

Michael Field's Revisionary Poetics by Jill R. Ehnenn. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2023. 288 pp. + 16 b & w illustrations. ISBN 9781474448390. \$120.00.

One Soul We Divided: A Critical Edition of the Diary of Michael Field edited by Carolyn Dever. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2024. 360 pp. ISBN 9780691208114. £84.00; \$99.95.

Like many readers of my generation, I owed my first encounter with “Michael Field” to the late Karl Beckson (1926–2008). His 1966 anthology, *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s*, was a required text in the undergraduate course on late-Victorian literature that I took in 1971, and it introduced me to their “A Dance of Death.” Already a fan of Oscar Wilde and a compulsive viewer of old Hollywood films shown on television, I had both marvelled at the play *Salome* and snickered at the 1953 Columbia Pictures screen version, with Rita Hayworth peeling off her seven veils to a ludicrously anachronistic orchestral score before converting to Christianity. Neither of these, however, prepared me for the outrageously inventive version of the Salome story contained in Beckson’s volume, with a willful artist-figure who danced atop a frozen river in an act of defiance (against Nature? against God? the answer was left open), then fell through, sending her decapitated head spinning uncontrollably across the ice. Wow.

I wondered about the poet who had conceived of such a spectacle. Beckson’s “Biographical Notes” told me little more than that “Michael Field” was the pseudonym adopted by two British women authors of verse and dramas: Katharine Bradley (1846–1914) and her niece, Edith Cooper (1862–1913), working collaboratively. Only years later did I learn, to my surprise, that they had been an incestuous couple who lived together for decades as lovers – romantically and erotically, as well as aesthetically, interlaced and inseparable – and considered themselves married to one another. It would be even longer before I opened *Works and Days*, the extracts from their diaries edited in 1933 by the poet Thomas Sturge Moore and his son, Daniel Charles Sturge Moore, which gave me at last a sense of their personalities and allowed me to enjoy their highly opinionated and strikingly phrased responses to the world around them. Eventually, with Mark Samuels Lasner, I would organize the first academic conference on Michael Field in 2004, at the University of Delaware – in large part, to keep acquiring more information from researchers on several continents who had been studying them.

Today, no one need wait as long as I did to receive even the most basic facts about “Michael Field.” They have been embraced and celebrated as queer women writers, and a considerable scholarly industry of criticism and interpretation has grown up around them. At the moment, moreover, Dartmouth College is hosting a community project to transcribe and digitize the