Trois aspects de l'amour chez Pierre Loti

Carol Hukill Rives

The University of Montana

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LES TROIS ASPECTS DE L'AMOUR CHEZ PIERRE LOTI

by

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Master of Arts

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Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

Date
A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.

This work is dedicated to Dr. Robert Burgess,
whose patient guidance and constant inspiration
assisted in its completion.

The seeking for one thing will find another. - Irish proverb.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Pierre Loti, French author of numerous novels, travel accounts, memoirs and dramas, was born in Rochefort, January 14, 1850, and named Louis Marie Julien Viaud by his Protestant parents. The name Pierre Loti he adopted as a pseudonym when he was a young man.

His childhood was tenderly indulged by the aging parents, grandmothers, and great-aunts, all of whom comprised the Viaud household. Julien was the youngest of three children: Gustave, 14 years his senior, was already pursuing the family career as a sailor. His sister, Marie, 19 years older than he, often played the role of a second mother. Others in the household were his father, Théodore; his mother, Nadine; Tante Clarisse, a sister of Nadine Viaud; Tante Rosalie, an aunt of his mother, and his grandmother. Surrounded by so many feminine influences, Julien Viaud was a painfully shy and sensitive child. Too much protection at home caused him unhappy moments at school, where the children's noisy and raucous games made him nervous and uneasy. His playmates were generally little girls, who were more sympathetic to his quiet nature. Little Julien preferred the quiet hours spent in his home or garden with his family, reading from the Bible, listening to stories of some faraway place, or tending to his collections of souvenirs: flowers, butterflies and rocks, all brought to him by his brother from distant shores. His earliest wish was to become a minister, but, as his spirit for adventure increased, he changed this goal to that of a missionary, inasmuch as he could combine piety with his ever-growing desire to follow his brother, Gustave. "Je m'étonne de ne plus me rappeler par quelle transformation lente ou subite, ma
vocation de pasteur devint une vocation plus militante de
missionnaire." "C'étaient bien les lointains voyages, la vie
aventureuse et sans cesse risquée, -- mais au service du Seigneur
et de sa sainte cause. Cela mettait pour un temps ma conscience
en repos." The sea, itself, represented an indefinable mystery
to Loti, even as a child, as he described his first childhood
encounter with it:

Pour la reconnaître ainsi, la mer, l'avais-je déjà vue?
Nous restâmes un moment l'un devant l'autre, moi fasciné
par elle. Dès cette première entrevue sans doute, j'avais
l'insaisissable pressentiment qu'elle finirait un jour par
me prendre, malgré toutes mes hésitations, malgré toutes
les volontés qui essayeraient de me retenir... Ce que
j'éprouvais en sa présence était non de la frayeur, mais
surtout une tristesse sans nom, une impression de solitude
désolée, d'abandon, d'exil... Et je repartis en courant,... 3

Thus a yearning to travel to unknown and exotic places became a
restless ambition while Julien was still very young. During these
years of French colonial expansion, the word "les colonies" held
a magic quality to him:

Oh! ce qu'il avait de troublant et de magique, dans mon
enfance, ce simple mot: "les colonies", qui, en ce temps-
là, désignait pour moi l'ensemble des lointains pays chauds,
avec leurs palmiers, leurs grandes fleurs, leurs nègres,
leurs bêtes, leurs aventures. 4

Oh! "les colonies"! comment dire tout ce qui cherchait à
s'éveiller dans ma tête, au seul appel de ce mot! un fruit
des colonies, un oiseau de là-bas, un coquillage, devenaient
pour moi tout de suite des objets presque enchantés. 5

1 Pierre Loti, Le roman d'un enfant (Paris: Calmann-
Lévy, 1922), p. 137. Henceforth all works cited in footnotes by
title only are by Loti.
2 Ibid., p. 139.
3 Ibid., p. 18.
4 Ibid., p. 61.
5 Ibid., p. 62.
However, it was a long and sometimes agonizing process by which the recognition came to him that he, too, would spend his life on the sea. "Il y avait bien deux ou trois ans que j'avais cessé de parler de ma vocation religieuse et je comprenais à présent combien tout cela était fini, impossible; mais je n'avais rien trouvé d'autre pour mettre à la place." Throughout these formative years, Loti did know one thing for certain: to remain in one place, to live a scheduled pattern, to follow the herd, would be insupportable to him. "Et que je me disais: il faudra un jour être comme l'un d'eux, vivre utilement, posément, dans un lieu donné, dans une sphère déterminée, et puis vieillir, et ce sera tout... Alors une désespérance sans bornes me prenait; je n'avais envie de rien de possible ni de raisonnable;" It was a painful decision for him to make, that of becoming a sailor, because of the strong attachment he felt for his home and his family. The thought of being separated from his mother for several years at a time was both odious and frightening to this carefully-tended child. Finally, all of these fears and desires began to solidify in his mind, and the ambition to be a sailor became a reality. At that time young Julien felt the need to confide in his sailor brother, to seek counsel. He knew that his family would oppose such a profession for the only child who remained with them. In the end, however, it was because of a financial disaster that the family was forced to give their permission to Julien to follow his ambitions.

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6 Ibid., p. 224.
7 Ibid., p. 225.
"Je viens de causer avec papa et maman, continua-t-elle, (Marie) et ils m'ont chargée de venir t'annoncer que, vu le changement de leur situation, il ne s'opposeront plus à ce que tu entres à l'Ecole Navale si tu en as toujours le goût, parce que là tu pourras gagner ta vie."

This decision was even more difficult for the Viauds' than young Julien had initially conceived, as Gustave had died and been buried at sea — a very tragic grief for all of the family to bear. Even though Julien Viaud was happy to have parental consent, he still was filled with remorse at the thought of leaving those whom he loved. "Oui, mais ces séparations de deux années, à l'autre bout du monde, ces longs exils pendant lesquels certaines des figures chéries qui m'entouraient et qui étaient déjà vieilles, hélas! pourraient mourir... Soudain, je m'aperçus que tout se brouillait devant mes yeux, je ne distinguais plus mes notes, je pleurais..."

The decision to become a sailor was not based on the romantic notions of a sailor's life at sea and the beautiful vessels he maintained, but rather on the sea itself and the mysteries it holds on the farthest shores. Once the reality was faced, however, preparations for his career were not difficult to make: three years at a Paris lycée, preparatory to naval school, and then the Naval School at Brest before he was admitted aboard the Borda in 1861, at 17 years of age. In 1870 he became midshipman, in 1873 an ensign, and in 1881 he was commissioned as a lieutenant. The rest of his life he spent as a

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9 Ibid., p. 117.
sailor; and once at sea, he saw France infrequently and for short intervals. At the age of 29, he had already roamed the world, sailed on all of its seas and led an extraordinary life in bizarre countries.

In 1891 Pierre Loti was elected to the French Academy, when he was only 41 years old. Never had an author achieved literary success so quickly; his novels enjoyed the immediate approval of "la haute société", the salons provided him with fervent fans, and the death of Octave Feuillet, of the Academy, provided Loti the opportunity to join their ranks. His contestant was Emile Zola.

Loti wrote prolifically until he died June 10, 1923 in Hendaye, of a cerebral hemorrhage which caused him to suffer greatly for several months. His death was mourned all over France, and he was buried in his garden with the rest of his family on the Ile d'Oléron, near Rochefort.

These biographical notes are pertinent to this study as Loti's life was directly related to his writings. Almost every significant incident from his life can be traced in his literature. This is, in fact, one of the dominant characteristics of his writings -- this autobiographical nature by which he renders his stories so poignant and draws the reader to him. His novels are all stories of a love between two people. It is a love which cannot be consummated because of race, religion, cultural or class differences, and it necessarily ends in either separation or death. Very frequently these stories depict a

sophisticated Western man (Loti himself) in love with a woman of an unsophisticated milieu, usually Oriental. The simplicity of the woman suggests Loti's yearning for the simple and uncluttered life which he enjoyed as a child. Throughout all of his work, he abnegated the technology of the Western world, particularly when it infringed upon a country whose beauty and charm lay in its rustic simplicity. Loti's love stories always end in disappointment, a separation or death.

There are three probable explanations for this pattern: first, Loti's own disillusionment with life and the disenchantment he felt by his own lack of faith. Secondly, his belief that the cultures of the Western world and the Orient are completely irreconcilable. Neither as nations, nor on an individual basis was there any hope of a compatible existence. Finally, and perhaps most important, was Loti's own inability to relinquish himself totally to the love of another single human being.

Loti's life followed a regular pattern. While he longed to sail to exotic and unknown places, after arriving there and spending several weeks, he became restless to return to the "foyer". Albert Guérard describes this pattern.

The framework of several of his early tales is the same; the young officer lands, buys a local costume, learns a few words of the language, and then sallies forth in quest of "Das Ewig Weibliche". The Man-of-war's station comes to an end. The bride of a few days weeps, and, if she be a proper heroine, dies. The officer is sorry, very sorry indeed. Not so much for her as for himself -- for is he not a poet -- that is to say, the quintessence of selfishness? -- And he finds
in this very remorse and in his self-pity a delicious torment of which he gives his readers the benefit. 12

Loti seemed always to be drawn by these two opposing forces -- the first, a compulsion to travel to mysterious ports, and the second, an equally strong desire to return to Rochefort, his own little corner of the world, which represented warmth and security for him.

Pierre Loti is frequently described as a "word-painter", rather than a story-teller. In fact, many of his novels are merely a conglomeration of personal notes and correspondence between himself and a trusted friend which comprise the episodes and provide the thread of continuity. He describes, or paints perfectly, the physical aspects of his story's setting: the blistering sun of Africa upon the unending sea of sand, the vastness of the blue skies over the huts of Tahiti, the verdant and fertile vegetation in the Japanese gardens. He sketches these scenes with a hand so talented, and a mind so knowledgeable from personal experience, that the reader feels the heat, or knows the beauty as if he, too, were there. His tales always give off the local perfume, abound with the sounds of the village and expand with the color and form that Loti so magically suggests to the point of reality. Loti is equally gifted in his ability to penetrate the human soul. The melancholy of human pain or loneliness, the agony of the departure from one he loves, and the unending anxiety of waiting, -- all of these are expressed succinctly over and over again in Loti's work. He even seems to understand the greatest of human mysteries and

miseries -- death itself, as it occurs so frequently in his writings. The strong feminine influence known to Loti throughout his early years is no doubt responsible for the acute sensitivity and the compassion he shows for human shortcomings.

One of the most important and recurring aspects of Loti's writings is that of love. This thesis will deal with the three aspects of love as they occur in his life and his work. The first and most important of these is "l'amour familial" since it was the only one in which he felt completely secure. Although none of his novels deal solely with familial love, his personal memoirs speak again and again of the respect and affection he felt for his family and particularly for his mother.

The second type of love which was important to Loti was "l'amour amical". He carried on innumerable correspondences with persons in whom he felt an empathy and a trust.

Finally, the type of love with which we are most familiar, as his readers, is "l'amour amoureux", since this is the one that pervades most of his novels. The love of a woman, so paramount in the lives of mortal beings, is what Loti strived to attain throughout his life, in every corner of the globe. Although Loti's women were always able to surrender themselves completely and without reservation to the man, the man was never capable of the same resignation of body and soul.

The subject for this thesis was suggested to me by the following quotation from Madame Juliette Adam, a close friend of Loti's:
L'amitié est pour moi un sentiment si puissant que l'expression ordinaire me paraît insuffisante, et que je dis souvent: j'ai l'amour filial, maternel; pourquoi ne pas avoir l'amour amical?...

Each of these aspects of love will be dealt with in detail, and examples of the situations mentioned will be cited from Loti's own texts, which will enable us to understand the intricate nature of this man's life.

"Je ne sais ce que je veux, je voudrais ne jamais quitter mes parents chéris, et je voudrais courir le monde en vrai bohémien..." Pierre Loti maintained a strong attachment to his home and family from his childhood throughout his adult years, even though he was driven by a contrasting desire to taste of the unknown as well. It is known that the women in the Viaud family tried to protect the youngest member of their ménage from the rudeness of the world. He was kept close to them and was not encouraged to seek the friendship of other children. They provided for him a childhood marked by solitude which largely accounted for the pensive attitude of dreaming and reflecting which characterized Loti as an adult. This cloistered childhood represented a warm security to Loti, even as a man. The "foyer" is a place of inviolable peace, a retreat to which, after being buffeted by the oceans, by strange love affairs, and by life itself, he could always return and find the quiet solitude of the past and memories of those who were most dear to him. No matter how far he traveled or how long he was away, he soon became weary and restless to return to his own "Mecca". Rochefort provided a respite which was very necessary to his well-being. Yet, when his body and mind were refreshed -- when he was assured that the family was secure, the desire to move on again invaded his peace. Loti describes this

anomaly well: "Mon Dieu, comme j'aime tout cela; comme on est bien ici, et quelle chose fatale que cette envie qui me prend toujours de repartir."

The dominant members of the Viaud family can almost be categorized according to Loti's poles of affection --"le foyer" and "l'exotique". His mother, his grandmother and his aunts were the elements of home and security. His brother and an uncle were agents of his curiosity for the unseen and unknown. His sister was somewhere in the middle. Although she was a strong familial force, Loti enjoyed the greatest freedom of his childhood with her. The two of them spent vacations together with their cousins and Loti was less restricted there. He was allowed to play children's games, but his sister was nearby to comfort him if she was needed. Later, when she married, her home provided another refuge for Julien if his own became too oppressive. Her husband, Armand Bon, and their daughter, Nadine, became a sort of second family to him.

