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"WHAT TIME WE KISS"

Michael Field's Queer Temporalities

Kate Thomas

Love, shall we triumph that our lips will touch
 When there are no more years,
Or rather that we press Soul's heart to heart
 What time we kiss?
—Michael Field, "The Blesse of Immortalitie"

I begin with a retro gesture. Over ten years ago, considerations of the critical category of *queer* theorized it as a moment and complicated the business of retrospection itself. In 1993 Judith Butler outlined her vision for queer as a "point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings," and she emphasized the "temporality of the term."¹ She was invoking "queer" as a *temporary* critical category, useful in the now, and in its relationship to past and future, but by no means a stable, eternally durable term. It is a term that may be, she warned, transient—and it is certainly *transitive*: part of the creativity of queer lies in its ability to imagine seemingly impossible futures and tangle seemingly fixed time lines. If it is queer to cross ages, it is also peculiarly queer, perhaps, to get lost in the process of crossing. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, writing in the same year, called queer "an immemorial current . . . relational and strange."² To be immemorial is to be so old as to be immortal; it is also to be beyond memory, beyond origin, or "out of time."

These decade-old reflections on queer time are revisited in our present through a flurry of interest among Anglo-American queer theorists in temporality. This revival may be prompted by the tempo of tabloidesque inquiries about whether queer theory is over, past, post. It may be prompted by good old-fashioned fin de siècle epistemic reflection. It is certainly inflected by the contradictions of a time of "progress" for queer politics, about whose progressiveness many are

dubious, a time accompanied by rollbacks and regressions in the form of renewed homophobias. This scholarship is marked by a drive to detail cross-temporalities and to explain why we should not be taken in by the easy temporality on which ideas like progress (and regress) rely. If there has been a shift in queer scholarship, it is a shift in which work on queer history has been joined by work on queer historiography. And from this pairing history emerges as a supple, slippery, and infinitely changeable relational set of interactions. Carolyn Dinshaw, whose 1999 book *Getting Medieval* is one of the earlier and most ample and generative examples of this work, describes her project as “about making relations with the past.”³ Along with other scholars like Christopher Nealon, Heather Love, and Jonathan Goldberg, she writes to make apparent “affective communities . . . across time” (*GM*, 12). This work turns gracefully from attempts to make history explain lesbian and gay lives and bodies to what Nealon calls the “other project,” the project of “making lesbian and gay bodies illuminate history.”⁴ What catches my eye—or, as I explore later, my ear—most particularly is the emergent notion that as we were historicizing sexuality, we realized the sexualizing power of history and feeling historical.

This essay draws together inaugural and contemporary queer theoretical preoccupations with temporality by focusing on two late-nineteenth-century lesbian poets whose writing is structured by complex adjudications of time and era. Katharine Bradley (1846–1914) and Edith Cooper (1862–1913) wrote together under the name of Michael Field. They regarded their life and their poetry as an immortal art and the age in which they wrote and loved as conversely prosaic and artless. Their collaboration throws light on current debates about queer temporalities for several reasons. First, their work emerges from—and creates—interstices of time; obsessed with queer pasts, they turn equally vigorously to decidedly queer futures. They believe that they will inherit the world, and they are anything but meek about it. Furthermore, the temporal disordering involved in imagining this future forms a wellspring for their erotics. Although futurity has recently come in for some flak as an antisex, pro-procreative diversion tactic, in the hands of Michael Field, the future appears downright kinky.⁵ They regarded the age difference or time lapse between them as a way to find themselves in each other. Second, Bradley and Cooper were aunt and niece. Their relationship was incestuous. Michael Field is understudied, to be sure, but this fact of the relationship has been so politely avoided that it is something of an elephant in the maiden-auntly parlor. Much work on Field thus far either adheres Field to a model of desexualized romantic friendship or identifies Field as lesbian.⁶ In both cases, incest hides in plain view. The women’s close familial relationship is mentioned as casually

as are the years of their births. Somehow, identifying Field as nicely lesbian still occludes the particular contours of their lesbian desire. Those contours are timely for this investigation—they are intergenerational and intrafamilial and as such can weigh in on current critical arbitrations of the place of futurity and the familial in queer scholarship and politics.

Within the last ten years, Field's poetry has become increasingly anthologized, and the poets are becoming potentially, still projectively, famous. One of my interests is in the timing and the contingency of that possible fame: not only is it not clear whether Field will stick in anthologies of Victorian poetry, but it is similarly unclear what it means to forge this new fame, when nineteenth-century fame notoriously eluded Bradley and Cooper. They can play no easy role in a recovery project. How might we relate this delay in—still ambivalent—critical appreciation to the women's artistic eccentricities, on the one hand, and their vast ambitions for literary immortality, on the other? The question of their queerness—their incestuous lesbian relationship and the lesbian-feminist erotics and politics of their writing—overarches these inquiries. My proposal is that Michael Field has always been—and perhaps always will be—"out of time": there are relationships among Bradley and Cooper's incestuous, multigenerational lesbianism, the lateness of literary and critical attention to their work, their own sense that as poets and lovers they joined hands and wrote against their age, and their often-expressed, often-extravagant desire for literary immortality.

My inquiry emerges out of an uncanny echo that I perceive ricocheting between the ends of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is an echo of the conceit that Michael Field awaits a new century, a new era in which to be discovered. The twentieth century offered that promise to Field's contemporary admirers, much as the twenty-first century offers it to recent scholars of Field's work. During their lifetimes, Bradley and Cooper were constantly warned that they would not find fame in their own time. Robert Browning "prophesied they would make their mark" but cautioned that their literary fortune would be realized only in a different era: "Wait fifty years," he told them in sage tones.⁷ In a campier vein Charles Ricketts, who with his lover Charles Shannon was Field's closest friend and artistic collaborator, envisioned the day "when we all come into our own," and "Michael Field will be remembered when the Thompsons, Addington Symonds etc are forgotten."⁸ Cooper herself marked the turn of the century, 1900, by writing in their journal that "Michael will be discovered in the twentieth century."⁹

