

## Love, forgery and strange desires: textual editing as research practice

“But is a scholar, collector, aficionado ‘in love’ with the object of his or her desire? Is it the existence of passion that defines the distinction between fan and aficionado, between dangerous and benign, between deviance and normalcy?” (Jensen 1992).

For academics, working in the archive is often a romanticised journey—its letters, diaries, *billet-doux* retain the *frisson* of history (Steedman 2001; Dever, Newman and Vickery 2009). In contrast, the work of the textual editor is seldom considered more than dry scholarship. Adrian Armstrong (2013) calls textual editors the “football referees of text-based research,” backing up his claim with a description of the work of editing that, while thorough, would have a despairing insomniac gratefully lapsing into slumber:

To edit a premodern text with a moderately complex tradition involves making literally hundreds of decisions per page: identifying a base text, attending to orthography and punctuation, selecting and presenting variants, supplying notes and glossary entries. All these decisions are informed by an expertise that embraces not only technical skill, but also an awareness of epistemological and methodological concerns, and a capacity for judgment that Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has aptly characterized as ‘aesthetic.’

Attendant upon Armstrong’s description of the work of the textual editor is a strong emphasis on expertise, technical skill and “a capacity for judgment”; what K. K. Ruthven (2001) calls “the powerful myths of authenticity and genius on which criticism often relies.” It is this that Joli Jensen (1992) identifies as dividing the diligent professional scholar from the obsessive fan, the production of a culturally-loaded context that validates and valorizes the work of scholarship and its “modes of enactment.” That is to say, obsession with the smallest details of a life are valued differently when contained in a scholarly monograph than when read in a

blog or fanzine. This chapter puts aside the idea of textual editing as detached, rational scholarship in order to re-think its obsessive passions as research practice and discuss how the editing of lifewritings can bring relationships and events to life in a meaningful way.

To illustrate this textual challenge, I focus on the *krankenhaus* (fever hospital) episode of the joint personal diaries of Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper, the late-Victorian British writers and lovers who formed the literary partnership of “Michael Field.”<sup>1</sup> This section of the diaries tells of Cooper’s diagnosis with scarlet fever, and the women’s detention in the Dresden *krankenhaus* while visiting Germany in 1891. What makes this section significant is, when viewed as a textual editing problem, it has several odd characteristics that separate it from the rest of the diaries. In most of their diaries the women share the page, re-telling or building upon the other’s account of an event one after the other. In contrast, the *krankenhaus* account is written throughout (53 pages) in the hand of Edith Cooper only; yet, in spite of this, the point of view shifts between Cooper and Bradley. Unusually for a diary (which is often reflective), early sections of the account—the arrival at the *krankenhaus*—have been retrospectively edited in Cooper’s hand to change the tense from past to present, and the whole episode is framed by a literary structure with a clear beginning and ending. Cooper (Michael Field Diary Archive) concludes:

This seems a little, circular bit of my life, shut out by a special, exclusive line from my other days; it is curious how perfectly my imagination has been curving round to the point whence this circle began. As soon as convalescence touched me warmly, my thoughts began to revert to the first sensations, the fear, the sadness, the vacancy of ‘illness’—the splendour of delirium, the still growth of the “machtige Liebe” in Schwester. I see all these things in their completeness as the time comes for me to pass the hospital doors [...]

Cooper comments on the “special, exclusive line” that “shut out” this experience from ‘normal’ life, but also from the rest of the diaries, and carefully marks it as separate just as the “splendour of delirium” invites the reader to regard its perceptions and assertions as illusion.

A simple explanation for the consistency of Cooper’s handwriting throughout the episode readily presents itself: the women were from home, they were detained until Cooper was medically discharged, and perhaps diary entries were of necessity recorded in some temporary form and transcribed later. Interpreted in this light, that the episode is written in Cooper’s hand is an effect of dislocation—barely a textual footnote—but I want to suggest a different, perhaps even deviant reading of this textual anomaly, one that embraces the carnival qualities of the narrative as the creation of a queer space that grants Cooper unique freedoms to explore her own character and sexuality in ways not usual in (these) diaries, and not generally appropriate for a Victorian woman.

