FRANÇOISE DE GRAFFIGNY AND
THE SEQUELIZATION PHENOMENON

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The Lettres d'une Péruvienne by Françoise de Graffigny was a popular novel in eighteenth-century France. Nevertheless, many of its readers were left dissatisfied and troubled. They felt that the ending, which left the heroine happily unmarried, left them expecting more. In fact, they did not feel the novel was concluded at all, and that it needed to be finished. The authors of sequels to the Lettres d'une Péruvienne were more than happy to comply. Although Graffigny published two editions of the novel, she refused to change the ending. Her strong desire to conclude with an independent and happy heroine is evidence of her wish to convey a philosophical message about the role of women in eighteenth-century society to her contemporaries, who for the most part did not grasp the novel’s implications.

Five sequels and several adaptations appeared on the market during the Eighteenth Century. The mere existence of so many adaptive works is an indication of Graffigny’s widespread influence. To one degree or another, all of these literary follow-ups modify Graffigny’s ending in keeping with traditional literary norms, in which the heroine either marries or passes away. The tendency of other writers to overlook the inherent message in Graffigny’s work while ultimately forcing her conclusion into line with a conservative worldview is strong evidence of the innovative quality of her work. Through their efforts to negate
Graffigny's philosophical message, the writers of sequels ultimately confirm her status as a *femme philosophe*.
Dedicated to my parents, Ray, and Carl
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INTRODUCTION

The life of Françoise de Graffigny is interesting and complex. After surviving an unhappy and violent marriage, which completely destroyed her financial security, she attached herself to the ducal court of Lorraine. When the court dispersed in 1738, she wended her way to Paris. On the way, she spent several months with Voltaire. In Paris, she became part of a vibrant literary society at the height of the Enlightenment, and eventually a noted author. Her novel, the Lettres d'une Péruvienne, was an instant success and catapulted her to fame. It was translated into several languages and was what we would call today a “best seller,” being read extensively throughout Europe. Nevertheless, she was poor throughout her life and constantly struggled with finances.

Fifty years after her death, interest in Françoise de Graffigny’s work faded. She became an obscure eighteenth-century French author whose work was practically unknown. The record of her work, however, persisted in libraries and private collections. In the second half of the Twentieth Century she came once again to be read with relish by scholars throughout the world, and this interest continues today. Her works have been republished in French and English and once again, although this time posthumously, she is an international success.

One of the most interesting things about Graffigny’s novel is the reaction it produced among its readers. Many of them were dissatisfied because the
heroine refused to marry at the end of the story and because she did not die of love or pine away for her lover, but instead chose an independent and happy life. Her heroine also refused to accept the Christian religion. Many of Graffigny’s contemporaries criticized this ending, suggesting a variety of alternative conclusions. Others felt compelled to complete the story by writing their own conclusions in the form of sequels.

According to Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg, “the sequel has become an almost-predictable footnote to the narratives of Western History.”¹ They believe that “the sequel is not unique, but uniquely representative in its extreme typicality.”² Yet, “[v]irtually nothing has been written about the phenomenon.”³ This dissertation is motivated in part by this gap in literary scholarship and more extensively by the exciting flow and counter-flow of ideas in Graffigny’s novel and its sequels. In short, this dissertation is about the many sequels of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne, how they relate to Graffigny’s life and times, and to how they prove that she was indeed an important figure in the Enlightenment.

For the most part, the sequels to Graffigny’s novel rework her conclusion in accordance with traditional literary models, in which the heroine marries or dies at the end of the novel. It seems, then, that the drive to “correct” Graffigny’s conclusion is indicative of deeply rooted cultural trends concerning women and their roles in fiction. In his book, La Destinée feminine dans le roman européen

2 Budra and Schellenberg 3.
3 Budra and Schellenberg 7.
du dix-huitième siècle: 1713-1807, Pierre Fauchery speaks of a collective attitude toward women that can be drawn from the eighteenth-century European novel.

En définitive, il est bien peu de ces œuvres qui, prises sous l’angle approprié, ne nous livrent quelques parcelles d’un message collectif sur la femme. C’est donc la quasi-totalité du roman du XVIIIe siècle qui sera appelée en témoignage, dans la mesure où, s’appuyant sur une vision bisexuée du monde humain, il s’explique nécessairement avec la féminité.4

Graffigny’s categorical refusal to change the ending of her novel seems to be indicative of her desire to make a philosophical statement on the status of women in French society. Indeed, it appears that Graffigny felt forced to reassert herself by producing a second edition of her novel, one in which the ending (true to her ideal) does not change. In fact, two of the five sequels were published before she wrote her second edition of the lettres d’une Péruvienne.

Interestingly, the philosophical content of her novel went largely unnoticed by contemporaries. Their inability to see Graffigny’s message reveals for us today the true innovation of her work. This leads me to the conclusion of this dissertation that Françoise de Graffigny was an important philosophical figure of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment. Although she was not recognized as such by her contemporaries, I will argue that she was nevertheless part of a broad base of intellectuals that participated in the Enlightenment as a whole. The number of sequels to her work, combined with their nature (they all strove to modify Graffigny’s work to some extent), provides evidence of both Graffigny’s innovation and the influence she had on her reading public.

To begin to make the case for Françoise de Graffigny as *femme philosophe*, I feel it is necessary to acquaint the reader with her life story. How did she go from obscurity, to fame, to oblivion, to be once again respected in the Twenty-First Century? Accordingly, Chapter One of this dissertation discusses Graffigny’s life and legacy. I discuss her journey from Lorraine to Paris and her entry into a literary milieu. I also retrace the development of scholars’ attitudes to her work after her death.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* as an epistolary novel, examining women’s particular relationship to this genre. As I would like to show that Graffigny had influence over her reading public, I also discuss the novel’s popularity in the Eighteenth Century and contemporary critics’ reactions to it.

A detailed study of the various sequels to the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* is undertaken in Chapter Three. Essentially, there are five sequels, three in French, one in English, and one in Spanish. The two foreign sequels were the work of translators who, after translating Graffigny’s work, supplemented it with their own ideas. In addition, for purposes of clarity, I also discuss the term sequel as it used in this dissertation.

By showing how the sequel writers reacted to Graffigny’s work, I set the stage for the discussion of Graffigny as a *femme philosophe* in Chapter Four. Sequels are an important literary and historical tool for modern scholars because they reflect not only the thoughts of popular authors of the time, but also the historical reactions and counter reactions to these thoughts, thereby presenting
for all to unearth a treasure trove of historical cultural understanding. It is precisely because Françoise de Graffigny was original and controversial (and also a leader in philosophical thought, whether her readers realized it or not) that her works were sequelized. It is precisely because she reacted to sequels by reinforcing her original thoughts that she stands out as a femme philosophe.

Chapter Four begins by situating the Lettres d'une Péruvienne among its literary and philosophical precursors. Afterward, I discuss the term philosophe and how Graffigny might fit into this category according to both modern critical evaluations and attitudes prevalent in her own time. Finally, in a concluding section, I discuss how the existence and nature of sequels to the Lettres d'une Péruvienne provide proof of Graffigny’s status as a femme philosophe.

In summary this dissertation presents a compelling argument that the sequels to Graffigny’s novel show that she was a most innovative and influential figure in eighteenth-century France, and in retrospect played a decisive role in promoting the development of women’s self-respect and respect by others that are now so common in the Western World.
Françoise d'Happoncourt de Graffigny was a popular eighteenth-century author. She wrote in a variety of genres, but was mostly known in the Eighteenth Century for her popular novel *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* and her play *Cénie*. Also, she ran her own salon, which was frequented by the philosophes and other eminent figures of the time. In the Nineteenth Century, she was rarely discussed. In fact, “after her novel ceased being reprinted in the 1830s, her achievements were virtually forgotten for a century and a half.”\(^5\) Some remembered her, however, for a series of letters she wrote from Cirey describing the life of Voltaire and Mme du Châtelet.\(^6\)

Upon her death, she left a voluminous correspondence (written primarily to her friend François-Antoine Devaux), documenting her life and times. In addition to Voltaire, she came into contact with a variety of historical figures. She was well known and popular during her own time. Moreover, the subjects she


treats in her work (such as the role of women, language learning, cultural differences, etc.) are of interest to modern readers.

In this chapter, I will examine Graffigny’s life and legacy. There are three stages both before and after her death making a total of six periods. First, I will examine her life up to her departure from Lunéville. Then, I will discuss her development as an author. In other words, I will look at her life up to the publication of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. Finally, I will examine the period in which she was popular during her own lifetime, which lasted until her death in 1758.

After reviewing the stages of Graffigny’s life, I will look at the stages of her legacy. Following her death, she was all but forgotten until 1850 when Sainte-Beuve took note of the importance of her letters from Cirey in his Causeries du Lundi. Although she received little attention in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, the Lettres d’une Péruvienne benefited enormously “from twentieth-century American experiments in canon revision… [It] has become a staple of reading lists in North America. Today’s teachers are thereby restoring this work to its original prominence.” The appearance of an MLA edition of the Lettres d’un Péruvienne in 1993, whose introduction I have quoted above, both confirms and constructs the validity of this statement. The final stage of Graffigny’s legacy is what I call her twenty-first century image, marked by the publication of English Showalter’s edition of Françoise de Graffigny: Choix de lettres making a selection of her letters available to the general reader. In addition, a new critical edition of

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the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* was published by Jonathan Mallinson in 2002, and, English Showalter presented a detailed and scholarly account of Graffigny’s life in his 2004 biography.

THE LORRAINE CONNECTION

Françoise d’Happoncourt (later de Graffigny) was born in Nancy on February 11, 1695. Her family was of recent nobility. Her paternal grandfather, Henri Dubuisson, was ennobled by the duke Charles IV for his services as a soldier. His son, Graffigny’s father, was to serve in the French army of Louis XIV and later in the army of Lorraine. Although serving in the armies of both France and Lorraine seems strange to us today, we must remember that the concepts of nationality and patriotism are a more recent phenomenon. Due to the French occupation of their country, one could view the people of Lorraine as partially French. Louis XIV welcomed them into his army, so that some citizens of Lorraine participated in conquering their own country while others defended it. Both sides were equally respected and honored. The name Happoncourt came from an estate purchased by Dubuisson in the valley of the Meuse. In keeping with contemporary practices, the family adopted this name.

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The thread of nobility stemming from Graffigny’s mother, Marguerite-Christine Callot, was slightly longer. The maternal side of the family had enjoyed its noble status for eight generations prior to Graffigny’s birth. One of her more famous ancestors was the seventeenth-century artist and engraver Jacques Callot.\textsuperscript{11}

The War of the Grande Alliance was still raging at the time of Graffigny’s birth. Fear of Louis XIV’s expansionist desires resulted in a European coalition that confronted him when he attacked the Holy Roman Empire in 1688. This war, finally settled in 1697 under the Treaty of Ryswick, greatly weakened the military strength of France. In addition, Louis XIV lost many of his minor territories including Lorraine, which was returned to its rightful ruler Léopold Joseph.\textsuperscript{12} The duchy of Lorraine, occupied by France for nearly thirty years and host to the French army during the war, had been devastated.

\textit{Opprimée, pillée, rançonnée par les uns et par les autres, suivant les hasards de la guerre, cette province, jadis riche et prospère, offrait le tableau le plus lamentable. Ce n’était partout que viols, assassinates, incendies, destruction, ruine; livrées à une soldatesque effrénée, les villes avaient été saccagées, les campagnes dévastées. Les infortunés habitants avaient fini par chercher un refuge dans les forêts qui couvraient le pays ; ils y vivaient relativement à l’abri, mais réduits à l’état de véritables bêtes sauvages et dans une misère que l’on peut deviner.}\textsuperscript{13}

Fortunately, this devastation was followed by a time of peace and recuperation.

\textsuperscript{12} Lorraine had been taken from Charles Léopold in 1669 and was returned to Léopold Joseph in 1697.
\textsuperscript{13} Gaston Maugras, \textit{La Cour de Luneville au XVIII siècle} (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1904) 4.
Léopold ne démentit pas les espérances que ses sujets avaient fondées sur lui. Malgré sa jeunesse, il s’occupa activement de rendre le bien-être et la prospérité à la Lorraine; il rebâtit les villes et les villages, rappela les habitants, fit venir des étrangers, repeupla les campagnes, encouragea l’agriculture, l’industrie, le commerce, et il mérita bientôt le nom glorieux de restaurateur de la patrie.  

Even during the war of Spanish Succession, Léopold Joseph maintained a luxurious court at Lunéville. It was in the festive atmosphere of his reign, occasionally disrupted by the repercussions of European politics that Françoise de Graffigny grew up. Though Graffigny rarely, if ever, mentions her youth in her letters, one imagines that she had a fairly happy childhood.

At age seventeen Françoise was married to François d’Huget de Graffigny whose name she bore thereafter. The Graffigny family was also of recent nobility having been ennobled by Léopold in 1704. The newly weds were not destined to enjoy a happy union. They had three children, none of whom survived. And, the ménage was plagued by marital strife.

In Graffigny’s first known letter, recorded in English Showalter’s Correspondence, she implores her father to send for her because her husband has brutalized her.

Je suis obliges dans l’extremité ou je me trouvee de vous supplier de ne me point abandonner et de m’envoier au plus vite chercher par Mr de Rarecour car je juis en grand danger et suis toutes brise de coups.

While this was unusual for the time, she was able to obtain a legal separation in 1718 and acquired the authority to oversee and organize her family’s finances.

14 Maugras 5.
François d'Huget de Graffigny was judged to be mentally ill and was sent away to Neufchâteau where he stayed until his death in 1725.

According to Georges Noël, Graffigny’s parents were still living at this time. Nevertheless, she did not return to their home. Instead, she attached herself to the court of Lorraine where she lived for almost fifteen years. Here, she was no doubt exposed to an array of literary works. She also made Voltaire’s acquaintance. And, most significantly, it is here that she met her life long friend and confidant François-Antoine Devaux, known to his friends as Panpan or Panpichon. When she was not with him, she wrote long, detailed letters discussing every aspect of her life. As we have already noted, most of the letters in Graffigny’s voluminous correspondence are in fact addressed to Devaux.

Graffigny was not destined to remain in Lorraine, however. Although she had no role in the evolution of European politics, her fate was swept along with them. Léopold died in 1729. Overweight, he fell off his horse while crossing a stream. He was succeeded by his son, François III. Unlike his father, François had neither an affinity with his subjects nor his father’s charisma. Therefore, in 1737, he had little trouble parting with Lorraine in exchange for the grand duchy of Tuscany. He married the archduchess Marie-Thérèse and later became the Holy Roman Emperor. Lorraine was given to Stanislas Leszczynski to compensate him for his loss of the throne of Poland. Because he was father-in-law to the king of France, Louis XV, it was agreed that on the death of the former Polish king, Lorraine would be ceded to France. Accordingly, the tiny court of

\[15\] Maugras.
Lorraine was disbanded and its members scattered. In 1738 Graffigny left Lorraine, never to return.

The Duchess of Richelieu had offered Graffigny lodging and protection in her Paris home commencing in the spring upon her return from Montpellier. As a result, Françoise slowly wended her way to Paris via a circuitous route dotted with friends. Deeply in debt and at the end of her resources, she relied on the generosity of her contacts. She lived with the Countess of Grandville for several months before leaving Lunéville. Next, she spent several days at Commercy. It was here that duke Léopold’s widow (known as Madame) had retired upon Lorraine’s cession to King Stanislas. Louis XV had granted her an estate for life in the château of Commercy.

It was at Commercy that Graffigny began her life long correspondence with Devaux. The two had corresponded prior to this, but Graffigny’s departure resulted in a considerable increase in the number of letters exchanged – three letters a week, on the average, with portions written almost every day. By most accounts, Panpan seems to have lived a life of idleness. He studied law, although he does not seem to have worked in the field. He held a position as a reader to King Stanislas, which seems to have been entirely symbolic and for which he was not asked to perform any duties. He never married. And, he wrote little (except for personal correspondence) despite the fact that he considered himself a man of letters. Scholars often wonder why Devaux and Graffigny

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16 Showalter, Madame de Graffigny and Rousseau 15.
maintained such close ties over the years, especially in light of the fact that they did not have a romantic relationship.¹⁷

Graffigny’s next stop was at the château of Demange-aux-Eaux. This time, for about two months, she was the guest of Mme de Stainville, the mother of the future Duke of Choiseul. Here, Graffigny languished. She found Mme de Stainville haughty and uninteresting. In her letters to Devaux, she called Demange the Château of boredom and she could hardly wait to leave. Nevertheless, Mme de Stainville continually insisted that she stay. Finally, relief arrived! Mme de Lénoncourt paid them a visit and allowed Graffigny to borrow her horses.

The next stage on the journey to Paris was Cirey. Graffigny had met Voltaire at Lunéville and managed to secure an invitation. For a long time, Graffigny was to be remembered primarily for the letters she wrote during this visit detailing the private life of Voltaire and Mme du Châtelet. The letters were published in 1820 and several times thereafter, but according to English Showalter, these editions do not provide reliable scholarly evidence due to the many errors, cuts, and additions.¹⁸

Graffigny was clearly excited and full of anticipation, in fact, she read Locke to prepare for her visit to Cirey. Moreover, she used the last of her remaining resources to buy a new dress for the occasion.¹⁹ Mme de Graffigny fully enjoyed the first part of her visit, describing it in the most idyllic terms. She

¹⁷ Showalter, Madame de Graffigny and Rousseau 15-16.
¹⁹ Showalter, Voltaire et ses amis 17.
described the décor and the events in the greatest detail, right down to the statue that was placed in a corner to hide the furnace. Art and literature were the topics of choice, except for one evening, when Graffigny brought everyone to tears by recounting her life story. On most occasions, everyone spent part of the day working in his or her room. Graffigny ploughed through some books she had been given rather than writing to Devaux so she could talk about them at dinner. Mme du Châtelet sang an opera one evening, and plays were staged periodically using the guests and neighbors as actors. Of course, Voltaire read everyone his unpublished works, including the controversial *La Pucelle*.

Nevertheless, there was a latent current of tension in the household as Voltaire was furious with the Abbé Desfontaines for the latter’s published attack entitled *La Voltairomanie ou Lettre d’un Jeune Avocat*. Both Voltaire and Mme du Châtelet had copies, the existence of which they each tried to conceal from the other. In her efforts to protect Voltaire, Mme du Châtelet routinely sorted through the postbag.

One night, the pleasantness came to a sudden and grinding halt when Voltaire accused our epistolière of sending a copy of *La Pucelle* to Devaux and of having it printed. Mme du Châtelet, while censoring the mail thought she had found the proof in one of Devaux’s letters: “La Pucelle est charmante.” Without explanation Devaux was asked to return Graffigny’s letters; they eventually proved her innocence. She had merely given an account of the work to Devaux, but had not in fact sent a copy of the manuscript. Although Graffigny’s innocence was established, her pride had been hurt. Mme du Châtelet had said in the heat
of the moment that she had only taken Graffigny in out of charity and in fact never liked her. Graffigny's relationship with Mme du Châtelet remained troubled and, by extension, so did her relationship with Voltaire.

The atmosphere at Cirey improved when Desmarest arrived to collect Mme de Graffigny. Finally, she dared write to Devaux telling him the story of the accusation to which she had been subjected. Nevertheless, she did not post the letter until she had definitively left Cirey.

PARIS

From Cirey, Mme de Graffigny had reserved a room in a boarding house from Mme Babaud. It was here that she stayed upon her arrival in Paris and where she continued to reside even after the return of the Duchess of Richelieu from Montpellier. Finances were tight, so we can only imagine how she lived.

Graffigny's situation improved upon the return of Mme de Richelieu when she became the duchess's *dame de compagnie*. It was the title preferred by the duke, who believed that to have a *dame d'honneur* was above his wife's station.

At this time, Graffigny also gained entry into some of Paris' literary and theatrical circles in an effort to help Devaux have his play staged. It was through these efforts that she met Jeanne Quinault (la cadette) who would eventually become one of her closest friends and whose salon she would attend regularly. She also met many other intellectuals who would become her friends.
Mme de Graffigny’s path once again crossed that of Mme du Châtelet. And once again, the experience was not a pleasant one. Both women were still smoldering over the incident at Cirey. After all, things had been said that could not easily be forgiven. From Mme de Graffigny’s letters, it seems that she felt almost persecuted. First, Mme du Châtelet blamed Graffigny for having abandoned the duchess after a fireworks display. Several days later she implied that Graffigny had stolen a manuscript from Cirey and was showing it around Paris. She irritated Graffigny by joking with the duke about his extra marital affairs in front of his loving wife. Ironically, Mme du Châtelet was in fact having a liaison with the duke herself. The ladies even fought about where they sat at dinner or at the opera. According to English Showalter, these arguments, although seemingly petty, revolved around important questions of rank and privilege. Eventually, Mme de Graffigny even felt that Mme du Châtelet was at least partially responsible for the declaration Desmarest had made at Cirey that he no longer loved her. In the end, it is safe to say that Graffigny came to hate Mme du Châtelet.\textsuperscript{20}

The last straw for Mme de Graffigny, following yet another run-in with Mme du Châtelet at the rehearsal of one of Voltaire’s plays, was the interdiction to accompany Mme de Richelieu to Languedoc. Mme du Châtelet went part way with the duchess before taking the road to Cirey while Mme de Graffigny stayed in Paris to baby sit the young duke de Fronsac, the son of the duke and the duchess.\textsuperscript{21}

Mme de Graffigny kept in touch with Mme de Richelieu through her correspondence. While in Languedoc, the duchess gave birth to a little girl. The

\textsuperscript{20} Showalter, \textit{Voltaire et ses amis} 22, 26, 27.
\textsuperscript{21} Showalter, \textit{Voltaire et ses amis} 31, 32.
birth turned out to be difficult. The duchess lost a tremendous amount of blood and was greatly weakened. In the end, she returned to Paris to die. Graffigny remained close to her during the last days of her life. In her will, the duchess left Graffigny a small pension to be administered by the Guise family. It was paid sporadically, and eventually not at all. The death of the duchess left Graffigny in a precarious situation. Where would she go now? She was not as friendly with the duke de Richelieu as she had been with his wife. Nevertheless, for a brief period she remained in his service while she planned her next move. Not wishing to burn her bridges before having secured a position elsewhere, she kept her intentions and activities as discrete as possible.

Graffigny secretly hoped to secure a place with Frederic the Great in Prussia. After his father's death, the Prussian monarch was reorganizing his court to include philosophers and academics. Maupertius, whom Graffigny had met at Cirey and affectionately called la Puce in her letters to Devaux, was one of the scholars successfully recruited by Frederic. In 1740, Maupertius was in Paris recruiting intellectuals to accompany him to Berlin. Graffigny also hoped to secure an invitation for Nicolas Liébault (le Chien), a struggling history professor at Lunéville. Liébault had been among Graffigny's inner circle of friends while she lived in Lunéville. The two continued to correspond, either directly or through the intermediary of Panpan. In order to include Liébault in the Prussian expedition, a plan was devised according to which he would pose as Graffigny's brother.

The plan did not progress as smoothly as one would have hoped. The two argued about how to proceed. Above all, Graffigny did not want the duke of
Richelieu to know that she was making arrangements to leave. In direct opposition to Graffigny’s wishes, Liébault made some contacts on his own who could have revealed Graffigny’s plan’s for departure to the duke of Richelieu. Graffigny was furious! No Prussian positions materialized. And, Graffigny felt compelled to withdraw into a convent, des Filles de Sainte-Elisabeth, as a companion to the princess of Ligne.

Adding to the growing list of problems, Liébault’s mistress – Clarion Lebrun (le Ron), an actress from Lunéville – had become pregnant. The question now was how to avoid scandal and dishonor. After all, what was tolerated in wealthy women of noble birth was frowned upon in the lower classes. The decision was finally made that the child would be born in Paris and that Françoise de Graffigny would make the necessary arrangements. A small apartment was rented for the occasion and Clarion set off for Paris. In the end, the child was stillborn, and Clarion escaped without any serious physical harm. She nevertheless remained in Paris for a time with Graffigny to recuperate. This provided the occasion for Liébault and Graffigny to clash once again.

It turned out that Alliott, who was responsible for the theaters of Lunéville under King Stanislas, had tried to start a romance with Clarion while on a trip to Paris. It is possible that Graffigny, feeling the burden of her poverty and being more worldly than her younger friend, pointed out that Clarion would be much better provided for with the well to do Alliott than with the struggling Liébault. In any case, Clarion seems to have felt the same way. Liébault accused Mme de Graffigny of acting in her own interest. Clarion finally left Paris in March of 1741.
Although the motives for the reconciliation remain unclear, Alliott and Liébault came to an amicable agreement. Alliott was to provide Clarion with enough money to live honorably and Liébault was to leave Lunéville with her. The reunited lovers left for the German army where Liébault served as a lieutenant. Their story alone, faithfully told in letters to Devaux, starts at the beginning of the Austrian war of Succession and is full of mishaps and adventures. Despite distance and the passage of time, Liébault retained a profound bitterness toward Graffigny.

During the course of these events, Graffigny’s living situation changed frequently. She moved out of the convent, des Filles de Sainte-Elisabeth, due to the exorbitant price. In addition, Graffigny’s friendship with Mlle Quinault had progressed to a point where the two were considering living near each other. The Filles de Sainte-Elisabeth was not disposed to accept a retired actress. Actors were not held in high regard by those with high moral standards and were, in fact, automatically excommunicated from the Catholic Church. This may have influenced Graffigny’s decision to leave.

