The Anti-colonialism of an Orientalist Writer
— The Paradox of Pierre Loti —

Peter Turberfield

Abstract
Many critics have labelled the works of the immensely popular French Orientalist travel writer Pierre Loti (1850-1923) as being perfectly representative of nineteenth-century colonialist attitudes, embodying a literary imperialism that has since, thankfully, fallen into disrepute. Following the publication of Edward Said's Orientalism (1978), Loti's imaginary Orient was merely discussed as a part of a wider political debate over Western exploitation of the world, and his works were consequently dismissed as an embarrassing reminder of out-dated European arrogance. His influence has been seen as an essentially negative one with regard to the great impact he had on attitudes towards the political and economic development of the countries he depicted. This view is, however, a little too simplistic, given the historical context in which he was writing, and the often complex and contradictory motivations that lay behind what he wrote. This paper aims to clarify a few of these misconceptions, and will detail some of the very real, but now largely forgotten political influence that he was able to exert.

The works of Pierre Loti, the enormously successful nineteenth-century French travel writer and naval captain, have most often been classified by the majority of critics as “Orientalist” or “exotic”. This was even before Edward Said made his celebrated attack on such writers in his seminal work Orientalism (1978). His unpopularity was even condemned in the form of ironic anagrams; the word “l’exoticisme” in French contains the words Loti and sexe, and the word “l’utopie”, Loti pue (Loti stinks). Following the appearance of Orientalism, critical theory, already hostile to outdated colonialist attitudes, largely
followed Said’s lead, and Loti’s Orient became a part of the wider political debate over Western exploitation. Loti would indeed at first glance appear to be the perfect embodiment of the literary imperialist, and in consequence fell into disrepute as an embarrassing reminder of European colonial arrogance. Said refers to the ‘doctrine about the Orient, […] fashioned out of the experiences of many Europeans, all of them converging upon such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like’ (Said: 203). He concludes from this stereotypical representation that ‘every European, in what he [sic] could say about the Orient, was […] a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric’ (204). A good example of this strongly felt condemnation is a poem by the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet who ridicules Loti’s vision of his country:

Et au loin à travers les vents  
Des imâms aux barbes vertes lisent le Coran !  
Voici, voici l’Orient  
L’Orient tel que le vit le poète français  
L’Orient pur et brut  
Des livres qu’on imprime  
Un million à la minute !

And far away across the winds/Green bearded imams read the Koran!/Here, here is the Orient/As seen by the French poet/Pure and simple/In books printed/One million a minute!

Another example of this hostility is Tzvetan Todorov’s 1989 study *Nous et les autres: la réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (*Us and Them: the French view of human diversity*), in which Todorov remarks on the link between sexism and imperialism: ‘L’homme, lui, jouit de la même supériorité par rapport aux femmes que l’Européen par rapport aux autres peuples’ (The man enjoys the same superiority with regard to women as the European does towards other peoples).

He gives many examples from Loti’s works, underlining Loti’s egocentricity, hypocrisy, and racism, finally leaving an utterly negative image:
‘Le Roman d’un spahi est un livre raciste et impérialiste, sexiste et sadique’(The Story of a Spahi is a racist, imperialist, sexist and sadistic book)(Todorov, 354). He does allow that Loti is not deliberately political, but makes sure this is not interpreted in a positive light: ‘S’il n’adhère pas à une philosophie impérialiste, [...] il n’est pas non plus, bien entendu, un anticolonialiste’(Even though he doesn’t adhere to an imperialistic philosophy, this does not, of course, make him an anti-colonialist)(355). He sees Loti as a representative of his time, and as Hikmet does, uses Loti’s writing as an illustration in a more general condemnation of Western colonialist/imperialist attitudes as reflected in literature.

