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Music Scoring and Analysis**

Fabrice Bensimon (ed.), *Samuel Bamford : La vie d'un radical anglais au temps de Peterloo*

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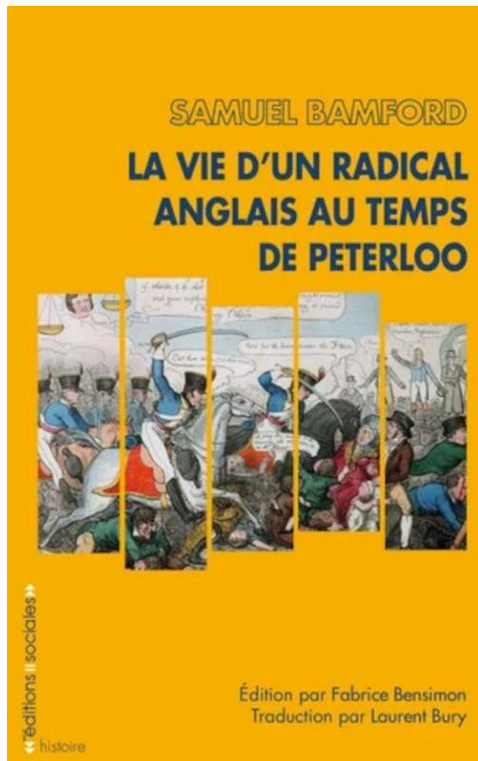
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REFERENCES

Fabrice Bensimon (ed.), *Samuel Bamford : La vie d'un radical anglaise au temps de Peterloo*, edited translated by Laurent Bury (Paris : les Éditions sociales, 2019).ISBN: 978-2-35367-035-2



- 1 *Samuel Bamford : La vie d'un radical anglaise au temps de Peterloo*, published by Les Éditions sociales in the bicentenary year of the Peterloo massacre, provides a French readership with a truly excellent translation of and commentary on the memoirs of the Lancashire radical reformer, Samuel Bamford, who was a central figure in the events recounted. Bamford's account of the build-up to the mass meeting at St. Peter's Fields on 16th August 1819, the events themselves and their aftermath covers the years 1816 to 1821 and was first published in English in 1844 at the height of the Chartist movement, under the title of *Passages in the Life of a Radical*. Translated for the first time into French by Laurent Bury and edited by Fabrice Bensimon, the book is a meticulous rendering of Bamford's chronicles of the period he lived through and the events he witnessed, written over the years 1839 to 1942. More widely, it plays an important role in broadening the awareness within French scholarship of British working-class and radical history of the early nineteenth century.
- 2 The bicentenary commemorations of Peterloo did not go unmarked in France. Fabrice Bensimon moderated a showing of Mike Leigh's film 'Peterloo' (2018) at the Sorbonne in Paris on 29th January 2020, an event supported by La Société d'histoire de la révolution de 1848 and the French Centre for Nineteenth-century History (Centre d'histoire du XIX^e siècle). Bensimon also delivered the keynote address at the conference held at the University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès on 6th March 2020, dedicated to the memory of Peterloo and entitled 'Peterloo, l'histoire d'un espoir, la mémoire d'un massacre dans l'Angleterre de 1819'. Articles also appeared by the editor of the translated edition on the topic in two French journals, *Revue d'histoire du XIX^e siècle*, and *L'Histoire*, while specialist of the radical novel, Marion Leclair, of the University of Artois, also wrote an article on the memory of Peterloo in *Le Monde Diplomatique*.
- 3 The introduction combines a carefully crafted view of the events of 16th August 1819 with historiographical anchorage which is both sweeping and selective, highlighting

the important work in this field of scholars such as Robert Poole, Michael Bush and John Belchem. It provides insight into Bamford's background as a handloom weaver in the small Lancashire town of Middleton, on the outskirts of Manchester, during a time of profound industrial change and his role in the resurgence of radical politics in the years leading up to Peterloo. It also gives a wider perspective on the revival of the reform movement in the years following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and the contribution of figures such as William Cobbett, Henry Hunt and Major John Cartwright, which culminated in a strategy of mass outdoor gatherings. It adds a voice to the resounding call for the events of Manchester and their impact over the following century not to be underestimated, judging it to have been "one of the single biggest civilian massacres of nineteenth-century Britain" which cast a large "shadow" over the whole period. Fabrice Bensimon documents the way in which the massacre has been remembered and commemorated in the years after 1819, both in Manchester and by later working-class reform movements which drew on the heritage of the violent repression meted out at St. Peter's Fields to shape their own calls for change. He also provides his readers with a clear picture of Bamford's antagonistic relationship with Chartism and his antipathy for one of its key figureheads, Feargus O'Connor, which explains in part his employment in the service of the government as a special constable during the campaign for the People's Charter.

