

**THE USE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERS IN THE WORKS OF  
JEAN-MARIE GYSTAVE LE CLEZIO**

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**Abstract:** The objective of this article is to identify the philosophical and aesthetic foundations of the works of J.-M. G. Le Clezio and determine the specifics of the artistic realization of the views of a prose writer in a philosophical and allegorical novel.

**Keywords:** French literature, Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio, material admiration, philosophical and allegorical novel, Spinoza, Ethics, rationalism, matter, homo sapiens, existentialism.

J.-M. G. Le Clezio is one of the most important contemporary French novelists. Since his literary debut in 1963 and recognition as a Nobel laureate in 2008, the author has published more than forty works: novels, collections of novels and short stories, essays, children's books, autobiographical and biographical works and translations.

J.-M.G. Le Clezio was born in 1940, descended from a Breton family that settled in the 18th century on the island of St. Mauritius. His father was an English military doctor who served in Nigeria during World War II. Jean-Marie Gustave and his older brother were raised by their mother during these years and lived at her parents' home in the south of France.

Le Clezio's family moved to Africa to his father in 1948 for a short period of time. The novelist would later write in an autobiographical essay, "The African. Traits and Portraits." (L'Africain. Traits et portraits, 2004), "meeting with my almost unknown parent is one of the most important events of my life, arrival in Africa was a step into the anteroom of the adult world". It was at that time, at the age of eight, that the boy first began to compose poems, fairy tales, short stories and novellas, and at the age of seventeen he had already earned a bachelor's degree in literature and philosophy. J.-M.G. Le Clezio studied in Nice, Bristol, London, and received a doctorate for his study of a Mexican state.

As the novelist himself admits in one of his interviews, for him writing is "the meaning of life, conditioned by an inner need, a defense mechanism against the consequences of violent, aggressive and 'artificial' Western society".

J.-M.G. Le Clezio taught at the University of Albuquerque (New Mexico, USA) and Bangkok, traveled extensively in South America, Africa, Southeast Asia. Among the countries in which he lived for extended periods of time are not only the United States, but also Thailand, Japan, and Nigeria. The writer studied the different cultures of these countries, and found a real holistic world in which a person feels differently than in the familiar and sullen space of civilization.

The literary heritage of J.-M.G. Le Clezio is inexhaustible for scientific research. Its volume, diversity and complexity are the target for scholars in various perspectives. The works of J.-M.G. Le Clezio are attributed to existentialism, then to neo-romanticism, then to structuralism, then to realism, then to postmodernism.

However, for our study the greatest significance is the fact that in his prose the author raises moral and philosophical problems, addresses universal issues of being and its cognition. The Works “Materials ecstasy” (*L'Extase matérielle*, 1967), *Terra Amata*, 1967, *The Book of Escapes* (*Le Livre des fuites*, 1969), *The War* (*La Guerre*, 1970), *The Giants* (*Les Géants*, 1973), *Voyages de l'autre côté* (*Voyages de l'autre côté, nouvelles*, 1975), *The Unknown on Earth* (*L'Inconnu sur la Terre*, 1978) have a pronounced parable-allegorical poetics.

The writer's worldview was influenced by various systems of thought. He was fond of Greco-Roman mythology, philosophy and religious systems of India, as well as the ideas of the Chinese school of mystical contemplation - Zen. According to the type of thinking J.-M. G. Le Clezio belonged to pantheists, animists, pseudoanimists or materialists. The author himself was suspicious of any system of thought. However, despite this, it is possible to identify some of his philosophical preferences: first of all, materialism and animism, which are reflected in his artistic works. The writer believes that matter is the only basis of reality, but this basis has certain abilities called subjective, such as thinking. This fact leads to the affirmation of the holistic consciousness of the cosmos, to the search for the self, to the reflection of the being in the universe.

