

Pierre Loti's Testimony on 19th-Century Montenegro

Abstract: The primary goal of this paper is to highlight the significance of travel writing for the history and culture of a country, as well as its role in fostering bilateral relations between the author's homeland and the country depicted in terms of its nature, culture, social, economic, or political conditions and events. In this context, the study focuses on the works of French writer Pierre Loti (real name Julien Viaud), who visited Montenegro in October and November 1880. Loti arrived in Montenegro, in the Bay of Kotor, on October 4, 1880, as an officer aboard the armored ship *Friedland*. This vessel was part of an international squadron composed of representatives from the Great Powers, with the mission of pressuring the Ottoman Empire to cede the town of Ulcinj to Montenegro in accordance with the decisions of the 1878 Berlin Congress. Loti documented his impressions of Montenegro, its people, and their resistance against the Ottoman Empire in two short stories: "Pascuala Ivanovich" and "*Voyage de quatre officiers au Monténégro*" (Journey of Four Officers to Montenegro). These works were included in his book *Les Fleurs d'ennui* (The Flowers of Boredom), published in Paris in 1882. Montenegro expressed its respect and gratitude toward Loti in 1934 by erecting a commemorative plaque in Baošići to honor his stay in that coastal town. In this context, the initial part of the paper provides a conceptual analysis and definition of travel writing, situating it between autobiography and scientific-historical literature. Since the study aims to emphasize the content and significance of Pierre Loti's work, the second section presents key biographical facts about Loti, along with details of his stay in Montenegro, including its purpose, context, and descriptions. This is followed by an analysis of Loti's works concerning Montenegro, specifically examining his depiction of the country in the late 19th century and the role these works played in its international promotion and in bolstering Montenegrin-French relations. In the concluding reflections, the paper underscores the scholarly, social, and practical significance of the findings, emphasizing the value of travel writing – despite its subjective elements – as a source of historical and cultural insight into a country.

Keywords: Pierre Loti, travel writing, Montenegro, Journey to Montenegro, France

Introduction

Situated between fiction and reality, objectivity and subjectivity, the real and the fantastic, as well as between literary expression and histor-

ical documentation, travel literature holds a unique place. These texts provide vivid portrayals and reflective descriptions of events, people, customs, cultures, and landscapes encountered by their authors – travellers who journeyed for personal or professional reasons. The travel writings of French author and academic Pierre Loti offer such depictions of Montenegro, capturing its natural scenery, traditions, and the celebrated beauty of Montenegrin women. In doing so, Loti's narratives serve as a testament to a particular historical moment in the aftermath of the Congress of Berlin in 1878.

The aim of this paper is to explore the significance of travel writing as a valuable source of historical insight and cultural understanding. It positions travel literature as not only a narrative form but also a vehicle for fostering international relations between the traveller's homeland and the host country – in this case, between France and nineteenth-century Montenegro. The first chapter presents a conceptual analysis of the travelogue, its role in literature and historiography, and the importance of critically evaluating its credibility as a historical source in terms of authenticity and objectivity. While the travel writer seeks to persuade the reader of the truthfulness of their experiences and interpretations, it is the responsibility of the researcher to discern and contextualize both the subjective and objective dimensions of the narrative in assessing its historical value.

To better understand Pierre Loti's literary motivations, stylistic characteristics, and intellectual context, the second chapter offers a biographical overview, a survey of his most notable works, and a discussion of his literary legacy. It also examines how Loti's reception has shifted over time – from marginalization during the rise of Surrealism to a renewed scholarly interest in the 1960s.

The final chapters are devoted to Loti's time in Montenegro, including the anecdote about the transformation of his name from Julien Viaud to Pierre Loti in Cetinje. Special attention is given to his works "Pascuala Ivanovich" and "Voyage de quatre officiers au Monténégro", in which he conveys his impressions of the country. Selected excerpts from these texts are analyzed to highlight the role of Loti's writing in deepening Franco-Montenegrin cultural relations. In recognition of his contribution, a commemorative plaque was placed in the coastal town of Baošići, where Loti had once resided.

