Filed among Guizot’s personal papers are letters from other prominent politicians of the July Monarchy, such as Molé and Thiers. Guizot’s relationships with these men were never easy; they were his rivals for power, and if he occasionally allied himself with one of them, he was more commonly their adversary. Unlike the letters he wrote or received from his friends, any correspondence occurred for very specific purposes, such as to obtain information or to seal an alliance. Consider, thus, an exchange from February 1836 between Thiers and Guizot, in which two master politicians navigated post-revolutionary politics using sentiment. The letters were written just after Thiers replaced Victor de Broglie as the head of the government. Guizot had been minister of public instruction in the Broglie cabinet and had no official place in the new government, but he did give it his support. Guizot and Thiers now had to reassure each other of their sincerity and loyalty, and they sealed their alliance through correspondence.

For his part, Thiers was obliged to state that he would not veer to the left. Hence, in his letter, he wrote, “Events have separated us, but I hope that the feelings aroused by so many years working together facing the same dangers will remain. If I can help it, much of our union will continue.” In order to state that he would not forget their joint commitment to the causes of liberalism during the Restoration and order during the July Monarchy, Thiers called on the emotional realm. In his account, he had an affection for Guizot, one that arose out of a shared past. He and Guizot were also bound together by their essential similarities in the way that male friends were. In other words, Thiers was indicating that he and his government would not swing too far to the left because of his affection for his doctrinaire colleague.
In his reply Guizot had to set Thiers’s mind at ease that he would not work
against the new ministry, and that he accepted the ouster of Broglie, his close
friend and ally, from power. Guizot also marshaled the language of friend-
ship to describe his loyalty to Thiers. Indeed, Guizot wrote a draft of his re-
sponse, one that shows the precise calculations in which he engaged. It was
the salutation in particular that allowed Guizot to express his commitment
to Thiers. Thiers had begun his letter with the words “mon cher monsieur
Guizot,” a greeting that indicated some degree of distance, but was relatively
warm. Guizot, however, was inclined to indicate considerably more attach-
ment to Thiers than Thiers had to him—but because the political situation
called for it, not because he felt any deep affection for his rival. As a powerful
politician with no place in the cabinet, Guizot would be at the top of any-
one’s list of those who might try to bring the government down, and thus he
needed to signal that he would do his utmost to be loyal to the new ministry.
To do so, he opted for a warmer salutation than the one Thiers had chosen.
The draft of his letter shows that he first thought of referring to his rival as
“mon cher ami et collègue” (the word “collègue” referred to the fact that
both men were members of the Académie française). Yet this did not satisfy
Guizot. Adding the word “collègue” to the phrase “mon cher ami” made the
salutation more formal and distant, while he wanted to show affiliation and
proximity. And so, as Guizot revised his draft, he crossed out the phrase “ami
et collègue” and wrote in the word “ami,” making this the warmest of all pos-
sible greetings: “mon cher ami.”

Such a salutation made an extraordinary claim. Guizot never used this
phrase lightly, and for him, as well as other correspondents of the time, it
indicated a real friendship in the fullest sense of the term. He reserved it
for his closest friends, men like Broglie, Barante, and Rémusat. Thiers and
Guizot, though, were rivals, and if they intermittently maintained good rela-
tions with each other during the 1830s, this is because they were often allied
with each other in this decade. Certainly Guizot’s draft indicates that he used
the salutation “mon cher ami” not because it represented the spontaneous
outpourings of his heart, but out of pure calculation. Nor was this state-
ment meant to deceive Thiers into thinking that Guizot regarded him as a
friend. For Guizot to have thought that such a profession of affection would
fool Thiers would suggest that Guizot regarded Thiers, a man known for his
craftiness, as being exceptionally naive. Guizot was hardly such a poor judge
of character. Rather, this statement served a purpose of which both men
were aware; here friendship functioned as a trope, not an actual, meaningful
personal relationship. By claiming to be friends with Thiers, Guizot was really stating that he would act as a friend would. He would not betray Thiers or his ministry, and he was not upset about the fact that he had been ousted from a cabinet position. In essence, descriptions of personal feelings stood in for political allegiance.

This exchange provides an entry point into the political culture of the Restoration and July Monarchy, one that was based around friendship, both as a relationship and as a metaphor. Because male friendship was founded on notions of similarity, politicians used male friends as proxies in ministries, elections, and political negotiations. This was another example of how men were to offer support and act in solidarity with one another. In other cases, politicians who were decidedly not friends used terms of affection with one another to indicate allegiance, as Thiers and Guizot did here. Likewise, they relied on a language of friendship during moments of conflict. In the Restoration and July Monarchy, words of love could be used to persuade, assuage, and signify a whole host of qualities seen as missing in political life, such as loyalty, trust, and free communication. Such a reliance on friendship in the political realm stands in contrast to any notion of a separation between public and private in the early nineteenth century. Men and women at the time may have imagined and wanted their friendships to be entirely private relationships that served as refuges from the harsh and unpleasant public sphere. But friendship had so many political uses precisely because this bond was seen as so different from other ties and so closely connected to trust and affiliation.

In many respects, the use of personal ties to transact politics demonstrates considerable continuity with Old Regime political practices. Ties of friendship cemented political alliances, as they had at the court of Versailles, just as questions of political affiliation were often framed in terms of affection. As chapter 6 discusses, women in the early nineteenth century were negotiators and go-betweens in ways that recalled the practices of the Old Regime. Thus the period between 1815 and 1848 was one when politicians were learning how to practice parliamentary politics and resorted to familiar patterns from the past to do so. After all, many politicians of the era were aristocrats from social milieus that recalled the political practices of the Old Regime, even if they themselves had little personal experience of it. There were also structural similarities between pre- and post-revolutionary politics that made political life so personalized. In both cases, actors were working without the support of impersonal political institutions, such as political parties. Similarly, high politics in the Old Regime and the era of parliamentary monarchy were both
a matter for elites, whether they were the courtiers at Versailles or the residents of Paris’s aristocratic neighborhoods.