I read these prognostics as more than simple assessments of a literary marketplace "not ready," as some critics have suggested, for Michael Field, and as different from a melancholic yearning for an inclusion-yet-to-be. Such readings

of Field's literary fate are usually founded, whether explicitly or implicitly, on the writers' lesbianism, and they also tend politely to pass over or smooth out the extraordinary oddness of their lives, poetry, and drama. (I might mention here, for example, their collection of verse that they channeled through their beloved and deceased dog, Whym Chow. The collection was called *Whym Chow: Flame of Love*.¹⁰) Heather Love has recently warned that turning away from "troubling" queer stories, or troublesome queer structures of feeling, will not help rethink "the protocols of queer historiography."¹¹ She argues that we sell queer histories short if we lose sight of loss and suffering as queer feelings and seek to "rescue" queer subjects from the torments of their era. The prompt I take from critics like Love and Elizabeth Freeman is that it is time to pay attention to that queer sense of being out of sync. Freeman stands firm against logics of progression, arguing that understanding drag temporally generates a "productive obstacle to progress" and acts as "a usefully distorting pull backwards, and a necessary pressure upon the present tense."¹² This is scholarship that respects and delights in anachronism, the "pastness of the past" (728), and does not dispose of that which is "tired" (732), eccentric, or out-of-date. Rather than see Bradley and Cooper as born out of step with their own time and as more suited to our own, I read their prognostics and those of their literary circle as attempts to describe the complicated epistemological vaults, clock-stoppings, and doubling-backs accomplished by Field's poetry. Any reading that seeks to "liberate" Bradley and Cooper from their era, that attempts to recover, affirm, or otherwise drag them as queer subjects into the supposed beneficence of the now, tramples over the complex temporal crossings of which Field, Browning, Meredith, Shannon, and Ricketts deem the Field opus capable. The Field opus will, these friends agree, triumphantly transcend era, and then what a party these ghostly aesthetes will throw. Who are we, those who come after, to imagine that these two women need rescuing from the slings and arrows of a fortune that they already knew to be outrageous?

There is a problem, in short, to seeing the twentieth or twenty-first century as the true home of Michael Field, or to rendering Bradley and Cooper as rejected—inevitably so—by their own time. That kind of reading practice is driven by the same motor as the repressive hypothesis. I prefer Bradley and Cooper's own sense of inevitability—they *will* be famous, they will enjoy immortality, though they die *for now*. That glitch, that recognition that they are not and will not be famous in their lifetimes, is very important. It shows that they feel historical and that this feeling derives from their embrace of a specifically broken, interrupted teleology. Michael Field theorized a queer futurity: they lived their afterlives as simultaneous to their

lives; they saw themselves as coming after themselves. If we are to work against “making historical analysis,” what Michel Foucault called the “discourse of the continuous,” we must not seek to stake queer history against the temporal anomalies to which it often clings.¹³ We must instead detail fissured and posturing queer temporalities: write of love and passion that is old-fashioned, out-of-date, retro, attracted to that which has expired, or—as in the case of Michael Field—yearns for and imperiously lays claim to the future, assuming immortality.

When Bradley writes on the eve of a new century that Field will be discovered by this new century, she *is* writing just a year after Field’s “dual lady authorship” had been discovered, and, subsequently diminished by a stream of bad reviews, the poets had resorted to publishing in a vanity press. But Bradley is doing more than lamenting the loss of poetic face and looking hopefully toward the horizon of a new epoch because she has no other option. She is writing with the same pen that, in 1889, had figured Sappho as careless and uncalculating of audience. Lyric 34 of Field’s *Long Ago* opens:

Sing to us, Sappho! cried the crowd,
 And to my lyre I sprang;
 Apollo seized me, and aloud
 Tumultuous I sang.¹⁴

These first four lines are full of precipitous poetic action: Sappho springs to it and is singing tumultuously by the end of the sentence. After this opening rush, however, the live poetic action is put on pause: the rapturous “I sang” is followed by

I did not think of who would hear;
 I knew not there were men who jeer;
 Nor dreamed I there were mortals born
 To make the poet’s heart forlorn.

The poem drops off from the rapture of past poem making and—as if in parenthesis—meditates instead on Sappho’s lack of temporal savvy. She had not, before lifting her lyre, anticipated the hostility that rises to greet her verses:

I heard a hostile sound
 And looked—oh, scornfuller than those
 ’Mong men I ne’er have found.
 I paused.

The scornful men change Sappho's verb: her "I sang" is arrested, then met by the parallel construction "I paused." They delay her. It is the delay, however, that leads to triumph: the pause is followed by the divine reverberations of her chords that force her audience into admission of her greatness:

the whistling air was stilled;
Then through my chords the godhead thrilled,
And the quelled creatures knew their kind
Ephemeral through foolish mind.

Sappho's song—and, crucially, her caesura—stuns her hostile listeners into recognizing themselves as "ephemeral," a damning epithet indeed. Their "kind" only fleetingly matter; "you are," as the Greek fragment that prefaces the poem translates, "nothing to me."

Time, Field reminds us, proved Sappho right, but importantly, it is the time *lapses*—both the short-term pause that the poem dramatizes and the long-term lag between Sappho's life and nineteenth-century reappreciation of her work—that provide her now (and forever) with the fame she was due back then. The implication of Field's poem is that time will be on the poets' side, too, despite and because of having to outwait a chattering nineteenth-century crowd. In fact, fame has always already come: Field's own future has already happened through generational collision with a Sappho of the past, rediscovered in the now and projected into her future. After all, "to my lyre *I*," not *she*, "sprang."

Given the terms of the current debate in queer scholarship about futurity and reproduction, it is important to note that the poets make the claim to creative immortality across the repudiated procreative body.¹⁵ I return to the last two lines of the first stanza: "Nor dreamed I there were mortals born / To make the poet's heart forlorn." The jeering crowd is stamped with the reproductive cycle: its members have been born and are specifically mortals, thus subject to death. The poet, on the other hand, may be "forlorn" but proves to be immortal. The born/forlorn couplet, in other words, deftly uncouples futurism from natalism. The untimeliness stressed by the poem and its signifying caesura portrays Sappho and Field as released from the inevitable chronologies and lifetimes of what Judith Halberstam calls "repro-time." Repro-time, Halberstam shows, is all about believing in scheduling and sticking to it: the "family time" of children's imagined needs; "generational time" that privileges continuities of wealth and name; the connection through time of the family to a national past; and the "hypothetical temporalities" of property or health insurance.¹⁶ Subscription to these unswerving

teleologies demands blindness to the inherent transivities of time. The conceit, the hauteur of Field's lyric 34 is that the blind can have their blindness—and their doom—revealed to them. The poem fulfills a wish that the members of the crowd can be stunned into realizing that they are transitory, rather than transitive. In Field's poetics, singing out of time is not only a mark of greatness but generates greatness, too. Being of the time, expecting appreciation (of property or reputation) to be born in time, and thus subjecting oneself to the limitations of timeliness and its own expiration is deathly. The pause in the poem is necessary to hearing the queer voice—the mocked and stigmatized Sapphic voice—as one that simultaneously speaks back and originates.

