

MARIAN ENGEL

THE GLASSY SEA



The glassy sea, Marian Engel, Penguin Books Canada, 1987, 0140096590, 9780140096590, 167 pages. .

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Varieties of Exile Stories, Mavis Gallant, 2003, Fiction, 324 pages. The complexity and uncertainty of the idea of home are very much at issue in the stories Gallant writes about Canada, her home country. Included in this new collection are the

Canada, the verbal creation , Alfredo Rizzardi, 1985, , 316 pages. .

Montana gothic , Dirck Van Sickle, Jan 1, 1979, Fiction, 244 pages. .

The Magic World , E. Nesbit, Sep 15, 2010, Fiction, 168 pages. To have your hair cut is not painful, nor does it hurt to have your whiskers trimmed. But round wooden shoes, shaped like bowls, are not comfortable wear, however much it may

Sarah Bastard's notebook , Marian Engel, 1974, Fiction, 181 pages. .

Lives Of The Saints , Nino Ricci, Mar 5, 2003, Fiction, 248 pages. What really happened to Vittorio's mother that day in the stable? That she'd been bitten by a snake was clear enough: the swelling in the ankle proved it. But that other

Women in management , Carol Schwartz Greenwald, 1980, Business & Economics, 49 pages. .

A fine and private place a novel, Morley Callaghan, 1975, Fiction, 213 pages. .

Whatever Comes (Mills & Boon Vintage 90s Desire) , Lass Small, Sep 27, 2012, Fiction, . It Was the Scoop of the Year... Everyone was talking about the way Amabel Clayton had finessed the interview with elusive rock start Sean Morant. The sexy, mysterious musician

Frog moon , Lola Lemire Tostevin, 1994, Fiction, 217 pages. .

Close to the sun again a new novel, Morley Callaghan, 1977, Literary Criticism, 169 pages. .

Despite a dreadful cover and excruciating blurb, this short novel is wonderful and I am delighted that this challenge encouraged me to read it. Consisting largely of a letter from a middle-aged woman to her Bishop, it tells the story of Rita from her rural childhood, through her transformation into an Anglican nun, Sister Mary Pelagia, her gentle "eviction" out of the order and into marriage and motherhood, and her eventual breakdown. As she re-reads the letter, written the previous summer, she begins to regain a sense of equilibrium about the past, and to review and reaffirm her decision about the future.

The writing is down-to-earth, almost chatty, even when considering matters of life and death, but there is a seriousness of tone, and earnestness, that tells us that the protagonist, while capable of efficiency and practicality, is in essence a dreamer, a lover of solitude. As a youngest child, we find she learnt her solitude early, along with an introspection her family find hard to deal with:

I liked it in church , too, because . . . I thought I understood Jesus. I didn't understand any of the other people I had read about because they did unheard of things like get caught in lobster pots or vanish down rabbit holes, or were orphans, but there was He, born in a barn, child of a man who worked with his hands (and my father, too, would have walked miles in winter to be honest and pay his taxes) and a woman who obviously worked her fingers to the bone. And, like me, He asked a lot of questions. I was always asking questions. When Rita is taken ill at university, and sent home to recuperate, she takes lessons from a retired Anglican clergyman, Mr Laidlaw, who introduces her to a community of nuns. Because the Anglican church can find no practical role for them, the Eglantines live a largely contemplative existence and Rita is drawn, despite immense parental opposition, to join them. And for ten years she is happy:

William Morris would indeed have been pleased with the Eglantines and I can't think God himself wasn't, at that time. I have read, since, books and stories by women who have dropped the veils of the Sisters of St Joseph, of the Ursulines - indeed, there must be dozens of them. But none of them seems to have found the earthly paradise I found for a while in Eglantine House, in London, Ont., as we call it, the heart of your diocese. Unfortunately for Rita, the Eglantines are an ageing community and, although she spends a time as its acting head, her Sister Superior decides that she is young enough to build a new life for herself and ejects her kindly but firmly into the arms of her friend Maggie, to help care for her children. Filled with grief at the loss of the community, she inevitably meets a young lawyer - in fact, they have met before, in high school, where Rita considers Asher Bowen the most beautiful man she has ever seen - and recognises in him some of her seriousness and religious fervour. Continuing the separation of each stage of her life, Ash renames her Peggy, they choose a church to attend together and are quickly married:

I was empty. I handed my void to him. He told me what to wear, what to do; when he knew me better, he told me what I felt. He filled my mind, my thoughts, my body. He sat beside me in church. During sacraments his face gleamed pale and fanatic; he had an intensity I had never seen in any Eglantine but Mary Elzevir. I loved him very much indeed. When she gives birth to a hydrocephalic child, the young couple are devastated. While Ash gradually withdraws, Rita becomes obsessive, dedicating herself to her child's welfare and survival. A "dreadful thing" occurs when Ash purchases the house of Rita's much hated (and child abusing) Uncle Eddie, as a summer cottage. For Rita, who has learnt detachment painfully during her parents' rejection, the return to her childhood home, the intrusion of the "messiness" of her country family, is too much.