Nevertheless, there are considerable differences between the pre- and post-revolutionary uses of personal ties, ones that gave friendship a special significance in the early nineteenth century. Notably, the new parliamentary system presented a whole series of new problems regarding cohesion and coordination that friendship could solve. In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, personal connections helped men and women appeal to their superiors and obtain the attention of important patrons or the king. But politics in the post-revolutionary era was a much more horizontal affair. And whereas a host of structures—corporate bodies, aristocratic lineages, privilege—supported political life in the early modern era, the Revolution left only individual actors on the scene. As a tie between individuals who were relative social equals, friendship was crucial because it was one of the only relationships that could build cohesion and facilitate politics in this environment. Additionally, there is the issue of ideology. The ideological divides of the Revolution made politics a much more fractious business and made the problem of trust more acute. Beyond the domain of sheer personal competition, politicians had a whole host of reasons not to like one another. Thus one of the principal functions of friendship in post-revolutionary political life was managing ideological divisions, as friendship could be used to prevent ruptures or build alliances among politicians who did not agree with one another. Men’s ideological loyalties also meant that political roles were much more divided along the lines of gender after the Revolution than they had been before. Because of the circumscribed nature of their personal affiliations, men were especially suited to serve as allies and backers of factions, whereas women’s relative impartiality and access to the emotions helped them work among political groupings. In contrast, neither of these roles was heavily gendered in the Old Regime.

PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS IN THE ERA OF THE NOTABLES

The Restoration was France’s first sustained experiment with modern politics in the sense that this was a period of relative stability during which politicians were learning how to operate within the constraints of a parliamentary system. As a result, the political elites of the time had to acquire a whole new set of skills: how to negotiate with one another, how to organize factions,
how to form alliances among political groupings, and even how to fight with
one another. In this climate, friendship provided a set of powerful norms
that governed interpersonal relationships as well as a way to understand al-
legiance. The July Monarchy built on this legacy of the Restoration, particu-
larly since the structure of parliamentary government did not fundamentally
change after the Revolution of 1830. Notably, like its predecessor, this new
regime lacked official political parties. Many of the dominant politicians of
this regime, including Guizot and Thiers, also received their political educa-
tion during the Restoration and so continued to rely on the political practices
they had learned before 1830.³

As they became proficient in the ways of parliamentary government, the
politicians of the post-revolutionary era faced the a lack of trust and cohe-
sion, key requirements for all of these new types of political activity. Indeed,
far more than presidential forms of government, parliamentary systems need
trust in order to function. After all, the government can survive only if it has
the backing of politicians in the parliamentary body.⁴ Ministers, too, came
from within the parliament, and the composition of the cabinet was gener-
ally the product of negotiations among members of the Chambers.⁵ All these
negotiations required some form of trust. Factions needed to know that the
men they nominated for cabinet positions would not betray their views once
in power. Many of the ministries in the period between 1815 and 1848 were co-
alition governments as well. In these instances, the different political group-
ings had to offer reassurances of their loyalty to one another and to a shared
set of principles.

However, the structure of parliamentary politics in this era made the
question of cohesion especially thorny. French politicians rejected the British
model that relied on parties, but in many cases factions functioned like par-
ties did. Many of them had clear leaders; Chateaubriand served as the head of
the faction known as the Defection in the late 1820s, while Guizot was de facto
party leader of the doctrinaires during the July Monarchy. French politicians
also had to negotiate both within their own factions and with members of
rival groupings, as did their cross-Channel neighbors. The problem, however,
was that French politicians had to come up with an alternate understanding
of allegiance. Markers such as salon attendance became one way to do so, but
unlike belonging to a party, going to a salon or a political reunion entailed no
real obligation to be loyal to a certain faction. Nor was there any enforcement
mechanism to deal with politicians who were unreliable allies, such as party
whips, who are dedicated to maintaining discipline within formal political
structures. The lack of official parties created exceptional complications during the July Monarchy, an era that saw a profusion of factions organized around prominent politicians, such as Guizot or Thiers, instead of around clear ideological positions. As a result, negotiations over the composition of cabinets and legislation were extraordinarily complex and lengthy.

Because of the structural deficits within post-revolutionary politics, trust and cohesion were vital political commodities. Without these interpersonal qualities, politicians could neither maintain the cohesion of their own factions nor work successfully with other political groupings. Yet the members of the political class were operating in an era beset by the problems of distrust and individualism, one when public life was seen as particularly divisive and anomic. This was one reason why friendship was so important, for invocations of the affection between friends served as a way to build trust and create solidarity between political actors. In turn, as the epilogue will discuss, the practices of relying on personal ties within political life left a significant legacy for French political culture even in an era of official political parties, as parties in the Third Republic emerged out of clubs and friendship networks.

