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# Characterization In Selected Novels Of Pierre Loti: Seafolk And The Sea

Allan James Wilton

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CHARACTERIZATION IN SELECTED NOVELS OF PIERRE LOTI:  
SEAFOLK AND THE SEA

by

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Department of French

Submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario  
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## ABSTRACT

Captain Julien Viaud served France in la Marine nationale for forty-two years; however, he is perhaps better known by his literary pseudonym: Pierre Loti de l'Académie française. Throughout most of his life this reporter, sailor and author recorded a detailed account of his personal activities, adventures and voyages around the world in his Journal intime. These records provided source material for more than fifty publications, including novels, about the sea.

It is widely accepted that there is significant autobiographical content in many of Loti's fictional writings: his own experiences as a sailor were transcribed into his diaries which in turn were integrated into a fictional world. It is also widely accepted that the major characters in this fictional world are the sea and those whose lives are inextricably linked to the sea. Yet, just as Loti's own naval career moves through various stages during its span of five decades, so does the depiction of his major characters. The aim of this thesis is to investigate this evolving depiction of seafolk and the sea in representative novels published over a period of some twenty-five years: Aziyadé, Le Mariage de Loti, Mon Frère Yves, Pêcheur d'Islande, Madame Chrysanthème, Le Roman d'un enfant and Matelot.



The main body of the study is devoted to the depiction of seafolk and is divided into four chapters illustrating different phases of the evolving characterization. The first phase is examined in the chapter entitled "Youthful Adventures", where attention is concentrated on the sea's influence upon young, relatively inexperienced sailors in an exotic port of call after long sea voyages. In the next chapter, "Toil, Dangers and Family", attention turns to more mature, responsible sailors committed to an arduous life at sea, but who return home to family, friends and loved ones after their long voyages. The third phase, "Reminiscence and Anticipation", involves seamen whose current life, being less than satisfactory, prompts them to seek an outlet through some form of escape.

The fourth chapter, "The Sea", is devoted to the characteristics of the sea and its evolution throughout the phases discussed in the three preceding chapters.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The following is a list of abbreviations used in this dissertation for the publications of Pierre Loti. The details of each edition are contained in the bibliography:

Az.	<u>Aziyadé</u>
ML.	<u>Le Mariage de Loti</u>
RS.	<u>Le Roman d'un spahi</u>
Yv.	<u>Mon Frère Yves</u>
PI.	<u>Pêcheur d'Islande</u>
MC.	<u>Madame Chrysanthème</u>
RE.	<u>Le Roman d'un enfant</u>
M.	<u>Matelot</u>
R.	<u>Ramuntcho</u>
D.	<u>Les Désenchantées</u>
JI. I.	<u>Journal intime</u> , vol. I.
JI. II.	<u>Journal intime</u> , vol. II.
JOP.	<u>Jeune Officier pauvre</u>
PJ.	<u>Prime Jeunesse</u>

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Louis Marie Julien Viaud was born at Rochefort-sur-Mer (Charente-Inférieure) on January 14<sup>th</sup> 1850.<sup>1</sup> He was the son of Théodore Viaud (1804-1870) and Nadine Texier (1810-1896). Julien was their third child. His sister Marie (1831-1908) was an artist and his brother Gustave (1838-1865) a naval officer.

The location of Rochefort, on the right bank of the Charente River about fifteen kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean, would go far towards explaining the Rochefort boys' predisposition to a seafaring career. Although as a child, Julien had planned to become a protestant missionary, his exposure to the influence of other students preparing to embark on a career in the navy, the merchant marine or commercial fishing, soon became an irresistible force acting on the ten-year-old. He later recalls some of the pressures which he faced at school and elsewhere:

Deux jours par semaine, pendant les classes d'histoire,

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Loti is a literary pseudonym for Julien Viaud. The name Viaud is used when referring to the novelist to avoid confusion with protagonists named Loti.

j'étais mêlé aux élèves des cours de marine, qui portaient des ceintures rouges pour se donner des airs de matelots et qui dessinaient sur leurs cahiers des ancres ou des navires.<sup>2</sup>

When he hears groups of sailors singing happily as they pass by his house on their way to and from their ships which will soon transport them to distant colonies,<sup>3</sup> he dreams about far-away places and the possibility of breaking away, of escaping from the constraints and security of his uneventful home life. He is filled with a longing to travel across the high seas, to visit exotic ports in tropical islands, and even to sing in the streets at the top of his voice like the sailors (RE. p. 112).

During a visit to l'île d'Oléron as a child Julien was struck with fear and trembling by the plaintive call of the sea. Many years later, at the age of forty, he writes of the almost indescribable fascination he experienced on this first remembered encounter with the sea:

Puis, tout à coup, je m'arrêtai glacé, frissonnant de peur. Devant moi, quelque chose apparaissait, quelque chose de sombre et de bruisant qui avait surgi de tous les côtés en même temps et qui semblait ne pas finir; une étendue en mouvement qui me donnait le vertige mortel... Evidemment c'était ça; pas une minute d'hésitation, ni même d'étonnement que ce fût ainsi, non, rien que de l'épouvante; je reconnais-sais et je tremblais. C'était d'un vert obscur presque noir; ça semblait instable, perfide, engloutissant; ça remuait et ça se démenait partout à la fois, avec un air de méchanceté sinistre. Au-dessus, s'étendait un ciel tout d'une pièce,

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Loti, Le Roman d'un enfant (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), p. 195. All further references to Loti's novels appear in the text.

<sup>3</sup> The Viaud residence is located on rue de Fleurus (to-day 141, rue Pierre-Loti) 17300 Rochefort.

d'un gris foncé, comme un manteau lourd.

Très loin, très loin seulement, à d'inappréciables profondeurs d'horizon, on apercevait une déchirure, un jour entre le ciel et les eaux, une longue fente vide, d'une claire pâleur jaune... (RE. pp. 53-54)

With this first impression of the sea Julien experiences a haunting feeling of recognition. Had he been there before? Had he seen the sea before? In an attempt to answer these unspoken questions, he speculates that perhaps he is unconsciously recalling that he had been there at the age of five or six during a trip to Oléron to visit his great-aunt Clarisse.<sup>4</sup> Or had his seafolk ancestors witnessed this scene so often that the immensity of the sea had been imprinted in his subconscious?<sup>5</sup> In any case, from this time forward Julien is haunted by a recurring premonition:

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 essaieraient de me retenir... (RE. p. 54)

Although there were seamen among his ancestors on both sides of the family, Viaud tends to glamorize his maternal ancestors, occasionally embellishing their association with the sea,<sup>6</sup> but he almost never mentions his father's family.

<sup>4</sup> Clarisse Lieutier, née Renaudin.

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this study, the term "seafolk" refers to "gens de mer" and their mothers, wives, children and loved ones, that is, people whose lifestyle is influenced by and/or dependent upon the sea.

<sup>6</sup> "Julien Viaud préférera se situer dans la lignée d'une famille de marins, s'inscrire dans la longue liste des coureurs de mer, comme déterminé par un atavisme auquel on n'échappe pas." Alain Quella-



Julien's ancestors on both sides were devout huguenots; as such they suffered religious persecution and were forced to live on the fringe of society in virtual isolation, compelling him to live in solitude, almost friendless as a child.

In this isolated environment his brother Gustave, a surgeon in the navy, exercised a very strong influence on his younger brother. Gustave's infrequent letters describing exotic adventures of seamen in Tahiti were eagerly awaited by Julien and other members of the household. Hungry for information about this enchanted isle Julien writes to his brother:

Je voudrais bien que tu me racontes des histoires de Tahiti... Je voudrais bien être avec toi, à Tahiti, il me semble qu'on doit être si bien là-bas, on doit être mieux qu'à la pension, au moins on a un bon parapluie, pour les pensums, garanti solide. Crois-tu, quelle différence d'être tous les jours dans les fleurs, bien, ou d'être planté sur un banc! Si on pense un peu à Tahiti, on attrape des pensums, j'en ai attrapé souvent pour ça. Quel bonheur d'aller habiter là avec tout le monde, si on pouvait emporter la maison, le petit bassin, le prunier, tout sur un navire et aller faire à Tahiti une petite république où les maîtres d'école et de pension ne seraient pas admis, mais il faudrait au moins bâtir un Léviathan.<sup>7</sup>

It would appear that although the student was anxious to voyage across the seas he was not quite ready to leave his home and family. However, in the autumn of 1862, Gustave's shore leave in Rochefort became a high point in the life of

Villéger, Pierre Loti l'incompris (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 1986), p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Odette Valence et Samuel Pierre-Loti-Viaud, La Famille de Pierre Loti ou l'éducation passionnée (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1940), p. 84.

the twelve-year-old and the following year Julien wrote a letter to his brother announcing his decision to enlist in the navy or, as he expressed it, to seal his destiny. Later, Viaud writes about this "pacte" and describes his solitude in the old garden that September afternoon:

Là, dans un grand calme de solitude, dans un grand silence d'été rempli de musique de mouches, j'écrivis et signai timidement mon pacte avec la marine.

De la lettre elle-même, je ne me souviens plus; mais je me rappelle l'émotion avec laquelle je la cachetai, comme si, sous cette enveloppe, j'avais scellé pour jamais ma destinée. (RE. p. 249)

This decision, to seek his destiny at sea, was a remarkable one to be taken by a youngster of thirteen whose home life was surrounded by adoring female adults, and whose childhood Brodin describes in these terms: "Julien eut une jeunesse émotive, et baigna dans un climat de tendresse, de caresses, de protection et de sensibilité féminine, dans une atmosphère de délicatesse et de mignardise, d'illusions et de rêve".<sup>8</sup>

Gustave's death and burial at sea in April 1865 did not deter his fifteen year old brother from his resolution to join the navy; on the contrary, Gustave became a hero and role model in his brother's eyes and Julien became even more determined to follow in Gustave's footsteps.

This became possible only after Julien's father, the chief secretary at the town hall, was wrongfully accused of

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Brodin, Loti (Montréal: Lucien Parizeau & Cie, 1945), p. 29.

misappropriating a large sum of money from his place of employment. He lost his job, the family was suddenly impoverished and could no longer afford to sponsor the education planned for Julien; therefore a career in the navy became an acceptable alternative and Julien was allowed to enter the Naval Academy in October, 1867. He saw this as an opportunity to restore the honour of the family as well as to establish his own. The protective environment of Julien's adolescent life at home did not impede his naval career which did in fact bring honour to both himself and his family.<sup>9</sup>

At a very young age Julien began to keep a personal diary to record the important occurrences and some of the trivia in his everyday life, records which soon became permeated with details about his visits to the seashore and his impressions and thoughts of the sea. In these diaries, and indeed in virtually all his factual, autobiographical writings, it was his intention to record, for himself and for posterity, his fleeting, inconsistent impressions, notably those of the sea, as well as his melancholic moods, periods of depression, regrets for the past, hopes and dreams for the future, his love for people, and for everything he cherishes (RE, pp. 202-03). Julien certainly fulfils these intentions, and in so doing it becomes apparent to even the most casual reader that many of the physical events of his life as well as his affective states can be traced to the influence of the sea.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix I.

In short, from his first encounter with the sea, Julien's experiences, impressions, love and fear of the sea were accumulating in his diary. All of these records and his experiences relating to the sea stimulated a growing passion to transcribe them for posterity in his books.

The use and comprehensiveness of his diary records is evident in his autobiographies, Prime Jeunesse, and Un Jeune Officier pauvre,<sup>10</sup> which include almost all facets of his personal life and experiences, selected information about members of his family and friends, and trace his early experiences and events pertaining to his life in the navy.

Some of Viaud's diary entries about sea voyages appeared as articles in periodicals published early in his writing career.<sup>11</sup> These entries also provide source material for non-fiction work, such as Au Maroc, in which Viaud depicts the desert as "un paysage marin" and compares many of its aspects to those of the sea, as he does in Le Désert. In L'Oeuvre de Pen-Bron près le Croisic, he expounds the therapeutic qualities of the sea which also appear to be helpful to his ailing friend, Carmen Silva, as seen in L'Exilée. As in so much of his writing Viaud includes images, comparisons, influences and descriptions of the sea in La Galilée.

<sup>10</sup> Fragments of Viaud's diary published by his son Samuel.

<sup>11</sup> "De 1872 à 1884 ... Viaud publia des articles dans au moins un numéro de l'Univers illustré, dans seize numéros de l'Illustration, et dans trente-et-un numéros du Monde illustré". C. Wesley Bird, Pierre Loti, correspondant et dessinateur, 1872-1889 (Paris: Impressions P. André, 1948) p. vii.

It is in Viaud's fictional writings, however, that his use of material from his diaries helps establish his reputation as perhaps France's best known writer of sea novels. His experiences as a sailor, and the records he made of these experiences, are moulded by the imaginative powers of the artist and become the prime determinant of a series of sea-related fictional works. The plots, events and settings of many of his novels, the descriptions and depictions of the sea itself, can so often be linked to entries in his diaries. Similarly, many of the seafolk referred to in the diaries serve as inspirations or models for a multitude of characters who people his novels.<sup>12</sup>

It was in this very subject matter that we developed a keen interest. As we delved into Viaud's sea novels we became intrigued by the way in which Viaud drew on his own experiences to create a world peopled by characters whose lives were dictated by and dependent upon the sea. We became fascinated by two aspects of this world. First, somewhat in the manner of a Balzac with his Comédie humaine, or a Zola with his Rougon-Macquart, Viaud painted a panoramic view of a type of society: that of seafolk and the forces which influenced their existence. Second, we came to believe that this panoramic painting was not static. We detected signs of an evolution

<sup>12</sup> The protagonist "Loti" appearing in five of the novels is the same character in each one, aging and evolving in step with Viaud. These novels are Aziyadé, Le Mariage de Loti, Mon Frère Yves, Madame Chrysanthème and Le Roman d'un enfant.

in the depiction of the major players, the seafolk and the sea itself. This evolving depiction, it seemed to us, was related to changes occurring within the seaman/novelist himself, as he moved from young adventurer enjoying shore-leave in exotic ports, to mature seaman exposed to the hard work, excitement and dangers at sea and then, in later life, to malcontented officer assigned to mainly shore duties.

Our review of the literature pertaining to Viaud did little to further our investigation of these aspects of his life and work. Most works that we read tended to confirm the obvious, that the sea exerted a preponderant influence on the seaman, diarist, writer of travelogues and novelist. Moreover, the critics paid scant, or oblique, or inadequate attention to Viaud's relationship with the sea in general, and to his depiction of seafolk and the sea in particular.

It is hardly surprising that, in the numerous biographies written about Viaud, the authors did not focus on the sea in Viaud's novels. The works by Brodin, Serban, De Coglay, Farrère and de Traz<sup>13</sup> essentially limit discussion of the sea to information about Viaud's naval career and sea voyages, while making little reference to their relationship with the fictional world that was moulded from them.

Several other works are essentially attempts to under-

<sup>13</sup> Brodin, see Footnote 8; Nicolas Serban, Pierre Loti, sa vie et son oeuvre (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1920); Michel Du Coglay, Le Vrai Loti (Tunis: Editions de "La Kahena", 1941); Robert de Traz, Pierre Loti (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1948); Claude Farrère, Loti (Paris: Flammarion, 1930).

stand various aspects of the complex character and personality of Viaud. Millward evaluates the influence of "l'esprit fin de siècle" on the work of Viaud in what is "essentiellement un effort pour situer l'homme et l'oeuvre dans son époque".<sup>14</sup> Lefèvre sees Viaud as disturbed and troubled and, therefore, eruditely tries to "rassembler, [...] grouper et [...] coordonner tout ce que Loti a écrit sur lui-même." Much of this is about seamen and the sea, but the author discusses Viaud and the sea only to enhance our understanding of the writer himself.<sup>15</sup> Blanch and Ekström also see Viaud as experiencing internal struggles and despair which prompt him to seek escape and refuge at sea,<sup>16</sup> and Le Targat's study concludes that the sea is a means of escape for Viaud.<sup>17</sup> In the broad scope of his work, Quella-Villéger examines Viaud's early attraction to the sea and the circumstances surrounding Viaud's naval career and sea voyages which provide sources for his novels and other work.<sup>18</sup>

All of the foregoing biographers give some attention to

<sup>14</sup> Keith G. Millward, L'Oeuvre de Pierre Loti et l'esprit "fin de siècle" (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1955), p. i.

<sup>15</sup> Raymond Lefèvre, La Vie inquiète de Pierre Loti (Paris: Société Française d'Éditions Littéraires et Techniques, 1934).

<sup>16</sup> Lesley Blanch, Pierre Loti, Portrait of an Escapist (London: Collins, 1983); P.G. Ekström, Evasions et désespérances de Pierre Loti (Göteborg: Gumperts Förlag, 1953).

<sup>17</sup> François Le Targat, A la recherche de Pierre Loti (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1974).

<sup>18</sup> Alain Quella-Villéger, Pierre Loti l'incompris (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 1986).

Viaud's relationship with the sea, but there is, perhaps naturally, no focus on the depiction of the sea world in Viaud's novels.

In discussions of Viaud's writing some critics focus on his talents as a correspondent during his early sea voyages, when he contributed articles complete with his own sketches of exotic people, places and maritime scenes which were published in periodicals (see p. 7). Bird describes some of these sketches and articles and Farrère published a hundred of Viaud's sketches complete with dated commentaries about the vessels, voyages, and the sketches.<sup>19</sup> Bordeaux comments on the fantasy of youth and the sensitivity of the writer in Viaud's descriptions of "la mer hyperborée", "les mers tropiques", et "la mer qui se lamente en sourdine".<sup>20</sup> Again, however, from our point of view, these works shed little light on the depiction of the fictional world in which we are interested.

In studies of a single novel, Barthes, in his discussion of Aziyadé, offers a critique of various aspects of Viaud's writing and style.<sup>21</sup> In his study of Le Mariage de Loti, Lefèvre explains the source and origins of the novel, and

<sup>19</sup> Claude Farrère, Cent Dessins de Pierre Loti commentés par... (Tours: Arrault, 1948).

<sup>20</sup> Henry Bordeaux, La Vie et l'art - Ames modernes (Paris: Perrin et Cie, 1895), pp. 77-130.

<sup>21</sup> Roland Barthes, "Pierre Loti: Aziyadé", dans Le Degré zéro de l'écriture suivi de nouveaux essais critiques (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), pp. 170-87.



makes direct comparisons between extracts from the novel and the appropriate texts from Viaud's diaries to show how he improved phrases, images and descriptions, which often include those of the sea.<sup>22</sup> Viaud's use of "improved" diary descriptions and his talent as an artist are certainly factors contributing to his evolution as a novelist; nevertheless, there is little discussion of seafolk and the sea itself.

Some critical works have been devoted to an analysis of some common aspects found in various groups of Viaud's novels. Augustin, for example, penned two articles underlining the force of Viaud's style in the descriptions of exotic realism in four of his novels.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, Wake, in his study of nine of Viaud's novels, considers them an extension of an autobiography. He tends to focus on interpreting the plots, symbolism and imagery which he finds in the novels, in order to explain Viaud's inner conflicts and alleged bisexuality, his contradictory moral values, sense of guilt and his fears of aging and death. Wake's work is, therefore, a psychological study of the novelist in which the sea's role is in the background except for some interpretations of symbology in Pêcheur.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Raymond Lefèvre, Le Mariage de Loti (Paris: Société Française d'Éditions Littéraires et Techniques, 1935).

<sup>23</sup> M. Augustin, "Étude littéraire sur les ouvrages de Pierre Loti", Modern Language Notes, 4 (1889), 222-27, 281-85.

<sup>24</sup> Clive Wake, The Novels of Pierre Loti (The Hague: Mouton, 1974).

Quella-Villéger also looks to Viaud's novels in his search for clues to a better understanding of the novelist. This critic refers to Viaud's novels, together with his non-fiction work, primarily to explain how and why the sailor is at a particular place at that time, and to support his thesis that Viaud was generally misunderstood by his contemporaries. Quella-Villéger provides us with detailed information on Viaud's relationships with sailors and others who became his models for protagonists. With his focus on understanding Viaud, this critic seems to concentrate on the people with whom Viaud comes into contact and, with the exception of a chapter which includes the origins and story behind Yves and Pêcheur, little attention is given to the sea or seafolk in the novels.

There are two studies which, however, do touch on these two aspects in some of Viaud's novels. Both studies are limited to the sea novels Yves, Pêcheur and Matelot. The study by Pagliarulo includes chapters on "La Mer et les marins", and "La Mer comme fond"; nevertheless, although there is some discussion about the activities of sailors at sea, Pagliarulo's characterization is quite limited: there is almost no discussion about sailors as individuals nor about their home life and families.<sup>25</sup> The protagonists are almost never referred to by name; in fact, Jean Peyral and Yann are the

<sup>25</sup> Anna Pagliarulo, La Mer chez Pierre Loti (Napoli: Istituto universitario orientale, 1941).

only protagonists other than Loti whose names appear on more than one occasion. Furthermore, while the study indicates that the sea is portrayed as an immense, eternal and immutable background, and as an intelligent, fatalistic force engaged in a duel with man, there is little evidence to support the latter characterization. Pagliarulo's study is, in short, somewhat limited in both scope and intent: the analysis of characterization is confined to but three novels and therefore there is no attempt to trace an evolution in characterization of either seafolk or the sea.

Chartier's thesis also includes two chapter titles, "La Mer et le marin" and "La Mer comme cadre", which are somewhat similar to, but more analytical than those of Pagliarulo.<sup>26</sup> Chartier analyzes some characteristics of the sailors, but ignores their families. She sees the influence of the sea as both positive and negative, as it acts on the characters of the sailors. Her study recognizes the continual change taking place in the sea due to changes in geographical and atmospheric conditions. As Chartier explains: "Dans cette thèse...nous nous sommes appliqués premièrement à l'étude de la vie de l'auteur au point de vue maritime",<sup>27</sup> that is, her efforts seem to be devoted to a study of the author as revealed through his novels. On the other hand our study is devoted to the

<sup>26</sup> Aline Chartier, La Mer dans l'oeuvre maritime de Pierre Loti (Québec: Université Laval, 1949).

<sup>27</sup> Chartier, Conclusion p. 15.

analysis of the evolution of the characteristics of the protagonists, the seafolk and the sea, as depicted in the novels.

It seems apparent from the preceding review of the literature that there is general agreement on the obvious: the sea exerted a preponderant influence upon Viaud. This influence is reflected in his writings, both autobiographical and fictional. It is, however, quite apparent that, to date, critics have failed to perceive, or at the very least to emphasize, how Viaud's own relationship with the sea corresponds to an evolution in his depiction of both the seafolk who people his novels and of the sea itself. Our own readings have led us to perceive three distinct phases in this important evolution, firstly with respect to the seafolk - in three separate chapters - and secondly with respect to the sea - in a fourth chapter.

The first phase of the study, examined in the chapter entitled "Youthful Adventures", is illustrated by the novels Aziyadé and Le Mariage de Loti, which reflect the earlier voyages of seaman Viaud. These two novels are both about young, somewhat naive, inexperienced sailors ashore in an exotic port after long sea voyages. The results of these sea voyages are evident in the sailors' outlook and approach to life ashore, and in their activities and adjustment to the pleasures, vices and relationships available in port.

To illustrate the second phase in the chapter entitled

"Toil, Dangers and Family", we draw upon two later novels, Mon Frère Yves and Pêcheur d'Islande. These novels concentrate the reader's attention upon people who, like Viaud himself, have evolved into more mature and responsible, career sailors with dependent families and loved ones who are also subject to the sea's influence. Unlike the philandering protagonists in the first phase, these sailors are serious as they carry out their life work at sea, and usually marry home-town girls.

In the third and final phase, discussed in the chapter "Reminiscence and Anticipation", we draw upon three novels: Madame Chrysanthème, Le Roman d'un enfant and Matelot. These novels belong to a period when Viaud is older, semi-retired, often confined to shore duties, and therefore not actively engaged in sea voyages. In each of these novels the heroes are all similarly discontented with their current lot in life. Each hero is essentially reminiscing about the happier days of his youth, or engaged in a sometimes dream-like quest for happiness in the future. Whether indulging in nostalgic reminiscence or forlorn hopes of a better future, they all have a common denominator in their propensity for temporal escapism.

The fourth chapter traces the evolution of the depiction of the sea through the three phases of novels. In the first phase our study of the seamen in foreign ports shows Viaud's depiction of the results of the sea's influence upon sailors who have been exposed to the isolation, dangers and celibacy

of protracted sea voyages. The sea is, therefore, a lasting influence on the sailors at sea and ashore. Its role is first as a facilitator, a magic carpet to romance and adventure then it becomes more passive as that of a backdrop whose presence is constant, but the sea is rarely at centre stage. In the second phase, the sea no longer acts as a passive backdrop; its expanding influence is evident in its changing moods and unpredictable dangers. Its power is manifested in its ability to becalm ships, to move them at great speed or destroy them. The sailor, whose life is inextricably intertwined with the sea, is the recipient of both the benevolence of the sea and its malevolence.

In the third phase the sailor, away from the sea, has a tendency to look back wistfully to the action-packed days of his youth. Characteristics of the sea which appeared in the earlier novels may at times be seen but it provides excitement only in retrospect. The sea is less benevolent and still exercises some control over the lives of the protagonists.

We therefore propose to show that it is possible to establish an evolution in the influence of the sea on Viaud as a novelist. Within the chapters discussing the three phases, we shall follow the same methodology. Firstly, we shall review the novelist's perception and literary adaptation of his personal experiences and those of others. Secondly, we shall provide a brief summary of plot and settings of each novel, the better to reinforce the link between reality and

fiction. Against this background, we shall describe and analyze the evolution of the depiction of the seafolk who people Viaud's novels. This is followed by a chapter dedicated to a study of the evolving role of the sea across the three phases of Viaud's novels.

## CHAPTER TWO

### YOUTHFUL ADVENTURES Aziyadé and Le Mariage de Loti

The two novels marking the beginning of the evolution in Viaud's portrayals of the fictional world of the sea are based on material gathered from the experiences of his early years as a sailor prior to writing his first novel.

When Julien arrives at the naval academy and is faced with the harsher, all-male environment and military discipline, he is forced to cope with major changes from his lifestyle at home, where he had always been the well-protected pet of doting older women.

The young trainee is introduced to the impersonal aspects aboard a naval vessel when he is given a number to replace his name and a hammock to sling and sleep in. He feels as if he is a long way from his private room and bed at home, which prompts him to write about a feeling of isolation: "C'était la première fois que je me sentais définitivement seul au milieu d'inconnus, en même temps que c'était mon premier contact avec cette classe de durs serviteurs de la Flotte..." (PJ. p. 254). It was not the ship-board life which had attracted him to the navy, "mais la mer, le grande large et surtout, il va sans dire, les rives lointaines des colonies..."



(PJ. p. 119). This attraction develops into a strong love for the sea, and these distant shores and colonies with palm trees become material for the novels to be discussed in this chapter.

As a naval cadet, Julien's first sea voyage takes place from the fourth to the twenty-ninth of August 1868 aboard a propeller-driven escort vessel, the Bougainville.<sup>28</sup> This familiarization cruise along the western coast of France is not a very enjoyable one for this over-protected, frail new sailor who is often seasick.

The following year Viaud, now Aspirant de 2<sup>e</sup> classe, sets sail on October the fifth for a year of practical training aboard the propeller-driven training ship, the Jean Bart. After a round trip to the Azores, the Jean Bart departs Brest, to visit several ports along the Mediterranean, arriving at Smyrna (now Izmir) on February 20, 1870. During the five days at Smyrna and another eight days at Marmaris Julien has his first opportunity to see some of the sights and experience enough of the pleasures available in Turkey to kindle a fervent desire to return.

On March 15, 1871, Aspirant de 1<sup>re</sup> classe Viaud is assigned to the Vaudreuil. This steam-powered escort vessel departs Lorient on the eighteenth of May to make a voyage of exploration around South America to the Pacific Ocean; it drops anchor in the port of Valparaiso, Chile, on November 1, 1871.

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix I, p. 290.

Julien is then transferred to the frigate Flore, which sails to Easter Island then on to Tahiti. There for two months, the young sailor enjoys the Tahitian life style and exotic adventures formerly lived and described in letters by his brother. Julien is thus able to experience the exotic pleasures which he had dreamed about and longed for since his childhood and had so strongly determined his decision to enlist in the navy.

Moreover, his diary records pertaining to this sojourn in Tahiti in 1872 provide source material for his second novel, Le Mariage de Loti. In this novel Viaud becomes Harry Grant, who is renamed, Loti, the name of a Tahitian flower.<sup>29</sup> the heroine, Rarahu is a composite of several girls; Queen Pomaré plays the role of the same name in the novel and George, Loti's brother, is based on Viaud's deceased brother, Gustave. These protagonists and many events in the story are a combination of fact and fiction, as Viaud explains in part in a letter to "Plumkett":<sup>30</sup>

Vous avez compris Rarahu comme moi-même; vous avez compris ce qui est exprimé, et lu entre les lignes ce qui n'est pas écrit.

29 A lexicon of Tahitian words is included in the text of the novel (pp. 31-33). Letters from Rarahu to Loti are also written in her language with translations (pp. 290-98).

30 Plumkett, the "midshipman de la marine de S. A. Britannique" is in reality "l'Enseigne de vaisseau" Jousselin (1851-1932). This long-standing friend was aboard the Borda (Rendeer in this novel) with Viaud and wrote the preface to Azivadé. They also collaborated in writing Fleurs d'ennui, published in 1882.

Ce sont en effet des notes anciennes que j'ai rassemblées, c'est un vrai livre de jeunesse; j'avais trouvé inutile de vous dire cela, sachant que vous le trouveriez tout seul. Cependant, ce ne sont plus des mémoires, comme Aziyadé: la vérité n'est respectée que dans les détails, le fond de l'histoire n'est pas vrai; j'ai combiné plusieurs personnages réels pour en faire un seul : Rarahu, et cela me semble une étude assez fidèle de la jeune femme maorie,<sup>31</sup> Tout ce qui concerne Taimaha est rigoureusement vrai.<sup>32</sup> (JI-I. pp. 62-63)

Lefèvre proves that many of the events and descriptions in Mariage are found in Viaud's diaries by making a detailed comparison between selected pages in the novel and entries in Viaud's diaries: "Loti, dans son livre, a reproduit presque textuellement le contenu de son Journal Intime. Les modifications sont insignifiantes: d'une part, des changements de noms propres; d'autre part, des retouches de style".<sup>33</sup>

After this brief but happy sojourn in the island paradise, Viaud returns to France via San Francisco, Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro, arriving at Brest on December 4, 1872.

Viaud is then assigned to La Bretagne, a training vessel stationed in Toulon. In January 1873, he is transferred to La Savoie, an armoured steam-frigate based initially at Toulon then later at Golfe-Juan to serve on manoeuvres in the

<sup>31</sup> In this novel the term Maori is employed in the Tahitian sense, that is, it refers to all Polynesians whereas currently this term refers exclusively to the indigenous people of New Zealand.

<sup>32</sup> "Taïmaha, de son vrai nom Tarahu, était la femme tahitienne du frère de Pierre Loti" (JI-I, p. 63).

<sup>33</sup> Raymond Lefèvre, Le Mariage de Loti (Paris: Société Française d'Éditions Littéraires et Technique, 1935). p. 66.

Mediterranean. On his next voyage, to Senegal, Enseigne de vaisseau Viaud is aboard the frigate, L'Entreprenant.<sup>34</sup> Soon after arriving in Africa, he is assigned to Le Petrel, patrolling the coast from Saint-Louis to Dakar until his departure, aboard L'Espadon, in July 1874.

During this stay in Africa, Viaud suffers an emotional trauma brought on by two events: the estrangement of his relationship with Joseph Bernard,<sup>35</sup> and the heart-break and disillusion resulting from his ill-fated love affair with a married woman and the resultant birth of their son.<sup>36</sup>

These events produce a rather significant effect on the evolution of Viaud and a lasting depressive influence on his state of mind. As the father of an illegitimate son, Viaud's depression is exacerbated when he is ostracized by officers of the Sovereign.<sup>37</sup> Viaud's morose, pessimistic outlook brought on by his traumatic experience in Africa prompt him to seek a means of escape which he seems to find in his motivation to write; this experience also influences the content

<sup>34</sup> See naval ranks in Appendix III.

<sup>35</sup> In referring to Bernard, Viaud writes: "John, lui, n'est pas comme moi, et je crois que déjà ce pays l'enchanté; depuis notre arrivée je le vois à peine. Il est d'ailleurs toujours ce même ami fidèle et sans reproche, ce même bon et tendre frère, qui veille sur moi comme un ange gardien et que j'aime de toute la force de mon coeur" (ML. p. 7). Bernard is upset by Viaud's disloyalty, or perhaps bisexuality, in transferring his affection to the Polynesian girls which with his next affair in Africa spells the end of the sailors' relationship.

<sup>36</sup> In Viaud's own words: "Cette année 1874 a passé comme un ouragan dans ma vie" (JI.I 1878-1881, p. 100).

<sup>37</sup> Quella-Villéger, p. 38 & 358, note 39.

of his novels (see below).<sup>38</sup>

Examples of the impact of this experience are evident in both of the novels discussed in this chapter. Each one takes place in an exotic port where the hero's love affair ends with the heroine being overcome with grief and is heartbroken. The settings and plots are somewhat similar to Viaud's sojourn in Africa. There is, however, a reversal of the roles played in Viaud's actual experience in Senegal where he, rather than the heroine, is the rejected one.

In another effort to escape depression, Viaud attempts to overcome the effects of his disappointments through intense physical activity; he also tries to forestall such rejections in the future by improving his physical appearance. These two factors prompt the sailor to enter the navy's physical fitness school at Joinville. Although Viaud was remarkably successful in improving his physical condition during the program at Joinville, it is not until his arrival in Turkey that his mental attitude improves.

Viaud serves aboard a corvette, Le Thetis, and then a frigate, La Couronne, on manoeuvres in the Mediterranean. These vessels operate out of Toulon from early 1876 until August when La Couronne moves to Salonica (presently the Greek

<sup>38</sup> Viaud wrote a novel, his third, which reflects this traumatic experience; Le Roman d'un spahi, first published in 1881, is not included in our study because the protagonists are not seafolk and the part played by the sea is minimal.

port of Thessalonica).<sup>38</sup> Viaud is then transferred to the flotilla battleship, Le Gladiateur, which is subsequently based at Constantinople until May 1877.<sup>39</sup>

Viaud's adventures in the Turkish port soon serve to overcome the sorrow, despair and cynicism resulting from his sojourn in Africa. He engages in a romantic affair which soon replaces the unhappy thoughts of the past. The sensitivity evident in Viaud's vulnerability to emotional mood changes is, as we shall see, a characteristic which he imparts to the heroes depicted in the novels of this phase.

Viaud's arrival in this exotic land opens the door to exciting and romantic adventures, notably with Hakidjé who, as his mistress, becomes the model for the heroine of his first novel. In Aziyadé, Viaud plays the role of Loti and Hakidjé becomes Aziyadé; two of Viaud's friends, who appear in his diary as Daniel and Mehmed, become the protagonists Samuel and Achmet, friends of Loti in the fictional work.

It is therefore obvious that, during this early phase of his naval career, Viaud has a predilection for love affairs

<sup>38</sup> "L'année 1876 fut marquée par les débuts d'une assez grave crise internationale dans les Balkans... A la suite de l'assassinat des consuls de France et d'Allemagne à Salonique, quelques navires de guerre furent envoyés dans les eaux turques. Julien, qui se trouvait toujours sur la frégate cuirassée Couronne, pénétra en rade de Salonique, - après escale au Pirée, - le 16 mai" (Brodin, p. 99).

<sup>39</sup> Le Gladiateur, (Deerhound in Aziyadé) was stationed at Constantinople from Oct. 5 to Dec. 11, 1876, then at Thérapia until December 16, returning to Constantinople until Mar. 14, 1877, then back to Thérapia until Mar. 17, when she returned to Constantinople and departed through the Dardanelles on the 18<sup>th</sup>, having completed her assignment in Turkish waters. Revue Pierre Loti (Rochefort: 1981), VI. 122.

with exotic women in ports of call. His first romantic relationship in an exotic port of call was in Tahiti in 1872. His next affair, a highly emotional one, took place in Senegal where he was stationed from September 1873 until July 1874. This was followed by his sojourn in Turkey where Hadikjé, events and circumstances provide much of the source material for Aziyadé.

While in Turkey, Viaud's mood reflects, therefore, the intense happiness which comes from being young, physically fit, energetic and, above all, madly in love. He is in this exhilaratingly happy state of mind until he has to leave Turkey, abandoning his lover and friends, to return to France where he begins his career as a novelist by writing Aziyadé in the summer of 1877.

For his second novel, it would appear that, after the highly emotional mood swings brought on by three romantic involvements with girls from different cultures and countries, Viaud decides to write about his first and least complicated affair with young Rarahu who, unlike his other two lovers, was not married.

## 1. Aziyadé

Soon after Viaud's arrival back in France, far from the exotic fantasy of his dream-like idyll in Turkey, his feelings of depression, initially brought on by his romantic involvement in Africa, had resurged after he left Hakidjé. Distraught by the abrupt ending to this, his third, romantic relationship, Viaud becomes bored, depressed, despondent and filled with grief.

Perhaps to counter his depression, Viaud attempts to relive his exotic fantasy by writing a fictional work based on his nostalgic recollections of his Turkish love affair and associated experiences. A young sailor, not unlike Viaud himself, is to be depicted as the hero. In this effort, Viaud is encouraged by a close friend and naval officer, Lucien-Hervé Jousselin, who provides advice and critiques the novel as it develops. Moreover, Jousselin is portrayed as the character, Plumkett, in both of the novels discussed in this chapter; among his activities in this role he also writes the preface to Aziyadé and the introductory chapter in Le Mariage.

As Viaud's depression continues, he seeks spiritual guidance or escape by entering a monastery, the Trappe de Bricquebec, on two different occasions, in February 1878 and



again in 1879. It would seem, however, that his most successful outlet for alleviating depression is through intensive writing.

By the end of 1878, Viaud's depression-inspired period of intensive literary activity culminates with the completion of Aziyadé, which is published the following year with the rather lengthy title: "Extrait des notes et lettres d'un lieutenant de la marine anglaise entré au service de la Turquie le 10 mai 1876 tué dans les murs de Kars le 27 octobre 1877".<sup>41</sup>

Aziyadé describes the adventures of an English naval officer, Loti, who arrives in an exotic port after a long sea voyage. Viaud imparts his own love of the sea to the hero who, when lonely ashore, tends to seek refuge on the sea where he finds comfort and solace from his loneliness. The initial setting is Salonica which, at the time of the novel, is a most unfriendly port and a dangerous place for foreign naval personnel (see p. 25). Loti is filled with youthful expectations of pleasures ashore and, being accustomed to the dangers of ship-board life and having escaped from the imposed celibacy at sea, he is not deterred by the unfavourable military and political conditions in port.

Faced with what he perceives as the lonely tranquillity of the port, Loti, like the stereotype sailor with a girl in

<sup>41</sup> "Cette bataille de Kars...fut à l'automne 1877 l'épisode central de la guerre russo-turque en Arménie... L'armistice fut conclu le 31 janvier 1878, et le traité de San Stefano du 3 mars fit de Kars une ville russe (elle le resta jusqu'en 1920)" ( Martin, pp. 29, 360).

every port, is determined to make the most of his visit to a foreign country and immediately begins his quest for excitement by establishing questionable relationships with a native boatman, Samuel, and a young girl, Aziyadé.

The boatman becomes a friend of the sailor and his guide to the night-life and pleasures of the port. As an interpreter he facilitates Loti's initial meeting and subsequent romantic affair with Aziyadé. Their meeting place is often aboard a small boat with the lavish, exotic comforts of a, "lit qui flotte", where the hero spends late evenings and nights with Aziyadé drifting towards the open sea in her small craft.

The hero, like Viaud with his Turkish paramour, becomes completely engrossed in his liaison with Aziyadé, without giving a moment's thought to the risks to both himself and Aziyadé. She is not only from a different culture and speaking a foreign tongue, she is the wife of another man and an inmate of his Muslim harem.

Their affair is punctuated by distress and suffering resulting from frequent separations due to the sailor's naval duties and the marital status of his young mistress. The lovers' first lengthy separation occurs towards the end of July when the navy moves Loti to Constantinople to join the Deerhound serving in the waters of the Bosphorus and the Danube.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Deerhound is sometimes spelled "Derrhound" in this and some other early editions of Aziyadé.

Lonely and despondent when ashore in Istanbul, the hero settles in a house in Péra, which overlooks the sea and a cemetery whose gloominess reflects his state of mind. Loti attempts to overcome his loneliness by nightly escapades in search of pleasure. During the day he wanders near the seashore, seeking solace on brief excursions in a caïque on the straits.

Loti's outlook improves when Samuel eventually joins him during the autumn when they are able to seek and enjoy pleasurable exploits together. Nevertheless, they decide to move to Eyoub in November; Aziyadé subsequently joins them, turning their pleasant home into a love nest close to the Golden Horn. While living here, as in Salonica, the proximity of the sea provides romantic settings for the young couple as they travel by caïque (Az. pp. 157, 220).

They are separated again in January when Loti leaves aboard the Deerhound; he is required to serve at sea for, "Huit jours à Buyukdéré, dans le haut Bosphore, à l'entrée de la mer Noire" (Az. p. 151).<sup>42</sup> The romance seems to be cooling off as Loti himself initiates the lovers' next separation; he obtains a ten-day furlough to journey to Angora despite the winter weather. He and Achmet, who had replaced Samuel in their household, seem to want to be together away from Aziyadé. During the trip, the two friends obtain horses and leave their fellow travel-

<sup>42</sup> Buyukdéré is a small village on the European bank about 20 kilometres from old Stamboul. It is actually some distance from the entrance to the Black Sea.

lers to go their own way; they visit Mudurin then, "Nicomédie et Nicée, les vieilles villes de l'antiquité chretienne".<sup>43</sup> Their travels also take them to Kara-Moussar, Brousse and Moudania before finally arriving back in Stamboul.

The lovers' idyllic interlude then resumes until Loti learns that the departure of the Deerhound is imminent. He immediately tries to find a way to extend his stay in Turkey. He explores every avenue, from the ramifications of jumping ship, of relinquishing his British citizenship, even of enlisting in the Turkish army. The last days pass quickly and after several delays and reprieves Loti departs on March 27<sup>th</sup> 1877, having promised to write often and return soon.

Some letters are exchanged, and in May Loti does return to Stamboul, only to learn that Aziyadé has passed away, perhaps of a broken heart. The novel concludes with a quotation from the Stamboul newspaper announcing the death of the Englishman, known in Turkey as Arif-Ussam-effendi, who had been killed in the Battle of Kars while serving in the Turkish army.

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In Aziyadé Viaud concentrates the reader's attention on one particular seaman, the hero, Loti, who arrives in port full of pent-up energy. His sense of excitement and anticipa-

<sup>43</sup> Nicée and Nicomédie are now Isnik and Ismidt (Az. pp. 228, 229, 231).

tion is heightened by the dazzlingly exotic surroundings in which he finds himself. This novel, then, is about the adventures and characteristics of a young, somewhat inexperienced and naive sailor, as he copes with living in a strange land among people who are, to him, foreign in language, customs, religion and lifestyle.

The first and most predominant characteristic of the sailor after he disembarks is his susceptibility to feelings of loneliness and isolation. On his first stroll around the inhospitable port these feelings of loneliness and isolation are unmistakable in his recorded impressions:

La population de Salonique conservait encore envers nous une attitude contrainte et hostile; aussi l'autorité nous obligeait-elle à traîner par les rues un sabre et tout un appareil de guerre. De loin en loin, quelques personnages à turban passaient en longeant les murs et aucune tête de femme ne se montrait derrière les grillages discrets des haremlikes; on eût dit une ville morte.

Je me croyais si parfaitement seul... (Az. pp. 5-6)

Loti's feelings are exacerbated by his tendency to avoid fellow officers and be a loner when ashore; he seeks a change from the inescapably close relationships with his "frères de mer", which are imposed by long voyages at sea. In port he tends to seek the company of simple, young, native people. His preference to seek new friends rather than to associate with those from his ship, together with the strange environment of the foreign port, where Loti neither knows anyone nor understands the language, serve to intensify his feelings of isolation.

These feelings prompt Loti to take remedial action. His subsequent activities are, therefore, explained in part by his need to combat these feelings, as well as by a pent-up desire to experience what appear to be the exciting opportunities available in his exotic new surroundings. Loti wants, in fact, to live out the sailor's daydreams about adventures ashore; consequently he attempts to participate in and enjoy all available pleasures during his brief sojourn in port. To realize these desires he seeks to enter into a relationship with a native girl and to find friends to accompany him on quests for pleasure and excitement. To accomplish these aims, he recognizes the importance of blending with the local environment by dressing appropriately, and of learning the language and making a favourable impression on the natives.

There is perhaps nothing more effective than a love affair with an exotic girl to combat a sailor's loneliness. Accordingly, Loti depicts a whole new life opening up when at first sight he is fascinated by Aziyadé in her elaborate Turkish costume. Her sea-green eyes and matching silk capelet incite the narrator-hero to describe her as only a young poet in love can. His painting tells us little about her physical appearance, except for her eyes and costume. On the other hand we are able to divine some of the hero's tastes. Loti's description of Aziyadé offers a sharp contrast to the picture of rugged, worldly sailors wearing their coarse uniforms aboard ship. Loti reveals his attraction to exotic costumes

and his love for innocent, childlike girls with the freshness of youth:

Les sourcils étaient bruns, légèrement froncé, rapprochés jusqu'à se rejoindre; l'expression de ce regard était un mélange d'énergie et de naïveté; on eût dit un regard d'enfant, tant qu'il avait de fraîcheur et de jeunesse.

La jeune femme qui avait ces yeux se leva, et montra jusqu'à la ceinture sa taille enveloppée d'un camail à la turque (féredjé) aux plis longs et rigides. Le camail était de soie verte, orné de broderies d'argent. Un voile blanc enveloppait soigneusement la tête, n'en laissant paraître que le front et les grands yeux. Les prunelles étaient bien vertes, de cette teinte vert de mer d'autrefois chantée par les poètes d'Orient. (Az. p. 6)

As Loti's attraction to this young girl develops into a romantic relationship, he describes one of their rendezvous in Aziyadé's "lit qui flotte", as they silently and aimlessly drift on the deep sea, completely oblivious to any danger. His comments reveal the sensitivity and feelings of a naive young man trying to fill the emotional vacuum created by several months at sea. He becomes consumed by an insatiable appetite which cannot be satisfied by the intoxicating exhilaration of such all-too-brief love trysts:

C'est une situation singulière que la nôtre : il nous est interdit d'échanger seulement une parole; tous les dangers se sont donné rendez-vous autour de ce lit, qui dérive sans direction sur la mer profonde; on dirait deux êtres qui ne se sont réunis que pour goûter ensemble les charmes enivrants de l'impossible.

Dans trois heures, il faudra partir, quand la Grande Ourse se sera renversée dans le ciel immense. Nous suivons chaque nuit son mouvement régulier, elle est l'aiguille du cadran qui compte nos heures d'ivresse.

D'ici là, c'est l'oubli complet du monde et de la vie, le même baiser commencé le soir qui dure jusqu'au matin, quelque chose de comparable à cette soif ardente des pays de sable de l'Afrique qui s'excite en buvant de l'eau fraîche et

que la satiété n'apaise plus... (Az. pp. 34-5)

When unable to be with Aziyadé, Loti strives to overcome loneliness by meeting and cultivating friends with whom he can enjoy other pleasures. While relaxing in a café overlooking the sea, he meets a handsome young boatman, Samuel, who soon becomes his friend and interpreter. Loti appears to have an unusual capacity for establishing strong friendships with simple, young people who quickly become very loyal and dedicated to him. It appears that Loti's choice of friends may stem from his desire to associate with people who are somewhat disadvantaged and who tend to look up to him as a well-educated world traveller. This doubtless gives him a sense of importance which is denied him at sea where he is among equal or higher ranking officers.

Samuel is happy with this relationship, for it allows him to function as an interpreter to an officer who wishes to meet other native people, most notably Aziyadé. The friendship between the two seamen quickly develops into a strong mutual affection. During the early morning, after the friends had been frequenting night spots in the seamy side of the city, Loti makes Samuel aware that he wants to initiate a homosexual relationship by taking his hand:

Sa main tremblait dans la mienne et la serrait plus qu'il n'eût été nécessaire?

- **Che volete**, dit-il d'une voix sombre et troublée, **che volete mi?** (Que voulez-vous de moi?)...

Quelque chose d'inouï et de ténébreux avait un moment passé dans la tête du pauvre Samuel; - dans le vieux Orient



tout est possible! et puis il s'était couvert la figure de ses bras, et restait là, terrifié de lui-même, immobile et tremblant...(Az. p. 20)

From this point on the sturdy, muscular boatman is portrayed as Loti's dedicated bodyguard and eventually the lovers' devoted servant:

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 pêle-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. (Az. pp. 20-21)

Loti is obviously proud that he has instilled such affection and devotion in a physically attractive young man such as Samuel. Loti's taste for this type of young man appears again when he establishes a relationship with Achmet, a twenty-year-old: "Singulier garçon, gai comme un oiseau; les idées les plus comiques, exprimées d'une manière tout à fait neuve; sentiments exagérés d'honnêteté et d'honneur. Ne sait pas lire...Le coeur ouvert comme la main..." (Az. p. 110). Achmet, like Samuel, provides insights into Loti's tastes; the hero prefers the company of happy, amusing, young men who are also honest, open and honourable. He seems to favour young, poorly-educated people, perhaps those whom he can control or dominate and who tend to look up to him. Just as important to him is their simplicity. When Loti becomes well acquainted with his new-found friends

he speaks affectionately of this trait which he seems to consider vital: "On déciderait difficilement quel est le plus enfant d'Achmet ou d'Aziyadé, ou même de Samuel" (Az. p. 183).

The hero's prestige as a naval officer, his affectionate nature and out-going friendliness seem to create a strong impression on his simple, new-found friends who almost immediately make an effort to please him. Loti affords them the opportunity to do this by enlisting their help in his quest for pleasure and excitement in the Turkish night-life.

During their pursuit of excitement and pleasure Samuel and Loti, dressed as a Turkish sailor, frequent fascinating places and are drawn to the local sailors' dives near the harbour front. Loti obviously enjoys being close to the sea, among sailors and dressed appropriately, as all this gives him a sense of belonging, of being one of the group even in a foreign land. Furthermore, he is enjoying the pleasures which he had longed for during long sea voyages. Loti, like Viaud, is interested in and able to study the people and their activities in some of the many strange and exotic places which attract sailors in a foreign port:

Mes soirées se passaient en compagnie de Samuel. J'ai vu d'étranges choses avec lui, dans les tavernes des bateliers; j'ai fait des études de moeurs que peu de gens ont pu faire, dans les cours des miracles et les tapis francs des juifs de la Turquie. Le costume que je promenais dans ces bouges était celui des matelots turcs, le moins compromettant pour traverser de nuit la rade de Salonique. Samuel contrastait singulièrement avec de pareils milieux; sa belle et douce figure rayonnait sur ces sombres repoussoirs. (Az. pp. 16-19)

Loti's need for companionship and his gregarious attraction to sailor-friends show how a lonely sailor in a strange port will strive to satisfy his thirst for exciting adventures in exotic places before having to return to the celibate life at sea. This is illustrated in the depiction of one of the hero's escapades, with a Turkish friend, during all-night celebrations in honour of "la grande fête du Baïram, grande féerie orientale, dernier tableau du Ramazan" (Az. p. 71):

Après avoir couru, Izeddin-Ali et moi, tout Stamboul, à trois heures du matin nous terminions nos explorations par un souterrain de banlieue où de jeunes garçons asiatiques, costumés en almées, exécutaient des danses lascives devant un public composé de tous les repris de la justice ottomane, saturnale d'une écoeurante nouveauté. Je demandai grâce pour la fin de ce spectacle, digne des beaux moments de Sodome, et nous rentrâmes au petit jour. (Az. pp. 72-73)

The seaman's attraction to the exotic has been in evidence since his arrival in port. He shows a strong interest in everything different and has a perceptive sensitivity towards the unusual. Loti even shows a tolerance for strange customs, such as the public hanging which greeted his arrival in port. He in fact seeks out, accepts and often admires some vastly distinctive features in the dress, language and religion of the people. He is exposed to these customs and qualities during his wanderings and is attracted by brilliantly-coloured, exotic costumes during his visits to unusual places in search of pleasures and entertainment.

Loti's fascination for exotic modes of dress appears in his depiction of Aziyadé's costume (see p. 34) and is unmis-

takable when he describes his own exotic attire which prompts the admiration of veiled ladies passing in the street: "Voici un Albanais qui est bien mis, et ses armes sont belles" (Az. p. 13). When describing his elaborate costume, Loti's pride and vanity are obvious in this self-portrait as described in a letter to his friend, William Brown:

Début de mélodrame. Premier tableau : Un vieil appartement obscur. Aspect assez misérable, mais beaucoup de couleur orientale. Des narguilhés traînent à terre avec des armes.