The pause is the technology, the echo chamber, necessary to make queer historical and historicizing resonances audible. I choose the term *resonances* deliberately. The pause in Field's lyric 34 is closely followed by a wavelength metaphor: "I paused: the whistling air was stilled; / Then through my chords the godhead thrilled." It is a metaphor employed by several critics studying queer temporal and affective relations. Goldberg, describing the importance of Nealon's work on "affective genealogies," writes of how "'our' history is carried along wavelengths that are not heard in the same way by each of us, and that telling the story of those strange coincidences is that task to pursue."¹⁷ In a chapter called "Good Vibrations," Dinshaw analyzes the resonances that both produce and emanate from queer alliances between cross-temporal texts. She pays close attention to Foucault's essay "The Life of Infamous Men," describing "Foucault in the archive, sensing a 'vibration' from the very documents he reads" (*GM*, 104). In place of constructing chronologies or forging "restorative" analyses, Foucault describes how the archive functions acoustically and writes of the "vibration which I feel even today" from the lives of these men whose infamy by definition makes them doubly out of time—to be infamous is to be both repudiated by your time and to gain immortality, be famed, by that repudiation.¹⁸ What is the role and action of reverberation? Nealon analyzes Hart Crane's fascination with "that amplitude that time explores" and the radio and telegraph that "connect ears."¹⁹ As Nealon points out, the technologies that Crane cites rely on silence and nonconnectivity: Crane can "plunge forward into the idea of the silence of history: just as radio waves are not percussive instruments or conduits for electricity or human bodies . . . but nonetheless convey a sound, so too will 'the river' produce song from nothing" (51). Communication, in other words, might rely on a lack of connectivity.

Wai Chee Dimock illuminates the importance of this aural nonconnectivity in her essay "A Theory of Resonance."²⁰ Writing to "honor the claim of the ear against the primacy of the eye in the West," she critiques practices of historicism

that rely on “semantic synchronism: the meaning of a text is assumed to be the property of the historical period in which it originated” (1060–61). Texts can be reanimated, she claims, as “future circumstances . . . bring about other possibilities for meaning” (1061).²¹ She argues that literary texts have traveling frequencies: “Frequencies received and amplified across time . . . causing unexpected vibrations in unexpected places” (1061). Dimock turns Harold Bloom on his head, linking “literary endurance not to the persistent integrity of the text, but to its persistent unraveling” (1062). She bends Bloomian concern with timeless strengths into appreciation of a text’s “*timeful* unwieldiness” (1062). We need not know or predetermine what the future will bring, but maybe we need its amplifying capacities. Michael Field is not Sappho’s inheritor or the new Sappho—Field is, rather, an eddy in her “immemorial current . . . relational and strange,” as indeed Sappho is in Field’s. Chronology falls to the wayside and immortality is defined and shared through stops, pauses, loops and delays, and lapses.

And so let us hark back to queer scholarship of ten years ago. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner’s 1995 essay “What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?” unfolds from a similar theorization of the necessity of hiatus. “We have been,” they write, “invited to pin the queer theory tail on the donkey. . . . yet the term itself is less than five years old.”²² Their reaction to the demand for definitions, manifestos, bibliographies, syllabi—the commodities, we might say, of field formation—is an astonished, strategic paralysis. “But here,” they write, in borrowed and arcane language, “we cannot but stay and make a pause” (343). Instead of just getting on with the job, their representation of their “amazed pause” registers the necessity of creating hiatus in overzealous, chronologizing, supercommodifying—potentially colonizing—articulations of “moments,” of what’s hot . . . for now. That pause interferes with queer theory being absorbed into some kind of evolutionary narrative. Noting that at that time many of the practitioners of queer theory are not faculty members but graduate students, whose role as future inheritors of the field provokes envy, they reject the call to define what they call a “propositional program” for queer criticism and instead meditate on the politics of generationality (343).

One of Bradley and Cooper’s friends and contemporaries, Oscar Wilde, expressed a similarly firm antipathy to the new and the notion of progress. Wilde’s often rehearsed disdain for his own era (he described the nineteenth century as “vulgar,” “monstrous,” “petty,” “hypocritical,” “uselessly utilitarian,” “inartistic”) finds full expression in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the study of fascination with immortality par excellence.²³ If Dorian’s beauty is undimmed by the *passing* of time, his descriptions of erotic passion derive from what might be called

trespassings of time—the way he passes across and beyond time. When Dorian is describing his love for Sibyl Vane he declares with passion that he has “seen her in every age and in every costume” and that she thus transcends “stereotyped” manners and behavior. When Dorian kisses Sibyl, he kisses the “Lips that Shakespeare taught to speak”—it is through her being not of her age, “out of time,” through her reordering and reiterating (she is in “every age”) an otherwise mundane sequence of events that Dorian can make love to history and imagine kissing Shakespeare himself.²⁴ That kiss, delivered across staggered and folded—kinky—time, will in turn rewrite history: at the end of the novel Dorian, remembering a letter from a lover who told him “the curves of your lips rewrite history,” repeats the phrase as he smashes the mirror that reflects his preternatural beauty, plans to forget the past and youth and think only of “his own future” and a “new life” (*DG*, 260, 261).

In a novel in which everyone describes themselves in relationships of debt to each other, *Dorian Gray*'s mirror and painting function like IOU notes, and these passages explicate the complicated temporal folds that relations of debt produce. Wilde had specifically selected an idiom of indebtedness to describe his literary relations with Michael Field. Writing to Field in August 1890 to thank the women for sending him a copy of their play *The Tragic Mary* (1890), Wilde regrets that “by comparison my own little gift of little fairy tales shows but poorly. Yet I like,” he continues, “such inequality, for it keeps me your debtor and since I read *Callirrhoë* I have been without hope of repayment.”²⁵ The compliment's extravagance is generic Wilde, but the conceit of a debt so sweet it should not be repaid is piercingly specific. In *De Profundis*, Wilde recalls being led “from my prison to the Court of Bankruptcy, between two policemen.” His ex-lover and longtime friend, Robert Ross, had waited in the corridor so that “he might gravely raise his hat to me, as, handcuffed and with bowed head, I passed him by.”²⁶ Ross's act of respect and kindness stands, for Wilde, as a corrective to the correctional: an act of generosity that counter- or overbalances the myriad deficits of the bankruptcy court. Wilde joyfully describes being able to bank the memory of this moment: “I store it in the treasure-house of my heart. I keep it there as a secret debt that I am glad to think I can never possibly repay. It is embalmed and kept sweet by the myrrh and cassia of many tears” (*DG*, 144).

