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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Susan Leigh Weir for the Master of Arts in French were presented June 30, 1995 and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

COMMITTEE APPROVALS:

[REDACTED]
Gina Greco, Chair

[REDACTED]
Claudine Fisher

[REDACTED]
Thomas Lockett

DEPARTMENT APPROVAL:

[REDACTED]
Louis Elteto
Department of Foreign Languages
and Literatures

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Susan Leigh Weir for the Master of Arts in French presented June 30, 1995.

Title: Lettres d'une Péruvienne: An Enlightenment Utopian Novel

This thesis examines Françoise de Graffigny's eighteenth-century novel, Lettres d'une Péruvienne, focusing on the aspects that demonstrate its consideration as a utopian work, or moreover, as a feminist utopian work.

The first chapter is developed from the premise about utopian fiction that the author's life must be considered since it is out of his or her "lived social experience" that utopian visions are born. Utopias, many have argued, are born out of reactions to social inequities and injustices. This chapter thus presents and analyzes, Graffigny's life especially where it shows needs for a future utopia.

The second chapter explores definitions of utopias, especially feminist literary utopias, in order to build a framework for analyzing Graffigny's work. It will be shown that this novel exhibits many of the traits found in a woman's utopia as opposed to those found in a man's. The third and fourth chapters directly analyze the text, Lettres d'une Péruvienne, using the research from the previous chapters as the groundwork to draw out the utopian aspects of the novel.

LETTRES D'UNE PERUVIENNE:
AN ENLIGHTENMENT UTOPIAN NOVEL

by
SUSAN LEIGH WEIR

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
FRENCH

Portland State University
1995

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I would like to dedicate this emotional and mental exercise to Jeffrey, whose presence in my life has given me significant insight into this novel. It is perhaps because of him that I came to choose this work and it is through this work that I have gleaned some valuable clarity and understanding. Therein I found my inspiration to see this to its end.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a re-reading of Françoise de Graffigny's eighteenth-century epistolary novel Lettres d'une Péruvienne as a utopian novel. Traits of the utopian genre, especially of feminist utopian literature, will be explored and the novel will be tested against definitions, visions and preceding literary utopian works. This thesis argues that Graffigny's work clearly shows utopian aspects and should be included in the canon of Enlightenment utopian literary works.

Lettres d'une Péruvienne (1747) was a best-seller in the eighteenth-century and received much critical acclaim. The following century, the book came under fire as Napoleonic Law found the property-owning heroine subversive. The novel has received considerable attention in this century as scholars are giving it a fresh look with new perspectives. Additionally, Graffigny's correspondence has been published in stages since the 1970s, edited by English Showalter and Eugène Asse. Unfortunately, editors past and present have compromised Graffigny's voice. English Showalter states that what is most important in the Graffigny letters is the light they shed on her contemporaries that she wrote about, namely Voltaire. Indeed, this is not a new bias: part of her correspondence was published in 1820 under the title Vie privée de Voltaire et de Mme du Châtelet pendant un séjour de six mois à Cirey. One must wonder

where Graffigny's voice is if editors, even modern ones, are more concerned about Voltaire than about the author herself. Nonetheless, the recent scholarship of Janet Altman and Nancy K. Miller strives to bring Graffigny's voice back from centuries of rest, and to redefine her place in the Enlightenment.

My research has benefited greatly from the above sources, but only in a general manner. My interest is the utopian vision of Graffigny and the utopian aspects she integrated into her novel. This utopian perspective has not yet been explored in scholarly research, in fact the only mention of it is in passing. In 1871 Louis Etienne wrote a scathing article of why Lettres d'une Péruvienne should not be given any further consideration. His view point represents literary criticism based on political priorities: "Faute d'un autre terme, on est bien obligé de qualifier ce roman de socialiste...On causait, on promenait son caprice sur des utopies sans conséquence, comme sur l'état des hommes primitifs ou sur l'histoire des Troglodytes; mais on n'avait pas de théorie sociale toute faite pour changer le monde du jour au lendemain" (L. Etienne republished letter in Nicoletti 485).

Recent attention has come from Donawerth and Kolmerten in the introduction to their anthology entitled Utopian and Science Fiction by Women. Brief reference is made to both Graffigny and Lettres d'une Péruvienne. The work is called a "critical utopia" (6). The need for exploration and development of Graffigny's utopian vision is obvious as they speak of the work as

if it is a given that it is a utopian one. Without having established it as such, it is presented as a precedent for the works that will be discussed in their collection.

Jack Undank in his article "Graffigny's Room of her Own" treats the notion of utopia in a footnote stating that the work treats the theme of "utopian elsewhere" (317). In her article entitled "Language and Reality in Françoise de Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*," Diane Fourny also writes in passing of Zilia's "Incan utopia" (229).

The goal of this thesis is to re-read Lettres d'une Péruvienne through the lens of utopian works. To do this, it was necessary to research utopias, especially Enlightenment utopias and feminist utopias. Interestingly, none of the authors that I am citing in this thesis refer to Graffigny or her novel. I have used their works to establish an understanding of the genre. Also, while researching utopias with Lettres d'une Péruvienne in mind, it became exceedingly clear that the passing comments of Graffigny scholars contained a gold mine of possibility.

In addition to pertinent scholarly literature, I consider works that Graffigny cites in her novel, therefore works that preceded hers, such as Montesquieu's Lettres persanes. Also, I will consider authors that she refers to in her correspondence. Utopian works during the eighteenth century flourished after Graffigny's novel, perhaps charting dissatisfaction with French society leading up to the Revolution. I will not, however, include

those works as my focus is Graffigny and the preceding works which may have influenced her or which indicate that she is at least writing *in the tradition of* established authors. I will refer to several female authors that precede Graffigny such as Mme de Lafayette and Mlle de Scudéry who seem to offer precedence of Graffigny's feminist and utopian visions.

In Chapter One, I ground my study in the principle that an author's utopian vision is found in his or her "lived social experience." From his/her experiences is born a utopian vision for a better place in which to live. Scholars of utopian literature concur that in order to understand the utopia it is necessary to first understand the author so as to understand from where he/she speaks. This chapter will look at Graffigny's life, especially as it will elucidate events and attitudes that are treated in Lettres d'une Péruvienne.

Chapter Two lays the utopian foundation on which the following chapters will build. Definitions and traits of the genre are established in this chapter including a discussion of male-centered utopias as contrasted to female-centered utopias.

The first two chapters will delve extensively into scholarly research and many sources will be quoted to support my contention that Graffigny's novel is utopian at least in conception. None of these varied sources *studies* the Graffigny text; rather, she is tossed in for flavor to buttress arguments regarding other texts as utopian literature.

In Chapter Three, having laid the groundwork, I will deal directly with the utopian vision of the text. It will be shown that the *Temple du Soleil* in Peru serves as Zilia's physical utopian referent--a Golden Age utopia that is now locked in time and space. Also, it will be shown that she and her compatriots represent virtuous values that make them superior to the French who are under fire from Graffigny's *naïve* social critic.

Chapter Four deals with the re-establishment of Zilia's utopia when all possibility of being reunited with her lover Aza, and all possibility of returning to her initial utopia are lost. As mentioned earlier, the feminist utopian vision differs from the male perspective. This chapter demonstrates that Zilia's recreating of her utopia involves a restructuring of the patriarchal system in which she lives. Eighteenth-century France not only fails to measure up to her nostalgic utopia, but it represents the present and Zilia's "lived social experience" against which she is reacting as she rebuilds her utopia.

Graffigny's orthography in her correspondence contains many misspellings and archaic spellings. It is assumed that the reader is aware of this and no footnoting or corrections will be made. Additionally, there is discrepancy among scholars as to the spelling of the author's name: Graffigny or Graffigny. Both will be quoted.

CHAPTER ONE

Graffigny's Life: Toward Utopia

Utopian literature, including the sub genre feminist utopian literature, is born of a vision of a better society. It is a reaction to an "expérience sociale vécue" (Soboul 14) or a dissatisfaction with the elements of society that have become obsolete or are fundamentally oppressive in either theory, practice, or both. There was much social critique in pre-Revolutionary France, however, despite the "forward" thinking of the Enlightenment *philosophes*, the patriarchal system fueling misogynic attitude cast shadows for women in the *Siècle des Lumières*.

As stated in the Introduction, Graffigny's life will be considered in order to establish her lived social experience. From such an understanding one can then draw out the reactionary factors that might lead her to a pre-conquest utopian society. Graffigny's heroine Zilia holds fast to her principles cultivated in her idyllic Incan homeland. Her utopian vision will not be denied as it travels thousands of miles and two hundred years to settle effectively in Enlightenment France where it will be put to the ultimate test, evolving into perhaps a private utopian environment, perhaps into a literary arsenal from which to take critical aim at society. This movement towards *private* will be discussed in Chapter Four of this study. As an aside, it is interesting to put this into an historical context as there was a

similar movement from the highly public court of Louis XIV to the more private salons.

Attempting to *find the author* in the work can be considered a non-literary approach, however, utopian literary scholars are quite in agreement that understanding a work depends on a rounded comprehension of the author's critical point of view. It is a given that: "Utopias have set themselves against identifiable evils in the author's own society" (Stephens 2). Thus the author's life is important when establishing the underlying principles behind the narrative.

The principal author of a personal ideology must be sought not in it, [the narrative] but in its author insofar as he was a particular individual situated socially in actual history which is reflected in this individual development according to the complex relations of the individual and history. (Soboul 178)

Reactions to the legal, social, economic, religious, intellectual, artistic, and sexual constraints that Graffigny lived with surface both in her correspondence and in her novel Lettres d'une Péruvienne. Her heroine, Zilia, becomes her *porte-parole* to criticize eighteenth-century society. In this criticism resides some of the identity of Françoise de Graffigny and the writer who strove to illuminate the *Siècle des Lumières* with her utopian vision. The work is distinguished from others in the genre as it has a "twice" female perspective: Graffigny's and Zilia's. Graffigny is championed as having given us "the strongest

feminist statement made by any of our *épistolières*" (Spencer 234).

This chapter will conflate the autobiographical and biographical elements that are known of Graffigny due to the editing and publication of her correspondence by English Showalter and Eugène Asse. Additionally, scholarly research will serve as an illuminating lens through which to analyze the novel and the intention behind it.

As mentioned in the introduction, none of these researchers has developed Graffigny's utopian perspective. The desired result of this chapter is to lay a groundwork on which to subsequently assert my contention that Graffigny possessed a utopian vision and that she sets forth her heroine, Zilia, to restructure her (Graffigny's) own problematic and oppressive childhood and adulthood. Zilia subverts patriarchal paradigms, skirts issues that plagued Graffigny and finally recreates a new utopian *Temple du Soleil* out of the ashes of her fallen idyllic homeland.

The question must be asked: why might Françoise de Graffigny write a novel that exhibits a utopian vision? A woman saddened by a troubling life wrote to her friend: "Ils m'ont rendu l'âme si noire, que je ne sens plus le plaisir, je ne fais que le penser" (Asse vii). Similarly, "quand on est malheureux, on l'est sans fin...je suis si convaincue que le malheur me suivrait en paradis" (Graffigny-Asse 162). Obviously this resignation to unhappiness does not allow her to preclude an imaginary happy

existence. As one scholar writes: "Pour elle, le bonheur n'était plus qu'un rêve de l'imagination" (Asse vii).

Françoise d'Issembourg's father was of German descent, having moved to France as a young man to find his fortune. In both countries he was titled and considered a gentleman. After a distinguished military service, he found himself at the court of Lorraine, where Françoise would meet her future husband.

Little is known of Graffigny's childhood; however, I include a much repeated anecdote which perhaps sheds some light on her mother. Additionally, I quote a later writing from Graffigny which sadly sums up the characters of both parents. The anecdote is taken to suggest the lack of artistic appreciation that her mother had, of which the future writer was ashamed. Apparently, as recounted by Elie Fréron, a noted journalist of the period, Françoise's mother took numerous engravings made by the artist and engraver Callot, Françoise's maternal great uncle, and had them melted down to make "une batterie de cuisine" (Showalter 1985: xxvii). And from Graffigny's own pen comes a depiction of a less than idyllic childhood:

Je suis née fille unique d'un gentilhomme qui n'avoit d'autre mérite que celui d'être bon officier. La douceur et la timidité de ma mère jointes à l'humeur violente et impérieuse de mon père ont causé tous les malheurs de ma vie. Séduite par l'exemple de l'une, intimidée par la sévérité de l'autre, mon âme perdit dès l'enfance cette force sans laquelle le bon sens, la

raison, et la prudence ne servent qu'à nous rendre plus malheureux. (Showalter 1985: xxvii)

As Françoise approached marrying age, numerous patriarchal, hence inequitable, institutions combined forces which reduced her to a beaten, penniless, and legally unprotected woman. First she married a financially irresponsible and physically abusive man, marriage being one of the socially acceptable options for young women along with entry into a convent. Secondly, when the marriage became life threatening, she had to plead for her father to rescue her and spent the next few years in constant fear of François de Graffigny's return which meant further financial hardship and the menace of further physical abuse. Graffigny would write into her heroine the loss that she, and other women of her time, suffered upon marrying: Zilia remarks that equality does not endure past the wedding day and that after that, "les femmes seules y doivent être assujetties" (144).

France's legal system during the pre-Revolutionary period was under Old Law: "that of an absolute Catholic monarchy which therefore recognized the jurisdiction of canon law for church-related matters, such as the sacrament of marriage" (Rogers 34). The patriarchal power structure benefited from repression of women and was also supported by legal and religious doctrines. The Church relegated the married woman to a subordinate

position. Her legal and social existence was mediated through her husband: "The married woman was, in fact, an inferior, a virtual slave, whose person and assets were given over to the absolute control of another party" (Rogers 35). The State and the Church created a formidable barrier towards the liberation of a woman trapped in a violent marriage. Indeed, it was nearly five years after their actual separation that Graffigny was able to obtain a legal separation.