Nadine Viaud, Loti's mother, was the most important of those who surrounded him at home. References to her may be found in all his writings, from the earliest to his very last. One of the most frequently-quoted is Loti's first memory of his mother, described in Roman d'un enfant. While recovering from some childhood illness, he felt well enough to be lonely and to

need something. "Elle se pencha sur mon lit pour m'embrasser, et alors je n'eus plus envie de rien, ni de pleurer, ni de me lever, ni de sortir; elle était là, et cela me suffisait; je me sentais entièrement consolé, tranquillisé, changé, par sa bienfaisante présence..." The overwhelming trust that the small child felt in his mother developed into a confidence that was to represent Loti's lifeline as an adult. During his childhood, he turned to her whenever he felt fear, loneliness, or grief. After his first encounter with the sea, he became very frightened and ran to her: "...avec une hâte extrême d'arriver auprès de ma mère, de l'embrasser, de me serrer contre elle; de me faire consoler de milles angoisses anticipées, inexpressibles, qui m'avaient étéint le coeur à la vue de ces grandes étendues vertes et profondes." If his mother was ever gone for a long while, Julien began to worry, anxious for her return. Once she appeared, he would be overjoyed and all was well again. No amount of loneliness or pain could hinder the feeling of warmth and security that her presence provided for her son. Loti describes the comfort of her presence. "Ma mère entra... Oh! alors je me jetai sur elle; je me cachai la tête, je m'abîmai dans sa robe; c'était la protection suprême, l'asile où rien n'atteignait plus, le nid des nids où l'on oubliait tout..." It was Loti's

3 Le roman d'un enfant, p. 22.
4 Ibid., p. 19.
5 Ibid., p. 10.
mother who supervised his early education, not trusting the influence of the public school. So until he was 12, and attended the Collège de Rochefort, there was very little reason for him to leave home. One of his favorite childhood retreats was the garden, where he could do his lessons or simply enjoy the blossoming flowers. Loti thought everything about the garden was peaceful, even the screeching bats that busied themselves each evening. Everything at the family home at Rochefort symbolized tranquility to this child. Each family member was a source of stability during his early years. As Henri Bonnemain points out in his introduction to Loti: "Loti a conservé un souvenir ému de toutes ces vieilles parents qui l'entourèrent d'une tendresse affectueuse et protégèrent son enfance contre les premiers chocs de la vie." Nevertheless, it was still his mother to whom he turned in either happiness or grief. "Non, en ce temps-là, c'était elle, voilà tout; autant dire une figure tout à fait unique, que je ne songeais à comparer à aucune autre, d'où rayonnaient pour moi la joie, la sécurité, la tendresse, d'où émanait tout ce qui était bon, y compris la foi naissante et la prière..." It was in his mother that he found solace when

7 Le roman d'un enfant, p. 22.
the shocking news of his brother’s death arrived. "...alors, maintenant que je savais, je partis en courant pour aller retrouver ma mère..." Even though his family made every effort to protect Julien Viaud from pain and suffering, there was no prevention for certain grief. The death of his grandmother was his first experience in mourning, and her death was difficult for him to understand and accept.

Comment grand’mère pourrait-elle être au ciel, comment comprendre ce dédoublement-là, puisque ce qui reste pour être enterré est tellement elle-même, et conserve, hélas! jusqu’à son expression?...

Après, je me retirai sans questionner personne, le coeur serré et l’âme désorientée, n’osant pas demander la confirmation de ce que j’avais deviné si bien, et préférant ne pas entendre prononcer le mot qui me faisait peur...  

After the death of his grandmother, this young boy was still destined to suffer the grief of losing two more loved ones: first, his brother, Gustave, who was buried at sea, and second, one of his "petites amies", Lucette, of whom he writes: "Pour la première fois, là devant elle, je me sentis vraiment écrasé par la grande horreur de la mort et je me jetai à genoux, accoudé sur un fauteuil, tenant des deux mains ma tête, pleurant à sanglots..." These early expressions of remorse are evidence of the depths of passion to be seen in Loti’s adult life, particularly his ability to understand and feel the pain and heartache for someone who is suffering.

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8 Prime jeunesse, pp. 61 - 62.
9 Le roman d’un enfant, p. 72.
10 Prime jeunesse, p. 91.
After Loti left home to circle the globe time and again, he was always concerned about the well-being of his mother, and often expressed this concern in his correspondence. In a letter to Emile Pouvillon in 1883, before leaving for Tonkin, he wrote, "Ma pauvre mère! Je songe avec frayeur qu'elle est bien âgée; encore deux ou trois campagnes et il m'arrivera de ne plus la retrouver à mon retour." Another example of his devotion may be found in his letter to Madame Juliette Adam in 1884. "Vous savez bien aussi que je puis comprendre cette douleur-là mieux que personne; car ce que j'ai de plus précieux, c'est ma mère, que je regarde vieillir avec frayeur." The wish to never lose his mother even invaded his dreams. "Cette nuit je rêvais que j'habitais avec ma mère dans une espèce de vallée d'outre-tombe. J'étais très vieux, moi aussi, et nous restions seuls, derniers débris sans doute de notre famille." As Nadine Viaud became older and more frail, Loti began to accept assignments which would keep him near the coast of France. These were tedious and dreary for him—so great was his desire to again visit the Orient and other exotic places. Once again he confides his feelings to Madame Adam. "Si ce n'était ma mère, si âgée, hélas! Mon impatience de partir serait extrême. Pour elle, j'ai accepté tous ces

ennuyeux postes, me retenant si longtemps en rivière; pour elle, je les prolongerais si je pouvais." By 1896 the correspondence between these two friends indicates that Nadine Viaud has become very ill and seems to have little time left. In May 1897, Loti tells of her death with a single line. "J'ai perdu ma mère. Loti." From this time on, he adopts Madame Juliette Adam as a second mother. He calls her "maman" in his letters and he demands from her the affection which is his due as "fils". "Merci d'avoir fait cette longue route pour venir voir votre fils, puisque vous êtes ma maman et que je suis malade." "Quand une maman insiste comme ça et quand, en plus, on a grande envie de l'embrasser, il n'y a qu'à venir. Donc, je lâche des belles dames et des affaires et je viens déjeuner dimanche prochain."

It is apparent from such letters that Pierre Loti had a tremendous need for the symbol of love and security which his mother had provided all his life. When she died he had to transfer this need to another figure who could provide the same sense of faith. Madame Adam in no way replaced Madame Viaud, but she formed a living substitude while Loti himself lived. Before he died, he asked Madame Adam to come see him, and his words to her at that time clarify his feelings. "Il me dit, quand je lui en posai la question, qu'il ne désirait plus rien de la vie puisqu'il

14 Lettres de Pierre Loti à Madame Adam, p. 108.
15 Ibid., p. 142.
16 Ibid., p. 186.
17 Ibid., p. 198.
voyait son fils heureux et qu'il pouvait embrasser son petit-fils. Et que s'il laissait une mère chérie, il croyait qu'il allait retrouver l'autre, tant aimée!" Loti’s own expressions of love for his mother describe most aptly the significance of the role of maternal love in his life.

L'amour qu'on a pour sa mère, c'est le seul qui soit vraiment pur, vraiment immuable, le seul que n'entache ni égoïsme, ni rien, -- qui n'amène ni déceptions, ni amertume, le seul qui fasse un peu croire à l'âme et espérer l'éternité... 19

Oh! non, j'ai le sentiment qu'il y a dans ce visage quelque chose d'à part que la mort ne touchera pas. Et mon amour pour ma mère, qui a été le seul stable des amours de ma vie, est d'ailleurs si affranchi de tout lien matériel, qu'il me donne presque confiance à lui seul, en une indestructible chose, qui serait l'âme; et il me rend encore, par instants, une sorte de dernier et inexplicable espoir... 20

Marie Viaud Bon, Loti's sister who was 19 years older than he, also held a position of esteem and affection in his life. She encouraged him to write a journal or diary when he was young, which consists of more than 200 volumes today. It was from these pages that Loti drew the material for his well-known novels and his memoirs became stories. Marie Viaud served as a substitute mother when Nadine Viaud was not there, and Julien felt the same kind of sentimental security in his sister, but with more latitude. Her rules were not so strict and they allowed this

18 Ibid., p. 248.
19 Fleurs d'ennui, pp. 363 - 364.
20 Le roman d'un enfant, p. 24.
child to act like a child and enjoy the "camaraderie" of his peers. When Loti was an adult, sailing to faraway places, he wrote to his sister regularly. In his frequent moods of despondence, he begged for reassurance of her affection, as shown in Aziyadé:

Je t'ai dit que je ne croyais à l'affection de personne; cela est vrai. ........................................

Ton affection à toi, ma soeur, j'y crois dans une certaine mesure; affaire d'habitude au moins, et puis il faut bien croire à quelque chose. Si c'est vrai que tu m'aimes, dis-le-moi, fais-le-moi voir ... J'ai besoin de me rattacher à quelqu'un; si c'est vrai, fais que je puisse y croire. Je sens la terre qui manque sous mes pas, le vide se fait autour de moi, et j'éprouve une angoisse profonde...

Tant que je conserverai ma chère vieille mère, je resterai en apparence ce que je suis aujourd'hui. Quand elle n'y sera plus, j'ira te dire adieu, et puis disparaîtrai sans laisser trace de moi-même... 22

This devoted sister patiently answered his pleas.

Ton pauvre coeur est plein de contradictions, ainsi que tous les coeurs troublés qui flottent sans boussole. Tu jettes des cris de désespoir, tu dis que tout t'échappe, tu en appelles passionnément à ma tendresse, et, quand je t'en assure moi-même, avec passion, je trouve que tu oublies les absents, et que tu es si heureux dans ce coin de l'orient que tu voudrais toujours voir durer cet éden. Mais voilà, moi, c'est permanent, immuable, tu le retrouveras, quand ces douces folies seront oubliées pour faire place à d'autres, et peut-être en feras-tu plus tard plus de cas que tu ne penses.

Cher frère, tu es à moi, tu es à Dieu, tu es à nous. Je le sens un jour, bientôt peut-être, tu reprendras courage, confiance et espoir. 23

23 Ibid., p. 109.
Since Julien Viaud lived on a seaport, it was inevitable that the influence of the sailors and their journeys should play a major role in the development of this man. Since his was a family of sailors, the impression was more deeply felt. As a youngster he amused himself with a museum belonging to an uncle — a ship doctor of earlier days. He was spellbound by the exotic plants and fish, and we detect the beginning of Loti's call to distant horizons. When his brother Gustave became a sailor, all of this child's fantasies became reality. Loti describes his brother's first departure:

... un grand événement traversa notre vie de famille: le départ de mon frère pour sa première campagne.
Il était, comme je l'ai dit, mon aîné d'environ quatorze ans. Peut-être n'avais-je pas eu le temps d'assez le connaître, d'assez m'attacher à lui, car la vie de jeune homme l'avait pris de bonne heure, le séparent un peu de nous. Mais l'approche de son départ doubla mon affection et m' causa de vraies tristesses.
Il allait en Polynésie, à Tahiti juste au bout du monde, de l'autre côté de la terre, et son voyage devait durer quatre ans, ce qui représentait près de la moitié de ma propre vie, autant dire une durée presque sans fin... Puis il me fit cadeau d'un grand livre doré, qui était précisément un Voyage en Polynésie, à nombreuses images; et c'est le seul livre que j'ai aimé dans ma première enfance. 24

Gustave wrote to Julien regularly, recounting wonderful tales of the places he had been, and most especially of the Polynesian island, Tahiti. Often he enclosed leaves, flowers, and other souvenirs belonging to the enchanted land. When he returned home after a voyage, his arrival was eagerly anticipated by all the family. Julien had a special reason to be anxious. In this home,

24 Le roman d'un enfant, pp. 94, 95, 96.
almost completely surrounded by doting females, he needed a confidante to share his doubts and anxieties about his future. He had long since given up any thought of a religious vocation, and probably wanted to be convinced that he indeed could be a sailor like Gustave. "Mais je me proposais aussi de le consulter sur mille questions troublantes, de lui confier toutes mes angoisses d'avenir; et je savais du reste que l'on comptait sur ses avis pour prendre un parti définitif à mon sujet, pour me diriger vers les sciences et décider de ma carrière; là était le point noir de son retour." The death of Gustave was a harsh blow to the entire family. They received a touching letter from him, written as he was dying, to which the priest added the exact latitude and longitude at which his body was immersed. Twenty years later, Loti, the officer, was to pass this spot. "C'est à moi seul que devait échoir ce privilège, quand, vingt ans plus tard, ayant déjà couru tous les océans, je fis ma première apparition dans ce Golfe de Bengale que je devais tant silloner par la suite."

The memory of Tahiti haunted Loti — that island where Gustave had spent two years and taken a native wife. When he had the opportunity to spend some time on the island himself, it became an obsession that he find and talk to Gustave's wife. "À l'approche du départ, j'étais étrangement obsédé par la

25 Ibid., p. 269.
26 Prême jeunesse, p. 70.
pensée de cette Taïmaha, qui avait été la femme de mon frère Rouéri. Il m'était extrêmement pénible, je ne sais pourquoi, de partir sans la connaître." Loti was able to locate the woman, who told him she had two children by Rouéri. This news brought mixed emotions. Loti was relieved to think that his brother was not completely lost -- two children of his blood lived and would carry this heritage to their own children. Yet a sadness prevailed because they could never be truly French, nor could his mother ever know them. "...le foyer de la patrie lui sera toujours inconnu, et ma vieille mère ne le verra jamais. Pourtant cette pensée me cause une tristesse douce, presque une impression consolante. Au moins, tout ce qui était Georges n'est pas fini, n'est pas mort avec lui..." This thought grew in him until he became enamoured with the idea of a continuing life for himself in the form of his own Tahitian family.

Moi aussi, qui serai bientôt peut-être fauché par la mort dans quelque pays lointain, jeté dans le néant ou l'éternité, moi aussi, j'aimerais revivre à Tahiti, revivre dans un enfant qui serait encore moi-même, qui serait mon sang mêlé à celui de Rarahu; je trouverais une joie étrange dans l'existence de ce lien suprême et mystérieux entre elle et moi, dans l'existence d'un enfant maori, qui serait nous deux fondus dans une même créature. 29

Loti expresses his affection for a Polynesian family numerous times in letters and in his novel, Le mariage de Loti. This idea took on paramount proportions in his mind. "--Cet enfant était

28 Ibid., p. 213.
29 Ibid., p. 213.
son fils, et une famille issue de notre sang se perpétuerait dans ces îles perdues..." But when Loti learned that he was deceived, (the children were not those of his brother, they had been fathered by another European sailor), his disappointment was great.

...un grand effondrement venait de se faire, un grand vide dans mon coeur, -- et je ne voulais pas voir, je ne voulais pas croire. --Chose étrange, je m'étais attaché à l'idée de cette famille tahitienne, -- et ce vide qui se faisait là me causait une couleur mystérieuse et profonde; c'était quelque chose comme si mon frère perdu eût été plongé avant et pour jamais dans le néant; tout ce qui était lui s'enfonçait dans la nuit, c'était comme s'il fût mort une seconde fois. --Et il semblait que ces îles fussent devenues subitement désertes, -- que tout le charme de l'Océanie fût mort du même coup, et que rien ne m'attachât plus à ce pays. 31

Loti wrote to his sister of this tahitienne trumpery. "Je m'étais habitué à l'idée de ces deux enfants, j'étais heureux de leur existence, ils m'étaient devenus nécessaires." This sad disillusion reflects the need Loti felt for "l'amour familial" -- for a love that is binding not only in the heart but also in the blood, and which in consequence sustains a mortal being, even when he no longer exists physically.