With the death of her child, Rita's disintegration into alcoholism, breakdown and divorce is rapid, but she eventually redeems herself through contemplation. She considers that her life has gone wrong when she is required to be Martha rather than Mary yet, as she finally begins to achieve an inner peace, she allows herself to be persuaded that she will return to Eglantine House to re-establish and lead the order. She has learnt the difference between detachment and hiding, the need for balance between Mary and Martha, even the necessity of uncertainty. At the end, still debating with herself about the rightness of her decision, she says: "Enough. Enough. I've made my choice. I shall learn how to live with it."

Despite its brevity, this is a thoughtful book. It was first published in 1978, a time when there was rather more turmoil about woman's role in society, and this is considered at some length here, but it goes deeper, too, to a consideration what it is required for anyone to play their role. In the course of the book the Eglantines too have developed, and will play a greater role than that which they had formerly been allowed; they will no longer be a contemplative order, yet the need for a spiritual dimension to their work is still recognised and permitted time. To me this book provides a powerful affirmation of the need for spirituality, whatever the creed, and I find it already influencing my response to my next book for the challenge, which considers the role of women at an earlier period.

There is compassionate mastery in Ms Engel's full-blooded characterization of Marguerite Heber, an Anglican nun who is, first and foremost, a woman--one who has experienced marriage, motherhood, and the tragic break-up of the family. Her crucible produces a startling and utterly unorthodox resolution, a vision born of her own turbulent experience, geared to the world and embodying all the elements of her singular character.

Marian Engel - infamous for parlaying a detailed account of the sexual gy...more The first book to be read off my "pick it up and dust it off" shelf: books that have been sitting around for dozens of years, forgotten and neglected. Hard covers - some of 'em first editions - that I've picked up at flea markets, second-hand bookstores or that have been handed down to me.

Marian Engel - infamous for parlaying a detailed account of the sexual gymnastics involved in a brown bear and a librarian's love affair in the great north woods into a Governor General's award - writes like a raft of Canadian women authors (Atwood, Laurence, Munro even) used to write. Deeply introspective, crafted and poetic, genre and gender role-defying, imagery and insight combining in this ... this ... extraordinary way. Honest, mind- and heart-blowing accounts of women's experience that - to me at least - reads as personal, female, and very Canadian.

I say "used to" for two reasons: 1) because Engel died in 1985 leaving behind a small, diverse, largely overlooked body of work which is now a little hard to get your hands on. And you should, despite 2) it's dated, rooted in a time and place - and concerns - that don't really exist anymore or at least are not expressed in the same way as they were when she was writing.

TGS is the account of a woman - born Rita to humble, bigoted, Protestant Ontario stock - who becomes Sister Mary Pelagia (the RCs and high Anglicans among you will have more background to understand that name) in a nine-member Anglican Order, the Eglantines. As they begin to die off, she leaves that world for 'the' world: one of (view spoiler)[marriage, a child, divorce, a slide into alcoholism and promiscuous sex, i.e., (hide spoiler)]sexual, spiritual, and emotional crises.

The prologue and epilogue frame the main story of her life retold in a letter to her Bishop, written shortly after she's made the decision to (view spoiler)[return to and revive (and become sister superior of) the Order. (hide spoiler)] I forgive the ending - which wraps the story up in a way that felt too practical, too prosaic and too 'preachy' - for all that went before it, because of all that went before it.

She was the first chair of the Writerâ€™s Union of Canada (1973â€“74) and helped found the Public Lending Right Commission. From 1975-1977, she served on the City of Toronto Book Award Committee (an award she won in 1981 for Lunatic Villas) and the Can...more Canadian novelist, short-story and children's fiction writer, Marian Engel was a passionate activist for the national and international writerâ€™s cause.

She married Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio producer Howard Engel in 1962 and, upon their return to Toronto from England in 1964, began to raise a family--twins William Lucas Passmore and Charlotte Helen Arabella--and to pursue a writing career. Marian and Howard separated in 1975 and divorced in 1977.

Her first novel, *No Clouds of Glory*, was published in 1968. She wrote two children's books: *Adventures of Moon Bay Towers* (1974) and *My name is not Odessa Yarker* (1977). Her most famous and controversial novel was *Bear* (1976), a tale of erotic love between a librarian and a bear, for which she won the Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction in 1976.

