The Owl Was a Baker’s Daughter

by Gillian Cummings

“Gillian Cummings’s The Owl Was a Baker’s Daughter is a stunning collection of lyrics in which the littleness and almostness of girlhood is held close and wants the clean madness of God. There’s a healing here, or a hope for one, for the kind of forgetting that can let us escape ‘death’s ongoing everness.’ Inspired by Ophelia’s dialogue in Hamlet and numerous Buddhist sutras, these poems deftly navigate metamorphosing images, gloriously elastic syntax, and the terrible failures of prayer. Here, the ethereal moon-girls and liminal clouds remind us why, despite love’s erasures and heaven’s grief over us, we stay on this earth.”

—Traci Brimhall

In The Owl Was a Baker’s Daughter, Gillian Cummings gives voice to her version of Ophelia, a young woman shattered by unbearable losses, and questions what makes a mind unwind till the outcome is deemed a suicide. Ophelia’s story, spoken quietly, lyrically, in prose poems whose tone is unapologetically feminine, is bracketed by short, whittled-down once-sonnets featuring other Ophelias, nameless “she” and “you” characters who address the question of madness and its aftermath. These women and girls want to know, what is God when the soul is at its nadir of suffering, and how can one have faith when living with a mind that wants to destroy itself?

If it is true, as Joseph Campbell said, that “the psychotic drowns in the same waters in which the mystic swims with delight,” then Cummings strains the boundaries of this notion: “Is it the same? The desire to end a life / and the need to know how: a flower’s simple bliss?” Her women and girls, part “little heavenling” and part “small hellborn,” understand the emptiness of utmost despair and long for that other emptiness, which can be thought of as union with God, the death of the troublesome ego. Cummings’s poetic ancestors may be Dickinson and Plath and her source here Shakespeare, but more contemporary voices also echo in her poems, those of Lucie Brock-Broido, Larissa Szporluk, and Cynthia Cruz. Here, in The Owl Was a Baker’s Daughter, is what might happen if, after sealing off the doors and turning on the gas, indeed, after dying, a poet had come to embrace the holiness in how “all dissolves: one color, / one moon, all earth, red as love, red as living.”

Gillian Cummings is the author of My Dim Aviary, winner of the 2015 Hudson Prize, as well as the chapbooks Ophelia, Petals as an Offering in Darkness, and Spirits of the Humid Cloud. Her poems have appeared in Boulevard, the Cincinnati Review, Colorado Review, Denver Quarterly, the Laurel Review, the Massachusetts Review, Quarterly West, Verse Daily, and others. A graduate of Stony Brook University and of Sarah Lawrence College’s MFA program, she was awarded the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Memorial Fund Poetry Prize in 2008. Cummings lives in Westchester County, New York.

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Legend Tripping
A Contemporary Legend Casebook

edited by Lynne S. McNeill and Elizabeth Tucker

“[A] valuable tool in not only synthesizing the key debates and concepts surrounding legends and legend tripping but also breaking new ground and showing practical applications of theory and place in the creation of a genre within the study of legends.”

—Trevor J. Blank, State University of New York at Potsdam

Legend Tripping: A Contemporary Legend Casebook explores the practice of legend tripping, wherein individuals or groups travel to a site where a legend is thought to have taken place. Legend tripping is a common informal practice depicted in epics, stories, novels, and film throughout both contemporary and historical vernacular culture. In this collection, contributors show how legend trips can express humanity’s interest in the frontier between life and death and the fascination with the possibility of personal contact with the supernatural or spiritual.

The volume presents both insightful research and useful pedagogy, making this an invaluable resource in the classroom. Selected major articles on legend tripping, with introductory sections written by the editors, are followed by discussion questions and projects designed to inspire readers to engage critically with legend traditions and customs of legend tripping and to explore possible meanings and symbolics at work. Suggested projects incorporate digital technology as it appears both in legends and in modes of legend tripping.

Legend Tripping is appropriate for students, general readers, and folklorists alike. It is the first volume in the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research series, a set of casebooks providing thorough and up-to-date studies that showcase a variety of scholarly approaches to contemporary legends, along with variants of legend texts, discussion questions, and projects for students.

Lynne S. McNeill is assistant professor of English in the Folklore Program at Utah State University, cofounder of the Digital Folklore Project, author of Folklore Rules and coeditor of Slender Man Is Coming. Her research interests include legend, belief, fandom, and digital folklore.