Travel Writing as a Historical Source

Despite numerous conceptual interpretations offered in literary theory and scholarly literature, a universally accepted definition of the travelogue remains elusive. What is commonly agreed upon, however, is that travel writing – like biographies, autobiographies, literary reportage, memoirs, and diaries – belongs to the domain of literary-scientific prose. These works blend artistic and scholarly expression, often composed in a popular scientific style (Pašić-Kordić, 2016: 3). Accordingly, Galić (2005: 111, as cited in Pašić-Kordić, 2016: 3) defines the travelogue as a unique prose genre that merges two modes of expression: on the one hand, subjective impressions and personal perceptions of places, cultures, peoples, customs, and histories; on the other, objective (scientific) data from disciplines such as history, ethnography, and geography.

Pašić-Kordić (2016: 5) notes that classical literary theory often marginalized travel writing, viewing it as a genre of limited aesthetic value. Emphasis was placed on its historical, educational, and didactic functions, while its literary merit and theoretical significance were largely overlooked. In this context, Tomić (2010: 591, in Pašić-Kordić, 2016: 4) describes the travelogue as a documentary form that recounts events, people, and impressions encountered by the author while traveling. It spans various discursive modes, from the historical and essayistic to the lyrical and emotional, and includes a wide range of formats – letters, diaries, memoirs, educational texts, and lyrical-expository works.

One of the key challenges in interpreting travel literature arises from the frequent conflation of the author with the narrator, which undermines the narrative nature of the text. This often results in an uncritical reception of the author's perspective as purely objective truth. Such a reading becomes particularly problematic when the travelogue is regarded as "scientific knowledge," and readers accept its content without skepticism. Two authors, for instance, may portray Egypt in entirely different ways, shaped by their unique perspectives and experiences. This traditional approach has contributed to the marginalization of travel writing and impeded its critical study as a genre (Pašić-Kordić, 2016: 8). Thus, scholars now emphasize that travel literature must first satisfy the criteria of artistic expression, while its documentary function should remain within the limits of general knowledge and cultural context (Ibid, 10).

In contemporary contexts, travel writing often takes on a commercial or even trivial character. The proliferation of guides on "how to write and sell a travel book" testifies to its commodification (Ibid, 10).

Nevertheless, this development does not diminish its scholarly value. On the contrary, within postmodern critical thought, travel writing has found renewed relevance and legitimacy as a subject of academic inquiry (Ibid, 11).

As Consolini (1987: 77, in Popović, 2015: 4) observes, travel writing was once “banished from the literary Olympus” due to the non-literary backgrounds of its authors and the presumed lack of artistic merit. Similarly, Popović (Ibid) argues that the documentary nature of travelogues led to their treatment as mere sources of factual information about particular countries and peoples, or as repositories of biographical data about their authors. On the one hand, travelogues serve as objective testimonies of historical events, geographic features, and cultural practices; on the other, they are inherently shaped by the author’s subjective interpretation. These narratives often incorporate both realistic and fantastical elements (Popović, 2015: 5), with the line between them sometimes difficult to discern.

Non-fictional genres, in principle, aim to present reality as it is – free of personal judgment, emotion, or bias (Ibid, 6). However, travel writers frequently seek to persuade readers of the objectivity and authenticity of their accounts. It is essential, therefore, to acknowledge the interpretive nature of such works – the author selectively curates the information presented and determines its framing. These choices may reflect ideological or political predispositions, whether consciously or unconsciously (Ibid, 7). As Popović (Ibid, 8) concludes, “every narration of reality is, in fact, a personal projection of reality.” This is echoed by Holland and Huggan (1998: 8, in Popović), who describe travel writing as “factual fiction” – works that recount real places and events but through a lens of personal experience and interpretation.

What qualifies a travelogue as literature is not merely its subject matter, but its style and language. Unlike scientific or technical texts – or even tourist guides – travel writing invites subjectivization, dramatization, and aesthetic expression (Ibid, 8–9). The fundamental distinction between a novel and a travelogue lies in the reader’s perception. While a novel is accepted as fiction, a travelogue is approached as an account of lived experience (Ibid, 8). Brillì (2006: 29, in Ibid, 12) notes that a travelogue may offer an abundance of factual detail or serve primarily as a deeply personal narrative. This duality underscores the need to account for subjective elements, especially when considering travel writing as a historical source for understanding particular processes and events. Ac-

cordingly, caution must be exercised when interpreting and presenting data from travelogues in academic and professional research.

