I hope that you miss me a little, for I miss you terribly. As I get older, I need fewer people, but I need them much more. . . . Each day the number of those with whom I take pleasure in communicating, those to whom I can truly, freely express myself, gets smaller. As a result, sympathy and moral fiber become at the same time all the more necessary and all the more rare.

So wrote François Guizot to Victor de Broglie in September 1832. Although the two men were best friends, their correspondence was rarely affectionate. But in the fall of 1832, France was undergoing a political and social crisis. Cholera was ravaging the population and Casimir Périer, the man whose strong leadership had stabilized France after 1830, had died of it in May. For Broglie and Guizot—men whose fathers had both been guillotined during the Terror—the specter of political instability was always unsettling. The anxieties of the moment led Guizot to reflect on his relationship with Broglie. According to him, one of the great advantages of this bond was that he could say anything to a true friend. In his account, friendship is a relationship built on trust, one in which individuals can speak the unguarded truth and reveal all of their thoughts and feelings—it is this that makes friendship special and different from all other social relations.

This chapter explores how early nineteenth-century elites described their bonds with one another, focusing on the pleasures of friendship. It looks at the connection between friendship and sexual desire in an era without a sharp distinction between erotic and platonic love. Friendship was also seen as a source of psychic satisfaction, as friends explored with one another the dimensions of their selves and their psychology. Men and women of the time did not write of themselves as enclosed beings who acted or felt in isolation. Instead, they posited that they were permeable creatures who were deeply
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imbricated with one another, both physically and emotionally. Crucially, too, friendship was understood to be a source of trust. Normative sources such as novels and conduct books praised friendship as a site of transparency, while friends celebrated their ability to communicate openly in their letters. Friendship, then, became a source of trust, pleasure, and cohesion, all of which were seen as lacking in an otherwise hostile and suspicious society. As did Guizot in his letter to Broglie, men and women often made sharp distinctions between the world of friends and the wider social scene where suspicion was the only possible attitude. This is not to say that friendship was the only space of intimacy in the early nineteenth century. Brothers and sisters were often close, for instance.2 But by definition friendship cannot exist without some level of intimacy and trust, in contrast to the ties of kin. For this reason, discussions of friendship are a particularly interesting window into the affective imaginations of post-revolutionary elites.

Beyond the general connection between friendship, cohesion, and trust, the specific workings of friendship were highly gendered. Bonds between men revolved around the notion of similarity, connection, and generosity. Friendship was supposed to motivate men to act outside their narrow self-interest. As a result, male friendship was seen as establishing trust in the form of loyalty. Male friends were to act in solidarity with one another and be faithful to their commitments to one another. In contrast, bonds between men and women were linked less to action and more toward interiority. These ties attached men to a private world of the affections and self-reflection as women and men served as each other’s confidantes. Women also helped situate men in their social milieus. They maintained bonds among men and channeled male emotions. These dimensions of friendship illuminate the gendering of social relations and sentiment in the nineteenth century. Historians have suggested that after the Revolution, both privacy and the emotions were feminized, as men were understood to be rational, public actors. Yet the picture that emerges here is more complicated. While male friendship was bound up in discussions of public affairs, not private feeling, men’s friendships with women could be highly emotionally expressive. Thus the qualities of emotionality and interiority were gendered, but were attached more to relationships than to bodies.

In order to look at the inner workings of personal ties in the early nineteenth century, this chapter draws on novels, conduct books, memoirs, and letters. To a remarkable degree, there is a confluence between normative descriptions of friendship and the expectations that the men and women
studied here had of their bonds as revealed in their life writings. This similarity highlights a shared set of cultural expectations about how friends were supposed to act, although of course individuals did not always behave according to cultural norms. For one, there were certainly plenty of times when they disappointed their friends; alternately, although they might have stated that they were revealing their innermost thoughts and feelings to their intimates, we cannot know whether they actually did. What this chapter is primarily interested in, then, is not what friends felt for one another, but how they spoke about their bonds. Thus I rely largely on correspondence because letter writing was central to defining, creating, and maintaining personal ties as well as analyzing the self and its relationship to others. Yet letters, like memoirs, were not transparent reflections of correspondents’ feelings. They followed clear conventions, some of which are discussed below. Scholars of epistolarity are also interested in the fictions of personal correspondence—that letters are particularly honest and open effusions of the heart, or that they serve as a substitute for conversation and thus can shrink the geographical distance between separated friends. Indeed, the men and women discussed here often claimed to write the unvarnished truth to one another and wrote of their desire for one another’s physical presence. But what is interesting is not the emotional truth of these statements, but rather what they say about a cultural understanding of the workings of friendship.

In particular, this chapter draws heavily on the letters of those in Guizot’s circle, due to the great quantity of available correspondence between his friends, both male and female. Many of the patterns of epistolary communication discussed here are visible in the correspondence of Chateaubriand, Béranger, and their intimates, however. It also examines discussions of friendship that range from the Napoleonic era to the Third Republic, as the individuals studied here communicated with one another in ways that remained consistent over time. Thus I do not claim that friendship became linked with cohesion and trust only in the period between 1815 and 1848. Rather, because of its strong association with these qualities, friendship was one way to imagine a solution to the problem of an atomized and suspicious society.

A RECIPROCAL AND SINCERE TRUST: FINDING AND REVEALING THE SELF

The connection between trust and friendship is visible in novels and conduct books where friends appear as each other’s confidantes, sharing all their
thoughts, joys, and sorrows. For instance, in the 1816 *L’Honnête homme à la cour et dans le monde*, the author states the following in a chapter titled “Des Avantages de la véritable Amitié”: “And what is sweeter than this reciprocal and sincere trust, where the friends share their most secret thoughts with each other?” Alternately, consider a passage from Mme de Souza’s 1801 epistolary novel *Charles et Marie* in which the author ties together friendship, personal revelation, and the self. The novel opens with a letter from Charles to an unnamed friend, one that begins by describing a journal Charles had been keeping: “I followed your advice: each day I give an account of the different sentiments that I felt. I thought that you would read my journal and I told myself: My friend will be a second conscience for me; I will speak to him or will speak to myself with the same sincerity.” In this case, self-reflection went hand in hand with friendship, as Charles wrote his diary at the instigation of his friend and with his friend in mind as he composed his entries. In this novel, accessing one’s interiority was constructed as a dialogic process, one that was undertaken with another. Charles scrutinized his moods, emotions, psychological makeup, and anxieties for his friend. In other words, it was not just that he was revealing everything to his friend; it was also that without his correspondent, there would be far less to reveal.

