

The Complex Nature of Memory in Personal Testimonies from the French Revolution: The Example of Fournier l'Américain

Sam Dobbie [University of Glasgow]

Abstract

This paper will discuss the complex nature of memory in memoirs written during the Terror by focusing on Fournier l'Américain. An ardent revolutionary, Fournier played a military role in some of the most important events of the Revolution. In addition to having a stormy relationship with many revolutionaries, he was the subject of a police report from 1793 and imprisoned several times between 1793 and 1814. It was during his imprisonment that he commenced writing his memoirs. These memoirs, though valuable because they offer an individual's account of their revolutionary experiences, must be considered in relation to the reliability of memory. This paper will consider the 1890 edition introduced and with notes by F. A. Aulard, which is the first published edition of the work. Firstly, the paper will explore the issue of memory in historical accounts and why this can pose a problem for historians interested in working with personal testimonies such as memoirs, diaries, and letters. Secondly, extracts from Fournier's memoirs pertaining to the broader themes of the creation of a pro-revolutionary, republican identity, personal ambition, and a subversion of the gender order in revolutionary France, will be analysed. The aim of this section is to highlight the complexity of writing during the Terror whilst suffering a crisis in one's identity and how this shaped Fournier's memories of the earliest years of the French Revolution.

Key Words: French Revolution, Memory, Memoirs, Masculinity, Eighteenth Century.

Introduction

In times of revolution one can only say what one has done;
it would be unwise to say that one could not have done otherwise [...]
Men are difficult to understand [...] Do they know themselves?
Do they account for themselves very clearly? [Napoleon Bonaparte, cited in
LeBon, 1913, p.76].

This astute observation by Bonaparte summarises the primary issue that those interested in studying personal testimonies from the French Revolution face: memory. Personal testimonies, including diaries, memoirs, or letters, can offer insight into the collective and individual experiences of men and women living in eighteenth century revolutionary France. Though generally written by one individual, personal testimony feeds into the political and social fabrics of societies across time and space because it is shaped by cultural norms and discourses – in this paper defined by the socially accepted behaviours, actions and languages which are unique to a given society. Within revolutionary France, cultural norms and discourses were shaped primarily by notions of nationalism, republicanism, patriotism, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (Hunt, 1984; Heuer, 2005): they shaped personal and collective identities, which were fluid and subject to change and influence (Tackett, 2018). In the context of the French Revolution, memoirs and letters were amongst the most common forms of personal testimony recorded. For those living through this time, characterised by its fluid political boundaries, memoirs and letters offered the space for personal reflection. They also, since they could be carried out at one's leisure from the confines of one's home, made it possible for men and women to get involved in political debates and this, in turn, shaped the revolutionary narrative (Hesse, 2001). Within a rapidly evolving world, men and women had to keep note of their observations if they wished to keep up with the turn of events. However, as the following sections in this article will demonstrate, this required the recall and interpretation of information.

To offer insight into how the recall and interpretation of memories influenced both the narrative and the accuracy of the memoirs created during the Terror of the French Revolution, this article will consider the memoirs of Fournier l'Américain. Born on 21 December 1745, Claude Fournier l'Héritier was the son of a weaver. Discontented with his humble background, at fifteen years old, Fournier went to the French colonies, most notably Saint Domingue, and spent twenty-one years seeking ways to make a fortune. For sixteen of these years, he served as a soldier in bourgeois militias and founded a successful tafia factory which was, he claimed,

burned to the ground by malevolent neighbours jealous of his accomplishments (Aulard, 1890, pp.i-ii). He returned to France in 1785 to claim justice and was awarded a pension of 500 *livres* per month by the Ministry of the Marine, but never received it. He decided to stay in Paris and was one of the first to throw themselves into revolutionary action by organising an armed force. Fournier's revolutionary career was controversial, and he was arrested several times for various alleged crimes including theft, murder, and his conduct in dealing with the Orleans prisoners who were massacred on 8 September 1792 (Aulard, 1890). It was during one of the several times he was imprisoned between 1793 and 1794, from which he was released, that he documented his revolutionary career in his memoirs as, one could argue, a way of defending himself against these charges.

