

## Wise return in John Keats' poetry and Le Clézio's writings (comparison of the elements between a romantic poet by John Keats and the Contemporary Novel Mondo by Le Clézio)

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**Abstract:** This paper seeks to compare the elements in a romantic poem by John Keats and a Contemporary Novel (Mondo by Le Clézio) and finding the answer of a question raised by the contemporary thinker Ihab Hassan. Correspondence and coordination between these two literary works (while they are different) is very impressive. It looks more impressive when at first glance these correspondences are hidden between the Mondo that even after comparing it cannot be considered a literary plagiarism. By the divergence and withdrawal of modernity in the last century, over time, some schools came out of the modernity heart and the most important of which is called post-modernity. This paper by correspondence between these two works of art from two different centuries tries to shed a light on the subject prove that it can be possible that some postmodern artists can be return to the past and wisely accomplish the untold in the previous school of literature and art. In this paper, this move is called (wise return).

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### 1. Introduction

We live in the century which witnessed profound changes in all fields of art and literature. New poetry, new music, new painting and new story have been emerged and opened new horizons for art lovers.

All the new poems try to combat the Romantic introversion and Realistic extroversion, new poetry is a poetic creation of truth.

In romanticism school, poetry is aversion to the truth, but the kind of truth which has already been there crafted and experiences the feelings. In the realism school poetry is a rhetorical device that is used in all cases. But in modern literature poetry does not explain made and known objects and does not describe life experiences or landscapes or stories and thoughts.

Through novel the author tries to show his personal problems and difficulties by allegory and find a way to solve them. Allegory is just an expression of a belief or emotions of the writer.

Life experience is the basis of the literature in the twentieth century, and often readers try to find author's memories through the novel, whether the novel is written by Andre Gide or Maxim Gorky. These authors believed that the purpose of realism is describing the personal experience not the author's observations.

After World War I, the novel shows the author's world-wide view. In this period it was stated that from the first step, the novel should move us, and by its early words it should spread a wide but vague

world for the reader, and suddenly put the reader among incidents, and to understand the events the reader should penetrate the story, and like the novelist the reader should rebuild the novel, and according to Andre Gide the novel needs the reader to be completed.

World War II put a stop on any modern seeking for few years, and after the war there was a kind of confusion and to eliminate this confusion, new attempts began in the novel world, most important of which was modern novels process. Although now a days the term new novel is famous as an established school and also has some theorists, but in fact it is a name that journalists called to some scattered activities.

The common goal of these authors was denying some present novel forms in the world. They wanted to replace the conventional novel to a novel that is not in the cliché form and is inspired from specific facts. Although two of the leaders of the new novel Natalie Sarraute and Alain Robbe Grillet tried to find theoretical aspects in their opinions, but their result was different. These differences in ideas and works of novel writers lead us to believe that new novel nor is a school, not a single movement. But most authors believe that novel should not be based on "intrigue" or heroes and death of heroes and death of the psychological and philosophical classifications should be stated in the novel.

According to many art lovers, one of the figures who could fill this literary gap of the contemporary novel in French literature is the French

author Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, the best seller novelist of France and the winner of literary Nobel Prize in 2008.

In the years 1965 to 1975, two major issues were the interest of writers of this period: the language and substance, they said that only a thought exists that comes to expression. Le Clézio in this period left out the language to establish real communication with the substance.

But this article particularly dealt with multi-dimensional look to Le Clézio in terms of new realistic novel and Romanticism which describes the Nature and specifically comparison of Le Clézio's *Mondo* and the famous poem by John Keats that is full of romanticism descriptive terms, and in other words the wise return in the poetry of John Keats and writings of Le Clézio. The main purpose of this comparison is the comparison between the romantic poetry of John Keats and the contemporary novel - *Mondo* by Le Clézio and arguing about the belief a contemporary thinker - Ihab Hassan – who believed that there is a significant correspondence and coordination between these two literary works, while they are separate works.

#### **Biography of Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio**

Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio was born on the thirteenth of April 1940, in the island of Niece. He had a French mother and an English father who was a Medical doctor in Nigeria.

Le Clézio completed his master's thesis about loneliness in the works of Henri Michaux and then completed his PhD thesis on "Lautréamont". His first novel was published with a great success at the age of twenty-three and won the "Theo Frost Renaudot" price. (RENAUDOT, 1926)

At the beginning of seventies Le Clézio found the release of language through Indians in Panama. Le Clézio believed that the author's role is writing internal and external experiences through automatic recording. In fact he plays the role of a seismograph to find something that will dictate human behavior.

