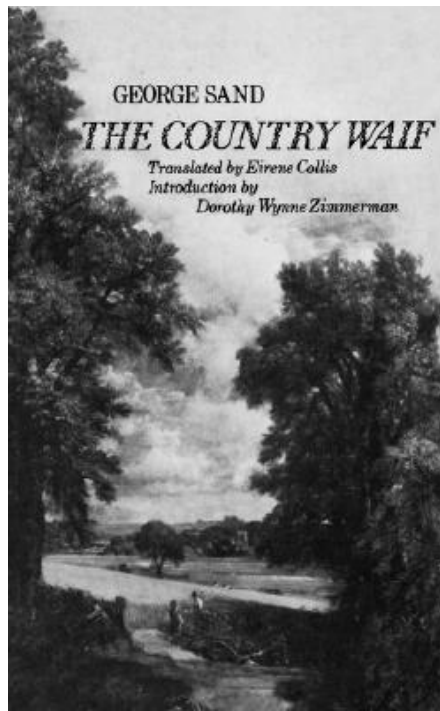




The Country Waif (Francois Le Champi)

George Sand , Eirene Collis (Translator) , Dorothy Wynne Zimmerman (Introduction)

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The Country Waif (François le Champi) is the second of the three pastoral novels which rank along with George Sand's autobiographical writing as her finest work. Although simple in themselves, these tales have behind them much of the complex experience of her extraordinary life. As Mrs. Zimmerman writes in the introduction, they reflect Sand's "youthful romanticism, her later championing of the working classes, and her desire to record in fiction that was both poetic and factual the lives of the people and the region she knew best."

Set in the countryside of the author's native province of Berry, *The Country Waif* tells the story of François, an orphan boy placed in a rural foster home, and Madeline, the miller's wife who befriends him. Sand's contemporary, Turgenev, wrote that it was "in her best manner, simple, true, affecting." The book has been admired by writers as diverse as Willa Cather (she found it "supremely beautiful") and André Malraux, who considered it a masterpiece.

As well as examining the setting, language, and narrative mode of the novel, the introduction looks at Sand's life, in part from the feminist perspective, with attention to the sociopolitical background of the post-Napoleonic era, when Aurore Dudevant felt impelled to rebel against her status as a country wife and to become George Sand.

The Country Waif (Francois Le Champi) Details

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From Reader Review The Country Waif (Francois Le Champi) for online ebook

Yann says

Quand on voit le style naturel, on est tout étonné et ravi, car on s'attendait de voir un auteur et on trouve un homme.

François le Champi est un roman de 1848 - dernière année où un roi régna en France - écrit par Georges Sand, un écrivain pour lequel je nourris une grande sympathie, ayant connaissance d'une partie de sa vie avec Musset, de sa correspondance avec Flaubert, et même d'un épisode que Tocqueville relate dans ses Souvenirs. Elle a défendu une approche généreuse et optimiste à l'égard de ses concitoyens les plus indigents. Dans ce roman, elle laisse éclater sa sensibilité en peignant la vertu dans les habits de la pauvreté et l'ignorance. On sent poindre à travers cette histoire champêtre la nostalgie d'une innocence perdue dans la sophistication de la civilisation, une idée toute droite sortie du siècle précédent, mais qui trouve également des échos lointains dans l'antiquité, comme en témoigne le roman de Daphnis et Chloé.

J'ai vu et j'ai senti par moi-même, avec tous les êtres civilisés, que la vie primitive était le rêve, l'idéal de tous les hommes et de tous les temps. Depuis les bergers de Longus jusqu'à ceux de Trianon, la vie pastorale est un Éden parfumé où les âmes tourmentées et lassées du tumulte du monde ont essayé de se réfugier.

La personnalité du héros est toute trempée de vertus chrétiennes: simplicité, humilité, ignorance, droiture, fidélité, persévérance. Ni la pauvreté, ni l'ignorance n'ont avili cette âme pleine d'aménité et de douceur pour son prochain, et qui ne compte pour rien les sacrifices qu'il accomplit pour ceux qu'il aime. Pour faire plus peuple, Georges Sand a taché de mettre dans la bouche de son héros des expressions provinciales. Mais il s'agit également de faire sentir avec la clarté et l'économie de l'expression, la pureté des sentiments et des intentions. Le savoir n'est estimé non par sa quantité, mais par sa qualité.