Though this source has been cited in works such as *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795* (Levy *et al.*, 1980), few primary or secondary sources, except perhaps for Aulard's introduction to Fournier's memoirs, discuss Fournier and his revolutionary career. Even studies like Soboul & Monnier's *Répertoire du Personnel Sectionnaire Parisien en l'an II* (1985), a list of the Parisian sections and their militant leaders, and Cobb's *The People's Armies* (1987), do not contain details of Fournier. Where he is mentioned, as evidenced by Godechot's *Taking of the Bastille: July 14, 1789* (1970), it is briefly and covers a few pages at most. This is surprising given the claims made by Fournier concerning the central role he played in the *grand journées* of the Revolution – most notably, the fall of the Bastille (July 1789), the October Days (1789), the Champ de Mars massacre (July 1791), and the September Massacres (1792). Such an active revolutionary would have left a lasting impression upon fellow revolutionaries, yet the lack of references to Fournier raises questions concerning how much of a role he truly played in these momentous events. This will be expanded upon when discussing extracts from his memoirs. Before turning to a discussion of the troublesome nature of Fournier's memoirs, this article will briefly consider some theoretical studies of personal testimony and the values and limitations of using these sources when carrying out historical research.

Theories of Personal Testimony

Personal testimonies are both valuable and problematic as demonstrated by the work of Smith & Watson (2010). According to Smith & Watson, memoirs were traditionally defined as recollections by individuals who held publicly prominent positions within society (2010, p.3). They are a form of life-writing that places the individual at the centre of the narrative and are

composed of a plot, setting, characterisation, and are shaped by the writer's need to justify, assert, or interrogate their actions whilst simultaneously convincing their intended audience to believe their version of events (2010, pp.4-10). This style of writing is an art form created through the relationship between memory and one's desires (Brooks, 1985). The types of memory recorded in memoirs vary from text to text and are inseparable from agency and intended audience. Agency in the context of memoirs is connected to authority and authenticity, that is the extent to which the author has the right to tell certain stories and how they insert themselves into the narrative (Smith & Watson, 2010, pp.236-237). The recall of memories is influenced by this because the writer may feel that the stories they are telling are not theirs to tell, so they may omit information or change the narrative to suit their motives for recording their perceptions of their experiences. As a result, the version that appears in the memoirs may not be an accurate representation of what happened. Alternatively, the writer may wish to portray themselves in a particular way, especially if they are trying to appeal to a certain audience, so may alter the stories they are telling to elevate their own self-importance in relation to events or other individuals. This highlights two important points about memoirs.

On the one hand, it illustrates that writers wishing to record their personal and collective experiences always have a specific audience in mind before they begin the writing process. Consequently, what they include in their memoirs and what they omit is determined by their target audience. This suggests that memoirists have a great deal of agency because they have the choice of what to include in their work; they had less agency than one would initially assume due to their need to keep within the accepted social and cultural norms and discourses of their intended audiences. On the other hand, this is indicative of the 'fragility and unreliability of memory' (Campbell *et al.*, 2000, p.3). What one remembers and what one forgets is a choice that is significantly influenced by emotion and bias (Baddeley, 1989, p.53; Petrov, 1989, p.78). As Linton and Biard assert (2021, p.44), every writer has a retrospective narrative they are trying to construct, which is often a bid to assuage any guilt or anxiety they may be experiencing concerning their actions. Hence, the recall of memories relies upon how the author wishes to portray themselves to their intended audience and the context in which the memoirs are being recorded.

There are several values to using memoirs as a historical source. Firstly, memoirs provide detailed insight into the broader workings of society across time and place. They are generally influenced by cultural norms and discourses – that is, the agreed upon beliefs, behaviours and language(s) that are conventional within a given society and are passed down from generation to generation (under '*cultural norm*', *Collins English Dictionary*, 2023). As a result, memoirs

are shaped in a specific way that aligns with socially accepted practices. Moreover, the individual telling the story is influenced by their familial and friendship networks, so memoirs are the sharing of both individual and collective experiences. This addresses the broader historical narratives by highlighting the continuities and changes within a given society and permitting the opportunity, when compared with sources of a similar nature, to track how the priorities of societies changed over time. This is particularly useful for those interested in researching minority and excluded groups such as women because, though they may not be the central focus of memoirs, their actions and participation within society appear to some extent as they are observed and commented upon. Thus, memoirs are invaluable sources for researchers that contain a wealth of detail that would not otherwise be available.