Regarding its genre classification, Borm (2012: 617) conceptualizes travel literature as a framework that enables the identification and comparison of multiple transitions between different writing modes and genres – shaped largely by the author’s identity and intended purpose. This fluidity is evident in the wide array of terms used to refer to travel writing: “travel book,” “travel narrative,” “travel sketch,” “travel memoir,” “travel tale,” “travelogue,” “meta-travelogue,” “traveller’s story,” “travel diary,” “journey,” “travel writings,” “travel literature,” “literature of travel,” and “the travel writing genre” (Ibid, 607). Borm thus proposes “travel literature” as an umbrella term encompassing all texts focused on travel, regardless of whether they include fictional elements. In this sense, both travel books and travelogues are integral components of this literary category (Ibid, 607–608). Similarly, Elvio Guagnini (2007: 29, in Popović, 2015: 5) refers to this body of literature as an “archipelago of diverse writings by travellers who recount their movements, adventures and misadventures, as well as their collected impressions.”

The Lotus Blooms Alone: The Story of Pierre Loti

French writer Pierre Loti, born Louis-Marie-Julien Viaud, was born into a Protestant family on January 14, 1850, in the historic town of Rochefort, where he received his early education. Some sources note that, due to poor health, he was largely home-schooled until the age of twelve (Berrong, 2015: 1). Even as a child, he exhibited exceptional sensitivity to external influences – a trait that would accompany him throughout his life. It was this sensitivity and introversion that earned him the nickname “Loti,” said to reference the Indian lotus flower that blooms discreetly (Cambon, 16). Conversely, Lainović (Loti, 2008: 7) suggests that he received the nickname from three young attendants of Queen Pōmare during his 1872 stay in Tahiti.

In his autobiographical work *Le Roman d’un enfant*, Loti offers a vivid and affectionate portrait of a childhood marked by love and care. At the age of seventeen, he joined the French naval academy Le Borda, gradually advancing in his maritime career. At thirty, he began to document and publish his unique experiences, starting with *Aziyadé*, a narrative set in Constantinople. This was followed by *Le Mariage de Loti* (1880), a romanticized Polynesian idyll, and *Le Roman d’un spahi* (1881), a melancholic account of a soldier’s life in Senegambia.



Figure 1: Studio Delphin, Rochefort: Portrait of Pierre Loti
(Source: L'éditorial du n°97 – Histoires Littéraires)

Following his visit to Montenegro, he published the short story collection *Fleurs d'ennui* (1882), which included two stories based on his stay in the region: “Pascuala Ivanovich” and “Voyage de quatre officiers au Monténégro” (Jovanović, 2020: 101).

The subsequent year saw the release of one of his most acclaimed novels, *Mon frère Yves*, depicting the life of a French sailor navigating the seas. Loti's popularity further surged when he exposed several scandals involving France's involvement in the Tonkin campaign, particularly during the conquest of Hué. This temporarily stalled his naval career, though he returned to literature with *Pêcheurs d'Islande* (1886), portraying the harsh lives of Breton fishermen.

In 1887, he published *Propos d'exil*, a series of short stories reflecting on exotic locales, and *Madame Chrysanthème*, a novel delving into Japanese customs. Throughout the 1890s, Loti continued producing travel literature, including *Au Maroc*, recounting his journey with the

French ambassador to Fez, *Le Livre de la pitié et de la mort*, and *Fantôme d'Orient*, a continuation of *Aziyadé*. His travels to the Holy Land inspired a trilogy – *Le Désert*, *Jérusalem*, and *La Galilée* – published between 1895 and 1896. This period also saw the publication of *Ramentcho* (1897), a novel centered on Basque traditions, and *Figures et choses qui passaient*, a collection of reflective essays. In 1902, he published *Les Derniers jours de Pékin*, based on his experiences in China.

On May 21, 1891, Loti was elected to the prestigious Académie française¹. After this honor, his literary activity diminished somewhat.² He died on June 9, 1923, in Hendaye, France, and was buried in Saint-Pierre, on the island of Oléron, in the courtyard of his maternal ancestors' home. Access to his grave is reserved for recognized scholars of his work (Loti, 2008: 9).

On the centenary of his death in 2023, Vercier (2024) reflected on the fluctuating literary reputation of Pierre Loti. Celebrated during his lifetime, his works were later marginalized, as evolving literary trends and shifts in publishing eclipsed his once-prominent position. The Surrealists, for example, dismissed him as a relic of the past. However, the 1960s marked the beginning of renewed academic interest – especially due to Marcel Proust's admiration for Loti's novels.