Another well-known condemnation of Loti is to be found in Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman (1988) in which Irene Szyliowitz analyses Loti’s works from a feminist perspective. As one might imagine she is fairly condemnatory, for example commenting on his opposition to progress: ‘By and large he wanted to keep women in their place - meaning both as subservient to men and in their cultural settings as he knew them’ (Szyliowitz: 119). He is seen accordingly to ‘[reflect] prevailing contemporary nineteenth-century attitudes’. Szyliowitz follows Said’s arguments, questioning how far Loti fits into the ‘Orientalist paradigm’, considering himself ‘superior to his Oriental paramour’, and treating women as ‘products of a male power-fantasy’ (38). Her conclusion is much along these lines, that Loti’s depictions of women are designed to ‘reinforce and magnify his manhood’ by depicting them as inferior and powerless (118).

The link between colonialism and eroticism in Loti’s work is also commented on by Alec Hargreaves in The Colonial Experience in French Fiction (1981), in which he ridicules Loti’s claims to want to understand the mysteries of the Orient by assimilating himself to native lifestyles: ‘It does not take much imagination to see that [...] the professed desire to penetrate the soul of [a country] amounts
to little more than a polite but transparent disguise for a basically erotic desire to physically penetrate the girl. He also criticises the repeated romantic formula of much of Loti’s work as a sign of literary imperialism, as this reduces all of the women he meets, and all of the countries he visits to a single model. His conclusion is unequivocal: ‘the stagnation of his literary technique as a whole undoubtedly results in the world being submitted to a process of standardisation. Indeed his literary technique bears such a close resemblance to the process of colonisation that it seems appropriate to describe Loti’s approach to writing as a kind of literary imperialism’ (Hargreaves: 80). Loti’s own expressions of horror at the spread of a ubiquitous Westernisation are thus discounted and seen as hypocritical ‘[self-indulgence], self-protection, self-pity, self-glorification: such are the features we find again and again in Loti’s works’ (Hargreaves, 76).

Such for many years was the critical fate of Pierre Loti, dismissed out-of-hand as an “exotic” writer. His repeated expressions of anti-colonialist sentiment were not accepted, as he himself was seen as an instrument of the Westernisation he professed to abhor. His own behaviour only reinforced this condemnation as it was basically seen as that of a sexual tourist. Even in the almost hagiographic biography written by Leslie Blanch, *Pierre Loti. The Legendary Romantic* (1983), Loti’s conduct is seen at times as an embarrassment. Blanch refuses to judge his conduct, although raising awkward questions, as she does when looking at an example of his callous treatment of his mistress Aziyadé in *Aziyadé* (1879), when he flaunts a new lover before her, to her inevitable distress. Blanch, however, then simply throws up her hands in mock defeat: ‘Was he, even now, the unappeased sensualist, forever gratifying his Bedouin’s temperament? Loti’s character is so tangled a mass of contradictions, disguises and pirouettes that his biographer ceases to analyse and can only record’ (Blanch: 123). This distancing or disavowal, even by one of his most fervent admirers makes a strong case for the condemnations of those such as Szyliowitz,
Todorov, or Hargreaves, and even more so when the more academic study by Alain Buisine is taken into account. In his biography *Pierre Loti: L’Ecrivain et son double* (1998) (*Pierre Loti: The Writer and his Double*), Buisine concentrates on the literary themes and imagery of Loti’s writing, and follows an approach largely divorcing the man from his works. This approach is symptomatic of the defensive tendencies of Lotistes under attack for their admiration of such a suspect figure. To disown the man, but appreciate the writer is a seemingly tactful strategy, but one that none-the-less earns the contempt of the main authority on Loti, Alain Quella-Villéger in *Pierre Loti : le pèlerin de la planète* (1998) (*Pierre Loti: the pilgrim of the planet*): ‘Alain Buisine a choisi son camp: ‘“il continue à [lui] sembler fort difficile de sauver biographiquement Pierre Loti: son indispensable réévaluation en passera d’abord par son écriture. » Pourquoi, au nom de quel manichéisme, faudrait-il séparer l’un de l’autre?’(“he continues to think it difficult to save Pierre Loti biographically: his indispensible reevaluation will just look at his writing.” Why, in the name of what Mannicheanism, must we separate one from the other?) This approach is seen as a kind of betrayal.