Friendship was also commonly associated with the term “épanchement,” or the verb form “épancher,” meaning effusion or outpouring, as authors and friends spoke of the “épanchements d’amitié.” This was how friends were supposed to communicate with one another, as they were to reveal everything. Hence, in the epilogue to Eugène Sue’s *Les Mystères de Paris*, the German prince Henri d’Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal writes a letter to his best friend in which he states that he needs to “épancher” his heart into his friend’s. And toward the end of this letter he claims, “I have never hidden my most secret thoughts, good or bad, from you.” The friend was one’s confidante, even more, perhaps, than the lover, and was willing to receive whatever one needed to disclose. As such, the trust between friends was supposed to be absolute, for one had to believe that the all-knowing friend would keep the details of such épanchements to him- or herself. Such a vocabulary of friendship also established that the friend was the recipient of parts of the self. In pouring one’s heart out, one was placing elements of oneself in the friend’s body. Indeed in much of the language of friendship, the body is figured as permeable, as if men and women did not see themselves as enclosed selves, but open to their chosen intimates.
Letters between friends also celebrated personal revelation as a special property of friendship, a notion central to Guizot’s statement to Broglie from 1832. Many of the same attributes of this bond can be seen in an 1841 letter from Dorothée de Courlande, duchesse de Dino, to Guizot’s friend Barante, who was returning to France after an unhappy term as ambassador to Russia. In Dino’s letter, she states she was looking forward to his arrival and then writes, “Retired enough to be able to give time to my friends, but not too retired to be ignorant of the things that would interest you, you can unload your judgments, opinions, reprimands, and surprises into my heart with complete security. And you will find in the relaxation and the total abandon of your trust and our communication a tranquility and a well-being that you probably searched for in vain elsewhere.” Mme de Dino was here offering herself as a confidante to whom Barante could tell anything. In her account, such communication would do him a world of good, as Dino associates a host of positive qualities like “relaxation,” “tranquility,” and “well-being” with their relationship. To our twenty-first-century ears, such language makes it sound as if their friendship was an extended therapy session. She wanted him to find a kind of psychic calm after a difficult period. Of course, such a notion is highly anachronistic, but Dino’s letter makes friendship central to self-revelation and emotional well-being. Alongside such a statement about the benefits of their friendship, Dino also invoked the idea that Barante’s ability to be open with her made their bond a unique one. In her reckoning, Barante had no doubt sought such relief elsewhere, but only in the context of their friendship could he find another who would accept the outpourings of his heart. Friendship was thus a haven in a heartless world.

MALE BONDS AND THE SEARCH FOR LOYALTY AND CONNECTION

While friendship in general produced trust and cohesion, it did so in distinctly gendered ways. The ties of male friendship revolved around notions of similarity and union, as men spoke of each other as another self or as part of their very self. Friends were to act in each other’s interest and with generosity; they proved their loyalty by offering direct financial assistance or by activating patronage networks. Hence, these bonds were to establish solidarity in an otherwise anomic society. Yet, except at moments of extreme personal stress, male friendship did not demand emotional expression or personal intimacies.
Instead, the free communication between men was frequently confined to discussions of public affairs. While these bonds often involved a play between distance and proximity, the language of male friendship can also sound strikingly erotic to our ears. In a period before homosexuality emerged as an identity, the fluidity of social and sexual boundaries allowed men to describe their desire for one another in physical terms.

Although novels and conduct books depicted the exchange of confidences as central to bonds between men, in practice, their correspondence was not particularly personal. Letters between the men of the doctrinaire circle typically revolved around discussions of political and scholarly matters—that is to say, news of public life. They sent lengthy reports to one another about the Parisian political scene, making personal correspondence a crucial source of information for those outside Paris. Friends in the provinces thus thanked one another when receiving the latest political news, stating that without such correspondence, they would have been in the dark as to what was happening in the capital. During the Restoration, when many of the doctrinaires maintained active scholarly agendas, these men also discussed their writing projects, gave advice to one another, and offered editorial assistance. Given that shared politics and intellectual endeavors held these men together, correspondence was clearly an important medium for political and intellectual cohesion. Yet, although they sent each other lengthy letters at regular intervals, their correspondence contained relatively little in the way of personal news. Information about the writer’s family life was often confined to a brief comment at the end of the letter. Indeed, it might even be as short and non-descriptive as a sentence like “Everyone around me is well,” as Guizot wrote to Barante in 1832.

The Guizot/Barante correspondence is especially revealing because their friendship was conducted entirely by letters during the 1830s, as Barante was living abroad during this decade as an ambassador. His only tie to his friends was through letters and he often expressed a desire that Guizot write him with more frequency. But what he wanted was not outpourings of intimate revelation, but an exchange of news on domestic and foreign affairs. For example, in 1834, he requested that Guizot “tell me your news and converse a bit with me. It has been a long time since I have heard anything from you.” His letter focused on a discussion of politics and diplomacy, suggesting that it was this that gave Barante pleasure. His epistolary exchange with Guizot was a form of intellectual sustenance and a way to maintain a tie to his intellectual milieu in France. The content of these letters may not have been
intensely personal, as only one paragraph at the end of this letter contained information about how he and his family were doing. Nonetheless, their correspondence was still intended to build forms of connection and allow friends to reaffirm their commitments to each other.

Similarly, these men were rarely openly affectionate in their letters. As with personal news, loving words tended to be confined to the end of letters and were often very brief. In many cases, such expressions of sentiment were formulaic, such as the closings “tout à vous” or “mille amitiés.” In other instances, although they were short, they might refer more to the specific nature of the relationship or to the content of the rest of the letter. For instance, in June 1826, Rémusat sent Guizot a long, six-page letter with information on the political situation in Grenoble, his writings on the subject of education, and his thoughts on religious affairs, a topic intimately connected to the state of the French educational system at this time. At the end of this letter, Rémusat included a short paragraph in a different vein. In it, he wrote, “A thousand affectionate feelings to everyone around you. . . . I love you with my heart and my reason.”

This last statement referred to the nature of the two men’s relationship, as Guizot was Rémusat’s mentor during the 1820s. It was also a reference to their shared political and theoretical project, and to their commitment to the sovereignty of reason. Lastly, loving Guizot with his reason was an allusion to the content of his letter. Both men were concerned that Catholic educational institutions inculcated passion and hatred and did not develop students’ rational faculties. This statement of affection was, however, relatively restrained; Rémusat did not, for instance, describe why he loved his friend, detail the history of his affection, or go into much depth concerning the exact nature of his feelings. This was also the only explicit discussion in this letter of the sentiments Rémusat had for Guizot, except for the use of the salutation “mon cher ami.” But by all accounts, this was a close and significant friendship for both men. In his memoirs, Rémusat returned again and again to a discussion of the exact nature of his bond with Guizot. After the two men split over politics in 1840, their estrangement led Rémusat to question whether Guizot ever really loved him. Concluding that he did, Rémusat repeatedly proffered as proof of Guizot’s affection a statement that Guizot made to someone else. According to Rémusat, Guizot had once said that “the two men he [Guizot] had loved the most were [Pierre Paul] Royer-Collard and myself.” That he displayed a scrupulous attention to the state of his relationship with Guizot in his memoirs implies that his friendship with
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Guizot meant a great deal to him. In their letters, however, the affection has to be read between the lines. The writing of the letter itself was to serve as a sign of how much the correspondents cared for each other and valued their intellectual, political, and personal partnership.

