

Leprosy in Society. V. "Leprosy" in Occidental Literature

TO THE EDITOR:

MESSIEURS,

Objet: Leprosy in Society. V. "Leprosy" in Occidental Literature.

J'ai lu avec intérêt l'article sous rubrique, paru dans le volume 38, Numéro 3, du trimestre juillet-septembre 1970 de votre revue.

J'ignorais que la littérature occidentale ne comprenait que la Divine Comédie et la littérature anglo-saxonne!

Peut-être pourra-t-il intéresser les auteurs de l'article que, rien que dans la littérature française, il y a une foule d'oeuvres où il est question de la lèpre. En me référant à la thèse du Dr. Malet sur l' "Histoire de la lèpre et de son Influence sur la Littérature et Les Arts," je puis vous citer, au hasard:

—Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut (lequel a été également conté en allemand, en gaëlique, en *anglais*, en tchèque et en norvégien)

—L'Encyclopédie du XVIII^e siècle

—Le Lépreux de la Cité d'Aoste (Xavier de Maistre)

—La légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier (Gustave Flaubert)

—La Lépreuse (Henri Bataille)

—Jocelyn (Alphonse de Lamartine)

—Voix intérieures (Victor Hugo)

—L'Impure (Guy des Cars)

—L'Annonce faite à Marie (Paul Claudel)

—Les Lépreuses (Henry de Montherlant)
etc. . . etc. . .

Un examen de la littérature espagnole ou allemande serait tout aussi fructueux!

Peut-être ignore-t-on Outre-Atlantique Monsieur Follereau et son oeuvre?

Veillez agréer, Messieurs, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués.

—P. VAN DEN WIJNGAERT

Secrétaire General

ELEP

Rue Stevin 196

B-1040 Brussels, Belgium

English translation follows:

TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Sirs:

Re: Leprosy in Society. V. "Leprosy" in Occidental Literature.

I read with interest your article listed above, which appeared in Volume 38, Number 3, July-September 1970, of your journal.

I wasn't aware that Occidental literature consisted of only the Divine Comedy and Anglo-Saxon literature!

It might be of interest to the authors of

the article that, in French literature alone, there are many works where leprosy is an issue. In referring to the thesis of Dr. Malet on the "History of Leprosy and its Influence on Literature and Art," I can mention, at random:

- The Romance of Tristram and Isolde (which was told as well in German, Gaelic, English, Czech, and Norweigen)
- The Encyclopedia of the Eighteenth Century
- The Leper of the City of Aoste (Xavier de Maistre)
- The legend of Saint Julian the Hospitable (Gustave Flaubert)
- The Lepress (Henri Bataille)
- Jocelyn (Alphonse de Lamartine)
- Interior Voices (Victor Hugo)
- The Impure One (Guy de Cars)
- The Announcement to Mary (Paul Claudel)
- The Lepresses (Henry de Montherlant) etc. . . etc. . .

A study of the Spanish or German literature would be just as profitable!

Is no one across the Atlantic aware of Mr. Follereau and his work?

Please accept, sirs, my best regards.

-P. VAN DEN WIJNGAERT
Secretary General, ELEP

[We thank Mr. Van den Wijngaert for his interest and for taking the trouble to add to our list of references to leprosy in literature. Some of these were known to us but several were not. We are aware that occidental literature consists of more than the Divine Comedy and Anglo-Saxon literature that we quoted. Indeed, it is obvious that a paper of this length could not ever encompass all of the Anglo-Saxon literature and we omitted many such references.]

We, and to our personal knowledge, many others on the continents to the west of the Atlantic Ocean are well aware of the work of Mr. Follereau, having both read many of his writings and having had the pleasure of hearing him speak. The writers, never-

theless, do not feel that this knowledge altered our own interpretations of the literature surveyed.

The paper referred to, as the title indicates, was one of a series of attempts to understand leprosy in society. The references selected seemed representative and pertinent to us for such understanding. The purpose was not claimed to be an exhaustive compilation of all references to leprosy in occidental literature but only to be representative of society's thought. It was recognized, in the writing, that over the centuries there has been much cross-fertilization between the literatures of the occidental countries—much more so than between the literature of the Orient and the Occident. Some reviewers of the paper suggested that it was already too long and recommended that it be published only in the form of our conclusions without representative quotations from the literature. We, however, concluded that this would leave the reader in the position of having difficulty in determining how we reached our interpretations. Therefore we left the quotations. For these reasons we did not make an attempt to delve deeply into Spanish, German, Scandinavian and other occidental literary heritages.

We are therefore not concerned that our paper did not include all references. We would be concerned if our conclusions were based on a biased sampling which did not give a true reflection of the attitudes of the societies from which they are derived. We would also be concerned if our judgement regarding cross-fertilization of ideas was faulty. If this be so we invite those who are more broadly versed in the other literatures of the Occident to bring forth their interpretations of society's reaction to leprosy as reflected in these works. Insofar as such studies have been available to us we recognize, of course, that there are variant interpretations possible and we respect those at variance with us while still hoping that our interpretations may prove to be a valid contribution.—O. K. Skinsnes]