Buisine thus carefully distances himself, taking care to condemn those episodes of Loti’s life that seem the most shocking. His exploitation of women, the hallmark of the exotic/erotic Orientalist writer, is clearly exposed. Buisine is for example highly critical of Loti’s cold decision to have children through a Basque woman, Basques being sort of home-grown Orientals, as ‘une idée à vrai dire assez invraisemblable et révoltante’(an idea, to tell the truth, quite improbable and disgusting) (*Double*: 182). Having thus stated his personal feelings, he then goes on to analyse the episode as a reference to literary themes, and what it reveals about the novel *Ramuntcho* (1897), and the themes of unhappiness and guilt therein. He is acquiescing to the condemnation of a life style, yet is doing so as part of a conscious decision to elevate Loti’s literary legacy. This literary legacy is the one thing he refuses to
compromise on. He is outspoken in his defence of the value of Loti’s work in itself, as is Elwood Hartman in his study *Three Nineteenth Century French Writer/Artists and the Maghreb* (1994). Both critics situate Loti not within current political debates but within the context of his own artistic conception...that of ‘Art for Art’s sake’ (Hartman: 2). Whilst acknowledging the failings of the Orientalist perception of the “Orient”, which of course is a purely imaginary entity, they nonetheless insist on the artistic validity of the search for beauty, albeit a narcissistic beauty which has little or nothing to tell us about the ostensible “subject”. Buisine indeed makes an open attack, writing in 1993 ‘il est grand temps de se libérer de cette censure que continue à imposer, quinze ans après sa publication, l’essai d’Edward Said (It’s high time to liberate ourselves from the censure, which, fifteen years after its publication, Said’s essay still continues to impose on us). He rejects the political condemnation of literature, championing the rights of fiction to free expression. He even goes as far as to make a condemnation of the Salman Rushdie fatwa as basically part of the same outrage, making a passionate defence of ‘les droits imprescriptibles de l’imaginaire romanesque et de la fiction sous toutes ses formes’ (the undisputable rights of literary imagination, and of fiction in all its forms) (*L’Orient voilé*: 264). Hartman similarly states that Loti is a Romantic in the tradition of Gautier and his belief that ‘Beauty must be divorced from Truth or Goodness’ (Hartman: 78). Loti’s writings are therefore accepted as “Orientalist” or “exotic”, yet the principles condemning such literature are totally rejected.

It would seem therefore that Loti stands guilty as charged, being at best nothing more than a successful representative of the nineteenth-century exotic travel writing genre, and at worst a representative guilty of that genre’s most abhorrent excesses. This labelling is however too simplistic and ignores or lightly dismisses the very real anti-colonial sentiment that Loti created. Inconsistency and hypocrisy are just two of the arguments used to dismiss Loti’s claims to be an ‘écrivain
engagé’ (a politically committed writer) in the service of Islam and his beloved Turkey, yet the fact remains that his influence as such was very great indeed.

