

Polite Letters: The Correspondence of Mary Delany (1700-1788) and Francis North (1704-1790)

Alain Kerherve



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Previously unedited, the letters exchanged by Mary Delany (1700-1788), one of the most prolific women in eighteenth century English correspondence, and Lord Guilford (1704-1790), the father of one of England's most famous Prime Ministers, Lord North, provide new material on eighteenth-century England. The letters are a source of information about life at Court, since Lord Guilford was governor to Princes George and Edward, King George III's intimate friend and Queen Charlotte's treasurer, while Mary Delany was offered a lodging at Court where she resided from 1785 to her death. Everyday concerns are associated with such exceptional events as the Gordon riots or the assassination attempt on King George III. The letters also bear testimony to the epistolary context of the period: the manuscripts are examined and commented upon, the structure of the letters examined, the originality of the style questioned. Moreover, the correspondence between a man and a woman permits to question the contact between the public and private spheres in the second half of the eighteenth century. The whole constitutes a valuable source for further historical, biographical or literary study. In the footnotes, the names of the people and places mentioned are sorted out, and various connections established to the writing and historical context. Quick navigation through the letters is made possible by two indices.

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