

Reliving the Terror: victims and print culture during the Thermidorian Reaction in
France, 1794-1795

On 27 July 1794 (9 Thermidor Year II in France's new calendar, which marked the time since the country's monarchy had been replaced by a Republic in 1792) Maximilien Robespierre, the leading political figure in a 'revolutionary government' that had ruled wartime France since October of the previous year, was denounced as a tyrant in the hall of the National Convention where he served as an elected deputy. Immediately arrested, Robespierre and four close allies were declared outlaws later the same day, and the following evening he was executed along with twenty-one others.¹ This epochal event saw a Revolutionary colossus unceremoniously stripped of power by his peers, and then left stricken and speechless by the pistol shot which rent his jaw apart as he waited in vain for his supporters in the capital to save him from the guillotine. It continues to serve as a major signpost on France's road through the Revolution—albeit one which historians now recognize does not mark the clearly defined route through the historical landscape which contemporary cartographers (both among a political elite and the wider public) had claimed.²

This article explores the 'Thermidorian Reaction' which ran from this point through to the end of 1795, when a new constitution ushered in another system of republican government, the Directory (1795-1799).³ Interest in this 'Reaction' has increased in recent years after two centuries of relative neglect, and precisely because the signposting provided by 9 Thermidor is so confused. Robespierre's public image solidified in subsequent weeks and months as the blood-crazed mastermind behind a Terror of guillotines, mass incarceration and inchoate, daily fears. However, historians (most recently and forcefully, Jean-Clément Martin) dispute the extent to which any

Terror of 1793-1794 existed as a coherent, national system, and highlight the obvious self-interest other leading politicians had in turning Robespierre's prominence into omnipotence so that they could exculpate themselves.⁴ Laura Mason points to the cycles of violence which continued to flourish right across the second half of the 1790, which drew repeatedly on tactics habitually associated with the Terror and likewise give pause to the notion of rupture in the summer of 1794.⁵ Nonetheless, as the work of Howard Brown among others has shown, attempts to both publicize certain acts of past Terrorist violence and punish the perpetrators were a key ingredient in the political climate of the Thermidorian era.⁶ Even if it was a manufactured reality to some degree, attempts to chronicle 'the Terror' and to use 9 Thermidor as a break in France's Revolutionary history resonated with the general population (and therefore possessed considerable political capital). The seductive clarity provided by a chronology that places a national 'Reaction' as the aftermath to Terrorist repression requires careful negotiation, but recent historiography proves that engaging with the idea of transition, and of a negotiation with or manipulation of the immediate past, is both necessary and productive when considering Thermidorian France and the later 1790s as a whole. The Polish historian Bronislaw Baczko's work has been central to this, with his *Comment sortir de la Terreur* demonstrating the rich analytical possibilities that came with interrogating the way in which the political class forged a new Thermidorian identity for the Revolution by constructing a particular understanding of 'the Terror' which had preceded it.⁷

Backzo argued that 'the Terror was not brought to an end by the fall of Robespierre; it was a road to be discovered and travelled.'⁸ However, while his Thermidorian travellers were an elite band of Parisian politicians, in this article I want to examine the movements of a much larger, diverse group within French society:

victims of the Terror. In doing so, it is imperative to recognize first that being killed was not the only (or even the most common) way to earn this label. Individuals could suffer harassment, intimidation, imprisonment, or trial for a capital offence, and still survive: 'So, I am still alive!' wrote one former prisoner.⁹ There could also be a significant collective element to the experience of Terrorist repression, enveloping the relatives, friends and wider community beyond any one targeted individual. The anonymous author of one Thermidorian tract described how guillotining a group of thirty-two people had meant some two hundred others—their relatives—continued to exist as living victims, 'cast into the abyss of suffering and destitution'.¹⁰ This combination of those directly and indirectly affected by the various mechanisms of Terrorist surveillance, repression and violence produces a vast and somewhat unwieldy constituency, for which even outline statistics remain inadequate. Donald Greer, whose work remains the default study on the scale of repression, recorded 16,594 death sentences in the revolutionary courts—but paid no attention to far higher numbers who passed through the courts without being sentenced to death. Likewise, it would be a thankless task to attempt a calculation of the total number under various forms of imprisonment, though it must have been in the several hundreds of thousands.¹¹ Beyond this 'regular' repression there is simply no way of quantifying the multifarious impacts of the Terror at a local level.

In a historiography which continues to infer that victimhood in this period equated to death, and even that the study of victims can only be of counter-revolutionary interest, it is not surprising that victims have seldom been shown holding their own in Thermidorian conversations.¹² But victims did participate, and what they had to say is significant for our understanding of the Thermidorian period and its troubled relationship with the Terror. Where can we hear this voice most clearly?

Victims' most prominent presence (in the surviving records at least) lies within the print culture of Thermidorian period—both as authors and subjects.¹³ France had become increasingly saturated with the printed word as the eighteenth century progressed, and this trend had been greatly augmented during the 1780s and into the early Revolutionary period as censorship broke down and then collapsed altogether amid a series of political crises which inspired an insatiable demand for printed commentary. By the middle of the revolutionary decade its citizens—especially but by no means exclusively in urban areas—were familiar with the idea that the printing press was an adaptable tool that could be exploited by any individual or group with a need or desire for publicity (providing they had the necessary financial backing).¹⁴ Nor was this pattern halted by the Terror itself. Even at the height of repression in the winter and spring of 1794, while the news press was subjected to heavy censorship these restrictions do not seem to have been extended systematically to the output of private citizens. Indeed, the Terror's actual victims could—and frequently did—contribute to a notable print sub-culture of self-defence and the defence of others, partly encouraged by the authorities' own need for a system whereby people unfairly targeted as 'suspect' could register proofs of their innocence and revolutionary credentials.¹⁵ It was only natural, therefore, that the Thermidorian reading public would continue to have plenty of fresh material from the Terror's victims to choose from. After all, the printed pamphlet was a flexible prop for the journey the country was now on: for the settling of old scores, the starting of new ones—or simply as a way of trying to set the record straight after suffering reputational damage. Charting its use is not without its challenges, however. The print output produced varies substantially in content, scope and style, and has survived in the archives in a way that often appears haphazard and frustrates the deployment of standard sampling techniques. This article therefore

draws on research in a wide range of locations—major print collections in France, Britain and the United States, but also the holdings of departmental archives—with the intention of highlighting significant areas of comparison and contrast within the genre.

This print material constructed and promoted not only an individual's identity as a victim, but also an image of collective victimhood for entire communities to unite around. Barely three weeks after 9 Thermidor, the popular society in one southern town was piecing together a local history of the immediate past that transposed national patterns of repression onto the local political scene, with a certain Bourget described as 'the Robespierre of Arles'.¹⁶ In this article I argue that the assertion of individual and collective identities as 'victims', along with an associated language of victimhood, made an important contribution to Thermidorian political culture. Victimhood stood as a powerful marker within a rapidly changing political landscape where revolutionary loyalties across the country were feared to be in flux, and the concept had an important role to play in attempts to secure personal and collective rehabilitation in the face of the many, inevitable reminders of the revolutionary violence of 1793-4. Print was also used to promote the denunciation of alleged perpetrators of Terrorist violence, and, Janus-like, such activity and language then proved to be valuable resources for those who found themselves on the opposite side of this reckoning with France's immediate past. It therefore linked to a familiar set of revolutionary fears, which had begun to be articulated long before the Terror, about judging authentic identity in light of concerns that France was riddled with counter-revolutionary conspirators and other 'enemies of the people' who could destroy the country if they were left unchallenged (or even alive).¹⁷

In some ways, of course, victims and victimhood have been ever-present in the historiography of this period. Printing presses were quickly reset to chronicle and

publicize their misfortunes (with varying degrees of accuracy, hyperbole and Gothic relish), and victims were a significant reference point in political debates on the national stage about how to respond to France's recent past and provide fresh impetus to the Revolution in the future.¹⁸ These versions of a history of the Terror have subsequently proved fertile ground for professional historians interested in the Reaction, because it has long been clear that the identity and dynamics of the latter are bound up with contemporary understandings of the former. However, this visibility has actually been limited to the two dominant viewing angles provided by the historiography of the Reaction, one of which renders victims largely passive while the other considers violence as their only active quality worth studying.