Loti himself was one of the first to deny that he had any political agenda. He formed a society in 1884 called the “Mousquetaires” (Musketeers) of which the first article declares a ‘Mépris absolu de la politique et autres supercheries, escobarderies et filouteries contemporaines’ (absolute contempt for politics and other frauds, equivocations, and swindles) (Quella-Villéger: 375). What is more Loti was officially forbidden to make political comments given his position as a naval officer. He states this unequivocally: ‘De par ma situation, toute analyse, tout commentaire m’est défendu sur les questions de cet ordre [...] n’ayant pas le droit d’exprimer une opinion - fût-elle contradictoire, conforme ou bien tantôt l’un tantôt l’autre’ (Because of my position, all analysis, all commentary on questions of that kind is forbidden [...] as I don’t have the right to express an opinion – whether contradicting, conforming or even then one then the other) (Quella-Villéger: 376). This inability lasted until 1910 when he retired from the navy. This is again, however, only part of the truth. In fact Loti was to find it impossible to stay out of politics. His mentor Madame Adam, was an influential figure not only in literary but also in political circles, and as a consequence Loti was kept in close contact with current debates. The Dreyfus affair reveals this politicised side to Loti. Initially, as a loyal military officer and through his connection with Madame Adam, whose periodical ‘La Nouvelle Revue’ (The New Review) quickly took an anti-Dreyfus stance, Loti’s first reflex was to condemn Dreyfus. He signed an article with other members of the prestigious Académie Française (French Academy), in answer to Zola’s famous article ‘J’accuse’ in L’Aurore (The Dawn) of 13 January 1898, in ‘Le Jour’ (The Day) which stated ‘L’Académie française toute entière est pour la chose jugée’ (The entire Academy is for the official judgment). However, a year later he was being reprimanded by Madame
Adam for selling out to the Dreyfus supporters: ‘Vous étiez, mon cher Loti, anti-dréfusard l’été dernier, ce qui me paraissait admirable de clairvoyance patriotique dans un huguenot. [...] je souffre au profond de mon cœur de vous voir indigné pour ce traître…’ (You were, my dear Loti, anti-Dreyfus last summer, which appeared to me to be an admirable patriotic clairvoyance in a Huguenot. [...] I suffer from the bottom of my heart to see you up in arms for this traitor). This reference to Loti’s Huguenot background is key to the importance of his change of heart, as his play Judith Renaudin was being produced in November 1898. The play is about the Catholic persecution of Loti’s Huguenot ancestors following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, and Loti felt obliged to defend himself against accusations of political content in a special foreword. He was anxious to stress that no parallel should be drawn with Dreyfus’s persecution as a Jew:

Je me crois assuré, au contraire de n’avoir pas écrit un seul mot dont un catholique ait à souffrir. Quand l’idée m’est venue de composer cette pièce, il y a plus de deux ans, j’ignorais d’ailleurs en quels tristes jours elle serait représentée, et je déplore la coïncidence que je n’avais point prévue. Quant à des allusions aux événements de l’heure qui passe - on m’a prévenue que, pour certains agités, il peut s’en trouver dans mon œuvre -, je proteste hautement que je n’en ai fait aucune : ce que disent mes personnages contre certain dragoons de Louis XIV, en bonne conscience, cela peut-il viser notre armée?

(I firmly believe, on the contrary, that I have not written a single word that would offend a Catholic. When the idea came to me to write this play, more than two years ago, I was quite unaware of the sad days in which it would be performed, and I deplore the coincidence that I did not at all foresee. As for allusions to events that are now happening -, I protest loudly that I have made none: what my characters say against certain dragoons of Louis XIV, in good conscience, can that be aimed at our army?) (Quella-Villéger: 140)
In spite of this denial, and perhaps even because of it, the play was indeed taken as a political statement, intent having no influence over effect. Loti, as a renowned best-selling author, was naïve to think he could avoid such an interpretation of his work.

A similar case is to be found in the effect on public opinion Loti’s articles in *Le Figaro* had in 1883, when he described the massacre by French sailors of rebellious natives in Indochina. Loti has been credited with the role of heroic whistle-blower for his graphic accounts of the killings, in articles that turned public sentiment against colonial policies. Hargreaves shows that this was not at all Loti’s intention. He uses Loti’s correspondence, to show that the graphic descriptions were instead intended to show his admiration for the sailors: ‘j’ai fait cela naïvement, en barbare que je suis autant qu’eux, les ayant trouvés sublimes, ne sachant pas que j’écrivais pour des petites-maîtresses et croyant qu’on allait les admirer’. (I did that naively, as the barbarian that I am as much as they are, having found them sublime, not knowing that I was writing for a bunch of sissies, and thinking people would admire them)(Hargreaves: 71). In spite of this argument put forward by Hargreaves, the fact to be noted is that Loti’s influence was actually very great indeed, regardless of his intent or motivation. A look at part of one of these articles reveals the powerful emotions they might have been expected to produce:

Ceux qui avaient la poitrine crevée criaient d’une manière profonde et morbide, en vomissant leur sang sur le sable. Un, qui avaient dans la bouche la baïonnette d’un matelot, mordait cette pointe, la serrait de toutes ses forces, avec des dents saignantes qui crissaient contre le fer, - pour l’empêcher d’entrer, de lui crever la gorge. Mais le matelot était fort, et ses dents s’étaient cassées, la pointe sortie par la nuque, l’avait cloué dans le sable. On tuait presque gaiement, déjà gris, par les cris, par la course, par la
couleur du sang.
(Those whose chests were crushed cried out in a deep and morbid way, whilst vomiting their blood on the sand. One, who had the bayonet of a sailor in his mouth, was biting on its point, holding it with all his strength, with his bleeding teeth, which grated against the iron, - to stop it from going in, and piercing his neck. But the sailor was strong, and his teeth broke, the point sticking out of his neck had nailed him to the sand. They killed almost light-heartedly, already drunk, by the shouts, the running, by the colour of blood.)(Quella-Villéger: 96)

The scandal caused by these articles led to Loti’s immediate recall to France, and although by the time he arrived the trouble had blown over, he was in effect henceforth muzzled by the admiralty, which recognised the dangers of having such an influential loose canon. Even with the knowledge of Loti’s intent, and the fact that he was not writing to attack colonial expansion, the fact remains that his writing was interpreted as such. That a street in Annam, in present-day Vietnam, was named after him on his death bears witness to the power of his pen.

Such was Loti’s influence, indeed that even the British government became concerned at his openly Anglophobic writings. Resentful that the British had usurped French influence overseas, Loti caused alarm with La Mort de Philae (the Death of Philae) published in 1909, in which he uses respect for traditions as a way of attacking the English colonisers. To make matters worse for the English, he had visited Egypt as a personal guest of Mustapha Kamel, the Egyptian nationalist. Loti had also dedicated his L’Inde (sans les anglais) (India (without the English)) in 1903 to President Krüger of South Africa in tribute to what he saw as the heroic struggles of the Boers against the British. Such openly anti-British sentiment in one so wildly popular was embarrassing, and so much so that Loti was invited to Britain in
1909 as a guest of the French ambassador Paul Cambon, and Lord Redesdale. There he was introduced to Queen Alexandra and Edward VIII, and basically charmed into stopping his attacks. This was indeed an important political manoeuvre by his two hosts, as they were then setting up the *Entente Cordiale*, the agreement to forget past conflicts and cement the newly formed French and British friendship. Silencing Loti was a major diplomatic coup, and necessary for the creation of an atmosphere of mutual respect after centuries of antagonism. That he was so easily manoeuvred into setting aside his personal feelings, bears witness to his political naiveté, and perhaps also the shallow nature of his convictions, yet that such trouble had to be taken at all, reveals how seriously his opinions were taken.