One of the errors seen in the biography of Le Clézio is that often he is believed to be a British descendant in the island of Mauritius, an island located in the Indian Ocean and once in the colonies of Great Britain. But the fact is that his parents came from a generations in Bertany region in northwestern France and settled in Morris since the eighteenth century.

In 2008 the Swedish Academy announced that Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, the famous French writer, is the winner of Nobel Prize for Literature. The prominent characteristic of the writer, according to the Nobel Foundation, is his poetic

adventure and sensual delight and his specific attention to environment, especially the desert.

The Swedish Academy called Le Clézio a writer with European roots, but a global citizen. He is a writer that everyone can understand him. Nobel jury member Horace Angdal called Le Clézio in the classic sense a European writer. "Le Clézio is a global citizen and is a wanderer. He belongs to different cultures and spent a long time of his life in non-European countries. This fact has influenced his writing. Based on this fact he cannot be considered as a typical European writer". (Horace Angdal, 2008)

His great travel experience reflects the influence of French culture and values in the world. Nobel Foundation, described Le Clézio, who also has Mauritanian Naturalization, as a browser of humanity in the rise and fall of the dominant civilizations.

Le Clézio states that his purpose and the purpose of authors is the desire to write, the social environment and issues and problems of the society. "Why do we write? I think each of us have our special answer to this simple question. The desire to write, the social environment, situations, and failures can also be the reason. If we write, we do not mean to practice something. It means that we are faced with a difficult reality, but we choose another way to react, another way to communicate, a specific location and time to respond." (Le Clézio, 2008)

In His word he talks about people with no language and talks about earliest humans who used sounds and myths for communication. "Do we have to live again today at a time that writers cannot dare to think that they are able to change the world, although they believe that their stories and novels can present a better sample of what life has to be, why do we write? Do we write to invent culture and go back to the early period of communication?" (Le Clézio, 2008) he severely believes in the role of cinema, popular music, and jazz in life.

"Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio" believes that there are two reasons to prove that literature is essential; the first reason is that literature comes out of the language heart. He says that in French "novel" offers those prose texts that after the Middle Ages were chosen by the people for speaking in a new style of language. Romance language means that the language is used for creating beauty, expression of thoughts and imagination. About the literary words including the function of poetry and rhymes believe in simple writing:

"A writer should write very simply because he works as a witness. In most cases, the author is not more than a simple spectator." (Le Clézio, 2008)

About the racist theories in a century ago Le Clézio believes that they considered language as an element to express the fundamental differences

between cultures, and he believes that these theories were very influential.

He believes that the source of globalization is Europe, and start of colonization in the renaissance: "People forget the fact that this phenomenon occurred with the onset of the Renaissance in Europe and start of colonization. Globalization itself is not a bad thing, and communication is the sharing scientific and medical advances. May be general information helps understanding concepts, who knows, if the Internet had existed at the Hitler time, perhaps he could not succeed in his plan" (Le Clézio, 2008).

Although at the beginning it was believed that his style was similar to authors of "new novel" which preferred "pure writing" to the fate of people in the story (Penalties novels, 1963), contrary to "new novel" Le Clézio paid attention to the fate of the characters in his stories. Although initially he liked the difficult style of writers such as Georges Perec, later he changed his style and wrote stories with simple words.

In African and deserts novels such as the novel "Great Ambassadors" by Henry James and "bluster and outrage" by William Faulkner and "Ulysses" by James Joyce, from the first row the reader enters in the middle of the story without an introduction. The strength of this novel is in its resistance against the reader, this means that the reader to understand the novel shall penetrate in it step by step. In other words, like the novelist he should re-build the novel. André Gide in the book "coin makers" refers to this concept:

"I do not want the author to quote the events explicitly. But he should look every incident several times from the view of people involved or affected by the events and then express them. I would like a minor change of events in the eyes of each witness. Readers' will arises from his effort to understand the truth. The novel needs readers' cooperation to be completed and explained." (Andre Gide, 1388)

One of the most important similarities of writers such as André Gide and Maxim Gorky with Le Clézio is that the readers try to find author's personal memories in their novels. Perhaps the uncertainty in the literature that emerged after World War II, led to new effort in the world of novel, and Le Clézio also affected. Now the existentialism impact in literature especially in the new novel and its writers are mentioned.