Although male/male correspondence was usually governed by restraint, there were a few instances where these men’s letters were openly—even wildly—emotionally expressive. During moments of great anxiety or personal distress, such as after the death of a loved one, friends often included outpourings of sentiment and exchanges of confidences in their letters. In these cases, friends offered support by allowing one another to grieve. Guizot’s 1832 letter to Broglie in which he spoke of his need for his friend and the importance of their relationship occurred at one such moment. In a correspondence that lasted for more than fifty years, this was the most emotionally laden discussion of their tie. The illness and death of Guizot’s first wife, née Pauline de Meulan, in 1827 also occasioned an extraordinary series of letters between Guizot and his male friends, ones that were meant to be both deeply emotional and extremely revealing. For instance, in a letter to Barante, Guizot wrote the following about his mental state:

I feel detached from myself, without any intimate personality; I belong entirely to activity. . . . Events, ideas, how much influence each one of us can exercise, all this occupies me and will continue to occupy me. It is the interior that is lacking. You know what it is for an honest worker who has finished his workday, who returns to his home, to find his wife, his children, his room, his fire, to rest in the center of this personal and pleasant space where he does not have to think of anything other than himself, his emotions, and his happiness. I will never finish my day, I will never return home. . . . I will always live outside, I will always be working.

At one level, this passage was meant to reassure Barante. Despite his devastating loss, Guizot would not give up his work as a scholar, political activist, and journalist. But in Guizot’s account, this was all that was left. He had been hollowed out; his sense of public duty remained but not his interiority. Part of the problem was precisely that his wife had helped him access his private life and the world of the affections. Now that she was gone, he could not find any respite from the realm of public activity. To be sure, this was an elaboration of the separate-spheres model, as his wife had been the guardian of his
interiority who provided him with a refuge from his working life. At the same time, even if his discussion focused precisely on this lack of an inner life, he was still describing his mental state to his friend. In this case, Guizot was acting as if he could understand and come to terms with the extent of his loss through engaging in such intimate revelation. Such a statement also shows how mourning reversed customary epistolary practices between men. Most of the content of this letter is personal; a discussion of political matters was relegated to two short paragraphs at the end of the letter.

In turn, Guizot’s male friends responded in kind. They wrote of their love for him and stated that they, too, shared his grief. This was a particular theme of Rémusat’s letters. In one written just before Guizot’s wife died, Rémusat writes, “I suffer knowing that you are still worried and unhappy. What can I tell you that your heart cannot guess and your reason does not already know? I have only one need, and that is to repeat that everything, fears, anxieties, hopes, everything is shared by my brotherly love, and that my heart unites with yours a thousand times a day.” Rémusat had been close to Guizot’s wife, for she had served as a surrogate mother to him after his own mother died in 1824. Less than a year before, his first wife had also died. Rémusat was here saying that he could empathize with Guizot’s feelings and enter into his emotional life as a result of his own losses. While the control of one’s emotions was seen as a necessary masculine attribute in this era, there were moments when it was acceptable to appear weak and at the mercy of one’s feelings. During these times, friends needed to provide one another with manifestations of affection and remembrance. This was what Rémusat was offering here, for he was stating that he not only mourned Pauline Guizot but also shared the burden of Guizot’s grief.

Rémusat’s letter illustrates some of the conventional ways in which men talked about their friendships with one another. When, for instance, he stated that “that my heart unites with yours,” he posits an essential connection between himself and Guizot and a physicality to their relationship that joins their bodies together. This was another instance in which individuals saw themselves as permeable beings. As an element in the language of male friendship, this convention made male bonds into sources of connection in an otherwise atomized society. Such terms also described how friends were similar to one another, as their identities and emotional lives were bound up with one another. The physical intimacy contained within the language of male friendship here is also notable. The men of the period frequently wrote
of their desire for a bodily connection with one another and did so in terms that strike us as remarkably homoerotic. Men demonstrated restraint in discussing their affections, but not in describing their desire for one another’s physical presence. Such a language speaks to a particular understanding of the boundaries between love and friendship and to the nature and possibilities of same-sex love in the post-revolutionary era.

Consider, for instance, a passage in Ludovic Vitet’s biography of his best friend, Charles Tanneguy Duchâtel, when he writes of how they became close during the Restoration. Both men were doctrinaire politicians during the July Monarchy and close friends of Guizot. In this posthumous biography, Vitet writes:

From our first encounter, . . . by an almost simultaneous movement, he came to me just as I came to him; then we sought out each other’s company in preference to others, and in just a few days our lives were united: between our spirits and our hearts an absolute trust was quickly established which nothing ever troubled. We had such a need for one another that soon we could hardly spend a day without exchanging our thoughts, and yet in everything we had to have the same tastes and the same needs.23

Vitet’s biography, written long after his first meeting with Duchâtel, should be seen less as an accurate description of their relationship than an engagement with the language of male friendship. Here, friendship revolves around a trust and similarity that arose from a simultaneous desire to be with each other. Vitet also conveys this notion of sameness by using the word “exchange,” as he presents a model by which his thoughts become those of Duchâtel and vice versa. Indeed, their friendship can be complete only after the two achieve this similarity.

Vitet’s description of his relationship with Duchâtel relies on two sources that were central to how the men of the early nineteenth century imagined their friendships. The first was Cicero’s De Amicitia, a widely reprinted work in the era. Cicero defines friendship as “nothing else than an accord in all things, human and divine, conjoined with mutual goodwill and affection.”24 Friendship also unites individuals together, or in his words, it makes “one soul out of many.”25 Vitet’s passage calls on this idea of similarity, as well as the conception of the friend as another self, as he and Duchâtel were so alike that they could serve as twins. Many of these notions would be taken up by Michel de
Montaigne, whose essay “Of Friendship” served as the model for writing about the relationship in the early nineteenth century. For Montaigne, friendship created powerful forms of connection that joined men together. He writes, “In the friendship I speak of, our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them.” Montaigne also focused on the simultaneity of desire, as did Vitet. He describes his bond with Étienne de La Boétie in the following terms: “We sought each other before we met. . . . And at our first meeting . . . we found ourselves so taken with each other, so well acquainted, so bound together, that from that time on nothing was so close to us as each other.” Montaigne’s essay employed terms of physical permeability, with words like “mingle,” “blend,” “bound,” and “close,” a language that men of the nineteenth century would use to articulate how the friend became a part of the self.