Though true that memoirs are useful sources, there are equally limitations to relying upon this form of personal testimony. First and foremost, memoirs, particularly those from the early modern period, were written by the most prolific members of society, who were literate and could share their stories without relying upon dictation or translation. Consequently, it is unlikely that these accounts are a fair representation of the diverse experiences of most of the population, which are influenced by factors such as age, sex, marital status, religion, and ethnicity, amongst other factors (Collins & Bilge, 2016). This offers a limited view of what everyday life was like. Those who left memoirs were typically well-educated and spoke the dominant language or dialect within the country they inhabited. For instance, many of those who left memoirs in revolutionary France wrote their accounts in Parisian French, which was not the spoken dialect in provincial areas, causing local patois to be overlooked. Furthermore, memoirs were not always published by the person writing them. Often, memoirs from the French Revolution were published posthumously by friends and family of the deceased, and so the memoirs published may not be an accurate representation of the original document. This, as Petrov argues (1989, p.79), means that every time the memoir is republished it is a new version that is created because the text is not reproduced exactly as it first appeared. Therefore, the authentic voice and memories of the author gradually fades over time, especially if their work is translated into other languages and goes through multiple editions. In relation to Fournier, his personal papers were found in carton F⁷ 6504 in the *Archives Nationales*. As someone who played a military role in the streets of revolutionary society, Aulard believed he deserved to have his story told, even if it was posthumously in the nineteenth century (1890, pp.xviii-xix).

Taking this brief evaluation of the values and limitations of memoirs into account, the next section of the article will analyse Fournier's *Mémoires Secrets*. It will draw upon excerpts

from 13 and 14 July 1789 and 5 October 1789, connecting these to discussions around republicanism, ambition, and masculinities to explore the problematic nature of memory in Fournier's memoirs.

The Memoirs of Fournier l'Américain

Published in 1890, *Mémoires Secrets de Fournier l'Américain*, was written at the height of the Terror, when it was fashionable for political prisoners, such as Madame Roland (1754-1793), Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville (1754-1793), and Fournier, to record their experiences. The reason for focusing on the memoirs of Fournier, rather than those of Roland or Brissot, is that these memoirs and the revolutionary experiences of Fournier remain underexplored by researchers in contrast with Roland and Brissot, well-documented figures of the Revolution studied in detail by Walker (2001), Reynolds (2012), and Oliver (2017), amongst others. This paper aims to address this by examining extracts from Fournier's memoirs as a means of bringing him into narratives of the French Revolution, whilst simultaneously exploring the issue of memory in memoirs from the revolutionary period. Like other memoirists from this time, Fournier had a story to tell, and he had a particular set of goals when writing his memoirs. This presents the first problem researchers encounter when examining memoirs from the French Revolution – memories are fashioned in a way that suits the agenda or ambitions of the writer.

Fournier was in his forties when the French Revolution broke out. As such, he had experienced a great deal more than his younger counterparts and one of the motivations behind writing his memoirs was to share his experiences and impart his wisdom to a broader audience. There are snippets from his memoirs that support this claim; for example, according to Fournier (1890, pp.1-2), people like himself, who were present during some of the most momentous events of the French Revolution, were in a stronger position to share the true nature of revolutionary society with future generations. This is a justification for recording his memoirs; it implies that Fournier wished to educate future citizens on revolutionary ideologies and commit to history the legacies of this phase of the revolutionary process. He almost hints, when he compares the value of his memoirs to the coverage of events by journalists, that the only accounts worth reading belonged to those who were at the heart of the action, sacrificing their lives for the Revolution (1890, p.2). The trouble with this, as Godechot notes (1970, pp.214-215), is that there are scores of memoirs and recollections from this time, and their true value is determined by the author and the date on which they were written. Some accounts, and this argument is applicable to the memoirs of Fournier, were written by people who played a

secondary role or were written too long after the events had taken place for them to be of much value (Godechot, 1970, p.215).