Votre ami Loti est planté au milieu et trois vieilles juives s'empresstent autour de lui sans mot dire... Elles se dépêchent de lui enlever ses vêtements d'officier et se mettent à l'habiller à la turque, en s'agenouillant pour commencer par les guêtres dorées et les jarretières. Loti conserve l'air sombre et préoccupé qui convient au héros d'un drame lyrique.

Les trois vieilles mettent dans sa ceinture plusieurs poignards dont les manches d'argent sont incrustés de corail, et les lames damasquinées d'or; elles lui passent une veste dorée à manches flottantes, et le coiffent d'un tarbouch. (Az. pp. 11-12)

Moreover, when he describes his visit to a friend's house, Loti's reaction to the exotic atmosphere, with its cornucopia of sensuality, borders on the mystical:

Il y avait réception chez Izeddin-Ali-effendi, au fond de Stamboul: la fumée des parfums, la fumée du tembaki, le tambour de basque aux paillettes de cuivre, et des voix d'hommes chantant comme en rêve les bizarres mélodies de l'Orient. (Az. p. 205)

On s'imagine avoir été visité par quelque rêve des Mille et une Nuits, quand on se retrouve le matin, pataugeant dans la boue de Stamboul, dans l'activité des rues et des bazars. (Az. p. 210)

The sailor's attraction to things new and unusual also

appears when he is alone in his house in Eyoub where "Il a tiré les verrous de ses portes, et goûte le bien-être égoïste de chez soi (Az. pp. 86-87). He describes some aspects of his accommodations in a letter to Brown:

La chambre de Loti, comme toutes les choses extraordinairement vieilles, porte aux rêves bizarres et aux méditations profondes; son plafond de chêne sculpté a dû jadis abriter de singuliers hôtes, et recouvrir plus d'un drame.

L'aspect d'ensemble est resté dans la couleur primitive. Le plancher disparaît sous les nattes et d'épais tapis, tout le luxe du logis; et, suivant l'usage turc, on se déchausse en entrant pour ne point les salir. Un divan très bas et des coussins qui traînent à terre composent à peu près tout l'ameublement de cette chambre, empreinte de la nonchalance sensuelle des peuples d'Orient. Des armes et des objets décoratifs fort anciens sont pendus aux murailles; des versets du Koran sont peints partout, mêlés à des fleurs et à des animaux fantastiques.

A côté, c'est le haremlike, comme nous disons en turc, l'appartement des femmes. (Az. p. 87)

After Aziyadé moves in, the house takes on an increasingly exotic appearance as she furnishes it in a Turkish decor. Loti obviously appreciates the luxury of their dream house and its furnishings even though they have been acquired through successful gambling and through Aziyadé's pilfering from her master's harem:

Peu à peu, de modeste qu'elle était, la maison d' Arif-Effendi est devenue luxueuse : des tapis de Perse, des portières de Smyrne, des faïences, des armes. Tous ces objets sont venus un par un, non sans peine, et ce mode de recrutement leur donne plus de charme.

La roulette a fourni des tentures de satin bleu brodé de roses rouges, défroques du sérail; et les murailles, qui jadis étaient nues, sont aujourd'hui tapissées de soie. Ce luxe caché dans uneasure isolée, semble une vision fantastique.

Aziyadé aussi apporte chaque soir quelque objet nouveau... (Az. p. 107)

Loti's liking for things new and unusual is in large part explainable by a young man's natural curiosity and sense of excitement. However, it is also, at least to some degree, inspired by a need to satisfy his gregarious instincts, to be accepted by others no matter how different from himself, and a willingness to do whatever it takes to achieve these goals.<sup>45</sup>

Loti's need for acceptance, his yearning to feel like one of a group and to have a sense of belonging stimulate his efforts to integrate into the local scene by studying the Turkish language.<sup>46</sup> His determined effort is successful as he gradually becomes competent in both understanding and speaking the language. He explains in a letter to Brown: "J'en suis venu à adopter pour un temps le langage et les coutumes de la Turquie, - même ses beaux habits de soie et d'or" (Az. p. 143). His rapid grasp of the language is due in part to a natural gift for languages and, as he explains, to his "tour de force d'apprendre en deux mois la langue turque" (Az. p. 60). Moreover, his strong motivation is helped by his knowledge of other tongues and his early realization that it is indispensable for

<sup>45</sup> This need seems to be a reflection of Viaud's almost-friendless childhood and desire to be one of the "peuple": "Confusément, je souffrais d'être enfermé, moi, et penché sur des choses arides, bonnes pour des vieillards, quand dehors les petits garçons du peuple, de tous les âges, de toutes les tailles, et les matelots, plus enfants qu'eux, couraient, sautaient, chantaient à plein gosier, ayant sur la figure des masques de deux sous" (RE. p. 132).

<sup>46</sup> Appendix IV contains a lexicon of Turkish words appearing in this novel.

a foreign environment. Even when travelling by sea, for example when the hero travels via Athos and Dédéagatch to the Dardanelles, he encounters, and is depicted as being able to communicate with, people speaking five different languages: "La conversation générale avait lieu en latin, ou en grec du temps d'Homère. Il y avait même, entre le missionnaire et moi des apartés en langue polynésienne" (Az. p. 45).

In a further attempt to integrate into his Turkish surroundings, the hero dons local apparel. He expends a great deal of time and energy on his costume, paying meticulous attention to detail. Such efforts bring him success and a sense of achievement which borders on boastfulness in the following entry in his diary:

S'habiller en turc à Salonique, dans un costume qui, pour un oeil quelque peu attentif, péchait même par l'exactitude des détails; circuler ainsi par la ville, quand une simple question adressée par un passant eût pu trahir et perdre l'audacieux giaour; faire la cour à une femme musulmane sous son balcon, entreprise sans précédent dans les annales de la Turquie, et tout cela, mon Dieu, plutôt pour tromper l'ennui de vivre, plutôt pour rester excentrique aux beaux yeux de camarades désœuvrés, plutôt par défi jeté à l'existence, plutôt par bravade que par amour. (Az. pp. 196-97)

Loti is, then, a strong-willed young man who, notwithstanding his sensitivity and naivety, displays considerable energy and strength of character in the pursuit of his personal goals. Yet if he has a certain inner strength, there are moments when he feels a need to make an external display

of strength which may, or may not, relate to the truth. In short, he occasionally feels a need to project the macho image of a sailor as fearless and virile. The sensitive inner being and the external expression of machismo seem to come together when he is unable to leave his loved one without having her Turkish name tattooed on his chest: "Et j'emportais sur ma poitrine une petite plaque endolorie, rouge, labourée de milliers d'égratignures - qui, en se cicatrisant ensuite, représentèrent en beau bleu le nom turc d'Aziyadé" (Az. p. 219).

These images of affectionate sensitivity and macho virility are indicative of what can be seen as broader, contradictory sides of Loti's moods, relationships and loyalties. In fact, oscillation between emotional poles is a recurrent aspect of his character, suggesting the type of immaturity and lack of emotional stability one might expect to find in a young, inexperienced seaman. We have seen that Loti is quick to exhibit happiness when emotional needs are fulfilled. However, when the many opportunities for pleasure in this exotic land are not available, his apparent inner strength deserts him and he falls prey to dejection and depression.

Such oscillation between extremes of happiness and depression is often in evidence, particularly in the sailor's correspondence. In a number of his letters to friends and loved ones at home, he exults over his amorous conquests, or boasts of the ease with which he is adapting to new-found



friends or adjusting to his new lifestyle. This self-satisfaction appears in the letter to Brown in which Loti furnishes details about being fitted with an elaborate disguise (see p. 39).

In a letter to his sister in Brightbury, Loti reveals that his depressive thoughts are quickly dispelled when circumstances again become favourable:

Puisque je t'ai parlé d'Aziyadé, je puis bien te dire qu'elle est arrivée. - Elle m'aime de toute son âme, et ne pense pas que je puisse me décider à la quitter jamais. - Samuel est revenu aussi; tous deux m'entourent de tant d'amour, que j'oublie le passé... (Az. p. 107)

A similar abrupt reversal of humour is found in another letter, written to Plumkett. Here, Loti is quick to contradict the impression given in previous correspondence when he was in a melancholy mood, and now expresses his extreme happiness: "Je rentrais ce soir chez moi en me disant, au contraire, que j'étais un des heureux de ce monde, et que ce monde aussi était bien beau" (Az. p. 181).

It is, of course, not simply in his correspondence that we read his expressions of great joy. When, for example, Samuel appears on the scene, Loti feels he is now inhabiting a kind of nirvana and is suitably invigorated:

J'habite un des plus beaux pays du monde, et ma liberté est illimitée. Je puis courir, à ma guise, les villages, les montagnes, les bois de la côte d'Asie ou d'Europe, et beaucoup de pauvres gens vivraient une année des impressions et des péripéties d'un seul de mes jours. (Az. pp. 69-70)

There are many instances of a contradictory frame of mind, and of a tendency to become excessively morose and despondent when circumstances turn against him. Again, this is evident in his correspondence. When, for example, Loti is separated from his friends, he is overcome with melancholy. His despair at being left alone is such that - in an ironical twist of logic - he says that it would be better to have no friends at all than to experience such pain: "Les amis sont comme les chiens : cela finit mal toujours, et le mieux est de n'en pas avoir" (Az. p. 56).

If Samuel's appearance has raised Loti to euphoric heights, he becomes equally negativistic when Samuel no longer appears to be a friend with whom Loti can discuss intimate matters. Then the macho seaman with tattoos on his chest seems to be looking for sympathy in this letter to his close friend Plumkett. Despite what we have seen about the hero's ability to acquire friends readily and his obvious pleasure when among them, Loti characterizes himself as having but few friends, being withdrawn and filled with sadness as he expresses his unhappiness and bitterness:

Derrière toute cette fantasmagorie orientale qui entoure mon existence, derrière Arif-Effendi, il y a un pauvre garçon triste qui se sent souvent un froid mortel au coeur. Il est peu de gens avec lesquels ce garçon, très renfermé par nature, cause quelquefois d'une manière un peu intime, - mais vous êtes de ces gens-là. - J'ai beau faire, Plumkett, je ne suis pas heureux; aucun expédient ne me réussit pour m'étourdir. J'ai le coeur plein de lassitude et d'amertume. (Az. p. 84)

One of the most extreme states of depression is found in

a letter written to his friend Brown. The distraught sailor appears to have lost faith in the Almighty as he offers his "profession de foi":

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 possibles, en attendant l'épouvante finale qui est la mort.

Les vraies misères, ce sont les maladies, les laideurs et la vieillesse; ni vous ni moi, nous n'avons ces misères-là; nous pouvons avoir encore une foule de maîtresses, et jouir de la vie.

Je vais vous ouvrir mon coeur, vous faire ma profession de foi: j'ai pour règle de conduite de faire toujours ce qui me plaît en dépit de toute moralité, de toute convention sociale. Je ne crois à rien ni à personne, je n'aime personne ni rien; je n'ai ni foi ni espérance. (Az. pp. 61-62)

This emotional extremism reveals the volatility of his temperament, of which Loti seems to be fully aware when he summarizes, in a letter to Brown, the ups and downs of his characteristically erratic view of life: "J'ai mis vingt-sept ans à en venir là; si je suis tombé plus bas que la moyenne des hommes, j'étais aussi parti de plus haut" (Az. p. 62). Such volatility becomes apparent even to Loti's sister, who sees what seems to be a split personality as revealed in the changeability of his moods. In her answer to one of his negative letters, she appears to have identified this duality in her brother's personality and describes it with remarkable insight: "Tu cours, tu vogues, tu changes, tu te poses... te voilà parti comme un petit oiseau, capricieux, blasé, battu des vents, jouet des mirages, qui n'a pas vu encore où il fallait qu'il reposât sa tête fatiguée, son aile frémissante" (Az. p. 47).

Such changeability is also evident in Loti's attitude towards his adopted home, Turkey, and his real home, England. He often speaks glowingly of life in Turkey, a lifestyle which reveals happiness shared with his native friends: "Ici, je suis devenu homme du peuple, et citoyen d'Eyoub; je m'accommode de la vie modeste des bateliers et des pêcheurs, même de leur société et de leurs plaisirs" (Az. p. 132). At other times, he admits that he is not entirely happy in the foreign land. He appears to be torn between his loyalty to England and his affection for Aziyadé and her country. He obviously does not want to relinquish either of his lifestyles, he wants to be both Arif-Effendi and Loti, the naval officer. He attempts to acknowledge and explain this duality in a letter to his friend Brown:

Je ne suis pas encore musulman pour tout de bon, comme ... vous pourriez le supposer; je mène seulement de front deux personnalités différentes, et suis toujours officiellement, mais le moins souvent possible, M. Loti, lieutenant de marine. (Az. p. 143)

This volatility also appears in what must, for a seaman, be one of the most fundamental aspects of his life: his relationship with the sea. It would seem, once again, as though he were two people: one is the sailor who loves the sea, but when at sea he dreams about life ashore; the other loves the pleasures of shore life, but when ashore dreams about being at sea.

There is no mistaking the fact that Loti misses the adventures, interesting environment and challenges of the sea,

and the friendship of his "frères de mer" as he gazes longingly from the window of his house towards his ship:

Là-bas, tout au loin, une colline plantée de maisons blanches; c'est Péra, la ville des chrétiens, et le Deerhound est derrière.

Le découragement m'avait pris, en présence de cette case vide, de ces murailles nues, de ces fenêtres disjointes et de ces portes sans serrures. C'était si loin d'ailleurs, si loin du Deerhound, et si peu pratique. (Az. p. 77)

On the other hand, the sailor's commitment to the sea is very much in jeopardy when in a moment of severe desperation prompted by the thoughts of having to leave Aziyadé, he considers jumping ship - deserting. This seems like an easy solution because, when Loti moved to Eyoub, he made an attempt to conceal his name and nationality. This would appear to make it easier for him to jump ship and disappear: "Je m'appelle là-bas Arif-Effendi; mon nom et ma position y sont inconnus. Les bons musulmans mes voisins n'ont aucune illusion sur ma nationalité; mais cela leur est égal, et à moi aussi" (Az. p. 75). As Loti's mood becomes more desperate at the thought of having to leave Aziyadé, he seems to become increasingly serious about deserting and taking on the permanent identity of Arif-Effendi.

The hero arranges an interview with an Ottoman dignitary; however, when confronted with the harsh reality of taking the difficult decision to abandon his naval career and his inherent love of the sea, his volatile mood changes yet again. He is unable to go ahead with this plan and decides against deserting.

We have, then, seen that seaman Loti is a rather unstable character, flitting rather easily between emotional highs and lows. One moment he expresses a belief, and soon afterward rejects it. He also questions some of his most fundamental relationships - with his country, the sea itself, and even with God. Loti is essentially unstable, with a strong tendency towards depression and morbidity. It is therefore not surprising that at times he demonstrates a preoccupation with the ultimate negative condition - death.

As death is a frequent visitor aboard ship it may be that his exposure to loss of life and burial at sea initially created and frequently turns the sailor's thoughts towards the subject. There is no doubt that during times of loneliness and despondency this is a recurring preoccupation. There are a sufficient number of references to death and cemeteries to consider Loti as suffering, at least on occasion, from an obsession.

The opening scene of the novel, the multiple execution, is probably intended to capture the reader's attention, but it also reveals this preoccupation which reappears throughout the novel. In a letter to Brown, Loti writes about his apprehensions about aging and death: "Il y a une vie qui passe, à laquelle il est logique de demander le plus de jouissances possibles, en attendant l'épouvante finale qui est la mort" (Az. p. 61). Moreover, during the course of the novel, Loti portends the death of Aziyadé and Achmet (Az. pp. 257, 284). Then, in a letter to

Plunkett, Loti reveals his premonition of his own death: "Je sens que l'heure présente n'est qu'un répit de ma destinée, que quelque chose de funèbre plane toujours sur l'avenir, que le bonheur d'aujourd'hui amènera fatalement un terrible lendemain" (Az. p. 182).

Thoughts of death become even more serious when suicide comes under discussion. With the many references to death in the novel, it is still remarkable that the suggestion of suicide comes from Aziyadé rather than Loti during one of the lovers' rendezvous afloat. Whether from fear and guilt brought on by her infidelity, or from genuine love for the hero, she suggests a double suicide so that they can be together forever, significantly, at the bottom of the sea. Samuel translates this suggestion for Loti:

Maintenant, dit Samuel en riant, elle demande si tu veux te jeter dans la mer avec elle tout de suite; et vous vous laisserez couler au fond en vous tenant serrés tous les deux... Et moi, ensuite, je ramènerai la barque, et je dirai que je ne vous ai pas vus.

- Moi, dis-je, je le veux bien, pourvu qu'elle ne pleure plus; partons tout de suite, ce sera fini après. Aziyadé comprit, elle passa ses bras en tremblant autour de mon cou; et nous nous penchâmes tous deux sur l'eau.

- Ne faites pas cela, cria Samuel, qui eut peur, en nous retenant tous deux avec une poigne de fer. (Az. p. 27)

Aziyadé's suggestion reveals that she is willing to sacrifice her life for love of the hero and she does die, perhaps of a broken heart, when he leaves her and returns to the sea. Nevertheless, when Loti arrives home, his love for Aziyadé and Turkey provokes changes to his moods and loyalties for the last time. He returns to Turkey where, learning of

Aziyadé's death, he sacrifices his life in the service of his adopted country.

Loti is, then, a young relatively inexperienced sailor determined to realize his high expectations of life in an exotic port. This determination is evident in his linguistic perseverance, efforts to be accepted and ready adoption of local customs and dress. His gregarious instincts enable him to make friends and establish a liaison with Aziyadé which reveals that he is a sensitive, loving person. His love of the exotic serves to stress his sensitivity in that he appreciates some of the finer things in life. On the other hand Loti is subject to emotionally charged and sometimes contradictory mood swings ranging from extreme happiness to deep depression which arouses his recurring preoccupation with thoughts of death and reveals the complex personality of the hero of Aziyadé.

The hero, Loti, sails to another exotic port where he reveals somewhat similar characteristics as he again becomes involved with a beautiful native girl in the next novel of this chapter.



## 2. Le Mariage de Loti

The satisfaction derived from the publication of Aziyadé and the encouragement offered by Jousselin prompt Viaud to start work on another novel based on his personal experiences and associated events. The impressions recorded in the novelist's diaries during his visit to Tahiti, the site of the novel, are probably tempered by the passage of time prior to writing the novel.

This novel first appeared in 1879 as Rarahu, but when Juliette Adam obtained the rights to publish it in La Nouvelle Revue she did so under the title Le Mariage de Loti with the subtitle "Rarahu, par l'auteur d'Aziyadé". Jousselin's participation in the writing is acknowledged by the implication that the first chapter was written by Plumkett.

Le Mariage de Loti, like Aziyadé, centres around the experiences of a British sailor, Harry Grant, whose name is changed soon after his arrival in Tahiti: "Loti fut baptisé le 25 janvier 1872, à l'âge de vingt-deux ans et onze jours" (ML. p. 1). Loti's experiences are devoted primarily to his love affair with a young Tahitian girl, Rarahu, in the port of an exotic South Sea island. As well as the main protagonist being the same personage as the hero of the earlier novel, there are some similarities of plot between Aziyadé and Mariage. These

resemblances prompted De Traz to write:

Presque tous ses romans datent de la première partie de sa carrière. Soit insuffisance d'imagination créatrice, soit besoin de se confesser, il les a extraits de son Journal...

L'invention compte donc pour fort peu. L'intrigue est d'une simplicité extrême. Plusieurs de ces récits, quoique se déroulant dans des décors différents, présentent le même schéma: un jeune officier de marine - Loti à peine grîmé - débarque de son navire - à Salonique, à Tahiti, au Monténégro, à Nagasaki; il s'attache à une indigène qui répond sans tarder à ses avances, car il est irrésistible; puis il repart, et elle se résigne ou meurt.<sup>47</sup>

If De Traz's assessment of the autobiographical content is essentially true, his critical assessment of the novel is perhaps unnecessarily harsh when one considers the public acceptance of Mariage. The number of editions and translations that have been printed, up to and including 1990 - more than a hundred and ten years after the original publication - provide ample proof that readers tend to refute his critique.<sup>48</sup>

The initial setting for this story is the port of Papeete where, in strong contrast to the dangerous and inhospitable reception accorded the hero of Aziyadé in the port of Salonica, "l'hospitalité vous est offerte partout, cordiale et gratuite, et dans toute l'île il n'existe d'autres animaux dangereux que quelques colons européens..." (ML. p. 128).

Le Mariage is an account of the fulfilment of the hero's

<sup>47</sup> De Traz, p. 86.

<sup>48</sup> There were 445 editions of Pêcheur prior to 1934, and Viaud's work has been translated into eleven languages.

childhood dream which was fostered by the tales of the sea and anecdotes recounted by his brother, George. This dream unfolded in the mind of young Harry as he read letters describing George's exotic life in Tahiti and his exciting naval career which culminated in his death and burial at sea.<sup>49</sup>

George's tales induced in the boy's mind an overwhelming desire to see the island. This was certainly a factor in his decision to join the navy, as confirmed by the following passage from a letter to Loti's sister: "Me voici devant cette île lointaine que chérissait notre frère, point mystérieux qui fut longtemps le lieu des rêves de mon enfance. Un désir étrange d'y venir n'a pas peu contribué à me pousser vers ce métier de marin..." (ML. pp. 5-6).

Loti is pleased to learn by Queen Pomaré's warm welcome that his brother, known as Rouéri, is still remembered in Papeete. Loti visits his brother's cottage and later meets his widow who, in answer to his question, nonchalantly replies: "Oui... c'est moi, Taïmaha, la femme de Rouéri, le marin dont les yeux sommeillent (*mata moé*), c'est-à-dire : qui n'est plus..." (ML. p. 193).

Not unlike Taïmaha and Rouéri, Rarahu and Loti soon become involved in a liaison. Having come from opposite sides of the world, they, like the lovers in Aziyadé, seem like a strange couple to form a close relationship.

<sup>49</sup> The protagonist George is based on Viaud's brother, Gustave (1838-1865), "chirurgien de marine", who died while, aboard the Alphée and was buried in the Indian Ocean at 6° 11'N; 84° 48'E (PJ. p. 73).

The lovers, in their efforts to be together and away from other people, leave the inhabited shoreline and travel inland where the charms of the island remain undisturbed by civilization. The young couple also visit their friend, Tiahoui, at Papéuriri where they are welcomed with a festive reception.

Loti's affair with Rarahu is periodically interrupted by his sea duties, as was the affair of Loti and Aziyadé in the earlier novel. These duties take the sailor on voyages to neighbouring islands and another of ten month's duration to the mainland. He also arranges to travel during his free time to another island in order to meet his alleged nephews.

The conclusion of the novel is marred by separations between the hero and his beloved and, as in the other novel in this chapter, her subsequent death. In May 1876, Loti learns of Rarahu's death from some sailors while ashore in a port of call at Malta.

\* \* \*

Whilst there are several differences due to local environment and circumstances, the character of Loti in Le Mariage de Loti is similar in its essential respects to that of Loti in Aziyadé. We shall see that the sailor in a port of call experiences the same feelings of loneliness and attempts to combat such feelings by engaging in a love affair, making friends, seeking excitement, and blending with the environment. The protagonist also displays emotional insta-

bility, with its positive and negative sides. On the other hand, he is perhaps more sensitive and imaginative than he was in Turkey.

In contrast with the hero of Aziyadé, who arrives in port without any preconceived ideas about Salonica, Loti is buoyed by the high expectations of his childhood dreams. His arrival in Tahiti is, therefore, somewhat marred by his unrealistic anticipation which results in an initial reaction of disappointment, sadness and petulance because his dreams are not immediately fulfilled. This is evidenced by the tone of his mood as depicted in this letter written to his sister: "Les années ont passé et m'ont fait homme. Déjà j'ai couru le monde, et me voici enfin devant l'île rêvée. Mais je n'y trouve plus que tristesse et amer désenchantement" (ML. p. 6). His disappointment and loneliness are soon overshadowed by the warm reception of the hospitable natives which helps the hero adapt to the environment of the exotic port of call. The charms of the island, most notably those of the lovely girls, soon dispel his disenchantment. Like the hero of Aziyadé, Loti's major hopes for self-fulfilment focus on a love affair with a simple native girl, in this case Rarahu.<sup>50</sup>

As in the previous novel, the hero shows an appreciation for the more graceful aspects of feminine beauty, and is also

<sup>50</sup> "Il y eut, en réalité, un grand nombre de Rarahus, dont aucune ne mourut de tristesse, ce qui serait d'ailleurs tout à fait étranger au caractère des femmes de l'île, pour qui l'amour est une fonction naturelle, une occupation agréable, et nullement une passion dont on meurt" (Lefèvre, Mariage, p. 17).

fascinated by the exotic attributes of Rarahu: her unusual tattoos and atypical native features:

Rarahu était d'une petite taille, admirablement prise, admirablement proportionnée; sa poitrine était pure et polie, ses bras avaient une perfection antique.

Autour de ses chevilles, de légers tatouages bleus, simulant des bracelets; sur la lèvre inférieure, trois petites raies bleues transversales, imperceptibles, comme les femmes des Marquises; et sur le front, un tatouage plus pâle, dessinant un diadème. Ce qui surtout en elle caractérisait sa race, c'était le rapprochement excessive de ses yeux, à fleur de tête comme tous les yeux maoris; dans les moments où elle était rieuse et gaie, ce regard donnait à sa figure d'enfant une finesse maligne de jeune ouistiti; alors qu'elle était sérieuse ou triste, il y avait quelque chose en elle qui ne pouvait se mieux définir que par ces deux mots : une grâce polynésienne. (ML. p. 9)

Loti thrives on intimacy and is pleasantly surprised when Rarahu suggests a relationship such as his brother had enjoyed while on the island:

- Loti, disait-elle, si bas que sa petite voix douce était comme un souffle à mon oreille, Loti, veux-tu que nous habitions ensemble une case dans Papeete? Nous vivrons comme vivaient ton frère Rouéri et Taimaha, comme vivent plusieurs autres qui se trouvent très heureux, et auxquels la reine ni le gouverneur ne trouvent rien à redire. (ML. p. 114)

Rarahu feels all alone after the death of her parents and hopes that Loti, like some other sailors, may be unable to resist the strong attraction of the island. As the lovers' relationship flourishes, Loti's rapidly-changing perception of his mistress is unmistakable. In his passionate adoration of Rarahu, he appreciates the fact that she seems to be changing from a local girl: she has developed an elegance almost European. As we have seen in Aziyadé, Loti is not a

rough or coarse sailor but likes the finer things in life and Rarahu now appears to be more civilized and coquettish, and her intelligence seems, in his eyes, to be developing rapidly.

At other times it is Rarahu's sensuality which excites him, and which rouses in him the kind of similar response typical of a young man in his situation. One evening he is quite elated as they make their way home after an old-fashioned saturnalia at the palace to which native girls were welcome. His senses are stimulated by the frenzied, seductive pleasures they have both experienced during the gala festival at the palace:

Nous partions la tête en feu; nous rentrions dans notre case, comme grisés de ce mouvement et de ce bruit, et accessibles à toutes sortes de sensations étranges.

Ces soirs-là, il semblait que Rarahu fût une autre créature. La upa-upa réveillait au fond de son âme inculte la volupté fiévreuse et la sauvagerie. (ML. p. 136)

In strong contrast with the happy palace events there are times when Loti is at the bottom end of the emotional scale with feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, his need for friends to help him overcome periods of loneliness is considerably less than was the case in Aziyadé. He is able to spend much more time with Rarahu, who is not married, than he could with Azyadé; therefore, his relationship with friends like Samuel and Achmet is unnecessary. Nevertheless, he does have one firm friendship with a fellow officer, John B\_\_, a "frère de mer" and confidant aboard the Rendeer, who provides comfort in times of need. Loti is very fond of John who

watches over him like a "guardian angel" when aboard ship; however, when Loti's needs are being taken care of on shore, he seems to be selfishly averse to sharing the shore activities of the island with John:

John, lui, n'est pas comme moi, et je crois que déjà ce pays l'enchanté; depuis notre arrivée je ne le vois à peine. Il est d'ailleurs toujours ce même ami fidèle et sans reproche, ce même bon et tendre frère, qui veille sur moi comme un ange gardien et que j'aime de toute la force de mon coeur... (ML. p. 7)

Loti in fact pursues another friendship worthy of note. His relationship with Queen Pomaré, a former friend of his brother, is significant not so much as just another illustration of his search for an antidote to loneliness, but rather of his love of hobnobbing with important people. In this respect the hero of Mariage resembles the hero in the preceding novel who actively sought the company of persons who made him feel important. Whereas in Aziyadé Loti enjoyed the respectful attention of those of lower status, in this instance he seems to bask in the reflected glory of one of the most important personages on the island.<sup>51</sup>

Loti is a frequent guest at the palace, and his friendship with the queen develops to the point where she suggests that he marry Rarahu (ML. p. 25). Moreover, the queen assists Loti in his efforts to learn the Tahitian language: "Pomaré

<sup>51</sup> Viaud himself had a penchant for ladies of distinction and royalty; his friends included, among others, Juliette Adam, Sarah Bernhardt, Queen Elizabeth of Rumania (Carmen Sylva) and Queen Natalie of Serbia.



consentait à tenir de longues conversations avec moi. .. La reine, pendant nos longues parties d'écarté, me regardait avec intérêt, charmée de me voir étudier et aimer cette langue destinée à disparaître" (ML. p. 140).

In addition to enjoying friendships and a passionate love affair Loti, like the hero in Aziyadé, is fascinated by the exoticism of the island. Indeed, he seems to be attracted by almost anything exotic. This characteristic first appeared in his reference to his brother's exotic lifestyle in Tahiti, the source of his childhood dreams. As the naval officer now sees his childhood dreams of "l'île délicieuse" becoming a reality, he recalls his nostalgic childhood visions so vividly that he is unable to believe that he is really there.

The exotic setting and those dreams still have such a strong attraction for him that he seems unsure as to whether he is actually there and not just dreaming about a sailor ashore in the port of a South Sea island. The hero seems to be indulging his propensity for mysticism, as seen in Aziyadé, by linking his earlier dreams of things exotic to the present exotic realities in this letter to his sister:

Je ne puis te dire tout ce que j'éprouve d'impressions étranges, en retrouvant à chaque pas mes souvenirs de douze ans... Petit garçon, au foyer de famille, je songeais à l'Océanie; à travers le voile fantastique de l'inconnu, je l'avais comprise et devinée telle que je la trouve aujourd'hui. - Tous ces sites étaient DEJA VUS, tous ces noms étaient connus, tous ces personnages sont bien ceux qui jadis hantaient mes rêves d'enfant, si bien que par instants c'est aujourd'hui que je crois rêver...

Cherche, dans les papiers que nous a laissés Georges, une photographie déjà effacée par le temps : une petite case au bord de la mer, bâtie aux pieds de cocotiers gigantesques, et enfouie sous la verdure... - C'était la sienne. - Elle est

encore là à sa place... (ML. p. 44)

Loti's highly charged imagination and receptiveness to the unusual stimulates a strong desire to be a part of the exoticism of the island, to blend with the environment, to be one of the exotic people. He of course shares the gregarious instincts of the hero of Aziyadé, but in this case there is no need for the sailor to don disguises in the small port community where he soon becomes accepted, nor is there any reason to conceal himself from possible enemies as was the case in the earlier novel. Nevertheless, Loti enjoys wearing what to him are exotic costumes in order to look like and be accepted as a Tahitian, even if he cannot be one. This can be seen from his detailed descriptions and comments as he affirms: "J'avais fait le voyage en costume tahitien, pieds et jambes nus, vêtu simplement de la chemise blanche et de paréo national. Rien n'empêchait qu'à certains moments je ne me prisse pour un indigène, et je me surprénais à souhaiter parfois en être réellement un..." (ML. p. 133).

Moreover, Loti believes that he may have relatives nearby whose presence would increase his sense of belonging. He was told by George's mistress that they have two sons who are living with her mother, and consequently, Loti sets out on a search for his brother's alleged sons on the island of Moorea.<sup>52</sup>

Echoing the needs of the hero in the previous novel, Loti

<sup>52</sup> Harry eventually meets the two boys but determines from their ages that they could not be George's sons.

attempts to blend with his environment and enhance his sense of belonging by taking a new name and adopting local customs. He also learns the language to facilitate and increase his enjoyment of the many diversions available on the island, though in this instance he seems less linguistically gifted, or perhaps less strongly motivated than in Aziyadé.

In both novels of this phase, we are therefore presented with a hero who shows determination and energy in his desire to integrate into his exotic surroundings. The heroes are also similar in that they also have a sensitive side to their natures, though the latter hero, perhaps because he is younger and less worldly than his equivalent in the preceding novel, does not feel a need to project a macho image and disguise the more poetic side of his soul. In this respect we seem to be dealing with a more naive and sincere Loti. Whereas in the previous novel Loti attempted to impress the native population with his macho image, in this one the hero impresses the guests at the queen's ball with his talent as a pianist:

Je jouai avec fièvre, en m'étourdissant moi-même, tout ce que je trouvai au hasard sur le piano. - Je réussis pour une heure à ranimer le bal; mais c'était une animation factice, - et je ne pouvais pas plus longtemps la soutenir. (ML. p. 281)

This more tender, sensitive side of the younger Loti's nature is apparent in even more significant ways. Whereas the hero of Aziyadé never seems to entertain a thought about the morality of his relationship with Aziyadé, nor to concern

himself with her sensibilities, in Mariage Loti shows a greater sense of morality and is more aware of the feelings of others. His ethical sense is underscored when his imminent departure opens his eyes to the fact that, essentially, he has been taking advantage of a young, innocent girl. He is struck with a sense of guilt due to his treatment of Rarahu. When she lost her parents, Loti had immediately accepted her suggestion that they live together. He gave no consideration to the fact that he would be taking advantage of the simple, trusting, teen-age orphan, who would eventually be left to fend for herself when he abandoned her. She had trusted him, believing his unrealistic promises to return. This feeling of guilt increases as he realizes that she has been living an impossible dream and lavishing upon him all the love that was possible for a very young and passionate native girl:

Je l'aimais bien, mon Dieu, pourtant!  
Quelle angoisse de la quitter, et de la quitter  
perdue...

- Oh! ma chère petite amie, lui disais-je, ô ma bien-aimée, tu seras sage, après mon départ. Et moi, je reviendrai si Dieu le permet. (ML. p. 263)

Loti has, then, a greater sense of morality and responsibility as a young sailor than the somewhat older hero who became involved with Aziyadé.

If the hero of Mariage appears more sincere than his predecessor in respect of his ethics and sense of responsibility, he still shows signs of the same type of emotional immaturity we discovered in the hero of the earlier novel.

We find instances of similar swings between emotional poles, from extreme happiness to extreme melancholy.

For example, Loti's piano renditions at Queen Pomaré's palace ball perhaps marked the acme of Loti's happiness and enjoyment of the island life. However, while still at the palace after the festivities are over, Pomaré, Rarahu and Loti discuss his imminent departure, prompting a violent mood swing: "Nous pleurons tous les deux, ou pour mieux dire, tous les trois: la vieille reine nous tenait les mains, et ses yeux d'ordinaire si durs se mouillaient de larmes" (ML. p. 283).

Loti's emotional volatility first became apparent when, soon after his arrival in Papeete, he was disappointed and depressed, but his relationship with Rarahu proves so exciting that it immediately changes his mood to one of happiness. He thus again moved from one emotional extreme to the other. In his new-found state of mind he writes to his sister to revise the earlier impressions of the island expressed in his previous letter: "La déception des premiers jours est bien loin aujourd'hui, et je crois que c'est ici, comme disait Mignon,<sup>53</sup> que je voudrais vivre, aimer et mourir..." (ML. p. 43). Rarahu makes such a difference to Loti's outlook that, on one emotional high, he considers the island as a place where, like George, he would like to live, love and die. Furthermore, towards the end of his sojourn in port, his happiness changes quickly to

<sup>53</sup> A character in the opera Mignon by Ambroise Thomas (1866) based on Mignon portrayed in Goethe's Wilhelm Meister.

disappointment and sadness with the imminent break-up of his relationship with Rarahu and inevitable return to the sea.

The changeable nature of Loti further reflects that of the hero in Aziyadé in that he seeks to integrate into a new environment but finds himself with ambiguous feelings towards the one in which he had spent much of his life. Just as the hero of Aziyadé fell in love with Turkey and consequently sacrificed some of his European values, so this hero becomes so enchanted by the Tahitian paradise and his young mistress that he loses contact with his real life in the navy and with the moral values of his British family. However, the new feelings and loyalties never totally displace the old, and this again leads to a kind of duality and uncertainty:

Je ne croyais pas tant l'aimer, la pauvre petite. Je lui suis attaché d'une manière irrésistible et pour toujours; c'est maintenant surtout que j'en ai conscience. Mon Dieu, que j'aimais ce pays d'Océanie! J'ai deux patries maintenant, bien éloignées l'une de l'autre, il est vrai; - mais je reviendrai dans celle-ci que je viens de quitter, et peut-être y finirai-je ma vie... (ML. pp. 213-14)

If such uncertainties suggest immaturity, we see that the heroes of Aziyadé and Mariage also have in common what may be described as a negative aspect of character: a preoccupation with death which borders on obsession.

This preoccupation shows up in the hero's effort to learn all that he can about his dead brother's life on the island and his attempt to relive his brother's adventures even though they lead to his death. Moreover, it seems as though the

hero's obsession is intensified by the frequent deaths: Queen Vaékéku dies on Nuka-Hiva (ML. pp. 99-110),<sup>54</sup> Queen Pomaré's granddaughter passes away and the Queen is not expected to survive her loss (ML. p. 301).<sup>55</sup> This is followed by the death of Rarahu's parents leaving her alone in the world: "Sa mère Huamahine est morte la semaine passée; son père Tahaapaïru est mort ce matin, et elle est restée auprès de lui avec les femmes d'Apiré pour la veillée funèbre" (ML. p. 111).

Several characteristics of the heroes in the novels in this phase are similar in many respects but usually vary only in degrees of intensity. The heroes's love affairs, their need for acceptance, attraction to things exotic and gregariousness are common attributes. They are essentially one with their inherent, emotionally-charged mood swings and morbid preoccupation with death.

There are, however, several noticeable differences between the heroes in the two novels. In Mariage Loti is less cavalier in his love relationship and more sensitive to the feelings of his mistress. He does not establish friendly relationships with handsome, simple young men to accompany him on nightly escapades in search of questionable pleasures. Rather than attempting to project a macho image as was the case of the hero in Turkey, Loti, in Papeete, appears to be

<sup>54</sup> Queen Vaékéku was the last of the queens of Nuku-Hiva, the largest of the Marqueses Islands.

<sup>55</sup> Queen Pomaré actually lives another two years.

more sensitive to the finer things in life. He has a stronger sense of loyalty to family and country unlike the hero of Aziyadé who gives up family, country and his life for Turkey. There are indications of tender sensitivity and greater sincerity in the hero of Marriage, which were not in evidence in the more worldly hero of Aziyadé. He appears to be more interested in selfish, and somewhat irresponsible, excitement and dubious pleasures.

The similarities in the characteristics of the hero in these two novels tend to define the men in the first phase of Viaud's novels as carefree, pleasure seeking young sailors. The minor differences in the depictions of the heroes stem primarily from the dissimilar conditions and circumstances in two entirely different exotic ports of call, rather than from substantial characteristic differences. Their attributes presage the evolution towards the more responsible, serious, hard-working sailors to be examined in the next phase of Viaud's novels.



## CHAPTER THREE

### TOIL, DANGERS AND FAMILY Mon Frère Yves and Pêcheur d'Islande

By 1884 Viaud is a Lieutenant de vaisseau de 2<sup>e</sup> classe with increased authority and responsibilities. This new role, coupled with the passing of time, Viaud's outlook on life and his priorities within it, become more mature and serious. It is during what we term as the second phase of his development that Viaud writes Mon Frère Yves and Pêcheur d'Islande. In these novels the protagonists, like the author, display a distinct evolution from their counterparts of the earlier phase. The heroes are no longer the carefree young sailors enjoying pleasures in ports of call, but are depicted as becoming more serious and mature seamen living in the harsh, albeit, fictional world of seafolk and the sea.

Viaud's own voyages and adventures continue to provide a major source of material for his writing. However, unlike the earlier novels which are quite clearly based on specific voyages to ports of call, the novels in this phase represent more of a mosaic of Viaud's experiences. In creating the novels Viaud selects and weaves together a variety of aspects

and events from diary records of his many voyages, including those to and from the port settings featured in the novels in the first phase.

Viaud's 1871 journey around Cape Hope and on to Tahiti was only a minor source of material in Le Mariage, whereas, in Mon Frère Yves Viaud draws heavily on this source in his rendering of a similar voyage undertaken by Loti and Yves aboard the Primauguet.

Moreover, in the first phase, friends were little more than acquaintances with whom the heroes could share pleasures, but in this second phase there is a noticeable evolution in friendships; friends are important trustworthy men whose shortcomings can be overlooked, but for whom one is willing to risk one's life.

At the time of writing the two novels in this chapter Viaud still bears the scars of the personal problems created by his shore-leave relationship in Africa (see p. 23). This had undoubtedly been a maturing experience for Viaud who, having fathered a son, now attaches more importance to family life. The romantic liaisons in ports of call are no longer an acceptable way of life either for himself or for his maturing heroes. The heroes are more interested in marriage to a good wife and mother who is willing and able to share the trials and hardships of seafolk.

Much of the material for Mon Frère Yves is in fact based on the friendship and adventures of Viaud and Pierre Le Cor,

who become Loti and Yves in the novel.<sup>56</sup> Le Cor is a simple Breton sailor, a ship-mate and close friend of the author who describes him as: "Mon seul ami dans la vie, mon compagnon, mon frère est un matelot un peu forban qui sait tout juste lire".<sup>57</sup> Viaud makes some use of his diary records and a more extensive use of his imagination; diary records include identifiable references to names, dates, places and events which he now changes and elaborates freely. In fact, Pierre Le Cor considered that Viaud had overly dramatized certain features in the novel, notably Yves' (Le Cor's) penchant for alcohol:

Le livre de Loti ne lui avait pas plu, il n'aimait pas qu'on lui en parlât - sans doute parce que, à son goût, l'auteur insistait trop sur son funeste penchant. Si d'aventure on se risquait à lui poser une question à ce sujet, il répondait fermé, embarrassé: Exagéré! Exagéré! Beaucoup d'invention.<sup>58</sup>

During the few short years (1878 - 1880) that Viaud and Le Cor actually spent together, and notwithstanding the many voyages to exotic places that Loti and Yves shared in Yves, they were seldom far from home. A substantial number of the descriptions of the sea and depictions of its influence stem,

<sup>56</sup> Le Cor was born Aug. 25, 1852, (Yves Kermadec, Aug. 28, 1851. YV. p. 2) at Saint-Pol-de-Léon where he died Jan. 5, 1927. Hector Talvart. Auteurs Modernes de langue française (1801-1953). (Paris: chroniques de lettres françaises. 1954) Tome 12, p. 258.

<sup>57</sup> Letter to Emile Pouvillon. (JI. I, p. 219)

<sup>58</sup> Y. Le Corre, Mon Frère Yves à Rosporden, "Cahiers Pierre Loti". (Paris: Association internationale des amis de Pierre Loti, March, 1958). pp. 17-21.

therefore, from diary records of earlier voyages. From September 1877, to June 1878, Enseigne de vaisseau Viaud and Pierre Le Cor are aboard the coast guard vessel Tonnerre, operating along the coast of Brittany. They are also together departing from Rochefort on September 18, 1878, aboard the transport ship Moselle, to service the northern and Brittany ports of Lorient, Cherbourg, Saint Nazaire and Brest as well as the Normandy port of Le Havre, until September 26, 1879.<sup>59</sup>

During these voyages Viaud became familiar with Le Cor's background and the lifestyle of the seafolk in Brittany. Viaud's knowledge of Le Cor's family, of his developing maturity and his marriage<sup>60</sup> was a strong influence on his attitudes and state of mind during the writing of the novels of the second phase. Viaud's increased interest in depicting the family life of seafarers appears firstly in Yves.

A primary source of material for this novel is drawn from the actual period of time which Viaud and Le Cor were together in the navy; however, this period is expanded in the novel to include other periods of Yves' life, from his baptism in August 1851 until he is in his thirty-third year.

Some material for the writing of Pêcheur d'Islande is gleaned from Viaud's rather limited knowledge of the northern environment. He had never sailed in Icelandic waters;

<sup>59</sup> See Appendix I

<sup>60</sup> Yves (Le Cor) is married to Marie (Marianne) Keremenen on October 14, 1877 (Yv. pp. 137-38). As Yves' wife, Marie becomes the long-suffering heroine of the novel.

however, he was exposed to rather maturing experiences during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. Midshipman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Viaud served aboard the corvette, Décres, operating out of Lorient into the English Channel and the North and Baltic seas. Moreover, Viaud's voyages to and from the Far East aboard L'Atalante and La Corrèze in 1883-84 provide new experiences for the young man who was accustomed to romantic flings in ports. The Far East adventure was also a source of material for the fictional account of the experiences of Sylvestre, a protagonist in Pêcheur who serves in China, dies during the homeward voyage and is buried in Singapore.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, the source of the greater part of the material for this novel comes from Viaud's visits to Brittany. Viaud affirms this source by citing his meetings with Islandais in Brittany and Paimpol. In Yves, he makes reference to "des Islandais, qui s'exilent tous les étés, six mois durant, pour aller faire la grande pêche dangereuse dans les mers froides." (Yv. p. 82), and to Paimpol, "où nous déjeunons en compagnie d'Islandais et d'autres frères de la côte." (Yv. p. 100)

The protagonists are painted from life in that Yann Gaos is based in part on Guillaume Floury of Pors Even, a mature former Islandais, and Sylvestre Moan appears to be patterned on a combination of Sylvestre Floury and Pierre Scoarnec of

<sup>61</sup> While stopping over in Singapore Loti took part in the burial of a deceased sailor which inspired and added to the realism of the interment of Sylvestre. (Jl.II. pp. 76-78).

Ploudaniel who served with the novelist aboard the Atalante:

Tous trois sont d'excellents marins, ayant l'expérience des mers lointaines, celles d'Islande pour Guillaume Flourey qui participe à une saison de pêche sur la Marie en 1884, celles d'Extrême-Orient pour les deux autres que l'on retrouve dans la campagne du Tonkin de 1883 à 1885.<sup>62</sup>

The heroine, Gaud Mével, appears to be modeled after a fisherman's daughter whom Viaud first met at Brest in December 1882. It is generally accepted that she was Guillaume's sister, Célestine Flourey, to whom Viaud is very strongly attracted. She seems to fit in with his maturing outlook towards marriage which prompts his desire to take a wife and have a family. Much to his surprise, his marriage proposal is immediately rejected; Célestine is already promised to an Islandais (JI. pp. 3-4). This rejection does not deter Viaud from confirming that Gaud and other protagonists are copied from living models; in 1887, he states publicly that: "Yann, Gaud, Sylvestre, tous fidèlement, servilement copiés d'après nature, tous vivent encore".<sup>63</sup>

In sum the Viaud of this second phase is not the Viaud of the first phase. Since his earliest days as a novice seaman he has faced dangers at sea, personal problems and rejection; such experiences coupled with the passing of time have made him more responsible, serious, and work and family

<sup>62</sup> Quella-Villéger, p. 106.

<sup>63</sup> André Moulis, Cahiers Pierre Loti, Dec. 1971, p. 19.

oriented. These attributes are reflected in the significant differences between the heroes of the earlier phase of his novels and the toil, dangers and families of seafolk in this group. In contrast with the romantic relationships and pleasure-seeking activities of the carefree heroes in the earlier novels who enjoy their shore leave in exotic ports, both Yves and Pêcheur are about real-life maritime activities, about sailors in action. The novels have two foci: first the responsibilities, monotony, isolation and dangers associated with the daily work of the sailor on long sea voyages in an often hostile environment far from his home and family; second, the influence of the sea on the sailor and on his lifestyle and that of his loved ones at home.

1. Mon Frère Yves.

Prior to and during the initial writing of Yves, Viaud appears to have been going through a period of inner conflict which, in a letter to Mme Lee Childe, he likens to the endless heartbreaking labour of Sisyphus approaching a crisis:

Ma vie à moi s'épuise à remonter une sorte de rocher de Sisyphe qui, sans doute, dans un avenir prochain, m'écrasera. Quelquefois, quand je l'ai fait remonter bien haut, je m'endors dans une espèce de paix; alors on me voit vivre comme tout le monde, et même assez gaiement. Je me réveille et le retrouve là, redescendu, tout près, tout près de ma tête; et je suis si las de cette lutte que l'envie me prend de ne pas bouger et de le laisser tomber sur mon front pour en finir (JI. II, pp. 10-11).

Viaud's state of mind and his attempts to obtain outside help from friends such as Lee Childe suggest that Yves is more than a novel about rehabilitating an alcoholic. It is also a reflection of Viaud's efforts to seek outside help to resolve his personal dissatisfactions, and the difficulties which he faces in adapting to the responsibilities of mature manhood.

This novel, published in 1883, first appeared in the



Revue des deux mondes, from August 1<sup>st</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1883.<sup>64</sup>

In the dedication of Yves, Viaud attempts to share the responsibility for writing about a socially inappropriate subject, an alcoholic, by attributing the idea for the story to Alphonse Daudet: "C'est vous qui m'avez donné cette idée, d'écrire une vie de matelot et d'y mettre la grande monotonie de la mer".

Yves is, then, not a not a novel about happy adventures in exotic places; rather it centres around the harsh realities of the dangerous life of sailors at sea and the struggles faced by a hard-working, ordinary seaman, Yves, who is cursed with hereditary alcoholism. His officer friend, Loti, although preoccupied with his own internal conflicts, attempts to do everything possible to rehabilitate his shipmate.

On their first voyage together Loti chooses Yves as his "gabier de hamac" and they soon become good friends. On their return to Brest, Yves and his fellow topmen celebrate his recent promotion to, "un quartier-maître de manoeuvre". After the long sea voyage Yves drinks to excess with the result that the next morning he is carried aboard ship unconscious and confined to the brig in irons. This is not unusual behaviour for Yves, nor will it be unusual for Loti to intercede on his behalf, as he does on this occasion in order to keep disciplinary action to a minimum. This pattern is reflected on many of their subsequent voyages together.

<sup>64</sup> After the publication of Mariage, and prior to Yves, Viaud wrote and had published Le Roman d'un spahi (1881) and Fleurs d'ennui (1883), about a voyage to Monténégro.

Yves takes Loti to visit the picturesque village of Saint-Pol-de-Léon where Yves' mother and sisters live, and where he spent his childhood in Finistère. This village with its humble homes is typical of the villages of other sailors, many of whom come from similar poor villages and homes like that of Yves where his mother and many other long-suffering women await the return of their loved ones.

Loti meets Yves' family and friends and learns about the hardships faced by the sailor's mother. She sees Loti as a guardian angel for Yves and asks the officer to watch over her son as though they were brothers. Loti recognizes the demands and challenges of such a commitment; nevertheless, in strong contrast to the carefree, pleasure-seeking hero we have seen in Viaud's earlier novels, Loti agrees to accept the responsibilities and carry out the poor mother's request.

Loti and Yves are, however, separated then reunited by various circumstances throughout the novel. The navy separates them almost immediately, then months later they find themselves together again aboard the Médée.<sup>65</sup> During this particular voyage they are caught up in a vicious storm, facing the type of dangers and challenges unseen in the novels of the first phase. The storm not only tests the mettle of

<sup>65</sup> The Médée is not among the names of vessels on which Loti served so it is probably a fictional name applied to another vessel with which he was familiar and aboard which he may have experienced this storm. On August 1, 1876 he was assigned to the flotilla gunboat, the Gladiateur returning to Toulon on May 8, 1877. On June 5, 1877, he was assigned to the escort Bouvet conducting trials at Rochefort.

all of the seamen aboard, but also causes the death of two crew members. After this voyage the friends are again separated: Yves' assignment keeps him in Brest while Loti ships out to Greece.

Some six months later, Loti receives a letter from Yves announcing his marriage to Marie who later gives birth to a son, Pierre. Loti visits Toulven for the child's baptism, where he is to be godfather.

Yves subsequently has difficulty in adapting to life as a husband and father. When young Pierre is but two years old, he and his mother are living in Brest, awaiting the return of Yves. On his return from previous voyages he had always gone straight home, but after this particular voyage he drinks to excess prior to arriving home. Marie becomes distraught over her husband's behaviour and considers leaving him. When Yves finally sobers up, he is filled with remorse and writes to Loti requesting his aid.

Loti is able to return to Brest and the brothers leave aboard the Sèvre to voyage along the coast. However, Yves' problems continue, and in the port of Cherbourg Loti, using his authority as an officer, has Yves put in irons to keep him on board and sober. It takes time to recover from this confrontation, but the friends eventually make up. As a solution to his problem Yves suggests that he should go ashore only when accompanied by Loti, an arrangement which seems to be satisfactory while they are together.