The marriage between François Huguet and Françoise-Paule du Buisson d'Issembourg d'Happoncourt was somewhat arranged by her paternal aunt Mme Soreau, who saw the union in its financial terms as "un moyen de tirer M. d'Happoncourt de l'embaras ou il etoit par rapport aux dettes qu'il avoit contractées" (Showalter 1985: xxviii). Graffigny, married under such circumstances, would later voice her disgust for marriages arranged for financial gains in Lettres d'une Péruvienne. Céline's mother, "cette mère dénaturée," forbids her daughter's marriage, instead sending her to a convent. Also, Déterville joins the Knights of Malta, both children thus making way for their older brother to inherit all the family wealth. The laws governing the nobility with regard to inheritance were based on primogeniture, inheritance by the eldest son (Rogers 34). The injustice in which Céline is caught reveals a double layer of inequality: The tradition of primogeniture does not provide for either herself nor for her brother Déterville. Against this system, Céline has no

voice; it is Déterville who must intervene to assure her future financial security.

François de Graffigny received 40,000 *livres* upon marriage to Françoise. They were awarded the land at Graffigny, from which they took the name, and François de Graffigny was promoted to chamberlain in the court of Lorraine. But financial woes plagued the young couple and despite moneys from Françoise's father, creditors demanded back payments and lands and properties had to be sold to cover the debts, including the house where the young couple was residing. Graffigny depleted his wealth and then *legally* squandered his wife's dowry.

The record of the violent marriage is pertinent in this study given that marriage and independence for an eighteenth-century woman figure into Zilia's utopian vision in Lettres d'une Péruvienne. Still in the framework of "lived social experience" from which the desire for something better stems, Graffigny's experiences should be taken into consideration. Her life perhaps gives understanding to Zilia's words:

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. (143-4)

English Showalter, who obtained the Graffigny Papers (a collection of letters, testaments and documents from various individuals), recounts a most violent and terrifying existence that Françoise de Graffigny endured at the hands of her husband. He inflicted frequent beatings with various objects--*ganivets, cannes, mains, coups de pied*. He threatened her at knife point and reduced her to desperate humiliation in front of the servants, even forcing her to fulfill their duties such as kneading and baking bread. So severe was the violence that the servants had to intervene for fear that he would kill her (Showalter 1985: xxx). Similarly, the correspondence between Mme de Graffigny and François-Antoine Devaux is another verification of the abusive situation in which she was living. Indeed, it was to Devaux that Mme de Graffigny would bequeath all of her correspondence.

By 1723, when the Graffignys had already been living apart for five years, Françoise sought a legal separation and a division of all possessions. She brought eight unrelated witnesses to her defense "qui attestèrent sous serment avoir vu François Huguet menacer, humilier et frapper sa femme à maintes reprises" (Showalter 1985: xxx). Graffigny's own description of the brutality she suffered was shared with the company at Cirey during her 1738-39 stay which visibly touched the audience and reduced Voltaire to tears. From her correspondence:

[Mme du Châtelet] me demanda si j'avais eu des enfants; en bref, voilà que de questions en questions,

me défendant toujours, on m'a fait conter l'histoire de ma vie qu'ils ignoraient totalement...Voltaire, l'humain Voltaire, fondait en larmes, car il n'a pas honte de paraître sensible... (Graffigny-Asse 106)

A letter written sometime in 1716 by the young Mme de Graffigny to her father indicates the desperate and threatening situation she was experiencing. She informs him of the physical abuse from her husband and asks him to get word to the family adviser, Antoine de La Vallée de Rarécourt:

Mon cher pere, Je suis obligés dans l'extremité ou je me trouee de vous suplier de ne me point abandoner et de m'envoier au plus vite chercher par Mr Rarecour car je suis en grand danger et suis toutes brisé de coups. Je me jete a votre misericorde et vous prie que se soit bien vite. Il faut que c'est d'autre que moy qui vous l'on mandé, car tout le monde le sait. Je suis avec bien du respect... (Graffigny-Showalter 1985-1)

After years of "une patience héroïque" (Nicoletti 475), the legal separation was finally obtained by Graffigny, but only after numerous legal battles against a system which did not even recognize women's rights. The onus of proof rested on the wife to prove that her husband was "willfully dissipating her fortune and endangering the value of her dowry" (Rogers 37). However, the legal system which had already devalued the woman could scarcely rule in her favor because this situation would suggest that a woman was capable of questioning the judgment of her

husband's management capabilities and "to do that would...undermine the basic underlying principles of feminine incompetence and male superiority" (Rogers 37).

The legal system did provide for separations based on physical abuse but this was difficult to obtain as well. The *bad treatment* that could serve as the basis of a situation was legally interpreted as "being life-endangering or inimical to health to the point of threatening the possibility of recovery" (Rogers 37). The witnesses that testified in Graffigny's favor and her personal testimony left little doubt that François de Graffigny was indeed an abusive husband.

The couple had three children who were born and died between 1713 and 1717. One died in infancy and the others were one and three years old at death. It is curious that Zilia writes to Aza to praise him as a liberal thinker for educating her and not reducing her to the "humiliant avantage de donner la vie à ta postérité" (23). Perhaps, as I will explain later, both Zilia and Graffigny have unconventional plans with regard to procreation.

François de Graffigny was imprisoned sometime in 1717 "pour violence contre son épouse" (Showalter 1985: xli), and Mme de Graffigny took refuge in a convent. After their separation, all lands and real estates having been sold or repossessed, François de Graffigny turned over his control to his wife by signing a general proclamation entitling Mme de Graffigny "de gérer, négocier, et administrer toutes leurs affaires" (Showalter 1985:

xxxi). The wayward François de Graffigny spent the latter part of his life in petty criminal activities according to his wife, living a life that was contrary to the moral ideal of the time or "indigne d'un honnête homme" (Showalter 1985: xlii). After several skirmishes with the law, "soupçonné de vol et de meurtre" (Showalter 1985: xlii), the ailing Graffigny was released to the custody of his brothers in Neufchâtel where he died in 1725.

Widowed at 30, she was "à peu près aussi indépendante qu'une femme pouvait l'être à cette époque" (Showalter 1985: xxxii). By 1728, her mother, father and aunt had all died, and she could no longer depend on her family's support. Mme de Graffigny found refuge at Lunéville. Her life was happy there; she enjoyed freedom and benevolent protection under the auspices of the Duke Léopold and the Duchess, sister of the Duke of Orléans who showed her special attention (Showalter 1975: 15).

From 1733 forward, Graffigny frequented a circle of cultivated people, men of letters and science, artists and actors, and it was among them that she acquired the reputation of "une femme d'esprit" (Showalter 1985: xxxiii). The intellectual atmosphere wherein the great authors and thinkers of the day were read and discussed perhaps allowed Graffigny "to make up for the inadequacies of the education commonly given to girls, a topic she would later develop in her novel" (Curtis 208).

Graffigny foreshadows many of the thinkers of the day in her criticisms of education for women, for it wasn't until 1751 when the Encyclopédie was first published that a comment on the abysmal situation for women took form: "We must be surprised that such untutored souls can produce so many virtues, that there are not more vices germinating in them" (Encyclopédie as translated by Malueg 262). Samia Spencer, an Enlightenment scholar offers a summary of the criticism of the educational system of the *Siècle des Lumières*:

Irrelevance. With its strict emphasis on the past--antiquity, ancient languages, literature, and history--and its neglect of the present, monastic education provided students with useless information and an outdated mentality, leaving them ignorant of reality and their environment. *Inefficiency.* Too much time was wasted on religious studies that failed even to lay the foundations for solid religious principles. *Inaccuracy of instruction.* Values taught in the college or the convent were not those prevailing in the world, thus engendering confusion in young people as they faced real-life situations. *Mediocrity.* Designed for masses, public education did not serve one of the most important groups, the gifted. *Inadequacy of instructors.* Inexperienced, out of touch with reality, and ignorant of the world, monks and nuns were incapable of shaping the lives and minds of young people. (Spencer 89-90)

Indeed, Mme de Graffigny's criticism of the lack of appropriate education revolves around each of the above inadequacies. Zilia will come to find that her Peruvian education,

also a religious one, once thought of as optimal, will prove quite lacking as she finds herself not only living outside of the idyllic *Temple du Soleil*, but now in French society where little of her education has prepared her for her new reality.

Through her *porte-parole*, Zilia, Graffigny takes aim at the educational system in France which she views as a superficial finishing school which only prepares women to be ornamentations. The *exterior* qualities are attended to, while the *interior*--intellectual and spiritual--qualities are seriously ignored. This is an illustration of a theme that Graffigny exploits which associates her with feminine utopians: the movement from the exterior to the interior. I will explore this issue in subsequent chapters.

France's priorities can in no way match those of Peru where the adults inspire children to grow up with "courage et une certaine fermeté d'âme" (138)--a valor and steadfastness of spirit that form in them a decisive character. Also, women's education does not instill a sense of self-respect thus creating a situation where women are expected to live virtuously without being given an adequate moral education. Zilia sees the inadequacy in the French system which does not instill self-respect in children: "ce sentiment généreux qui nous rend les juges les plus sévères de nos actions et de nos pensées, qui devient un principe sûr quand il est bien senti, n'est ici d'aucune ressource pour les femmes" (139). This lack leads the *naïve* Zilia to make the trenchant

remark which underscores the hypocritical expectations for women to act virtuously without having been provided a sound moral development: "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" (138).

Graffigny was familiar with the works of the author-historian Charles Duclos, who was received regularly at her salon. Indeed, she includes in Lettres d'une Péruvienne a passage from Considérations sur les Mœurs de ce Siècle, which was first published in 1750, indicating that Graffigny revised her 1747 novel to include prevailing opinions regarding educational reform. One may ascertain therefore that Graffigny was not only a proponent of change, but that she was fully cognizant of the writings of the day which criticized contemporary culture as a means to restructure the ideologies that produced unjust institutions. Duclos writes in his chapter entitled "*Sur l'éducation et sur les préjugés*," words that might have come through the doubly critical pen of Graffigny and Zilia: "On trouve parmi nous beaucoup d'instruction et peu d'éducation" (Duclos 207).

Duclos' thrust is to "former les hommes" (Duclos 207). With a belief in the capabilities of his *Siècle des Lumières* to do so, he states: "il me semble qu'il y a une certaine fermentation de raison universelle qui tend à se développer...et hâter les progrès par une éducation bien étendue" (Duclos 209). His notions, he is

quick to say, are firmly grounded in *real* problems and *real* solutions, an element of the utopian vision despite his assurance that he is not dabbling in whimsical fancy: “Ce n’est point ici une idée de république imaginaire: d’ailleurs, ces sortes d’idées sont au moins d’heureux modèles, des chimères, qui ne le sont pas totalement, et qui peuvent être réalisées...” (Duclos 208).

Graffigny’s notions are equally grounded in contemporary problems as revealed by her naive social critic, Zilia. Zilia’s criticism is forward-thinking. She criticizes actual social institutions and mores with the aim of heightening sensitivity to the issues as a means toward change. Similarly, her criticisms look backward, a traditional utopian technique, comparing France to her idyllic Peru--a society which, through a literary anachronism, has been destroyed for two hundred years and which now stands isolated in time and space as a utopian model for Graffigny’s eighteenth-century France.

On a language level, Graffigny is quite capable of using Duclos’ ideological tenets but with a feminist agenda. Her utopian vision concerning education holds a *private* place in her ideal society as opposed to that of Duclos whose desire to restructure the educational system is *public*. Whereas Duclos is concerned with forming men, and moreover forming men’s minds to live efficiently and effectively in a patriarchal society, Graffigny turns his principles towards the feminist issue. She wants to form women, and moreover to form women’s minds, so

that they might begin to live a more examined life offering a sense of personal satisfaction--which is presently being denied them.

The State was responsible for national education; however, it was the Church that controlled and oversaw the schools (Spencer 85). The Cyclopedia of Education speaks to the dissatisfaction of convent-run schools: "The whole tone...was religious and ascetic. The girls were to learn a little Latin with a Latin Psalter, but their schoolbooks were strictly limited to those of a devotional character" (800). The inadequacies and need for reform were much discussed throughout the century: "As early as 1718, the duchesse d'Orléans expressed her concern over the quality of conventual education: 'It is difficult today to find a convent where children can be well educated'" (Spencer 86).

Graffigny entered the debate as Zilia writes: "...je sais que, du moment que les filles commencent à être capables de recevoir des instructions, on les enferme dans une maison religieuse, pour leur apprendre à vivre dans le monde" (138). Zilia's initially favorable impression of her priest-tutor crumbles away as his ethnocentric (and *religiocentric*) value system does not allow for Zilia's own. His monastic tunnel vision demonstrates a lack of real-world applicability for the heroine. This is an example of the *être/paraître* tension that weaves its way through the novel, that is, things are not always what they seem: "Si d'abord il m'avait paru doux et sincère, cette fois je n'ai trouvé que de la rudesse et

de la fausseté dans tout ce qu'il m'a dit" (90). This theme of appearance is prevalent in Enlightenment discourse and literary works. In her correspondence, Graffigny laments: "Hélas! je le vois bien...nous sommes toujours trompés par l'apparence..." (Graffigny-Asse 86). Zilia criticizes convent education for the instructors' (nuns and priests) lack of real-world applicable knowledge. Also, the formation of the heart and mind is a typically feminist utopian ideal:

Que l'on confie le soin d'éclairer leur esprit à des personnes auxquelles on ferait peut-être un crime d'en avoir, et qui sont incapables de leur former le cœur qu'elles ne connaissent pas. (138)

Two of Graffigny's closest friends were François-Antoine Devaux and Léopold Demarest. Devaux was an unpublished writer who served nonetheless as a constant source of encouragement for Graffigny's writing (Showalter 1985: xxxiv). Devaux and Graffigny wrote the most intimate of letters: they shared their joys, sorrows, hopes, disappointments, financial woes, and their writings. It is not known whether they were lovers; however, the seemingly platonic rapport that the two shared, a relationship that was thought impossible during that time, perhaps gives life to Zilia's differentiation between love (Aza) and friendship (Déterville), finding both equally powerful and satisfying, but based on the different sentiments.