She moved into another convent, Précieux-Sang in July 1741, but did not stay for long. While there, she managed to arrange a marriage for one of the princesses who resided there. The princess, of course, moved out and went to live with her new husband. The loss of the rent paid by the princess enraged the nuns, and Graffigny was asked to leave. This time, she rented her own apartment, staying briefly with a friend in the interim.
Nevertheless, Graffigny’s experience of living in convents left its mark. We see references that remind us of these situations both in her play, Cénie, and her novel, Lettres d’une Péruvienne. In Cénie, one of the characters refers to the fact that nuns are more interested in the rent they are due than in helping people. In Lettres d’une Péruvienne, Zilia is lodged for a period in a convent. Here she tries to understand the Christian religion, but in the end prefers her own faith. Graffigny herself seems to have regarded Christianity with skepticism.\textsuperscript{22}

LITERARY FORMATION

It is safe to say that Mme de Graffigny’s literary formation started at the court of Lunéville. “To judge by the few letters surviving from the 1720’s, she had virtually no education until she came to Lunéville; in 1738 she departed with a fairly solid culture.”\textsuperscript{23} This lack of education may have worked in her favor, as she seems to have been open and receptive to new ideas and not predisposed to any particular school of thought. At the court, she came into contact with numerous writers and their works. One example that stands out is Voltaire. At the same time, scholars seem to agree that Graffigny’s training in literature and writing was a struggle. Her letters, especially the early ones, are disorganized and full of mistakes. In addition, she uses many colloquialisms. Sainte-Beuve

\textsuperscript{22} Noël 274.
characterized her early writing as “un langage dont le ton ordinaire n’était pas toujours très-distingué.” In fact, Graffigny’s struggle to educate herself can be compared with her character Zilia’s struggle to learn French. According to English Showalter, “[d]espite the lack of education apparent in her letters dating from around 1720, Mme de Graffigny began to write long before she went to Paris.” We do not know exactly how much she wrote, however, her letters do mention four works: “L’Honnête Homme, a play which she left with Devaux in manuscript and eventually destroyed out of shame; a dialog, probably called La Réunion du Bon Sens et de l’Esprit, which she thought Voisenon plagiarized in 1747; Héraclite, a verse tragedy which she read to an approving Voltaire at Cirey; and Le Sylphe, which was published in a little known periodical, Nouveaux Amusements du Coeur et de l’esprit in 1737.” Le Sylphe was the result of a collaboration between Mme de Graffigny and her friends. Surprisingly, she did not learn of the work’s publication until 1743. Dabbling in letters, according to English Showalter, was merely a sign of the times and the social circles in which Graffigny moved.

Graffigny’s contact with Voltaire served only to heighten her interest in literature. Her trip to Cirey had been the motivation for reading Locke and other literary works. Afterwards, while recounting the experience to Devaux, she was surprised that she had understood what she read and that she had in fact already thought the same things. The experience must have boosted her confidence

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25 Showalter, “Mme de Graffigny’s Literary Career” 297.
26 Showalter, “Mme de Graffigny’s Literary Career” 297.
enormously. While at Cirey, she found the schedule rigorous and not entirely to her liking. In the evening, as we saw earlier, she wanted to speak about the works she had been given and sound intelligent. Therefore, she even put off writing to Devaux to accomplish the task.

In Paris, while in the service of the Richelieu family and afterwards, she continued to come into contact with many educated people: actors, philosophers, writers, economists, scientists, mathematicians, etc. She showed little interest in writing, however. Instead, she reveled in the erudite atmosphere that surrounded her. She went to the theater as often as she could. Also, she introduced herself to the actors of the Comédie Française in an effort to promote her friends’ plays.²⁷ She performed this service for both St. Lambert and Devaux. After thirteen years of negotiations, and constant requests for revision, Devaux’s play was finally staged. It failed, but had served as a valuable introduction to the French Theater and its actors for Graffigny. She had made many valuable contacts and friends. Later, she would use this knowledge when promoting her own play.

Living in Paris naturally led Graffigny to become a book buyer for some of her friends in Lorraine. Performing this small service enabled her to become aware of the current trends in literature. She would purchase the latest works in Paris and mail them to Devaux who would deliver them. In the process, she and Devaux would both read the works before passing them on. In this way, Graffigny

²⁷ Showalter, “Mme de Graffigny’s Literary Career” 298.
read a large number of the newly produced works of her time. Due to these frequent purchases, she became well acquainted with the booksellers who reserved the latest books for her, even some that had been banned.

Through the Abbé Calabre-Pérau, whom she met shortly after arriving in Paris, Graffigny obtained some valuable experience in the publishing industry. The Abbé was one of the few authors who earned a living from writing. In addition, he reviewed and edited manuscripts for printers. It was in this capacity that Graffigny would sometimes help. As she learned her way around the world of publishing, she soon offered to guide others through the process. Interestingly, among those in her care was Linant, one of Voltaire’s former protégés.

Not least among the literary influences in her life, was Mlle Quinault’s salon. It came to be called the Bout du Banc. Graffigny referred to it as “les lundis,” or whatever day of the week the event was to be held. It was here that Graffigny got her start writing works of a literary nature. Mlle Quinault hosted the salon and the Comte de Caylus supported it financially. In addition to dining and enjoying each other’s company and conversation, one of the activities of the group was composing humorous texts. At the time Graffigny became a regular of the salon, the group had already published a joint work.

After Mme de Graffigny’s embarrassing experiences caused by Mme du Châtelet, she loathed the thought of being disparaged or mocked. Over time, however, as she became comfortable with the group, she came to appreciate the

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29 Showalter, “Mme de Graffigny’s Literary Career” 299.
members’ ability to frankly critique each other and to graciously accept criticism. The inability to accept advice and suggestions had been a sore point between Graffigny and Devaux because of the latter’s intolerance to criticism of his play.

In January 1744, Mlle Quinault proposed a writing project for the group. Each diner was given a different subject. Mme de Graffigny’s topic was an “Oraison funèbre d’un Capucin.” She worked on the assignment without much success pleading with Devaux to help her. Eventually, Caylus gave her another topic. He provided an outline of a Spanish tale and Graffigny’s job was to compose a story around it. It was appropriately entitled *Nouvelle Espagnole.*

The anonymity of the authors was protected. Each gave his or her contribution privately to Mlle Quinault who acted as the editor of the collection. She even read some of the submissions at dinner. The collection was printed in March 1745 under the title *Recueil de ces Messieurs.* Graffigny’s *Nouvelle Espagnole* was viewed favorably and praised. She was left feeling comfortable and happy about her writing. She was ready to write again almost immediately. Her next endeavor was a fairy-tale, *Azerole.* Again, Caylus furnished the outline. The work was published together with several of his own in 1746. By this time, Graffigny had moved into a more fashionable apartment and was hosting her own salon.

According to English Showalter, Graffigny now felt she was an established author and immediately started producing other works. Unfortunately, few have survived or, in some cases, perhaps no one has yet identified her as the author. In any case, she now felt comfortable enough to seek financial rewards for her
literary efforts. She sent a number of short works to the former duke of Lorraine and his wife (now emperor and empress) at the court of Vienna for the edification of their children. Interestingly, one of the children was Marie-Antoinette who would eventually become queen of France. For her efforts, Graffigny received a small pension and was asked to write additional works to supplement the children’s education.

Encouraged by her positive experiences, Graffigny now took on her most important work, the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. Unlike her prior works, she kept *Zilie* (the original title) secret from most of her friends while she worked on it. Even Devaux was not allowed to see it until she felt that it was presentable. She worked diligently on the novel for several years earning nothing from her labor. Even after its publication, she reaped few rewards. In her letters to Devaux, Graffigny complained that writing was a tedious and arduous task from which she gained little pleasure. It is hard to believe that she disliked the experience as much as she says. Instead, it is easy to imagine that a growing pride in her work now overshadowed her desire for financial gain and the difficulties inherent in writing and publishing. In the end, the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* was a huge success, elevating Graffigny from obscurity into the limelight overnight.

Essentially, the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* tells the story of a Peruvian princess, Zilia, who is captured by the Spanish and rescued by the French. Déterville, the French captain of the ship that rescued her, falls in love with the princess. He takes her back to France and does everything in his power to make

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30 Showalter, “Mme de Graffigny’s Literary Career” 301, 302.
her transition into French life and culture as smooth as possible. The novel is written in the form of letters from Zilia to her Peruvian fiancé, Aza. We follow Zilia in her own words and thoughts from her capture, to her first impressions of French society, through her struggle to learn and eventually acquire the French language, to her ultimate independence.

Along the way, Zilia comments on French society, frequently comparing it to her native Peru. Thus, from the point of view of a foreign observer, Graffigny critiqued French ideas and practices. This technique was relatively common in the Eighteenth Century. Authors would examine familiar institutions and customs, but as if seeing them for the first time. This technique also took advantage of the public's predilection for exoticism. It was used successfully by Montesquieu in the *Lettres Persanes*, for example. Afterwards, it became a popular method for authors who wished to write social satire. According to James Creech, both Montesquieu and Graffigny present the foreign culture and French culture in a way that prevents either from becoming "a privileged culture of reference against which all others were to be measured." In addition, many modern critics now see that Graffigny placed particular emphasis on the role of women and that Zilia's story may in some sense have paralleled her own. We will examine these and other details in another chapter.

The enormous success of Graffigny's novel is rather stunning, in retrospect. Under the best of circumstances, making a name for oneself in the

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field of popular literature has always been an arduous task. When one was poor and a woman, the road was even more difficult to travel.

Women had many additional handicaps. The greatest obstacle for Madame de Graffigny lay not in her own timidity, nor lack of education, nor dependency on pensions, but rather the social barriers against her entering the profession directly. ... Madame de Graffigny, like most minor authors, remained entirely dependent on the good will and favors of men who had power, like Caylus and Duclos.32

In addition, Gethner reminds us that “Graffigny did not manage to escape the fate of most successful women authors: she was accused of using a male ghost writer.” Insinuations were made that she had bought the novel from the Abbé Pérau who was often a guest at her salon. In any event, no one, then or now, seems to have believed the allegation.33

Now that she had written a novel, Graffigny next turned her attention to the theater. In 1750, Cénie was performed at the Comédie Française. Again, it was an outstanding success. In its first year, the published version went through three editions. Also, it was performed more times than any other play by a female author prior to the Revolution. People started to recognize Graffigny when she went shopping or to the Comédie Française. She recognized that she was now famous.

According to Perry Gethner, “the play’s female characters have certain parallels with the lives of Mme de Graffigny and her niece.” Some even believe that Graffigny based the title on an anagram of the word “nièce.” Nevertheless,

32 Showalter, “Mme de Graffigny’s Literary Career” 303.
Cénie was clearly modeled after La Chaussée’s La Gouvernante. Graffigny both simplified the story and embroidered it with her own experiences. Cénie primarily tells the story of the heroine for whom the play is named. Cénie is thought to be the daughter of Dorimond, a wealthy elderly man. In the course of the play, she learns that she is in fact a penniless orphan. The play discusses her reaction to this news and possible courses of action. Of course, by the end of the play she learns the identity of her true parents and finds herself in an even better position than at the beginning of the play.

Cénie is considered a “comédie larmoyante,” a genre that appeared in the middle of the eighteenth century blurring the distinctions between tragedy and comedy. “Its greatest exponents were Madame de Graffigny … and Nivelle de La Chaussée. … [F]ollowing the example of the comédie larmoyante, Diderot put forward … proposals for intermediate genres avoiding the remoteness of tragedy and the frivolity of comedy.” Voltaire and Miraux also experimented with this style.

The cult of sensibility, based on the philosophical views that people are borne naturally good and that virtuous conduct can, or should, be grounded in “natural” emotions, was to mark a sizable percentage of eighteenth-century literature in France, and in the neighboring countries, as well. Dramatic characters endowed with that sensibility have a number of distinctive characteristics, including: the propensity to weep at the slightest provocation…

The application of this style and philosophy to her work is one of the reasons Graffigny was compared to Jean Jacques Rousseau. English Showalter, Gethner 276, 280.
Gethner 277.
in his book *Madame de Graffigny and Rousseau: between the two Discours*, remarks that “[e]veryone today would agree that, broadly speaking, mme de Graffigny’s works contain pale foreshadowings of Rousseau’s.” Turgot and a young Swiss called Isaak Iselin both noticed the similarities early on. Showalter also states that scholars have now accepted that Rousseau was one of the guests at Graffigny’s salon and that the two may even have been friends. Rousseau even mentions Graffigny twice in his own works. Most convincingly, in *Françoise de Graffigny: Choix de letters*, Showalter reprints Graffigny’s letter to Devaux in which she tells of her first encounter with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This encounter took place in October 1751, after Rousseau had been catapulted to fame by his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* which was printed in January of the same year. Despite evidence that the two authors had at least met and were acquainted with each other’s works, it is difficult to say whether Rousseau was influenced in any way by Graffigny. As the answer to this question has no bearing on the present work, I will leave the examination of this matter to the keen insights and avid inquiries of other scholars.

Graffigny’s last work, *La Fille d’Aristide*, was another play. This time, she took her subject from Greek history. She poured her energy into writing. She consulted numerous friends and made numerous revisions based on their advice. One could say that the presence of too many cooks spoiled the broth. Nevertheless, the public was waiting expectantly. In the end, her comedy was

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37 Showalter, “Madame de Graffigny and Rousseau” 21.
38 Showalter, “Madame de Graffigny and Rousseau” 21, 22, 25.
39 Showalter, *Choix de lettres* 211.
heavy and serious. The play was an immediate failure and was quickly withdrawn by its author. The pressure of living up to her past works, combined with her poor health, eventually took its toll on Mme de Graffigny.

Without a doubt, Graffigny’s disappointment at the reception of her play was intense. However, her health was already failing. For much of the proceeding year, she had been dictating her letters and other texts to a secretary because she was unable to write herself. According to her first biographer, Georges Noël, “la pauvre dame mourut le jour même où elle finissait de corriger les épreuves destinées à l’impression de la Fille d’Aristide.”40 Françoise de Graffigny died on December 12, 1758. Although deeply in debt, Graffigny left a will bequeathing small sums to her friends, which in the end could not be paid.

GRAFFIGNY’S LEGACY

Devaux received all of her papers which he was charged with editing. The papers included “manuscripts of some of her works and of a large number of the unpublished plays; letters to mme de Graffigny from Panpan and from many other people, some of them famous; some occasional verse; and of course the numerous letters of mme de Graffigny herself, which were already in Panpan’s hands.”41 Devaux did not complete the task. At most, he reorganized the papers, and this may not have been such a good thing. Nevertheless, to his credit, he

40 Noël 353.
41 Showalter, “Madame de Graffigny and Rousseau” 17.
expanded the collection by adding various letters that he received from friends.

The history of these papers (now known as the Graffigny papers) is outlined by Georges Noël in his biography of Graffigny. In addition, English Showalter has verified, updated, and discussed this history in several of his works. Here, I am quoting from the account Showalter gives in Madame de Graffigny and Rousseau: between the two Discours.

[Panpan] bequeathed the papers … to an old friend, mme Durival, … . She was no better prepared than Panpan to edit such a mass of papers, and so on her death in 1819 they passed to her adopted children, Joseph-Louis Gabriel Noël and his wife Charlotte-Suzanne-Adélaïde de Visme d’Aubigny. … Georges Noël, a descendant of this couple, relates a family legend that most of the papers were turned over to a Russian, count Orloff, who was presumably responsible for extracting the letters written from Cirey, and having them published in 1820 with the title Vie privée de Voltaire et de mme Du Châtelet. The relatively small number of papers remaining in the family’s possession then served as the basis for Georges Noël’s biography, Une ‘primitive oubliée’ de l’école des ‘coeurs sensibles’: mme de Graffigny, published in 1913. … In 1965, the ‘Orloff’ portion reappeared when it was auctioned by Sotheby. … [T]he bulk of the collection, …, was purchased by H. P. Kraus, who then donated all of it to Yale, except for the manuscripts of the letters from Cirey. [The collection is] now available to scholars at the Beinecke rare book and manuscript library of Yale University. The collection includes the series of letters from mme de Graffigny to Devaux, …, complete except, …, for the Cirey letters, which are presumably still in mr Kraus’s possession, and a few stray letters in other libraries. The other lots sold by Sotheby in 1965 are now in the Bibliothèque nationale … . In short, very nearly all of Devaux’s original accumulation now seems to have been located.42

After her death, Graffigny was essentially forgotten by the literary community for about fifty years. La Fille d’Aristide, which Graffigny finished before her death, was published in 1759. Also, in 1770, two of Graffigny’s plays

42 Showalter, "Madame de Graffigny and Rousseau" 17-19.
Ziman et Zenise and Azor were published in Oeuvres posthumes. Showalter believes that there is little chance that Devaux could have had anything to do with this publication as both plays had already been staged and copies were certainly available outside the collection of papers in Devaux’s possession.

If Graffigny was remembered at all, it was for her connection to historical figures such as Voltaire with whom she had contact. We have already seen that the letters she wrote from Cirey were published in 1820. They were of interest primarily to Voltaire scholars and viewed as a literary curiosity. In 1850, in his Causeries du Lundi, one of the leading nineteenth-century literary critics Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve offers the following remark:

> On peut être tranquille, je ne viens parler ici ni du drame de Cénie, ni même des Lettres péruviennes, de ces ouvrages plus ou moins agréables à leur moment, et aujourd’hui tout à fait passés. Je viens surtout parler de Voltaire, chez qui Mme de Grafigny nous introduit et qu’elle nous aide à surprendre sous un jour assez nouveau ou du moins très naturel.⁴³

Thus, Graffigny and her works passed into a long period of oblivion.

Georges Noël, inspired by his family’s inheritance of the Graffigny Papers, was the first to bring Graffigny out of the literary graveyard. In the preface to his biography of Graffigny, published in 1913, he nevertheless feels compelled to justify his choice of topic.

> De la renommée fort honorable que cette femme auteur avait autrefois dans la République des Lettres, à peine reste-t-il un souvenir … on ne cherche pas pourtant, dans cette étude, un essai de réhabilitation littéraire. … Placée dans un tumulte d’idées, à l’extrême avant-garde d’une évolution naissante, elle semble chercher sa direction sans la trouver nettement, … dans ses incertitudes, nous croyons distinguer parfois, comme une vague et

⁴³ Sainte-Beuve 208.
lointaine aurore des angoisses qui tourmentent notre époque, et cela suffit à nous intéresser.44

An interesting aside comes out in Georges Mangeot’s review of Noël’s biography of Françoise de Graffigny. He discusses the question of how to spell Graffigny’s name. He tells us that Mme de Graffigny’s contemporaries generally spelled her name with two Fs, but that she signed her letters and the dedication of Cénie as Grafigny with only one F. Oddly, she signed the dedication of La fille d’Aristide as Grafigny with two Fs. Mangeot reminds us that people in the Eighteenth Century were frequently unaware of the information on their official records, and thus of how their names should be spelled legally. In the case of Françoise and her husband, they both took the name Graffigny when they married and received the seigneurie de Graffigny from François Huguet.45

Throughout history, the name has been spelled in a variety of ways: Graffigni, Grafigni, Graffigny, Grafigny, and even Graphigni. As we see, the use of the final Y is as much open to question as the double F. Mangeot and Noël corresponded and had occasion to discuss this topic. Noël felt it was best to accept what he considered to be the standard spelling of the name, Grafigny; whereas Mangeot felt that a name derived from a place name should be spelled accordingly, Graffigny. To verify a spelling, it is sufficient to merely look at a map.46 Mangeot seems to have won the argument as Graffigny with two Fs is the spelling commonly used today.

44 Noël I, II, IV.
45 Noël 16.
As for the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, Noël finds it a “pauvre petit roman pâli et fané.” In fact, the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* would have to wait until the end of the Twentieth Century before it would again be esteemed a worthy pursuit for literary scholars. With rising interest in women’s studies in the last decade of the Twentieth Century, Graffigny’s novel once again gained in popularity. In his article, “Graffigny Rediviva: Editions of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* (1967 - 1993),” David Smith discusses, among other things, four of the twentieth-century editions of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* and their relationship to the original texts. Each of these editions will be briefly mentioned below in addition to several more recent editions and the publication of Graffigny’s correspondence.

Gianni Nicoletti was the first to publish a critical edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* in 1967. Smith believes it is an essential reference tool for scholars of Graffigny. The edition contains an introduction in Italian, a bibliography of the novel and its sequels from 1747 to 1835, portraits of Graffigny, examples of her handwriting, the three French sequels printed in their entirety, and a letter published by Turgot commenting on the novel, in addition to a few other things.

Bernard Bray and Isabelle Landy-Houillon published their edition in 1983. Smith believes this is the best edition. The introduction discusses the history of the love letter. The *Lettres Portugaises*, once thought to represent the epitome of female writing even though it was written by a man, is prominently featured on the cover alongside the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. Graffigny’s original treatment of Zilia’s struggle to learn the French language and culture is found to be

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47 Noël IX.
noteworthy. Bray includes other epistolary novels. In addition, there is a chronology of the love letter from 20 BC. This permits readers to view Graffigny’s novel as a unique representation of a genre existing from Roman times to the present. Finally, there is a helpful bibliography for each work included.

In 1985, the first volume of Correspondance de Madame de Graffigny was published. English Showalter and a team of scholars are still compiling, editing, and publishing over 2500 letters detailing every aspect of her existence. The fourteen-volume set will provide researchers with new insights and new materials to investigate Graffigny’s life and times. This project marks a turning point in Graffigny studies, because, it not only demonstrates active interest for detailed research into this author in 1985, but it anticipates future scholarly interest. For such a massive project to get off the ground, it is clear that the inherent value of Graffigny’s observations, both as a correspondent and as an author, has finally been recognized by scholars.

In 1989, the Groupe d’Étude du XVIIIe Siècle of the University of Strasbourg presented a volume entitled Vierge du Soleil / Fille des Lumières: la Péruvienne de Mme de Grafigny et ses Suites. This is a comprehensive study of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne covering everything from interpretation of the text to sequels, adaptations, reader’s reactions, and the novel’s place in the evolution of the epistolary novel. Of specific relevance to this dissertation were Schneider’s article discussing the Lettres d’une Péruvienne as an open or closed novel, Hartmann’s article discussing the Lettres d’une Péruvienne in the epistolary tradition, and Rustin’s article on the three French sequels.
Piau-Gillot published a Côté-femmes edition of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne in 1990. Smith finds many errors in it. Among other mistakes, Piau-Gillot reprints the 1747 edition while claiming in her introduction to reprint the 1752 edition. Furthermore, I noticed that the seven-letter sequel, which appeared in print shortly after the Lettres d’une Péruvienne appeared in 1747, is included at the end of the novel without pointing out that it is not part of the original text. Smith recommends avoiding this edition. It must nevertheless be mentioned as it serves to illustrate the confusion scholars are faced with when establishing a base text. Graffigny was responsible for only two editions of her novel and she never wrote a sequel. Yet, numerous unauthorized editions were printed in Holland and elsewhere. The Lettres d’une Péruvienne was often printed with one or more of its sequels. It was not always clear that Graffigny did not write these supplementary texts.

Joan DeJean and Nancy K. Miller are the co-editors of the 1993 Modern Language Association edition of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. This edition reprints the text of the Bernard Bray edition. In its fourth printing in 2002, various changes were made to the text to reflect recent scholarship and to make it more reflective of Graffigny’s original intentions. Smith mentions that the bibliography is unfortunately limited to American scholars. In addition, a second volume exists which is the English translation of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. Smith claims that it is defective. Nevertheless, this is the only modern English translation
available. With over 30,000 members in 100 countries, the Modern Language Association’s sponsorship of this text is noteworthy. In fact, it is safe to say that these editions (in French and in English) represent Graffigny’s final acceptance into the literary canon.

Once the Lettres d’une Péruvienne gained mainstream acceptance, scholars turned their attention to Graffigny’s plays. In 1993, Perry Gethner published Cénie along with five other plays. In 1994, he published an English version of his work. His book, The Lunatic Lover is based on plays written by French women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For each text, Gethner provides a biographical sketch of the author, some analysis of the play presented, and a performance history.

One of the century’s last editions of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne was published in 1996. In this anthology, Romans de Femmes du XVIIIe Siècle, Raymond Trousson presents thirteen works by ten women. In his introduction, he mentions that novels about love, written in the form of letters, were considered during the Eighteenth Century to be a particularly appropriate genre for women. This will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter. Trousson provides a chronology of women’s works from 1735 to 1825. For each year, he also mentions what is happening on the political and social front, and in arts sciences and letters both within France and in other countries. Each text presented is preceded by a scholarly analysis.

We are now embarking into the Twenty-First Century and a whole new view of Graffigny. Indeed Graffigny has come a long way since Sainte-Beuve promised that he had no intention of writing about her and her works, and that he would instead write about Voltaire. These days, anything concerning Graffigny is a respectable topic for research. It is safe to say that the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* has been admitted to the canon of women’s literature. I have even heard the phrase “Graffigny studies” tossed about in discussions among researchers. Some highly respected scholars, such as English Showalter, have made research into Graffigny a significant part of their life’s work. Bringing her texts to the public is an important part of this work.

As previously discussed, the publication of her correspondence, documenting much of the Eighteenth Century and innumerable details of the author’s own life, promises to be an invaluable tool for researchers. In addition, English Showalter’s *Choix de lettres*, published in 2001, provides a comprehensive sample of Graffigny’s letters. Now, students and scholars of the Twenty-First Century will be able to study Graffigny’s story in a manageable format and in her own words.

In 2002, Jonathan Mallinson published a new critical edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. This is the first twenty-first-century edition of this work. In addition to an annotated version of Graffigny’s text, the book includes a scholarly introduction, a comprehensive bibliography, and a dossier of critical commentary from Graffigny’s contemporaries. Mallinson notes the differences between the 1747 and the 1752 editions of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. This detail will be of
great importance to scholars, as these were the only two editions authorized by Graffigny herself. Excerpts from the Péruvienne’s three French sequels are included marking the growing interest in contemporary readers’ reactions as displayed through continuations. These follow-up texts were frequently commissioned by publishers to satisfy the perceived demands of the reading public. The interplay of the Péruvienne with its sequels will most likely continue to capture the interest of scholars as the century progresses.

In 2004, the Voltaire Foundation, under the direction of Jonathan Mallinson produced a volume entitled Françoise de Graffigny, femme de lettres: Ecriture et reception. This work examines Graffigny and her works from numerous points of view, leaving the reader with a multifaceted image of Graffigny, her times, and her works. Some of the subjects treated are Graffigny’s correspondence, the Lettres d’une Péruvienne, Cénie, images of Graffigny, translations of her work, Graffigny as a feminist, Graffigny as a reader, and Graffigny’s relationships with her contemporaries.

Also, in 2004, English Showalter published a comprehensive biography of Graffigny’s life. This is the first biography of Graffigny in ninety years, since Noël’s biography in 1913. Showalter’s work draws on Graffigny’s correspondence and provides new insights into her life and times. In addition, some of Graffigny’s most personal thoughts are revealed.

