



# Letters of a Peruvian Woman (Oxford World's Classics)

*Françoise de Graffigny*

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'It has taken me a long time, my dearest Aza, to fathom the cause of that contempt in which women are held in this country ...'

Zilia, an Inca Virgin of the Sun, is captured by the Spanish conquistadores and brutally separated from her lover, Aza. She is rescued and taken to France by Déterville, a nobleman, who is soon captivated by her. One of the most popular novels of the eighteenth century, the Letters of a Peruvian Woman recounts Zilia's feelings on her separation from both her lover and her culture, and her experience of a new and alien society.

Françoise de Graffigny's bold and innovative novel clearly appealed to the contemporary taste for the exotic and the timeless appetite for love stories. But by fusing sentimental fiction and social commentary, she also created a new kind of heroine, defined by her intellect as much as her feelings. The novel's controversial ending calls into question traditional assumptions about the role of women both in fiction and society, and about what constitutes 'civilization'.

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