



THE MICHAELIAN

ISSUE TWO: DECEMBER 2010

Victorian Mænads: On Michael Field's *Callirrhōë* and Being Driven Mad.

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but the few,
Who learn it not from custom, suddenly
Behold it, as Narcissus his fair form;
Would peril all for its embrace, discern
In it the image of the unknown self,
And leap to it adoring." *Callirrhōë* I.ii.69–74

"Simplicity, lucidity, sanity—these are the qualities that his work does not possess, and they are the qualities which alone can give poetry high or enduring value ... Better results ought to come of natural powers which are, perhaps, as great as those of any of our younger poets." Mackail, *Review of The Father's Tragedy, William Rufus, Loyalty or Love?*, *Academy* 28 (1885:July 18): 37.

"They were demanding Muses, and some days they drove me mad." Emma Donoghue, *We are Michael Field*, 10.

It is not unwarranted to describe the reception that greeted Michael Field's debut book of verse dramas, *Callirrhōë: Fair Rosamund*, as frenzied. This 'New Poet' was compared to Swinburne, to George Eliot, and to Shakespeare; his "poetic fire" sounding "like the ring of a new voice, which is likely to be heard far and wide among the English-speaking peoples" ("A New Poet" 681). From the sober perspective of 1886, less than two years later, the *Liverpool Mercury* noted this 'lady' had at first "laboured under the grievous disadvantage of rather indiscreet adulation" ("The Year 1886"). Before the chill reservations of lady authorship, however, Victorian Britain was mad for Michael Field: uncertain, discomfited, but clearly enthralled by what Mary Robinson called the "glories of enthusiasm ... the gospel of ecstasy" (395). In the remorse of the 'morning after,' Literary London awoke to the realization they had flung themselves not at the feet of a beautiful, languid boy-poet, but a far more prosaic aunt-niece partnership—Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper: spinsters from the suburbs of Bristol. Never again would reviewers swing the thyrsus pole with such abandon. This article seeks to reclaim what it is about *Callirrhōë*—now a little known historical closet drama—that fired up London with Maenadic madness.

The Victorian Maenads of my title will recall for many scholars Yopie Prins' important article, "Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters"; in which Prins argues the Fields and Cambridge scholar Jane Harrison used Greek studies, via Pater, to create a "feminine counterdiscourse" of desire (46). Prins' excellent study honours Pater's role as, if not father, then queer uncle of women's Greek studies (47). Unlike Prins, my title fails to respect historical and scholarly boundaries: it is a bastardization, a hybrid, a paradox. Recently Marion Thain has noted the central importance of the paradox in Michael Field's poetry (16) and, like Thain, I too read temporal and spatial paradox as centrally important to the work of Michael Field. However, for Thain what is equally important in the Fields' treatment of paradox is an impetus toward reconciliation: "the impossible desire to combine the diachronic [events across time] with the synchronic [the timeless moment] ... and achieving that combination, or the illusion of its achievement, is Bradley and Cooper's greatest aesthetic triumph" (16). Prins also sees Michael Field as remaining within conventional social structures: "The identification of Victorian Spinsters with Greek Maenads in my argument does not place them 'outside' the social order" (71). For both Thain and Prins, Bradley and Cooper are ultimately good daughters (or nieces) in their literature and in their literary genealogy—their Maenadic robes little more than quaint costumes.

But the Maenad is not a good daughter or niece: what the Maenad offers is the dangerous promise of disorder. According to Barbara Goff, at the centre of Maenadic rituals were the acts of *sparagmos* (dismembering) and *omophagia* (eating raw meat) which she argues are a potent symbol for everything "opposed to and outside the ideology of the civilized polis" (272). Prins notes that the play "can be read expressively through its own metaphor" (58) but she only goes so far as to consider this as "breathing modern spirit into Greek maenads" (59). If we begin to think seriously about Maenadism as structure rather than overly ornate style, then Michael Field's reworking of the Maenadic myths in *Callirrhōë* can itself be read as an act of *sparagmos*. *Callirrhōë* herself may choose to "peril all for its embrace" and burn in the hard Paterian flame of experience; but the drama's multiple and (for me) irreconcilable temporal paradoxes carry this embrace further, threatening to burn all in the flames of Maenadic disorder. This, I believe, is the dark promise that titillated English literary culture in 1884: the *frisson* of excitement rising from the notion of an *enfant terrible* unleashed.

The slim book of verse dramas that introduced Michael Field to the world in May 1884 was not the first book produced by the collaboration of Katharine Bradley (1846–1914) and her niece, Edith Cooper (1862–1913). Under the names, Arran and Isla Leigh, they had already published *Bellerophôn* in 1881. As Michael Field, they published eight volumes of lyric poetry and seventeen historical verse dramas. Other dramas were authored anonymously in an attempt to circumvent perceived prejudice about the name of Field, or published posthumously, making a total of twenty-seven. Mary Sturgeon's unchallenged 1922

designation of the plays as historical tragedies divides them into three rough thematic periods: English, Latin and Eastern (118). Sturgeon suggests the first group includes plays on Scottish and English history (written 1881–1890); the second group (1892–1903) deals with Roman history; and a third group (1905–1914) which share “an almost Oriental violence of passion” (198). Sturgeon acknowledged the problematic nature of this grouping, noting “it is amusing” (120) to discover *Callirrhoe*, a play about a Calydonian maiden loved by a Dionysian priest, within Field’s English histories.