It is of course with Turkey that Loti’s political role is most associated. Loti was welcomed by the Turks for his openly expressed love of their country, in spite of the dubious nature of his affair with another man’s wife as portrayed in *Aziyadé* (1879), or the criticism of the harem system as portrayed in *Les Désenchantées* (*The Disenchanted*) (1906). Recognition of Loti’s status, and the benefits he brought in the creation of a much-needed Western sympathy, led to special consideration and privileges being granted to him on his many visits to Turkey, and even to a personal audience with Sultan Mehmad V in 1910. That Loti’s sympathy was based on sentiment rather than considered thought is evident. This is commented on by the French ambassador to Turkey, Alphonse Cillière, a correspondent of Loti, who remarks on Loti’s apparent sympathy with the brutal Sultan Abdül-Hamid: ‘Abdül-Hamid, pour des raisons bien éloignées de l’idéalisme sentimental de Pierre Loti, avait entrepris de lutter “contre le torrent de feu du temps” (formule de Loti dans Les Désenchantées). C’est de cela, je crois, et de cela seul, que Loti lui savait gré’ (Abdül-Hamid, for reasons far-removed from the sentimental idealism of Pierre Loti, had undertaken to struggle “against the torrent of fire of time” (Loti’s formula in *The Disenchanted*). It is from that, I think, and from that alone,
that Loti was grateful to him) (Quella-Villéger: 404). Loti did, however, develop beyond this naïve attachment, and became fully politically engaged for Turkey following the Italian occupation of Tripoli in 1911. It is from this moment that Loti, now retired from the navy and finally free from the constraints of official censorship, fully begins to express his anti-colonial sentiment. In the newspaper *Le Figaro*, on the 3rd of January, Loti vehemently states his case. Whilst confessing to France’s colonial aggression of the past, he nevertheless passionately denounces European arrogance:

Also it is not only against the Italians that my saddened protests arise, it is against us all, so-called Christian peoples of Europe, on Earth it is always us who kill the most; with our words of brotherhood on our lips, it is us who, every year [...] put to blood and fire, in the pursuit of pillage, the old world of Africa, or Asia, and who treat people of brown or yellow race as cattle.

(Quella-Villéger: 405)

It may have taken a lifetime to get there, but there is no mistaking the change in heart. This development from the sentimental to the polemic is reflected in Loti’s writing from this time on. Political writings dominate with *Turquie Agonisante* (*Turkey in Anguish*) in 1913, the WW1 attacks on Germany in *La Hyène Enragée* (*The Rabid Hyenna*) (1916), and *L’Horreur Allemande* (*The German Horror*) (1918), and *Les Massacres d’Arménie* (*The Armenian Massacres*) in 1919. Loti was strident in his support for Turkey in the face of its dismemberment in
The Treaty of London in 1913, and tried to act as an intermediary during the war to bring the Turks onto the Allied side. The punitive Treaty of Sèvres in 1919 sees Loti at his most ardent, a lone voice speaking out for his beloved Turkey. Quella-Villéger stresses the importance of Loti’s role, going as far as to compare Loti with Zola:

Loti va s’engager de toutes ses forces pour défendre la Turquie agressée, et devenir à la cause turque ce que fut Zola pour l’Affaire Dreyfus, l’auteur de nombreux “J’accuse”, exposé aux pires insultes, mettant sa ténacité, sa pugnacité au service d’une cause à priori perdue.

(Loti would throw himself with all his strength into the defence of an aggressed Turkey. And would become for the Turkish cause what Zola was for the Dreyfus Affair, the author of many “J’accuse” articles, exposing himself to the worst insults, putting his tenacity, his fighting spirit to the service of an obviously lost cause.) (Quella-Villéger: 410)

These attacks on Loti even led to his being challenged to a duel by an outraged Bulgarian, in 1913, and became especially bitter over his defence of the notorious Turkish massacre of the Armenians of 1896. Whilst admitting the massacre took place Loti asks why only the Turks are blamed for atrocities, as such events are not restricted to them alone:

Je prétends surtout que le massacre et la persécution demeurent sourdement ancrés au fond de l’âme de toutes les races, de toutes les collectivités humaines quand elles sont poussés par un fanatisme quelconque, religieux ou antireligieux, patriotique ou simplement politique.

(I claim above all that massacre and persecution remain mysteriously anchored deep in the souls of all races, of all these human collectives when they are pushed by some fanaticism, religious or anti-religious, patriotic or simply political.) (Quella-Villéger: 461)
This defence in Les *Massacres d’Arménie* (1919) was to earn him the reputation of an apologist of massacre. At the same time Loti earned the gratitude of none less than Mustapha Kemal Atatürk as a tireless champion of the Turkish people. A letter expressing this official recognition, together with the gift of a carpet were officially presented to Loti in 1921 (Quella-Villéger : 467). Whilst remaining forever a romantic exoticist, Loti’s importance as an ‘écritain engagé’ (politically committed writer) must therefore also be acknowledged, as it evidently was by contemporary political leaders.