The use of social ties within a political context was also intimately connected to the narrow dimensions of political life in this era. From 1815 until 1848, France was governed by a tiny oligarchy. During the Restoration, electoral rights were limited to a mere ninety thousand of the wealthiest citizens. After the Revolution of 1830, the electorate increased to only two hundred thousand. Voters thus traveled in similar social circles and relied on social spaces to transact politics. For instance, in the provinces, men’s clubs were gathering places for liberals, while salons were the locus of conservative politics. In Paris, salons served politicians of all political stripes, and throughout the period of post-revolutionary monarchy they were a central location of extra-parliamentary activity. Because of the lack of official political parties, ideological affiliations were generally understood through social ones. The salons that politicians attended frequently identified their political orientation. In an 1817 letter to his wife, Hercule de Serre, then aligned with the doctrinaires, stated that there were three basic divisions among Parisian political elites of the time: moderates who went to “the reunion at M. Ternaux’s,” those on the left who went to Laffitte’s, and ultras, who had a variety of salons to attend. During the July Monarchy, the doctrinaires gathered at the salon of Mme de Broglie or that of Lieven, while those allied with Thiers went to that of Eurydice Sophie Matheron Dosne, his mother-in-law. Salons also gave politicians a place to share information and discuss and disseminate strategy.
In an 1817 letter to his wife, Joseph de Villèle stated, “Reunions . . . are entirely necessary so that our little regiment can be put together.” For Villèle, who would become the effective party leader of the ultras in the 1820s, the cohesion of his faction was created through social activity. Hence, as politicians were learning how to organize parliamentary life, they relied on institutions of sociability and they adapted preexisting social forms to serve the new needs of this era. In this respect, the period of parliamentary monarchy was one in which the political and the social were collapsed.

The essential lack of division between the political and the social is visible in the language that politicians used to describe factional allegiance, as well as some of the uses of male friends in political transactions. In both elections and the negotiations surrounding ministerial combinations, friends were stand-ins for one another. For instance, if the leader of a government did not or could not include a prominent politician in his ministry, he often called on a friend of the politician to serve in the cabinet. This use of friendship in politics arose out of the set of understandings about the way in which male friendship functioned. Male friends were so similar that they could serve as one another’s proxies; the closest one could come to a double of a prominent politician was his friend. Because ties between men created obligation and solidarity, politicians were assured that they would have a representative in the cabinet to look after their interests. In these instances, friendship created public forms of loyalty—a task that was both difficult and necessary in the political climate of the time.

At the most basic level, politicians used the vocabulary of friendship to stand in for political affiliation, as members of the same faction employed the term “ami” with one another. For example, speakers at the tribune used the phrase “honorable ami” to refer to their allies. Politicians also used this salutation in their letters to members of the same camp. As one of the secondary definitions of “ami,” such a usage was hardly new to the post-revolutionary period. In the Old Regime, the term “ami” had been used for allies, backers, or patrons. British politicians also used the phrase “my honorable friend” to refer to their allies in their parliamentary speeches. In this case, the French borrowed from their past and their cross-Channel neighbors who were more experienced in the ways of parliamentary government.
In practice, too, a politician’s closest friends were often his political allies. The ties among Guizot, Barante, and Victor de Broglie were those of political and personal allegiance. Likewise, Béranger, Dupont de l’Eure, and Manuel were bound by their shared political affiliation and their friendship. Many of Chateaubriand’s male friends were also his allies, including Hyde de Neuville and Clausel de Coussergues. Like him, they were all ultras in the early years of the Restoration, and they followed him into the political center in the mid-1820s. Indeed, in the political climate of the Restoration, it was hard for men to be friends without a shared political allegiance.

Bound by similarity and solidarity, male friends were also proxies in political campaigns, when friendship became shorthand for political affiliation. Take, for instance, an 1824 letter from Manuel to his friend Dupont de l’Eure after an election campaign in which Manuel had stood as a candidate in the department of the Seine. One year earlier, Manuel had been expelled from the Chamber of Deputies for a speech that seemed to condone regicide. Re-electing Manuel to the Chamber became a rallying cause for those on the far-left. His return to the Chamber would indicate that the electorate disapproved of his expulsion, the ultras who led the charge, and the regime as a whole. Unfortunately for Manuel, the electors of the Seine were hesitant to vote for him; doing so would be a step too far. Instead, they cast their votes for Dupont, who had campaigned heavily for his friend. In writing to Dupont after the results were announced, Manuel reassured his friend that he was not upset about his loss to Dupont. Indeed, Manuel stated that he was not wholly displeased with the result of the election. After all, the electors had shown that they agreed with Manuel and Dupont’s common cause of far-left politics. As Manuel wrote, the electors “clearly proclaim . . . that they have adopted the cause that I upheld in our shared fight. . . . In a word, all of France knows that you are, in the Chamber of Deputies, in my political career, my closest and most faithful friend [mon plus intime et plus constant ami].”

These references to their friendship indicate that Manuel understood that if the electors of the Seine had not voted for him, they had voted for the next best thing—Dupont. Manuel’s evidence that Dupont was his stand-in was that Dupont was widely known as his “closest and most faithful friend” in political life. In this, Manuel relied on the fact that “ami” is the term for both ally and friend. His statement referenced both the political realm (their shared work in the Chamber of Deputies) and the personal, as he uses the term “intime” to describe their bond. This word meant both close and private; in this case, it signified that the two men were close political collaborators and
devoted personal friends. In other words, of all his political allies, Dupont was the one to whom he was personally closest. Such a statement was meant to reassure Dupont that his efforts to get Manuel elected had not failed, since he very nearly succeeded. If the electors of the Seine did not feel they could vote for Manuel, they cast their votes for his substitute. To phrase it another way, in voting for Dupont, the electors had come as close as they could to voting for Manuel, because Dupont, as a friend, was essentially Manuel’s twin.

