

# **François Guizot epistolier, historian and memorialist: the academic, political and diplomatic correspondence of a 19th-century actor and witness**

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Guizot the letter writer is a man of letters, a literary critic, an archivist, a historian, a publisher, an academician, a politician and a diplomat. He was also a man in love and a friend.

The first difficulty highlighted by Guizot's biographers is the immensity of the sources he left behind.

The importance of correspondence in the life and work of the historian becomes clear when we consider the time he devoted to it, its role in informing and shaping his thought, and the links between his public work and his correspondence.<sup>1</sup>

The Guizot collection poses an archival and historiographical challenge. The extent and volume of the fonds are not the only difficulties. We must emphasize its thematic richness, and question the care he took in preserving and classifying the letters he received and the copies of those he wrote, often requesting the return of his own letters.

I will present the results of the current edition. I won't go back over the editorial methodology. I have devoted an article to it, published in the CTHS conference proceedings, and it is presented on the website.

I would of course like to thank the CTHS for its support of this editorial undertaking since 2019, notably through the Sociétés savantes prize in 2020, and today by further strengthening the links between the CTHS and its history. I would also like to thank the Association François Guizot for its confidence in the conception and management of this editorial project. I would also like to underline the support of the EMAN platform (Thalim/CNRS/ENS) and that of the Observatoire des Humanités Numériques, which ensures the technical maintenance of this project and makes it possible to inscribe it in a critical and scientific approach. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Culture and the Drac Normandie.

But I'd also like to give François Guizot plenty of time to express his views, as well as those of his correspondents, and to begin with an extract from a letter to Dorothée de Lieven,

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<sup>1</sup> G. de Broglie, "L'itinéraire Guizot" in ASSOCIATION FRANÇOIS GUIZOT-VAL RICHER (dir.), *François Guizot et la culture politique de son temps*, Paris, Gallimard le Seuil, 1991., pp. 293-308.

when he was writing his Mémoires. He wrote to her from Val-Richer, on **Sunday September 30, 1849**:

*I have the fantasy of being a little known, and the inner feeling that I will die with my pockets still full, not having shown half of what was worth seeing. I want people to be a little suspicious of this after me, and to say of me: "It's a pity he didn't do everything he wanted. It's not much to have been something if you don't leave the public with the feeling that you could have been much more. The world disdains and soon forgets what it thinks it has measured to the core and exhausted.*

*It needs to catch a glimpse of the unknown that it has failed to see and appropriate. Then he truly appreciates and admires. I left the stage on a failure, a very undeserved one, I think, but a failure at last. I don't want, if God gives me life, to go away completely in that position. I want my country to realize that it was wrong to let me down, and to raise me up itself, not in the arena, but in its mind. And I'm sure that I can give it that feeling without hurting its self-esteem and awakening its bad temper, by instead arousing its curiosity, regret and respect.<sup>2</sup>*

Guizot invites us not to stop questioning his legacy, his works and his commitment, shedding light on the close links between his public action and his intellectual work, and inviting us to pay attention to his discourse beyond the fall of 1848. This is what I shall attempt through a brief survey of his correspondence.

(Article to be published in the Actes du congrès 2024 du CTHS)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://eman-archives.org/Guizot-Lieven/items/show/3150>