Take the date in which Fournier commenced the drafting of his memoirs as a starting point. 1793 was a time when paranoia was rife, denunciations against neighbours and former friends were common, and death was a possibility for anyone deemed suspect, which was broadly defined in the Law of Suspects, published on 17 September 1793, as:

those who, through their conduct, associations, or writings showed themselves to be enemies of liberty; those who, by the standard of the decree of 21 March, could not prove their means of existence or their patriotism through their civic duties; those refused certificates of patriotism; any public functionaries dismissed from their position in the National Assembly and not reinstated; former nobles and relatives or spouses of nobles who emigrated and did not show patriotism; and, finally, anyone who emigrated between the 1 July 1789 and 8 April 1792, even if they had since returned (Baker, 1987, pp.353-354).

Fundamentally, anyone could be labelled suspect, and Fournier had to tread carefully when recalling events for inclusion in his memoirs. This explains his selection of the *grandes journées* of the late 1780s and early 1790s as his focus for the work. These were days that represented true patriotism and support for liberty, equality, and fraternity. In other words, anyone who could prove their participation in these days could not be considered an enemy to the revolutionary efforts because they displayed pro-revolutionary and/or republican sympathies.

The extent to which Fournier was a true republican is debatable because his memoirs were shaped by the context of the Terror and his imprisonment. As a monotonous form of forced incarceration, the prison cell removes individuals from the routine of everyday life and permits them to revisit their life experiences (Smith & Watson, 2010, p.70). Fournier's incarceration provided him with the space to reimagine his revolutionary career by creating a performance in which he cast himself as the lead actor and used his memories as the stage from which he could tell the story that he wanted to tell and not the one that happened. Most memoirs from the French Revolution do this to some extent. Another prime example is Jeanne-Marie Roland, guillotined in November 1793, who teleologically documented her memoirs, making it appear as though she were always destined to be a martyr of the Revolution, despite nothing about the Revolution being predestined (Roland, 1905). This example is relevant to the complexity of memory in memoirs written during the French Revolution because it depicts the

significant relationship between self-image and the recollection of memories. As Reynolds argues (2012, p.9), revolutionary memoirs are performances through which the writer creates and shares the desired version of their self with their audience. Fournier's memoirs followed this tradition of combining imagination with reality when documenting his involvement in revolutionary society; this feeds into the argument presented by Campbell *et al.* (2000, p.6), concerning the interdependency between memory and imagination in the production of identity and one's sense of self.

This is evident in Fournier's memories of 13 and 14 July 1789 and the October Days of 1789. In the days and months preceding the fall of the Bastille on 14 July, tensions grew in Paris. Poor harvests; rising bread prices; the Réveillon riots of April, which resulted from Réveillon, a wealthy, self-made man from a working background, proposing cuts to workers' wages; and the dismissal of Jacques Necker, the popular Finance Minister, on 11 July contributed to this (Godechot, 1970). This combination of economic and political uncertainty that rippled through the country, coupled with the removal of the king's troops from Paris, manifested as a crowd of Parisians attacking the customs posts where goods entering the city were levied (Godechot, 1970, p.192). In Fournier's recollections, he took charge of events:

All the good citizens were in a state of permanent alert. [...] They deliberated on forming a citizens' militia and had to choose a leader. It was on me that this choice fell. [...] We still only had batons, old swords, crescents, forks, spades, et cetera and it was at this moment we began the patrols (1890, pp.11-12).

