



# Marian and the Major: Engel's "Elizabeth and the Golden City"

*Marian Engel, Christl Verduyn*

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**Marian and the Major: Engel's "Elizabeth and the Golden City"** Marian Engel, Christl Verduyn  
In "Marian and the Major", Christl Verduyn brings together the story of Major William Kingdom Rains and the compelling fictionalized version of his life, "Elizabeth and the Golden City," created by novelist Marian Engel. Rains, a former soldier in the Napoleonic Wars, immigrated to Canada at the same period as Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill. He brought with him his wards, sisters Frances and Elizabeth. The three settled on St Joseph Island in northern Ontario, where their unusual domestic arrangement caught the attention and imagination of, among others, the nineteenth-century British travel-writer Anna Jameson, the Swiss born naturalist and explorer Louis Agassiz, the American poet William Cullen Bryant, and the Canadian novelist Marian Engel. Engel was a key figure on the Canadian writing scene during its formative years in the 1960s and 1970s - the setting for her final work-in-progress, Elizabeth and the Golden City. Verduyn looks at the novel, the story on which it was based, and the parallels Engel found to her own life, exploring the fascinating relationship between history and literature. "Elizabeth and the Golden City" provides a glimpse of the creative process while it deepens appreciation of Marian Engel's artistry.

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