Thus ends the most recent stage of Graffigny’s legacy. We have seen Graffigny’s departure from her native Lorraine, her development as an author, and how she became widely popular during her own lifetime. After her death, her
name and works passed into oblivion for much of the Nineteenth Century. She gradually gained renewed respect during the Twentieth Century. The Twenty-First Century marks Graffigny’s final acceptance into the literary canon. The Lettres d'une Péruvienne has become standard classroom fare in courses on the eighteenth-century novel, and Graffigny studies are becoming increasingly popular. It only remains to be seen what further wealth scholars will unearth in Graffigny’s works and in the study of her life, and to observe the ever changing reactions of the reading public.
In France, letter writing occupies an important position on the literary horizon. Important examples can be drawn from every century. However, letter writing in the form of the epistolary novel was particularly popular during the Eighteenth Century. Authors such as Diderot, Laclos, Montesquieu, and Rousseau all adopted this form at one time or another.

Indeed, there were distinct stylistic reasons for writing letters. For example, the move from the "il" of third person narration to the "je" of the first person gives any text an autobiographical feel, strengthening the illusion the author is trying to create. Readers therefore experience a voyeuristic gaze into another's life.

Similarly, a century earlier and for a long time afterwards, the Lettres Portugaises were thought to have been written by a real Portuguese nun. In the Nineteenth Century, she was even identified by scholars as Mariane Alcaforada, a nun from Beja. It wasn't until the Twentieth Century that Fréderique Deloffre provided convincing evidence that the Lettres Portugaises were indeed written by Guilleragues, a man.
Through examining eighteenth-century guides to correspondence, Howland discovered that letter writers were counseled to strive for a natural and spontaneous style by means of calculated negligence and the avoidance of linearity. They were encouraged to write with passion and emotion.\(^{49}\) As these attributes were generally associated with femininity, one could say that letter writers (male or female) were encouraged to write like women. Since the appearance of the *Lettres Portugaises* in 1669 the epistolary novel was generally associated with women and their concerns.\(^{50}\) According to Katherine Ann Jensen, “the *Lettres portugaises* confirmed the public's assumptions about gender that equated woman with overwhelming passion and man with calm and control.”\(^{51}\)

The creation (and overwhelming popularity) of the *Lettres Portugaises* and other epistolary novels established an environment in which women were pressured to identify with the heroines and their situations. Indeed, Jensen believes that the “female” epistolary novel was pivotal in male control of female identity throughout the Eighteenth Century, a legacy from the Seventeenth Century and the *Lettres Portugaises*.

It wasn’t until 1747 when Françoise de Graffigny’s *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* appeared on the market that “the first letter novel [was] written and

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published by a woman in France [italics original].” Interestingly, the epistolary novel enjoyed its most prolific period after this event, from 1750 – 1820. Prior to the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, women primarily wrote letters. Even if moving from letters to letter novels appears to be a natural progression, it is nevertheless significant that the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* is an epistolary novel and NOT a letter collection.

Although many epistolary novels claim to be collections of letters that the author or “translator” found and merely wants to share, one could say that a narrator is frequently and implicitly present. After all, the letters had to be arranged and edited. Some will argue that the editing and sequencing of letters blurs the distinction between the epistolary novel and the letter collection. For example, the editing of Mme de Sévigné’s correspondence did not begin until thirty years after her death. Although her work, in my mind, is clearly a letter collection, the letters were organized into categories by a third party. Thus, the editions that appeared portrayed her correspondence in varying ways – as personal letters from a mother to a daughter and as a contemporary aristocratic woman’s view of the court. Similarly, the twelfth-century letters of Abélard and Héloïse were translated into French during the Seventeenth Century. The seventeenth-century version of these letters was infused with preciosity and was no longer truly representative of the original text.53

53 There is some debate as to whether the original letters of Abélard and Héloïse were genuine or fictional texts. However, the dominant view seems to be that the letters were genuine.
Although the line between letter collection and epistolary novel may be blurred, fictional texts lose some of their pretended claim to authenticity through stylistic devices used to inform the reader of background information. For example, we find information about events, characters’ origins, and relationships. In other words, the writer supplies information necessary to an uninformed reader, but that the letter’s fictional recipient would and should already know.

When Graffigny and other eighteenth-century women writers chose to write *epistolary novels*, they effectively broke the constraints of traditional letter writing. The traditional unbridled outpouring of sentiment was replaced with consciously constructed plot. In other words, moving from the mere letter to the letter novel was a disruptive force in traditional feminine ideology.

Through the epistolary novel (as opposed to the traditional letter), the realm of fiction was open to women. They could write stories that either reflected or deviated from their own lives, or combine the two elements. They now had the power to change traditional romantic plots that governed women’s fictional lives. For example, Françoise de Graffigny ended her *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* with an independently wealthy heroine, free from male constraint. This was a dramatic change from traditional endings in which female characters either marry or pine away in a convent for the rest of their lives.

In this way, we see that in women’s hands, the epistolary novel became a medium for subversive political expression – a means to promote change in society through influential ideas. By seeming to conform to traditional conceptions of women’s writing (emotional love letters), female authors were
able to appear sufficiently mainstream to publish and subsequently to make themselves heard. Again, it was the apparently natural progression from letter to epistolary novel that allowed women to subvert traditional feminine ideology. One may even say that the move from the letter to the letter novel reveals women’s desire to influence society and to assert themselves as women.

LETTRES D’UNE PÉRUVIENNE, BESTSELLER!

One of the historical interests of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne was its status as a bestseller. Raymond Trousson referred to it as “l’un des grands succès de librairie du temps.” While determining the factors that affect any given work’s popularity is a complex business involving sociological factors such as demographics, literacy rates, and technological advances in printing; I will attempt to summarize here some of the factors to be considered by literary scholars in the study of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne as a bestseller.

MAKING A DETERMINATION OF POPULARITY

In order to determine the popularity of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne we must first have an idea of how widely it was read. Publisher’s records would seem to be a good place to start such a study. Unfortunately, the records of

many eighteenth-century publishers did not survive. In his article, “The Popularity of Mme de Graffigny’s Lettres d’une Péruvienne: The Bibliographical Evidence,” David Smith mentions several studies that have been conducted throughout the years.\(^5\)

For example, in 1910, Daniel Mornet examined the catalogs of five hundred private libraries in France in existence during the second half of the Eighteenth Century. Rousseau’s La Nouvelle Héloïse was found in 165 libraries while Graffigny’s Lettres d’une Péruvienne was found in only 108. We must keep in mind that these libraries belonged to the wealthiest people of the time. Also, individuals who could not afford to buy books had access to them through cabinets de lecture.

Another method of calculating a work’s popularity is by counting the number of editions that were issued. In its first forty years, there were forty-seven editions of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne.\(^6\) However, here too, one must proceed with caution because it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine how many copies of each edition were printed if the publisher’s records did not survive. Also, without the sales records, we cannot know how quickly a particular run sold out. David Smith points out that “[s]ome editions did not sell out quickly, since they were reissued with a new title-page over the next few years.”\(^7\) Surprisingly, of the many editions of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne in existence, only two were approved by Graffigny. The first was published by Madame Pissot in 1747,

\(^{6}\) This excludes translations and reissues. David Smith, “The Popularity of Mme de Graffigny’s Lettres d’une Péruvienne” 6.
\(^{7}\) David Smith, “The Popularity of Mme de Graffigny’s Lettres d’une Péruvienne” 4.
editions A Peine. The second, supplemented with three new letters, was published by Duchesne in 1752.\textsuperscript{58} Today, it is the 1752 edition, which is most likely to be reprinted.

One can also count translations. It seems likely that a publisher would only invest in a translation if he believed that there was a market for the work. The \textit{Lettres d'une Péruvienne} was translated into seven different languages by 1828. Among the numerous editions were bilingual editions used to teach French abroad and vice versa. David Smith wonders about the validity of counting “school texts” when ascertaining a work’s popularity. He gives the example of Camus’s \textit{L’Étranger}, pointing out that its easy language made it a popular text among teachers of French, but that it may not actually have been more popular than other novels.\textsuperscript{59}

Finally, one can also judge the popularity of a work from the number of sequels it inspired, for, writing a sequel to an already popular book can increase one’s chances of success. From this perspective, Mme de Graffigny’s work well deserves our attention. There are at least five sequels to the \textit{Lettres d'une Péruvienne}, however, none of them are by Graffigny.\textsuperscript{60}

1. Seven Letter sequel in French by an anonymous author - 1747\textsuperscript{61}
2. \textit{Lettres d’Aza} (35 letters) in French by Hugary de Lamarche-Courmont - 1748
3. Twenty two letters in English by R. Roberts - 1774\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{59} David Smith, “The Popularity of Mme de Graffigny’s \textit{Lettres d'une Péruvienne}” 5.
\textsuperscript{60} The following list is taken from David Smith’s article “The Popularity of Mme de Graffigny’s \textit{Lettres d'une Péruvienne}” 6, 7.
\textsuperscript{61} David Smith, and Jacques Rustin date the first sequel from 1747, however, Mallinson lists it as 1748 in his edition. In addition, Graffigny believed that the first sequel was written by the Chevalier de Mouhy. However, there is no conclusive evidence that this was the case.
In addition, Mallinson mentions another one-letter sequel added to an English translation into verse, entitled *Letters from Zilia to Aza* (Dublin, Henry Saunders, 1753). Mallinson also mentions *Briefe einer Sonnenpristerin*, a loose translation (or adaptation) of Graffigny’s text.\(^{63}\) I have not included these works in the above list, as they do not fall into my working definition of a sequel as outlined in the following chapter. Also, Goldoni wrote *La Peruviana*, a play in Italian based on the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* and Lamarche-Courmont’s *Lettres d’Aza*. And in 1754, Rochon de Chabannes produced a comic opera in French entitled *Lettres d’une Péruvienne: La Péruvienne*.\(^ {64}\)

Given all of the above factors, we are left with the impression that the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* was well read and well liked by the eighteenth-century reading public. Indeed, there were numerous editions, including pirated editions, that made their way into readers’ hands. In this respect, the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* was a bestseller in the true sense of the word.

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\(^{62}\) Simth and Mallinson mentioned only nine letters in the English sequel, however, when I examined the volume, there were twenty-two.


People read for a variety of reasons including the desire for knowledge and the wish to be entertained. What then would lead someone to choose one book over another? More specifically, what was it about the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* that appealed to the readers of eighteenth-century France? There are a variety of responses to this question, several of which I will consider here.

The most obvious response is that the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* was simply entertaining. It is easy and relaxing to read, a good way to spend a little spare time and to escape from the mundane concerns of everyday life. Graffigny tells the story of Zilia, an Inca princess, who is captured by the Spanish then rescued and taken to France. Exotic tales were already in vogue in eighteenth-century France, and Graffigny’s novel fits this mold. Although the book is certainly entertaining, this alone would oversimplify the many forces that conspired to make the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* a bestseller.

One of the most striking aspects of the novel is the ending. We are left with an independently wealthy heroine who is noticeably unmarried. Contemporary readers were left unsatisfied and troubled. Many felt that an ending containing neither retreat into a convent nor marriage was not really an ending at all.\(^\text{65}\) Indeed, Graffigny received many letters requesting her to change the ending of her novel.\(^\text{66}\)

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\(^{65}\) Trousson 71.

It is peculiar that a book known for leaving its readers hanging would attract such a large readership. Generally, people do not seek to read a novel if word gets out that the ending is flat, or worse, nonexistent. This has lead many scholars to reflect upon the possibilities of a deeper social significance behind the popularity of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. These studies, which will be discussed in another chapter, usually focus on the status and role of eighteenth-century women in society.

Women in the Eighteenth Century were thought to be both physically and spiritually inferior to men. Contemporary scientists even affirmed that women were biologically disadvantaged in relation to men. These traditional prejudices come to light in the articles of the *Encyclopédie*.

Les Anatomistes ne sont pas les seuls qui ayant regardé en quelque manière la femme comme un homme manqué ...

[L]es lois & les coutumes de l’Europe donnent cette autorité unanimement & définitivement au mâle, comme à celui qui étant doué d’une plus grande force d’esprit & de corps ...  

Graffigny’s message on the empowerment of women is all the more powerful in that it is delivered in a subtle and subversive manner. In most cases (at least in the original edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*), she does not insist on refuting the status quo. Moreover, to a certain extent, she conformed

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69 Although Graffigny agreed that women did not have all the attributes of men, she believed that they were born equal to men. Their inferior status resulted from being deprived of equal opportunities, such as education. In her second edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, she adds, “[I]l me semble que les femmes naissent ici … avec toutes les dispositions nécessaires
to contemporary expectations about women’s writing, such as her choice of
having Zilia present herself in a series of letters.

However convincing Graffigny’s message, we are still left wondering who
exactly was reading the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. This is an elusive question as
publishers’ records did not always survive and even when records survived,
publishing houses very rarely kept track of who was buying their books. Lists of
subscribers to the Encyclopédie offer one of the rare instances in which
eighteenth-century purchasers can be identified. According to Roger Chartier,
“The real buying public for the Encyclopédie was the traditional elites—the
clergy, military, nobility, parliamentary magistrates, the law, and the liberal
professions.”70 Unfortunately, this sheds very little light on who may have been
purchasing the Lettres d’une Péruvienne, not to mention that the books
themselves were vastly different in nature.

In addition, Chartier reminds us that there were three distinct book
markets in eighteenth-century France.

The first market was for rare and unusual books, and it functioned
much like the art market. … The second book market, based on
new books, was much broader in scope. … A third book market
reached an even wider public. Inexpensive editions of texts first
published for a more moneyed and therefore more limited clientele
were made available.71

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pour égaler les hommes en mérite et en vertus. Mais … leur orgueil [celui des hommes] ne pût
supporter cette égalité, ils contribuent en toute manière à les rendre méprisables.” MLA version.

70 Roger Chartier, “Book Markets and Reading in France,” Publishing and Readership in
Revolutionary France and America: A Symposium at the Library of Congress, Sponsored by the
Center for the Book and the European Division, ed. Carol Armbruster (Westport: Greenwood
Press, 1993) 129.
71 Chartier 118-121.
It seems likely that the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, after having passed through the “second” market consisting of new books, was distributed to a much wider audience in the “third” market. After all, as David Smith reminds us, Graffigny’s novel was even used in language instruction, and printed in bilingual editions.\(^2\)

Of course, readership cannot be based solely on whatever remaining records we have of purchasers and print runs. Eighteenth-century readers had other ways to access books.

Readers who could not afford books had access to them in two types of institutions. The great libraries (royal, religious, university, academic, or private) were open to varying degrees to scholars and men of letters. Beginning in 1760, bookshops created more and more lending libraries where, for an annual subscription of 10 to 12 livres, newspapers and gazettes, large and expensive reference works, and the most recent philosophical and literary works could be read or borrowed. … These popular libraries seemed to attract a large clientele from among the liberal professions, as well as among businessmen, students, teachers, and even artisans. … They were able to satisfy the demands of readers unable to afford the costly subscriptions of newspapers or to buy all the books they wanted to use.

In fact, we have already seen the example of Graffigny who read the books she purchased on behalf of her friends in Lorraine, and who passed them on to Devaux who also read them before they were finally delivered.

In the end, we are still left with the question, who was reading the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*? Was the novel primarily popular among men, women, or both sexes? Doubtless, the answers to these questions will continue to elude us for some time. In the mean time, we may surmise that the novel was popular because Zilia represented different things to different people. On one level,

\(^2\) David Smith, “The Popularity of Mme de Graffigny’s *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*” 5.
people appreciated her dramatic change in fortunes; but on another level, her final refusal to tie herself to a man, or adopt Christianity, was annoying. Some of the dissatisfaction may, perhaps, have spurred on other readers wanting to see what all the fuss was about.

CONTEMPORARY REACTIONS

In addition to the evidence previously discussed of the Lettres d'une Péruvienne’s widespread popularity, many articles and letters were published, both during Graffigny’s lifetime and afterwards, discussing the merits of her novel. In the Voltaire Foundation’s 2002 edition, Mallinson reprints eighteen different reactions to the Lettres d’une Péruvienne, not including excerpts from three sequels and one adaptation. Here I will concentrate on the reactions of Graffigny’s contemporaries.

Some of the commentators seem bitter over the novel’s obvious success, proclaiming that it nonetheless contained many defects. Behind continual reassurances that their remarks were insignificant, lay a torrent of biting criticism laden with (from today’s perspective) seemingly trivial detail. For me, these excessively meticulous reviews gave a false ring to the equally lavish praise intermingled with the critique. We must, however, keep in mind that Graffigny sometimes solicited remarks from friends and cohorts and that she valued both frank criticism and the ability to accept it. In fact, some of this literary advice may have caused her to consider a second edition. Accordingly, I will commence with
the material written prior to 1752. As we shall see, many of the critiques have elements in common. For example, Graffigny’s contemporaries complained that the novel lacked “vraisemblance;” contained historical inaccuracies; and had a “metaphysical,” moral, or philosophical tone that needed to be expanded or contracted in various ways. Some found it implausible that Zilia did not recognize the signs of love in Déterville, casting an air of suspicion and doubt upon the character. Also, some felt that Graffigny should expand Zilia’s observations on educational issues, both in general and as they relate to women. Most of all, they disliked the denouement and suggested numerous ways to change it.

First, Pierre Clément, a private tutor at the home of the British ambassador to France, discussed the Lettres d’une Péruvienne in his Cinq Années littéraires. After his first reading, he was not overly impressed with the work. However, he confesses that the enthusiasm of the public caused him to take another look. “J’avoue que cette impression n’avait pas été jusqu’à l’enthousiasme: mais voyant celui du Public, j’ai voulu en avoir ma part, et je me suis mis à relire pour y arriver.”73 He claims that he didn’t appreciate the book during his first reading because he paid too much attention to the faults, which he of course still finds present. Clément falls into the category of someone reading the book (rereading in this case) simply to see what others found so interesting.

Among other things, Clément objects to the metaphysical (or philosophical) tone of Zilia’s love letters. He is particularly surprised that a female character would express such views or even that Graffigny would be interested in

such things. “Ce qui m’étonne le plus est qu’un pareil goût soit entré dans l’esprit
der une femme, tandis que l’art d’un écrivain qui manie les passions est de faire
imiter les femmes à ses personnages, c’est-à-dire de leur faire tout mettre en
sentiments particuliers, sans les laisser presque jamais montrer de vues
générales.”

Although Graffigny adopted a form and a subject matter deemed
appropriate to her sex (an epistolary novel filled with love letters), she did not,
according to Clément, conform to the general view of women’s writing. In
addition, Clément is crystal clear about the fact that he did not like the ending of
the novel. “… le dénouement ne m’avait pas satisfait,” and “Quel dommage que
ce dénouement soit manqué! car il l’est. … toutes ses Lettres à Déterville … me
sont insipides.” He even goes so far as to suggest another conclusion, one in
which Aza remains faithful and Zilia, overwhelmed with emotion, dies. Again,
Graffigny’s ending did not conform to the traditional view of women. Clément’s
commentary (dated February 10, 1748) appeared shortly after Graffigny’s first
dition arrived on the market, making him one of the earliest critics of the Lettres
d’une Péruvienne. His commentary may, therefore, represent a critical “gut
reaction.”

Our next critic, L’abbé Joseph Gautier, was more lenient in his
assessment of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. This is understandable since, as we
learn from Mallinson, he was friends with Devaux and no doubt with Mme de
Graffigny. Gautier was both a mathematician and a man of letters. He is known
for his refutation of Rousseau’s first Discours. Graffigny liked Gautier, but felt that

74 Clément 251.
he made too few remarks and that his criticism was too restrained. On the other hand, Gautier is careful to point out that he only made these remarks in the first place to please Mme de Graffigny. It is true that Graffigny solicited and followed advice from her friends more than most authors. English Showalter points this out in his article, “Les Lettres d’une Péruvienne: composition, publication, suites.” “Mme de Graffigny cherchait des conseils peut-être plus que l’écrivain typique, et se laissait influencer davantage par les conseils qu’elle recevait.” In addition, Graffigny’s tendency to consult her friends is mentioned by Fréron in his Année Littéraire. Gautier’s letter to Graffigny can also be found in Gianni Nicoletti’s 1967 edition of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne.

Essentially, Gautier felt that Graffigny should strive for greater vraisemblance. He mentions that she should both shorten and expand some of the metaphysical elements, but does not make any specific suggestions. In addition, he said that she should not mention the poor opinion the French have of the Indians. His strongest criticism is levied against her poor grammar. Laying the blame on the main character not being a native speaker, he claims, is a poor excuse; and, it is not vraisemblant.

On a laissé les fautes de grammaire et les négligences de style, afin, dit-on, de ne rien dérober à l’esprit d’ingénuité qui règne dans cet ouvrage. Cette raison ne me paraît pas satisfaisante. Un lecteur malin prendra ce détour pour une excuse que s’est ménagée un auteur qui est comme sûr d’avoir fait des fautes contre la langue. Il

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75 Mallinson gleaned this information from an as yet unpublished manuscript. Mallinson, Footnote 253.
est vrai que ce qui rend cela excusable en quelque sorte, c'est qu'on a tenu parole. D'ailleurs,…, on dit que Zilia savait parfaitement la langue française lorsqu'elle traduisait ses lettres; cela ne contraste-t-il pas avec les fautes qu'on dit qu'elle a faites contre la grammaire?

One of the critics, whose advice Graffigny may have taken into account while revising the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* for her second edition, is Elie-Catherine Fréron – a journalist. Early on in his career, he collaborated with l'abbé Desfontaines (one of Voltaire’s arch enemies) on a magazine discussing modern literature. Because of his religious and monarchist ideas, he clashed vehemently with Voltaire and the philosophes. Jin Lu believes that Fréron’s analysis represents a new stage in the evolution of literary criticism. Not content to simply summarize a work, Fréron’s objective was to help authors improve their overall performance, while leaving ample room for his own ideas in the form of digressions. Accordingly, the first quarter of his critique consists of his own ideas, doubtlessly inspired by Mme de Graffigny’s status as a female author and his reading of the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*.

He begins by pointing out that anyone engaged in activities or thought outside the status quo is met with ridicule. Writers and thinkers wanting to avoid disdain must therefore hide their activities as they would a crime. If male authors have this much trouble gaining mainstream acceptance, it is all the more difficult

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79 Lu 105, 106.
for women.\textsuperscript{80} He then goes on to discuss the condition of women in French society.

Si l’on blâme dans les hommes d’un certain rang l’amour des Lettres, on le pardonne encore moins aux femmes. On les a, pour ainsi dire, condamnées à une ignorance perpétuelle. Il leur est défendu d’ornier leur esprit et de perfectionner leur raison. Notre orgueil a sans doute imaginé ces lois insensées. Comme les femmes nous effacent déjà par les charmes de la figure, nous avons craint qu’elles n’eussent encore sur nous la supériorité des lumières et des talents. Que nous entendons bien mal nos propres intérêts, en les livrant dès leur enfance à la mollesse, au monde et aux préjugés! Nous exigeons qu’elles soient raisonnables et vertueuses; mais le moyen qu’elles le deviennent, si de bonne heure on ne leur imprime des maximes de force et de sagesse? Se peut-il qu’on élève si mal la plus belle moitié de l’univers? Ce sexe charmant n’est-il donc fait que pour être l’objet de l’admiration passagère de nos yeux? Une pareille éducation nous prive des seuls vrais plaisirs, des plaisirs de l’esprit qu’on goûterait dans leur commerce. … Comme on les a accoutumées à n’estimer que les grâces extérieures, dès qu’elles les perdent, elles tombent dans un abandon qui les désespère. … Il serait à souhaiter que tous les Pères, qui sont en état de donner de l’éducation à leurs filles, leur fissent du moins apprendre à bien parler leur langue, à l’écrire purement.\textsuperscript{81}

Accordingly, he proclaims that Mme de Graffigny has contributed to the glory of her sex and of the French nation by writing the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}. A careful reader can see many of Fréron’s ideas (on education, the status of women, the need for women to speak and write French correctly, etc.) reflected in Graffigny’s second edition of the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}. Compare the following citation from an entirely new letter added to the 1752 edition with the above passage from Fréron’s critique.

\textsuperscript{80} Elie-Catherine Fréron, “Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps (Genève, 1749),” \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Mallinson 255, 256.
\textsuperscript{81} Fréron 256-257.
On voudrait, comme ailleurs qu'[e les femmes] eussent du mérite et de la vertu. Mais … l'éducation qu'on leur donne est si opposée à la fin qu'on se propose, qu'elle me paraît être le chef-d'œuvre de l'inconséquence française. … Régl er les mouvements du corps, arranger ceux du visage, composer l'extérieur, sont les points essentiels de l'éducation. … On borne la seule idée qu'on leur donne de l'honneur à n'avoir point d'amants… [I]ls attendent de leurs femmes la pratique des vertus qu’ils ne leur font pas connaître… Elles ignorent jusqu’à l’usage de leur langue naturelle; il est rare qu’elles la parlent correctement…

Graffigny could, of course, have been influenced by other sources, some of which will be discussed in another chapter. Nevertheless, it is impossible to say definitively where she got her inspiration. Furthermore, Graffigny by no means followed all of Fréron’s suggestions.

After his long preamble, Fréron gets into the particulars of his critique. He objects to the word “orientales,” claiming that the Indians of the Americas have nothing to do with Orientals. Although, many make this mistake, he believes it is unpardonable for our author. Also, in the introduction, Graffigny claims to have clarified some of the philosophical aspects of the text. Fréron points out that the “original text” (a fiction of the novel) could not have had philosophical terms, as South American languages were not rich or complex enough to express such ideas. He said that this would have been fine had the text been offered to the public as fiction, but instead it was offered as a set of “real” letters and was therefore inexcusable. In addition, he remarks that the heroine’s name starts with a “Z,” and that recently, names beginning with or containing the letter z were very popular for fictional characters. From his research on Peruvian culture, he states that quipos would not have been an adequate form of writing to express all of

82 Graffigny, Lettres d’une Péruvienne, ed. Miller 137-141.
Zilia’s thoughts. He also cites certain historical inaccuracies, but concedes that in a fiction it is not essential to be precise. Fréron finds fault with Zilia’s naivety. Being in love herself, she should have recognized the signs in Déterville. Instead, he sees the character as feigning innocence. Also, the incident in which Zilia does not recognize herself in a mirror is unrealistic. Surely, she would have seen her reflection in Peru, and the Peruvians in fact had primitive mirrors. He also finds it strange that Zilia cites a French author in her *quipos*.