This revival gained further traction thanks to Roland Barthes, who published an essay on *Aziyadé* in *Critique* (1972), later included in *Nouveaux essais critiques*. Notably, Barthes stated that he “felt no need to justify his interest in Loti” (*il n'éprouve pas le besoin de justifier son intérêt pour Loti*) (Vercier, 2024: 6). In 1973, Loti's home in Rochefort was opened to the public, further encouraging public and academic engagement. That same year, the Musée Bonnat in Bayonne hosted an exhibition dedicated to illusion and fantasy, featuring artists who viewed Loti not only as a subject of photographs, but as a creator in his own right – someone who both drew and took photographs (Quella-Villéger & Vercier, 2012 in Vercier 2024: 6).

This laid the foundation for a true renaissance of interest in Loti during the 1980s, when his works became accessible to a broader audience through new editions of his *Romans et Voyages* and various an-

¹ His opponent in the election was Émile Zola (Loti, 2008: 8)

² Over the course of his life, Loti published around forty books, including those mentioned above, as well as *Le Château de la Belle-au-bois-dormant* (1910), *Quelques aspects du vertige mondial* (1907), *L'Horreur allemande* (1918), *Première jeunesse* (1919), and *Un jeune officier pauvre* among others. For a more comprehensive overview of his literary output, see: Académie française – Pierre Loti.

notated releases (GF-Flammarion, Folio classique). The posthumous publication of his diary reinforced his self-perception as “a writer without imagination, who could only write what he had lived through” (*être un écrivain sans imagination, qui ne pouvait écrire que ce qu’il ressentait*) (Vercier 2024: 7). In this light, Vercier proposes the term *lotification* to describe a form of autofiction – dominant in literature since the 1990s – that is grounded in personal experience.

Today, Loti is no longer regarded merely as a popular novelist of his era, but as a distinctive literary figure whose works invite new critical perspectives and deserve serious reconsideration within literary studies.

Scepi (2024: 35) highlights Loti’s restless spirit – a traveller who ventured everywhere, yet belonged nowhere. Even Loti’s house in Rochefort, built as a personal museum and purported refuge, fails to encapsulate an identity formed across many lands. Quella-Villéger and Vercier (2001: 65 in Scepi 2024) articulate this paradox of the traveller: one “condemned to a ceaseless search for another self, for a double who would soon become more real than the old self” (*autre moi, d’un double qui, bientôt, sera plus vrai que l’ancien moi*).

Where Loti Was Born Again: A Montenegrin Autumn

The study of the Pierre Loti’s works represents the central focus of the scholarly and creative work of Dr Risto B. Lainović (Podgorica, 24 February 1937 – Podgorica, 29 December 2014), professor of French language and literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš. Lainović earned his doctorate at the Sorbonne in 1977, defending a dissertation entitled *Romantic Themes in the Works of Pierre Loti*. In 2007, at the French Embassy in Belgrade, he was awarded the prestigious *Ordre des Palmes Académiques*.

Loti’s works were also translated by Sophie Daniel from Bordeaux, who rendered *Le Mariage de Loti* and *Pêcheur d’Islande* into Serbian, and by Rosanda Vlahović, whose 2008 translations included “Pascuala Ivanovich” and “Voyage de quatre officiers de l’escadre internationale au Monténégro” (Jovanović, 2020: 101). Additionally, Budo Simonović dedicated a special chapter to Pierre Loti, titled “Love beneath the ‘terrible remnants of chaos’”, in his book *Za njima će vjekovi hramati*, reflecting on Loti’s stay in Montenegro and his works about the country.

Simonović (2020, pp. 409–411) points out that Loti adopted his famous pseudonym while in Montenegro. Indeed, the name “Loti” appeared for the first time on October 2, 1880, when he published an ar-

ticle titled “L’Affaire d’Ulcinj in Le Monde Illustré.” Fifteen days later, he published another piece, “Le Prince héréditaire du Monténégro en visite à l’escadre internationale,” dedicated to Prince Danilo, the son of Prince Nikola. From Cetinje, Loti wrote a letter to French author Alphonse Daudet describing the city, Prince Nikola – who “paces up and down” – the Montenegrin people, and the landscape. This letter was later included in his *Journal intime*. From that point onward, he consistently used the name Loti, which led Professor Lainović to suggest that “Pierre Loti was in fact born in Cetinje” (Ibid, 411).