Victims continue to decorate the Thermidorian landscape depicted by the likes of Howard G. Brown, Mette Harder, Pierre Serna and Jean-Clément Martin, who have built on Baczko's work dissecting the behavior of the Parisian political elite and their attempts to navigate Thermidorian waters made choppy by the legacy of violence.¹⁹ Here, though, victims are mostly narrative pawns in the strategies of others, although recent work (by Ronen Steinberg in particular) has begun to uncover some of the impact they could have in national debates about potential compensation and the prosecution of former Terrorists.²⁰ The role played by victims is almost as limited in the other dominant historiographical thread for this period: the 'White Terror' (white was the colour of the deposed monarchy, and therefore a symbol of counter-revolution). There, the victims of the Terror appear as the inspiration (or excuse) for the individuals and marauding bands who took retributive justice into their own hands by harassing, beating and murdering supposed Terrorists during a wave of popular violence centred on the Midi.²¹ Recent discussion has underlined the fact that even the period's most basic terminology—'Thermidorians'; the 'Thermidorian moment'—has a habit of

limiting study to politicians in Paris, and of automatically attributing exclusive control over any *non-violent* contemporary dynamics to this same cast.²² As Laura Mason has recently highlighted, 'we still do not sufficiently understand how the Terror was reimagined beyond the confines of the National Convention'.²³ Victim print culture does provide the historian with connections to the heart of the political establishment (literally so when addressed to the Convention, as many examples were), but overall it encourages a view of Thermidorian engagement with the revolutionary past that was driven just as much by local and individual agendas.

I. Individual victims and print culture after 9 Thermidor

Events had moved fast—too fast—for Robespierre on 9 Thermidor, but elsewhere in France the lived experience of the Thermidorian Reaction could prove very similar to that of the Terror. Joseph Emond, writing from his prison cell in Brest, complained that he was still being tormented some three months later by Joseph Verteuil, the public prosecutor of the local revolutionary tribunal. 'The sublime day of 9 Thermidor has passed' he noted bitterly, but he had yet to notice any improvement in his unfortunate situation.²⁴ Even when those still caught up in that system succeeded in escaping it, the Terror might be relived in myriad ways. Jean-Claude Boutay was acquitted by a reformed Paris Revolutionary Tribunal on 14 brumaire III/4 November 1794, but this did not protect him from renewed attacks against his character and loyalty to the Republic. He endured the situation for around seven months before employing a printer on the rue de la Loi in Paris to amplify a rejoinder because 'the tenacity of my persecutor leaves me with no other means of justifying myself'.²⁵ This was all part of a

wider trend whereby Terror victims, even if they no longer felt under threat, sought to publicize their past experiences via the printing press. Their motives were various but often overlapped: repairing the lingering reputational damage of being targeted during the Terror; responding to a reading public with a growing appetite for such narratives, as proven by the obvious commercial success of publications like the *Mémoires d'un détenu* of Honoré Riouffe; and denouncing those who were allegedly responsible for their suffering. In so doing, victims repeatedly set the Thermidorian present against what had preceded it—a temporal relationship which can even be seen in one victim's very particular (and suspiciously self-effacing) explanation that he was printing his account of what happened because, 'I am well-known to those who shed tears at my suffering [i.e. during the Terror], and [now, after 9 Thermidor] they are ready to judge whether I have deserved their support.'²⁶

The circumstances that pushed victims into print during the Thermidorian period were therefore almost as varied as each individual experience of the Terror had been, but the resulting texts shared common traits which merit closer attention. First, there was a clear, widely-held concern to protect and enhance individual revolutionary identities. This desire for personal rehabilitation was largely expressed in political terms, and required an understanding of how to distinguish acceptable examples of 'revolutionary' behaviour from those which might link either to 'Terrorist' or counter-revolutionary sympathies. Many victims therefore included some form of political and civic biography in their texts. These were often referred to as a *conduite politique* (political record), already a recurring feature of revolutionary culture in both print and manuscript form.²⁷ Typically such *conduites* presented narrative accounts of the lives of victims, often starting in the ancien regime but with a focus on active participation in the Revolution itself. Thus, Boutay reflected on his experiences by providing details of a

life's service in uniform—from the American War of Independence through to National Guard service, where he explained how 'I rose up the ranks thanks to the confidence of my fellow citizens'.²⁸ Joseph Pâris de l'Épinard, a prominent citizen of Lille who had been running his own (very profitable) local postal service and newspaper since well before the Revolution, gave a meticulous account his active role in local affairs over the course of sixteen pages. He demonstrated a level of awareness about the patriotic potential of biographical details that befitted a man who had edited and printed the *Gazette du Département du Nord* (a re-branding of his ancien regime newspaper) for several years. For example, he made great play of the claim that he had been the first man in Lille to fund an army volunteer to fight against the invading Prussians in 1792, being too old to serve himself.²⁹

To this roll-call of respectable revolutionary activity, replete with examples of self-sacrifice and honest public service, was frequently added a dramatic focus on specific harm suffered during the Terror. This completed the picture of the deserving victim who was worthy of their fellow citizens' support and respect, as when the printer and businessman Claude Dupré from Épernay spent thirty pages describing the ways in which his rival, Berchère, had manipulated the local system of surveillance against him to secure control over riverside business in the area.³⁰ Such details chimed well with an audience that relished sentimentalism and melodrama, as studies by William Reddy and Sarah Maza have shown.³¹ Xavier Audouin shared the story of his humiliating arrest, and increased its power by suggesting that many in his audience would recall similar experiences:

On hearing the sound of weapons, my wife was terrified; I grabbed my pistols and ran to the door; I recognized the

police...[who were] all dressed up to make an official arrest. I will leave it to those who have been in this position themselves to reflect on how this scene made me suffer. I was stark naked; I went back to the bed, and holding my wife in my arms [said]: come on, courage, my dear; and she could only repeat over and over: oh! the scoundrels! oh! the scoundrels!³²

Elsewhere, the dramatist Auguste-Étienne-Zavier Poisson de La Chabeaussière, who had been in the Parisian prison of *Les Madelonnettes* for eight months, confronted the reader on the very first page with the story of an entire family torn apart by the cruel servants of an arbitrary government. Not only was he thrown in gaol, but his wife was too—and she was to suffer further through being ‘callously insulted by HÉRON, that vile enforcer of arbitrary orders’. Their sick daughter, still a minor, was ‘torn from her mother’s arms’ for the first time since her birth and sent to live among the prostitutes housed in La Force.³³

The high male body count both during and after the Terror also ensured that women could themselves have an active part to play in the construction of these histories—rather than being limited to passive roles within them.³⁴ This included not just authorship but also the physical and logistical challenges of locating the necessary material evidence with which many of these accounts bristled (as, for example, in Boutay’s work where his Tribunal acquittal ruling was reproduced in full). Where continuing imprisonment was involved, women could play a key role in securing documents from local and national bodies. An extensive footnote to l’Épinard’s pamphlet, for example, quotes a letter received from his wife while he was still in gaol

after Thermidor recounting her detective work on his behalf—including a tense meeting with one his original denouncers.³⁵ Marie-Jeanne Gueirrier, the widow of a farmer and miller named Claude Leger from the commune of Rosay just to the west of Paris who had been guillotined during the Terror, had access to her deceased husband's Paris Revolutionary Tribunal case dossier when her pamphlet petitioning the Convention for the restitution of the family's property was drawn up soon after 9 Thermidor.³⁶ This allowed her to contest the official narrative contained in the indictment, and point to evidence of her husband's innocence in the written records of the interviews conducted in preparation for the prosecution. While copies did not form part of the petition, the text states that 'these documents from the case are presented with this petition for the examination of the National Convention'.³⁷

Both the push for rehabilitation and the personal narratives of Terror led in many cases to a third element which provided authors and readers with another visceral connection back into the Terrorist period: denunciation.³⁸ Auguste La Chabeaussière linked his denouncer to a broader class of traitor, claiming that the man responsible for causing his arrest and prolonged imprisonment was

one of those people who were born to do wrong to those nearest to them and to shame of all humanity, [a] groveling valet to power, in whoever's hands such power lay, too cowardly to conspire [by himself], but always ready to join with the winning conspirators.³⁹