### **Why “Michael Field”?**

Prying into the sexuality of Cooper may seem an unpardonably salacious act, but largely as a result of the disputes of the 1980s and 90s regarding “romantic friendship” on one hand (Faderman 1981) and “fleshly love” on the other (White 1990), Cooper and her partner/aunt Katharine Bradley are, in the twenty-first century, “now among the best-known lesbian couples of the British *fin de siècle*” (Vicinus 2005).<sup>2</sup> More than that, careful stewardship by their literary executor, Thomas Sturge Moore, and his family has guaranteed the survival of the extensive lifewritings of “Michael Field” for over a century. Since their recovery, “Michael Field” has continued to grow in literary and critical importance as a key part of scholarship on the female aesthetes of the late-Victorian period, and are now one focus of an

ambitious interactive digital archive project developed through the *Victorian Lives and Letters Consortium* (<http://vllc.cdhsc.org/about/>).

“Michael Field” burst on to the British literary scene in May 1884 with a frenzied critical reception to their debut book of verse dramas, *Callirrhoe: Fair Rosamund*. 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” (Sturgeon 1922). As “Michael Field”, Bradley and Cooper published eight volumes of lyric poetry and seventeen verse dramas. Other dramas were authored anonymously or published posthumously, making a total of twenty-seven. Michael Field’s literary career began to falter in the 1890s, and was in decline by the 1900s although they continued to publish well-regarded lyric poetry throughout this decade and beyond. They died, mere months apart, in 1913 and 1914.

Possibly their best known poem is “Prologue” (Field 1893) in which both lyric voice and beloved/muse intertwine bodies and voices to declare the centrality of art and love:

It was deep April, and the morn  
Shakespeare was born;  
The world was on us, pressing sore;  
My love and I took hands and swore,  
Against the world, to be  
Poets and lovers evermore (1-6)

With all three—Field, Bradley and Cooper—complexly interwoven in the poem’s declaration, “Prologue” embodies what several critics (Prins 1999, Laird 2000, Thomas 2007) have identified as the contingent pluralities of “Michael Field” and ‘his’ poems and verse dramas. This is the way Bradley and Cooper create the queer spaces and temporalities through which they explore their love and fluid female-centred subjectivities and sexualities.

In addition to the published poetry and plays of “Michael Field,” the extensive letters and diaries represent a treasure trove of the lives of a pre-modern lesbian couple. Particularly in the earlier lifewritings, their depiction of the women’s relationship is often dominated by Bradley. Her statements unequivocally represent their unity, as in her diary reflection (Sturge Moore 1933): “we are closer married.” In their love letters (Field 2008), Bradley adopts the position of husband, “the male part of Michael as beseemeth our relations,” to Cooper's wife. Cooper writes to Bradley, “Well, gifts are not always perfect and yet of some help and joy— And I have given myself to you as your spouse forever.” Later she declares: “Dearest love, my Own husband. I send you this blue flower--I, your spousa, and so make you a brilliant complement,” and Bradley replies to Cooper with the salutation, “Darling Wife.” From Cooper’s late teens, Bradley’s lifelong adoration of her niece is remarkably constant. While the diaries reflect the full complement of experiences in a shared life, from joys to petty disputes, if Bradley’s eyes strayed from her object it is not recorded in the journals she shared with Cooper and in which she performed her devotion.

I have argued elsewhere (Field 2008) that the textual construction of the relationship as a marriage in which Bradley was husband to Cooper's wife functions in the early love letters as an assertion of the primacy of their private and literary bond over the claims of family. Once Cooper matures and the control her family is able to exert over her lessens (particularly after the death of her mother), her sexuality becomes more complicated. In one of the few articles to consider the impact of the art historian, Bernhard Berenson, on the relationship of Bradley and Cooper, Martha Vicinus (2005) argues that Cooper’s “discovery of raw heterosexual desire” for Berenson developed soon after they met in 1890, and “pried apart their private persona as a devoted couple.” Cooper shifted between love and hate for Berenson for the rest of her life—oddly abetted and occasionally defended by Bradley.