If critics are once more mad for (and driven mad by) Michael Field, it is not because of their verse dramas, but rather the lyric poetry. Perhaps the reason that scholarship remains untroubled by Sturgeon’s rationalization of a “Greek, though Englished” mythological play as an English history (122) is that *Callirrhoe* itself is little read. Part of the problem with the plays of Michael Field is that, as a literary form, verse drama is deeply unfashionable. Worse still, while they draw their narratives from historical figures who continue to fascinate—Mary Stuart and the Borgias—they also frequently spotlight history’s least wanted, such as William Rufus and Canute. While there have been some attempts to examine Michael Field’s use of history in the dramas, the plays are still widely perceived as recreations which ‘ventriloquise’ the past in order to comment upon contemporary issues.¹ While this approach has produced some very useful scholarship on the plays, it nevertheless sets the dramas apart from the fragmented subjectivities and doubled visions of their lyric poetry—ultimately rendering them not only separate, but less generically innovative and fundamentally less interesting than the poetry.

The highly successful recovery project that has reclaimed the Fields as key women writers of the *fin de siècle* owes its momentum to the lyrics of *Long Ago* (1889) and *Sight and Song* (1892). Scholars have been fascinated by the way in which the Fields use the fractured, multi-layered and multi-visual ‘we’ to mediate between the poet/s and other modes of artistic expression: the Sapphic fragments in *Long Ago*; and painting/sculpture in the ekphrastic *Sight and Song*. It is from the interrelationship of doubled gazes that Michael Field’s unique vision emerges and through which the poets are able to ‘translate’ experience from one mode across to another. Key to this approach is the much discussed preface to *Sight and Song* (1892) which articulates Michael Field’s aim in that volume “to see things from their own centre, by suppressing the habitual centralisation of the visible in ourselves” (vi). There has been considerable debate about what seeing things “from their own centre” means for this text: Ana Parejo Vadillo identifies a process of “transparent translation” (*Women Poets* 180) and Thain argues for synaesthesia (70). However, what emerges in each case is the importance of connecting with a central experience—literary or ekphrastic—not by recentralizing or decentralizing, but rather through a process of interrelationship that produces multiple “ways of seeing” (Vadillo, *Women Poets* 186). Indeed, Thain redefines ‘field’ using scientific terminology as “a region in which a body experiences a force as the result of the presence of some other body or bodies” (qtd in Thain 1). Approached in this way, it is not difficult to conceive of Michael Field’s use of history in the verse dramas as the experience of force (history) through the interrelationship of bodies (character). The basis of drama is the creation of multiple voices and multiple ways of seeing, yet the odd anachronistic characters of the plays, and the impact of their divergent interpreting gazes upon authorized history has been little noted.

Michael Field’s *Callirrhoe*

The narrative of *Callirrhoe* is faithful to the brief account given by Pausanias in his *Description of Greece*. The play begins in the hills outside Calydon with the Bacchic priest, Coresus bidding his chief Maenad Anaitis to go into the town and recruit new girls for a revel. In particular, he desires Callirrhoe—who he identifies as “the true Mænad!” (l.i.63)—and Nephelē to attend. After the revel, Nephelē seeks rest within the calm domesticity of Callirrhoe’s house. Contrary to Coresus’ designation, Callirrhoe appears at the centre of family life, devoted to the needs of her blind father and irresponsible brother. Coresus tries unsuccessfully to convince Callirrhoe to embrace the life of the Maenad, and her refusal leads Coresus to call upon Bacchus to send a “murrain” (infectious disease) to Calydon.

In the second act, the effects of disease settle upon Calydon; lovers die in their bridal chamber, Nephelē, and Callirrhoe’s father sicken. Her brother, Emathion, leaves to consult the oracles at Dodona and there an aged oracle, Promenia, falls in love with his youthful beauty. In the midst of all this, the faun dances blithely through the text with his often noted and admired but unexamined song. Back in Calydon, Nephelē dies, and Callirrhoe’s father, and the citizens turn upon the Maenads as the source of the fever—the young doctor, Machaon, restrains them. At the end of the act, Machaon works at understanding the disease scientifically through dissection, and his mother warns him not intercede between the citizens and Maenads, not if he wants Callirrhoe’s love.

In the final act, Emathion arrives back in Calydon with the news that only the sacrifice of Callirrhoe or one in her place will end the fever. Callirrhoe discovers the worthlessness of her dedication to familial duty when none will sacrifice themselves to save her. At the crucial moment, Coresus kills himself instead of Callirrhoe—proving the superiority of *eros* over *agape*. Emathion meets the elderly oracle who has followed him to Calydon and kills her in revulsion; and goes mad. With Coresus’ death comes Callirrhoe’s apotheosis as Maenad. Machaon meets the faun loved by Coresus, and explains to him the meaning of death. In comprehending death, the faun dies; doubling the faun, Callirrhoe makes Machaon promise to abandon science and lead the Maenads, and kills herself beside the faun. Coresus, the faun and Callirrhoe die but nevertheless fulfil the promise of the play’s epigraph “to make the heart a spirit” when they are transformed into narrative by Machaon—himself transformed into Michael Field by committing himself to chronicle their lives in the final lines of the play.