Wilde's moved and moving words, and his grief—in the form of metamorphosing tears—translate Ross's gift into a debt that becomes a gift again. One that keeps on giving. We could say that the gift of debt is the gift of reciprocity itself. What Wilde is celebrating is not just Ross's braving of public shame and the raising of his hat, it is the beauty of the never-time into which it is a portal.

Wilde luxuriates in the idea that the debt can *never* be repaid. It makes the act of friendship timeless and sustains a state of perpetual desired and desiring obligation within the friendship.

Callirrhoe, Field's 1884 four-act tragedy that Wilde felt so indebted to have read, teaches a similar lesson about how to understand time. The play wags a stern finger at those who expect their own subjectivity to remain constant and will not rightly apprehend that they must change:

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.²⁷

Iterated selves, as Field portrays them, imagine that they are complete, but because of this delusion, they in fact have no future and are not visited by desire for one. It is for this reason that failing to fulfill an exchange adequately is a pleasure. It leaves one standing in the chains of obligation and waiting, satisfaction deferred but pleasure perpetuated. Ross waits to raise his hat to Wilde: waiting is sweeter than the gesture, and so Wilde will leave Ross waiting, never repaying the debt.

I should break here, make a pause, to explain why I bring Wilde into the study of Michael Field: their literary friendship is not often considered significant. I invoke Wilde as more than a literary parallel (and *less* than a literary sponsor) to Field: my rationale is that they shared key moments in which they gave up their literature to public opinion. I am most interested in a particular evening that Wilde actually spent with Bradley and Cooper—an occasion in which the women were crushed between their belief that they were above the tastes of the age and their painful desire for appreciation by that age. When most of their other friends abandoned them, it was Wilde who booked a whole box for the disastrous 1893 debut of their play *A Question of Memory*.²⁸ It is a deeply parenthetical moment for Wilde, a time of looking forward and reflecting back, because he attended the single show the day before finishing his own play *Salome*, and he was himself at that time a writer who had suffered two theatrical flops.²⁹ His constancy as a literary friend to Michael Field is therefore bracketed by the inconstancy of other audiences. I read his cheering on of the women and their play not as a palliative to but as a celebration of the inconstant: a delight in failure and the abandonment of the orthodox sequence. His letters about the script and preparations for the production of *A Question of Memory* display a grand enthusiasm that is entirely careless of the play's reception. All prior to the play is anticipation: he gives extravagant

advice about hiring only young actors, using tapestry as a backdrop, having the stage strewn with rushes, and, “if you can manage it,” using gilded masks. His advice centers on maximizing what he calls the “possibilities of poetry and passion” (572). These possibilities, the letter implies, derive from not pandering to the tastes of the age and audience but from leaving the play’s success to the future in, he writes, “the hands of God and the poet” (572). This spirit of aesthetic recklessness continues even after the play fails. In their journal Cooper describes feeling like walking to the British Museum and climbing into a sarcophagus—“waking to find every morning paper against us,” the women write, “it seems more natural to be dead.”³⁰ They revive, however, through going both backward and forward in time. They move forward through Wilde’s assurances that after death their time will come, and they go backward by *going back* to their play and identifying with its hero. Like him, they write, “though everything is against us, we are strong.”³¹ Once again, the world and contemporary opinion being against them, twinned practices of looking forward and backward generate a sense of themselves as capable of achieving an immortality in which the “possibilities of poetry and passion” are not only uncompromised but have been developed eccentrically and ex-chronologically beyond the limits of age and era.

Michael Field was not, however, Oscar Wilde, and it is important for me to acknowledge the points at which reading them alongside each other falters, especially when the key terms for my study are those of time, futurity, and immortality. Am I using Wilde, notorious for his homosexuality, to make legible the obscurities of Field? Is the gay man necessary for the disclosure of the lesbian? In their own lifetimes, Bradley and Cooper both enjoyed and suffered from male literary sponsorship. When Field was first published, their work was met with huge acclaim. One of their main champions, Robert Browning, subsequently let the cat out of the bag that they were two women. Their reputation plummeted and never recovered. Field criticism has debated whether it was the revelation of their gender or their dualness that was, to quote an early biographer, “obscurely repellant” to the literary world.³² Another explanation, one that echoes certain stresses in contemporary queer theory, is that the problem was that they were not a gay man. This may seem a perverse argument, given that the prosecution of Wilde dealt a brutal blow to his literary fate. But legal sentencing is not the same as literary sentencing, and there was undoubted dismay among the nineteenth-century literati that Field was not a lovely young lad. Marc-André Raffalovich, author of *Uranisme et Unisexualité* (1896), expressed this dismay in a letter to Field: “He thought he was writing to a boy—a young man” and had been distressed to learn “on the best authority that it is not so.”³³ My point is not that there was friction between gay

men and Field—on the contrary, Bradley and Cooper situated themselves firmly within a gay male coterie, and understanding their work requires attention to the power of their cross-gendering and their lively and active participation in a male, largely gay, community of writers and readers.³⁴ But even as we attend to that texture of their lives and career, we must question how these women were reduced to something of a lesbian addendum to queer nineteenth-century literary circles and how the lesbian forms an addendum or, as Freeman calls it, a “big drag” in current queer criticism.³⁵

If I see Michael Field as an occasion to reopen the question of the relationship of lesbian to queer, this reopening is strongly allied to the question of the models through which we theorize alliance. Much scholarly work on late-nineteenth-century queer writers focuses on their efforts to reach back through history to find queer lineages. The nineteenth-century turn to Shakespeare, the Renaissance, or Greek culture is by now well documented. But reaching back is not the only temporal undertaking in late-Victorian queer literature. Poetic figurations of futurity bear proleptic or metaleptic characteristics that might challenge us to rework Butler’s “historical reflections and futural imaginings” as something like “historical imaginings and futural reflections.”³⁶ To feel my way around this idea, I want to turn to a Field poem that announces itself as “that which comes before”—it is a poem that is untitled in its first edition, but titled “Prologue” in subsequent editions and stands as the preface to their 1893 collection *Underneath the Bough: A Book of Verses*.³⁷ It opens:

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 (79)