When the brothers are separated once again, they correspond and Yves manages to behave himself while ashore. Yves is then stationed on one of the ships in the harbour at Brest for two years, an assignment which enables his wife and son to join him.

Unfortunately Yves finds it very difficult to adjust to family life on shore and becomes very unhappy in Brest. Before long his drinking provokes tension with his wife and during one of their disputes Yves accidentally hurts young Pierre. Ashamed and unable to face Marie, the sailor decides to desert the navy.

Loti arrives in Brest just in time to intervene and have Yves reinstated. They sail together to the South Seas aboard the Primauguet. Yves' subsequent conduct during the voyage is above reproach; he is proud of his group, reads books and papers, studies to understand naval charts, and writes to his wife. In Valparaiso, Loti leaves the Primauguet to return to France. Before leaving Loti asks his friend Plumkett to take care of Yves, a precaution which proves to be successful.

Loti visits Toulven with Yves and his family who are planning to build a house on the outskirts of the village. After Yves is promoted to "second-maitre" and moves into his new house, Loti visits the happy couple. While there, the brothers visit the grave of Yvonne, Yves' daughter who died before her father had seen her. There are sad thoughts at the time of the brother's final separation, perhaps foreshadowing

future problems, but the novel ends at a time when Yves seems to have conquered his hereditary illness and everyone appears to be happy.

\* \* \*

In this novel, and in Pêcheur, Viaud broadens his character base, rather than concentrating our attention on the figure of one sailor in a port of call, as was the case in the first phase of his work. In Yves we have two main protagonists. Loti is an officer, depicted as more mature than the heroes of earlier novels; he is no longer interested in casual flirtations but is seriously considerate and willing to take on responsibilities, such as those entailed in guiding, protecting and rehabilitating Yves, the second main protagonist. Yves is an enlisted sailor with a drinking problem. He is depicted as evolving, with Loti's help, from the irresponsible lifestyle of a young sailor to overcoming his hereditary weakness, earning promotions in the navy, taking on the responsibilities of a wife and son, and those of being a home owner. In short, Yves achieves the attributes of mature manhood.

In addition to a broader base of sailors, the novels of this second phase depict seafolk other than the seamen themselves: they include a number of those living on shore and whose lives are inextricably linked to sailors and the sea. In Yves, these seafolk include Yves' mother, brothers, sister,

wife, son and friends.

The sailors are depicted in two types of settings: at sea and on shore. At sea they seem like all sailors, that is, frequently lonely, prone to bouts of monotony and homesickness. The precise response to these feelings varies in this novel: that of the enlisted sailor, Yves, is not the same as that of the more refined officer, Loti. Beyond this, the maturing sailors in Yves display a higher level of physical and mental fortitude, conscientiousness, pragmatism, trust, confidence, courage and stronger feelings of friendship than those visible in the younger heroes of the earlier novels.

In the first pages of the novel, there is a general description of the young lad, Yves, who will evolve into a mature seaman. The portrait is somewhat typical of the early apprenticeship and background of a novice sailor: he is devoted to his mother, lacking in experience and education, innocent and trusting but, unfortunately in Yves's case, there is a ruinous character flaw - a hereditary tendency towards drinking to excess:

Premières années, où il gagnait par mois quinze francs, dont il gardait dix pour sa mère; années passées la poitrine au vent, à vivre demi-nu en haut de ces grandes tiges oscillantes qui sont des mâts de navire, à errer sans souci de rien au monde sur le désert changeant de la mer; années plus troublées où l'amour naissait, prenait forme dans l'âme vierge et inculte, - puis se traduisait en ivresses brutales ou en rêves naïvement purs au hasard des lieux où le vent le poussait, au hasard des femmes jetées entre ses bras; éveils terribles du coeur et des sens, grandes révoltes, et puis retour à la vie ascétique du large, à la séquestration sur le couvent flottant; il y a tout cela sous-entendu derrière ces chiffres, ces noms et ces dates qui s'accumulent, année par

année, sur un pauvre livret de marin. Tout un étrange grand poème d'aventures et de misères tient là entre les feuillets jaunis. (Yv. p. 3)

A few pages later Loti, drawing on the notes which he himself had made concerning Yves, provides a detailed depiction of the paradoxical aspects of Yves' character. At sea, in his element, he is in all respects one of the finest young sailors on board. Ashore, Yves is out of his element and unable to cope; as the victim of his heredity, he runs into trouble in every port and usually ends up drunk and confined in the brig:

Comme notes au service, les siennes n'étaient pas excellentes: "Exemplaire à bord; l'homme le plus capable et le plus marin; mais sa conduite à terre n'est plus possible." Ou bien: "A montré un courage et un dévouement admirables," et puis: "Indiscipliné, indomptable." Ailleurs: "Zèle, honneur et fidélité," avec: "Incorrigible" en regard, etc. Ses nuits de fer, ses jours de prison ne se comptaient plus.

Au moral comme physique, grand, fort et beau, avec quelques irrégularités de détails

A bord, il était le gabier infatigable, toujours à l'ouvrage, toujours vigilant, toujours lesté, toujours propre.

A terre, le marin en bordée, tapageur, ivre, c'était toujours lui; le matelot qu'on ramassait le matin dans un ruisseau, à moitié nu, dépouillé de ses vêtements comme un mort, par les nègres quelquefois, ailleurs par les Indiens ou par les Chinois, c'était encore lui. Lui aussi, le matelot échappé, qui battait les gendarmes ou jouait du couteau contre les alguazils... Tous les genres de sottises lui étaient familiers. (Yv. pp. 37-38)

Physically, Yves is portrayed as what we may call the archetypical seaman: muscular as an athlete, with an implied inner strength; soft-spoken, with a Finistère accent and ready smile. In short, he is an example of what a sea-going Breton sailor should be and almost the antithesis of the shallow,

pleasure-seeking transients who frequent the questionable dives in sea ports:

Yves, un grand garçon de vingt-quatre ans, à l'air grave, portant bien son tricot rayé et son large col bleu.

Grand, maigre de la maigreur des antiques, avec les bras musculeux, le col et la carrure d'un athlète, l'ensemble du personnage donnant le sentiment de la force tranquille et légèrement dédaigneuse. Le visage incolore, sous une couche uniforme de hâle brun, je ne sais quoi de breton qui ne se peut définir, avec un teint d'Arabe. La parole brève et l'accent du Finistère; la voix basse, vibrante d'une manière particulière, comme ces instruments aux sons très puissants, mais qu'on touche à peine de peur de faire trop de bruit.

Les yeux gris roux, un peu rapprochés et très renfoncés sous l'arcade sourcilière, avec une expression impassible de regard en dedans; le nez très fin et régulier; la lèvre inférieure s'avançant un peu, comme par mépris.

Figure immobile, marmoréenne, excepté dans les moments rares où paraît le sourire; alors tout se transforme et on voit qu'Yves est très jeune. Le sourire de ceux qui ont souffert : il a une douceur d'enfant et illumine les traits durcis, un peu comme ces rayons de soleil, qui, par hasard, passent sur les falaises bretonnes. (Yv. pp. 10-11)

This handsome, young sailor is, however, vulnerable to the bouts of homesickness which affect many of those away from home for extended periods. Yves' devotion to his mother, his fond memories of his early childhood at home, and his very limited experience and knowledge of life ashore, spawn periods of homesickness which can strike at any time or in any place, on shore or at sea. This homesickness is perhaps more devastating than the loneliness to which the sailors depicted in the preceding chapter were exposed. The conditions that bring on homesickness are never tougher than those faced by Yves in winter aboard the Sibylle; deprived of many of the basic comforts of human existence, he is exposed to the cold



and darkness on the stormy sea in perhaps one of the most desolate places in the world - the desert-like sea off Cape Horn:

Les tombées des nuits devenaient sinistres. C'étaient les parages du cap Horn : désolation sur les seules terres un peu voisines, désolation sur la mer, désert partout. A cette heure des crépuscules d'hiver, où l'on sent plus particulièrement le besoin d'avoir un gîte, de rentrer près d'un feu, de s'abriter pour dormir, - nous n'avions rien, nous, - nous veillions, toujours sur le qui-vive, perdus au milieu de toutes ces choses mouvantes qui nous faisaient danser dans l'obscurité.

On essayait bien de se faire des illusions de **chez soi**, dans les petites cabines rudement secouées, où vacillaient les lampes suspendues. Mais non, rien de stable : on était dans une petite chose fragile, égarée, loin de toute terre, au milieu du désert immense des eaux australes. (Yv. pp. 69-70)

There are, of course, the inescapable periods of homesickness which simultaneously afflict not only Yves, but the entire crew with sadness, gloom and despondency. These periods occur most frequently with their evening prayers, or during twilight as the sailors watch the last vestiges of light; they dream of home and feel that their life is not all that it should be. Fortunately, as these periods of melancholy are shared by the "frères de mer" their sadness is usually short-lived; after nightfall, when the stars brighten the sky, their melancholic mood is replaced by the contentment that comes from good fellowship, camaraderie and singing:

Il n'y avait qu'une heure de mélancolie inévitable, c'était quand la prière de soir venait d'être dite, quand les signes de croix des Bretons venaient de finir et que le soleil était couché; à cette heure-là, assurément, beaucoup d'entre eux songeaient au pays.

Même dans ces régions d'admirables lumière, il y a

toujours cette heure indéfinie entre le jour et la nuit, qui est triste. On voyait à cet instant-là des têtes de matelots se tourner involontairement vers cette dernière bande de lumière qui persistait du côté du couchant, très bas, à toucher la ligne des eaux...

C'était l'heure des révoltes intimes et des serremments de coeur. C'était l'heure où les matelots avaient la notion vague que leur vie était étrange et contre nature, où ils songeaient à leur jeunesse séquestrée et perdue. Quelque lointaine image de femme passait devant leurs yeux, entourée d'un charme alanguissant, d'une douceur délicieuse. Ou bien ils faisaient, avec un trouble subit de leurs sens, le rêve de quelque fête insensée de luxure et d'alcool pour se rattraper et s'étourdir, la prochaine fois qu'on les déchaînerait à terre...

Mais, après, venait la vraie nuit, tiède, pleine d'étoiles, et l'impression passagère était oubliée; les matelots venaient tous s'asseoir ou s'étendre à l'avant du navire et commençaient à chanter. (Yv. pp. 304-05)

The conditions of the sea and weather can exacerbate the sailors' feelings of isolation and solitude in ways which did not impact on the heroes in the earlier chapter; such feelings are often most intense when nothing else is visible, when one can see nothing but the fog:

En mer, - Nous revenons de la Manche. La Sèvre marche tout doucement dans une brume épaisse, poussant de minute en minute un coup de sifflet qui résonne comme un appel de détresse sous ce suaire humide qui nous enveloppe. Les solitudes grises de la mer sont autour de nous, et nous en avons le sentiment sans les voir. Il semble que nous traînons avec nous de longs voiles de ténèbres; on voudrait les percer, on est comme pressé de se sentir depuis tant d'heures enfermé là-dessous, et on songe que ce rideau est immense, infini, qu'on pourrait faire des lieues et des lieues sans vue, dans le même gris blafard, dans la même atmosphère d'eau. Et la houle passe, lent, molle, régulière, patiente, exaspérante. C'est comme de grands dos polis et luisants, qui s'enflent, donnant leur coup d'épaule, vous soulèvent et vous laissent retomber. (Yv. pp. 232-33)

The sense of isolation is not only brought about by the dismal fog: a calm sea and the fine weather can also under-

score the unnatural, celibate existence of seamen far from land. With time to think, the sailors' thoughts turn to their need for the type of companionship unavailable at sea, notably, in the tropics where:

Il n'y avait rien que les mers désertes, et toujours l'étendue circulaire, absolument vide...

Ces nuits étaient bien d'exquises nuits d'été, douces, douces, plus que nos plus douces nuits de juin. Et elles troublaient un peu tous ces hommes dont les aînés n'avaient pas trente ans...

Ces obscurités tièdes apportaient des idées d'amour dont on n'aurait pas voulu. On se voyait près de s'amollir encore dans des rêves troublants: on sentait le besoin d'ouvrir ses bras à quelque forme humaine très désirée, de l'êtreindre avec une tendresse fraîche et rude, infinie. Mais non, personne, rien... Il fallait se raidir, rester seul, se retourner sur les planches dures de ce pont de bois, puis penser à autre chose, se remettre à chanter... Et alors les belles chansons, gaies ou tristes, vibraient plus fort, dans le vide de la mer. (Yv. p. 307)

The focal point of Yves' homesickness, and the inspiration of many of his dreams when far from home, is a small isolated cottage with low, moss-covered granite walls half buried in the ground by the side of a remote road in Brittany. Brought up in these very modest surroundings Yves, even as a child, begins to develop characteristics not found in the heroes in previous novels. Yves' childhood tended to foster his naivete and candour, and the sensitivity, love of home, mother and traditions, which later appear in the man. Yves' home is the source of his most happy memories and his fondest dreams of a happy future:

Là sont tous les souvenirs d'enfance, à lui; là était son berceau de petit sauvage, là était son nid; foyer chéri

habité par sa mère, foyer auquel, dans les pays lointains, dans les grandes villes d'Amérique ou d'Asie, son imagination toujours le ramenait. Il y songeait avec amour, à ce petit coin du monde, pendant les belles nuits calmes de la mer et pendant les nuits troublées, brutalement joyeuses, de sa vie d'aventures. Une pauvre chaumière isolée, au détour d'un chemin, et c'est tout.

Dans ses rêves de marin, c'était là ce qu'il revoyait: sous le ciel pluvieux, au milieu de la campagne morne du pays de Goëlo, ces vieux petits murs humides, tout verdis de pariétaires; et les chaumières voisines où les bonnes vieilles en coiffe le gâtaient au temps de son enfance; et puis, au coin des chemins, les calvaires de granit, mangés par les siècles... (Yv. pp.79-80)

As Viaud's depictions of seafolk evolve, he tends at times to include seamen in general, rather than concentrate almost specifically on his heroes, as was the case in the first-phase novels. Moreover, in the novels in this chapter, he depicts them at work, and at play, on their ships at sea. This broader perspective is evident in his depictions of the methods developed by the navy to maintain discipline for the enlisted men, such as Yves, whilst serving at the same time as a counterbalance to the isolation of long sea voyages. During fair weather there are many routine duties planned to minimize monotony and maintain morale. Among these tasks is that of swabbing the decks:

... Une sonnerie de clairon tout à coup, alerte et joyeuse : le rappel au lavage!

Ce clairon avait des vibrations grêles, un peu argentines, dans ce beuglement formidable du vent.

Laver le pont quand les lames déferlent dessus, cela semblerait une opération très insensée à des gens de terre. Nous, nous ne trouvons pas cela trop extraordinaire; cela se fait tous les matins, ce lavage, toujours et quand même; c'est une des règles primordiales de la vie maritime. (Yv. p. 125)

The bridge and the decks are not the only components of a naval vessel to be scrubbed frequently, in the interest of maintaining the discipline of the crew; the sailors themselves are also subjected to a thorough cleansing while in appropriate dress for yet another ship-board routine to promote togetherness and camaraderie, and to keep the men usefully occupied. This practice is referred to as "le grand lavage":

Chaque matin, c'était d'abord un délire de propreté qui les prenait dès le branle-bas. A peine réveillés, on les voyait sauter, courir pour commencer au plus vite le grand lavage. Tout nus, avec un bonnet à pompon, ou bien habillés d'un tricot de combat (qui est une petite pièce tricotée pour le cou, à peu près comme une bavette de nouveau-né), ils se dépêchaient de tout inonder. Des jets de pompe, des seaux d'eau lancés à tour de bras. Ils se dépêchaient, s'en jetant dans les jambes, dans le dos, tout éclaboussés, tout ruisselants, chavirant tout pour tout laver; ensuite, usant le pont, déjà blanc, avec du sable, des frotes, des grattes, pour le blanchir encore. (Yv. pp. 299-300)

Such routine morning activities seem to be a source of pleasure for the sailor; at the same time his vigorous training as a seaman continues and he develops physically and mentally. The day's work which follows is organized in part to keep the sailors busy, and to help maintain the discipline necessary to control "ces grands enfants". The simple, strong, mischievous, fun-loving sailors are thereby helped to endure the long periods of monotonous routine and feelings of solitude:

Vers huit heures, ce lavage devait finir, à un certain roulement de tambour. Alors, pendant que l'ardent soleil

séchait très vite toutes ces choses qu'ils avaient mouillées, et commençait à fourbir; les cuivres, les ferrures, même les simples boucles, devaient briller clair comme des miroirs. Chacun se mettait à la petite poulie, au petit objet, dont la toilette lui était particulièrement confiée, et le polissait avec sollicitude, se reculant de temps en temps d'un air entendu pour voir si ça reluisait, si ça faisait bien. Et, autour de ces grands enfants, le monde, c'était toujours et toujours le cercle bleu, l'inexorable cercle bleu, la solitude resplendissante, profonde, qui ne finissait pas, où rien ne changeait et où rien ne passait. (Yv. pp. 300-01)

It is a rare event to see a passing ship in the South Seas. However, during the course of one voyage aboard the Primauguet, they cross paths with an American whaler out of California whose crew includes Yves' brother, Goulven. The navy then slackens its strict discipline and allows its hard-working, isolated sailors to indulge in their need for relaxation and fun. Some members of the crew of the Primauguet have the unexpected pleasure of dining aboard another ship. Afterwards, they celebrate with the whaler's crew, singing and dancing with pent-up energy and enthusiasm created by weeks at sea. However the sailors' prolonged celibate existence deprives him of normal social contacts and leaves him ill prepared for such excitement: the festivities, end with a fight between two of the nautical dancers.

In an example of the harsh discipline aboard the whaler, the captain, wielding a whip made of hippopotamus leather, quickly separates the combatants while explaining to the visitors that the fight was of no importance as the sailors were just drunk. Drinking and fighting aboard ship is unacceptable in the navy, but the combination appears to be

a common characteristic of the whaler's motley crew. It is made up in large part of deserters like Yves' brother who, having fled the navy's strict discipline, are now subjected to an unnatural and more restrictive lifestyle.

In the South Seas the sailors occasionally find another outlet for their pent-up energies and need for some of the fundamental pleasures of life. As their vessel passes close to a small coral island, the sailors are temporarily released from their normal celibate lifestyle: they are allowed to enjoy the company of native girls during a period of recreation on the beach:

Des femmes qui habitaient là s'étaient approchées dans les pirogues, et le commandant les avait laissées monter à bord, devinant pourquoi elles étaient venues. Elles avaient toutes des tailles admirables, des yeux très sauvages à peine ouverts entre des cils trop lourds; des dents très blanches, que leur rire montrait jusqu'au fond. Sur leur peau, couleur de cuivre rouge, des tatouages très compliqués ressemblaient à des réseaux de dentelles bleues.

Leur passage avait rompu pour un jour cette continence que les matelots gardaient. Et puis l'île, à peine entrevue, s'était enfuie avec sa plage blanche et ses palmes vertes, toute petite au milieu du grand désert des eaux, et on n'y avait plus pensé. (Yv. p. 302)

Viaud describes yet another strategy of the navy to counter the negative effects of long sea voyages and to provide the sailor with much-needed diversion. The officers on board often organize an activity called "aller aux sacs". The game provides an opportunity for each sailor to open his sea-bag in a ritual which takes on the appearance of a bazaar. They rifle through their belongings and treasured souvenirs

until a whistle sounds to "Ramassez les sacs!" then the sailors make everything disappear as if by magic (Yv. pp. 303-04).

Another naval custom designed to keep the sailor interested and alert is to take advantage of the sailors' pride and vanity by rewarding the one who can distinguish himself from his peers through some unusual action. Yves earns such a distinction by being the first to sight land after an extended voyage across uncharted seas. The reward as announced by Loti is a double ration of wine:

- Tu as gagné la double, frère, dis-je à Yves.  
Je voulais dire : la double ration de vin au dîner de l'équipage. A bord, cette double est toujours la récompense des matelots qui ont annoncé les premiers une terre ou un danger, - de ceux encore qui ont pris un rat sans l'aide des pièges, où bien qui ont su s'habiller plus coquettement que les autres à l'inspection du dimanche. (Yv. pp. 265-66)

Though many aspects of the sailors' lives are organized and structured by their officers, this is not always the case. Left to their own devices, sailors are often quite capable of finding other outlets for their energies: suitable weather near the tropics inevitably generates the urge to cast a line and fish for whatever is available, even for sea-birds (Yv. p. 68).

If Viaud broadens his spectrum of characters in the novels of this second phase, his portrayal of Loti's life and activities at sea also evolves from that found in the earlier novels in which most of his activities were on shore. If, at sea, the ratings engage in a series of physical activities



which reduce their susceptibility to feelings of homesickness, Loti attends to the varied responsibilities of an officer; his very nature is to keep busy at all times, a characteristic which combines with his ship-board responsibilities and reinforces his increasing maturity by accomplishments rather than self-indulgence.

Nevertheless, while approaching Brest aboard the Médée, after a long voyage to the Far East in September 1877, Loti falls prey to homesickness as he reminisces about his early days in the navy when he was living in port studying and preparing to qualify for sea duties:

... Toujours un émotion de souvenir, quand reparait cette grande rade de Brest, imposante et solennelle, et ces grands navires de la marine à voiles qu'on s'est déshabitué de voir ailleurs. Toutes mes premières impressions de marine, toutes mes premières impressions de Bretagne, - et puis c'est la France.

Le Borda, là-bas; je le regarde et je retrouve dans ma mémoire le bureau sur lequel j'ai passé, accoudé, de longues heures d'étude; et le tableau noir sur lequel j'écrivais fiévreusement, avant l'examen, les formules compliquées de la mécanique et de l'astronomie. (Yv. pp. 127-28)

In contrast to the enlisted men who have routine duties assigned to them by their superiors, Loti is more independent and self-sufficient. He establishes his own routines, one of which is maintaining daily entries in his diary. He records entries about various events and depicts interesting descriptions. These attributes and activities tend to make Loti a role model for Yves.

Another characteristic practice of Loti is that of

studying and enjoying his surroundings rather than blindly accepting them, as seems to be the approach of most enlisted men. Notwithstanding their feelings of solitude at sea, the ratings seem to be entirely ignorant of the fact that there is always some absorbing aspect to be seen by the interested observer. Loti, on the other hand, not only overlooks "la grande monotonie" of the sea but he becomes a student of the sea, examining her in detail with a mature appreciation of her wonders. This fills him with admiration for what goes unnoticed by most crew members: the constantly changing beauty and musical sounds are appreciated by the accomplished sailor/artist, who sketches houses in Turkey, and the musician whose abilities on the piano fascinate the Tahitian queen. These wonders are, perhaps, seen and heard by Loti alone; they are presented for, and ignored by, the eyes and ears of all aboard the Primauguet while she glides before the trade winds during fine weather:

Mais il avait beau courir, il était toujours au milieu du même grand cercle qui semblait éternellement se reformer, s'étendre et le suivre.

Quelquefois ce cercle était noir et dessinait nettement partout sa ligne inexorable qui s'arrêtait aux premières étoiles du ciel, ou bien l'immense contour était adouci par des vapeurs qui fondaient tout ensemble; alors on se figurait courir dans une espèce de globe d'un bleu gris, très étoilé, dont on s'étonnait de ne jamais rencontrer les parois fuyantes.

L'étendue était remplie des bruits légers de l'eau, l'étendue était toujours bruisante à l'infini, mais d'une manière contenue et presque silencieuse; elle rendait un son puissant et insaisissable, comme ferait un orchestre de milliers de cordes que les archets frôleraient à peine et avec grand mystère. (Yv. p. 306)

There is no doubt that the naval officer, like Loti in the earlier novels, has an eye for beauty and artistic appreciation of colour which enables him to perceive the changes that occur within the sea. Moreover, he vividly records his impressions of the gleaming, arrow-like, flight of the flying fish with their flashes of ever-changing colours:

Toujours le cercle bleu, l'inexorable cercle bleu, la solitude resplendissante, profonde, qui ne finissait pas, où rien ne changeait et où rien ne passait.

Rien ne passait que les bandes étourdies des poissons-volants aux allures de flèche, si rapides qu'on n'apercevait que des luisants d'ailes, et c'était tout. Il y en avait de plusieurs sortes: d'abord les gros, qui étaient couleur d'acier bleui, et puis de plus petits et de plus rares qui semblaient avoir des nuances de mauve et de pivoine; on était surpris par leur vol rose, et, quand on voulait les regarder, c'était trop tard; un petit coin de l'eau crépitait encore et étincelait de soleil comme sous une grêle de balles; c'était là qu'ils avaient fait leur plongeon, mais ils n'y étaient plus. (Yv. p. 301)

Even the darkness of night does not prevent Loti from seeing and enjoying the study of his surroundings; it actually affords him an opportunity to examine everything with a new insight and from a completely different perspective. This opportunity goes completely unnoticed by other crew members.

The simple sailors lack Loti's imagination and poetic sensitivity - which we saw in Mariage and which continue to evolve in his depictions of his seafolk. With their different backgrounds, personalities and interests the other sailors are not only unappreciative, but completely unaware of the beauty and activity of the surrounding sea-world. Nightfall

conceals neither the vastness nor the beauty of the sea, but actually reveals to the interested observer a whole new universe illuminated from the depths. Darkness provides an exotic transformation which enables Loti to develop the effects of the ever-changing light in his painting of the magic and mystery associated with the sea since the beginning of time:

Et la mer aussi éclairait par en dessous. Il y avait une sorte d'immense lueur diffuse dans les eaux. Les mouvements les plus légers, le navire dans sa marche lente, le requin en se retournant derrière, dégageaient dans les remous tièdes des clartés couleur de ver-luisant. Et puis, sur le grand miroir phosphorescent de la mer, il y avait des milliers de flammes folles; c'étaient comme des petites lampes qui s'allumaient d'elles-mêmes partout, mystérieuses, brûlaient quelques secondes et puis mouraient. Ces nuits étaient pâmées de chaleur, pleines de phosphore, et toute cette immensité éteinte couvait de la lumière, et toutes ces eaux enfermaient de la vie latente à l'état rudimentaire comme jadis les eaux mornes du monde primitif. (Yv. pp. 64-65)

Loti never ceases to wonder at the magnificent expanse of the sea, the source of all life, in contrast to his friend Yves who sees nothing but sameness. Loti's wonderment at the glory and potency of the ocean is constantly expressed in the novel:

...La mer de Corail! - C'est aux antipodes de notre vieux monde. - Rien que le bleu immense. - Autour du navire qui file doucement, l'infini bleu déploie son cercle parfait. L'étendue brille et miroite sous le soleil éternel.

Yves est là, seul, porté très haut dans l'air, par quelque chose qui oscille légèrement; il passe, dans sa hune.

Il regarde, sans voir, le cercle sans limite; il est comme fatigué d'espace et de lumière. Ses yeux atones s'arrêtent au hasard, car, partout, tout est pareil.

Partout, tout est pareil... C'est la grande splendeur inconsciente et aveugle des choses que les hommes croient

faites pour eux. A la surface des eaux courent des souffles vivifiants que personne ne respire; la chaleur et la lumière sont répandues sans mesure; toutes les sources de la vie sont ouvertes sur les solitudes silencieuses de la mer et les font étrangement resplendir.

...L'étendue brille et miroite sous le soleil éternel. Le grand flamboiement de midi tombe dans le désert bleu comme une magnificence inutile et perdue. (Yv. pp. 261-62)

The marked contrast between Yves' perception of the sea and that of Loti reveals the officer's strong affection for all aspects of the sea. Yves, like most sailors, views the sea as a body of water, vast and dangerous, suitable for ships to travel across and the provider of fish. Loti, on the other hand, finds pleasure in her beauty, changing moods, and the distinctive personality of an ever-present companion. He appears to be involved in a romantic relationship; he loves the sea.

If ratings and officers sometimes have different responses to the monotony and solitude of long voyages, they occasionally have a similar response: they draw close to each other. As we have seen in the earlier novels, sailors tend to gravitate towards each other and form friendships which sometimes can be very loyal. In Yves, a close camaraderie develops between the crew members, notably between "un groupe de jeunes hommes... C'était la bande d'Yves, les gabiers de misaine et ce du beaupré" (Yv. p. 56). Moreover, the major theme of this novel is the development of a strong, deep friendship between Loti, an officer, and Yves, an ordinary seaman. Their friendship is unusual in that it transcends social and class differences

in a manner that is almost unheard of in the class-conscious, senior service.

Yves seems to regard Loti as a role model; many of his activities, such as keeping a diary, do not go unnoticed by Yves who is portrayed as maturing as he becomes increasingly interested in self-improvement. He eventually decides to keep a diary and, like Loti, records his impressions:

A bord de la Sèvre, mai 1881.

Yves qui aura trente ans bientôt, me prie de lui rapporter de terre un cahier relié pour commencer à y écrire ses impressions, à ma manière; il regrette même de ne plus se rappeler assez les dates et les choses passées pour reconstituer un journal rétrospectif de sa vie.

Son intelligence s'ouvre à une foule de conceptions nouvelles; il se façonne sur moi, c'est incontestable, et se complique peut-être un peu plus qu'il ne faudrait. Mais notre intimité amène un autre résultat très inattendu, c'est que je me simplifie beaucoup à son contact; moi aussi, je change, et presque autant que lui... (Yv. pp. 228-29)

The two friends come from vastly different backgrounds and families, and were educated very differently. As an officer candidate and a cabin boy, they had entered, "dans la marine par des portes différentes" (Yv. p. 35). Nevertheless, they also have several things in common.

They are both about the same age, both have strong ties with their mothers, and soon after meeting one another they become good friends, not only at sea but also on land. Their mutual attraction, which seems similar to that of Loti and Samuel in Aziyadé, acts as a buffer against the hardships of a mariner's life, and creates an emotional bond that nothing

seems to break. Not long after their first meeting, Loti is promoted to midshipman and ships out with Yves as his orderly. "Pour un midship,<sup>66</sup> le gabier de hamac, c'est le matelot chargé de lui accrocher tous les soirs son petit lit suspendu et de le lui décrocher tous les matins" (YV. p. 36).

As the friends' relationship appears to develop beyond that of platonic friendship during their life at sea, similarities appear in their outlook towards life and death. The "manières" of the two men become increasingly alike as each one takes on attributes of the other; neither one is the man he used to be:

- Ce n'est plus si bon qu'autrefois, dit Yves quand il eut tout mangé, et puis il me semble que je me sens triste ici... Quand j'étais petit, je me rappelle que ça m'arrivait de temps en temps, la même chose, mais pas si fort que ce soir. Allons-nous-en, voulez-vous?

Alors, moi, je lui répondis, étonné de l'entendre:

- Des manières de moi que tu prends là, mon pauvre Yves!

- Des manières de vous, vous dites?

Et il me regardait avec un long sourire mélancolique, qui m'exprimait de sa part des choses nouvelles, indicibles. Je compris ce soir-là qu'il avait beaucoup plus que je ne l'aurais pensé des manières de moi, des idées, des sensations pareilles aux miennes.

- Tenez, continua-t-il, comme suivant toujours le même cours de pensées, savez-vous une chose qui m'inquiète souvent quand nous sommes si loin, en mer ou dans ces pays de là-bas? Je n'ose pas vous dire... C'est l'idée que je pourrais peut-être mourir et qu'on ne me mettrait pas dans notre cimetière d'ici. (Yv. pp. 93-94)

The "Enseigne de Vaisseau" and the "gabier" see one another every morning and evening and often reaffirm their friendship

<sup>66</sup> Midship: "(1785-1867; mot angl. 'homme du milieu du vaisseau'). Aspirant dans la marine anglaise" (Petit Robert, 1981 ed.).

by meeting at other times such as on this occasion when Loti seeks out Yves and visits with him as he works high in the rigging:

Yves habitait là-haut, dans sa hune. En regardant en l'air, on était sûr de voir sa silhouette large et svelte sur le ciel; mais on le rencontrait rarement en bas.

C'est moi qui montais de temps en temps lui faire visite, bien que mon service ne m'y obligeât plus depuis que j'avais franchi le grade de midship; mais j'aimais assez ce domaine d'Yves, où l'on était éventé par un air encore plus pur. (Yv. p. 58)

Aloft, the calm and placid, but enigmatic and unpredictable sea seems to encourage the peace of mind stemming from the sense of communion between the two friends.

Due, perhaps, to the isolation and all-male company at sea, the two friends become more devoted in their affectionate relationship than if they were civilians on shore. Each one seems to fill a need for the other: Loti seems to enjoy the devotion and subservience of Yves, who undoubtedly is flattered by the attention accorded him by an officer. This fellowship exposes Loti to possible criticism by his superiors for associating too closely with Yves, an enlisted sailor. Loti's concern about this possibility prompts him to mention it in dedicating the novel to M. Daudet:

Ce livre va peut-être me faire des ennemis, bien que j'aie touché le plus légèrement possible aux règlements maritimes. Mais vous, qui aimez toutes les choses de la mer, même le vent, la brume et les grosses lames, - même les matelots simples et braves, - vous comprenez certainement Mon frère Yves.

- Et cela me dédommagera.



On the other hand, the amicable rapport between junior officers and topmen has mutual advantages other than that of an antidote to loneliness. A sense of collectivity, of being as one in the face of any external threat, develops between these crew members, be they officers or enlisted men. At one point the rugged topmen provide the additional manpower needed to ensure the safety of the midshipmen:

Il y avait une solidarité dans ce temps-là entre les midships et les gabiers; surtout pendant les campagnes lointaines comme celles que nous faisons, cela devenait entre nous très cordial. A terre, dans les milieux étranges où, quelquefois, nous rencontrions la nuit nos gabiers, il nous arrivait de les appeler à la rescousse quand il y avait péril ou mauvaise aventure; et alors, ainsi réunis, on pouvait faire la loi.

Dans ces cas-là, Yves était notre allié le plus précieux. (Yv. pp. 36-37)

Their friendship is in fact quite different from the more casual relationships depicted in the novels of the earlier phase. On one occasion in Cherbourg, when Yves runs afoul of friends celebrating their return from the Antilles and is brought aboard "ivre-mort", Loti demonstrates that he is prepared to risk his career for his friend. Fortunately, Loti is on watch and is able to conceal Yves in his cabin and prevent the otherwise inevitable punishment:

Personne encore sur le pont; seulement quelques matelots qui font leur fourbis sage, - mais des dévoués, ceux-là, connus de longue date, et sur qui on peut compter. Quatre hommes l'enlèvent, le descendent furtivement par un panneau et le cachent dans ma chambre.

Mauvais début à bord de cette Sèvre, où je l'avais pris sous ma garde, comme en punition, et où il avait promis d'être exemplaire. Cette idée sombre me venait pour la première

fois, qu'il était perdu, bien perdu, malgré tout ce que je pourrais tenter pour le sauver de lui-même. Et aussi cette autre réflexion, plus désolante encore, que peut-être il lui manquait quelque chose dans le coeur... (Yv. pp. 196-97)

The relationship develops to the point where Loti assumes an increasing responsibility for Yves' behaviour, and Yves becomes even more dependent upon Loti. When the officer attempts to exercise this responsibility, a confrontation develops between the friends over the topman's drinking problem which had been exacerbated by the New Year's celebrations. In order to resolve their differences, Yves proposes an uncompromising solution to ensure his sobriety: he will never go ashore unless accompanied by Loti:

- D'abord, disait-il, j'ai trouvé une manière sûre : je ne descendrai plus jamais à terre qu'avec vous, quand vous m'emmènerez. - Ainsi, comme ça, vous comprenez bien... (Yv. p. 214)

A dater de cette mauvaise journée qui avait commencé l'an 81, notre façon d'être ensemble avait complètement changé, et je le traitais à présent tout à fait en frère.

Sur cette Sèvre, un très petit bateau où nous vivions, entre officiers, dans une intimité bien cordiale, Yves était maintenant de notre bande. (Yv. p. 218)

If the two friends' constant intimacy gives rise to the occasional problem or difference of opinion, nothing seems to break the bond between them:

Ce temps que nous venons de passer ensemble, dans une intimité fraternelle de chaque jour, n'a pas été exempt d'orages entre nous. Il mérite toujours un peu, malheureusement, ses notes passées d'indiscipliné et d'indomptable : tout va bien mieux cependant, et, si j'avais pu le garder près de moi, je l'aurais sauvé. (Yv. pp. 235-36)

In fact, their relationship is so strong that, even after they are separated, Loti continues to work on Yves' behalf behind the scenes by approaching his friend, Madame Adam, to enlist her considerable influence with the minister. She is successful in obtaining for Yves the "galons d'or", signifying his promotion to Second Mate:

J'avais été à Paris demander cette faveur, intriguer beaucoup pour mon frère d'adoption, en me portant garant de sa conduite à venir. Une femme de coeur avait bien voulu employer à ma cause son influence très puissante, et alors la promotion d'Yves avait été enlevée d'assaut, bien qu'elle fût difficile. (Yv. p. 322)

Close friendships, characterized by feelings of mutual concern, devotion and, when necessary, self-sacrifice, are more typical of mature seamen than of the younger men in Viaud's previous novels. These are not, however, the only admirable characteristics with which Viaud imbues his seafolk in Yves.

One such characteristic which seems to be stressed is the physical and mental fortitude of the sailor at sea which appears in his ability to perform difficult tasks under dangerous and trying conditions. Loti and Yves both display such mature strength one stormy night aboard the Médée:

En haut, dans la mâture, on essayait de serrer les huniers, déjà au bas ris; la cape était déjà dure à tenir, et maintenant il fallait, coûte que coûte, marcher droit contre le vent, à cause de terres douteuses qui pouvaient être là, derrière nous.

Il y avait deux heures que les gabiers étaient à ce travail, aveuglés, cinglés, brûlés par tout ce qui leur tombait dessus, gerbes d'écume lancées de la mer, pluie et

grêle lancées du ciel; essayant, avec leurs mains crispées de froid qui saignaient de crocher dans cette toile raide et mouillée qui ballonnait sous le vent furieux. (Yv. p. 110)

The men watching from below lose sight of the topmen, high in the rigging where, beyond help from below, they are confronting the storm on its own terms. These brave young men can no longer be seen or heard until:

Des cris d'angoisse venaient de là-haut, de cette espèce de grappe humaine suspendue. Cris d'hommes, cris rauques, plus sinistres que ceux des femmes, parce qu'on est moins habitué à les entendre; cris d'horrible douleur : une main prise quelque part, des doigts accrochés, qui se dépouillaient de leur chair ou s'arrachaient; - ou bien un malheureux, moins fort que les autres, crispé de froid, qui sentait qu'il ne se tenait plus, que le vertige venait, qu'il allait lâcher et tomber. Et les autres, par pitié, l'attachaient, pour essayer de l'affaler jusqu'en bas.

... Il y avait deux heures que cela durait; ils étaient épuisés; ils ne pouvaient plus...

Depuis deux jours on vivait dans l'eau, on avait à peine mangé, à peine dormi, et la force des hommes diminuait.

C'est cette longue attente, cette longue fatigue dans le froide humide, qui sont les vraies horreurs de la mer. Souvent les pauvres mourants, avant de rendre leur dernier cri, leur dernier hoquet d'agonie, sont restés des jours et des nuits, trempés, salis, couverts d'une couche boueuse de sueur froid et de sel, d'un enduit de mort. (Yv. pp. 110-11)

During this turmoil the sailors' maturity is revealed in their ability to cooperate and work together under stressful conditions. The conscientious Loti, is carrying out his duties but, unable to protect his men aloft until he receives the approval of the captain, he worries about the "gabiers", including Yves. They are almost out of sight of the men on deck until Loti is finally able to bring them down:

... Et les gabiers, et mon pauvre Yves, que faisaient-ils là-

haut? Les mats, les vergues, on les apercevait par instants, dans le noir, en silhouettes, quand on pouvait encore regarder à travers cette douleur cuisante que causait la grêle; on apercevait ces formes de grandes croix, à deux étages comme les croix russes, agitées dans l'ombre avec des mouvements de détresse, des gestes fous.

- Faites-les descendre, me dit le commandant, qui préférait le danger de ce hunier non serré à la peur de perdre encore des hommes. (YV. p. 115)

The seamen are portrayed as having developed a form of pragmatism, a characteristic which enables them to strike a balance between facing their problems and enjoying their blessings. There are times when the sailor is able to put aside all thoughts of hard work, danger, solitude and homesickness and savour the satisfaction which comes from the knowledge of a job well-done, and the euphoria of contentment and good health:

Il y a encore de beaux jours dans la vie, de belles heures de jeunesse et d'oubli. Au diable toutes les rêveries mélancoliques, tous les songes maladifs des tristes poètes! Il fait bon courir, la poitrine au vent, en compagnie des plus joyeux d'entre les enfants du peuple. La santé et la jeunesse, c'est tout ce qu'il y a de vrai sur terre, avec la gaîté simple et brutale, et les chants des matelots! (Yv. p. 232)

In some respects Yves is depicted as having the characteristic simplicity of the heroes in the preceding chapter. However, Yves does show increasing maturity in several ways: he is willing and able to perform difficult, dangerous tasks; he tries hard to conquer his hereditary illness; he strives to increase his knowledge through reading and studying in imitation of Loti.

Nevertheless, Yves is still a reflection of the typical sailor aboard a nineteenth century naval vessel who, absorbed in his endless tasks, still enjoys simple activities, such as "aller aux sacs". He tends to live from day to day, takes little interest in why his ship is going to its destination or how it will eventually get there. He looks forward to going ashore at their destination without knowledge of what it may be like. The outside world, even the national and international politics of France, which determine the reasons for his ship's voyage, appear to be far beyond his interest or understanding. Loti equates the seamen's simplicity with that of children:

Ils n'avaient pas de but, les matelots, et ils ne savaient pas où ils allaient. A quoi bon d'ailleurs, puisqu'on ne leur permettait nulle part de mettre les pieds sur terre? Ils ignoraient la direction de cette course rapide et l'infinie profondeur des solitudes où ils étaient; mais cela les amusait d'aller droit devant eux, dans l'obscurité bleuâtre, très vite, et de se sentir filer. En chantant leurs chansons du soir, ils regardaient ce beaupré, toujours lancé en avant, avec ses deux petites cornes et sa tournure d'arbalète tendue, qui sautillait sur la mer, qui effleurait l'eau bruissante à la façon très légère d'un poisson volant. (Yv. p. 308)

As we have seen, the sailor with his simple pragmatism is usually able to deal with the everyday realities of life at sea; however, there are times when, like the sailors in the novels of phase one with their simple friends and pleasures, he feels unable to cope. In his darkest moments, the dishonourable alternative of desertion offers itself as a possibility: "Désertier pour aller naviguer au commerce à l'étranger, ou faire la

grande pêche, c'est toujours le rêve qui obsède les matelots, et les meilleurs surtout, dans leurs moments de révolte (Yv. p. 31).

Sailors, suffering from isolation and homesickness, on extended sea voyages and faced with never-ending, often monotonous or dangerous tasks, have a tendency to dream of happier times in the future. But if dreams and anticipation of better days ahead can overcome dissatisfaction with the present, they can do so only for a limited time; then the sailor's dreams begin to reflect a negative view of existence.

We have seen in the novels discussed in the preceding chapter that the sailor is often preoccupied with thoughts of death. This is also the case in Yves. At one point, both Yves and Loti have dreams, apparently dissimilar, but both having death, the ultimate escape, as the common denominator. Yves is characteristically very open and conceals nothing as he relates his dream to Loti:

- J'avais envie de vous voir, dit-il: c'est que j'ai beaucoup rêvé sur vous cette nuit. Tout le temps j'ai vu ces bonnes femmes de Birmanie avec leurs grands ongles en or, vous savez? Elles vous entouraient avec leurs mauvaises singeries, et je ne pouvais pas réussir à les renvoyer. Après cela, elles voulaient vous manger. Heureusement qu'on a sonné le branle-bas; j'en étais tout en sueur de la peur que ça me faisait... (Yv. p. 124)

Loti, the officer, believes that he must maintain an image of fearlessness in the eyes of Yves, an enlisted man, and is, therefore, more secretive and unwilling to disclose any details of his dream. However, Loti does reveal to the reader his own fears of the sea, and of death at sea, which have

plagued him since childhood. One can only speculate as to whether he may think that he will be considered more courageous for spending so much of his life at sea confronting his greatest fear:

Je rêvais que j'étais couché dans un hamac, comme autrefois au temps de mes premières années de mer. Le hamac d'Yves était près du mien. Nous étions balancés terriblement, et le sien se décrochait. Au-dessus de nous, il y avait une agitation confuse de quelque chose de noir qui devait être l'eau profonde, - et lui, allait tomber là dedans. Alors je cherchais à le retenir avec mes mains, qui n'avaient plus de force, qui étaient molles comme dans les rêves. J'essayais de le prendre à bras-le-corps, de nouer mes mains autour de sa poitrine, me rappelant que sa mère l'avait confié; et je comprenais avec angoisse que je ne le pouvais pas, que je n'en étais plus capable; il allait m'échapper et disparaître dans tout ce noir mouvant qui bruissait au-dessus de nous... Et puis ce qui me faisait peur, c'est qu'il ne se réveillait pas et qu'il était glacé, d'un froid qui me pénétrait moi aussi, jusqu'à la moelle des os; même, la toile de son hamac était devenue rigide comme la gaine d'une momie... (Yv. pp. 122-23)

It is, of course, hardly surprising that sailors seem so preoccupied with thoughts of death, since death is a frequent visitor aboard ship. In the novels of the preceding chapter many deaths occur, but none in the line of duty at sea. The deaths portrayed in this novel occur primarily at sea where, in the excitement of storms, they receive little attention. The violent deaths of the topmen who, while carrying out their hazardous duties, fall from the rigging aboard the Médée pass almost unnoticed during the storm. On the other hand, during calmer conditions this is not the case with the death of un frère de mer, Barazère who contracted a venereal disease during a night of pleasure in Algiers.



Loti, like Viaud, fully expects to be taken by the sea; his depiction is significant, therefore, as an imaginative and thought-provoking account of the sea welcoming the corpse of Barazère, as she will one day welcome Loti into her living depths. His portrayal brings out all aspects of the sea, her immensity, unfathomable depths, and her wildlife from sharks to invisible creatures and plants. The cadaver is a traveller on a voyage at ever-increasing speed to the sailor's resting place, where he will join the life of the deep:

Le corps de Barazère était tombé dans ce gouffre, immense en profondeur et en étendue, qui est le Grand-Océan...

Cependant on regardait derrière avec inquiétude, dans le sillage : c'est qu'il arrive, quand le requin est là, qu'une tache de sang remonte à la surface de la mer.

Mais non, rien ne reparut; il était descendu en paix dans les profondeurs d'en dessous.

Descente infinie, d'abord rapide comme une chute; puis lente, lente, alanguie peu à peu dans les couches de plus en plus denses. Mystérieux voyage de plusieurs lieues dans des abîmes inconnus; où le soleil qui s'obscurcit paraît semblable à une lune blême, puis verdit, tremble, s'efface. Et alors l'obscurité éternelle commence; les eaux montent, montent, s'entassent au-dessus de la tête du voyageur mort comme une marée de déluge qui s'élèverait jusqu'aux astres.

Mais, en bas, le cadavre tombé a perdu son horreur; la matière n'est jamais immonde d'une façon absolue. Dans l'obscurité, les bêtes invisibles des eaux profondes vont pousser sur lui leurs branches, le manger très lentement avec les milles petites bouches de leurs fleurs vivantes.

Cette sépulture des marins n'est plus violable par aucune main humaine. Celui qui est descendu dormir si bas est plus mort qu'aucun autre mort; jamais rien de lui ne remontera; jamais il ne se mêlera plus à cette vieille poussière d'hommes qui, à la surface, se cherche et se recombine toujours dans un éternel effort pour revivre. Il appartient à la vie d'en dessous; il va passer dans les plantes de pierre qui n'ont pas de couleur, dans les bêtes lentes qui sont sans forme et sans yeux... (Yv. pp. 296-97)

After the immersion, the calm moods of the sea instill

a reflective mood in the disturbed sailors. This provides Loti with a forum to discuss the evolution of his thoughts and focus on his preoccupation with death. Moreover, he includes his predisposition to fathom the incomprehensible by stimulating a discussion about life after death with his friends, Yves and Barrada:

Je les vois encore tous deux assis devant moi, de moitié sur la même chaise à cause de l'exiguïté du logis, se tenant d'une main par habitude de rouler, et me regardant avec leurs yeux attentifs. C'est que j'essayais de leur démontrer ce soir-là que les hommes ce n'était pas comme les bêtes, de leur parler du mystérieux après... Et eux, ayant cette mort toute fraîche dans la mémoire, m'écoutaient surpris, captivés au milieu de cette tranquillité, très particulière des soirs où la mer se calme, tranquillité qui prédispose à comprendre l'incompréhensible.

Vieux raisonnements ressassés d'école que je leur développais et qui pouvaient impressionner encore leurs têtes jeunes... C'était peut-être très bête, ce cours d'immortalité; mais cela ne leur faisait aucun mal, au contraire. (Yv. p. 298)

On arriving home from the Far East aboard the Médée, Loti sees the Borda and reminisces about his early friendship with Yves. He then recalls the changes which have taken place since that time. He views the future with pessimism, seeing only his two nemeses - old age and death:

Le Borda, là-bas; je le regarde et je retrouve dans ma mémoire le bureau sur lequel j'ai passé, accoudé, de longues heures d'étude; et le tableau noir sur lequel j'écrivais fiévreusement, avant l'examen, les formules compliquées de la mécanique et de l'astronomie.

Yves, à cette époque, était un petit garçon qu'on eût dit sérieux et sage, un petit novice breton, à la figure douce, qui habitait le vaisseau d'à côté, la Bretagne, le voisin et le compagnon du Borda. Nous étions des enfants alors, - aujourd'hui des hommes faits, - demain...la vieillesse, - après-demain, mourir. (Yv. p. 128)

Yves seems to share Loti's preoccupation when, approaching his village cemetery, he confesses: "Je n'ose pas vous dire... C'est l'idée que je pourrais peut-être mourir et qu'on ne me mettrait pas dans notre cimetière d'ici" (Yv. p. 94). Loti's tendency to dwell on this subject can be seen in the marvellous imagery and sensitive description of his visit to the church at Toulven (Yv. p. 158).

The simplicity of sailors, their vague religiosity, tendency to attach significance to signs from nature, to feelings, dreams and thoughts of death are perhaps prerequisites to yet another trait which we have seen in previous novels and which continues to evolve in the novels of this chapter: sailors tend to believe in the supernatural. Yves is obviously disturbed when he recounts an inexplicable event to Loti: an apparent apparition visualized near Paimpol which occurred during a visit just after the Franco Prussian War of 1870:

Paimpol dort quand nous sortons par un pâle clair de lune. Je l'accompagne un bout de chemin, pour raccourcir ma soirée. Nous voici dans les champs.

Yves marche très vite, très agité, et repasse dans sa tête les souvenirs de ses autres retours.

- Oui, dit-il, après la guerre, je suis venu comme ça, vers deux heures du matin, les réveiller. J'avais fait la route à pied depuis Saint-Brieuc; je m'en retournais, bien fatigué, du siège de Paris. Vous pensez, j'étais tout jeune alors, je venais de passer matelot.

Et tenez, j'avais eu bien peur, cette nuit-là : contre la croix de Kergrist, que nous allons voir au tournant de cette route, j'avais trouvé un vieux petit homme très laid qui me regardait en tenant les bras en l'air et qui ne bougeait pas. Et je suis sûr que c'était un mort; car il a disparu tout d'un coup en remuant son doigt comme pour me faire signe de venir. (Yv. p. 74)

Loti himself is not entirely immune from apprehensions about the supernatural; one night while in bed at Yves' home Loti appears to be disturbed by incursions from the sea awakening supernatural spirits, "A l'heure des apparitions et des promenades de morts" (Yv. p. 90). On another occasion Loti sees a little, old, dead man; however, once again as in their discussions about dreams, the officer does not discuss his innermost feelings or hallucinations with Yves:

Justement nous arrivions à cette croix de Kergrist. Nous la voyions surgir devant nous comme quelqu'un qui se lève dans l'obscurité. - Mais il n'y avait personne de blotti contre son pied.

Ce fut là que je dis adieu à Yves et que je rebroussai chemin, moi qui n'allais pas jusqu'à Plouherzel. Quand nous eûmes chacun perdu le bruit de nos pas dans le silence de cette nuit d'hiver, le vieux petit homme mort nous revint en tête, et nous nous mîmes à regarder malgré nous dans les taillis noirs. (Yv. pp. 74-75)

When exposed to the dangers of life at sea, seamen tend to become morbid, often given to thoughts of sadness, foreboding and apprehension, feelings sparked in part by fear of what may have transpired at home during their long absence. These negative thoughts recede as they near the end of a voyage; they are replaced by the pleasurable anticipation of shore leave and of seeing loved ones, thoughts which fill the sailor with a sense of euphoria. Such mixed feelings tend to mark, if not bridge, the sailor's transition from life at sea to a very different life at home.

We have, then, seen how the characteristics of the

sailors, both enlisted men and the somewhat more refined officers, evolve when they are at sea. In this novel, as in the next one we shall study, the characteristics of these same people continue to evolve when they are in a substantially different habitat - on shore. Instead of the pleasurable environment of exotic ports, there are, in Yves, two significantly different types of on-shore scenarios: brief stops at ports of call after long periods on the job at sea, and visits home to family and friends in or near the home port.

