of our contributors: thanks to their efforts, the Gordon riots can once again take their place as a seminal event of late eighteenth-century Britain.

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## *Abbreviations*

BL	British Library
BM	British Museum
NRO	Northumberland Records Office
NYCRO	North Yorkshire County Record Office
<i>OBP</i>	<i>The Proceedings of the Old Bailey: London's Central Criminal Court, 1674 to 1913</i> , <a href="http://www.oldbaileyonline.org">www.oldbaileyonline.org</a>
PA	Protestant Association
SCA	Sheffield City Archives
TNA	The National Archives