In this example, La Chabeaussière refrained from revealing his denouncer's actual identity—probably because it seems it was his son-in-law—but others were not so

restrained when given the opportunity to point the finger at those they thought or claimed to be responsible for their past suffering.⁴⁰ As Joseph Pâris de l'Épinard put it:

It is necessary that right next to this depiction [of the misfortune l'Épinard had suffered] is exposed in all its deformity, in all its horror, that of the barbarous authors of the torture which tore me apart for fifteen months: who therefore are my executioners? A wicked nobody called Lavalette, the ferocious Duhem, the monster [unnamed]...I will add without hesitation, to these tigers, Bentabole and Levasseur.⁴¹

Likewise Boutay, when forced to respond to those continuing attacks after his Thermidorian acquittal, did not hesitate to confront his accusers directly—despite the fact that this entailed a lengthy public battle with not one but three Convention deputies.⁴²

That denunciations were a recurring feature of these texts is significant because it means that victims' print activities must be analysed as part of a wider conversation—or, more accurately, confrontation. Given that imprisonment (or worse) was a very real possibility for suspected Terrorists as the Reaction gathered pace, denunciation was a high-stakes activity. Evidence of its impact is difficult to track on a case-by-case basis, but can be inferred from the response in kind by those under pressure from similar allegations. In responding to the changing political weather, those who found themselves exposed became adept at coopting the language and imagery of victimhood that was being developed within the narratives of their accusers. In the

process, they retold and relived the Terror both by adding a counter-narrative against the allegations and also transposing the experience of victimhood onto their own *post-Terror* experiences—invalidating the claims of those originally affected by the Terror in the process. Subverting the Thermidorian imagery of a blood-soaked Terrorist-era France, one Parisian militant sneered:

All of you prison fugitives, federalists [a movement of local rebellion against the authority of Paris in the early phase of the Terror] and ex-nobles must love our national government so much more than us of course, we who made a rampart out of our bodies and are still covered in battle scars from when we fought in [our country's] defence!⁴³

Over in the Yonne meanwhile, a locally published pamphlet addressed the recent crackdown against those labelled as 'terrorists' in the municipality of Sens, in the late spring of 1795. Citizen Régley, the author, was angry after local officials accused him of being a Terrorist sympathiser for trying to help someone who had erroneously been gaoled as part of the formal disarmament process legislated by the Convention in 1795 to punish those complicit in the Terror.⁴⁴ 'But is it not itself an act of terrorism', Régley protested, 'to prevent an unfortunate detainee from being able to petition a higher authority?'⁴⁵ In doing so, Régley's audience would surely have recognised the parallels with past Terrorist abuses. Complaints about the inability to communicate with the outside world or present a case for release to the authorities—albeit frequently exaggerated—were part of the staple diet of the prison memoirs that became such commercial successes post-Thermidor. As one rather sensational account of the Paris

prison system put it: 'no one dared to put themselves at risk to solicit on our [his and other prisoners'] behalf. We believed ourselves to be abandoned by the world.'⁴⁶ Régley had attempted to perform precisely this function, but in the middle of the Thermidorian reaction, first by formally protesting an incarceration order and then acting as a go-between to facilitate the prisoner's petition to the departmental authorities.

These counter-narratives in defence of those labeled as 'Terrorists' intertwined with the output of victims themselves. They were, in this sense, very much a part of victim print culture. Combining the literature associated with victims and perpetrators produces a more rounded picture of the effects of the various policies announced at a national level in response to calls for compensation and retribution against Terrorists—effects which ultimately led the Convention to pass an amnesty for 'acts purely related to revolution' shortly before it was dissolved in the Autumn of 1793 because of fears that such measures were proving divisive at a local level and offered too much encouragement to counter-revolutionaries.⁴⁷ The experience and reaction of a citizen Coltier provides an instructive example here. This man had worked as a national commissioner for the district tribunal at Épernay in the Marne department during the Terror, and was therefore a very small cog within the large wheel of repression. Nevertheless, his status as a public functionary during the period meant that he was caught up in the Convention's disarmament programme in the Spring of 1795, which targeted the thousands of petty officials whose compliance (assumed rather than proven) it was maintained had ensured Robespierre's conspiracies had gained local traction. In a ten-page pamphlet, Coltier protested to his fellow citizens about both his categorization as a Terrorist and the way in which the disarmament ruling was enforced. In line with Charles Walton's argument about the continuing importance of personal honour within Revolutionary society, Coltier was particularly exercised by

elements that humiliated him personally, and that he claimed had undermined his status within the local community:

But how was I disarmed? Was it, like for everyone else [on the local list of disarmament], a municipal officer who came, quietly and without an escort, to ask for my weapons? No, it was the local militia they sent out, with a warrant demanding my immediate presence at the town hall...I could clearly see by the number of armed men, which someone had ensured were out on foot; [and] by the care which had been taken to assemble groups of citizens in the main square...that all this had been concocted to humiliate myself and [the others who were being disarmed].⁴⁸

This experience took place hundreds of miles away from the Midi, and involved a far less violent set of interactions between rival factions, and yet it bears witness to divisions within local communities that were just as much a part of the post-Terror dynamic in France as the more familiar extrajudicial killings. The structure, tone and much of content could easily be mistaken for the *conduite politique* of a Terror victim.

The status of 'victim', and an associated language of victimhood, was therefore clearly politicized by repeated confrontations in print between individuals reliving multiple, competing histories of the Terror right across the country. This compounded the dynamic already identified by historians whereby the idea of rehabilitation was established at the heart of Thermidorian culture at a national level, with denunciations a common supplement. As the likes of Baczko, Brown and Steinberg have shown,

deputies in the Convention wrestled with ways of simultaneously protecting themselves and the Republic they represented from the contamination of the past. Their efforts developed through various stages from early attempts to distinguish the despotic Terrorist acts of a select few at the heart of government from the wider system of 'revolutionary government' which they argued was integral to the continuing success of the war effort and a necessary bulwark against domestic counter-revolution. To this end, the trials of deputy Jean-Baptiste Carrier (emblem of the extraordinary violence meted out during the quelling of a large-scale domestic rebellion in the Vendée), then Antoine Fouquier-Tinville (public prosecutor at the Paris Revolutionary Tribunal) and finally deputy Joseph Le Bon (who became a symbol of the immorality it was claimed lay at the heart of the Terror's excesses) punctuated the period.⁴⁹ After an initial pretence that existing structures of revolutionary government could survive Robespierre's fall, deputies also initiated an overhaul of the state machinery underpinning the Terror. The notorious Law of 22 Prairial/10 June 1794, blamed for an exponential rise in the number of executions in the capital, was revoked, the executive powers of the Committee of Public Safety reined in, and the national network of surveillance committees dramatically reduced. Already by 22 thermidor II/9 August 1794 Deputy Bertrand Barère, always sensitive to the political climate, promised those languishing in the nation's gaols some relief now that a new dawn had arrived, 'when the country can afford to be generous without fear of the consequences'.⁵⁰ Over the winter of 1794/1795, and in the context of growing public demands for wider retributive justice and increasing violence in the Midi, the Convention sought public support and its own institutional rehabilitation via legislation targeting a wider circle of Terror-era officials (including by the disarmament process which Coltier complained about) and tentative efforts to develop compensation schemes for victims.⁵¹