Il y a deux manières de lire, et il serait bon de dire cela à ceux qui se croient bien instruits. Ceux qui ont beaucoup de temps à eux, et beaucoup de livres, en avalent tant qu'ils peuvent. Ceux qui n'ont pas le temps et les livres, sont heureux quand ils tombent sur le bon morceau.

Au final, on se laisse de très bon gré charmer par l'illusion de cette fiction édifiante. Une lecture fort plaisante, qui laisse la meilleure impression dans l'âme, et les meilleures dispositions à l'égard de son auteur.

Steve Gordon says

A short little tale about the life of a waif...foundling...or orphan if you will. Not the most political of Sand's novels, but still a testament to the glory of the common worker / peasant. And what the hay - she even throws in a nice Oedipal thread for your reading pleasure.

Anne-Marie G says

My least favorite George Sand book to date.

It is supposed to be among her best, but it just didn't click with me--and the ending was not what I wanted it to be. At all.

Helynnne says

François le Champi (1848) is the third in the trio of George Sand's popular "pastoral novels," and just as rewarding as *La Mare au Diable* and *La Petite Fadette*. Sand's Avant-Propos or Prologue is a beautifully written tribute to the beauties of nature (especially in rural central France) as God's work of art, and the peasants of the region who are the caretakers thereof. “. . . le paysan le plus simple et le plus naïf est encore artiste, et moi, je prétends même que leur art est supérieur au nôtre.” The title character is a handsome, but abandoned and ragged, 10-year-old child with no last name, who is known only as François le Champi (*champi*: a child found in the fields). François is found one day by 20-year-old Madeleine, a wife of a local farmer, who has a small child. She finds the boy a new guardian, but continues to give him food and clothing in secret. Sand can't help but comment here on how Madeleine, a kind and decent person, is ill-used by her husband, and that marriage often turns sour for the nicest and prettiest of young women. As François matures, he remains innocent, but grows in strength, looks, and Christian faith. Eventually, other young women in the region will become attracted to François even though he has always loved Madeleine, and despite the difference in their ages, he is growing, and she is widowed, and . . . This is a lovely story--not only rewarding in plot, but rich in Sand's love for her native area of France and all its natural charm.

Yan says

so after a whole book of calling one another mother & son they - decide to get married! ok.

& i totally forgot abt this being in proust! but as i was reading it i was thinking how similar it felt to rotp, particularly certain passages in the intro, so maybe i remembered subconsciously or s/t idk

Sandra says

“La mamma mi sedette accanto al letto; aveva preso Françoise le Champi la cui copertina rossastra e il titolo incomprensibile suscitavano in me l’idea di una personalità distinta e un’attrattiva misteriosa. Non avevo ancora mai letto veri romanzi. Avevo sentito dire che George Sand era il tipico romanziere. Questo mi disponeva già ad immaginare in Françoise le Champi qualcosa di indefinibile e di delizioso. I procedimenti narrativi destinati a suscitare la curiosità e la commozione, certi modi di dire che destano inquietudine o malinconia, e che un lettore un po’ istruito riconosce come comuni a molti romanzi, mi sembravano semplicemente —a me che consideravo un libro nuovo non come una cosa che potesse assomigliare a molte altre, ma un’entità unica, esistente in sé stessa- un’inquietante emanazione dell’essenza particolare a

Françoise le Champi. Sotto quegli avvenimenti così quotidiani, quelle cose così comuni, quelle parole così usuali, sentivo come un'intonazione, uno strano accento. Iniziò a svolgersi l'azione; mi parve tanto più oscura in quanto a quei tempi, quando leggevo, pensavo per pagine intere a tutt'altra cosa. E alle lacune che quella distrazione lasciava nel racconto, si aggiungeva, quando era la mamma che mi leggeva a voce alta, il fatto che saltava tutte le scene d'amore. Anche tutti i bizzarri cambiamenti che avvenivano rispettivamente nel comportamento della mugnaia e del ragazzo e che non trovavano la loro spiegazione se non nel progredire di un amore nascente mi sembravano improntati a un profondo mistero la cui origine mi piaceva immaginare doveva essere in quel nome mai sentito e così dolce di Champi che trasmetteva al ragazzo che lo portava, senza ne sapessi il perché, il suo colore vivo, purpureo e incantevole....”
Le carezzevoli parole di Marcel Proust mi esonerano dal commento e spiegano il motivo per cui ho voluto leggere questo breve romanzo dal sapore agreste di George Sand.