Vitet language is strikingly homoerotic (as was Montaigne’s) as he wrote of the exclusivity of his relationship with Duchâtel and how both men desired each other’s presence. Vitet also writes of their “same tastes and the same needs”—words generally associated more with sexual desire than with political belief. Of course, we will never know what the two men felt for each other or what they did behind closed doors, as is the case with Béranger and Manuel, two other best friends whose devotion to each other may have surpassed the boundaries of platonic friendship. Yet this passage was not meant for a private audience but for a very public one, as it was in a biography that celebrated Duchâtel’s political career. Speaking in such terms established Vitet’s right to write of his friend’s life; as his best friend, he knew the man’s thoughts better than anyone else did. But it also points to a lack of self-consciousness about the language of male friendship and its connection to sexuality, one that would mark other early nineteenth-century writings about these bonds.

Crucially, the early nineteenth century fell between two eras of repression. In contrast to the Old Regime, homosexual acts were not criminalized during this time. Nor did homosexuality exist as a fixed identity that was connected to medical and criminal pathology, as would be the case at the end of the century. As a result, there was a space—though limited—for toleration of men whose sexual preferences were for other men. Many elites might condemn homosexual behavior at the same time as they were willing to accommodate it on occasion. Napoleon, for instance, relied on the talents of both Cambacérès and Joseph Fiévée and gave them considerable positions of authority in his government, despite the fact that both men were open about their same-sex inclinations. Indeed, the latter lived with
his lover Théodore Leclercq, a fact that did not prevent him from becoming prominent in ultra circles in the early years of the Restoration. The case of Astolphe de Custine—the son of one of Chateaubriand’s close friends—is also instructive. When his preference for other men became clear, some of his high-society connections cut off contact with him. But not all did, and he was still received in some of the salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain as well as in Parisian literary circles.  

More generally, the post-revolutionary era was one in which certain boundaries—whether between male and female or between forms of affection—were not necessarily fixed. Historians have shown how the social and political upheaval that began at the end of the eighteenth century made way for a great deal of sexual and affective experimentation. For instance, Victoria Thompson states that the unrest of the 1830s and 1840s meant that “sexuality and gender often appeared as fluid.” This was, after all, the era in which George Sand dressed as a man. Many novels and plays written during the July Monarchy featured homosexual and bisexual love, cross-dressing, and other acts of gender nonconformity. Likewise, the boundary between love and friendship was porous. Speaking of the pre-Freudian affective understanding, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg writes that the “tendency to view human love and sexuality within a dichotomized universe of deviance and normality, genitality and platonic love, is alien to the emotions and attitudes of the nineteenth century.”

Thus friendship was often the language of homosexual love; Custine, for instance, called his longtime lover Edward Sainte-Barbe “my best friend.” Alternately, the culture of military friendship that grew out of Napoleon’s Grande Armée—one that echoed throughout early nineteenth-century literature—encompassed “a broad spectrum of masculine affection and intimacy” that included erotic as well as platonic attachments.

While this fluidity of affective and sexual categories made articulations of same-sex love possible, it also meant that men could discuss their homosocial desire without being seen as necessarily deviant. This is true even among men whose erotic affinities were for women, as was the case with Rémusat and Molé, two of Barante’s friends. For instance, in 1831, Rémusat asked Barante, “When will we see each other again? It will make me very happy. . . . It seems that one of the reasons why I cannot come back to myself is that I do not have the conversations like those I had with you. Come back, my dear friend, if only to complete me.” Two years later, Molé told Barante, “I miss you more that I can say, with my reason, my spirit, and my friendship. When I am with you, I vanish with you and without you I am a sterile instrument.”
Both men described that they needed Barante to make them complete. In Rémusat’s case, he stated that he was not whole without Barante and was incapable of being or knowing himself without his friend. In the absence of their conversations, he claims to be unable to think and function properly, a formulation that tied male friendship to intellectual endeavors. In Molé’s account, Barante was his animating spirit, and without his friend he was not truly alive. But when he and Barante were together, they could fuse their existence. Here, the friend appears not much as a double, as for Cicero and Vitet, but as a necessary component of the self and its functioning, revealing both notions of the porous self and the openness with which men could discuss their need for each other’s physical presence.

Yet while these discussions of the need for the friend convey considerable affection and were meant to indicate the importance of this bond for the letter writer, such statements are not quite the same as the open and profuse descriptions of love that were so common in correspondence between men and women. In this respect, the language of male friendship could contain some elements of restraint. These bonds were not constructed around detailed revelations of sentiment, but rather around closeness. Statements of similarity indicated that there was no mental or emotional divergence between friends, as did the assertions that the friend’s physical presence was required in order to ensure the proper functioning of the self. In an atomized society, friendship was to fight against the forces of isolation. The idea that a friend was a twin, another self, or an element of the self made the friend into a unique, chosen companion. Indeed, the notions of union and similarity also help explain the culture of male emotional restraint: if the friend was another self, he had no need to be told what his friend was feeling.

These understandings of male friendship also help explain some of the ways that bonds between men functioned in practice. Men provided financial support for each other and access to patronage networks. They were to prove their love through action and not necessarily through scrupulous accounts of their affections. In a world where many feared that narrow self-interest was the only motivation, male friendship served as an exception. Because emotion was understood to be a force that compelled action, love could lead men to act outside the bounds of their own self-interest. Hence, male friendship offered the prospect of loyalty and the promise of assistance when needed. This is what Balzac imagines in Illusions perdues, in which he creates a world of masculine solidarity within the confines of the Cénacle.
Providing for friends in times of need was a clearly defined cultural norm in the early nineteenth century. One conduct book from the period told the male audience that we are to “share our money with our friends when they are poor and when we become rich.” The male friends of novels are also figured by their generosity. Early on in Stendhal’s The Red and the Black, Julien Sorel’s friend Fouqué, a timber merchant, offers to make Julien his business partner; Julien refuses, dreaming of a grander life. Later, when Julien is in prison, Fouqué thinks of giving all his money to help Julien escape. Male friendship and generosity went hand in hand in Balzac’s novels as well. Such is the case in Illusions perdues, while in his Le Cousin Pons, written between 1846 and 1847, the title character wills his valuable art collection to his best friend, Schmucke, the one man who treats him with kindness and generosity. Certainly some of the men studied here saw aiding each other as important acts of friendship. For Chateaubriand and Béranger, the connection between friendship and financial assistance was particularly noteworthy, as both men lived much of their lives under the constant threat of penury. In 1820, when Chateaubriand was in considerable monetary difficulties, his friend Hyde de Neuville proposed that he lend Chateaubriand 800 F per year until Chateaubriand achieved financial stability (Chateaubriand did not accept Hyde’s proposal). In the years of the July Monarchy, he and Béranger offered to provide pecuniary assistance to each other. Both men declined such aid, but each regarded the gesture as a proof of the strength of their bond. Béranger was also famous for both his generosity toward his friends and his reliance on them. For instance, during the Restoration he supported his friend Rouget de Lisle, the author of “La Marseillaise,” who had fallen on hard times, while in the 1830s he helped his friend Louis Bérard who was experiencing financial difficulties.