Existentialism school occurred shortly before World War II in France and after the war reached its utmost power. They believe that "existence" is above "nature" and humans are left in a useless and absurd world with no rule and end. Thus nothing guides the creation. Existentialists' works

influenced profoundly in the contemporary literature of Europe. As for Le Clézio, among characters of his stories such as Mondo or Lolaby, there is the trend to absolute freedom and avoid from bonds of social rules and confusion in Nature and Society:

"Quand il n'y avait pas de danger, il se promenait toute la Journée dans la vill, en regardant ce qui se passait. Il aimait bien se promener sans but, tourner au coin d'une rue, puis d'une autre, prendre un raccourci, s'arreter un peu dans un jardin, repartir. "

"Whenever he did not feel safe (Mondo), he wandered in the city all day long and watched the events around. He liked to walk aimlessly, walk around a street and then another street and choose a short way, stand beside a garden and again start walking." (Mondo, 1982)

Another thing that is noteworthy about Le Clézio but rarely has been mentioned is his desire to write short stories. One of the most famous short stories in French literature is Le Clézio's Mondo which also have been translated into Persian. It must be understood that Le Clézio is one of the few French authors who has written short stories, and highlighted this genre in French literature which is mostly the tradition of literature in Anglo-Saxon (many English and American authors), Italian (Luigi Pirandello, Alberto Moravia, etc.) and Latin America (Juan Rulfo, Jorge Mario Vargas Llosa, etc.). In fact, before Le Clézio, French literature has not introduced a great writer in this genre to the world of literature, but a few authors such as Guy de Maupassant and Alphonse Daudet.

In the study of Le Clézio's stories we see some common elements that will be mentioned here. The first element is child. Child is important in his works. Le Clézio believes that there is innocence in children that adults have lost by the force of time and it is the duty of the writer to remind it again. The next element is the mountain. Mountain has a direct relationship with light. In the "Mondo" where Mondo is absorbed to the light and selects the "Golden Light House" at the top of the hill, is in fact a place of worship which received his homelessness. Another important factor in the story of Le Clézio is "poverty". Lala or Leila, the desert hero is a poor.

Mondo is also poor. But contrary to what has been associated with poverty, their poverty has not led them to withdrawal and isolation, but shows their freedom.

Mondo in French means the world and is comprised of two parts "Mon" and "do" which in Buddhist ritual mean the question and answer. Mondo story is also the questions of a child who is not waiting for any response.

The author tells about a society in which humanitarian values has been destroyed and promises

a community will not distinguish between freedom and debauchery. The characteristics of the mentioned society can be cleaned and shiny floor of tall buildings, a turning chicken roast that turns roasted chicken, lifts and ... which Mondo sees them.

Le Clézio in the reconstruction of consumer-oriented society supported the past object, and because of this return to the past he is called postmodernist. The symbolic work of the author retells the second language of the story which is contrary to the childish language of Mondo and unveils the fear and insecurity that has been imposed in the last century.

Le Clézio believes that before man thinks of heaven, thinks of hell. He is an expert sociologist and depicted his own philosophy of contemporary urbanization. He is an author who the revelation of human nature, avoid from civilization and the consumer society are the main motif in his world of thought and ideas.

#### **Wise return in the poetry of John Keats and Le Clézio's writing**

Ode on a Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
 What leaf-fring'd legend haunt about thy shape  
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?  
 Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
 Are sweeter: therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
 Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
 Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve;  
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!  
 Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;  
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
 For ever piping songs for ever new;  
 More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
 For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
 For ever panting, and for ever young;  
 All breathing human passion far above,  
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.  
 Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,

And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
 What little town by river or sea shore,  
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.  
 O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
 When old age shall this generation waste,  
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," - that is all

Ihab Hassan (1925) in "post-modernism: a critical bibliography" writes: "Behind each history, continuously or intermittently, abstract or imaginary, lurked a conflict between personal identity and death. Is history often the hidden biography of historians? Is it the recorded imagination of our own mortality? Thou silent form, bring us out from our thoughts; / as the eternity, and cold priests' preaching / does so.... When will the modern age ends? And what will come after?" (Ihab Hassan, 1975) {This section of text is a translation of a poem by Keats, which happens to be used by Ihab Hassan. The present translation is a little different with a translation of a poem by the author (for Greek vases).}

The characteristic of modernity help us to answer the question of Ihab Hassan: "Enlightenment program was disillusionment from the world, the dissolution of myths and establishment of wisdom instead of the dreams" (Adorno T.W. & M. Horkheimer, 1995). The artist is the creator, and enlightenment was - (is) - making the world difficult to him, and each day makes creator-like competitors for him, thus having in mind the meaninglessness of the modern world, and was more alienated in a world extremely narrow and repetitious.