Claude Farrère poignantly reveals the depth of this passion for the Turkish cause in his description of the dying Loti: ‘J’eus l’honneur de sa suprême confidence. C’est moi qu’il fit à son lit de mort, […] , jurer de continuer après lui de combattre pour la Turquie, cette Turquie musulmane injustement condamnée par une Chrétienté, qui n’a plus de chrétien que le nom’ (I had the honour of his supreme confidence. It was me who he made on his death bed, swear to continue after he had gone to struggle for Turkey, an Islamic Turkey unjustly condemned by a Christianity, which is no longer Christian in anything but name) (Farrère : 19-20). The sincerity of Loti’s convictions is therefore not in doubt. Farrère’s blind belief in his idol is, however, just as misleading as the sweeping condemnation of Loti as a facile exoticist.

In conclusion, I would therefore say that recognition of the complexity of Loti’s stance is necessary. He can be seen as a man of his time, but the drawing of a simplistic black and white picture is not possible. He was capable of immense hypocrisy, as is shown on his return to France with 800 kilograms of artefacts taken in the looting of Peking after the Boxer uprising: at the time Loti justified himself to his wife by saying that he bought everything from the looters, and didn’t participate in the looting himself. Whilst, as this shows, he was in many ways very much a man of his time, it is perhaps more honest to see Loti as an observer, sometimes participating, sometimes condemning,
Peter Turberfield

dr the product of an imperfect world. He was not responsible for the age in which he lived, and was in many ways was a progressive. As Quella-Villéger notes ‘Loti est tout l’opposé de Kipling [...]. Pierre Loti ne croit pas à la mission civilisatrice de l’Europe, au “fardeau de l’homme blanc”’ (Loti is the complete opposite of Kipling [...]. Pierre Loti does not believe in the civilizing mission of Europe, in “the White man’s burden”) (Quella-Villéger: 389). He is also the opposite of another contemporary, Robert Louis-Stevenson, who describes natives in In the South Seas (1889) as developing under the benign influence of colonial rule. Loti believed other cultures should be left with their own ways and traditions, and never ceased to rail against the spread of a Westernisation which he saw as rendering everywhere the same: ‘Hélas! hélas! qui nous sauvera de la pacotille moderne, du faux luxe, de l’uniformité et des imbéciles!’ (Alas! Alas! Who will save us from the shoddy modern world, from false luxury and imbeciles!)

It is also disingenuous to deny the development in Loti’s work, as his early work and later polemical writing have very little in common. Rather than just forming a simplistic judgment, as has so often been done, a recognition of the existence of two seemingly contradictory trends, that of the ‘écrivain exotique’, and that of the ‘écrivain engagé’ needs to be made. Even if Loti is at times naive to the point of being ridiculous, as can be said of his willingness to fight a duel over his support for Turkey, his sincerity is never in doubt. This sincerity is what makes Loti, the Quixotian dreamer admirable, especially as he willingly invited widespread ridicule and animosity with his unpopular support for Islamic causes. Honoured by both Egypt and Turkey on his death for his political support, and given a National funeral by France in recognition of his literary status, Loti must be appreciated in both capacities, however seemingly incompatible. His works are undeniably exotic/Orientalist, but his contemporary political influence must be seen as equally indisputable.
Notes

Works Cited
Loti, Pierre. 1879. *Aziyadé* in *Romans: Collection Omnibus*.
Peter Turberfield

—. 1881. *Le Roman d’un spahi in Romans: Collection Omnibus*.
—. 1906. *Les Désenchantées in Romans: Collection Omnibus*.


