bürgerlichen Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts über, die "zwischen Idealismus, Realismus und Pessimismus" pendelt. Im dritten Teil wird die "question des artistes au temps du réalisme" behandelt, wobei Themen, wie die zeitspezifische Beziehung zwischen Literatur, Malerei und Fotografie, die Rolle des geschichtlichen Romans für die Bildung einer nationalen Identität, der realistische Roman und die letzten "feux" des Bildungsromans konstitutiv ins Spiel kommen. Der vierte Teil, Réalité sociale et roman réaliste, bringt eine raffinierte Exemplifizierung der Richtungen realistischen Denkens ausgehend vom Beispiel der vier konsekrierten Repräsentanten des realistischen Romans in Deutschland: Gustav Freytag, Friedrich Spielhagen, Theodor Fontane und Wilhelm Raabe. Im vierten Teil (Par delà le réalisme) führt der ehemalige Autor der Journaux intimes viennoises eine Analyse der realistisch wirkenden Werke Wagners und Nietzsches, eine Betrachtung Max Webers als "critique de l'époque bismarckienne et du réalisme politique" und schließlich eine Betrachtung der Weimarer Republik (im Unterkapitel Le réalisme par gros temps) aus der Perspektive des späten Realismus.

Schon aus dieser knappen Aufzählung der Kapitelüberschriften und der entsprechenden Inhaltspunkte geht hervor, wie komplex die Rekonstruierung des soziogeschichtlichen, kulturellen und ideologischen Panoramas der "realistischen Zeit" in Jacques Le Riders Studie ist. Seinem "génial esprit de synthèse" (Magda Jeanrenaud) ist die gelungene Ausweisung des Realismus, nicht nur als ideologische Strömung des bürgerlichen Zeitalters, sodern auch als eine Konstante der wirklichkeitstreuen Manifestierung der Künste zu verdanken, die sich über die Jahre hinaus bis in die Gegenwart zieht.

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