Vicinus suggests that through Berenson, Cooper “fell in love with a masculine version of herself”:

[Cooper] reworked her boy-role, not only to differentiate herself from her aunt but also to confirm her androgynous, faun-like resemblance to Berenson. Cooper was both delighted and dismayed by this mirroring, because she discovered her desired (and desirable) self through her soul-sameness with a man and her alterity with a woman.

Most significantly from a textual editing perspective, Vicinus suggests that from 1892, with her passion thwarted by Berenson’s relationship with Mary Costelloe (who he married), Cooper “deployed an array of metaphors and similes [in the diaries], in order to help Bradley see her emotional conflict,” a performance Vicinus depicts as “self-dramatization.” Here, I argue that Cooper’s play with androgyny and fluid gender fantasies in the *krankenhaus* episode of the diaries grants her a freedom to perform the “desired (and desirable) self” identified by Vicinus. It is in the *krankenhaus* that her transformation into an object of desire that revels in the attention of both women and men, begins. More than that, to aid this dramatization, Cooper distances her own voice from the events in the *krankenhaus* with a small act of forgery.

### **Forging the bonds of love**

Forgery or fakery is an accusation never levelled at “Michael Field.” Women writers who take a male pseudonym choose to follow a common literary practice that enables their writings to be taken seriously in a marketplace that privileges the male voice—and to which literature and its gatekeepers for the most part turn a blind eye. However, while “Michael Field” began as exactly this type of conventional, authorly pose, Bradley and Cooper soon test such polite accommodations by becoming Michael (Bradley) and Field (Cooper). In this

sense, “Michael Field” is always more than a forged or faked subject not only because of the exemption that excuses women’s literary pseudonyms, but because the name is absorbed into Bradley and Cooper’s personal identities in art and in life. Nevertheless there are good reasons for looking upon the *krankenhaus* episode as a kind of forgery.

Although now a dated notion in autobiographical theory, Phillipe Lejeune’s idea of the “autobiographical pact” (1989) where, as Leigh Gilmore (1994) states, “the title page functioned as a signed document attesting to the historically truthful representation of the coherent self of an actual person” is still influential. Studies of autobiography now emphasise the fictional/narrative qualities of lifewriting in what has been termed the “textual turn” (Stanley 2004), but historical and testimonial affects linger, particularly in considerations of pre-modern subjects. In many ways the simple existence of the diaries as “Michael Field” diaries enacts the fundamental paradox of lifewriting and autobiography as textual-historical documents through the contingent and shifting nature of its constitutive identities (Michael and Henry or Field, Sim and Puss, and “Michael Field” himself) that are never quite coherent or consistent with their gendered bodies.

In the *krankenhaus* account, Cooper writes or re-writes Bradley with implied permission (Bradley was the first reader of the journal besides Cooper herself) and in a manner that violates, or at least vigorously bends, the autobiographical pact to its own unique textual turn. In the rest of the diaries, changes of voice are not explicitly flagged, which is entirely consistent with a private autobiography whose readership is its two authors. Here, however, narrative shifts are clearly marked with subheadings. This is necessary because the episode is all in Cooper’s hand, but also adds strange layers to the narrative: when the subhead “P. [Cooper] dictates”<sup>3</sup> appears, it suggests Bradley is writing Cooper’s dictated words upon ‘a’ page, yet ‘this’ page is in Cooper’s hand—so the content has been spoken by Cooper, written by Bradley, and re-written by Cooper. There is slippage between the

subjectivities—who is who? Further, as both Bradley and Cooper were there in the *krankenhaus*, why is it necessary to be so fey about who is actually telling the story?