Friends were also used as proxies in negotiations surrounding the composition of cabinets. Calling on personal networks was a common tactic to ensure support from various factions and to neutralize potential opposition to ministries. For instance, in 1828, Joseph de Villèle was ousted from power after serving as the head of the government for seven years. The vicomte de Martignac led the new cabinet, one that was more centrist than Villèle’s ultra-dominated one. In order to have any hope of surviving, Martignac would have to placate various conservatives. Villèle was one threat: it was not hard to imagine that he would be opposed to the Martignac government, both because it was too moderate and because he wanted to return to power. Just as dangerous were the men grouped around Chateaubriand who occupied a position in the center-right of the political spectrum and were used to voicing opposition to the government. But although Martignac needed to reach out to Chateaubriand, he could not include him in the cabinet. Chateaubriand was too much of a troublemaker and too proud to be part of any ministry of which he was not the head. He was thus appointed ambassador to Rome, which both gave him a position in the government and removed him from France. At Chateaubriand’s suggestion, Hyde de Neuville was made minister of the navy, while the comte de La Ferronnays became minister of foreign affairs in the new cabinet. Both men were members of the Defection and personal friends. Martignac hoped that Chateaubriand would avoid criticizing a government in which his allies served. Meanwhile, the comte de Montbel, one of Villèle’s closest friends, also joined the cabinet. In this way, Martignac also placated Villèle and his allies.17

These efforts went beyond attempting to ensure that Chateaubriand and Villèle’s factions were represented in the new cabinet. Because Hyde de Neuville and La Ferronnays were Chateaubriand’s friends, it was possible to imagine that Chateaubriand was in fact a member of the government; the same was true with Montbel and Villèle. Of course, Chateaubriand and Villèle would never have agreed to serve together in a ministry, for their animosity toward each other ran too deep. Nor would Martignac want them to do so, as
they were too prominent in their own right. But if he could not have them, their friends were valuable substitutes. The nature of the Chateaubriand/Hyde de Neuville and the Villèle/Montbel relationships are also significant. Undoubtedly, Chateaubriand suggested that Hyde de Neuville join the cabinet because of his merits as a politician. Hyde was also one of Chateaubriand’s closest and most loyal friends. He could be considered the one who was most like him and who could best serve as a proxy. Likewise, Montbel was not just any politician from Villèle’s faction. The two men were close friends, both were from Toulouse, and both had served as mayor of that city. Montbel and Hyde were the closest that one could get to Villèle and Chateaubriand respectively without having these two men in the cabinet.

Politicians of the July Monarchy would use many of the same tactics, as can be seen in the negotiations surrounding doctrinaire participation in Thiers’s cabinet of 1840. After years of ministerial turmoil, the king asked Thiers to form a new government. To do so, Thiers called on both the center-left and the dynastic left. This was the most left-leaning cabinet of the July Monarchy. Not surprisingly, Thiers was concerned about how Guizot, the leader of the conservatives in the Chambers, would react to its formation. Fortunately, Guizot had been made ambassador to Britain under the previous ministry and so could simply retain this posting. For Thiers, this had the advantage of keeping him out of Paris and made him less able to act against the ministry. Nevertheless, he was still a powerful politician who needed to be appeased. Hence, Thiers selected two doctrinaires to serve in his cabinet—Hippolyte François Jaubert and Rémusat. Just after the ministry was formed, Thiers wrote Guizot the following about the government: “You will see that two of your friends are among its members.” As in the Martignac ministry, the relational quality was key. Rémusat in particular was meant to assuage any of Guizot’s fears about the cabinet and to ensure that Guizot felt represented in it. Rémusat was made minister of the interior, a job that was generally second in importance only to that of minister of foreign affairs, Thiers’s position. Rémusat was valuable because he was one of the few politicians who had been able to strike a balance between the doctrinaires’ center-right position and Thiers’s center-left one. But while there were other left-leaning doctrinaires, Rémusat was the one who was personally closest to Guizot. He had known Guizot since the early days of the Restoration and had been very close to Guizot’s first wife. Rémusat was useful because his emotional proximity to Guizot would make the latter feel that his views were represented in the
Rémusat’s role as a stand-in for Guizot placed him in an enormously difficult position, for he would be at the epicenter of all tensions between Thiers and the doctrinaires. In order to secure his ties to the latter group, he went to see Broglie and asked for his support. Broglie gave Rémusat his blessing, as he had consulted with Thiers on the formation of the cabinet. Just as he backed the new ministry, he also backed Rémusat’s role in it. Rémusat wrote of this encounter, “I opened myself up to Broglie, who showed me more friendship than he ever had before.” Broglie’s support was crucial because, with Guizot in London, he was the most prominent doctrinaire politician who remained in France. He also tended to get along better with Thiers than Guizot did. Moreover, he was Guizot’s best friend. The Broglie and the Guizot families were deeply intertwined; until Guizot bought his property of Val-Richer in the Calvados, Guizot and his kin spent their summers with the Broglies in their chateau in the Eure. Indeed, these summers and his connection to the Broglies were the reasons that Guizot eventually settled in Normandy, rather than in his native South. Securing Broglie’s backing was as close as Rémusat and Thiers could come to obtaining that of Guizot himself. As a friend, Broglie was a stand-in for the absent politician. Here, friendship functioned as both a relationship and a way to reference political loyalty. It was the bond that linked Rémusat, Broglie, and Guizot, but when Rémusat stated that Broglie showed him friendship, he was not necessarily (or not solely) referencing Broglie’s personal feelings for him. Instead, what was crucial was Broglie’s political backing and declaration of support.