In addition to numerous other seemingly insignificant details, Fréron nevertheless takes the trouble to point out Graffigny’s skill as an author. Moreover, he admits in several places that such details are insignificant. “Ces fautes, je l’avoue, sont de pures minuties.”

He believes, however, that an author demonstrates his or her merit through the details of a text. “C’est surtout dans les détails difficiles qu’on doit admirer l’esprit d’un Auteur.”

On a level above mere detail, Fréron, like so many others, was dissatisfied with the ending. “Je vous avoue … que ce denouement auquel je ne m’attendais pas, m’a fait une peine sensible.” He spends several paragraphs suggesting alternatives. For example, Zilia and Aza could have been related to a lesser degree. Alternatively, Zilia could have married Déterville; her friendship and gratitude toward him would have been reason enough.

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83 Fréron 267.
84 Fréron 265.
85 Fréron 263.
86 Aza used the excuse that Zilia was his relative to break their engagement. Marriages between close relatives were not permitted by the Christian religion.
reconnaissance seule devait la porter à faire la félicité d’un homme, qui n’avait cherché que la sienne.\textsuperscript{87}

Unable to accept the ending of the story as outlined by Graffigny, Fréron retained the hope that Zilia and Déterville would marry at a later date – a clear invitation for a sequel. Indeed, sequels to the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} were as popular as the book itself.

Joseph de La Porte is another journalist who in fact worked closely with Fréron at one stage of his career. His comments on the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} are in keeping with those of his contemporaries. He was less than pleased with the vogue of examining French society and morals by comparing them to other cultures.

\textit{[L’]endroit du Livre où nous sommes le plus maltraités, est toujours celui qui nous plait davantage. Les Lettres Persanes et les Lettres Juives n’avaient pas épuisé tous nos ridicules; il nous en restait encore assez pour l’ornement des Lettres Péruviennes; aussi sont-elles enrichies de notre abondance.}\textsuperscript{88}

He also finds Graffigny’s style somewhat “précieux.” Like Fréron, he finds several historical inaccuracies, and he suspects Zilia of duplicity for not recognizing the signs of love in Déterville. Like so many others, he is displeased with the ending. Aza’s infidelity has no other purpose than to make the other characters sad. He felt that Zilia was truly ignorant of love if she thought the study of philosophy would satisfy Déterville’s desire. He wonders if she will succumb to the Frenchman’s romantic inclination in the near future. Like Fréron, La Porte imagined an ending in keeping with his own desires.

\textsuperscript{87} Fréron 264.

Another critic, L’abbé Guillaume-Thomas Raynal started off as a priest but left the clergy to devote himself to philosophy and literature. He was involved with the *Encyclopédie* and knew Helvétius and Rousseau. He is best known for his multi-volume work on European colonization entitled *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* published in 1770. This work, though co-authored by other philosophes, earned him the reputation of a radical and forced him into exile.

At Mme de Graffigny’s salon, he was a regular.\(^89\) Accordingly, he starts his commentary in a very flattering way. Nevertheless, he quickly points out that the text has major defects. “Cet ouvrage, malgré son succès, a des défauts assez considérables. Le plan en est tout à fait vicieux.”\(^90\) He believes it lacks vraisemblance and that it is impossible to believe that Zilia did not notice Déterville’s love. He surmises that Graffigny, not able to distinguish herself through beauty as other women, threw herself into writing. “Cette femme, ne pouvant se distinguer par ce qui donne de l’éclat à nos femmes, s’est jetée dans le bel esprit, et vit avec les gens de lettres.”\(^91\) Evidently, a woman who is not beautiful, who has thrown herself into literature, and who has subsequently written a successful novel seems to disturb Raynal. Although a future radical, his view of Graffigny, a female author, remained conservative.

Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, an economist and a statesman, was also a frequent visitor at Graffigny’s salon. He is known primarily for his economic ideas.

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89 Mallinson, Footnote 276.
91 Raynal 277.
promoting free trade and just taxation. Through these methods, he hoped to relieve the suffering of the masses by increasing the prosperity of society at large. He starts his critique of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* by studying ways to expand the philosophical message. He believes that Zilia should recognize the superiority of organized society over the condition of the savage. In nature, men are not born equal. Their circumstances are different, and they have different strengths and passions. The distribution of labor and the tendency of people to specialize in a particular field are both necessary and useful, however, people will not be equal. After all, men everywhere desire property and the accumulation of goods. Zilia should carefully weigh the condition of the savage against that of the civilized man. It would, of course, be ridiculous to prefer the savage. However, Zilia could reveal how our institutions cause us to forget our natural ways. Specifically, this leads him into a discussion of eighteenth-century French educational practices. Turgot believed that the philosophical aspects of the novel are equally balanced with the storyline. Therefore, if Graffigny wants to expand the philosophy, she will also have to expand the story.

In any case, a few changes, regardless of Graffigny’s decision in the above matter, would not be out of place. Mainly, Turgot is dissatisfied with the ending and suggests numerous ways to amend it. Although he is aware of the feminist message Graffigny was trying to convey, he counsels her not to spoil her novel for the glory of women, especially as it will not have any effect on the status quo.

Je sais bien que vous avez voulu faire le procès aux hommes, en élevant la constance des femmes au-dessus de la leur… [J]e ne
vous conseillerais pas de gâter votre roman pour la gloire des femmes... D’ailleurs il n’en sera ni plus ni moins, et la chose demeurera toujours à peu près égale pour les deux sexes.  

Turgot would of course like the story to end with Zilia’s marriage, either to Aza or to Déterville. This would open the door for Graffigny to comment upon matrimony. She could focus on the right reasons to marry; especially as so many people, in Turgot’s opinion, marry for the wrong reasons. This discussion would then allow Graffigny to explore why people are unhappy with or unfaithful to their partners. People would be much better off if, at an early age, they learned to both give and receive criticism in a constructive way. Turgot recognized that the apprenticeship of humankind would be slow and multigenerational, and therefore knowledge would be transmitted through books. “[C]’est aux livres à être ainsi les précepteurs des nations.”  

Who then is better placed than Mme de Graffigny to spread these ideas. “[Q]ui peut mieux travailler que vous à répandre ces maxims?”

A major theme of discontent among these pre 1752 critics, possibly reflective of contemporary public opinion as previously discussed, is their dissatisfaction with the ending of the novel. The above critics of Graffigny’s first edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* seem to acknowledge, although in many cases reluctantly, that the book has philosophical content. We should, however, recall Pierre Clément’s surprise that a woman would be interested in such matters. Fréron expressed the general attitude politely when he characterized the

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93 Turgot 287.
94 Turgot 287.
Lettres d’une Péruvienne as “un mélange adroit et amusant de satire fine de nos mœurs, de saine Philosophie, et de peintures fortes et naïves de l’Amour.”

Nevertheless, with the obvious exception of Turgot, none of the critics discussed above (note that they are all men) entertained the idea that the conclusion of Graffigny’s novel could have been part of her philosophical message. All, however, felt that the ending of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne left them dissatisfied and that it should be changed.

Graffigny, on the other hand, felt differently! While discussing possible revisions in a letter to Devaux, she wrote, “Non, tranquillise-toi, Zilia ne sera pas mariée; je ne suis pas assez bête pour cela. Je n’ajouterai même rien à sa personne ni à ses sentiments, mais seulement je lui ferai remarquer des ridicules qui lui étaient échappés.”

It could not be more obvious that Graffigny did not want to change the conclusion of her novel. A conventional ending, as suggested by so many of her critics, would have brought the story in line with the status quo and destroyed the book’s final philosophical message – a woman can be independent and live happily, free of the bonds of Church and marriage.

It is interesting to compare the criticism of the 1747 edition of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne with that of the 1752 edition. In a few cases we are lucky enough to have before and after commentary from the same people, so that we can see how their perspective on the work changed with the modifications.

One person who reviewed both editions was l’abbé Joseph de La Porte. In his 1752 article, he only addresses the new material, as he does not want to

\[95\] Fréron 267.
\[96\] Graffigny, Choix de lettres 192.
repeat himself. He is pleased with the physical aspect of the book: beautiful paper, beautiful printing, images, and the inclusion of Cénie. For the most part, he contents himself with pointing out differences between the two editions by extensively quoting Graffigny. He draws our attention to Graffigny's commentary on the "superflu" claiming that Zilia has "une parfaite connaissance de nos moeurs." He seems less annoyed than he did in 1747 by the fact that Graffigny is pointing out a negative side of the French character. He next points out the new commentary on the education of women and does not forget to include a passage showing that Graffigny laid some of the blame on men. He also mentions that she clearly does not fall into the category of frivolous women herself.

He ends with a discussion of Graffigny's conclusion, which has not changed. He mentions that some readers are still dissatisfied that Zilia does not marry. He admits freely that novels and comedies almost always end with a marriage. "Il est vrai, que nos Romans et nos Comédies se terminent Presque toujours par des mariages."97 However, Mme de Graffigny, not content with the status quo, insists on the uniqueness of her character Zilia. Not content to simply equal men, she wishes to surpass them. "Madame de Grafigny ne se contente pas d'égaler les plus grands hommes, par les talents de l’esprit, elle veut encore les surpasser par les qualités du coeur, et leur donner dans ses écrits, des leçons de fermeté et de courage."98

The Mercure de France, overseen by l’abbé Raynal, commented briefly on the second edition of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. Although we cannot be sure if Raynal wrote the commentary himself, we know he was the editor of the Mercure de France during this time. Therefore, we may assume that the article is at least somewhat reflective of his opinion. This new commentary mentions a few of the changes to the second edition of Graffigny’s work, such as the historical introduction and the new letters. Although the new material is not long, it is sufficient. It contains some wise moral observations. The author mentions that Cénie is included in the volume and believes that this new edition will reaffirm Graffigny’s reputation. The overall tone of the second critique is neutral and polite. The author seems to have been less engaged than in Raynal’s first critique of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne.

Finally, Fréron also critiqued both editions. As he is somewhat prone to digression, the major part of his second critique discusses a book that an Italian gentleman wrote justifying the use Graffigny made of the Peruvian quipos, as a form of writing. Many critics had claimed that quipos could not be used to communicate complex ideas as one could with the Roman alphabet. Fréron claims that Garcilaso de la Vega himself believed that quipos were insufficient as a mode of communication and that orders from Peruvian rulers were conveyed across distances by relays of couriers who communicated their messages orally. Our unnamed Italian author invented an elaborate system for deciphering quipos, proving that they could in fact have served as a form of writing. Although, according to Fréron, the system is rather far fetched. In fact, Fréron wonders if
the Italian’s book, despite its serious tone, is not a joke. If it is a joke, Fréron feels it was pushed rather far. The system for reading quipos was, however, ingenious and imaginative.

In a very small section at the end of the article, Fréron finally mentions the new edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. He points out such things as the fact that it was printed by Duchesne in two small volumes. In addition, it was augmented by several new letters, an historical introduction, and a few corrections. For the most part, he approves of the corrections. However, in one case when he does not approve (a single sentence), he says reading the changed material is like reading quipos – it is indecipherable. Nevertheless, he claims, as he did in his first critique, that the defects are nothing compared to the beauties that fill the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. He is glad that “tout ce qui eft échapé à la plume élegante & philofophique de Madame de Grafigni”⁹⁹ can be found in one volume. He does not mention the ending of the novel, which had left him so disappointed at the time of his first critique.

The eighteenth-century Republic of Letters was characterized by a reading public who “understood themselves to be participating as they read an epistolary narrative.”¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, the critics of the 1747 edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* filled their critiques with advice and suggestions perhaps believing that they could influence the outcome of the novel. Conversely, the critics of the 1752 edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* do not offer their advice

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¹⁰⁰ Cook 16.
on how to amend and improve the novel. Such advice would have been pointless at a stage when they could no longer hope to influence the outcome of the novel. Graffigny had taken the advice she wanted, made her decisions, and published a second edition of her work in which she reaffirmed her desire for an independent and unmarried Zilia. The commentators of the 1752 edition, although still dissatisfied with the ending, were now forced to recognize its role in conveying Graffigny’s philosophical message. In its second more luxurious edition, the Lettres d’une Péruvienne established its reputation as one of the century’s’ more popular novels.

CONSEQUENCES OF CELEBRITY

Today, when thinking about well-liked novels, the words “bestseller,” “celebrity,” and “popularity” bring to mind images of wealth. Ironically, financial gain was not one of the results of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne’s success experienced by Graffigny. In a letter to a friend, she wrote concerning the sale of the original manuscript to Mme Pissot, “il n’y a pas moyen d’en avoir plus de 3 cents [francs.]”

In addition, after the sale of her manuscript, she would not have had any further rights over it, and therefore would not have been entitled to a share of the profit resulting from the book’s success. It was quite difficult to make a living from writing in the Eighteenth Century. Also, as I will discuss later,

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once her characters had been introduced to the public she would no longer have
had any control over them.

Instead, Graffigny became a witness to the ever-increasing popularity of her
novel and its ensuing sequels. As we have seen, it is noteworthy that none of the
sequels are by Graffigny herself. Writing a sequel would have at least provided
her with another manuscript to sell. It is likely that the public, ever desirous of a
“happy ending,” would have welcomed a sequel by Graffigny. In fact, two of the
five sequels appeared on the market before she published her second edition of
the Lettres d'une Péruvienne.

It appears that one of the primary objectives of sequel writers was to bring
original texts back into line with the status quo. In early print culture, readers saw
themselves as participating in the outcome of stories or debates.\textsuperscript{102} I believe that
this is a force at work in the apocryphal masculine replies (a genre in itself) to the
“female” epistolary novel. For example, Lapeyre reminds us that one of the
primary objectives of the Réponses to the Lettres Portugaises was to rehabilitate
the unfaithful lover from the fateful accusation of infidelity.\textsuperscript{103} Such was the case
in Les lettres d’Aza. In addition, the author, Lamarche-Courmont, included some
of his own social commentary.

Graffigny was forced to reassert herself by creating a second edition of her
novel, one in which the ending (true to her ideal) does not change. There is
evidence to suggest that this second edition was inspired, at least in part, by

\textsuperscript{102} Cook 16.

\textsuperscript{103} Paule Lapeyre, “Le Potentiel Tragique des Lettres Portugaises Déchargé dans les Réponses
these sequels in addition to the critiques of her contemporaries. The additional social commentary, specifically related to women, in the second edition seems to indicate that Graffigny seized the opportunity afforded by the immense popularity of the novel to more fully and explicitly express her views.

The popularity of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* waned during the 1830s when it was last reprinted. However, in recent years, it has been the focus of much research and numerous articles. The growing field of women’s studies has sparked renewed interest in the novel, and Françoise de Graffigny’s legacy remains with us today.
By its very nature, a sequel is inherently intertextual. Intertextual relationships are vast and complex. In fact, some theorists will say that all texts are linked at some level. In *The Poetics of Prose*, Tzvetan Todorov writes, “all texts can be considered as parts of a single text which has been in the writing since the beginning of time.”\(^\text{104}\) From a narrower perspective, even the term *sequel* comprises many elements. A wide array of authors have used the term to mean prequel, continuation, expansion, adaptation, spin-off, and a variety of other extensions. Due to the highly expressive nature of the word, we will begin with a working definition of *sequel*.

In this document, a *sequel* is any text that stems from another, and that bears a distinct relationship to the original text in terms of genre, chronology, characters, storyline, and the world created by the original. In other words, a sequel extends or expands the original text and is therefore bound by spatial and temporal constraints.

It is an obvious and natural reaction to examine any sequel in relation to its source text. In fact, good scholarship demands such an examination. However, the position of a text in society is larger than simply how we view it, either alone or in relation to other texts. Rather, scholars and students can learn much about a text by situating it in its social and historical context. Conversely, any given text can also help us to understand the society in which it was created and consumed.

A sequel is unique in literature because it is at the juncture of a popular original text, readers’ extensive knowledge of and interest in the text, and their desire to continue the text and often change its message. Because sequels encompass both original stories and responses to and adaptations of those stories that reflect the culture of the period, they are a valuable tool for researchers of historical culture. It is precisely because of audience participation in reaction to the original text that sequels add so much to cultural understanding.

Budra and Schellenberg tell us that sequels tend to be representative of the dominant culture at any given moment and exercise a stabilizing influence upon it. It follows then, that we can gain even greater insight into cultural patterns when the texts inspired by an original work are not by the same author. Such texts can be seen as responding to the original work and in some cases may be seen as representative of a general public sentiment.

Let us first examine some of the reasons writers might have for creating sequels, to their own work or that of others. If a writer enjoys a text, he or she

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105 Budra and Schellenberg.
might wish to recreate the experience enjoyed while reading it. There might be some compelling personal reason. The characters might be fascinating. Perhaps, authors wish to satisfy the desire of their reading public or fill a request from their publisher. Possibly, they wish to capitalize on the perceived demand for a sequel.

Jurgen von Stackelberg tells us that public desires can sometimes play a very decisive role in the continuation of a genre. Accordingly, these desires are of great interest to the literary historian. In fact, it is precisely these interests that lead them to study sequels to certain texts. Analysis is based on “l’horizon d’expectative.” In other words, what does the public expect? “Rien ne révèle mieux l’originalité, rien ne démontre plus clairement la qualité esthétique d’une œuvre que la comparaison de cet « horion d’expectative » avec les concepts réalisés dans celle-ci.”\(^\text{106}\) In short, sequels are well worth reading.

Through a sequel, we can discover the true extent of innovation in the original work. If original works were not innovative and at least partially at odds with the cultural sensibilities of the time, they did not warrant sequels. For the most part, only those novels that upset and concerned readers, in the sense of seeming to be incomplete or unsatisfactory, spawned sequels.

In some cases a sequel is written to honor the work of an original author. Or, as we have already said, writers may wish to correct something in the original work.\(^\text{107}\) In his work on Chaucer, Andrew Taylor writes:

A host of fifteenth-century poets proclaimed Chaucer as their master, borrowing images, rhetorical figures, and turns of phrase, in

\(^{106}\) Stackelberg 519.
elaborate tribute. On a few occasions, however, these poets went a step further and wrote sequels. ... But if 'success breeds sequels,' ... so, too, does a difficult ending, one which refuses the reader the appropriate form of closure. ... The sequel thus becomes not just an act of homage, but also an act of resistance to an author's more severe artistic or didactic purpose.\textsuperscript{108}

The sequels to Chaucer's work were written after his death. However, some writers who had the opportunity to view other authors' sequels to their work wrote their own sequels to counteract or thwart these unauthorized works. Sometimes, they would go as far as killing off their own characters to neutralize future attempts to modify their work. An excellent example of this practice is the sequel to \textit{Don Quixote}. Cervantes, amidst references to an impostor, ended his sequel with Don Quixote's death. The impostor in this case was a character from the unauthorized sequel. Cervantes used his sequel to regain control over his creation. Indeed, Schellenberg tells us that, "one of the most common functions of the early sequel seems to have been to strengthen an author's claim to his literary property."\textsuperscript{109} Only through producing a sequel could he hope to establish his "paternity" of the original text. We must keep in mind, however, that no text is ever irrevocably finished. Authors of sequels can always untangle the conclusions of original works no matter how carefully constructed.

\begin{quote}
Du fait des natures respectives de la lecture et de l'écriture, un roman peut toujours être considéré d'une certaine manière comme ouvert, dans la mesure où il laisse subsister des flous, des failles, des vides qui engendrent des appels. Et dans cette perspective,
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{109} Betty A. Schellenberg, "'To Renew Their Former Acquaintance': Print, Gender, and Some Eighteenth-Century Sequels," Part Two, eds, Budra and Schellenberg 90.
\end{footnotes}
Throughout the early history of France, authors enjoyed little or no legal protection. People, at that time, did not have a strong sense of literary property. During the Middle Ages, Taylor tells us, “writings flowed into each other in a stream of translations, free adaptations, reworkings, abridgements, and expansions.” This state of affairs transformed slowly over time. Nevertheless, by the Eighteenth Century, authors’ rights to their creations were still not fully recognized. Once they had sold their manuscripts to a publisher, they were not entitled to further proceeds. The system conferring a *privilège* or a provisional monopoly of the rights to print a book was primarily designed to protect publishers. Once an author sold a manuscript, he or she could no longer maintain control over the text.

In the Eighteenth Century, an author did not have a legal right to control the further use of his or her characters. Today, one does not need permission from an author to produce a parody or a criticism of his or her work. However, one does need permission to produce a sequel. Nevertheless, the rights of authors who create works that transform the nature of an original work are still not clear. The recent battle over the rights to Nabakov’s character Lolita illustrates the extent to which this issue has evolved and yet remains unresolved.

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111 Taylor 35.
112 Just as the *Lettres d’Aza* retells the story of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* from the perspective of another character, *Lo’s Diary* by Pia Pera retells the story of Lolita from Lolita’s point of view. The principal difference in perspective is of course that the *Lettres d’Aza* is from the male point of view.
Graffigny had no hope of controlling her characters once they had been introduced to the public. They seemed to take on a life of their own, and as we have seen, sequels abounded. If Graffigny wanted to leave her character living happily, well off, and independently, killing Zilia in order to stop the sequelization phenomenon was not an option. Instead, she exercised her authorial power by coming out with a second revised and augmented edition. It was revised and augmented because she believed she needed new material to attract readers.

Interestingly, Graffigny frequently claimed that she was only writing for money. However, we see that she also had a great deal of pride in her work, although Graffigny herself makes light of this fact. The following citations were taken from letters to Devaux who had accused her of secretly aspiring to fame.

Tu crois donc que j'ai du plaisir à écrire? Pas plus que tu n'en as vu. Ce n'est qu'en me forçant, en regrettant le temps que j'y emploie qui me servirait à lire. Mais j'ai en tête d'avoir des couverts; les miens sont cassés. Je ne me sers depuis plus de deux ans que de ceux de l'Abbé. Voilà mon point de vue, qu'il faut que je me remette à tout moment devant les yeux, pour ne pas tout laisser là. … Et que je n'écrirai jamais pour mon plaisir me pour la gloire, que je tâche de faire le mieux qu'il m'est possible parce qu'au pis-aller, si on sait que c'est de moi, j'ai l'amour-propre là-dessus pareil à celui de me pas aller dans le monde avec une robe tachée. Il ne va pas plus loin.\(^\text{113}\)

A propos de Zilie, tu as raison, c'est assurément par vanité que j'y prends tant de peine mais c'est de la même qui me fait défaire une feuille mal nouée dans ma tapisserie autant de fois qu'elle n’est pas à mon gré, et non pas cette sottise de faire parler de moi à laquelle je ne sone en vérité jamais directement, quoique je croie bien que

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\(^{113}\) Graffigny, Choix de lettres 117.
Nevertheless, Graffigny affirmed her creative intent by leaving the ending of her 1752 edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* untouched as originally planned.

The end in question is one where the heroine, Zilia, offers the comfort of her friendship to Déterville instead of the torments of love.

Venez, Déterville, venez apprendre de moi à économiser les ressources de notre âme, et les bienfaits de la nature. Renoncez aux sentiments tumultueux, destructeurs imperceptibles de notre être ; venez apprendre à connaître les plaisirs innocents et durables, venez en jouir avec moi, vous trouverez dans mon cœur, dans mon amitié, dans mes sentiments tout ce qui peut vous dédommager de l’amour.\(^{115}\)

Contemporary readers were left unsatisfied and troubled. Many felt that an ending containing neither retreat into a convent nor marriage was not really an ending at all.\(^{116}\) There was something missing and it needed to be “corrected.”

Although Graffigny refused to fashion her literary production according to public expectations, the authors of sequels to the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* were more than happy to oblige. Essentially all of these literary follow-ups contain “happy endings” to one degree or another.\(^{117}\)

In addition, the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* was inherently open-ended. Zilia’s monologue creates a sense of openness, as we only know one side of the story. The few letters she wrote to Déterville, once she has stopped writing to Aza, create the feeling of a new era. Also, Déterville’s continued presence throughout

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\(^{114}\) Graffigny, *Choix de lettres* 136.


\(^{116}\) Trousson 71.

\(^{117}\) Trousson 76.
the story elicits a response. According to Schneider, “[T]outes les Suites, …, peuvent trouver des justifications légitimes dans le texte même de Mme de Grafigny.” Finally, the very nature of an epistolary novel creates a sense of openness, begging authors to take up their pens.

THE FRENCH SEQUELS

THE FIRST SEQUEL (1747)

The first of the five sequels was published in 1747, shortly after the first appearance of the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* in the same year. David Smith tells us that this sequel “went through four editions in 1747 alone.” The author of the seven additional letters is anonymous, however, Grafigny attributed them to the Chevalier de Mouhy. He was an eighteenth-century writer, principally known for his plays, novels, and various writings on the theater. Mallinson tells us that he was “sans fortune” and lived from his writing. In addition to other texts, he wrote eighty novels, several of which were inspired by popular novels of his time. Grafigny’s suspicions have, as yet, not been confirmed.

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118 Schneider 28, 29.
120 Showalter, “composition, publication, suites” 25.
Interestingly, the first sequel was issued by the same publisher that printed the original text – A Peine. In fact, all four of the 1747 editions of this sequel (mentioned in the foregoing) came from the same publishing house. This, in conjunction with the fact that the author is not named in the “Avis de l'Editeur”, could perhaps have lead some readers to assume that Graffigny wrote the sequel. Moreover, the editor simply refers to “l'Auteur” making no distinction between the author of the Lettres d'une Péruvienne and the author of the sequel. “C'est ainsi que l'Auteur en juge, dans une Lettre qu'il m’a écrite, où il marque une tendre prédilection pour cette suite.” “Il,” of course, refers back to “l'auteur” – a masculine word and no clues are available as to the author’s sex or identity.

Modern critics view the first sequel to the Lettres d'une Péruvienne in a variety of ways. This is not surprising since the ending, although prolonged, is not significantly different from Graffigny’s original text. At the end of the story, as Graffigny told it, Zilia offers her friendship to Déterville. In the first sequel, Zilia reiterates her offer and Déterville accepts it. Bernard Bray and Isabelle Landy-Houillon, in their 1983 edition, notice the similarity between the two conclusions; “la première « Suite », … respectant à peu près le dénouement original, se contente de le retarder en prolongeant l'intrigue.”