In *Faking Literature*, K. K. Ruthven (2001) argues that the separation of literary forgeries from truthful representation is what makes it like literature. More than that, Ruthven comments on the forgery's "carnavalesque irreverence towards the sanctity of various conventions designed to limit what is permissible in literary production." It is just this sense of the carnivalesque that the confusing layers of Cooper's 'forgery' add to the *krankenhaus* episode. Even when Cooper as herself writes (Michael Field Diary Archive) "as in a dream and to someone I watch," she contributes to the idea that this section of the diaries invites the reader into an altered reality. As a result of the slippages of perspective, Bradley seems more character than writer or co-writer and, from within the distorted illusions of carnival, perhaps Bradley as narrator is best read as mask. In this sense, Bradley (written by Cooper) observes a world apart in which Cooper is embodied in a way distinctly separate from her usually reserved self, and who can perform herself and call out her desires in ways that are not commensurate with her 'real' self. It is precisely within this unstable—and I would argue protective—matrix of not just one but several illusory and unstable realities that I want to explore the experiences in the *krankenhaus* as a queer space.

### **Into the *krankenhaus*: A Dantean descent**

The *krankenhaus* episode begins with Cooper falling ill at their hotel in Dresden. On Wednesday, 19 August, the suggestively-named Dr Faust diagnoses her with scarlet fever and declares she must go to hospital. The associations with hell continue in the trip to the hospital which is depicted (Michael Field Diary Archive) as Dantean descent:

An officer enters—burly, black, prompt—two men follow in deep-coloured blouses. I am borne through deserted passages on a chair and descend, descend—til I come to

piercing grey light and free air. Then I am shut with my beloved in a coach—very like a mourning coach.

Later, incarcerated in the *krankenhaus*, Cooper compares herself to Tantalus, the mythological figure punished eternally in the underworld, and the *krankenhaus*'s relationship with Dantean imagery becomes more explicit when Bradley notes “the sick ones from their pale hospital gowns look at my English clothes as the Shades at the shadow cast by Dante on the ground.”<sup>4</sup> These Dantean shades continue to wander the grounds of the *krankenhaus* aimlessly throughout the account.

Judged one of “die Kranke”—the sick—by the head doctor, the narrative (Michael Field Diary Archive) also makes use of several Gothic tropes. There is an attempt to separate Cooper and Bradley, a division of the living from the dying: Cooper says “I have a feeling, that the dying must have, of external powers taking possession of me and severing me from all I love.” Bradley, however, argues doggedly with the doctors, and ultimately a compromise is reached where, as she may have a red throat, she is incarcerated as well. Perhaps surprisingly, little is made of Bradley—who is not sick—and her unquestioned, even heroic, willingness to enter a nineteenth-century fever hospital to be with Cooper, but this is not really Bradley's story. Cooper is taken on a dream-like journey through “prison-passages” to a tiny room, then to a large room with six beds “in one of wh: was a great baby-doll—Ghastly creature!” The uncanny doll plays no part in Cooper's narrative but contributes to the nightmarish dreamscape. Events in the *krankenhaus* become even odder when Cooper writes of her delirium, “A great dromedary comes along, with red trappings and trophies, in the midst are set the words Two weeks at Dresden!! The ironic beast passes.” The ironic beast brings a further sense of theatrical performance to what has been identified in the narrative both psychologically and spatially as a different reality.

If it were not clear enough by this that Cooper and Bradley have somehow found themselves in an unreal space, perhaps closest to a Gothic novel, the account of Cooper's fever confirms it. Bradley (Michael Field Diary Archive) writes of "The horror of imprisonment, the sense of isolation, the strange gnawing anxiety. Last (Thursday night) was one of delirium and horror, the delicate brain all entangled. I woke to find P. at the other end of the room; she nearly if not quite fainted." In this way, several pages of the account are devoted to drawing Cooper's special, exclusive line, positioning the narrative within the "kingdom of the Captive sick" and removing the *krankenhaus* from the usual rules that govern both the rest of the diaries, and the broader conventions recognisable in diaries and lifewritings more generally.