In 1735, Graffigny was the companion of the Duchess of Richelieu, who allowed her entry into Parisian society. The guests of the Duchess, Voltaire and Mme du Châtelet, were delighted by Mme de Graffigny. Indeed the enchanted Voltaire described her in a poem: "Car cette veuve aimable et belle./ Par qui nous sommes tous séduits,/ Vaux cent fois mieux qu'une pucelle" (Showalter 1985: xxxv). Years later, in a letter to Mme de Denis (22 août 1750), Voltaire refers to Mme de Graffigny as "madame la Péruvienne" (Asse xiv), a term of endearment linking the author to her literary heroine.

By 1737, the Treaty of Vienna disbanded the ducal court where Graffigny had enjoyed intellectual stimulation, a sense of protection and security. As the nobility regrouped, Graffigny allied herself with the Chancellor of Lorraine's family. Since her separation from her husband in 1718, she had maintained her own dwelling, but now she was forced to depend on friends. She lamented the loss of her independence and feared the strains on her friendships. The burning need to live alone and to be independent certainly found their way into Zilia's character.

The Duchess of Richelieu again offered her help. By 1738, Graffigny suffered two disasters. Whereas her creditors were continually pressing her, Léopold Demarest was not (Showalter 1975: 16). In 1728, Graffigny began an amorous liaison with Demarest, a young cavalry officer who was the love of her life. The officer spent much of his time with his regiment, thus

Graffigny had grown accustomed to an epistolary relationship. Demarest was nicknamed *l'Autre Moi* in their correspondence, suggesting the terms of endearment that Zilia uses for Aza. Indeed, the style of address in Graffigny's correspondence is the fledgling voice of Zilia: "vous êtes le souffle de ma vie" (Graffigny-Asse 163). Their affair broke definitively in 1743, Demarest cruelly abandoning Graffigny. It has been suggested that Graffigny's rupture with Demarest was cathartically dealt with through the character of the unfaithful Aza (Curtis 1991: 209).

Mme de Graffigny spent several charming, stimulating months during the winter of 1738-39 in the company of Voltaire and Mme du Châtelet at Cirey. There Graffigny wrote about the access to Voltaire's library and his personal manuscripts, and wrote of his weekly readings of his works and those of contemporary writers. This *access* will unwittingly create an explosive rupture and a somewhat forced retreat from Cirey where she had again attained a feeling of security.

As mentioned earlier, the affects of Mme de Graffigny's abusive marriage would return in her writing, as evidenced by this correspondence entry. One of the entertainments at Cirey was to put on plays. One contained a part that reminded Graffigny of her marriage: "...il y a dans celle de Voltaire, pour épisode, une femme méprisée de son mari qu'elle adore, je la jouerai. Ah! que je la jouerai bien!" (Graffigny-Asse 109).

For many months, Graffigny sensed that Mme du Châtelet was reading her mail. In actuality, she was. She herself indicated that she was screening all the mail that came to Cirey to intercept any copies of *Voltairemanie*, a publication that infuriated Voltaire. On one occasion, a line from one of Mme de Graffigny's letters created an explosive reaction from Mme du Châtelet, whose fury sparked an caustic response from Voltaire. The line mentioned something from an unpublished work, *La Pucelle*, that Voltaire himself had read for his company at Cirey. The host and hostess accused their guest of having circulated a canto of the work (Showalter 1986: 128). Accusations and personal insults created an awkward environment, but slowly Mme de Graffigny's defense was heard. Voltaire proffered sincere apologies, but the damage had been done. Mme du Châtelet, who had started the whole scene to cover up her own letter-opening activities, packed Mme de Graffigny off to Paris. In what has been interpreted as an apology, Mme du Châtelet commissioned Mme de Graffigny with a delivery of a sack of money, however the addressee did not exist, thus perhaps leaving Graffigny with some recompense for her troubles (Showalter 1986: 122).

Expulsion from Cirey on an accusation of literary espionage was followed by Mme de Graffigny's rejection by the Duchess of Richelieu on whom she had also depended. According to Showalter, despite the hardships, Graffigny was always given a

helping hand and because “sa nature généreuse et tenace aidant, elle arriva à surmonter les pires obstacles” (Showalter 1985: xxxvii).

It was after these tumultuous years that Graffigny set up a salon in Paris, and in 1747, she made her name throughout Europe with Lettres d'une Péruvienne. Defined by her inferior status as a woman, the author cultivated contacts in her salon and made a place for herself “in the worlds of authorship and of influence peddling, skirting the social barriers that discouraged her direct entry into the writing profession” (Spencer 233). At her death in 1758, she was the center of her own distinguished literary salon, with a reputation as a woman of letters, a novelist, and a playwright. She received such philosophers and public figures as Helvétius (who composed his book L'Esprit there [Asse xi]), Choiseul, and Turgot, as well as the author Caylus and the author-historian Duclos (Curtis 209).

Turgot penned a long commentary on the novel “and called upon the author to write in not only a marriage between Zilia and Aza, but a sequel offering examples of civic and domestic virtue” (Curtis 213). This opinion reflects numerous others which criticised Graffigny's lack of acceptable closure to the love story aspect of her novel--marriage. Graffigny resisted changing her ending, however five sequels appeared by other writers who rewrote marriage into the ending.

Duclos was to be helpful in Graffigny's publishing interests and as mentioned previously, a passage of his text, Considerations sur les mœurs, is quoted in Lettres d'une Péruvienne. Zilia's extensive criticism on the superficiality of the French mores and customs leads into the Duclos quote with: "J'ai lu dans un de leurs meilleurs livres..." (124).

Despite her literary and social successes, Graffigny was constantly plagued by financial difficulties, this frustrating reality being written out of her heroine who is financially secured by Déterville's diligence at obtaining the spoils of the conquest pillaged by the *conquistadores*. Graffigny became a court playwright for the Emperor of Germany and was paid 1500 *livres* yearly for the rest of her life. She wrote several morally educational plays that entertained the court, but none that ever attained the success of Lettres d'une Péruvienne, nor of her play Cénie, which was a smash hit in 1750 at the Théâtre Français. One of Graffigny's early plays, La nouvelle espagnole, already contained a heroine "who has developed 'that strength of character (fermeté d'âme) which is as neglected in women's upbringing as it is essential to their conduct' as well as 'a liking for the accomplishments of the mind (les belles connaissances), which women acquire only rarely, and always too late'" (Curtis 210).

In 1758, her play La Fille d'Aristide was a complete disaster and a double disappointment. Not only did her play flop,

but her unsuccessful comeback was a cruel blow (Asse xv). She died December 12, 1758, a month after the failure of her last play. According to the abbot Voisenon she was well thought of, her only faults were that she died with 42,000 *livres* of debt ('elle n'avait aucune connaissance de ses affaires' Asse xviii) and that her "humeur" made her insufferable to her servant staff (Asse xviii). Voisenon described Graffigny in the same terms that might account for the author's vision of financial security for Zilia: "...accoutumée à vivre à la cour du dernier duc de Lorraine, à ne se rien refuser, à la façon des grands, sans s'inquiéter de ce que les choses coûtent..." (Asse xvii). As mentioned before, Graffigny's financial woes occupied a good portion of her adult life, and quite naturally, her utopian heroine would not be saddled with such dreary and prosaic considerations.

CHAPTER TWO

Utopias

In this and subsequent chapters, I will demonstrate that a reading of Lettres d'une Péruvienne as utopian literature increases our understanding of the text, adding a level of meaning suggested, but not developed, by previous critics. The need to look beyond traditional readings of the novel inspired this thesis. Imposing a utopian framework also reinforces other literary aspects of the work which are all woven together, much like one of Zilia's *quipos*, which she describes as "une peinture fidèle de nos actions et de nos sentiments" (19).

Literary traditions such as the epistolary novel, the spy novel, the travel novel, the sentimental novel, and the philosophical novel, are represented in this work. Additionally, Enlightenment issues, such as educational reform and the ideas of nature, virtue, and truth find their places as well. Finally, Graffigny has been claimed by twentieth-century feminists as an important feminine voice in the issues of marital rights for women and alternative career and living choices. All these literary traditions become more trenchant when read through a utopian perspective which adds to the literary weaving new dimensions of color, texture, and meaning.

This chapter will provide a working definition of utopias based on the literary tradition in general, with the sole purpose

of identifying utopian literature by its necessary traits in order to make a cogent argument for Graffigny's induction into the utopia genre. Also, I will look at definitions of feminist utopian literature as opposed to male utopian literature. The needs for a utopia based on the perceived inequities in society vary between the two genres as well as the resulting utopias which are drastically different. Finally, reading Lettres d'une Péruvienne in its *Siècle des Lumières* context, where utopian visions and the Enlightenment intersect, situates Graffigny's work not only as it has historically been classified as a philosophical novel in the tradition of Montesquieu, but also as a feminist utopian vision that is fueled by prevalent principles of the Enlightenment. More on this point will follow later in this chapter.

The basic definitions of utopia vary depending on the content of the work being analyzed. The futuristic novels possess some attributes that the nostalgic ones do not. A combination of various definitions will give us our meaning, as I will show, because Graffigny plays with time which creates both a forward-looking and a backward-looking movement in the novel. It has been suggested that we should "look beyond the traditional comparisons of the work" (Curtis 214), which invites such a study as this thesis.

In a preface that might precede a 'utopian' edition of Lettres d'une Péruvienne, Mathé Allain sums up the proceedings of the Third Symposium of French-American Studies from Spring

1974, with these remarks. In all the papers presented, one thing is agreed upon:

Utopias are rooted in reality. Utopian schemes...grew out of real abuses to be corrected...Not only were utopian schemes born from the consciousness of real abuse, but they often sought solutions in real answers, known in the past, but forgotten. (Allain vii)

Graffigny's "lived social experience" certainly involved real abuses. As illustrated in the preceding chapter, Graffigny's early life saw her leave a dysfunctional family for an abusive marriage. The concept of marriage as ownership affected Graffigny most assuredly as she signed away her rights to become the property of François Huguet, who was no more careful with her finances than he was with her person.

Literary Sources: History

Soboul's research has distilled utopian works down to three historical reference groups. The first is the Greek and Roman classics, the second is evangelical Christian communities and the third "derived their inspiration from Peruvian Inca society as it was described in Garcilaso de la Vega: his Royal Commentaries" (Soboul 180-181). Without ever naming Graffigny or her novel Lettres d'une Péruvienne, Soboul actually places the work squarely into one of the three reference groups that he sees literary utopias falling into. Racault also names Garcilaso's works

as “véritables magasins d’archétypes dans lesquels puisent les auteurs d’utopies” (Racault 35). Still another source describes the author's indebtedness to writings on Peru as a “Utopian paradigm, the idealized empire of the Incas as described by Garcilaso de la Vega...” (Rose 39). Graffigny depended heavily on Garcilaso's work for historical credibility, evidenced by the numerous footnotes that elucidate Peruvian cultural aspects in the text. We know from her correspondence that she was familiar with his work as early as 1737 as she describes her writing as “knots,” which meant the Peruvian record-keeping system, or *quipos*: “...et je fais des nœuds; ainsi je suis encore plus occupée si je lisais moi-même” (Graffigny-Asse 154).

Garcilaso's writing typifies the historical literature that utopia writers use for credibility. Nostalgia for the past is written into Graffigny's heroine, Zilia, in the Peru of her youth which is now suspended in time and space. Zilia continuously looks back. She looks back to her days as a Virgin in the ideal *Temple du Soleil*; she reveres her society, its customs and values; and she holds Aza in her heart as the epitome of the virtuous, constant, and perfect man, lover, and leader. In a subsequent section of this chapter, Peru as utopia will be demonstrated through the heroine's nostalgic adherence to its principles, despite the disruption and anguish she is experiencing.

Literary Sources: Travel Literature

In addition to historical references, travel literature provided both impetus for and source information for the utopian imagination. Travel literature was born out of "geopolitical manœuvres of the super powers of the day, Britain and France, who used scientific endeavor as both a cover and a powerful weapon in sparring for position in the New World of the Pacific..." (Romanowski 22). We are reminded that Montesquieu's Usbek used a scientific cover to get out of a politically charged Persia. Graffigny refers to numerous such travel literature sources in her correspondence, for example, "Voyage en Laponie" by Maupertius which interestingly enough ties her again to Montesquieu as she pastiches Rica's famous questions: "Comment peut-on être Lapon?" (Graffigny-Asse 92).

Lumière

In contrast to Montesquieu, Graffigny chose Peru for her ideal country. The historical appeal of Garcilaso's Peru combined with the geopolitical move towards a new frontier perhaps led her to South America. An obvious reason for Graffigny's choice is the play with light--*lumière*. Light is represented metaphorically in the *Temple du Soleil* as it stands as the most righteous temple in Zilia's society, sacrosanct through divine incarnations and

divine rule of the Sons of the Sun. Zilia, the *Vierge du Soleil* lives in this empire of a deified Sun. She associates her princely fiancé Aza with light, his regal incarnation of the sun filling her heart, soul, mind and body with light: “ô lumière de ma vie” (23), “chère lumière de mes jours” (28), “ô lumière de mon esprit” (30). It is curious that whereas Zilia’s religion is natural and solar, her perception of Louis XIV’s use of the same principles render him ridiculous, arrogant and self-aggrandizing. Ultimately Zilia will learn a new meaning of light. As she begins to find her way in France, which includes the acquisition of a new language, she begins to attribute light to knowledge: “...Je cherche des lumières avec une agitation qui me dévore” (48). She seeks a peace of mind and soul finding that knowledge will illuminate the obscurity of her disordered thought.

Light also indicates “*Siècle des Lumières*” -- the Enlightenment. In this sense, the word shines throughout the work. As Zilia’s environment and realities change, the light of Peru makes way for the light of France. Indeed, she says upon arrival in France that she has never seen the sun shine so brightly, so purely (51). Light becomes an intellectual pursuit. It equals ideas and by association books that contain ideas and men who write them: “...je comprends qu'ils sont à l'âme ce que le Soleil est à la terre, et que je trouverais avec eux toute les lumières, tous les secours dont j'ai besoin” (86). She absorbs this light which satisfies her need of knowledge, intellectualizing

“lumières” into that of comprehension, learning, knowledge and enlightenment.

