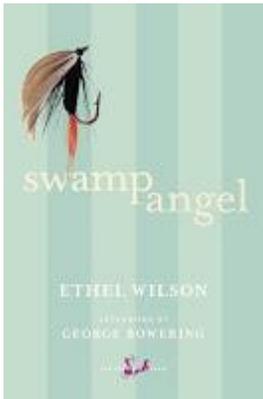


Spotlight on eBooks



Currently on display at the Yellowknife Public Library is a small sample of the great eBooks and audiobooks we offer through our Overdrive service. Like many, I prefer physical books but see a time and place for such electronic resources. For me, that's when I'm traveling. It's much easier to "carry" four eBooks than 4 actual books! Recently when traveling, one of the titles I brought with me was Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel*, first published in 1954.

Swamp Angel was an unexpectedly great treat. I knew it had legendary CanLit status, but, well, it had legendary CanLit status. I expected it to be boring and dated, to be honest.

As for it being boring, I cannot say that some readers wouldn't still argue that opinion. It does come across at some points like it's heading to a scene that will tie everything and everyone together but it never really does. Towards the end, and noting how few pages left, I started to suspect this might be the case and I recalled an experiment by Milton Berle in which he set a joke up but swapped out the punchline for another unrelated, nonsensical and non-funny punchline. Due to the warm-up and Berle's rhythm the audience laughed anyway!

Perhaps I'm a bit like that audience as I enjoyed the novel anyway, but I do recognize that the plot leaves a lot of loose ends and questions.

I think what I enjoyed most was Wilson's great character studies. Most characters, including the protagonist Maggie Lloyd, begin as almost cardboard characters but then, as the book progresses, Wilson strips them down to essentials and builds them up again, this time with complexities. She also uses pacing to complement the story, particularly with chapter lengths; some as short as single paragraphs, to show more rapid passing of time. And, some of her sentences are just stunners. I particularly liked a comment by Mrs. Severance, "Everything happens again and it's never the same."

Swamp Angel is rich in symbolism but openly has characters discuss objects as symbols. There's something simultaneously pragmatic and artistic about this approach that quite won me over.

For classics such as *Swamp Angel*, as well as recent bestsellers, be sure to check out Overdrive courtesy of Yellowknife Public Library.

John Mutford, Library Manager

March 2, 2018