History: Order and Disorder

Read as historical narrative, it often seems that Michael Field’s dramas display a remarkable fidelity to their rigorously researched source texts. Most of what has been written on the play to date attends to the play’s diachronic narrative rather than the anachronisms that disturb it. The few critical texts that engage with *Callirrhoe* usually do so quite briefly, concentrating on its central linear narrative. Yet in *Callirrhoe*, anachronism is foregrounded in the first lines of a preface that seems as full of promise with regard to its ways of seeing as that of *Sight and Song*:

Before the bar of Time this poem pleads guilty to anachronism. The establishment in Greece of the worship of Dionysus reaches back into the dateless vistas of legend. The Author has so far defied Chronus, that he has represented this foreign cult struggling for recognition in the midst of a refined and even sceptical Hellas. Mighty voices excuse him, which have prevailed in silencing the accusations of "Old Time"; he is their client. Euripides puts the language of a sophist in the lips of pre-historic heroes. Virgil makes Aeneas and Dido contemporaries.

The Author would here remark that his account of the rise of the drama is purely imaginative and unhistorical [...] Greek men and women are approached, not from the centre of nationality, but from the circumference of humanity. "All the world's a stage" (iii-iv)

The context within which Michael Field pleads guilty—the temporal resituation of the establishment of Dionysian worship—seems a minor offence in comparison with some of the more obvious anachronisms and temporal displacements within the play: the presence of an Asiatic deity, a faun, and a doctor with enlightened nineteenth-century views on disease. It is these marginalized characters and their fracturing and alternate ways of interpreting the central narrative "from the circumference of humanity" that provide the multiple ways of seeing so familiar from the lyric poetry. These multiple interpretations enable the reader to translate history as a mode of imaginative experience. However, rather than a means of reconciling distinct modes, I argue that the drama instead seeks to disorder history (and the authority of its historians) as one narrative among many—constructed and totalizing.

Callirrhoë: Historically and Geographically

The account of the life of Callirrhoë in Pausanias' *Description of Greece*, from which the play is drawn, is offered in the context of thenaming of the spring near Calydon:

... [A]mong the Calydonians who became priests of the god [Dionysus] was Coresus, who more than any other man suffered cruel wrongs because of love. He was in love with Callirrhoë, a maiden. But the love of Coresus for Callirrhoë was equalled by the maiden's hatred of him. When the maiden refused to change her mind, in spite of the many prayers and promises of Coresus, he then went as a suppliant to the image of Dionysus. The god listened to the prayer of his priest, and the Calydonians at once became raving as though through drink, and they were still out of their minds when death overtook them. So they appealed to the oracle at Dodona ... the oracles from Dodona declared that it was the wrath of Dionysus that caused the plague, which could not cease until Coresus sacrificed to Dionysus either Callirrhoë herself or one who had the courage to die in her stead ... Coresus stood ready to sacrifice, when, his resentment giving way to love, he slew himself in place of Callirrhoë. He thus proved in deed that his love was more genuine than that of any other man we know. When Callirrhoë saw Coresus lying dead, the maiden repented. Overcome by pity for Coresus, and by shame at her conduct towards him, she cut her throat at the spring of Calydon ... (291).

Callirrhoë thus describes a geographical site as much as it does an historical or mythological one. Geographical space is carefully delineated in the play between life inside the boundary of the city of Calydon and that outside around the altar of Bacchus and on the hills associated with the Maenads.

When Callirrhoë refuses Coresus, it is not because she is immune to the temptation of the "glittering hills" (I.iii.41) but rather as a result of her sense of familial duty; the centrality of her place within the family home and within the city. This centrality is metaphorically represented as a web and Callirrhoë is associated with Ariadne and with spinning and weaving which she herself ties into the wellbeing of her family. The web that Callirrhoë sits at the centre of is not only symbolic but geographical as it is located in the family house, in the town of Calydon. Callirrhoë asserts:

And oft 'mid common household work have smiled
To think how like the blessèd gods my hands
From chaos could educe a tiny world
Of perfect order. My dear father's peace
I will not wreck, as Nephele; he ne'er
Shall miss his daughter at the evening board,
Nor sadder, find her truant to herself,
Indocile, indolent. (I.iii.135-42)

Callirrhoë's creation and maintenance of the domestic space defines her role and her identity as daughter. The opposition between city and hills is again invoked in Coresus' conversation with the faun in which the faun describes trapping a bee within the foxglove. Coresus replies:

Would that a flower encompassed mine, and not
A stricken city!
A blossom holds a bee, a city plague.
My childish faun immures the murmuring bee,
I the malignant plague. (I.vi. 54-8)

The plague that Coresus calls down is clearly defined in terms of inside the city and without. The spring by which Coresus meets Callirrhoë (and Pausanias claims for Callirrhoë) is a liminal space between city and hills both Maenads and townsfolk inhabit—and where the antagonistic forces of city and hills meet.