Julien Viaud arrived in Montenegro – specifically the Bay of Kotor – in the autumn of 1880, serving as an officer aboard the French ironclad *Friedland*. His presence was part of a larger geopolitical context in the Balkans and Europe. Although Montenegro had been internationally recognized as an independent state at the 1878 Congress of Berlin, the Ottoman Empire refused to hand over the coastal town of Ulcinj. Consequently, an international naval squadron, including France, was dispatched to the Adriatic to pressure the Ottomans to cede the town. As Loti wrote (2008: 20): “...it is this international squadron that, at this very moment, preoccupies politicians in every European cabinet.”

While stationed across from Baošići, Loti met a young and beautiful shepherdess named Paskvala Ivanović, and their relationship was later fictionalized in “Pascuala Ivanovich”. His sensual and earthy descriptions of her – such as “she smells of hay, of mountain thyme, and a bit of the sheep she tends” and “she must have had encounters with shepherds from Baošići...” – were considered scandalous by some authors. However, Lainović highlights the poetic quality of Loti’s writing, describing it as a melancholic tale of love, from their meeting and her initial hesitation, to her refusal of his money, the romance that ensued, and his sorrowful departure: “...my heart suddenly tightens at the thought of leaving without seeing her again” (Loti, 2008: 14–15).

Loti also praised her moral virtues and expressed deep affection for the “little savage” (Ibid, 42). “Suddenly a wave of nausea overcomes me, an unexpected tightness in the chest at the thought of leaving without seeing her – and I start to run again” (Ibid, 62). She even returned the red silk scarf, the gold coins, and the icon he had gifted her.

In “Pascuala Ivanovich”, Loti paints a picture of Montenegro: “This land of Slavs seems like something out of a dream” (Ibid, 20); “Autumn is a magical season in these Mediterranean parts. The fields are fragrant, the woods splendid. The sun lingers here to ripen sweet figs, pomegran-

ates, and oranges – every day it warms the mountain passes, creating a kind of earthly paradise” (Ibid, 38). He describes villages: “From place to place, houses cling to the edges – households or crumbling Venetian estates, or more likely, little inns where fishermen gather around tables and coffee is served at the door like in the Orient. When I leave this place, I will remember them for a long time... along with these good people...” (Ibid, 44).

Even the harshness of village life carries a charm for him: “The cigarette is strong, the coffee bitter, the room where I’ve been hosted dirty. And all of it feels wonderful...” (Ibid, 49). In describing the hut of Paskvala’s masters, he remarks on the blend of poverty and wildness: “...the luxury loved by these Slavs who have remained primitive in their mountains – icons and gleaming weapons amid peculiar squalor” (Ibid, 59). Montenegrins appear “like hajduks, dressed in velvet embroidered with gold...” (Ibid, 22).

He also notes the international dynamic aboard the squadron: “This is our special fleet; beside us, the French, there are the Austrians, Russians, Germans, Italians – all currently friends, resting peacefully on the blue waters” (Ibid, 21). He writes that “we French, along with the English, receive the most visits. These people seem to sense that the others are inferior to us” (Ibid, 22), and muses on peculiar friendships: “It’s strange how the French and Austrians have become close. In this Babel-like squadron, where we are forced into camaraderie, sympathies and national rivalries still emerge: it’s well-known that the French mingle with the Austrians, and the Italians with the Germans” (Ibid, 40). National stereotypes abound: “The noisy French, the cold-blooded English, the good-natured Austrians, the theatrical Italians, the cunning Germans, the drunken Russians – they either befriend or brawl, sing and raise hell” (Ibid, 45).

The story “Voyage de quatre officiers de l’escadre internationale au Monténégro” recounts a journey from Baošići to Cetinje, rich with descriptions of landscapes, customs, people, and architecture. Loti writes that Montenegro carries “a sorrow unlike any other” (Ibid, 86), and calls the road from Njeguši to Cetinje a “lunar landscape” where “everywhere lies the same grey stone of Herzegovina and Montenegro, where nothing greens, nothing grows” (Ibid, 87). Upon arriving in Cetinje, he describes Prince Nikola’s habit of greeting the public in person, Cetinje’s small post office, printing house, hospital, and its houses – modest yet adorned with icons and richly decorated relics of saints (Ibid, 99–100).

Wedding rituals and the prince's chapel – “small and low” (Ibid, 103) – are also vividly portrayed.