There was one girl of whom Loti makes brief mention in his journal, who appeals to him so much that he makes up his mind to marry her. This girl was Breton, from Guingamp, the daughter

30 Ibid., p. 243.
32 Correspondance Inédite, p. 136.
of a fisherman. Loti describes her beauty as classic, with the type of simplicity that attracted him. "...je décidai

d'épouser cette fille du peuple.........................

mais elle était déjà fiancée à un 'islandais' et elle disait non." A mere refusal was not sufficient to deter this man

when his heart ruled his mind. He continued to write letters to the lady, requesting a rendezvous even after she was married! He pestered and pleaded until at last she agreed to a final meeting, which Loti describes.

Près de chez elle, je m'arrête et me place dans un chemin où je sais qu'elle passera. Elle passe, en effet et, timide, je demande encore mon baiser d'adieu. Alors, elle me tend ses bras, avec un sourire triste de reproche et de pardon: "Tiens, je t'embrasse, oui, et je t'aime peut-être, mais à la condition que tu ne reviennes plus." Et je m'en vais, et c'est fini à jamais... 34

Loti finally did marry, and although he writes very little about his wife, there are a few references in his correspondence with Madame Adam. She writes that: "Pierre Loti épousa, le 20 octobre 1886, Mademoiselle Jeanne-Blanche Franc de Ferrière, appartenant à une des vieilles familles de Bordeaux." Loti himself mentions his wedding in this manner: "...le mercredi 20, contrat et mariage civil, sans tambours ni trompettes,". References to his bride are infrequent, however she is mentioned at least once more.

Pour moi, j'accepte, et cela m'amusera beaucoup et je vous remercie bien. Pour ma femme, non. Il y a

33 Journal intime, Volume Two, p. 3.
34 Ibid., p. 178.
35 Lettres de Pierre Loti à Madame Adam, p. 89.
36 Ibid., p. 89.
This infant did not live, but another child was born in 1889 who was named Samuel, the only child Loti had. From this time on there is no further mention of Madame Loti, which suggests that the main reason for the marriage was to perpetuate the family name. If this is true, the young lady did her job well, and Samuel Viaud became the center of his father's life. This son is mentioned quite often in Loti's memoirs, increasingly so as Loti ages. In later years Samuel was his sole reason for existence. "Moi, si mon fils, qui est ma seule raison d'exister, n'était au feu, je n'aurais jamais été si heureux de ma vie,".

In 1920 when Samuel Viaud was planning to marry, Loti wrote to Madame Adam to ask if she would act as grandmother in the procession, thus bringing together those two figures most important to him -- the mother, who brought forth the man (figuratively speaking), and his son, who would carry his blood into perpetuity. By this chain Loti hoped that he would not be lost as his brother was -- that a part of him would live in his children and grandchildren.

Loti demonstrates his sympathy for "l'amour familial"

37 Ibid., p. 94.
38 Ibid., p. 220.
in his novels as well as in his personal notes. As Bordeaux points out: "Nul ne dit mieux que lui l'amour du foyer et de la famille. On dirait que la distance resserre les liens d'affection: ses marins aux vies exilées en les pays lointains gardent une tendresse profonde pour le vieux logis déserté et les vieux parents abandonnés." Yann, in Pêcheur d'islande left a devoted family and a sweetheart behind when he embarked on his fatal voyage. The aged grandmother in the same story has already suffered the grief of losing her husband and her son to the greedy sea, when in addition, her grandson, Sylvestre, dies in service of his country. When the heroine's father dies, she goes to care for the grandmother and lives with her so she will no longer be alone. Yves, of Mon Frère Yves comes from a family of Breton fishermen also, and it was his mother who enjoined Loti to look after her son as though they were brothers. The lives of the sailors and the fishermen were well-drawn by Loti. He understood their passion for the sea as well as their attachment to the hearth. He knew the torment of waiting for the fishing ships to return. He grieved with them when whole ships did not return, when whole crews were lost at sea. Pierre Loti, in fact, led a drive for funds to help all of the families of those sailors aboard a particular ship which never came home.

He solicited money from everyone he knew who was able to help. He knew that these families' suffering and anguish were encumbered by financial stress. Loti's novels describe the physical bonds of familial love as well as the emotional ties. They illustrate the chagrin and depths of sorrow when the hero does not return.

In *Le roman d'un spahi*, Jean Peyral thinks very often about his family so far away from the African desert: "l'image de ses vieux parents, de sa toute jeune fiancée l'attendant, confiante, au village, avaient repris sur lui tout leur charme honnête,". He begins to resent the long years he is required to spend away from those he loves.

"—Une immense révolte se faisait en lui, révolte contre tout et contre tous!... Pourquoi l'avait-on pris à son village, à sa mère, pour l'ensevelir au plus beau temps de sa vie sur cette terre de mort?... De quel droit avait-on fait de lui cet être à part qu'on appelle spahi, traîneur de sabre à moitié Africain, malheureux déclassé... —oublié de tous, — et finalement renié par sa fiancée!"

In this novel Loti admonishes any who would find fault in the actions of others who have to be separated from their home.

"Oh! vous qui vivez de la vie régulière de la famille, assis paisiblement chaque jour au foyer, ne jugez jamais les marins, les spahis, ceux que leur destinée à jetés, avec des natures ardent es, dans des conditions d'existence anormales, sur la grande mer ou dans les lointains pays du soleil, au milieu de privations inouïes, de convoitises, d'influences que vous ignorez. Ne jugez pas..."

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ces exilés ou ces errants, dont les souffrances, les joies, les impressions tourmentées vous sont inconnues. 42

In each of his books we can feel the presence of Loti as he is expressing his innermost sentiments regarding the "foyer". It is his own devotion to the family and home that he describes. It is he who wants to return and find everything unchanged, in fact, to find that time has stood still, thus enabling him to grasp more tightly this fragile life we hold so dearly, rather than watching it escape as time passes. Loti looked forward to each return visit as a chance for him to recapture his childhood.

, et à rêvasser dans les coins et recoins de cette chère maison; je vais arriver pour les longues soirées d'hiver, et retrouver toutes les impressions de mon enfance; ce sera comme une longue étape dans la vie, pendant laquelle j'aurai le temps de considérer à mon aise le chemin parcouru; ce sera doux et aussi un peu triste... 43

Regrets follow memories, and Loti held many regrets in his life:

Je regrette à présent d'avoir détruit ce qui existait avant, qui était bien plus simple, mais qui était plein de souvenirs de mon enfance -- car il n'y a plus que cela de bon pour moi: pouvoir, à certains moments, oublier ma vie d'homme dépensée ailleurs, et me retrouver ici enfant, tout enfant; c'est l'illusion que je m'amuse à chercher par toute sorte de moyens, conservant, respectant mille petites choses d'autrefois, avec une sollicitude exagérée. 44

Loti was taught a tender affection and respect for all things or beings which are old, since he was the product of a household two generations away from himself. He loved each person tenderly, but as he became older, he began to resent the fact

42 Ibid., p. 78.
43 Correspondance inédite, p. 138.
44 Fleurs d'ennui, p. 312.
that they would all soon be gone, leaving him to cope with life alone.

Ce fut sans doute un des malheurs de ma vie d'avoir été beaucoup plus jeune que tous les êtres qui m'aimaient et que j'aimais, d'avoir surgî parmi eux comme une sorte de petit Benjamin tardif sur lequel devaient converger fatalement trop de tendresses, -- et puis d'être laissé si affreusement seul pour les suprêmes étapes de la route! 45

The memory of his home and those who lived there, their indulgent care and affection, and the comfort they gave him became an anchor early in Loti's life. There was no other place in the world where he could feel as peaceful or satisfied, as in Rochefort, his private harbor.

C'est aussi le coin du monde auquel je reste le plus fidèlement attaché, après en avoir aimé tant d'autres; comme nulle part ailleurs, je m'y sens en paix, je m'y sens rafraîchi, retrempé de prime jeunesse et de vie neuve. C'est ma sainte Mecque à moi, ce petit coin-là; tellement que, si on me le dérangeait, il me semble que cela déséquilibrerait quelque chose dans ma vie, que je perdrais pied, que ce serait presque le commencement de ma fin. 46

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45 *Prime jeunesse*, p. 23.
46 *Le roman d'un enfant*, p. 80.
CHAPTER III

L'AMOUR AMOUREUX

"Et pourtant il y a une chose qui est tout dans la vie; l'amour..." Pierre Loti was the object of much love and affection during his life, particularly during his childhood. He was the "enfant gâté" of all his family and later, of many others. It was inevitable that he would sustain this desire to be loved in his later years, as Frédéric Mallet points out:

"Il reste un enfant choyé, aimé, peut-être trop aimé, qui a besoin de la protection de l'amour, et qui, par voie de conséquence, vivra pour l'amour, ..." Naturally enough, this quest for love invades Loti's writings since they are an extension of himself and his personal experiences. Very often it is love which provides the only thread of unity to a story which is otherwise only a series of notes, memoirs, letters or thoughts. The expression of love in a variety of forms is the central theme both in Loti's work and in his life. All of this man's books are embellished with it: love of nature, love of beauty, love of youth, love for simplicity, love of mankind, love for the sea, and of course the three main categories already designated for this paper. Loti himself stated, "If it were not for love, I would have lived and died unknown." The books about

his childhood abounded with love for his family and all the cherished figures who surrounded him. His novels describe the mysterious, passionate love for a woman and the strong fraternal love between friends. Later books and articles plead for love of humanity in his descriptions of the tragedies of war. All of his writings are filled with his love of nature and beauty. "L'amour amoureux", according to Loti, is especially linked with nature, because each woman he loved belonged to an exotic land -- a beautiful and unspoiled natural setting. The mystery remains: would Aziyadé have seemed so desirable without the white domes of Constantinople? Was Rarahu more enchanting because of the aura that Polynesia breathed on the lovers? Madame Chrysanthême surely belonged to a more romantic world of tiny people, miniature gardens and pagodas. Even the lass of Guingamp represented an unspoiled civilization, the ancient Breton culture. Fatou-Gaye certainly might have been less intriguing without the burning white sands of Senegal. A part of Loti surely remained with each of these women in her unique setting. Only a word, a sound, or a smell was necessary to bring back memories of some other place and the woman he loved there. Each love affair was inextricably caught in with its physical environment, and Loti lived in reverie of each. "Dans les périodes de la vie où le cœur est rempli par quelque passion vive, les moindres détails des objets extérieurs se gravent étrangement, et le temps, qui emporte tout, en laisse

4 Henry Bordeaux, Ames Modernes, p. 81.
persister le souvenir..." "ce besoin de tout emporter, de se faire suivre d'un monde de souvenirs, -- et surtout ces adieux à des petites créatures sauvages, aimées peut-être précisément parce qu'elles étaient ainsi, -- ça représente toute ma vie."

Loti's heroines follow a specific pattern. Each represents the serene simplicity of her surroundings. She gives her heart and love completely to Loti, with no demands on him aside from the present moment. Their love expresses the joining of two separate cultures -- Loti's civilized world and the woman's uncomplicated milieu.

Ses amoureuses ont des coeurs ingénus, et doux; elles aiment naïvement et de toute leur âme, et c'est là ce qui fait leur attrait. ...Si délicieusement les premières comprennent les barrières qui séparent leurs âmes simples de l'âme compliquée et plus artificielle de leur amant, et, respectueuses de ce qu'elles ignorent, elles consentent à se donner tout entières, corps et âme, sans exiger la complète possession de lui-même.

The love affairs weave a pattern as well. As the amourous adventures mature, the two lovers enjoy a brief time of happiness. They indulge in the delicious pleasures of their passions and the world seems empty except for themselves. Their stolen kisses and intimate moments are even more greatly cherished when they are forbidden. The strength of their love unites their souls, and Loti often dreams of death with his beloved in

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5 Un jeune officier pauvre, p. 79.
6 Le roman d'un enfant, p. 89.
7 Henry Bordeaux, Ames Modernes, p. 92.
order that their love may continue in eternity. But love is fragile, according to Loti, and the two lovers always suffer the anguish of their separation. Very often the separation is due to the ordered departure of the hero's ship. Such a departure confirms Loti's belief that the Occident and the Orient can never co-exist, even as individuals. Their lifestyle, their beliefs and their mores are too disparate to allow an equal existence. The Western man maintains superiority in his education, his technology and his sophistication. The primitive woman remains submissive and respectful, giving everything and asking nothing of her lover, who is really master. Yet Loti loves each lady deeply — he loves her for her soul and for her submission; he loves her for what she represents, and he loves her for that moment in time. When she is gone, a part of him will also be gone forever, a part of his youth. It is that part of himself that also contributes to his love for her.

Even Loti must submit to the passage of time, and memories of each love affair are more cherished for the memory of his youth.

8 Henry Bordeaux, Ames Modernes, pp. 73 - 74.
Other love affairs in Loti's writings are ended by death. The irrevocable force of nature is exerted over the destinies of the two lovers. Death and time are two immortal powers which change our lives and our happinesses. Loti would rather die with his beloved (so that together they may learn the mysteries of eternity), than be left to suffer the torment of their broken love alone. He expresses this desire often in his books:

Il y a des femmes que j'ai bien adorées; j'éprouvais une terrible douleur en songeant qu'un jour la mort nous séparerait, que tout finirait dans la sombre poussière... Je rêvais qu'au moins on nous coucherais dans une même fosse, pour que nos cendres fussent mêlées...

Et puis, celles-là, je les ai oubliées. J'en ai aimé d'autres......., et bientôt la vieillesse viendra...9

Et, avant que ce ne soit fini de ma jeunesse, je voudrais qu'on m'enterrât dans une même fosse avec celle que j'aime à présent, de peur que cette forme de l'inconnaissable que j'essaye d'embrasser en elle ne s'échappe encore, et que je ne retombe dans le vide; de peur de cesser de l'aimer; -- de peur des années qui, lentement, viendront nous affaîser et nous anéantir. 10

Pierre Loti is able to describe the suffering of his characters so well because it is he who has felt the same human pain. He has known the tender passion of love torn apart by the separation. He has spent long periods of anxious waiting and hoping for the reunion, and he has experienced the final despair of death, over which man has no power. As Albert Guérard points

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9 Un jeune officier pauvre, pp. 227 - 228.
10 Fleurs d'ennui, p. 120.
out in speaking of the love affairs in Loti's works: "There is nothing frivolous about them: they are profoundly human." Loti's books are profoundly human because they reflect Loti himself; they describe his hopes and passions, his anguish and remorse, his nostalgia and solitude. Each of his romances should be studied carefully to understand how much a part of them Loti represents. In this study, they will be discussed in order of their importance to Loti's life, rather than in order of their occurrence, beginning with the least significant.