Literary Sources: Utopian Works

Graffigny refers to numerous utopian works in her correspondence (Swift's Gulliver's Travels and Massé's Voyage autour du monde, for example), but she affiliates herself most directly with Montesquieu, whose presence in Lettres d'une Péruvienne is felt through the epistolary genre, the philosophical motives and the sentimental plot. Also, as noted above, she quotes Montesquieu in her *Avertissement* as she ponders, “Comment peut-on être Persan?” But in his 1721 work Lettres Persanes, Montesquieu also created the Troglodytes, an Arabian people who lived sometime in the past and created a utopia for themselves after generations of chaos and mass destruction. Romanowski reminds us that “le bonheur des Troglodytes, c'est celui d'un âge d'or qui ne connaît pas le péché” (98). Thus like Zilia, Usbek looks to the past, the nostalgic Golden Age where virtuous societies flourished.

Montesquieu's utopia includes themes such as friendship, virtue, justice, and an emphasis on patriarchy. Religion was tied to Nature. But unlike Graffigny's utopian vision “girls...sought no other blessing than that of making a Troglodyte happy” (Letter XII). Life was simple and innocent; even their war, dubbed “the

battle of injustice and Virtue” (Letter XIII) was fought by modeling the Troglodyte virtues, which made their enemies flee. Montesquieu assumes that patriarchies are “natural.” Usbek proffers this parable to justify his harem believing that “the ‘ordered’ virtue of his wives is analogous to the ‘natural’ virtue of the Troglodytes” (Douthwaite 1989, 67). While Usbek’s despotic harem is crumbling from within, the elder Troglodyte cries as he predicts his people’s repeated destruction. Montesquieu’s vision borders dystopia as half the population is subjugated to the happiness of the other. Additionally, the male vision of priorities in the Troglodyte’s utopia suggests the impossibility that any utopia can exist while the dreams (male as opposed to female) are so different.

Later in this chapter when I address the genre of feminist literary utopians, I will show the influence on Graffigny of several seventeenth-century female authors. I will foreshadow that discussion with a summary of one author’s works: “...running through the novella is a theme of the ideal society, present to the girl in her youth, lost during a time of conflict in patriarchal society, and reclaimed at the end as Mathilde shapes her own life” (Capasso 40). Again, a similar observation might preface the utopian edition of Lettres d'une Péruvienne, as Zilia’s youth is indeed spent in an idyllic Peru, from which she is violently abducted during what might be seen as a conflict in patriarchal society because her loss is precipitated by a hierarchy of males--

the King of Spain, the ship's captain and his officers, then, after the French takeover, the King of France (Louis XIV), the ship's captain (Déterville) and his officers. The agenda of both aggressors is political--conquest, which is a typically male characteristic. Another element of the conflict in the patriarchy is that the motivation of the conquests were to the glory of the *patrie* or a *patriotic* conquest. Finally, Zilia does reclaim her utopian elements of her lost homeland integrating them into the room in her house which then becomes her private *Temple du Soleil*. From there she shapes her life, as mentioned before, skirting the patriarchy and not marrying, instead choosing a nontraditional and non feminine career as a writer.

It is worth noting that Graffigny is also perhaps indebted to Mme de Lafayette and La Princesse de Clèves in that both authors use two unifying techniques: both works depend on time play and both revere virtuous love. The Princess of Clèves, lives in a court whose values are superficial and odious to her. Like Graffigny, Lafayette uses time play in that the court is that of Henri II, but the values that the Princess is criticizing (as Zilia does), are those of Louis XIV. Each heroine finds it necessary to construct her own values rather than accepting prevailing societal values.

Masocentric Literary Utopias

Male utopians authors, who are typically public minded, envision utopias that are structured: patriarchal hierarchies with all-encompassing institutions and programs that control productivity and production, relationships and procreation. The physical space is laid out, usually in mathematical proportions and often in geometric designs. Everything is provided to serve the society as a whole. The writings of Plato (Republic), Thomas More (Utopia), and Tomasso Campanella, (La Città del Sole) all were written in this framework. However, often the problem with utopias lies in the mechanization of the human spirit to achieve the ideal society. Dystopias were born out of the reaction to such dehumanization, making way for such early works as Abbé Prévost's, Le Philosophe anglois ou Histoire de Monsieur Cleveland (1739) which is the "first [work] in the Utopian tradition to be explicitly written to show the failure of Utopian communities" (Stephens 13).

In contrast to these structured utopias, Zilia's utopia is almost exclusively concerned with values: personal values instilled from youth which form a conscientious, virtuous individual, whether male or female, who lives in a conscientious, virtuous society. Indeed, "L'Utopie ne saurait être indifférente aux valeurs" (Soboul 13) and perhaps Graffigny's slant on a *personal* utopia suggests that an ideal society can be achieved

only through equitable and conscientious attention to both males and females with regard to values. Careful attention to education will lead to the formation of natural, truth-seeking, virtuous individuals who adhere to these principles, not out of State dictates, not through governmentally sanctioned fear tactics, but because they have been raised to live out these principles. Their characters have been nurtured so that they naturally deflect superficiality and falseness. Understanding that “l’utopie est d’abord un *mode*, une attitude mentale née d’un sentiment d’insatisfaction” (Racault 35) reminds us that utopias are born out of societies gone awry, but that the visionary possesses a mode or an attitude which is purely intellectual and independent of the actual enacting of his or her principles.

Graffigny’s utopian agenda is not to paint an unrealistic and unrealizable futuristic society for her readers to emulate, but to offer subtle illuminations on real problems that are already getting real attention. Graffigny’s citations of Montesquieu and Duclos situate her in the middle of the feminine rights discussion of the day, but the fact that Graffigny speaks, that a feminine voice is heard in the discussion, gives a new edge to the argument. Dennis Hollier explains that women in the Enlightenment period were perhaps the one element of society that would benefit most from the fight against intellectual and personal oppression:

Woman...stood close not only to the bourgeois of historical reality but also to the new ideal, derived from the bourgeois, of the emancipated, detached, enlightened individual, the abstract, universal citizen who was no longer defined and restricted by a fixed social rule. (Hollier 489)

The shackles that the *philosophes* are trying to shed are double shackles for Graffigny's eighteenth-century sisters. Everyone is under the same oppression, but women are also subjects of patriarchal laws and attitudes. References to Montesquieu and Duclos put Graffigny in company with the great thinkers of the Enlightenment. As mentioned earlier, her novel is a philosophical Enlightenment work. However, what do utopias have to do with the Enlightenment?

As touched on earlier, Enlightenment principles and utopian thought intersect, at least in theory. The philosophers criticized real social inequities and utopians reacted against the same. "The utopian starts from a criticism of existing society to build an ideal society. Enlightenment and utopia have the same basis, criticism, and the same point of reference, natural law" (Soboul 182-3). Natural law is one of the buzz words of the Enlightenment treated by Montesquieu as well as by Graffigny. "The Utopias of the Enlightenment were, in fact, models for testing out deduced theories of the nature of man and the kind of society that would best fit that nature" (Rose 38). This thesis, however, cannot begin to tackle the various interpretations of such a complex

philosophical issue as natural law. The allusion is made only to unite Enlightenment and utopian thought.

Although it might be said that Graffigny's Lettres d'une Péruvienne does not provide a utopian society in its entirety, it cannot be denied that Graffigny has a utopian vision. Allain points out quite rightly that "only components of utopias ...become realized" (Allain viii) which indicates that even full-blown descriptions of utopias which provide for every element of society from the most efficient government and the most equitable social system down to the most efficient control of mating and reproduction, have unrealizable elements. With this in mind, Graffigny enters utopian suggestions through the back door, so to speak, through a more private (feminine) and less public (male) agenda. Graffigny's concern does go public with the educational issue; however, most of her utopian vision centers around personal relationships of friendship or love, mores and customs which are virtuous in Peru, but superficial in France.

Graffigny's utopian thought falls into step with "the Enlightenment doctrine of slow perfectibility" (Stephens 12), that is, the utopian elements that Graffigny envisions, based on her "lived social experience" of Peru, suggests practical changes based on reason, justice, and truth. It is useful to keep in mind that the "utopiste ne cherche pas à divertir, mais à convaincre" (Racault 25). For example, the educational criticisms that Graffigny offers are justified and the practicality of implementation of an

education that treats girls holistically giving them a complete education, especially where morals and values are concerned, is quite reasonable. The manner in which she gently criticizes, perhaps to spark interest, perhaps to infuriate towards a revolution, is also in line with Enlightenment thought: "For the *philosophes*, improvement must be gradual, piecemeal and moderate" (Rose 35). Graffigny's *backdoor* utopian vision does not provide a drawn-out plan of how this will be achieved, but is more of a seed that is planted to grow in the Enlightenment sun.

Returning to the definition of utopia provides another way in which to analyze Zilia. As the heroine moves from utopia (Peru) to the society of reform (France), there is a shift. It is a question of the known being the ideal, then the unknown surpassing it:

La pensée utopique procède par comparaison: elle analyse le monde connu par l'intermédiaire d'un monde inconnu et imaginé, radicalement différent, étant entendu que le monde inconnu est meilleur et qu'il sert de repoussoir à ce monde réel de misère et de malheur. (Soboul 13)

Zilia gets caught between real and unknown as the two change place according to point of view. In Peru, she lives in the known world. In fact, it is a very small, controlled world--The *Temple du Soleil* where all of her needs are provided for. Her real world is Peru and the unknown resides nebulously somewhere outside of the kingdom of the Sun. After her abduction, Peru takes on a

new meaning for Zilia as it becomes a utopian point of comparison: Peru and Peruvians are far superior to France and the inconsistent French.

Zilia's criticism of France fits into the Montesquieu tradition as Graffigny uses her as a naive social critic to bring out the inconsistent or ridiculous aspects that the indoctrinated French do not see in their own society: "...je ne puis assez m'étonner de ce qu'avec autant et plus de lumière qu'aucune autre nation, ils semblent ne pas apercevoir les contradictions choquantes que les étrangers remarquent en eux dès la première vue" (135).

Slowly, the ingenious French become superior to her countrymen. The French are more technologically advanced, capable of inventing such tools as telescopes, mirrors, and scissors. Zilia's realization of the inadequacies of her country comes while she excitedly (and in periphrasis) attempts to weave these inventions into *quipos*, in a language which can only "imperfectly" give meaning to her new experiences. Thus, the Peruvian utopia is no longer perfect, as France now surpasses it in creativity and in language. Also, Zilia questions her education when she encounters the mirror for the first time and asks: "Suis-je moins mortifiée de ne trouver dans mon esprit que des erreurs ou des ignorances?" (50) At one point she even expresses "le regret de n'être point née en France" (166).

As mentioned earlier, there is a time play regarding Zilia's utopian perspective which gives this novel both a backward-

looking vision as well as a forward-looking one. In the first case, the sixteenth-century Peruvian society, which is described by the eighteenth-century Zilia, puts Zilia into the tradition of the Golden Age nostalgics. In the second case, when Zilia turns her critical eye on Peru, the sixteenth-century princess lauds the *future* France as a country of *lumières*. As the book closes, she reverts back to her nostalgic point of view when she finally settles into her home, flanked by souvenirs from her *Temple du Soleil*, from that far away utopian society now locked into a lost time and place. Somewhere between the past, present, and future lies Zilia's utopian existence, perhaps by definition as:

Utopias not only intersect reality in the present, where the problems abound, and in the past, where some answers lie, but also...in the future. Utopia is...anticipa-tion, not escape....(Allain vii)

As previously discussed, Graffigny's utopian vision does not describe institutions and mechanisms of control; it promotes self-growth, self expression and self actualization. Therefore this is a unique approach to utopias because we've already witnessed how the male utopias tend to destruct from the inside, leading to dystopias. However, the feminist literary utopias are built on the very principles that are missing from their male counterparts.

Gynocentric Literary Utopias

With the definition of utopian literature basically established, especially where it supports Graffigny's vision, we move into the feminist perspective. As mentioned earlier, the value system of women structures their personal utopias in sharp contrast to the male models of infrastructures which provide for all contingencies to best serve society. Several definitions of feminist utopias point directly toward Graffigny's desire not to marry. Like her later literary heroine, Zilia, she chooses, rather, to live in the company of her friends in "notre petite société" (Graffigny-Asse 167, and Lettres d'une Péruvienne 109). Indeed, in 1738, the childless Graffigny (having lost three children while married to François Huguet) refers to her writing as "fétus" (Graffigny-Asse 152), her literary notion of creating. Perhaps Zilia, who also chooses to spend her life alone as a writer, is *procreating à sa façon*.

Feminist utopias tend to be based on a "female value system [where] communication, education, and creativity are primary values" (Donawerth 75). When Zilia is abducted she loses her voice. Along with the geographic loss of her homeland, she also experiences a "linguistic exile" losing her language as well (Fourny 222). Zilia refers to herself as "une âme privée de toute communication" (48). Fighting against both forms of exile, Zilia plunges herself in her "chère occupation" (55) of tying knots.

This form of communication reconnects her both to her voice in her Incan tongue and to her lover who is still in Peru.

The calm life of friendship that Zilia proposes to Déterville at the end of the novel when she asks him to renounce his passion, his "sentiments tumultueux" (168) for "les plaisirs innocents et durables" (168) of friendship demonstrates that utopian "females tend to value egalitarianism, cooperation, connection, tolerance, generosity, and most importantly, harmony..." (Rosenthal 75). This issue of platonic love also suggests that Graffigny's utopian vision has evolved out of the feminine utopian vision of the seventeenth-century writers such as Mlle de Scudéry, Mme d'Aulnoy and Mlle de Montpensier.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, these three women penned utopian works. Not one of them is discussed, nor even mentioned, in Jean-Michel Racault's 830-page *thèse d'état*, entitled L'Utopie narrative en France et en Angleterre 1675-1761. However, this utopian trio is treated by feminist scholars who work to revise the feminist literary history to include their works.

Ruth Capasso addresses the trio of seventeenth-century writers in a utopian light, two of which, per Capasso, do not fit notions of traditional utopia. Capasso also addresses the "lived social experiences" of the three authors' personal lives as well as societal issues such as "limits to a woman's freedom" (35). She speaks of the influence of the *préciosité* movement, described as an "aesthetic and moral reform" (35). For Graffigny, the century

had begun anew, however the issues were of old. The *précieuses* dealt with “women’s rights to education advocating radical social changes...” (35). Like Graffigny’s, these utopias are private: based on the needs of women that are not being met in patriarchal society.