The months spent in the sequestered life at sea are, for the unsophisticated sailor, a total contrast to the lures and temptations of life in a seaport. After sometimes months of a sequestered, confined and celibate existence at sea, the returning sailor has a natural and obvious need for pleasure, especially female companionship. He is thus often easy prey for predatory exploiters. Unlike the discerning Loti discussed in Chapter Two, the ingenuous Yves, who has accumulated money at sea where there is no need or opportunity to spend it, has little notion of its value. When he returns to shore he usually wastes money on extravagances. Moreover, the sailor's simplicity, trust, and love of pleasure make him vulnerable to being cheated or robbed by swindlers, unscrupulous women and common thieves who thrive on the unsuspecting sailors: "Au retour de leurs campagnes, les matelots font mille extravagances avec leur argent; c'est de règle. Les villes maritimes connaissent leurs excentricités un peu sauvages" (Yv. p. 138). Yves

is conscious of what will probably happen, especially since he now has earned his quarter-master's stripes. One would expect that he would be very happy about wearing his quarter-master's insignia which is evidence of his higher qualifications as a seaman; however, he is also mature enough to realize that ashore he is still a simple, vulnerable sailor. He is filled with apprehension about what is about to happen as he leaves the familiar habitat at sea to face both known and unexpected problems on shore, that is, his all-too-familiar problem of alcoholism and the always unknown consequences of his behaviour. He knows that he will be called upon to "arroser ces galons", a navy ritual to celebrate his promotion which he will be unable to resist.

In the following description of Yves sitting in a drinking house it is apparent that Viaud, conscious of the effects of months of deprivation on the comfort-starved sailor, is very sympathetic towards sailors who hanker after creature comforts:

L'air chaud y sentait l'alcool. Il y avait un feu de charbon dans une corbeille, et Yves s'assit devant. Depuis deux ou trois ans, c'était la première fois qu'il se trouvait dans une chaise. - Et du feu! - Comme il savourait ce bien-être tout à fait inusité, et de se sécher devant un brasier rouge! - A bord, jamais; - même dans les grands froids de cap Horn ou de l'Islande; même dans les humidités pénétrantes, continues des hautes latitudes, jamais on ne se chauffe, jamais on ne se sèche. Pendant des jours, pendant des nuits, on reste mouillé, et on tâche de se donner du mouvement, en attendant le soleil. (Yv. p. 20)

After wining and dining in cabarets Yves and his friends,

like most sailors under similar circumstances, notably those discussed in the preceding chapter, are still starving for such pleasures as are unavailable at sea. Taking to the streets in search of wilder revelry, "Les matelots chantaient. Et les femmes, qui guettaient leurs pièces d'or, - agitées, échevelées dans ce grand coup de feu des retours de navire, - mêlaient leurs voix aigres à ces voix profondes" (Yv. p. 22). The sailors are depicted as simple, high spirited and exuberant, with beautiful singing voices:

A tue-tête, avec une sorte d'accent naïf, des choses à faire frémir, - ou bien des airs du Midi, des chansons basques, - surtout, de tristes mélodies bretonnes qui semblaient de vieux airs de binioù légués par l'antiquité celtique.

Les simples, les bons, faisaient des chœurs en parties; ils restaient groupés par village, et répétaient dans leur langue les longues plaintes du pays, retrouvant encore dans leur ivresse de belles voix sonores et jeunes. D'autres bégayaient comme de petits enfants et s'embrassaient; inconscients de leur force, ils brisaient des portes ou assommaient des passants.

La nuit s'avancait; les mauvais lieux seuls restaient ouverts, et, dans les rues, la pluie tombait toujours sur l'exubérance des gaîtés sauvages... (Yv. p. 23)

After too much celebrating in port, Yves falls asleep outside in the rain; he is depicted as a black thing seeking forgiveness with arms stretched out in the form of a symbolic cross: "La chose noire dans le ruisseau était bien un grand corps d'homme, un matelot, qui était couché les bras étendus en croix" (Yv. p. 24). When, back aboard ship, Yves has regained consciousness, he reverts to being a dedicated seaman; he realizes what has happened and is filled with remorse:

... Ainsi c'était fait; il était retombé encore, et toujours dans son même vice. Et, toutes les rares fois qu'il touchait la terre, cela finissait ainsi, et il n'y pouvait rien! C'était donc vrai, ce qu'on lui avait dit, que cette habitude était terrible et mortelle, et qu'on était bien perdu quand une fois on l'avait prise. De rage contre lui-même, il tordit ses bras musculeux qui craquèrent; il se souleva à demi, serrant ses dents, qu'on entendit crisser, et puis retomba, la tête sur les planches dures. Oh! sa pauvre mère, elle était là tout près et il ne la verrait pas, depuis trois ans qu'il en avait envie!... c'était ça, son retour en France! Quelle misère et quelle angoisse! (Yv. pp. 29-30)

Yves' self-recrimination is not unlike that of Loti in Mariage when he realised the harm, in a moral sense, that he had been doing to Rarahu.

Like most of the sailors in Viaud's novels, Yves is depicted as essentially a good, albeit simple, person with a conscience; unfortunately, being cursed with alcoholism, he becomes caught up in situations with which he is ill-prepared to cope. Whenever he fully recovers from a bout of drinking he is bitter about his wasted life and considers deserting the navy, but his thoughts, like those of Loti in the earlier novels, invariably turn to his poor mother and to the worry she continues to suffer because of the desertion of his brothers, Goulven and Gildas. With such thoughts Yves is overpowered with feelings of shame and guilt:

Il sentait un attendrissement infini en songeant à sa mère, et une envie de pleurer; quelque chose comme une larme vint même dans ses yeux, qui étaient durs pourtant à cette faiblesse-là... Peut-être serait-on encore un peu indulgent pour lui à cause de sa bonne conduite à bord, de son courage à la peine et de son rude travail dans les mauvais temps. - Si c'était possible, - si on ne lui donnait pas une punition trop grave, il est certain qu'il ne recommencerait plus et se ferait tout pardonner. (Yv. p. 34)



Occasionally the credulous, unsuspecting sailor finds that his drunkenness can have serious, irreversible consequences. In Viaud's evolving depiction of sailors seen from a more mature perspective he tends to stress the undesirable consequences of intemperate behaviour and, at least by implication, hold them more responsible for their actions than in his earlier novels. Sailors who drink to excess expose themselves to the many hazards faced by the nineteenth-century sailor seeking excitement on shore. There is the danger of being impressed by unscrupulous press gangs looking for sailors to serve on other ships. They lure or force drunken sailors into becoming deserters so that when they sober up they are unable to return to their home country without risk of imprisonment. In Montevideo, the sailors willingness to take risks to aid one another is demonstrated when Loti, as Yves' friend and guardian angel together with the help of other shipmates, manage to save Yves from being shanghaied from "la taverne de la Independancia":

Un convoi singulier sortit de cette taverne : quatre hommes en emportant un autre, qui devait être très ivre, sans connaissance. Ils se hâtaient vers les navires, comme ayant peur de nous.

Nous connaissions ce jeu, qui est en usage dans les mauvais lieux de cette côte : enivrer les marins, leur faire signer quelque engagement insensé, et puis les embarquer de force quand ils ne tiennent plus debout. Ensuite on appareille, bien vite, et, quand l'homme revient à lui, le navire est loin; alors il est pris, sous un joug de fer, on l'emmène, comme un esclave, pêcher la baleine, loin de toute terre habitée. Une fois là, d'ailleurs, plus de danger qu'il s'échappe, car il est déserteur à son pays, perdu...

Donc, ce convoi qui passait nous semblait suspect. Ils se pressaient comme des voleurs, et je dis aux matelots : "Courons-leur dessus!"

Eux, alors, de lâcher leur fardeau, qui tomba lourdement par terre et puis de s'enfuir à toutes jambes.

Le fardeau, c'était Kermadec. (Yv. pp. 39-40)

Thoughtless behaviour, like intemperate actions, can also lead to disastrous results such as a hasty marriage to a woman of easy virtue but irresistible charms. Often such a woman seeks the marriage allowance of a navy wife and still continues her immoral lifestyle during her husband's absence. When Loti, who is fully aware of this possibility, receives a letter from Yves announcing that he is married, Loti understandably fears the worst:

Au retour de leurs campagnes, les matelots font mille extravagances avec leur argent; c'est de règle. Les villes maritimes connaissent leurs excentricités un peu sauvages.

Quelquefois même ils épousent, en manière de passe-temps, des femmes quelconques pour avoir une occasion de mettre une redingote noire.

Et Yves, lui, qui avait déjà épuisé autrefois tous les genres de sottises, pour changer, avait fini par un mariage. (Yv. p. 138-39)

These fears were completely unwarranted, as Loti realizes when he meets the new bride, Marie. She is not an immoral woman that Yves met in a bar; she is a sweet, home-town girl, a very suitable wife for Yves: "Il y avait en elle quelque chose de candide et d'honnête qu'on aimait à regarder. Il me parut que j'aurais précisément désirée ainsi si j'avais été chargé de la choisir moi-même pour mon frère Yves" (Yv. p. 140).

With the knowledge that they must accept responsibility

for their actions in port and face the consequences, the serious, mature sailors depicted in this chapter take on family responsibilities. They have dependent mothers, siblings and when, like Yves, they get married they take on obligations of husband and father. Wife and children constitute the sailor's home life, the on-shore setting which appears as a haven from not only life at sea, but from the irresponsible temptations of ports of call. In home settings, the gentler, more serious side of the sailor's character rises to the surface. For example, Loti accompanies his friend for a brief stay at Plouherzel where, as a child, Yves' characteristic devotion to his mother, his religiosity, innocence and trust, started to develop. Plouherzel is not even a village, but only a region surrounding a chapel where there are damp paths between moss-covered embankments under old dead beech.

The homesickness endured by the sailors, during the long sea voyages and absence from home for years on end is brought into focus when he is able to return home to dance and sing. It is then that he fully realizes the powerful attraction that he feels for his home and all that he has missed during the preceding years:

Comment elle est belle et rajeunie, la Bretagne, et verte, au soleil de juin!

Nous autres, pauvres gens de la mer, quand nous trouvons le printemps sur notre route, nous en jouissons plus que les autres, à cause de notre vie séquestrée dans les couvents de planches. Il y avait huit ans qu'Yves n'avait vu son printemps breton, et nous avions été longtemps fatigués tous deux par l'hiver ou par cet éternel été qui resplendit ailleurs sur la grande mer bleue, et nous nous laissons

enivrer par ces foins verts, par ces senteurs douces, par tout ce charme de juin que les mots ne peuvent dire. (Yv. p. 231)

In this novel Viaud underscores how readily and easily his seamen seem to adjust from being world travellers on the high seas to becoming dedicated husbands and fathers living in a remote village. Life at home for the sailor is, nevertheless, not always just calmness and tranquillity - far from it, in fact. As we have seen in our study of earlier novels the sailor is rarely at ease for long when he is away from his natural habitat - the sea. The lure and pull of the sea can undermine what is but a temporary peace of mind stemming from the homecoming.

Yves is depicted as a prime example of the sailor who, when at sea looks forward to returning home but who, after a certain time at home, longs for the sea that he has left. Even after he is happily married and home on leave with his son and Loti, Yves still misses the sea. Changes in lifestyle are always difficult, but perhaps none so radical and difficult as that of a sailor assuming the responsibilities of a family man. Such contradictory desires for home and sea generate feelings of uneasiness even when Loti and Yves are together, strolling through the woods on a quiet June evening, Yves' happiness in the tranquil security of his home surroundings is marred by thoughts of the immensity of the open sea and the brothers become lonesome and homesick for their other life at sea:

Toutes ces campagnes qui dorment, toutes ces collines boisées qui nous entourent, tous ces sommeils d'arbres, toutes ces tranquillités nous oppressent. Nous nous sentons un peu des étrangers au milieu de tout cela, et la mer nous manque, la mer, qui est en somme le grand espace ouvert, le grand champ libre sur lequel nous nous sommes accoutumés à courir.

Yves subit ces impressions et me les exprime d'une manière naïve, d'une manière à lui, qui n'est guère intelligible que pour moi. Au milieu de son bonheur, une inquiétude le trouble ce soir, presque un regret d'être venu étourdimement fixer sa destinée dans cette chaumière perdue. (Yv. pp. 153-54)

This is not an isolated instance of the call of the sea at a time when one might expect that nothing would be farther from the two men's minds. Yves, when assigned to duties ashore, lives with his wife and son in Brest where Loti visits them only to find that, "Physiquement, Yves avait changé beaucoup. Il était devenu plus pâle, à l'abri du hâle de mer; son expression était différente, moins assurée, et presque douloureuse" (Yv. p. 191). Very concerned about his brother's condition, Loti senses Yves' yearning for the sea and, sharing his "dépaysement", describes what he sees and feels:

Je regardais tout autour de moi avec une impression de surprise et un serrement de coeur; en effet, je n'avais pas prévu ce que pourrait être, à terre et dans une ville, le logis de mon frère Yves. Il était bien différent de ces logis de mer où je l'avais longtemps connu; les hunes, pleines de vent et de soleil. Ici, maintenant, au milieu de ces réalités pauvres, je me trouvais, comme lui sans doute, dépaycé et mal à l'aise. (Yv. p. 192)

This emotional instability, common in Viaud's enlisted men and shared by Loti, is exacerbated in the case of Yves by his addiction to alcohol. A similar type of emotional duality

develops in that on board ship he exhibits one type of behaviour, whereas on shore it is almost the opposite. Yves himself seems to recognize this duality in his personality when, after his wife is considering leaving him because of his drunken behaviour, he seeks Marie's forgiveness: "Il faut me pardonner, disait-il, tu vois bien que **ce n'était plus moi**" (Yv. p. 183)!

As long as they are together, Loti makes every effort to help Yves control his negative and self-destructive behaviour, but Loti cannot be constantly at Yves' side and it is at such times that Yves experiences the greatest challenges. He corresponds with his brother during one separation in a determined effort to avoid backsliding into his old habits. However, too much time in port and the presence of many old drinking partners eventually wear down Yves' resistance and he again falls victim to alcohol. Driven by the combination of shame and his inability to face his wife, Yves decides to escape his predicament by deserting from the navy: he signs on as a crew-member aboard the Belle-Rose, a tramp under American colours. Fortunately, due to one of those happy coincidences which occur in novels, Loti appears on the scene in the nick of time and acts as a catalyst to resolve the emotional struggle within Yves between the caring, sensitive man and the darker side of his personality:

A Brest, ce mauvais jour où il avait voulu nous quitter, je l'avais vu passer, en déserteur, portant ses effets de matelot si bien pliés dans un mouchoir, et je l'avais suivi de loin jusqu'à Recouvrance. J'avais laissé monter Marie, puis j'étais monté, moi aussi, après eux, et, en sortant, il

m'avais trouvé là, en travers de sa porte, lui barrant le passage avec mes bras étendus, - comme jadis, à Toulven. Seulement, cette fois, il ne s'agissait plus d'arrêter un caprice d'enfant, mais d'engager une lutte suprême avec lui.

Elle avait été longue et cruelle, cette lutte, et je m'étais senti bien près de perdre courage, de l'abandonner à la destinée sombre qui l'emportait. Et puis elle s'était terminée brusquement par de bonnes larmes qu'il avait versées, des larmes qui avaient besoin de couler depuis deux jours, - et qui ne pouvaient pas, tant ses yeux étaient durs à ce genre de faiblesse. (Yv. p. 263)

Loti, the sympathetic friend, realizes that such erratic behaviour is all too common in those who have chosen to divide their lives between the two worlds of land and sea:

Au fond de chaque homme, il y a toujours un sauvage caché qui veille, - chez nous surtout qui avons roulé la mer. - C'étaient nos deux sauvages qui étaient en présence et qui se regardaient, ils venaient de se heurter l'un à l'autre, comme dans nos plus mauvais jours passés. (Yv. p. 165)

In this dilemma the sailor, unable to visualize a solution to his dilemma, often dreams of an end to the inner turmoil of his dual lifestyles. Sometimes he dreams of leaving the profession, of retiring to a place of peace and tranquillity. But this dream of retiring to pleasant pastures will, he knows, seldom materialize and his last years will probably be spent in poverty with his only escape an early death:

La retraite!... Toujours ce rêve que les matelots commencent à faire en pleine jeunesse, comme si leur vie présente n'était qu'un temps d'épreuve. Prendre sa retraite, vers quarante ans; après avoir fait les cents coups par le monde, posséder un petit coin de terre à soi, y vivre très sage et n'en plus sortir; devenir quelqu'un de posé dans son hameau, dans sa paroisse, - marguillier après avoir été rouleur de mer; vieux diable, se faire bon ermite, bien

tranquille... Combien d'entre eux sont fauchés avant de l'atteindre, cette heure plus paisible de l'âge mûr? Et, pourtant, interrogez-les, ils y songent tous. (Yv. pp. 217-18)

Retirement is many years away for Loti and Yves whose close relationship reveals that each one is in his own way developing, albeit spasmodically, into a staunch, competent, seaman, ready and willing to put his life on the line for his friend. Having a realistic, practical outlook, rather than that of the carefree, young sailors depicted in the novels of Chapter Two, they each face the toil and dangers of their way of life in an expert manner and without hesitation. Moreover, Loti shares, to the extent possible, the trials and happiness of Yves' family. The friends have been able to overcome Yves' hereditary weakness and thereby established the probability of a bright future for Yves and his young family.

In the next novel of this phase, Pêcheur d'Islande, Viaud focuses on the world of the industrious seafolk of Brittany; these fishermen divide their lives between the Icelandic waters where they fish for half of the year and then return to their families in Brittany for the other six months.



## 2. Pêcheur d'Islande

Viaud visited Brittany on several occasions, as did Loti and his brother in Yves.<sup>67</sup> During these visits Viaud met several Islandais and their families and developed a strong affection for the brave, hard-working, simple fishermen and for their long-suffering women. We have seen that some of Viaud's earlier novels were written during a time of depression following the unhappy termination of a romantic involvement. Pêcheur is written under somewhat similar circumstances; Viaud's proposal of marriage had been refused by a Breton girl who was in love with an Islandais;

Originally, the story was basically that of Loti's own experience of the Breton girl's persistence in waiting for her loved-one's return; but he later cut out certain scenes where this was too obvious for the sake of the girl, and changed his title just as he also had some of the lovemaking episodes curtailed because it was out of keeping with the impression of Breton life he wished to convey.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, the seafolk of Brittany reinforced Viaud's favourable impression of the Bretons with whom he was associated in the navy. Moreover, the lifestyle of the Islandais

<sup>67</sup> "Je suis dans une petite ville de Bretagne (Guingamp), où je m'étais arrêté il y a cinq ans, avec Yves" (JI.II. p. 2). See also Yv. pp. 44-53; 71-100; 146-69; 323-43.

<sup>68</sup> Michael G. Lerner, Pierre Loti (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1974), pp. 58-59.

had such a strong impact on him that he decided to make these seafolk the subject of his next novel, in which the wives and loved ones would play a more significant role than in his other sea novels.

Pêcheur d'Islande, published in 1886, first appeared in the Nouvelle Revue from April 1<sup>st</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup>, under the title Au Large. In creating this novel, Viaud draws on information gleaned during his visits and from his contacts with models employed for his protagonists. His personal knowledge of the fishing area was rather limited; nevertheless, his voyages aboard the Décres had afforded him the opportunity to observe and study the northern climate and the sea conditions and moods which, as Brodin observes, his talents bring to life so vividly in this novel:

Pour ce qui est de la Mer d'Islande, Julien ne l'avait jamais vue. Mais il s'était servi des impressions notées en 1870 sur les côtes de Norvège et d'une foule de renseignements scrupuleusement recueillis auprès des capitaines et matelots de Paimpol. Ainsi avait-il pu décrire comme personne avant lui ne l'avait encore fait, la poésie étrange des mers du Nord, avec leur lumière pâle et tremblante, leur humidité pénétrante, leurs horizons monotones.<sup>69</sup>

Pêcheur begins aboard a small fishing vessel, the Marie, in the northern seas near Iceland. In the confines of the small cabin, five men are celebrating in honour of their patron saint, the Virgin Mary, and waiting for the sixth member of the crew, Yann, prior to going on the midnight

<sup>69</sup> Brodin, p. 174.

watch. Viaud concentrates our attention on the non-stop fishing on board this vessel on the dangerous North Atlantic in the vicinity of Iceland. This is in sharp contrast to the lifestyle of sailors in port in the first phase of his novels and it broadens Viaud's portrait of working seamen that we have seen in Yves.

Young Sylvestre, who is engaged to Yann's sister, tries to convince Yann to marry Gaud, Sylvestre's cousin. She is the daughter of a wealthy father and very fond of Yann who, although ready to get married, is too proud to even consider marrying above his station.

As in Yves, the action alternates between the sailors at sea and their loved ones at home. Viaud stresses the similarities and contrasts between the lifestyles of the sailors and folks on shore, between their sufferings and pleasures. Serban emphasizes these aspects by picturing the protagonists as living in two different worlds:

Loti nous peint l'existence de ces gens de mer sous forme de diptyque : d'un côté les pêcheurs perdus dans les brouillards d'Islande; de l'autre, leurs parents, leurs femmes ou leurs fiancées qui les attendent, le coeur gros d'amour et d'anxiété. Entre ces deux mondes, séparés par les nécessités de la vie, s'entendent, invisibles, les fils ténus et indestructibles de l'affection et de l'amour, fidèles jusqu'au delà de la tombe.<sup>70</sup>

Viaud transports his reader back to Brittany to provide details of Gaud's background and of her meetings with and

<sup>70</sup> Serban, p. 97.

details of Gaud's background and of her meetings with and feelings towards Yann. When the Islandais return home and Yann makes no effort to see Gaud she tries unsuccessfully to see him, but he seems to be avoiding her.

Almost immediately after arriving home, Sylvestre leaves for his military service. His grandmother, Yvonne, visits him in Brest prior to his departure for China. During the war the courageous Islandais distinguishes himself for bravery but is seriously wounded. He dies while homeward bound on a hospital ship and is buried in Singapore.

Yvonne is devastated when she receives news of his death; Gaud, who is also shocked, manages to comfort the distraught grandmother. Yann, now back in Icelandic waters, receives the news by mail; he stoically conceals his knowledge and feelings from the other crew members.

The fishermen encounter dense fog for an extended period, during which they see another ship, the Reine-Berthe, and exchange greetings with their friends on board. When the Marie returns to port the crew is astonished to learn that the ship which they had seen, whether in fact or apparition, had been lost with all hands aboard prior to the time of their meeting in the fog.

Back in Brittany, Yann's pride continues to separate him from Gaud until he learns that her father has passed away, leaving her in poverty. In a chance encounter with Yvonne and Gaud, Yann is able to help the ladies and accompanies them to

Yvonne's home, where he eventually proposes marriage to Gaud. The lovers' brief courtship is a happy one even though Gaud is still in mourning for her father.

On Yann's next voyage, he is to be the captain of a new vessel, the Léopoldine, which troubles Gaud who has a religious attachment to the Marie; she is filled with anguish and fearful premonitions.

The couple are married just six days prior to the departure of the fishing fleet with Yann aboard his new vessel. Their marriage celebrations are disrupted by the nearby stormy sea. While the guests speculate as to why the storms are so bad at this time, Yann expresses what he had been feeling for some time: the sea is jealous and angry because he was promised to her. The sea's noise and anger seem to invade the nuptial chamber of the newly-wed couple.

Gaud is left alone when Yann, the proud captain of the Léopoldine, leaves for the six-month-long fishing season near Iceland. Gaud's premonitions and Yann's prediction made early in the novel, "Moi!... Un de ces jours, oui, je ferai mes nocés...avec la mer" (PI. p. 15), both come true.

\* \* \*

In this novel, as in Yves, Viaud's portrait of his seamen encompasses life both at sea and on shore. As we have seen in some of his other novels, Viaud often depicts the characteristics of the protagonists as they appear in different settings.

As the initial action in this novel takes place at sea, we shall examine the traits that Viaud ascribes to the **Islandais** as a collectivity in this environment. We shall then concentrate on the characteristics of each of the two protagonists, Yann and Sylvestre, who play principal roles. Next, we shall turn our attention to the on-shore world to establish how, in this very different environment, the sea is still able to influence the characteristics of Yann, Sylvestre and their loved ones, notably Gaud and Yvonne; the characteristics of the distaff seafolk will be given greater prominence than in any of the preceding novels.

The **Islandais**, like Yves, are Breton sailors, but instead of serving in the navy they devote their working lives to fishing for cod in Icelandic waters. Viaud depicts them as mature men both at work and at home; they are "gens de vent et de tempête" (PI. p. 38), courageous, religious and, when their work is productive, happy. Their characteristics are exemplified in Captain Guermeur and the crew of the Marie, all of whom are the progeny of generations of **Islandais**:

Les six hommes et le mousse, ils étaient des **Islandais** (une race vaillante de marins qui est répandue surtout au pays de Paimpol et de Tréguier, et qui s'est vouée de père en fils à cette pêche-là)

Ils n'-vaient presque jamais vu l'été de France.

A la fin de chaque hiver, ils recevaient avec les autres pêcheurs, dans le port de Paimpol, la bénédiction des départs. Pour ce jour de fête, un reposoir, toujours le même, était construit sur le quai; il imitait une grotte en rochers, et au milieu, parmi des trophées d'ancres, d'avirons et de filets, trônait, douce et impassible, la Vierge, patronne des marins, sortie pour eux de son église, regardant toujours, de génération en génération, avec ses mêmes yeux sans vie, les

heureux pour qui la saison allait être bonne - et les autres, ceux qui ne devaient pas revenir. (PI. pp. 19-20)

The **Islandais** enjoy their busy life, hard work and the sense of camaraderie which they share in the small "gîte". Relief from their continuous, strict routine occasionally comes from home: letters from far away are greeted with jubilation:

Un vapeur, là-bas!

- J'ai idée, dit le capitaine en regardant bien, j'ai idée que c'est un vapeur de l'Etat - le croiseur qui vient faire sa ronde...

Cette vague fumée apportait aux pêcheurs des nouvelles de France...

Et, de différents points de la mer, de différents côtés de l'étendue, arrivaient des navires pêcheurs : tous ceux de France qui rôdaient dans ces parages, des Bretons, des Normands, des Boulonnais ou des Dunkerquois. (PI. pp. 58-59)

Like many sailors depicted by Viaud, the **Islandais** tend to be superstitious and capable of seeing apparitions. This occurs early one morning while they are fishing in the fog. The monotonous silence is broken by the sound of voices prompting a strong blast on the fog-horn:

Cela seul faisait déjà frissonner, dans ce silence. Et puis, comme si, au contraire, une apparition eût été évoquée par son vibrant de cornemuse, une grande chose imprévue s'était dessinée en grisaille, s'était dressée menaçante, très haut tout près d'eux : des mâts, des vergues, des cordages, un dessin de navire qui s'était fait en l'air, partout à la fois et d'un même coup, comme ces fantasmagories pour effrayer qui, d'un seul jet de lumière, sont créés sur des voiles tendus. Et d'autres hommes apparaissait là, à les toucher, penchés sur le rebord, les regardant avec des yeux très ouverts, dans un réveil de surprise et d'épouvante...

L'apparition, c'était la Reine-Berthe, capitaine Larvoër, aussi de Paimpol; ces matelots étaient des villages d'alentour; ce grand-là tout en barbe noire, montrant ses

52)

We can only speculate as to whether this was an apparition or whether the ghost-ship was actually the Reine-Berthe with her crew still alive.

Superstitious or not, the **Islandais** are brave and courageous men, ready to accept the dangers of their occupation with confidence in their ship, captain, crew and above all themselves. This confidence is illustrated during a violent storm with two of their most competent men at the tiller: "Yann et Sylvestre étaient à la barre, attachés par la ceinture. Ils chantaient encore la chanson de **Jean-François de Nantes**...<sup>71</sup> Ils n'avaient pas peur... ayant confiance dans la solidité de leur bateau, dans la force de leurs bras" (PI. pp. 67-68).

Above all, these fishermen are hard working and industrious. They are, for example, undeterred by a dangerous fog signalling the end of the fishing season; they simply redouble their efforts and strive for a larger catch:

En même temps, la pêche allait de plus en plus vite, et on ne causait plus, tant les lignes donnaient; à tout instant, on entendait tomber à bord de gros poissons, lancés sur les planches avec un bruit de fouet; après, ils se trémoussaient rageusement en claquant de la queue contre le bois du pont; tout était éclaboussé de l'eau de la mer et des fines écailles argentées qu'ils jetaient en se débattant. Le marin qui leur fendait le ventre avec son grand couteau, dans sa précipitation, s'entaillait les doigts, et son sang bien rouge se mêlait à la saumure. (PI. p. 147)

<sup>71</sup> In Yves the sea chantey, "C'est le vent de la mer qui nous tourmente", is quoted in its entirety (Yv. pp. 86-87), whereas in this novel only the first three lines "Jean-François de Nantes" appear but are repeated four times.



précipitation, s'entaillait les doigts, et son sang bien rouge se mêlait à la saumure. (PI. p. 147)

These fishermen seem to be undeterred by storms, dangers, isolation and the boredom of continuous fog which can often last for days on end. No matter what circumstances they have to face, they are determined and able to concentrate on accomplishing the task at hand, as during these conditions aboard the Marie:

Tout était imprégné d'eau; tout était ruisselant de sel et de saumure. Le froid devenait plus pénétrant; le soleil s'attardait davantage à traîner sous l'horizon; il y avait déjà de vraies nuits d'une ou deux heures, dont la tombée grise était sinistre et glaciale...

La vie était saine et rude; ce froid plus piquant augmentait le bien-être du soir, l'impression de gîte bien chaud qu'on éprouvait dans la cabine en chêne massif, quand on y descendait pour souper ou pour dormir.

Dans le jour, ces hommes, qui étaient plus cloîtrés que des moines, causaient peu entre eux. Chacun, tenant sa ligne, restait pendant des heures et des heures à son même poste invariable, les bras seuls occupés au travail incessant de la pêche. Ils n'étaient séparés les uns des autres que de deux ou trois mètres, et ils finissaient par ne plus se voir. (PI. pp. 148-49)

Yann, a typical hard-working, brave and industrious Islandais, is the principal character in the novel and, therefore, the portrait drawn of his character is more rounded, like those of Loti and Yves in the previous novel. Yann is not, however, an officer with a more refined character which would make him stand out from the common seaman, nor is he, like Yves, an example of the negative side-effects of a life at sea. Rather, Yann is portrayed as something of a strong silent type, a mature man who exudes quiet strength and

confidence.

Physically, Yann is very striking. He is an extremely large man, physically dominating those around him; he is forced to double over in order to enter the small forecastle of the Marie. This bear-like man, upright and muscular, combines a strength that hints at savagery, with a freshness that attracts. Viaud depicts Yann as an admirable physical specimen somewhat similar to the handsome young friends of Loti described in Aziyadé; however, Yann is portrayed as a more mature man, with an inner strength which goes far beyond his exterior appearance:

Il entra, obligé de se courber en deux comme un gros ours, car il était presque un géant. Et d'abord il fit une grimace, en se pinçant le bout du nez à cause de l'odeur âcre de la saumure.

Il dépassait un peu trop les proportions ordinaires des hommes, surtout par sa carrure qui était droite comme une barre; quand il se présentait de face, les muscles de ses épaules, dessinés sous son tricot bleu, formaient comme deux boules en haut de ses bras. Il avait de grands yeux bruns très mobiles, à l'expression sauvage et superbe...

Ses dents, qui avaient eu chez lui plus de place pour s'arranger que chez les autres hommes, étaient un peu espacées et semblaient toutes petites. Ses moustaches blondes étaient assez courtes, bien que jamais coupées; elles étaient assez frisées très serré en deux petits rouleaux symétriques au-dessus de ses lèvres qui avaient des contours fins et exquis; et puis elles s'ébouriffaient aux deux bouts, de chaque côté des coins profonds de sa bouche. Le reste de sa barbe était tondu ras, et ses joues colorées avaient gardé un velouté frais, comme celui des fruits que personne n'a touchés. (Pl. pp. 10-11)

It is, therefore, not surprising that Yann typifies the type of seaman in whom his ship-mates have ultimate confidence. At one point Yann, alongside Sylvestre, is portrayed

as engaging in an epic struggle with the sea during a violent storm which, symbolic of Yann's volatile relationship with the sea, becomes ever more fierce as the strain begins to tell on the two helmsmen. Shivering from the cold, with their hands almost frozen, blinded and deafened by the thundering, mountainous waves, the brave helmsmen fight with a primitive savagery, conscious only of one another and the ever-present danger:

A travers leurs lèvres devenues blanches, le refrain de la vieille chanson passait encore, mais comme une chose aphone, reprise de temps à autre inconsciemment. L'excès de mouvement et de bruit les avaient rendus ivres; ils avaient beau être jeunes, leurs sourires grimaçaient sur leurs dents entrechoquées par un tremblement de froid; leurs yeux, à demi fermés sous les paupières brûlées qui battaient, restaient fixes dans une atonie farouche. Rivés à leur barre comme deux arcs-boutants de marbre, ils faisaient, avec leurs mains crispées et bleuies, les efforts qu'il fallait, presque sans penser, par simple habitude des muscles. Les cheveux ruisselants, la bouche contractée, ils étaient devenus étranges, et en eux reparaissait tout un fond de sauvagerie primitive.

Ils ne se voyaient plus! ils avaient conscience seulement d'être encore là, à côté l'un de l'autre. Aux instants plus dangereux, chaque fois que se dressait, derrière, la montagne d'eau nouvelle, surplombante bruissante, horrible, heurtant leur bateau avec un grand fracas sourd, une de leurs mains s'agitait pour un signe de croix involontaire. (Pl. pp. 70-71)

It is during such situations that life-long friendships are formed rather than the short-lived, dubious relationships we have seen in the novels of Viaud's first phase. These are friendships between reliable, mature men who share toil, danger and responsibility, secure in the knowledge that they can depend on one another. A particularly close relationship,

similar to that of father and son, develops between Yann and Sylvestre; their emotional needs complement each other: Sylvestre sees in Yann someone with whom to share dangers and his feelings, like a mature, older brother or the father whom he never knew, while Yann seems to fulfil a need to guide and protect the young and innocent Sylvestre:

Sylvestre, passant ses bras autour de ce Yann, l'attira contre lui par tendresse, à la façon des enfants; il était fiancé à sa soeur et le traitait comme un grand frère. L'autre se laissait caresser avec un air de lion câlin, en répondant par un bon sourire à dents blanches. (PI. p. 10)

As in the case of Loti and Yves, companionship becomes a means of overcoming the desolateness of life aboard ship. The two friends do almost everything together. In one scene, Viaud makes us very conscious of the teamwork between unselfish, industrious men as they cooperate while working through the long night, hauling out the heavy codfish, until the changing light signals the arrival of dawn:

Yann and Sylvestre avaient préparé leurs hameçons et leurs lignes, tandis que l'autre ouvrait un baril de sel et, aiguisant son grand couteau, s'asseyait derrière eux pour attendre.

Ce ne fut pas long. A peine avaient-ils jeté leurs lignes dans cette eau tranquille et froide, ils les relevèrent avec des poissons lourds, d'un gris luisant d'acier.

Et toujours, et toujours, les morues vives se faisaient prendre; c'était rapide et incessant, cette pêche silencieuse. L'autre éventrait, avec son grand couteau, aplatissait, salait, comptait, et la saumure qui devait faire leur fortune au retour s'empilait derrière eux, toute ruisselante et fraîche.

Les heures passaient monotones, et dans les grandes régions vides du dehors, lentement la lumière changeait; elle semblait maintenant plus réelle. Ce qui avait été un crépuscule blême, une espèce de soir d'été hyperborée,

en vagues traînées roses... (PI. pp. 14-15)

There are, however, times when Yann, like Loti in Yves, retreats into himself to ponder his own private thoughts and preoccupations. Typically introspective like many Islandais, Yann is careful to conceal his emotions at all times whether they be feelings of deep sorrow or of strong affection. This is particularly true when he grieves over the loss of his close friend, Sylvestre. When his thoughts turn to Gaud he withdraws, therefore, into his own world, protecting his feelings by an air of indifference and superiority which keeps him remote from the other crew members:

Yann avait bien retrouvé tout de suite ses façons d'être habituelles, comme si son grand chagrin n'eût pas persisté : vigilant and alerte, prompt à la manoeuvre et à la pêche, l'allure désinvolte comme qui n'a pas de soucis; du reste, communicatif à ses heures seulement - qui étaient rares - et portant toujours la tête aussi haute avec son air à la fois indifférent et dominateur.

Le soir, au souper, dans le logis fruste que protégeait la Vierge de faïence, quand on était attablé, le grand couteau en main, devant quelque bonne assiettée toute chaude, il lui arrivait, comme autrefois, de rire aux choses drôles que les autres disaient. (PI. p. 150)

As we have seen, Yann, like Yves, readily accepts responsibility at sea without question, even when it involves putting his own life at risk in situations which demand both physical strength and emotional courage; however, strength and courage do not exclude the sensitivity and affection seen in the heroes of Viaud's earlier novels. This tender side to Yann's character is revealed when the crew is discussing the

death of an Islandais and Yann, "Avec son dédain des autres, il pleura sans aucune contrainte ni honte, comme s'il eût été seul" (PI. p. 145).

Following the familiar pattern of previous heroes reacting to the constant exposure to dangers at sea, Yann's sensitivity to the effects of the death of his close friend arouses his fatalistic view of existence.<sup>72</sup> Fatalism, a characteristic of some of Viaud's other sailors, is prevalent among the collectivity of Icelandic seafolk; it and their religious beliefs are essential to enable them to face the dangers, fear of the unknown and loss of loved ones which are so much a part of their lives. Yann's fatalism became apparent at an early stage of the novel - when the fear of being tied down by marriage recalls his pronouncement that he expects to be married to his true love, the sea. He extends this "invitation" to his friends:

"Moi!... Un de ces jours, oui, je ferai mes noces - et il souriait, ce Yann, toujours dédaigneux, roulant ses yeux vifs - mais avec aucune des filles du pays; non, moi, ce sera avec la mer, et je vous invite tous, ici tant que vous êtes, au bal que je donnerai..." (PI. p. 15)

The factors, such as the Reine-Berthe apparition of the collectivity, lead to the fatalism of so many seafolk. Yann, with his religiosity bordering on outright paganistic super-

<sup>72</sup> Viaud imparts to Yann a characteristic which the novelist acquired on his first contact with the sea: "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 essaieraient de me retenir" (RE. p. 23).

stition, appears to be imbued with a characteristic that we have seen to be typical of Viaud's seamen - a preoccupation with thoughts of death. The night after learning of the loss of Sylvestre, Yann is haunted by thoughts of death: "Bientôt il rêva de Sylvestre mort, de son enterrement qui passait" (PI. p. 140). This fatalistic view of human existence is, Viaud tells us, not specific to Yann, but is shared by almost all sailors:

... Dans son idée à lui, la mort finissait tout...

Il lui arrivait bien, par respect, de s'associer à ces prières qu'on dit en famille pour les défunts; mais il ne croyait à aucune survivance des âmes.

Dans leurs causeries entre marins, ils disaient tout cela, d'une manière brève et assurée, comme une chose bien connue de chacun; ce qui pourtant n'empêchait pas une vague appréhension des fantômes, une vague frayeur des cimetières, une confiance extrême dans les saints et les images qui protègent, ni surtout une vénération innée pour la terre bénite qui entoure les églises.

Ainsi Yann redoutait pour lui-même d'être pris par la mer, comme si cela anéantissait davantage - et la pensée que Sylvestre était resté là-bas, dans cette terre lointaine d'en dessous, rendait son chagrin plus désespéré, plus sombre. (PI. pp. 144-45)

The portrait of Sylvestre<sup>73</sup> at sea adds yet another dimension, that of youth and naivety, to the general picture of the Islandais as an industrious, strong, courageous and reliable race. Sylvestre is the youngest member of the crew,

<sup>73</sup> According to Kerleveo, this character seems to be based on Sylvestre Floury, Guillaume's brother, or on Pierre Le Scoarnec who sailed with Viaud on the Atalante and later became the novelist's servant but more probably the writer combined some of the characteristics of each one to create "Sylvestre", who has many of the physical and other characteristics which are admired by Viaud, hence his detailed descriptions ("Paimpol et Pierre Loti", Cahiers Pierre Loti, nos. 34-36).

and as such is perhaps more ingenuous than the others when ashore, but in the familiar surroundings of his ship he is a responsible, committed seaman, sharing the admirable traits of character of the Marie's crew. Physically, he obviously belongs to the same breed of men as Yann, but in the following description we see that he is a younger and more gentle version:

Il était déjà un homme, pour la taille et la force; une barbe noire, très fine et très frisée, couvrait ses joues; seulement il avait gardé ses yeux d'enfant, d'un gris bleu, qui étaient extrêmement doux et tout naïfs. (PI. pp. 8-9)

Il était beau, lui aussi, et, après Yann, le mieux planté du bord. Sa voix très douce et ses intonations de petit enfant contrastaient un peu avec sa haute taille et sa barbe noire; comme sa croissance s'était faite très vite, il se sentait presque embarrassé d'être devenu tout d'un coup si large et si grand. (PI. p. 13)

Sylvestre's innocence stems from the fact that he became an orphan at a very young age and was brought up by his religious, widowed grandmother. They were devoted to one another and, being very poor, as soon as Sylvestre was strong enough he went to sea with the fishing fleet. Aboard the Marie, he says his prayers every evening; he is still very much the product of his religious upbringing:

Lui était un enfant vierge, élevé dans le respect des sacrements par une vieille grand-mère, veuve d'un pêcheur du village de Ploubazlanec. Tout petit, il allait chaque jour avec elle réciter un chapelet, à genoux sur la tombe de sa mère. De ce cimetière, situé sur la falaise, on voyait au loin les eaux grises de la Manche où son père avait disparu autrefois dans un naufrage. - Comme ils étaient pauvres, sa grand-mère et lui, il avait dû de très bonne heure naviguer à la pêche, et son enfance s'était passée au large. Chaque



soir il disait encore ses prières et ses yeux avaient gardé une candeur religieuse. (PI. pp. 12-13)

Sylvestre displays the typical Islandais' enjoyment of hard work and camaraderie while fishing in the northern seas; he also relishes his close friendship with Yann. On the other hand, as a recruit aboard the naval vessel, Sylvestre, unlike Yves, is definitely not at home amidst the bustle of the crew at work. As a recruit in this unfamiliar environment, Sylvestre seems younger, more naive, less self-confident than the other ratings. He prefers to distance himself a little from the crowd and, therefore, feels more at home perched high in the rigging, observing the others below:

Déjà il avait conscience d'être bien loin, à cause de cette vitesse qui était incessante, égale, qui allait toujours, presque sans souci du vent ni de la mer. tant gabier, il vivait dans sa mâture, perché comme un oiseau, évitant ces soldats entassés sur le pont, cette cohue d'en bas. (PI. p. 95)

When Sylvestre is in the war zone in Indochina he and the crew of his ship have to endure months of inaction waiting offshore near Tourane.<sup>74</sup> However, being of Islandais stock, he displays the type of maturity not seen in the sailors in Chapter Two, by concealing his feelings, better than most of his companions, with silence and a gentle smile. When there is talk of peace, some crew members express fears that they are missing the action, while others look forward to an early

<sup>74</sup> Tourane, now Da Nang, is a port in South Vietnam, south-east of Hue.

departure: Sylvestre, however, just waits, the epitome of calm, confident courage:

Sylvestre, lui, était assez silencieux et concentré en lui-même son impatience d'attente; seulement quand on le regardait, son petit sourire continu disait bien : "Oui, j'en suis en effet, et c'est pour demain matin." La guerre, le feu, il ne s'en faisait encore qu'une idée incomplète; mais cela le fascinait pourtant, parce qu'il était de vaillante race. (PI. p. 113)

On board a hospital ship heading for home after he has proven his bravery and is seriously wounded, Sylvestre is unable to find solace aloft in the fresh wind of the crow's-nest as he was on the out-bound voyage. Moreover, on this trip, like a true *Islandais*, he shows courage and strength of character by stoically accepting the discomforts of being confined below among the wounded and sharing their misery and suffering:

A bord de ce transport qui allait partir, on le coucha dans l'un des petits lits de fer alignés à l'hôpital et il recommença en sens inverse sa longue promenade à travers les mers. Seulement, cette fois, au lieu de vivre comme un oiseau dans le plein vent des hunes, c'était dans les lourdeurs d'en bas, au milieu des exhalaisons des remèdes, de blessures et de misères. (PI. p. 121)

Sylvestre reveals his patience and tolerance in these surroundings until, as they approach the equator, the heat, humidity and stormy seas, together with the stifling conditions down in the airless sick-bay, contribute to Sylvestre's

already deteriorating condition.<sup>75</sup> He eventually dies, while dreaming of his homeland and of Iceland, leaving this life after nineteen years of dangerous toil, a brave, patriotic credit to the teachings of his grandmother and as pure and innocent as when he entered this world:

Toute sorte de visions du pays hantaient son cerveau mourant; dans l'obscurité chaude, des figures aimées ou affreuses venaient se pencher sur lui; il était dans un perpétuel rêve d'halluciné, où passaient la Bretagne et l'Islande.

Le matin, il avait fait appeler le prêtre, et celui-ci, qui était un vieillard habitué à voir mourir des matelots, avait été surpris de trouver, sous cette enveloppe si virile, la pureté d'un petit enfant. (PI. p. 122)

Having looked at seafolk at sea we shall now examine seamen and other seafolk on shore. When Yann was on shore as a young naval seaman he acted in a manner reminiscent of the seamen depicted in the novels of Viaud's first phase whose moral codes are overridden by their need for pleasure. It was, in fact, very soon after he entered the navy that Yann indulged himself with women of somewhat easy virtue:

Un soir, revenant de la mer, il était entré un peu gris dans un Alcazar. Il y avait à la porte une femme qui vendait des bouquets énormes au prix d'un louis de vingt francs. Il y en avait acheté un, sans trop savoir qu'en faire, et puis, tout de suite en arrivant, il l'avait lancé à tour de bras, en plein par la figure, à celle qui chantait sur la scène, - moitié déclaration brusque, moitié ironie pour cette poupée peinte qu'il trouvait par trop rose. La femme était tombée du coup; après, elle l'avait adoré pendant près de trois semaines. (PI. pp. 11-12)

<sup>75</sup> Loti probably bases his narration of life in the sick-bay on his own experience, having been sick and delirious aboard the Atalante, in the Far-East (JI. II, pp. 79-83).

In his initial meeting with Gaud, Yann appears confident; his apparent honesty and frankness immediately appeal to Gaud as these characteristics contrast sharply with the shallow pretentiousness of the men she had met in Paris:

Et quelle chose singulière et inattendue, ce grand garçon avec ses allures désinvoltes, son aspect terrible, toujours traité chez lui en petit enfant et trouvant cela naturel; ayant couru le monde, toutes les aventures, tous les dangers, et conservant pour ses parents cette soumission respectueuse, absolue.

Elle le comparait avec d'autres, avec trois ou quatre freluquets de Paris, commis, écrivassiers ou je ne sais quoi, qui l'avaient poursuivie de leurs adorations, pour son argent. Et celui-ci lui semblait être ce qu'elle avait connu de meilleur, en même temps qu'il était le plus beau. (PI. p. 45)

Yann's self-confidence is shattered when he realizes that he is in love with Gaud and that she is far beyond his reach: he is unable to marry, or even court, her because of their different social status. His frustration and the blow to his pride has a detrimental effect causing the mature seaman to feel like a fish out of water and revert to the emotional instability of youth.

If Yann's strongly developed sense of pride makes him feel that Gaud's social position and obvious wealth place her beyond his reach, there are nevertheless times when his affection for her overcomes all other considerations. On one occasion this happens when he arrives late for a wedding-feast; there had been word that the fish were running on the English side of the Channel, and the boats at Ploubazlanec had thus left immediately. Yann allowed his affection to take

precedence even over his pride in his work, and managed to find a fisherman who would take his place. During the festivities Yann confides this to Gaud and reveals the strength of his emotions:

"Il n'y a que vous dans Paimpol - et même dans le monde - pour m'avoir fait manquer cet appareillage; non, sûr que pour aucune autre, je ne me serais dérangé de ma pêche, mademoiselle Gaud..."

Etonnée d'abord que ce pêcheur osât lui parler ainsi, à elle qui était venue à ce bal un peu comme une reine, et puis charmée délicieusement, elle avait fini par répondre :

"Je vous remercie, monsieur Yann; et moi-même, je préfère être avec vous qu'avec aucun autre." (PI. p. 42)

Yet such sincere exchanges are temporary and infrequent; Yann's relationship with Gaud is really a series of emotional ups and downs characterized by failure to communicate and missed opportunities. Yann's inability to visualize a happy outcome to his involvement with Gaud seems to manifest itself in a blow to his pride and lack of self-assurance in on-shore personal relationships. He is, nevertheless, sensitive and considerate. Realizing that he can never ask Gaud to marry him due to their differences in social standing, he tries to gently reduce her expectations by deliberately hiding his love and acting coolly towards her. He even goes so far as to make sure that she sees him with another girl, thereby trying to turn her against him and forestall her possible disappointment in the future: "Un soir de dimanche, très tard, elle l'avait vu passer sous ses fenêtres, reconduisant et serrant de près une certaine Jeannie Caroff, qui était jolie assurément, mais dont la réputation était

fort mauvaise" (PI. p. 49).

His concern for Gaud's expectations again becomes apparent when the normally tender and affectionate Yann returns from Iceland and conceals his feelings from Gaud in order to avoid hurting her by raising her expectations. Gaud is, therefore, very disappointed when they do meet, a chance encounter during which Yann seems cold and distant:

Il avait dit en touchant son bonnet :  
 "Bonjour, mademoiselle Gaud!  
 - Bonjour, monsieur Yann", répondit-elle.  
 Et ce fut tout; il était passé. (PI. p. 165)

Gaud, unfortunately, had not been at home earlier when Yann visited grandmother Moan and had revealed his sensitivity and tenderness by giving way to tears over the death of Sylvestre. Yvonne's description later explains how very different he was with her than at his meeting with Gaud:

Jusqu'à ma porte, qu'il a voulu me raccompagner, ma bonne Gaud, pour me porter mon petit fagot...  
 Elle écoutait cela, debout, et son coeur se serrait à mesure : ainsi, cette visite de Yann, sur laquelle elle avait tant compté pour lui dire tant de choses, était déjà faite, et ne se renouvellerait sans doute plus; c'était fini...  
 Alors la chaumière lui sembla plus désolée, la misère plus dure, le monde plus vide - et elle baissa la tête avec une envie de mourir. (PI. pp. 165-66)

Even after Gaud's social position changes and she is penniless following the death of her father, Yann is hesitant in their relationship. He seems to have difficulty adjusting to the new circumstances and still finds it difficult to propose marriage to Gaud, possibly fearing

refusal. Yann's hesitancy and lack of self-confidence is evident in his eventual proposal which seems more like an ambivalent suggestion than a proposal of marriage:

"Gaud, demanda-t-il à demi-voix grave, si vous voulez toujours..."

Qu'allait-il dire?... On devinait quelque grande décision, brusque comme étaient les siennes, prise là tout à coup, et osant à peine être formulée...

"Nous pourrions faire notre mariage, mademoiselle Gaud, si vous vouliez toujours..."

... Et puis il attendit sa réponse, qui ne vint pas... Qui donc pouvait l'empêcher de prononcer ce oui?... Il s'étonnait, il avait peur, et elle s'en apercevait bien. (PI. p. 184)

Yann's openness, confidence and self-assurance, as seen prior to falling in love with Gaud, do not seem to return even after she has accepted his proposal. He is reluctant to explain to Gaud why he had avoided her for so long, when his feelings towards her were so strong. In answer to her question, as to whether he was afraid of being refused, his pride prompts him to reply in the negative; he makes no mention of his promise of marriage to the sea as she seems to answer Gaud's question by her moaning and groaning:

- Oh! non, pas cela.