The opposition identified by the space within the city and the outside hills is reinforced by an opposition of the heterosexual and the homosexual. Within the city, heterosexual courtship and marriage are a key concern. Thus, early in the play, Callirrhoë—from the centre of her web—seeks to match-make her brother, Emathion, and her friend, Nephele; and the plague's

first victim in the city is Hylia on her bridal-bed (II.i). In contrast, first among the Maenads is Anaitis whose task it is to lure young women to the hillsides. Nephele describes her encounter with Anaitis as a seduction:

The wondrous creature, threw her spells on me,
And emptied my young heart as easily
As from a pomegranate one plucks the seeds,
And then she drew me in, in caressing arms,
By secret pathways. To the temple gates,
Where stood Coresus. (I.ii.26-31)

The image of the pomegranate places Anaitis' beguiling of Nephele alongside the abduction and rape of Persephone; that she is plucked and caressed renders the encounter inescapably homoerotic. Anaitis again uses homoerotic language when Coresus tells her of Callirrhoe's rejection of him. She offers "Let me tear her. 'Tis enough./I'm hungry for her" (I.v.35). T. D. Olverson has noted that Anaitis "represents bestial female sexuality, sexual rapacity and sado-masochism ... [her] behaviour blurs the distinction between dutiful observance and frenzied indulgence" (766). The tension between heterosexual relationships within the city and the homosexual ones without seems to maintain a boundary between procreative coupling and the non-procreative, artificial relations of prostitutes and lesbians valorized by many Decadent writers.

If the play overtly opposes spatially distinct geographies, it is also very specific with regard to its historical and literary genealogies. I have already commented on the accuracy with which it reproduces Pausanias' narrative of the spring of Callirrhoe, but the play also clearly and accurately references Euripides' *Bacchae* and its associated paradigm of Dionysian Maenadism. Yopie Prins has noted that Maenadism drew considerable attention from scholars, anthropologists and critics in the nineteenth century (49), and Michael Field's opposition of the patriarchal order within the *polis* and feminized disorder without demonstrates an understanding of a (more or less) historical representation which Barbara Goff argues, "offers to invert the Greek tropes of female identity, by disassociating the woman from her domestic environment and from her customary approved behaviours" (277). When Coresus confronts Callirrhoe at the spring, their dialogue narrates the events of Euripides' play in which King Pentheus is ripped to pieces by Maenads, including his mother, as punishment for his refusal to honour Dionysus. Callirrhoe says of Dionysus:

I surely know
That he provokes men to unnatural deeds,
And once stirred frenzied mother as a fell
Tigress to murder her deluded son. (I.iii.96-9)

Again in Act II, Callirrhoe's father Cephalus blames the fever on the Maenads through intertextual reference to the *Bacchae*. Cephalus states:

Nay, child, we suffer for the foolishness
That has bewitched this city; drunken heaps
Of maddened women have infected it.
The babe hath perished, while the mother's breast
Has suckled the young panther on the hills. (II.ii.91-5)

In Euripides' *Bacchae*, the Maenads are depicted as suckling a young gazelle or wolf cub, but there are identifiable echoes in the Fields' descriptions of the Maenads. This scene from the *Bacchae*, where the Maenads wake upon the mountainside, is also reproduced in detail in Walter Pater's essay on "The Bacchanals of Euripides." Pater writes: "Some, lately mothers, who with breasts still swelling had left their babes behind, nursed in their arms antelopes, or wild whelps of wolves, and yielded them their milk to drink" (*Greek Studies* 72). In Field, the babies perish for want of mother's milk, whilst in Euripides and Pater, they are merely abandoned (though their fate may be inferred). This denotative reading portends the change that follows the Maenads' waking in Euripides and Pater, where the narrating shepherds are forced to flee for their lives as the Maenads rip apart the cattle and consume the raw meat—a preview of Pentheus' fate.

There are structural similarities between *Callirrhoe* and *The Bacchae*: both are concerned with what happens when characters deny or refuse to recognize the godhead of Dionysus. Michael Field's play, however, produces a specifically Paterian reading of this narrative. Early in the play, Callirrhoe reflects:

"Can it be meant," I often ask myself,
"Callirrhoe, that thou shouldst simply spin,
Be borne of torches to the bridal-bed,
Still a babe's hunger, and then simply die,
Or wither at the distaff, who hast felt
A longing for the hills and ecstasy?" I.ii.154-6.

The form of this ecstasy is given shape by Coresus who challenges her:

Seems it so strange
That Semele's sublime audacity
Should be the origin of life urbane?
We must be fools; all art is ecstasy,
All literature expression of intense
Enthusiasm: be beside yourself.
If a god violate your shrinking soul,
Suffer sublimely. (I. iii. 61-8)

Prins notes that the vision of Maenadic ecstasy offered to Callirrhoe by Coresus “sounds increasingly like a version of Pater’s aestheticism” (57). This is readily apparent when compared directly with Pater’s incitement in the famous conclusion to *The Renaissance*: “To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy is success in life” (189). Indeed, Prins goes so far as to suggest we should “read *Callirrhoe* as an initiation rite into the cult of Pater” (58). However, Callirrhoe is doubly Paterian in that it also addresses Pater’s essays “A Study of Dionysus” and the “Bacchanals of Euripides.” Pater interprets Dionysus as a nature god associated with the seasons, the male equivalent of Demeter: “the dispenser of the earth’s hidden wealth, giver of riches through the vine as Demeter through the grain” (Pater, *Greek Studies* 14). Pater also notes that there is a darker side to Dionysus who:

Like Persephone belongs to two worlds, ... and a full share of those dark possibilities which, even apart from the story of the rape, belong to her. He is a *Chthonian* god, and, like all the children of the earth, has an element of sadness; like Hades himself, he is hollow and devouring, an eater of man’s flesh. (*Greek Studies* 44)

Pater recognizes the darker side in the Maenads’ practice of *omophagia*, the eating of raw meat, which he identifies as actual human sacrifice (*Greek Studies* 47). In Euripides, the Maenads’ awful feast arises out of mass madness; but Pater dismisses this interpretation as nothing more than a “sophism” (*Greek Studies* 77-8) that softens the myth. For Pater, what is required to fully understand the myth is an acceptance of the horror at the centre of the story of Dionysus.

