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YVES ENREGLE : *L'IDENTITE, CETTE OMBRE QUI NOUS ECLAIRE. MEDITATION SUR LE POUVOIR, LA MEMOIRE ET L'HISTOIRE*
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The issue of identity has always been at the core of our contemporary concerns, especially in an era of globalization and multiculturalism, and it has acquired new nuances during this covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the volume authored by Yves Enrègle comes to shed further light on this central concept, reflecting on the three fundamental issues mentioned in the title, i.e. power, memory and history, considered from a twofold perspective, collective and individual.

In these tormented times, the identity singling us out in the sea of collective communities seems to be the only lifeline keeping us connected with our true selves in the midst of plural representations like the Nation, the People, Our country, etc. This complex phenomenon which makes us unique and part of the crowd at the same time is dealt with in a reader-friendly manner, mixing together theoretical questions and empirical methods.

Despite the complexity of the notions discussed, the style is surprisingly approachable and easy to follow, making it the type of reading that is intellectually fulfilling and able to convey academic information in an unpretentious manner.

It is quite interesting to notice that the author himself has had a number of diverse roles, offices and interests in his life (in the fields of academia, administration, consultancy, corporate management), which makes his concern with identity perfectly understandable and tallies in which the multifarious nature of the present book, harmoniously combining psychoanalysis, government, politics, biblical studies, art, literature, philosophy and many others.

Deeply entrenched in today's ever-changing interconnected realities, Yves Enrègle proposes multiple illustrations of the intriguing personal and interpersonal identity dynamics at work in contemporary history, starting from a solid psychoanalytical basis and occasioning a captivating interpretation of the subtle art of managing a plant and, on a larger scale, a city.

As the Preface by Pascal Lardellier calls it, this is a “disconcerting book in form and structure, motley like a Harlequin cloak, making use of everything, at the same time lifestory, political and management treatise, ‘curiosity cabinet’, chronicle of present time, academic gloss of famous texts and great authors” (pp.11-12, my translation). In turn, the author himself writes a preamble explaining that the reader is going to “move on a fairly mysterious terrain [...] that some call quite plainly ‘human soul’” (p.13), providing his very own customized definition of identity, viz. “a shadow which lights up our way” (p.14). Combining in an intertextual flurry Jacques Brel, Montaigne, Aragon, Cocteau, Sartre, Tiggelar, Platon, Beaumarchais, Asterix, the cathedral of Notre Dame and many others within the space of just a few pages, the author manages to give us a taste of the seven ‘baroque’ chapters of the book to follow, taking us from the flowing border between ‘I’ and ‘non-I’, to the case study of the presidential elections in 2017 France, the definition of constructs like ‘leader’ and ‘people’,

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the deep mechanisms of the shadow in defining identity confusion, to the issue of Europeanisation, the risks of the myth of a united Europe, as well as the future identity of our continent. Borrowing tools from various methodologies, the author effortlessly swings between the study of the election campaigns in France between 1981 and 2017, the ethos of the presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron and the identity mechanisms that made him successful, the features of corporate leadership, the various acceptions of ‘people’ as Laos, seen as an amorphous mass without strong ties among its members, and Demos, or people organized as a political force, the micropeople of an enterprise vs. the macropeople of a city/nation, language as the keeper of national identity, the tortuous path towards building the European identity since World War I and its delicate balance between fragmentation and unity, as well as Europe’s present status relying on shared culture and emotions especially in the context of the 2020 crisis. The ultimate purpose is to reveal that this shadow that enlightens us is in fact intuition through which we are able to understand each other, to reach the magical instant of a shared dream and a common purpose. After all, the declared objective of the book is to trigger the dynamics of identity (re)construction.

Thus, like a fascinating kaleidoscope of concepts and methods, the book constitutes an energizing reflection exercise on the singular and collective dimension of identity and its pervasive role in shaping the future of Europe and all of us at the same time, in a never-ending quest of our deep roots and common future.