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978-0-521-65128-8 - Reading the French Enlightenment: System and Subversion
Julie Candler Hayes
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Julie Candler Hayes offers an ambitious reinterpretation of a crucial aspect of Enlightenment thought, the rationalizing and classifying impulse. Taking issue both with traditional liberal and contemporary critical accounts of the Enlightenment, she analyzes the writings of Denis Diderot, Emilie Du Châtelet, the Abbé de Condillac, Buffon, d'Alembert, and numerous others, to argue for a new understanding of "systematic reason" as complex, paradoxical, and ultimately liberating. Hayes examines the tensions between freedom and constraint, abstraction and materialism, linear and synoptic order, that pervade not only philosophic and scientific discourse, but also epistolary writing, fiction, and criticism. Drawing on the insights of a wide range of theorists from Adorno, Habermas, and Foucault to Deleuze and Derrida, she offers a dialogue between the eighteenth century and our own, an ongoing exploration of the question, "What is Enlightenment?"

Julie Candler Hayes is Associate Professor of French at the University of Richmond, Virginia. She is author of *Identity and Ideology: Diderot, Sade, and the Serious Genre* (1991) and of numerous articles on various aspects of eighteenth-century literature, philosophy, and culture.

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Author's note

Whenever possible, I have made use of the ongoing critical edition of Diderot's work edited by Herbert Dieckmann, Jacques Proust, Jean Varloot, *et al.* Full references appear in the bibliography; in the notes references to this edition are indicated by the abbreviation DPV. All translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.

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