This broader climate helps explain the prevalence of victims like Boutay, Dupré and l'Épinard as active participants in Thermidorian print culture—rather than simply the subject matter for other authors. During early Thermidorian debate about the Terror's prison system, deputy Legendre admonished some of his colleagues for asking that the 'appalling descriptions' of this system of mass incarceration be brought to a close: 'No, no, these things must not be hidden from us; you should not be shocked by what happened [there], since...you must remember that prison was a threat to all of us in here.'⁵² This was indicative of prevailing attitudes in political circles, noted recently by Steinberg, which encouraged those victims who wished to publicize their personal accounts of the Terror—not least because this complemented 'official' attempts to legitimise the current regime by positive comparison to what had been replaced.⁵³ The hesitant development of Convention policy towards dealing with the history and legacy of the Terror—subsequently reversed by the general amnesty—also likely intensified the pressure felt by individual victims to make concerted efforts to burnish their revolutionary reputations. Political and social legitimacy was in flux post-Thermidor, and nobody quite knew where France's enemies were—apart from being certain that they could be anywhere, including among the hundreds of the thousands affected by the Terror. By January 1795, the 'Representatives on mission' from the Convention to the southern departments of the Bouches-du-Rhône and the Var were reduced to issuing the following official advice on how to spot such threats:

So as to tear away every mask, look the man your heart
suspects straight in the eyes, & soon enough you will
recognize your enemy. Is he always into the latest fad; does
he adopt the colours of the revolution only periodically; does

he buy into the vagaries of each and every splinter group;
was he a cheerleader for the terror; was he the agent of
every faction...does he always call himself a knight of the
Revolution, & the very best of patriots.⁵⁴

Acts of personal rehabilitation to shore up one's own or someone else's revolutionary credentials, as well as the decision to brand others as Terrorists, made perfect sense in this confused environment where signs of loyalty and treachery were largely indistinguishable.

II. Victimhood and collective action

Let us now extend our focus on print culture beyond individual voices, and examine how victimhood was used to articulate collective responses to both the Terrorist past and the Thermidorian present. On 30 ventôse III/20 March 1795, the general assembly of the Contrat-Social section in Paris voted unanimously to depute three of its members to draw up a report 'with the aim of rehabilitating' a citizen Chaudot, who had been sentenced to death by the capital's Revolutionary Tribunal during the Terror.⁵⁵ Vivant-Jean-Baptiste Chaudot's fate had made considerable waves at the time of his conviction, on 25 pluviôse II/13 February 1794, owing to an unprecedented intervention by the Convention the following day in response to a petition by his family. Chaudot's sentence was suspended pending an investigation and inspired a blizzard of printed defence statements which suggest a highly organized support network within his section—although in the end the conviction was upheld and

Chaudot was sent to the guillotine.⁵⁶ Now, thirteen months later, the same community picked up the cause again.

The report commissioned by the general assembly included the standard elements of an individual *conduite politique* for the deceased Chaudot, as well as yet another reconstruction of a specific episode of Terrorist repression (centering on alleged collusion between the Paris Revolutionary Tribunal's then-president, Jean-Baptiste Coffinhal, and its prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville, to force through a guilty verdict). However, its opening remarks betrayed just as much concern for those still breathing the Thermidorian air. Its three authors described the section's decision to rehabilitate their compatriot's memory as 'fresh evidence of your concern for oppressed virtue and innocence', while the challenge they had taken on 'of avenging the memory of victims' was declared worthy of a local community keen to uphold its reputation for taking the fight to the country's Terrorist oppressors.⁵⁷ Section members agreed to this positive self-appraisal with great enthusiasm when the text was formally read out on 30 germinal III/19 April 1795, and lost no time in further expanding their public relations operation. They generously decided to give the Convention itself the chance to atone for its failure to protect Chaudot by reading out the report alongside a fresh petition about the victim. The political signaling would not have been lost on contemporaries given that the report was drawn up between the two Paris popular uprisings of spring 1795, which were redolent of the violence Chaudot and his section had been caught up in during the Terror. Enlisting the Convention would simultaneously endorse the section's re-crafted image as a model for local resistance during the Terror and as a supporter of the successor regime—at a time when popular opposition to the government's anti-Terror policies was reaching its brief apogee elsewhere in the capital.⁵⁸ The deputation

sent to the Convention thus presented Chaudot's rehabilitation as having the potential to form a kind of regenerative Paris-wide network:

We have come to remind you about a man...His rehabilitation already exists in the souls of the citizenry in the Contrat-Social section...Rehabilitation has been achieved in the hearts of all Parisians...His rehabilitation is even consecrated in the report you yourselves wrote [the joint committee report back in 1794 about the trial]...And the rehabilitation of Chaudot now exists in your hearts, and we have come to ask you to say this openly. This just act...will be yet further proof that you are working tirelessly to secure France's happiness.⁵⁹

This example demonstrates how much the work done to restore the reputation of individual victims of the Terror (living or dead) could resonate within Thermidorian political culture: the memorialization of one death created an expanding halo of civic virtue for the entire city to gather under. More broadly, the Thermidorian period saw local communities across France print their own particular histories of the Terror in response to the changing political weather. These texts chronicled the privations of particular, named victims, but they also presented an image of collective victimhood that linked together an entire village, town, district or department. More than 150 signatories from Cusset (Allier), for example, called on the citizenry of the district to unite around the 'scenes of horror' they had all endured and 'expose the tyrants who oppressed them'.⁶⁰ Such efforts were often organized through local popular societies

(once they had been ‘regenerated’ by purging their membership of radical members, under instruction from the Convention), but other local authorities and unspecified groupings were also involved.⁶¹ Although the documents are often impossible to date with precision, there are examples from right across the Thermidorian period—as with the output of individual victims—and this was clearly a widespread practice.

Recent historiography has integrated the outlines of this print phenomenon into analysis of the pressures faced by the Thermidorian Convention to punish Terrorist excesses without encouraging a reaction that might lead to outright counter-revolution.⁶² However, a closer reading of these texts reveals how the figure of the victim and a language of victimhood were deployed to fulfil local objectives even as they engaged with the national dynamics of the Reaction. As in the Chaudot case, victimhood was closely tied to the theme of rehabilitation, which was just as much a political concern for groups within villages and towns across France as it was for individual victims or Convention deputies. Under such circumstances, print was often used to construct minutely detailed narratives about the local permutations of Terror—to a much greater extent than the efforts of individual victims. As we have already seen, the focus of the latter could produce striking vignettes of personal experiences from the Terror, but a natural corollary of creating narratives that spoke (or claimed to speak) for the community as a whole was that the Terror came to be described in terms which were commensurately broad. This ensured prominence for a much more wide-ranging definition of repression than just imprisonment or execution. Thus, for example, the commune of Mornant near Lyon in the Rhône department began its roll-call of suffering with Annet Lespinasse and Claude Leclerc, who had been executed as a result of false denunciations, but gave equal prominence to three others ‘who had miraculously escaped the fatal blade’. Far greater detail was then given over to Terror-related

activities that directly impacted on a much larger number of citizen but were clearly less serious offences: petty theft, stealing meat from inns ‘to the detriment of other citizens’, and seizing property from people’s homes ‘while imposing silence on any protests by making wild threats’.⁶³ Elsewhere, attention was drawn to activities as diverse as drawing excess salaries from the public purse, removing papers from the sealed properties of detainees, and forced loans and taxes.⁶⁴

One obvious motive for the construction of such detailed narratives, as historians have regularly concluded, was to denounce specific individuals for their role in the Terror and facilitate their future prosecution. Named denunciations are indeed a common feature of these texts, whether that was the local ‘Robespierre’ in a particular town, or a department’s Representative on mission.⁶⁵ However, for the remainder of this article I want to focus on two other characteristics which historians continue to neglect. First, and irrespective of the historical accuracy of such accounts, these reconstructions of a lived experience of the pre-9 Thermidor everyday helped with attempts to answer the question facing thousands of communities across the country: how could this have been left to happen, and to continue for so long? Of course, Baczko identified such questions at the heart of the Convention’s creation of its Thermidorian image, but victims themselves have not yet been added to this conversation.⁶⁶