Mlle de Scudéry published Artamène, ou le grand Cyrus between 1649 and 1653, and in 1657, Mathilde d’Aguilar. In 1738, Graffigny refers to the former work (Graffigny-Showalter 1985: 87). In 1690, Mme d’Aulnoy wrote L’Isle de la Félicité, and in 1735 the letters of Mlle de Montpensier which spelled out her utopian vision were published. What is of interest here in these works is the feminist utopian themes that tie the three together and point towards Mme de Graffigny’s later work. It cannot be ascertained whether Graffigny had familiarity with these works, and if so, whether she had them in mind as she wrote Lettres d’une Péruvienne. What can be said, however, is that Graffigny follows, consciously or not, in the footsteps of the female utopian writers of the preceding century.

Capasso gives summaries of several works that give useful insight into the feminist utopian vision of Graffigny. Questioning the patriarchy and the need to revise society led these women to write utopias “in terms of individual happiness and fulfillment” (38). As such, economics and politics are not addressed “in order to allow a focus on the psychological and interpersonal” (38). Capasso strongly believes that despite the limited or incomplete

perspective that "it is worth stretching the canon to include these early dreams" (38).

The feminine perspective is indeed an inward looking one, as we have discussed. The themes that unite these works include beautiful settings where peace and friendship reign. Jealousy and division is unheard of. Individual choices are respected and women possess a desire to reshape their own physical environment. Platonic love or friendship is the most precious relationship.

Mlle de Scudéry's utopia contains elements also found in Graffigny's work: "emphasis on beauty, virtuous love, and the tranquil pursuit of individual fulfillment through learning and artistic expression" (39). Also, like Graffigny's heroine, faithful love is the greatest value, and "the inhabitants of Cyprus seemed to rely primarily on education to ensure fidelity" (40). Despite the desire for virtuous and faithful love, in Mathilde, marriage is seen as an "alienation of liberty and a source of emotional suffering for men as well as women" (41). Zilia comes to a similar conclusion. Having been abandoned by her unfaithful lover, she looks towards the tranquil pleasures of friendship with Déterville. Capasso describes Scudéry's utopia as "limited and highly personal" which certainly describes Graffigny's utopian vision.

Mme d'Aulnoy's work l'Isle de Félicité is an all-women utopia: men are banished and women are peaceful. The traditional patriarchal values including ambition, violence and

glory through military deeds is highly criticized. A young officer somehow comes to the island and he and Félicité fall in love. They are quite happy until he realizes that he has been idle for three hundred years and has not proven himself by deeds nor battles. He leaves the enchanted island, time catches up to him and kills him. The moral is that men's vision of power and glory do not equal women's. This was certainly true of Zilia who suggested to Aza to renounce his throne to the Spanish and to come find his glory in their love. This further illustrates the notion that no utopias can exist as men and women's priorities are so different.

Mlle de Montpensier's published letters also show a utopian vision. One of the issues shared with Graffigny is a critical opinion of marriage:

You will permit me to say that what has given men superiority has been marriage, and that what has caused us to be called the weaker sex was this dependency in which men have subjugated us, often against our will, and for reasons of family, of which we have often been the victims. Well, let us pull ourselves out of slavery; let there be a corner of the world where one may say that women are their own mistresses. (Capasso 43)

The issue of friendship plays an integral part in Graffigny's vision, and created quite a stir from critics and readers, as did her avoidance of traditional closure to her novel, skirting established norms by not marrying Zilia to the ever-patient Déterville.

Instead, Zilia invites him to live as part of her small group where the sentiments of friendship will allow them to live calmly and happily away from the tumultuous effects of love.

Zilia has felt the stab of abandonment and rejection, but her mind set is also formed by her incredulous observations at how people act while in love: Céline was forced to pretend that she did not know her lover at the theater, then she showed scorn for his impertinence at having slipped her a *billet-doux*. Déterville's unsolicited advances troubled Zilia when the honest Peruvian learned the art of dissimulation in order not to aggravate Déterville over Aza. These behavioral modifications disturbed Zilia who was shocked over the gap between *être* and *paraître*.

Capasso's summary regarding the utopian vision of Scudéry, Aulnoy and Montpensier supports my argument of Graffigny's utopian vision:

These utopias of the seventeenth century must be classified as worlds made predominantly for the fulfillment of individual women, and not for the transformation of society, as havens rather than revolutionary nuclei... (Capasso 51)

In an article dealing with an early twentieth-century female writer, Rosenthal distills the scholarly definitions of feminist literary utopias down to: "three distinguishing traits: emphasis on feminine values and issues, commitment to communalism, and an ability to overcome male intruders through

either expulsion or conversion" (Rosenthal 74). This definition is quite useful to describe Graffigny's literary stance. As mentioned earlier, Zilia is almost exclusively concerned with values and issues as they relate to the feminine experience. Also, at the end of the novel, having found Aza unfaithful, she still spurns Déterville's amorous advances, both chastising him for it, and inviting him to partake in her own small community of close friends. Zilia seeks to convert the amorous Déterville to fulfill her need for him as a friend. It is this very expectation that Zilia has of the lovesick Déterville that will give weight to my later argument that Zilia's perception of Déterville's capability of turning off his love, or rechannelling it, comes from her superhuman expectations, the same expectations that were perhaps no more possible for Déterville to live out than for Aza.

In the following chapter, the utopian definitions and visions outlined in this and the preceding chapter will be further tried against the Graffigny text. It has been illustrated in the preceding pages that Graffigny writes in the tradition of utopians given that she is criticizing the society in which she lives. It has also been demonstrated that she is following in the feminist utopian tradition in that her vision is an inward one: one that looks inside man and woman to better form them to live in the world. Likewise, the establishment of a physical utopia is an inward one in that the "haven" is a safe place apart. Finally, it has been demonstrated that the aim of the feminist utopia is to

provide the woman with an intellectual, spiritual and emotional outlet.

CHAPTER THREE

Lettres d'une Péruvienne: A Utopian Text

As previously established, Graffigny possesses a utopian vision, moreover a feminine utopian vision. In this chapter I will draw out the elements that demonstrate Zilia's utopian Peru, thus elucidating Graffigny's meaning of an "esprit d'ingénuité qui règne dans cet ouvrage" (6). Several descriptions are offered by both Graffigny (in the book's introduction) and by Zilia, but most of what Peru was is told by what France is not. That is, the now defunct Peru stands as a historically virtuous model for the much criticized France. Similarly, the individuals who comprise each society are contrasted: the utopian Aza/Zilia duo stand superior to the superficial, inconsistent French people. One individual, however, is treated by Zilia as worthy of being a new utopian--her ever faithful, but spurned Déterville. Zilia's expectations of Déterville are not necessarily with his best interests in mind, but rather serve her own concerns.

In the *Introduction Historique*, Graffigny cites several historians regarding the Incan culture: Garcilaso de la Vega and the Baron of Puffendorf. These citations perform two functions: initially, they give the work historical plausibility, or to use the Enlightenment charged word--*vraisemblance*. Secondly, as demonstrated earlier, writers often depend on historians' works in order to situate their utopias in a long, lost paradise, in a Golden Age. As discussed earlier, Garcilaso de la Vega is named

in several works on utopias as a much cherished source for such information.

Most of Zilia's explanation of her people comes from her comparisons with the French. She tells us what Peruvians are like by telling us that they are not like the French. With a touch of generosity she writes that the French are not born evil. If they could only spend some time in utopian Peru, they would be virtuous; but unfortunately, they have been formed by "l'exemple et la coutume [qui] sont les tyrans de leurs conduites" (134). The French seem to her unformed from the inside out: "Tels à peu près que certains jouets de leur enfance, imitation informe des êtres pensantes, ils ont du poids aux yeux, de la légèreté au tact, la surface colorié, un intérieur informe, un prix apparent, aucune valeur réelle" (134). As discussed earlier, this lack of attention to the *interior* is a pedagogical and philosophical criticism of Zilia/Graffigny's and a recurring theme of feminist utopians.

For Zilia, the French are a people of inconsistencies and contradictions. The society has as its *culte*, the superfluous which has corrupted their "raison, cœur et esprit." Indeed, the *superflu* takes prestigious precedence over the *nécessaire*. They are a people who prefer appearance over substance, a confusing notion for the virtuous and truthful Zilia. They prefer: a false brilliance of the mind over good sense and reason; they laud vanity et opulent appearance over humanity, justice and genius; frivolity is

esteemed over prudence and worth. They lack good sense believing that superficial politeness will always do in place of sound mores. Zilia remarks that "censure [est] le goût dominant des Français" (133) and that "l'inconséquence [est] leur caractère national" (137-8). Even in religious piety they are guilty of excess; the aristocracy wallows in narcissism and France is a country of flawed genius (because their stunning technological advances are wasted on inconsequential trappings).

In letter 34, using herself as a model to criticize French women, Zilia tells us much about herself by her incredulity at their lack of values. At a point, however, she borders on blaming the victim, given her invective against the inadequate system of education which does not give women the tools to make intellectually informed, thus virtuous choices. For example: "ils ne leur disent pas que la contenance honnête n'est qu'une hypocrisie, si elle n'est l'effet de l'honnête de l'âme" (139-40). She ponders at their lack of knowledge of: "la connaissance du monde, des hommes et de la société" (141). She also wonders at their lack of language education: "il est rare qu'elles la parlent correctement, et je m'aperçois pas sans une extrême surprise que je suis à présent plus savante qu'elles à cet égard" (141). Therefore the superior Zilia not only surpasses her French sisters in values, but she exceeds them in their own language.

Zilia depicts utopian values by listing the deficiencies in French women: self love, goodness which lacks indulgence and

humanity, negligible sensitivity to discretion, lack of moderation, the key to keeping virtues from becoming vices. She continues her criticism by raising the issue of marriage. Perhaps born out of her own situation, Graffigny has her heroine criticize the system which has young girls marry right out of convent school: "C'est dans cette ignorance que l'on marie des filles, à peine sortie de l'enfance" (141). Zilia exhibits ethnocentric blindness as it does not register that she, too, was raised in a *convent* and would have married in this same manner.

Once married, Zilia finds that wives are treated with both respect and contempt, creating an untenable situation for women--the ubiquitous Madonna/whore paradox. The inequitable patriarchy, as mentioned earlier, does not give women the tools to live virtuously, while still expecting them to do so. Zilia sees that men and women are born equal, but that because the pride of French men: "ne put supporter cette égalité, ils contribuent en toute manière à les rendre méprisables" (143). The control and oppression of women extends throughout patriarchal institutions (legal and religious as we have seen), keeping them in a voiceless and powerless position.

Peru as Lost Utopia

As Zilia witnesses the inequities and inconsistencies in French society, she pines for her lost utopia stating: "Heureuse la

nation qui n'a que la nature pour guide, la vérité pour principe, et la vertu pour mobile" (134). Graffigny offers us background information on Peru and Peruvians that is quite idyllic. As with most utopias, Peru is defined as one of the most beautiful parts of the world.

Incans, we are told never told a lie. They were simple, modest, and truthful. Zilia writes to Aza of "la droiture de nos cœurs, la candeur de nos sentiments et la simplicité de nos mœurs" (134). They were a happy people whose credulity, naiveté, frank and humane nature unfortunately made them an easy prey to the vicious conquistadors. Their ignorance of the vices of Europeans, coupled with their predisposition to annihilation because of a myth that they held to be true, allowed the seductive Spanish to plunder their wealth, wipe them out, and virtually end their civilization.

Their system of education involved "forming" the young under pedagogical attention and care in order to produce morally correct individuals for the good of the society. This notion certainly underscores my contention that Graffigny's feminist utopian vision is an inward one, as opposed to the outward, public utopias of her male counterparts. Zilia's criticism is that France does not form hearts and minds with strong moral convictions. Their emphasis is not on an internally strong sense of morality, but rather on external behaviors which are dictated by fashion, modes, and public show. This criticism is based in her

cultural belief that the interior of the human is in more need of being formed than the outer being adorned. Again, this is the *être/paraître* tension.

The sciences of the Incans were hailed as advanced and, despite having no metal harder than gold and silver, their technologies allowed them to build complex irrigation systems and aqueducts. They also possessed knowledge of geometry and a naturalistic medicine. Arts and music were known to them as well as their “auguste langue” and their “written” language of woven threads, or *quipos*.

Peruvians were a simple people who lived by the land; their society was an agrarian one tied to Nature by their sacred attachment to the earth and its cultivation. Festivals and much celebrating was common as the Peruvians obtained infinite pleasure, satisfaction and glory from hard work in the earth. They were also tied to Nature by their religion. Their creation myth was born when a decadent people were sent the son and daughter of the Sun to give them laws and to show them simple living and the capacity “à devenir des hommes raisonnables” (7). Thus the incarnated children of the Sun and their offspring were products of Nature which had been divinely attributed with Reason. Having chosen the Peruvians and their culture, Graffigny entered into the much debated Enlightenment era philosophical discussion regarding Nature and Reason.

Being a divine culture, governed by righteous principles, Graffigny underscores the utopian quality of Peru in a rather Montesquieu-like fashion entering the debate over natural laws as the justification of societal inequities. Zilia tells us that Peru's laws are "les plus sages qui été données aux hommes" (119). We are reminded that Zilia acknowledges female subordination in Peru, but that it was not odious because it was seen as necessary and neither fueled by pride nor tyranny. Montesquieu, as mentioned earlier, based his principles of subordination on nature as quoted in Soboul: "Je n'ai point tiré mes principes de mes préjugés, mais de la nature des choses" (15).

Zilia: The Last Surviving Utopian

Zilia's character remains unchanged in a certain manner throughout the book. One critic interpreted that as unevolved; an unbelievable character because she did not grow or mature (Carrell 92). I present here another interpretation. Zilia's character is not flat, but constant: she writes of "mon cœur inébranlable" (51). She doesn't just espouse virtuous living, she lives it. She sets herself above the French in that regard because she is truthful, honest, and consistent--descriptors she repeatedly uses for Aza. Not only does she live that way, but she is convinced that Aza does and imagines that Déterville does as well. With utopian overtones, she senses that the French take her

for “un être supérieure à l'humanité” (38). In the next chapter I will address the notion of Zilia's superhuman expectations as she rebuilds a private utopia.

