

VAUGHAN, HILDA CAMPBELL (1892 - 1985), author

Name: Hilda Campbell Vaughan
Date of birth: 1892
Date of death: 1985
Spouse: Charles Langbridge Morgan
Child: Elizabeth Shirley Vaughan Paget (née Morgan)
Child: Roger Morgan
Parent: Hugh Vaughan Vaughan
Parent: Eva Vaughan (née Campbell)
Gender: Female
Occupation: author
Area of activity: Literature and Writing
Author: Katie Gramich

Hilda Vaughan was born in Builth Wells, Breconshire, on 12 June 1892, the daughter of Hugh Vaughan Vaughan (1852-1937), a solicitor, and his wife Eva (née Campbell, 1863-1932). Her father was closely associated with Radnorshire, serving as Under Sheriff of the County, Clerk of the County Council and of the Local Education Authority. Educated at home by a series of governesses, she stayed in her parents' house, The Castle, Builth Wells, until the outbreak of World War One, when she worked for the Red Cross and was organizing secretary of the Women's Land Army in Breconshire and Radnorshire. After the war she moved to London and began studies at Bedford College, where she met her future husband, the writer **Charles Morgan**; they were married in London in 1923. They had a daughter, **Elizabeth Shirley**, born in 1924 and a son, Roger, born in 1926.

Vaughan published ten novels between 1925 and 1954, to critical and popular acclaim. Her novels are set wholly or partly in the eastern counties of Wales, Breconshire and Radnorshire, where she herself had her roots, and also in rural Carmarthenshire and London. Her first four novels, *The Battle to the Weak* (1925), *Here are Lovers* (1926), *The Invader* (1928), and *Her Father's House* (1930) were published by William Heinemann. The next three, *The Soldier and the Gentlewoman* (1932), *The Curtain Rises* (1935), and *Harvest Home* (1936) appeared under the imprint of Victor Gollancz, the left-leaning publishing house which published a number of Welsh writers of the 1930s. 'A *Thing of Nought*', her 1934 novella, was brought out by Lovat Dickson & Thompson and has received critical admiration for its poetic, atmospheric style, bereft of the melodrama which characterizes some of her longer works. Her final novels, *Pardon and Peace* (1945), *Iron and Gold* (1948), and *The Candle and the Light* (1954) were issued by Macmillan.

Her fiction tends to focus on conflicts of gender, nationality, or both. One of her most accomplished works, the 1932 novel *The Soldier and the Gentlewoman* is a case in point. It returns to the aftermath of the First World War to explore issues of national identity, belonging and gendered property rights. Gwenllian, the main character, is fervently Welsh and bitterly resentful that she will not inherit her home because she is a woman. Meanwhile, Dick, the feckless English incomer in the novel, inherits the estate and Gwenllian's undying hatred. The estate, Plâs Einon, means everything to her and she is willing to sacrifice anything to ensure its survival in the family. The plot echoes that of an earlier novel by Vaughan, *The Invader* (1928), in which the English incomer and inheritor of the estate of Plas Newydd is a woman, Miss Webster, and her antagonist is the Welshman Daniel Evans; however, the earlier novel takes the form of a comedy, rather than the tragedy of *The Soldier and the Gentlewoman*. The novel exposes the proverbial pride in ancestry which is supposed to characterize the Welsh, as well as a concern with belonging and inheritance. These themes are also found in the earlier novels, *The Invader* (1928) and *Her Father's House* (1930).

The novel clearly touched a chord with readers in the 1930s, since it became a bestseller and was adapted as a play for the London stage. Encouraged by the success of this venture, Vaughan co-wrote two plays with Laurier Lister, *She Too Was Young* (1938) and *Forsaking All Other* (not performed).

During the Second World War Vaughan and her children moved to the United States for safety, and it was here that her eighth novel, *The Fair Woman*, was first published in 1942. It was later republished in the UK in 1948 under the title *Iron and Gold*. This differs from her other work in being based quite closely on a Welsh myth, the legend of the lady of Llyn y Fan Fach. The novel's concerns, though, are familiar from Vaughan's other work: marital and familial relationships, conflicts, gender roles, and notions of belonging and alienation. Owain, the farmer protagonist, captures his fairy bride, Glythin, from the lake. Through enclosure of the mountain and the felling of trees, Owain appropriates more and more of the wild landscape, just as he attempts to domesticate and tame his wife. Ultimately, though, Glythin returns to the lake and Owain is defeated.

Vaughan did not publish any further creative work after the 1950s, perhaps because her work seemed slightly old-fashioned by the 1960s, when women were beginning to achieve greater liberation. There is a certain irony in this, since Vaughan's work was pioneering in its day for its championing of ordinary women's rights.

Hilda Vaughan died in London on 4 November 1985.

Author

Katie Gramich

Sources

Katie Gramich, *Twentieth-century women's writing in Wales: land, gender, belonging* (Cardiff 2007)

Christopher W. Newman, *Hilda Vaughan* (Cardiff 1981)

Lucy Thomas, 'The Fiction of Hilda Vaughan (1892-1985): Negotiating the Boundaries of Welsh identity' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cardiff University, 2008)

Further reading

Wikipedia Article: [Hilda Vaughan](#)

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