Callirrhoe embraces the Paterian reading of the myth of Dionysus; indeed, in the preface to the play, the Fields explicitly invoke Pater’s “sophism” when they note “Euripides puts the language of a sophist in the lips of pre-historic heroes” (iii). While Nephele is a clear example of women who go to the hills as the result of a spell; there are no hallucinations surrounding the deaths of Coresus and Callirrhoe. As the ‘true’ Maenad, Callirrhoe is driven by a need for blood—the Maenadic *omophagia* that metaphorically places the Maenad outside the boundaries of the Greek family and *polis*—but it is a clear-eyed madness. After the death of Coresus, she declares:

Ah me! Ah me!
How thou did’st ope thine eyes wide at the shout;
And I looked down on thee and drank thy love.
I am a Maenad; I must have love’s wine,
Coresus, and you die before my face,
Leaving me here to thirst. I dare not mar
Thy holy death, mixing my fruitless blood
With this most precious, sacrificial stream. (III.v.200-7)

Callirrhoe’s evocation of thirst not only expresses her inability, now Coresus is dead, to reciprocate the love she ‘drank’ from Coresus’ eyes in the moment of his death; it also refers back to Anaitis’ earlier thirst for human flesh. It is also tempting to read in Callirrhoe’s “fruitless blood” a faint echo of Laura’s hunger in Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market*. Yet Callirrhoe does not act in the heat of the moment, she holds back from killing herself and her behaviour throughout act III is calm and methodical. Callirrhoe’s Maenadism cannot excused by delusion—she deliberately takes up the sacrificial knife only after making her arrangements for the Maenads. When Callirrhoe states that as a Maenad, she must have love’s wine, this articulates a need for blood that draws directly from the dark side of the myth and overturns the neat boundaries set out in the first two acts of the play; she dedicates herself to Paterian experience but without the sophism of delusion.

What is particularly striking about *Callirrhoe* as a ‘debut’ play by an emerging playwright, is the clarity of the map it draws of its geographical, historical and Aesthetic genealogy. It makes very explicit references to Pausanias, and to Euripides, as well as acknowledging Pater. This concern with accuracy is notable, I think, in terms of the use by Bradley and Cooper of the male pseudonym “Michael Field” and its initial success as a means of concealing the joint/female authorship. Sharyn Fiske argues that while access to Greek writings was not difficult—many, many English translations of Greek texts became available in the Victorian period—the way in which women used Greek knowledge was fundamentally different from the way in which men used it. Men came to the classics via a rigidly structured educational system that privileged grammar and memorization, whereas women’s knowledge—even for those who were able to learn some Greek—was less systematic, less technically accurate and involved a more personal response (Fiske 8). Fiske identifies a particularly female “way of knowing” (8) that sets women’s engagement with Greek works apart from its use in the male world.

As Arran and Isla Leigh, Bradley and Cooper had already experienced male contempt of Lady’s Greek. While the adoption of these names may be taken to indicate an earlier attempt to conceal the wholly female nature of the collaboration behind a brother/sister or spousal relationship, in practice I don’t believe the name ‘Arran Leigh’—so very close in form to Barrett Browning’s Aurora Leigh and first appearing on a volume of poetry, *The New Minnesinger*, with a clearly female persona or its extension to Arran and Isla Leigh—were ever seriously meant to conceal female authorship. When *Bellerophon* appeared in 1881, the *Academy’s* reviewer dismissed it noting “... their trumpery pedantry, which, in the absence of knowledge to excuse, if not to justify, it, has led the authors into all manner of grotesque blunders, is not compensated by any merits, either of conception or execution” (196). While it must be noted that the reviewer’s contempt for *Bellerophon* is neither more nor less cutting than their contempt for the other books reviewed in this column, nevertheless, the laying of the poem’s blunders at the feet of ignorance suggests that the reviewer recognizes a ‘way of knowing’ Greek that is clearly different to how a knowledgeable [male] writer would use it. I suggest that when they came to write *Callirrhoe*, Bradley and Cooper had indeed learnt from their earlier mistakes, and that one of the reasons for the initial period of ‘indiscreet adulation’ of “Michael Field” as an exciting new [male] poet is that the accuracy with which the Greek source material is applied struck many of their early readers as consistent with a male ‘way of knowing.’

History and Anachronism

Thus far there seems little about Michael Field's drama to trouble the conventional face of ancient or contemporary history and literature; no apparent ruptures or the slightest rumble of dis-ease. The anachronism foregrounded in the preface, "Before the bar of Time, this poem pleads guilty to anachronism," is disingenuous. "Michael Field" is presented as on trial—a position which Bradley and Cooper may have regarded as particularly apt given their earlier experience with *Bellerophôn*—but only for temporally resituating the rise of the Dionysian cult. If they 'cop a plea,' it is only to the mildest of misdemeanours. Of greater interest in the preface is perhaps the genealogical claims that their guilty plea enables, positioning Michael Field in the direct line of descent from Euripides and Virgil, through Shakespeare ("All the world's a stage"), and to Pater. Yet, there it is. The spectre of anachronism stares back from the first line, not only of the play, but Michael Field's first published line.

