

It was “Grand Louis l’Innocent”, her first novel and winner of the Prix Fémina in 1927, which conveyed the message of her personal trauma and her ideal of a companion for both travel and affairs of the heart.

In her personal and love life, Marie Le Franc could find no man who was equal to her culture, her interests and her expectations as a woman. So she brought him to life through her writing. She created her "dream man" as the negative to the "man from the North". She constructed him through a dual process of recovery from an injury sustained in the Great War, and the creation of a new type of couple in which both Eve and Grand-Louis participated...

At the time of writing Grand-Louis l’Innocent, Marie Le Franc was emerging from yet another disappointment in love, in the Great White North.

Consequently, the literature she produced was an antidote to her pain and an appeal for a new world where there is happiness, harmony and heedfulness between beings, between men and women, between humans and between humans and nature, including the moors, the wind, the sea and the changing landscape of snow and tides.

She cultivated the generosity of feelings, the importance of gaiety, the importance of all languages, of words, of gestures, of silence, of noises, of waiting and of respect for the time humans need to evolve in solitude as a person, and the freedom to return to oneself. She gives prominence to the human dimension in the onset of desire.

“Someone was there behind the shutters...

The sea and the wind suspended their combined wailing which rose from the pit of darkness like a double groan, and in the silence, someone was breathing.

...With stiff little steps she approached the door, and turned the key in a single movement. The light fell on a tall figure. The man did not step back. His arms hung by his sides. A motionless portrait framed by the moor.

He wore a fisherman's jacket, the sleeves too short, and canvas trousers that fell to his calves. A handkerchief hung out of his pocket. He had long moustaches, blond but discoloured, hollow cheeks, eyes that looked straight ahead with great openness, a face sculpted by the wind. His head of greying hair was bare, and thrown back.”

“It was in the evenings, mainly, that he became extraordinary. He no longer tried to cling to a world whose edges slipped through his fingers. He was reclaiming his personality. He was returning to his domain. Eve made no attempt to enter it. He was like the reflection of a landscape inverted in water; a landscape you know is futile to approach. He imparted a mystery into the atmosphere that it would have been sacrilege to try and penetrate. This atmosphere was pleasing to her woman’s spirit. She was living a romance which surpassed her expectations. There was a soul at her side with contours so vast and so fluctuating that it could never touch them. She must continue to move forwards with her arms outstretched. Every day the haze of the unknown between them was renewed, an impenetrable fog. They remained strangers to each other. They would meet every day with a new perspective. They kept their reasons for actions secret, their words held unsuspected meaning. They would never cease their discovery of each other. There would never be the slow, dreadful fusion of two personalities. They each retained their own. They would continue to meet with a smile on their lips and a mask over their eyes... You only build when you're alone; you only create with your hands.

“They talked mainly with their eyes. In the absence of other joys, this one was given to them. They looked at each other without weariness, without turning away and without fear, with no sudden impulse to conceal their thoughts behind the screen of their eyelids. There was nothing in their eyes that spoke of an effort to please, only the will to discover each other.