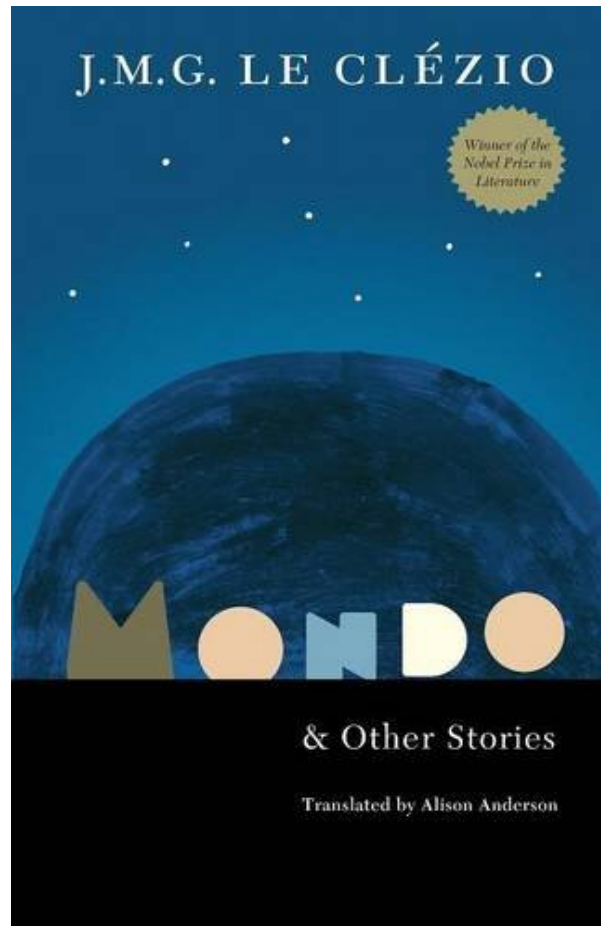
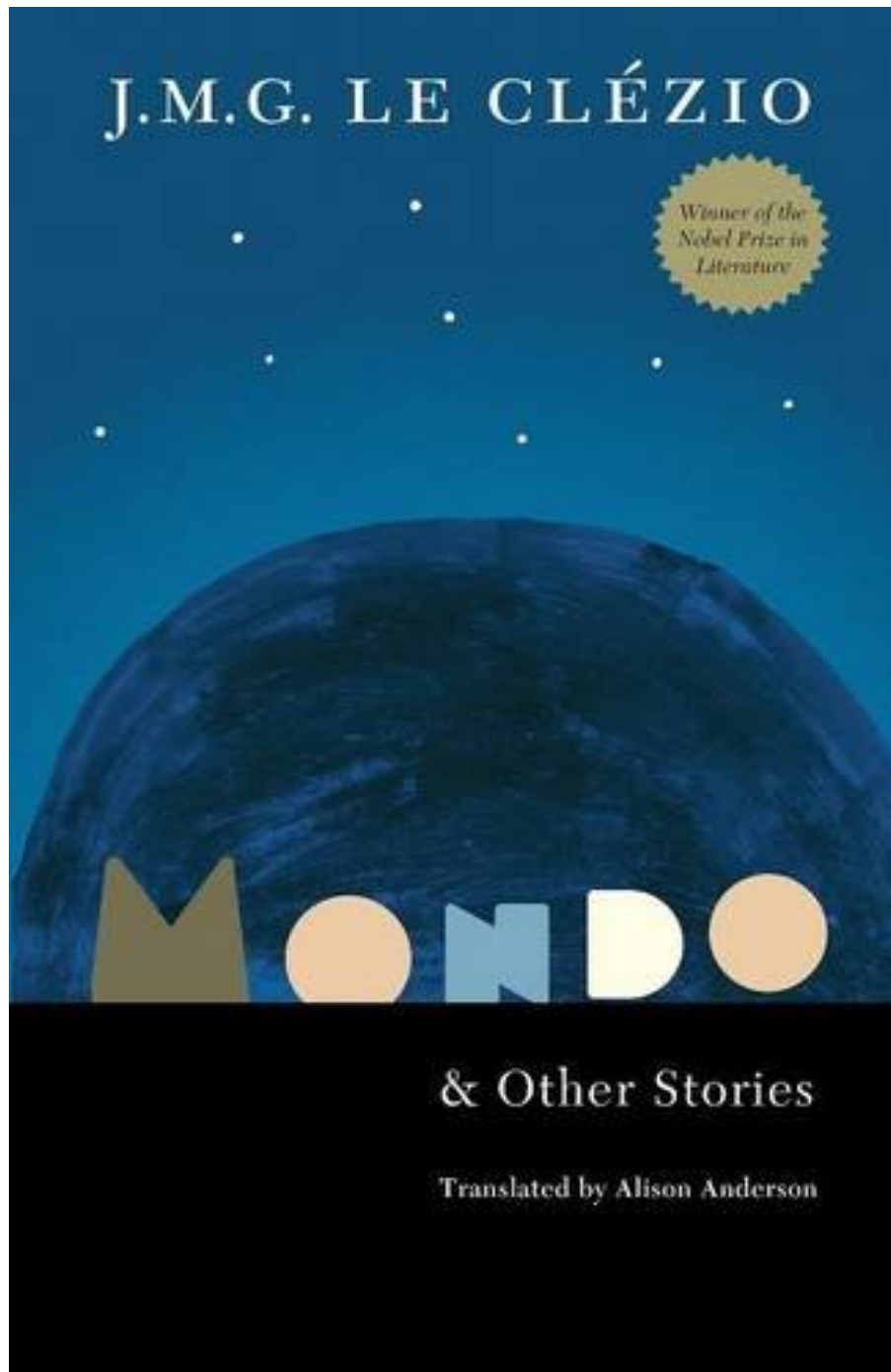