The inadequacy of the weapons readily available to the citizens is indisputable because this was mentioned in other recollections of this period. In the memoirs of Pitra, one of the electors of Paris, it was emphasised that the people were armed with pikes, swords, sticks, and axes (Flammermont, 1892). When combined with Fournier's memories of the armed crowd, this illustrates that memoirs do contain grains of truth and that they can be useful for offering limited access to the past. These memories are particularly valuable because they provide insight into the mentality of the growing crowd and highlight the resourcefulness of the Parisian population – they armed themselves with whatever materials they could and set out to find guns and cannons, which would be more effective in attacking the Bastille. This indicates that memoirs are not solely valuable for the insight they provide into an individual's memories of historical events; they also offer a window into the collective history of the early revolutionaries as underdogs in their quest for liberty and equality. In defence of Fournier's emphasis of the ill-equipped crowd, in addition to this being confirmed in other sources (Humbert, 1789;

Flammermont, 1892) is that there was no need for Fournier to over-exaggerate this point. Due to his military background, he was aware of how ill-equipped the newly established sectional battalions were. He knew that the men had to have better weaponry if they were to successfully challenge the oppression of the ancien régime and would gain nothing from making it appear as though the crowd were well-prepared and well-organised for this challenge.

By describing the heroic efforts of the poorly equipped battalion of citizens he oversaw, Fournier portrayed himself as pertinent to the success of the crowd in obtaining guns and cannons, which aided them in destroying the fortresses surrounding the Bastille. He near implied that without his leadership this momentous event would not have occurred because he was the one who sounded the tocsin to rally the crowd; who forced Flesselles, the Provost of the Merchants, to deliver to him ten pounds of bullets and six pounds of powder; and who had this ammunition delivered to the Bastille (Fournier, 1890, p.12, p.15). Patriotism, virtue, and transparency, that is one's willingness to sacrifice oneself for the nation and to display an openly honest style of politics, defined true republicanism in 1793 (Linton, 2013, pp.5-6; Hunt, 1984, pp.45-46). By placing himself at the centre of his narrative of the fall of the Bastille, Fournier painted himself as a friend of the Republic, someone who had fought the oppression and tyranny of the ancien régime to allow the Revolution and its principles of liberty and equality to flourish. The primary question that arises from this is to what extent his involvement was for the greater good of society compared to his own personal ambitions. The fact that Fournier was writing during the Terror, when ambition was deemed egoistic and at odds with the virtue displayed by true patriots, explains why he was so keen to highlight his leadership during 14 July: the Bastille symbolised the arbitrary power and tyranny of the absolute monarch (Godechot, 1970, p.1). As someone who had played a principal role in the destruction of a cornerstone symbol of the corruption of the ancien régime, he could not possibly be deemed a traitor to the Revolution. That said, career progression was at the forefront of Fournier's mind when constructing his account of revolutionary society. This extract from July 1789 illustrates that he was interested in casting himself as a revolutionary hero, someone worth idolising. Further evidence for this can be found in his account of the October Days.

On 5 October 1789, an estimated 6,000 Parisian market women marched to Versailles to complain to Louis XVI and the National Assembly about the bread shortages in Paris. As the works of Garrioch (1989) and Jarvis (2019) demonstrate, this food riot was organised and initiated by the women in response to the lack of action taken by their male counterparts. The turmoil of the French Revolution led to many individuals facing an identity crisis. For Fournier, these events threatened his understanding of the gender order, resulting in a need to reassert his

role as a leader. In the ancien régime, masculinity - the umbrella term encompassing the behaviours and actions expected of boys and men - was a multilayered and complex concept because it meant different things to different individuals. There was no universal understanding of what masculinity was. For some men, one's ability to effectively head a household and exert considerable control over one's dependents, including wife, children, journeymen, and servants was a defining characteristic of masculinity (Roper, 1994, p.46). For others, especially where a military background was concerned, masculinity depended upon buying one's position and promotions regardless of whether one possessed the required skills for such positions (Pichichero, 2008). The Revolution replaced this ambition and egoism with patriotism and virtue, prioritising the common good of society over individual success. Men had to navigate this unstable world and create an identity that was compatible with the revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and national sovereignty. What rendered this more complex was the active participation of women in the political sphere as they redefined femininity - a multidimensional concept like masculinity often defined as the incomplete version of masculinity or the 'other' (Connell, 1995) - to encompass virtue through loyalty to the nation (Hunt, 1984, p.2). In the case of the market women who led this march, they demonstrated that they were not completely dependent on male relatives to represent them in public, which turned the world on its head for these men because they could no longer base their identity around the perceived inferiority of the female sex (Desan, 2020, p.376). This impacted masculinity because patriotic virtue was supposed to be a masculine characteristic yet women, by displaying dedication to the nation through their obligations to the state such as raising future citizens, illustrated that it was not exclusive to the male sex and raised questions over what unique characteristics defined manhood. The military was one area that remained masculine and glorious, which relied upon praise from others and one's reputation (Linton, 2015). Tackett notes (2018, p.11) that this confusion and anxiety had a significant impact upon the psychology and behaviour of revolutionaries, who struggled to create identities in an environment composed of highly destabilizing events.