As a theory, although it can be assumed that the conflict between the modern and the postmodern provided a challenge and revelation for the artists in post-Enlightenment era, but this "coming out of modernity" of the postmodern cannot satisfy some today artists. This artist finds contemporary literary and artistic theories inefficient to create a work which satisfies the needs of today people to meaning and truth. The individual oriented and poetic trends of some of these artists show their efforts for "wise return" where there are serious effects of the combination. On these combined wise returns, there are some truth oriented views of the Romantic artists, such as "Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio". It is noted here that the purpose of this paper from romantic "Le

Clézio” is only about the Le Clézio who created “Mondo”.

Since Romanticism has many meanings and feedbacks, to facilitate the present discussion, we present our view of this artistic and philosophical school in the form of a poem from a poet who itself is a summary of Romanticism and criticism on it.

John Keats is a nineteenth century English poet who is considered as one of the last great Romantic elites. In his poems he is seeking for a definition of poetry and poets: a poet who is in connection with the power of his imagination and ability to tell the timeless truth. Keats's does not consider the heritage of previous poets only as the former data, but tries to make clear the definition of the poetic imagination and what a poet should be. Thus he implements the past poetic theories and creates poems very close to the tradition of Romantic poetry. The characteristics of these poems are faith to the everlasting timeless truth in nature that the poet can discover them through his ingenuity and express them in his poem. Keats believed that poetry and art is a vehicle for truth and immortality, and basically art is able to create them, but this belief gradually fades; until in a few poems that he wrote before his early death, he used a more descriptive, more cautious, more skeptical and more realistic language, specifications which later became more prominent and bold in modern art. "Sadoldin, 2011" (Sadoldin Adel, 2011)

Among the poems of Keats's romantic poetry "an ode to the Greek Vases" has been selected for this paper for two reasons: First, Ihab Hassan used a piece of this poem for the opening of his question, and second, we believe that discussion about this poem and finding similarities between it and Mondo by Le Clézio can somehow clear a kind of “wise return”.

“Mondo” by Le Clézio is a story of a boy in a semi-fictional modern world. Mondo who no one could tell where he came from, once comes to a city in which we - as readers and consumers of novel – cannot have an explicit idea of its time and location. The fact that it is a French novel and the author due to his biography is considered “global”, the fact that Mondo is wearing tennis shoes, and these kinds of keys and signifiers do not lead us to any specific or even limited language and location. Sometimes you are tempted to call Mondo a magical realism story, but it is not for a thousand and one reasons. Basically we do not discuss in this paper that whether Le Clézio consciously had this idea in mind. This paper is a study because: there are ideal similarities between a novel in the twentieth century with a Romantic poem in the nineteenth century and the resultant and outcome of these commonalities can

provide an answer to the question raised by Ihab Hassan.

In the poetry of Keats, the poet's imagination sees the silent heroes on the pot “Immortals” - whether positive or negative. There is a beautiful young lover who is sitting near under an eternal and evergreen tree, and feels that his lover will stay beautiful and in love “Immortality”, and the lover “Immortality” apt to kiss her. There are examples of such nested in the poem and can be achieved. But there are two visions in “Mondo”:

First: Mondo - the hero –the city is narrated from his point of view - is the representative of a fancy and meaningful look that gives meaning and “immortality” to the life of lifeless humans around him, the surrounding environment and consequently to the city and basically to the story, whether this immortality is sectional, such as the sectional immortality we feel from Mondo fellowship with each of the novel's minor characters, or the eternal immortality such as the novel itself. It means that in the Keats's poetry the fantastical look of Keats at a pot, has immortalized the pot and the poetry of Keats, and Le Clézio by Mondo, has immortalized the Mondo and city and his novels. One of the reasons that indicate Mondo is a representative for meaningful imagination to the world around is that throughout the novel Le Clézio accompanied him with the concept of light, and reflected him like a monologist in theater who has the topical light.