These negotiations regarding the composition of cabinets reveal the political applications of a set of ideas about bonds among men. Centered on loyalty and a notion of shared burdens, male friends were bound to look after one another’s interests. Coalition government thus called on friendship networks to ensure that prominent politicians felt represented in ministries in cases where these men could not or would not serve. Such uses of friendship could neutralize potential opposition and build trust between factions. Chateaubriand could trust the Martignac ministry because two of his friends were in it, while in 1840 Thiers’s selection of Guizot’s friends was designed to reassure him about the politics of the cabinet. In 1836, too, when Thiers and Guizot sent letters to each other sealing their alliance through expressions of friendship, they were calling on the idea of the friend as proxy. Thiers would act as a
representative of Guizot’s interests in the cabinet, while Guizot would do the same for Thiers from within the Chambers. In an era without formal means to understand affiliation or ensure party discipline, it was personal connections that made up for the structural deficits of political life.

**Politics in the Language of Friendship: Describing Affiliation, Managing Conflict**

The political uses of friendship are also apparent in negotiations in which political figures employed an elaborate rhetoric of affection to discuss the terms of their relationships with one another. Friendship offered a powerful and easily understood set of norms for interpersonal bonds. In these instances, politicians used a sentimental language of friendship with those who were in no way their actual friends. These affectionate words were not designed to make claims about the speakers’ emotional states, as these politicians were not attempting to deceive their interlocutors. Rather, expressions of love were meant to be indicative of the attributes of friendship: they were promises of loyalty and statements of public affiliation. This language of affection was an adaptation of the language of patronage of early modern France, one in which clients employed a rhetoric of affection in their letters to their patrons. In the early nineteenth century, this vocabulary was adapted to the new needs of the post-revolutionary era. It was no longer used to negotiate dependence, but rather the terms of the relationship between prominent political figures who sought one another’s backing or wanted to ward off the threat of ideological divisions. Thus this was a horizontal language of affiliation and not a vertical one. And in a period when oaths, intentions, and promises were thought to be meaningless and when political life was regarded as hostile and atomizing, politicians reverted to a vocabulary from the private realm to indicate their loyalty to one another, as friendship was understood to be a durable bond of devotion.

Politicians commonly used this affectionate language with one another during ministerial reshufflings, moments of great tension within the parliamentary body. These changes in cabinet makeup were a constant feature of parliamentary life in the Restoration and July Monarchy. The 1830s, for example, was an exceptionally unstable decade, one that saw a total of fourteen ministries. In other instances, a particular minister was replaced and the rest
of the personnel of the government remained in place. As individual ministers were swapped out, leaders of the cabinets had reasons to be concerned about the loyalty of the men who had been divested of their posts. After all, a prominent politician had been informed that he was no longer an asset to the government and deprived of a source of income. Additionally, the formation of a completely new government often signified a political shift, and members of the previous ministry might have ideological reasons to oppose the new one. Understandably, these were moments when the leader of the government wanted reassurances that those who were no longer in power would not become his adversaries. In these cases, expressions of friendship and devotion served to indicate that the excluded politician would remain aligned with the government. This is precisely how Thiers and Guizot were using sentiment in their 1836 letters, as both men were operating within a cultural context in which friendship stood in for ideological affiliation and loyalty.

For instance, take an epistolary exchange between the duc de Richelieu and Élie Decazes in 1818. Since 1815, Richelieu had been leader of a cabinet in which Decazes served as minister of the police. Richelieu was aligned with the center-right and Decazes with the center-left and the doctrinaires, but the two maintained good relations up until the end of 1818. The problem was that in the elections of 1818, the liberal opposition had won seats while the ultras had lost ground; as a result, Richelieu needed to make a decision as to where he would find backing from within the Chambers. He wanted to form an alliance between the center and the right, but Decazes, who was the king’s favorite, preferred one between the center and the left. This occasioned a split between the center-right and the center-left, as well as a fight between the two men who came to regard each other with increasing ill will and saw each other as disloyal. After moving closer to the right, Richelieu eventually resigned from the cabinet and Decazes became minister of the interior as well as head of the new government. For Decazes, this created a problem: would Richelieu oppose him and his new ministry? After all, he hardly wanted a powerful and respected politician like Richelieu to shift from being an ally to being an adversary. Thus Decazes wrote the following to Richelieu after calling on him and being told he was unavailable: “Your door is closed to me and I greatly fear that your heart will also become closed to me.” Ten days later, Richelieu replied, saying, “Assuredly it will never be my heart that is closed to you. A few miserable differences of opinion cannot destroy bonds held together by esteem and friendship.”
Although both politicians were speaking in a sentimental language with references to hearts and friendship, the issue here was hardly one of feeling. By this point the two men’s relationship had soured considerably. In any case, what Decazes wanted was not a personal friendship with Richelieu but an indication of where his political loyalties lay. In his reply, Richelieu stated that while his political views were not those of Decazes, he still felt some attachment to his former colleague. In other words, he was reassuring Decazes that he would not betray him or work against him; he would act like a friend would in the political realm. Here then, questions of political allegiance and behavior were phrased in terms of personal affection—words of friendship were a metaphor, not an expression of deep emotion.