This brings me back to my original paradox. The bastardization represented by the title which fails to respect boundaries: the Victorian Maenad. Anachronism and history meet with a Maenadic delight in disorder both in the Victorian Maenad (if we discount the notion she is really only playing dress-up) and in the play itself. Thain interprets Michael Field's temporal paradox as the "experimental fusion" (41) of the diachronic or "chronological, linear progression" and the synchronic, "the possibility of a quasi-timeless moment at which different events, normally thought to exist in different times, can appear to co-exist" (16). In Michael Field's lyric poetry, Thain argues that this fusion is afforded a perfect arena that cannot be achieved through verse drama or life writings. Thain is not the first to note the temporal instabilities of Michael Field's writings. Kate Thomas has noted in relation to Bradley and Cooper's life writings that they are "out of time" and "out of sync" and argues for interpreting their temporal disjunctions as a form of queer time (332).

Attending to anachronisms in Michael Field's *Callirrhoe* introduces what Thain defines as a synchronic aspect to what has been largely viewed as a diachronic narrative. These anachronisms are the marginalized characters of Anaitis, the faun, and Machaon—figures often overlooked in extant examinations of the play. While Thain interprets paradox as the "apparent fusion of contradictory terms" (16) and 'field' as a force resulting from the presence of other bodies (1); my argument begins from Thain's identification of the importance of the temporal and spatial paradox and extends the concept of 'field' to include force as "strength, impetus, violence, or intensity of effect" (*OED*). When Anaitis, the faun and Machaon are viewed as anachronistic figures out of time, rather than producing reconciliation with the diachronic narrative, a far more violent dynamic is revealed. Read in this way, the play dramatises a site at which anachronistic characters articulate alternate and fracturing ways of seeing events. History functions within *Callirrhoe* as a metanarrative—a mode of totalizing representation by which a unified, coherent narrative is created. On the surface, the historical metanarrative of Pausanias' tale interwoven with accurate intertextual references to Euripides' play seems to be a faithful reproduction, but when the view from the margins is considered, this history becomes only one of several competing means of understanding events. Just as the comforting, structured web of family and *polis* is exposed to *Callirrhoe* as an illusion, so anachronism threatens the structures of history and literature with Maenad-like dismemberment.

In the first lines of the play, Coresus describes Anaitis asleep. She is described as a force of nature:

She sleeps: what wearied wildness in that arm
That crowns the head above the twisted vine's
Noon-faded leaves! Spent agitation gives
Strange calmness to her face. There is no calm
Like that upon the sea after the wind
Hath frenzied its blue breast (I.i.1-6)

Anaitis is designated in the *dramatis personae* as simply a Maenad, but within the context of the play, she is far more important. Anaitis is not only Coresus' right hand, seducing maidens like Nephele and flinging a horrified Dione by the hair "amid the bloody fragments" (I.i.30), she is also a figure of great power: she forsees Coresus' death, and assists him in calling down the fateful murrain upon Calydon. In the first scene of the play, we are given the story of Anaitis' bond to Coresus who rescued her from a panther and still bears the scar. At the end of Coresus' recount of these events, Anaitis crouches at his feet saying "My master, pardon! Thou didst rescue me" (I.i.100-101). Anaitis emerges through the text as a bound spirit, somewhere between Aesop's fable of Androcles removing the thorn from the lion's paw, the Islamic Djinn, and a Caliban to Coresus' Prospero. The supernatural and anachronistic aspects of Anaitis become clearer when her presence in the play is read in terms of her own mythology.

Any examination of Michael Field's letters and extensive diary "Works and Days" soon reveals that Bradley and Cooper did extensive research for all their writings and particularly for their plays. Anaitis is an Asiatic divinity who, according to William Smith, had slaves consecrated to her. Female slaves prostituted themselves as part of the cult of Anaitis, and she has been regarded as central to the Indian worship of the powers of Nature (158). Smith also notes that for some Greek writers, Anaitis is associated with Artemis (158). It is no coincidence that Pater wrote of Dionysus as a Nature God and an Asian Nature god appears enslaved to his priest in the Fields' play. The anachronistic presence of Anaitis extends the meaning of Nature worship in the play beyond the Dionysian cult to become part of a wider Paganism that recognizes Nature and the Earth Mother at the centre of its philosophy. Michael Field explored this philosophy further in *William Rufus* and *Brutus Ultor*. Anaitis may also represent Artemis—the prevailing Goddess of Calydon in Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* (set in the same town as *Callirrhoe*)—now enslaved to Dionysus. Coresus reports Anaitis dead at the beginning of Act III scene iii as a result of the plague, but as he erroneously assumes the faun is dead in the same speech, it is far from certain whether Anaitis has died or merely disappeared/escaped. In *Anaitis*, therefore, Michael Field introduce an anachronism that redefines the nature of the Dionysian cult, liberating it from its historical moment to form part of a Pagan worship of Nature that exists synchronically across time, as well as interjecting a wild inhuman character into the text to embody its supernatural energy; a liminal figure that exposes the narrative—Coresus' sacrifice on the altar—in a dream-prophecy from the very opening of the play.

