

IMAGINING FRANCE: Imagining the Outsider's View in Eighteenth-Century France

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Handout for Seminars 4-5: *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*

Seminar overview

- Warm-up exercises:
 - what does *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* have in common with Voltaire's *L'Ingénu*? What is different? Write down a list of three similarities and differences (think about formal qualities, style, characterization, elements of cultural critique, etc.)
 - compile a list of elements of French culture that Zilia observes and criticises. (Similarities/differences to elements criticised by *l'Ingénu*?)
- To what extent is Peruvian culture used as a counterpoint to France? (what Enlightenment ideals does it represent?) Are there any changes in Zilia's attitude towards Peru as the novel progresses?
- **Group work: How is pathos used for the purposes of social criticism in the following letters:**
 - (A) Letters 13 and 19
 - (B) Letters 20, 29 and 32
- **Group work: discussion on the following topics:**
 - (C) In what ways is Zilia perceived as "other" by the French characters she meets, and by the hypothetical reader addressed by the preface to the novel?
 - (D) Can we read this novel as the story of the heroine's gradual progress towards self-affirmation and independence (in if so, in what ways?) Is there an alternative 'regressive' reading of the story (in which Zilia retreats from reality, and the world, into dream and illusion)?