"Le grand secret de la vie et de l'amour me fut donc appris là, devant une de ces entrées de grotte qui ressemblent à des portiques de temple cyclopéen;" This initial introduction to love is mentioned because it shows that Loti related the affair to its natural surroundings just as he did with all his later loves. Even though he was quite young when a gypsy girl taught him to love, he still felt the influence of nature over that first experience. This brief affair also ended in separation, when one day Loti ran to their meeting place and found the gypsy camp disbanded. Thus his three main themes, nature, love, and separation or death, play their roles, even in this minor play.

Pêcheur d'Island differs from Loti's other works in that it is not an extract from his personal experience. Yet it

12 *Prime jeunesse*, p. 146.
is his best-known book. The theme is the same: Nature triumphs over love through death of the lover. Gaud is the heroine, and she strays from the pattern usually set by Loti. She is a French girl of the better classes who falls in love with the disdainful Yann, a great, towering Breton fisherman. The book runs almost its full course before the two young lovers get together, and then Yann never returns from his fishing trip to Iceland. Although the young lady waits, anxiously praying for him, final resignation is inevitable and she takes the widow's weeds. The only parallel that might conceivably be drawn between this novel and Loti's life is that the heroine represents the young girl from Guingamp of Bretagne for whom Loti held a brief passion. "Je reviens d'une course précipitée en Bretagne, et la fille du pêcheur islandais -- celle qui avait refusé d'être ma femme que je désirais, que j'adorais sans espoir depuis deux ans -- m'appartiendra enfin!"  

It may be more realistic to suggest that Gaud represents all the wives and mothers of Bretagne who lost their loved ones to the cruel and treacherous sea. Loti loved this part of France, which was almost foreign in its traditions, and he was sympathetic to their way of life and the hardships which they endured. Nevertheless, this novel is a perfect sample of Loti's ability to paint the happiness and the sorrow of human hearts.

Madame Chrysanthème follows the pattern set in all Loti's romances, but it lacks the fullness of passionate love which usually exists. It is important to remember, however, that this book was written after he had experienced two great romances and the ensuing heartbreak which contributed to his disillusion. He was becoming disenchanted with life as it dissipated his youth and his love. This love story lacks the charm that is so inherent among his others. Loti decides, as soon as he sets foot on Japanese soil, to marry. "...Moi, disais-je, aussitôt arrivé, je me marie..." "...avant deux ou trois jours (n'ayant pas de temps à perdre) j'aurai épousée!"

Even though Loti wanted and sought this marriage, it was a marriage of convenience — one which would help him pass the long days in Japan. Madame Chrysanthème was no more than a tool — to satisfy his ego, his need for female companionship, and a key to introduce him to the Japanese culture. He wrote to his niece, Ninette, of the marriage:

...je me suis marié, il y a trois semaines, par désœuvrement et par solitude. Bien que ce mariage n'enchaîne en rien l'existence, c'en est un, cependant, inscrit au registre public, devant Pierre et deux familles japonaises. Il est valable, suivant la coutume, pour la durée de mon séjour ici. J'ai envie de dire, comme disait Daniel quand on le grondait pour quelque irrégularité de conduite: -- Cela n'est pas bien mal!  

16 Correspondance inédite, p. 195.
Loti spoke of others who had entered the same type of marriage contract somewhat wistfully: "Madame Jonquille..., celle-ci, mariée à X..., un blond septentrional qui l'adore: c'est le couple amoureux et inséparable; les seuls qui vont pleurer peut-être quand l'heure du départ viendra." Perhaps Loti regretted his inability to feel the tender love for his own "mousmé" that he had known for others in his life. This lack of affection depicts the sadness that surrounds them, the passage of time, and his fleeting youth. Still, Madame Chrysanthème served the purpose for which she was chosen — she filled the gaping emptiness that would have awaited Loti in Japan. She introduced him to the Japanese way of life and to Japanese philosophies. Together they attended many religious festivals. She provided an escape for Loti, a fact of which they were both aware. When the hour of departure arrived, there were no tears, no regrets.

Allons, petite mousmé, séparons-nous bons amis, embrassons-nous même, si tu veux. Je t'avais prise pour m'amuser; tu n'y as peut-être pas très bien réussi, mais tu as donné ce que tu pouvais, ta petite personne, tes révérances et ta petite musique; somme toute, tu as été assez mignonne, dans ton genre nippon. Et, qui sait, peut-être penserai-je à toi quelquefois, par ricochet, quand je me rappellerai ce bel été, ces jardins si jolis, et le concert de toutes ces cigales. 18

17 *Madame Chrysanthème*, p. 90.
Later when Loti is alone, he prays to the Japanese Deity:

"O Ama-Térace-Omi-Kami, lavez-moi bien blanchement de ce petit mariage, dans les eaux de la rivière de Kamo..."

The "dédiace" for this book is no doubt very significant in explaining Loti's lack of emotional involvement. "Bien que le rôle le plus long soit en apparence à Madame Chrysanthème, il est bien certain que les trois principaux personnages sont Moi, le Japon, et l'Effet que ce pays m'a produit." In 1885, when Loti again finds himself in Japan, he writes to Madame Juliette Adam. "Nous voici de nouveau au Japon, et pour tout l'hiver peut-être; mais je ne me marierai pas cette fois. Je serai très sage. Vous n'aurez pas à me gronder."

Although Madame Chrysanthème has been called superficial and effeminate, it illustrates Loti's pattern of separated lovers, and of greater consequence, it points out his personal need for permanence. The romance provided something real to mark this brief sojourn, something which would continue to live through memories and therefore serve as a weapon against the destruction of time.

Le roman d'un spahi is a confusion of "l'amour familial" and "l'amour amoureux". It is the story of a French "spahi", or foot soldier, who is drafted to Senegal in Central Africa. He is filled with remorse at having left his parents

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19 Ibid., p. 329.
20 Ibid., Dédicace.
21 Lettres à Madame Adam, p. 73.
and his young fiancé in France, but he lacks the emotional strength to combat his despair alone.

Il songeait à celle qu'il aimait d'un chaste amour d'enfance, à Jeanne Mery... Hélas! -- six mois seulement qu'il était en Afrique!... Attendre encore plus de quatre années avant de la revoir!... il commençait à se dire que le courage lui manquerait peut-être pour continuer de vivre seul, que bientôt à toutes forces il lui faudrait quelqu'un pour l'aider à passer son temps d'exil... Mais qui!... 23

As always, there was someone willing to give him the solace he required.

Fatou-Gaye peut-être?...Allons, donc!... Quelle profanation de lui-même!... Et puis ressembler à ses camarades, les clients de la vieille Virginie!... Violer comme eux des petites filles noires!... Il avait une sorte de dignité, de pudeur instinctive, lui, qui l'avait préservé jusque-là de ces entraînements de sensualité pervertie; -- jamais il ne pourrait descendre aussi bas. 24

But in the end the flesh is weak and he becomes entangled with Fatou-Gaye, who brings him to the depths of despair. He begins to drink, and in his lucid moments, the shame of what he has done to himself and to Jeanne Mery increases his torment. When Jean Peyral finally finds the courage to extricate himself from his wrongdoings and from Fatou-Gaye, her cunning is demonstrated. She produces his son.

L'enfant n'avait pas voulu du sang de sa mère, il était tout entier de celui de Jean: -- il était bronzé, mais blanc comme le spahi; il avait ses grands yeux profonds, il était beau comme lui. -- Il tendait les

23 Le roman d'un spahi, p. 108.
24 Ibid., p. 108.
mains, et regardait, en fronçant ses petits sourcils, avec une expression déjà grave, -- comme cherchant à comprendre ce qu'il était venu faire dans la vie, et comment son sang des Cévennes se trouvait mêlé à cette impure race noire.

Jean se sentait vaincu par je ne sais quelle force intérieure, pleine de trouble et de mystère; il se pencha vers son fils et l'embrassa doucement, avec une tendresse silencieuse. -- Des sentiments jusqu'alors inconnus le pénétraient jusqu'au fond de son âme. 25

The child changed Jean's entire outlook, and although he will always regret his homeland, he cannot abandon his child.

Certes il allait retourner d'abord voir ses vieux parents; rien ne lui ferait différer ce départ. Mais, après, il lui faudrait bien revenir en Afrique, à présent qu'il y avait un fils ... Il sentait bien qu'il l'aimait déjà de tout son coeur, ce petit enfant, et que pour rien au monde il ne pourrait se décider à l'abandonner... 26

Jean Peyral does not have the opportunity to rejoin his parents, even for a brief visit. He is wounded in a skirmish, and as he lies dying, he recalls his dear family and thinks of the cool mountains he will never again see. Fatou-Gaye searches for her lover, and when she finds that he is dying, she kills the child and herself as a testimony of her love. Loti demonstrates both a separation and a death in this book. Peyral was separated from his family and his fiancé forever, even before death, and his death terminated his bond with a woman and a lifestyle that degraded him.

Tahiti, the setting for Le mariage de Loti, was a magic island for Pierre Loti. Tales of its enchantment brightened

25 Ibid., pp. 308 - 309.
26 Ibid., p. 327.
his childhood when Gustave was home between voyages. He longed
to go there too. The opportunity arrived when Loti was a young
man. It was the first voyage during which Loti was unfettered
by responsibility. He was free to sample life as he desired.
The island fulfilled all his expectations.

Je serai dans une joie folle quand je reverrai ce pays;
j'aime tout ce qui en vient, tous les souvenirs que j'en
ai rapportés, tout ce qui me le rappelle; j'en avais tant
rêvé autrefois que je m'y trouve comme attaché par des
souvenirs d'enfance; j'ai maintenant deux patries:
Tahiti et la Saintonge. J'aime également les bois de nos
pays et ces bois de cocotiers. 28

Part of the charm of Tahiti no doubt was that Loti was young and
eager for life. It was here that he languished in his first
meaningful romance. It was also Tahiti that gave Loti his pen
name, a name which he was to use for the rest of his life.

Loti fut baptisé le 25 janvier 1872, à l'âge de vingt-
deux ans et onze jours. Loti, qui jusqu'à ce jour,
s'était appelé Harry Grant, conserva ce nom, tant sur
les registres de l'état civil que sur les rôles de la
marine royale, mais l'appellation de Loti fut généralement
adoptée par ses amis. 29

Loti did not seek a wife in Tahiti — he was as yet unaccustomed
to the procedure — but the idea was given to him by the Queen
Pomaré. She suggested that he marry a young girl of the court,
Rarahu.

"Epouser la petite Rarahu du district d'Apiré." Cette
proposition me prenait au dépourvu, et me donnait
beaucoup à réfléchir...

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27 N. Serban, Pierre Loti, sa vie et son oeuvre,
28 Correspondance inédite, pp. 132 - 133.
29 Le mariage de Loti, pp. 1 - 2.
Loti may not have loved Rarahu in the beginning, but it was not difficult for his amusement to become a tender passion under the palms and the star-studded sky of Tahiti. Although the child was only 14 years old, she became a young woman for whom Loti's passion grew. "pour la première fois elle me semblait quelqu'un, et je commençais à soupçonner la femme adorable qu'elle eût pu devenir," "C'était déjà quelque chose de plus troublé et de plus triste. -- Je l'aimais davantage, parce qu'elle était seule au monde, parce que pour la peuple de Papeete elle était ma femme." Their love was great, but they were strangers to one another. Loti recognized the barriers that separated them, lamenting the futility of their love. "En effet, nous étions enfants de deux natures bien séparées et bien différents, et l'union de nos âmes ne pouvait être que passagère, incomplète et tourmentée." Rarahu understood the fragile nature of their passion as well or better than Loti.

30 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
31 Ibid., pp. 57-58.
32 Ibid., p. 127.
33 Ibid., p. 178.
...je n'étais qu'une petite créature inférieure, jouet de hasard que tu t'es donné. Pour vous autres, hommes blancs, c'est tout ce que nous pouvons être. Mais que gagnerais-je à me fâcher? Je suis seule au monde; à toi ou à un autre, qu'importe? J'étais ta maîtresse; ici était notre demeure; je sais que tu me désires encore. Mon Dieu, je reste et me voilà!... 34

Like a butterfly, their love became more precious and beautiful because it was fragile. It dominated each day, as though fighting to make time stand still. As the inevitable date of departure approached, Loti worried about the future of his "petite aimée".

"-- Et je comprenais bien qu'après mon départ elle serait une des petites filles les plus folles, et les plus perdues de Papeete." Loti's love was not confined to Rarahu; he was in love with this exotic island and with the simplicity of the people. He was intoxicated with his own youth and his lust for life. When the separation interrupted the lovers' embrace, it also stole a part of their youth and the idealism that accompanies youthfulness. Loti regrets losing his dreams: "Celui-là était un acte de féeerie au milieu de ma vie, mais il était fini sans retour!... Finis les rêves, les émotions douces, enivrantes, ou poignantes de tristesse, -- tout était fini, était mort..." His hope of finding a part of his brother Gustave on the island was also lost. There had been no family or children by him who would continue his life, and Loti began to feel the presence of death. The separation between Loti and Rarahu became one of eternity when

34 Ibid., pp. 183 - 184.
36 Ibid., p. 277.
he later learned that she had died. He felt that the part of his life which she shared died with her, just as Gustave's memory died in Tahiti. His resignation of a lost love and lost youth to the overwhelming power of death is illustrated. "J'ai vu Tahiti trop délicieuse et trop étrange, à travers le prisme enchanteur de mon extrême jeunesse... En somme, un charmant pays quand on a vingt ans; mais on s'en lasse vite, et le mieux est peut-être de ne pas y revenir à trente."