Beyond such direct monetary exchanges, the men studied here frequently asked for and received favors from one another. During the July Monarchy, Béranger’s letters to his friend Pierre Lebrun contain a steady stream of requests on behalf of Béranger’s friends and acquaintances. As director of the Imprimerie royale, Lebrun had any number of positions he could fill with Béranger’s contacts. Béranger also arranged for Rouget de Lisle to have a state pension from the government right after the Revolution of 1830, which had the secondary benefit of ensuring that he was no longer responsible for supporting a troublesome and depressive friend. But it was Guizot’s friends who benefited the most from their relationships with him, and he typically took seriously his duty to provide for his friends. For instance, in the early years of the July Monarchy, he created the position of Inspector general of
historical monuments for Ludovic Vitet and put Vitet on the Conseil d'État. Guizot also helped Barante’s sons find positions in the diplomatic and the prefectorial service.  

In their requests for favors and positions, men used a sentimental vocabulary to motivate their friends to take action, and the performance of favors offered proof of love. This is visible in a series of letters from the 1830s from Barante to Guizot in which Barante sought a position for his children’s tutor, a man named Louis François Bellaguet. When Barante first hired Bellaguet, he promised that once the children were grown, he would find Bellaguet a post as a fonctionnaire, and in 1834 Barante began to search for such a position. Because he was serving as an ambassador, he needed to rely on his friends who remained in France, and he asked Guizot, then minister of public instruction, to aid him. Presumably, Guizot could provide a position to a promising young man. When Barante made this request, he appealed to Guizot in two ways. The first was by describing Bellaguet’s merits, such as his intelligence and good character. But he relied primarily on personal appeals, telling Guizot that his aid would be “a true service of friendship.” In another letter, Barante described it as “a benefit of friendship that I ask of you.” As Barante’s requests continued through the years, he touched more on the emotions and less on Bellaguet’s qualities, indicating that he considered the obligations of friendship to be the stronger argument. Thus, in 1837 he asked Guizot to “give me this sign of recognition”; in another letter, he called the favor a “special sign of your remembrance.” Here, Barante suggested that if Guizot did not perform the favor, he did not value their friendship.

At the same time, Barante articulated that his own obligation to Bellaguet arose out of affection. In one letter, he wrote that Bellaguet “has given me proofs of affection and devotion that have created a real obligation for me.” Barante needed to obtain a post for Bellaguet because not doing so would be a failure of honor—he had given his word—and a failure of the demands of love on Guizot’s part. Here, Barante both connects and distinguishes love and honor, a crucial attribute for elite men of the nineteenth century. Both created obligation, as Barante was trying to create a chain of duty that connected Bellaguet to him and himself to Guizot. Love and duty were powerful motivators for action that also existed outside of interest. Speaking in these terms allowed Barante to request that Guizot act for his benefit and not Guizot’s own while using a language that was more culturally acceptable than that of self-interest. Despite these similarities, honor was generalized, as men were to behave honorably at all times, whereas friendship was a particularized
affection that bound intimates. Notably, Barante does not discuss whether he had any affection for Bellaguet; his duty toward the tutor arose only from his desire to fulfill his promises and not from sentiment. In contrast, Guizot was to take on this request because of the reciprocal love that tied him and Barante together, one that placed special claims on Guizot. In the end, Guizot did find a place for Bellaguet, but in 1839 he replaced Barante’s protégé with his own. Barante indicated that this act was a clear sign that Guizot did not reciprocate his love and he gave Guizot an ultimatum: if Guizot did not find a post for Bellaguet, Barante would break off their friendship. When Guizot failed to do so, Barante put an end to their friendly correspondence. One year later, though, it recommenced—but only after Guizot honored Barante’s request for a position for his son.

Barante used affection as a way to activate assistance, and this exchange shows how individuals relied on sentiment to solve the problem of individualism in an interest-driven society. The prospect of a world where men and women pursued nothing but their own gain was a distressing spectacle for observers of the time, one that Barante discussed in his scholarly works. It also provided a practical problem: how could one persuade others to undertake tasks that were not necessarily in their immediate self-interest? In this instance, Guizot had provided one of his own protégés with a position as a fonctionnaire, but Barante wanted him to reverse his actions and aid someone in his entourage. For Guizot, this would be to act in Barante’s interest and not his own. Doing so would take time and effort; he would then need to find another place for his protégé. Barante’s solution was to appeal to love and duty, two acceptable spurs for action, unlike self-interest. Guizot’s failure to bend to Barante’s appeal offered evidence that his affection was not reciprocated. Once Guizot aided Barante’s son, their friendship could be restored. This act offered proof of love and remembrance. No doubt he regarded procuring a position for his son as more important than finding one for the son’s former tutor.

Male friendship, then, was understood to create cohesion and trust in the form of loyalty. Men were to support one another and saw their ties as leading one another to action. Providing benefits to a friend was a form of activity that was both self-interested (in that the friend was another self) and took one outside the self (because, in fact, the friend was not the self). As a result, bonds between men were understood to create solidarity within the confines of an individualistic social order. For men, however, action was to provide more proof of affection than was intimate revelation.
In both novels and conduct manuals from the early nineteenth century, friendship was usually described as uniting two or more members of the same sex. Certainly Balzac’s vision of friendship in *Illusions perdues* was of an all-masculine fraternity. Yet the men and women studied here hardly lived in such a gender-segregated world; Chateaubriand, Guizot, and Béranger all had close ties to women. Indeed, both Chateaubriand and Guizot maintained that their relations with women were easier and more pleasant than were those with men. In Guizot’s words, “All things being equal, a woman is always more amiable than a man.” In these friendships, men searched for confidantes who were to help them access their emotions and interiority. Male/female friendship established bonds of trust through the open exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings. If men provided each other with psychic relief during exceptional moments, such as after the loss of a loved one, men and women were to do the same for each other on a more consistent basis.

