

## Terra Amata

*J.M.G. Le Clézio*

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This is vintage French. A formal and sophisticated exercise. One is reminded of Raymond Queneau and Georges Perec and the movement of the Oulipo. Of course the latter provided a travesty of formalism, Le Clézio is more sincere, really wanting words to carry far and deep. Maybe another allusion could be that of the Swiss Max Frisch. It presents the life of a man, from his young boyhood throughout adolescence, love, parental death and, what usually follows far too soon upon its heels, death itself.

It is a celebration of the richness and variety of the sensual world, allowing endless digressions on details. Admittedly there is a certain charm akin to that provided by a photograph, which records indiscriminantly the one thing after another. On the other hand it is hard to avoid tedium and thus the temptation to turn tedium to greater heights, and by that provide a strong illusion of reality. The closest you can come in literature to the collage in visual art, which incorporates real artefacts, thus transcending the representative mission.

One may of course describe the exercise in exultant terms, as a statement on Man and his Fate, a probing inquiry into the human condition. This is part of the game that the author sets up between himself and his prospective reader.

September 13, 2010 **Ulf Persson:** *Prof.em, Chalmers U.of Tech., Göteborg Sweden* ulfp@chalmers.se