Nosotros
Author:
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Reader's name:
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Nosotros (Us), by Manuel Vilas, appears to be a story about a perfect love, a perfect marriage. Irene and Marcelo were married for 20 years, and they lived each day of their marriage as if it were the first day. The passion and love never faded. They never argued, never doubted their feelings for each other, which remained strong and true and perfect.

Then Marcelo got cancer and died. At the novel's outset, a recently widowed Irene embarks on a trip along the Mediterranean coast, retracing holidays that she and Marcelo took as a married couple. She is looking for a way to maintain her connection to Marcelo from beyond the grave, and, perhaps following the promptings of Marcelo, she appears to find an unusual way to evoke his apparition, even after his death.

As she travels along the coast toward Rome in a luxurious rented BMW, Irene's beautiful memories of her perfect marriage become more charming, extraordinary, and evocative. The novel unfolds as a series of introspective memories that Irene meditates on as she drives, checks into luxury hotels, and dines at high end restaurants.

Then Irene starts to do things that seem a bit odd. Her behavior becomes more erratic, and the reader starts to wonder, what actually did happen in Irene's marriage?

The novel ends with a surprising twist, and we realize that we have been taken in by Irene's fantasy life, as has Irene, herself. In reality, Marcelo died in a plane crash over 20 years ago, and Irene has never been able to accept this fact. From time to time, she invents a story, which she truly believes, and escapes her life in Madrid to travel around, living this story in her mind, and trying to reunite with Marcelo from beyond the grave by engaging in a series of rituals, like bathing in the Mediterranean Sea, and seducing others. As her behavior becomes more and more erratic, the reader has to decide if Irene's memories of her relationship with Marcelo are reliable and trustworthy depictions of the possibilities for love between a husband and wife, or if they are the delirious dreams of a woman driven mad. The novelist does not make it clear what the reader should think, as Irene's musings are deeply poetic, philosophical, and beautiful. But are they true?

Us would be an excellent candidate for translation into English. A story about the nature of the love between two people, the difference between the fantasy of love, the memory of love, grief, mourning, and mental illness. The subject matter would travel well in the United States because the themes are universal.

The overall idea of the book seems to concern a woman of 50 who is processing the grief of having recently been widowed by taking a trip around the Mediterranean coast of Spain and Italy. As the novel progresses, however, the reader slowly starts to realize that the main character, Irene, is not exactly who she thinks she is, and that her memories of her past are not reliable, and that this is not the novel one expected it to be.

The themes of grief and loss and the mind's ways of processing them are treated in a mysterious and original way in this novel. There are many literary and philosophical allusions to various Spanish poets and authors.

Irene's interior meditations on love, her memories of her marriage, her philosophical musings on the meaning of it all are moving, interesting, literary and philosophical. Above all the novel is a meditation on pleasure: what it is, and whether we need others to experience pleasure, or can we experience it alone. A surprising twist at the end surprises the reader and leads us into the innermost depths of the woman, Irene's, psyche. Her interior life is very relatable because it deals with universal themes: grief, loss, love, marriage, loneliness, and pleasure.

All these themes are examined by the unique perspective of the author, a talented storyteller with other best-selling works to his credit. The novelist, Manuel Vilas, won the 2023 Nadal Prize for this work, one of Spain's oldest and most prestigious literary prizes. (). Vilas is an accomplished writer who has won many Spanish literary prizes and published numerous collections of poetry, essays, and novels. His novel *Ordesa* was an international bestseller translated into languages including French, German, and English. Vilas teaches at the University of Iowa in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. (https://www.hayfestival.com/artist.aspx?artistid=5806)

The surreal character of this work, with its surprising twist at the end, are reminiscent of an M. Night Shyamalan film. This novel would make an excellent film, especially if Mr. Shyamalan were to direct it.