Between 30 brumaire/20 November and 20 frimaire III/10 December 1794, over 130 inhabitants from the modest commune of Puy-Rédan (today: Saint-Gérard-le-Puy) in the central department of Allier were involved in discussing and recording their local experience of the Terror over multiple stages, and they confronted these questions head on. The resulting document, printed locally in the district capital Cusset, began with an address to deputy Boisset (operating as the area as Representative on mission) that employed only general statements about the Terror with nothing to single out the

locality being spoken about from the rest of the country ('Here...we had tyrants of humankind...Here...nature and liberty were abused by dictatorial and power-hungry men'); it subsequently developed into a painstaking account of this community's soul-searching about just a single day from the Terror.⁶⁷ Moving on to reproduce the detailed minutes of a packed gathering at the local popular society, this pamphlet presented the image of a commune anxious to atone for 'the notorious meeting of 10 Thermidor', when its inhabitants had failed to stand up for the widow of their former mayor, citizen Girard, in the face of a public attack by the district's national agent, Givois. Girard himself had been among more than 1600 people executed by the revolutionary commission in Lyon between December 1793 and April 1794.⁶⁸

After agreeing to a general statement about their executed mayor's impeccable revolutionary credentials, attention moved on to the unfortunate widow they had been encouraged to denounce three months earlier. Back in Thermidor, although Givois had been tacitly resisted by a lack of response to his requests for denunciations, the failure to provide any open support was still taken by him (literally, in the form of a copy of the society's register for the session) as material evidence to add to the case being manufactured against widow Girard. Now, there was a clear mood to correct the record as people fought to be heard voicing their undying support for her:

Anne Chasser, Sébastien Bazille, Charles Devaux, Guinatier, Colon jeune, Jean Ruchon...and many others, rushed up [to the podium] in a crowd, and told of all the kindness they had received at the hands of the Girard family. One of them said: Without citizeness Girard, I would only have one arm. Another said: And I would only have one leg.⁶⁹

Twelve others are recorded as having made positive statements about Girard in the meeting. These included five who claimed that, despite being named as denouncers in a report from the authorities in Cusset, they had not been involved in Givois' scheme. There was clearly a feeling—both as individuals and as a community—that reputations had been damaged as a result of what happened on 10 thermidor II/28 July 1794, which given the social prominence of the victims likely served as a lightning rod for a range of other incidents during the Terror as a whole. Further rehabilitation was then offered by an unnamed member of the popular society who reminded the audience of 'the debilitating oppression under which they had all suffered'.⁷⁰ This prompted a general (and convenient) recollection that 'they had been so frightened by the executions going on, and by threats made against them, that they would have been unable to protest against the guillotining of even the most innocent person', given that doing so was known to be entirely futile and would only have put further lives at risk.⁷¹ This description of the debilitating societal effects of their local Terror confirmed that what had initially been framed as an act of rehabilitation for two particular victims was now intended to encompass an entire community. The central role of Givois also connected the inhabitants of Puy-Rédan to wider district reaction against the Terror, since he was a central figure in other print accounts of local repression then in circulation and was also the target of a formal investigation in the nearby town of Cusset.⁷²

Other communities were able to point to more positive records in their campaigns for rehabilitation by focusing on collective acts of resistance. One example of this occurred in Moulins, forty miles to the north of Puy-Rédan. This was the hometown for many of a group of thirty-two local men (including citizen Girard) executed together in Lyon back on 11 nivôse II/31 January 1794. Sometime during the summer of 1795, an

investigation was carried out and an anonymous but detailed submission was sent to the national authorities in the hope of securing a posthumous annulment of this judgement.⁷³ Ronen Steinberg has established that pursuing this legal angle was a common tactic among the relatives of Terror victims seeking redress during Thermidor, but, just as with the Chaudot case detailed at the start of this section, the Moulins campaign was not only for those who had been killed.⁷⁴ While the investigation was partly motivated by a desire to restore the reputations of the deceased, the resulting pamphlet also ensured publicity for the collective protests which had taken place in response to this particular example of local Terrorist excess. When the memoir describes 'the catastrophe' of the group arrest early in 1794, the thirty-two men are followed directly in the text by another group: the seventy-two people who 'protested to the department about this arrest'. According to the memoir, it was this act of defiance, combined with fears that public opinion would side with the group, which led the arresting authority (the local municipality) to push the victims' names further up the judicial chain and so guarantee quicker punishment.⁷⁵

The political resonance of being able to connect a Thermidorian identity to a record of protest from within the timeframe of the Terror was exploited elsewhere too. In an otherwise doom-laden description of deputies Amar, Javogues, Albitte and Méaulle as something akin to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse during their successive missions to the Ain department, the inhabitants of Bourg-en-Bresse celebrated the courage of four of their fellow townsmen who had travelled to Paris to petition in favour of local detainees.⁷⁶ In Lot-et-Garonne, the authors of a pamphlet detailing events in Tonneins-la-Montagne emphasized how locals had celebrated together—openly—when efforts to prosecute opponents of the town's regime failed and the men were released.⁷⁷ Likewise, the Contrat-Social section's strategy in the Chaudot case was considerably

strengthened by the fact that there had been public protests against the conviction at the time it was originally under dispute. It is interesting to note that they addressed the issue of resistance within the Convention too, and in a way that was more nuanced than might have been expected given the body's failure to uphold the original suspension of the guilty verdict. This behaviour was excused by maintaining that, in the pre-9 Thermidor world, any attempt to rescue an innocent life would have been as ineffective as 'a dam overrun by the force of a devastating torrent'.⁷⁸ However, a thread of resistance was highlighted in the exceptional behaviour of deputy Guffroy, who spoke out against the decision and was apparently targeted for doing so. This further demonstrates of the flexibility of a language and identity of victimhood within Thermidorian culture, allowing for the vexed question of accountability to be addressed in parallel with a positive offer of rehabilitation.⁷⁹

The collective view offered by this printed material is also significant because it frequently relied on, and subsequently publicized, interactions, investigations and debate within particular communities regarding the immediate past. In the case of the 'Moulins thirty-two', the published pamphlet was the end product of a lengthy series of initiatives, and although likely from the summer of 1795 it actually builds on a Thermidorian reaction within the town that dated back at least to November of the previous year. In isolation, the statement in its title to being written 'on behalf of [the thirty-two executed men's] widows and orphans' suggests that the author could have been commissioned by those families themselves. However, local archival records indicate that the driving force came from the local popular society—long since moulded into a committed Thermidorian institution by the visiting Representative on mission, deputy Boisset, when he 'regenerated' it in the late autumn of 1794 by purging its membership of known Terrorist sympathisers.⁸⁰ So good a job did Boisset do that when

he returned to give a morale-boosting speech on the progress being made under the Thermidorian regime on 10 frimaire III/30 November 1794 he was pressed by a member to say what was being done about 'the unfortunate affair of the thirty-two slaughtered victims'. The society was almost certainly better informed than their visiting Representative about this infamous local case, not least because its records show a citizen Bouquet returning from Lyon four days previously with full copies of all the relevant documents from the affair. Soon after Boisset's visit, the society created a Commission of Seven to investigate and report on this and other examples of the local Terror, and launched a public subscription on 13 pluviôse III/1 February 1795 to fund the cost of sending commissioners to Paris with the material to inform the Convention about the experience of the Terror in their area.

This mission was completed almost immediately, with the backing of deputy Boisset, but the commissioners remained in the capital for two more months and reported back to the society by letter regularly. Their aim was to secure a meeting with the Committee of General Security in order to get some form of national endorsement for the prosecution of those responsible for arresting the Moulins Thirty-Two (in this they were ultimately successful), and also to prepare a printed account of the Commission's findings. Although the society eventually decided not to fund the latter's publication, it seems highly probable that the commissioners' report was indeed the source for this anonymous account even if it is not an exact transcript. The fact that it was published regardless is evidence that its message was attractive to enough people locally for alternative funding to be found.⁸¹ Bouquet's earlier trip to the archives on behalf of the popular society was presumably the source for the trove of archive material published with this account in the customary legal format of a separate concluding section of *pièces justificatifs* (an official term referring to the evidence

included in a legal brief). Documents quoted at length throughout the pamphlet were rearranged there in chronological order and reproduced in full. This all served to emphasise the suffering of the executed men, the impact this had had within the community, and the illegality of the acts which the community was continuing to fight against in a Thermidorian context. Some of the items were even introduced with a note explaining that the original was 'deposited with the clerk at the criminal tribunal for the Rhône department'.⁸²