Women also frequently conveyed affection between men and managed their emotional lives. Such patterns of communication reveal that the men of the early nineteenth century did have authorization to discuss their inner lives and emotional states. After all, this was the era of Romanticism, a cultural and literary movement that praised the expression of emotions and personal self-reflection. Because men were generally more restrained with one another than with women, it was women who were to anchor men in a private realm of the emotions and social ties. While the construction of male/female bonds challenged a division between a masculine public sphere and a feminine private one, it also relied on the notion that the realm of the emotional and the social belonged to women. Women served as gatekeepers to men’s private lives and social milieus.

Many of the differences between men’s bonds with each other and their ties with women are articulated in a conduct book titled *Nouveau guide de la politesse* by Louis Damien Éméric. Written for a male audience, it contains the following statement about friendships between men and women:

Friendship with women is sweeter, pleasanter, and more soothing than friendship between men: the female friend pardons our frailties with gentleness, and every day her counsel pierces the heart with such delicacy that she makes us feel the charms of hope. Friendship between men is stronger and perhaps more useful during important events. One
is the flower that every day brightens our moments of peace by alleviating our troubles; the other is a robust and vigorous plant whose wondrous sap gives us new life even if it does not follow the rules of good manners. 

What is immediately apparent in this telling is how easy, enjoyable, and emotional friendships between men and women are, hence Éméric’s use of terms like “sweeter,” “pleasanter,” “soothing,” “heart,” and “charming.” In this case, too, the functions of consolation and lifting psychological burdens are particularly gendered. With a female friend, a man can open up and reveal his private, flawed self. It is this that makes these relationships so restful, as the ability of men to talk about their troubles with women has psychologically calming effects. By contrast, male friendship is less pleasant. Éméric’s assertion that these bonds are not conducted according to the rules of politeness implies that honesty and roughness characterize male friendships. These relationships, however, connect men to masculine virtues as they make men stronger and more vigorous. Éméric uses a remarkably homoerotic phrasing when he describes how the “wondrous sap” of masculine ties restores men. Such terms point to a lack of self-consciousness about language in a pre-Freudian era, one in which open expressions of male desire were permissible. This was, after all, a normative work, one intended to map the contours of friendship for a literate public. But the benefits of male/male friendships have little to do with interiority. Instead, they help men succeed in public life; they are useful “during important events.” In this respect, Éméric’s account fits with the patterns of male friendship traced above, as men aided one another and proved their love through action.

Éméric’s description of the functioning of male/female friendship is also born out in the correspondence patterns of the individuals studied here. For one, relations between men and women involved expressions of distance, fitting with Éméric’s notion that these ties “follow the rules of good manners.” Thus, unlike male bonds, they require some level of formality. Indeed, the forms of address that men and women used with one another indicate a respectful distance. While men used “mon cher ami” with one another, they often used “chère madame” or even “madame” with their female friends, while women frequently employed the salutation “cher monsieur” in their letters to men. The play of distance and intimacy between men and women—and the way in which distance could facilitate intimacy—can be seen in the correspondence between Hortense Allart and Sainte-Beuve from
the 1840s. The two were former lovers turned best friends; according to her side of the correspondence she was still in love with him, but he wanted only a friendship. Their letters contain detailed descriptions of their views on literature, philosophy, religion, politics, their mutual friends, as well as their emotional lives and their feelings for each other. They also spoke of the love affairs they were pursing; in Allart’s case at least, she discussed her sex life, as when she wrote that her relationship with Henry Bulwer-Lytton contained “the delights of a delicate and powerful sensuousness.” Yet in her letters, she often called him “monsieur”; had this salutation been used between men, it would have indicated the absence of a personal connection. Here, though, this formality did not preclude the intense exchange of intimacies. Instead, it served as a mark of respect for both him as a person and for the nature of the relationship, as she was signifying that she understood and accepted the fact that they would not reignite their love affair. In this case, the hallmarks of distance allowed them to have the relationship they did have—a close friendship.

As was true with Allart and Sainte-Beuve, men and women wrote to each other as confidantes and men turned to women to be the bearers of their secrets. For instance, Chateaubriand’s letters from the 1820s to his former mistress Cordélia Greffulhe, comtesse de Castellane, are filled with the details of his health, financial situation, personal preoccupations, and likes and dislikes. Likewise, Béranger relied on Hortense Allart and his friend Judith Cauchois-Lemaire for such revelations. In 1834, he wrote to the latter about his melancholy and his increasing sense of isolation as he aged. He then stated, “You know that I have always had the pleasure of confiding my thoughts to you, as I am sure that I can count on your complete discretion as well as your friendship.” Such a statement was intended to reveal how special she was to him, as well as the degree of trust that he placed in her. She would not betray Béranger’s confidences to others. Guizot had a string of female confidantes—Mme de Broglie, then after she died in 1838 Gabrielle Henriette Catherine Laure de Daunant de Gasparin, and then Juliette Dutilleul, comtesse Mollien, after Gasparin’s death in 1864, Broglie and Gasparin were two of the only friends with whom he discussed his disappointment with his younger son, Guillaume, and his correspondence with Broglie includes what were meant to be exhaustive reflections on his mental state and family life. Thus one letter from 1835 describes an inability to achieve true happiness. He states, “During the moments when I have been the happiest, I always felt that I could not attain all the happiness that was given to me. . . . It always seemed that a part of the blessings fell to the ground before they were able to penetrate into my
soul.” And while he was relatively terse about the state of his family life with his male friends, his letters to women were considerably more detailed. In the same letter, he told Mme de Broglie about his children who had just returned from a trip taking the waters: “They are doing wonderfully. The baths and showers fortified my little Pauline more than I could have hoped for. Guillaume is very well, always a good and sweet creature who does not suspect and will never suspect what the pure blue of his eyes means to me. Henriette is more lively and serene than ever.” Guizot’s reference to the blue of his son’s eyes is not clear; he may have been referring to his son’s resemblance to Guillaume’s mother, née Elisa Dillon, who had died two years earlier after giving birth to Guillaume. But certainly this was something that Mme de Broglie would have known, as if this letter was part of an extended conversation about his personal and sentimental life. In this case, correspondence was intended to serve as a form of self-exploration. Guizot’s memoirs were not particularly introspective, and instead focused on his public life, while his letters to his male friends were typically not as personal as those to his female friends. Thus female confidantes were to facilitate reflections on interiority and a scrupulous detailing of the state of his soul.