Il fit cette réponse avec une si naïve sûreté de lui-même, que Gaud en fut amusée. Et puis il y eut de nouveau un silence pendant lequel on entendit dehors le bruit gémissant de la brise et de la mer. (PI. p. 197)

This response by the sea reinforces Yann's belief that he will be taken by the sea, and seems to Gaud to be more convincing than Yann's half-hearted reply. He makes no mention of his

than Yann's half-hearted reply. He makes no mention of his fear that their marriage shall be a brief one, or of any reluctance to relinquish the freedom so dear to sailors;<sup>76</sup> he simply reverts to the child-like obstinacy by blaming his inherent stubbornness:

"C'est mon caractère qui est comme cela, Gaud, dit-il. Chez nous, avec mes parents, c'est la même chose. Des fois, quand je fais ma tête dure, je reste pendant des huit jours comme fâché avec eux, presque sans parler à personne. et pourtant je les aime bien, vous le savez, et je finis toujours par leur obéir dans tout ce qu'ils veulent, comme si j'étais encore un enfant de dix ans... Si vous croyez que ça faisait mon affaire, à moi, de ne pas me marier! Non, cela n'aurait plus duré longtemps dans tous les cas, Gaud, vous pouvez me croire." (PI. p. 198)

Such reactions of course impede the progress of his relationship with Gaud; it appears that his actions are to a large extent dictated by his sense of pride. Yann knows that at sea, he works effectively and efficiently, he is in control of himself and his job - in contrast to his hesitant indirect behaviour with Gaud. It is doubtless in an attempt to regain some lost self-esteem that he tries to impress Gaud by describing his work, the functions of his vessel and the skills necessary for fishing:

<sup>76</sup> The need of freedom from family responsibilities is a characteristic of Viaud, perhaps, because he too expects to be taken by the sea. "L'épouse, le foyer, tout fixes et stables qu'ils paraissent être, représentent, au regard de Loti, une autre évasion, l'évasion devant les choses et les êtres qu'on laisse un peu partout dans le monde; évasion devant la mort, devant la fin de tout" (Ekstrom, p. 53).



"Vois-tu, Gaud, dit-il, sur le **plat-bord** de nos navires, il y a des trous qui sont percés à certaines places et que nous appelons **trous de macques**; c'est pour y planter des petits supports à rouet dans lesquels nous passons nos lignes. Donc, avant de partir, nous jouons ces trous-là aux dés, ou bien avec des numéros brassés dans le bonnet du mousse. Chacun de nous gagne le sien et, pendant toute la campagne après, l'on n'a plus le droit de planter sa ligne ailleurs, l'on ne change plus. Et bien, mon poste, à moi, se trouve sur l'arrière du bateau qui est, comme tu dois savoir, l'endroit où l'on prend le plus de poissons; et puis il touche aux grands haubans où l'on peut toujours attacher un bout de toile, un **cirage**, enfin un petit abri quelconque, pour la figure, contre toutes ces neiges ou ces grêles de là-bas; cela sert, tu comprends; on n'a pas la peau si brûlée, pendant les mauvais grains noirs, et les yeux voient plus longtemps clair." (PI. pp. 228-29)

Although the characters of Yann and Sylvestre are similar when they are on board ship, this is not entirely the case when they are on shore where Sylvestre has been secure in his relationship with Yann's sister from a very young age. He has never had to face the emotional problems and inner conflicts of Yann. Sylvestre's life seems to be well organized, exempt from the complications and difficulties faced by Yann. As a result the younger man is able to display very positive qualities: constant devotion to loved ones, strength of character and bravery.

Sylvestre is extremely devoted to his grandmother, his fiancée, Marie, and to Gaud; unfortunately, soon after his arrival home from Iceland he has to leave for Brest to join

<sup>77</sup> In this paragraph Loti employs more nautical technical terms than is his custom: "plat-bord", or gunwale, is the upper rail of a vessel; "cirage", is a waxed waterproof piece of canvass; "hauban", is a shroud, a supporting rope stretched between the mast-head and the side of the vessel.

the navy for his military service. While stationed at Recouvrance in Brest, Sylvestre - unlike the youthful Yann, Yves and the heroes discussed in Chapter Two - proves his maturity, strength of character and firm religious faith by resisting the temptations so readily available in the naval port. His exemplary behaviour reflects his love of Marie and the teachings of Yvonne:

Sylvestre... portant crânement son col bleu ouvert et son bonnet à pompon rouge; superbe en matelot, avec son allure roulante et sa haute taille; dans le fond, regrettant toujours sa bonne vieille grand-mère, et resté l'enfant innocent d'autrefois.

Un seul soir il s'était grisé, avec des pays, parce que c'est l'usage : ils étaient rentrés au quartier, toute une bande se donnant le bras, en chantant à tue-tête. (PI. p. 87)

Ashore in the Far East, Sylvestre benefits from his experience in the dangerous waters near Iceland which test the mettle of all *Islandais*. He is not wanting for courage in the face of the enemy; when he finally sees action he shows outstanding bravery and leadership qualities.<sup>78</sup> After a couple of days of fighting some of his comrades-in-arms are hesitating, so Sylvestre takes the lead and his initiative successfully turns back the Chinese:<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup>Loti served aboard the *Atalante* near Tourane, at which time he was harshly criticized for three articles written for the *Figaro*, (See p. 6). In a letter to Mme Adam requesting her help in defending himself he reveals his dedication to the navy: "Si on me force à quitter la marine, disait-il, ce sera un coup de massue. J'aime ce métier et ces gens de la mer par dessus tout. Je voudrais rester avec eux malgré toutes les vilénies qu'on pourra me faire" (Juliette Adam, p. 32).

<sup>79</sup>"Annamites, Tonkinois, Pavillons-Noir, pour les matelots, tout cela, c'est de la même famille chinoise" (PI. p. 116).

A une minute d'indécision suprême, les matelots, éraflés par les balles, avaient presque commencé ce mouvement de recul qui eût été leur mort à tous; mais Sylvestre avait continué d'avancer; ayant pris son fusil par le canon, il tenait tête à tout un groupe, fauchant de droite et de gauche, à grands coups de crosse qui assommaient. Et, grâce à lui, la partie avait changé de tournure : cette panique, cet affolement, ce je ne sais quoi, qui décide aveuglement de tout, dans ces petites batailles non dirigées, était passé du côté des Chinois; c'étaient eux qui avaient commencé à reculer. (PI. pp. 117-18)

Unfortunately, the brave Sylvestre is seriously wounded and for him the war is over. Although he is perhaps the youngest, he has proved himself as certainly the bravest man in his group, a fact which is recognized: "On lui avait donné la médaille militaire et il en avait eu un moment de joie" (PI. p. 120). Sylvestre dies aboard the hospital ship and is buried in Singapore.<sup>80</sup>

In Pêcheur, Viaud paints a more significant picture, than in Mon Frère Yves, of the lives and characters of the family members who await the safe return of their seafaring husbands, sons and lovers. His depiction of the lifestyle of the families of the fishermen is more extensive and detailed than that of the families in Yves; there is a strong interdependence and camaraderie between the closely knit group of Islandais families, whereas the naval seafolk usually face

<sup>80</sup> Viaud seems to revert from narrator to a protagonist as he employs the first person "Je" in the chapter devoted to Sylvestre's burial: "Aussi bien, je ne puis m'empêcher de conter cet enterrement de Sylvestre que je conduisis moi-même là-bas, dans l'île de Singapour. On en avait assez jeté d'autres dans la mer de Chine pendant les premiers jours de la traversée; comme cette terre malaise était là tout près, on s'était décidé à le garder quelques heures de plus pour l'y mettre" (PI. p. 126). Viaud took part in a burial in Singapore which inspired and added to the realism of this interment (JI. pp. 76-78).

their problems alone, in isolation. unable to share their difficulties with others in a similar situation.

The characteristics of the seafolk depicted in Pêcheur have developed through generations of Islandais; born into a lifestyle established by their ancestors, the women have much in common with their menfolk, for both sexes must face the consequences of voyages which can last up to six months. Like their men at sea, the seafolk on shore have to depend on one another and are therefore always ready to help their neighbours. They are brave, long-suffering and resilient, strongly religious but fearful for the lives of their menfolk: "Etre femme d'Islandais, voir approcher tous les printemps avec tristesse, passer tous les étés dans l'anxiété douloureuse" (PI. p. 219).

Traditionally, the Islandais have large families - a fact which adds to the hardship of the mothers. Nevertheless, they are always willing to help, as Gaud learns when she visits Yann's mother at Pors-Even. Despite his mother's large family she did not hesitate to adopt another child in order to help a neighbour:

Plusieurs petits Gaos était là, garçons ou filles, tous frères d'Yann - sans compter deux grands qui naviguaient. Et, en plus, une bien petite blonde, triste et proprette, qui ne ressemblait pas aux autres.

"Une que nous avons adoptée l'an dernier, expliqua la mère; nous en avons déjà beaucoup pourtant; mais, que voulez-vous, mademoiselle Gaud! son père était de la Marie-Dieu-t'aime, qui s'est perdue en Islande à la saison dernière, comme vous savez - alors, entre voisins, on s'est partagé les cinq enfants qui restaient et celle-ci nous est échue." (PI. p. 80)

Although the men and their loved ones are separated for long periods, the close camaraderie of the men and close friendships of the women and the seasonal routine of their lifestyle, all help to make their lives happier than those of the navy families. Yves, for example, leaves home without his family knowing where in the world he is going or when he will return; he is exposed to all the dangers of the sea and also, like Sylvestre, to those of combat.

Like most *Islandais*, the Gaos all have large families, perhaps as a means to provide security for later life and promote their culture. At the wedding of Gaud and Yann, one of the men indicates the importance and family pride associated with this aspect of their lives by counting the members of the Gaos family:

Et, en comptant sur ses doigts, il expliquait à un oncle de la mariée comment il y en avait tant de ce nom-là : son père, qui était le plus jeune de neuf frères, avait eu douze enfants, tous mariés avec des cousines, et ça en avait fait, tout ça, des Gaos, malgré les disparus d'Islande!... (PI. p. 205)

The new babies signal happier times to come when, with the first signs of autumn, the returning fathers and the men who have been chosen to serve as godfathers arrive home for the baptism of the new-born children. The pragmatic *Islandais* consider the large families necessary to replenish the annual loss of fishermen devoured by the Icelandic sea:

On rentre au foyer, à Paimpol ou dans les chaumières éparses du pays de Goëlo, s'occuper pour un temps de famille et

d'amour, de mariages et de naissances. Presque toujours on trouve là des petits nouveau-nés, conçus l'hiver d'avant, et qui attendent des parrains pour recevoir le sacrement du baptême ; - il faut beaucoup d'enfants à ces races de pêcheurs que l'Islande dévore. (PI. p. 21)

Here Viaud presents us with the portrait of an Islandais wife whose sons may someday be taken by the sea; she brings up a large family without seeing their father all summer. She is constantly haunted by nagging fears that he may be lost at sea or buried in Iceland: "L'Islande lui apparaissait, avec le petit cimetière de là-bas - l'Islande lointaine, éclairée par en dessous au soleil de minuit (PI. p. 240).

The lonely wives learn to depend on one another and, not surprisingly, to find solace in their religion. All of the wives are, therefore, in attendance when the fishermen receive the benediction of departure before leaving for Iceland:

Le saint sacrement, suivi d'une procession lente de femmes et de mères, de fiancées et de soeurs, faisait le tour du port, où tous les navires islandais, qui s'étaient pavoisés, saluaient du pavillon au passage. Le prêtre, s'arrêtant devant chacun d'eux, disant les paroles et faisant les gestes qui bénissent. (PI. p. 20)

Among the families at the departure service, Sylvestre's grandmother, Yvonne Moan, stands out as the typical Islandais woman, a most rounded, sympathetic person, she is a model of maturity and motherhood: she is tender, loving and compassionate, but resilient and decisive, embodying perhaps all that is admirable in an Islandais woman. Unlike her neighbours, who all have large families, Yvonne has outlived most

of the members of her family; Sylvestre is her only living relative. Viaud's depiction of her physical characteristics emphasizes her age, religiousness, honesty and purity:

Elle était vieille, très vieille, malgré sa tournure jeunette, ainsi vue de dos sous son petit châle brun. Mais tout à fait vieille: une bonne grand-mère d'au moins soixante-dix ans. Encore jolie par exemple, et encore fraîche, avec les pommettes bien roses, comme certains vieillards ont le don de les conserver. Sa coiffe, très basse sur le front et sur le sommet de la tête, était composée de deux ou trois larges cornets en mousseline qui semblaient s'échapper les uns des autres et retombaient sur la nuque. Sa figure vénérable s'encadrait bien dans toute cette blancheur et dans ces plis qui avaient un air religieux. Ses yeux, très doux, étaient pleins d'une bonne honnêteté. Elle n'avait plus trace de dents, plus rien, et, quand elle riait, on voyait à la place ses gencives rondes qui avaient un petit air de jeunesse. Malgré son menton, qui était devenu "en pointe de sabot" (comme elle avait coutume de dire), son profil n'était pas trop gâté pour les années; on devinait encore qu'il avait dû être régulier et pur comme celui des saintes d'église. (PI. pp. 22-23)

Yvonne, being very fond of Sylvestre, is constantly worried when he is on the sea which has taken so many members of her family, including her husband and son, Sylvestre's father. Understandably, she is preoccupied with thoughts of death; she is well aware of the many dangers faced by the fishermen. Her sleep is troubled, as she dreams of her grandson and of death, even though at the time he is happy and well:

Dans sa chaumière de Ploubazlanec, la grandmère Moan, qui était, elle, sur l'autre versant plus noir de la vie, avait fini aussi par s'endormir, du sommeil glacé des vieillards, en songeant à son petit-fils et à la mort.

Et, à cette même heure, à bord de la Marie - sur la mer Boréale qui était ce soir-là très remuante - Yann et Sylvestre, les deux désirés, se chantaient des chansons, tout

en faisant gaiement leur pêche à la lumière sans fin du jour... (PI. pp. 52-53)

After Sylvestre joins the navy and is stationed in Brest, he writes to Yvonne, advising of his imminent departure for the Far East to fight his country's battles. She does not hesitate, but immediately goes to Brest to spend a few days with Sylvestre: "Elle était restée trois jours avec lui, trois jours de fête sur lesquels pesait un après bien sombre, autant dire trois jours de grâce" (PI. p. 92). During the three days that she is there, evidence of her tender compassion for Sylvestre abounds; they are together constantly, walking arm in arm like two lovers which prompts other sailors to make good-natured remarks, such as: "Elle est un peu ancienne, son amoureuse" (PI. p. 90). The couple's enjoyable sojourn together is truly a love story but unfortunately a short-lived one; Sylvestre is to be confined to barracks before departure and Yvonne's money is running out.<sup>79</sup> Their last day together is a sad but memorable one; the following passage idealizes the kind of bond which forms between Islandais men and women:

Oh! ce dernier jour!... Elle avait eu beau faire, beau chercher dans sa tête pour dire encore des choses drôles à son petit-fils, elle n'avait rien trouvé, non, mais c'étaient des larmes qui avaient envie de venir, les sanglots qui, à chaque instant, lui montaient à la gorge. Suspendue à son bras, elle lui faisait mille recommandations qui, à lui aussi, donnaient l'envie de pleurer. Et ils avaient fini par entrer dans une église pour dire ensemble leurs prières. (PI. p. 92)

<sup>79</sup> Viaud seems to be recalling the separation from his mother prior to his first naval voyage.



In an apostrophe, Viaud reveals the inevitable tragic end to this emotionally charged, life-long affection between grandmother and grandson: "Regarde-le bien, vieille femme, ce petit Sylvestre; jusqu'à la dernière minute, suis bien sa silhouette fuyante, qui s'efface là-bas pour jamais" (PI. p. 94). Separated, Yvonne and Sylvestre find it impossible to hide their emotions in the traditionally stoical manner of the *Islandais*:

Et, quand elle ne le vit plus, elle retomba assise, sans souci de froisser sa belle coiffe, pleurant à sanglots, dans une angoisse de mort...

Lui, s'en retournait lentement, tête baissée, avec de grosses larmes descendant sur ses joues. La nuit d'automne était venue, le gaz allumé partout, la fête des matelots commencée. Sans prendre garde à rien, il traversa Brest, puis le pont de Recouvrance, se rendant au quartier. (PI. p. 94)

Yvonne soon faces Viaud's apostrophic prophesy; in a callous, unsympathetic interview with M. le commissaire d'inscription, she learns of Sylvestre's death. "C'était bien ce qu'elle avait à moitié deviné, mais cela la faisait trembler seulement; à présent que c'était certain, ça n'avait pas l'air de la toucher" (PI. pp. 134-35).

The long-suffering, stoical *Islandais* woman manages to hide her emotions until she reaches the private confines of her home where she can no longer hide her inner suffering and allows herself to give in to feelings of despair:

Chez elle, la porte fermée, elle poussa un cri de détresse qui l'étouffait, et se laissa tomber dans un coin, la tête au mur. Sa coiffe lui était descendue sur les yeux; elle la jeta par terre - sa pauvre belle coiffe, autrefois si ménagée. Sa dernière robe des dimanches était toute salie, et une mince queue de cheveux, d'un blanc jaune, sortait de

son serre-tête, complétant un désordre de pauvresse... (PI. pp. 137-38)

Grandma Moan shows her resilience by recovering from this loss as she has from so many tragedies in her life; her strength of character and religious faith which enabled her to survive the loss of all the other members of her family now enables her to accept the loss of her last surviving relative, her favourite - Sylvestre.

This loss seems to increase Yvonne's interest in Gaud and Yann's relationship. Although thoughts of her death are never far from the aging grandmother's thoughts, during the period of silence when Gaud hesitates to respond to Yann's marriage proposal, Yvonne proves that she can still be decisive. Knowing the feelings of the young couple and unable to stand the strained tension, she is the one who finally breaks the silence: "Allons, Dieu vous bénisse! mes enfants, dit la grand-mère Moan. Et moi, je lui dois un grand merci, car je suis contente d'être devenue si vieille, pour avoir vu ça avant de mourir" (PI. p. 185).

As we saw in Viaud's depictions of Yvonne, Gaud's character is also much more fully drawn than those of the seafolk on shore in the preceding novel. Marguerite Mével, known as Gaud in Paimpol, had lived in Paris where she never felt at home with the Parisian way of life; she felt homesick and lonely with only her father as company. On her return to Paimpol, she soon realizes that, after her exposure to Paris, she is now somewhat different from the families of the

**Islandais.** Returning to her roots, she wants to feel at home and gradually becomes like one of the village women, adopting some of their characteristics and distinctive features, such as their hairstyles and old-fashioned caps:

Sa coiffe était en forme de coquille, descendait bas sur le front, s'y appliquant presque comme un bandeau, puis se relevant beaucoup des deux côtés, laissant voir d'épaisses nattes de cheveux roulés en colimaçon au-dessus des oreilles - coiffure conservée des temps très anciens et qui donne encore un air d'autrefois aux femmes paimpolaises. (PI. p. 24)

Gaud may differ from the local women in that she has blond hair, but she is typical of the **Islandais** in that she is strong-willed and forceful, proud and dignified, "ayant dans les veines ce sang des coureurs de mer" (PI. p. 32). Although Gaud shares many of the serious, obstinate and solemn attributes of the mature seafolk she is, nevertheless, a young, distinctive and very attractive lady:

Elle était bien jeune, celle-ci, adorablement jeune, une figure de vingt ans. Très blonde - couleur rare en ce coin de Bretagne où la race est brune; très blonde, avec des yeux d'un gris de lin à cils presque noirs. Ses sourcils, blonds autant que ses cheveux, étaient comme repeints au milieu d'une ligne plus rousse, plus foncée, qui donnait une expression de vigueur et de volonté. Son profil, un peu court, était très noble, le nez prolongeant la ligne du front avec une rectitude absolue, comme dans les visages grecs. Une fossette profonde, creusée sous la lèvre inférieure, en accentuait délicieusement le rebord; - et de temps en temps, quand une pensée la préoccupait beaucoup, elle la mordait, cette lèvre, avec ses dents blanches d'en haut, ce qui faisait courir sous la peau fine des petites traînées plus rouges. Dans toute sa personne svelte, il y avait quelque chose de fier, de grave aussi un peu, qui lui venait des hardis marins d'Islande ses ancêtres. Elle avait une expression d'yeux à la fois obstinée et douce.

Sa coiffe était en forme de coquille, descendait bas sur le front, s'y appliquant presque comme un bandeau, puis se relevant beaucoup des deux côtés, laissant voir d'épaisses

nattes de cheveux roulés en colimaçon au-dessus des oreilles - coiffure conservée des temps très anciens et qui donne encore un air d'autrefois aux femmes paimpolaises. (PI. p. 23)

Gaud soon shows that she has a serious interest in meeting and establishing a relationship with a brave and, like all of Viaud's seafolk, handsome **Islandais**, Yann. Moreover, she shows the confidence of youth when her first meeting with him turns out to be a disappointing one, as he acts rather coolly towards her. She had immediately fallen in love and his coolness does not deter her; she is certain that she can win him over and later recalls every detail of their first meeting:

C'était le lendemain de son arrivée, au **pardon des Islandais**, qui est le 8 décembre, jour de la Notre-Dame de Bonne-Nouvelle, patronne des pêcheurs - un peu après la procession, les rues sombres encore tendues de draps blancs sur lesquels étaient piqués du lierre et du houx, des feuillages et des fleurs d'hiver. (PI. p. 35)

Gaud's self-confidence, in contrast with Yann's insecurity in their relationship, is in evidence during her next meeting with Yann when she openly and unequivocally lets Yann know that she likes him. Her strength of character, not unlike that of Yvonne, is shown when, with full knowledge of the hardships faced by the wives of **Islandais** and the constant fears for the safety of their husbands, she is still anxious to marry Yann.

Gaud's love is strong enough not only to enable her to accept the hardships and loneliness of an **Islandais'** wife,

but also to take the decision to confess it to him directly. However, he denies her the opportunity:

Elle l'aimait assez pour oser le lui avouer en face. Elle lui dirait: "Vous m'avez cherchée quand je ne vous demandais rien; à présent, je suis à vous de toute mon âme si vous me voulez; voyez, je ne redoute pas de devenir la femme d'un pêcheur, et cependant, parmi les garçons de Paimpol, je n'aurais qu'à choisir si j'en désirais un pour mari; mais je vous aime, vous, parce que, malgré tout, je vous crois meilleur que les autres jeunes hommes... je vous aime tant, pourquoi ne me prendriez-vous pas? "

...Mais tout cela ne serait jamais exprimé, jamais dit qu'en rêve... (PI. p. 106)

As in Yves, Viaud emphasizes the deprivation and sufferings of these women who must needs be of uncommon strength to simply survive. Gaud is tormented by loneliness when separated from Yann, after he has returned to the Icelandic seas for the fishing season. She strives to overcome her feelings of depression by recalling her happy memories, dreaming wistfully and longing for Yann's safe return:

...Oh! cette nuit de bal, la nuit délicieuse, décisive et unique dans sa vie - elle était déjà presque lointaine, puisqu'elle datait de décembre et qu'on était en mai. Tous les beaux danseurs d'alors pêchaient à présent là-bas, épars sur la mer d'Islande - y voyant clair, au pâle soleil, dans leur solitude immense, tandis que l'obscurité se faisait tranquillement sur la terre bretonne.

Gaud restait à sa fenêtre. (PI. p. 45)

Gaud avait passé bien des soirées à cette fenêtre, regardant cette place mélancolique, songeant aux Islandais qui étaient partis, et toujours à ce même bal... (PI. p. 46)

Gaud's exposure to heartache leads naturally to empathy with others who experience similar suffering. Like a typical member of the Islandais family group, she shows compassion and

pity in her efforts to console and comfort Yvonne after Sylvestre's death. Gaud shares her sorrow and tries to protect the destitute old lady by calmly announcing her decision to move into Yvonne's humble abode: "Je viendrai, moi, ma bonne grand-mère, demeurer avec vous; j'apporterai mon lit qu'on m'a laissé, je vous garderai, je vous soignerai, vous ne serez pas toute seule" (PI. p. 138). After the sale of her father's house, Gaud moves all her worldly goods to Yvonne's house and begins to adjust to her new life:

Tous les jours, elle travaillait à des ouvrages de couture chez les gens riches de la ville et rentrait à la nuit, sans être distraite en chemin par aucun amoureux, restée un peu hautaine, et encore entourée d'un respect de demoiselle; en lui disant bonsoir, les garçons mettaient, comme autrefois, la main à leur chapeau. (PI. p. 157)

Elle aimait toute cette région de Ploubazlanec; elle était presque heureuse que le sort l'eût rejetée là : en aucun autre lieu du pays elle n'eût pu se faire à vivre. (PI. p. 158)

After the death of her father Gaud tends to develop the kind of character that we have seen in Grandma Moan. Gaud becomes more wise and resolute, confident that she can overcome any problem even after a hard day at work which also serves to lessen her melancholy. Looking forward to the return of her loved one she, like Yvonne, retires early to dream of her Islandais:

Ensuite la vieille Yvonne se couchait dans son étagère d'armoire, et Gaud, dans son lit de demoiselle; là, elle s'endormait assez vite, ayant beaucoup travaillé, beaucoup marché, et songeant au retour des Islandais en fille sage, résolue, sans un trouble trop grand... (PI. p. 163)

However, Gaud, again like Yvonne, encounters situations which can still induce depression. Such a situation arises when Yvonne becomes increasingly helpless and her mental faculties seem to be diminishing. Gaud was already somewhat despondent, having had little contact with people her own age and counting so much on Yann's return. Her thoughts of Yann are disturbed by anguish; taunted by the sea she feels upset, unstable, as though she is on board a ship sensing the wind and waves:

Rien de vivant, rien de jeune autour d'elle dont la fraîche jeunesse appelait la jeunesse. Sa beauté allait se consumer, solitaire et stérile...

Le vent de mer, qui arrivait de partout, agitait sa lampe, et le bruit des lames s'entendait là comme dans un navire; en l'écoutant, elle y mêlait le souvenir toujours présent et douloureux de Yann, dont ces choses étaient le domaine; durant les grandes nuits d'épouvante où tout était déchaîné et hurlant dans le noir du dehors, elle songeait avec plus d'angoisse à lui. (PI. pp. 169-70)

Gaud is, of course, not immune to the characteristic preoccupation with thoughts of death which so frequently appears in Viaud's depictions of sailors. On Gaud's first trip to visit Yann's home, she stops at a grave-yard adjoining the chapel of Pors-Even, where sailors "unwanted by the sea" are buried:

Un petit mur croulant dessinait autour un enclos enfermant des croix. Et tout était de la même couleur, la chapelle, les arbres et les tombes; le lieu tout entier semblait uniformément hâlé, rongé par le vent de la mer; un même lichen grisâtre, avec ses taches d'un jaune pâle de soufre, couvrait les pierres, les branches noueuses, et les saints en granit qui se tenaient dans les niches du mur.

Sur une de ces croix de bois, un nom était écrit en

grosses lettres : *Gaos*, - *Gaos*, *Joël*, quatre-vingts ans. (PI. p. 77)

Fascinated by what she sees and tormented by premonitions, Gaud regrets having come to the chapel and has difficulty in trying to pull herself away from the cemetery.

As in so many of his novels Viaud reveals his own preoccupation by stressing death which, perhaps ironically, plays a role in facilitating Gaud's marriage. First it is the death of her father which, by removing their financial and social disparities, makes her more acceptable to Yann as a wife. Then it is the death of a cat which brings the lovers closer together and paves the way for Yann to propose marriage to Gaud.

After they are married Yann tends to exacerbate Gaud's preoccupation with thoughts of death by telling her about another small grave-yard far away; it is the final resting place for fishermen from Pors-Even and Ploubazlanec:

Et puis, disait-il, il y a aussi un petit cimetière sur la côte, dans un fiord, tout comme chez nous, pour ceux du pays de Paimpol qui sont morts pendant les saisons de pêche, ou qui sont disparus en mer; c'est en terre bénite aussi bien qu'à Pors-Even, et les défunts ont des croix en bois toutes pareilles à celles d'ici, avec leurs noms écrits dessus. Les deux Goazdiou, de Ploubazlanec, sont là, et aussi Guillaume Moan, le grand-père de Sylvestre. (PI. pp. 222-23)

Gaud's preoccupation with death, like that of Yvonne, reflects the women's perspective; this comes to the fore in her pragmatic acceptance of the dominant influence of the sea and the uncertainties associated with her life as the wife of



an Islandais. Because the wives of the Islandais are so aware of the perils of the sea and the fisherman's risk of an early death and a watery grave, Gaud finds their love of the sea incomprehensible, and questions her husband:

Elle songeait à ces mêmes morts sous la glace et sous le suaire noir de ces nuits longues comme les hivers.

"Tout le temps, tout le temps pêcher? demandait-elle, sans se reposer jamais?"

- Tout le temps. Et puis il y a la manoeuvre à faire, car la mer n'est pas toujours belle pour là. Dame! on est fatigué le soir, ça donne appétit pour souper et, des jours, l'on dévore.

- Et on ne s'ennuie jamais?"

- Jamais! dit-il, avec un air de conviction qui lui fit mal; à bord, au large, moi, le temps ne me dure pas, jamais!"

Elle baissa la tête, se sentant plus triste, plus vaincue par la mer. (PI. p. 223)

Viaud's depiction of the sailors in this chapter is such that we seem to be looking at the same people who appear in the first phase of Viaud's novels, though during a later period of their lives. Although some of their earlier characteristics may still be present, some major differences appear as the result of gradual maturing of naval ratings and officers, and of fishermen. Changes from the carefree, pleasure-seeking young men are due, in part, to aging and the impact of exhilarating and often dangerous experiences and their dedicated, hard work at sea; the seamen have developed perspectives towards, and relationships with, seafolk at home and family values which stem from ordeals and seasoning during the interceding years. The young and carefree sailors depicted in Chapter Two seem to have evolved into serious,

industrious family men.

Yet, if the seamen themselves are somewhat similar, Viaud broadens his character base in the novels of this phase to include other seafolk: the sailor's family and loved ones. This extended character base is particularly prominent in Pêcheur, where Viaud shows the women at home who have been developing through generations of **Islandais** families and seem to embody, to the extent possible, some characteristics of the fishermen. The women are also brave, self-reliant, hard-working, dependable and mature. The seafolk families live a difficult, stressful, often lonely and worrisome existence which serves to bring out the best in this admirable race of people.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### REMINISCENCE AND ANTICIPATION

#### Madame Chrysanthème, Le Roman d'un enfant and Matelot

Prior to writing the novels of the first phase Viaud, as an adventurous young aspirant, made extensive voyages and enjoyed the variety of experiences and pleasures available in exotic ports of call. These voyages provide source material for his first two novels. As Viaud is promoted to higher ranks in the navy his responsibilities increase, he becomes more mature and his perspective changes: his outlook becomes broader and more serious. His second phase of novels are based on a combination of information gleaned from friends and acquaintances and his own experiences, altered and enhanced by his imagination, and reflecting his state of mind. In a similar manner, the sources of material and content of the novels in this, the third phase of Viaud's writing, reflect the ongoing changes in Viaud's naval career, his experiences, lifestyle and state of mind.

During the period of the Second Empire, France had established a small colony in Indo-China; however, the activities of pirates and the loss of a small force turned a minor policing expedition into a war with China over the possession

of Tonkin.<sup>82</sup> It was under these circumstances that, on March 20, 1885, Lieutenant de Vaisseau Viaud departs Toulon aboard the transport Mytho en route to the Far East to join Admiral Courbet aboard the battleship, La Triomphante.<sup>83</sup> He arrives in Saigon in time to board the Chateau-Yquem and continues on to join La Triomphante in HongKong on May 5<sup>th</sup>. The battleship serves in the campaign near the Mekong Delta and in the Pescatores Islands until, with the signing of a peace treaty, she sails to Nagasaki for repairs where she remains from July 8<sup>th</sup> to August 12<sup>th</sup>, providing Viaud with source material for Chrysanthème.

This novel appears to be a blend of fact and fiction relating to Viaud's sojourn in Nagasaki. In his dedication to Madame la duchesse de Richelieu, Viaud endeavours to explain how and what he is attempting to do in the novel:

C'est le journal d'un été de ma vie, auquel je n'ai rien changé, pas même les dates, je trouve que, quand on arrange les choses, on les dérange toujours beaucoup. 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...

Veillez recevoir mon livre...sans y chercher aucune portée morale dangereuse ou bonne, - comme vous recevriez une potiche drôle, un magot d'ivoire, un bibelot saugrenu quelconque, rapporté pour vous de cette étonnante patrie de toutes les saugrenuités. (MC. p. i)

<sup>82</sup> Alfred Cobban, A History of Modern France, (Aylesbury: Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd. 1979) Vol. 3, p. 29.

<sup>83</sup> Viaud's departure foils an attempt being made, by his sister Marie and his aunt Nelly Lieutier, to arrange his marriage with Marguerite X, a young lady from an excellent family living in Sceaux.

This dedication, together with the inclusion of Yves, the hero of Mon Frère Yves, as a protagonist in the novel, references to the Triomphante, Viaud's vessel, and to Aziyadé, attest to much of the novel being autobiographical.

Le Roman d'un enfant is also autobiographical and is based, in large part, on the diary records of young Julien Viaud who is filled with anticipation as he dreams of an exciting future. These records are supplemented by diary entries of the adult Viaud and the fictionalization of recollections of his childhood and of his more recent experiences. Although he refers to this work as a novel, within it he seems to attest to its validity as an autobiography: "Et tout ce chapitre, presque inintelligible, n'a d'autre excuse que d'avoir été écrit avec un grand effort de sincérité, d'être absolument vrai" (RE. p. 61).

Viaud attempts to relive his youth, as Loti, in these two novels; this seems to be an unusual approach for the hero who, years before, recognized the fallacy of attempting to turn back the clock. His feelings and state of mind have evolved considerably since he wrote in Le Mariage de Loti:

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. (ML. pp. 309-10)

In the third novel, Matelot, Viaud appears to draw on his childhood experiences in his depiction of the hero, Jean Berny. They both have a strong affection for their mothers,

Berny is attracted by the sea at an early age and some of his ancestors were sea captains. He also enters the Naval Academy at Brest, however unlike Viaud, he does not qualify as an officer: "Malgré les sacrifices de sa mère veuve et de son grand-père, il échouait au concours d'entrée à l'Ecole Navale. Alors il s'embarquait comme simple matelot".<sup>84</sup>

In addition to having some of Viaud's characteristics, Berny is modelled to some extent upon Léo Thémèze, a friend of Viaud during the time he was writing Matelot.<sup>85</sup> Viaud portrays Berny affectionately as though portraying Thémèze whom he regards as a brother; their friendship prompts him to make this entry in his diary: "Il est bien toujours celui dont je sens l'âme la plus proche de la mienne et la plus pareille, le vrai frère, qui comprend jusqu'au fond, et que je voudrais avoir près de moi à l'heure de mourir".<sup>86</sup>

The voyages of the hero of Matelot, including one to Canada,<sup>87</sup> parallel some made by Viaud and are therefore sources for material as are his diary records of voyages

<sup>84</sup> Brodin, p. 218.

<sup>85</sup> Their friendship continued at least until 1894, when we find the last mention of Thémèze in Loti's diary and correspondence. During the first half of 1894 they regained something of their former intimacy when Thémèze accompanied Loti on his journey to the Holy Land. The result of this journey was three of Loti's best travel books: Le Désert, Jérusalem, and La Galilée, all published in 1895. La Galilée was dedicated to Thémèze (Wake, p.14').

<sup>86</sup> JI. July 27, 1893 (Cahiers, 45; p. 5).

<sup>87</sup> In 1869, Viaud visited the city of Quebec, also aboard a corvette, the Jean-Bart, his voyages included service aboard the Petrel along the coasts of Senegal (See Appendix I).

aboard the Jean-Bart, Chateau-Yquem and Atalante. The voyages and settings on which the novel is based are selected by Viaud, altered and enhanced by fictional material in the creation of plot, protagonists and events which take place in Matelot. Moreover among the ports and countries visited by Viaud, which provide him with source material, are the academy at Brest, the port of Quebec, Senegal and China during the war.

The basic theme of these three novels stems from the heroes' feelings relating to the passing of time; each hero is unhappy with the present and therefore attempts either to relive enjoyable past experiences, or he dreams about happier times in the future. These manifestations of temporal escapism reflect the novelist's feelings at the time of writing the novels.

Viaud's state of mind during the creation of these novels was influenced by many factors. The most dominant influence is perhaps his assignment to shore duties. During 1886, he was stationed on Le Magicien, based at Rochefort then, during 1888 and 1889, he was on reserve at Rochefort and attached to L'Ecureuil. These shore-based assignments, which replace the exciting sea voyages of the past, seem to Viaud to denote the passing of his youth, the approach of old age and death, and tend to play on his mind.

Such concerns are not new to Viaud: as early as April, 1882 he wrote to Madame Adam: "Ma vie s'use à lutter contre

la fragilité des choses, à retenir tout ce qui s'en va, à me raccrocher au passé mort. Et puis, je songe avec une terreur suprême au moment où viendra la vieillesse et où on ne m'aimera plus"<sup>88</sup> His friend, Claude Farrère, also recognized these preoccupations of Viaud:

J'ai vu souffrir Loti. Et je l'ai entendu, presque jeune encore, - mais jamais assez, jamais! car vieillir lui apparaissait comme la disgrâce suprême, - je l'ai entendu évaluer cette gloire en termes concrets: "Vous en avez envie, vous? Vous y croyez? Mais cela se traduit par quoi? Le succès? la fortune? les hommages? et le sourire des belles bouches, - dont on ne sait plus désormais s'il est sincère ou vaniteux? - Que voulez-vous qu'on fasse de tout cela quand on n'a plus cette 'manière de s'en servir' qu'est la jeunesse? J'ai aujourd'hui la sensation de n'être plus qu'une triste bête curieuse que tout le monde regarde avec excès, dans sa niche de grand luxe, et qui bornerait ses ambitions finales à simplement passer partout inaperçue".<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, Viaud's concern about his writing career was another factor influencing the evolution of his state of mind. By his thirty-fifth birthday, he seems to believe that his best novels are behind him. This belief, together with the discontent and unhappiness associated with his naval career, heighten his awareness of the passing of time and exacerbate his resultant depression.

A third factor relating to the development of Viaud's state of mind was his own personal life. During his assignment to shore duties in Rochefort, Viaud was married in October 1886.<sup>90</sup> It was a marriage of convenience to a

<sup>88</sup> Adam, p. 20.

<sup>89</sup> Farrère, p. 105.

<sup>90</sup> Viaud was married to "Blanche Franc de Ferrière, née le 21 août



somewhat sickly wife and Viaud soon regrets his commitment.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, a tragedy occurred while Chrysanthème was being written: their first-born child died in April 1887.

The changes brought about by shore assignments, the absence of sea voyages, the feeling that his literary career is on the decline, anguish over family matters, all contribute to Viaud's negativistic state of mind at the time of writing the novels in this phase. This impacts, therefore, on his depiction of seafolk and the sea in this chapter.

In this third and final phase of the development of his novels, Viaud's focus is now almost entirely upon sailors who are deprived of their close relationship with the sea or whose efforts to improve this relationship are repeatedly frustrated. He no longer depicts a group of seafolk as in Chapter Three, but concentrates on a single hero/protagonist as in Chapter Two. The major protagonists are sailors who are essentially assigned to shore-duties and not as directly involved in the sea adventures which they once enjoyed. They are basically discontented with their current lives and attempt to find or fashion new, happier lives for themselves.

They are, in essence, dreamers: they are nostalgic about

1859 à Pompoprt (Dordogne), d'une vieille Famille protestante bordelaise, originaire du Périgord" (Laffont, p. XLVI).

<sup>91</sup> "Désenchantements d'un mariage de raison, de la descendance espérée contrariée, de la maladie de son épouse, voilà le cadre qui sert de période de rédaction à ce premier roman japonais où Loti, jeune marié, raconte une histoire de mariage à laquelle il ne croit même pas" (Quella-Villéger, p. 118).

past enjoyable experiences which they strive to recreate, or speculate about potential situations and accomplishments which could lead to future happiness.

1. Madame Chrysanthème

Madame Chrysanthème, published in 1887, was harshly criticized, because Viaud's depiction of Japan and the Japanese culture was made on the basis of little personal knowledge - a fact which inflamed some Oriental readers. Brodin is correct when he states that a brief acquaintance with one young girl is hardly sufficient to form an opinion of a country. It is understandable that a reporter, even one from a third culture, is sharply critical, perhaps overly critical, of the author of this novel:

Voir un pays à travers une seule femme est toujours dangereux. Loti, poursuivant son voyage, révisera en partie son jugement sur les Japonais. Néanmoins, l'épisode de... Madame Chrysanthème colora longtemps sa vision et celle de ses lecteurs. A la grande indignation des Extrême-Orientaux. Plus tard, un Chinois, écrivant dans le Japanese Mail, devait se faire en ces termes l'interprète de leurs sentiments:

"Si l'on me demandait de nommer le livre qui montre le degré le plus bas de la civilisation européenne, je nommerais sans hésiter Madame Chrysanthème. A mes yeux, le type d'homme représenté par l'auteur de ce livre est un démon incarné".<sup>92</sup>

Viaud's insensitive and discourteous depiction of the Japanese stems in all probability from his depressed state of mind. Such a reaction is untypical of Viaud who, although often depressed, usually maintains the image of a positive

<sup>92</sup> Brodin, p. 167.

attitude towards people. His usual antidote to depression is to plunge into intensive writing, as he did while creating Aziyadé.

As mentioned earlier, Viaud's attempts to turn back the clock are unsatisfactory; nevertheless, this is exactly what the protagonist appears to be doing in the plot of Madame Chrysanthème. Loti, the hero of the same name in several previous novels, attempts to turn a routine naval voyage into a quest for happiness by trying to relive, in a different exotic setting, the lifestyle that he relished as a young man in "l'île délicieuse", as portrayed in Le Mariage de Loti. Like most attempts to recreate the past, his quest is doomed to failure.

The plot of Madame Chrysanthème replicates in many respects those of Aziyadé and Mariage, but there are several major differences. The opening scene of the novel features the Triomphante, arriving in the harbour of Nagasaki; the hero on board is filled with anticipation in the belief that he is entering not just another exotic port of call but a Garden of Eden. He has already decided to seek pleasure in a romantic relationship similar to previous ones. He intends to indulge in temporal escapism by reliving his reminiscences of other exotic ports, to "rent a wife" for the duration of his stay in accordance with a Japanese custom.

The actual marriage to an attractive child-bride seems quite strange to Loti. He misses the challenge which he

associates with wooing a pretty girl and eventually overcoming her resistance to his advances. The business-like approach of the Japanese custom, which consists of renting from her parents a girl who will act as his wife, makes the western hero uncomfortable; he immediately begins to feel a sense of failure in his attempt to relive the past. He is deprived of the challenge and conquest which were important elements of his former love affairs. In this situation, Loti feels a little ashamed and is plagued with doubts and twinges of conscience. He is disappointed and unable to refrain from making unfavourable comparisons with his happier memories of past liaisons.

Madame Chrysanthème performs her wifely duties to the best of her ability, but her husband soon recognizes that they are completely incompatible, worlds apart. His bouts of depression prompt him to distrust his faithful friend, Yves, suspecting him of being romantically involved with Chrysanthème. Feeling tied by his marriage, he seeks escape from his dream world of the past by returning to the present and the familiar refuge of the sea and life aboard his ship.

There is no doubt that, despite his high expectations and anticipation of reliving the past in this port, the sailor's nostalgic memories of other romantic affairs thwart any possibility of happiness in this one. Even when he attempts to sketch his apartment, as he had in other ports, it serves only to bring back memories of the happier scenes of his

younger days in other ports of call. Instead of being a place to relive his youth, Nagasaki simply reinforces Loti's dread of the approach of old age and death. In the end, the familiar ship-board setting seems like a comfortable refuge from the relationship that he shared with Madame Chrysanthème.

When the sea calls, Loti welcomes the opportunity to escape, to leave his wife and Japan. He had arrived in Nagasaki seeking to relive the past, and in leaving he is ready to seek the familiar refuge of the sea. Loti is glad to finally leave Japan without a friend to bid him farewell. Aboard the Triomphante, he acknowledges that his attempt to relive the past was a dismal failure: he paraphrases a Japanese prayer as he asks the Spirit "to wash him truly white of this marriage in the waters of the Kamo river".

\* \* \*

The protagonists we studied in Chapter Two were essentially naive, immature seamen; those in Chapter Three evolved into hard-working, mature men who were conscious of the basic values of work and family. The hero in Time Chrysanthème evolves further into an older man who, if not physically old, displays characteristics which one would associate with old age: dissatisfaction with the present, an overriding sense of failure, and a tendency to reminisce about the past. The notion of temporal escapism is central to the character of

Loti in this novel. The entire episode in Japan is, on his part, a conscious attempt to recreate and relive situations and emotions from the past. From an initial high point of enthusiastic anticipation as he disembarks in Japan with intent to rent a wife, Loti moves through a process of disillusionment and disappointment to a low point of despondency where, in moods similar to virtually all of Viaud's protagonists, he entertains thoughts of death.

Loti's experience in Japan is, from the very beginning, a form of temporal escapism. He attempts to go back to the past and relive the Papeete fantasy depicted in Le Mariage de Loti as well as, at times, his exotic liaison with Aziyadé. But Loti is not the person he once was. In Chapter Two, the protagonists were young and open-minded; they were naive in that they had no idea what to expect, but they were ready for anything and adaptable. On the other hand, the Loti of Mme Chrysanthème had decided before he reached Japan that he would get married for the length of his stay in Nagasaki. He has, therefore, specific expectations, and when they are not met he will prove unable to adapt.

Nevertheless, to all appearances Loti exudes the kind of initial exuberance and enthusiasm that we associate with the heroes of the first phase of novels. As he and Yves discuss what awaits them, Loti feels the pleasures of eager anticipation:

- Oui... avec une petite femme à peau jaune, à cheveux

noirs, à yeux de chat. - Je la choisirai jolie. - Elle ne sera pas plus haute qu'une poupée. - Tu auras ta chambre chez nous. - Ca se passera dans une maison de papier, bien à l'ombre, au milieu des jardins verts. - Je veux que tout soit fleuri alentour; nous habiterons au milieu des fleurs, et chaque matin on remplira notre logis de bouquets, de bouquets comme jamais tu n'en as vu... (MC. pp. i-ii)

Expectations and hopes are rarely fulfilled. The hero certainly experiences moments of happiness and satisfaction, but these are relatively short-lived and he is overtaken by feelings of dissatisfaction with a relationship and situation which does not seem to live up to his recollections of past experiences.

When Mme Chrysanthème moves in with him, Loti believes that he has created conditions similar to those of the past: living with an attractive young girl in an exotic port of call. He seems particularly happy with the sleeping arrangements. However, thoughts of what seems to be a better past begin to haunt him. When he compares the current relationship with those in Tahiti and Istanbul his current happiness pales:

Tout cela est presque joli à dire ; écrit, tout cela fait presque bien. - En réalité, pourtant, non; il y manque je ne sais quoi, et c'est assez pitoyable.

Dans d'autres pays de la terre, en Océanie dans l'île délicieuse, à Stamboul dans les vieux quartiers morts, il me semblait que les mots ne disaient jamais autant que j'aurais voulu dire, je me débattais contre mon impuissance à rendre dans une langue humaine le charme pénétrant des choses.

Ici, au contraire, les mots, justes cependant, sont trop grands, trop vibrants toujours; les mots embellissent. Je me fais l'effet de jouer pour moi-même quelque comédie bien piètre, bien banale, et, quand j'essaie de prendre au sérieux mon ménage, je vois se dresser en dérision devant moi la figure de M. Kangourou, agent matrimonial, à qui je dois mon



bonheur. (MC. pp. 63-64)

This pattern - of the older man failing to enjoy the present because it compares unfavourably with his recollection of the younger man's experiences - becomes firmly established during the course of the relationship with Mme Chrysanthème. He finds that he is unhappy with their house located in a setting which compares unfavourably with his memories of the beautiful love-nests in Istanbul and Tahiti. He soon discovers that several more important factors are missing: he is unable to communicate with his mistress either linguistically or emotionally; he has no sense of acceptance and finds the customs, religion and inhabitants incomprehensible. Most of all, he gradually realizes that even if he surrounds himself with the trappings of his youth, he himself is unable to become who and what he once was.

As Loti attempts unsuccessfully to rediscover an earlier experience, his malaise increases and influences his approach to the pleasures in a port of call that had been enjoyed by the younger sailors of Chapter Two. He no longer seems to have the strong desire to seek pleasure, to go for "the chase". The spontaneity which he brought to his earlier liaisons in Tahiti, and to the challenges and dangers of his clandestine illicit affair in Turkey, seem to disappear as soon as he sets foot in Nagasaki.

Recollections of the past again encroach on enjoyment of the present as he realizes that the mutual attraction of young

lovers is vastly different from the reality of a preplanned marriage of convenience. The emotional response cannot be the same in a marriage to an unknown "bride", half his age, rented and paid for in advance. Loti is starting to realize that happiness cannot be bought in this way and that one cannot relive the adventures of one's youth, especially when such adventures are shared with very different people, in unusual circumstances and strange lands.

In his depressed frame of mind, minor incidents, no matter how trivial, are still capable of reminding the sailor of happier times in the past. One night his wife calls out a word during the night which reminds him of a happier night when Aziyadé had called out the equivalent word in her language:

Une de nos premières nuits passées à Stamboul, sous le toit mystérieux d'Eyoub, quand tout était danger autour de nous, un bruit sur les marches de l'escalier noir nous avait fait trembler, et elle aussi, la chère petite Turque, m'avait dit dans sa langue aimée: "Setchan!" (les souris!)...

Oh! alors, un grand frisson, à ce souvenir, me secoua tout entier: ce fut comme si je me réveillais en sursaut d'un sommeil de dix années; - je regardai avec une espèce de haine cette poupée étendue près de moi, me demandant ce que je faisais là sur cette couche, et je me levai pris d'écoeurement et de remords, pour sortir de ce tendelet de gaze bleue...

Au milieu de ce calme et de ce silence du milieu de la nuit, je cherchai à ressaisir encore mes impressions poignantes de Stamboul. (MC. pp. 68-69)

Loti is still living in the past, thinking about Aziyadé, when, prior to his departure, he prepares to sketch the house he shares with Chrysanthème. Once again, comparisons favour the past over the present and emphasize his failure:

"Pourtant, avant qu'on dérange mon appartement, je veux prendre le temps de le dessiner... comme jadis, à Stamboul... Il semble vraiment que tout ce que je fais ici soit l'amère dérision de ce que j'avais fait là-bas" (MC. p. 272).

The circumstances and conditions of the relationship with Mme Chrysanthème fail to live up to Loti's memories of the ideal; however, this is not the only source of his dissatisfaction. The heroes in Chapter Two were young and therefore perhaps pliable, adaptable; indeed, the Loti of Aziyadé went to great pains to integrate himself in the local environment and his success in this endeavour was a source of intense satisfaction and enjoyment. The older hero, however, is not so adaptable. The exotic surroundings of the past are now unfamiliar, perhaps a little daunting. The freshness of youth is replaced by the irritation of a man who feels strangely like a fish out of water as he visits a Japanese temple: "Nous sommes là, nous, très dépayés dans cette fête, regardant, riant puisqu'il faut rire; disant des choses obscures et niaises, dans une langue insuffisamment apprise, que ce soir, troublés par je ne sais quoi, nous n'entendons même plus" (MC. p. 169). This statement, that the Japanese are uttering stupidities in a language which he poorly understands, offers a sharp contrast with the Loti of Aziyadé who became proudly fluent in Turkish.

His reactions in the temple are by no means the only example of the hero's intolerance and inability to adapt to his new surroundings. Among the factors leading to Loti's

discontent with this marital relationship is his inability to accept the moral attitudes, cultural practices and customs of a civilization so different from his own. This is a factor which was never a problem during his escapades as a younger man in Stamboul and Papeete. The Japanese customs, values, ceremonies, even their thinking, are all so unlike any with which he is familiar. His intolerance extends to their religion, simply because it is a complete mystery to him:

Dans les amusements religieux de ce peuple, il ne nous est pas possible, à nous, de pénétrer les dessous pleins de mystère que les choses peuvent avoir; nous ne pouvons pas dire où finit la plaisanterie et où la frayeur mystique commence. Ces usages, ces symboles, ces figures, tout ce que la tradition et l'atavisme ont entassé dans les cervelles japonaises, provient d'origines profondément ténébreuses pour nous; même les plus vieux livres ne nous l'expliqueront jamais que d'une manière superficielle et impuissante, - parce que nous ne sommes pas les pareils de ces gens-là. Nous passons sans bien comprendre au milieu de leur gaité et de leur rire, qui sont au rebours des nôtres... (MC. pp. 163-64)

Loti finds that he is in conflict not only with the religion but the moral codes under which he himself is now operating. Indeed, even when he arrived in Japan to choose a wife he was taken aback by the youth of one of the prospective brides:

Ah! mon Dieu, mais je la connaissais déjà! Bien avant de venir au Japon, je l'avais vue, sur tous les éventails, au fond de toutes les tasses à thé - avec son air bête, son minois bouffi, - ses petits yeux percés à la vrille au-dessus de ces deux solitudes, blanches et roses jusqu'à la plus extrême invraisemblance, qui sont ses joues.

Elle est jeune, c'est tout ce que je lui accorde; elle l'est tellement même que je me ferais presque un scrupule de la prendre. L'envie de lire me quitte tout à fait et je me sens au coeur un froid plus profond. Partager une heure de

ma vie avec cette petite créature, jamais!... (MC. p. 44)

Loti's conscience is appeased only when a somewhat older girl is found - Mme Chrysanthème.