The tone is defiantly playful—they will “laugh and dream” on Lethe’s shore, rather than forget, and they will counsel timid souls, “Of judgment never to take heed.” We should instead find fellowship with those who have drunk deep of sensual and artistic pleasures. Immortality will be gained through this fellowship. The poem ends: “Continually / With them to dwell. / Indifferent to heaven and hell.” Critics have dwelt on the formulation “Poets and Lovers” to open out the relation of the poetic to lesbian identity and to connect both to Field’s vow of separation from the world at large. I am interested in the term that has fallen to the

critical wayside: “evermore” and the powerful echo it finds in the word “continually” that gets its own line at the end of the poem. This is not to claim that the temporal reading of the poem trumps the work that focuses on the poem’s formulation “poets and lovers.” On the contrary: Chris White, Virginia Blain, Yopie Prins, and others have shown that this poem dramatizes Bradley and Cooper’s strong sense of themselves as married, a notable reiteration across Field’s work.³⁸ Most remarkably, they smugly asserted that they were “closer married” than Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning—an audacious claim, given that the Brownings scored a perfect ten for romantic marriage from most Victorians.³⁹ But Bradley and Cooper knocked points off because the couple did not write together. If Bradley and Cooper were concerned to distinguish between kinds of marriage, I see this poem as also distinguishing between *times* of marriage. In their journals, Bradley and Cooper regularly attack heterosexual marriage and marriage rituals as evacuated and—notably—antiquated. After one ordeal of being guests at a wedding, they describe the scene:

The sisters make their posies quiver behind the Bride—she stands like a willing victim, but a victim to the first Great Illusion. I feel as if I am assisting at some rite of an old world. The Illusion is strong as the Earth, but the worship paid to it must have new forms or new freedom if it is to be living as the power it celebrates. Then comes all the deformation of love by cake, champagnes, stupid hopes, emphasis of the new condition—Ugh!⁴⁰

They have only one word of praise and—bless them—it is for the cook: “But the cake,” they write, after eviscerating everything else, “is excellent” (76r).

Newness and oldness focus the women’s disgust: they make it clear that champagne and “stupid hopes” may prance around in the language of “new conditions” but do so while excluding truly “new forms or new freedom.” This description occurs in their journals immediately preceding a copy of the “It was deep April” prologue poem. The contempt they feel for the wedding turns into poetic expression of satisfaction in their own superior unity. The journal passage, in Cooper’s hand, continues: “My love & I go to the Station that I may see her off to Dover. We swear with the bright world round us, that we will remain Poets & Lovers whatever may happen.” This poem that so celebrates their literary and erotic collaboration springs from the words of their vow and across the separation incurred by travel as if it were a Sapphic fragment, and from that vow Bradley writes the rest of the poem on the train to Dover.

The material conditions of the poem’s production have not attracted any crit-

ical attention, but it seems to me that the poem bears the traces of both the motion and the discursive signification of the train upon which it was written. Transport is not merely a theme in this poem but is troped through how the Fields transfer themselves between the ancient and the modern: singing happens in Charon's boat, just as poem making is happening on the train. The poets write "It was deep April" to urge their readers that they must "speed" to the company of those who embrace the arts and illumination of Apollo. This is a poem with ancient, mythological referents but a thoroughly contemporary steam engine beneath its hood. It is also a poem that comforts those buffeted by the world's capacity to bless or condemn. If it is composed by Bradley and Cooper in response to and in the wake of the assaults they felt at the wedding, it casts them as poets who must "hearten" other souls made timid by the world's "judgment." And a train is a fittingly heterotopic location for such sentiment.⁴¹ In a train they are simultaneously "set apart" from the world, but are still in a social space.

In a poem called simply "The Poet," Field writes of the poet as an atemporal projection:

He is a plan, a work of some strange passion
Life has conceived apart from Time's harsh drill,
A thing it hides and cherishes to fashion

At odd bright moments to its secret will:
Holy and foolish, ever set apart,
He waits the leisure of his god's free heart.⁴²

If the poet is set "apart" from time and life as Field insists twice in the above lines, the poet is also destined to enjoy quite the luxurious afterlife. In the sonnet "From Baudelaire," which they translate from Baudelaire's "La Mort des Amants," the poets reanimate a perfumed scene of leave taking in which the deathbed and the lovers' couch are melded. If in "The Poet" strangeness attended the *entry* of the poet into the world—the poet figured as the progeny "conceived" of "strange passion"—in this poem Field imagines poets *parting* from the world memorialized by "strange blooms":

There shall be beds full of light odours blent,
Divans, great couches, deep, profound as tombs,
And, grown for us, in light magnificent,
Over the flower-stand there shall droop strange blooms.

Careful of their last flame declining,
 As two vast torches our two hearts shall flare,
 And our two spirits in their double shining
 Reflect the double lights enchanted there.

One night—a night of mystic blue, of rose,
 A look will pass supreme from me, from you,
 Like a long sob, laden with long adieux.

And, later on, an angel will unclose
 The door, and, entering joyously, re-light
 The tarnished mirrors and the flames blown to the night.⁴³

As with the pause in lyric 34, this sonnet enacts hiatus, turns on a lacuna that destroys the completeness of a sentence. This lacuna occurs in the sestet (broken at the fourth line) and the “one night” with the look that marks “supreme passing.” The “later on” marks missing time, missing action, missing poets. It is the pause, however, that refreshes. The angel-cum-housemaid who enters at the end of the poem renovates the scene and prepares for fame, much as Field has done by rewriting Baudelaire’s poem. Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin reminds us, was a poet who wanted to be read like a classical poet: “He experienced the ancient claim to immortality,” Benjamin writes, “as his claim to being read as an ancient writer some day. ‘That all *modernism* is worthy of becoming antiquity some day’—to him that defined the artistic mission generally.”⁴⁴ Field’s attraction to and dramatization of that temporal criss-crossing inserts the hiatus, the gap in which the two poets, two lovers, two hearts, two spirits come together in one night that seems to contain both their bliss and their legacy.

Figurations of futurity and time passing are tropes that not only infuse Field’s poetry but also saturate the only prose essays they published. In the three years between 1887 and 1890, Field published three short prose pieces in the *Contemporary Review* that each meditate on the passing of time and the possibility of immortality. The first, called “An Old Couple,” imagines that Adam and Eve never died but lived on and “kept pace with the world,” observing, “as the ages passed on” the Middle Ages (the literature of which they find tedious), the slave-trade, the French revolution, and other world events. The essay comes to rest on their dismay at the contemporary European malaise of narcissistic melancholy.⁴⁵ Their remedy for the last affliction: memories. Eve and her interlocutor lament the fate of those who have “lost the secret of living over again their happy days,

or . . . care nothing at all about the past” and recommend a cure to this fin de siècle—style malaise: “The secret of hoarding the hours” (*OC*, 224).