gufo_bufo says

Il libretto non è gran che: sembra buttato giù in fretta e furia, con incongruenze temporali e contraddizioni narrative; ha pretese di letteratura sociale con riscatto delle classi povere e superamento delle barriere e compagnia bella; ha personaggi molto buoni o molto cattivi e poche sfumature; ha dialoghi stereotipati e un intreccio miserello. Capisco perché non è famoso.

Ma l'ho preso in mano con interesse, quando l'ho incontrato nella libreria della cugina da cui ero ospite, perché ne parla Proust nel primo volume della Recherche: è il libro che la mamma gli legge una notte in cui l'ansia e la solitudine del bambino incontrano la misericordia del padre, che gli concede la compagnia della mamma. In questa luce, la storia del trovatello che viene teneramente allevato da una giovanissima mugnaia, già moglie e madre, e che viene ingiustamente accusato di intrattenere con lei una tresca, e che finisce poi per sposarla, assume una chiara valenza di Edipo non bollato di incesto ma anzi assolto e approvato: sposare la mamma ancora giovane e bella è il sogno di ogni bambino, e quella di essere stati adottati è una fantasia infantile altrettanto comune.

Il libro non vale più di due stelline; la terza è per Proust.

Kai Weber says

An idealist must feel satisfied when reading novels whose protagonist show the finest ethical behaviour. But a realist facing the same works must doubt that any such perfect model is likely to exist. If an idealist mind and a realist heart meet in the same reading person, this reader would be torn hither and thither while reading Sand's "François le Champi". There's certainly some joy in seeing how a person can always behave well, but on the other hand pure goodness is at times not only unrealistic, but even a bit boring.

Markus says

François le Champi

George Sand, née Aurore Dupin (1804 – 1876)

Après la Mare au Diable, achevé en quatre jours, Sand écrit un autre roman champêtre, plus long, plus complexe et plus riche et romantique.

Un Champi est un enfant trouvé, abandonné par sa mère, souvent trop misérable pour élever son enfant, a un

Hospice des enfants trouvés. Un enfant de l'Assistance Publique qui démarre dans la vie avec un handicap social presque insurmontable.

Dans cette histoire l'auteur nous présente ses héros avec force et beauté, avec belle taille et noble cœur, force de caractère et fidélité à toute épreuve.

De façon plus accentuée que dans son précédent roman Sand fait parler ses personnages la langue berrichonne, avec le ton populaire et simple qui convient.

Il y a aussi de fort méchants gens et des épisodes bien amers dans le Champi, mais, et je me souviendrais de ce roman avec plaisir pour l'ambiance de l'amour, de la fidélité et de la persévérance qui réussissent en fin de compte de surmonter le conflit social et à réunir le jeune amoureux et sa belle meunière.

Dans son meilleur des romans champêtres, l'écrivain réussit à exprimer ses intentions avec charme, modestie et justesse de ton.

Sylvain says

avant-propos > roman

alessandra falca says

"La mamma mi sedette accanto al letto; aveva preso Françoise le Champi la cui copertina rossastra e il titolo incomprensibile suscitavano in me l'idea di una personalità distinta e un'attrattiva misteriosa. Non avevo ancora mai letto veri romanzi. Avevo sentito dire che George Sand era il tipico romanziere. Questo mi disponeva già ad immaginare in Françoise le Champi qualcosa di indefinibile e di delizioso." M. Proust - Alla ricerca del Tempo Perduto [Dalla parte di Swann] - 1° volume.

Pubblicato nel 1850, François le Champi divenne in seguito un libro di culto per gli amanti della Recherche proustiana, dove viene definito "straordinario".

In realtà Proust non riconosceva alla Sand doti letterarie piuttosto spiccate ma il tema "campestre" di questo romanzo breve della Sand era perfetto per il piccolo Marcel.

