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Marian engel, who died in 1985 after a tragic struggle with cancer, was among Canada's most celebrated and beloved novelists. Her last, best known, and most controversial book was Bear (winner of the Governor-General's Award) in which a mousy, timid librarian is summoned to a remote Canadian island to inventory the estate of Colonel Cary, who, she learns soon enough, had any number of secrets. But the most surprising and enduring secret is a pet bear. In thirty pages, the reticent librarian meets the not so reticent bear and "wonders if it would be good company." It is good company indeed. Intimate company. Shocking company.

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Editorial Review

Review

Bear is a strange and wonderful book, plausible as kitchens, but shapely as a folktale, and with the same disturbing resonance. --Margaret Atwood

From the Inside Flap

After five years buried like a mole amid the decaying maps and manuscripts of an historical institute, Lou is given a welcome field assignment: to catalogue a nineteenth-century library, improbably located in an octagonal house on a remote island in northern Ontario. Eager to reconstruct the estate's curious history, she is unprepared for her discovery that the island has one other inhabitant: a bear.

Lou's imagination is soon overtaken by the estate's historical occupants, whose fascination with bear lore becomes her own. Irresistibly, Lou is led along a path of emotional and sexual self-discovery, as she explores the limits of her own animal nature through her bizarre and healing relationship with the bear.

A daring and compelling novel, Marian Engel's *Bear* won the Governor General's Award for 1976.

About the Author

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.

After living abroad and teaching in the United States and Europe, Engel returned to Canada in 1964 and settled in Toronto, which was to remain her home.

Her many novels and short stories explore the daily lives of her contemporaries, frequently reflecting upon the human condition from the perspective of women.

Engel was a founding member of the Writers Union of Canada and served as its first chairman in 1973-74.

Marian Engel died in Toronto in 1985.

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