Broglie’s letters in which she responded with descriptions of her mental state matched the tone and content of Guizot’s letters. During the 1830s, she was increasingly melancholic, and in one letter from 1837 she claims to have diagnosed what was wrong with her. In her words, “I was tired when I left Paris, not bodily or spiritually, but in an intermediary region; at least for me, it is precisely the link between the mind and the body that becomes exhausted, even though neither my health nor my rational capacities feel it, I hope, but it still makes me incapable of many things.” Broglie and Guizot were united by their shared Calvinist faith, and the introspective nature of their letters may have owed something to a Protestant sense of self-examination. Yet Guizot was not the only individual to whom she turned for such revelation; in the 1810s and 1820s, when she was especially close to Barante, he specifically asked her to write to him about her mental state and her sorrows. Her letters to her female friends, including Mme de Castellane (the same woman who was Chateaubriand’s mistress and then friend) and Mme Anisson du Perron (Barante’s sister), also contained statements of similar introspective intensity. Likewise, men often relied on their sisters to serve as loving confidantes, as did Barante and Chateaubriand. In this respect, women—either as friends or as sisters—set the patterns of male/female bonds. Men had to play by women’s rules in their correspondence. Women had different expectations of
friendships than men did with each other. Friends were not to come to each other’s aid in the public realm, but to provide psychological relief by giving each other the opportunity to describe and understand their mental states.

Similarly, if profusions of affection were not typical in letters between men, they were both customary and expected in letters between men and women, as they were in female/female correspondence. Chateaubriand’s letters to Mme de Castellane and to his adviser Mme de Duras consistently contained expressions of how much he valued their friendship and how much he cared for them. Likewise, Mme de Broglie’s letters to Guizot were intensely affectionate. In one she states, “I can tell you that in thinking of the gifts I have received from God, I placed friendships like yours at the top of the list.” In return, his letters to his female friends were intended to read as being highly emotional and even wildly, almost passionately, loving. For example, in one from 1845, Guizot wrote the following to Gasparin when at his country home:

When are you coming to see me? I want precise details. I like to think about our conversations. You must know how much pleasure it gives me to see you, to talk with you. I know you well, and I want you to know that no one thinks more highly and affectionately of you than I do. The more I know you, the more rare and special I find you to be. I like only what is rare. But I appreciate these things a great deal. The truth, the truth, the truth which is perfectly free, hearts and spirits entirely exposed, the interior and the exterior completely identical and merged, without any lies or difficulties, only this is good, gentle, and charming. But it is charming. I have this with you. And then do you know that you are very witty and that this is also rare and charming? We have so much to say to each other! I have thought of many, many things since we last saw each other. I have told you a few of them. I hold the rest in reserve.

This veritable torrent of affection occupies much of the letter. Here, Guizot makes claims about how much he loves, misses, and needs Gasparin, how special she is to him, and what it is that makes her so unique. She is charming, she is full of life; their conversations are particularly easy and free. According to Guizot, he can be completely himself with her and can achieve a perfect and entire communication—some ultimate transparency—in her presence. Most obviously, he repeats the term “truth” three times to emphasize the fact that the two communicate to each other with total openness. He also
reinforces the unspoiled nature of this truth, that it is “perfectly free” and without any shadow of falsity or hindrance (“without any lies or difficulties”). Additionally, there is the phrase “hearts and spirits absolutely exposed.” He and Gasparin are to bare their souls to each other and hide nothing from each other. The next phrase reinforces this notion of transparency, as he states that with her, he finds “the interior and the exterior completely identical.” According to Guizot, the fact that this is a relationship that is entirely without dissimulation is a special quality, one he can find with few others. As in so many other epistolary testaments to friendship, this bond is constructed as unique.

Chateaubriand’s letters to his female friends, including Duras and Castellane, could also be emotionally expressive; crucially, much of his correspondence with the latter constructs an emotional permeability between himself and Castellane. When she set out on a voyage to Italy in 1825 he sent her frequent letters in which he described an emotional attachment to her in two ways. The first was through straightforward descriptions of his affection, as in one letter in which he wrote, “You will see by this that even beyond the mountains your friends follow you with their greetings and that there is no distance for the hearts that are attached to yours.”68 The notion of the attached heart reveals the same idea of physical permeability and connection that pervaded the rhetoric of male friendship. In other letters, Chateaubriand wrote as if Castellane had an emotional influence on him. He described his anxieties that arose when she was in danger or unwell, and wrote of how her sadness made him sad or her happiness gave him a sense of pleasure. For instance, in response to a letter in which she discussed going to a ball, he wrote, “I like to think that you are enjoying yourself... I delight in everything that can make the ones I love happy.”69 This was another manifestation of the notion of the open self that pervaded descriptions of friendship, for here Castellane was understood to be molding Chateaubriand’s psychological state through her actions and emotions.

Much of this language is notably erotic as well. After all, Guizot spoke of a longing for Gasparin, while Chateaubriand wrote of his bodily attachment to Castellane, a woman with whom he had recently had a passionate affair. As was true between men, the boundaries between romantic love and platonic friendship were not necessarily sharp. For instance, Guizot and Gasparin’s relationship was never physical, but they considered becoming lovers in the mid-1830s.70 Alternately, Chateaubriand had a habit of remaining close with his ex-mistresses, including Castellane as well as Delphine de Custine, née
Sabran, and Hortense Allart. His relationship with Mme Récamier is illustrative as well. The two had an affair that began in the early years of the Restoration, but by the regime’s closing they were no longer physically intimate. Yet she remained his companion and the two considered marrying each other after his wife died. Such a relationship does not fit with our notions of what a love affair should be nor what a friendship is; in this case, our own categories cannot contain the dimensions of this relationship.

Men and women could even be open about their romantic interest in one another, as were Hyde de Neuville and Mme de Montcalm, two of Chateaubriand’s friends. In one letter from August 1817, she wrote the following to him when he was ambassador to the United States: “Our relations have a romantic tinge to them, one that might be dangerous if we were younger and if a thousand ties did not separate us and if you were less absorbed by a mistress who has taken over all of your affections and who is so terribly jealous of all of your thoughts that you are not allowed the least bit of distraction; this mistress is politics.” Their letters spoke of an erotic affinity that never developed into an affair. But if they were not lovers, they could be friends, ones who wrote as if their tie might have had a different cast in different circumstances.