The second essay, “Mid-Age,” opens with an epigraph from Edward FitzGerald’s 1859 (very free) translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*: “The Bird of Time has but a little way / To Flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.”⁴⁶ The note struck by this epigraph forms a carpe diem motif. The preceding lines of FitzGerald’s *Rubáiyát* (not quoted by Field) exhort the listener to cast off the season of death and regret and embrace the sensuous renewals of spring. “Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring / Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling.”⁴⁷ This celebration of the vernal is remarkably like Field’s own “It was deep April, and the morn / Shakespeare was born”; both poems emphasize spring as a time of vigor generated by shaking off worldly cares. And the Field essay prefaced by FitzGerald’s quote itself repeatedly figures loss as a necessary condition for gain and an opportunity to escape the trammels of era and persona: “Whosoever will gain his life,” Field quotes and amends from the Gospels, “even the life of his youth, must lose it; some freedom from the bondage of personality must be claimed” (“M-A,” 431–32). Like Sappho, who must *pause* before she hears the pleasing effects of her song, Field praises the necessary *pause* between the story and the telling, or the living and the reflecting, in a couple of gnomic, enigmatic sentences: “There must be ‘a little while’ between. We cannot possess what we experience” (“M-A,” 432). Their point is that delay, or acts of remembering and reflection, produces insight that commentary synchronous with experience cannot.

That remembering produces stronger resonances than experiencing the here and now is celebrated throughout Field’s poetry: “How larger is remembrance than desire! / How deeper than all longing is regret!”⁴⁸ Remembering—or regretting—puts one at odds with time, and that sense of being out of sync is itself a powerful erotics, one that Bradley and Cooper pursue throughout their work. They repeatedly describe temporal dislocation that derives not only from the feeling of being out of step with their era but also from their awareness that their own incestuous partnership was built across familial sameness and generational difference. In a poem called “Youth and Age,” unusual in the Field oeuvre for being written from the perspective of just one poet who is contemplating the other, the older lover describes looking at the younger and celebrates being able “to see and smell the rose of my own youth / In thee.”⁴⁹ The poem is framed by a description of how Zeus “first peopled earth” with “children of one birth,” a same-aged population without elders, without youngsters, and thus without vitality: “So lay / On life a pall” (*YA*, 48). Zeus realizes that “Man by change must be beguiled”

and resolves to provide “Generation’s difference.” The poem breaks the narrative frame, addressing the beloved, to explain the moral of the myth:

Dear, is not the story’s truth
 Most manifest?
 Had our loves been twinned, forsooth,
 We had never had one heart:
 By time set a space apart,
 We are bound by such close ties
 None can tell of either breast
 The native sigh
 Who try
 To learn with whom the Muse is guest. (YA, 48–49)

Zeus, we should remember, solves the problem of dull synchronicity not only by resolving to produce generational difference in humankind but also by marrying his sister. The incestuousness of Bradley and Cooper’s relationship makes them mythological—by attaching themselves to each other across propriety and generation, they attach to an age that is other to the nineteenth century.

While being of the same time forecloses pleasure, being “by time set a space apart” yields the erotic pleasure of crossing generations. *Being there at the time*, I am arguing, holds little allure for Field. It might be countered that it holds much allure for them, that their regret is regret that they are not of an era with Sappho or Shakespeare. The value they place on being at a distance is, this reading would conclude, sour grapes. Forced to devise some benefits of living at the end of a cantankerous and unappreciative century, they pretend it gives them perspective. A good reading, it would seem to me, can allow for desire to pull in different directions—they simultaneously long for ancient Greece *and* desire modernity. “Mid-Age” modulates into a strikingly eccentric rhetorical question: “Why, indeed,” they ask, “should looking forward be synonymous with anticipation, and looking backward with regret? Prehistoric vision, one would fancy, cannot fail to be more nebulous than memory, life’s gendered dream” (“M-A,” 432).

This is no simple exhortation to remember the past. Here, the past is put into creative dialogue with present and future—each shaping the other—memory creating (“gendering”) life and the dream of life creating memory. In what might be called a poetics of metalepsis and prolepsis, Field’s petition that “looking back” can be an “anticipatory” gesture is demonstrated by their poetry, which throughout all its incarnations (they move through pagan, psychic, and Catholic

periods) insistently tropes both historic era and poetry as media for transcending the banality of the contemporary world into the future. The poet and the queer subject stand in the interval following the nineteenth century, between generative, gendering ages—as Bradley and Cooper put it, they are in “Mid-Age,” “full of marvelous hope.” That the sequence of essays on age culminates in “The Lumber Room,” a room clearly modeled on Bradley and Cooper’s shared family home, returns me to the incest problematic.

If the temporal character of Field’s passion—devotion to futurity and immortality—has been overlooked, the other character of the women’s relationship that is notably avoided in Field criticism is its incestuousness. Why, if recent queer scholarship has worked hard to revise the “they were just good friends” narrative, showing that “they were lesbians who had sex *and wrote about it*,” has it proved more difficult to revise the story to “they were *aunt and niece* who had sex and wrote about it”? I am not accusing anyone of prudery or suppression—the blood kinship is not so much an unsaid as an unremarked, and my hunch is that this might have to do with the difficulty of theorizing queer—and specifically lesbian—temporal schemes. In *An Archive of Feelings*, in the chapter called “Does Incest Make You Queer?” Ann Cvetkovich opens up the said but unremarked relation between lesbianism and incest and in so doing builds a much-needed platform over the critical leeriness about analyzing that relation. What is more, she shows that questions of memory and futurity frame the problem. She points out that theorizing incest and queerness together has made scholars nervous in part because it threatened setbacks—regression or delay—to a certain kind of celebratory, hell-bent-on-progress queer politics: “The construction of positive gay identities,” she writes, “has often seemed to require their differentiation from other ‘perversions’ or ‘deviant’ sexual practices, or from psychiatric classifications of disease.”⁵⁰ Describing how the category of the lesbian has been the fall guy in literature on incest as sexual abuse, she shows that the terms of debate are all about remembering and returns: “In the fierce debates prompted by the recovered memory movement and its opponents in the false memory movement, there has been a certain amount of lesbian baiting” (91). Cvetkovich’s work specifically treats incest as sexual abuse, her start and end points being trauma theory and analysis of the lesbian’s role in therapeutic culture. It may therefore be incongruous to use her work to help theorize Bradley and Cooper’s consensually and apparently joyously incestuous relationship. But her project illuminates the inadequacies of talking about incest only by asking how to turn a bad past experience into a beneficial future or how to “leave incest behind” in terms of personal therapy and queer politics. Her insight that it is reductive to figure incest as a troubled past

tense of “healthy” queer presents and futures is useful because for Bradley and Cooper, incest is their future.