Letto adesso è più una favola cupa. Con i buoni 'buoni' e i cattivi 'cattivi'.

Ma se hai letto "La recherche" ti verrà voglia di andarlo a cercare.

Lunga vita a George Sand!

Kalliope says

François le champi (A Country Waif) is not one of the most celebrated novels in French literature. It is not even the major work by George Sand, a fascinating woman but who does not rank at the very top of the French literary figures.

And yet, Le champi holds one of the keys to the greatest work in French literary modernism.

This book stands at the beginning and at the end of *La recherche tu temps perdu*. It is one of its multiple frames. In the opening of *La recherche* it appears as the first novel to which Proust's young protagonist is exposed, and this conveys for him the feeling of mystery in literature. It then surfaces again at the closing of

Proust's work with a revelatory role. We can then see this minor novel as actually inaugurating the beginning of time being wasted away while also signaling the possibility that lost time can be regained when we are approaching its end.

Little did George Sand suspect, when she wrote this novel in 1848, that this work would play later on such a major literary role.

In her preface she explains how the end of the July monarchy and the 1848 revolution had interrupted the publication of her work. These interfering circumstances however were the appropriate context for her work. For her aims with this novel were social. She wanted to present how a boy, a waif, could be honorable. She wanted to break social stigmas. A good-for-nothing could be good-for-everything. Her aims were also aesthetic. She wanted to find beauty in the common, in the everyday, and for this she chooses what she thinks is the simple life, the country life. She draws then from the pastoral tradition to which she however has given a socio-political twist and has transformed it into an engaged "roman campagnard".

In François le Champi, she constructed a story within a story. A couple of characters, who remain inexplicable in spite of explicating themselves, discuss aesthetics and its application to real life. At the core of this debate there is also a strong moral standpoint. One of these two characters proceeds then to illustrate his points with the tale of the Champi. This second story is the bulk of the novel.

We can see these two dialoguing characters as the mouthpieces for Sand's view on art. Nature is where beauty resides and it is the people who live close to it who live closer to truth and should be emulated (*je voudrais sentir la manière du paysan..*). Civilization has a denaturalizing effect -- literally (*j'ai vu et j'ai senti par moi-même, avec tous les rêves civilisés, que la vie primitive était le rêve, l'idéal de tous les hommes et de tous les temps*). And the artist can have a special role in extracting the lessons from nature: he can be its translator (*l'artiste est chargé de traduire cette candeur, cette grâce, ce charme de la vie primitive, à ceux qui ne vivent que de la vie factice...*).

I wonder how much of Proust's interest in this novel was drawn to this fictitious dialogue. I suspect that not much, even if some sentences seem to denote an echo in his writing (*entre la connaissance et la sensation, le rapport c'est le sentiment*). My impression is that the attention of his young narrator is drawn directly to the tale of François le champi, a boy like himself.

In this second narrative, the plot is simple and the characters are simple. The story, however, has baffled me.

What leaves me in suspense is that I would like to know why Proust chose to include this particular novel in such a prominent place in his own work. Le Champi involves a surrogate mother and a young castaway and, easily to predict, love develops between the two. This plot becomes a very tempting premise. I have however preferred to push aside any Freudian lenses and looked through less pre-colored filters.

For one, the young Narrator did not read the book himself, it was read to him by the mother. She censored the sections that she thought were sensual and jumped over those passages. Consequently a certain level of incomprehension was created but immediately endowed with a veil of mystery by this sensitive and highly imaginative young boy.

A second factor would be that his exposure to Sand's work was through sound, through the warm voice of his dear mother (*Ces phrases qui semblaient écrites pour sa voix*). To him it was the voice of sentiment (*elle insufflait à cette prose si commune une vie sentimentale et continue*) and of goodness. Both blended well with the moral tone of Sand's novel (*la prose de Sand, qui respire cette bonté, cette distinction morale que*

maman avait appris de ma grand'mère à tenir pour supérieures à tout dans la vie.)