III. Conclusion

The 'Thermidorian Reaction' is a convenient label for historians to deploy while navigating through France's revolutionary decade, and it is bookended with significant interventions by the country's elected representatives: their arrest of Robespierre on 9 Thermidor and their approval of the Constitution of Year III (inaugurated on 17 October 1795). It is perhaps unsurprising that much of the historiography contained by such a periodization still gravitates towards this political elite, but this article has demonstrated the importance of a broader coalition of travellers on Baczko's Thermidorian road through the shared memories, historicization and cross-examination of the Terror. Shifting the focus onto victims, whose actions have often been hiding in plain sight over the last two centuries, and to the print culture which developed around them, reveals a diverse constituency who were ready to compete with both the pen of Parisian politicians and the bloodied *poignards* of a reactionary Midi for control over narratives of the Terrorist past, and to bend its legacy to their own advantage. In the words of one former prisoner in Paris, it was up to victims like him 'to

make known [to the public] the horrors they had witnessed', and this drive to investigate, discuss, write and read about the immediate past extended across the country.⁸³ The process effectively meant that the Terror's victims were among its first researchers and historians—indeed some, like the Épernay businessman Dupré, had even been archiving evidence *during* the Terror.⁸⁴

The identity and agency of these victims was more complex—and more influential—than historians have generally assumed. Individual victims might be formally freed from the state system of repression, like the acquitted Boutay, or they could still be in gaol, like the frustrated Emond in Brest. Furthermore, public campaigns which were ostensibly about the type of victim with which historians are most familiar (those who were executed) had a tendency to develop into something broader which encompassed the Terrorist experience of entire communities and, crucially, those who were still alive and negotiating this next phase of the Revolution. What these different victims shared through print culture was an ability to contribute to Thermidorian debates about the recent revolutionary past and to establish individual histories within this larger narrative. The frequent denunciations included in this process also pulled alleged perpetrators of the Terror into adapting the language of victimhood for their own public defence.

Although the current generation of scholarship on the Thermidorian period has consistently presented the political elite in Paris as the gatekeepers of national reflection on the Terror, the work by an on behalf of victims highlights an alternative dynamic. A collective memory of the Terror had already been carried across the boundary of 9 Thermidor because the majority of its victims were still living. Individual experiences of the Terror then became a critical marker of people's personal and political identity, as exemplified by the argument that one particular victim 'was worthy

of being persecuted, since crime and tyranny were waging open war to the death against patriotism and virtue.⁸⁵ Victimhood was a Thermidorian status symbol and, while the recent work of Ronen Steinberg and others shows that those campaigning on behalf of executed victims had a national impact through the pressure created for anti-Terror legislation, I believe we need to pay much more attention to surviving victims' assertion of this status beyond the Convention, and its impact in the lives of individuals and local communities elsewhere in France. For example, when we expand our inquiry to look at collective activity within local communities, there is evidence of groups both using individual victims as a focal point for campaigns which investigated and documented local Terror regimes, and also creating an idea of collective victimhood and shared rehabilitation through such histories—as at Puy-Rédan, where villagers debating the experience of just one victim soon turned the process into a collective expiation for their failure to resist the machinations of citizen Givois. The creative way in which the theme of resistance was explored elsewhere is another demonstration of the political potential of victimhood during this period. In this sense, perhaps Baczko's metaphor could be adapted to describe the Terror as a road *network* for exploring Thermidorian France, with victim print culture throwing up multiple routes around and alongside the course plotted by politicians in the Convention.

¹ Peter McPhee, *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* (New Haven and London, 2012), pp. 217-220 provides an up-to-date biographical treatment.

² Colin Jones, '9 Thermidor: Cinderella among revolutionary *journées*', *French Historical Studies*, 38/1 (2015), pp. 9-31.

³ Classic studies range from Albert Mathiez, *La réaction thermidorienne* (Paris, 1929) to Michael J. Sydenham, *The First French Republic, 1792-1804* (London, 1974) and Denis Woronoff, *The Thermidorean Regime and the Directory, 1794-1799*, trans. Julian Jackson (Cambridge, 1984).

⁴ Annie Jourdan, 'Les discours de la terreur à l'époque révolutionnaire (1776-1798): étude comparative sur une notion ambiguë', *French Historical Studies*, 36/1 (2013), pp. 51-81; Jean-Clément Martin, *Les échos de la Terreur: vérités d'un mensonge d'état, 1794-2001* (Paris, 2018).

⁵ Laura Mason, 'Thermidor and the myth of rupture', in David Andress (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 521-537.

⁶ Howard G. Brown, 'Robespierre's tail: the possibilities of justice after the Terror', *Canadian Journal of History*, 45 (2010), pp. 503-535.

⁷ Bronislaw Baczko, *Comment sortir de la Terreur: Thermidor et Révolution* (Paris, 1989). I am using the English translation for subsequent quotations: B. Baczko, *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution after Robespierre*, trans. Michael Petheram (Cambridge, 1994).

⁸ Baczko, *Ending*, p. 34.

⁹ B[ritish] L[ibrary] F[rench] R[evolutionary] T[racts] F.846/13 Joseph Pâris de l'Épinard, *Mon retour à la vie après quinze mois d'agonie. Anecdote qui peut servir à la connoissance de l'homme* (Paris, 1794), p. 56.

Ronen Steinberg, 'Trauma and the effects of mass violence in revolutionary France: a critical inquiry', *Historical Reflections* 41/3 (2015), pp. 28-46, endorses a similarly broad reading of the effects of the Terror.

¹⁰ BLFRT F.847/1 *Dénonciation à la Convention nationale, de l'assassinat commis à Lyon sur trente-deux citoyens de Moulins, le 11 Nivôse de l'an deuxième, et Mémoire en faveur de leurs veuves et orphelins* (Paris, 1795?), p. 5.

¹¹ Donald Greer, *The incidence of the Terror during the French Revolution: a statistical interpretation* (Cambridge, MA, 1935), p. 147; Baczko, *Ending*, p. 68.

¹² For suspicions about 'victims' as a subject of historical inquiry, see Patrice Gueniffey, *La politique de la terreur: essai sur la violence révolutionnaire 1789-1794* (Paris, 2000), p. 14.

¹³ Another presence is in the legal archives of the period, where criminal investigations of local Terrorist figures regularly featured denunciations made by their victims. For example, A[rchives] D[épartementales] Côte d'Or L 4302 (Tribunal criminel) dossier 234 JP witness statements (11-30 pluviôse III).

¹⁴ For an overview of print culture in the French Revolution, see Carla Hesse, *Publishing and Cultural Politics in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1810* (Berkeley, 1991); Charles Walton, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution: The Culture of Calumny and the Problem of Free Speech* (Oxford, 2009).

¹⁵ See Lise Andries, 'Récits de survie: les mémoires d'autodéfense pendant l'an II et l'an III' in Jean-Claude Bonnet (ed.), *La carmagnole des muses: l'homme de lettres et l'artiste dans la Révolution* (Paris, 1988), pp. 261-275; Alex Fairfax-Cholmeley, 'Defence, collaboration, counter-attack: the role and exploitation of the printed word by victims of the Terror', in David Andress (ed.), *Experiencing the French Revolution* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 137-154; Sylvie Garnier, 'Les conduites politiques en l'an II: compte rendu et récit de vie révolutionnaire', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 295 (1994), pp. 19-38.

¹⁶ N[ewberry] L[ibrary] F[rench] R[evolution] C[ollection] 6705 *Les patriotes monaidiers d'Arles, à la Convention nationale* (no place [n.p.], 1794), p. 2. The entire NLFRC is in the process of being digitised.

¹⁷ Among many, Geoffrey Cubitt, 'Robespierre and conspiracy theories', in Colin Haydon and William Doyle (eds), *Robespierre* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 75-91; Marisa Linton, 'The Tartuffes of patriotism,' in Barry Coward and Julian Swann (eds), *Conspiracies and conspiracy in early modern Europe from the Waldensians to the French Revolution* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 235-254. For a longer perspective, see Timothy Tackett, 'Conspiracy obsession in a time of revolution: French elites and the origins of the Terror, 1789-1792', *The American Historical Review*, 105/3 (2000), pp. 691-713.