In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault describes the Greek emphasis upon what he calls “the strategy of timeliness,” the role of season and “the right time,” or *kairos*, in the “art of making use of the pleasures.”⁵¹ The observation helps Foucault make it clear that seeking general and universalizing principles of sexuality must give way to acknowledging the importance of moment, scale, and occasion in the deployment of sexual relations. This necessary historicizing must not, however, seek to “reconstitute the spirit” of an age.⁵² The passage on timeliness comes to a crux with the example of incest. Foucault writes:

The importance of the “right time” in sexual ethics appears rather clearly in a passage of the *Memorabilia* dealing with incest. Socrates states unequivocally that the precept that “parents shall not have sexual intercourse with their children nor children with their parents” constitutes a universal dictum, laid down by the gods.⁵³

Socrates explains that the offspring of incest never come to any good because “the parents failed to respect the principle of the ‘right time,’ mixing their seed unseasonably.” Foucault reemphasizes that the Socratic principle here is one of seasonableness. The injunction, he argues, does not differentiate incest over and above other kinds of temporal transgression: “Xenophon and Socrates do not say that incest is reprehensible only in the form of an ‘inopportune’ action; but it is remarkable that the evil of incest is manifested in the same way and with the same consequences as the lack of regard for the proper time” (59). Fucking your kith and kin, in other words, is fucking with time, and it fails to respect seasons. If critics have found it difficult to read Bradley and Cooper’s references to themselves as “poets and lovers” as incestuous, perhaps we can read the emphatic season marking in “It was deep April” as an embedded expression of the women’s consciousness of a relationship between their excess kinship and their sense that they were “improper to their time.”

“It was deep April and the morn that Shakespeare was born,” the poem continues. Field does not, however, invoke Shakespeare as a literary parent. When the women cite Shakespeare, they are citing a model of literary immortality (and of genius posthumously recognized), and they are also, curiously, citing themselves. They are not in pursuit of literary tutelage so much as tautology. One of their great failures, *In the Name of Time*, is titled for a line in Shakespeare’s *Winter’s Tale*. The line comes from the opening scene of act 4, made by “Time, the Chorus” who,

“in the name of Time,” skips the play forward many years. Time’s speech is Puckish in tone, winningly entreating the audience to

Impute it not a crime
To me or my swift passage, that I slide
O’er sixteen years and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
To o’erthrow law and in one self-born hour
To plant and o’erwhelm custom.⁵⁴

The play is about to show us Perdita, last seen as the unfortunate baby of Hermione, as a grown girl, but it strikes me that Field’s quotation of this passage is deeply self-referential. Bradley was herself sixteen years old when she first held her newly born niece. Shakespeare’s “sixteen years,” the “wide gap” that Time “slides o’er” becomes, through their citation, the age difference between them. Just as “Michael Field” personifies a plurality, Time is a *choric* voice, and both sneer at the unities of time and relish their power “to o’erthrow law and in one self-born hour / To plant and o’erwhelm custom.” Planting and o’erwhelming happen in the same hour. The passage is wracked with untimeliness. The question is to what law and what custom is it referring?

A plausible answer is “the law of exogamy.” I arrive at this answer in part by pushing a little harder on the *Winter’s Tale* citation. In *A Winter’s Tale* the character too weak to “o’erthrow law” and go against the king’s instructions, to dispatch the child Perdita to a certain death, is Antigonus. He is consequently punished through suffering an ignoble and infamous death at the (offstage) paw of an angry bear, but he is doubly ridiculed by bearing the masculine version of a name that stands for brave and noble feminine transgression of a king’s instructions: Antigone. Butler has recently explicated how the figure of Antigone stands against heterosexual exogamy as the founding rule of culture. The daughter of an incestuous bond, she lives and dies for the incestuous love of her brother. She defies patriarchal and monarchical law in order to honor her brother with the ritual of burial (twice) and—by hanging herself in the family tomb with her bridal veil—turns a plurality of dead family members into her bridegroom.⁵⁵ For Antigone and for Field “o’erthrowing the law” and “o’erwhelming custom” mean eschewing marriage and worldly edicts and instead keeping it in the family. Sappho can be happily understood as signifier of Bradley and Cooper’s lesbianism. But the figure of Antigone and incestuous structures of relation are integral to that lesbianism.



Figure 1. *Punch*,
February 26, 1876

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY AT GIRTON.

First Young Lady (opens Valentine, and reads):—

“Ἔρως ἀνίκαιε μάχαν,
Ἔρως, ὃς ἐν κτήμασι πίπτεις,” . . . &c., &c.

CHARMING, ISN'T IT? GUSSIE MUST HAVE SENT IT FROM OXFORD?”
Second Young Lady (overlooking). “YES, IT'S OUT OF THE *ANTIGONE*—THE LOVE-CHORUS,
YOU KNOW. HOW MUCH JOLLIER THAN THOSE SILLY ENGLISH VERSES FELLOWS USED TO
SEND!”

A Valentine's Day cartoon (fig. 1) appeared in *Punch* magazine in 1876, a year after Bradley had studied classics at the other women's college in Cambridge, Newnham. Prins has used this image to demonstrate that a taste for Greek in the late nineteenth century has a queer aspect.⁵⁶ Her essay is important because it carefully and definitively places women in the same tradition that links male homoerotics and Greek eros, and it queers the figure of the aunt, postulating a queer “tantulate” analogous to the queer “avunculate” articulated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.⁵⁷ Prins notes that the cartoon figures the unruly, lawless lesbian potential of cigarette-smoking women with more liking for Greek than the silly English verses of “fellows.” But additionally, the verse that so “charms” these arm-in-arm women is specifically from the *Antigone*—and thus incest is embedded in the scene. Passion between two women looks tautological or nontransformative, like a non-forward-looking iteration, but so does incest. These are not women who can be satisfied by fellows, English verses, or even the cigarettes that will leave them craving more.⁵⁸ Desire persists. When mythology is privileged over exogamy or progeny, the immortality of desire can result.

“Why, indeed,” Field asks, “should looking forward be synonymous with anticipation, and looking backward with regret? Prehistoric vision, one would fancy, cannot fail to be more nebulous than memory, life’s gendered dream.” Bradley and Cooper stress the creative effects of looking backward and forward and of locating their poetry in a parenthesis in time. They posit a dreamed-of immortality that can rewrite the unappreciative present and demonstrate that being at odds with one’s time—being ahead of this time, looking backward to past ages and imagining a future immortality—is a generative poetic stance that overwhelms a generational, hetero procreative model of time in which a transient past begets an inconsequential future.

