

# The Content Reader

Always looking for a good book!

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Wednesday, 27 April 2016

## The Sage of Waterloo by Leona Francombe

This is a lovely and wonderful book, written by one of my Brontë friends, Leona Francombe. Leona is a very talented lady; not only does she write books but she is also a classical pianist.

Inspired by the battle of Waterloo which took place on 18 June 1815, on the huge plains outside Brussels, it has survived as one of the most famous battles. Leona has found a different angle to describe the battle and the various people involved in it. She tells it from the point of view of William, a white rabbit, today living at Hougomont, the farmhouse which held an important stand during the battle.

*"Odors that I knew well - dandelions, for example - flooded the senses. Even with my dim vision I could see why: just beyond the fencing lay an entire, hallucinatory lawn of them.*

*Ah, yes... How well I remember my dandelion lesson.*

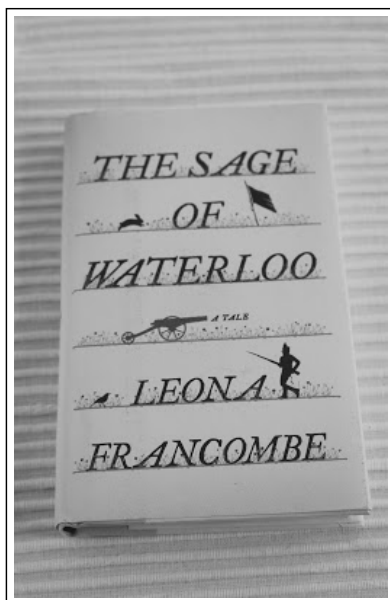
*"Life cannot be lived secondhand, William! (Old Lavender again.)*

*"No one can truly describe a dandelion. You must experience one yourself - even if it means taking a risk. And you can't say you've lived until you've taken at least one risk. Can you?"*

When I first heard that it was told from a rabbit's point of view, I was a little bit doubtful. Then I remembered the wonderful *Watership Down* by Richard Adams, so I opened the book with great anticipation. It does not disappoint you. This novel has hit "one of my favourite books" list without doubt.

Leona has woven a tale of a small rabbit colony, owned by someone not known, and looked after by a young guy, who sometimes forget to feed them. William's grandmother is the Old Lavender, a source of wisdom, and she is the one telling him tales of times past, especially the battle of Waterloo. Her words of wisdom are interwoven with real events during the battle, and various persons participating in it. The novel is very well researched.

*"It all would have made an impressive universe indeed if Bonaparte had actually been able to hold on to it. He certainly tried. "Power is my mistress," he declared. "I have worked too*



## About Me



Lisbeth Ekelof

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I am an expat Swede, living in Belgium. After a life time in an administration, I am now enjoying a more creative life, including reading, blogging, writing and journaling.

The centrepiece of my creative life is "The Content Reader". Here I share my views on books, history, film and much more. It has taken me on a journey all over the world, connecting me to bloggers sharing my interests. It is a great pleasure to exchange views on a variety of subjects and to get inspired!

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- ▶ [2017](#) (39)
- ▼ [2016](#) (107)
  - ▶ [December](#) (14)
  - ▶ [November](#) (7)
  - ▶ [October](#) (5)
  - ▶ [September](#) (6)
  - ▶ [August](#) (3)
  - ▶ [July](#) (16)
  - ▶ [June](#) (14)
  - ▶ [May](#) (7)
  - ▼ [April](#) (7)

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*hard at her conquest to allow anyone to take her away from me, or even to covet her. "Well, I never worked that hard at anything. But standing where I was, on the threshold of a territory that would have fuelled Napoleon's ambitions even further had he been closer to my size, I can say that a certain lust for adventure seized my loins. Until I remembered that Napoleon had also said: "One never climbs so high as when he knows not where he is going." By now I was lost."*

The description of the rabbits are very personal and you can't help love William and Old Lavender. Everyday happenings are related to remembrances of the battle of Waterloo. There are so many thoughtful ideas inside, making you consider people, how we act and what really matters in life. Many where the times I just stopped reading, to consider the text, the notions and the philosophical dealings, often finding situations that we all meet in real life.

*"Old Lavender was not yet finished with me, thank heavens: Square your shoulders! Take a step, even with all that despair pressing down. "Rise up!" Wellington told his men as they were hiding among the corn stalks. This you must do, William; you must rise up and face whatever life puts before you."*

The writing is very poetic and beautiful, as you see from the few samples I have gathered here. It is like you are surrounded by a make believe world, all hidden in mist and sunshine. The rabbits provide something for all your senses, and in the end you have a wonderful twist to the story. A really enjoyable read.

*"...Maybe I'd been too young to truly appreciate it the first time; maybe I needed two interventions to finally realize that the best dreams must sometimes remain intangible. That maybe we are better off gazing appreciatively at a green field, than actually fining ourselves in the middle of one. Dampness, darkness, exposure, falcons... this is what can happen to the loveliest of dreams. Perhaps it's better to live happily with the idea of a dandelion, than to die eating one."*

And then this quote below, which makes me remember the re-enactment of the battle in 2015. I saw exactly the same thing (see picture to the right); all these people dressed up in character clothes and acting as if they were in the beginning of the 19th century, and then...one takes up a cell phone and starts calling!

*"The Sunday soldier lifted his head, glanced around to make sure no one was watching, then crawled very slowly to the wall. There he opened a silver button of his uniform and pulled out a cell phone.*

*"Beth?" he yelled - he had to, as the din still raged all around, which meant that I could hear him quite well. "Beth, Oh, hi. I was just shot. Can you pick me up in the parking lot over by the café? Half an hour? Okay."*



Check point # 1 on [Mount TBR Reading Challenge 2016](#), hosted by Bev over at [My Reader's Block](#) was to answer 3 questions for our tour 'up the Mountain'. Two of the three led to *The Sage of Waterloo*.

B. Who has been your favourite character so far? And tell us why, if you like.

[The Sound of Silence!](#)

[2 x Henry James](#)

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- ▶ [March](#) (8)
- ▶ [February](#) (10)
- ▶ [January](#) (10)
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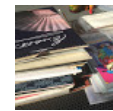
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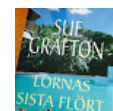
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Grandmother Old Lavender (a rabbit) from the wonderful story *The Sage of Waterloo*, which is told from a rabbit point of view. She has the wisdom learned through generations, tells the history of the battle and the people involved and always has a word of wisdom to sooth her grandson William.

**C. Have any of the books you read surprised you--if so, in what way** (not as good as anticipated? unexpected ending? Best thing you've read ever? Etc.)

I have to choose *The Sage of Waterloo* here as well. A surprisingly human story from a rabbit perspective and with a wonderful twist in the end. On top of this a beautiful, almost poetic prose.

at 17:00

 +1 Recommend this on Google

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## 2 comments:



**Jeanie** 1 May 2016 at 00:40

With characters like rabbits and Old Lavender, I think this sounds like a wonderful take on a long-told story. Thanks for bringing it to my attention!

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**Lisbeth Ekelof** 2 May 2016 at 21:46

It is worth a read! Lovely book!

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