However, no matter how hard he may try, Loti's conscience cannot be placated whilst he indulges in practices which contravene his basic religious and moral beliefs. On occasion he is at odds with himself as he strives to come to terms with the nature of his relationship. At one point he attempts to relieve his feelings of guilt by implying that marriages such as his are acceptable and common among his fellow officers on shore-leave in Japan:

Ils sont quatre à présent, quatre officiers de mon bord, mariés comme moi et habitant, un peu moins haut, dans le même faubourg. C'est même une aventure très commune. Cela s'est fait sans dangers, sans difficultés, sans mystères, par l'entremise du même Kangourou.(MC. p. 81)

He does establish that his fellow officers, who traditionally have a girl in every port, are also somewhat ashamed of their marital relationships with the Japanese girls. This shows up when the couples are strolling in the heart of Nagasaki; they do not walk together, the brides walk in a line in front of the officers. Instead of the sailors removing the cause of their guilty shame, they heap more shame upon themselves by denigrating their poor wives. The officers refer to the Oriental ladies with unfavourable appellations, such as "chat" (MC. pp. 135, 185), "souris" (p. 247), and "nos petits

chiens savants".<sup>93</sup> The local girls are actually adhering to their moral principles and traditional customs, whereas the officers are acting immaturely and increasing their own feelings of guilt by treating the girls so badly:

Oui, vues de dos, elles sont mignonnes; elles ont comme toutes les Japonaises, des petites nuques délicieuses. Et surtout elles sont drôles, ainsi rangées en bataillon. En parlant d'elles, nous disons: "Nos petits chiens savants", et le fait est qu'il y a beaucoup de cela dans leur manière. (MC. p. 84)

If his struggle with the morality of the situation in which he has involved himself is evidence of a sense of shame and dissatisfaction, the fact that he accuses his wife and faithful friend, Yves, of having an illicit affair merely strengthens this impression:

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... (MC. p. 141)

Tout un imbroglio de roman semble poindre à mon horizon monotone; toute une intrigue paraît vouloir se nouer au milieu de ce petit monde de mousmés et de cigales : Chrysanthème amoureuse d'Yves; Yves de Chrysanthème; Oyouki, de moi; moi de personne... (MC. p. 191)

Such accusations are perhaps indicative of a transfer of his own moral uncertainties to a friend whose loyalty and devotion can hardly be questioned.

Loti's attempts to recreate the emotions of the past, in

<sup>93</sup> The use of such terms as these sparked strong criticism of the novelist. See work by Irene L. Szyliowicz, Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1988).

what at first sight seemed to be very similar circumstances, therefore prove to be futile. The past, or his perhaps romanticized view of it, constantly impinges on a present which proves to be imperfect. Loti's response to this realization is to seek to escape. The past now becomes, not a point of comparison, but a haven to which he can escape, if only in thought:

Et chaque jour je m'éveille au bruit de cette litanie shintoïste qui vibre au-dessous de moi dans la sonorité exquise des matins d'été...

Hélas! Autrefois c'était le chant du muezzin qui me réveillait, les matins sombre d'hiver, là-bas dans le grand Stamboul enseveli... (MC. p. 129)

Istanbul is again recalled when Loti sketches his apartment. Preparations for the celebration of his departure also bring to mind departures from other exotic ports, and prompt Loti to compare his current feelings with those he had when leaving his paramours of other lands:

Je cherche à m'impressionner, à m'émotionner sur ce départ, et j'y réussis mal. A ce Japon, comme aux petits bonshommes et bonnes femmes qui l'habitent, il manque décidément je ne sais quoi d'essentiel : on s'en amuse en passant, mais on ne s'y attache pas. (MC. p. 280)

The unhappy sailor endeavours to find solace by travelling back to his earliest memories of his childhood. His nostalgic reminiscing about the happy memories of his early life often return to haunt him:

Une heure plus tard, au crépuscule de cette journée de typhon, toujours dans cette même montagne, le hasard me

conduit sous des arbres ressemblant à des chênes; ils sont tordus toujours par ce vent... Là, je retrouve très nettement tout d'un coup ma première impression de grand vent dans les bois - dans les bois de la Limoise, en Saintonge, il y a quelque vingt-huit ans, à l'un des mois de mars de ma petite enfance.

Il soufflait sur l'autre face du monde, ce premier coup de vent que mes yeux ont vu dans la campagne, - et les années rapides ont passé sur ce souvenir - et depuis, le plus beau temps de ma vie s'est consumé... (MC. p. 152)

Such is Loti's discontent with the present situation that he indulges not only in temporal escapism via nostalgic reminiscences, but on occasion he physically removes himself from the source of his discontent. He returns to what are perhaps his first and deepest loves: his ship and the sea. He leaves his wife alone for some five days while he stays on board. The vessel's mooring had been changed to a position farther away from their residence, and the sailor uses the increased travelling time as an excuse for his absence.

Loti's attempts to escape - especially in time - not only prove to be futile, they actually contribute to the hero's growing despondency and bouts of depression. At one stage he realizes that his reminiscences about his childhood serve only to accentuate his consciousness of the passing of time, of the fact that he has lived a life which has failed to measure up to the dreams of youth. He feels unfulfilled, aged, and sees nothing before him but darkness and death:

J'y reviens beaucoup trop souvent à mon enfance; j'en rabâche en vérité. Mais il me semble que je n'ai eu des impressions, des sensations qu'en ce temps-là; les moindres choses que je voyais ou que j'entendais avaient alors des dessous d'une profondeur insondable et infinie; c'était comme



des images réveillées, des rappels d'existences antérieures; ou bien c'étaient comme des pressentiments d'existences à venir, d'incarnations futures dans des pays de rêve; et puis des attentes de merveilles de toute sorte - que le monde et la vie me réservaient sans doute pour plus tard - pour quand je grandirais. Eh bien, j'ai grandi et n'ai rien trouvé sur ma route, de toutes ces choses vaguement entrevues; au contraire, tout s'est rétréci et obscurci peu à peu autour de moi; les souvenirs se sont effacés, les horizons d'en avant se sont lentement refermés et remplis de ténèbres grises. Il sera bientôt l'heure de m'en retourner dans l'éternelle poussière, et je m'en irai sans avoir compris le pourquoi mystérieux de tous ces mirages de mon enfance; j'emporterai avec moi le regret de je ne sais quelles patries jamais retrouvées, de je ne sais quels êtres désirés ardemment et jamais embrassés... (MC. pp. 152-53)

Morbid reflection and thoughts of death are, of course, common themes with Viaud's seamen, though in this instance the apparent cause of the morbidity has nothing to do with the sea; rather it is the end of hope. This is perhaps symbolized by the sleeping form of his wife who, he feels, appears to be dead. In his morose state, he seems to wish that she were dead as he finds her more attractive seen in this motionless state. Then, while she sleeps, he seems to be looking for a resting place for her, as he becomes engrossed in studying the adjacent cemeteries:

Elle dormait à plat ventre sur les nattes, sa haute coiffure et ses épingles d'écaille faisant une saillie sur l'ensemble de son corps couché. La petite traîne de sa tunique prolongeait en queue sa personne délicate. Ses bras étaient étendus en croix, ses manches déployées comme des ailes et sa longue guitare gisait à son côté.

Elle avait un air de fée morte. Ou bien encore elle ressemblait à quelque grande libellule bleue qui se serait abattue là et qu'on y aurait clouée...

Quel dommage que cette petite Chrysanthème ne puisse pas toujours dormir : elle est très décorative, présentée de cette manière, - et puis, au moins, elle ne m'ennuie pas...

Assis sous ma véranda, je regardai à mes pieds les

temples et les cimetières... (MC. pp. 102-03)

Loti's thoughts of death become quite obsessive as he devotes an entire chapter to the description of cemeteries then depicts a funeral procession:

Des bonzes marchent en tête, vêtus de robes en gaze noire, - un air de prêtres catholiques; le principal personnage du défilé, le mort, vient par derrière, assis dans une sorte de petit palanquin fermé, tout à fait gentil. Suivent une bande de mousmés, cachant leur figure rieuse sous un semblant de voile et portant, dans des vases de forme sacrée, les lotus artificiels à pétales d'argent qui sont de rigueur pour les funérailles; puis de belles dames marchent après, minaudières, étouffant des envies de rire, sous des parasols où sont peints en couleurs gaies des papillons et des cigognes... (MC. p. 112-13)

Loti's unhappy, guilty, depressed and morbid personality is the antithesis of that of his seaman friend. Yves' role, characteristically that of the faithful friend, is a relatively minor one in this novel, but it provides a strong contrast to the negative aspects of Loti's character. There is no indication of Yves' inherent drinking which figured so prominently in Yves, otherwise his characteristics seem to be unchanged. The enlisted sailor is a good listener when his friend explains his marriage plans and during the negotiations Yves is helpful: he is the one that notices and suggests Chrysanthème.

Yves' relationship with Chrysanthème is also that of a good friend and she returns his friendship in a platonic manner with Loti's full knowledge. Therefore, when Loti suddenly accuses Yves of having an affair with Chrysanthème,

he is justifiably surprised. As a loyal friend of long standing it seems inconceivable to him that Loti could entertain such a thought, as nothing could be farther from Yves' mind. Moreover, he is absolutely shocked at Loti's suggestion, that is, offering him Chrysanthème in so many words:

- Tu sais, après tout, si elle te faisait tant de plaisir... Je ne l'ai pas épousée, elle n'est pas ma femme, en somme...

Très surpris, il me regarda:

- Pas votre femme, vous dites? - Si! par exemple... Voilà justement, c'est qu'elle est votre femme... (MC. p. 263)

The characteristics of the enlisted sailor, Yves, portrayed as the faithful friend in Mon Frère Yves, have changed very little in this novel. On the other hand, the depiction of Loti's characteristics has evolved considerably; although he has moments of anticipation, expectation and happiness, his predominant characteristics are negative. His attempt to relive the past is a dismal failure, as the actuality of the present fades in comparison with the past.

The changes undergone by Loti since the first phase are remarkable: he is dissatisfied with his marriage and makes no attempt to adapt to his situation. He has become suspicious, intolerant and resentful of the local customs, language, religion, moral codes, and the people themselves. His sense of failure fills him with depression and despondency as he becomes increasingly preoccupied with thoughts of aging and death.

## 2. Le Roman d'un enfant

In the first edition of Le Roman d'un enfant, published in 1890,<sup>94</sup> Viaud dedicated the novel to Queen Elizabeth of Rumania.<sup>95</sup> The dedication includes this phrase: "la souveraine de qui me vient l'idée de l'écrire", as the writer prepared to record nostalgic reminiscences of his childhood:

Il se fait presque tard dans ma vie, pour que j'entreprenne ce livre: autour de moi, déjà tombe une sorte de nuit; où trouverai-je à présent des mots assez frais, des mots assez jeunes?

Je le commencerai demain en mer; au moins essaierai-je d'y mettre ce qu'il y a eu de meilleur en moi, à une époque où il n'y avait rien de bien mauvais encore. (RE. p. 41)

The idea of writing this novel had actually been contemplated by Viaud for some time; while in the Trappist Monastery,<sup>96</sup> during February 1878, he made this entry in his

<sup>94</sup> At the time of the writing this novel, the name Pierre Loti was the widely accepted name of Viaud. His son becomes known as Samuel Pierre-Loti-Viaud, and to this day his surviving grandson is known as Pierre Pierre-Loti-Viaud.

<sup>95</sup> A close friend of Viaud, Queen Elizabeth, the authoress Carmen Sylva, was a "femme séduisante, princesse allemande née en 1843 ayant pour tante la grande-duchesse Hélène de Russie, épouse depuis 1869 déçue par un mari trop guindé - un Hohenzollern, le roi Carol I<sup>er</sup> -, mère douloureuse depuis la mort en bas âge de sa fille unique, reine exilée bientôt pour raison d'Etat inconciliable avec son côté mystique et sentimentale et sa participation aux intrigues des filles d'honneur" (Quella-Villéger, pp. 177-78).

<sup>96</sup> "La Trappe de Bricquebec", located on the English Channel about twenty kilometres from Cherbourg.

diary:

Pendant de longues heures, de ma cellule, j'ai promené sur le passé un regard long et sombre. Seuls mes souvenirs d'enfance rayonnèrent dans le lointain, - ce sont les seuls vraiment heureux de ma vie...

Avant de mourir, je voudrais les écrire, ces souvenirs de mon enfance... 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... (JOP. pp. 198-99)

In these few lines he confirms that his childhood was the happiest time of his life; this novel is, therefore, an escape from his current depressed state of mind, a reminiscent voyage back into the past, to the happiness enjoyed as a child.

Du Coglay offers this explanation of why the novelist delayed revealing these personal impressions of his early years: "Loti avait beaucoup hésité avant d'écrire ce livre, car il craignait de profaner ses plus chers souvenirs; mais il s'y décida en pensant que ces souvenirs émus pourraient ainsi, au contraire, lui survivre".<sup>97</sup> There is no doubt that Viaud is attempting to preserve the exciting, emotional and moving memories of his childhood for both himself and posterity.

There is, however, another reason for Viaud to write the novel at this time. We saw in Chrysanthème Viaud's unsuccessful attempt to recapture his youth by artificially recreating the love affairs in exotic ports of call which we discussed in Chapter Two. This failure, and such success as he may have derived from his brief attempts to return to his childhood in

<sup>97</sup> Michel du Coglay. Le Vrai Loti. (Tunis: Editions de "La Kahena") p. 170.

Chrysanthème, could have been a strong influence in deciding that the time had come to write Enfant.

Viaud's reminiscence about his childhood should be looked at in the light of the fact that the events and impressions described took place twenty-five years or more before the publication of the book. His memory is, no doubt, refreshed by some of his many cherished childhood souvenirs and by reference to notes in his diary. The childhood impressions and the incidents depicted in this novel were probably among his strongest and most lasting ones. They are, therefore, relatively accurate, though the child is also imbued with some of the adult Viaud's notions and feelings.

Le Roman d'un enfant is essentially a series of recollections of and reminiscences about the first fourteen years in the life of the forty-year-old naval officer, Pierre Loti. Discontented with the present, the aging seaman seeks to escape back to his childhood days when he was fascinated by the sea and looking forward to life as a happy, adventurous sailor. Throughout the novel the text is punctuated with references to aspects of his other novels and linkages to his life in the navy.

Young Pierre is depicted as living at home in Rochefort,<sup>98</sup> located "au coeur de la Charente-Maritime", where the influence of the sea is inescapable. This sea port, encircled

<sup>98</sup> The same house, located on what is now rue Pierre Loti, has been extensively enlarged and modified and is a popular museum filled with the novelist's memorabilia.

on three sides by the winding Charente river, serves as a naval base and arsenal. Ships are constantly coming and going, sailors are everywhere in town, and school-boys are preparing to become seamen. Every family seems to have a sea-going father or son, including Pierre's family; his brother Gustave is serving in the navy. Although the sea is only about fifteen kilometres from his home, Pierre is too young and protected to travel there. He lives a spoiled, but isolated, existence with his parents, sister, grandmother and Aunt Berthe.

Pierre's infrequent outings are with his older sister and occasionally with his father. Most of Pierre's activities are in or around the house where he is educated privately, and taught music and art. His hobbies are centred around his fish pond, his own private sea, and his collection of specimens in his "museum" of natural history.

Pierre's travels are limited to visiting relatives and friends of his family in nearby villages. One such visit is to Saint-Pierre-d'Oléron, a small town located on an island west of and about thirty-five kilometres by viaduct from Rochefort. Saint-Pierre was the home town of Pierre's maternal grandparents and a favourite haven for the youngster because of its accessibility to the sea.<sup>99</sup>

On a visit to Oléron young Pierre sees the sea for the

<sup>99</sup> This was also a favourite haven for Viaud and, in accordance with his wishes, is his final resting place.

first time. His impression of the sea is one of sadness, desolate solitude, abandonment and exile, and he experiences the beginning of a life-long premonition that someday he will be taken by the sea. However, as from this initial contact between Pierre and the sea, she is depicted as playing the role of temptress, enticing the young lad, constantly arousing his hopes and desires.

His family visits include some to La Limoise, a few kilometres south of Rochefort and located on the river; the village is close enough to the sea to be influenced by tides. Pierre's activities in this setting and his trips aboard ferry-boats and skiffs appear to have been memorable ones.

None of these visits take Pierre far from home, but from discussions with his brother and letters from afar describing exotic settings across the seas, the young, aspiring sailor looks forward to visiting such places as the Straits of Magellan, Islam, the Indian Ocean and the "infini resplendissement bleu du Grand Océan austral" (RE. p. 236).

Eventually Pierre can resist the call of the sea no longer; he feels the need to spread his wings, to become a sailor and travel, like his brother, to exotic lands. At the age of fourteen, he therefore signs a pact with the sea, beginning their life-long love affair.

\* \* \*

As with the preceding novel, Enfant concentrates on a



single protagonist; however, the hero is depicted at two stages of his life: as an adult in the present who looks back to the past; then as a youngster who eagerly anticipates the future. As an adult the characteristics of the naval officer, like those of the hero in Chrysanthème, are rooted in his discontent with the present which prompts him to reminisce about happier times when he was a youngster on the verge of an exciting relationship with the sea.

The character of Loti has evolved from the pleasure-seeking young sailor, to mature seaman, then - in the first novel of this final phase - to a disillusioned and discontented officer seeking to relive happier times. This trend towards ineffectual temporal escapism continues in Enfant as he reminisces about his childhood.

The mature Loti, who narrates the story of his own childhood, is essentially the same character as the Loti of Madame Chrysanthème: a similarly, discontented, somewhat disillusioned personage who has a strong tendency to seek compensation for an unsatisfactory present in reminiscence about the past. The past and the present intermingle quite frequently in the mind of the older man and such situations almost always accentuate the current dissatisfaction of the mature seaman. On one occasion, during a discussion of young Pierre's sketch of "Le Canard malheureux", he reveals that, as a child, he foresaw conditions and ordeals which he experienced later as a naval officer aboard ship in the straits of

## Magellan:

Je le cachais sous mes doigts, ce dessin, mais j'y revenais toujours. Et le regardais si attentivement au contraire, qu'aujourd'hui, après tant d'années, je le revois encore tel qu'il m'apparut là, transfiguré : une lueur traînait sur l'horizon de cette mer si gauchement esquissée, le reste du ciel était chargé de pluie, et cela me semblait être un soir d'hiver par grand vent; le canard malheureux, seul, loin de sa famille et de ses amis, se dirigeait (sans doute pour s'y abriter pendant la nuit) vers ce rivage brumeux là-bas, sur lequel pesait la plus désolée tristesse... Et certainement, pendant une minute furtive, j'eus la prescience complète de ces serremments de coeur que je devais connaître plus tard au cours de ma vie de marin, lorsque, par les mauvais temps de décembre, mon bateau entrerait le soir, pour s'abriter jusqu'au lendemain, dans quelque baie inhabitée de la côte bretonne, ou bien et surtout, aux crépuscules de l'hiver austral, vers les parages de Magellan,<sup>100</sup> quand nous viendrions chercher un peu de protection pour la nuit auprès de ces terres perdues qui sont là-bas, aussi inhospitalières, aussi infiniment désertes que les eaux d'alentour. (RE. p. 69)

The negative terms relating to the sea seem to stress the discontent and depression of the shore-based officer. Rather than bringing out the lonely isolation visualized by the child who looks forward to exciting voyages to exotic lands, Loti's musings tend to underscore the mature seaman's sense of loss at no longer experiencing the excitement of past voyages.

Similar revelations of discontent are perceived during a fit of moody depression. At this point Loti attributes the extremely rare images of sadness experienced during his early childhood to the melancholic recollections which he suffered

<sup>100</sup> Viaud is probably referring to his voyage aboard the Vaudreuil in September 1871: "Le détroit de Magellan est devenu une voie importante pour la navigation à vapeur; mais les deux rives sombres de ce grand détroit ne portent nulle part encore les traces de la civilisation et les marins qui, en passant, mettent pied à terre n'ont aucun secours à attendre d'un pays aussi inhospitalier" (JOP. p. 16).

as an adult in Islam:

Il est étrange que mon enfance si tendrement choyée m'ait surtout laissé des images tristes. (RE. p. 77)

Et toujours, la grande chaleur, les très profonds ciels bleus, les étincellements de nos plages de sable, la réverbération de la lumière sur les chaux blanches des maisonnettes dans nos villages de "l'île", me causaient ces impressions de mélancolie et de sommeil que j'ai retrouvées ensuite, avec une intensité plus grande, dans les pays d'Islam... (RE. p. 78)

On another occasion Loti discusses places which he frequented as a child.<sup>101</sup> While discussing Bretenoux, his thoughts turn to unhappy recollections of a time in Brittany when one of his ill-fated love affairs was abruptly and unhappily concluded. Such recollections merely exacerbate his current sense of unfulfillment, disappointment and failure:

La Bretagne, que beaucoup de gens me donnent pour patrie, je ne l'ai vue que bien plus tard, à dix-sept ans, et j'ai été très long à l'aimer, - ce qui fait sans doute que je l'ai aimée davantage. Elle m'avait causé d'abord une oppression et une tristesse extrêmes;<sup>102</sup> ce fut mon frère Yves qui commença de m'initier à son charme mélancolique, de me faire pénétrer dans l'intimité de ses chaumières et de ses chapelles des bois. Et ensuite, l'influence qu'une jeune fille du pays de Tréguier exerça sur mon imagination, très tard, vers mes vingt-sept ans, décida tout à fait mon amour pour cette patrie adoptée. (RE. pp. 162-63)

Moreover, in recalling memories of his childhood fish-pond, "ma sainte Mecque, à moi, ce petit coin-là", Loti irrelevantly

<sup>101</sup> Bretenoux (Lot in the basin of the Aquitaine) on the banks of the Cère river and Saintonge (Charente-Maritime).

<sup>102</sup> "Une oppression et une tristesse extrêmes" is a reference to Viaud's infatuation for the daughter of an "Islandais". The recollections of her, and of his happy times at the home of Pierre Le Cor (Yves) enhance the novelist's affection for Brittany.

relates it to distant voyages and lengthy exiles: "La consécration définitive de ce lieu lui est venue, je crois, de mon métier de mer; de mes lointains voyages, de mes longs exils, pendant lesquels j'y ai repensé et l'ai revu avec amour" (RE. p. 96).

The older Loti's depression leads, of course, to the typical morbid preoccupation and thoughts of death. For example, when Loti discusses his brother's return to the sea, he mentions how happy Pierre was that his brother's trip would be quite short, the narrator feels it necessary to reveal that Gustave never returns:

Les adieux cependant furent moins tristes cette fois, parce que son absence, pensions-nous, ne durerait que deux années... En réalité, c'était son départ éternel, et on devait jeter son corps quelque part là-bas au fond de l'océan Indien, vers le milieu du golfe de Bengale... (RE. p. 235)

From the perspective of the older Loti, the role of young Pierre is to transport him back to another time when he was the antithesis of what he is now. Essentially Pierre is youthful, enthusiastic, full of hope and anticipation as he becomes increasingly conscious of the life of excitement and adventure that the sea can offer him. The story of Pierre is, then, for Loti, a sentimental journey par excellence.

Loti travels back to describe his roots, to the time before he became struck by the sea. He was, he tells us, brought up in a household of kindly, fervently religious, doting women - perhaps a reason why in later life he so much enjoys the company of men. His life as a child is very much

cloistered and protected: "Au début de l'existence, mon histoire serait simplement celle d'un enfant très choyé, très tenu, très obéissant et toujours convenable dans ses petites manières, auquel rien n'arrivait" (RE. p. 43). He remembers feeling isolated and alone during this period - perhaps his childhood experiences go far in explaining his sensitivity to such feelings in later life.

The novel is, however, essentially the story of the burgeoning enthusiasm and anticipation - this latter element being the reverse form of temporal escapism to the one in which the mature Loti indulges. Anticipation involves hope and expectation of pleasurable things to come, and as such the mature Loti seeks it as an antidote to his present depression. Le Roman d'un enfant therefore recounts the various and varying ways in which Pierre's interest in the sea, and everything related to it, was stimulated.

Within his own home and family, there are influences which predispose him to a life at sea. Pierre's brother, Gustave, is a medical officer in the navy who, when his young sibling falls ill and needs stimulation, constructs a small pond in the garden, and stocks it with goldfish. Pierre's resultant interest in fish is complemented by his great-uncle, who helps develop the lad's interest in natural history. The older man encourages the boy's efforts to create a museum: "Je ne sais plus bien à quelle époque je fondai mon musée qui m'occupa si longtemps" (RE. p. 117).

Pierre makes his initial contact with the sea on a trip

to Oléron, and it is also here that he strengthens his burgeoning interest in natural history and the creatures that inhabit the sea. On the île d'Oléron he makes his first contact with exotic sea creatures, a discovery which evolves into a lifelong interest in the inhabitants and underwater mementoes of the sea:

Nous étions allés demeurer tous trois seuls à la grand'côte, dans un village de pêcheurs absolument ignoré et perdu en ce temps-là...

Toute cette partie de l'île... regarde le large, les infinis de l'Océan; partie sans cesse battue par les vents d'Ouest. Ses plages s'étendent sans aucune courbure, droite, infinies, et les brisants de la mer, arrêtés par rien, aussi majestueux qu'à la côte saharienne, y déroulent, sur des lieues de longueur, avec de grands bruits, leurs tristes volutes blanches. (RE. p. 99)

De ce séjour à la grand'côte date ma première connaissance vraiment intime, avec les varechs, les crabes, les méduses, les mille choses de la mer. (RE. p. 100)

Young, enthusiastic Pierre leaves the island, like a sailor departing from an exotic port, loaded down with souvenirs and mementoes of the sea.<sup>100</sup> Loti quotes from his sister's account of their departure:<sup>101</sup> "Au 15 septembre, il fallut quitter le village. Pierre avait fait des monceaux de coquilles, d'algues, d'étoiles, de cailloux marins; insatiable, il voulait tout emporter; et il rangeait cela dans des caisses" (RE. p. 101).

If Pierre's interest in the sea is stimulated by the

<sup>100</sup> These souvenirs mark the beginning of Viaud's collection of exotic memorabilia which adorn his museum to-day.

<sup>101</sup> In Chapter 20 of Le Roman, Viaud quotes from: "Les pages écrites par Marie Viaud lors du séjour à La Brée (Oléron)" (RE. annexes, p. 270). See Les Cahiers Pierre Loti, April - June, 1982.

objects and creatures that people it, his enthusiasm is further fostered by the people who sail on it. Seamen seem to be everything that he - living in a protective environment with rather staid, older women - is not. During the Mardi Gras parade he is obviously attracted by the fun-filled activities of the children and the seamen who seem to be having even more fun. Ironically, however, he purports that he has no desire to join them:

Confusément, je souffrais d'être enfermé, moi, et penché sur des choses arides, bonnes pour des vieillards, quand dehors les petits garçons du peuple, de tous les âges, de toutes les tailles, et les matelots, plus enfants qu'eux, couraient, sautaient, chantaient à plein gosier, ayant sur la figure des masques de deux sous. Je n'avais aucune envie de les suivre, cela va sans dire; j'en sentais même l'impossibilité avec le dégoût le plus dédaigneux. Et je tenais beaucoup à rester là, ayant à finir de mettre en ordre la famille multicolore des Purpurifères, vingt-troisième des Gastéropodes. (RE. p. 132)

In spite of protestations to the contrary, it is obvious that the fun-loving seamen represent an escape from his cloistered environment.

The boy is indeed attracted to the simple, childish, fun-loving young sailors; he watches them singing and celebrating when on leave ashore. His impressions also come from the sailors' boisterous fun-making that he surreptitiously witnesses in the lower section of the village. These activities help form the lad's vision of the sea as a means of liberation from his home environment. Just like his brother, Gustave, he could thereby travel to the many exotic places all over the world.

The secluded lad is encouraged to avoid this part of town near the port and the ramparts, though it is of course the very area where he wants to go so he can be closer to the sea and to seafarers. Such restrictions on his movements naturally have the reverse effect: he becomes even more determined to break free of his constraints. This forbidden area, with the sailors singing noisily or involved in other animated activities, strengthens his attraction to the sailor's lifestyle and the sea:

J'avais une sorte de curiosité inquiète pour ces quartiers bas... où on ne me conduisait jamais. Vieilles rues aperçues de loin, solitaires le jour, mais où, de temps immémorial, les matelots faisaient leur tapage les soirs de fête, envoyant quelquefois le bruit de leurs chants jusqu'à nous. Qu'est-ce qui pouvait se passer là-bas? Comment étaient ces gaietés brutales qui se traduisaient par des cris? A quoi donc s'amusaient-ils, ces gens revenus de la mer et des lointains pays où le soleil brûle? Quelle vie plus rude, plus simple et plus libre était la leur? (RE. pp. 111-12)

At a later point, the strong attraction exerted by the activities of these seafolk and by the temptress sea is reinforced by the excitement of the happy homecoming of the captain of a frigate returning from exotic lands:

Il arrivait de je ne sais quelle colonie éloignée après deux ou trois ans d'absence, et il me parut qu'il n'avait pas changé d'aspect... On rentrait donc au foyer tout de même! Elles finissaient donc, ces années d'exil, qui aujourd'hui du reste me faisaient déjà l'effet d'être moins longues qu'autrefois!...

Et quelle joie, sans doute, que ces retours! Et quel prestige environnait ceux qui arrivaient de si loin! (RE. p. 204)

This is quite an event for young Pierre who is looking forward



to Gustave's return home, bringing gifts from exotic ports and stories about adventurous voyages across the sea.

It is of course not surprising to discover in Pierre a growing fascination for things exotic. The exotic is the antithesis of the dull, the prosaic, the ordinary, the cloistered, the restrictive - everything that his home environment seeks to impose on him and from which he yearns to escape. By dreaming of the exotic he is filled with the all-important sense of anticipation of what the future might bring if he can but put to sea on voyages of discovery. On the day prior to Gustave's departure on a voyage, he presents his young brother with a book, Voyage en Polynésie. The volume is filled with awe-inspiring pictures of the sunny, palm-filled island and its "vahinés".<sup>102</sup>

While Gustave is away, he writes home and his letters are filled with descriptions of exotic islands, filling Pierre's dreams with images of "l'île délicieuse". His imagination is thereby further stimulated, along with the constantly growing desire to escape to these exotic places:

Il y en avait de particulières pour moi, de bien longues même, avec d'inoubliables descriptions. Déjà je savais plusieurs mots de la langue d'Océanie aux consonances douces; dans les rêves de mes nuits, je voyais souvent l'île délicieuse et m'y promenais; elle hantait mon imagination comme une patrie chimérique, désirée ardemment mais inaccessible, située sur une autre planète. (RE. p. 173)

Pierre's love affair with the unusual deepens when, in

<sup>102</sup> A Polynesian word for woman, wife or mistress.

Lucette's home at La Limoise, he is looking through her mother's library full of books about navigation published in the previous century. He comes across one book which includes a ship's log, unopened for a hundred years (RE. pp. 141-42). The boy's sense of wonderment and anticipation of sea voyages are evident in this description of his discoveries:

Je trouvai un cahier en gros papier rude d'autrefois, et je l'ouvris distraitemment... J'appris alors, avec un tressaillement d'émotion, que de midi à quatre heures du soir, le 20 juin 1813, par 110 degrés de longitude et 15 degrés de latitude australe (entre les tropiques par conséquent et dans les parages du Grand Océan), il faisait beau temps, belle mer, jolie brise de sud-est, qu'il y avait au ciel plusieurs de ces petits nuages blancs nommés "queues de chat" et que, le long du navire, des dorades passaient... (RE. p. 216)

This log becomes a recurring, nostalgic memory for the older Loti, who explains his recollections:

Dans cette vie des marins, dans leur métier qui m'effrayait et qui m'était défendu, que de choses devaient être charmantes! Je ne l'avais jamais si bien senti que ce soir.

Le souvenir inoubliable de cette petite lecture furtive a été cause que, pendant mes quarts à la mer, chaque fois qu'un timonier m'a signalé un passage de dorades, j'ai toujours tourné les yeux pour les regarder; et toujours j'ai trouvé une espèce de charme à noter ensuite l'incident sur le journal du bord, - si peu différent de celui que ces marins de juin 1813 avaient tenu avant moi. (RE. p. 217)

If Le Roman d'un enfant is the adult Loti's retrospective catalogue of events and emotions that recreate a lost sense of anticipation, it should perhaps be mentioned that the boy's growing excitement is not without problems. Though the reader is aware that Pierre will opt for a seafaring career, we are

made to realize that his choice was not an easy one. Pierre is very devoted to his mother and he shares the type of religiosity which is a constant in so many of the seamen in Viaud's other novels. These two emotions are, in Enfant, frequently in conflict with Pierre's desire to escape to exotic climes and live the vacuous and apparently fun-filled life of a sailor. At times Pierre considers a career as a pastor, as this would certainly be more to his mother's liking. At one point, he believes that he might have discovered the ideal compromise: he sees pictures in a missionary magazine, the "Messenger" (RE. p. 134), and thinks that becoming a missionary would reconcile religion and family with the freedom to travel to exotic places:

Missionnaire! Il semblait cependant que cela conciliait tout. 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. (RE. p. 135)

Pierre will not, of course, opt for a religious career, he will become a seaman.<sup>103</sup> But the oft-depicted conflicts between home, family and religion, on the one hand, and the lure of the sea on the other, goes far to explaining the

<sup>103</sup> During his childhood Pierre does not consider the idea of writing as a career; he likes to write but only for himself. To ensure the privacy of his diary he initially writes in a cryptography, until he finds it to be too time consuming. He had already found a need "de noter, de fixer les images fugitives, de lutter contre la fragilité des choses et de moi même, qui m'a fait poursuivre ainsi ce journal jusqu'à ces dernières années" (RE. p. 202). Nevertheless, many factors that influenced Viaud to become a writer appeared during his childhood are also recounted in this novel.

future conflicts and apparent contradictions that we have already seen in the adult Loti. Home and family - and the related religious and moral values - always act as a powerful lure to the seamen far away in foreign climes; conversely, the young Pierre's impatience with the constraints of home help to explain how easily the desire to put back to sea is rekindled in Viaud's mature seamen.

Le Roman d'un enfant is, then, not simply about a child: it is about a man looking back at himself as a child. The man is, like the similar persona in Madame Chrysanthème, a mature man who feels old and is attempting to come to terms with the passing of time and his growing sense of discontent.

He therefore looks back to what in retrospect may seem to be the happiest of times: his childhood. He is indulging in temporal escapism via a visit to the past. The child, however, is not overly happy with his own present life, but he has what the older man has lost: the ability to escape through anticipation of the future. In their need for temporal escapism, the two sides of Loti are as one.

### 3. Matelot

After Le Roman d'un enfant and before writing Matelot, Viaud published several other works; however, as might be inferred from the titles of two publications, Le Livre de la pitié et de la mort and L'Exilée, his depressed and discontented state of mind had not changed since the writing of the preceding novels in this chapter.

Matelot first appeared in the Revue hebdomadaire in 1892,<sup>107</sup> and was published in book form in 1893. In this novel many scenes, adventures, romantic affairs, deaths and burials at sea are not unlike those described in Mon Frère Yves and Pêcheur d'Islande.

Some critics consider Matelot a rewrite of Yves and not up to the standard of Viaud's other sea novels; De Traz, in referring to the three sea novels, states quite clearly that Matelot, "n'est qu'une réplique médiocre des deux précédents".<sup>108</sup> It would probably be more accurate to consider that Viaud is attempting to perpetuate the great success of the two earlier sea novels by writing a third one employing some similar

<sup>107</sup> Tome XV, 1892, pp. 5-24; 161-198; 321-357 and 481-517.

<sup>108</sup> The two novels are Yves and Pêcheur (De Traz, p. 107).

descriptions and other material from his diary records and recollections of past experiences. Brodin looks at the broader picture and offers this more charitable opinion of the novel:

Matelot était peut-être moins beau, moins fort, moins complètement satisfaisant que Pêcheur d'Islande. Mais le volume complétait de façon magnifique le triptyque commencé avec Mon Frère Yves et continué avec Pêcheur d'Islande. L'ensemble de la trilogie constituait une admirable épopée de la mer et des marins.<sup>109</sup>

Although Brodin groups these three novels together as a sea trilogy, in our broader study of Viaud's novels, Matelot is included with our third group for several reasons. Matelot is the depiction of a hero who, like those in the two preceding novels, is frequently discontented with his current life and wishes to improve it. However, unlike the seamen in Chapter Three, he is a dreamer rather than a man of action. He dreams about escaping from his current discontent to a more satisfying, happier life in the future. Although, on occasion, he sets out to do what is necessary to fulfil his dreams, he never follows through. Instead of applying himself, he continues to day-dream about the future and thereby engages in a form of temporal escapism not dissimilar to that of the other heroes in this chapter.

Matelot traces the life of Jean Berny. The novel opens in Provence on the border of Italy, where young Jean lives

<sup>109</sup> Brodin, p. 218.

with his widowed mother and aged grand-father. The hero is not happy with his lot and dreams of future accomplishments, but he procrastinates rather than taking the action necessary to achieve his goals.

Jean's mother is a poor widow who has high hopes that her son will grow up in Provence and eventually take over the perfume business of his wealthy uncle. The sea, however, seems to offer greater excitement to the young man - a fact which becomes apparent to Jean's mother when her son is only ten years of age.

Jean enters the naval academy and the action moves to the bustling naval port of Brest where his mother accompanies him. However, instead of studying Jean dreams and fails to graduate. Not wishing to renounce his ambition of a seafaring career, he signs on as a crew member on a brig and serves until he discovers that the captain and vessel are involved in smuggling operations.

Jean then joins the navy as a rating with the intention of studying to qualify as a captain of a commercial ship - an impossible dream for the young man who never seems to be able to concentrate his attention and achieve his goals.

Jean's voyages take him to the port of Antibes on the Mediterranean near Nice, and to Rhodes in the Aegean Sea.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>110</sup> The voyages and ports visited by Jean reflect Viaud's extensive travels from his initial voyage as a young Midshipman aboard the *Jean-Bart*, to later voyages as a Lieutenant on the Chateau-Yquem and other vessels.

On the traditional Atlantic voyage, he travels aboard the Résolue to the tropics, then north to the New World where he becomes familiar with the port of Quebec. In Canada, Jean becomes involved in a romantic relationship and considers deserting the navy to get married; however, after much soul-searching and a great deal of procrastination, he decides not to take this drastic step.

After completing his term of service in the navy, Jean's mother wants him to stay home and study hydrography. He disappoints her by taking the easy way out, by signing on with the navy for another five years without even discussing it with her. He fantasizes about a voyage around the world, but instead is assigned to Brest where he spends the winter with his mother.

When he eventually does leave port it is only for a short trip to Senegal where he is again assigned to shore duties. In port, Jean again meets an attractive girl, Madeleine, and dreams of marriage. The romance is short-lived; her father, a retired naval officer, soon breaks up his daughter's relationship with the common sailor. Jean, seeking escape from the futile affair and his shore duties, volunteers to serve in the Far East. He is immediately confined to barracks and leaves the next day without taking leave of Madeleine.

Jean's assignment in China under war-time conditions is reminiscent of that of Sylvestre in Pêcheur. Jean continues to dream of a better future while based on a small gunboat,



the Gyptis, moored among river reeds where the sailors are exposed to an unhealthy, debilitating environment. Aboard this unarmed ship, two of Jean's friends succumb to disease and after a year his own health deteriorates so badly that he is invalided home. He joins other wounded men aboard the Saône for the voyage home via - symbolically, perhaps ironically - the Cape of Good Hope.

His illness and experiences on this voyage recall those of Sylvestre.<sup>111</sup> Jean's health improves initially under the therapeutic influence of the sea and then deteriorates rapidly; he dies and is buried at sea. His mother is devastated by the bad news; she feels that God has forsaken her and, like Yvonne, briefly renounces her religion. She gradually finds peace, however, and her faith is restored in the concluding pages of the novel.

\* \* \*

As we have noted, it is possible to view Matelot as forming a trilogy of high-sea adventures with Mon Frère Yves and Pêcheur d'Islande, and to regard the character of Jean Berny as being essentially similar to that of Yves and Yann. Indeed, there are strong similarities between these three.

<sup>111</sup> Viaud's illness aboard the *Atalante* in 1883: "On dit: 'C'est une insolation, il fallait bien qu'il y passât à son tour, comme ses gabiers qui vont tête nue : ce ne sera pas grave.'" (JI. II. pp. 79-82) His sickness lasted no longer than ten days, but is his source of first-hand information in writing about Sylvestre's illness (PI. pp. 120-25) and Jean's suffering prior to death during their long voyages home.

especially as they relate to the typical qualities that Viaud ascribes to his working seamen.

There are times, when Jean is at sea, that he obviously enjoys the communal physical effort and emotional bonding with other members of the crew. He feels free and happy, absorbed and satisfied in his work:

Au large. Partout alentour, le vide, l'infini cercle bleu de la mer. En haut, l'échafaudage des voiles blanches et des cordes rousses aux senteurs de goudron, domaine de Jean et des gabiers; mécanisme organisé merveilleusement, presque animé, dont chaque nerf moteur a son nom, sa fonction et sa vie; et, circulant dans tout cela, l'équipage, c'est-à-dire quelques centaines d'hommes que le hasard a rassemblés, dont les noms sont tout à coup devenus des numéros, et dont les personnalités s'absorbent dans les fonctions remplies. (M. p. 98)

When Jean is engaged in his work, Viaud ascribes to him the kind of characteristics seen in Yann who is strong, energetic and self-sufficient, yet dignified and respectful:

Il était... un matelot ponctuel, alerte, énergique, - en même temps que soumis et muet. La discipline de fer ne révoltait pas son indépendance native; lui, si vite buté contre les pressions individuelles, acceptait ce joug spécial, qui n'est pas blessant par cela même qu'il est impersonnel et uniforme, et qui souvent vient à bout des plus indomptables. (M. p. 83)

In sum, he becomes the consummate working seaman, with an air of distinction which Viaud seems to reserve for such men:

De plus en plus, il devenait matelot, d'aspect et d'allures, tout en restant distingué, - deux choses d'ailleurs qui n'ont rien d'inconciliable : c'est un privilège des gens de mer que les plus étonnantes libertés de désinvolture ou de langage puissent, chez quelques-uns, n'être jamais triviales, jamais communes, jamais peuple. (M. p. 84)

However, such a view of Jean is at best incomplete, and at worst quite misleading. Jean is not, fundamentally, a hard-working, mature seaman of the type we have seen in the previous chapter. Rather, he is a somewhat weak character, an indecisive dreamer who is incapable of dictating the course of his own life, a malcontent who dreams about the future as a means of mentally escaping from an unhappy present. If, as we have seen, he can show energy and drive in the execution of his shipboard duties, he is fundamentally a procrastinator who lacks the necessary strength of character to bring his dreams to fruition. Circumstances rather than his own will become the arbiter of his fate.

Therefore, instead of belonging with the heroes we have studied in Chapter Three, Jean belongs with the heroes of this last phase of Viaud's work. From the point of view of the hero's character, Matelot has more in common with Roman d'un enfant than with either Mon Frère Yves or Pêcheur. If Enfant is about a disillusioned sailor who nostalgically looks back to his youth of expectant anticipation, Matelot is about the process which begins with expectant anticipation and proceeds to disillusionment. The two novels are two different perspectives of a similar phenomenon.

Jean's life follows a pattern of discontent with the present causing him to dream about some better condition in the future. Often he is incapable of taking the necessary action to realize his dreams; on other occasions he may

achieve a measure of betterment, but this fails to temper his discontent and he continues to dream of the future.

This pattern first becomes apparent when he dreams of escaping his dull life at home. He is accepted into the naval academy to train to become an officer, but his initial success tempers his energy and emotion:

Par exemple, à présent qu'il était admissible, il s'était dit qu'il allait employer tout à fait bien les deux mois de grâce qui lui restaient avant le décisif et terrible examen oral; - mais il se donnait vacances ce soir et encore demain, rien que pour rêver un peu. (M. p. 12)

The neglect of his studies means that he fails to achieve his goal. The pattern is constantly repeated as he dreams, perhaps takes a little action, but never enough to prevent failure and avert discontent.

His dreams turn to acquiring experience as a naval rating in preparation for becoming a captain on a commercial vessel. He explains his ambitions, his dreams for the future, to their maid of long standing, Miette:

"Quand j'aurai fini mon service de matelot, - lui contait-il, - tu comprends, j'entrerai dans les capitaines au long cours; j'arriverai même bien plus vite à commander des navires; pour moi, j'aime autant ça, je t'assure..." Et voyant qu'elle le regardait avec des yeux pleins de larmes, il l'embrassa, la pauvre humble Miette. (M. p. 27)

He again makes the initial step by enlisting in the navy, but instead of studying, he again falls prey to diminished motivation and procrastination, with the inevitable consequences.

ces.

While assigned to the home port of Brest for an extended period, Jean lives ashore with his mother. As we have often seen with Viaud's seafaring men who spend too much time ashore, he becomes quite discontented and dreams of escaping to the sea. While preparing for a ten-month voyage, his outlook improves and, always the dreamer, his expectations increase as he anticipates a happy, meaningful future:

Demain, Jean partait pour faire, autour de l'Atlantique, le traditionnel voyage de la Résolue.<sup>112</sup>

Ses plans d'avenir étaient d'ailleurs très bien combinés, très raisonnables; l'été prochain, revenir avec les galons de quartier-maître; ensuite, repartir vite pour une campagne lointaine, qui finirait son temps de service; y faire des économies; les dépenser, au retour, pour suivre, les cours d'hydrographie, et passer enfin ses examens de capitaine au long cours. (M. p. 96)

Aboard ship Jean dreams incessantly of escaping to a better life in the future by applying himself to his studies. He has the very best of intentions, but his innate weakness of character is such that he allows himself to be distracted by the various interesting and exciting things to see and do. Jean is conscious of his own procrastination; however, like so many dreamers, he consoles himself with the thought that he can always make up for lost time:

Il se consolait ensuite en se disant qu'il avait des années devant lui; que le moment n'était pas venu de se

<sup>112</sup> Jean's lack of firm determination suggests that perhaps Viaud is deliberately being ironic in his selection of a name for the ship, the Résolue.

enfantillages. (M. p. 103)

As their ship travels through the tropics, there are times when Jean's thoughts turn to the future and what he needs to do in order to realize his dream; but in a revealing passage Viaud implies the futility of the dream as the hero subsides into a state of lethargy:

Fatigué d'une bonne fatigue musculaire, bercé très doucement par le roulis comme un enfant qu'on endort, Jean était à demi couché sur le pont, à la lueur naissante des étoiles, au milieu de l'entassement des flâneurs en vareuse blanche, qui venaient, les uns après les autres, s'asseoir ou s'étendre, par petits groupes bien serrés, pour passer la belle veillée ensemble. Et, dans ce calme d'avant le sommeil, ses pensées à lui s'assombrissaient encore un peu, comme d'habitude, dans des préoccupations d'examen et d'avenir. (M. p. 107)

Visits to exotic ports of call, with all of the pleasures and pretty girls, exacerbate Jean's tendency to neglect his studies; he daydreams and seeks pleasure, rather than focusing his energies on his ultimate goal. Moreover, when he arrives in the port of Quebec, he is presented with an opportunity to alter drastically the course of his life, perhaps for the better. In Quebec he falls in love with a local girl, Marie, and he is sorely tempted by her father to jump ship and begin a new life in the New World. His tendency to procrastinate and inability to act decisively are perhaps at no time more apparent. He dissipates his energies in futile daydreaming and imaginings until circumstances take over and relieve him of the responsibility of making a decision: "Il partit, se disant

of the responsibility of making a decision: "Il partit, se disant qu'il écrirait bientôt, qu'il reviendrait sûrement, qu'il l'épouserait peut-être" (M. p. 116).<sup>113</sup> These thoughts of writing to Marie and returning are dreams doomed to failure by his indecision.

Jean allows his life to be controlled by circumstances rather than by his own actions when his compulsory service in the navy approaches completion. Unable to make a change and study hydrography as his mother wishes, Jean enlists in the navy to maintain the same lifestyle for another five years. He is reluctant to go against his mother's wishes and lacks the courage to tell her of his plans until they are irreversible. After he has signed up and knows that nothing can be changed, he finally tells her:

Alors il s'était buté, avec un entêtement silencieux, ayant en lui-même un autre projet, très facile et très tentant, qui le délivrerait de tout: se rengager dans la Flotte!... D'ailleurs cette vie le tenait encore, par son charme inexpliqué, que tant de jeunes hommes subissent.

Et c'était fait depuis la veille, signé, définitif; il avait, sans rien dire, contracté un nouveau pacte avec le col bleu, pour cinq années! (M. p. 124-25)

When Jean is on shore, as in Quebec and Brest, he is unhappy and dreams about life at sea; however, at sea he longs for and dreams about life ashore. In this respect he is somewhat similar to the sailors discussed in Chapters Two and Three. But in Jean's case, this constant desire to be

<sup>113</sup> Jean's indecision and procrastination are stressed by Viaud's extensive use of the conditional tense as in this quotation.

somewhere else, to do something which he is unable to do, is obsessive.

On shore duty in Senegal, Jean is again discontented and disappointed in his assignment and dreams of serving at sea. His discontent is intensified by the long separation from his mother and his isolation from the sea: "On ne voyait même pas la mer, dans ce port tranquille environné de grandes plaines d'herbages, et on aurait pu s'y croire perdu dans les provinces intérieures, sans ces bandes de marins qui chantaient le soir" (M. p.140).

There are times, other than when he immerses himself in the camaraderie of shipboard life, when Jean finds temporary relief from his self-inflicted dilemma. One such occasion is when he falls in love with Madeleine. As might be expected, he speculates about what might be: "La possibilité lui apparaissait pour la première fois, la possibilité radieuse de devenir sa femme" (p. 163). Of course, the dream is not fulfilled and the romance is short-lived. In this case it is Madeleine's father who puts an end to the relationship - another broken dream for Jean. Henceforth, Madeleine serves only as a source of yet more fanciful speculation on the part of the hero.

During this extended period of shore duty and discontent in Senegal, Jean's dreams tend to focus on escaping from both his assignment and his thwarted amorous involvement. Therefore, when the navy calls upon Jean's group for a volunteer to leave almost immediately for the Far-East, he steps



forward.<sup>114</sup> Jean is so anxious to escape to the sea that he does not even consider the dangers inherent in spending, "un ou deux ans là-bas, à bord d'une petite canonnière, appelée Gyptis, sur un de ces fleuves de l'intérieur qui se traînent chauds et lourds, au soleil mortel" (M. p. 168). His action may be in the best tradition of sailors in the navy; but, his only consideration is to escape from his discontent by returning to the sea.

With the passing of time, and the gaining of a variety of experiences in varied countries and cultures, there is a discernable evolution in Jean's outlook. He becomes more realistic and aware that most of his dreams will not come to pass. This awareness makes him even more discontented. Unable to delude himself any longer with distant fantasies, he thinks more pragmatically about what the future holds in store for him, and his mind invariably turns to thoughts of aging and death.

Like so many of the protagonists in Viaud's novels, Jean becomes preoccupied with thoughts of death, brought on by facing dangers and by familiarity with deaths occurring at sea. Like many of the sailors discussed in this study, Jean has premonitions of death and burial at sea: "Lui, gâté déjà par les baisers et les étreintes, ayant le monde pour habitation changeante, appelé à partir, peut-être demain, pour ne revenir jamais et laisser son

<sup>114</sup> There is an unmistakable similarity to the plot of the Spahi where the hero voluntarily agrees to relinquish his trip home and is sent into the debilitating climate of the African interior where he eventually dies (RS. pp. 202-03, 234).

corps aux mers lointaines" (M. p. 165).

Jean's fears and premonitions of death are exacerbated by the death of friends and the deterioration of his own health caused by a year of exposure to the noxious, debilitating climate aboard the Gyptis in the disease-ridden rivers and marshes of China: "Ses joues avaient jauni comme celles des petits personnages félins d'alentour et ses forces musculaires avaient décliné beaucoup" (M. p. 184). "Deux des matelots partis de France avec Jean étaient morts au bout d'une année" (M. p. 197).

Aboard the hospital ship, Saône, en route home Jean's thoughts of death are confined to the hope that he will live long enough to reach France as he dreams of seeing his poor mother again:

En plus du réel bien-être physique que ce vent répandait dans les poitrines, il apportait aussi aux pauvres épuisés un peu d'espérance. Et à mesure que la Saône élargissait l'envergure de ses ailes, les yeux de Jean fixés sur les moins lointaines apparitions de France, reprenaient presque toute leur expression de vie qu'ils avaient perdue... Oh! la bonne vitesse! oh! aller vite, vite, se sentir à présent courir et voler, à travers ce désert des eaux - dont l'immensité effroyable le séparait de sa mère... (M. p. 206)

His suffering seems almost endless as his final hours approach.<sup>115</sup> He is realistically aware that the end is near and his thoughts of death focus on being wrapped in a shroud and lowered into the bottomless sea.

The hero of Matelot has therefore a great deal in common

<sup>115</sup> "L'otî détaille longuement ses dernières heures. Et c'est en enfant, avec des étonnements, des incrédules, des révoltes, qu'il allait recevoir la grande Mort" (De Traz, p. 158).

with the heroes of Madame Chrysanthème and Le Roman d'un enfant. Jean Berny is, basically, an unfulfilled malcontent, whose unhappiness is expressed in a need to escape from the present; he dreams constantly of a better life in the future. Many of his dreams seem eminently realistic and achievable but he proves incapable of the necessary commitment of time and effort. Minor short-term successes are sufficient to trigger a relaxation of effort, and thus his major, long-term goals remain chimeras. With the passing of time, reality conquers fantasy, and without his dreams he faces aging and death.