### ***Der sanfte Heinrich* (gentle Heinrich)**

Thus far, I have outlined how Cooper uses the episode in the *krankenhaus* to clearly signal the creation within the diary of a Gothic fantasy world with Cooper as its focus and subject. Reliant upon the narrative or perhaps mask of a fictionalised or forged Bradley are the transformations in Cooper herself. As she moves from being sick to convalescent, Cooper (Michael Field Diary Archive) writes, "my whole nature grew elfishly wicked as she read. I determine I will have as much pleasure as I can." The 'elfishly wicked' Cooper also has a new look: on 29 August, Cooper had her hair cropped short. This creates for her a boyish identity—"der sanfte Heinrich"—given her by the nurse, Schwester. The "pretty boy" as a new masculine identity was so dear to both Cooper and Bradley that Henry very quickly becomes Cooper's preferred identity in their letters and lifewritings, one that she maintains through the rest of her life.

Vicinus (2005) argues that in her relationship with Bernhard Berenson, Cooper "fell in love with a masculine version of herself" exploring her role as a boy, a mirror image of

Berenson's androgynous faun. Situated at the nexus of two gazes, Bradley's and Berenson's, Vicinus asserts Cooper "used her passionate feelings to transform herself into an art object, to be admired not only by her partner but also by their friends." In Dresden in 1891, Cooper and Bradley had known Berenson for a year, and Berenson's interest was on his relationship with Mary Costelloe: the original love triangle of Berenson-Cooper-Bradley was doubled by the addition of Berenson-Cooper-Costelloe. While in the *krankenhaus*, Berenson and Costelloe visit the invalid several times, bringing gifts of flowers and books. Berenson flirts casually with Cooper, telling her (Michael Field Diary Archive): "You will never know what plans I have been forming for your happiness, nor how I looked forward to being in the gallery with you" and "My little blue blouse (his choice) he had been enjoying some time." Berenson's flirtations with Cooper in the *krankenhaus* illustrate his willingness, even here, to participate in the androgynous love-play described by Vicinus, and to continue his admiration of Cooper (despite the presence of his lover and future wife).

More than that, Berenson's presence in the *krankenhaus* signals his ability to cross that special, exclusive line between the world of the well and the sick. According to the diary (Michael Field Diary Archive), Berenson claims he is "just a faun" who therefore has no fear of infection, and who therefore mirrors Cooper's 'elfish wickedness'; just as his shaving of his moustache mirrors Cooper's cropped hair. In this way, Berenson is situated as part of two worlds—their existing cross-gendered, love-fantasy as described by Vicinus, but by participating in the fantasy Cooper is constructing within the *krankenhaus*, his similarity to Cooper is emphasised more than ever before.

Cooper's feelings for Berenson are on display here, as they are in several parts of the diaries—a despairing and doomed passion that haunts her life. Directly after a visit from Berenson, Cooper writes (Michael Field Diary Archive) of a vision of a broken cupid:

A little love comes to me and lays his little cheek against my heart. He shows me in a vessel his broken wings, his broken bow and arrows, his broken heart. And then he sings ... In the vessel it looked such a bright, feathered smash.

On the next page, Cooper writes erotically of Berenson's gift of roses:

Oh, I lay and gazed intoxicated with the glow, the colour of life itself swelling the buds, fading in the blossoms,—with the perfume around me, within me. An insatiable rapture, almost delirium, haunted my eyes and brain.

While Cooper's relationship with Berenson opened up the potential for cross-gendered and heterosexual pleasures to be found at the centre of multiple gazes; it is in the *krankenhaus* (or her contained and constructed fantasy of the *krankenhaus*) that Cooper discovers a space in which to perform her cross-gendered sexual fantasies, beyond Bradley and even beyond Berenson too, abandoning caution and revealing a fluidly-desiring sexuality.