Second: through the novel (Mondo) we know characters who - suddenly - Mondo deals with them, talks, interacts, and says goodbye. Their immortality is just like that, Just like a moment on the Keats's Greek vases; beautiful youth, tree and... are immortalized. The point is that all the heroes fixed in Mondo are “non-modern Mondo”. It means that throughout the novel, those characters find kind of immortality who somehow are sick of modernity and have left modernity, and unlike these individuals, other people are not more than shadows that should be imagined in the city. Here there is no difference between the Rosa who sells fruit and only meets Mondo half of the row, and Ti Sheen who is very familiar with him. Both are immortalized and somehow their degree of immortality can be measured by their distance from modernity. Even objects in Mondo are immortalized through their distance from modernity.

In the Keats's poem, leaves refer to the leaves painted on vase, and this is the general style of Greek pottery. Covering the Greek vase by leaves imagined a kind of life from the perspective of the manufacturer. But when the City Mondo is covered by leave, it represents another fact: death. Because leaves on the Greek vase are green and attached to

the stem, but deciduous leaves in Mondo city represent fall and are deadly (even though it comes after summer). On the other hand the leaves on Greek vases are generally the laurel tree leaves, which are the only kind of leaf that Le Clézio refers and they exist in the golden light house, T Shen's house - the most eternal human in Mondo.

And the last point about leaves: Where does the paper of the modern world come from? We all know that it comes from stems and leaves of trees, and also in most languages there is a verbal similarity between leaf and paper, and by the result of these two factors - especially the first modern factor - in the Mondo city there are small rivers on both sides of the road, full of dry leaves and pieces of paper. Therefore we have to admit that this sequence between leaf and paper has undermined the deathly modernity.

The Greek vase and its ancient history made it immortal in the poet's imagination and on the other hand its fixed designs from the vision of romantic poet provided a kind of immortality for them.

In Mondo instead of the vase there is city, and instead of ashes of the dead there are people who appear to be live, but the spirit of modernity has declined them.

### Conclusion and discussion

Writers of the late twentieth century tried to deny some of the common themes in the novel, etc. The aim of all these new writers and theorists was to replace a novel that is not in the cliché of other schools is inspired from particular facts. The novel should not be based on "intrigue" or heroes and death of heroes and death of the psychological and philosophical classifications should be stated in the novel. The novel must be very precise draft of the world outside: the specific world of "pure objects".

But each of the authors of the new style (new novel) has its own indicators, for example, Robbe Grillet always wants to remain at the level of objects. Nathalie Sarraute, while avoids creating types, narrates the roaring and vibrant life of people with their tacky characteristics.

Ihab Hassan finds contemporary literary and artistic theories inefficient to create a work which satisfies the needs of today people to meaning and truth. Keats is one of the artists with individual oriented and poetic trends and tries for "wise return" in his poems; especially the poem "ode to Greek vase", integrated wise return and truth oriented approaches of romantic artist.

"Le Clézio" talks about the fall and decline of the last century, about the current world that suffers economy crisis. There is a rhythmic track of hunger and poverty in his stories, especially his new stories. He is a realistic writer who demands reality in

this sick world. The world suffers crisis in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is a world with non-resilient development and dictatorship, a world of hatred and degradation and falling, it is a proud world that does not see evident catastrophes. In his works Le Clézio cries loud against false pride and lie, a scream in a world that is like a small opera, the world that we live in, and we do not learn anything from it. He is a writer with a great nostalgia and sadness in the world, and this is the base "Le Clézio" works, and his writing has high efficiency and excellent for everyone. He pictures a human beyond this world and this materialistic civilization, humans with celestial figures, thoughtful and gentle characters that pass the Planet Earth and pass. Persuasion and comfort in his word sometimes become angry and effect as boiling hot springs.

This author was inspired by Native American culture and has found desert and island and denuded and pristine lands tastes, and his story characters always wandering non-stop in such territories, and look for adventures and seek for treasures such as emotion, truth, and may be love.

Passionate characters of old stories and legends such as Adam Polo, Lala, Mao, Nour, Mondo or Juan who opened a borderless world in Le Clézio's works are his real friends to win the Nobel Prize award.

To express his love, he embraces the world and rejects the despicable soul and closed views and fashions of modern life and opinions of the current society makers. "Le Clézio" is an author with open arms on the extreme. Each of the events in his novels inspires something to our mind and discovers other inner events of distant lands.

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