

## Ethel Wilson



Photo courtesy of [ABC Bookworld](#)

The [Ethel Wilson](#) Fiction Prize, won in 2011 by [Gurjinder Basran](#) for *Everything was Goodbye*, was created in 1985 to honour BC and Yukon authors.

It honours a BC writer born in 1888 in South Africa, then taken to England when her mother died. When she was orphaned by the death of her father at age ten, she was brought to Vancouver, where she grew up with relatives and became first a teacher, and later the wife of a doctor.

Between 1947 and 1987, [Ethel Wilson](#) produced novels, novellas and short stories, many of them set in Vancouver. Her writing is lyrical and poignant and her characters, utterly believable, are imbued what Wilson called "the genius of place." Reading her descriptions of mid-century Vancouver is like stepping through a portal in time.

In the novella "Lily's Story," the protagonist, ruthless with herself, protects her child from social and possibly physical harm at the cost of a heartbreaking loneliness and secrecy.

The novel *The Swamp Angel* opens in Vancouver. Maggie, unwilling to tread the path socially sanctioned for women of her time, befriends a retired circus woman who keeps a strange little gun she used in her act, then escapes her insensitive husband with the help of a young Chinese taxi driver.