Some critics have asked themselves why someone would write a new ending in which the outcome of the story remains essentially the same. In his article “Les Lettres d'une Péruvienne: Composition, Publication, Suites,”

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124 Bray. 243.
Showalter surmises that this sequel was no more than a hasty attempt to cash in on the success of the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*. Jacques Rustin, on the other hand, remarks that the first sequel attempts to explain Graffigny’s ending, a point that will be further explored here. Conveniently, neither of these statements precludes the veracity of the other.

This first sequel differs from the original text in that it breaks the diary-like aspect of only being exposed to one point of view. In Graffigny’s version, the letters are all written by Zilia, who even translated her own letters from quipos into French. Conversely, the first sequel includes two additional voices, those of Déterville and Céline respectively. In fact, each character writes at least once to each of the other characters maximizing the number of different opinions expressed.

The feeling conveyed in Déterville and Céline’s letters (and by some of Graffigny’s contemporary critics) is that simple gratitude would be reason enough for Zilia to give her “love” to Déterville. In fact, in this sequel, Déterville was hoping Zilia would turn to him to spite Aza. He wants to be with her so much that her reasons for being with him would matter little.

Heureux si dans ces divers sentiments, il entroit de l’amour pour moi, je sens bien que ma délicatesse en seroit blessée, mais n’importe, elle m’aimeroit; je devrois, à la vérité, mon bonheur au dépit; mais je le devrois aussi peut-être à la reconnoissance.

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125 Showalter, “composition, publication, suites” 25.
According to this sequel, maintaining a mere friendship with the object of one’s love is cruel, since what one desires is constantly present yet unattainable. Friendship with Zilia would only make his pain worse. Both Déterville and Céline feel that friendship is a feeble recompense for the most tender and devoted love. In addition to the added suffering that Déterville experiences by being forced into a mere friendship with Zilia, we feel especially sorry for him because, as Céline tells us, Zilia is his first love. The reader understands that Zilia’s desire to be faithful to an unfaithful lover is rather silly behavior. Although we still believe in Zilia’s sincerity, she now appears unreasonable and not as grateful as she should.

Essentially, through Céline’s insightful letters, readers are led to expect an imminent change in Zilia’s sentiments toward Déterville. Céline claims that it would not be natural for Zilia to continue loving Aza after his infidelity and that she will soon realize that an unrequited love is pointless. Moreover, Céline encourages Déterville and the reader to believe that friendship between a man and a woman naturally contains the seeds of passion. “Cette amitié si pure en apparence, aura néanmoins en naissant le germe de la passion.” Also, it would be unseemly for Zilia to transfer her affections too quickly. Through the veil of friendship, love can develop in a proper and decorous manner. In fact, the parties involved may not even perceive the change themselves.

[N]’importe, toutes leurs précautions ne changeront rien au progrès imperceptible de la nature, & bien-tôt ils seront étonnés d’être amoureux l’un de l’autre sans s’en être aperçus. Cette amitié donc que l’on vous offre, mon cher Déterville, est, selon moi, le premier

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Céline’s letter is never delivered because it is misplaced and found by Zilia who promptly writes to Déterville protesting the purity of her motives and reaffirming that he should expect nothing more than friendship. Déterville replies accepting her friendship. He never doubted the purity of her motives. He adds knowingly, with a literary wink at the reader, that he will nevertheless hope for more.

In addition to alluding to a more traditional conclusion, this sequel also alters Zilia’s views on Christianity. Zilia’s refusal to accept Christianity was a point of contention among contemporary critics. Thanks to Aza’s example, Zilia is finally ready to open her mind to a new religion. After all, if Aza in his infinite wisdom converted to Christianity, Zilia should at least learn something about it.

[C]e pense que je dois aussi étudier votre Religion. Aza, dont les connoissances étoient sublimes, comme fils du Soleil doit avoir l’esprit plus vif & plus pénétrant que moi, il a pu connoître des défauts que je ne vois pas dans la nôtre : … Quand je quittai le Pérou j’étois persuadée qu’il étoit seul le favori du Soleil. Que notre seul horizon en étoit éclairé, & que les autres Peuples étoient dans d’obscures ténèbres. Je n’ai pas tardé à reconnoître mon erreur ; il me semble donc que des instructions qui me seront données par Déterville, dont la droiture, la candeur, la modération, la générosité forment le caractère, feront sur moi plus d’impression.130

Céline counsels Zilia to get rid of the prejudices formed by her native religion. “Si vous désirez vous éclairer sur notre Religion, ne craignez point que Déterville vous instruise avec tirannie; … mais ma chère Zilia, pour ce grand ouvrage, il

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Here again we are left with a negative impression of Zilia. Without Aza’s guiding example, she remained closed minded and prejudiced. It seems that she needs a man to guide her. Of course, Déterville is ready to step in and set her on the right path.

In essence, the author of this sequel tries to overturn our belief in Zilia’s common sense. Thus, we are led full circle, back to the condescending opinion expressed in the “Avis de l’Editeur” – “Dans la première Partie de ces Lettres Zilia n’avoit encore changé que d’habit; mais [le Lecteur] trouvera dans celle-ci, plus de progrès qu’il n’en devoit attendre d’un naturel Indien.” Although the desired outcome has not been achieved (a marriage between Zilia and Déterville), these new letters show that Zilia has not only changed her clothing from her Indian garb to the European habit, but that she has made more intellectual progress than one would expect from an Indian. Although the conclusion is not significantly different from the original story, the door is left open for Zilia’s intellectual development (especially in regards to Christianity) and for a more traditional ending.Implicitly, both events will occur sometime after the final pages of the story.

Interestingly, the letters are organized into a symmetrical pattern. For example we have letters from Zilia (Z), Déterville (D), and Céline (C). They are organized in the following pattern: D Z C D C Z D. If one wished to infuse this with meaning, it is possible to say that Déterville punctuates the series of letters by both beginning it and ending it. Furthermore, he marks the center of the

series. After all, the way in which Zilia will respond to his love is the central question of this sequel. Symbolically, he is surrounded by Céline who (as evidenced by her letters) tries to protect him, and he surrounds Zilia and Céline whom, in keeping with his masculine role, he actually protects and guides. Moreover, the organization of the letters gives both the first word and the last word to the man.

**LES LETTRES D’AZA OU D’UN PÉRUVIEN (1748)**

The second and longest sequel, *Les lettres d’Aza ou d’un Péruvien* was written by Ignace Hugary de Lamarche-Courmont. He was of noble origin and throughout his career served in different capacities with various noble families. He was interested in literature as evidenced by several publications in addition to the *Lettres d’Aza*. In 1753, he obtained a “privilège” to publish a monthly journal called *Journal étranger*. 133

In his sequel, Courmont responds to readers’ desires. In a series of letters written by Aza to his friend Kanhuiiscap, Courmont replies to the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. First, he created the desired “happy ending” satisfying both his editors and readers. Second, he restores a positive image of Aza. One no longer looks on this character’s acceptance of Christianity and European values as an infidelity. In fact, in Courmont’s version, Aza was not unfaithful to Zilia or to

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133 Mallinson, Footnote 316.
himself and the two characters are reunited. Finally, like Zilia, Aza records his impressions of European society.

In a footnote at the beginning of his work, feigning to be the translator of Aza’s letters, recently discovered in Spain, Courmont clearly states his intentions.

Je sentis, avec joie, s’effacer de mon âme les idées odieuses que Zilia m’avait données d’un prince plus malheureux qu’inconstant. J’imagine que les autres lectures éprouveront le même plaisir ; car on aime toujours voir la vertu justifiée.\footnote{Françoise de Grafigny and Ignace Hugary de la Marche-Courmont, “Les Lettres d’Aza.” Lettres d’une Péruvienne: augmentées et suivies de celles d’Aza, tirées d’un manuscript espagnol, et traduites de l’anglais par P. Durand (Paris: Chez Durand, 1802) 176.}

Indeed, the \textit{Lettres d’Aza} seems to have reflected and satisfied contemporary readers’ expectations.

Many twentieth-century critics see little to recommend the \textit{Lettres d’Aza}. It has been called a “[c]omplément sans grand intérêt,”\footnote{Trousson 76.} and a “vulgaire suite de l’œuvre de Mme de Grafigny.”\footnote{Colette Plau-Gillot, Preface. \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} (1747), by Françoise de Grafigny (Paris: Côté-Femmes, 1990) 9. No other citations will be taken form this edition of the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} as it is not favorably looked on by scholars. “Its text seems to be a mixture of the 1747 and the 1752 editions, with numerous revisions which were certainly not the work of Mme de Grafigny.” David Smith, “Graffigny Rediviva” 75.} In 1967, Henri Coulet, author of the \textit{Roman jusqu’à la Révolution}, wrote that Courmont “ramenait le roman au niveau le plus vulgaire . . . et dénaturait le dessein de Mme de Graffigny.”\footnote{Stackelberg 518.}

Graffigny herself saw little to recommend Courmont’s work. She commented: “Je le trouve assez bien pour le sentiment, fort sot pour les critiques des mœurs, et très faible imitateur.”\footnote{David Smith, “The Popularity of Mme de Graffigny’s \textit{Lettres d’une Peruvienne}” 7.} To Graffigny’s chagrin, editions of the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} often included the \textit{Lettres d’Aza}. Lamarche-Courmont
was not always cited as an author, and Graffigny was thought to have written both works.\textsuperscript{139}

To counter balance the opinion of twentieth-century critics and of Graffigny herself, it is interesting to note that not everyone regarded Courmont as a “faible imitateur.” Goldoni, the writer of \textit{La Peruviana} already mentioned in conjunction with various sequels to the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, appreciated both the work of Graffigny and of Courmont.

Non seulement il n’a trouvé aucune différence thématique et structurelle entre ces deux textes, mais, et cela pourrait vraiment étonner si l’on était prêt à s’étonner, il a admiré également le style de Mme de Graffigny et celui de Lamarche-Courmont.\textsuperscript{140}

Indeed, the storyline of \textit{La Peruviana} contains elements from both the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} and the \textit{Lettres d’Aza}.

Although Graffigny did not write a sequel, the 1752 edition of the \textit{Péruvienne} appears to be her literary response to her critics and to the \textit{Lettres d’Aza}. Here, I will primarily discuss her response to the \textit{Lettres d’Aza}. On further examination of the three texts in question (both editions of the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} and the \textit{Lettres d’Aza}), one can more easily accept that Graffigny’s second edition was in fact a response.

Graffigny revised the novel for the 1752 edition, making numerous small changes and corrections throughout. Most important, she added two entirely new letters (29 and 34), reworked the original letter 28, and included part of it in a new letter 30.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{139} David Smith, “The Popularity of Mme de Graffigny’s \textit{Lettres d’une Peruvienne}” 7.
\textsuperscript{140} Stackelberg 526.
\textsuperscript{141} Miller, Note on the Text, \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller xxv.
Indeed, the new letters “contain the novel’s most unflinching social protest.”142

Moreover, they correspond to themes addressed by the Lettres d’Aza.

Before examining Graffigny’s “reply” to the Lettres d’Aza in the 1752 edition of the Péruvienne, it is first necessary to compare the 1747 edition with Courmont’s sequel. For purposes of the following discussion and until otherwise noted, I am referring to the 1747 edition.

LETTRES D’AZA : COURMONT’S REPLY TO GRAFFIGNY

Roughly speaking, the Lettres d’Aza has the same general framework as that of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. Aza suffers separation from Zilia. He is then captured by the Spanish and taken to Spain where he is faced with learning a new language and culture. As Zilia formed bonds with Déterville and Céline, Aza strikes up a friendship with Alonzo and his daughter Zulmire. Both stories contain a love triangle. Déterville loves Zilia who only loves Aza, and Aza who only loves Zilia is loved by Zulmire. Both Peruvians study the customs, habits, and morals of European society. Also, both suffer from an illness brought on by emotional stress, and both nearly die.

In addition, Courmont imitates Graffigny’s style by employing some of the same imagery and vocabulary found in the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. For example, the first sentence in both works compares Zilia’s cries to morning dew.

142 Miller, Footnote in introduction, Lettres d’une Péruvienne, ed. Miller xxii.
Zilia : Les cris de ta tender Zilia, tells qu’une vapeur du matin, s’exhalent et sont dissipés avant d’arriver jusqu’à toi. 143

Aza : Puissent tes pleurs se dissiper comme la rosée se dissipe au lever du soleil ! 144

Courmont echoes Graffigny by reemploying the word “dissiper.” Elsewhere in the text, Courmont uses the image of “une vapeur.” There are other examples of stylistic similarities, however a detailed analysis of the language employed by Courmont would exceed the scope of this analysis.

Though the similarities between the Lettres d’une Péruvienne and the Lettres d’Aza are numerous, it is the differences that are most striking. For example, both Peruvians are faced with learning to communicate in a new language and culture. However, Aza appears to be more active than Zilia. He takes steps to procure his own tutor and we read nothing of his struggles to master the language. In fact, he is almost instantly endowed with the ability to hold a conversation. Conversely, Zilia is reliant on the benevolence of Déterville. She does not look for her own tutor. Moreover, Graffigny includes detailed descriptions of Zilia’s struggle with the language.

Zilia : Le Cacique [Déterville] m’a amené un Sauvage de cette Contrée qui vient tous les jours me donner des leçons de sa langue. … [S]i je réussis un jour…, je suis bien assurée que ce ne sera pas sans beaucoup de peines. 145

Aza : [J]’ai cherché un maître qui pût m’instruire dans cette langue. Grâce à ses soins, je suis déjà en état de tenir une conversation. 146

143 Graffigny, Lettres d’une Péruvienne, ed. Miller 17.
145 Graffigny, Lettres d’une Péruvienne, ed. Miller 72.
146 “Les Lettres d’Aza” 236.
Amazingly, Aza never seems to run out of quipos – colored threads woven together by Peruvians as a from of writing. While composing his letters, he continually refers to “les nœuds que je forme.” In fact, we learn in a footnote that all of Aza’s letters were translated from Peruvian quipos by his friend Kanhuiscap.\footnote{“Les Lettres d’Aza” 174.} Zilia, on the other hand, does run out of quipos. After a long period of silence she begins to write in French. Eventually, she translates her own letters. It is interesting to note that the majority of Zilia’s letters are addressed to Aza. In fact, until she learns of his infidelity, all of her letters are directed exclusively to him. Aza, in turn, addresses the majority of his letters to a friend. Only three letters out of thirty-five in the \textit{Lettres d’Aza} are written to Zilia, the first two and the second to last.

Another striking difference between Zilia and Aza is their approach to religion. Both are amazed by religious hypocrisy. Nevertheless, while Zilia remains loyal to her native religion, Aza eventually converts to Christianity. The reader sees how Aza first abandons his religion when he discovers science and reason.

\begin{quote}
Si nous avions été instruits des secrets de la nature comme les Espagnols, nous aurions su que le tonnerre qu’ils nous lançaient n’était qu’une masse de matière qui se trouve dans notre pays : que Yalpor lui-même, ce dieu terrible, n’est qu’une vapeur qui s’élève de la terre et se dirige au hasard dans le vague des airs.\footnote{“Les Lettres d’Aza” 290.}
\end{quote}

Espousing reason and expressing doubts about the nature of religion was not uncommon during the eighteenth-century enlightenment. Indeed, many of the leading philosophes found Christianity corrupt and absurd and tried to reduce it
to a minimum that educated people would find credible. Fontenelle and others argued that the belief in vengeful gods was the invention of primitive men, powerless against the forces of nature. Instead, reason proved that superstition did not exist and that the laws of physics governed nature. Nevertheless, Porter reminds us that “[v]ery few intellectuals wanted to replace religion with out-and-out unbelief. For one thing, most believed that science and philosophy, though casting doubt upon the existence of the specifically Christian, Biblical, anthropomorphic ‘God of miracles’, nevertheless pointed to some sort of presiding Deity.”\(^{149}\) Indeed, for much of his career Voltaire promoted belief in a God independent of the Christian church.

Aza's faith in reason is in keeping with the times. Nevertheless, his conversion to Christianity seems to be genuine. This is another instance where Courmont complied with readers’ expectations. By not declaring war on philosophy, but instead reconciling it with Christianity, Courmont attempted to defuse some of Graffigny’s more radical views. Likewise, some of Graffigny’s friends, and perhaps a larger audience, continued to wish that Zilia show herself to be “plus décidément chrétienne.”\(^{150}\)


\(^{150}\) Trousson 74.
Although Les lettres d'Aza was written in response to the Lettres d'une Péruvienne and to a large extent parallels its structure, Courmont allowed himself freer reign in his observations of contemporary society. Specifically, he includes several sections of social commentary. Among his topics are the “divinity of good taste”, women, and philosophy. Some of the changes made to the 1752 edition of the Lettres d'une Péruvienne seem to be a literary reply to Courmont's observations made through the eyes of Aza.

Graffigny, in her second edition of the Lettres d'une Péruvienne, accepts Courmont’s portrayal of the pursuit of fashion and decorum as a cult to the “divinity of good taste.” In fact, both authors agree that appearances, as opposed to reality, are of utmost importance in eighteenth-century society.

Zilia: Il faut paraître riche, c'est une mode, une habitude, on la suit.\textsuperscript{151}

Aza : Ce n'est rien d'être sage, la seule chose nécessaire est de le paraître.\textsuperscript{152}

In a new letter twenty-nine, Graffigny pushes Courmont's analysis one step further by describing the practical consequences of trying to “paraître.” The sacrifice of well-being and health are the results of “false opulence.” Those who pursue splendor beyond their means become “les martyrs de cette religion.”

Interestingly, Rousseau also discussed the issue of “être et paraître” in his Discours sur l'Origine de l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes written for the Academy of

\textsuperscript{151} Graffigny, Lettres d'une Péruvienne, ed. Miller 121.
\textsuperscript{152} "Les Lettres d'Aza" 264.
Dijon’s essay contest in 1753. Rousseau felt that one gained more consideration from peers by appearing to be what one was not.


Graffigny also addresses Courmont’s commentary on women in her new letter thirty-four. To a lesser extent, she had talked about injustice to women in her first edition. Perhaps Graffigny’s original observations inspired Courmont to write about women in the first place. Evidently displeased by his portrayal of unfaithful and conniving females, Graffigny greatly expands her feminist commentary in the 1752 edition of the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}. She seems to echo and agree with Fréron’s commentary on the 1747 edition.\footnote{154 See Chapter two for a more detailed explanation.}

From a twenty-first century perspective, it is surprising that Graffigny did not refute Courmont’s characterization of women. However, one must not forget that people are subject to the prejudices of the time in which they live. Accordingly, she criticizes society’s disregard for women’s education and men’s desire to retain their superior status as the causes of female “licence” and “perfidie.”

\textit{Régler les mouvements du corps, arranger ceux du visage, composer l’extérieur, sont les points essentiels de l’éducation. …} \footnote{155 Graffigny, \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller 139, 140.}

\textit{[Il]ls attendent de leurs femmes la pratique des vertus qu’ils ne leur font pas connaître.}

\textit{[Il] me semble que les femmes naissent ici … avec toutes les dispositions nécessaires pour égaler les hommes en mérite et en vertus. Mais … leur orgueil [celui des hommes] ne pût supporter}
Graffigny notes that the lack of education and ignorance are self-perpetuating problems. Meanwhile, Zilia calls on Aza to be her example and her guide.

In virtually the same breath\textsuperscript{157}, Graffigny draws our attention to the problem of infidelity in marriage, her reply to Courmont’s long diatribe in the \textit{Lettres d’Aza} on the same subject.

Courmont depicts women who seduce men for prestige and not for love. Unfaithful to their husbands, they are equally unfaithful to their lovers who they continually switch upon growing tired of them.\textsuperscript{158} Later in the text, Courmont writes, “[Les espagnols] sont plutôt des ravisseurs que des maris,” and that ”c’est la perfidie des femmes qui force leurs maris à cet acte tyrannique.”

Instead of taking issue with Courmont, Graffigny again pushes his analysis one step further laying blame on lack of education.

Pourrais-tu comprendre sur quel fondement on exige d’elle la pratique des vertus, dont les hommes se dispensent en lui refusant les lumières et les principes nécessaires pour les pratiquer?\textsuperscript{159}

Moreover, Graffigny suggests that after marriage vows are pronounced, only women are bound by them and that they have no legal recourse against the injustice of men.

Un mari, sans craindre aucune punition, peut avoir pour sa femme les manières les plus rebutantes . . . Il est autorisé à punir rigoureusement l’apparence d’une légère infidélité en se livrant sans honte à toutes celles que le libertinage lui suggère. Enfin, mon

\textsuperscript{156} Graffigny, \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller 143.

\textsuperscript{157} We are still discussing Graffigny’s new letter thirty-four in conjunction with Courmont’s portrayal of women in the \textit{Lettres d’Aza}.

\textsuperscript{158} “Les Lettres d’Aza” 282, 284.

\textsuperscript{159} Graffigny, \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller 145.
cher Aza, il semble qu’en France les liens du mariage ne soient réciproques qu’au moment de la célébration, et que dans la suite les femmes seules y doivent être assujetties.\textsuperscript{160}

Graffigny herself was often the victim of violent physical attacks by her husband. It was not without great difficulty that she succeeded in obtaining a legal separation.\textsuperscript{161} Hence, it is not surprising that she reacted so strongly to Courmont’s commentary on women.

Graffigny did not always react by producing additional pages of text. As already mentioned, the most noticeable aspect of the 1752 edition is that Graffigny left her ending unchanged. Her refusal, despite public opinion to the contrary, reinforces the idea of Graffigny’s feminist message. So in the end, Déterville must be satisfied with Zilia’s friendship.

Interestingly, Graffigny herself maintained a strong friendship with François-Antoine Devaux with whom she corresponded daily for twenty years. In their letters, they often examined the nature of their unique relationship.\textsuperscript{162} Perhaps Graffigny used her own experience as a model for Zilia’s relationship with Déterville.

In the end, the overall effect of the \emph{Lettres d’Aza} is one of masculine self-possession and supremacy. The original title, \emph{Lettres d’Aza ou d’un Péruvien: Conclusion des Lettres Péruviennes}, does nothing to attenuate this impression. In addition to making the sweeping claim of completing Graffigny’s work,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{160} Graffigny, \emph{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller 143, 144.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Miller, Introduction, \emph{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} ed. Miller x.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Mallinson remarks that the Lettres d’Aza extends its authority over the Lettres d’une Péruvienne by providing a key to clearer understanding of the text.

Les Lettres d’Aza servent, en fait, non seulement à compléter les lettres de Zilia de façon plus traditionnelle, mais à en fournir la clé; elles expliquent un roman qui n’a choqué que parce qu’il a été mal compris.  

THE LAST SEQUEL (1797)

The final and most recent sequel to the Lettres d’une Péruvienne contains fifteen letters in French written by Madame Morel de Vindé. Little is known about her life. However, her husband had a minor role in politics and published various novels and works on morality. The Vindé sequel is the fifth sequel overall, but the third in French. It is separated from the two earlier French sequels by not only half a century, but by the turmoil and sweeping political changes of the French Revolution. Although many texts of this period reflect political and social upheaval, the Vindé sequel does not. It provides simple and easy solutions to the dilemmas of the text. Graffigny’s philosophical work is thereby concluded with a marriage and a traditional happy ending. Perhaps, this easy ending provided readers with an escape from the harsh realities of the time.

Vindé accepted Graffigny’s stylistic device of a single point of view. Therefore, all the letters in this sequel are written by Zilia. They are shown below in chronological order, and each recipient is noted – Déterville (D), Céline (C),

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and Céline’s husband (H). They are organized as follows with the center point marked in boldfaced type: CDCCCCC\textbf{D}CDDCDDH. Unlike Graffigny’s text, in which Zilia realizes that her letters may never be delivered and she discovers that she is in fact writing for herself, Vindé’s Zilia is writing for others and knows that her letters will be read. She even expands her confidences to include Céline’s husband.

At times, our heroine waxes melodramatic. Her emotions run away with her to such an extent that she directly addresses the person she is writing about instead of the recipient of the letter. For example, in a letter to Céline, Zilia writes, “Aza! cruel Aza! tu ne m’as jamais aimée!”\textsuperscript{165} In addition, she occasionally refers to herself in the third person. Accordingly, we see that Vindé’s Zilia has not only widened her circle of correspondents, but has become detached from herself. In a letter to Déterville, she writes, “Zilia se détesteroit si elle avoit pu mériter d’être moins aimée de vous.” Using the third person instead of the first to talk about oneself can be viewed as objectifying oneself or as taking the position of an outside observer. Zilia’s use of the third person to refer to herself is thus in keeping with an increasingly outward perspective and a greater focus on others.

The letters start with a series of confidences between Zilia and Céline in which Aza is mentioned frequently. Through the correspondence, we witness the gradual and natural evolution of Zilia’s sentiments. Essentially, we follow Zilia’s mental state from one of total preoccupation with Aza to one of total preoccupation with Déterville. Ultimately, the entire story revolves around

\textsuperscript{165}“‘Suite’ del 1797,” ed. Gianni Nicoletti 396
Déterville, and a letter to him symbolically marks the midpoint of this sequel as seen above.

Essentially, Vindé fulfills Céline’s prediction from the first sequel, that friendship between a man and a woman is the first stage of love. Zilia seems to need constant reaffirmation of Déterville’s sentiments. Moreover, she frequently expresses “love” without labeling her feelings. For example, in a letter to Céline, Zilia writes about an evening spent with Déterville.

[N]ous étions animés d’une joie pure et douce; nous osions nous regarder, car nos yeux n’exprimoient que le bonheur. Oh! Comme cette soirée passa vite! Nulle contrainte ne venoit gêner nos expressions: ce que l’un disoit l’autre le pensoit; et nous n’avions à retenir ou à cacher aucun des mouvements de notre âme.  

In order for Zilia to completely love Déterville, all thought of Aza must be eliminated. Vindé accomplishes this by making him an accomplice to the Spanish and a traitor to the Peruvian nation and people.

[C]’est [Aza] qui leur enseigne les moyens de mieux tourmenter nos compatriotes pour leur enlever leur or. Il trahit ses innocents et fidèles sujets, indique leurs mines et leurs retraites, et les livre à la persécution, déguisée sous le nom imposteur de conversion; il est le favori, le vil esclave du gouvernement qui a porté le fer et la flamme dans nos climats.