- 4 The editor charts the book's reception by a British audience, noting how middle-class readers, manufacturers and leaders embraced Bamford's work, published as it was at a time of acute anxiety about the subversive potential of the Chartist 'agitation'. As Fabrice Bensimon emphasises, Bamford's text has a "double time frame": that of the years covered by the account (1816 to 1821) and that of the time of writing (1839 to 1942). Bensimon, drawing on observations made by E. P. Thompson, notes unequivocally that Bamford was writing for a contemporary readership and therefore more than likely overstated his distance from the more radical, insurrectionary wing of the reform movement during a decade that Eric Hobsbawm defined as "the hysterical 1810s". (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* [London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975] 211). He also pays attention to the role of Bamford's wife Jemima who is not only brought to life in the memoir but provided some crucial sections of the narrative. Bensimon is careful to draw the reader's attention to the fact that there were a multitude of working-class autobiographies written in Britain over the period 1790-1900 – he counts over 800 – and that only a small number reached an audience outside their author's immediate family.
- 5 A crucial addition to our knowledge surrounding Bamford's work is the consideration given to the work's reception in France. Bensimon notes that Bamford's text was not published in French and suggests that this was partly because of broad prejudice against popular literature, but also because the genre of workers' autobiographies is less well-known and there are simply fewer of them. He concedes that since the 1970s and 1980s some French workers' autobiographical writings have been published, but they were mostly from a later period than that covered in Bamford's memoirs. Nevertheless, Bensimon points out that the Peterloo massacre did not go unnoticed among Parisian workers and was recorded in contemporary publications.
- 6 The French translation follows the organisation used in the Oxford University Press edition of the English text, published in 1984. The chapters are numbered from 1 to 102, with the last five chapters – added later by Bamford and primarily devoted to the

contemporary reviews of the memoir and the author's reaction to them – separated from the rest. The translation is faithful to Bamford's manuscript, expertly translated by Laurent Bury, professor of British literature at the University of Lyon 2. The subheadings of each chapter are retained in the translation and the footnotes provide helpful information, for instance on the precise location of small English towns, on the origins of Bamford's literary references or on allusions that would not necessarily be explicit to a French reader unfamiliar with the period. Bamford's work is beautifully rendered in the French language. The original memoir combines minute description of the landscape he roamed, rich portraits of radical figures he knew and detailed accounts of the events he lived through, including encounters with the local magistracy and national authorities and a precise depiction of the demonstration on 16th August 1819. Bamford also included a number of poems in his memoirs as well as transcripts of the trials of 1820. It is a challenging text to translate, combining prose and verse, description of a very particular regional landscape with the culture and dialect of Lancashire in the early nineteenth century. Bury tackles these elements with brio, balancing efficacy with accuracy and not over-translating specific cultural terms (the protestors who attempted to march to London in 1817 are kept as *les blanketteers*). The translation of the assault by the Manchester yeomanry cavalry on the peaceful protestors and the silence of the immediate aftermath retains the simplicity and horror of Bamford's original description.

- 7 This is an extract from the translation of Bamford's survey of the scene after the massacre:

“Dix minutes après le début du carnage, le champ n'était plus qu'un espace vide et quasi désert. Le soleil brillait à travers l'air étouffant et immobile. Les rideaux et les volets de toutes les fenêtres étaient fermés. [...] Les tribunes restèrent debout, avec quelques hampes brisées et tranchées, quelques bannières lacérées pendaient. Tout le champ était jonché de casquettes, de bonnets, de chapeaux, de châles, de chaussures, et d'autres éléments du costume masculin ou féminin, labourés, déchirés et sanglants. Les cavaliers avaient quitté leur selle ; les uns desserraient les lanières de leurs chevaux, les autres ajustaient leur équipement, d'autres encore essuyaient leurs sabres. Plusieurs monticules d'êtres humains s'entassaient là où ils étaient tombés, écrasés et étouffés” (*La vie d'un radical anglaise au temps de Peterloo*, 176).

- 8 In interpreting a text of this nature, there is however an almost insurmountable difficulty which is how to go about translating dialogues which, in Bamford's original text, are written out as they would have been pronounced in contemporary Lancashire dialect, an aspect that Mike Leigh and his team of actors handled impressively in the film adaptation of the massacre aided by Bamford's own guide to Lancashire dialect, published in 1853. The translator and editor rightly choose not to use an equivalent French dialect from the period, given the very particular regional anchorage of Bamford's memoirs. The dialogues are therefore translated without dialect, an inevitable loss for anyone who has read Bamford's original text and who is seeking access to the orality of the language used by Bamford and his contemporaries. There is also the issue of translating Bamford's poetry. The numerous verses that Bamford interspersed his text with, and which are regularly woven into his narrative, are translated by Bury to take into account the meaning of the text without straining to achieve an equivalent rhyming structure. These are the decisions a translator is inevitably faced with when trying to transpose particular cultural, linguistic and poetic

traits from one language to another, a process which inevitably entails a certain degree of loss.

- 9 Yet these elements are independent of what is, without doubt, a brilliant translation and explanation of Bamford's text, enriched by a helpful index of individuals mentioned in the original account, photographs of the both author and veterans of Peterloo as well as maps, token coins and engravings. A French readership will, for the first time, be able to access the details and depth of the period and events of Peterloo first recounted in print by Bamford in the mid-nineteenth century.
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Keywords: Radicalism, Peterloo massacre, Napoleonic Wars, Chartism, autobiography, weavers, Lancashire, Industrial Revolution

Mots-clés: Radicalisme, massacre de Peterloo, guerres Napoléoniennes, Chartisme, autobiographie, tisserands, comté de Lancashire, Révolution industrielle

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