



## The Reception of Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio in Iran\*

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THE work of Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio has been the subject of consecutive translations and academic and critical investigations throughout the world as well as in Iran. In our country, most of the researchers are just focused on the content and the form of his writings and have brought only little light on the reception of his works, a fairly recent concept in the field of literary criticism.

In this article, we relied on the theory of reception, especially that of Jaus and "horizon of expectation", one of the essential notions of his theory. In this context, we established the historical, social and cultural situation of Iran in different years to better analyze the reception of Le Clézio in Iran. The working method consisted of collecting all newspaper and journal articles as well as books wholly or partially devoted to the author in Iran during our research period, from 1967 to 2015, and then studying them to recognize the major themes identified by the criticism. Finally, we focused on the work of translators and publishers. We studied translation in an overall perspective in order to draw the itinerary of Le Clézio's work in Iran.

The purpose of this study is not only to reveal the reception of Le Clézio's books in Iran, but also try to understand why this French author was very welcome. Our goal is not exclusively to understand which works are published in Persian, but what we will attempt to answer is the "why".

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behind this question. Hence we make a generic and thematic study of Le Clézio's works. The generic study showed that his six works, by their particular and innovative style, approach the "new roman": *The Interrogation (Le Procès-Verbal)*, *Fever (La Fièvre)*, *The Flood (Le déluge)*, *The Book of Flights (Le livre des fuites)*, *War (La guerre)*, and *Journeys to the Other Side (Voyages de l'autre côté)*. According to the new novelists (nouveaux romanciers), the young writer created the innovations not only within the genre but more generally in the universalist perspective of the *emancipation* of man. He questioned the basic fundamentals of realistic works like character and plot but he soon took his distance from this sort of writing and set out to create more seductive books for his readers.

Any work of the first period is translated into Persian, although they have not given rise to published investigations because they run counter to the "horizon of expectation" of Iranian readers, who have become accustomed to traditional stories.

The books that follow the first period of the creative life of Le Clézio are rather "traditional", nine in number: *Desert (Désert)*, *The Prospector (Le Chercheur d'or)*, *Journeys to Rodrigues (Voyages à Rodrigues)*, *Angoli Mala*, *Onitsha*, *Wandering Star (Etoile errante)*, *The Quarantine (La Quarantaine)*, *Fish of Gold (Poisson d'or)*, and *Chance (Hasard)*. Most of the novels of the second period of the creative life of Le Clézio were translated into Persian and were the subject of multiple published research because they met the expectations of the general public.

His biographical book, *Diego and Frida*, has attracted the attention of Iranian translators and publishers, but not that of criticism, especially journalistic criticism. *People of clouds (Gens des nuages)*, a travel narrative, is also known to Iranian readers. These two books are characterized by their ease of reading as traditional novels.

Among the literary essays, *Material ecstasy (L'extase matérielle)*, *The unknown on earth (L'Inconnu sur la Terre)*, *Three holy cities (Trois villes saintes)*, *The Mexican dream or interrupted thought (Le Rêve mexicain ou la pensée interrompue)*, only *Material ecstasy* is translated, which is a work of reflection exposing the writer's ideas and point of view on one or more topics. Le Clézio's essays also include his thoughts on different subjects which he talks about without having a specific order, making it difficult to understand the books. The only essay of Le Clézio is translated into Persian with a delay of 43 years. This delay would entail the change of horizon. The waiting horizon of the Iranian public of the time would interfere from the outset with the perception of this book.

Le Clézio also wrote stories for children: *Journey to the land of trees (Voyages aux pays des arbres)*, and *Pawana*. His two books are exhibited in the bookstores of the country.

A thematic study of his works allows us to identify three main periods: the 60s and 70s are largely devoted to the themes of madness and revolt. The second period is marked more by the travels and criticism of our materialistic civilization opposed to the lost paradises of ancient peoples. After this long detour by the Other, Le Clézio operates in the third period: a return to oneself from the early 2000s when he evokes his childhood and the history of his family in Mauritius, in a form that is not autobiographical, but combines fiction and reality in a singular form of autofiction.

A glance at the translated works shows us that the works of the second and third periods of his creative life attracted the attention of publishers and critics in our country.

This research shows that the economic logic as well as the institutional logic along with the adaptation of a work to the taste of a target audience, i.e. dynamic translations, the socio-political situation of the target reader, and many other criteria may favor the translation and publication of foreign works including those of Le Clézio in a foreign country such as Iran. But what about the influence of this author on the Iranian public after the translation of Le Clézio's works? It is really difficult to answer this question because the discovery of foreign literature by a growing number of readers is obvious in a country like ours. However, what pushed a certain number of Iranian students/researchers whether at home or abroad is the similarity that may exist between the topics covered in his books and those present in some Iranian authors like Dowlatabadi. Indeed, a number of academic research works in the field of comparative literature would not be possible if the translations of Le Clézio had not been made.

**Keywords**— Le Clézio, Reception, Horizon of expectation, Translation