Elizabeth Tucker is Distinguished Service Professor in the English Department at Binghamton University (SUNY), where she teaches folklore, children’s folklore, folklore of the supernatural, folklore and the mass media, and Native American folklore and literature.
Idolatry and the Construction of the Spanish Empire

by Mina García Soormally

“An informative and thought-provoking text that provides a deeper look into the theological machinations of Spain’s religious trajectory as carried out in the peninsula and the colonies. . . . The author takes transatlantic colonial scholarship further than many scholars have dared to go.”

—Marie-Theresa Hernandez, University of Houston

An ethnohistory on the spiritual and governmental conquest of the indigenous people in colonial Mexico, Idolatry and the Construction of the Spanish Empire examines the role played by the shifting concept of idolatry in the conquest of the Americas, as well as its relation to the subsequent construction of imperial power and hegemony.

Contrasting readings of evangelization plays and chronicles from the Indies and legislation and literature produced in Spain, author Mina García Soormally places theoretical analysis of state formation in Colonial Latin America within the historical context. The conquest of America was presented, in its first instances, as a virtual extension of the Reconquista, which had taken place in Spain since 711, during which Spaniards fought to build an empire based in part on religious discrimination. The fight against the “heathens” (Moors and Jews) provided the experience and mindset to practice the repression of the other, making Spain a cultural laboratory that was transported across the Atlantic Ocean.

Idolatry and the Construction of the Spanish Empire is a wide-ranging explication of religious orthodoxy and unorthodoxy during Spain’s medieval and early modern period as they relate to idolatry, with analysis of events that occurred on both sides of the Atlantic. The book contributes to the growing field of transatlantic studies and explores the redefinition that took place in Europe and in the colonies.

Mina García Soormally is associate professor of Spanish in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Elon University, where her research focuses on early modern Spanish theater and trans-Atlantic studies. She is the author of Magia, hechicería, y brujería: Entre La Celestina y Cervantes.
Often seen as geographically marginal and of limited research interest to archaeologists, the Jornada Mogollon region of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico deserves broader attention. Late Prehistoric Hunter-Gatherers and Farmers of the Jornada Mogollon presents the major issues being addressed in Jornada research and reveals the complex, dynamic nature of Jornada prehistory.

The Jornada branch of the Mogollon culture and its inhabitants played a significant economic, political, and social role at multiple scales. This volume draws together results from recent large-scale CRM work that has amassed among the largest data sets in the Southwest with up-to-date chronological, architectural, faunal, ceramic, obsidian sourcing, and other specialized studies. Chapters by some of the most active researchers in the area address topics that reach beyond the American Southwest, such as mobility, forager adaptations, the transition to farming, responses to environmental challenges, and patterns of social interaction.

Late Prehistoric Hunter-Gatherers and Farmers of the Jornada Mogollon is an up-to-date summary of the major developments in the region and their implications for Southwest archaeology in particular and anthropological archaeological research more generally.

Thomas R. Rocek is associate professor of Anthropology at the University of Delaware.
Nancy A. Kenmotsu is principal investigator at Versar, Inc.
Though the Neo-Assyrian Empire has largely been conceived of as the main actor in relations between its core and periphery, recent work on the empire’s peripheries has encouraged archaeologists and historians to consider dynamic models of interaction between Assyria and the polities surrounding it. Imperial Peripheries in the Neo-Assyrian Period focuses on the variability of imperial strategies and local responses to Assyrian power across time and space.

An international team of archaeologists and historians draws upon both new and existing evidence from excavations, surveys, texts, and material culture to highlight the strategies that the Neo-Assyrian Empire applied to manage its diverse and widespread empire as well as the mixed reception of those strategies by subjects close to and far from the center. Case studies from around the ancient Near East illustrate a remarkable variety of responses to Assyrian aggression, economic policies, and cultural influences. As a whole, the volume demonstrates both the destructive and constructive roles of empire, including unintended effects of imperialism on socioeconomic and cultural change.

Imperial Peripheries in the Neo-Assyrian Period aligns with the recent movement in imperial studies to replace global, top-down materialist models with theories of contingency, local agency, and bottom-up processes.