Aziyadé was the first book that Loti wrote for publication. He published this book anonymously, not using his pen name of Loti until he was certain that his work would be favorably received by the public. He need not have been so cautious: Aziyadé was an immediate success. The French ladies were charmed with the tender love story and they wept with the lovers when they parted. This book follows Loti's general pattern -- perhaps it sets the pattern since it was his first publication. Constantinople sets an exotic and romantic natural background for the two lovers who risk death each night as they embrace. Aziyadé is the wife of a Turk, but Loti hardly considers the grave consequences to themselves and their accomplices should they be found out. This love affair continues for about a year before the inevitable orders to depart are issued. The melancholy resulting from the farewell and separation follow as always. But this novel does not end here as his others have. There is much more to Aziyadé than a brief interlude of sensuous pleasure. Let us study it carefully.

37 Ibid., pp. 309 - 310.
There is no doubt that Aziyadé was Pierre Loti's greatest love. He was attracted immediately to "la jeune femme aux yeux verts" when he first saw her sitting in her window in Salonica. A young Turk, Samuel, agreed to act as their go-between, and the love affair began along the river of Salonica. Each night the two lovers floated along the river while Samuel kept watch for their safety. After only three months, Loti was ordered to Constantinople. The departure was sudden, but Samuel left with Loti, and Aziyadé promised to follow when she could. Loti describes their loyalty to him early in the book:

Ces deux êtres rencontrés le même jour devaient bientôt remplir un rôle dans mon existence et jouer, pendant trois mois, leur vie pour moi; on m'eût beaucoup étonné en me le disant. Tous deux devaient abandonner ensuite leur pays pour me suivre, et nous étions destinés à passer l'hiver ensemble, sous le même toit, à Stamboul. 38

While Loti awaits Aziyadé's arrival at Constantinople, he prepares an apartment for her.

Il est vide, lui aussi, il attend Aziyadé, qui devrait être déjà près de moi, si elle avait tenu sa promesse.

Si pourtant elle ne venait pas, mon Dieu, un de ces jours une autre prendrait sa place. Mais l'effet produit serait fort différent. Je l'aimais presque, et c'est pour elle que je me suis fait Turc. 39

Loti is not a patient man. When his beloved does not come immediately, he questions her love. He does not consider the

38 Aziyadé, p. 9.
39 Ibid., p. 83.
obstacles that may beset her. His doubts are ill-founded and disappear quickly when, "On m'avait dit: Elle est arrivée!'

-- Et depuis deux jours je vivais dans la fièvre de l'attente." 40

Et quand la rêve impossible fut accompli, quand elle fut là, dans cette chambre préparée pour elle, seule avec moi, derrière deux portes garnies de fer, je ne sus que me laisser tomber près d'elle, embrassant ses genoux. Je sentis que je l'avais follement désirée: j'étais comme anéanti. 41

Aziyadé's love for Loti is completely resigned; she loves him alone, as she has never before known love. "Tu es mon Dieu, mon frère, mon ami, mon amant; quand tu seras parti, ce sera fini d'Aziyadé; ses yeux seront fermés, Aziyadé sera morte." 42

Her love penetrates Loti's soul more deeply than any other, and he begins to dream of an eternal love with her.

Rester près d'elle, non plus à Stamboul, mais dans quelque village turc au bord de la mer, vivre, au soleil et au grand air, de la vie saine des hommes du peuple; vivre au jour le jour, sans créanciers et sans souci de l'avenir! Je suis plus fait pour cette vie que pour la mienne; j'ai horreur de tout travail qui n'est pas du corps et des muscles; horreur de toute science, haine de tous les devoirs conventionnels, de toutes les obligations sociales de nos pays d'Occident.

Ce serait possible, après tout, et je serais là moins malheureux qu'ailleurs. 43

However there is one part of Loti that rebels at such an arrangement. "-- Je te jure, Aziyadé, dis-je, que je laisserais tout sans regret, ma position, mon nom et mon pays. Mes amis... je n'en ai pas et je m'en moque! Mais, vois-tu, j'ai une vieille mère." The shadow of their eventual separation

40 Ibid., p. 93.
41 Ibid., p. 95.
42 Ibid., p. 107.
43 Ibid., p. 129.
44 Ibid., p. 129.
serves to strengthen their love, but Aziyadé becomes more resigned to their destiny. She has no illusions; she knows that he will one day leave her, and her love is saddened. She does what she can to retain his soul — she gives him her name in the form of a tattoo.

Et j'emportais sur ma poitrine une petite plaque endolorie, rouge, labourée de milliers d'égratignures — qui, en se cicatrisant ensuite, représenterent en beau bleu le nom turc d'Aziyadé.

Suivant la croyance musulmane, ce tatouage, comme toute autre marque ou défaut de mon corps terrestre devait me suivre dans l'éternité. 45

When the final hour arrives it is Loti who lacks the courage to face reality. He plays a game of self-deception when he goes to the pacha to become a Turc officially — to change his name and his nation.

Mon Dieu, oui!... pourquoi pas, yuzbâchi, turc pour de bon, et rester auprès d'elle...

Au bout d'une heure ma décision était prise et irrévocable; partir et l'abandonner me déchirait le cœur. Je me fis de nouveau introduire chez le pacha, pour lui donner le oui solennel qui devait me lier pour jamais à la Turquie, et le prier de faire, le soir même, présenter ma requête au sultan.

Quand je fus devant le pacha, je me sentis trembler, et un nuage passa devant mes yeux: je vous remercie, Excellence, dis-je, je n'accepte pas. 46

In the final moment, Loti could not give himself completely to his beloved as she would gladly do for him. He swears to return, but they both know he never will. Once again Aziyadé demonstrates total submission to her lover:

45 Ibid., p. 221.
46 Ibid., p. 242.
Too late does Loti realize the depths of his adoration for the young woman who could no longer live without him.

Et je l'adore pourtant. En dehors de toute ivresse, je l'aime, de l'affection la plus tendre et la plus pure; j'aime son âme et son cœur qui sont à moi; je l'aimerai encore au delà de la jeunesse, au delà du charme des sens, dans l'avenir mystérieux qui nous apportera la vieillesse et la mort.

Loti is besieged with regrets for having left Aziyadé and he is haunted with memories of her everywhere he goes. "Chère petite Aziyadé, je t'aime encore de toute mon âme, de tout mon cœur, comme au moment où je t'ai quittée." Even when he is in the arms of another, he is reminded of Aziyadé. "Nidzoumi! (les souris) dit Chrysanthème. Et, brusquement ce mot m'en rappela un autre, d'une langue bien différente et parlée bien loin d'ici: 'Setchen!'... 

et elle aussi, la chère petite turque, m'avait dit dans sa langue aimée: 'Setchen!' " Time passes and Loti is unable to treat the memory of Aziyadé superficially, as he does his other lovers. Neither is he able to find peace of mind for himself. He has lost faith in life, in friendship and in love. Perhaps he felt he

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47 Ibid., p. 258.
48 Ibid., p. 293.
49 Un jeune officier pauvre, p. 188.
50 Madame Chrysanthème, p. 73.
could recapture his youth and his faith if he could find Aziyadé. Suddenly this became an obsession and he begged his old friends in Constantinople to find her for him, and then to bring her to France. His plans were elaborate and precise to the finest detail. He reassured one friend of his honor: "Ne craignez pas, mon cher ami, de tremper dans une aventure de roman, celle-là n'en est pas une. Sur mon honneur, je vous jure qu'une fois en France Aziyadé sera ma femme." This was Loti's ultimate pledge of love. To promise that he would return or to wish that they might die together in order to remain together were only beautiful dreams. But his pledge of marriage suggested and promised reality. It is an indication of Loti's profound remorse at having lost his one real love. Loti wrote to Aziyadé as well.

Mais si tu acceptes tout cela, ma bien-aimée, si tu m'aimes tant que tu veuilles tout supporter, si tu veux fuir, ... alors viens, je t'adore et je t'attends...

Viens, ma bien-aimée, par ton Dieu et le Dieu des chrétiens, je te le jure, en France, tu seras ma femme, tu seras à moi devant les hommes et devant les lois de mon pays...52

Loti's efforts to find Aziyadé were fruitless, and ten years pass from the time he left her, swearing to return, until the haunting memory of her brings him back to Turkey.

Depuis dix ans que les hasards de mon métier de mer me promènent à tous les bouts du monde, jamais je n'ai pu revenir là, jamais; on dirait qu'un sort, un châtiement sans merci m'en ait constamment éloigné. Jamais je n'ai pu tenir le solennel serment de retour qu'en

51 Un jeune officier pauvre, p. 216.
52 Ibid., pp. 221 - 222.
partant j'avais fait à une petite fille circassienne, abîmée dans le suprême désespoir.
Et je ne sais plus rien d'elle, qui fut la bien-aimée à qui je croyais m'être donné jusqu'à l'âme, pour le temps et pour les au delà infinis. 53

The dénouement of this love story is presented in a sequel to Aziyadé, a book called Fantôme d'Orient. During these years, Loti dreamed and hoped of being reunited with Aziyadé, but a dark foreboding told him that she no longer lived. In order to satisfy his mind and perhaps to regain a part of his youth that was lost, he made his pilgrimage to Constantinople. This book is filled with his regrets and with nostalgia. When Aziyadé's death is verified, Constantinople, once so full of memories of their love, suddenly became insupportable. "que Stamboul est vide, et mon cœur vide aussi, et mon âme vide; je sens comme un affaissement de toutes choses et un désir de quitter cette Turquie au plus tôt, pour n'y revenir jamais." Loti's remorse was supreme and the rest of the book becomes a sort of elegy to the memory of Aziyadé. A note of humility can be detected in his despair and regret.

Pauvre petite Aziyadé, tant de choses que je n'ai jamais su lui dire, et qui me brûlent maintenant, et que je lui dirais là, si on pouvait me la rendre seulement pour quelques minutes, pour un entretien suprême: lui dire que je l'ai aimée bien plus tendrement encore qu'elle ne le croyait et que je ne le croyais moi-même; lui dire que jamais ne s'éteindra le regret de l'avoir perdue; lui demander pardon de vivre, et d'être encore jeune, et d'aimer encore; lui dire tout cela, et puis la laisser se

54 Ibid., p. 133.
rendormir dans la terre, après l'adieu plein d'amour! Mais non, il faudra en rester pour l'éternité sur un malentendu affreusement cruel; bientôt viendra mon heure de mourir aussi, rendant plus irréparable de malentendu-là, et plus définitif encore ce silence entre nous, parce que toutes ces choses, qui n'avaient pu lui être dites, mais qui vivaient au fond de moi-même, seront mortes avec moi. 55

The little Turkish girl loved only Pierre Loti; furthermore she was never loved by anyone but him. Her devotion was to a man who could never return such simplicity of emotions. His life was too crowded, his soul was too complicated. He had loved and been loved by many. His experience was too vast to be reduced to a single affection. She waited three years for the fulfillment of his pledge to her, but when her hopes were abandoned, she lost her will to live. There was no longer any reason to justify her existence and she died, heartbroken, with no one to mourn her. Her very death symbolized her adoration for this man and fulfilled her promise to him. "...quand tu seras parti, ce sera fini d'Aziyadé; ses yeux seront fermés, Aziyadé sera morte." 56

Loti's pilgrimage to the tomb of Aziyadé was a result of the disenchantment for life that was shrouding him. He was haunted not only by her memory, but also by the memory of their happiness and the charm of their youth. Out of desperation he sought her, hoping to regain by her physical presence, the spiritual and emotional faith that time and death had destroyed. Aziyadé

55 Ibid., pp. 150 - 151.
56 Aziyadé, p. 107.
represented a cherished memory of his younger days which could not be brought back. Loti's efforts to find her were too late, not because of her death, but because one cannot go backward in time. The spirit of their love and their youth could never have been reborn because nature had played its role, encompassing everything. This realization made Loti's grief all the more tragic. He lost not only his loved one, but also a part of himself, and he viewed death as an inevitable source of annihilation:

Quand nous mourons, ce n'est que le commencement d'une série d'autres anéantissemens partiels, nous plongeant toujours plus avant dans l'absolue nuit noire. Ceux qui nous aimaient meurent aussi: toutes les têtes humaines, dans lesquelle notre image était à demi-conservée, se désagrègent et retournent à la poussière; tout ce qui nous avait appartenu se disperse et s'émiette; nos portraits, que personne ne connaît plus, s'effacent; -- et notre nom s'oublie; -- et notre génération achève de passer... 57

Loti's dream of love and his pursuit of the past ended at the tomb of Aziyadé. A sadness penetrated his heart and the notion of romantic love ceased to invade his soul. His faith in religion, in life and even in love, lost its existence in his grief. He considered himself old and drained -- incapable of human reaction. This Turkish adventure was an agent in the romantic nihilism of Pierre Loti. As he stood at the tomb of Aziyadé, he recognized the end of his dream.

57 Fantôme d'Orient, p. 218.
58 N. Serban, Pierre Loti, sa vie et son oeuvre, p. 63.
Eh bien! ce rêve angoissant qui, pendant tant d'années m'avait poursuivi, ce rêve d'un retour à Constantinople toujours entravé et n'aboutissant jamais, -- ce rêve ne m'est plus revenu depuis que j'ai accompli ce pèlerinage. Et, du côté de l'Orient, tout s'est apaisé encore dans mon souvenir, avec les années qui ont continué de passer...

Ce rêve était sans doute l'appel du cher petit fantôme de là-bas, auquel j'ai répondu et qui ne se renouvelle plus. 59

Pierre Loti's overwhelming need to love and to be loved was recognized by his friends and his critics. The paradox is that Loti was unable to submit himself to a total love. His demand for affection was great, but he could not forsake his identity as proof of his devotion. His friend Plumkett wrote to him saying,

La raison de l'instabilité de l'amour qu'on a pour vous, c'est dans votre propre instabilité qu'il faut la chercher.

... quand on a un tel besoin d'amour, quand, ainsi que vous, on ne vit que par l'amour et pour l'amour, c'est un grand malheur de n'inspirer que des passions d'un instant. 60

Emile Pouvillon also recognized that love was a prerequisite to Loti's life style.

Je ne suis pas du tout étonné de vous voir rembarqué dans votre amour. C'est la façon de vivre qui vous est la plus naturelle, la plus essentielle même. Tout vous vient de l'amour, il vous faut ce doublement, ce triplement de vie que donne la fièvre amoureuse et, si vous aviez en plus cette fois la souffrance, je vous tiendrais pour un mortel parfaitement heureux. 61

59 Fantôme d'Orient, pp. 233 - 234.
60 Journal intime, Volume 1, pp. 16 - 17.
Loti, for whom woman played such an important role, loved women of all types. Each one represented a different part of the world, and each symbolized a stage in his life. If each of his love stories followed a pattern, then it must also be recognized that his life followed the same pattern. Pierre Loti was a man with a great capacity for love in all of its dimensions.

