



Cap sur l'école inclusive
en Europe



Resource sheet
Literature in 20th and 21th centuries
Section of the module / D

1/ Theme:

Through French literature, we find the place of disability in society.

20th century:

Jean Dominique Baudry: The Diving Bell and the Butterfly 1997

Hervé Bazin: Get Up and Walk 1952

Jeanne Benameur: Les Demeurées (equivalent to "The Half-wits") 2000

André Gide: The Pastoral Symphony 1919

Patrick Segal: The man who walked in his head 1977

21th century:

Henry Bauchau: The Blue Child 2006

Dorine Bourneton: My mother's favourite colour 2002

Cécile Ladjali: Illiterate 2016

Aral 2012

Philippe Pourtalet : Un battement d'Elle (equivalent to "a She flap", there is a pun between French words for wing and she) 2014

2/ Context:

André Gide's novel The Pastoral Symphony in which he makes the idea of educability the plot of his novel stems directly from the novels of the late nineteenth century. Indeed, initially, we are dealing with a heroine without a name, without body and without life.

"Oh! I don't think she sleeps, she's an idiot; she doesn't speak and understands what we say..." Her parents died when she was 15 years old, no one had ever been interested in her, had never spoken to her; but the pastor decides to welcome her at home more in the name of the Protestant religion which he embodies and of his principles than by consideration. ("The blind let herself be taken as an involuntary mass ...")

The first thing he does is to name it: Gertrude; it then comes to him the idea that she is perhaps educable; he speaks to his doctor, who confirms it at the same time as he tells him that his blindness is probably operable. Then he speaks to her, she learns, "his features became animated", as André Gide very well says. This work is done through a love relationship between Gertrude and the teacher. The awakening of feelings goes hand in hand with openness to the senses through music in particular. It is thus that he has the idea to take him to a concert performing the pastoral symphony. During this one, it comes to him the idea to rely on the music to explain the colors: he compares the brass with the yellow, the strings with the blue... He even explains the white then the black as the whole of a band in unison. Gertrude ends up having surgery and regains sight. However, when she wakes up, she realizes that the love she felt for her preceptor that she thought he could be her lover was actually a father to her and had deceived her all this time; it kills her.

This novel raises the issue of the relation in the transmission, what it allows but also its limits, how also the desire of the other can be important in this relation. It also shows it possible to use art as a pedagogical medium for teaching, soliciting the now acquired sensitivity of the handicapped person. Door of possibilities is open and then begins the era of a resolutely optimistic literature on disability. Get Up and Walk Hervé Bazin is a particularly edifying example. The heroine demonstrates a will and commitment to life that affects all of us; In the second half of the twentieth century, a series of autobiographies recounts the story of people who have gone through disability following an accident or birth. We can quote The man who walked in his head Patrick Segal or The Diving Bell and the Butterfly Jean Dominique Baudy. This allowed for a broader dissemination to a wider audience of those lives hidden in previous centuries. The twentieth century appears as a time of great progress on educability and artistic openness to the world of disability. Yet we remain on physical handicap, the one that is most obvious, that we notice the most at first.

With the twenty-first century, new forms of disability appear in the literature, including autism and illiteracy. It is interesting to note that the latter state has obtained this status and that it is so. In a society where writing takes a large place, one can feel discomfort in which illiterate people can find themselves. Thus in the novels of Jeanne Benameur The Half-wits and The illiterate Cécile Ladjali is firstly described the singular difficulty of these characters to go to school; Luce goes there because "it was necessary. Everyone said it: school is obligatory." A link of extreme fragility is established between this girl and the teacher; she wants to teach her to write her name, "that's how everyone starts", Luce finally agrees the day she offers to embroider his name on a piece of cloth and there his body comes alive. The history of Leo, a suburban young, who struggles to navigate the corridors

of the metro using the colors of the lines is just as singular. At the age of six, he learned of his parents' departure for Christmas; he will not see them anymore because they are actually dead. A grandmother will take care of him and take him to school, but access to written will remain very complicated throughout his schooling. In secondary school, he quickly found no place: "when he sat down in front of his blank sheet, he felt that around him everything was disappearing, to himself. He did not remember that when he was six years old, when the first rudiments of reading and writing were set up at his comrades, grandma Adelaide had told him on Christmas morning that his parents had left." Leo forgot as soon as he entered the factory to work. As an adult, a meeting with her nurse and neighbor Sybille will allow him to take an interest in the world of writing again; he will even register for lessons in an integration center.

However, in both cases, the fragility of their encounters will be revealed to reader, showing their limits; thus, Luce will quickly get sick; undermine her teacher to the point that she becomes depressed. While Leo will not bear that Sybille leaves him. The question of the transmission of knowledge is thus posed. How can we take into account the singularity of each individual at school through the teacher / learner relationship? Freud notes that the school "must not claim on its behalf the inexorability of life, it must not want to be more than a game of life".

Thus, over the centuries, we have moved from the idea that some different born-men were idiots and beggars, and that we could deceive them with no limit to the idea that, through the testimonies of their stories, handicapped people could themselves contribute to change the view of the other on difference. Thus are the possible as well as deadlocks in which they are found and then invite society to hear their voices (ways).

3/ Objectives:

This sheet is attached to the training module of the history of disability and its legislative framework.

4/ Limits:

We have studied only the case of France.