Craig W. Tyson is associate professor of religious studies at D’Youville College in Buffalo, New York. He is author of The Ammonites: Elites, Empires, and Sociopolitical Change (1000–500 BCE) and several articles on the history and culture of ancient Jordan.

Virginia R. Herrmann is a Junior Research Group Leader in the Institute for Ancient Near Eastern Studies at the University of Tübingen and co-director of the Chicago-Tübingen excavations at Zincirli, Turkey. She co-curated the 2014 Oriental Institute Museum exhibit In Remembrance of Me: Feasting with the Dead in the Ancient Middle East.
Re/Orienting Writing Studies
Queer Methods, Queer Projects
edited by William P. Banks, Matthew B. Cox, and Caroline Dadas

“This book will strongly poke at and rattle our thinking about writing studies and research, about what we are doing in writing classrooms, and about how, why, and where we write.”
—Martha Brenckle, University of Central Florida

“This book is needed in the field of writing studies. The contributors’ thinking about conceptual questions that go to the heart of our discipline—how have our epistemological positions toward writing and methods become normative in damaging ways—is illuminating, insightful, and educational.”
—Pamela Takayoshi, Kent State University

Re/Orienting Writing Studies is an exploration of the intersections among queer theory, rhetoric, and research methods in writing studies. Focusing careful theoretical attention on common research practices, this collection demonstrates how queer rhetorics of writing/composing, textual analysis, history, assessment, and embodiment/identity significantly alter both methods and methodologies in writing studies. The chapters represent a diverse set of research locations and experiences from which to articulate a new set of innovative research practices.

While the humanities have engaged queer theory extensively, research methods have often been hermeneutic or interpretive. At the same time, social science approaches in composition research have foregrounded inquiry on human participants but have often struggled to understand where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people fit into empirical research projects. Re/Orienting Writing Studies works at the intersections of humanities and social science methodologies in order to offer new insight into using queer methods for data collection and queer practices for framing research.

William P. Banks is director of the University Writing Program and the Tar River Writing Project and professor of rhetoric and writing at East Carolina University, where he teaches courses in writing, research, pedagogy, and young adult literature. He is coeditor of Reclaiming Accountability.

Matthew B. Cox is associate professor at East Carolina University, where he teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in rhetorical theory, cultural rhetorics, queer theory and rhetorics, and technical and professional writing.

Caroline Dadas is associate professor in the Department of Writing Studies at Montclair State University, where she teaches courses in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality major and the Professional and Public Writing minor.
Defining, Locating, and Addressing Bullying in the WPA Workplace

edited by Cristyn L. Elder and Bethany Davila

“This isn’t just a book for WPAs or composition teachers—this is a book for everyone who lives inside the discipline of Rhetoric and Writing studies. This collection opens an important conversation about the acts of aggression and everyday incivilities that too many of us have experienced, witnessed, or fought against in our roles as administrators, teachers, colleagues. By naming these acts as what they are—bullying, racism, sexism, classism, etc.—instead of writing them off as part of the job or as the product of institutional politics, the editors of this collection are asking us all to hold a mirror to our actions, and to the actions of others. This book goes onto the ‘use every day’ shelf of my bookcase.”

—Malea Powell, Michigan State University

Defining, Locating, and Addressing Bullying in the WPA Workplace is the first volume to take up the issue of bullying in writing programs. Contributors to this collection share their personal stories and analyze varieties of collegial malevolence they have experienced as WPAs with consequences in emotional, mental, and physical health and in personal and institutional economies.

Contributors of varying status in different types of programs across many kinds of institutions describe various forms of bullying, including microaggressions, incivility, mobbing, and emotional abuse. They define bullying as institutional racism, “academic systemic incivility,” a crisis of insularity, and faculty fundamentalism. They locate bullying in institutional contexts, including research institutions, small liberal arts colleges, community colleges, and writing programs and writing centers. These locations are used as points of departure to further theorize bullying and to provide clear advice about agentive responses.

Cristyn L. Elder is assistant professor of rhetoric and writing and cofounder of the Stretch and Studio Composition program at the University of New Mexico, for which she was cowinner of the 2016 Award for Innovation from the Council on Basic Writing. She received the 2015–2016 award for Outstanding New Teacher of the Year at the University of New Mexico. She received the 2015–2016 award for Outstanding New Teacher of the Year and the 2015 Golden Louie Award for Outstanding Faculty Student Service Provider, both at the University of New Mexico.

