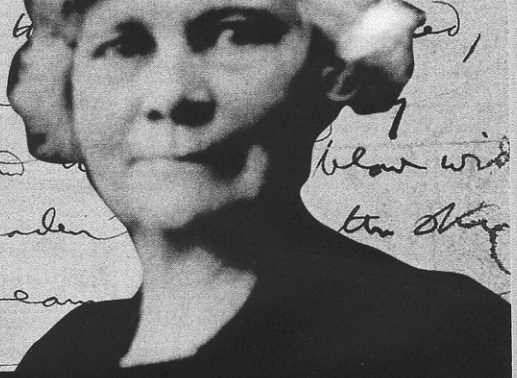


Teresa Brayton

In an Irish Twilight

you be inspired, pleased, in a pretty way
let the ornamental lettering hide the
rhyme stanzas ^(which are very good) at the beginning should be
an Inscription, not Introduction
must study every poem carefully
recreate it exactly. (Don't leave anything
out to the printers.)

Most of the pieces in *Love Lyrics* should
be arranged according to the rhythm.
Place the very first



"Sing us a song of the
"For night is
"With never a star, and
"Through the leader
Then one with a dream
"I'll about

An anthology of Her Poetry
and Short Stories

Teresa Brayton

In an Irish Twilight

An anthology of her Poetry and Short Stories

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Bernadette Gilligan

Introduction by

Olive Moran

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Co. Kildare.

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This book is a response to a local need for the work of Teresa Brayton to be made more widely available. The poems and short stories included in this book only represent a selection of her work. For helping to bring this long overdue project to fruition we would like to acknowledge and thank the following: K.E.L.T. for sponsoring the project; The Local Studies Section, Kildare County Library and Arts for their invaluable support; to the artist Kevin Simms for his illustrations, to Evonne Gilligan for typing the manuscript and to Sr. Fionntan Dáibhís for proof reading. We would also like to acknowledge the wholehearted support of our colleagues Breda Rogers, Seán Montague, Jim Rochfort and Mary Costello.

Front Cover: Background handwriting from a Teresa Brayton manuscript courtesy Kildare County Library and Arts

Inset on front cover: Teresa Brayton in her later years.
Photo courtesy Kildare County Library and Arts.

Back Cover: The Old Bog Road
Photo: B. Gilligan

Introduction

Teresa Coca Brayton was born into a nationalist family in Kilbrook, Kilcock on 29th June 1868. Her father was Hugh Boylan and her mother Elizabeth Downes. The Boylans were prominent during the 1798 Rebellion, her great grandfather led a battalion of pikemen at the Battle of Prosperous. Raised in such an atmosphere, she later used her talent and articulated her nationalist instinct during the Land League period by writing poetry which was published in *The Nation*, *Young Ireland*, *Westmeath Independent* and *Kings County Chronicle* under the pen-name of T.B. Kilbrook. She attended Newtown National School and became an assistant teacher to her sister Elizabeth. In later years she disclosed that she had won a literary award at the age of twelve.

In September 1895 Teresa Boylan emigrated to America. She settled first in Boston but then moved to New York where she met and married Richard Brayton a French-Canadian who worked in the Municipal Revenue Department. It was as Teresa Brayton that she became known as a writer of poetry. She became well known in Irish American circles and her poems appeared in *The Irish World*, *New York*, *The San Francisco Monitor*, *The Syracuse Sun*, *The Rosary Magazine* and many other publications. The *Old Bog Road* which was set to music by Mrs. Madeline King O'Farrelly a native of Rochfordbridge, Co. Westmeath, was included in her book of poetry called *Songs of the Dawn*. Teresa Brayton returned to Ireland a number of times and was personally acquainted with most of the leaders of the 1916 Rebellion. Her commitment to the struggle for Irish freedom was unstinting, and she used her pen unreservedly in highlighting and promoting the 'cause'. She engaged in fundraising and wrote poems in honour of several Irish patriots including Parnell, Casement and Pearse. An editorial at the time in the *Catholic Columbian* proposes that *Teresa Brayton may well be hailed as the poet of the Irish Rebellion*.

In recognition of her efforts Countess Markievicz sent a chip of the flagstaff which flew over the GPO during the 1916 Rising to Teresa Brayton as a tribute to your beautiful verses that are an inspiration to lovers of freedom and justice. She treasured this souvenir of the Rising until her death. This momento now resides with her other memorabilia in the Teresa Brayton Memorial Library, Kilcock, Co. Kildare.

She also had a practical view on how political stability would benefit economic progress. On one of her visits home to Ireland she was interviewed for the Mayo News which appeared on the 29th June 1912. When questioned on the high level of emigration at the time her response was *A satisfactory settlement of the land question and re-possession of a native Parliament should not alone tend to stem the tide of emigration, but should also be powerful factors in drawing back the sea-divided Gaels to their motherland. With the foundations of national prosperity firmly set, I believe there will be no lack of foreign capital to start the wheels running again.*

Unlike most exiles Teresa Brayton returned permanently to Ireland in 1932 aged sixty-four. She lived a further eleven years in Ireland first in Bray, later at North Strand, Dublin where she experienced the bombing of the North Strand during the Second World War. She spent the last three years of her life in Kilbrook and died in the room in which she was born on the 19th August 1943. She is buried in nearby Cloncurry graveyard.

William Walsh a close friend of Teresa Brayton's described her as *shy and reserved when in a crowded room. She was at home only with those who shared her interests but if one were interested in poetry or the arts she asked no more. She had a richly stored mind and was never less alone than when alone.* On his last visit to her in 1941 in Kilbrook he remembers her *bobbed silver hair framing a calm face, the most striking features of which were her bright alert blue eyes.*

In 1913 her first book of poetry was published in New York called the *Songs of the Dawn*. The *Flame of Ireland* appeared in 1926 and *Christmas Verses*, her only book published in Ireland came out in 1934. Other poems and short stories were published in newspapers and periodicals both in the United States and Ireland. The main themes, which permeate her poetry, are the exile's nostalgic loss of homeland, nationalism and religion. The emigrants' theme was often localised and personalised and many of her poems are enveloped by her love of nature and her keen awareness of the changing seasons. In an article about Teresa Brayton in the *Caupchin Annual* James Flynn claims *the notable and distinguished thing about her writing is its close adherence to the old bardic traditions. Scarcely any other Anglo-Irish poet has recalled so vividly the old world of Gaeldom.*

As an admirer of Éamon de Valera she told an Irish Press reporter on her return to Ireland in 1932 *I feel that it is the crowning glory of my return to Ireland that Mr. De Valera's party has come to power. I think the answer to Pádraig Pearse's words 'What if my dream should come true?' is already taking place in Ireland today.*

At the instigation of Enfield Muintir na Tire, President de Valera as a tribute to Teresa Brayton agreed to unveil a memorial cross over her grave on the 18th October 1959. After the unveiling Rev. Seán Corkery, Librarian of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth proposed a vote of thanks to the President and said they were extremely grateful to him for performing the ceremony. On 8th September 2002 Fr. Paul O'Boyle, Curate of Kilcock and Newtown Parish unveiled a stone plaque in honour of Teresa Brayton in Newtown Community Centre where she went to school and taught as an assistant teacher. The inscription on the plaque comes from her poem *'When I was leaving Ireland'* and probably encapsulates the essence of Teresa Brayton.

But I'll go back to Ireland in life or death I'll go

Teresa Brayton

Photo Courtesy of Kildare County Library

