# Correspondance Littraire Philosophique Et Critique Par Grimm Diderot Raynal Meister Etc Tome

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best book of the year kirkus reviews a spirited biography of the prophetic and sympathetic philosopher who helped build the foundations of the modern world denis diderot is often associated with the decades long battle to bring the world's first comprehensive encyclopédie into existence but his most daring writing took place in the shadows thrown into prison for his atheism in 1749 diderot decided to reserve his best books for posterity

for us in fact in the astonishing cache of unpublished writings left behind after his death diderot challenged virtually all of his century s accepted truths from the sanctity of monarchy to the racial justification of the slave trade to the norms of human sexuality one of diderot s most attentive readers during his lifetime was catherine the great who not only supported him financially but invited him to st petersburg to talk about the possibility of democratizing the russian empire in this thematically organized biography andrew s curran vividly describes diderot s tormented relationship with rousseau his curious correspondence with voltaire his passionate affairs and his often iconoclastic stands on art theater morality politics and religion but what this book brings out most brilliantly is how the writer s personal turmoil was an essential part of his genius and his ability to flout taboos dogma and convention

it is only relatively recently that serious attempts have been made to rescue diderot s political writings from obscurity and neglect and ascribe to the ideas expressed therein their due place in the panoply of his intellectual and artistic achievements this has been largely made possible by the transference of the fonds vandeul from diderot s descendants to the bibliotheque nationale in 1954 this important collection of manuscripts and papers to which scholars have previously had very inadequate access contains the bulk of the political writings most of which had either never been published or were only obtainable in badly prepared or rare editions in recent years however excellent critical editions of the most important political texts have appeared the textes politiques edited by yves benot and the oeuvres politiques and the memoires pour catherine ii edited by paul verniere are all notable contributions meanwhile jacques proust has written a major thesis on diderot et l encyclopedie which con tains a detailed study of diderot s political ideas during the years he de voted to the construction of that great intellectual monument most re cently yves benot has published a general work with an important study of diderot s hostility to european colonial policies diderot de l atheisme a l anticolonialisme furthermore diderot s contributions to the three editions of raynal s histoire des deux indes have been identified with virtual certainty by michele duchet and hans wolpe thereby opening up a further valuable source for his political ideas

this rich highly enjoyable portrait of an extraordinary moment in french history introduces us to 7 dazzling aristocrats who rose and fell during the french revolution guardian benedetta craveri reveals the history of the libertine generation whose youth coincided with the french monarchy s final moment of grace a moment when a style of life based on privilege and the spirit of caste might acknowledge the widespread demand for change and reconcile itself with enlightenment ideals of justice tolerance and citizenship here we meet 7 characters who craveri singles out not only for their romantic character but also for the keenness with which they experienced this crisis of the ancien régime of which they themselves were the emblem duc de lauzun vicomte de ségur duc de brissac comte de narbonne chevalier de boufflers comte de ségur comte de vaudreuil these men were at once irreducible individualists and true sons of the enlightenment all of them ambitious to play their part in bringing around the great changes that were in the air but when the french revolution came they found themselves condemned to poverty exile and in some cases execution telling the parallel lives of these dazzling but little remembered historical figures craveri brings the past to life powerfully dramatizing a turbulent time that was at once the

last act of a now vanished world and the first act of our own

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