



Bradley King

Also Known As:

Josephine McLaughlin, Mrs. John Griffith Wray, Bradley King Wray, Mrs. George Hiram Boyd

Lived:

July 8, 1894 - Unknown

Worked as:

playwright, scenario writer, screenwriter, stenographer, writer

Worked In:

United States

by **Brian Taves**

During the preliminary research that culminated in my volume *Talbot Mundy, Philosopher of Adventure* (McFarland 2005), I investigated the anomaly of the book *Her Reputation*, titled *The Bubble Reputation* in the UK, Mundy's sole literary collaboration as well as the only book he wrote with a "photoplay edition" motion picture tie-in. Who was his coauthor, Bradley King? The standard references offered only a long list of credits. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences had two clippings, revealing that "Bradley" was not a man, but an attractive female brunette. County and city legal records were the next recourse, and other bits came from brief mentions in articles and papers, found as I began researching a biography of producer Thomas Ince (1880–1924). From this research I realized that, despite King's obscurity today, she ranked as one of the leading female screenwriters during the 1920s and 1930s.

Bradley King was born Josephine McLaughlin in 1894. Daughter of a physician, she was educated at Sacred Heart Convent in New York City. Articles about her report that she stood five foot three inches in height, with brown hair and blue eyes. Her brother Barnum Brown later served as the head of the dinosaur department of New York's American Museum of Natural History. Young Josephine initially wanted to be an actress, but, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, failure to achieve this goal led to a job as a stenographer for a motion picture scenarist who paid her \$10 a week (20). When the writer stalked out of the studio one day — taking the script of a production that was ready to begin—Josephine suggested that the director use one of her own stories (Winship 63). By 1916 she was writing scenarios under her own name at the Lubin Manufacturing Company in Philadelphia, then in 1918 began to author love stories for prominent magazines under the name Bradley King.

She lived in San Diego for two years, where her naval officer husband was hoping to become an actor. She returned to motion pictures in 1920, working for a variety of companies until summoned that August by Thomas Ince; her contracts with him survive in the Ince papers at the Library of Congress. He initially signed her to a long-term contract at \$100 a week. The ability to learn continuity writing and dramatic structure and to adapt to any genre soon made her the most important Ince scenarist. By late 1924, her salary advanced to nearly \$700 a week. She also began writing for the stage, including a theatrical adaptation for Ince of her script for *A Man of Action* (1923). *Her Reputation*, King's only "book," was actually Talbot Mundy's novelization of her script, written to add market appeal to adaptation-minded filmgoers. For the work, both received an equal weekly salary, although King was by then earning a \$1,500 bonus for each original story. Later, Mundy recalled that King "'thought' in terms of tabloid scare-heads," doubtless because of her talent for writing melodrama (letter to Rose Wilder Lane, June 25, 1934). King and Mundy had been brought together by mutual friend Larry Trimble; King held a financial interest in Trimble's Strongheart dog pictures, and subsequently King and Trimble became romantically involved for two years.

In addition to her credits on completed Thomas Ince productions, King scripted many of his unproduced projects. Among these was *The Just and the Unjust*, an adaptation of the popular 1912 Vaughan Kester novel that was to have been helmed by Ince's primary director, John Griffith Wray. King and Wray finally filmed it in 1926 at Fox Film Corporation as *Hell's 400*, starring former Ince player Margaret Livingston. After Ince's death in 1924, King began freelancing for various studios, making \$10,000 for a single script, and easily made the transition to sound films, with over twenty feature film writing credits in the sound era. On October 6, 1928, King and Wray married. As she explained, the two had disagreed about many love scenes in the past while under Ince, but after working at different studios, they began to miss one another's company. She briefly changed her name to Bradley King Wray. John Griffith Wray had just completed his first "talkie" production when he died of appendicitis at age forty-seven on July 15, 1929, leaving King his estate of \$100,000. A newspaper morgue of clippings at the University of Southern California Special Collections Library recounts details of the brief marriage.

King spent much of the time after Wray's death traveling, hoping to improve her own poor health. While she was in Honolulu developing a screen epic based on the ancient peoples of Hawaii, she met George Hiram Boyd, a thirty-six-year-old building contractor who had previously been a stage entertainer. They were married October 31, 1930. Although King was raised as a Catholic (and her mother was a Quaker), this marriage was conducted by Reverend Ernest Holmes, Divine Science Minister of the Institute of Religious Science—better known as "Science of Mind."

King worked steadily through 1937 on a variety of genres, then found it impossible to continue to create, after Boyd lost her entire fortune of \$400,000 in failed investments and further refused to work altogether. In 1940, she divorced Boyd and returned to screenwriting in 1947 for one final motion picture, *That's My Man* (1947). Subsequently, King vanished from the film industry, and not even the date of her death is known. She is absent from modern Hollywood histories, and while most of her sound films exist, nearly all of her roughly forty silent feature films are lost

today. Her only major extant silent movie, *Anna Christie* (1923) starring Blanche Sweet, has been forgotten in favor of the 1930 Greta Garbo remake.