MONDO AND OTHER STORIES BY J.M.G. LE CLEZIO



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Review

"Le Clezio's style is the collection's greatest attraction. Anderson's elegant translation conveys the detailed, physical, fluid, and complex lushness of the language, which may engage and satisfy readers of Garcia Marquez and other master stylists."-Ellen Loughran, Booklist -- Ellen Loughran Booklist "In Le Clezio's fictional universe, the world exists in a prelapsarian state of timeless grace, at least until the inevitably corrupt and destructive world of adults comes crashing in."-Michael Lindgren, Washington Post -- Michael Lindgren Washington Post

About the Author

J. M. G. Le Clézio, winner of the 2008 Nobel Prize in Literature, was born in Nice in 1940 and is one of France's best-known contemporary writers. His books *Onitsha* and *The Round and Other Cold Hard Facts* are both available from the University of Nebraska Press. Alison Anderson is the author of *Hidden Latitudes* and *Darwin's Wink* and translated Le Clézio's *Onitsha*.

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In awarding him the Nobel Prize in 2008, the Swedish Academy hailed J. M. G. Le Clézio as an “author of new departures, poetic adventure and sensual ecstasy, explorer of humanity beyond and below the reigning civilisation.” The outlying humanity that Le Clézio explores in this collection of stories finds its expression in the understanding of children. The world of *Mondo and Other Stories* is that of a natural world pushed to the margins by complacent, indifferent modernity.

Haunting and beautiful, these stories speak to a universal longing for a life beyond the confines and trappings of modern existence. In each tale it is a child who can see and appreciate these places filled with wonder and knowledge. *Mondo* is a little boy whose connection to the beauty in everything unites a seaside town. *Little Cross* perturbs the order of things with her question: “What is blue? Daniel flees his stifling school and absent parents for the sea. All these children, like the wise billy goat in the collection’s final story, understand “so many things, not the things you find in books that men like to talk about but silent, strong things, things full of beauty and mystery.” And in the end, so do we.

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Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Poetic sensitivity to life

By libellulemvd

First of all, let me say that "Mondo" is a beautiful collection of stories that reveals the beauty of imagination,

the greatness of a child's curiosity and the magic that the child has to show us who have lost our connection with these gifts. It is a reminder of our need for balance, poetry and faith in the human race. I recommend this book, along with the almost 50 other books from this author, without hesitation and with enthusiasm. Beyond speaking for myself, students whom I've taught are captivated by his writing style, stories and messages - in *Mondo* and in other collections.

Le Clézio's books give us insight into the magic of life and our connectedness to others and natures. Each piece that comprises Le Clézio's works dialogues with each other without being repetitive, thus underlying similarities and differences between cultures. I would hope that as society, we have "advanced" to a point where we can appreciate the poetry of the world and the beauty of human souls, the magic of human imagination, that isn't to be confused with sweetness or naivety.

Beyond doubt, Le Clézio is a writer who deserves to be read and who was chosen by the Nobel Academy because Le Clézio is an "author of new departures, poetic adventure and sensual ecstasy, explorer of a humanity beyond and below the reigning civilization" that our world is in need of today. Furthermore, Le Clézio was the honored guest at the Louvre in 2011-2012, which he accepted in order to challenge the Louvre to bring in cultures and pieces that have not and still do not have their "place" inside such hierarchical institutions, cultures and pieces who have a voice, histories and messages that are essential to us if we wish to claim being or becoming global and "civilized".