Nor did these men and women have difficulty with relationships that included unreciprocated love. This was the case in the bond between Allart and Sainte-Beuve; her love went unreturned but not her friendship. Similarly, the bond between Duras and Chateaubriand straddled the border between love and friendship. By all accounts, she was in love with him, but he was uninterested in becoming her lover. Except for a lack of physical intimacy, however, they behaved liked lovers. He told her that he loved her more than he loved anyone else and she was constantly jealous of his ties to other women. When he and Récamier began their affair, he hid the relationship to assuage Duras’s suspicions. Such an insistence on the monopoly of his affections seems outside the rules of friendship, a bond that is generally not so exclusive. Certainly, these men and women conceived that there was a distinction between friendship and romantic love. After all, without such an understanding, Montcalm’s statement to Hyde de Neuville would make no sense. But as was the case between men, individuals did not see these forms of attachment as being sharply different from each other. As a result, the friends studied here could speak of physical attraction and erotic desire without either one disrupting the relationship. Rather, as in the case of Montcalm and Hyde de Neuville, the erotic frisson could strengthen their bond and add to their sense of mutual devotion. Romantic love and platonic friendship were
not understood as arising from separate impulses, but as two manifestations of affection.

WOMEN’S SOCIAL ROLES: MAINTAINING CONNECTION, MANAGING EMOTION

Just as women were to aid men in accessing their emotions and interiority, so, too, did they integrate men into their social milieus and help them maintain their personal networks. Notably, letters between men and women frequently contained a mixture of society gossip, political news, and information about the friends and allies of the correspondents. In this respect, as well, these letters are more similar to those between female friends than between men.75 Thus, when Hyde de Neuville was ambassador to the United States in the early years of the Restoration, he received relatively short, impersonal letters from his male friends. But his letters from Mme de Montcalm and Mme de La Trémoïlle were filled with the latest Parisian scuttlebut, as well as both personal and political news.76 Mme de Broglie’s letters to Barante also contained information about political, diplomatic, and literary matters, as well as a fair amount of society chatter. In one from 1824, she mentioned that although he had asked her for gossip, she had relatively little, except that pertaining to a society marriage that was attracting a great deal of mockery.77 Likewise, letters from men to their female friends were much more wide-ranging than those between men. In the 1840s, Guizot wrote Mme de Gasparin long letters that included information about politics, his social life, his family, his health, and his servants.78

Women also maintained contact between men. Thus it was Mme de Broglie, and not her husband, who wrote letters to his friends reporting on his doings.79 In the 1830s, she and the princesse de Lieven, Guizot’s mistress, were also in charge of informing Barante about what was happening in Paris when he lived abroad as an ambassador.80 Mme de Dino, too, sent Guizot letters with information about her companion Talleyrand, as well as the news of two doctrinaires to whom she was close—Théobald Piscatory, who was briefly her lover in the 1820s, and Royer-Collard, who was her neighbor.81 If correspondence between men situated men in a political and intellectual milieu, letters from women integrated men into a social one.

Moreover, women frequently conveyed and managed affection between men. Once again, it was Mme de Broglie who was tasked with communicating
how much her husband cared about his male friends. In a letter from 1828, she wrote the following to Guizot about his upcoming visit: “I would like you to come as early as possible. I wish it for myself and I wish it just as much for Victor. You know that you are indispensable to him and that his spirit is incomplete without yours.”82 Victor de Broglie was rarely affectionate; Guizot’s memoirs (published while Broglie was still alive) call him “the least demonstrative of men.”83 But he did not have to be, for he had his wife to interpret and convey emotions to others.

The relationship between Béranger, Chateaubriand, and Hortense Allart is also instructive in this respect. During the Restoration, Allart and Béranger were good friends who circulated in the same liberal milieus. In 1829, she began an affair with Chateaubriand when the two were both in Rome. At the same time, he was flirting with the liberal opposition. In early 1830, after both Allart and Chateaubriand had returned to France, she decided to orchestrate a meeting between Béranger and her lover, and it was this encounter that eventually led the two men to become friends. From the beginning, they called on Allart to facilitate their relationship. After their initial meeting, Béranger wrote Allart a letter in which he stated, “M. de Chateaubriand just left my home. In truth, it is more than I deserve, even if you find me too humble! I do not know how to admit such kindness. Please be my interpreter, for I am so stupid that I fear he did not understand the feelings that he inspired in me.”84 Béranger was writing as if he was overawed at meeting the literary lion and so needed Allart to convey his emotions to Chateaubriand; as a woman, she was to have an emotional intelligence that he lacked. Even after the two men started corresponding with each other directly, Béranger still charged her with helping him communicate with Chateaubriand on particularly sensitive matters. For instance, when Chateaubriand proposed to nominate Béranger for a seat in the Académie française, the latter asked Allart to convey to Chateaubriand that he had no interest in becoming an immortel.85

These patterns of male/female correspondence relied on both new and old understandings of the inner workings of gender and the emotions. The salon culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made women responsible for interpersonal interactions, a role they would continue to play here as they maintained social networks and helped men cultivate their ties with one another. At the same time, the content and tone of letters between men and women fit with the new emotional regime and the new understanding of male psychology in the post-revolutionary era. In the early nineteenth
century, emotional expression was feminized, in contrast to the eighteenth century, when both men and women could be highly emotive. Because men could not always express their feelings, they often turned to women to do it for them. Moreover, the men of the post-revolutionary age could not always engage in personal revelation with one another. The new psychology of the time, founded by Victor Cousin, emphasized men’s rational capacities. Although Cousinian psychology stressed the importance of introspection, this psychological system offered limited guidance on how to look inward. Because women demanded and authorized personal and emotional revelation, men were to turn to female friends for scrupulous accountings of their interiority. These correspondence patterns thus relied on an understanding that women were private actors and men public ones. Because they belonged to private life, women could receive the intimate thoughts and feelings of men. Among one another, men had to be preoccupied with public affairs, whereas women were concerned with social relations, the cultivation of personal ties, and emotional states—although chapter 6 will show the political application of these roles. At the same time, of course, male/female ties helped men access their private selves. In these relations, men came to behave like the women around them—emotional, reflective, and connected to their social milieus.

For the men studied here, the benefits of friendship—physical, psychic, and material—were many, but were for the most part highly gendered. Relationships with women were understood to provide men with the ability to give and receive affection and personal confidences. They could connect men to their social worlds and allow for psychic relief. In contrast, friendships among men supplied tangible benefits, such as financial assistance and the activation of patronage networks, as well as intellectual and political companionship. In many respects, the construction of bonds among men relied on the old understanding of the friend as a companion in arms, as these men fought for the same causes as one another and acted in solidarity with one another. In both cases, however, friendship was bound up in the creation of trust, as male friends were to act with loyalty toward one another and as men and women were to serve as confidantes and the bearers of one’s most intimate thoughts. Friendship was thus imagined to be a key location of trust in an otherwise suspicious society and a primary source of connection in an atomized world.