He questions whether these Slavs can ever become a great nation, expressing doubt (104). He reflects critically on Montenegrin gender roles: women carry heavy loads, dig with shovels, while their husbands – idle and proud – beat them (Ibid, 106). He does, however, admire the endurance of both men and women, who can walk all day without tiring (p. 79), and praises the ornateness of their weaponry (Ibid, 109). The traditional red Montenegrin cap, bordered in black (symbolizing Ottoman rule) and bearing Prince Nikola's initials (H.I.), also captures his attention (Ibid, 109–110).

Though Loti claims to side with the Ottomans and Albanians, and says he cannot be “enchanted by anything in Montenegrin lands” (Ibid, 98), Lainović argues that Loti's affection for Montenegro is evident – especially in his portrayal of Paskvala and patriarchal customs (Ibid, 12). While Loti doubted the country's potential for modernization, this, Lainović explains, stems from the author's admiration for what is natural and authentic (Ibid, 13).

In addition to his words, Loti enriched his book with his own drawings, including: *L'escadre internationale réfugiée dans la baie de Kotor, le 5 octobre, Le village de Perast, Au Monténégro (1er novembre 1880), Début du voyage au Monténégro, à la porte de Kotor (novembre 1880), and Reliques de Saint-Pierre et icônes dans la chapelle du prince Nikola* (Ibid).

Besides Loti, many others were enchanted by the Bay of Kotor – Portuguese poet Flavio Ebozenze, Russian Count Pyotr Alekseyevich Tolstoy, Archduke Maximilian of Austria, and most South Slavic writers: Njegoš, Dositej, Vuk, Marko Miljanov, Aleksa Šantić, Ivo Andrić, Desanka Maksimović, and many more (Simonović, 2020: 414).

Eleven years after Loti's death, in October 1934, a marble plaque was installed in Baošići bearing a French inscription: “In memory of Pierre Loti, the French writer who stayed in Paskvala's land from 4 to 31 October 1880.” The plaque was erected by the Society of the Friends of France and remains a site of remembrance and Franco-Montenegrin friendship, frequently visited by diplomats and dignitaries.

Conclusion

The travelogue of Pierre Loti about Montenegro encompasses not only biographical and autobiographical elements, but also elements of fiction and documentary-historical material. On one hand, Lainović

warns us not to take the data in Loti's works as pure truth, since he is an incorrigible romantic filled with fiction and imagination. On the other hand, his descriptions stand as a testimony to the geographical and civilizational space of Montenegro at the end of the 19th century, immediately following its liberation from Ottoman rule. The portrayal of Montenegro, emerging from centuries of Turkish domination and subjugation, becomes a valuable source of information once the "fictional" elements are removed.

Beyond offering a testimony to Montenegro's landscape, the specific characteristics and appearance of Montenegrin men and women, the significance of sacred icons adorned with golden and silver elements, weapons as symbols of importance and power, gender relations, and his personal romantic involvement with the coastal woman Paskvala, Loti also describes the dynamics within the international fleet and offers nationalistic qualifications about his colleagues.

For those wishing to immerse themselves in descriptions of the Bay of Kotor, Njeguši, Cetinje, and the Montenegrin people in 1880, Loti's work serves as an excellent portal. It is not a "frozen" portrayal of Montenegro, as he describes it, but rather a sea governed by the currents of stone, plains, as well as oranges and olives. All of this contributed to the affirmation of Franco-Montenegrin relations, while the memory of Loti's stays and his creative work about Montenegro is preserved from oblivion.

The wealth of information provided in his work constitutes an important resource for multidisciplinary research. This article serves as a reminder of the multifaceted significance of studying travel writing: as the relationship of a given author towards the places they visited, a testimony to the spirit of the time and customs, but also potential stereotypes, a source of popularizing a given country among foreign audiences, and stimulating interest in that country and its people. All of this highlights the undeniable historical and cultural value of the travelogue.

As numerous authors have noted, travel writing often contains a complex mixture of fact and fiction. Writers like Popović and Brill highlight the dual nature of travelogues, blending factual detail with deeply personal narrative, and caution against taking the accounts as purely historical. Such works are best understood as "factual fiction" that reflects both the reality of a place and the personal experience and interpretation of the writer. This inherent subjectivity calls for careful consideration when using travelogues as historical sources.

This interplay of fiction and fact in Loti's work ultimately reflects his unique literary approach, which blends the personal and the historical. As Vercier suggests, Loti's self-perception as "a writer without imagination, who could only write what he had lived through" emphasizes his inclination toward autobiographical fiction. This approach, which Vercier terms "lotification," underscores the autobiographical nature of much of Loti's work, a characteristic that resonates with contemporary forms of autofiction that are grounded in personal experience.