L'amour, qui a changé pour moi les aspects des choses, des pays, qui m'a rendu délicieuses les misères, qui m'a rendu empoisonnées les prosérités... L'amour, qui a jeté pour moi sur certaines contrées de la terre ce charme mystérieux que je me suis épuisé inutilement à comprendre, à fixer, à traduire par des mots humains... En somme, je n'ai jamais vécu que par l'amour, -- dans la vie, je ne vois plus rien, que l'amour. 62

62 Fleurs d'ennui, p. 120.
CHAPTER IV
L'AMOUR AMICAL

Friendship, according to Webster, is a "friendly attachment". To Pierre Loti, however, friendship was more expansive, and should be divided into three classifications. There were many persons with whom Loti felt a "friendly attachment", but their memory was not significant. Their relationships did not go beyond this friendliness. These acquaintances are not relevant to this study.

A second group, and more important to Loti, were those primitive souls which Loti dominated in their fellowship. Such a friend accompanied Loti in most of his adventures and in his amours. The memories of his friends were cherished almost as much as the memories of the lady loves. Each one was an integral part of the country he inhabited.

The last group represents those people to whom Loti was drawn in an intellectual friendship. They were other writers, critics, publishers, or other Europeans who were Loti's peers. It was these friends in whom Loti confided his dreams and his despairs, and who played an important role by acting as sounding boards for his most intimate thoughts. The fact that Loti indulged in so many and varied correspondences is an indication of the significance of friendship to his life.

Just as so many of Loti's loved ones were primitive creatures, representing diverse exotic lands, many of his friends were also simple persons. They provide a contrast with Western man who presents a life of ambition and greed. Their simplicity
and innocence seem far more desirable to Loti, and they are ennobled by it. Loti makes close friendships with these less-civilized men. He enjoys the relationship in which he dominates. There is no need for him to prove himself; he need not compete with such a friend for the superior position. His supremacy is accepted from the beginning. He is superior intellectually and his very birthright guarantees him that advantage. It signifies his freedom to be educated and his freedom from the backward and archaic philosophies that hamper more primitive cultures in their development. These primitive beings are completely submissive, as are their female counterparts. Loti describes Samuel in Aziyadé:

..., il est à mon service corps et âme; il joue chaque soir sa liberté et sa vie en entrant dans la maison qu'Aziyadé habite; il traverse, dans l'obscurité, pour aller la chercher, ce cimetière rempli pour lui de visions et de terreurs mortelles; il rame jusqu'au matin dans sa barque pour veiller sur la nôtre, ou bien m'attend toute la nuit, couché pèle-mêle avec cinquante vagabonds, sur la cinquième dalle de pierre du quai de Salonique. Sa personnalité est comme absorbée dans la mienne, et je le trouve partout dans mon ombre, quels que soient le lieu et le costume que j'aie choisis, prêt à défendre ma vie au risque de la sienne. 1

Plumkett, one of Loti's best friends, reveals Loti's obsession for domination in one of his letters.

Quelle bonne chose d'aimer et d'être aimé! Savoir qu'une nature d'élite a compris la vôtre; que quelqu'un rapporte toutes ses pensées, tous ses actes à vous; que vous êtes un centre, un but, en vue duquel une organisation aussi délicatement compliquée que la vôtre, vit, pense et agit! 2

1 Aziyadé, p. 20.
2 Ibid., p. 177.
Even though Loti accepts and depends upon the total fidelity of these friends, he does not deceive himself with the dream of everlasting friendship. He knows that time will alter the appearance of their amity, just as it has altered love. Neither love nor friendship are durable -- both depend upon elements which are not permanent: situation, circumstance and people. As these elements are transfigured, the binding relationship must also change. Loti discusses this lack of stability.

Je t'ai dit que je ne croyais à l'affection de personne; cela est vrai. J'ai quelques amis qui m'en témoignent beaucoup, mais je n'y crois pas. Samuel, qui vient de me quitter, est peut-être encore de tous celui qui tient le plus à moi. Je ne me fais pas d'illusion cependant. C'est de sa part un grand enthousiasme d'enfant. Un beau jour, tout s'en ira en fumée, et je me retrouverai seul. 3

Samuel is replaced by Achmet in the service of Loti, and his loyalty is no less than that of his predecessor:

Je suis comme Aziyadé, quand tu seras parti, ce sera fini aussi de ton Achmet.
Veux-tu, dit-il, me faire aussi un serment, Loti? Quand tu seras marié et que tu seras riche, tu viendras me chercher, et je serais là-bas ton domestique. Tu ne me payeras pas plus qu'à Stamboul, mais je serai près de toi, et c'est tout ce que je demande. 4

The sincerity of such promises was their most touching quality. A total lack of artificiality and selfish motivation characterized these people. Achmet said exactly what he felt, without pretense, and without fear of degrading himself by speaking so frankly. Loti was accepted and enveloped by his devotion,

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3 Ibid., p. 78.
4 Ibid., p. 168.
regardless of what he said or did. It is because of this total acceptance as a man that Loti finds it easier to give himself as a friend in these less-sophisticated countries. Here, he need not be concerned with the superficial standards and the prejudices of Europe.

Although Loti attempted to become "l'homme du peuple" by wearing the local costume, learning the language, and living among the people, his superiority was immediately acknowledged. His presence among them remained a mystery, but the people readily accepted him as their friend.

Le derviche Hassan-Effendi, à la suite d'une visite de deux heures, tire ainsi ses conclusions:

Tu es un garçon invraisemblable, et tout ce que tu fais est étrange! Tu es très jeune, ou du moins tu le parais, et tu vis dans une si complète indépendance, que les hommes d'un âge mur ne savent pas toujours en conquérir de semblable. Nous ignorons d'où tu viens, et tu n'as aucun moyen connu d'existence. Tu as déjà couru tous les recoins des cinq parties du monde; tu possèdes un ensemble de connaissance plus grand que celui de nos ulémas; tu sais tout et tu as tout vu. Tu as vingt ans, vingt-deux peut-être, et une vie humaine ne suffirait pas à ton passé mystérieux. Ta place serait au premier rang dans la société européenne de Péra, et tu viens vivre à Eyoub, dans l'intimité singulièrement choisie d'un vagabond israélite. Tu es un garçon invraisemblable; mais j'ai du plaisir à te voir, et je suis charmé que tu sois venu t'établir parmi nous.

5 Ibid., p. 128.
6 Ibid., p. 74.
Henry Bordeaux believes that a friendship between a complicated soul (like Loti) and a simple soul (like Samuel or Achmet) is the only type of friendship that can attain perfection. Two complicated souls are forever in competition with one another, each one striving for domination, and two simple beings cannot provide any challenge or ultimate goal to the relationship. But a combination of the two eliminates rivalry and the two personalities compliment one another in a total fellowship. "et les différences de classe et d'éducation ne serviront qu'à les rapprocher davantage encore, l'une haussant l'autre à son niveau."

Mon Frère Yves is the most touching testimony of friendship that Pierre Loti wrote. The very title is an indication of the affection he felt for Yves Kermadec, the Breton sailor whom Loti adopted as a brother. Their brotherhood and bond of friendship undergo innumerable trials. But these serve only to strengthen their love and to unite them even closer. Throughout all of Loti's correspondences, he describes Yves as his best and most devoted friend. "Il s'agit d'un pauvre matelot de mon âge, mon ami d'enfance, le compagnon de mes voyages, que j'aime d'une affection fraterne." "Je me suis trouvé heureusement deux bons camarades. L'un est Yves Kermadec . . . . . Bien entendu, des deux, c'est Yves mon préféré. J'aime mieux les gens qui ont poussé tout seuls que les demi-éductions de mes collègues; je vous ai déjà exposé mes théories là-dessus. Et puis, c'est amusant d'avoir un camarade qui accepte avec admiration toutes

8 Lettres à Madame Adam, p. 4.
Yves Kermadec, like so many sailors, found it difficult not to submit to the temptation that lay before him in each port as their ship docked. His most vulnerable vice was liquor, and it was for this reason that Yves' mother asked Loti to act as his guardian, watching over him as he would do for his own brother. Loti's solemn pledge to do so initiated the fraternity which united them for most of their lives. Many times Loti found himself pulling his comrade out of the gutter and getting him aboard ship before further dangers could occur. Yves always regretted his misdeeds and promised to stay away from the taverns. But a sailor's life is a lonely one and usually the only divertissements are those which are evil. It was Loti, using his influence as an officer, and beseeching his many friends to exercise their authority, who obtained for Yves his degree as an officer of the navy.

A deux heures, mon cher Yves est parti, heureux d'aller embrasser Marie, sa femme et le petit Goéland, son fils; d'annoncer chez lui qu'il est monté en grade et que c'est à moi qu'il le doit. Il était bien triste cependant de ce que nous nous quittions et j'en avais le coeur serré, moi aussi, je l'avoue. Pauvres marins que nous sommes, qui sait si l'aveugle destinée nous réunira une fois de plus?

Je l'aimais bien, cet Yves Kermadec. Notre affection avait grandi très vite, peut-être parce que je l'avais tiré de terribles passes, disputé à beaucoup de dangers. 10

9 Un jeune officier pauvre., p. 175.
10 Ibid., p. 252.
Yves was like a child who needed strict discipline to stabilize his actions, and he knew that he was indebted to Loti for his very life.

Loti was very jealous of his friendship with Yves. In Japan, Yves spent a great deal of time with Loti and Chrysanthème. When Loti noticed that Chrysanthème displayed too much affection for Yves, he was resentful and suspicious.

Voilà donc Yves couché et dormant sous notre toit.
Le sommeil lui est venu ce soir plus vite qu'à moi-même: c'est que j'ai cru remarquer des regards très longs de Chrysanthème à lui, de lui à Chrysanthème.
Je lui laisse entre les mains cette petite comme un jouet, et une crainte me vient à présent d'avoir jeté un certain trouble dans sa tête. De cette Japonaise, je me soucie comme de rien. Mais Yves... ce serait mal de sa part, et cela porterait une atteinte grave à ma confiance en lui . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Je la prendrais en haine, ma mousmé, si elle entraînait mon pauvre Yves à une mauvaise action que je ne lui pardonnerais peut-être plus... 11

This illustration exemplified Loti's driving need to be the center in his relationships — both with loved ones and with friends. It would be insupportable for Yves to desire Loti's wife, or for Loti's wife to desire his friend. Nevertheless the friendship endures, in spite of this and other assaults.

Maintenant, entre Jean et moi, (Yves) tout est fini
et je cherche encore le mot de la sombre énigme qui l'a irrémédiablement éloigné de moi.
Hélas! on n'arrache pas de son coeur une affection comme celle que j'ai eue pour ce frère perdu, sans qu'il reste des déchirures profondes et cruelles. Les années qui passent les ferment à la longue, l'oubli descend tout doucement sur toutes choses et bientôt sans doute le

11 Madame Chrysanthème, p. 155 - 156.
souvenir de Jean sera mort dans mon coeur. Mais, ce soir, sa douce figure est là, présente, et je lui pardonne tout ce qu'il m'a fait. 12

Perhaps it was the very difficulty and misery which they so often encountered that served to unite their souls so completely. Sometimes it is with those whom one has overcome great hardships that the greatest confidence and intimacy develops. Yves represents the most lasting and the closest of the relationships that Loti formed with "primitive" souls. Together they knew the solitude of long weeks at sea; they shared the joy of returning to the foyer; and they experienced the mysterious adventures that life presented in exotic places. Loti was the godfather of Yves' child, and Yves shared Loti's pleasure of returning to Rochefort and Madame Viaud. Their friendship surpassed amity -- it was truly a brotherhood that bound them together. Their faith and fraternal love were strong enough to withstand the differences that might sever a less durable relationship.

Pierre Loti maintained friendships with many persons on an "intellectual" level. Among those who are important to this study were Plumkett, Madame Juliette Adam, Alphonse Daudet and Emile Pouvillon. Much of Loti's soul can be interpreted in his correspondence with these people. His need for acceptance and affection are illustrated many times in his letters. The

12 Un jeune officier pauvre, p. 234.
evolution of this necessity to a total nihilism of friendship, as well as love, is expressed through his correspondence. Evidence of this disillusion can be detected quite early among his writings, but it later becomes a complete abnegation of all moral values and mortal attachments. To understand this pessimism, one must study his various affections closely.

Madame Juliette Adam was a trusted friend of Loti's. In fact, their relationship surpassed "l'amour amical" and became one of "l'amour familial", as was pointed out earlier. In the beginning, Loti wrote to her saying,

Je crois que je vous ai dit, madame, quelle grande place d'âme vous aviez prise en moi, depuis vos lettres du printemps dernier. Sans doute, quand j'aurai pu enfin aller vous voir, je vous aimerai encore plus. Vous m'avez écrit une fois que j'étais entré dans le très petit nombre de ceux avec "qui vous marchiez accompagnée dans la vie." Je veux croire que c'est vrai, et vous ne m'avez jamais rien dit qui m'ait fait plus de plaisir. Moi, j'ai grand besoin de marcher accompagné. Seul, je ne vais plus rien et ne tiens même plus debout. 13

A year later, Loti wrote again, trying to exact from her a testimony of her affection.

A la fin vous aviez mis, peut-être par mégarde, votre amie et c'est là le point que je pourrais le moins oublier. J'estime comme une chose précieuse ce mot écrit par vous, madame, même écrit une seule fois, et écrit par hasard. J'ai bien besoin d'avoir des amis et que mes amis me disent qu'il y a en moi quelque chose qui vaille. J'ai le vertige souvent tout seul. Abandonné à moi-même, je serais capable de m'en aller tomber très bas. 14

It has already been shown how Madame Adam grew in importance to Loti until she became a symbol of his own mother. Loti's fear

13 Lettres à Madame Adam, p. 9.
14 Ibid., p. 12.
of losing this devotion is illustrated by this passage, written in 1884.

J'ai appuyé mes levres sur votre lettre de ce matin à l'endroit où vous m'avez appelé "votre fils". Avec ma frayeur habituelle de la fragilité des choses, je crains que ça ne s'en aille, que bientôt vous ne m'aimez plus, m'ayant vu de trop près. 15

This lady inspired Loti with a kind of faith when his own protestant background and his innumerable experiences in life and love could not. It was by virtue of her faith that Loti portrayed fleeting moments of optimism. "Et puis, ce que j'aime dans votre rêve, c'est cette foi dans la persistance, après la vie, de l'amitié et de l'amour, de l'union de deux âmes, ...ces unions-là, qui sont les seules choses sublimes données par la vie. 16

The friendship between these two individuals was strongly tested when they disagreed over a political issue. As is often true in political matters, each felt that he was correct and there was no room for compromise.