Fournier's depiction of his military role during the October Days exemplifies this. According to the first half of Fournier's account, when he heard the tocsin sounding at 7 a.m. on Monday 5 October and the hungry cries of fellow citizens, he raced into town where he was confronted by a crowd who shouted, 'Fournier, lead us to Versailles where we want to go to ask for bread' (1890, p.27). He then describes his efforts to rally citizens into action and the failure of La Fayette's lieutenant, d'Ogny, who was also Fournier's military successor in the sectional battalion of Saint-Eustache, to control the men (1890, p.28). After getting the men

under control, Fournier allegedly obtained permission from La Fayette to lead the crowd to Versailles in search of bread (1890, p.29). When compared to other accounts from this time, few of Fournier's claims can be verified, which makes working with his memoirs complex. In 1790, over a period of seven months, the National Assembly held an official investigation into the events of the October Days at the Châtelet prison in Paris. When a search of the three-hundred-and-eighty-eight testimonies recorded during these inquiries is carried out, Fournier's name yields no results. Had Fournier played such an important role as he claims to have done, his name should have appeared in at least a handful of these testimonies. This signifies the importance of time when recording personal testimonies and how time affects memory. Fournier's recollections are more problematic than those recorded at the Châtelet because they were recorded later. Though true that the witness testimonies were recorded the following year, little time had passed so events were still relatively fresh in the minds of those affected. Fournier, in contrast, initially set down his memories of this event in 1793, but as his memoirs were not published until 1890, it is possible that the account included was not the original draft. According to Petrov (1989, p.79), this is because each time a work is revisited the version created is not an exact reproduction of what has come before. Therefore, one must take caution with Fournier's memoirs because the published work may not be a true reflection of his views, opinions, or feelings on events as they unravelled.

That said, it is important to examine Fournier's memories of the October Days to assess their value. The most relevant testimony to compare Fournier's version of events with is that of Stanislas Maillard, a twenty-six-year-old member of the National Guard, who was also involved in the fall of the Bastille, and whose claim to have led the women to Versailles is confirmed in several testimonies, including those of François-Nicolas Molieue, Jean-Louis Brousse des Fancherets, and Jeanne-Dorothee Délaissement (*Procédure Criminelle*, 1790, Vol.I, p.29, p.60, p.138). Like Fournier, Maillard confirms that the tocsin sounded at 7 a.m. on 5 October (*Procédure Criminelle*, 1790, Vol. I, p.117). This memory is valuable because it highlights the importance of symbols like the tocsin in inspiring action at the local level. To speak of a universally accepted definition of a nation would be a false depiction of eighteenth century France. As Garrioch (1986) argues, most people felt they belonged to a specific neighbourhood or district and did not think in terms of belonging to a nation. That is, as defined by Renan (1882), solidarity based upon common sacrifices, a collective identity founded upon the common needs of the people, and a desire to live together in harmony. The mosaic organisation of the ancien régime with its variations in languages spoken, laws and courts, inconsistencies in the administration of taxation, weights and measures, and privileges of the

church and the nobility diversified France and helped foster this mentality of separateness and loyalty to local communities, which continued to varying degrees throughout the Revolution (McPhee, 2016, pp.1-2). This feeds into Butler's (1989, p.13) argument surrounding the role that collective memory sharing plays on the formation of one's own memories, which are a combination of one's own experiences and generational storytelling. As inhabitants of Paris, Fournier and Maillard undoubtedly felt some solidarity with the starving Parisians. They recognised the tocsin as an alarm for expressing grievances and inciting insurrectionary behaviour, and their memories from the October Days are constructed around cultural expressions ingrained into society.