However, beyond its literary artistry and autobiographical richness, Loti's travelogue also stands as a significant historical document – one that captures a pivotal moment in Montenegrin history. Through his romanticized yet keenly observed lens, Loti provides invaluable insight into the political atmosphere, cultural identity, and key figures of post-Ottoman Montenegro. His reflections, while laced with imagination, reveal the contours of a society in transition – emerging from subjugation into sovereignty and negotiating its place on the European stage. Thus, despite its subjective nature, Loti's work remains not only a testament to personal experience but also a layered chronicle of a specific historical time, set of events, and people – offering researchers and readers alike a textured understanding of Montenegro's late 19th-century reality.

References

1. Berrong, R. M. "Loti, Pierre (Julien Viaud) (1850–1923)." GLBTQ, Inc., 2015. https://www.glbtc.com/literature/loti_p_L.pdf.
2. Borm, Jan. "Određivanje puta: O putopisu, putničkoj književnosti i terminologiji." *Philologia Mediana* 5 (2013). https://www.npao.ni.ac.rs/files/863/Odredjivanje_puta_-_o_putopisu_putnickoj_kn_i_terminologiji_4a8f8.pdf.
3. Brillì, Attilio. *Il viaggio in Italia. Storia di una grande tradizione culturale*. Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2006.
4. Consolini, Constanza. "Reisebeschreibung nel Settecento tedesco." In *La letteratura di viaggio*, edited by M. E. d'Agostini. Milan: Guerini, 1987.
5. Deretić, Jovan. *Istorija srpske književnosti*. Belgrade: Nolit, 1983.
6. Galić, Sanja. *Književno-jezični pojmovnik: Priručnik za učenike i studente*. Zagreb: Znanje, 2005.

7. Guagnini, Elvio. "L'arcipelago adriatico: Forme e generi della letteratura di viaggio." In *Questioni odepatiche: Modelli e momenti del viaggio adriatico*, edited by G. Scianatico and R. Ruggiero. Bari: Palomar, 2007.
8. Holland, Patrick, and Graham Huggan. *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998.
9. Jovanović, Ivana. *Francuski jezik i kultura u Crnoj Gori (1914–1941)*. Podgorica: University of Montenegro, 2020. https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_3/objava_140662/fajlovi/FRANCUSKI%20JEZIK%20I%20KULTURA%20U%20CRNOJ%20GORI%20_1914-1941_.pdf.
10. Khashan, Ali K. A. "Pierre Loti's Journey across Sinai to Jerusalem, 1894." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 43 (2010): 18–30.
11. "L'éditorial du n°97." *Histoires Littéraires*. Accessed [date]. <https://histoires-litteraires.fr/leditorial-du-n97/>.
12. Loti, Pierre. *An Iceland Fisherman*. Translated by J. Cambon. Classica Libris, 2023. <https://teabooks.rs/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Pierre-Loti-An-Iceland-Fisherman.pdf>.
13. Pašić, Mirzana Kodric. "Tradicionalno razumijevanje putopisa i putopisne proze." Paper presented at The Second Sarajevo International Conference on Social Sciences, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 2016. <https://www.ius.edu.ba/conference/26MirzanaPasic-KodricBosnian-IUSconference.pdf>.
14. Popović, Olivera. "Italijanski putopis XIX vijeka o Crnoj Gori." PhD diss., University of Montenegro, Faculty of Philosophy, 2015. <https://www.ucg.ac.me/radovi/28/Olivera%20Popovic.pdf>.
15. Popović, Tanja. *Rečnik književnih termina*. Belgrade: Logos Art / Edicija, 2010.
16. Raspopović, Radoslav. *Berlinski ugovor 1878*. 2nd ed. Podgorica: Istorijski institut Univerziteta Crne Gore, 2019.
17. Scepi, Henri. "Pierre Loti, le paradoxe du voyageur." *Histoires Littéraires* 24, no. 97 (2024).
18. Simonović, Branislav. *Za njima će vjekovi hramati*. Cetinje: Oktoih; Štampar Makarije, 2020.
19. Vercier, Bruno. "Loti 100 ans." *Histoires Littéraires* 24, no. 97 (2024): 5–7.
20. Vercier, Bruno, and Alain Quella-Villéger. *Aziyadé suivi de Fantôme d'Orient*. Paris: Gallimard, 2001.