Thus, a significant influence on the worldview of J.-M.G. Le Clezio was the rationalist philosophy of B. Spinoza. Spinoza. Both the French writer and the Dutch philosopher emphasize the materiality of human nature in an interconnected and interdependent universe. Like B. Spinoza, the French novelist explores the universal laws that govern the existence of all beings on this planet, including humans. Moreover, J.-M. G. Le Clezio and B. Spinoza. Spinoza compel the subject to accept life as it really is, as opposed to illusions that conceal fundamental, ontological realities. Deconstructing anthropocentric and religious ideology, opposite to elementary ecological truths, the French writer in his essay “Material Ecstasy” (*L'Extase*

Matérielle, 1967) states: “We build the fortress walls of our systems, our beautiful phrases and our imaginary paradises; we are the habits of our houses of illusion”. Both thinkers see salvation for man in the “earthly-divine”. Like B. Spinoza, J.-M. G. Le Clezio constantly urges the reader to delve deeper into the essence of matter. As the French novelist writes: “We need to take a closer look at matter. Rich, virtuous, painful matter, a tragic battlefield. You, you are its target.” These words strike a deep existential anguish expressed by the author, which resembles the burning pain of his heroes of works such as Adam Polo, Beaumont and Roche.

Just as B. Spinoza wrote in Ethics, Le Clezio argues that the universe is made up of matter and its modifications. Rather than attempting to separate oneself from it, which cannot be achieved, both authors urge the subject to accept this scientific reality. B. Spinoza explains that “matter is everywhere the same <...>, its parts indistinguishable. Like every other intelligent and insensible organism inhabiting this biosphere, the human race is but one ephemeral mode, inseparable from the rest of the universe. Furthermore, matter is constantly evolving and recycling its energy to create new life”.

The French author, in turn, writes: “Life and death in plant and mineral meanings are not important. Life and death are forms adopted by matter, among many others <...> how to discover this law, which would not even be a law, but a reality”.

Like the Dutch philosopher, J.-M.G. Le Clezio argues that the planet is composed of infinite variations of a single sacred substance. He emphasizes that its fleeting existence constitutes a minor part of the larger biotic network, that sustains all life in the universe. The novelist writes that “beings were born and then disappeared, continuously sharing the lives of others, were one moment of matter impossible to feel, impossible to love or understand, impossible to get out of the system. This infinity was made of infinity...”.

Given that nothing exists apart from matter and its modifications, J.-M. G. Le Clezio argues that there is no escape from the ontological shell of being. Scientifically, homo sapiens are part of a long history of the universe that predates our species by billions of years. The attempt to understand the organic cycles that give rise to all life in its various forms is symbolic of the attempt to find possible answers to global existential questions such as “Who am I?” and “What am I?”.

However, it is obvious that the author realizes that we will always have only fragmentary knowledge of other material particles and their complex relationships with us.

For B. Spinoza and J.-M. G. Le Clezio, the “network” of life in which humanity is woven is far more complex than a simplistic, anthropocentric ideology suggests. First, both thinkers reject misleading dualities such as man/nature and man/animal that have created a split between

our species and the rest of the material universe. Rather than existing in some cosmic void separated from the rest of the planet, as homocentric logic has led Western society to believe, B. Spinoza and J.-M. G. Le Clezio remind the reader that we are part of a larger cosmic mystery.

Recognizing the reality that humans are inseparable from the cosmic forces that created each individual organism, J.-M.G. Le Clezio narrates, “When I was not born, when I did not belong to anything that existed, I was not even conceived by a seed entangled in another seed. Man, you are, Woman you are, Horse you are, Spruce you are, or *Staphylococcus aureus*...”. In this passage and throughout the essay “Material Ecstasy,” J.-M. G. Le Clezio explains that the ecosphere randomly generates life according to its own laws in all its divergent forms. Given that humans have been thrown into the chaos of existence by impersonal cataclysms like any other living particle, existential hierarchies are simply the product of wishful thinking. Like the Dutch philosopher, the French novelist believes that our species is the center of creation around which everything else revolves.

In his works of fiction J.-M.G. Le Clezio puts B. Spinoza's views and his own philosophical and aesthetic conclusions into a parable-allegorical form. Asserting that everything in the universe has one and the same substance, the writer urges man to transcend sovereignty and abandon Eurocentrism.