And last there was the title. For the word **Le champi** is not a common word in French. Sand has one of her characters explain to the other that he is mistaken if he thinks it is a foreign word, for Montaigne had used it. The title was incomprehensible to Proust's dreamy child as well (*sa couverture rougeâtre et son titre incompréhensible donnaient pour moi une personnalité distincte et un attrait mystérieux*). And the fascination that a word can enclose (*la source devait être dans ce nom inconnu et si doux de "Champi" qui mettait sur l'enfant qui le portait sans que je susse pourquoi, sa couleur vive, empourprée et charmante.*) is what endows the name with such a strong evocative power than it can make memories be relived or older selves resuscitate and possess the current identity.

And so a copy of **François le champi** rests on the night table in Marcel's room in **Tante Léonie's house** in Illiers-Combray, an idilic countryside. It is a witness that Time was Recovered and that we, posterity, continue to keep his Time ticking.

Chris says

An oddly heartwarming tale about a 6 year old foundling who is adopted by a young peasant wife who is only 16, and the love that grows between them. I'm not sure how such things were handled 150 years ago when the book was written (if such things happened) but the transition from a mother/son relationship, albeit an adoptive relationship, to a romantic relationship remained troubling to me even as it smoothly wrapped up the story.

Etienne Mahieux says

"François le Champi" poursuit la veine paysanne de "La Mare au Diable" et de "La Petite Fadette". George Sand invente ou réinvente les histoires de sa Vallée noire, après un prologue poétique dans les deux sens du terme où le romancier — elle joue toujours de son pseudonyme masculin — s'apprête à transcrire, pour un ami, les récits d'un chanvreur à la veillée.

La jeune meunière Madeleine Blanchet, pas très bien mariée, prend sous son aile un "champi", c'est-à-dire un enfant abandonné, élevé par une femme entre deux âges contre une petite pension d'État, et voué par les préjugés sociaux à une vie marginale et probablement délinquante (chaque époque a ses délinquants désignés, semble-t-il). Petit à petit le jeune François conquiert sa place dans la famille Blanchet, à force de dévouement reconnaissant, mais le mari de Madeleine, bien que de plus en plus absent, prend ombrage de cette présence.

George Sand tâche de tenir une position intermédiaire, très difficile, entre l'idylle pastorale traditionnelle et le réalisme qui, dans le sillage de Balzac, devient l'une des exigences de l'art du roman. Si les personnages principaux sont d'une vertu héroïque, et si les sentiments ici sont grands et chrétiens, Sand refuse le décor de convention et ente le récit sur la tradition orale berrichonne, à la fois par la délégation de la narration au

chanvreur, ou plus exactement par l'invention d'une voix double qui est à la fois celle du conteur paysan et celle du romancier qui transcrit la première pour les Parisiens, et par le recours, saupoudré avec modération, à un vocabulaire et à des tournures de phrases archaïques et/ou dialectaux. Ce choix donne sa réalité au monde de la fiction. Il y a de belles descriptions, bien sûr, encore que Sand en soit économe et les dispense selon les besoins de l'intrigue, au lieu de les concentrer au début sur le modèle balzacien. On peut par exemple songer au retour au moulin de François, après plusieurs années passées dans la Creuse comme ouvrier agricole, belle évocation d'une nuit glaciale. Il y a enfin une précision réelle dans l'évocation du mode de vie paysan, de ses rites, de ses coutumes et de ses problèmes les plus concrets (il y a ici de sacrées histoires de baux ruraux et de terres rachetées à crédit).

Si l'étrange n'a cette fois aucun rôle dans l'intrigue, la situation centrale, qui remet en cause, sous couvert de reportage ethnographique, la succession des générations et le modèle traditionnel de la famille, est presque de l'ordre du mythe. C'est aussi l'une des forces de "François le Champi".

Manny says

Proust fans will recall that this is the book Marcel's mother reads to him during the incident near the beginning of *Combray*, when he becomes distraught after not getting his goodnight kiss. When I visited the Proust museum in Illiers-Combray, I found that one room had been made up to look like a tableau of this scene, and there was indeed a copy of *François le Champi* lying on the bedside table.

So, given the importance of the book to *A la recherche du temps perdu*, I thought I should read it some time - Proust gives you no clue as to what it's about. (view spoiler)

Well! I hope that hasn't destroyed other people's appreciation of the passage from *Combray*. Personally, I thought it clarified certain aspects of the story. Poor Marcel is a seriously messed-up kid, and I felt I understood better why that might be.