Being constant, Zilia remains a representative of virtuous ideals as she refuses to acculturate (refusal to get into step and do the socially and morally correct thing and marry Déterville), to assimilate (refusal to allow herself to be consumed into the morally questionable French society), and to convert to Catholicism (refusal of the barbarous religion of Spain and the *bizarre* religion of France).

Zilia never hides her love of Aza to Déterville. She never denies it to herself nor to others. She remains faithful to an ideal of love, an ideal that was incarnated by Aza. Zilia distinguishes herself as capable of being principled and living out one's principles despite criticisms and social pressures. Zilia remains faithful to her belief in love, despite her disappointment in Aza's infidelity. She shows herself as possessing this “fermeté d'âme” that was instilled in her as a child.

Another trait of Zilia's is that she takes people for face value. The attention that Déterville gives her is taken as noble friendship, and she interprets his behavior in its relationship to Aza. When she is finally reunited with Aza, he will laud and praise Déterville's humanity toward Zilia and Déterville and Aza will revel in a mutual glory. Zilia's innocent interpretation of Déterville's attention is based in her composition. She is honest

(no Incan ever lied), thus she stands in a superior light as she criticizes the French art of dissimulation. She speaks plainly and she behaves honestly with regard to her thoughts and feelings. In the twenty-third letter, after a lengthy stay away, Déterville is elated to hear that Zilia "loves" him. She is indebted to him, relies on his generosity and is impressed with his character and it is in her nature to say as much. However, Zilia "loves" Déterville, but he hears that she is "in love" with him and he is bitterly disappointed when he learns of his heartbreaking *quid pro quo*.

The issue of love is an important one, especially as represented on the language level. As illustrated above, Zilia's understanding of love does not run parallel to Déterville's. He is in love with her, so that when she says "Je t'aime" he hears it romantically. However, Zilia's meaning is different, as different as when the non-French speaking Zilia spoke the same words at Déterville's prompting from which he gleaned immense pleasure. The misuse of language as representative of thought and action is a notion that Zilia was thoroughly familiar with as she advised Aza during the conquests not to be seduced by the lies of the Spanish, for despite the favorable impression their words left, she could read dishonesty and treachery in their hearts. Later, Zilia would read in the hearts of Déterville and Céline goodness and virtue while still incapable of discerning their spoken words.

Zilia remains faithful to her principles despite the exterior forces that would have her change, seemingly to become more

virtuous, which is a continuing frustration for the *naïve* Zilia who cannot quite fathom the superficiality and lack of character in the culture that she has found herself living in. Zilia stands as a representative from her virtuous and idyllic utopian homeland which itself has succumb to European vice, as illustrated by the infidelity and religious conversion of Aza. Both culture and religion are forsaken by Aza, but Zilia remains firm: “Ce n’est point au simulacre de la vertu que je rends hommage, c’est à la vertu même. Je la prendrai toujours pour juge et pour guide de mes actions. Je lui consacre ma vie, et mon cœur à l’amitié” (165).

Zilia compares her integrity, which is challenged as criminal, to the questionable ethics of the French. She prides herself in her ability to remain loyal and steadfast in her principles, as she chastises Aza and those around her who would put their principles on and off to better their position in a given situation. Such a lack of adherence to a code of ethics is intolerable to Zilia: “Funeste sincérité de ma nation, vous pouvez donc cesser d’être une vertu? Courage, fermeté, vous êtes donc des crimes quand l’occasion le veut?” (162). As mentioned in the previous chapter, we are reminded of the Princesse of Clèves who must find her way in a morally objectionable court based on adherence to her own virtuous principles.

Zilia realizes to some degree that her fidelity to principles is difficult for others, but she cannot live otherwise: “je leur fais tout le mal qui est en mon pouvoir et cependant je ne puis ne

veux cesser d'être criminelle" (101). Indeed, despite her disgust for dissimulation in others, she learns that in some cases it is for the best: "je n'oubliais point que mon bonheur devait augmenter ses peines; je lui cachai mes transports" (103). But Zilia's character contains opposing traits on this point. At once she does not seem capable of interpreting Déterville's love because it is unfathomable to her given that she is betrothed and that they are not from the same country, but she is capable of reading pain in Déterville's countenance and takes steps to modify her behavior.

Zilia will show herself constant and deluded at the same time. When she learns of Aza's conversion, she will convert too believing that she is eternally bound to Aza and that her happiness resides in him, in fact her life force resides in him: *lumière de ma vie, lumière de mon esprit, maître de mon âme*. Zilia's fidelity to Aza has her write: "j'aurais soumis mon esprit à ses illusions" (160). She *would have*, however her constancy would have plunged her into despair as she already wrote of Catholicism: "cruelle religion qui autorise le crime qu'il commet; elle approuve, elle ordonne l'infidélité, la perfidie, l'ingratitude" (159); "Hélas! toute bizarre qu'est cette religion" (160). Zilia, who fights against having her body, mind and spirit controlled by patriarchal institutions falters on a fine line: she makes one last, desperate move towards Aza, a complete compromise of self, of the *new* self that she has been cultivating through a growth process that includes ego-maturation through language

acquisition, study of human behaviors, desire for independence and adherence to her original code of ethics.

There is an interesting split in the characters of both Aza and Zilia, one that at once illustrates the *être/paraître* tension, but also suggests from quite early on that we have not only been reading a love story and a philosophical novel, but that we are witnessing the loss and re-establishment of self. Indeed, Zilia's loss of self parallels the loss and subsequent rebuilding of utopian elements of her homeland.

In the second letter, Zilia sets up the split: she questions Aza: "Ne suis-je plus *cette* Zilia?" (25; emphasis mine). What we will see is that *this* Zilia is radically different from the Zilia who will end the book with a sense of self who can say: "je suis, je vis, j'existe!" Indeed, this book of letters is *not* a written dialog as Aza never responds, but is rather a tool for Zilia's self-analysis and self-growth. The one thread that runs between *this* Zilia and *that* Zilia is her unflagging adherence to her principles.

Aza's split is quite different. His actual divergence from the virtuous path is obscured throughout most of the novel by Zilia's insistence on his consistency. For Zilia, Aza's character remains single faceted: "J'aime, je vois toujours le même Aza" (25). When Aza finally resurfaces showing himself having chosen quite a different path (abandoning his home, his religion, his principles and his fiancé), Zilia is forced to see that the Aza to whom she was betrothed no longer exists.

When Zilia realizes Aza's infidelity, she says "je le verrai plus, mais je n'en vivrai pas moins pour lui" (98). The following statement regarding utopias gives some credulity to Zilia's ability to remain faithful to her principles: "Utopian fictions are orderly worlds, whose truths are the premise, not the possible implications of the action" (Kramer 134). Zilia's truths are not negated by the actions of her unfaithful lover.

Her "bonne foi trahie" (166) unsettles her momentarily, but her character is strong enough to withstand such a blow. No longer do we see the Zilia who wants to die (die at loss of Aza, homeland, disappointment in his infidelity); rather we see the Zilia who proclaims her new credo: *je suis, je vis, j'existe!* (168).

Zilia's character has been molded by her early experiences. She was raised in confinement with the destination of being a wife. Thus, despite the optimal education and the efforts to instill her with self respect, she believes that "La subordination n'effrayait point les esprits parce qu'on en montrait la nécessité de très bonne heure, et que la tyrannie et l'orgueil n'y avaient aucune part" (12). Thus her make-up already pre-disposes her to a hierarchy in which she is relegated to an inferior position. This leads her to say to Déterville "vous goûterez le plaisir de la supériorité" regarding teaching her about science, however, she sees herself as his master in the realm of virtue having come from her utopian Peru. Regarding the pleasure of superiority, she

says: “je la reprendrai en développant dans votre cœur des vertus que vous n’y connaissez pas” (167).

Looking at Zilia in an historical context, it has been suggested that her character represents eighteenth-century aristocratic women. The notion of time play that Graffigny uses makes this suggestion credible. It is also credible when compared with the precedent set by Mme de Lafayette whose heroine of one time period is criticizing the values of another. Thus, Zilia is a representation of “very real aristocratic women who knew in their souls that their...unappeased longings accompanied women everywhere [and] that this sensibility and its attendant sense of estrangement are everywhere latent, at the horizon of women's dreams” (Undank 299). This notion also supports my contention that Zilia's character has a vision, a vision of a more equitable world for women.

Aza: The Fallen Utopian

Throughout the book, Aza, the recipient of Zilia's touching letters, is painted through her eyes. The reader never reads Aza's own words--all his actions, thoughts and intentions are interpreted through Zilia's conviction that he, too, is a utopian in his morals and values. She constantly describes his function in her life through terms of endearment such as: *ô lumière de ma vie, lumière de mon esprit, le maître de mon âme, cher idol de*

mon cœur. These hyperbolic periphrases that Zilia uses in lieu of Aza's name raise him to "une situation de suprématie" (Léal 1282).

Graffigny gives her hero, Aza, a quality that was of much discussion among the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century: that is, he was a visionary in the realm of female education. Aza was not an ordinary man, rather, he was an enlightened one, foreshadowing Diderot, Laclos, even Montesquieu in his way, who proposed that female intellectual inferiority is not innate, but created by man who denies her education and access to intellectual stimulation. Aza, chose to bring Zilia to his level, to instruct her, to give her the opportunity to become learned and enlightened.

As Zilia observes the behaviors of the French, she constantly refers back to Aza, who stands like a virtuous yardstick that they do not measure up to. He is constant, virtuous, respectful, wise, and honest. She describes Aza to a superhuman degree: "Toi seul réunis toutes les perfections que la nature a répandues séparément sur les humains," continuing her description by stating how nature endowed her, specifically, with sentimental qualities: "comme elle a rassemblé dans mon cœur tous les sentiments de tendresse et d'admiration qui m'attachent à toi jusqu'à la mort" (69).

Aza's character is always interpreted through Zilia's which we have established as being constant and virtuous. Even his

love for her is depicted as an “amour extrême” (144). Zilia writes to her beloved not to lose sight of his principles as he serves as her model:

“N’oublions jamais, toi l’obligation où tu es d’être mon exemple, mon guide et mon soutien dans le chemin de la vertu; et celle où je suis de conserver ton estime et ton amour en imitant mon modèle” (146). In effect, Zilia's advice foreshadows Aza's eventual betrayal. She begins to doubt him:

Pour la première fois ma tendresse me devint un sentiment pénible, pour la première fois je craignis de perdre ton cœur. Aza s’il était vrai! si tu ne m’aimais plus, ah, que jamais un tel soupçon ne souille la pureté de mon cœur. Non, je serais seule coupable, si je n’arrêtais un moment à cette pensée, indigne de ma candeur, de ta vertu, de ta constance. (131)

Zilia chastises herself for even doubting Aza. Yes, he is still the Aza that she fell in love with. She cannot even allow herself to entertain thoughts of his infidelity. It is incomprehensible to her. Unfortunately, he is not loyal to her, and her words emanating from her uncompromised value system now seem to paint a superhuman Aza, when the readers know, as does Déterville, that the real Aza has not lived up to her value system.

At this point, Aza falls from his utopian status. Aza comes to France and tells Zilia that he is not going to marry her, but instead will marry a Spaniard and convert to her religion. In his fall he betrays his marriage promise to Zilia, and forsakes his

religion and all the natural laws of his culture and society. Zilia laments that the Aza that she knew no longer exists: “Cet Aza, l'objet de tant d'amour, n'est plus le même Aza que je vous ai peint avec des couleurs si tendres” (158).

There is a significant movement between Aza and Déterville as the book progresses. Zilia, as it has been shown, remains a constant, however, her opinion of Déterville grows in a positive and upward manner while Aza, the supposed constant, is in a severe moral decline. She will find that he has forsaken his homeland. Obviously he bought into the Spaniards' lying words and had followed them to Spain. He has forsaken his religion, choosing to convert to Catholicism, and he has forsaken his future wife by taking a Spanish one. This fall removes him from the highly principled position that he has held throughout the book, as we have seen him portrayed through Zilia's perception of him. Did Zilia have unreasonable expectations of Aza, ones that place him above human capabilities?

Attributing Aza with superhuman qualities demonstrates, perhaps, an unrealizable aspect of utopia as it doesn't take into consideration human pride, ambition, need or frailty. As mentioned earlier, male and female utopias are perhaps impossible as the motivating dream behind them are different. While Zilia's dream of utopia resides in the love she and Aza shared, his dream resides, perhaps in his materialistic ambitions. Or, perhaps Aza just chooses to assimilate rather than to perish.

Déterville: The New Utopian

At first glance, Zilia separates Déterville from the fierce and tyrannical Spaniards, then from the disrespectful French males she encounters. She finds him respectful, gracious and noble. Without the benefit of verbal communication, Zilia begins a language of gestures and soon establishes a system of language that is born out of her ability to read in Déterville's heart a nobility of spirit and character. She trusts him and allows him to guide her through social situations with nothing more than a glance or a slight wave of the hand to instruct her. Zilia extols the virtues of Déterville: "Si vous n'étiez pas la plus noble des créatures...si vous n'aviez l'âme la plus humaine, le cœur le plus compatissant..." (159). It appears that Zilia has elevated Déterville to superhuman, or utopian status.

As mentioned earlier, Déterville's attentions are interpreted by the virtuous Zilia as honorable and ultimately in service of Aza. Indeed, working from her cultural bias, she naturally reads Déterville according to her perceptions of Peruvians: "La douceur honnête, le tendre sérieux de son frère, [Céline's] persuaderaient facilement qu'il est né du sang des *Incas*" (69). Given that Déterville is regarded by Zilia in Incan terms she says:

Je n'ai trouvé que vos vertus digne de la simplicité des nôtres. Un fils du Soleil s'honnorerait de vos sentiments; votre raison est presque celle de la nature; combien de motifs pour vous chérir! jusqu'à

la noblesse de votre figure, tout me plaît en vous.
(128)

Zilia's opinion of Déterville seems quite exalted. It must not be forgotten that his character is rather flat, and like Aza's, serves Zilia's ultimate concerns. Déterville's character compliments and flatter Zilia's. He is rather one-sided--he loves Zilia. And despite his flattering tantrums, he is controlled by Zilia's reporting of his thoughts and actions that are determined by her strict vision of comportment based on honest values. Déterville's behavior, which is dictated by his own sentiments and values, is controlled by Zilia through her narrowed vision of how one *should* act. Zilia describes Déterville in the same exalted manner as she did Aza. Is she deluded? Does she ascribe moral traits to Aza and to Déterville that are based in her code of ethics, thus reasonable, or does she glorify them in humanly impossible terms? Perhaps she will be disappointed later, as she was with Aza.