A September 1847 letter from Marshal Soult to Guizot called on much the same uses of affection in the context of a ministerial shift. The former had been president of the Council of Ministers since 1840, but while he was officially head of the cabinet, he was not politically active. Rather, he lent a luster of Napoleonic military glory to the government and helped hide the fact that Guizot—who was deeply unpopular—was the real leader of the ministry. Both men were staunch conservatives but hardly friends. All their correspondence was entirely formal and never personal. Nor did they even like each other. Guizot once called Soult a “vulgar muddle-head,” and there was considerable tension between the two during the 1840s. In 1847, Guizot and Louis-Philippe decided that they could do without Soult, and thus Guizot became president of the Council in addition to retaining his position as minister of foreign affairs. In a letter to Guizot accepting his ouster from the government, Soult wrote, “I have the honor to renew from my heart and soul the assurance of a friendship that will only end with my life.” Here, Soult used elements of the language of friendship, notably the references to the heart, to suggest that his affection for Guizot was deeply rooted. So, too, he wrote that his good feeling would last until death, as if the two men were similar to the lifelong friends idealized in novels of the time. Yet the letter and this statement were too formal to have been an exchange between friends. Soult’s formulation is too stiff, and male friends did not speak of the honor of expressing their feelings. Given this and the long history of antipathy between the two men, Soult’s letter was not meant to signify affect. This empty expression of emotion served to reassure Guizot that Soult would remain loyal to the conservative cause. He was indicating that he bore Guizot no ill will, despite his removal from office, and that Guizot could trust him not to betray him or his
politics. Whatever his actual emotional state, Soult would act like a friend in the political sphere.

Politicians also used this sentimental language during moments of conflict. Two instances—one from the Restoration and one from the early years of the July Monarchy—illuminate how an empty rhetoric of friendship signified trust and allegiance in the political realm. In both cases, the individuals were somewhat estranged from each other and used expressions of love to sort out questions of affiliation and smooth over conflict.

One use of friendship as a metaphor to indicate cohesion can be found in a January 1829 letter from Benjamin Constant to Béranger, written in response to a letter from Béranger. This first letter has been lost, but it is clear from Constant’s reply that the songwriter had rebuked Constant for his political views and activity and for an article he wrote in the Courrier français. In particular, both men were writing during a period of tension within the liberal camp between moderates like Constant and those further to the left like Béranger. During the center-right Martignac ministry, Constant was inclined to compromise with the cabinet, or at the very least cease his hostility. Indeed, he took to praising the government from the tribune when he approved of its actions. The prospect of a union between prominent liberals and the government (what Béranger called “fusion”) was, however, anathema to Béranger, for he considered that the entire Restoration regime was irredeemable and had to be overthrown. Indeed, Béranger had thrown down the gauntlet in 1828 with the publication of a new collection of songs that attacked the government. Imprisoned for sedition, Béranger had shown the limitations of the Martignac government’s moderation. Anyone who was inclined to compromise with the ministry risked being seen as betraying Béranger, then at the height of his popularity.

Constant’s letter made these essential political differences between the two men clear while ceding no ground. The songwriter’s letter had accused Constant of pursing a fusion between liberals and the ministry and seeking a position in the cabinet. For his part, Constant stated in his reply that he had no particular interest in obtaining a ministerial post and that “I will neither work toward nor oppose the fusion.” But of course he was not saying he would not accept a cabinet position were it offered to him, only that he did not seek one. Similarly, his statement that he was ambivalent toward the prospect of a fusion could be interpreted as indicating that he would agree to
a fusion if the government, and not the liberals, were the ones who compro-
mised. Constant was also forthright about his essential ideological differences
with Béranger. He states, “I believe that we should remain a constitutional
monarchy. I know or I think I know that old governments are more favor-
able toward freedom than new ones [i.e., republics].” Thus he indicated that
while he had no attachment to the Bourbon Restoration, he had no desire for
a republic, as Béranger did.

For Constant, the problem was that these differences put him in a tight
spot. He hardly wanted to cause a rupture among the liberals; nor did he
want the immensely popular Béranger to turn on him. In order to win
over Béranger despite their disagreement, Constant turned to a language of
friendship and affection. He thus opened his letter with a statement describ-
ing his great love for the songwriter: “My dear Béranger, although your let-
ter contains many things that could distress or hurt me, there is, especially
toward the end, a wealth of friendship and interest that produced such a
singular effect that I felt more pleasure than pain. You are one of the men
toward whom I feel the most drawn.” Béranger could be a stingingly frank
correspondent with those who disappointed him; Constant’s opening indi-
cated that the songwriter had not spared him. But Constant invoked the idea
that the displeasure he felt in receiving Béranger’s rebukes had turned into
something sweeter. In the end, Béranger’s letter demonstrated the affection
the songwriter had for him and thus allowed Constant to show how much he
loved the songwriter in return.

Toward the end of the letter, Constant continued in this same vein by stat-
ing, “This is a very long letter, my dear Béranger. I take great pleasure in
talking to you with complete abandon. I would like it if this hassle . . . inau-
gurated a closer and more trusting friendship between the two of us. You are,
I say again, the man in France who appeals the most to me. . . . I offer you a
full and complete attachment. If we disagree on a few points, this is because
our minds are differently made. This has nothing to do with affection.” Here
Constant repeatedly invokes his love for Béranger, and as he did earlier in the
letter he suggests that their quarrel has not so much demonstrated division
as provided an opportunity for greater personal—although not political—
union. He thus indicates that he hopes that the two of them will become
great friends. Indeed, in the first sentence he describes how he has already
begun such a move toward friendship. In stating that he writes with “with
complete abandon,” he makes it sound as if he was being especially honest
and open, as if this letter was simply the outpourings of his heart and mind.
Instead of reading Constant’s statements of affection as a reflection of his feelings, it is best to see that both men were operating in a context when a discourse of friendship served political ends. After all, Constant’s letter was carefully crafted, and it is hard to imagine that his stated desire to become close friends with Béranger was in any way sincere. Given that he indicated that he was in fact open to some compromise with the government, Constant would have found a relationship with Béranger to be a liability. Rather, friendship functioned as a language meant to facilitate a political alliance that was in peril, for Constant was referencing the qualities of friendship, not his emotions. The two men had profound political disagreements, but the language of affection suggested that there could be some type of affiliation that overrode such differences. For one, Constant could claim that both men were united in a fundamental opposition to the Restoration regime, even if their views on the desirability of monarchy in general differed; friendship here stood in for similarity. Constant’s invocations of emotion also assured Béranger that he would not betray the songwriter and that he would not go too far in his efforts to find common ground with the ministry. Notably, too, discussions of affection allowed Constant to articulate the idea of a loyal opposition: he understood and appreciated Béranger’s different perspective even if he did not agree with it. This is most obvious when Constant states, “If we disagree on a few points, this is because our minds are differently made. This has nothing to do with affection.” That is to say that he recognizes that their political disagreements arise out of their different natures and life experiences and are not the result of any deficits in Béranger’s morality or intelligence. Historians have described that the problem of imagining a loyal opposition has bedeviled French politics since the Revolution. In this case, tropes of friendship were one way to signify difference without fundamental division, for they allowed Constant to state that he could not imagine betraying a man he wanted to treat as a friend.