Through betraying their countrymen, Aza loses Zilia’s love and respect. She feels he must be obliterated from her mind. The mere thought of him, now, only causes her shame. Déterville, of course, remained magnanimous and loving throughout Aza’s demise. In fact, he tried to shield Zilia from the knowledge of

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Aza’s treachery. Thus, Vindé successfully eliminated Zilia’s feelings for Aza, a looming obstacle preventing any possible relationship with Déterville.

Vindé uses the story of a destitute family to direct the outcome of the intrigue. The mutual desire of Déterville and Zilia to help this family brings them closer together. Eventually, Zilia admits that what she feels for Déterville is beyond love, claiming that there is no word in French to express her true feelings. Love involves pain, tears, and deception; while with Déterville, she only experiences pleasure and happiness. Clearly, in this sequel, Zilia has much stronger feelings for Déterville than she ever did for Aza.

Déterville, in turn, loses his fortune; and, Zilia finds herself in a position to return the kindness that had been bestowed upon her. She acts like a businesswoman, visiting debtors, collecting promissory notes, signing contracts, etc. She has no attachment to her Peruvian treasure. She remorselessly melts down the golden ornaments from the Temple of the Sun to pay Déterville’s debts.

Let us recall Graffigny’s description of Zilia upon receiving these ornaments.

Un sentiment confus, mêlé de tristesse et de joie, de plaisir et de regret, remplit tout mon Cœur. Je me prosternai devant ces restes sacrés de notre culte et de nos Autels; je les couvris de respectueux baisers, je les arrosai de mes larmes; je ne pouvais m’en arracher, j’avais oublié jusqu’à la présence de Céline.  

Moreover, we see from Graffigny’s text that these ornaments are intimately associated with the memory of Aza. Like Zilia’s feelings for Aza, Vindé disposes of the objects that recall images of Aza and of the past. By willingly and
remorselessly disposing of these objects for the benefit of Déterville, Zilia shows how deeply in love she has become with her benefactor and “friend.” Zilia essentially obliterates her past and becomes completely absorbed in the present – her life in France and Déterville.

The reversal of Zilia and Déterville’s respective fortunes dramatically alters the dynamics of power. Déterville is now the needy one, and Zilia is in a position to help him. Unlike Zilia, Déterville is not a gracious recipient and tries to refuse her gifts. Perhaps his masculine pride will not allow him to comfortably accept such generous gifts from a woman, or, perhaps he is using the situation to force the issue of Zilia’s affections out into the open.

In any case, Déterville’s refusal prompts Zilia to offer him her hand in marriage. “[C]ette main que vous avez tant désirée, je vous l’offre.” Although subtle, it is worth noting that she does not ask him to marry her, but instead offers herself in marriage. Finding herself in the more powerful position, she chooses to retain, at least lexically, some of her feminine passivity. Déterville, still unsure of Zilia’s sentiments, demands and receives assurances of her love.

Dites-moi Zilia, à quel sentiment je dois attribuer l’offre de votre main : est-ce une reconnaissance exagérée qui vous en fait un devoir ? est-ce la pitié qui vous l’ordonne ? est-ce un sacrifice que vous faites au bonheur de Déterville ? ... [L]es yeux de Déterville exprimoient la crainte, et il l’avoit fait passer dans mon âme : je l’avois dans la sienne que sa délicatesse ne vouloit rien devoir qu’au sentiment, et refuseroit tout de la reconnaissance.

Clearly, for the Déterville of this sequel, “reconnaissance” is not enough. Unlike contemporary critics of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne and the author of the first

sequel, Vindé seems to agree with Graffigny that gratitude is not a satisfactory reason for marriage.

Once Déterville receives the desired proof of Zilia’s love, Céline plans a traditional wedding for the couple. She only needs three days in which to plan it. In fact, it is surprising just how traditional the wedding is. It is in a garden. There are plenty of guests. There is dinner and dancing. The bride and groom go around to each table visiting their guests. Zilia even converts to Christianity for the occasion. Using philosophical reasons, Déterville had convinced her to accept the local religion. Interestingly, she did not convert due to a spiritual belief in the tenets of Christianity, but through a desire to fit in with others.

[Déterville] m’avoit fait sentir que la vraie philosophie respecte l’opinion, redoute d’afficher une entière indépendance, et je m’étois soumise depuis quelque temps à la religion du pays que j’avois adopté.  

Instead of worshiping the Sun or Christ, Zilia and Déterville seem to have turned their attention to the cult of love. Accordingly, the three days needed to plan the wedding are not devoid of religious symbolism. During this time, Zilia has the last remaining symbol of her heritage destroyed in an effort to demonstrate her love for Déterville. She repaints the room formerly called the Temple of the Sun, which Déterville had decorated for her when she was presented with her country mansion near the end of Graffigny’s text. Instead of depicting the ceremonies of the city of the Sun, the walls now illustrate the story of Déterville and Zilia. Vindé transforms this makeshift sun temple into a temple of Déterville and Zilia’s love. It is not until after the wedding and when he sees

the new paintings that Déterville realizes the true depth of Zilia’s love. In fact,
these lovers worship each other

Adorable amie! me dit-[Déterville] en me serrant dans ses bras, ce
cabinet n'échappera pas à sa première destination, et tu es la
divinité tutélaire qui y sera l'objet du culte de ton heureux époux ! –
Mon ami, lui dis-je, nous nous y rencontrons donc souvent : car
c'est bien à présent qu’il représente tout ce qui j'idolâtre, ton
amour, tes vertus, toi enfin…  

To top everything, Zilia voluntarily relinquishes her position to Déterville as
head of the household. Vindé’s brand of feminism is an interesting one. Although
French law would doubtlessly have dictated the same scenario (a total
relinquishment to Déterville through marriage of all of Zilia’s rights to property,
finances, etc.\textsuperscript{173}), Vindé elevates woman (in this case Zilia) to a position of power
over man, but has her voluntarily defer to him. In fact, Vindé’s woman is proud of
her ascendance over man, believing she is necessary to his happiness. Zilia
writes the following to Céline’s husband: “Savez-vous, mon frère, que je suis
fière de ma destinée? je ne puis me défendre d’un mouvement d’orgueil quand
je pense que j’étois nécessaire au bonheur de Déterville.”\textsuperscript{174}

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\textsuperscript{172} “‘Suite’ del 1797,” ed. Gianni Nicoletti 436
\textsuperscript{173} “By and large, women were legally totally subservient to their husbands or fathers in virtually
all areas of marriage contracts, inheritance laws, property and tax laws, and child custody
arrangements.” Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson,
Introduction, \textit{Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,
1979) 6. “Mais quoique le mari & la \textit{femme} ayent au fond les mêmes intérêts dans leur société, il
est pourtant essentiel que l’autorité du gouvernement appartienne à l’un ou à l’autre: or le droit
positif des nations policées, les lois & les coutumes de l’Europe donnent cette autorité
unanimement & définitivement au mâle, comme à celui qui étant doué d’une plus grande force
d’esprit & de corps, contribue davantage au bien commun, en matière de choses humaines &
sacrées; ensorte que la \textit{femme} doit nécessairement être subordonnée à son mari &obéir à ses
ordres dans toutes les affaires domestiques. C’est-là le sentiment des jurisconsultes anciens &
modernes, & la décision formelle des législateurs.” “Femme, Droit nat.” \textit{Encyclopédie} 471.
\textsuperscript{174} “‘Suite’ del 1797,” ed. Gianni Nicoletti 431.
These feelings of voluntary submission may have been prevalent among women at the time of the Revolution. Indeed, women's rights in France did not advance as much as one might have expected during this period. Mary Trouille points out that many eighteenth-century women felt “a deeply rooted traditionalism conditioned in [them] by society, from a tacit (albeit self-defeating) support for the status quo.”\(^\text{175}\) In discussing Rousseau’s popularity among women, the themes of which could be equally applied to Vindé’s sequel of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, Trouille writes:

[Rousseau’s] women readers still identified with him and with the characters of his novels because they expressed, on an existential level, their deepest aspirations and longings – for ideal love, self-fulfilling motherhood, and domestic felicity. In an age of loveless marriages and widespread adultery, they saw Rousseau as the champion of a new moral order in which women could play a central role. By nursing their babies themselves (instead of sending them away to wet-nurses, as had long been the custom), by devoting themselves to their husbands and children and to domestic and charitable tasks, they hoped to create stronger affective ties within their families, thereby fostering the moral regeneration of society envisioned by Rousseau and by other moral reformers of the period. Far from being considered a trap, the ideals of motherhood and enlightened domesticity advocated by Rousseau seemed to offer a new dignity to women, regardless of their socio-economic status.\(^\text{176}\)

Vindé’s Zilia, who lovingly relinquishes her whole being to Déterville, is a stark contrast from Graffigny’s Zilia, who wished to remain single and independent. This may, in fact, reflect a difference in the two women’s experiences. Graffigny, who had many problems in her own marriage, reflects on this institution with some bitterness. In the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, Graffigny


\(^{176}\) Trouille, *Sexual Politics* 4.
wrote that a married woman was exploited and fettered by the tyrannical rule of her husband.

Un Mari, sans craindre aucune punition, peut avoir pour sa femme les manières les plus rebutantes, il peut dissiper en prodigalités aussi criminelles qu’excessives non seulement son bien, celui de ses enfants, mais, même celui de la victime qu’il fait gémir presque dans l’indigence par une avarice pour les dépenses honnêtes, qui s’allie très communément ici avec la prodigalité.  

After such a strong statement, it seems incongruous for Zilia to relinquish her independence, which had been so long in coming – even to the magnanimous Déterville.

Vindé, on the other hand, seems to have romanticized love and marriage. She, nevertheless, reveals some problems in Céline’s marriage due to her husband's jealously. However, this fault is eventually accepted as a virtue. It seems that the good kind of jealously stems from a true and deep love. Too often, flighty women misinterpret this sentiment.

Trop souvent en effet la femme légère, inconsidérée, appelle jaloux l’homme tendre et passionné qui fait de l’amour une importante affaire, qui s’étonne de voir des distractions frivoles l’emporter sur le sentiment profond qui doit captiver entièrement notre être. Qu’arrive –t-il ? il s’afflige, se plaint ; et on l’appelle jaloux : comme s’il méritoit le même nom que cet odieux tyran qui voudroit ravir à tous les yeux l’objet de sa persécution, qui l’outrage par ses soupçons, et dont tous les témoignages d’amour sont des marques de mépris ! Ah ! certainement, mon amie, votre mari n’est pas jaloux de cette manière affreuse. Je ne veux pas vous fâcher, mais je croirois bien plutôt qu’il l’est de l’autre façon.

Of course, there is no jealously in what eventually becomes the idyllic relationship between Zilia and Déterville. Any doubts that existed about their

feelings for each other are more than cleared up by the end of the sequel. To emphasize Zilia’s total and willing surrender, Vindé has her sign the last letter in the third person, as “la trop heureuse épouse de Déterville.” The last word of the text, and therefore the thought left with the reader, is “Déterville.”

THE FOREIGN SEQUELS

The popularity of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne was widespread and inspired translations and adaptations in a wide array of languages and cultures.

Quatre traductions en anglais ont paru entre 1748 et 1774, deux traductions en italien (1754 et 1759) et en allemand (1750 et 1792), et à la fin du siècle, des traductions en russe et en espagnol... Le roman a inspiré aussi au moins trios pièces de théâtre, en France et en Italie. \footnote{Mallinson, Introduction, Lettres d’une Péruvienne, ed. Mallinson 80, 81.}

Some of these texts included additional letters expanding upon or modifying the message of the original work. The sequels discussed below are new letters added to the Lettres d’une Péruvienne by foreign translators.

THE ENGLISH SEQUEL (1774)

R. Roberts published an English translation of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne in 1774. \footnote{R. Roberts, trans., The Peruvian Letters: Translated from the French with an Additional Original Volume, by Françoise de Graffigny (London: Cadell, 1774).} In a second volume, she included a translation of the first
sequel (discussed above), and twenty-two of her own letters continuing the story of Zilia and Déterville. Essentially, Robert’s sequel (like Vindé’s sequel, though appearing twenty-three years prior to it) fulfills Céline’s prediction from the first sequel that through friendship with Déterville there would be a gradual change in Zilia’s sentiments ending in love for her French benefactor. Also, as foreshadowed in the first sequel, through Déterville’s instruction Zilia converts to Christianity.

The English sequel is similar to the *Lettres d’Aza* in that it is told from a male perspective. Accordingly, most of the letters are by Déterville. In fact, he wrote all but three of them. He recounts the details of his story with Zilia from his perspective, and discusses the various characters that surround him during his travels. Indeed, through Déterville’s letters, we discover a whole new cast of characters. In fact, little mention is made of his sister Céline. Also like Aza, most of Déterville’s letters are addressed to a friend, the Chevalier Dubois in Malta, with whom he shares his deepest feelings.

Zilia, who is accorded only one short letter in this sequel, is virtually silenced. Moreover, she is objectified by Déterville’s continual references to her as “my Zilia” or “my lovely friend” (emphasis mine). In addition, he highlights her foreignness by referring to her as “my lovely Indian” and “my Indian maid.” He also uses the “my” when he addresses her directly. Although other characters refer to their friends using “my”, and although one would expect Déterville to use this turn of phrase more often since he writes most of the letters, the frequency with which he uses it in reference to Zilia is underscored in the first sentence of
his last letter ending with the declaration, “Zilia is mine,”\textsuperscript{181} after which, he refers to her as “my wife.”

Robert’s sequel portrays Zilia as confused and lacking complete understanding of events and consequences. For example, Déterville explains that a friendship with Zilia will not work, as platonic love does not exist except among the devout who have deadened their feelings. He is surprised that Zilia, who is so sensible, would fail to understand.

Dull, insensible clods, who talk of Platonic love, a dream, a chimera, which never did, nor ever will exist, but in the brains of monks and religious enthusiasts; who having deadened all tender feelings in themselves, endeavor to degrade the Deity, to whom all mankind have bowed, and set up this unnatural idol in his stead: Yet, my Zilia would persuade me, that it is possible for me to yield to their nonsensical jargon. \textit{Strange! That she, who judges so justly in all other things, should in this so much deceive herself;} and that while she cherishes a hopeless passion for a lover who is for ever lost, should imagine that I, the beloved object daily in my sight, can cease to wish her mine. (italics mine)\textsuperscript{182}

In addition, an Abbé, who had become their friend, reiterates the above sentiment. “I know not how you understand it, replied Zilia, with some confusion; … AH, Madam! Replied the Abbé, you know but little of love.”\textsuperscript{183} Even when Zilia is clearly in love with Déterville and another character points this out to her, she is not able to understand her feelings. “I hardly know myself what I mean,” she says, “how then can you?”\textsuperscript{184}

Accordingly, Roberts introduces another character with a parallel story who serves as a catalyst to Déterville and Zilia’s love. Déterville tells Miss St.
Clare’s story, in her own words, by transcribing it into several of his letters to Dubois. Essentially, Miss St. Clare was in love with a young man called St. Far, and they were destined to be married. Just before the wedding, St. Far was called to the bedside of his dying mother who handed him a letter explaining that he and his fiancée were in fact related. Much like Zilia’s relationship with Aza (minus the infidelity), their union would now be a sin and their love was doomed. Their relationship frustrated, both swore themselves to a religious life. In fact, St. Clare had only left the convent to spend a little time with her sister before taking her sacred vows, and thus became acquainted with Zilia.

St. Clare plays an important role in the story as she communicates Zilia’s love to Déterville when he is abroad in England\textsuperscript{185} and explains to Zilia that her love is in fact acceptable. She is motivated by the fact that Zilia is endowed with all the qualities suitable to a wife and mother and should not be deprived of her natural role due to an inability to communicate her feelings.

I should not look upon myself justified in acting the part I now do: but born, as Zilia is, with all that ardour of affection, which is consistent with unaffected modesty; formed with qualities capable of shining in the characters of wife, and mother, as well as that of friend; shall we suffer her, from a mistaken delicacy, to pine away in silent discontent, and never fulfil those social duties, for which Nature designed her?\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{185} Roberts nationalism slips into her text through Déterville’s observations. He has nothing but praise for England and the English. “Yet I cannot help telling you, though a Frenchman, that the English manners are more suitable to my taste than those of my own nation. And can I, my dear Zilia, help admiring their ladies, when I tell you, that they have an ingenuousness in their carriage, which is nearly Peruvian? The country, in general, is well cultivated; and those parts which are not, have a romantic wildness, which is beautiful in the highest degree. … I daily find new beauties in their works of genius. Their poetry, in particular, has a sublimity which the French tongue will not admit of.” Roberts 153, 154.

\textsuperscript{186} Roberts 134.
St. Clare’s own story does not end well. Her lover, St. Far, dies and she withdraws to a convent sooner than expected to drown her sorrow in a religious life.

Interestingly, it is Zilia’s conversion to Christianity that leads her to a deeper understanding of life. Through the contemplation of nature, she develops the desire to study the Christian religion and asks Déterville, who regards himself as a missionary, to be her guide. “I look on myself as a missionary sent by heaven, to convert my Zilia.” He fills his role well, and is even able to explain to Zilia such illusive concepts as the reason vice exists. He also explains how important it is to forgive others for the injuries they have inflicted upon us. Accordingly, through studying religion, Zilia is able to heal herself from the emotional wounds inflicted upon her by Aza.

When he forsook me, I seemed to have lost a part of myself: the whole creation, without him, was a blank, and gave me no real delight. Time, though it lessened my regret, would never have enabled me to conquer my passion, had not a new, and indeed glorious pursuit, engaged my mind; the study of religion. As my faith has increased, my love has died away; and I can now hear his name without emotion, and look on any thing which was once his, without feeling any thing more than a kind remembrance: instead of condemning, I venerate the principles which induced him to forsake me.

This new freedom, through Christianity, will eventually enable her to love Déterville.

By the end of the text, Zilia finds “true enlightenment.” St. Clare recounts a conversation with her to Déterville.

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187 Roberts 59.
188 Roberts 72.
Here, ... I have enjoyed the happiest hours since I left Peru; indeed, I may say happier than any I ever spent there; for I was then happy only in my ignorance; but here my enlightened mind, first learnt those truths, which restored peace to it, after its being so long a stranger to my soul.\textsuperscript{189}

Again, through Miss St. Clare, we see that religion is the road to both intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. One must “wait patiently for that time when the mysterious ways of Providence shall be made clear to our enlightened understanding.”\textsuperscript{190} Though Déterville ends up with Zilia and tradition is satisfied, the interconnectedness of philosophy and religion is perhaps Roberts final message, an attempt to defuse Graffigny’s views by blurring the distinction between philosophical and religious enlightenment.

\textbf{THE SPANISH SEQUEL (1792)}

The Spanish sequel\textsuperscript{191} consists of a single letter added to a translation of the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} in 1792. In addition to the sequel, the translator, Maria Romero Masegosa y Cancelada, freely expresses her own views by altering the original text and by commenting on it in a series of footnotes spread throughout the translation. According to Teresa Anne Smith, in her article “Writing out of the Margins: Women, Translation, and the Spanish Enlightenment,” it was safer for women to express their views veiled as the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{189} Roberts 144.
\item\textsuperscript{190} Roberts 170.
\item\textsuperscript{191} Maria Romero Masegosa y Cancelada, trans., \textit{Cartas de una Peruana. escritas en Frances por mad. de Graffigni, y traducidas al castellano con algunas correcciones, y aumentada con notas, y una carta para su mayor complemento}, by Françoise de Graffigny (Valladolid: Oficina de la Viuda de Santander, 1792).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
translator of another’s work, as opposed to producing their own original texts. In addition, Romero shielded herself by attributing her scholarly pursuits to her brother’s influence. Equally modest, Graffigny did not put her name on the 1747 edition of her work.

“[G]oing public” could be a perilous prospect for female intellectuals in any nation during the early modern period, because publication involved a measure of transgression against social expectations of women’s modesty, submission, and anonymity. … [T]ranslation long comprised one method women employed to mitigate the risks of publication. … However, translating was not as passive an occupation as it might have seemed. The original text provided women with a shield behind which they could – and did – express themselves. The simple act of rendering the text into another language constituted an authorial act. … In addition, translators often provided their own textual exegesis, in the form of translator’s introductions, footnotes, or other editorial mechanisms. Translations thus served to interpret, not merely transmit, an original work. Furthermore, many translators did not remain faithful to the original piece. Through subtle, or even overt, transformations in the text, translators often imbued a work with a slightly new or altogether distinct meaning.

Maria Romero availed herself fully of these translators’ liberties. In her introduction, she talks about her own struggle as a female author and how she hopes to encourage other women. Through her footnotes, she seconded many of Graffigny’s opinions. For example, she agrees with Graffigny that women are hampered by their lack of education and that they play a subservient role to men in marriage. Theresa Smith points out that “by presenting her views in her own voice [through footnotes], not filtered through Zilia as in the original, Romero

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192 Romero 13, 14.
193 Romero’s translation was based on the 1752 edition of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne.
195 Romero 17.
commented even more strongly than Graffigny on the state of women in
European society.”

Interestingly, Romero is the only sequel-writer to have preserved
Graffigny’s ending, in which Zilia remains single and wealthy. We should
remember that although the first sequel leaves Zilia unmarried, her future
coupling with Déterville is strongly foreshadowed. In regard to the position of
women in eighteenth-century society, Romero clearly supported Graffigny.
Through her footnotes, she pointed out how Graffigny’s commentary
encompassed Spanish society. Romero’s agreement could indicate that
Graffigny’s message was indeed spreading to other women. At a minimum,
Romero’s sequel shows that Graffigny was not the only eighteenth-century
woman to feel society’s injustice toward the female sex. Interestingly, Theresa
Smith points out that not all Spanish readers agreed with Romero’s decision to
preserve Zilia’s independence.

An anonymous annotation to the copy of Cartas de una peruanathat housed in the National Library in Madrid makes clear one Spanish
reader’s desire to see Zilia and Déterville married. At the very end
of the story is an almost illegible note in eighteenth-century script:
“Zilia at long last you married your friend, good I say I am very
happy, yes, very happy. Zilia [and] Déterville, Céline and her
husband, Aza and his wife lived happily ever after. The Author
Romero.” In order to make this ending the extension of Romero’s
text, the anonymous reader scribbled over Romero’s last sentence,
changing the word “friendship” to read “passion.”

Although Graffigny’s message was circulating, Romero’s translation indicates
that not a lot had changed by 1792.

196 Theresa Smith 122.
197 Theresa Smith 126.
While Romero agreed with Graffigny in many respects, there were, nevertheless, several elements of the text with which Romero disagreed. First, Graffigny’s portrayal of Spain as a brutal and barbarous nation clearly offended Romero’s national pride. She did her utmost to repair the image of Spain and the Spanish. “By cutting phrases, or even whole paragraphs from Graffigny’s historical introduction, Romeo rewrote the conquest.” In addition, Romero eliminated or softened unflattering references to Spain throughout the text. For her, taking Christianity to the New World was a noble quest. In another footnote, she defends Spain claiming that the Spanish government and people should not be blamed for the faults of a few.

Romero also disagreed with Graffigny’s stance on religion. Although Graffigny’s Zilia assimilated into French society by adopting the French language and European clothing, she maintained her own religion. Romero’s Zilia, on the other hand, willingly adopts Christianity. The one-letter sequel at the end of the translation is primarily devoted to Zilia’s conversion. In this letter, Zilia describes the transition from her native religion to Christianity. It is a product of her reading and long conversations with a local priest. True to enlightenment values, the conversion of Romero’s Zilia is based on reason. According to Theresa Smith, Romero’s objective was to inspire a truer, purer form of Christianity among Europeans whose behavior did not always match their profession of faith. Through Zilia’s conversion, Romero combined Christianity with the religious

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198 Theresa Smith 128.
199 Romero 47.
passion of the “primitives.” Romero’s skillful synthesis of reason, passion, and religion, provides a new perspective on the Enlightenment.

GRAFFIGNY’S 1752 EDITION OF THE LETTRES D’UNE PÉRUVIENNE

Graffigny’s 1752 edition of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne appeared after the anonymous sequel and the Lettres d’Aza, but before the Vindé sequel and the two foreign sequels. Although the new edition of Graffigny’s work has already been discussed, I wanted to create a separate section for it, in order to examine a few of the changes Graffigny made to the novel. It should be noted that only nine volumes of Graffigny’s correspondence, currently being published in a fifteen-volume set by English Showalter and a team of scholars, are currently available. The existing volumes cover the period from 1716 to April 25, 1749. Graffigny did not start working on the second edition of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne until sometime after August 1750 when she mentioned in a letter to Devaux that she wanted to add two new letters to the work.200 Fortunately, some of Graffigny’s correspondence after 1749 is available in English Showalter’s Choix de lettres.

Devaux reacted strongly to Graffigny’s suggestion of revision. He did not feel it was a good idea to alter the conclusion. Graffigny assured him, however, that she would only expand the societal critique, leaving the ending unchanged.

Non, tranquillise-toi, Zilia ne sera pas mariée; je ne suis pas assez bête pour cela. Je n’ajouterai même rien à sa personne ni à ses sentiments, mais seulement je lui ferai remarquer des ridicules qui lui étaient échappés. En voici la raison: j’en veux tirer parti et pour cela faire, les corrections ne suffisent pas, il faut de l’augmentation.\footnote{Graffigny, \textit{Choix de lettres} 192.}

Of course, as the novel was already popular, Graffigny may have hoped to make a small profit from the republication of her work. Nevertheless, she took full advantage of the opportunity for revision to highlight the philosophical content of her work. The revisions take into consideration the reactions of her contemporary critics as well as the first two sequels.

As mentioned, the most significant addition to the work was two new letters, and the inclusion of an historical introduction. In the new letters, Zilia comments on the French passion for luxury and the poor education given to French women. The letter on women includes a section highlighting the injustice and suppression women are subjected to in marriage. After reading these new observations, it is hardly surprising that Zilia did not marry Déterville at the end of the novel.