Jean's mother seems to be of somewhat hardier stock than her son, though she too is prone to moments of dejection and pessimism; she is somewhat similar to the Islandais womenfolk depicted in Pêcheur. She is portrayed as long-suffering, facing constant worries about her son far away; she is essentially a caring, sensitive, worthy soul - one who obviously deserves our admiration.

When Jean was just a child his mother dreamed of a bright future for him; his desire to go to sea was but one of many disappointments suffered by the widowed mother who had recently lost their only means of support - his grandfather. His mother has high hopes for Jean and, like him, she dreams of a better future, but one with him at home; unfortunately, her dreams, like her son's, are doomed to failure.

She supports and empathizes with her son in his trials and tribulations. She shares Jean's disappointment when he

is unable to graduate from the naval academy; she has difficulty accepting the fact that he is a sailor on a tramp vessel, and is again disappointed when he leaves her to serve in the navy as an ordinary seaman. The lonely woman, like Yvonne and Gaud, is often haunted by fears that her loved one will never return, that he may already be buried at sea.

She can also share in his moments of joy and anticipation. She is filled with admiration for her son when he arrives back in Brest after a long voyage and, with the end of his compulsory service approaching, she has high hopes for what she sees as his bright future:

Son temps obligatoire de matelot étant près de finir, sa mère aurait voulu qu'il fit la seule chose raisonnable; qu'il restât là, à Brest, pour suivre des cours d'hydrographie; en travaillant bien, croyait-elle, il aurait pu être reçu l'année suivante et entrer comme officier dans quelque grande compagnie de paquebots, - du côté de la Méditerranée, peut-être, - et alors tout l'avenir s'éclairerait. (M. p. 123)

Of course, relations with her son are not always smooth or clearly defined. After his initial stint in the navy she wants him to stay home and study hydrography - the mother naturally wants him to better himself. Relations become strained when she learns that, rather than respect her well-intentioned wishes, Jean has - without informing her - signed on for another stint in the navy. Her anger and disappointment are quieted when she realizes that he will stay with her for the winter.

She has no such mixed emotions when the time comes for

Jean to set sail for Africa. In a scene reminiscent of others seen in Yves and Pêcheur, she is devastated at the thought that she may be seeing him for the last time:

Sans larmes, comme hébétée, toute tremblante avec une sueur, sous une sorte d'impression de suprême écrasement qu'elle ne connaissait pas, que les autres départs de Jean ne lui avaient jamais causée, elle se laissa tomber sur une chaise, devant le feu mourant... (M. p. 136)

The mother's fear is, in this case as it has been in others, a premonition of what actually happens. It is not until a month after Jean's burial at sea and the Saône arrives in Brest that the waiting mother full of anticipation receives a note from Jean's friend, Pierre Joal: "Jean Berny est décédé, à la mer, il y a un mois" (M. p. 248).

The anguish and suffering of the poor mother deprived of her only son is depicted with understanding and sensitivity. She returns home and to bed without knowing how she managed to do so:

Pendant la nuit, elle avait eu des assoupissements lourds, traversés, éclairés en dedans par de sinistres incohérences cérébrales, où repassaient toujours des images de son fils mort; - et ses réveils devenaient chaque fois d'une clairvoyance plus déchirante, dès que s'était évanoui en quelques secondes le court espoir d'avoir seulement rêvé. La grande chose affreuse, au contraire, s'affirmait de plus en plus; dans sa pauvre tête, qui secouait peu à peu le premier engourdissement du coup de massue, cette chose s'établissait, toujours plus réelle, et plus froidement, plus irrévocablement définitive... (M. p. 253)

The moods, sorrow and anger of this religious woman during the following days are portrayed in detail. She tries

moody, changeable and can display herself as a negative, malign force which seems to impede and obstruct the protagonists. For example, in one display of antagonistic power and authority she extends a stormy welcome to the sailors who, after languishing through a prolonged, dreamy existence on the exotic island, must face the hard reality of life at sea:

La mer était grosse, et le vent nous poussait rudement dans la nuit noire. C'était comme un réveil, un retour au dur métier des marins, après une année d'un rêve énervant et délicieux, dans l'île la plus voluptueuse de la terre... (ML. p. 212)

In a similar vein, the sea appears to impact on events and make them work against the protagonists. When Taïmaha refuses to accompany Loti, the sea seems to support her by ominously refusing to cooperate and angrily making the voyage difficult for the hero by producing high winds and storms: "La traversée dure près de quatre heures; au large, le vent était fort et la mer grosse, la baleinière se remplit d'eau" (ML. p. 236). The angry sea seems to foreshadow emotional storms ahead and at their destination; even in the protected bay the sea continues to proclaim her powerful presence with violent winds and trumpeting noises:

Dans toute l'étendue de cette baie, déployée en cercle immense, les cocotiers s'agitaient sur leurs grandes tiges; la puissante lumière tropicale étincelait partout. - Le vent du large soufflait avec violence, les feuilles mortes voltigeaient en tourbillons; la mer et le corail faisaient grand bruit... (ML. p. 242)

In her ill-disposition, the sea is hardly just a physical

Et elle parlait dans ses sanglots: "'Oui, Seigneur, je me soumettrai...Oui, Seigneur, je vivrai, je travaillerai, je ferai de mon mieux... jusqu'à l'heure où vous me rappellerez à vous..."

O Christ de ceux qui pleurent, ô Vierge calme et blanche, ô tous les mythes adorables que rien ne remplacera plus, ô vous qui seuls donnez le courage de vivre aux mères sans enfants et aux fils sans mère, ô vous qui faites les larmes couler plus douces et qui mettez, au bord du trou noir de la mort, votre sourire, - soyez bénis!... (M. p. 269)

In the novels of Viaud's second phase we saw mature, industrious seamen serving their country and earning a living. If occasionally they had, like Yves, a character flaw, their portraits are essentially positive. The seamen in this last phase are, it would fair to say, not such positive, admirable personages. Each hero is discontented with his life in the present and searches for fulfilment and betterment through some form of temporal escapism.

In Madame Chrysanthème the hero seeks to turn back the clock, to relive experience and kindle emotions of a bygone day. He fails in his attempts.

In Enfant, the discontented hero attempts to escape from a dismal present by reliving his childhood, when he was filled with great expectations and anticipation of an adventurous, exciting career as a seaman. His reminiscences serve to intensify current woes and a preoccupation with aging and death.

In the final novel of this phase, the hero is also a "Marie" (Brodin, p. 219).

dreamer, one who believes that tomorrow will be a better day; but the desired tomorrow never comes, as Jean Berny proves to have inadequate energy, motivation and perseverance.

In sum - notwithstanding the positive portraits of seafolk such as Jean's mother - the three novels of this phase are novels of discontent, of unfulfillment, of failure to either accept life as it is or to take the action necessary to change it. These novels are, it may be true to say, the expression of Viaud's declining years.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE SEA

Thus far we have studied the human characters in Viaud's novels. There is, however, another major player in these seafaring novels: the sea herself. Viaud's portrayals of the sea lead one to the conclusion that the sea is animate, a living persona who assumes a fictional identity alongside the human characters with whom she interacts. As such, she can assume a variety of roles, and has a character which, depending on the novel, can be multi-faceted. Moreover, just as the depictions of the seafolk themselves evolve according to the various phases of Viaud's own naval career and states of mind, so it is possible to trace a similar type of development in his depictions of the sea.

In the first phase, the sea enables the sailors to travel to exotic ports where her function becomes that of an ever-present backdrop. Her interaction with seafolk increases in scope in the second phase. Sea and seamen are drawn closely together on the basis of mutual admiration and respect; human endurance is tested in confrontations which, at times, force the sailors to participate in lengthy battles to ensure their own survival as well as that of their loved ones on shore.

When writing the novels of the third phase, Viaud's assignment to shore duties leads to significant changes in his portrayal of the sea's role and her relationship with other characters.

In the novels of the first phase most of the action takes place on shore, a fact which tends to minimize the sea's presence. Generally, her role is a minor one, but as a persona who interacts with the seafolk she is decidedly more visible in Le Mariage de Loti than in Aziyadé.

In Aziyadé, the sea is depicted as little more than a body of water whose role is to provide a backdrop against which the protagonists play out their lives. In a port setting, it is not surprising that the sea's active involvement in the life of the sailor is in fact mainly limited to that of facilitator, bringing Loti to Turkey and opening the door to exciting and exotic experiences.

In her passive role the sea is omnipresent, usually just hovering in the background, though on occasion moving to the forefront. The sea is depicted as constantly providing subtle reminders of her presence and is, therefore, rarely far from the hero's thoughts. Viaud stresses these reminders by his numerous depictions of the sea and frequent references to trips in caïques, to ships and "frères de mer", and to the many seas in the area.

At times, the sea's role appears to be that of a guardian angel, watching over the hero and the young couple's love trysts which often take place aboard a barque drifting near

hostile warships on the tranquil sea (Az. p. 34). She also plays this protective role one night when Loti and Samuel fall asleep and drift towards a German battleship: "Nous nous étions endormis tous deux de ce sommeil accablant contre lequel il n'y a pas de résistance possible; - et la barque s'en alla en dérive" (Az. pp. 36-37).

The guardian-angel role is, of course, a benevolent one: when alone in Péra, having been separated from Aziyadé and Samuel, the sea's proximity provides a source of comfort to the hero. In similar fashion, he later finds security and solace in excursions in a caïque on the straits between the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea: "Je passai la fin d'août et une partie de septembre en excursions dans le Bosphore. Le temps était tiède et splendide. Les rives ombreuses, les palais et les yalis se miraient dans l'eau calme et bleue qui sillonnaient des caïques dorés" (Az. p. 53).

The sea that brought the hero to Aziyadé can also take him away; shortly after Loti's relationship with Aziyadé becomes well established, naval duties at sea take him away from her to a distant location aboard the Deerhound. But if the sea forces him to abandon one love, it is apparent that she has compensating charms of her own. Towards the end of the novel Loti eagerly anticipates the voyage home: in a discussion with Achmet, he expresses his feelings for the immense, beautiful sea which allows him access to so many places:

- Achmet, dis-je, quand j'aurai traversé la mer de

Marmara, l'Ak-Déniz (la mer vieille), comme vous l'appellez, j'en traverserai une beaucoup plus grande pour aller au pays des Grecs, une plus grande encore pour aller au pays des Italiens, le pays de ta "madame", et puis encore une plus grande pour atteindre la pointe d'Espagne. Si au moins je restais dans cette mer si bleue, la Méditerranée, je serais moins loin de vous; ce serait encore un peu votre ciel, et les bateaux qui font le va-et-vient du Levant m'apporteraient souvent des nouvelles de la Turquie! Mais j'entrerai dans une autre mer, tellement immense, que tu n'as aucune idée d'une étendue pareille, et il me faudra, là, naviguer plusieurs jours en remontant vers l'étoile (le nord) pour arriver dans mon pays - dans mon pays, où nous voyons plus souvent la pluie que le beau temps, et les nuages que le soleil. (Az. pp. 282-83)

In Aziyadé, the sea is depicted, therefore, as offering opportunities for new experiences and discoveries in exotic places as well as being the means of returning to the familiar. She is, in essence, a benevolent being, in harmony with the wishes of the young adventurer/hero.

In the island setting of Mariage, the sea is more in evidence than in Aziyadé; she has a more visible and significant role. In Tahiti, she is depicted as a persona whose power enables her to play several roles in moods which can be either benevolent or malevolent. She exercises an increasingly strong control over the human players; she can influence the hero's feelings, moods, and activities whether he be at sea or on shore. Perhaps the most striking features of the sea in Mariage are her omnipresence and the fact that she constantly impinges on the consciousness of the hero. Loti loves and admires the sea; her constant presence is, for him, a source of wonderment and amazement. In a typical situation, the call of the sea is heard by the naval officer as the water

splashes beneath him while he is in his hut, built above the waves breaking on the coral shoreline. From this vantage point he can hear the voice of the sea calling him to watch, to admire and share the wonders of her colourful underwater world of coral; a universe inhabited by thousands of tiny, colourful creatures. He shares these wonders with John in a letter full of enthusiasm for his house and lifestyle:

J'habite seul une case isolée, bâtie sur pilotis, au-dessus de la mer et des coraux. De mon lit de nattes blanches, en me penchant un peu, je vois s'agiter au-dessous de moi tout ce petit monde à part qui est le monde du corail. Au milieu des rameaux blancs ou roses, dans les branchages compliqués des madrépores, circulent des milliers de petits poissons dont les couleurs ne peuvent se comparer qu'à celles des pierres précieuses ou des colibris; des rouges de géranium, des verts chinois, des bleus qu'on ne saurait peindre, - et une foule de petits êtres bariolés de toutes les nuances de l'arc-en-ciel, - ayant forme de tout excepté forme de poisson... Le jour, aux heures tranquilles de la sieste, absorbé dans mes contemplations, j'admire tout cela qui est presque inconnu, même aux naturalistes et aux observateurs. (ML. pp. 81-82)

Loti cannot seem to escape the all-pervading presence of the sea as he and Rarahu leave the inhabited shoreline and travel inland to Tiahoui. Even as they approach the centre of the island and look down from the height of the mountainside, the view is amplified and enhanced by the immensity of the sea, dominating, dwarfing everything in sight including the landscape reminiscent of bygone ages before the Great Flood:

Le pays autour de nous devenait plus grandiose et plus sauvage. - Nous suivions sur le flanc de la montagne un sentier unique, d'où la vue dominait toute l'immensité de la

mer; - çà et là des flots bas, couverts d'une végétation invraisemblable; des pandanus à la physionomie antédiluvienne; des bois qu'on eût dit échappés de la période éteinte du Lias. - Un ciel lourd et plombé comme celui des âges détruits; un soleil à demi voilé, promenant sur le Grand Océan morne de pâles traînées d'argent... (ML. p. 129)

Inland, far from the nearest shore, the sea creates an optical illusion, adding magic to the impressive picture seen from the volcanic area at the centre of the island. There, the lovers experience an illusion of the sea rising above the horizon, higher up than they are, and see a ring of coral reefs enhanced by the circle of eternally breaking waves:

Le soir nous étions presque arrivés à la zone centrale de l'île tahitienne... Autour de tout cela l'immense océan bleu; l'horizon monté si haut, que par une commune illusion d'optique, toute cette masse d'eau produisait à nos yeux un effet concave. La ligne des mers passait au-dessus des plus hauts sommets; l'Oroena, le géant des montagnes tahitiennes, la dominait seul de sa majestueuse tête sombre. - Tout autour de l'île, une ceinture blanche et vaporeuse se dessinait sur la nappe bleue du Pacifique : l'anneau des récifs, la ligne des éternels brisants de corail. (ML. pp. 149-50)

Even after dark the presence of the sea constantly impinges on the consciousness of the characters. Rarahu and Loti are fascinated by their vision of the sea on a starlit night when her beauty cannot be obscured during the dark silence of nightfall: "On apercevait par échappées, à la lueur pâle qui tombait des étoiles, la vertigineuse concavité bleuâtre de l'Océan, et on était comme en proie au sublime de l'isolement et de l'immensité" (ML. p. 154).

In a more active role the sea is, as in Aziyadé, a facilitator bringing Loti to Tahiti, taking him to other ports

of call such as Honolulu in the Sandwich Islands, San Francisco, Vancouver, Quadra and Alaska, and then safely back to Papeete.

More importantly, she also assumes benevolent roles such as that of a guardian angel, a bestower of tranquillity. The relaxed lifestyle of the island reflects the calm smoothness of the surrounding ocean and is a welcome refuge for sailors, after a long voyage at sea. This is especially apparent during the hero's voyage to Moorea aboard the Rendeer with Queen Pomaré and the royal entourage. After the exciting festivities at Moorea and the return voyage to Papeete, the view from the bridge of the anchored frigate prompts the hero to recall the peaceful tranquillity of their return voyage upon the mirror-like sea:

La traversée s'était effectuée par un beau temps calme. C'était le soir, le soleil venait de disparaître; la frégate glissait sans bruit, en laissant derrière elle des ondulations lentes et molles qui s'en allaient mourir au loin sur une mer unie comme un miroir. De grands nuages sombres étaient plaqués çà et là dans le ciel, et tranchaient violemment sur la teinte jaune pâle du soir, dans une étonnante transparence de l'atmosphère. (ML. pp. 180-81)

One of the most significant aspects of the sea is that she has the power, not only to make her presence felt, but also to exert control over the human players. Her influence on Loti's mood is apparent when he is ashore and, as we shall see in most of Viaud's shore-based sailors, he perceives life at sea in a more favourable light and finds her irresistible attraction drawing him back to the sea. Her interaction can

affect other aspects of the sailor's perception: she can improve his outlook on life and brighten his moods as she prompts him to contemplate the Pacific Ocean, and the islands. Viaud in fact frequently underscores this salutary effect of the sea. In a description of life in villages far from Papeete, the sea, with the monotonous sound of her waves breaking on the coral, provides a backdrop which interacts with the silent, motionless groups clustered in the shade of the trees:

Allez loin de Papeete, là où la civilisation n'est pas venue, là où se trouvent sous les minces cocotiers, - au bord des plages de corail, - devant l'immense Océan désert, - les districts tahitiens, les villages aux toits de pandanus. - Voyez ces peuplades immobiles et rêveuses; - voyez au pied des grands arbres ces groupes silencieux, indolents et oisifs, qui semblent ne vivre que par le sentiment de la contemplation... Ecoutez le grand calme de cette nature, le bruissement monotone et éternel des brisants de corail; - regardez ces sites grandioses, ces mornes de basalte, ces forêts suspendues aux montagnes sombres, et tout cela, perdu au milieu de cette solitude majestueuse et sans bornes : le Pacifique... (ML. p. 36)

The islanders' moods are constantly influenced by those of the sea; when she is calm and quiet so are the natives. Loti responds, similarly, to the sea's happy mood as he sees the captivating scene of the beautiful blue sea illuminated by the fading rays of the setting sun, brightening the strollers' moods and inspiring them to burst into song: "Nous nous en revenions en chantant, par un chemin d'où la vue dominait le grand Océan bleu, éclairé des dernières lueurs du soleil couchant" (ML. p. 62).

It is, of course, not surprising to find that the sea is



moody, changeable and can display herself as a negative, malign force which seems to impede and obstruct the protagonists. For example, in one display of antagonistic power and authority she extends a stormy welcome to the sailors who, after languishing through a prolonged, dreamy existence on the exotic island, must face the hard reality of life at sea:

La mer était grosse, et le vent nous poussait rudement dans la nuit noire. C'était comme un réveil, un retour au dur métier des marins, après une année d'un rêve énervant et délicieux, dans l'île la plus voluptueuse de la terre... (ML. p. 212)

In a similar vein, the sea appears to impact on events and make them work against the protagonists. When Taïmaha refuses to accompany Loti, the sea seems to support her by ominously refusing to cooperate and angrily making the voyage difficult for the hero by producing high winds and storms: "La traversée dur. près de quatre heures; au large, le vent était fort et la mer grosse, la baleinière se remplit d'eau" (ML. p. 236). The angry sea seems to foreshadow emotional storms ahead and at their destination; even in the protected bay the sea continues to proclaim her powerful presence with violent winds and trumpeting noises:

Dans toute l'étendue de cette baie, déployée en cercle immense, les cocotiers s'agitaient sur leurs grandes tiges; la puissante lumière tropicale étincelait partout. - Le vent du large soufflait avec violence, les feuilles mortes voltigeaient en tourbillons; la mer et le corail faisaient grand bruit... (ML. p. 242)

In her ill-disposition, the sea is hardly just a physical

presence; we have seen her ability to exert a positive influence on the human characters' mental states, but she is equally able to have the opposite effect. The sea's immensity, the noise of its breeze and the melodious sound of the surf induce feelings of sadness and isolation in the natives gathered in the deepening shadows:

Il y a dans le charme tahitien beaucoup de cette tristesse étrange qui pèse sur toutes ces îles d'Océanie, - l'isolement dans l'immensité du Pacifique, - le vent de la mer, - le bruit des brisants, - l'ombre épaisse, - la voix rauque et triste des Maoris qui circulent en chantant au milieu des tiges des cocotiers, étonnamment hautes, blanches et grêles... (ML. pp. 69-70)

Even at night, when the sea can no longer be seen, she makes her presence known with a loud sinister rumbling and can continue to affect the sailor on shore. She keeps him awake, affecting his thoughts and moods, filling him with anguish and loneliness, reminding him that her dominion extends to the Polar continents:

La nuit, mon coeur se serre un peu dans cet isolement de Robinson. - Quand le vent siffle au dehors, quand la mer fait entendre dans l'obscurité sa grande voix sinistre, alors j'éprouve comme une sorte d'angoisse de la solitude, là, à la pointe la plus australe et la plus perdue de cette île lointaine, - devant cette immensité du Pacifique, - immensité des immensités de la terre, qui s'en va tout droit jusqu'aux rives mystérieuses du continent polaire. (ML. p. 82)

If the sea is sometimes depicted as having the insidious ability to affect, even control, the protagonists, nowhere is this more apparent than one stormy night, when the reader perceives an obvious parallelism between the hero's anguished

state of mind and the raging of the sea. Loti meets his "nephew" on the shore, and then becomes increasingly doubtful that the lad is really his brother's son. His doubts in turn reawaken unsettling thoughts of George buried at sea. As the storm rages and night falls, the sea disturbs the sailor both emotionally and physically: "Je n'avais prévu cette nuit, ni l'impression sinistre que me causait son approche. Je commençais à sentir aussi l'engourdissement et la soif de la fièvre" (ML. p. 248). Throughout the night, the sick sailor is victimized by frenzied fearful nightmares:

Alors commença une nuit étrange, toute remplie de visions fantastiques et d'épouvante.

Les draperies d'écorce de mûrier voltigeaient autour de moi avec des frôlements d'ailes de chauves-souris, le terrible vent de la mer passait sur ma tête. Je tremblais de froid sous mon paréo. - Je sentais toutes les terreurs, toutes les angoisses des enfants abandonnés... (ML. p. 254)

It is not until the fury of the sea subsides during the journey to Tahiti that Loti's fever also subsides:

Au large, la brise tomba; - subitement le calme se fit. Ballottés par une houle énorme, dans une nuit profonde, nous n'avancions plus; il fallut pagayer.

Cependant la fièvre était passée; j'avais pu me lever, et prendre en main le gouvernail...

Quand la mer se fut calmée comme le vent, le jour était près de paraître. (ML. pp. 257-58)

The power exerted by the angry sea is so strong that the memories of this night haunt the hero to the end of the

novel.<sup>117</sup>

In the novels of the first phase, Viaud focuses his attention on the adventures of young sailors who escape briefly from their life at sea to enjoy good times ashore. At this time he devotes relatively little attention to characterizing the sea. In Aziyadé, the sea, although never far away, is primarily a backdrop for the exciting activities of the sailors as they dissipate their pent-up energy. In Le Mariage, the role of the sea is somewhat similar, but shows clear signs of becoming a more active and forceful persona interacting with the human protagonists. She is, in fact, moving towards centre stage - a position she will occupy in the next phase of novels.

\* \* \*

We have seen that, as Viaud matures and advances in rank in the navy, his interests change from pleasure-seeking in port to concentrating on the serious work at sea. The novels in the second phase of his work reflect this change. As a consequence, the sea ceases to be a mere backdrop and becomes a fully developed character with a role at least as substantial as those of the human players. Both Mon Frère Yves and Pêcheur d'Islande can, in fact, be regarded as novels which

<sup>117</sup> Viaud's memories of the source of his material, his actual experience on this night, were so powerful that years later, in March 1876, he refers to it in his diary, as, "La terrible nuit de Moorea, toutes mes émotions, tous mes rêves d'autr. fois, où est-ce tout cela?..." (ML. pp. 304-05).

depict two personae pitted against each other: seafolk against sea.

In Yves, the sea is seen as powerful, with unpredictable and moody characteristics; her moods can change quickly from being benevolent to malevolent. She can be gentle, caring, nurturing and a helpful facilitator. On the other hand, in a malevolent mood her powerful storms reveal her potential hostility and cruelty. Her moods impact, not only on sailors at sea and ashore, but on seafolk at home who have never been to sea. Moreover, the sea exerts an obvious and constant control over seamen and other seafolk - the mothers, wives and families of the sea-going son, husband or father. In addition to the sea causing anguish in their lives, these families must share the hardships and sufferings of their seamen.

In her benign moods the sea is shown to promote the good health of the sailor and generate his feelings of well-being by her therapeutic breezes and healthy environment. This role of nurturer extends to many of God's other creatures: sea-birds, flying-fish indeed all forms of sea-life. As their vessel, the Sibylle, travels far across the South Pacific, Loti and Yves see flocks of a variety of different species of birds whose only source of sustenance is the sea:

Et leur troupe grossissait toujours à mesure que nous descendions. Avec les damiers, il y avait les pétrels gris perle, le bec et les pattes légèrement teintés de bleu et de rose; - et les malamochs tout noirs; - et les gros albatros lourds, d'une teinte sale, avec leur air bête de mouton, avec leurs ailes rigides et immenses, fendant l'air, piaulant après nous. Même on en voyait un que les matelots se montraient;

un amiral, oiseau d'une espèce rare et énorme, ayant sur ses longues pennes les trois étoiles dessinées en noir.

Le temps, changé, était devenu calme, brumeux, morne. L'alizé austral était mort à son tour, et la limpidité des tropiques était perdue. Une grande fraîcheur humide surprenait nos sens. On était en août, et c'était le froid de l'autre hémisphère qui commençait. (Yv. pp. 67-68)

The sea can also play the role of benevolent facilitator; when she so desires she can move ships comfortably and rapidly. The sea is able to provide smooth sailing in fair weather as she does on this the Médée's return voyage from the Far East:

La Médée a rebroussé chemin depuis longtemps.

Tous les vents, tous les courants l'ont favorisée. Elle a marché, marché si vite, pendant des jours et des nuits, qu'on en a perdu la notion des lieux et des distances. Vaguement on a vu passer le détroit de Malacca, franchi à la course; la mer Rouge, remontée à la vapeur dans un éblouissement de soleil; puis la pointe de Sicile, et enfin le grand lion couché de Gibraltar. Maintenant on veille l'horizon, et la première terre qui paraîtra tout à l'heure sera une terre bretonne. (Yv. pp. 126-27)

If the sea can be benevolent towards those whose lives she touches, it is not this characteristic which is the most in evidence, nor is it the one which moves her to centre stage as a major player; rather, it is her power and her ability to control, either obliquely or through direct confrontation.

This power and ability to control may be implied. In calm moments, there may appear to the unwary seaman to be an absence of danger; there are frequently unseen, unexpected perils, such as when the glassy water conceals treacherous reefs:

Des falaises grises muraient les lointains de l'horizon comme un long rempart. - Une espèce de calme venait de se faire dans les eaux, bien que le vent continuât de nous envoyer sa poussée furieuse. Au ciel, des nuées sombres et lourdes glissaient les unes sur les autres, très vite : toute une voûte de plomb en mouvement; des choses immenses, obscures, qui se déformaient, qui semblaient très pressées de passer, de courir ailleurs, comme prises du vertige de quelque chute prochaine et formidable. Autour de nous, des milliers d'écueils, des têtes noires qui se dressaient partout au milieu de cet autre remuement argenté que les lames faisaient; on eût dit d'immenses troupes de bêtes marines. A perte de vue, il y en avait toujours, de ces dangereuses têtes noires, la mer en était couverte. (Yv. p. 195)

The sea's control over those who associate with her is perhaps best illustrated in the depictions of the tumultuous storms, such as the one encountered by the Médée along the coast of China (Yv. pp. 109-17). The sea always poses potential dangers for sailors working aloft, but during this storm the danger is intensified. She seems to be not just threatening the "gabiers", but teasing them as they hang on, trying to do their job aloft. They are "aveuglés, cinglés, brûlés par tout ce qui leur tombait dessus, gerbes d'écume lancées de la mer, pluie et grêle lancées du ciel" (Yv. p. 110). The sea demonstrates her power by constantly attacking the frail vessel and her crew and finally provokes a tragic accident:

Et tout à coup, dans une plus grande secousse, la silhouette de cette grappe se rompit brusquement, changea de forme; deux corps s'en détachèrent, et tombèrent les bras écartés dans les volutes mugissantes de la mer, tandis qu'un autre s'aplatit sur le pont, sans cri, comme serait tombé un homme déjà mort. (Yv. p. 112 )

Ceux qui étaient à la mer, on jeta bien des bouées pour eux, - mais à quoi bon? - ...Seulement on fit l'appel de ceux qui restaient, pour savoir le nom du second qu'on avait perdu:

c'était un petit novice très sage, que sa mère, une veuve déjà âgée, était venue recommander au maître avant le départ de France. (Yv. p. 113)

The sea shows no compassion for the fallen sailors, refusing to allow the topman in sick-bay to die in peace or the man in the water to be rescued. The injuries of the sailor who fell onto the deck are extensive and although every effort is made to protect him from the ravages of the sea and allow him to die in peace, the relentless sea shows no mercy and continues the fray. Moreover, the life preservers thrown to the man in the sea are to no avail: "On aimait encore mieux ne plus les voir reparaître... on n'aurait pas pu s'arrêter pour les reprendre, il aurait fallu avoir ce courage horrible de les abandonner" (Yv. p. 113). Still the sea shows no pity: "elle continuait de le faire danser, de le sauter de plus belle" (Yv. p. 114).

The sea is in a particularly uncooperative, antagonistic mood as she plays her controlling role in the vicinity of Cape Horn. The crew aboard the Sibylle is not only forewarned, but is challenged to join her in battle, by a mighty clarion call from the sea announcing the approaching stormy confrontation. In full control, the sea has chosen the most advantageous time and place for joining battle with the ship and crew. They must face the threatening dangers associated with a storm at night in latitudes where there is no escape route, no shelter from the dark power of the raging sea:

Une nuit on entendit tout à coup se lever une grande voix terrible, et tout le monde s'agiter et courir.



En même temps, la Sibylle s'inclinait toujours, toute frémissante, comme sous l'étreinte d'une ténébreuse puissance.

Alors ceux mêmes qui n'étaient pas de quart, ceux qui dormaient dans les faux ponts, comprirent : c'était le commencement des grands vents et des grandes houles; nous venions d'entrer dans les mauvais parages du sud, au milieu desquels il allait falloir se débattre et marcher quand même.

Et plus nous avançons dans cet océan sombre, plus ce vent devenait froid, plus cette houle était énorme.

Les tombées des nuits devenaient sinistres. C'étaient les parages du cap Horn : désolation sur les seules terres un peu voisines, désolation sur la mer, désert partout. A cette heure des crépuscules d'hiver, où l'on sent plus particulièrement le besoin d'avoir un gîte, de rentrer près d'un feu, de s'abriter pour dormir, - nous n'avions rien, nous, - nous veillions, toujours sur le qui-vive, perdus au milieu de toutes ces choses mouvantes qui nous faisaient danser dans l'obscurité. (Yv. p. 69)

This battle between man and sea reveals another aspect of her character: she can be vicious and ruthless in exercising her power, confident in her knowledge that there is no safe haven for the frail craft, no security for the sailors, no deliverance from the deafening din, the wild winds and the savage violence. The sailors, hearing the sea's battle cries, are forced to confront her on her own terms:

Mais non, rien de stable: on était dans une petite chose fragile, égarée, loin de toute terre, au milieu du désert immense des eaux australes. Et, au dehors, on entendait toujours ces grands bruits de houle et cette grande voix lugubre du vent qui serrait le coeur. (Yv. p. 70)

This fearsome control exercised by the sea is not confined to ships and sailors far from land. During a visit to Yves' home we see how this malevolent power impacts on seafolk who have never been to sea. Yves' mother lost her husband at sea, and her family has been decimated due to the

inescapable influence of the sea. Seven sons disappeared in shipwrecks, two are deserters who, having sought freedom from navy life, are unable to return home or to escape from the control of the sea. One daughter is, like her mother married to an "Islandais", and suffers under the full control of the sea; another daughter has sought refuge from the same plight by entering a convent:

Pauvre vieille délaissée!... De treize enfants que Dieu lui avait donnés, trois sont morts tout petits. Sur huit garçons qui ont grandi, tous marins, la mer lui en a pris sept, - sept, qui ont disparu dans des naufrages, ou bien qui ont passé à l'étranger, comme Gildas et Goulven.

Ses filles, mariées, dispersées. Des deux plus jeunes, qui demeuraient au logis, l'une a épousé un Islandais, qui l'a emmenée à Tréguier; l'autre, la tête tournée de religion, s'est mis en esprit d'entrer au couvent des Dames de Saint-Gildas du Secours. (Yv. pp. 200-01)

The cruel sea extends her control by sending her tides ashore to reach into the very heart of Yves' family and claim his mother's grandchild, Goulven's abandoned young daughter:

La petite aimait aller regarder la marée monter, au bord du lac d'eau marine. On le lui avait défendu pourtant. Mais, un jour, elle y était allée toute seule, et on ne l'a plus vue revenir. La marée suivante a rapporté un petit cadavre raidi, une petite fille de cire blanche, qu'on a couchée près de la chapelle, sous une croix de bois et une bosse de gazon vert. (Yv. p. 201)

The sea can encroach on Yves' life to the extent that his mother fears that he will be taken by the sea, as were his father and brothers. Yves' mother, therefore, asks Loti to take care of her son, to help save him from the grasp of the sea and from a watery grave. Recalling his own mother, Loti

finds it impossible to refuse when Yves' sister explains her mother's request for him to become Yves's "brother":

- Elle demande, monsieur... si vous voulez lui faire cette promesse... au sujet de mon frère...

Ce regard anxieux, profond, fixé sur moi, me causait une impression étrange. C'est pourtant vrai que toutes les mères, quelles que soient les distances qui les séparent, ont, à certaines heures, des expressions pareilles... Maintenant il me semblait que cette mère d'Yves avait quelque chose de la mienne.

-Dites-lui que je jure de veiller sur lui toute ma vie, comme s'il était mon frère. (Yv. p. 98)

Loti's well-intentioned pledge of brotherhood towards Yves is almost immediately nullified by the call of the sea. On their return to Brest the brothers are separated by diverging sea voyages which undermine the seriousness which Loti attached to his pledge to Yves' mother.

The sea's constant demands, together with the exigencies of the senior service, have a disruptive influence on Yves' marriage. Marie's lot is not unique among the wives of sailors living in Brest. All of the wives suffer from their husbands' instability: they find it difficult to readjust to life ashore after extended periods at sea. While waiting for Yves to return, Marie assists another wife who is helping her drunken husband to stand up; he had just left a cabaret, stumbled and fallen. Marie watches another wife being beaten by her sailor-husband as they pass; she is trying to take him home.

If, in Mon Frère Yves, the sea moves from backdrop to centre stage, and her major characteristic is her powerful

presence and ability to control the lives of seafolk, these trends are also apparent, and perhaps even intensified, in Pêcheur d'Islande.

In this novel, the sea's characteristics include most of those seen in Yves; however, she becomes even more dominant as she tests the mettle of the sailors. Her benevolent and malevolent moods are more in evidence than in the previous novel. She can be generous and magnanimous as she provides the fishermen with their livelihood, and at times her therapeutic qualities benefit them. There is a price to pay for this benevolence, for the sea is omnipotent during her threatening storms. Then she toys with the struggling seamen and may not seem to be satisfied until she devours one. When it is calm and foggy she can generate apparitions to confuse the superstitious fishermen. Even on shore they and their families are never really safe from the sea's unpredictable power.

The sea encroaches upon virtually all aspects of the lives of the sailors. This is, of course, most apparent when they are aboard ship, where the sea's every whim is immediately felt by the sailors and they must act to maintain the control and security of vessel and men.

As in Yves, the presence of the sea is not only a factor for the sailors at sea, she impacts upon the Islandais and their loved ones on shore. Even though calm and at times invisible, she ensures that there is no peace for Gaud when

Yann is away fishing and she is lonely, sad and worried. The sea flaunts her power and influence, and this exacerbates Gaud's depression and worries about Yann's safety:

Et dans ce pays, même ce calme, même ces beau temps, étaient mélancoliques; il restait, malgré tout, une inquiétude planant sur les choses; une anxiété venue de la mer à qui tant d'existences étaient confiées et dont l'éternelle menace n'était qu'endormie...  
Malgré tout, elle voulait considérer ce Yann comme une sorte de fiancé - un fiancé fuyant, dédaigneux, sauvage, qu'elle n'aurait jamais; mais à qui elle s'obstinerait à rester fidèle en esprit, sans plus confier cela à personne. (PI. pp. 159-60)

The sea is so strong a presence that she is portrayed as a formidable rival for Yann's affection. Initially, she appears to accept his relationship with Gaud, but later she intrudes, casting a shadow over the lovers' courtship. As the two young people enjoy each other's company the sea reminds the lovers of her presence by the noise of waves breaking on the shore:

Au-dessous d'eux, la mer très calme déferlait faiblement sur les galets de la grève, avec un petit bruissement intermittent, régulier comme une respiration de sommeil; elle semblait indifférente, ou même favorable, à cette cour qu'ils se faisaient là tout près d'elle...

Leur cour, faite le soir dans ce lieu triste, au bruit continu de la mer, et avec cette préoccupation un peu enfiévrée de la marche de temps, prenait de tout cela quelque chose de particulier et de presque sombre. Ils étaient des amoureux différents des autres, plus graves, plus inquiets dans leur amour. (PI. p. 194)

The sea therefore refuses to be ignored, and is virtually a third party participating in their brief courtship. Their voices mingle with the sound of her waves lapping at the base

of the cliffs below:

Les gens qui passaient, le soir, dans le chemin, entendaient un léger sursmure à deux voix, mêlé au bruissement que la mer faisait en dessous, au pied des falaises. C'était une musique très harmonieuse, la voix fraîche de Gaud alternait avec celle de Yann qui avait des sonorités douces et caressantes dans des notes graves. On distinguait aussi leurs deux silhouettes tranchant sur le granit du mur auquel ils étaient adossés : d'abord le blanc de la coiffe de Gaud, puis toute sa forme svelte en robe noir et, à côté d'elle, les épaules carrées de son ami. Au dessus d'eux, le dôme bossu de leur toit de paille et, derrière tout cela, les infinis crépusculaires, le vide incolore des eaux et du ciel... (PI. pp. 189-90)

If the sea's presence is strong, it is also - even more so than in Yves - affecting not only the lovers but the activities of all with whom she comes in contact. The sea controls the departure of the fishermen, and their return. She forces them to spend part of each year in two different worlds: summer in the Icelandic seas and winter on shore. The sea dictates their working conditions, and the success or failure of their catch. Of course, she also controls the lives of the fishermen's loved ones on shore: she takes their men away for the entire summer and, all too frequently, forever.

While exercising this control over the other protagonists, the sea reveals her moody, changeable behaviour as depicted by her physical characteristics in the following painting.<sup>118</sup> She can be calm, colourless, diaphanous, intangible, vaporous, enigmatic and seemingly powerless:

<sup>118</sup> "Ou mieux encore cette description de la lumière d'Islande, où il s'agissait de donner l'idée d'une atmosphère innommée, qui n'est ni jour ni nuit" (Domic, p. 115).

Les trois... remontèrent sur le pont reprendre le grand travail interrompu de la pêche; c'était Yann, Sylvestre et un de leur pays appelé Guillaume.

Dehors il faisait jour, éternellement jour.

Mais c'était une lumière pâle, pâle, qui ne ressemblait à rien; elle traînait sur les choses comme des reflets de soleil mort. Autour d'eux, tout de suite commençait un vide immense qui n'était d'aucune couleur, et en dehors des planches de leur navire, tout semblait diaphane, impalpable, chimérique.

L'oeil saisissait à peine ce qui devait être la mer: d'abord cela prenait l'aspect d'une sorte de miroir tremblant qui n'aurait aucune image à refléter; en se prolongeant, cela paraissait devenir une plaine de vapeur - et puis, plus rien; cela n'avait ni horizon ni contours. (PI. pp. 13-14)

On the other hand, her appearance can change without warning as she shows her true power; the ever-changing imagery of the sea becomes heavy and the colours strong. The illusionary absence of horizons and contours is replaced by a closed, limited space hiding gigantic mysteries to trouble man's imagination, all overshadowed by a temple-like vaulted ceiling reflected in a marble-like floor - the sea:

La lumière matinale, la lumière vraie, avait fini par venir; comme au temps de la Genèse, elle s'était séparée d'avec les ténèbres qui semblaient s'être tassées sur l'horizon, et restaient là en masses très lourdes; en y voyant si clair, on s'apercevait bien à présent qu'on sortait de la nuit - que cette lueur d'avant avait été vague et étrange comme celle des rêves.

Dans ce ciel très couvert, très épais, il y avait ça et là des déchirures, comme des percées dans un dôme, par où arrivaient de grands rayons couleur d'argent rose.

Les nuages inférieurs étaient disposés en une bande d'ombre intense, faisant tout le tour des eaux, emplissant les lointains d'indécision et d'obscurité. Ils donnaient l'illusion d'un espace fermé, d'une limite; ils étaient comme des rideaux tirés sur l'infini, comme des voiles tendus pour cacher de trop gigantesques mystères qui eussent troublé l'imagination des hommes. Ce matin-là, autour du petit assemblage de planches qui portait Yann et Sylvestre, le sonde changeant de dehors avait pris un aspect de recueillement

immense; il s'était arrangé en sanctuaire, et les gerbes de rayons, qui entraient par les traînées de cette voûte de temple, s'allongeaient en reflets sur l'eau immobile comme sur un parvis de marbre. Et puis, peu à peu, on vit s'éclairer très loin une autre chimère : une sorte de découpe rosée très haute, qui était un promontoire de la sombre Islande... (PI. pp. 16-17)

The diversity of these two pictures of the sea underscores the existence of two sides to the type of control exercised by the sea: a positive, benevolent side, and a negative, malevolent side. This duality is perhaps even more in evidence in this novel than in Yves.

The positive side of the sea's control is confirmed by the fact that she earns the respect and love of Yann. The very immensity of the sea's domain instills in the fisherman a sense of freedom, which he would find difficult to relinquish by marriage to Gaud.

The benevolence of the sea ensures that the fishermen have passage to and from excellent fishing grounds. In the Iceland waters the sea, "la grande nourrice" (PI. p. 36), in her generosity and magnanimity, provides the Islandais with the bounteous supply of fish necessary for their livelihood. In her benign moods the sea promotes the good health of the fisherman as her therapeutic breezes and healthy environment generate a sense of euphoria in his unusual lifestyle.

On the negative side, the sea's interaction with the sailors can be malevolent and threatening; she can be like a devouring monster, "la grande dévorante de ces générations vigoureuses" (PI. p. 36), just as was the case in Yves. She is at times



angry, dominant, furious, sometimes seeming to be toying with, or playing games with, her helpless victims.

The sea can play with the sailors by causing them to see apparitions, and to have premonitions of things to come. Her storms can test their mettle and, by causing their vessel to run aground, she can bring them to a standstill in the water and Yann's life to a symbolic impasse. The sea can take Sylvestre to a foreign land, where he is wounded, and to a burial ground among strangers, albeit in an exotic place.

In fact, in Pêcheur, the role of the sea as a hostile force attains levels beyond those of Yves as she reaches the apogee of her controlling influence in the novels of our study. Her storms become so overwhelming that the sea deities of classical mythology become almost believable.<sup>L</sup> As a storm approaches, the sailors feel alone in a milieu enclosed by the horizons. The gigantic clamour seems to be announcing the apocalyptic end of the world. This noisy, invisible power instills fear as it threatens to destroy everything:

Et cette éclaircie était triste à regarder; ces lointains entrevus, ces échappées serraient le coeur davantage en donnant trop bien à comprendre que c'était le même chaos partout, la même fureur - jusque derrière ces grands horizons vides et infiniment au-delà : l'épouvante n'avait pas de limites, et on était seul au milieu!

Une clameur géante sortait des choses comme un prélude d'apocalypse jetant l'effroi des fins de monde. Et on y distinguait des milliers de voix : d'en haut, il en venait de

119 De Traz describes a Viaud tempest as, "plus grandiose et plus terrible encore. Détails précis, comparaisons familières y sont comme soulevés, emportés par le mouvement du style, transfigurés par une personnification de l'ouragan" (De Traz, p. 111).

sifflantes ou de profondes, qui semblaient presque lointaines à force d'être immenses : cela, c'était le vent, la grande âme de ce désordre, la puissance invisible menant tout. Il faisait peur, mais il y avait d'autres bruits, plus rapprochés, plus matériels, plus menaçants de détruire, que rendait l'eau tourmentée, grésillant comme sur des braises...

Toujours cela grossissait.

Et, malgré leur allure de fuite, la mer commençait à les couvrir, à les ~~manger~~, comme ils disaient: d'abord des embruns fouettant de l'arrière, puis de l'eau à paquets, lancée avec une force à tout briser. (PI. pp. 68-69)

The omnipotent sea controls the fishing vessels as her changing aspects and colours become menacing. Some of the portending signs, which foreshadow an imminent storm, force the ships to disperse like a retreating army:

Il avait aussi changé d'aspect et de couleur, le soleil d'Islande, et il ouvrait cette nouvelle journée par un matin sinistre. Tout à fait dégagé de son voile, il avait pris de grands rayons, qui traversaient le ciel comme des jets, annonçant le mauvais temps prochain.

Il faisait trop beau depuis quelque jours, cela devait finir. La brise soufflait sur ce conciliabule de bateaux, comme épouvante le besoin de l'éparpiller, d'en débarrasser la mer; et ils commençaient à se disperser, à fuir comme une armée en déroute - rien que devant cette menace écrite en l'air, à laquelle on ne pouvait plus se tromper. (PI. p. 63)

The sea threatens to unleash her devastating power as small waves build up ever more rapidly and the coming storm begins to envelop the Marie and other fleeing vessels:

Les lames, encore petites, se mettaient à courir les unes après les autres, à se grouper; elles s'étaient marbrées d'abord d'une écume blanche qui s'étalait dessus en bavures; ensuite, avec un grésillement, il en sortait des fumées; on eût dit que ça cuisait, que ça brûlait; - et le bruit aigre de tout cela augmentait de minute en minute. (PI. p. 63)

Les lames, frisées en volutes, continuaient de se courir après, de se réunir, de s'agripper les unes les autres pour devenir toujours plus hautes, et, entre elles les vides se creusaient. (PI. p. 64)

The sea vaunts her domination over the fishermen in their frail craft as the clouds are constantly reshaped by the wind and the sea whips herself into a foaming, green frenzy. At one point the clouds are so dark as to create the impression of looking into a coal mine:

La grande panne de nuages, qui s'étaient condensée à l'horizon de l'ouest avec un aspect d'île, se défaisait maintenant par le haut, et les lambeaux couraient dans le ciel. Elle semblait inépuisable, cette panne, le vent l'étendait, l'allongeait, l'étirait, en faisait sortir indéfiniment des rideaux obscurs, qu'il déployait dans le clair ciel jaune, devenu d'une lividité froide et profonde. (PI. p. 64)

Les nuages achevaient de se déplier en l'air, venant toujours de l'ouest, se superposant, empressés, rapides, obscurcissant tout. Quelques déchirures jaunes restaient seules, par lesquelles le soleil envoyait d'en bas ses derniers rayons en gerbes. Et l'eau, verdâtre maintenant, était de plus en plus zébrée de baves blanches...

En haut, c'était devenu entièrement sombre, une voûte fermée, écrasante - avec quelque charbonnages plus noirs étendus dessus en tâches informes; cela semblait presque un dôme immobile, et il fallait regarder bien pour comprendre que c'était au contraire en plein vertige de mouvement : grandes nappes grises, se dépêchant de passer, et sans cesse remplacées par d'autres qui venaient du fond de l'horizon; tentures de ténèbres, se dévidant comme d'un rouleau sans fin... (PI. p. 65)

The sea seems to be merely toying with the fishermen and their small Marie, as they are tossed by the wind and heavy swells, and drenched by the driving rain. The tiny vessel fights gamely but gracefully, pursued by the winds. She rides lightly over the surging swells, lithely sliding down the cresting waves, all the while striving to avoid the full fury of the storm:

La brise, la mer, la Marie, les nuages, tout était pris d'un même affolement de fuite et de vitesse dans le même sens. Ce qui détalait le plus vite, c'était le vent; puis les grosses levées de houle, plus lourdes, plus lentes, courant après lui; puis la Marie entraînée dans ce mouvement de tout. Les lames la poursuivaient, avec leurs crêtes blêmes qui se roulaient dans une perpétuelle chute, et elle - toujours rattrapée, toujours dépassée - leur échappait tout de même, au moyen d'un sillage habile qu'elle se faisait derrière, d'un remous où leur fureur se brisait.

Et dans cette allure de fuite, ce qu'on éprouvait surtout, c'était une illusion de légèreté; sans aucune peine ni effort, on se sentait bondir. Quand la Marie montait sur ces lames, c'était sans secousse comme si le vent l'eût enlevée; et sa redescente après était comme une glissade, faisant éprouver ce tressaillement du ventre qu'on a dans les chutes simulées des "chars russes" ou dans celles imaginaires des rêves. Elle glissait comme à reculons, la montagne fuyante se déroband sous elle pour continuer de courir, et alors elle était replongée dans un de ces grands creux qui couraient aussi; sans se meurtrir, elle en touchait le fond horrible, dans un éclaboussement d'eau qui ne la mouillait même pas, mais qui fuyait comme tout le reste; qui fuyait et s'évanouissait en avant comme de la fumée, comme rien... (PI. p. 66)

In her malevolent moods the sea can not only control and toy with those who sail upon her, in her jealousy she seems to deliberately antagonize the seafolk on shore. This antagonistic interaction appears in the first of the two major storms which occur during Yann's marriage to Gaud; the storm breaks on the day of their wedding. The celebrations seem to have provoked the anger of the sea as the wedding festivities are plagued by a threatening sky and strong winds, a forewarning of the impending tempest. The fiddler leading the wedding procession plays recklessly, his music shrill as the cry of a sea-gull in the noise of the gusty winds:

C'était six jours avant le départ pour l'Islande.

Leur cortège de noces s'en revenait de l'église de Ploubazlanec, pourchassé par un vent furieux, sous un ciel chargé et tout noir. (PI. p. 200)

Le violoniste qui menait tout ce monde, affolé par le vent, jouait à la diable; ses airs arrivaient aux oreilles par bouffées, et, dans le bruit des bourrasques, semblaient une petite musique drôle, plus grêle que les cris d'une mouette. (PI. p. 201)

The sea, in her antagonistic jealousy, prevents the wedding party from reaching the chapel of La Trinité in accordance with the custom of the newlyweds of Ploubazlanec. The chapel is situated at the foot of the cliffs so close to the sea that it seems to belong to her. The sea makes the path impassable with her stormy breakers pounding dangerously on the rocks; nevertheless, Yann takes Gaud as close to the shoreline as possible, seemingly to present her to the sea as if presenting a subject to the queen:

Au pied de la dernière et extrême falaise, elle pose sur un seuil de roches basses, tout près des eaux, et semble déjà appartenir à la mer. Pour y descendre, on prend un sentier de chèvre parmi des blocs de granit. Et le cortège de noces se répandit sur la pente de ce cap isolé, au milieu des pierres, les paroles joyeuses ou galantes se perdant tout à fait dans le bruit du vent et des lames...

Yann, qui s'était le plus avancé avec Gaud appuyée à son bras, recula le premier devant les embruns. En arrière, son cortège restait échelonné sur les roches, en amphithéâtre, et lui, semblait être venu là pour présenter sa femme à la mer; mais celle-ci faisait mauvais visage à la mariée nouvelle.

- En se retournant, il aperçut le violoniste, perché sur un rocher gris et cherchant à rattraper, entre deux rafales, son air de contredanse.

"Ramasse ta musique, mon ami, lui dit-il: la mer nous en joue d'une autre qui marche mieux que la tienne..."

En même temps commença une grande pluie fouettante qui menaçait depuis le matin. Alors ce fut une débandade folle avec des cris et des rires pour grimper sur la haute falaise et se sauver chez les Gaos... (PI. pp. 202-03)

The jealous sea continues to antagonize the guests who are safely inside the Gaos' house; her noise and the threat of damage to vessels is too loud and imminent to be ignored. She succeeds in disrupting the celebrations as some guests are forced to leave the celebrations and go to their vessels in order to protect them from the sea's rage:

Dehors, le temps ne s'embellissait pas, au contraire; le vent, la pluie, faisaient rage dans une épaisse nuit. Malgré les précautions prises, quelques-uns s'inquiétaient de leur bateau, ou de leur barque amarrée dans le port, et parlaient de se lever pour aller y voir. (PI. p. 206)

Non décidément il ventait trop fort; en ce moment les vitres tremblaient sous une rafale terrible, le conteur, ayant brusqué la fin de son histoire, se leva pour aller voir sa barque. (PI. p. 208)

The sea gives the remaining guests no peace during the wedding feast as the storm shakes the house to its foundations. When the guests speculate as to the reason for the violence of the storm at this particular time, Yann laughingly reveals what has probably been on his mind throughout the wedding festivities - the sea is jealous:

Le vent dans la cheminée hurlait comme un damné qui souffre; de temps en temps, avec une force à faire peur, il secouait toute la maison sur ces fondements de pierre.