The "Kingdom of the Captive Sick" is populated not just by Bradley and Cooper, the visitant Berenson (and Mary), and the roaming shadows of the inmates, but also by the nurse, Christiane Schwester and the Doctors. Dr Henner is described in the diary (Michael Field Diary Archive) as "a very tall dark young man, with gentle lines of beauty and a thoughtful face." On 15 September, Henner arrives "light-minded and disposed to flirt. P. is so minded." He returns in the afternoon and their limited conversation is rendered in German complete with bouts of girlish laughter from Cooper. Later, the young Dr 'Waggie' is depicted with eyes that "gleam on the patient." While none of these interactions could be described as *risqué*, Cooper's delight in these interactions sits in contrast to her usual self, and go beyond how a well-brought up Englishwoman should comport herself when abroad. Charles Ricketts described Cooper for Mary Sturgeon's study of "Michael Field" (1922) as:

[V]ery quiet and restrained in voice and manner, a singularly alive and avid spectator and questioner, occasionally speaking with force and vivacity, but instinctively retiring, and absorbed by an intensely reflective inner life.

If, however, we view Cooper's flirtations with the doctors as kicking over the traces, it is in her relationship with nurse Schwester that Cooper (Michael Field Diary Archive) really embraces the role of object to a "terrible fleshly love."

**In the grip of passion: *Eine machtige Liebe* (a mighty love)**

Early in the diary's *krankenhaus* account (Michael Field Diary Archive), Sister is depicted as severe but re-assuring, fervently Catholic and lonely: a "good, sweet, homely woman."

During Cooper's convalescence, as Bradley begins to venture outside the wall of the fever hospital once again, she returns to discover:

Sister kisses her [Cooper] with a kiss that plunges down among down among the wraps (Yes, as the wolf did when he sought the child—O Eros!—in Browning's "Ivan Ivanovich"—a fatal kiss).

Bradley is upset that the nurse's attentions have pre-empted her own "Springtide kisses," and, in spite of the wolfishness of her interaction with Schwester, Cooper mollifies Bradley by emphasising the motherliness of the attachment. Hereafter, Schwester's passion for Cooper retains a dual aspect: "She has in her eyes a twofold divineness when she looks at P.—that of the mother who has done everything for her babe, and that of a Dog who watches for the love of a higher Power." Yet there are no less than ten encounters with the nurse involving "great spreading kisses," more "wolf-kisses" and hands that "stray" from over Cooper's heart. Ultimately, Cooper is brought to the conclusion that:

My experiences with Nurse are painful—she is under the possession of a terrible fleshly love, she does not conceive as such, and as such I will not receive it. Ah, why will Anteros make one cynical by always peering over the beauty of every love ... why must his fatality haunt us?

There are some ways in which Cooper's interlude with Schwester mirrors the one she shares with Bradley. Schwester is older, and idolises Cooper with a passionate intensity that becomes a kind of desperation. Is Schwester's "fearful passion of unsatisfied senses in a strange nature" then a dark reflection of the Cooper-Bradley relationship? Is Cooper gesturing obliquely at the ways her desires for Bradley and Berenson conflict and collide? Is this the fatality of Anteros, the god of requited love? It is, of course, the nature of the *krankenhaus* that permits Cooper to reveal such thoughts, but not be held to book for them or for a clear explanation of her meaning—it is simply part of the 'splendour of delirium' that covers all and extends its mantle over the entire time she lives as one of the *kranke* (sick).

For Chris White (1990), the *krankenhaus* episode helps map out a pro-sex account of the history of lesbianism that included "the complicated processes whereby the discourses of lesbianism might have been inscribed in the nineteenth century." White argues that "fleshly love" is a phrase indicative of Cooper's capacity to recognise "one woman's feelings of physical desire for another woman." For White, the description of this "fleshly love" as terrible is ambiguous in terms of how that adjective is applied: to all such feelings, or just to their manifestation in Schwester? It is important to note that White's intention is a broad one—to demonstrate that the Bradley-Cooper relationship is more complex than Faderman's romantic friendship hypothesis (1981), and to identify how, while neither woman would have named their relationship lesbian, the diaries include strategies and devices that can articulate female-oriented desire. Having begun the process of thinking about how lesbian desire might be expressed, she leaves it to others to expand on the discourses of lesbianism.