If Anaitis opens the play with a mystical vision that doubles the narrative to follow and that the intended audience (educated in their Greek history and geography) would recognize, then the character of Machaon introduces a competing scientific narrative. Machaon, like Anaitis has a history beyond the pages of the play. Machaon is the doctor mentioned several times in Homer's *Iliad* whose skill was taught him by a centaur and who cures Menelaus of his injury (Smith). In *Callirrhöë*, however, Machaon is an enlightened physician. He appears in the play treating the sick amidst the rumours spreading in the town that Callirrhöë is responsible for the plague. When Emathion presents him with his hypochondria about the disease he advises him: "Keep from the north side the town, where the wind blows,/ and you'll live to in-urn us" (II.iii.49–50). Again at the end of Act II, Machaon's approach to the disease is recognizably modern as he dissects the body of one of the victims and he comments:

Have mortals then found that life goes so well
With gods to follow?
I had cracked the world as a walnut-shell,
And found it hollow. (II.ix.8–11)

At the site of Coresus' sacrifice, Machaon disrupts the narrative of the plague as sent by Dionysus in retribution for Callirrhöë's rejection of his priest by noting that new cases of the disease have already stopped. He comments:

The plague
Had spent itself; I clearly marked its course,
Tracked and predicted the returning health,
Dependent on no priestly sacrifice.
And yet what glory rested on the girl
Who could put life by for her people's peace. (III.viii.24–9)

Machaon specifically questions the rules by which the historical metanarrative operates, displacing Greek mythology with nineteenth-century medical practices. He explicitly challenges the generic boundaries that mandate disease as a product of revenge sent by gods rather than infection. In this way, Machaon produces a competing narrative of the events in the play, even if he speaks only to himself.

It is the faun, however, who makes explicit both the divisions within the play and introduces a narrative that dances alongside but is almost entirely distinct from the central metanarrative. The faun literally sings and dances into the play in Act I scene vi, called forth by Dione's musing on "the gentle happy fauns,/ And mystic dryads" (12–13) of the forest. His first conversation with Coresus can perhaps be most usefully described as tandem soliloquies as both pursue their own abiding concerns and ignore what the other is saying. The faun dances back into the play in Act III, singing the lines that are the most widely known part of the play:

I dance and dance! Another faun,
A black one, dances on the lawn.
He moves with me, and when I lift
My heels, his feet directly shift.
I can't out-dance him, though I try;
He dances nimbler than I.
I toss my head, and so does he;
What tricks he dares to play on me!
I touch the ivy in my hair;
Ivy he has and finger there.
The spiteful thing to mock me so!
I will outdance him! Ho! ho! ho! (III.vi.1–12)

Critics and reviewers have loved the faun from its first appearance in 1884, but nobody has tried to identify his relevance to the text itself. The faun is an innocent creature of the forest, loved by Coresus, and unaware of both his own shadow and of the notion of mortality. Machaon meets the faun in the forest after the death of Coresus and attempts to identify it using his rational logic. He questions "Come, tell me what you are, whether a boy/ Or but a boyish creature" (III.vi.56–7) to which the faun repeatedly replies "I am a faun" (58). The faun denies gender, family and childhood insistently replacing biology with performativity: through past and present he dances—a creature seemingly separate from time itself.

The faun's song, which shares the premise of (but predates) Robert Louis Stevenson's "My Shadow," associates the faun with innocence and childhood but defines him as a divided being, locked in a struggle with his shadow-*doppelgänger*. This central division is given great importance by the concluding lines of the play:

Callirrhöë
Must go to her Coresus; and the boy—
I'll lay him in the sunny grass-plot, where
No other faun shall vex him with its dance. (III.viii.283–6)

This conclusion seems to promise a resolution to the faun's division whilst at the same time acknowledging multiple fauns who might come to "vex him with its dance." The play, then, only offers the illusion of reconciliation whilst actually leaving us with a productive multiplicity.

The faun's narrative ties in with the metanarrative through the figure of Machaon, the young doctor. Machaon finds the faun in the woods and tries to explain to him that Coresus is dead but is stymied because the faun has no notion of death. His initial attempts to explain death in terms of the hyacinth fails because the faun insists correctly that these renew with each season.

Then Machaon hits upon the example of a deer that "lay, and would not stir" (III.vi.194) and "grew a heap/ More nasty than an ant-hill, for it smelt!" (III.vi.198–9). Still the faun doubts and runs off to see if the deer has recovered. In the final scene of the play, Machaon and Callirhoë find the faun dead beside the dead deer: faun has been transformed into fawn, a body liable to biological decay. Magic dispelled by science. On finding the faun, Machaon laments that he has been the ignorant one, and has killed part of Nature. Callirhoë, whose story mirrors the faun's in that she has had her illusions stripped away, lost the love of Coresus, and will soon die beside the body of the faun (who died beside the body of the fawn), articulates for Machaon the importance of mystery:

Who dwell but with themselves grow impotent;
They have no Past; the Past is what hath been
Other than now; the Future is a guest
Comes not to them
Who will admit no novel influence.
Such can but iterate themselves. It needs
Heaven to transmute our days to yesterdays,
And touch our morrows with the mystery
Of hope; when men remembered and desired,
Straightway they worshipped (III.viii.121–30)

Doubling the voice of the faun, Callirhoë offers an argument against linear temporal narratives that construct past and present as mere iterations and the future as unseeable, and instead validates a different way of seeing the world that reintroduces mystery and desire. She then enacts this elevation of the Dionysian view by having Machaon the scientist promise to take Coresus' place as leader of the Maenads, before killing herself. Machaon willingly adopts this notion of the importance of mystery, reinterpreting Coresus' death for the Maenads in Paterian terms embracing "not the fruit of experience, but experience itself" (*Renaissance* 189). Coresus' death becomes a transient, burning, experience: "Life flooded him, he was immersed in life" (III.viii.208) The faun plays, therefore, a significant role in the drama as it is the catalyst, the "novel influence" that guides Callirhoë and Machaon to seeing beyond the metanarrative of Coresus' death and to embrace what literally becomes a new telling of the story that worships not by the altar but in life.