Also, it must be taken into consideration that not only do words flow from the utopian pen of Zilia, but that they are ultimately coming from the pen of Graffigny who is developing her heroine as a model of virtue. From the feminist utopian perspective, as noted earlier, there is a tendency: "to overcome male intruders through either expulsion or conversion" (Rosenthal 74). In Zilia's case, Aza is now distilled down to the virtues that he once represented, but there will be no room for a

future romantic relationship. Thus romance has been expelled, and we see how Zilia is attempting to convert Déterville.

Utopias attempt to provide a better life, as we have said, in reaction to an unacceptable society. However, a fine line between utopias and dystopias is that in order to have an efficient, perfectly run society, there must be some leveling of differences between the inhabitants: "a persistent leitmotif of Utopia is the elimination of the autonomy of the individual, who is subjected to the immutable rules fixed by the uncontested will of the utopian writer" (Pezzuoli 37). We are reminded of why utopias come about (desire for social change) and that feminist utopias base themselves on emotional, spiritual and intellectual needs: "utopian experiments...represent...an anticipation or a realization of behavior and needs that are in conflict with the existent society" (Pezzuoli 36). This explains Zilia's vision based on virtuous behaviors and her need to live in a society based on truth, not artifice. With this said, we now see why Déterville's character is molded toward serving Zilia's needs, and how he can state perhaps against his own desire: "je vous obéirai" (127).

In a seemingly incredible, but nonetheless honest and forthright manner, Zilia invites the lovesick Déterville into her new utopian environment based on friendship; an idyllic place in which she intends to live unhampered by the human incarceration of her own body (the humiliating advantage of giving birth) and the ravages of love (a refusal of human

passion). Perhaps Zilia is deluded by the image of the perfect human, by the essence of spirituality unencumbered by the weight of physicality. She invites Déterville to renounce his passion (physical and sentimental).

Through the pen of Graffigny and then again through Zilia's, this renunciation perhaps seems perfectly plausible as Déterville is a flat character who reacts to Zilia, but who ultimately conforms to her reason and logic. This is a most incredible transformation given that reason and logic, as she herself wrote, do not control one's emotions. Despite her invitation which may appear to Zilia as perfectly reasonable, she has already told us that reason is "impuissante...sur une âme désolée" (163). Still, Zilia believes, and says to the new utopian, if you share in my friendship: "Cette action juste vous élève au-dessus des mortels" (129).

In the final chapter, I will outline the restructuring of Zilia's utopia, which is both a physical place and a philosophical haven. We have seen thus far that the Incan system of values has carried Zilia through numerous trials: she has fought against loss of self, of her *other*, of her home, language and culture. She has been tested by the inconsistent values of eighteenth-century Europe and has skirted numerous barriers, both literary and real, as she chooses her profession and alternative living arrangements. Lastly, we will see what elements and tools Zilia

uses to restructure her world in order to make for herself a personal and private utopia.

CHAPTER FOUR

The New Utopian Environment

As established in the preceding pages, the definition of utopia is to find a better place in reaction to one's "lived social experience." It has also been noted that the very essence of the utopian vision, despite itself, must delimit individual autonomy for the good of the utopia or as in Zilia's private utopia, for the good of the *utopian*. We see this progression in Zilia: the reaction against the objectionable society towards an interiorized and personally satisfying utopia which, unfortunately for the likes of Déterville, insists on personal modifications. This tendency towards the interior is emotional as well as physical.

Imprisonment

There is a sector of scholarship that deals with utopian writers who write while imprisoned. Graffigny was never in prison, but has defined her life in confinement terms. She was confined by societal limitations, such as marriage and the lack of legal rights, as described in a previous chapter. During the Cirey incident, the dependent and penniless Graffigny who was without means of an escape, writes of her feelings of imprisonment: "Si vous envisagez la situation où j'étais : sans *chez moi*, sans argent et insultée dans une maison d'où je ne pouvais m'éloigner" (Graffigny-Asse 216).

Zilia's life begins in imprisonment, although she does not see it in those terms until she begins to sense her deprivation from being cloistered in the *Temple du Soleil*. During a carriage ride in the French countryside, Zilia is amazed at the beauty of nature and the immensity of the universe. Raised in a temple, she was not to see the light of day until the moment of her pre-arranged marriage to Aza. From the time that she is abducted, Zilia goes through numerous incarcerations, both physical and mental. She demonstrates an independent spirit, however, one that is still defined by her initial education. Slowly, through a process of self awareness, Zilia rejects imprisonment, but then ironically chooses it. She is perhaps like a timid animal who, despite finding the doors of the cage opened, through habit, finds comfort in confinement--in the known. More so, she is typical of the feminine utopians who seek an inward, personal utopia.

After the violent abduction from the *Temple du Soleil*, Zilia finds herself in a series of limiting spaces: detention by the Spanish, a carriage ride (she is unable to define it in those terms--she just senses being in an obscure box), the hull of the Spanish ship, a room in the French ship, the coastal house, the house in Paris, the room she was sent off to by Déterville's mother, "the highest one in the house" or the *donjon* using the French connotation of the word. Indeed, she says of her hosts: "je dois donc croire qu'ils me regardent comme leur esclave, et que leur pouvoir est tyrannique" (38).

Her initial reaction is to fling herself out of the enclosed space, to end the torment of being imprisoned away from Aza. Indeed, her own body becomes a prison from which her mind floats back and forth to her lover. Zilia refers to her Spanish captors as "ces hommes féroces dont je porte les fers" (17). Perhaps we can use these words as a metaphor to qualify Graffigny's experience which she is vicariously trying to break free from through her literary heroine.

She liberates herself, but it is interesting to see that, after having broken out of "les folles prisons que les hommes se sont faites" (59-60), she begins her own process of self-enclosure. For example, in the convent where she is sent by Déterville's mother, already an enclosed space, she flees from the priest who offends her sensibilities and takes refuge in her room.

Bound to Aza by love, she describes herself as "un être libre, indépendant, et qui se donne volontairement" (145). Ironically, after Aza leaves her, she finds herself in a state of liberation that is odious to her: "une liberté que je déteste" (160). Liberty is opposed to the preferable chains of love; it is symbolic of her preference for enclosure, enclosure in physical space like that of her youth. Also, as a feminine utopian, we have established that her need to isolate herself is utopian in its conception.

Finally, at the end of the book, her physical space is defined by her new house, but much more so by the two rooms which

reflect her existence: her new *Temple du Soleil*, which is a constant reinforcement of her lost utopia and the safety of her initial cloistering from the vice-ridden and oppressive world, and her library, which represents her intellectual pursuits as well as her space from which to write. We are reminded that her library also makes the *lumière* connection because the new light, which replaces her Peruvian *Soleil*, is the light or the knowledge found in books. The secluded, protected space where she can live independently as a writer serves as her reestablished temple, safe from the outside and bathed in representations of her former utopia.

Looking Beyond

Zilia possesses the desire to reconstruct her sense of self and of well-being which parallels the reconstruction of the *Temple du Soleil*.

Throughout the novel, Zilia has been learning to redefine herself through the acquisition of a new language in order to understand her new environment. With language comes self expression. She is now capable of defining herself as *different* from those who surround her--she is morally superior, she is even linguistically superior. She is still burning from the desire for *lumières* that will devour her.

As the book closes, Zilia's life is also different from those women around her. The difference comes from the rewriting of the choices given to women, real or literary. Graffigny quietly took aim at the patriarchal society in which she lived by rewriting her heroine outside of the acceptable societal and literary norms.

The reconstruction begins as loss is acknowledged. Zilia expresses having fallen “du suprême bonheur dans l'horreur du désespoir” (18). Zilia experiences loss throughout the novel: she lost her wedding day, she lost her future husband and her future to live in utopian, enlightened and equitable society: “Je perds ce que j'aime, l'univers est anéanti pour moi” (41). She lost her language which was her ability to define herself and she was forced to learn the French language and its writing system in order to find her place in her new world. As an epistolary function of the novel, the letters serve as a connection for Zilia, or the illusion of one back to all that she had lost.

When she is confronted with the reality of having lost Aza, at the moment that Déterville informs her that “il nous était à jamais impossible de revoir la ville de Soleil” (108), Zilia looks toward the future. She will not die as she thought she would on numerous occasions. She will live and rebuild. Her life force is no longer Aza, but the principles instilled in her as a girl which will serve as her staying power. Of virtue she writes: “Je la prendrai toujours pour juge et pour guide de mes actions. Je lui

consacre ma vie, et mon cœur à l'amitié" (165). And of fate she writes: "Je vis; le destin le veut, je me soumets à ses lois" (163).

The New Temple of the Sun

The new physical utopian space is the house that Déterville purchases for Zilia when he realizes that Aza is not coming to take Zilia back with him. Déterville wants to assure Zilia's future in France. His romantic intentions, however, will bend to the will of Zilia, and the novel will end without us knowing whether Déterville will be one of Zilia's new utopians.

Zilia is fatigued by all of the trappings of society: the lengthy primping that women must go through, the endless social calls that more than not fill her with disgust as she is forced to witness the emphasis on appearance without regard to the mind, heart or soul. Similarly, she finds herself in the untenable situation of being forced to sit with *Madame* (Déterville's mother). Zilia is confused by the tension of *Madame's* obvious dislike or disapproval of her and the obliging social rule of not leaving until one is dismissed. She laments, "je voudrais vivre seule" (73) and finally gets her wish as Céline reassures her that possession of the house will ensure her "une vie indépendante" (150).

Zilia realizes her loss of social status as a Peruvian princess when she begins to understand the system of power in France. She understands that her lack of power stems from the

inferiority of her sex because: “in France, [property] confers both social status and a certain measure of autonomy, privileges usually reserved for men” (Undank 303). Earlier, when she lamented that she had no place in French society, that realization was predicated on the notion that power in society means ownership, which in turn begets money, creating the possibility for more ownership, all of which gives prestige. When Zilia signs her name to the document giving her ownership of the house and gardens, she skirts a patriarchal barrier. Thus, the Zilia who was to rule in Peru alongside her Aza, now has security in ownership of a home where she is the ruler, the lawgiver, the subject, as opposed to being the dependent object.

Perhaps softening the blow to the patriarchal system, Graffigny enveloped her heroine in enchantment. Zilia, who doesn't realize that she is the homeowner, in effect describes herself in magical terms. She wonders: “si nous étions chez une de ces fées...où la maîtresse du logis était invisible” (147). Once again, we see the split-Zilia: she is both the Zilia who is being escorted to “one of Céline's best friends' house” and she is the Zilia who is the unknown hostess of the house. Within a short time, the split is reconciled and Zilia's autonomy is established.

Unwittingly she describes herself as a *fée*--an invisible, supernatural being who is endowed with superhuman qualities (the ability to render herself invisible). Indeed, Céline's husband chides Zilia about her “nouvelle dignité” somewhat of a

patronizing comment as if her ownership was a charming flaw in the otherwise stable system. Likewise, Zilia is careful not to seem too forceful: “Je badinais sur mon autorité et mon opulence” (154). Like the *fée*, who lives there, the house itself is also defined as “un enchantement” (147).

One characteristic of utopian space is that it is laid out in an aesthetically pleasing and orderly manner. The new utopian garden is defined by “l’art et la symétrie” (148). Also, “order and symmetry [are] sanctioned in moral and religious terms” (Stephens 6). The morally steadfast Zilia will reestablish the last remaining remnants of her religion, creating a space for “ces restes sacrées de notre culte de nos Autels” (111). Her new *Temple du Soleil* will have as its center the radiating figure of the sun suspended from a sky blue painted ceiling, a moral reminder of her *natural* religion of her original temple.

Zilia’s new power is symbolized in the key that she is given. The typically patriarchal emblem of power is turned over to Zilia by Déterville who had Aza’s chair of solid gold melted down and transformed by “une opération magique” into the house and property. It is significant that Aza’s throne--the symbol of his power over the Peruvian people--has been transformed into Zilia’s power over her own future.

The little key to this magic room reminds one of the little key to the *cabinet interdit* to the young and curious wife of Barbe Bleue in Charles Perrault’s fairy tale. That *conte de fée* uses the

biblical theme of Eve's transgression as she took the apple (key) from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Zilia has also *transgressed* in that she now *owns*; she has entered the patriarchal playing field.

Also, the little key to the "cabinet enchanté" (in effect the new *Temple du Soleil*) gives Zilia autonomy in her private utopia. As stated earlier, Zilia is experiencing a rebuilding of self. It is interesting to note, as does Undank, that the peasants who parade around her new garden are dressed like the Incan princess, and that they repeat her name again and again (303). Similarly, once inside the house Zilia can see herself reflected in numerous mirrors or in painted panels where Incan Virgins are depicted. Zilia, the last survivor of her virtuous society, is reflected in multitude in her new temple: "On y voyait nos Vierges représentées en mille endroits avec le même habillement que je portais en arrivant en France; on disait même qu'elle me ressemblaient" (152). Zilia will live out her days seeing herself depicted in her former utopia. The transformation being, however, that as a new utopian she is now defined by her autonomy as she pursues intellectual and personal avenues as a writer and a translator of her *quipos*. Zilia has come full circle, as she is reconciled with her initial "tendre occupation" of writing. She began the book tying quipos, she survived Aza's absence through the same, then through writing, and now, after losses and

disappointments she is “rendue à elle-même;” brought back to herself through her career as a writer.