After the *krankenhaus*, and more significantly after Berenson rejects Cooper for Mary Costelloe in Paris in mid-1892, Cooper's position at the centre of a love triangle in which she could enjoy the admiration of both Berenson and Bradley collapsed. The special, exclusive line of the *krankenhaus* that allowed her to experiment with open, fluid expressions of sexuality had forever shut behind her when she wrote in the diary on 29 July 1892 (Michael Field Diary Archive):

Although the doctrine's [Berenson's] wonderful eyes—a Faun's crossed with the traditional Christ's—pursue me, tho' they have a charm that maddens, I will never go off to the hills like Agave only to rend my own flesh and blood—my artistic personality. I die in the presence of the face I love—the man's.

There is no fellowship, no caress, no tight winding-together of two natures, no tenderness when my Love [Bradley] is severed from me. And there seems to be no life in people—no life to be got anywhere—if one is withdrawn from the Doctrine.

So I sit here doubly dead.

The double death that Cooper describes is both the loss of Berenson and (temporarily) Bradley, who is away in Oxford. While Berenson was now more or less untouchable as a result of his long-term relationship with Mary Costelloe, Bradley would return, and would reaffirm her adoration for Cooper in a telegram transcribed into the diary (Michael Field Diary Archive), “But oh it is most better when we are together, closer, growing into one.” Throughout Cooper's passionate love for Berenson, she never renounces or sublimates her feeling for Bradley in the diaries, nevertheless it is difficult not see the shift from the ‘splendour of delirium’ in the *krankenhaus* to an exclusive focus on the devoted love Bradley offered her as also the closing off of part of herself.

After 1892, the “Michael Field” relationship becomes a far less problematic love relationship. While Berenson continues to trouble Cooper’s heart, and while Berenson and Mary Costelloe’s difficult marriage encouraged Berenson occasionally to stir the embers of desire between himself and Cooper (probably to provoke Mary to jealousy), no other relationships could take precedence over Cooper’s love for Bradley. Indeed, after this it is possible to see more clearly Ricketts’s assessment of her (Sturgeon 1922) as “instinctively retiring, and absorbed by an intensely reflective inner life.” In the final years of their lives, Cooper and Bradley took strength and consolation from each other, and also from their Catholic faith.

Maryanne Dever (2009) writes that we venture into the archive with our own ‘archival stories’ and the nature of what we seek there is revelation, particularly if what is sought is sexual intrigue or what Dever calls “the smoking lipstick.” Carolyn Steedman (2001) characterises the archival search as about dust, an “immutable, obdurate set of beliefs about the material world” that enables the archival scholar to “conjure a social system from a nutmeg grater.” Antoinette Burton (2005) notes: “archives are always already stories; they produce speech and especially speech effects, of which history is but one.” It does not escape me that what I have conjured from the *krankenhaus* is a fanciful story of Edith Cooper’s secret inner self—perhaps held together by dust and smoke—but also guided by what Armstrong (2013) describes in that maligned description of the textual editor’s work as technical skill, the questions that arise from careful observation of the words on the page, its additions and deletions, with the eye of an editor: an editorial process which sparks off its own research journey.

All quotations from the MSS of “Works and Days,” the journals of “Michael Field,” appear by kind permission of the copyright holders Leonie Sturge-Moore and Charmian O’Neil.

## Works Cited

Armstrong, Adrian, 2013. Scholarly editing. *French studies: a quarterly review*, 67.2, April 2013, pp. 232-40.

Blain, Virginia, 2006. Michael Field, the two-headed nightingale: lesbian text as palimpsest. *Women's history review*, 5.2, pp. 239-57.

Burton, Antoinette, 2005. Introduction: Archive fever, archive stories. In *Archive stories: facts, fictions and the writing of history*. Durham: Duke UP.

Dante, A. and Longfellow, H. W. *The divine comedy*, Project Gutenberg, eBook Collection (EBSCO host), *EBSCOhost*, viewed 20 February 2018.