"On dirait que ça se fâche, parce que nous sommes en train de nous amuser, dit le cousin pilote.

- Non, c'est la mer qui n'est pas contente, répondit Yann, en souriant à Gaud - parce que je lui avais promis mariage". (PI. pp. 208-09)

The jealous sea refuses to be ignored and her violence creates a sense of uneasiness which seems to permeate the atmosphere notwithstanding the singing and dancing. Many of

the frightened guests exchange apprehensive glances as the threatening sounds continue like those of thousands of enraged beasts. It is as if the sea is firing her own guns to frighten the bride on her wedding night:

Les chansons continuaient gaiement; cependant on avait guère l'esprit tranquille à ce souper, et les hommes échangeaient des signes d'inquiétude à cause du mauvais temps qui augmentait toujours.

Dehors le bruit sinistre allait son train, pis que jamais. Cela devenait comme un seul cri, continu, renflé, menaçant, poussé à la fois, à plein gosier, à cou tendu, par des milliers de bêtes enragées.

On croyait aussi entendre de gros canons de marine tirer dans le lointain leurs formidables coups sourds : et cela, c'était la mer qui battait de partout le pays de Ploubazlanec - non, elle ne paraissait pas contente, en effet, et Gaud se sentait le coeur serré par cette musique d'épouvante, que personne n'avait commandée pour leur fête de noces. (PI. p. 212)

The deafening sound of the storm in full force greets the newly-weds as they venture outside to make their way home. Their breath is cut short as they try to run, hand in hand leaning into the wind, to their tiny damp abode with its thatched roof, a poor refuge from the fury and noise of the enraged sea:

Dehors ils se trouvèrent dans le froid, dans le vent sinistre, dans la nuit profonde et tourmentée. Ils se mirent à courir, en se tenant par la main. Du haut de ce chemin de falaise, on devinait sans les voir les lointains de la mer furieuse, d'où montait tout ce bruit. Ils couraient tous deux, cinglés en plein visage, le corps penché en avant, contre les rafales, obligés quelquefois de se retourner, la main devant la bouche, pour reprendre leur respiration que ce vent avait coupée...

Enfin ils arrivèrent chez eux, dans leur pauvre petit logis au sol humide, sous leur toit de paille et de mousse; et ils allumèrent une chandelle que le vent leur souffla deux fois. (PI. p. 213)

As the antagonistic sea and her invisible orchestra invade the privacy of the nuptial chamber, the lovers are filled with fatalistic premonitions:

Autour d'eux, pour leur premier coucher de mariage, le même invisible orchestre jouait toujours.

Houhou!... houhou!... Le vent tantôt donnait en plein son bruit caverneux avec un tremblement de rage; tantôt répétait sa menace plus bas à l'oreille, comme par un raffinement de malice, avec des petits sons filés, en prenant la voix flûtée d'une chouette.

Et la grande tombe des marins était tout près, mouvante, dévorante, battant les falaises de ses mêmes coups sourds. Une nuit ou l'autre, il faudrait être pris là-dedans, s'y débattre, au milieu de la frénésie des choses noires et glacées - ils le savaient...

Qu'importe! pour le moment, ils étaient à terre, à l'abri de toute cette fureur inutile et retournée contre elle-même. Alors, dans le logis pauvre et sombre où passait le vent, ils se donnèrent l'un à l'autre, sans souci de rien ni de la mort, enivrés, leurrés délicieusement par l'éternelle magie de l'amour... (PI. pp. 215-16)<sup>120</sup>

The sea's jealousy does not end with Yann's marriage: she seems determined to make this premonition and Yann's long-standing announcement, "Je ferai mes noces... avec aucune des filles du pays; non, moi, ce sera avec la mer" (PI. p. 15), come to pass. The second major storm of Yann's marriage is encountered during the maiden voyage of the Léopoldine with him in command. On this voyage the jealous sea, seemingly exacting a retribution,

<sup>120</sup> "C'est le langage, le rythme et presque la musique du poème immortel du Moyen-Âge, Tristan et Yseult. D'ailleurs, l'amour de Yann et Gaud évoque incontestablement le roman. Tous deux, dans la chambre nuptiale, au milieu des hurlements du vent et de la frénésie de la mer, enveloppés et emportés par le délire vertigineux des sens et du coeur, sourds à la fureur des éléments, insouciants de la pauvreté de leur foyer" (Ekström, p. 47).



takes Yann and the Léopoldine. In the sea's long-expected embrace, he fights like the powerful giant that he is, struggling manfully against the jealous, grasping deity, against his destiny:<sup>121</sup>

Une nuit d'août, là-bas, au large de la sombre Islande, au milieu d'un grand bruit de fureur, avaient été célébrées ses noces avec la mer.

Avec la mer, qui autrefois avait été aussi sa nourrice; c'était elle qui l'avait bercé, qui l'avait fait adolescent large et fort - et ensuite elle l'avait repris, dans sa virilité superbe, pour elle seule. Un profond mystère avait enveloppé ces noces monstrueuses. Tout le temps, des voiles obscurs s'étaient agités au-dessus, des rideaux mouvants et tourmentés, tendus pour cacher la fête; et la fiancée donnait de la voix, faisait toujours son plus grand bruit horrible pour étouffer les cris. - Lui, se souvenant de Gaud, sa femme de chair, s'était défendu, dans une lutte de géant, contre cette épousée de tombeau. Jusqu'au moment où il s'était abandonné, les bras ouverts pour la recevoir, avec un grand cri profond comme un taureau qui râle, la bouche déjà emplie d'eau; les bras ouverts, étendus et raidis pour jamais.

Et à ses noces, ils y étaient tous, ceux qu'il avait conviés jadis. Tous, excepté Sylvestre, qui, lui, s'en était allé dormir dans des jardins enchantés - très loin, de l'autre côté de la Terre... (PI. p. 254)

In Pêcheur, Viaud's principal protagonist is, in many respects, the sea. There is no doubt that the sea is by far the strongest character and, as Brodin remarks, she adds colour and an epic dimension to the novel.<sup>122</sup> If the sea is

<sup>121</sup> Viaud, who is married to the sea and remains so for forty years, employs the metaphor of a marriage in this description of Yann's death which is representative of how the novelist fully expects to die.

<sup>122</sup> "La Mer était un des personnages principaux de Pêcheur d'Islande. Cette amante trahie qui se vengeait, cette jalousie qui une nuit d'août, au milieu d'un grand bruit de fureur', reconquerrait l'infidèle et consommait ses vraies noces avec lui, c'était, au fond, l'héroïne du livre. Elle lui donnait la couleur et l'accent épiques" (Brodin, p. 175).

personified, it is as a female persona, assuming both positive and negative characteristics. She is tender and loving, nursing, cradling and rocking her sailors to sleep, nurturing them with her bountiful riches. She can also be sedentary, a seductive mistress, a betrothed fiancée, a jealous rival, mysterious, moody, irritating, annoying, enervating, keeping her sailors on edge.

The sea's image as a woman must, however, be that of a liberated one, as she differs greatly from the other women in the novel who live in their protected surroundings and are basically dependent on their sailor men. The sea is ultimately a woman who controls men, sharing much of their lifestyle and constantly exposed to their attempts to dominate her; to accentuate her superiority she frequently displays her omnipotence and on occasion inspires terror. Although the sailor believes that he is able to travel where he will, it is always at the discretion of the sea. She affords him considerable freedom, but never lets him gain the upper hand. To maintain her ascendancy over man the sea sometimes confronts him in struggles which may be fatal, such as with Yann, when she seductively leads him down to the depths of oblivion.

\* \* \*

As Viaud writes the novels of the third phase, the author's state of mind is an important factor: he was confined, in large part, to shore-based assignments which, to

him, denoted the passing of his youth and the approach of old age. Discontented on shore, he tends to stress this factor in the interactions between the sea and his heroes. This interaction of the sea with each hero is a reflection of Viaud's desire to relive past experiences.

In Madame Chrysanthème, Viaud portrays the sea's relationship with the discontented hero, Loti, as the result of his attempt to establish a relationship such as he enjoyed in Aziyadé. Then the sea initially provided a route to adventure, after which she became a constant backdrop, offering refuge when required as well as a romantic setting for love trysts, notably, aboard the lovers' "lit qui flotte" (Az. p. 35). In Chrysanthème, the sea's role and presence are similarly limited. The sea is, to a large extent, simply a facilitator: she brings the sailors to the port of call. At the initial point when the ship arrives in Nagasaki, she provides calm water and a gentle breeze in the Eden-like setting of the port. The sea is here but a backdrop, though she benevolently provides a safe haven for Loti and his vessel:

La Triomphante, qui était sur rade, presque au pied des collines où ma maison est perchée, entre aujourd'hui au bassin, pour réparer ses flancs éraillés pendant le long blocus de Formose... Ce bassin est situé sur la rive opposée à Diou-djen-dji. Il est creusé dans une petite vallée, étroite et profonde; toute sorte de verdure se penchent au-dessus, des bambous, des camélias, des arbres quelconques; notre mâture, nos vergues, vues du pont, ont l'air d'être accrochées dans les branches. (MC. pp. 115-16)

If the sea is always present in the novel, she is less conspicuous than in any novel since Aziyadé. She occasionally

makes her presence felt by Loti, stimulating his desire to return to the sea, such as by sending a sea breeze to his house, "quand soufflera certain vent plus frais qui monte jusqu'à nous, de la mer et de la rade profonde, avec l'extrême matin" (MC. p. 125). When he answers her call, it is primarily to escape from his wife; his relationship with the sea has become rather distant. Nevertheless, he goes down the slope from the house in the early morning and boards his ship: "C'est à ce moment qu'il faut se lever; descendre quatre à quatre jusqu'à la mer, par des sentiers d'herbes pleines de rosée, - et regagner mon navire" (MC. p. 129). We are also made aware of the presence of the sea in the evening when she appears unexpectedly during a stroll; she is black and is sleepy but, significantly, in the distance:

On découvre à vol d'oiseau toute la rade : les eaux noires, endormies, reflétant d'innombrables feux lointains; et les navires - petites choses immobiles qui ont forme de poisson, vues d'où nous sommes, et qui semblent dormir aussi, - petites choses qui servent à aller ailleurs, à aller très loin et à oublier. (MC. pp. 283-84)

If the sea is a somewhat distant presence, she can, of course, provide the sailor with an escape route from whatever disagreeable situation may occur on shore. It is, however, significant that, throughout most of the novel, such an escape route is closed. There are times when the shore-bound Loti falls into moods of deep depression and, like a fish out of water, he would normally seek out the sea as a sanctuary. Unfortunately, his ship is in dry dock, also out of its natural element - and the usual haven is not available. In

many respects, this forced separation of sailor and the sea is symptomatic of the breakdown of their once close relationship.

This impression is reinforced towards the end of the novel when it is time for the sailors to board ship and leave Nagasaki. The sea appears black, colourless and empty, implying Loti's changed relationship with her, as he moves back to what he significantly refers to as her colourless, empty expanse:

Nous sortons avec lenteur de la grande baie verte. Les groupes de femmes s'effacent. Le pays des cabrelles rondes à mille plissures se referme peu à peu derrière nous.

Voici la mer qui s'ouvre, immense, incolore et vide, reposant des choses trop ingénieuses et trop petites. (MC. p. 302)

Moreover, when Loti finally reaches the open sea, her welcome is not the warm one he had expected; it is more in keeping with their changed relationship and his depressed state of mind. The sea appears angry and lacklustre, indicating the approach of autumn. Loti is also apathetic and cheerless as he feels that he, too, is approaching the autumn of his life: "Une lueur livide tombe sur les eaux, d'un ciel brumeux; une espèce de crépuscule terne et morne descend, jaunâtre sur cette mer Jaune. - On sent que nous avons couru vers le nord et que l'automne approche" (MC. p. 304). Loti makes an offering to the sea of his last living souvenir of Japan - some lotus-blossoms:

Je les prends à la main, avec quelques égards toutefois, et j'ouvre mon sabord...

Je les jette, ces pauvres lotus, dans l'étendue indéfinie, - en leur faisant mes excuses de leur donner une sépulture si triste et si grande, à eux qui étaient Japonais... (MC. p. 304)

The role of the sea is, then, greatly diminished in this novel as it reverts from the powerful role of the previous phase to more closely resemble the backdrop of Aziyadé. However, the relationship between sea and hero is not as positive as it was even in Aziyadé: sometimes the sea is not there for the hero and, even when she is, their reunion is not the happy one of the past. This broken relationship is perhaps but a reflection of Viaud's own situation.

Chrysanthème signals a trend towards a diminishing relationship between the sea and seafolk in Viaud's novels, even though there are times when the sea appears to regain her pre-eminence and overriding influence.

In Enfant the mature hero, who narrates the story, is assigned to shore duties and is thereby deprived of his former happy relationship with the sea. The relationship between sea and hero is therefore all but severed. However, the hero sorely misses the excitement and challenges of this lost relationship and as a result he reminisces about the very origins of the relationship and the motivation which brought it about. The sea is therefore a major persona in this novel but only at the level of the young Pierre.

If, for the young hero, the sea plays a significant role, it is one which is based on promise and expectation rather

than fulfilment. Once the young boy has become enamoured of the sea's many charms, he is lured into a life-long affair. In essence, then, the sea's role in interacting with Pierre is that of a temptress.

As a prelude to this love affair, the sea's first overture to captivate young Pierre occurs during his visit to the island of Oléron. It is here that he, shuddering with fear, has his first encounter with the unstable, treacherous, all-engulfing, moving, shifting, thrashing sea, which figures so prominently in the second phase:

Puis, tout à coup, je m'arrêtai glacé, frissonnant de peur. Devant moi, quelque chose apparaissait, quelque chose de sombre et de bruissant qui avait surgi de tous les côtés en même temps et qui semblait ne pas finir; une étendue en mouvement qui me donnait le vertige mortel... Evidemment c'était ça; pas une minute d'hésitation, ni même d'étonnement que ce fût ainsi, non, rien que de l'épouvante: je reconnais-sais et je tremblais. C'était d'un vert obscur presque noir; ça semblait instable, perfide, engloutissant; ça remuait et ça se démenait partout à la fois, avec un air de méchanceté sinistre. Au-dessus, s'étendait un ciel tout d'une pièce, d'un gris foncé, comme un manteau lourd.

Très loin, très loin seulement, à d'inappréciables profondeurs d'horizon, on apercevait une déchirure, un jour entre le ciel et les eaux, une longue fente vide, d'une claire pâleur jaune... (R.E. pp. 53-54)

The child gradually manages to keep his excited fear in check but it remains with him throughout his life in a strange, almost love-hate relationship. When ashore he cannot wait to escape to the freedom and refuge he finds at sea; nevertheless, at sea his fear of her dangers is never far away and he fully expects that some day he will be taken by her.

The sea continues throughout the novel to attract young

Pierre with her lure of excitement. During his strolls through the monotonous countryside with his father and sister he longs to catch a glimpse of her:

Du côté de l'Ouest, au bout des lointains, je cherchais des yeux la mer qui, parfois, quand on était allé très loin, montrait au-dessus de ces lignes déjà si planes, une autre petite raie bleuâtre plus complètement droite, - et attirante, attirante à la longue comme un grand aimant patient, sûr de sa puissance et pouvant attendre. (RE. p. 63)

The boy seems to somehow be aware of the awesome influence and controlling power which the sea is able to exert upon his life and upon those of other sailors drawn by her magnetism.

The sea not only entices the boy by revealing her exotic underwater inhabitants, she also sends her emissaries to captivate him. At school it is the students training to be seamen who, with their red belts, imitate the flamboyant style of sailors. These students with their colourful, dashing, exciting lifestyle spur on the idea of a sea-faring career already germinated and developing in Pierre's mind. The sailors also act as the sea's emissaries, with their happy songs and tales of exciting adventures, serving to intensify the allure of the sea.

There is no doubt that another emissary, Gustave, with his gift of a book on Polynesia, his tales of the sea and voyages to exotic places, add to Pierre's sense of excitement and anticipation. These factors exert a strong influence on Pierre's desire to emulate his brother and become a seaman. After a sojourn at Oléron, the brothers' return home is marred



by news that Gustave will soon have to leave on a voyage across the seas; the call of the sea and her exotic attractions are already coming between Pierre and members of his family, notably Gustave: "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" (RE. p. 106).

In this novel the role of the sea is therefore basically that of a temptress who shapes Pierre's decision to seek a seafaring career. She entices him, arousing his desires and hopes, filling him with enthusiasm, with the promise of excitement in far away places. She infiltrates his consciousness even when he is on an outing with family members. As a temptress the sea can still be very dangerous: she is able on their very first contact to instill a life-long fear in Pierre. Once he succumbs to her charms, she can permeate his being with feelings of sadness, desolate solitude and alienation. Moreover, she separates family members and provides a resting place for the deceased Gustave.

No matter how the sea appears to young Pierre, it is important to keep in mind that Enfant is not really a novel of young hope, it is a novel of disillusionment attempting to relive the past. In this novel the naval officer, having been unable to recreate love affairs of the past with associated feelings and emotions with Mme Chrysanthème, attempts to return to his childhood and recreate his first love affair -

with the sea. Loti's attempt to return to his youthful, happy past and former relationship with the sea is, like his simulated love affair in Japan, doomed to failure. The interaction between sea and seaman continues to evolve, and as far as the mature Loti is concerned, the temptress has lost much of her charm.

In Viaud's portrayal of the sea in Matelot, her relationship with the hero, Jean, like that with the hero in Enfant, is an ambiguous one. Jean's relationship with the sea is a reflection of both Viaud's current, discontented relationship, and one drawn from his diary records and recollections of the days of his early sea voyages and his happier relationship with the sea. Her characteristics tend, therefore, to reveal some changeability as the diary records and happy recollections of the past are mixed with Viaud's discontented state of mind in the present.

In this novel the sea's role is frequently to provide a backdrop for the action because of the number of extended periods that the hero is confined to shore duties in Brest and the Orient, and to ports of call such as Quebec and Senegal.

She is also frequently a temptress as she entices the boy, exerting a strong influence on Jean, who at the age of only ten years, dreams about becoming a sailor. She successfully lures young Jean into opposing his mother's wishes and becoming a seaman. When he is ashore, the sea reverts to the

role of temptress from time to time, enticing him to return to the sea by joining the smuggler's crew, and by turning down the opportunity for a favourable marriage in Quebec.

The sea's moods in this novel tend to swing from benevolent to malevolent. In a benevolent mood she can be a facilitator enabling Jean to visit and participate in the excitement and adventures at sea and in ports of call. She provides favourable winds and calm water as his vessel traverses the boundless blue of Indian Ocean en route to China, leaving a trail glittering in the sunlight:

A travers la mer des Indes, la Circé s'en allait, rapide et doucement balancée, toute blanche de toiles sous une incandescente lumière, entre deux infinis très bleus, laissant derrière elle, comme une longue queue, son éternelle traînée bruissante, qui étincelait de soleil. (M. p. 176)

In her benevolent role, the sea provides a means of escape and a refuge from difficult decisions such as those relating to desertion and marriage in Quebec, and that of acceding to his mother's wishes that he study hydrography. Moreover, after an unhappy love affair during an extended stay on shore, Jean escapes to the sea, even though it is only a temporary refuge prior to serving in a war zone in the Far East.

The sea's benevolent role continues after Jean is wounded and aboard the hospital ship, Saône. She provides Jean, who is down in the sick-bay, with the benefits of her exhilarating and therapeutic qualities which we have seen improving

the condition of sick sailors. As the ship continues her southern trajectory, the southern trade winds augment the sea's healing qualities to reduce the fevers of the suffering sailors:

Une brise se leva, imperceptible d'abord, mais grandissant toujours, dans un ciel moins violent et plus semblable au nôtre, où couraient des petits nuages cotonneux d'une teinte très douce. Elle était tiède, cette brise, mais si vivifiante qu'elle semblait fraîche; jusqu'au fond du navire, dans l'hôpital aux senteurs de fièvre, elle entraînait peu à peu, par les longues manches de toile tendues pour l'aspirer, et les malades la recevaient avec un bien-être délicieux. C'était l'Alisé austral, et c'était le ciel éternellement pareil des tropiques; la Saône avait atteint cette région invariable, et le même souffle régulier allait, pendant des jours et des nuits, la pousser vers le grand cap. (M. p. 204)

The sea changes from her benevolent role to an angry, malevolent one, threatening storms, dangers, death and cruelty to all aboard Jean's ship as the crew prepare to repel her night assault in austral waters:

Mais, un soir, une immense nuée obscure surgit à l'horizon du sud, envahissante, formant tout de suite voûte de ténèbres. Et le bon vent tomba, et, dans l'air subitement refroidi, deux grands albatros, les premiers, apparurent, - bêtes de l'Austral sombre. (M. pp. 221-22)

L'agression du vent fut prompte, commencée tout de suite... Et les lames enflaient des dos énormes, se rangeaient en longues files de bataille. Et les matelots étaient dans la mâture, au dangereux ouvrage; les pauvres grosses mains rudes, les ongles durcis et courts, peinaient, en crissant, sur la toile mouillée des huniers qu'on mettait au bas ris. Et tous les visages se hâlaient, saisis et brûlés par le premier froid. (M. pp. 224-25)

As the malevolent sea joins battle with the threatened vessel, the weather worsens intensifying the stormy waters

adding to the deteriorating conditions in the sick bay where Jean is dying.

Even after death, the cruel sea continues to harass the body of the poor sailor. Her rough treatment of the crew carrying the cadaver causes it to be bumped against corners on the way up from the sick bay to the deck where:

Un sinistre matin, au jour naissant, cousu dans sa gaine de toile, il fut monté péniblement, par deux hommes qui le tenait au cou... A grand-peine, à cause de tant de roulis, ils le montaient, avec des brutalités involontaires, qui heurtaient contre des angles de bois sa tête à jamais voilée. Par un panneau, furtivement entrebâillé pour le laisser passer, il fut remis à d'autres mains qui l'attendaient sur le pont et qui le hissèrent. (M. pp. 229-30)

As the body is being lowered to the water, the cruel sea's onslaught batters the remains against the side of the vessel:

Pendant un plus effroyable mouvement de roulis, on le jeta dans un de ces gouffres d'eau, qui s'ouvrent et aussitôt se referment. Malgré le poids de fer attaché à ses pieds, une lame, une montée d'écume, le relança d'abord contre le navire, avec une force à briser ses os; puis il disparut, plongé tout de suite dans le silence pour jamais, et commençant sa descente infinie, dans les ténèbres insondées d'en dessous... (M. p. 230)

"La grande dévorante" (Pl. p. 36), finally seems to be satisfied as the body disappears under the water; her anger fades away, the wind dies down, the battle is finally over and peace is restored:

Et le vent se taisait; on commençait à s'entendre parler comme l'ordinaire; dans une paix relative, les choses à bord reprenaient leur cours, les panneaux fermés se rouvraient.

Après midi, le vent tombant toujours, l'ordre se trouvait à peu près rétabli partout. La Saône tendait de nouveau ses ailes blanches, qu'elle avait si péniblement repliées, - et les matelots retrouvaient le temps de penser à celui qui s'en était allé pendant la grande tourmente, les amis de Jean commençaient à se souvenir tristement de lui. (M. p. 231)

In this novel, then, the sea is depicted in many roles: initially she is a backdrop and temptress, in her benevolent role she is facilitator, a means of escape, a refuge and wellspring of therapy. On the other hand, in her malevolent role, she can be angry, dangerous, cruel and ultimately takes the hero to her depths.

The sea's characteristics and her interaction with seafolk, in the three phases discussed in this chapter, are products of Viaud's state of mind. In the first phase his happy-go-lucky pleasure seeking in port relegates the sea to being a backdrop, a constant presence but playing a minor role in her relationship with the sailor heroes.

In the second phase, Viaud's more mature outlook and increased responsibilities aboard naval vessels have impacted upon his state of mind. At sea, he is constantly aware of the importance of all aspects of her ever changing moods and activities and, above all, her interaction with and domination of the seafolk.

While writing the novels of the third phase, Viaud, confined to shore-based assignments and deprived of sea voyages and interaction with the sea, is very discontented. In the novels of this phase each hero is depicted as making

an effort to overcome a similar discontent by recalling his on-going relationship with the sea from early childhood. Therefore these novels reveal, to varying degrees, the role and characteristics of the sea as Viaud now perceives them. In his present state of mind, his perception and depictions of the sea are somewhat more mercurial than those portrayed in the novels of the preceding phases; nevertheless, she is portrayed as unwilling to reestablish the interaction of past relationships.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

The sea had a profound effect on Julien Viaud as a sailor and more specifically as a writer of novels. From his first contact with the sea during early childhood he was fascinated by the sea and the lifestyle of sailors. However, as might be expected, his relationship with the sea evolves through several stages during the course of his naval career. The majority of Viaud's novels reflect this evolution as it impacts on his depictions of his seafolk, the sea itself, and the interactions between the two.

Viaud's personal diaries record details of his life from his first encounter with the sea and include his voyages and experiences as a sailor, encompassing his perceptions, thoughts and feelings towards the people whom he encounters. His love and fears of the sea, and his preoccupations and premonitions are all candidly recorded. With this extensive reserve of material about all aspects of his life, his novels are a blend of autobiography and fiction. Many of the seafolk mentioned in the diaries serve as inspirations or models for his protagonists. The predominant one, appearing as the same character in several novels, is Loti, aging and evolving in



step with Viaud.

In his sea novels, Viaud created a panoramic view of a society of seafolk living in their own world and subjected to the omnipresent dictates of the sea. His depictions of the major players evolve with changes occurring within the novelist as he moves from young playboy sailor in exotic ports to mature, industrious seaman braving the dangers at sea, and finally to an old, discontented officer on shore duties. In the representative novels in this study, we have traced and established an evolution of the influence of the sea on Viaud which impacts, in turn, on his evolving depictions. Our study examines, therefore, Viaud's activities and experiences as they relate to seafolk and the sea in each of the three phases in which we have grouped his novels.

In the first phase, the novels are based on Viaud's lifestyle and experiences in exotic ports as an Aspirant de 1<sup>re</sup> classe serving aboard La Flore during a Pacific cruise, and as a Lieutenant de vaisseau attached to Le Gladiateur, while stationed at Constantinople. These experiences provide information for the setting of the novels and Viaud's activities, augmented by his imagination, provide the essentials for the plots: a sailor in port becomes involved in a romantic relationship with a local girl, then with some complications the affair continues until the departure of the sailor, causing his paramour to fade away and die.

The depictions of seafolk are limited to those of the

hero, Loti, who is characterized as a young, relatively inexperienced sailor determined to realize his high expectations of life in an exotic port. His gregarious instincts enable him to make friends and establish a liaison which reveals his sensitive, loving nature. His love of the exotic serves to stress his sensitivity in that he appreciates some of the finer things in life. On the other hand Loti is subject to emotionally charged and sometimes contradictory mood swings, ranging from extreme happiness to the kind of deep depression which arouses his recurring preoccupation with death.

There are, however, several significant differences in the hero as depicted in the two novels. In Aziyadé, he is more interested in selfish, and somewhat irresponsible, excitement and dubious pleasures; in Mariage, Loti is less cavalier in his love relationship and more sensitive to the feelings of his mistress. He appears to be more responsive to the finer things in life and has a stronger sense of loyalty to family and country in contrast to the hero of Aziyadé who gives up his family, country and life for Turkey.

In Mariage, there appears to be indications of more tenderness and greater sincerity in the younger Loti which were not in evidence in the more worldly hero of Aziyadé. These developments presage the evolution towards the more responsible, serious, hard-working sailors in the next phase of Viaud's novels.

The novels in the second phase concentrate the reader's attention upon protagonists who have evolved into more mature and responsible, career sailors. Unlike the philandering protagonists in the first phase, these sailors are serious as they carry out their life work at sea and marry seafolk.

Viaud's naval voyages and adventures continue to provide diary records as material for his fictional writing. However, unlike the earlier novels, those in this phase represent more of a mosaic of his experience. In creating the novels Viaud selects and weaves together a variety of aspects and events from records of his many voyages, including those to and from the port settings featured in the novels in the first phase. Viaud's 1871 voyage around Cape Hope and on to Tahiti passed almost unnoticed in Le Mariage, whereas the voyage itself provides inspiration and material for the exciting, fictional voyage of Loti and Yves aboard the Primauguet.

In contrast with the romantic relationships and pleasure-seeking activities of the carefree heroes in the earlier novels, both Yves and Pêcheur are about real-life maritime activities, about sailors in action. The plots have two foci: first the responsibilities, monotony, isolation and dangers associated with the daily work of the sailor on long sea voyages in an often hostile setting; second, the interaction of the sea with the sailor's lifestyle and that of his loved ones at home.

In this phase, Viaud broadens his character base rather

than concentrating our attention on the figure of one sailor, as was the case in the first phase of his work. In Yves we have two main protagonists. Loti is an officer, depicted as more mature than the heroes of earlier novels; he is seriously considerate and willing to take on responsibilities, such as those entailed in guiding, protecting and rehabilitating Yves, the second main protagonist. Yves, on the other hand, is an enlisted sailor with a drinking problem. He is depicted as evolving, with Loti's help, from the irresponsible lifestyle of a young sailor to the point of overcoming his hereditary weakness, earning promotions in the navy and taking on the responsibilities of a family and home owner. In short, Yves achieves the attributes of mature manhood.

The fishermen in the second novel are Breton sailors who devote their working lives to fishing for cod in Icelandic waters. They are depicted as mature men both at work and at home; they are "gens de vent et de tempête" (PI. p. 38), courageous, religious and, when their work is productive, happy; they are all born from generations of *Islandais*.

In this phase Viaud's evolving depictions of seafolk include a number of those living on shore whose lives are inextricably linked to sailors and the sea. The wives and loved ones, living in their women's world, separated from their men at sea, are also under the control of the sea. Lonely, worried, often depressed and preoccupied with thoughts of dangers and death, the wives and lovers still have many of

the characteristics associated with members of their sex. They are tender, loving, faithful, sensual, friendly, moody, comforting, nourishing, motherly and protective.

When writing the novels of the third and final phase in 1887-92, Viaud is in his forties and holding more senior positions in the navy. He is assigned to less active duties which keep him on shore and preclude the sea voyages which had been so much a part of his life. These circumstances tend to make him conscious of his advancing age and to breed the discontent which is imparted to the protagonists in the novels of this group.

Viaud's source of material for the first novel in this phase is found in diary records relating to the war in China: on March 20, 1885, Lieutenant de Vaisseau Viaud departed Toulon aboard a transport vessel en route to the Far East to join Admiral Courbet aboard the battleship, La Triomphante, in Hongkong, arriving on May 5<sup>th</sup>. With the subsequent signing of a peace treaty, the battleship sailed to Nagasaki for repairs where she remained from July 8<sup>th</sup> to August 12<sup>th</sup>, providing Viaud with source material for Chrysanthème. The other two novels are based upon his childhood diaries and his records of such voyages as are appropriate to the plot.

In the novels of this phase, the common thread is that the heroes are all similarly discontented with their current lot in life. Each hero is essentially a dreamer who, while often reminiscing about the happier days of his youth, is

engaged in a sometimes dream-like quest for happiness in the future. Whether they indulge in nostalgic reminiscences of the past, or forlornly hope that the future will solve the problems of the present, they all have a common denominator in their propensity for temporal escapism. In two of the novels the hero looks back: one reminisces about his days as a young sailor in a port of call, while the other hero tries to relive his childhood. Neither sailor succeeds in his attempt to relive the happier days of the past. In the last novel, the sailor looks to the future: he dreams about what could happen but does almost nothing to realize his dreamy ambitions.

The hero in the first novel of this phase is in such a depressed state that he seems to have reverted to characteristics associated with immaturity; he is intolerant, suspicious, distrustful and insensitive. He seeks escape from these negatives of his changeable personality by recalling the past, reminiscing about happier days of his youth, then, as this dream world pales, he becomes increasingly preoccupied with morbid thoughts of aging and death.

In Enfant, as in the preceding novel, Viaud concentrates on a single protagonist; however, the characteristics of the hero are depicted at two stages of his life, as an adult in the present and as a child. His characteristics, like those of the hero in Chrysanthème, are rooted in his discontent with the present which prompts him to seek temporal escape in

nostalgic reminiscing about his childhood when he was in the process of developing an exciting relationship with the sea.

The hero of Matelot has much in common with the heroes of the first and second phases. However, Jean has a character flaw which tends to dominate almost all of his other traits: he is a dreamer, almost always discontented and seeking to better his lifestyle by musing about satisfaction and happiness in the future. As a youngster Jean's dreams were quite similar to those of Pierre in Enfant, but unfortunately, Jean seems to have difficulty outgrowing the tendency to day-dream about the future while doing nothing to help realize his dreams. It is not until he is mortally wounded that he eventually faces the hard fact that he has no future.

Like the seafolk wives depicted in the preceding chapter, Jean's mother, is long-suffering, facing constant worries about her son far away and exposed to the dangers of life at sea. The poor lonely woman, like Yvonne and Gaud, is haunted by fears that her loved one will never return, that he may already be buried at sea. She shares Jean's disappointment when he is unable to graduate from the naval academy; she has difficulty accepting the fact that he is a sailor on a tramp vessel, and is again disappointed when he leaves her to serve in the navy as an ordinary seaman.

Viaud's depictions of the sea, like those of his seafolk, evolve with his changing perceptions as he writes the novels of each phase. The novels of the first phase stress what was

his primary objective when he visited the exotic ports, namely enjoyment of his shore leave. His heroes' relationships with the sea are, therefore, relatively subordinate ones. She is depicted as facilitating the beginning and the end of the action; between these two points she is constantly present, playing a relatively minor role. In Le Mariage, however, we can clearly discern that she is beginning to evolve into the dominating character who will eventually control all those associated with her. The sea asserts her influence on the sailor when he is in his own hut or at the centre of the island, affecting his perceptions, moods and actions, creating illusions as she displays her spectacular underwater showcase. The interactions between Loti and the sea grow stronger as their moods appear to be shared and coordinated.

The second phase of Viaud's novels, based on his extensive experiences at sea, divulge significant changes in their relationship. The sea is omnipresent, watching over all of the seafolk and their activities as she plays her omnipotent role. Having evolved from the less intrusive and often more passive roles of the earlier novels, she is now emerging as the preeminent protagonist, influencing almost all aspects of the plot as well as the personalities and actions of the players.

There is no doubt that in Pêcheur, the sea is by far the strongest character and, as Brodin remarks, she adds colour and an epic dimension to the novel (see p. 260). The sea is



personified as female with both positive and negative characteristics. She is tender and loving, sedentary, a seductive mistress, a betrothed fiancée, a jealous rival, mysterious, moody, irritating, annoying, enervating, keeping her sailors on edge. The sea's feminine image is, however, that of a liberated persona; she differs greatly from the other women in the novel who live in their protected surroundings and are basically dependent on their sailor men.

While writing the novels of the third phase, Viaud is assigned to shore duties which minimize his relationship with the sea which in turn impacts on his portrayal of the sea's relationship with the heroes in these novels. Broadly speaking, her presence and contributions as a persona diminish in this phase.

In Chrysanthème, her initial influence, during the hero's arrival, is to provide calm waters and a gentle breeze in the Eden-like setting of the exotic port, which serve as a welcome for the sailors and heighten the hero's expectations of reliving the type of romantic adventures enjoyed by the younger sailors of the first phase. After the sailors disembark, the sea is no longer a significant factor; she is present but inactive.

In Enfant, the hero is attempting to regain his former relationship with the sea by recalling impressions of his childhood contacts with the sea. In this context, the role of the sea is basically that of a temptress who shapes young

Pierre's decision to seek a seafaring career. She entices him, arousing his desires and hopes, filling him with enthusiasm and the promise of excitement in far away places. As a temptress the sea can still be very dangerous, able to instill a life-long fear in Pierre on their very first contact. Once the adult, Loti, has succumbed to her charms she can permeate his being with feelings of discontent, sadness, desolate solitude and alienation.

In Matelot, the sea is depicted in many roles: initially she is a backdrop, temptress, facilitator and controller. She influences the hero when on shore, she attracts and entices him to return to the sea, where by providing distractions she ensures that he is unable to study. On the other hand, she also keeps him occupied and participates in his development as a seaman. Ever changeable, the sea exerts her power on the hero - sometimes benevolent, but more often malevolent - and she ultimately takes Jean to her bosom.

Jean's relationship with the sea is, however, one of unfulfillment - he dreams of becoming a seaman such as we have seen in the heroes of Yves and Pêcheur, but he is never able to match their strength of character. Jean seems to have an irrepressible yearning for a close relationship with the sea which he is unable to achieve, hence their interaction is not as strong as it was in the novels of the second phase.

Our thesis establishes that the sea exerted a preponderant influence on Viaud, and more specifically, we have traced

the evolution of this influence through his characterizations of seafolk and the sea. In so doing we have limited our study to selected novels which are specifically about seafolk.

Initially we were tempted to adopt a broader scope and include Le Roman d'un spahi, Ramuntcho, and Les Désenchantées. However, although these novels are about characters who are essentially similar to many protagonists who appear in the selected novels - they are not seafolk.

The spahi, Jean, is a soldier, but like the sailors discussed in phase one, he arrives in an exotic port where he is lonely, seeks pleasures and becomes involved in romantic relationships. Viaud likens Jean's abnormal lifestyle and interaction with the desert, a metaphoric sea, to that of sailors with the sea (RS. p. 83): Jean dreams, suffers mood swings, and faces dangers in an unpredictable environment. He travels across the broad expansive desert sea capable of devouring spahis, including Jean, as the sea devours sailors.

Viaud tends to dwell on lengthy descriptions of the desert in the same manner that he dwells on those of the sea in other novels. His painting of the sky could almost have been written while on watch at sea in Yves. Sounds, smells and feelings, together with assessments of temperature and humidity, supplement portrayals of shapes and colours (RS. pp. 87-88).

In Ramuntcho, the hero is a pelota player and smuggler. Viaud draws parallels between the lifestyle of this hero and

that of sailors, that is, a life of solitude and dreams facing dangers and long separations from loved ones (R. pp. 114, 163, 289). Ramuntcho, like Viaud's sailors depicted in the second phase, is strongly attached to his mother; nevertheless, he feels hemmed in by the mountains and restrained by the strong religious ties and the ancient traditions of the Basque people.

Like young Pierre and Jean Berny, Ramuntcho longs to go to sea, to visit exotic places and see the world. Although his military service, as a naval infantryman, enables him to go to sea for three years, Viaud glosses over this part of his life.<sup>123</sup> Nothing is mentioned about his military service or life at sea; nevertheless there are frequent references to the sea and her interaction with the hero (R. pp. 26, 51, 107).

In Désenchantées, the hero, André Lhery, is a diplomat and novelist, but many of his characteristics and his relationship with the sea are to some extent similar to those of heroes in Viaud's first phase novels. André lives, acts, writes and shares characteristics similar to those of the sailor hero in Aziyadé.<sup>124</sup>

Viaud, perhaps not surprisingly, tended to portray some

<sup>123</sup> At the time of writing this novel Viaud is on a land-based assignment near Hendaye which prompts him to comment "Tout me paraît désolé, inhabitable, hostile" (Cahiers, Juin, 1961, p. 5).

<sup>124</sup> Viaud is recounting his own experiences but, because he is aware that the novel will be controversial and offensive to his Turkish friends and to Turks in general, he introduces the novel as pure fiction and the hero as a diplomat.

basic types of characters in many of his novels. It is, therefore, apparent that Viaud's soldier, his smuggler and his diplomat bear striking resemblances to types of seamen. Moreover, these heroes are rarely far from the actual sea, and when they are they may well find themselves in an environment which is made to seem very similar, as in the desert in Spahi. It is, in fact, difficult not to believe that Viaud is talking about seafolk and the sea, even when he is not. For this reason it could make an interesting study to examine the character base of all of Viaud's work and see what they owe to Viaud's own contacts with the sea.

A final thought relates to the depiction of the sea. We have seen that the sea is often portrayed as a female persona. Moreover, Viaud draws on an extensive array of images to characterize the sea. A detailed study of these images from a stylistic and a psychoanalytic point of view could be fascinating and would augment current knowledge and understanding of Viaud, the seaman, author, musician and artist.

## APPENDIX I

### MILITARY CAREER OF LOUIS-MARIE-JULIEN VIAUD

Born at Rochefort-sur-mer on Jan. 14, 1850.

Entered l'Ecole Navale (Brest) as a Cadet - Oct. 1, 1867.

Aspirant de 2<sup>e</sup> classe - Aug. 1, 1869.

Aspirant de 1<sup>re</sup> classe - Aug. 15, 1870.

Enseigne de Vaisseau - June 26, 1873.

Lieutenant de Vaisseau de 2<sup>e</sup> classe - Feb. 24, 1881.

Lieutenant de Vaisseau de 1<sup>re</sup> classe - June 16, 1886.

Capitaine de Frégate - May 1, 1899.

Capitaine de Vaisseau - Aug 2, 1906.

Granted leave of absence from May 1, 1907 to Jan. 14, 1910.

Retired - Jan. 14, 1910. Appointed to the Naval Reserve as Capitaine de Vaisseau.

Mobilized at the Arsenal de Rochefort - Aug. 3, 1914, until Sept. 1, 1914.

Officier de Liaison du Général Galliéni (without pay) - Sept. 25, 1914.

At his own request was recalled to active service by the Minister of the Navy and assigned to the Staff Headquarters of General Galliéni the Military Governor of Paris - Feb. 1, 1915.

Under the jurisdiction of the Minister of War Viaud was assigned to the Headquarters of the Groupe des Armées de l'Est - May 31, 1915.

Assigned to Staff Headquarters of the Groupe des Armées du Nord - May 9, 1917.

On a mission to the General Headquarters of the Italian Army - Aug. 8, to Aug. 20, 1917.

Demobilized - Mar. 15, 1918.

"Remis à la disposition" of the Navy - Mar. 9, 1918.

Granted permanent authorization without pay to wear his uniform and military honours assigned to the staff headquarters of the Groupe des Armées de l'Est.

Evacuated from the front for reasons of health - May 31, 1918.

Discharged from the Reserve due to his age - Nov. 11, 1919.

Buried with National Honours in his Capitaine de Vaisseau uniform (five gold stripes) at Saint-Pierre d'Oléron - June 16, 1923.

\* \* \*

#### WARSHIPS ABOARD WHICH JULIEN VIAUD SERVED

Le Borda (training vessel) - Oct 1, 1867 to Aug. 1, 1869. Brest harbour.

Le Bougainville (escort attached to the Naval Academy) - Aug. 4-29, 1868.  
Familiarization sea cruise along the coast of France from Brest to La Rochelle and back.

Le Jean-Bart (training ship) - Oct. 5, 1869 (Brest) to Aug. 8, 1870 (Cherbourg). Instructional campaign: Mediterranean, Brazil, Canada & United States.

Le Decrès (steam corvette) - Aug. 8, 1870 (Cherbourg) to Mar. 15, 1871 (Lorient). Franco-Prussian War campaign, 1870-71: English Channel, North Sea & Baltic.

Le Vaudreuil (escort) - Mar. 15, 1871 (Lorient) to Nov. 1, 1871 (Valparaiso). Cruise around South America to the Pacific, Senegal, Cayenne, Brazil, Uruguay, Tierra del Fuego & Chili.

La Flore (frigate) - Nov. 1, 1871 (Valparaiso) to Dec. 4, 1872 (Brest). Pacific cruise: Easter Island, Tahiti, San Francisco, Montevideo & Rio de Janeiro.

La Bretagne (training vessel) - Dec. 4, 1872 to Jan. 9, 1873. Stationed in Toulon harbour.

La Savoie (Armoured steam-frigate) - Jan. 9, 1873 (Toulon) to Mar. 20, 1873 (Golfe-Juan). On manoeuvres in the Mediterranean.

L'Entreprenante (frigate) - Sept. 1-21, 1873. From Toulon to Dakar to join Le Petrel at Senegal.

- Le Petrel (escort) - Sept. 21, 1873 (Dakar) to May 25, 1874 (Saint-Louis de Sénégal). Patrolling the coasts of Senegal from Dakar to Saint-Louis.
- L'Espadon (escort) - May 25, 1874 (Saint-Louis) to Sept. 12, 1874 (Rochefort). L'Espadon departed Saint-Louis on July 29, 1874 and visited several ports on her return voyage to France.
- Le Thetis (corvette) - Feb. 17 to Mar 16, 1876 (Toulon). Cruising the Mediterranean.
- La Couronne (frigate) - Mar. 1, 1876 (Toulon) to Aug. 1, 1876 (Salonica). Squadron manoeuvres in the Mediterranean and Levant following the assassination of the French and German consuls.
- Le Gladiateur (flotilla battleship) - Aug. 1, 1876 (Salonica) to May 8, 1877 (Toulon). Stationed at Constantinople.
- Le Bouvet (power escort) - June 5 to Aug. 10, 1877. Sea trials at Rochefort.
- La Tonnerre (Coast-guard vessel) - Sept. 20, 1877 (Lorient) to June 17, 1878 (Brest). Cruising the coast of Brittany operating primarily out of Lorient.
- La Moselle (transport) - Sept. 18, 1878 (Rochefort) to Sept. 20, 1879 (Brest). Servicing the northern and Brittany ports: Lorient, Cherbourg, Saint-Nazaire, Brest & Le Havre.
- Le Friedland (battleship) - Apr. 1, 1880 (Toulon) to Feb. 25, 1881 (Toulon). Squadron manoeuvres in the Mediterranean, Algeria, Rochefort, Brest, Cherbourg, Toulon & the Adriatic: Raguse, Gravosa & Cattaro (now Kotor).
- La Surveillante (frigate) - July, 3, 1882 (Brest) to Dec. 17, 1882 (Cherbourg). Along the coasts of the English Channel.
- L'Atalante (corvette) - May 22, 1883 (Brest) to Dec. 16, 1883 (Tourane). Campaign in the Gulf of Tonkin.
- La Corrèze (transport) - Dec. 16, 1883 (Tourane) to Feb. 2, 1884 (Toulon). Recalled to France in the wake of articles written for Le Figaro.
- Le Mytho (transport) - Mar. 20, 1885 (Toulon) to Apr. 27, 1885 (Saïgon). Viaud returned to the Far East as a passenger.
- Château Yquem (small passenger boat) - Apr. 27, 1885 (Saïgon) to May 5, 1885 (Hongkong). Crossing the China Sea.
- La Triomphante (battleship) - May 5, 1885 (Makung, Pescadores Islands) to Mar. 6, 1886 (Toulon). End of the China campaign, refit in Japan.



Le Magicien (dispatch escort) - Apr. 1, 1886 to June 16, 1886. Trials at Rochefort.

L'Ecureuil (dispatch escort) - Sept. 6, 1888 to Mar. 19, 1889, and May 19, to July 28, 1889. On reserve at Rochefort.

Le Formidable (squadron battleship) - Jan. 23, 1891 (Golfe Juan) to Oct 1, 1891 (Toulon). Mediterranean Squadron.

Le Courbet (first line battleship) - Oct. 1, 1891 (Toulon) to Nov. 22, 1891 (Villefranche). Along the French coast of the Mediterranean.

Le Javelot (gun-boat) - Dec. 16, 1891 to June 16, 1893, and from May 16, 1896 to Jan. 1, 1898. Hendsays, anchored at the mouth of the Bidassoa.

Le Redoutable (battleship) - Aug. 1, 1900 (Cherbourg) to Mar. 15, 1902 (Saigon). Boxer Rebellion in China.

Le Vautour (dispatch-torpedo boat) - Sept. 1, 1903 to Mar. 30, 1905 (Constantinople). Stationed at Constantinople for the protection of the French interests in the area and the security of the Ambassador of France.

## APPENDIX II

### HONOURS BESTOWED ON PIERRE LOTI

Elected Member of the Académie Goncourt in 1883.

Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur (à titre civil) - July 5, 1887.

Elected to l'Académie française (at the age of forty-one Loti was youngest Académicien) - May 21, 1891.

Officier de la Légion d'Honneur (à titre civil) - Apr. 17, 1898.

Promoted Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur (au titre de l'Instruction publique) - Aug. 2, 1910.

Elevated à la dignité de Grand Officier de la Légion d'Honneur (au titre de l'Instruction publique) - Jan. 16, 1914.

Awarded la Croix de Guerre, with a Citation<sup>1</sup> from the Army - June 28, 1918.

Presented with "les Insignes de Grand-croix de la Légion d'honneur...au nom de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts" - April 26, 1922.

<sup>1</sup> "Bien que dispensé par son âge de toute obligation militaire, a repris du service dès le début de la guerre, donnant ainsi le plus bel exemple de dévouement et de patriotisme. A rempli sous le feu de l'ennemi plusieurs missions dont il s'est acquitté à l'entière satisfaction de ses chefs."

## APPENDIX III

### RANKS AND GRADES

#### Marine Nationale

#### Royal Navy

#### Enlisted Men

Matelot (Mit)	Junior Rating (1st & 2nd class)
Matelot breveté	Ordinary Rating
Quartier-Maitre de 2 <sup>e</sup> classe (EVI)	Able Rating
Quartier-Maitre de 1 <sup>re</sup> classe	Leading Rating
Second Maitre (SM)	Petty Officer (PO)
Maitre (MT)	Petty Officer (PO)
Premier Maitre (PM)	Chief Petty Officer (CPO)
Maitre Principal (MP)	Fleet Chief Petty Officer (FCPO)
Major (MJ)	

#### Officers

Aspirant (ASP)	
Enseigne de Vaisseau de 2 <sup>e</sup> classe (EV2)	
Enseigne de Vaisseau de 1 <sup>re</sup> classe (EV1)	Sub Lieutenant (SLt)
Lieutenant de Vaisseau (LV)	Lieutenant (Lt)
Capitaine de Corvette (CC)	Lieutenant Commander (LtCdr)
Capitaine de Frégate (CF)	Commander (CDR)
	Commodore
Capitaine de Vaisseau (CV)	Captain (Capt)
Contre Amiral (CA)	Rear Admiral (RADM)
Vice Amiral (VA)	Vice Admiral (VADM)
Vice Amiral d'Escadre (VAE)	Admiral (ADM)
Amiral (AL)	Admiral of the Fleet

APPENDIX VI

TURKISH AND ORIENTAL WORDS

Arabadji	cocher
ateuch	feu (persan)
bachi-bozouk	troupes de police irrégulière turque
ben	moi, je
biz	un
bizum	notre
bou	ceci, ce
bourda	là
cadine	épouse légitime
cafedji	tenancier ou vendeur turc de café
caïqdji	batelier turc (travaillant avec un caïque)
caïque	barque turque, effilée à la pointe
cheytan	satan, diable, habile
chibouk	pipe turque
dahabieh	barque du Nil (arabe)
djami, djiami	mosquée
djan	âme
eski	antique, ancien
culu	il est mort
fathia	prière pour les morts
fatih	victorieux
férédjé	camail du vêtement féminin à l'époque d'Aziyadé
goez	oeil
gul	rose
guzel	beau, joli
hamal, hammal	porteur
hane	khan, auberge turque
hanoum	dame, femme mariée
henné	rouge pour les ongles
hodja	maître d'école, savant, médecin
iagh	vigne (iaghda = à la vigne)
iman, imam	prêtre, musulman attaché à une mosquée
karabatak	canard plongeur
karagueuz	guignol turc
kedi	chat
keui	village
kizil	rouge
kodja	vieux
Kouba	chapelle mortuaire (arabe)
lokoum	pâtisserie turque faite avec du sucre et du miel
mihrab	chaire indiquant la direction de la Mecque (arabe)

Moghrabi	habitant du Moghreb (Couchant: Maroc, Algérie et Tunisie)
mussafir	hôte, étranger
narguilé	large flasque à travers laquelle passe la fumée du chibouk
oulema, uléma	haute dignitaire religieux
ratlokoum	voir "lokoum"
rédiif	troupe de réserves de l'armée ottomane
sen	toi, tu
selamet	paix
setchan	souris
shaknisir	balcon muré ou fenêtre grillée sur balcon muré
tcharchaf	vêtement féminin ample et cachant entièrement la forme, en usage à l'époque des Désenchantées
tchodjouk	enfant
top	canon
turbé	tombeau fermé d'une grille et protégé par un toit
validé	mère du sultan
var	il y a
yachmak	voile féminin ne laissant que les yeux (époque d'Aziyadé)
yagh	voir "iagh"
yali	maison de campagne
yapmak	faire
yangun	incendie, feu
yatag	couche, lit
yéni, iéni, jéni	nouveau
yétichir	cela suffit, c'est assez
yldiz	étoile
zaptié	gendarme turc
zarar yok	cela ne fait rien

Pierre-E Briquet, Pierre Loti et l'Orient (Neuchatel: Editions de la Baconnière, 1945), pp. 609-10.

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