



Marian Engel: Life in Letters

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Marian Engel was a writer's writer – an iconoclast, deeply admired and loved by a generation of Canadian authors and critics. Informal gatherings were often held at Engel's Toronto house, and it was there that Engel's many literary friendships were first nurtured, later to blossom through the exchange of numerous and extraordinary letters, which are variously funny, insightful, irreverent, and moving. Engel's lively epistolary practice offers a view of the literary landscape in Canada from 1965 to 1985 as seen through her correspondence with mentor Hugh MacLennan, and friends and colleagues Robertson Davies, Dennis Lee, Margaret Atwood, Timothy Findley, Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence, Matt Cohen, Robert Weaver, and Graeme Gibson, to name but a few.

In the spring of 2001, the Marian Engel Archive in Hamilton, Ontario received an exciting and unexpected new installment of Engel correspondence. *Marian Engel: Life in Letters* is born of that gift. In making their selection, Christl Verduyn and Kathleen Garay have chosen correspondence that specifically captures Engel's life as a writer, a narrative that spans her early youthful travels in Europe to her early death in 1985. In addition to the letters sent to her friends, this startling and important collection includes letters by Engel to critics, to editors, to granting officers, to publishers, and a brilliant letter to a chief librarian lambasting him for, among other pungent criticisms, the library's prejudice against 'Domesticity' amongst other categories. Thoughtfully presented and accompanied by insightful commentary, these letters are rich in their detail, filling in the fine points in the life of not only one Canadian writer, but of a nation of writers.

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