¹⁸ For example, *Almanach des Prisons* (Paris, 1794?) and *Tableau des prisons de Paris, sous le règne de Robespierre, pour faire suite à l'Almanach des prisons* (Paris, 1795); Baczko, *Ending*.

¹⁹ Howard G. Brown, *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon* (Charlottesville and London, 2006); Mette Harder, 'A second Terror: the purges of French revolutionary legislators after Thermidor', *French Historical Studies*, 38/1 (2015), pp. 33-60; Sergio Luzzatto, *L'automne de la Révolution: luttes et cultures politiques dans la France thermidorienne*, (Paris, 2001); Martin, *Les échos*, Pierre Serna, *La république des girouettes: 1789-1815—et au-delà: une anomalie politique: la France de l'extrême centre* (Seysssel, 2005).

²⁰ Ronen Steinberg, 'Reckoning with Terror: retribution, redress, and remembrance in post-revolutionary France', in Andress (ed.), *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 487-502.

²¹ Richard Cobb, *Reactions to the French Revolution* (London and New York, 1972); Stephen Clay, 'Vengeance, justice and reactions in the revolutionary Midi', *French History*, 23/1 (2009), pp.22-46; Colin Lucas, 'Themes in southern violence', in Gwynne Lewis and Colin Lucas (eds), *Beyond the Terror: Essays in French Regional and Social History 1794-1815* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 152-194; Donald M. G. Sutherland,

Murder in Aubagne: Lynching, Law, and Justice during the French Revolution (Cambridge and New York, 2009).

²² *H-France Salon*, 8/11 (2016), <URL: <http://h-france.net/Salon/Volume8.html>> (Last accessed 3 August 2017). This was in response to blockbuster coverage of the Thermidorian Reaction across two Forums in *French Historical Studies*: 'Thermidor and the French Revolution', *French Historical Studies*, 38/1 (2015) and 'Thermidor and the French Revolution, part 2', *French Historical Studies*, 39/3 (2016).

²³ Laura Mason, 'The Thermidorian reaction', in Peter McPhee (ed.), *Companion to the French Revolution* (Chichester and Malden, MA, 2014), p. 324.

²⁴ BLFRT F.35*/13 *Joseph Emond, ci-devant capitaine au 109e regiment d'infanterie, à ses concitoyens* (Brest, 1794?), p. 9. His printed complaint and attack on Verteuil was later cited in the official report produced on the Terror in Brest: Amable Castelnau, *Les crimes de l'extribunal révolutionnaire de Brest, dénoncés au peuple français et à la Convention nationale, par les deputes extraordinaires de cette commune* (Paris, 1795), p. 63.

²⁵ BLFRT F.846/6 Jean-Claude Boutay, *Balthazard Faure, Député de la Haute-Loire, démasqué par sa correspondance avec son ami Fouquier-Thinville, et Réponse de Jean-Claude Boutay, chef de la première légion du district de Sarguemines, à ses persécutions* (Paris, 1795), 'Avertissement'; A[rchives] N[ationales de France] W/481/351 (14 brumaire III) for the trial records.

²⁶ BLFRT F.846/13 *Mon retour*, p. 1; Steinberg, 'Reckoning with Terror', p. 492 (Riouffe).

²⁷ Andries, 'Les récits de survie'; Fairfax-Cholmeley, 'Defence'; Guilhaumou, *La Langue politique et la révolution française: de l'événement à la raison linguistique* (Paris, 1989), chapter 5.

²⁸ BLFRT F.848/6 *Balthazard Faure*, p. 5.

²⁹ BLFRT F.846/13 *Mon retour*, p. 67. In addition to the biographical information available in the pamphlet itself, see E. Levet, 'Joseph Pâris de l'Épinard', *Revue savoisienne*, 2nd series, 4 (1888), pp. 300-310 and his entry in the online 'Dictionnaire de journalistes', <URL: <http://dictionnaire-journalistes.gazettes18e.fr/journaliste/620-joseph-paris-de-lespinard>> (Last accessed 28 July 2017).

³⁰ BLFRT F.37*/6 Claude Dupré, *Mémoire pour le C. Dupré, imprimeur, & Louise-Blanche Demolière, sa femme; contre le nommé Berchère...* (Étampes, 1795).

³¹ William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001); Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley and London, 1993).

³² BLFRT F.848/14 Xavier Audouin, *L'intérieur des maisons d'arrêts* (Paris, 1795), p. 6.

³³ BLFRT F.846/1 Auguste Étienne Xavier Poisson de La Chabeaussière, *Les huit mois d'un detenu aux Madelonnetes* (Paris, 1794?), p. i.

³⁴ See also Joseph Clarke, *Commemorating the Dead in Revolutionary France: Revolution and Remembrance, 1789-1799* (Cambridge, 2007), chapter 6. For access to the wider historiography of women and the French Revolution, see Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley, CA, 2006) and Dominique Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses: les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française* (Aix-en-Provence, 1988).

³⁵ BLFRT F.846/13 *Mon retour*, p. 79.

³⁶ BLFRT F.847/11 Marie-Jeanne Gueirrier, *La veuve et les neuf enfans de Claude Leger, cultivateur et meunier, à la Convention nationale* (Paris?, 1794).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁸ For denunciation during the Terror: Jacques Guilhaumou, 'Fragments of a discourse on denunciation (1789-1794)', in K. M. Baker (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Vol. 4, 'The Terror' (New York, London and Tokyo, 1994), pp. 139-155; and C. Lucas, 'The theory and practice of denunciation in the French Revolution', *Journal of Modern History*, 68/4 (1996), pp. 768-785.

³⁹ BLFRT F.846/1 *Les huit mois*, p. iii.

⁴⁰ Catherine Kawa, *Les ronds-de-cuir en Révolution: les employés du ministère de l'Intérieur sous la Première République (1792-1800)* (Paris, 1996), p. 146.

⁴¹ BLFRT F.846/13 *Mon retour*, p. 72. General Lavalette was a Parisian radical who was serving in the Army of the North: Alan Forrest, *The Soldiers of the French Revolution* (Durham, N.C., and London, 1990), p. 97. The last three named were deputies in the National Convention.

⁴² BLFRT F.846/6 *Balthazard Faure*, and also the later Bibliothèque nationale de France Lb⁴¹ 1930 Boutay, *De l'importance du choix d'un représentant du peuple, par rapport au danger de l'avoir pour ennemi personnel...* (Metz, 1795?).

⁴³ NLFRC 13405 Aigoïn, *A Bas les brigands et les buveurs de sang! Vive la Convention nationale! Ou Coup d'Oeil sur les dangers présents de la patrie* (Paris?, 1794?). A second copy, held at NLFRC 13405, was published 190 miles away to the west in Laval.

⁴⁴ Brown, 'Robespierre's tail', pp. 513-514. The local impact of the disarmament process is poorly understood, but very much evident in the archives. For example, AD Marne 1 L 340, where the disarmament process is recorded in considerable detail for the districts of Châlons, Épernay and Reims.

⁴⁵ NLFRC 24317 Régley, *Réponses du C. Régley, secrétaire du District de Sens, aux inculpations dirigées contre lui par la Municipalité dudit Sens dans sa délibération du dix-sept Floréal an III* (Sens, 1795).

⁴⁶ BLFRT F.846/2 Joseph F.N. Dusaulchoy, *L'agonie de Saint-Lazare, sous la tyrannie de Robespierre* (Paris, 1794?), p. 25.

⁴⁷ Law of 4 Brumaire IV/26 October 1795, quoted in Brown, 'Robespierre's tail', p. 523. See also Jean-Louis Halpérin, 'Les décrets d'annulation des jugements sous la Convention', in Michel Vovelle (ed.), *La Révolution et l'ordre juridique privé: rationalité ou scandale?*, 'Actes du colloque d'Orléans, 11-13 septembre 1986', 2 Vols. (Orléans, 1988), Vol. 2, p. 465.

⁴⁸ NLFRC 26618 Coltier, *À mes concitoyens* (n.p., 1795), p. 2; Walton, *Policing*, especially pp. 147-158 and 189-190. AD Marne 1 L 340 (Épernay) 'Etat des hommes désarmés, comme accusés pour l'opinion [sic] publique' includes a 'Coltier fils' in its list.