As Machaon exhorts the Maenads at the end of the play, he depicts their purpose as to "put/ Before men's eyes the picture of high deeds" (III.viii.234)—to represent the story of Callirhoë and Coresus. He declares:

Ye shall dance
And thunder in your mighty mountain hymns,
While I recount
The Evian conflicts, victories, and ye,
With glorious inroad of irruptive praise,
In chorus shall conclude the chronicle. (III.viii.251–6)

Machaon's role, therefore, is to be a chronicler and the events of the play self-reflexively turn back upon themselves and are transformed into a play that is aware of its own performance, its structures of dance, narration and chorus. Machaon, in becoming the chronicler, is himself transformed into a doubled voice, the voice of Michael Field (which is itself the doubled voice of Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper). The play ends therefore, in the ascent of Michael Field's own text which re-writes all that has come before in a self-canonizing gesture, and which exists out of time: coming both before and after Euripides, Pausanias and Pater.

An act of Maenadic *sparagmos*

It is this self-reflexivity in the text combined with its positioning alongside and outside of the metanarratives which it invokes so accurately that suggest to me that Maenadism is more than just the historic subject of the drama. In the first scene of the play, Coresis interprets Anaitis' bloody nightmare as a reaction to her previous evening's activity when she caught the horrified maenad, Dione, by the hair and flung her "amid the bloody fragments" (I.i.30). This is not only the first described incident of the play, it is also its purpose—to unseat the reader from the comfortable morality of family and state and to fling them out into the gore. Viewed with the scholarly objectivity of history—and Pater's essays on Euripides do maintain a calm authoritative tone and distance from his subject—there is no threat; but the view through the interrelated gazes from "the circumference of humanity" grants a very different perspective. Anaitis moves across time and space as a pagan Asiatic deity sowing local disorder and disappearing, thus breaking down the temporal and spatial boundaries that separate past from present. If Anaitis represents the dangerous promise of movement from past to present, then Machaon is even more confronting as a figure who moves against time from the present into the past. Machaon is the nineteenth-century man—a man of science and reason—but it is he that is guided by Callirhoë and the faun; he who turns his back on the city and civilization to become the leader of the Maenads; he who ultimately swaps scientific rationalism for mysticism and mythology. In this play, it is Machaon who is constructed in the place of Michael Field's nineteenth-century reader and he who is grasped metaphorically by the hair and flung backward into pagan disorder.

In this reading, Michael Field's *Callirhoë* is not a dry historical re-telling of the Maenadic myths but rather an invitation to join in wild atavistic revelry—to enjoy the act of Maenadic *sparagmos* and to consume the blood and raw meat. When Coresus dies, Callirhoë declares "I am a Maenad, I must have love's wine"; as I have argued above, this thirst articulates a need for blood that harkens back to Anaitis' own thirst. The relationship between the wine and the blood has already been established in the preface to the play, and its direct address to the reader invites them to participate in its frenzied consumption:

Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all

We can desire, O Love! And happy souls
Ere from the vine the leaves of autumn fall,

Catch thee, and feed from their o'erflowing bowls
Thousands who thirst for thy ambrosial dew. (Preface)

In conclusion, this article demonstrates that Michael Field's use of history in *Callirrhoë* is far from being adequately described or contained by any description that concerns itself with historical (diachronic) narrative alone. History retold—whether it be Euripides, Pausanias or Pater—can only be seen to carry the meaning of the play if the disruptive gazes from the margins are overlooked. When the play is approached, as its preface suggests “from the circumference of humanity” then the metanarrative of history becomes only one of the ways of seeing the events of the play—part of a web of interrelated and interpreting bodies. Like the Sapphic fragments of *Long Ago* and the paintings and sculpture of *Sight and Song*, history itself is translated into another mode of experience that takes its structure from Maenadic disorder and that breaks down the boundaries between time and space and invites the reader into the Maenadic frenzy.

Part of the emerging mythos of the reclaimed Michael Field is the fact that their first volume of plays *Callirrhoë/Fair Rosamund* was an outstanding success, and that literary London embraced the new Poet, if only for a brief time. Nevertheless, I think we consistently underestimate the impact that *Callirrhoë* had in that moment in 1884 because while much of the lyric verse has been successfully recovered, the verse dramas remain outside the story of Michael Field. What I have sought to achieve here is some appreciation of the dangerous promise of Michael Field's first play—and why it is that commentators and reviewers were so moved to swing the thyrsus pole in Maenadic frenzy.

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¹1. Vadillo, “Outmoded Dramas” 241. For recent examinations of Michael Field's dramas see Ana Parejo Vadillo's useful study of ‘outmoded’ history in *The World at Auction*, and Jill Ehnenn's explorations of *The Tragic Mary* and *A Question of Memory*.

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