Another example of this is the emphasis upon the irrational behaviour of the women across the two days. Maillard mentioned instances of violence throughout the march. He stated that the women were armed with broomsticks, lances, forks, swords, pistols, and rifles, and that at Viroflay the women dragged two men from their horses and forcibly removed their black cockades – symbolic of the Hanoverian dynasty – trampling them under their feet and forcing the men to follow them to Versailles so that it could be made known they were traitors to the Revolution (*Procédure Criminelle*, 1790, Vol. I, p.119, p.122). Fournier expanded upon this (1890, p.30), describing an incident between some women and d'Ogny, who was beaten by the women for trying to talk them into returning to Paris and who died shortly after the beating. He also asserted that (1890, p.34), on 6 October, he spoke to five or six of the women in the coarse language used in *le Père Duchesne*, the newspaper edited by Jacques Hébert that spoke directly to the common people, to convince the women not to massacre the Swiss and Royal Guards. The way that Fournier and Maillard describe the violence of the women implies that this behaviour went against the traditional norms associated with the female sex and is further evidence for Hunt's claims (1984, p.2) surrounding women redefining what it meant to be a woman in this period. This paints them as heroes of the October Days, who restored the gender order by taking charge and persuading the women not to massacre the guards. It also portrays them as central to the successes of the women in obtaining a promise of increased grain supplies in Paris and the return of the royal family to the capital city. This connects back to the fragility of manhood during the French Revolution and explains their emphasis upon their own actions, sidelining the agency of the market women.

Maillard, in his late twenties and a member of the National Guard, who had distinguished himself on 14 July, undoubtedly sought promotion. He had demonstrated his willingness to liberate France from the tyranny of the ancien régime and showing his ability in leading the women during the October Days further cemented the success of his military career.

He was one of the first to step up to the mark and offer his services to the women, promising government officials to keep the women under control, which he did to a considerable extent. He displayed patriotism, virtue, and a loyalty to the Revolution, making him an ideal candidate for a military promotion. Fournier, in comparison, feeling let down over the lack of support he had obtained from French authorities for the loss of his income when his tafia factory was burned down, most likely viewed the October Days as a follow-up to the fall of the Bastille and a way of challenging the power of the absolute monarchy more broadly. His decision to convince the women to continue their march after attacking d'Ogny, something Fournier instigated by reminding the women of their starving children and painting d'Ogny as a traitor for ordering them back to Paris (1890, p.30), could be considered an act of revenge and an opportunity to reverse his fortunes. Not only was he attacking the pre-established practices of the ancien régime, but he also showcased his military expertise. Traditionally, positions in the French military were bought, favouritism was rife, and morale was low because military leaders were inexperienced (Pichichero, 2008, pp.554-555). Additionally, issues of insubordination, desertion, and a lack of professionalism plagued the army (Pichichero, 2008, p.555). The establishment of sectional battalions, that Fournier helped forge, had the potential to alter this because they were separate from the official French army, were voluntary, and the leaders elected generally had military experience, so could boost morale. It is possible that Fournier, driven by ambition, stressed his military expertise in his account of the October Days to illustrate that he was a competent, professional soldier who deserved commendation and the pension he had been promised but had never received. Therefore, both Fournier and Maillard's recollections of the October Days were shaped by personal ambitions and the need to reinstate their manhood within revolutionary society.

Conclusion

This article was inspired by my PhD thesis on women's political agency in Paris between 1789 and 1793. It considers the market women of the October Days; the journalism and translation of Louise de Kéralio, Sophie de Condorcet, and Rosalie Jullien; the letters and memoirs of Madame Roland; and the *citoyennes* of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women. Although women's agency drives this research, male reactions to these politically active women uncovers contemporary attitudes towards the variety and complexity of women's real and perceived agency. The extract on the October Days from Fournier's memoirs is incorporated into the first chapter which examines the roles women played in the October Days. When conducting my research for this chapter, I developed an interest in how Fournier granted

himself agency by using his memoirs to create different versions of himself that satisfied his own self-image. This is comparable to the memoirs of Madame Roland, the subject of chapter three of my thesis.