The paintings on the walls in her new temple parallel Zilia's initial encounter with the mirror, but she is no longer the scared and naive child who is shocked and delighted at her temporary reflection. She is now the self-determined woman whose life-affirming being has been immortally etched on hard surfaces, as if she herself were those written words that she wanted to etch into metal (78). Another illustration of the personal and inward utopia comes from a

comparison of Campanella's *public* utopian walls and Graffigny's *private* ones. In his City of the Sun it is not the glory of the utopian visionary that is depicted, but the glory of discovery, perhaps of intellectual conquests: “all of the sciences [are] pictured on all of the walls” (Stephens 4).

In Zilia's description of the new *Temple du Soleil*, we are reminded of her constant devotion to her Peruvian utopia. She had kept her trunk of “précieux monuments de notre ancienne splendeur” (111) with her since Peru, including the move into the convent, which symbolized a hopeful conversion to Catholicism. Zilia's steadfast fidelity to her religion would withstand this intended conversion:

Les ornements du temple que j'avais laissés dans la maison religieuse, soutenus par des pyramides dorées, ornaient tous les coins de ce magnifique cabinet. La figure du Soleil, suspendue au milieu d'un plafond

peint des plus belles couleurs du ciel, achevait par son éclat d'embellir cette charmante solitude. (152)

Gynocentric Restructuring

Zilia perceives the inequities of society as stemming from patriarchal rule: "Quand tu sauras qu'ici l'autorité est entièrement du côté des hommes, tu ne douteras pas...qu'ils ne soient responsables de tous les désordres de la société" (143). The rebuilding of Zilia's utopia involves the feminine deconstruction of patriarchal control. On the literary level, the author is a woman and her *porte-parole* is a woman. The doubly female point of view controls the male perspective and rewrites it according to the female vision. The male characters (only one has his own voice) are mute or controlled at least by one female. That is, the copied letters of Déterville are subject to Graffigny's intentions and the reported actions and thoughts are subject to both author and heroine. The need to restructure patriarchy is a feminine one. "It is doubtful whether any man could ever conceive a feminist utopia, for the male writer's progressive ideas cannot include the abolition of male power" (Pezzuoli 38). Graffigny distinguishes herself as a feminine utopian writer as she conceives of Zilia's locus of power as an autonomous woman and a writer in a male profession.

Montesquieu's females are locked into the patriarchal vision. Even the rebellious Roxane who creates her own happy

place in the harem must commit suicide for her transgression against patriarchal law. Also, Montesquieu's utopian society of Troglodytes is patriarchal with the women's basic function to make the men happy.

The Power of Language

The language of the Incas, a representation system which had never expressed a non truthful word, was for Zilia an externalization of her *self* in the world. At the same time, as "language permits self-consciousness" (Fourny 225), Zilia's loss of language was her loss of her self-perception. She did not realize this until she lost her language, her ability to define herself and the objects around her. However, as she takes to weaving her thoughts, her language becomes a mental tool of self expression and Zilia undergoes an internalization of this virtuous system of language which serves to bolster her sense of self. This is also another example of the tendency of movement from exterior to interior.

As shown earlier, Zilia has a keen sense of people that transcends language barriers. She was able to read treachery in the hearts of the Spanish. Zilia understood that the structure of the language in which words *said* did not equal the actual meaning. There is an irony that Zilia witnesses as she reserves judgment of the French until she has acquired their language,

fearing perhaps that her opinions may be too superficial. What she finds is that the French betray themselves through their language system. She writes: "Il ne faut ni éloquence pour se faire écouter, ni probité pour se faire croire. Tout est dit, tout est reçu avec la même légèreté" (133). Zilia learns that their "paroles sans significations" (122) are indicative of their character: they prefer quantity over quality and their language hides no profundity of meaning.

Similarly, the scene in which Déterville is giving Zilia words to repeat, words of love create a moral dilemma for her. The Incan princess who was raised speaking a language through which she was incapable of formulating a lie, was now being given non-truths to parrot for the pleasure of another.

As a writer Zilia can henceforth administer some control over this inundation of words. She can control and manipulate the flow of words to express her thoughts. She will remove herself from the superficial society where she is fatigued by "le fonds inépuisable de la conversation des Français" (123), to return to her "occupation" of writing.

The Power of Writing

Graffigny steps into a male career as writer and then proceeds to manipulate language to erode away at attitudes that inhibit women. Woman is now subject and man is object. The

double female voice of Graffigny and Zilia deconstructs the power that men exert over women by rewriting their patriarchal words and by doing so, restructuring dominant patriarchal thought. Just as Déterville would put words into Zilia's mouth to construct his own perceived reality, so does Graffigny put words and thoughts into Aza and Déterville to rewrite herself an acceptable gynocentric reality.

Graffigny's choice of writing as a career flew in the face of acceptability to some degree, but her success in the eighteenth century as a writer and a playwright was undeniable. She was fully aware of her boundary crossing as she wrote in her correspondence that she liked "being a man right under people's noses" (Showalter 1978: 97).

She had numerous critics, but interestingly enough, the bulk of them were personal attacks against the *woman*, not the writer and her writings. These criticisms seemingly stemmed from the male's inability to perceive of women writers. L'Abbe Raynal wrote in his Nouvelles Littéraires just after the publication of Lettres d'une Péruvienne, "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" (Altman 1991, 263). Graffigny as utopian writer saw to it that Zilia's character would not have to endure such remarks as her restructuring pen wrote those ignoble attitudes out of her male characters.

Zilia turns directly toward writing when she is abducted, in fact, she turns *back* to writing as she was in the process of tying her *quipos* to render immortal her love with Aza at the moment of being abducted. On the one hand she sought refuge in an activity that already served as a *transporting* device, indeed already perceived as a profession: "Tout entier à mon occupation, j'oubliais le temps..." (19). On the other, she sought to bridge the gap between herself and Aza through the exchange of letters.

Zilia's loss of language and loss of ability of self expression was exacerbated by the multitudes around her who could neither *hear* her, nor could make themselves understood by her: "En vain j'emploie mon attention et mes efforts pour entendre, ou pour être entendue; l'un et l'autre me sont également impossible" (33). Zilia grieved deeply for this loss and her *quipos* served to alleviate that misery. "Renfermée en moi-même, mes inquiétudes n'en étaient que plus vives, et le désir de les exprimer plus violent" (19).

Her nebulous, airy "vapeur du matin" self is concretized into *quipos*, then onto paper as she begins to free herself through writing which becomes a means for survival. She no longer has Aza's presence, but her epistles intended for him will serve as the ties that bind. Distressed at the separation, Zilia says the power of writing will "tromper nos tyrans" (21). The act of writing empowers and liberates even the imprisoned.

Zilia comes to realize that her letters will have no reader: "Ma lettre est finie; et les caractères n'en sont tracés que pour moi" (99). Nonetheless she continues to write. Even on the day that Aza is to come to France, she impatiently bides her time writing to him. The need to write is no longer the need to be heard, but it has become its own need to self express. The dialogue that she initiated with Aza has become a self-dialogue: "Writing letters is writing herself" (Fourny 228). She wrote to Aza in the very first letter that her knots, her *quipos*, "t'apprendront mon existence" (21). Zilia's existence is indeed woven into her *quipos*, as it is written into her letters. Her empowerment and control has always been the "chère occupation" that has sustained her throughout the novel. Perhaps, she only could come to realize it through its loss and through the recreating of her self.

Refusal of Marriage

Finally, Graffigny's and thus Zilia's trait to question norms and attitudes, endows the heroine with a clarity of determination to decide her own fate. She is freed from traditional expectations and chooses not to marry. This expectation was both societal and religious as noted earlier. That is, as mentioned in the first chapter of this work, marriage is both a legally binding contract and a sacrament.

A woman's choices were limited to marriage or entry into a convent. It is also a literary expectation as evidenced by the heroines of the eighteenth century whose options were marriage, convent or death. Additionally, Graffigny's contemporaries--critics and the public--seemed dismayed at this lack of a socially acceptable ending. The socially correct conclusion, a conclusion that was played out in variations on a theme in five sequels written by various authors (only one female): Zilia must accept the hand of Déterville, or she must somehow be reunited with Aza. However, "Graffigny was moving away from obvious...literary plans" (Spencer 206).

Hints of Graffigny's own life shine through as her security of home was compromised by her irresponsible husband. When Zilia's pillaged belongings turn up, and Déterville transforms Aza's throne of gold by "une opération magique" into a country house, Zilia accepts with appreciation. She skirts the barriers and establishes herself in her house, a place of her own where she will then rebuild her own private utopia. She becomes a property owner, an act which places her among the "powerful" whereas she had been one of the "powerless."

Utopian Vision of Friendship

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one trait of the feminist utopian vision is to redefine the male's function in the

gynocentric society. Zilia's aim is to convert Déterville, which in my opinion is humanly impossible and therefore *utopianly* conceived. Déterville's conversion from lover to friend will deny or delimit his experience and his will. Although, under the pen of Graffigny, we have already witnessed how Déterville modifies his will towards Zilia's. We have also seen Graffigny's perception of control for the good of the society when she writes: "La subordination n'effrayait point les esprits parce qu'on en montrait la nécessité de très bonne heure" (12).

In contrast to the utopian vision of friendship, Graffigny writes of the reality of it in her correspondence. She asks of Devaux:

C'est un pesant fardeau que celui de mon amitié, n'est-ce pas, mon tendre ami? Ah! je vous en ai accablé déjà bien des fois, et vous m'avez bien la mine de le porter seul à l'avenir; en aurez-vous bien le courage? (Graffigny-Asse 156)

Graffigny's friendship is *real-world* based--subject to normal strains of interpersonal relationships. "Je suis bien fâchée de vous affliger en vous contant tous mes maux, mais je ne saurais m'en abstenir; il me semble que cela me soulage, et ma confiance en votre amitié est sans bornes" (Graffigny-Asse 157). Graffigny shows that she depends on Devaux's support and counsel, but that she is fully aware of his feelings and the impact that her dependence can have on their friendship. Graffigny seems to

have written this notion out of Zilia's character regarding the forming and maintenance of friendships. In this respect, Zilia seems superhuman as she projects her vision of a *painless* friendship into the heart of Déterville who feels more for her than just friendship. She has ascribed superhuman traits to Déterville, and her belief that he is capable of complying with her vision of friendship shows that she has an elevated opinion of his abilities.

Feminist

Throughout this work I have referred to Graffigny and her heroine Zilia as purveyors of feminist manifestos, credos, intentions and visions. But can one say that they are feminists? Obviously the term is retroactively applied and is replete with twentieth-century connotations. However, it may be said that Graffigny enters into the male/female discussion when she writes: "Si tu étais un homme ordinaire, je serais restée dans l'ignorance à laquelle mon sexe est condamné..." (23). And she not only enters the discussion, but marches into it when she asks: "Comment ne seraient-elles pas révoltées contre l'injustice des lois qui tolèrent l'impunité des hommes, poussée au même excès que leur autorité?" (143).

As shown in the first chapter of this work, Graffigny and her heroine take issue with the lack of education for women.

Once out in the world the first yoke of "une éducation mal dirigée" (139) must be thrown off. The inadequate instruction of the finishing schools where the essential goals include "régler les mouvements du corps, arranger ceux du visage, composer l'extérieur" (139), creates an untenable situation for women who then find themselves subject to the strictest of moral codes. Zilia's opinion is that men's treatment of women is an "espèce d'anéantissement" (145). This mistreatment of women, a denial of their capabilities, has been historically a feminist issue. Realizing the educational handicaps that women have, Graffigny writes of Mme du Châtelet: "Mais combien de siècles faut-il pour faire une femme comme celle-là?" (Graffigny-Asse 117). Finally, as Zilia witnessed that France possessed no woman of merit (142), Graffigny wrote of her Cirey hostess: "...au vrai, il y a peu de femmes comme elle, du moins n'en ai-je point vu" (Graffigny-Asse 118). Graffigny's opinion sometimes surpasses equality of the sexes, especially in the realm of writing as she writes in her correspondence: "Il est bien vrai que quand les femmes se melent d'écrire, elles surpassent les hommes : quelle prodigieuse différence!" (Graffigny-Asse 117).

CONCLUSION

Does Françoise de Graffigny's eighteenth-century novel constitute itself as a utopian work? We have looked at some scholars of utopian and feminist utopian literature to establish a definition on which to test Lettres d'une Péruvienne, and it is undeniable that it does indeed fit the criteria.

Graffigny's life or "lived social experience" provided her with ample fuel for her utopian vision. The social constraints of marriage, the inequities in the legal system bolstered by Church doctrine created a physically dangerous environment for the young Graffigny. Out of this situation was born her heroine, Zilia, who was able to skirt issues that plagued Graffigny--financial, marital, social. Zilia, like her creator, found refuge in writing which was also a bold feminist statement in an all-male profession.

Graffigny's vision of utopia was both nostalgic and futuristic. The point of view was fluid as her sixteenth-century princess was impressed with the ingenuity of eighteenth-century France, but the new eighteenth-century resident pined for her lost utopia--a two hundred year-old memory of a now destroyed empire. Zilia's feminist utopian vision gives the work a personal edge, a triumph of the feminine spirit which has historically suffered oppression justified in nature, as per Montesquieu, justified biblically and justified by socially sanctioned and all too often patriarchal attitudes serving patriarchal ends.

Strictly as a feminist, Zilia is a shining light in history as she lives out the virtuous principles instilled in her lost utopia. She is a constant who is able to live out the principles she espouses. This strong heroine stands as a contrast to the philosophers of the day who, like Montesquieu was writing of the righteousness of patriarchal rule in families, while he himself had abandoned his family to travel and write. Or, perhaps, Zilia differentiates herself from Rousseau who would write novels treating the proper raising and education of children while he was leaving his children on church doorsteps. Graffigny wrote Zilia as a strong female literary heroine. Despite the social pressures to marry, Zilia would choose to consecrate herself to her principles, alone with virtue as her judge and guide.

Graffigny's novel, as Janet Altman believes, deserves new readings and Curtis has suggested looking beyond traditional readings. Capasso speaks of "stretching the canon" (38) which indicates at once that it has the power of closing its doors on works, not based on their own merit, but based on the canon's ideology. This thesis has been a nontraditional reading of Lettres d'une Péruvienne as it has stepped away from the love story, the philosophical aspect, and the epistolarity. I have indeed looked beyond and have found a weak point in the utopian literary canon where stretching is applicable, reasonable and justified.

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