⁴⁹ Brown, 'Robespierre's tail'; Corinne Gomez-Le-Chevanton, 'Le procès Carrier: enjeux politiques, pédagogie collective et construction mémorielle', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 343 (2006), pp. 73-92; Ronen Steinberg, 'Terror on trial: accountability, transitional justice and the affaire *Le Bon* in Thermidorian France', *French Historical Studies*, 39/3 (2016), pp. 419-444. See also Baczkó, *Ending*, chapter 3.

⁵⁰ BLFRT F.846/3 *Rapport fait au nom du Comité de salut public, par Barère, sur les patriotes détenus...* (Paris, 1794).

⁵¹ Brown, 'Robespierre's tail', provides an excellent analysis of these different policies.

⁵² NLFRC 7376 *Rapport fait à la Convention nationale, sur l'affreux régime des prisons, & les cruautés exercées sur les patriotes par les ordres du scélérat Robespierre* (Paris, 1794), p. 8.

⁵³ Steinberg, 'Reckoning with Terror', p. 492.

⁵⁴ John Rylands Library (Manchester) European Proclamations and Broadside Box 33 Representatives of the People Espert and Cadroy, *Adresse au peuple* (12 nivôse III). Members of the Convention were sent out to different areas of the country as 'Representatives of the People on Mission' to promote the Convention's legislative programme and coordinate the war effort: Michel Biard, *Missionnaires de la République: les représentants du peuple en mission (1793-1795)* (Paris, 2002).

⁵⁵ BLFRT F.1020/1 *Rapport fait sur le C^{en} Chaudot, en l'assemblée générale de la section du Contrat-Social, en vertu de l'arrêté par elle pris le 30 Ventôse, l'an 3^e* (Paris, 1795); AN W/324/dossier 512 for the relevant Revolutionary Tribunal documents.

⁵⁶ *Archives Parlementaires. Recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des Chambres françaises imprimé par ordre du corps législatif*, 1st series, 82 Vols (Paris, 1867-1990), Vol. 85, entries at 26 pluviôse (no. 9), 28 pluviôse (no. 24) and 29 pluviôse II (no. 46); examples of the defence statements being produced at the time of the family's original appeal: AN AD/I/54/110-113, including *Résumé de l'affaire de Chaudot* (Paris, 1794) which reproduces statements made by witnesses in the defendant's favour.

⁵⁷ BLFRT F.1020/1 *Rapport fait sur le C^{en} Chaudot*, p. 4.

⁵⁸ For background on the uprisings of germinal and prairial III, see François Gendron, *The Gilded Youth of Thermidor*, trans. by James Cookson (Montreal, 1993) and Morris Slavin, *The French Revolution in Miniature: Section Droits-De-L'Homme, 1789-1815* (Princeton, 1984), chapter 13.

⁵⁹ BLFRT F.1020/1 *Rapport fait sur le C^{en} Chaudot*, pp. 18-19.

⁶⁰ AD Allier L 1133 *Crimes connus des principaux terroristes et hommes de sang du district de Cusset, département de l'Allier* (Cusset, 1795), p.1.

⁶¹ For the regeneration of local popular societies post-9 Thermidor, see Michael L. Kennedy, 'The "Last Stand" of the Jacobin Clubs', *French Historical Studies*, 16/2 (1989), pp. 309-344.

⁶² Brown, 'Robespierre's tail'; Steinberg, 'Reckoning with Terror' and 'Transitional justice in the age of the French Revolution', *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 7/2 (2013), pp. 267-285.

⁶³ *Les citoyens de la commune de Mornant, chef-lieu de canton, district de la campagne de Lyon, département du Rhône, À leurs Concitoyens du canton, vrais amis de l'ordre, de la justice & de la convention* (n.p., 1795?), pp. 7 ('silence') and 8 ('detriment'). This text is not held in the Rhône department archives, but a copy is available online: <URL: <http://bit.ly/2wIMKYM>> (Last accessed 15 July 2017).

- ⁶⁴ For example, AD Allier L 836 bis/14 *Extrait du registre de la société populaire de Vichy* (Cusset, 1794) and L 1133/5 *Tableau des crimes du comité révolutionnaire de Moulins* (n.p., 1795?).
- ⁶⁵ For examples of the identification of local figures as alternative Robespierres: NLFRC 6705 *Les patriotes monaidiers d'Arles*; NLFRC 1788 *Les citoyens opprimés de Tonneins-la-Montagne: À la Convention Nationale, aux Représentans du Peuple dans les Départemens du Bec-d'Ambez et de Lot et Garonne, aux Sociétés Populaires du Département, et à tous les Amis de la Vérité, de la Liberté et de l'Égalité* (n.p., 1794?) and AD Allier L 1133 *Crimes connus*. For attacks on Representatives of the people, see Biard, *Missionnaires*, pp. 375-385, and for the argument that vengeance was integral to the Thermidorian period, Clay, 'Vengeance'.
- ⁶⁶ Bacsko, *Ending*.
- ⁶⁷ AD Allier L 836 bis/37 *Les Citoyens du canton de Puy-Rédan, district de Cusset, à Boisset, Représentant du Peuple dans le département de l'Allier* (Cusset, 1794?), p. 2.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-15. Although Givois' actions occurred on 10 Thermidor, given the location in the country this was obviously well before any news of Robespierre's fall could have changed the political climate in the area. For Lyon's revolutionary commission, see William D. Edmonds, *Jacobinism and the revolt of Lyons 1789-93* (Oxford, 1990) and Greer, *Incidence*.
- ⁶⁹ AD Allier L 836 bis/37 *Les Citoyens du canton*, p. 8.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ⁷² AD Allier L 1133 *Crimes connus*; L 836 bis/13 *Conduite justificative de Galien Jeune, au Représentant du peuple Boisset, et à ses Concitoyens* (Cusset, 1794?); L 836 bis *Régistre et copie des dénonciations qui ont faites à la commission des sept* (1794).
- ⁷³ BLFRT F.847/1 *Dénonciation à la Convention nationale*.
- ⁷⁴ Steinberg, 'Reckoning with Terror', pp. 492-494.
- ⁷⁵ BLRT F.847/1 *Dénonciation à la Convention nationale*, pp. v-vi.
- ⁷⁶ BLFRT F.848/4 *Dénonciation des citoyens de la Commune de Bourg, chef-lieu du Département de l'Ain, contre Amar, Javogues, Albitte et Méaulle; à la Convention nationale* (Bourg?, 1795), p. 4.
- ⁷⁷ NLFRC 1788 *Les citoyens opprimés de Tonneins-la-Montagne*, p. 26.
- ⁷⁸ BLFRT F.1020/1 *Rapport fait sur le C^{en} Chaudot*, p. 12.
- ⁷⁹ For the issue of accountability, see Steinberg, 'Transitional Justice'. Guffroy was involved in another public campaign before 9 Thermidor, attacking his fellow deputy Joseph Le Bon for his behaviour on mission in the Arras region: Steinberg, 'Terror on Trial', pp. 432-433.
- ⁸⁰ AD Allier L 902 Register of the Moulins popular society (23 brumaire III-19 floréal III). The purge can be followed at the beginning of the register.
- ⁸¹ AD Allier L 902 Register, especially entries at 13 frimaire, 13 pluviôse and 25 germinal III for the details in this and the previous paragraph. *L'Anti-terroriste, ou Journal des Principes*, 6 (6 ventôse III/24 February 1795) gives an account of the relevant session in the Convention.
- ⁸² BLFRT F.847/1 *Dénonciation à la Convention nationale*, pp. 100-115.
- ⁸³ FRC 20863 Leblanc, *Vie secrettes et politiques de Couthon, Saint-Just, Robespierre jeune, complices du tyran Robespierre, et assassins de la République* (Paris, 1794), p. 33.
- ⁸⁴ BLFRT F.37*/6 *Mémoire pour le C. Dupré*, which includes Terror-era correspondence with Representative on mission Couturier.
- ⁸⁵ BLFRT F.1020/1 *Rapport fait sur le C^{en} Chaudot*, pp. 17-18.