Nous ne nous dégageons jamais tout à fait de nos haines et de nos préjugés de terroir et de famille. Vous, ce sont Allemands, moi, les Anglais...

Vous me jugez comme à une époque où j'étais comme un véritable petit sauvage, ignorant de toutes les choses du siècle, et vous continuez de voir en moi l'enfant de jadis. Ce qui le prouve, c'est que vous avez encore aujourd'hui, dans mon esprit de conduite, la crainte que vous gardez de me voir faire des choses puériles, l'habitude qui vous est restée de me redresser avec un peu de hauteur. Mais, depuis les premières années où vous m'avez accueilli, j'ai beaucoup changé, beaucoup appris; je considère que

15 Ibid., p. 36.
16 Ibid., p. 115.
Loti was not willing to abandon his affection for a political matter. He continued to write to Madame Adam, ignoring letters of rupture which he received from her. In the end, he was triumphant. In spite of their differences of opinion, which may have been irreconcilable, the friendship endured. Many harsh letters were exchanged — many, in fact, which Madame Adam refused to publish because of their violent nature — and in 1912, Loti wrote to her saying,

Vous vous figurez que je vais venir le manger à la main, et que ça calmera mes justes indignations et que ça me fera oublier le cas de cannibalisme qui s'est déclaré chez ma maman? Jamais de la vie!

Sachez, madame, que politiquement nous sommes brouillés à mort...

Heureusement que notre affection n'est pas une personne à broncher pour si peu de chose.

Elle a résisté à de plus rudes assauts. 18

A year later Loti closes the disagreement completely.

J'attendais pour reparaître dans votre vie que les atroces Balkaniques m'aient donné raison, ce qui ne pouvait manquer. Ils le font en ce moment avec tout l'éclat que je prévoyais. Félonie, perversité, incendie, massacre, rien me manque au tableau. Donc, vous conviendrez bien que vous étiez injuste, abusée, illusionnée par des rêves trop généreux. D'ailleurs que vous en conveniez ou pas, c'est kif-kif. Le différence entre nous est clos et je vous demande la permission de vous embrasser avec le respect le plus tendre. 19

17 Ibid., p. 148.
18 Ibid., p. 213.
19 Ibid., p. 217.
The strength of this relationship is further exemplified when Loti is dying and requests that Madame Adam come to see him a last time. Perhaps even some of his lost faith was restored in the face of death, when he says goodbye to his adopted mother, in hopes of finding again his other mother in eternity. Juliette Adam played various roles in Loti's life. She was his publisher and critic; she was a trusted friend and confidante; she was a living symbol of Nadine Viaud, and she acted as intermediary when Loti sought to help Yves obtain his promotion. She provided him with an understanding and sympathetic heart and she may have been an agent in restoring his faith in life, or at least in checking his growing pessimism. Theirs was truly an enduring and reciprocal union of souls.

Alphonse Daudet was one of those "grand seigneurs" with whom Loti enjoyed a brief friendship. They were introduced in Paris, at Daudet's request, because he was so charmed by Loti's literature. In the beginning, Loti expressed his usual pessimism concerning the fragile nature of friendships.

J'ai peur pourtant que vous me regrettiez d'avoir parlé trop vite, que vous ne me trouviez bien ordinaire et bien obscur pour être, même un peu, votre ami. J'ai toujours terriblement peur des désenchantements, de ceux que je cause aux autres, autant que de ceux que les autres me causent à moi. 21

Once again, Loti's personal pleasure for estime is demonstrated:

Nous décidions de nous tutoyer, Daudet et moi. Il me tient sous son charme; j'ai une affection sincère pour

21 Journal intime, Volume 1, p. 126.
lui et je crois qu'il m'aime bien, lui aussi. Personne au monde, à part peut-être Pouvillon, ne me connaît ni ne me comprend comme lui. Pour un peu, il me donnerait un immense orgueil, tant il me place haut.  

Daudet's affection was confirmed in his note to Loti, concerning Mon Frère Yves, which Loti dedicated to him. "Voici votre dédicace. (Mon Frère Yves). Je n'y change qu'un mot, le 'monsieur' qui nous empêche d'être amis." For reasons unknown, the correspondence was not a lasting one. There was no rupture between the two friends, but their friendship seems to have become lost, perhaps among others, more sincere. Loti briefly mentions this in a letter to Madame Adam. ", je fais pour vous ce que j'ai fait pour monsieur Alphonse Daudet, qui m'oublie, après avoir eu un moment d'affection pour moi l'an passé. Je lis peu à peu tout ce que vous avez écrit." Daudet's friendship, though brief, was not unimportant in that it provided the affection and admiration of an intelligent person, which was necessary to the delicate balance of Loti's ego.

There was another brief correspondence with Oirda, or Madame Blanche Lee Childe. Their friendship was shortened by her death. Her replies to Loti's letters are full of praise and admiration for him. This lady, who did not live in the same melancholy that Loti did, often found it difficult to reassure him. It is ironic because Oirda appears to have had a terminal disease which she had to treat carefully, and yet she

23 Ibid., p. 41.
was not overcome by pessimism with life like Loti — who had no apparent reason for his despair. He was young and very healthy and very successful in his work. Oirda wrote to Loti concerning this melancholy in 1882.

La vie, n'a-t-elle plus rien qui vous dédommage? Et êtes-vous donc si malade que vous n'avez plus guérir? Vous êtes jeune, et fort et brave — car vous l'êtes -- et vous désespérez quand vous avez encore tout devant vous! Que puis-je vous dire, moi qui vous connaissez pas, quand ceux qui sont tout près de vous ne peuvent rien, -- au contraire? 25

Later she praises his ability as an artist.

Vous me demandez que j'aille dans le Midi cet hiver, pour ma poitrine. Je suis touchée que vous y ayez pensé. Oui, j'irai, mais ceci n'est pas intéressant. Ce qui l'est, c'est votre lettre, . . . . N'oubliez pas qu'il n'y a qu'un Loti dans le monde, qu'il faut le soigner, le perfectionner et le ramener à la plus grande joie de ceux qui l'attendent. 26

Loti mentions this friend in his journal. "...et mon amie Lee Childe; son baiser d'adieu, à celle-là me serre le coeur, car je crois bien ne plus la trouver à mon retour." 27

Two of Loti's friends understood his melancholy and disenchantment better than any other — Plumkett and Emile Pouvillon. In these correspondences the evolution of Loti's disbelief can be seen. Loti valued love more greatly than anything else in life, and he was the object of many different forms of affection. His family, his loved ones and his friends were all devoted to him. But Loti was faced with the constant threat of losing these affections. He had learned from his

26 Ibid., pp. 93 - 94.
27 Ibid., p. 185.
life of adventure that time would alter the aspect of things. He knew that it would change the very character of his associates as well as of himself. Consequently passions would also change. In order to combat this force of destiny, Loti sought to find in the past a form of stability. He clung obstinately to memories of his childhood and those who surrounded him; he cherished souvenirs of his past romances, establishing in his home a sort of museum, filled with relics from each abandoned country. He tried to prolong the present by knowing all he could about the past of his beloved. In doing so he was able to build a stable foundation for his own memories.

At first Loti thought he could withstand the pressures of time by isolating himself from any close friendships. He accepted it as a passing thing and he refused to become involved emotionally. He depended completely upon Yves and Plumkett as his only real friends. His thoughts are explained in a letter to Daudet.

Depuis bien des années, pourtant, j'ai fermé mon coeur à autrui; je me suis habitué à ne compter pour rien les gens qui m'entourent, tout en vivant en bonne intelligence apparente avec tous. J'ai mon ami, Yves, . . . . . . et mon camarade, Plumkett, . . . . , tous

28 Fantôme d'Orient, pp. 33 - 34.
deux partagent ce mépris orgueilleux que je professe, malgré moi, pour le reste de mes semblables. En dehors de ces deux-là, je ne me figurais pas qu'un nouveau venu pourrait encore prendre place dans ma vie. 29

This cautious attitude was in reality a battle between Loti and the fragile nature of life. Loti became acquainted with Emile Pouvillon at this point, and their friendship endured (after much preliminary precaution on Loti's part). Pouvillon understood Loti's growing philosophy and was sympathetic, even though he was not a pessimist. In a letter to Pouvillon, Loti generalized his theories, but an optimistic note is present. "Ces considérations sur les fragilités en général ne s'appliquent nullement à notre amitié; étant à peine née, elle n'a pas le droit de mourir encore. Elle finira par la banalité et le désenchantement; c'est indiqué, c'est fatal. Tant pis, essayons tout de même." The letter continues in a more enlightened manner.

Il y a pourtant des amitiés qui sont durables, je vous assure. Ainsi celle d'Yves et moi,... Elle a résisté aux années, au frôlement de tous les jours...... si on m'affirme qu'un jour viendra où je n'aimerai plus mon pauvre Yves, ce serait pour moi la déception suprême. 31

At this point Loti had not completely lost faith in the sincerity of friendship. He was still dependent upon the affection of others. He even indicated in his letters that he hoped for a mutual

29 Journal Intime, Volume 1, pp. 125 - 126.
30 Ibid., p. 255.
31 Ibid., p. 256.
entente between himself and Pouvillon. "il me semble que
j'attacherais un grand prix à une amitié un petit peu solide
faite avec vous, si nous pouvions." This friendship with
Pouvillon became a source of stability to Loti. Pouvillon
did not lack the moral faith that Loti did, and he tried to
neutralize Loti's bitter rejection of moral values as it
became apparent. Since his own existence was not a constant
battle against life, as was Loti's, he was able to look at
the problem objectively.

Et alors, d'où ce voile, cette malaria, ce brouillard
de mélancolie qui vous suit partout? Vous m'expliquerez
cela, n'est-ce pas, et si je peux vous communiquer un peu
de ma sécurité, de mon calme habituel, oh! que je serai
heureux. Venez donc me voir, mon cher ami, je vous
désenfiévrerai, je vous mettrai à mon régime de bonne vie
familiale et provinciale. J'ai vraiment une impatience
passionnée de vous avoir ici, de vous aimer de plus près,
de me lier tout à fait étroitement avec vous. 33

Gradually Loti's lack of faith became a total nihilism of all
moral values. He rejected love and friendship in particular.
In his mind, death was the final power over all. "Il n'y a
pas de Dieu, il n'y a pas de morale, rien n'existe de tout
ce qu'on nous a enseigné à respecter; il y a une vie qui
passe, à laquelle il est logique de demander le plus de
jouissances possible, en attendant l' épouvante finale qui est la
mort." He began to value only youth and beauty, and the
youth which he had lost seemed to represent death in itself.

32 Ibid., p. 256.
33 Ibid., pp. 258 - 259.
34 Azizyadé, p. 58.
He often felt that if he could recapture his youth, he would regain his faith.

Par instants, l'envie me prend de tout oublier et de tout recommencer . . . . Mais non, il est trop tard; mon mal est trop profond et mon passé trop lourd... Je n'ai qu'à suivre le courant qui m'emporte, en ramassant de droite et de gauche les dernières jouissances que je rencontrerai sur ma route. 35

The degradation that Loti felt became a fear: a terror of watching each moment pass, dissipating his life and bringing with it old age and subsequently death. These fears are expressed often in letters to Plumkett, who understood his friend so well because he himself often felt the same disenchantment. In 1878 Loti wrote at great length, reminiscing and expressing his apprehensions.

Les amis, je n'y crois guère. Et pourtant, plus que personne au monde, j'en ai eu... J'ai rencontré bien des affections, bien des dévouements . . . . Mais tout passe et passera...

Quand les années seront venues, avec la souffrance peut-être, et les rides et les cheveux gris, quand il n'y aura plus d'amour possible que celui que j'achèterai, qu'on m'abandonnera comme un objet usé qui a trop servi, -- alors quelle ressource aurait-je, mon Dieu! autre que le suicide? 36

Loti reveals the same fear in a letter to Juliette Adam. "et puis je songe avec une terreur suprême au moment où viendra la vieillesse et où on ne m'aimera plus!" He expressed this premonition of death when he revisited Turkey in Fantôme d'Orient.

36 Un jeune officier pauvre, p. 228.
37 Lettres à Madame Adam, p. 21.
Il ne me charme ni ne me trompe plus; je n'ai conscience à présent que de son impassibilité devant les continus anéantissements, les continuelles fins. Je sens de la mort, de la mélancolie de mort, dans sa lumière douce; ses rayons sont pleins de mort...

Loti's final rejection can be found more than once in his writings. "Mais les amis sont comme les chiens, cela finit mal toujours et le mieux est de n'en pas avoir." Plumkett's reply to Loti's despair and rejection may provide a clue in explanation of this distress.

Non, non, mon ami, je ne vous crois pas, et vous ne vous croyez pas vous-même. Vous êtes bon, vous êtes aimant, vous êtes sensible et délicat; seulement vous souffrez. Aussi je vous pardonne et vous aime et demeure une protestation vivant contre vos négations de tout ce qui est amitié, désintéressement, dévouement.

C'est votre vanité qui nie tout cela et non pas vous; votre fierté blessée vous fait cacher vos trésors et étaler à plaisir "l'être factice créé par votre orgueil et votre ennui."

Certainly Loti's vanity must be considered, since he was a very proud man. His regrets were understandably profound when he looked upon his past, scattered over so many countries, each one withholding a part of his soul. But could this man who lived only by love and for love, and on whom so much affection and devotion was spent, -- could he truly reject the one thing which he valued above all else? A final ray of faith and hope must be illustrated in order to complete the evolution of

38 Fantôme d'Orient, pp. 91 - 92.
39 Correspondance inédite, p. 154.
40 Azizadé, p. 136.
— au milieu d'un rêve bien étrange. J'étais comme illuminé, je ne sais par quelle vision, par quelle intuition radieuse d'immortalité et de revoir... Le néant n'existait plus et je souriais, confiant à une certitude révélée tout à coup de réunion éternelle avec ceux que j'aimais, avec ma chère vieille mère surtout... Puis, tout cela s'évanouit mystérieusement, comme s'envolent les rêves à mesure que le réveil amène des conceptions plus précises... 