In the short story “The Day Beaumont Knew What Pain Is” from the collection “Fever” J.-M. G. Le Clezio created such an artistic model, where universal longing, existential conflict of man with the world mean immeasurably more than, for example, the impact of severe cold or heat. Stringing metaphors, the author describes excruciating toothache, however, physical pain, after all, is only an allegory of suffering metaphysical - loneliness, inexplicable fear of life, things and people. The hero of the novel Beaumont suddenly realizes a surprising thing: if the person on the phone agrees to listen to his toothache out of compassion, then this pain is important to him, Beaumont. for him, Beaumont, is important and necessary, “then ... I am something of myself only because of it ...”.

The life of the hero of the novel “The Flood” by François Besson is a chain of senseless actions, quite natural for the existence of that society, the “herd” to which François himself belongs. The character neglects himself no less than other people. François Besson doesn't so much running away from people or things, but from himself, from the “emptiness”. To fill it, he goes on an unmotivated killing spree, thus committing an act of free will that cannot be explained by anything but the inner need to realize it. Besson anticipates either a worldwide flood or an atomic war. He does not find the strength to exist in anticipation of the Apocalypse and begins to gradually destroy himself physically. To begin with, he consciously deprives

himself of sight, opening his eyes wide to the scorching sun. Besson dreams of that time as deliverance, when he will finally be able to step “on the other side”.

The characters of J.-M.G. Le Clezio - Adam Polo (“The Protocol”), François Besson (“The Flood”), Agan (“The Book of Escapes”) - are allegorical and have many similarities with the heroes of A. Camus, J.-P. Sartre, F. Kafka. For example, Adam Polo, who escaped from a psychiatric hospital, closed himself in an abandoned house on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, eats only canned food and dreams of completely abandoning the world around him. The fugitive is silent most of the time and struggles with rats.

In the novel “Travels on the Other Side”, the harmonious world has moved from Earth to a fairy tale planet that is very close to our jaded world. The character of the work Naya-Naya - allegorical, he is able to turn into a bird, a green leaf, is able to fly to the sun, rain or, becoming invisible, brings people unexpected joy without waiting for gratitude.

Because the road to self-realization entails direct, sensual contact with the sacred envelope to which we are connected, for the writer, characters often seek to commune with or “merge” with the divine elements. Finding that authentic spiritual experiences are actuated by a form of direct communication with the cosmic whole.

The author endows his heroine with unusual abilities so that she can overcome various vices of “earthly attraction”. The author divides the allegorical narrative of the fairy woman into small sections about the beginning and end of life on Earth. Cold spaces, rocks, endless waters, such is the beginning of all things. A similar picture in the finale, which shows the “other side” - whether after the atomic war, when miraculously survivors wander, or in the “other world” - far from earthly life: “Neither fire, nor flood, nor battle threatened to destroy any more “the preserved houses. At last beauty, tranquility, infinity reigned. This is the last country, there will be no others. A country unknown to anyone - pure, calm, without any borders”. Thus, the novelist is of the opinion that external transcendence of the physical plane is impossible. If redemption from the poverty of the human condition is possible, this type of salvation must take place in our fleeting time on this planet.

J.-M.G. Le Clezio pays great attention to the materiality of the human condition. For the novelist, the path to existential redemption and spiritual edification is inseparable from the biotic network of life to which we are inextricably linked. Given that nothing exists in the cosmic vacuum in complete isolation from other material organisms, J.-M. G. Le Clezio urges the modern subject to dissociate itself from seductive, anthropocentric ideology and to accept reality. Indeed, understanding and accepting our own corporeality, in addition to exploring the complex

relationship between ourselves and the cosmic forces that sustain us, is perhaps the only true path to self-realization that allows us to project meaning onto the absurdity of the universe.

Thus, we can conclude that both B. Spinoza and J.-M.G. Le Clezio remind us that we are mortal beings bound by a material universe on which our continued existence depends. Furthermore, by rejecting the binary logic inherited from Renaissance humanism and exposing the inherent flaws of Cartesian logic that have no real basis, both thinkers encourage the alienated modern subject to seek philosophical and perhaps even spiritual redemption from the poverty of the human condition in the only place where we truly know we exist. Instead of inventing imaginary heavenly paradises that await our certain “privileged” species after a brief stay on earth, both authors argue that the first step toward enlightenment is to stop denying our own material selves.

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