Notes

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1. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 228, 223.
2. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), xii, 9.
3. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Post-modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 11. Hereafter cited as *GM* in the text.
4. Christopher Nealon, *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 96–97.
5. See Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
6. See Christine White, “‘Poets and Lovers Evermore’: Interpreting Female Love in the Poetry and Journals of Michael Field,” *Textual Practice* 4, no. 2 (1990): 197–212.
7. T. Sturge Moore and D. C. Moore, eds., *Works and Days* (London: John Murray, 1933), 20.
8. Ricketts to Sydney Cockerell, June 6, 1917, quoted in *Letters from Charles Ricketts to “Michael Field” (1903–1913)*, ed. J. G. Paul Delaney (Edinburgh: Tragara, 1981), 7.
9. Add. MS 46789, vol. 14 (1900), 180a. The Michael Field journals, which are held in the British Library, occupy twenty-six volumes and cover the years 1883–1914.

10. Michael Field, *Whym Chow: Flame of Love* (London: Eragny Press, 1914).
11. Heather Love, "'Spoiled Identity': Stephen Gordon's Loneliness and the Difficulties of Queer History," *GLQ* 7 (2001): 491.
12. Elizabeth Freeman, "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations," *New Literary History* 31 (2000): 728.
13. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 12.
14. Michael Field, *Long Ago* (Portland, ME: Thomas B. Mosher, 1897), ii.
15. See especially Edelman, *No Future*, 18–19.
16. Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 5.
17. Jonathan Goldberg, *Willa Cather and Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), xii.
18. Michel Foucault, "The Life of Infamous Men," trans. Paul Foss and Meaghan Morris, in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, ed. Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney: Feral, 1979), 76–91; quotation on 77.
19. Nealon, *Foundlings*, 47, 51.
20. Wai Chee Dimock, "A Theory of Resonance," *MLA* 112 (1997): 1060–71.
21. In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler similarly emphasizes change across time: matter is, she argues, materialization. Critiquing the determinist notion that constructivism is an act rather than an activity, she wants instead to "return to the notion of matter, not as a site or a surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter" (9, emphasis in the original).
22. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?" *PMLA* 110, no. 3 (1995): 343.
23. Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis, eds., *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Holt, 2000), 524.
24. Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 104. Hereafter cited as *DG*.
25. Holland and Hart-Davis, *Complete Letters*, 450.
26. Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 1954), 143. Hereafter cited as *DP*.
27. Michael Field, *Callirrhoe: Fair Rosamund* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1884), 121.
28. The one performance took place at the Independent Theatre in London, October 27, 1891.
29. See Holland and Hart-Davis, *Complete Letters*, 491.
30. Add. Ms. 46781, Vol 6 (1893), 87.
31. Emma Donoghue, *We Are Michael Field* (Bath, UK: Absolute, 1998), 82. *A Question of Memory* is the only Michael Field play that is set in the relatively recent past: the action takes place in Hungary at the time of the 1848 rising. The play satirizes

the desire of the hero's bimbo fiancée to "forget the past" because "the present is so much more interesting," and, she continues soppily, "I am getting just a wee bit interested in the future too, because of our wedding-day" (*A Question of Memory* [London: Mathews and Lane, 1893], 12). Since Bradley and Cooper subsequently wrote more than thirty-five plays, all set much further in the past than *Question*, it might be surmised that they regretted the folly of finding the present interesting.

32. Mary Sturgeon, *Michael Field* (London: Harrap, 1922), 29.
33. Moore and Moore, *Works and Days*, 6.
34. Ruth Vanita makes an important contribution to Field scholarship by emphasizing the importance of cross-gendering to Bradley and Cooper. She shows that they reached for literary lineages that were overwhelmingly male, and "the male pseudonym was," she argues, "not just a ruse to forestall male bias. It was also, like the age difference, part of the erotic charge between the two women" (*Sappho and the Virgin Mary* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1996], 119).
35. Freeman, *Packing History*, 728.
36. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 228.
37. Michael Field, *Underneath the Bough: A Book of Verses* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1893).
38. Christine White, "'Poets and Lovers Evermore': Interpreting Female Love in the Poetry and Journals of Michael Field," *Textual Practice* 4 (1990): 197–212; Virginia Blain, "'Michael Field, the Two-headed Nightingale': Lesbian Text as Palimpsest," *Women's History Review* 5, no. 2 (1996): 239–57; Yopie Prins, "A Metaphorical Field: Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper," *Victorian Poetry* 33, no. 1 (1995): 129–48.
39. Moore and Moore, *Works and Days*, 16.
40. Add. MS 46780, vol. 5 (1892), 76r.
41. I take the term from Michel Foucault's essay "Des espaces autres," the text of a lecture presented in 1967 and first published in 1984. Translated and reprinted as "Different Spaces," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: New Press, 1994), 175–85.
42. Ivor C. Treby, ed., *A Shorter Shirazad: One Hundred One Poems of Michael Field* (Suffolk: De Blackland, 1999), 78.
43. Published in Michael Field, *Wild Honey* (1908), lion.chadwyck.com.proxy.brynmawr.edu/searchFulltext.do?id=Z200374083&divLevel=2&queryId=../session/1165790133_10878&trailId=10ED402F443&area=Poetry&forward=textsFT&warn=Yes&size=2Kb.
44. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1983), 81.
45. Michael Field, "An Old Couple," *Contemporary Review*, February 1887, 222. Hereafter cited as *OC* in the text.
46. Michael Field, "Mid-Age," *Contemporary Review*, September 1889, 431. Hereafter cited as "M-A" in the text.

47. Edward FitzGerald, *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, ed. Christopher Decker (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 38.
48. Michael Field, "Ebbtide at Sundown," in *Wild Honey from Various Thyme* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1908), 115. In other manuscript versions this poem is alternatively titled "Low Tide at Sundown."
49. First published in *Contemporary Review* in December 1885, this poem was then included in the 1893 collection *Underneath the Bough*. Reprinted in *Music and Silence: The Gamut of Michael Field*, ed. Ivor C. Treby (Suffolk: De Blackland, 2000), 48–49. Hereafter cited as YA in the text.
50. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 89.
51. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, vol. 2 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 57.
52. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994), x.
53. Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 59.
54. William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, act 4, scene 1, lines 4–9. In *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 1585.
55. Freeman augments Butler's reading of Antigone with the suggestion that the play "allegorizes social melancholy, or a response to the process by which culture forecloses the possibility and even intelligibility of certain attachments as signs of the social" (*The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002], 37).
56. Yopie Prins, "Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters," in *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, ed. Richard Dellamora (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 43–81.
57. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Tales of the Avunculate: Queer Tutelage in *The Importance of Being Earnest*," in *Tendencies*, 52–72.
58. "A cigarette," says Lord Henry in *Dorian Gray*, "is the perfect type of a perfect pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want?" (Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*, 65).