This same reliance on a sentimental vocabulary is also visible in an October 1830 letter from Talleyrand to Molé at a moment of tension and conflict between the two men. Unlike in the Constant/Béranger exchange, the problem was not ideological. Both men belonged to the center-right and wanted to promote the interests of the new July Monarchy. Rather, the issue had to do with status and turf and whether these two men could establish a working relationship with each other. Although the men are somewhat outside the case studies on which this work concentrates, their remarkable exchange shows how a language of friendship established norms of communication and trust
and smoothed over a conflict that threatened the stability of the newly established regime.

Soon after the Revolution of 1830, Molé was appointed minister of foreign affairs, while Talleyrand was made ambassador to Britain. This posting to London was both the most prestigious of all ambassadorships and, in 1830, the most important one. Talleyrand’s job was to convince the British government that the July Monarchy was anything but revolutionary. If he could win acceptance for the new regime in Britain, all of Europe would follow. The upshot was that it was he who was really in charge of French foreign policy, more so than Molé. Talleyrand was certainly the more experienced diplomat, and he met with considerable success in London. Dealing with Molé was another issue, for Talleyrand had no interest in showing deference to Molé or his position. Molé was technically his superior and the man through whom all communication with Louis-Philippe had to pass. Yet Talleyrand cut Molé out of the loop and reported to the king either through Mme de Vaudémont, a mutual friend, or through Mme Adélaïde, Louis-Philippe’s sister and confidante. His dispatches to Molé were filled with useless information, such as reports on the tariffs for Portuguese wine. In the words of one of Talleyrand’s biographers, “Talleyrand behaved as if poor Molé did not even exist.”

By October 1830, Molé’s frustration had become manifest and he was threatening to resign. Talleyrand felt that he had to mend fences, or at the very least give the illusion of doing so in order to prevent Molé from leaving the cabinet. After all, Molé’s resignation would hardly have helped Talleyrand convince the British government that the Orleanist regime was a picture of stability. He thus wrote a letter to Molé in which he stated:

We know each other, we love each other, we want the same things, we understand them in the same way, we want them in the same fashion; our point of departure is similar, our goal is the same. Then why do we not understand each other on the route to this goal? This is something that I do not understand and that I hope will be temporary.—Our correspondence is neither friendly nor ministerial; it seems however that it should be otherwise between us, and I ask this of you with all my old interest. A less perfect trust, a less intimate understanding could damage, impede, stop our work, which would make me unhappy; our friendship could suffer, which would make me angry. If my way of seeing things is out of fashion, it would be easier to tell me plainly. We must be open with each other. We will only do well if we treat our affairs with
the ease born of trust. You will find that I say everything except what I think to be of no importance.⁸

This is an astonishing letter, one that makes extraordinary claims about the relationship between the two men. Most notably, Talleyrand suggests that he and Molé are bound together by a great and strong friendship. He speaks of their love for each other and states that he is afraid that their friendship will be strained unless they learn to communicate better with each other. This letter is suffused with emotion terms like “sad,” “angry,” and “love” and he uses words like “friendship” and “intimate” to characterize their bond. The idea that male friends are bound by similarity also appears in the first sentence, where Talleyrand phrases everything in the first-person plural, stating the two men know each other, want the same things, have essentially the same views, and, of course, love each other. They are, more or less, twins who can substitute for each other. Likewise, toward the end of the letter, he maintains that the two men need to communicate more openly so that they can come to trust each other, and again raises the specter of an ideal friendship based on confidence and free communication.

As an account either of the relationship between the two men or of what went wrong between them, Talleyrand’s letter is far from satisfactory. He did recognize that there was a communication problem between the two of them, but he suggested that the fault lay with both men, as he consistently used the first-person plural to describe the situation. He also stated that he did not know why their relationship was so strained (“This is something that I do not understand”). But, of course, the difficulties they were encountering had a clearly identifiable cause, for Talleyrand was violating the protocols of diplomatic communication. By so doing, he was implicitly asserting that he had no need of Molé, and that whatever their job titles, Talleyrand was master of the situation.