The historical introduction gives the novel a more scholarly tone. Following the work of Garcilaso de la Vega, Graffigny gives a brief account of Incan society and history. Through this account, the reader is better able to understand Zilia’s cultural frame of reference. In addition, the physical aspect of the book was improved. It appeared in two volumes, each containing a print chosen by Graffigny herself. Interestingly, both prints depict Zilia in situations where French
and Peruvian culture meet. The prints were by Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen, a prominent eighteenth-century illustrator. In addition, Graffigny obtained an official *privilège* for the new edition, as her earlier edition did not have one. *Cénie* was printed alongside the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. The overall effect was of a more comprehensive, elegant edition.

In addition to the more significant changes mentioned above, Graffigny made numerous stylistic changes to the text. Many of these changes highlight Zilia’s intellectual independence. One example, already pointed out by Vera Grayson in her article “The Genesis and Reception of Mme de Graffigny’s *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* and *Cénie*,” is the scene of Zilia at Céline’s wedding. The 1752 edition reads:

> Les jeunes homes, qui sont ici en grand nombre, se sont d’abord empresses à me suivre jusqu’à ne paraître occupés que de moi; mais soit que la froideur de ma conversation les ait ennuyés, ou que mon peu de goût pour leurs agréments les ait dégoûtés de la peine qu’ils prenaient à les faire valoir, il n’a fallu que deux jours pour les déterminer à m’oublier, bientôt ils m’ont délivrée de leur importune préférence.

In the 1752 edition, on the other hand, Zilia is no longer an object drawing the attention of crowds of men. Instead, although still struggling to understand the rapidity of spoken French, she is an observer of French culture.

> La parure des homes et des femmes est si brillante, se chargée d’ornemens inutiles, les uns et les autres prononcent si rapidement ce qu’il disent, que mon attention à les écouter m’empêche de les voir, et celle que j’emploie à les regarder m’empêche de les entendre. Je reste dans une espèce de stupidité qui fournirait sans doute beaucoup à leur plaisanterie, s’ils avaient le loisir de s’en

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apercevoir; mais ils sont si occupés d’eux-mêmes, que mon étonnement leur échape.²⁰⁴

In addition, Zilia is less focused on Aza in the 1752 edition. No longer a passive object of desire, she shows great interest in her own personal development and in observing French culture. Zilia is curious, yet never disdainful, and her observations pass without the biting sting of criticism.

In the end, as Graffigny had assured Devaux, none of the alterations to the novel changed Graffigny’s conception of the work. Zilia’s character remained unchanged, as did the conclusion to the novel. The final philosophical message was left untouched: a woman who respects herself and who has some educational opportunities can live an independent and happy life, free of the bonds of marriage and male domination. If anything, Graffigny’s final message was reinforced. By coming out with a second edition of her novel, Graffigny asserted her own ideas and identity.

FAITH AND HAPPY ENDINGS

In her book, examining the plots of eighteenth-century French and English novels, Nancy Miller demonstrates that female protagonists almost always behave in accordance with a certain ideal of femininity. While conceding that each novel is unique, Miller points out that “they are no less bound together by

the supervising grid of a feminist narratology."\textsuperscript{205} Accordingly, she identifies two types of female-centered plots: euphoric and dysphoric. Essentially, “the novels in the euphoric text end with the heroine’s integration into society; … In the dysphoric text, the novels end instead with the heroine’s death. … (The positive heroine, of course, [has] the help of a Christian lexicon.)"\textsuperscript{206} Due to frequent repetition in eighteenth-century novels of the female-centered plot structures outlined above, one experiences a sense of what Miller calls “déjà lu.” Eighteenth-century readers, when sitting down to enjoy a novel, had fairly well defined expectations. No doubt, this pattern of repetition did much to reinforce the status quo in the Eighteenth Century. Today, it provides researchers with a valuable tool for examining currents in cultural ideology. Of course, even modern readers are subject to cultural influences.

Consequently, Graffigny’s genius lies in her knowledge of cultural patterns. By creating a sense of incompleteness in her readers, she caused many of them to examine or reexamine the role of women in eighteenth-century society. Many did not ultimately agree with her. Nevertheless, the popularity of her novel was widespread. Her success, then, should be measured by the exposure her ideas received and the discussion they generated. Accordingly, through examining the different sequels to the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} and the diverse commentary of contemporary critics, it is apparent that the reception of this novel is as significant as the text itself.

\textsuperscript{206} Miller, Introduction, \textit{The Heroine’s Text} xi.
It is noteworthy, then, that many contemporaries did not notice (or refused to notice) the philosophical content of the novel. According to English Showalter, “Rien ne souligne mieux cet aveuglement curieux que les continuations qu’on a publiées, ou proposées, pour le roman.” Some of Graffigny’s more erudite critics did of course notice that her novel contained a message, and over time, it gradually came to be recognized as a philosophical work. In 1759, the Journal de Trevoux classes it among “les petits Livres philosophiques du XVIIIe siècle,” but does not consider its impact to be of great weight: “pensera-t-on que ce Roman puisse faire des Sages?” In addition, Graffigny and the Lettres d’une Péruvienne were mentioned in six different articles of the Encyclopédie between 1751 and 1765, the year the novel was banned by the Catholic Church.

In any case, all of the sequels, to one degree or another, attempt to bring Graffigny’s novel back into line with the status quo. Zilia’s religious orientation and her final social status (married, single, wealthy, etc.) were the two most frequently objected to elements of the text. Below is a table outlining the various outcomes of the different sequels.

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207 Showalter, “composition, publication, suites” 25.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequel</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Author’s sex</th>
<th>Winning suitor</th>
<th>Religious Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First (1747)</td>
<td>Mouhy? 209</td>
<td>Male (if the author is in fact Mouhy)</td>
<td>Predicts Déterville</td>
<td>Predicts Zilia’s conversion to Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettres d’Aza (1748)</td>
<td>Lamarche-Courmont</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Aza</td>
<td>Aza converts to Christianity. 210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (1774)</td>
<td>Roberts</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Déterville</td>
<td>Zilia converts to Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish (1792)</td>
<td>Romero</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Zilia converts to Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final (1797)</td>
<td>Vindé</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Déterville</td>
<td>Zilia converts to Christianity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – Sequels to the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* and their conclusions

As we see, most of these sequel writers wanted Zilia to marry someone. Accordingly, they created endings that fell in line with the euphoric plot structure outlined by Nancy Miller. Only Romero maintained Zilia’s single status, and as already mentioned, there is evidence that some of her readers also objected to this ending. Déterville was overwhelmingly the most popular suitor. In addition to the sequels outlined above, Goldoni married Zilia to Déterville in his Italian play *La Peruviana*. 211 In *La Péruvienne*, a comic opera by Rochon de Chabannes, Zilia once again gives her love to Déterville.

Oui, je veux qu’il te soit connu,
Jouis de mon amour extrême.

209 Graffigny speculated that Mouhy was the author, but we do not have proof.
210 The *Lettres d’Aza* takes place in the same time frame as the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. Therefore, Zilia’s further religious development is not discussed. Nevertheless, it is clear that Aza’s conversion is sincere.
211 There was, in fact, a double wedding as Aza married Zulmire.
On ne trahit point sa vertu,
En se rendant à ce qu’on aime.  

Moreover, Graffigny herself greatly preferred Déterville to Aza, as English Showalter has noted. “[Graffigny] préférait certainement Déterville à Aza.”

Why might Déterville have been the preferred suitor? Many of the contemporary critics felt that gratitude was reason enough for Zilia to give her love to Déterville. In addition, much mention was made in the sequels of Déterville’s great virtue, making him the ideal lover. Although love seems to have been a romantic ideal, the idea of deserving love and receiving it out of gratitude does not seem to have offended the values or sensibilities of our eighteenth-century critics and sequel writers. Nevertheless, many of the sequels strive to fulfill this romantic ideal.

Interestingly, no one wrote a dysphoric text, ending in the heroine’s death. However, at least one person suggested the possibility. In his critique, discussed in the previous chapter, Pierre Clément (one of the first to write a critique of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne) proposes killing Zilia in a surge of passion and melodrama.

Il faut que de l’instant que Déterville lui laisse entrevoir (Lettre 29) qu’elle pourrait bien se tromper dans son idée sur l’amour d’Aza, elle tombe dans des inquiétudes affreuses ; que des soupçons tous les jours plus violents, la succession des fantômes de son imagination alarmée, le feu dévorant de sa passion perpétuellement irritée par ses craintes mêmes, la jettent enfin dans un abattement, dans un épuisement de forces, qui la mettent à deux doigts de la mort ; qui dans ce moment arrive Aza, fidèle,

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213 Showalter, “composition, publication, suites” 27.
It should be noted that in addition to desiring Zilia’s death, Clément favored Aza as the suitor. Although he was in the minority, Zilia’s death would have brought her back into line with the status quo. Nevertheless, most people (having greatly enjoyed reading about her progressive integration into French society) wanted her to succeed. According to the dominant culture, as it is reflected in the sequels to Graffigny’s work, “success” for a woman in eighteenth-century society frequently meant getting married.

For marriage, however, the acceptance of Christian ideology was paramount. After all, a conventional marriage could not take place if the parties involved were not Christian. The conversion (or imminent conversion) of both of our protagonists (Zilia and Aza) before the end of all of their respective sequels strongly suggests the pervasive influence of Christianity during the Eighteenth Century. It should not be surprising, then, that the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* was banned by the Vatican in 1765.\(^{215}\) It is perhaps more surprising that during the author’s lifetime, no mention was made of the work containing any dangerous influences. “[D]u vivant de l’auteur, les homes d’église et les homes d’état semblent tous l’avoir approuvé sans réserve, comme le grand public. Si bien

\(^{214}\) Clément 252.

\(^{215}\) Showalter, “composition, publication, suites” 23.
qu’en 1750, …, Mme de Graffigny a pu penser à procurer une nouvelle édition revue et augmentée, avec approbation et privilège.”

According to May Trouille in her article “Sexual / Textual Politics in the Enlightenment,” four main currents of thought existed in eighteenth-century gender ideology: the traditionalist-naturalist perspective, the rationalist perspective, the feminist perspective, and the pseudo-feminist perspective.

The dominant current of thought was the traditionalist-naturalist perspective, … Maintaining that women are by nature inferior to and dependent upon men and that their primary function is to serve as wives and mothers. … For rationalists … the oppression of women was simply one form of injustice among many, a theoretical problem they addressed on isolated occasions. In contrast, for feminists … the cause of women was a central preoccupation of their lives and work. They denounced the inequality of women with greater conviction and vigor; their arguments were generally more detailed and systematic than those offered by the rationalists. … There was a fourth group that adopted a rhetoric that was feminist in tone, but whose underlying message was basically traditionalist for lack of concrete proposals and a genuine desire for change. Beneath the surface of their pseudo-feminist rhetoric lies a subtle paternalism and a tacit complicity with the status quo.

As we have seen, Graffigny’s contemporaries barely recognized the philosophical implications of the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. This should not be a complete surprise as three of the four viewpoints outlined by Trouille reflect conservative views toward women. Blindness to the deeper significance of Graffigny’s work, however, may have contributed to its success. Troubled readers, not dwelling on changes in societal patterns of thinking, attributed their dissatisfaction to the ending of the novel. Although contemporaries did not

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216 Showalter, “composition, publication, suites” 23.
understand the powerful aspect of Graffigny’s message, her work was widely read. Because Graffigny was not overtly pushing change, people’s defenses were down, and Graffigny’s philosophical message may well have worked on reader’s sensibilities without their even knowing. Clearly, the many sequels to the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* are evidence of Graffigny’s subtle impact on society.

Graffigny was ahead of her time. She was able to write about things that others had not yet conceptualized. Moreover, she touched on issues that would be further explored only later in the century. In her second edition of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, Graffigny reaffirmed and strengthened her innovative ideas. She specifically addressed the role of women, challenging prevailing views that women were not intellectual equals of men. Heidi Bostic maintains, “*Lettres d’une Péruvienne* also shows that women are rational, and may become philosophers, using their reason as Zilia does to expose oppression.”

Accordingly, the next chapter will examine Graffigny as a *femme philosophe*.

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CHAPTER 4

GRAFFIGNY, FEMME PHILOSPHOPHE?

The focal point of this chapter is the question, could one consider Françoise de Graffigny a *femme philosophe*? In my analysis, I will, therefore, discuss the meaning of the word philosophe. In addition, I will consider her most popular work, the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* in relation to other works in the larger literary and philosophical debate on women. In this context, the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* is generally considered to be part of a long epistolary tradition beginning with the *Lettres Portugaises*. Such novels were not generally classed as philosophical works, but were regarded instead as popular fiction. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence to indicate that the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* contains a clear philosophical message, intended by Graffigny. Does she thus warrant the title *femme philosophe*? Furthermore, if Graffigny is indeed a *femme philosophe* for us today, was she considered to be a philosophe by her contemporaries?
To start, it is important to situate Graffigny’s work among its literary and philosophical precursors. Fittingly, Catherine Labio reminds us of the intimate link between the novel and philosophy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: “philosophie et roman modernes ne sont pas des frères ennemis, mais des frères jumeaux.” After all, philosophers and novelists have many of the same concerns, and both deal with similar questions in their work. Accordingly, the discussion below will focus on several widely recognized precursors to the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* – the *Lettres Portugaises*, *La Princesse de Clèves*, and the *Lettres Persanes*. It is my assumption that all these works, intertextually related on some level, were part of an ongoing debate in the Eighteenth Century on the role of women, society, and religion. Here, I intend to focus on a few key elements that link these works to the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*.

Graffigny chose to write a series of letters in the first person. However, she was not alone in choosing this style. Many of the key figures of the Eighteenth Century also chose to write in the epistolary (or memoir) form. Indeed, the epistolary novel was exceedingly popular in the Eighteenth Century. Characters seemed to write with a freedom of expression equivalent to what one might find in a diary. Readers shared an intimacy with the characters who “authored” the letters, almost as if they themselves were the destined recipients.

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Like the Lettres Portugaises, which appeared in 1669, the Lettres d’une Péruvienne provides a single point of view. Accordingly, it is through Zilia’s unanswered letters that Graffigny comments on French society. Prior to Zilia, the epistolary heroine was the epitome of the abandoned lover. Admired by many, she was long-suffering, passionate, and hopelessly faithful. In addition to the conspicuous absence of the loved one, this one-sided correspondence serves to remind us of the heroine’s ignorance. Since she is not receiving letters, she is not knowledgeable about her own intimate concerns.

Although beginning with the same premise, Graffigny’s heroine (unlike la religieuse portugaise) is gradually enlightened. In an interesting plot twist, Zilia goes from being alone (intellectually and emotionally) because she does not understand French, to being alone because she has chosen to remain unmarried and live a tranquil life of reflection. She will, of course, not be lonely but instead surround herself with friends as evidenced by her final offer of friendship to Déterville. Nevertheless, “Our final image of Zilia is that of a woman happily alone.”

Zilia has chosen independence. Far from being a failure, a woman who did not marry was able to ensure her autonomy. Graffigny believed that women were born equal to men, but deprived of equal opportunity, hence their purportedly inferior status.

[I]l me semble que les femmes naissent ici … avec toutes les dispositions nécessaires pour égaler les hommes en mérite et en vertus. Mais … leur orgueil [celui des hommes] ne pût supporter

cette égalité, ils contribuent en toute manière à les rendre méprisables.\footnote{221}{Graffigny, \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller 143.}

The \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} also shares fundamental elements with \textit{La Princesse de Clèves}. In both novels, we have a sense that appearances are not everything. At the start of La Fayette’s novel, “[L]a cour est décrite … comme un lieu voué au commerce des apparaences et, par conséquent, à la dissimulation.”\footnote{222}{Labio 81.} Similarly, Graffigny notices the discrepancy between appearing to be wealthy and actually being wealthy, “[Il faut paraître riche, c’est une mode, une habitude, on la suit.”\footnote{223}{Graffigny, \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller 121.}

In addition, both novels comment on love and the institution of marriage. According to DeJean, “La Princesse de Clèves provides the earliest testimony in literature to the desire for what James Traer terms a ‘modern’ marriage, that is a union founded on ‘equality and sentiment’.”\footnote{224}{Joan DeJean, \textit{Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 114.} Graffigny’s Zilia also expected a relationship based on these elements and comments on their absence in French society. “[I]l semble qu’en France les liens du mariage ne soient réciproques qu’au moment de la célébration, et que dans la suite les femmes seules y doivent être assujetties.”\footnote{225}{Graffigny, \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller 143, 144.}

Interestingly, both novels end with a refusal of marriage, and, both novels were criticized by contemporary critics for this “fault.” DeJean points out that, “The first critic of \textit{La Princesse de Clèves}, Valincour, mocked the novel’s
The princess admits that she loves Nemours, but refuses to marry him. Instead, she chooses to remain faithful to the memory of her dead husband by choosing a life of solitude and retreat. She is afraid that once her marriage with Nemours was concluded, he would ultimately prove to be unfaithful. This would destroy her peace of mind and tranquility.

Jensen reminds us that it was a popular belief in ancien-régime France that, “By freeing oneself from the agitations and conflicts of desire, one might attain repos and through it insight and knowledge into oneself and others.” In other words, some felt that serenity could lead to enlightenment. In her final offer of friendship to Déterville, Graffigny’s Zilia also insists on the benefit of emotional tranquility.

Venez, Déterville, venez apprendre de moi à économiser les ressources de notre âme, et les bienfaits de la nature. Renoncez aux sentiments tumultueux, destructeurs imperceptibles de notre être ; venez apprendre à connaître les plaisirs innocents et durables.

Marriage in La Princesse de Clèves also takes on a political dimension. According to DeJean, Lafayette “proposes a new model for the historical novel in which affairs of state are dominated by marital politics.” Accordingly, the woman who allowed herself to be caught up in the tumultuous affairs of love became a pawn in the political arena, sacrificing her autonomy and the ability to control her own destiny.

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226 DeJean 127.
228 Lettres d’une Péruvienne. MLA version. 168
229 DeJean. Tender Geographies. 96.
[T]he woman who yielded to desire and its momentary fulfillment in physical union – whether conjugal or adulterous – subjected herself not only to the self-undermining vagaries of desire but also to the self-defeating structure of the double standard: a women’s husband or lover would inevitably betray her. In other words, the nature of desire and the structure of heterosexual relations left women with very little self at all. By contrast, the tranquility that could result from lack of desire, from the absence of emotional dependence and of the agony of abandonment, would afford women the chance to be subjects for themselves rather than objects of men’s seduction and betrayal.

In a similar act of self-affirmation, Zilia chooses to remain faithful to Aza, her unfaithful lover. By doing so, she refuses a liaison with Déterville whom many contemporary critics felt she should have married simply out of gratitude. We once again see an echo of La Princesse de Clèves who felt gratitude toward her husband, but not love. Monsieur de Clèves ultimately dies from remorse and jealousy. Having a wife who was merely grateful to him was clearly not enough. Again, for Graffigny’s Zilia, gratitude was not an adequate reason to marry.

It is noteworthy that both Lafayette’s and Graffigny’s heroines were princesses. To be sure, during the Eighteenth Century, “the wealthy and privileged aristocracy still remained the preferred class to represent and read about in fiction.” Nevertheless, the position of privilege enjoyed by the characters to some extent undermines their capacity for self-affirmation. In other words, as wealthy aristocrats, both would already have enjoyed considerable freedom. Graffigny was conscious of the benefits of wealth and prestige, having struggled to attain them in her own life. Through Zilia, she comments on the important role of money and status in everyday life.

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231 Jensen, Writing Love 122.
Sans avoir de l’or, il est impossible d’acquérir une portion de cette terre qu’la nature a donnée à tous les hommes. Sans posséder ce qu’on appelle du bien, il est impossible d’avoir de l’or, …, cette Nation orgueilleuse, suivant les lois d’un faux honneur qu’elle a inventé, attachée de la honte à recevoir de tout autre que du Souverain, ce qui est nécessaire au soutien de sa vie et de son état : ce Souverain répand ses libéralités sur un si petit nombre de ses sujets, en comparaison de la quantité des malheureux, … Je n’ai ni or, ni terres, ni industrie, je fais nécessairement partie des citoyens de cette ville. Ô ciel ! dans quelle classe dois-je me ranger ?

Zilia’s fortunes change dramatically by the end of the text, for Déterville returns to her the numerous artifacts that had been stolen from the Temple of the Sun at the time of her abduction. Furthermore, he took the liberty of exchanging a number of the objects for money, some of which he used to procure Zilia’s chateau. Thanks to Déterville’s assiduous attentions, status and fortune return to her in a windfall. Nevertheless, Zilia’s long and painful ordeal from the time of her capture, not to mention her struggle to learn French, allows the reader to feel that she more than earned her rewards. Regardless of class, Zilia’s self-assured independence is nevertheless striking.

Another work that was frequently discussed in relation to the Lettres d’une Péruvienne was Montesquieu’s Lettres Persanes. Graffigny herself aligned her work with Montesquieu’s when she quoted him in her preface, “Comment peut-on être Persan?” In 1752, she added a footnote specifically indicating the Lettres Persanes. In fact, Turgot, one of her contemporary critics had already noticed a correlation between the two works and declared Graffigny’s superior. “Quoique les Lettres Péruvienne aient le mérite des Lettres Persanes, d’être des

232 Mallinson, Lettres d’une Peruvienne, 159, 160.
observations sur les mœurs et de les montrer sous un nouveau jour, elles y joignent encore le mérite du roman, et d’un roman très intéressant.”

According to Douthwaite, “Graffigny’s entire fiction is designed as a corrective to unfair judgments found … in Montesquieu’s novel.” Based on Graffigny’s evaluations of the work in her letters to Devaux, I am inclined to agree. In December of 1738, Graffigny wrote, “J’ai hier entendu dire en corus que les Lettres persannes etoit pueriles: ‘C’est du fretin, c’et un pietre livre.’” In February of 1739, she again commented, “les Lettres persannes [est] un ramassis de mauvais rien mal cousus ensemble.” Nevertheless, Montesquieu clearly enjoyed considerable prestige in the Eighteenth Century. Therefore, it should not be surprising that Graffigny mentioned him in her preface, especially if she intended her own work as a “corrective” to Montesquieu’s “unfair judgments.”

In her article, “A Woman’s Place in the Enlightenment Sun: The Case of F. de Graffigny,” Altman astutely observes that Montesquieu did not admit that he was the author of the Lettres Persanes until after Graffigny’s second edition.

Significantly, Montesquieu publicly claimed paternity for the Lettres persanes only after Graffigny’s success. In the first preface to the Lettres persanes in 1721 he coyly opted for anonymity, because such a work was not “digne d’un homme grave.” In his second preface, however, which accompanied the 1754 edition (published two years after Graffigny had reissued her own novel with a second preface), he revised his rhetorical stance. Here, on the contrary, Montesquieu praises the epistolary novel at length as a philosophic vehicle and claims that he was the first to illustrate its potential: the “charming” works that have followed his, he claims, have simply imitated his own formula (a manuscript variant specifically mentions

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234 Turgot 281.
Pamela and the “Lettres péruviennes”). Montesquieu’s argument has been taken at face value by twentieth-century critics, insofar as Graffigny’s novel has been repeatedly described as an “imitation” of the Lettres persanes, but a more complex reading of literary history would have to note the timing of his “Quelques réflexions sur les Lettres persanes” (1754). Montesquieu claimed to be the originator of a tradition at a time when Graffigny’s novel was being touted by contemporary critics as more “original” than Montesquieu’s, and the major wave of so-called “imitations” of the Lettres persanes were actually published in the wake of Graffigny’s novel.237

The accusation that Graffigny’s work was an “imitation” of Montesquieu’s was doubtlessly based on a superficial analysis of the two novels. For example, the Lettres d’une Péruvienne appeared over twenty-five years after the Lettres Persanes, both works are epistolary in nature, and both critique eighteenth-century French society. Clearly, those that accused Graffigny of “imitation” failed to consider her novel as a “corrective” composition.

Unlike the Lettres d’une Péruvienne and the Lettres Portugaises, Montesquieu’s work has multiple points of view. Nonetheless, the primary author of the letters is Usbek, a Persian lord, and his friend Rica. One of their functions is to critique French society through the naive perspective of a foreigner. In this way, Montesquieu includes serious discussions on topics ranging from natural justice to religion. Likewise, Graffigny addresses serious topics, including religion and issues of particular relevance to women. Like Montesquieu, she critiques society through the eyes of an outsider. Exoticism and travel motifs were popular among authors in the Eighteenth Century.

Interestingly, Graffigny’s approach seems to be more realistic than Montesquieu’s. Zilia’s introduction to French culture parallels her acquisition of the French language, whereas Usbek and Rica arrive in Paris completely fluent in French. The practicality of Graffigny’s point of view could be explained by the fact that she was a foreigner herself when she arrived in Paris from her native Lorraine. In her correspondence, we see that her letters are sprinkled with colloquialisms and expressions typical of her region. Doubtlessly, after arriving in Paris, she would have had to modify her vocabulary to avoid seeming too provincial. Through Zilia, Graffigny shows us that language provides access, not merely to a system of signs, but to a wider base of cultural values and assumptions. Mesch points out that, “The vocabulary used to describe Zilia’s unceasing desire to learn implicitly inscribes her within the philosophical project of the era.”

Curiously, both Graffigny and her character used writing as a means to improve their respective situations.

In their observations, both Graffigny’s and Montesquieu’s characters notice the frivolity of French women and their supposed inferiority to men. Moreover, both authors point out that women’s inequality with men is in part due to their lack of educational opportunities. Rica quotes a gallant philosophe in one of his letters on women, “les forces [des femmes] seraient égales si l’éducation l’était aussi.” Similarly, Zilia remarks, “l’éducation qu’on … donne [aux femmes] est si opposée à la fin qu’on se propose, qu’elle me paraît être le chef-

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d’œuvre de l’inconséquence française.”\textsuperscript{240} Despite ostensible agreement, the fates reserved to the female heroines at the end of each novel serve to highlight fundamental differences between these authors’ perceptions of female identity.

The female characters in both novels begin their existence as victims. Roxane is confined to the harem while her husband travels abroad and studies other cultures, and, Zilia is abducted during the devastation of her country by Spaniards. Ingeniously, Graffigny’s abduction scenario allows Zilia to experience a journey similar to that of Montesquieu’s male characters. Jensen reminds us that abductions were, nevertheless, a common strategy in the heroic novel. “Like shipwrecks, natural disasters, and cross-dressing, abductions served to extend and complicate plots by keeping lovers apart and postponing the novel’s usual happy end of marriage.”\textsuperscript{241} Zilia’s abduction, however, provides her with an alternative to the usual scenario of obsessive longing and pain.