Dever, Maryanne, Newman, Sally and Vickery, Ann, 2009. *The intimate archive: journeys through private papers*. Canberra: National Library of Australia.

Donoghue, Emma, 1998. *We are Michael Field*. Bath: Absolute Press.

Faderman, Lillian, 1981. *Surpassing the love of men: romantic friendship and love between women from the Renaissance to the present*. New York: Quill.

Field, Michael, 1893. *Underneath the bough: a book of verses*. London: George Bell and Sons.

\_\_\_\_\_, 2008. *The fowl and the pussycat: love letters of 'Michael Field.'* Ed. Sharon Bickle. U of Virginia P.

Foster, Jeannette, 1975. *Sex-variant women in literature: a historical and quantitative survey*. Baltimore: Diana Press.

Gilmore, Leigh, 1994. *Autobiographics: a feminist theory of women's self-representation*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.

Jensen, Joli, 1992. Fandom as pathology: the consequences of characterization. In *The adoring audience: fan culture and popular media*. Ed. Lisa Lewis. London: Routledge, pp. 9-28.

Laird, Holly, 2000. *Women Coauthors*. Urbana: U of Illinois P.

Lejeune, Phillipe, 1989. *On Autobiography*. Ed. Paul John Eakin. Trans Katherine Leary. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P.

Michael Field Diary Archive. *Victorian Lives and Letters Consortium*. Center for Digital Humanities, University of South Carolina: <http://vllc.cdhs.org/the-michael-field-diaries/>. Viewed 9 November 2018.

Prins, Yopie, 1999. Greek maenads, Victorian spinsters. In *Victorian sexual dissidence*. Ed. Richard Dellamora, ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P.

Ruthven, K. K., 2001. *Faking Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Stanley, Liz, 2004. The Epistolarium: on theorizing letters and correspondences. *Auto/Biography*, 12: pp. 201-35.

Steedman, Carolyn, 2001. *Dust: the archive and cultural history*. Manchester: Manchester UP.

Stetz, Margaret and Wilson, Cheryl A. (eds), 2007. *Michael Field and their world*. High Wycombe: Rivendale Press.

Sturge Moore, T and D. C., 1933. *Works and days: from the journals of Michael Field*. London: John Murray.

Sturgeon, Mary, 1922. *Michael Field*. London: George G. Harrap.

Thomas, Kate, 2007. 'What time we kiss': Michael Field's queer temporalities. *GLQ: a journal of lesbian and gay studies*. 13.2-3: pp. 327-51.

White, Christine, 1990. 'Poets and lovers evermore': interpreting female love in the poetry and journals of Michael Field. *Textual practice*, 4.2, pp. 197-212.

Vicinus, Martha, 2004. *Intimate friends: women who loved women, 1778-1928*. Chicago: Chicago UP.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2005. 'Sister souls': Bernard Berenson and Michael Field (Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper). *Nineteenth-century literature*, 60.3, pp. 326-54.

---

<sup>1</sup> Part of Cooper's writing about the *krankenhaus* from Cooper and Bradley's joint journals "Works and Days" is published in T. and D. C. Moore's *Works and days: from the journals of Michael Field* (1933). The full account can be accessed via the Michael Field Diary Archive, *Victorian Lives and Letters Consortium* (Center for Digital Humanities, University of South Carolina): <http://vllc.cdhsoc.org/the-michael-field-diaries/>. This is hereafter referenced as Michael Field Archive Diary.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to Faderman and White, as early as 1975, Jeannette Foster included Michael Field as conjectural proto-lesbians in *Sex-Variant Women in Literature*; Emma Donoghue's biographic *We Are Michael Field* (1998) asserts that Bradley and Cooper were lesbian lovers. For the notion that Bradley and Cooper became lovers when Cooper turned twenty-one, see Blain 2006 and Vicinus 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Bradley's favoured nickname for Cooper at this time is Persian Puss and its diminutives, Pussie, Puss, P. P. and simply P.

<sup>4</sup> In Purgatorio III, the dead are unsettled by seeing Dante's shadow on the ground which indicates he is living.