Le Clézio is far from a "rich bourgeois". He was born into WW 2 without food and luxuries. He was raised by his mother and grandmother because his father was serving as doctor to people, irregardless of their background, in British Guiana and then in Cameroon and Nigeria. His family, since the outbreak of the French Revolution, lived without in order to promote human rights and to abolish slavery, refuse colonial lifestyles. While a child, Le Clézio turned to books as his reaction to the war-filled society surrounding him. He served as a teacher in Thailand for his military service and lived amongst the people. He is not a rich outsider viewing the state of the world. He is a witness who "reports" while remaining a humble member of society who shares and learns from others without placing himself above them.

He lives inside the societies from where he studies their histories and cultures as well as listening to oral histories and testimonies of daily life. His entire work explores humanity that is shared, and often times unknown so that we as readers can contemplate the reality of others: he encourages humanity to think - he is "engagé" to promote human understanding and dialogues between cultures and across generations and political boundaries. Examples of this outsider and insider experience can be observed with his direct experience with Aroussyrian nomads of Southern Morocco and with natives and non-natives in 20th century Nigeria; the testimonies of inhabitants of Vanuatu and the cultural and spiritual lessons while living with Emberas and Waunans Amerindians in Panama; the fictive historical slave narrations in Kilwa and Mauritius and the fictionalized new items and histories regarding numerous immigrants in Northern Africa, Nigeria, Israel and Palestine, France, England, Mexico, Oceania, Korea and the United States. the who lived

Perhaps some may not know that Le Clézio, after earning money from a poorly paid translation job in Mexico during the late 60s, shared life with the Emberas Indians in Panama, lived inside their society from 1970 - 1974 ... not owning anything. He has said (and I am translating from "La Fête Chantée"):

"I had the opportunity to share life in the Darien with the Amerindian people, the Embras and their cousins, the Waunanas in the Darien, Panama, and experience that changed my entire life, my ideas on the world, art, my way of being with others, walking, eating, sleeping, even until my dreams. I learned about the vanity linked with consumerism, vain because the heat, humidity and the insects in this forest made them useless."

His books will remain on shelves for decades to come, and *Mondo* is but a small illustration of the worlds

that Le Clézio invites the reader to experience, contemplate and explore.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

When it works, it's great

By Edgar M Shawen

As the fourth reviewer coming to this book, I find two reviews of almost fulsome praise and one of utter condemnation. I found the book not quite as good as the first two claim and not nearly as bad as the third declares.

Almost any short-story collection, which this book is, shows some unevenness between the strongest stories and the weakest. That's true here. The qualities most praised--lyrical style, rich and lush imagery, the fresh outlook of a child on the world, an implied criticism of a mechanistic and regimented "civilization"--are most evident in the first three stories. They are beautiful works of imagining a child's ability to relate to and fit into an unspoiled world permeated with air and light. LeClezio can evoke effects of light as only a few painters can. In the next four stories (there are eight) LeClezio tries harder to impose symbolism on this world of imagination, and the result is murky and unresolved although the nature imagery remains poetically luminous.

The eighth story, "The Shepherds," seems out of place in the collection. Here the relation of children to nature is that of a constant battle of survival where the dangers include scorpions, snakes, wild dogs, and starvation. Animals may become friends, like the fox Mim--or they may be killed for food. Since the focal character, the boy Gaspar who wanders into this primitive world at the beginning of the story, exits from it to return to civilization at the end, we do not know the fate of the little band of children who remain. We are a long way from the lovely dream world of "Mondo" or "Lullaby."

A final note: As in the case of Gaspar, the modern world of civilization, of "regulation fools with their regulation rules" (AC/DC), lurks almost always in the background of these stories and reasserts itself in the end.

LeClezio is a high risk/high reward writer. His successes are spectacular and may deeply affect how his reader sees the world. But his success rate is not 100%.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Great Story

By Patticus

This book was great, has some very deep and interesting stories especially dealing with childhood, and how children see the world. I read this book in French originally for an upper division French course at my University and loved it so I purchased the English version as well. I was absolutely shocked and appalled to see that hate rant that passed for a review as the only other review. Truly one should not listen to this person for they are ignorant and that should not affect your decision to buy this book. This book is great for both children and adults, and should not be blanket attacked by irrational words of hatred. This book definitely has some great stories, odd at times, but touching as well. Mondo is simply about a boy who never had a family and ends up learning all of the lessons of life through friends he has earned but remains to never truly get a family.

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