As in other epistolary exchanges between politicians, discussions of emotion were disconnected from actual emotional states. Though both men had worked with each other since the days of the Empire, they were hardly friends. Nor was this letter was meant to convince Molé that Talleyrand wanted to be his friend or that Talleyrand had some hidden wellspring of affection for him. Notably, Talleyrand’s letter was too affectionate; this was not the way male friends communicated with each other. It was also without the trappings of epistolary communication between male friends, such as the use of “mon cher ami” as a salutation. And however Talleyrand regarded Molé, it
was inconceivable that he would have thought that Molé would be taken in by such phrasings. The two men knew each too well for Talleyrand to have imagined that Molé would be deceived into thinking that this was the sudden and spontaneous outpouring of Talleyrand’s heart.

Although these profusions of affection were empty, they were not meaningless, for this letter did serve a purpose. By using the language of friendship, Talleyrand was indicating that he would act like a friend. In this instance, he was promising that he would do a better job communicating with Molé and report to him as he should have done in the first place. It was the last sentence of the letter that was key, for here Talleyrand made a statement about how he would proceed in the future. He would tell Molé everything, leaving out only the trivial—those Portuguese wines, for instance. Such communication was Molé’s immediate need. More generally, if Molé was going to remain in his position as minister of foreign affairs, the two men would have to have a functional working relationship and Talleyrand had to change how he treated Molé. He had to respect Molé and demonstrate that he was loyal to him, especially since ambassadors were considered political appointees who owed their allegiance to a particular ministry.³⁸ Talleyrand was promising that he would not work against Molé or seek to undermine him, as he had previously done by cutting him out of the chain of communication. In essence, he would have to trust that Molé knew what he was doing, while Molé would have to trust that Talleyrand was acting in the best interests of France and in accordance with their shared political principles.

Trust, loyalty, and respect were all requirements of friendship, and so useful here as these two men renegotiated the terms of their relationship. In using a language of friendship, moreover, Talleyrand was able to do more than merely suggest that he would act better in the future. Friendship is a bond of reciprocal obligation. If the two men were to be friends in the sense that they would act as such in the political sphere, Molé would be obliged to behave in a certain way as well. He could not undermine Talleyrand’s position as an ambassador. While the king had great faith in Talleyrand’s diplomatic abilities, Molé had the advantage of being in Paris and had had the king’s ear whenever he wanted it. Speaking in the language of friendship meant that Talleyrand and Molé had to support each other.

Talleyrand’s use of words of friendship was also extraordinarily canny in that it failed to resolve the central problem between the two men—who was really in charge. Friendship could indicate a vertical tie of dependence, as it did in early modern political discourse, and indeed Molé was Talleyrand’s
superior. But more commonly in the nineteenth century, friendship was understood as a bond among equals and Talleyrand’s letter suggested that this is how he saw the nature of their relationship. Indeed, Talleyrand violated certain epistolary codes meant to indicate his own lower station on the diplomatic hierarchy in this letter, for diplomatic protocol required that Talleyrand address Molé as his superior. For example, in the Restoration, when Chateaubriand was ambassador to Britain, his letters to the minister of foreign affairs, Mathieu de Montmorency, showed clear signs of deference to Montmorency’s position as his superior. Chateaubriand’s letters were addressed “À Son Excellence, Monsieur le Vicomte de Montmorency,” and he ended them with phrasings such as “I have the honor to be with a high consideration, Monsieur le Vicomte, your very humble and very obedient servant.”

As a set of formulas, these indicated that Chateaubriand was Montmorency’s subordinate. Montmorency was not, for instance, even required to include a closing statement in his responses to Chateaubriand; his letters could just end when the content did. By violating these epistolary codes, Talleyrand was saying that he might keep Molé better informed in the future, but he would not recognize that Molé was his superior. Here, friendship signified Talleyrand’s vision of the terms of their relationship: equality, obligation, and communication.

Thus, in all of these cases, politicians appropriated a language of friendship to describe political behavior. Friendship became a stand-in for trust, allegiance, and communication, and questions of ideological affiliation were personalized and sentimentalized. Friendship was useful because the duties of friendship were clear and well-known, and this bond presented a powerful set of norms for interpersonal relations. This use of the rhetoric of affection arose out of both the reworking of an old language of politics and the particular problems of the post-revolutionary era. With the birth of parliamentary government, politicians had to find ways to understand their relationships to one another at a time when it was no longer possible to imagine trust or loyalty as existing in the public realm. As a result, politicians appropriated a language from the private sphere to signify affiliation and cooperation.

The year 1815 reopened the wounds of the Revolution and ushered in a new chapter in France’s political history, that of parliamentary monarchy. This conjuncture created a set of problems for the political class of France, as post-revolutionary politicians needed to find ways to establish and signify trust and cohesion. Although this context made ties between men and a language
of friendship crucial to the political culture of the Restoration and July Monarchy, ultimately the uses of male friendship and this emotional rhetoric were quite limited. Words of friendship could serve to indicate that a politician intended to act in a particular manner, or could be deployed in an effort to persuade him to do so, but they offered no real guarantees. Empty of actual affection, they were only a statement of intention. Despite Talleyrand’s claims to Molé, for example, he did not change his behavior. Placing male friends in a cabinet signified an alliance but could not create one—nor, in the end, could it offer substantial guarantees about the direction of the government.

One problem was that men’s political loyalties were typically too circumscribed for them to be able to work between political groupings or build trust between factions. For example, Rémyusat’s task in the Thiers ministry of 1840 was to facilitate the relationship between center-left and center-right. Eventually, however, he had to make a choice as to whether his real allegiance was to Thiers or Guizot. When he chose the former, his friendship with the latter ended; Guizot and Rémyusat were not on speaking terms until the 1850s. Since men’s loyalties allowed insufficient room to maneuver, it was women who were called on to negotiate alliances and provide more lasting assurances of political loyalty.