Bibliography

“Girl Who Has Written Scenarios Gives Sound Advice to Learners.” *Washington Post* (15 July 1923): 55.

King, Bradley. “The Demand for Originals.” *The Photodramatist* (3 Nov. 1921): 25-26.

----- . “Lying Lips.” *The Washington Post* (6 March 1921): 75. [Short story]

----- . “More Studio Secrets.” *Photodramatist* (3 May 1922): 5-6.

----- . “The Pale Gold Lady—A Weird Study.” *Los Angeles Times* (20 Feb. 1921): IX6. [Short story]

----- . “A Shy Celebrity.” *Picture-Play Magazine* (25 Jan. 1927): 44-45, 103.

----- . “Some Studio Secrets.” *Photodramatist* (3 June 1921): 19-20.

Mundy, Talbot. Letter to Rose Wilder Lane. 25 June 1934. Rose Wilder Lane Collection. Herbert Hoover Presidential Library & Museum.

Palmer, Edwin Obadiah. *History of Hollywood*. Hollywood: Cawston, 1937.

Winship, Mary. “No, Bradley King is Not ‘Mr.’” *Photoplay Magazine* (26 July 1924): 63.

“Writer Bradley King Awarded Divorce.” *Los Angeles News* (8 Nov. 1940): n.p.

“Writer’s Rise to Fame Phenomenal.” *Los Angeles Times* (7 June 1925): 20.

Archival Paper Collections:

Bradley King clippings files. [Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library](#).

Cinema Library clipping files. [University of Southern California, Cinema Arts Library](#).

The Rose Wilder Lane Collection. [Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum](#).

Thomas H. Ince papers. [Library of Congress, Manuscript Division](#).

Filmography

A. Archival Filmography: Extant Film Titles:

1. Bradley King as Screenwriter

Beyond the Cross Roads. Dir.: Lloyd Carleton, st.: Bradley King (Pioneer Film Corp. US 1920) cas.: Ora Carew, Lawson Butt, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

Lying Lips. Dir.: John Griffith Wray, sc.: Bradley King. (Thomas H. Ince Corp. US 1921) cas.: House Peters, Florence Vidor, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

Anna Christie. Prod. Thomas H. Ince, Dir.: John Griffith Wray, sc.: Bradley King (First National US 1923) cas.: Blanche Sweet, William Russell, Eugenie Besserer, si, b&w. Archive: [Museum of Modern Art \[USM\]](#).

Declassee. Dir.: Robert G. Vignola, sc.: Charles E. Whittaker, Bradley King, au.: Zoe Akins (Corinne Griffith Prod. US 1925) cas.: Corinne Griffith, Lloyd Hughes, Clive Brook, si, b&w, 8 reels, 7,733 ft. Archive: [BFI National Archive \[GBB\]](#), [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#) [trailer].

B. Filmography: Non-Extant Film Titles:

1. Josephine McLaughlin as Screenwriter

Jackstraws, 1916; *Playthings of the Gods*, 1916; *Prisoners of Conscience*, 1916; *Scapegrace*; 1916; *Sons of the Sea*, 1916; *The Wheat and the Chaff*, 1916.

2. Bradley King as Screenwriter

Footlights and Shadows, 1920; *The Girl From Nowhere*, 1921; *I Am Guilty*, 1921; *The Miracle of Manhattan*, 1921; *Her Reputation*, 1923; *The Love Letter*, 1923; *A Man of Action*, 1923; *The Sunshine Trail*, 1923; *What a Wife Learned*, 1923; *Broken Laws*, 1924; *The Chorus Lady*, 1924; *Christine of the Hungry Heart*, 1924; *Enticement*, 1925; *The Marriage Whirl/Modern Madness*, 1925; *Satan in Sables*, 1925; *When the Door Opened*, 1925; *The Gilded Butterfly*, 1926; *Hell's 400*, 1926; *Marriage License?* 1926; *The Palace of Pleasure*, 1926; *The Return of Peter Grimm*, 1926; *The Lovelorn*, 1927; *Mockery*, 1927; *One Increasing Purpose*, 1927; *Diamond Handcuffs*, 1928; *The Gateway of the Moon*, 1928; *Under the Black Eagle*, 1928; *Morgan's Last Raid*, 1929; *Scarlet Seas*, 1929.

Credit Report

All credits attributed to Josephine McLaughlin do not appear in Braff or the AFI catalog, but are referenced in Paul Spehr and the Library of Congress Copyright Office records. USW only has the second reel of *Lying Lips*.

Citation

Taves, Brian. "Bradley King." In Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta, eds. *Women Film Pioneers Project*. New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2013.
<<https://wfpp-test.cul.columbia.edu/pioneer/ccp-bradley-king/>>