From 1965 to her death in 1985 she corresponded with literary peers and friends such as Hugh MacLennan, Robertson Davies, Dennis Lee, Margaret Atwood, Timothy Findley, Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence, Matt Cohen, Robert Weaver, Graeme Gibson and more. Some of this correspondence can be found in *Dear Hugh, Dear Marian: The MacLennan-Engel Correspondence* (1995) and *Marian Engel: Life in Letters* (2004).

After her death in 1985, the Writer's Development Trust of Canada instituted the Marian Engel Award, which was presented annually to a woman writer in mid-career. The Engel and Findley Awards are no longer awarded separately, but were combined into the new Writers' Trust Notable Author Award as of 2008.

Marian Engel was born in Toronto, Ontario, in 1933. She grew up in the Ontario towns of Brantford, Galt, Hamilton, and Sarnia. She received her B.A. (1955) from McMaster University and her M.A. (1957) from McGill University, where she wrote her thesis, "The Canadian Novel, 1921-55," under the supervision of Hugh MacLennan.

afraid Amabel Anglican Anthony Ash Bone Asher asked Aunt baby beautiful began bird Bishop boys brassiere called chapel child China Township Christabel Christian Chummy church Clergy Reserve course Desert Fathers Dr Stern Eddie's Eglantine House eyes father feel felt friends funny girl grace Grammacrae hand Harriet Isbister heart Hebers high school John Katie Rogers kind kitchen knew Laidlaw live looked Mac Moan's Macraes Maggie Maggie's Marian Engel Mariette married Mary Beatrice Mary Cicely Mary Dorothy Mary Elzevir Mary Pelagia mind mother never night once Ontario Philip Phoebe remember Rita Rose's Shirl Shirley Sister Mary Rose sister superior smell someone summer suppose T.S. Eliot talk tell Tess there's things thought told took Toronto trying walk wanted West China wind woman women

Born May 24, 1933 in Toronto, Canada, Marian Engel is a respected Canadian writer whose works range from children's books to adult nonfiction. She is best known, however, as a novelist. Her writings frequently center on exceptional women who are often complex, wrestling with crucial problems and variant roles. Her novel *Bear* won the 1976 Governor General's Award. Many consider it her best work. *Lunatic Villas* was co-winner of the City of Toronto Book Awards in 1982. Engel continues her career living in Toronto.

The Marian Engel Archive at McMaster University is a rich resource that yields new insights into Marian Engel's work. A study of the several available drafts of *The Glassy Sea* reveals that Engel made significant changes to the epigraph, the title, and the form of her developing novel. This essay notes the changes Engel made to her intertexts and points to the increasing subtlety with which Engel dealt with women's ambivalent relationship to traditional discourses such as religion and language.

L'archive Marian Engel à l'université McMaster est une excellente ressource qui permet d'examiner différemment l'œuvre de Marian Engel. Une étude des nombreuses ébauches disponibles de *The Glassy Sea* révèle que Mme Engel a apporté des changements importants à l'épigraphie, au titre et à la forme du roman en plein développement. Cet article indique les changements faits par Mme Engel à ses intertextes et signale les subtilités progressives utilisées par Mme Engel pour traiter la relation ambivalente des femmes vis-à-vis les sujets traditionnels, comme la religion et la langue.

Marian Engel told Carroll Klein in the interview "A Conversation with Marian Engel" (1984, 30) that *The Glassy Sea*, an ambitious and complex novel published in 1978, took two years to write, and that it would have taken the rest of her life to "get it right." The Marian Engel Archive, held in the William Ready Archives Division of Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University, contains evidence of Engel's willingness to keep rewriting and of her desire for perfection in representation. The archive holds over a thousand pages of drafts and revisions of this compact and powerful novel about a late-twentieth-century Canadian woman who experiences being as ongoing transformation. The Archive is a rich resource that yields significant insights into Marian Engel's work, especially regarding the creative process and its implications for the meaning produced in the published novel.

The materials related to the production of *The Glassy Sea* are contained in two boxes (boxes 14 and 15), which hold 37 files. Dr. Kathy Garay, Engel's archivist, describes the archive as a whole in the introduction to the Library Research News published by McMaster University's Mills Memorial Library:

This archive, which was purchased by McMaster University in 1982, is a particularly full reflection of Marian Engel's creative life. The collection, which extends some four linear metres, includes all the extant manuscripts of her books, short stories, plays, scripts, reviews, speeches and articles written to date, both published and unpublished, as well as some business and personal correspondence and her notebooks. The earliest items, fragments of short stories, probably date from the late 1940s and the latest items included are pieces of correspondence from the spring of 1982. (1984, vii)