Friendship and Politics in Post-Revolutionary France

Horowitz, Sarah

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“Sarah Horowitz’s engaging study of friendship in post-revolutionary France offers a refreshing window onto the complex calculus that underlies people’s political propensities and choice of friends. Her subtle reading of the historical record is complemented by a masterful implementation of social network analysis, revealing the extent to which ideology and friendship interacted in this time of shifting political allegiances. Basing her work on memoirs, correspondence, and other archival resources, Horowitz teases out the social networks of Chateaubriand, Guizot, Béranger, and the women to whom they were close. Among her most intriguing findings are the ‘spanning roles’ played by women in these social networks, bringing together men from disparate political camps. In effect Horowitz brings the world of Facebook into the realm of post-revolutionary France, illustrating in straightforward visualizations and clear argumentation the complex intersections between friendship and politics. In so doing, she not only shows just how illuminating social network analysis can be as a methodology for historical research, but also adds an important new dimension to our understanding of the instability of politics and friendship.”

—Timothy R. Tangherlini, UCLA

“Horowitz’s elegant study of the personal bonds underlying public life in the early nineteenth century is an important contribution to the field of post-revolutionary French history. Erudite, lucid, and highly readable, her book engages with questions of broader relevance about how political trust is rebuilt in the wake of revolution, and about the role of the emotions in political life.”

—Sarah Maza, Northwestern University

“The book offers a fresh look at a number of key questions related to the politics of the early nineteenth century and makes an important contribution to the study of women’s involvement in public life, the history of emotions, and the political culture of France’s post-revolutionary monarchies.”

—Steven Kale, Washington State University

“In demonstrating how elite women and men understood friendship and politics in this period, the work makes a significant and original contribution to existing scholarship on early nineteenth-century France.”

—Denise Z. Davidson, Georgia State University

In Friendship and Politics in Post-Revolutionary France, Sarah Horowitz brings together the political and cultural history of post-revolutionary France to illuminate how French society responded to and recovered from the upheaval of the French Revolution. The Revolution led to a heightened sense of distrust and divided the nation along ideological lines. In the wake of the Terror, many began to express concerns about the atomization of French society. Friendship, though, was regarded as one bond that could restore trust and cohesion. Friends relied on each other to serve as confidants; men and women described friendship as a site of both pleasure and connection. Because trust and cohesion were necessary to the functioning of post-revolutionary parliamentary life, politicians turned to friends and ideas about friendship to create this solidarity. Relying on detailed analyses of politicians’ social networks, new tools arising from the digital humanities, and examinations of behind-the-scenes political transactions, Horowitz makes clear the connection between politics and emotions in the early nineteenth century, and she reevaluates the role of women in political life by showing the ways in which the personal was the political in the post-revolutionary era.

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