By the time Aza actually does abandon Zilia, …, she will have made so much of her life outside her bond to him that she can plausibly, within the terms of her own plot, refuse the traditional fates of the epistolary heroine: eternal suffering or death. Similarly, Zilia will have made so much of her life outside her relationship to Déterville that she can plausibly refuse the fates of the novelistic heroine: marriage or death. Instead, Zilia transforms the epistolary heroine’s rehearsal of her pain into a self-affirming life of writing.\textsuperscript{242}

Ironically, in the \textit{Lettres Persanes}, Usbek’s progressive enlightenment coincides with his increasing loss of control over his harem in Persia, culminating in the suicide of his favorite wife Roxane. Thus, “Montesquieu’s Persian experiment ultimately comes to a conventional conclusion: death, at her own

\textsuperscript{241} Jensen, \textit{Writing Love} 103.
\textsuperscript{242} Jensen, \textit{Writing Love} 104.
hand, of the misfitting woman and the larger social system unperturbed.”

In the end, Roxane’s suicide reestablishes the male patriarchy. Graffigny, on the other hand, reserves a very different fate for her heroine. Whereas Roxane fights to be heard and ultimately loses, Zilia’s letters are characterized by her freedom of expression. “Instead of sacrificing herself or adopting the stance of a victim vis-à-vis the dominant order, Zilia keeps her autonomy: resisting religious conversion and cultural naturalization as well as seduction.”

In a convincing and powerful reading of Graffigny’s text, Jensen points out that Zilia has an authority over the text previously unknown in women’s epistolary literature. As the translator of her own letters, she remains in control of their dissemination. Accordingly, they are published with her consent using Déterville as an intermediary. It was unseemly for women to conduct their own business dealings in Eighteenth Century France. In fact, Graffigny herself had a male friend negotiate on her behalf when publishing the Lettres d’une Péruvienne. The genius of Jensen’s argument lies in her ability to demonstrate narrative closure in what is practically always considered an open-ended text.

The preface’s presentation of Zilia as author of her book and of Déterville’s role in its publication tells the reader what happened after the end of the novel. We will, therefore, realize that refusing Déterville in marriage is related to Zilia’s desire for a writing life – a desire that has in fact already been fulfilled and that is actively supported by Déterville. … Graffigny does not leave her heroine’s life perpetually open. … she defines and motivates Zilia’s life as that of a woman who comes to writing and chooses its promise of independence and pleasure.

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243 Douthwaite, “Female Voices and Critical Strategies” 68.
244 Douthwaite, “Female Voices and Critical Strategies” 70.
245 Jensen, Writing Love 102.
Graffigny’s refusal to change the ending of her novel, despite public pressure to the contrary, is a strong mark of her philosophical stance. In fact, one could argue that her insistence on the conclusion (or perceived lack thereof, according to contemporaries) was her strongest form of social protest. As we have already seen, in a letter to Devaux, at the time she was contemplating changes to the novel for her second edition, Graffigny remains firm that Zilia will remain single. “Non, tranquillise-toi, Zilia ne sera pas mariée; je ne suis pas assez bête pour cela. Je n’ajouterai même rien à sa personne ni à ses sentiments, mais seulement je lui ferai remarquer des ridicules qui lui étaient échappés.”

Finally, it appears as if Françoise de Graffigny is, at least for us today, a femme philosophe! She was influenced by the concepts of her age in a comparable manner to many of the traditionally recognized (canonical) philosophe of the time. The new atmosphere of critical thinking, brought about by the Enlightenment, allowed Graffigny to imagine female existence on another plane. Fiction provided the forum for her to express her views. It is safe to say that through the Lettres d’une Péruvienne, Graffigny introduced a novel point of view to her contemporaries. She herself was unique being the first woman to write and publish an epistolary novel in France.

Fiction can be a very powerful force. Its images can remain for years after the initial reading of a work. I believe that it serves to broaden our current perspective and our vision of the future. Nevertheless, there are some who

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246 Graffigny, Choix de lettres 192.
247 Jensen, Writing Love 7.
maintain that fictional images are non-threatening due to their invented nature. In response to those who do not feel the ominous power of fiction, I simply point to the public outcry during the Eighteenth Century requesting Graffigny to change the ending of her novel.\textsuperscript{248} The dissatisfaction that the public expressed with an independent and wealthy woman living in her own chateau was perhaps indicative of deeper cultural feelings and the looming specter of change characteristic of the eighteenth century French Enlightenment as a whole.

\textbf{WHAT IS A PHILOSOPHE?}

Before situating Graffigny within the designation \textit{philosophe}, I would like to examine what the word means for us today, and what it meant for Graffigny’s contemporaries. This is important, as Graffigny’s status as a writer, let alone as a \textit{philosophe}, has been far from stable over time. Although authors who are viewed as philosophes do not always fall in neatly with the description of the word, examining several definitions is nevertheless a worthy task. Definitions provide us with a good idea of how a given word was viewed at a particular point in time. With this viewpoint, we will look at the word philosophe as defined in several modern dictionaries and in the \textit{Encyclopédie} of Diderot and d’Alembert. I will also

\textsuperscript{248} An opposite but equally relevant example lies in the fact that very little attention was paid to Graffigny during the Nineteenth Century. Altman astutely points out that Zilia resembles heroes of postcolonial immigration novels, and therefore, may have been unpalatable to readers during the French colonization of Algeria. Altman, “A Woman’s Place in the Enlightenment Sun” 263, 267.
examine several discussions of modern scholars revolving around the term *philosophe*.

Let us first examine dictionaries. The definition below is from one of the more widely used dictionaries of the French language – the *Petit Robert*.

Philosophe – (XVIIIe) Personne qui, par le culte de la raison appliquée aux sciences de la nature et de l’homme, par l’honnêteté morale mise au service de l’humanité, cherchait à répandre le libre examen et les lumières.\(^{249}\)

This definition does indeed seem to encompass Graffigny as *femme philosophe*. For, it is possible to maintain that Graffigny’s view of women in eighteenth-century society was based on reflection and reason, and that she actively sought to share her views.

In the article, “Did Women have an Enlightenment? Graffigny’s Zilia as Female *Philosophe*,” Rachel Mesch discusses Graffigny’s message in the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. Speaking of Graffigny’s character Zilia, Mesch writes, “[S]he speaks as a *philosophe*, astutely grasping the points of cultural tension and ultimately voicing her objections.”\(^{250}\) Although Mesch does admit that “[i]n most characterizations, the Enlightenment refers to the philosophical innovations undertaken by an elite male group,” her discussion on Graffigny’s use of “the *philosophe*’s own critical tools” is quite convincing.\(^{251}\)

In Mesch’s analysis, Graffigny used such common literary devices as the exotic other’s encounter with French culture, defamiliarization, the love story, the perspective of the naive observer, analysis based on observation, use of literary


\(^{250}\) Mesch 529.

\(^{251}\) Mesch 523, 524.
types such as the foreign traveler and the noble savage, enlightenment vocabulary, and describing objects instead of naming them thereby revealing their greater cultural significance. Graffigny’s innovative blending of the above elements enabled her to construct female identity outside patriarchal norms.

For example, “[t]he bon sauvage … is characterized by his ignorance, which also constitutes his privilege.” In a unique twist on this theme, Graffigny’s Inca princess knows both how to read and how to write in her own language at the start of the novel. Although she is immersed in French, she remains isolated through much of the novel due to her initial lack of linguistic understanding. By the end of the novel, however, she is able to master French. In addition, unlike her captors, she is able to comprehend non-linguistic signs. Graffigny’s heroine is thus able to critique French society, albeit from within her own cultural framework.

Another twist on literary types used in Enlightenment literature is that Zilia is both a traveler and a prisoner. Unlike Montesquieu’s Roxane from the *Lettres Persanes*, Zilia is not confined to a single universe. “There is no longer a relay between the liberated thought of the traveler who can explore the world and the confined arena of the woman’s words from within the *sérail.*”

Defamiliarization is the most commonly used tool in which an object that is familiar is shown in an unfamiliar way. For example, Zilia being unable to fully comprehend the French language is frequently forced to describe objects thereby revealing their deeper cultural significance. Mesch describes the passage in

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252 Mesch. 525.
253 Mesch. 526.
which Zilia sees herself in a mirror for the first time, highlighting through Zilia’s surprise the Peruvian woman’s focus on her inner self as opposed to the French woman’s focus on her appearance. By approaching the French language through her native Peruvian language, thereby recognizing its arbitrary nature, Zilia is able to demonstrate that language is in fact a construct of society. We also see that many of society’s prejudices are present in its language. Accordingly, “[Zilia’s] ability to analyze the structures of domination hidden in the French language ultimately free her from their grasp.”

Finally, Mesch highlights Graffigny’s use of Enlightenment vocabulary. “The vocabulary used to describe Zilia’s unceasing desire to learn implicitly inscribes her within the philosophical project of the era. Her philosophical leanings are grounded in her origins: she comes from *le pays du Soleil* – in other words, *le pays des Lumières.*”

In addition, as an American scholar, writing in English, I felt compelled to look at the *American Heritage Dictionary.* Only a simple definition is given. According to this dictionary, a *philosophe* is one of the leading philosophical, political, and social writers of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment. Although Graffigny was exceedingly popular (she was a best selling author) and may have written with intent to convey a specific message, can one really say that she was a “leading philosophical writer?”

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254 Mesch. 524.
255 Mesch. 526, 527.
In order to be “leading,” one must be ahead of others. Graffigny was certainly “leading” in sales of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*. This could be proved through a close observation of publishers’ sales records (assuming they survived), not to mention the fact that there were numerous pirated editions on the market.  

Nevertheless, some may say that it would be difficult to prove that she was a “leading” philosopher. Unlike more mainstream (or canonical) philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and Montesquieu; Graffigny did not possess (relatively speaking) a voluminous body of work. Indeed, she does not appear to have been “recognized” as a *philosophe* in her own time.

Graffigny’s contemporaries could not fully interpret the message of their own student. While her stylistic innovation of combining the cultural critic and romantic heroine were noted by at least some of her peers, the political implications of this gesture were ignored. Instead of contemplating the choice of philosophy over marriage, Graffigny’s readers criticized this lack of traditional closure.

Of course, “recognition” is not necessarily the equivalent of “being.” In other words, Graffigny did not have to be accepted as a philosophe in order to be one. In her article, “A Woman’s Place in the Enlightenment Sun: The case of F. de Graffigny,” Janet Altman demonstrates that Graffigny was indeed ahead of her time. Although some of her contemporary critics read the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* simply because it was in vogue, Altman maintains that, through it, they gradually came to respect Graffigny’s work and the novelistic genre itself. Altman even asserts that Graffigny laid the way for some of the prominent philosophes of the era.

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257 For further discussion on the popularity of the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, see chapter 2.  
258 Mesch 535.
Indeed, by demonstrating that philosophic fictions could reach a wide audience, Graffigny’s innovative work carved a path for Diderot, Voltaire, and Rousseau – who turned toward philosophical novels and drama after Graffigny had illustrated the potential of these genres to vehicle the philosophes’ ideals.259

As a woman, Graffigny did not have the same opportunities for literary expression as the above-mentioned men. However, given Altman’s assertion, it is safe to say that she was a “leader” among both women and men. Indeed, Graffigny does hold the distinction of being the first woman to write and publish an epistolary novel in France.260 According to the above discussion, it seems to me that Graffigny could be considered today as a femme philosophe, at least for Americans.

To continue with our examination of the term philosophe, it is important to look at Peter Gay’s classic discussion of the term in his book, The Party of Humanity. Gay puts to rest sweeping generalizations “that the men of the Enlightenment were naïve optimists, cold rationalists, abstract literary men, with a Utopian vision of the world and (worst of all) no sense of ambiguity or tragedy whatever.”261 Instead of cold calculation and mechanical reason, Gay claims that the philosophes were rationalists in the sense that they preferred reason to ignorance. They believed in formulating reasonable actions based on sound research as opposed to patiently waiting for God to act. Gay also refutes the concept that “the theory of progress, ‘was one of the dominant ideas of the Age

259 Altman 269.
260 Although Jensen’s work does not revolve specifically around the case of “Graffigny, femme philosophe,” she does mention that Graffigny was instrumental in affirming women’s ability to write cultural criticism and philosophy as opposed to “an endless cycle of letters of love and suffering.” Jensen, Writing Love 7.
of Enlightenment.” The mere observation that progress would occur cannot be called a “theory of progress.” Gay’s third criticism is that the philosophes were thought to have “no sense of history.” On the contrary, Gay shows that “the philosophes were … convinced that the only way to escape from the past was to know it.” The fourth criticism was that the philosophes sought to realize utopian dreams. Although government, power, and the legal organization of society were hotly debated topics, simply claiming general support for a utopian ideal would greatly oversimplify the matter. Gay’s final criticism is levied against the idea that “the Enlightenment was the work of lightheaded wits who glittered in salons.” This impression may have come from the fact that the philosophes transmitted their ideas through amusing stories, plays, and dialogues. Gay feels that the apparent irresponsibility of the philosophes is easy to understand, though unjustified. Their practical, yet entertaining and argumentative approach “was necessary, considering the people they wished to persuade and the authorities they had to flatter and evade.” In addition, some scholars accuse the philosophes of undermining the once secure foundations of Christianity. Again, Gay claims this is a simplistic view. Although “the range of philosophe opinions was wide, … at the center was a program for government responsible to its citizens, governing by laws rather than arbitrary enactments, protecting the rights of civil and religious minorities” alike. In the end, Gay’s discussion

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262 Gay 270, 271.
263 Gay 274.
264 Gay 277.
265 Gay 287.
266 Gay 288.
demonstrates that it is never safe to make sweeping generalizations or to assume that the work of only a few people is representative of a movement.

More recently, historians have attempted to advance Gay’s programme of a ‘social history of ideas’ beyond Gay’s own horizons. They have focused upon the fluid and fruitful interplay between wider groupings of thinkers, and their ebbings and flowings; they have emphasized how the Enlightenment was a broad collective endeavor, not just the work of a few giants … Recent historians have invited us to regard the movement as a wider ferment inaugurated, sustained and spread by a vastly larger number of relatively obscure thinkers, writers, readers and contact loops. … It is becoming clearer that, at all stages of the movement, nine-tenths of the Enlightenment iceberg was submerged.267

Whether or not we ultimately choose to call Graffigny a philosophe, she was clearly involved in the process in and through which the category was created.

The Enlightenment is commonly dated from the middle of the Eighteenth Century and the emergence of *philosophe* as a category. However, Jean de Viguerie, in his *Histoire et Dictionnaire du Temps des Lumières*, situates the production of philosophical works a few years earlier. “La date à laquelle commence la production philosophique n’est pas 1750, mais 1745.”268 This is the period in which the *philosophes* began to produce their most notable works. Interestingly, Graffigny’s *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* was published in 1747, and her popular play *Cénie* was performed at the Comédie Française in 1750. This situates her firmly within the period in which philosophical works were produced.

Let us now examine the term *philosophe* from an eighteenth-century perspective. In the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d’Alembert, a whole article was

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267 Porter 40, 42.
devoted to the term. We should, however, keep in mind that the *Encyclopédie*
reflects what is commonly thought to be “the summation of Enlightenment
thinking.” I will therefore limit my comments on how the term *philosophe* arose,
and instead focus on the final meaning of the word as expressed in the
Eighteenth Century.

The author starts by saying that some people have a rather vague view of
the term, believing that one only needs to be a bit of a recluse with a wise air,
and have read a few books. Others take a narrower view, believing that they are
the only philosophes because they dared defy the sacred precepts of religion.
The aim of the article, therefore, is to provide a more exact idea of the term
philosophe.

Essentially, a philosophe is a man who reasons using his powers of
reflection and observation, but who is not afraid to suspend his judgment when
there is not enough information to make a rational decision. The philosophe
realizes that he is a social being, and therefore does his best to get on in society.
Accordingly, he tries to please others and make himself useful. These feelings
are nourished in his heart by religion, where his natural reason has led him.
Finally, a true philosophe is not tormented by ambition. He wants, in addition to
the necessities of life, a reasonable excess from which to provide the basis of his
comfort and happiness.  

Let us examine this definition as it applies to Françoise de Graffigny. For
the most part, she seems to fall nicely into the description of philosophe. In

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270 Diderot, “Philosophe,” *Encyclopédie*.  

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previous chapters, we see how she uses reason, reflection, and observation to
demonstrate her points. She was clearly a social being who did her best to be
helpful and to please others. Although one could not call her ambitious, we saw
that she indeed spent a great deal of her time occupied with acquiring the
necessities of life, and whatever reasonable excess she could. Furthermore, in
the *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, Graffigny has her main character Zilia suspend
judgment about the French after a confusing experience with a mirror.

*Ces prodiges troublent la raison, ils offusquent le jugement; que
faut-il penser des habitants de ce pays ? Faut-il les craindre, faut-il
les aimer ? Je me garderai bien de rien déterminer là-dessus.*

The two points of the definition that do not fit neatly are the fact that Graffigny
was not a man and that she was not very religious. Interestingly, Zilia’s status as
a woman and her religious beliefs were also the two points that contemporary
critics objected to most in the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*.

Let us first discuss religion. According to the description in Noël’s
biography already discussed in chapter one, Graffigny (like many of the
philosophes) was somewhat skeptical about Christianity. Moreover, her
characters, Zilia and Cénie, both expressed similar doubts. Indeed, the existence
of God was widely discussed during the Enlightenment. Writers like Rousseau
felt that the complexity of nature demonstrated the existence of God. Others, like
Voltaire, felt that God was like a great watchmaker who set the universe in
motion and then stepped back to let it operate in accordance with the laws of
science. Deism, or belief in God outside the Christian creed, became popular

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among the philosophes. In fact, as all revealed religions were flawed, religious persecution seemed all the more ridiculous. Many, including Voltaire, preached tolerance. Since all religions were faulty and inconsistent, no religion was worth a fight.  

Graffigny was not openly antagonistic to Christianity, outwardly conforming to its precepts. For example, she was friendly with many men of the Church; and, she arranged her niece’s wedding, which was duly held in a Church. In *Choix de lettres*, Showalter mentions that having recently moved, they tried to get the priest from their former parish to perform the wedding ceremony. As they were no longer members of the parish, however, he was unable to comply. I mention this simply to show that despite Graffigny’s skepticism, there was nothing unusual about her religious practices.

Instead, let us turn our attention to whether a philosophe in the Eighteenth Century could be a woman. Despite our general perceptions, we should not immediately conclude that a philosophe was always a man. This led me to examine another article from the *Encyclopédie*, this time under the rubric HOMME. In the most general terms, “homme” refers to mankind, “un être sentant, réfléchissant, pensant, qui se promène librement sur la surface de la terre.” In addition, when discussing the term “homme” in relation to natural history, both sexes are discussed. In relation to anatomy, the human body is discussed in sexually general terms, except when differences are noted in

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272 Viguierie 272-274.
273 Graffigny, *Choix de lettres* 203, 204.
274 “Homme,” *Encyclopédie*.
genitalia. Additionally, the *Encyclopédie* lists philosophe as a masculine word, a designation, which does not in itself exclude women. One could conclude then, that the term “homme” could encompass any human.

Nevertheless, no explicit provision was made for women. Unlike the term “auteur,” in Furetière’s *Dictionnaire Universel*\(^{275}\) where women are specifically included in the definition, no such distinction was made for the word philosophe in the *Encyclopédie*. Moreover, the philosophical content of Graffigny’s novel clearly indicates that eighteenth-century women were not on a par with men. Specifically addressing the possibility that *man is mankind*, Jensen argues that “Zilia will make explicit that *men* is not a general, but gendered, noun.”\(^{276}\) Roy Porter also notices that the Enlightenment was characterized by male domination, duly noting that even Gay only included men in his discussion.

The (male) Enlightenment warmly and broadly encouraged the view that women ought to be treated as rational creatures, and such authors as Locke held that girls should have more or less the same education as boys (that followed from the notion that the mind began as a *tabula rasa* – the mind had no sex.) But beyond that, *philosophes* did not generally commit themselves to the general emancipation of women as men’s equals. … Indeed, advanced female thinkers, …, especially praised women’s role as mothers and educators of children.\(^{277}\)

Modern scholars usually agree that Graffigny’s feminist message in the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* went largely unnoticed in the Eighteenth Century. However, they do not seem to agree on how Graffigny herself was perceived. Altman feels that Graffigny was viewed in a more or less gender neutral way.

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\(^{276}\) Jensen, *Writing Love* 114.

\(^{277}\) Porter 45, 46.
What is most striking in Graffigny’s critical reception in the eighteenth century is its relative blindness to gender. Graffigny is acclaimed as a writer, not as a woman writer. Critics position her within generic traditions, not gendered traditions, citing her as the peer of Montesquieu for the philosophic novel and of Richardson for the sentimental novel.\footnote{Altman, “A Woman’s place in the Enlightenment Sun” 267.}

On the other hand, Hogg notices discomfort on the part of some contemporaries with Graffigny’s status as female author. Collé’s critique underlines the pressing economic needs that inspired Graffigny’s literary endeavors, \footnote{Altman, “A Woman’s place in the Enlightenment Sun” 267.} “[T]he critic is scarcely sympathetic to Graffigny’s financial woes, nor to her recourse to the pen as a means of solving them: … A woman without money who openly declares her difficulties … seems to disturb Collé. Rather than sympathizing with her plight, he criticizes her spending habits. While purportedly reviewing Graffigny’s play, Collé reacts more profoundly to the spectacle of a woman writing for money.”\footnote{Chloe Hogg, “The Philosopher as Tramp and Female in the Writings of Graffingy,” Women in French Studies 6 (1998) 4, 5.}

It is possible that these two competing views typify women’s experience in the Eighteenth Century. Although women, especially of the nobility, were not excluded from the intelligentsia, they may, nevertheless, have been viewed with skepticism when they ventured outside the roles typically allotted to them. Graffigny notices this duality in the treatment of women in the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, “je n’en vois point de plus déshonorante pour leur esprit que leur façon de penser sur les femmes. Ils les respectent, mon cher Aza, et en même temps ils les méprisent avec un égal excès.”\footnote{Graffigny, \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller 135.}

In the end, Graffigny’s status as a philosophe in relation to the above discussion is a matter of judgment. Modern scholars tend to view her as a \textit{femme philosophe}, duly taking note of women’s inferior status to men during the

\footnote{Graffigny, \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, ed. Miller 135.}
Eighteenth Century, and thereby, reserving the term *philosophe* for men. People of Graffigny’s own time did not refer to her as a *philosophe*. However, they did consider the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* to be a “roman philosophique” (even if they did not completely grasp Graffigny’s feminist message). In 1749, Fréron mentioned the “saine Philosophie” contained in the novel. It is possible that he was referring to Zilia’s critique on French society, as he clearly did not like the ending of the novel. He gave detailed suggestions on how to revise it in a way that would bring it back into line with the status quo. In this light, Fréron’s acknowledgement of Graffigny’s “saine Philosophie” appears to be an attempt to defuse the more radical aspect of her philosophical message. Similarly, about four months after Graffigny’s death, the *Journal de Trévoux* situated the *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* among “les petits Livres philosophiques du XVIIIe siècle,” adding, “mais pensera-t-on que ce Roman puisse faire des Sages? Nommera-t-on quelqu’un que cette lecture ait rendu meilleur?” In addition, at least six articles in the *Encyclopédie* referred to the novel, several of them citing it extensively. Regardless of what contemporaries may have thought of Graffigny (as a *philosophe* or otherwise), her work was respected during her lifetime. Although she fell from the public eye and was barely thought of during the Nineteenth Century, she has more than recovered her status today.

281 “Journal de Trévoux” 296.
GRAFFIGNY PHILOSOPHE AND THE SEQUELIZATION PHENOMENON

In judging the achievements of the Enlightenment, both Gay and Porter bring to light the question of influence. They caution historians to be attentive to what “habits of thinking, patterns of feeling, and styles of behavior were modified, if not amongst the masses, at least among the many.”\textsuperscript{282} It is for this reason that I feel the study of the sequels to the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne} is so important.

First, the mere existence of so many adaptive works is evidence that people were paying attention to Graffigny’s novel. The fact that the book was not only popular, but motivated other writers to continue the story, demonstrates that Graffigny at least had an impact on the individuals who sought to modify her work. We may surmise, then, that she may well have had an impact on a larger audience. After all, numerous people were reading her work.\textsuperscript{283}

Second, the tendency of other writers to force Graffigny’s conclusion into line with the status quo is strong evidence of the innovative quality of the novel’s final philosophical message. In short, the sequels to the \textit{Lettres d’une Péruvienne}, which are for the most part conservative and conventional, seek to correct Graffigny by refrusing the philosophical implications of her concluding message. In fact, the strongest evidence of Graffigny’s innovation lies in the fact that many contemporaries did not even notice the novel’s feminist message.

\footnotetext[282]{Porter 10.}
\footnotetext[283]{For a more lengthy discussion of this topic, please see the section entitled “Lettres d’une Péruvienne Bestseller!” in Chapter 2.}
It is my contention that the writers of sequels, through their efforts to negate Graffigny’s philosophical message by remolding it to fit the status quo, ultimately confirm her status as a femme philosophe. In other words, the sequels to Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* provide negative proof of her status as a philosophe. The fact that her contemporaries did not recognize her as a philosophe shows a clear resistance to giving her this status. Her gender may have contributed, in part, to the fact that she was not noticed in this way. In addition, Graffigny first entered the literary scene at a time prior to the firm establishment of philosophe as a category. The *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* was first published in 1747, prior to the period in which the philosophe came into vogue.

In this regard, it is interesting to note the conciliatory and optimistic tone of Diderot’s article “philosophe” (discussed above) and Graffigny’s more assertive and critical stance.

Diderot: Notre philosophe ne se croit pas en exil dans ce monde; … c’est un honnête homme qui veut plaire & se render utile. … [I]l aime extrêmement la société.

Graffigny: [J]e ne vois point de plus déshonorante pour leur esprit que leur façon de penser sur les femmes.

In the end, Graffigny’s refusal to change the ending of her novel is the strongest indication of her philosophical stance.
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