41 Journal intime, Volume 1, p. 156.
There is a vein of egoism present in Loti's nature which is usually very subtle, but which is sometimes quite shocking in its clarity. This egoism presents a paradox when one considers the humility that is also characteristic of Loti. The paradox is illustrated in all aspects of Loti's life. Whenever he wrote to members of his family, he demanded from them declarations of their love for him. He insisted that they write to him frequently, and he complained when they did not. He hardly considered the worries he caused to them when he did not write frequently himself. In a letter from Nadine Viaud one reads, "Cette fois, mon chéri, ce n'est pas un jour de retard que tu as mis à m'écrire; mais bien quatre, presque cinq, même; . . . . J'avoue que je commençais à me monter la tête, à me figurer toutes espèces de choses." Loti knew that his long absences from home were difficult for his family, especially his mother. He was also aware that his varied romances in all parts of the world were not compatible with his austere Huguenot heritage. And so one day he proposed to settle down to a life which would be more harmonious with the desires of his family. This project is expressed with great humility in a letter to his sister, Marie. "Pour vous, pour toi, à mon retour, je ferai un suprême effort. Quand je serai au milieu de vous, mes idées

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changeront; si vous me choisissez une jeune fille que vous aimiez, je tâcherai de l'aimer, et de me fixer, pour l'amour de vous, dans cette affection-là." However, when his family approved of and encouraged his marriage with a certain Madame M. R. **, he rejected her vehemently. "Je veux commencer par vous dire que jamais, jamais je n'épouserai madame M. R. **." While he wished to please his family, his ego would not allow any form of domination by them. One of the most obvious examples of this paradox is Loti's continuous cycle of travel and return. As he became bored with his travels, he yearned for his home and loved ones. However, when he returned, he stayed only long enough to alleviate his own mental and physical ennui. His departures were coincident with his inclinations. Only when his mother was becoming very frail and sickly did he request tours of duty which would keep him near home, and then he complained of the tedium. Even in doing this, his motives were selfish. He wished to retain as long as possible the faith and security which his mother provided for him. Pierre Loti suffered self-pity and abuse even in the deaths of these aged members of his family. He felt that he was abandoned by them and left to suffer life's difficulties in solitude. "--et puis, d'être laissé si affreusement seul pour les suprêmes étapes de la route!" Is it not the quintessence of egoism to assume that by the deaths of the various members of his family, he was carelessly deserted? The irony is even greater since he quit his

3 Journal intime, Volume 1, p. 87.
4 Prise jeunesse, p. 23.
home and family time after time in order to appease his relentless search for the unknown.

Loti's egoism is also illustrated in his romantic adventures. He extolled the more primitive cultures and their simplicity in life. He maintained that such an existence was more acceptable to his nature than his own lifestyle. He dreamed of living in some faraway land with a pretty young native girl. There he could live each day as it came, without the cares and worries that beset Western man. There he could forget creditors, war and even death. And yet each time that he had such an opportunity, he insisted on dominating his beloved and his friends. His superiority had to be acknowledged, if only by a tacit understanding. Thus an egoism emerges out of his original desire for a more humble station in life. One wonders whether it was this egoism which finally drove him away from each of his idyllic scenes. Perhaps Loti felt a suppressed fear of ultimately being dominated himself by these simple souls whom he considered superior to himself. Their unquestionable faith in God and eternal life challenged his agnostic thinking, and it was this lack of faith that was responsible for his fear of death.

Pierre Loti knew the pleasure of being loved completely, even to death. Both Rarahu and Aziyadé died because they had no reason to continue living without him. This fact further exemplifies the selfishness in his love. While he often dreamed of dying with his beloved, he never did. The young lady died of heartbreak, but Loti did not. He lived to love again, and again,
and again! Madame Chrysanthème, however, did not fulfill this requirement of death. Instead, she collected the "alimony" due her and proceeded to marry another. Albert Guérard very humorously recognizes her deficiency: "Had Madame Chrysanthème realized the literary greatness of her husband, and how his words of praise or blame would go round the world, she might have been patriotic enough to commit Hara-kiri, not for Loti's sake, but for the good name of the Island Empire." Madame Chrysanthème fell short of Loti's requirements in other ways as well. Not only was she not willing to subjugate herself completely to him, but she was also audacious enough to covet his friend, Yves. This was an unpardonnable sin on her part. "Je la prendrais en haine, ma mousmé, si elle entraînait mon pauvre Yves à une mauvaise action." Madame Chrysanthème might be considered an agent in the final disenchantment and rejection of love which Loti purported to believe.

One of the most shocking examples of Loti's egoism is found in Aziyadé. Loti proposed a malicious scheme to his beloved, Aziyadé, who lived only for his love. Aziyadé was to leave while a certain Séniha from a neighboring harem replaced her for Loti's amusement. "Je lui avais déclaré que le lendemain je ne voulais plus d'elle; qu'une autre allait pour quelques jours prendre sa place; qu'elle-même reviendrait ensuite, et

5 Albert Guérard, Five Masters of French Romance, p. 147.
6 Madame Chrysanthème, p. 156.
m'aimerait encore après cette humiliation sans en garder même le souvenir." Loti carried his project out completely. Aziyadé and Achmet left and Loti made no move to alter his plans, even when Aziyadé fell to her knees, crying in despair, as she left. "Mais la pensée de cette créature qui allait venir brûlait mon sang: je restai là, et je ne les rappelai pas." Only after his personal desire for domination was satisfied did Loti feel remorse at what he had done. The next day after receiving Seniha, he summoned Aziyadé to return to him. How could this man, who understood and expressed human sorrow so intensely, how could he be so deliberately cruel to his loved one? There is no explanation other than the enigmatic egoism which so frequently penetrates his soul. His ego was satisfied. Not only did Aziyadé return without a single reproach for him, but their love was strengthened by it. "l'épisode de Sén iha-Hanum était clos; il avait eu pour résultat de nous faire plus vivement nous aimer." Thus it is Loti's desire for total domination that expresses most fully the egoism present in his life.

A more subtle form of egoism also permeates Loti's friendships. As a child, he had difficulty making friends, and he exercised caution in choosing his comrades as an adult as well. He describes this difficulty in Le roman d'un enfant.

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7 Aziyadé, p. 188.
8 Ibid., p. 188.
9 Ibid., p. 194.
"Tandis que j'étais fier avec ces enfants du collège, qui, eux, me trouvaient bizarre et poseur. Il m'a fallu bien des années pour corriger cet orgueil." Loti may have thought that he had corrected this note of false pride, but it remained with him. As an adult, his friends were put to numerous tests of their fidelity, as were his loved ones. It was with much restraint that he used the word "ami". Emile Pouvillon became one of Loti's best friends, yet it was a long time before Loti shared his confidence. Pouvillon recognized this reticence when he wrote, "Tout dépend de l'idée qu'on peut se faire de ce mot d'amitié que j'ai peut-être prononcé un peu vite. Si peu qu'il vous effraie, n'en parlons plus."

Loti's egoism is inextricably tied with his rejection of all human values. When he felt that life was stealing from his precious youth, he chose to reject it and all its moralities. His ego refused to allow him to be anything but the central character in any drama. However, on the greater stage of life, Loti could only play a role which was secondary to the leading lady, Nature. Since he was thus rejected by life, he would in turn forsake those things valued in life. His alternative was to "jouer de la vie", and extract from life whatever pleasures he could. He explains this philosophy in a letter to a friend, "Je vais vous ouvrir mon cœur, vous faire ma profession de foi: j'ai pour règle de conduite de faire toujours

10 Le roman d'un enfant, p. 212.
11 Journal intime, Volume 1, p. 240.
ce qui me plaît, en dépit de toutes moralité, de toute convention social. Je ne crois à rien ni à personne, je n'aime personne ni rien; je n'ai ni foi ni espérance."

It was Loti's friend, Plumkett, who recognized immediately that Loti defiled all morality only as a result of his own angry passion and wounded pride. In a long letter to his friend, Plumkett displayed a tender compassion for Loti's anguish, and indicated its source. "C'est votre vanité qui nie tout cela et non pas vous; votre fierté blessée vous fait cacher vos trésors et étaler à plaisir 'l'être factice créé par votre orgueil et votre ennui.'" It was also Plumkett who understood and expressed the nature of love in Loti's life. "Ce que l'on aime le mieux chez les autres, c'est soi-même." This is a perfect expression of the egoism which invaded Pierre Loti's life. Time and again this man mourned his own lost youth as it was represented by each romance. As his beloved was gone -- so was his own life increasingly disintegrated. Such a complicated and proud soul as his could not submit quietly to this violation of nature upon his life. He chose as retaliation the bitter, if not sincere, rejection of life itself. This nihilism was in part determined by the paradoxical egoism which penetrated the soul of Pierre Loti.

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12 Aziyadé, p. 58.
13 Ibid., p. 136.
14 Ibid., p. 170.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Three main themes dominate Pierre Loti's life and his literary works. They are: his search for love, his repudiation of human values, and his morbid fear of death. Each of these themes is related to the others, and each can be identified with all stages of his life. There was very little difference between Loti as a young man, and Loti in his later years. His thoughts and philosophies remained the same, only becoming more emphatic in their expression as he matured. Consequently these three major themes also retained stability throughout his life.

The many books that this man wrote were auto-biographical in that each portrayed some event in his life, or they expressed his thoughts. Although he may have used pseudonyms, the characters were also associates of his. This thread of honesty is in part a reason for the appealing sincerity in Loti's works. Because he wrote only about things he had actually seen or experienced, his books are most touching in their reality. An empathy develops between the author and his reader. One is never isolated from this author, rather one is drawn into his realm of experience, and subsequently sympathizes with the anguish or the ecstasy of the moment. This is a result of Loti's immense ability to feel and to extend this sense of feeling to others.

The search for love and affection continued throughout Loti's life. As a child, the security of his home and family was vital to him. As an adult, he continuously returned to
Rochefort to revive this manifestation of life. His many and varied amours also indicate the intensity of Loti's need for love. Love represented the only stable value in a life of disillusion. He wrote, "L'amour! . . . En somme, c'est encore tout ce qui est resté, après l'effondrement de tout. L'amour sans lequel il n'y a rien que de sombre et de mort." In each corner of the world he sought a romance which would serve as proof of his existence when he was gone. These "marriages" served to retain the memory of his own youth and to perpetuate it. Since he could not combat time as it stole days and years of his life, he could at least safeguard it by means of his memories. In friendships, Loti also sought acceptance and affection. The approval of his peers, especially concerning his literature, was important to this man. He valued the opinions of such men as Daudet, Emile Pouvillon, or Octave Feuillet, and he was ecstatic when they praised his work. He demanded understanding and sympathy from other friends, Madame Adam and Plumkett. The need to confide in a friend, to relate his despairs and his pleasures remained with him from the time he was a young man until his death. Loti sought love, in all its forms, throughout his entire life. Love symbolized life to him, and in its passing, death persists. It was Loti who said, "je n'ai jamais vécu que par l'amour."

1 Journal intime, Volume 1, p. 3.
2 Fleurs d'ennui, p. 120.
The repudiation of moral values was partly a result of Loti's egoism, as has been previously pointed out. It was a kind of compensation for his inability to compete with those powers superior to his own as a mortal being. As his life slipped through his fingers he denied the value of those things represented by life. This repudiation actually took the form of a desperate plea for help. When he wrote of his nihilism to others, he was seeking to gain security and faith from them. He was unconsciously begging them to draw him out of his despair and to instill in him that faith which restores one's soul and peace of mind. Loti could not have truly believed in the nihilism of which he spoke. The values he decried were the very ones which comprised his entire life -- friendship and love. It was, then, his own lack of faith, resulting in a profound fear of death, which caused him to cry out against life. As his youth was ended and he felt the oppressing nearness of death, an overwhelming sadness and despair enveloped him and caused him to reject those things which he was losing.

Loti's fear of death was the result of a single factor -- his lack of religious faith. Since he was taught as a child that one without faith could not enjoy the eternal life, this fear was imposed on him very early. As an adult he saw the hypocrisy in many religions, and he could not bring himself to take part in that hypocrisy. He could not profess to believe in something which gave him doubts. He felt that the only sincere religions were those of primitive cultures, and it was in India that he came the closest to a real religious faith. Although Loti did
not try in any way to undermine the religious beliefs of others, he felt that the same kind of faith was impossible for himself. Consequently his death would be the end of him, simply and irrevocably. There would be no sweet afterlife, no meetings in the hereafter. In the end, his repudiation of life became a compliant resignation to destiny. "Si vite, si vite, s'enfuit le temps, les secondes, les minutes, les heures...
Et ce sera demain la vieillesse, la fin, avec le grand oubli..."
Loti viewed old-age as the symbol of death, and his own age approaching terrified him. In a dream he saw himself as an old man, and he described his horror at the preview: "Et la lumière tomba aussi sur la figure de ce vieillard, qui était bien moi, et que je regardais, debout devant lui, avec pitié et dégoût, et terreur." This haunting fear of death is portrayed even more explicitly in his statement: "j'offrirais un pourboire à la Mort pour qu'elle me les laisse tranquilles quelque temps de plus..."

As Loti grew older, he lived in reverie of his youth and he tried to instill his life with a permanent quality by recording it. With an intense fervor he put his adventures and his thoughts on paper. In this way he could create his own eternal life. While he knew that he could not expect the same

4 Fleurs d'ennui, p. 359.
eternity that Christians seek, he could prolong his life by his memories. "Avant de mourir, je voudrais les écrire, ces souvenirs . . . . il me semble qu'en les écrivant, je fixerais un peu l'existence fugitive, je lutterais contre la force aveugle qui nous emporte vers le néant."

Pierre Loti's life began and ended in Rochefort, after embracing tender passions and affiliations all over the world. Yet it was the "foyer" which provided him with the comfort and even the faith which was necessary to his peace of mind. In the face of death, his fear became a resignation to fate. He even displayed a flicker of faith when he expressed hopes of rejoining his mother in the hereafter. The sadness which accompanied his submission to destiny is shown by his final faith in "la Pitié Suprême". It is a faith out of desperation, and the only one he was able to profess. This faith is nameless, yet it encompasses all of those beliefs to which his life was exposed, and it represented for Loti his final hope for a life after death. When he returned to Rochefort, he held no illusions, only a sense of sadness in his solitude. "Eh! Mais c'est aujourd'hui ce morne retour au foyer dont j'avais eu le pressentiment si net, le retour suprême, avec une âme très lasse et des cheveux blanchissants! Il n'y a pas d'illusion à se faire, c'est aujourd'hui, et le cycle de ma vie est clos..."

6 Un jeune officier pauvre, p. 199.
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