Public figures such as Roland and Fournier told their own stories as a method of self-presentation (Roland, 2012, p.9). How they told their stories depended upon a multitude of social and cultural factors, including gender, social status, marital status, and political sympathies. For Roland, emphasising her role as a wife and mother was an attempt to justify her foray into the political sphere during the first few years of the Revolution. She was aware that women were deemed incapable of carrying out rational political debates; her unofficial role as advisor to her spouse when he served as Minister of the Interior and role in getting together the Girondins crossed established gender boundaries. This attracted considerable opposition from male revolutionaries such as Chaumette, who labelled her 'haughty' and implied she believed herself capable of governing the republic (Levy *et al.*, 1980, pp.219-20). Roland, acknowledging these criticisms of her character and intentions, used her memoirs to depict herself as a true patriot, republican, and martyr to the Revolution. Fournier, in contrast, as an active male citizen with a military background had greater opportunities than Roland to immerse himself in the political landscape of the Revolution. Whilst doing so, he made several enemies, amongst whom was Jean-Paul Marat – the Friend of the People - who described Fournier as 'ambitious, a spy, a parasite' (Aulard, 1890, p.vii). This resulted in him being expelled from the Cordeliers Club on the grounds that he was a renegade (Aulard, 1890, p.viii). Thus, writing his memoirs was a way for Fournier to try to redeem himself in the eyes of fellow revolutionaries. His focus on the big events of the Revolution and the way he recalled his role in these events demonstrates that memories contained within memoirs from the French Revolution are complex.

As the example of Fournier underscores, the individual recounting their experiences often has personal motivations for doing so, and these shape the way in which events are remembered. This is useful because it allows a snapshot into the individual and collective mentalities and experiences of those living during this time. However, it must be remembered that this is exactly what memoirs are: recollections of moments rather than an entire life span, often selected because of their significance in relation to the author's understanding of their self (Smith & Watson, 2010, pp.3-4). What is the narrative for? Why is it being told? What aims does it manifest and conceal? What does it seek to say and do? As Brooks (1985, p.236) notes, these are the questions one is confronted with when examining memoirs. For Fournier, the selection of his participation during some of the *grandes journées* of the early years of the

French Revolution offered the opportunity to reimagine his military career, making it appear that he played a more crucial role in the success of these days than he perhaps did. The context of the Terror, fraught with emotion, undoubtedly influenced his portrayal of himself as a valorous soldier willing to overthrow the ancien régime for the sake of liberty, equality, and popular sovereignty. This cemented him as a patriot willing to sacrifice his life for the Revolution. What this concealed, however, was his ambition, which was at odds with the revolutionary ideals of transparency and virtue. This is a good starting point for analysing the complex nature of memory in personal testimonies from the French Revolution.

However, there remains much work to be carried out on Fournier and his memoirs. Future research could consider studying Fournier's memoirs alongside those of others imprisoned during the Terror to gain a broader understanding of how this state of incarceration influenced the structure and content of revolutionary memoirs. This would permit gendered discourses to be considered by offering a comparison between the techniques employed by male and female prisoners when documenting their revolutionary experiences. Furthermore, it raises questions over how much agency memoirists had over their work, especially given that most revolutionary memoirs were published posthumously, often edited and published by family members or friends. There is a unique relationship between human agency and the revolutionary process, and memoirs from revolutionary periods grant intimate access to this relationship. For anyone wishing to uncover the significance of human agency in relation to the French Revolution, memoirs like Fournier's are an invaluable source. Fournier is an under-researched figure and deserves to have his story told within the broader narrative of the French Revolution. Future works should continue to analyse extracts from Fournier's memoirs and compare these to other sources from the years which he was writing about, to allow his experiences to be situated within contemporary accounts of the revolutionary era. This would tie in with works by scholars such as Tackett (2018), Reynolds (2012), and Parker (2013), which focus on individuals who lived during the French Revolution and their contributions to revolutionary efforts. Individual accounts are as pertinent to understanding the cultural, social, and political impact of the Revolution as collective accounts. Consequently, it is important that scholars continue to tell the stories of those who fought for a more egalitarian society.

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