Bethany Davila is assistant professor of rhetoric and writing and cofounder of the Stretch and Studio Composition program at the University of New Mexico, for which she was cowinner of the 2016 Award for Innovation from the Council on Basic Writing. She received the 2013–2014 award for Outstanding New Teacher of the Year at the University of New Mexico, the Best New Scholar Award in 2012 from Written Communication, and the Diment Best Dissertation Award in 2011 from the University of Michigan School of Education.
The Colorado State Capitol
History, Politics, Preservation
by Derek R. Everett

"Derek Everett captures the essence of the Colorado state capitol’s history. As a Colorado native, former Capitol tour guide, and current doctoral student at the University of Arkansas, Everett brings his entire being to the study. . . . Expect to be engrossed."
—Journal of the West

"Everett’s thorough research, his succinct and flowing chronology, and his obvious fondness for this building combine to make an informative and entertaining read."
—Western Historical Quarterly

"...Derek Everett...makes the case that the Capitol symbolizes Colorado in a way that nothing else can, and points out that just about every significant protest in state history occurred on the Capitol grounds. Furthermore, deceased leaders lie in state there; U.S. Presidents have spoken there; and of course, the legislature meets there, upstairs from the governor’s office."
—Colorado Central Magazine

"The book is an outstanding piece of historical research and writing. The history of this key state building is in many ways a history of the whole state. The narrative covers many episodes of general interest, such as conflicts among early settlements, the colorful career of Henry Cordes Brown, the rise of the KKK, political and social impacts of the Progressive Era and Great Depression, numerous political high-jinks and scandals at top levels over time, and the consequences of the protest movements and terrorist threats of recent times."
—Colorado Central Magazine

As the representative building of the state, the Capitol has served as a silent witness to the evolving needs and interests of all Colorado citizens. The statehouse provided a proud testament for nineteenth-century Coloradoans who wanted to prove their state’s potential through grand architecture and it represents “the heart of Colorado” to this day.

In one comprehensive volume historian Derek R. Everett traces the establishment, planning, construction, and history of Colorado’s state capitol—including a discussion on the importance of restoring and preserving the building for current and future generations of Coloradoans.

Derek R. Everett is an instructor at Colorado State University, specializing in Colorado and Western history with an emphasis on geography and politics. He also volunteers at the statehouse as a tour guide and researcher.
Making the White Man’s West
Whiteness and the Creation of the American West

by Jason E. Pierce

“A new look at how whites came to control the political and social milieu of the West. . . . Pierce’s study of the construction of the white man’s West is an important contribution to the scholarship, critically examining the view of a white utopia in the midst of a great diversity of peoples.”

—Pacific Northwest Quarterly

“[A] concise, readable, and trenchant cultural history of how the U.S. West came to be imagined as a ‘white man’s’ country. . . . a compelling book about the construction of a distinctively western version of white supremacy that continues to mold the region’s identity in the twenty-first century.”

—Western Historical Quarterly

The West, especially the Intermountain states, ranks among the whitest places in America, but this fact obscures the more complicated history of racial diversity in the region. In Making the White Man’s West, author Jason E. Pierce argues that since the time of the Louisiana Purchase, the American West has been a racially contested space. Using a nuanced theory of historical “whiteness,” he examines why and how Anglo-Americans dominated the region for a 120-year period.

In the early nineteenth century, critics like Zebulon Pike and Washington Irving viewed the West as a “dumping ground” for free blacks and Native Americans, a place where they could be segregated from the white communities east of the Mississippi River. But as immigrant populations and industrialization took hold in the East, white Americans began to view the West as a “refuge for real whites.” The West had the most diverse population in the nation with substantial numbers of American Indians, Hispanics, and Asians, but Anglo-Americans could control these mostly disenfranchised peoples and enjoy the privileges of power while celebrating their presence as providing a unique regional character. From this came the belief in a White Man’s West, a place ideally suited for “real” Americans in the face of changing world.

The first comprehensive study to examine the construction of white racial identity in the West, Making the White Man’s West shows how these two visions of the West—as a racially diverse holding cell and a white refuge—shaped the history of the region and influenced a variety of contemporary social issues in the West today.

JASON E. PIERCE is associate professor of history at Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas.