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Myths of Transformation: Realities of Change

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SINCE JANUARY 1998, I HAVE BEEN THE graduate dean of arts and sciences at a research university, New York University. As I have thought about graduate education, I have had to place it in the context of the research university and the research university in the context of postsecondary (or higher) education as a whole. As a result, my paper consists of two parts, the first my description of some of the changes that are affecting postsecondary education. Although my focus is the United States, I hope that my remarks will have some relevance to educators and researchers outside the United States. The second part is my response to these changes, a call to the research university to embody and animate a set of survivalist values.

[I]

On a spring day in 1999, I picked up a free copy of the New York University student newspaper, *Washington Square News*. A Doug Letterman was reporting on a conference at the College of Arts and Science. Its subject? Nothing. Buffy Oakland, the vice president for Student Oversight, suggested that the college might be creating "a new specialized nothing studies program in nothing." NYU spokesman Johan Beeckman said, "NYU has made a phenomenal transition in the past few years to become one of the nation's most prestigious research institutions for the study of nothing." The story concluded, "Whether or not the new program is formed, it is clear that NYU has caught the new wave in academic research—nothing" (Letterman).

Not surprisingly, this trifle was a feature in an April Fool's issue. Jokes, though, make points. On a local scale, this joke is deploying popular culture (a reporter named Letterman) to chide NYU, my home institution, and its custom of talking about our transformations as a research university. On a larger scale, the joke is tweaking academic pomposity, faddishness, and inflated sense of self-worth. On both scales, the suggestion is that universities are a jumbo combo of self-aggrandizement and actual insignificance. "Nothing," as King Lear warns in a radically different context, "can come of nothing" (1.1.92).

Paradoxically, the joke is also paying a sinister compliment to its butt and suggesting that this jumbo combination is big enough and ubiquitous enough to be satirized. Like many other modern phenomena (e.g., photography), the research university is so big and ubiquitous that we tend to forget how young it is. Yale University did not award the first doctor of philosophy degree in the United States until 1861; New York University did not award the second until 1866. It was only in the nineteenth century that the two dominant, overlapping models of the American research university emerged: that of the great land-grant universities, which the United States Congress founded in 1862 with the Morrill Act and which stressed serviceable knowledge, and that of the new German university, which lauded advanced learning and the seminar, laboratory research, and scholarly monograph as tools and proof of learning. Between 1815 and 1918, over ten thousand Americans studied at these German institutions, at least half of them at the University of Berlin, itself founded only in 1810. Several returned from their international studies to become presidential architects of twentieth-century American higher education and formidable patriarchs: Charles W. Eliot, of Harvard; Daniel Coit Gilman, of Johns Hopkins (founded in 1876); An-

drew D. White, of Cornell; James D. Angell, of Michigan; G. Stanley Hall, of Clark; Nicholas Murray Butler, of Columbia; Benjamin Ide Wheeler, of California.

These names are literally carved into the stones of the American research university. In turn, these institutions have matured to become sites of genuinely great achievement and national value, centers of information in an information age. They have grown in sheer institutional size. In 1944, the year Butler left the presidency of Columbia, its operating budget was \$11 million. Fifty years later, in 1993–94, it was \$1.1 billion. The research universities have grown in terms of external resources, which have helped swell budgets. In 1930, research universities received \$22 million of federal support; in 1960, \$405 million; in 1998, \$13.5 billion. They have grown in terms of the number of students they educate. If the 125 research universities today represent but 3% of all institutions of higher education, they award 32% of the baccalaureate degrees. Of the people who received science and engineering doctorates from 1991 to 1995, 56% had taken their baccalaureates in research universities.

The expansion of the research university has been part of a pattern of growth for American higher education as a whole. Over 50% of all colleges and universities in the United States today were created after World War II, perhaps most remarkably the community colleges. Quickly, these institutions have become both highly differentiated and stratified (Calhoun). One of the difficulties that PhD-granting institutions have created for their graduate students is their shortsighted refusal to prepare them respectfully and effectively for such a wide variety of academic employers. The research universities coexist with comprehensive universities, professional schools, state colleges, elite liberal arts colleges, religious colleges, community colleges—in both public and private spheres. Each, no matter what its stratum, has its own very specific local, state, national, and often global ties.

Anyone who has ever witnessed a Big Ten athletic event knows about the bonds between a university and its home setting. This specificity increases the differentiation among institutions and, far more important, establishes an institution as uniquely valuable to a particular place, a source of economic and cultural well-being.

To be sure, not every American scholar has applauded the muscular evolution of the research university. Perhaps the most pungent mockery spurted out of William James and his March 1903 polemic "The Ph.D. Octopus." In spirit and often in substance, James's critique anticipates that of the educational reforms of the 1960s and women's studies. For James accuses the United States of becoming a credentialed society, preferring outward badges to inward value, slashing at substance while cultivating "vanity and sham" (1118), fetishizing "fantastic standards" (1117), and demeaning flesh-and-blood human beings. Moreover, as James urgently warns his readers, there is no guarantee that a person with a PhD can teach. "Notoriously," James writes, "his moral, social, and personal characteristics may utterly disqualify him for success in the classroom: and of these characteristics his doctor's examination is unable to take any account" (1114). In effect, James tacks up a blazing, bracing series of warning signs on the perimeter of his ideal university: "Rigidity and Fear of Creativity: Do Not Enter," "Title Worship: Keep Away," "Preferring the System to the Person: Do Not Even Think of Parking Here."

Today, even greater criticism from a wide hash of sources is being slung at the American research university—as it is being slung at most institutions. The title of a brilliantly provocative recent book is *The University in Ruins* (Readings), although this text is less criticism than elegy and postmortem and an invitation to moral reinvention. Even the titles of far more sober, far less radical essay collections are *The Research University in a Time of Discontent* (Cole, Barber, and Graubard) and *The American University: National Treasure or Endangered Species?* (Ehren-

berg). This bespattered institution is regularly charged not only with neglecting teaching (Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University) but also with exploiting its labor force, overproducing doctorates, and devaluing divisions of continuing education as cash cows rather than treating them as vital centers of lifelong learning. Potential employers are skeptical about the graduates they hire. To many of them, holders of the baccalaureate degree may seem unskilled as speakers, writers, problem solvers, and team players. Holders of advanced degrees may seem unable to think beyond narrow specialties, to be trapped within a box and thus to be cognitively and psychologically entombed. Having heard this criticism frequently, I have begun to ask how often current dissertation practices inadvertently discourage creativity as much as they encourage research.

Why now? Why this yammering and hammering now? Patricia Albjerg Graham suggests four reasons with her habitual incisiveness: the cost of education and research; faculty devotion to research rather than to teaching, to discipline rather than to institution; the university's activities at the forefront of social change; and the anti-intellectualism of American life. In addition, I suggest, the criticism marks at least two events. First, political actors in late-twentieth-century America are playing out their version of long-established efforts to control the university. These actors are performing on all points of the political spectrum. Though criticism has its validity, it has become a tactic for softening up and degrading the university so that political efforts appear to be rescue missions and makeovers rather than assaults and takeovers. From the perspective of the right, the university, especially the humanities, has lapsed from intellectual order and standards—to the detriment of the institution, students, and knowledge itself. Anti-abortion activists accuse the university of seeking federal funding to use human embryos for scientific research. From the perspective of the left, the university tortures animals in scientific

experiments, practices corrupt labor relations, and displays an erratic sense of social purpose. In April 1999, Gray Davis, a Democrat, elected governor of California in 1998, announced at a news conference that he would make community service a graduation requirement for students at the state's public universities and community colleges. University officials blurted that they had not been notified of this. Faculty members announced that since this was a curricular matter, they should have some say in it. In brief, a response to gubernatorial dictates was set in motion. The point is that it had to be.

Second, and what is often more oblique, the criticism is a symptom that United States institutions and the landscape they inhabit are changing. Like health care, higher education is caught in a feedback loop with dynamic processes. They are evolutionary processes, but they are sufficiently swift and intense, and we are sufficiently in thrall to hyped-up rhetoric, to compel some among us to call them revolutionary or transformative. Given the differentiation and stratification of higher education, not every change affects every institution in precisely the same way. Every institution, however, must do the loop-the-loop of history. Taken as a whole, the criticism of the research university signals two mutually incompatible fears that the university will do the loop-the-loop badly. On the one hand, it will move slowly, awkwardly, resentfully, resistingly, but on the other hand, it will move heedlessly, speedily, carelessly jettisoning tradition.

The new demographics of higher education have helped provoke these contradictory fears. The increasing diversity of America has been reflected since the 1960s in the composition of student bodies, faculties, and staffs. American higher education is internationalizing and democratizing Aristotle's great dictum "All men, by nature, desire to know" (243). This diversification has in turn stimulated the expansion and creation of academic fields and curricula that are an honorable hallmark of late-twentieth-century higher education. Obviously, the change is in-

complete. Diversity has not equaled equity, although the degree of inequity depends on what group one is measuring and in what field. In all fields, and for all groups, we are recognizing that resistance to diversity is deeply psychological as well as structural. Writing about gender, but in ways that are applicable to race, Virginia Valian suggests that we persist in clinging to ideas about gender that harm women. She argues that

a set of implicit, or nonconscious, hypotheses about sex differences plays a central role in shaping men's and women's professional lives. These hypotheses, [...] *gender schemas*, affect our expectations of men and women, our evaluations of their work, and their performance as professionals. Both men and women hold the same gender schemas and begin acquiring them in early childhood. [The schemas'] most important consequence for professional life is that men are constantly overrated, while women are underrated. (2)

The current academic focus on gender, race, sexual preference, and, increasingly, post-colonialism has often obscured another, consequential source of diversity: age. Significantly, students are older. Between 1980 and 1990 the enrollment of students under the age of twenty-five increased by 3%. The enrollment of students twenty-five and over rose by 34% (Hunt 8). As significantly, they will need education throughout their careers. Some predict that adult workers will need the equivalent of one year of college every seven years "to keep up with or change careers" (Tierney 6). The increasingly mature subjects of the narrative of education are incessantly educable. And they are more apt to prefer their own house to Animal House. Educational providers have outfitted themselves to meet this new demand. Some are in-house corporate educational divisions. Corporations now spend more on in-house training than is spent on all of public and private education (Chaffee 17). Some are nonprofit, distance-learning institutions, like the National Technological University. Others are for-profit institutions, like the

University of Phoenix or the DeVry Institute. To an extent that many faculty members have not yet grasped, higher education has competition as a "content provider" from the new, for-profit educational companies. These companies' ambitions are both national and international.

Ironically, demographic expansion is synchronous with financial constraints. My paranoia is too weak to permit me to believe that increasing diversity has led to decreasing resources, although perhaps it has in some places. What any reasonable person must realize is that most universities, like higher education in general, confront stringent limits on traditional sources of funding. The hotly breathing bull market of the 1990s, which has ballooned the endowments of the endowed, has helped mask how stringent these limits are. Jumps and leaps in tuition are increasingly unpalatable, unacceptable, unwise, unsellable. Moreover, the public sector, on state and federal levels, is more and more reluctant to pay higher education's bills—or indeed many of the bills that the public good totes up. The expenses of higher education are booming because of higher demands for student services; the need for extensive legal counsel; and increasing costs for books, journals, technology, and buildings and grounds. As a result, a startling, painful discrepancy exists between patterns of enrollment growth and financial support. Between 1945 and 1960 the annual average rate of enrollment growth was 5%. Between 1960 and 1975, it was 8%. It then flattened to an average of 1% to 2% during the 1980s, only to go upward again. However, since 1975, the financial support from the public sector has risen more slowly than enrollment, and in some places, since 1990, it has actually declined.

These disconnections among enrollment, public support, and costs will not end in the immediate future. Fortunately, the expansion and resources of the 1960s and 1970s underwrote new academic and curricular enterprises. To put it crudely, they got in just in time. Increased fiscal constraint has put pressure on research funding

in all areas except biomedicine (Brand). It has bred other consequences as well. Demands for guarantees that money is being well spent are more and more frequent. Various constituencies want tough choices to be made, priorities to be set, indexes of achievement, performance measures, accountability, assessment, proofs of "responsiveness" to students and society (Tierney). Requests for money must be stringently justified. Here, the professional schools of law, medicine, and business have the edge over other professional schools and the arts and sciences. Thus Nils Hasselmo, the president of the Association of American Universities, can ask for greater funding for research in NASA, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Energy by drawing on arguments, familiar since World War II, about the national utility of science:

The fundamental scientific research being done at NASA, NSF and the Department of Energy will lay the groundwork for America's economic competitiveness for generations to come. In addition, future advances in biomedical science depend upon continuing investments in the non-medical sciences, including molecular biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, engineering, and the social and behavioral sciences. Doubling the federal investment in scientific research is imperative to America's future quality of life, economic strength, health and welfare.

Yet scientists, too, must search ever more aggressively for funds. One source of financial and human capital lies in partnerships among the government, industry, and the research university. For example, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology between 1984 and 1999, private capital went from supporting 5% of research to nearly 25% (Goldberg). Promising and productive though these partnerships can be, they have their dangers. Jonathan Cole, the provost of Columbia University, has described several problems: the uncertainty of industrial support; the difficulties of balancing "investments in high economic payoff research against sustained effort in more basic and intellectually challenging

research"; the temptations of large economic gains for some faculty members; the possibility of training graduate students by putting them to work on potentially profitable rather than intellectually vital projects; and finally, the threat to "a commitment to open science" by relations with "both foreign and domestic businesses" that want proprietary rights to their scientific discoveries (31-32).¹

Fiscal constraints mean a contracted academic job market. This painful development is well documented: the shifts from full-time to part-time work and from tenure-track to contract or non-tenure-track jobs; the paucity of any jobs at all. The more precarious the job, the more apt it is to be held by a woman. Moreover, the further a job is from tenure, the less its holder can participate in faculty governance. Faculty governance is itself under strain. Obviously, political efforts to usurp it or to weaken shared governance are putting faculty governance through the wringer. In addition, faculties do not always handle financial constraints well. Faculties can either support or block change with some efficiency, but they are less skilled at contracting or cutting programs, often protecting their own trees while neglecting the forest as a whole.

The bad market has notoriously affected both individual careers and institutions, individuals more painfully than institutions. It has, however, forced the more conscientious research universities to examine scrupulously the size and operations of their graduate programs. Moreover, universities and private foundations such as the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation have augmented postdoctoral positions in the humanities for new PhDs.² Laudable and promising though this move is, it begs the question of whether the postdoctoral position will evolve into a more agreeable but nevertheless temporary non-tenure-track job.

In the twentieth century, the rise of tenure has been inseparable in the United States from that of the research university. Since 1900, 85% of colleges and universities have evolved some sort of

tenure. I expect comparatively few direct assaults on tenure, because they are time-consuming and expensive, but rather the nurturing of parallel systems of tenured and contract faculty within the same institution.³ Only the most elite and affluent institutions will retain a single system of tenured faculty. Consequently, higher education will become even more stratified in terms of faculty security and rewards.⁴ Both tenured and contract faculty will, no doubt, enter far more often into performance contracts with their departments or divisions or institutions as a whole. Simultaneous with the shrinkage of tenure will be the closing of some institutions, although exactly which will disappear I cannot predict. The survivors will form more partnerships, as Indiana University and Walden University have done. Their motives will be to avoid redundancies, to achieve economies of scale, and to enter new markets, particularly in adult and lifelong learning in the United States and globally.

Not surprisingly, these changes have fertilized the use of a market model for higher education and a market discourse. Dominick LaCapra, in his strong analysis of Bill Readings's *The University in Ruins*, writes, "In my own judgment, the contemporary academy is based on a systemic, schizoid division between a market model and a model of corporate solidarity and collegial responsibility" (32). The market model need not be wholly dominant. Nor must it be. It is, however, on one big roll, which will continue until large social and political developments more powerfully nurture a sense of the public good and of a shared civil society. So for now, higher education is increasingly a service industry. If one owns rising stock in a for-profit educational company, one is happy. (It is striking how many of the names of for-profit educational companies—Sylvan, for example, or Apollo—are ironically redolent of pastoral and classical modes. So is Amazon.com.) Administrators function like either corporate leaders or bureaucrats. Faculty members are either star entrepreneurs or contract workers. And students are, at

best, clients, but even more commonly customers and consumers. This model of the student as consumer—who will comparison shop and want value for money—is increasingly pervasive. Obviously, the rising age of students makes such terms as consumer or client more plausible than *pupil*, with its connotations of malleable youth and glowing immaturities.

This market model prizes new delivery systems. In part, they adapt assembly-line manufacturing techniques to teaching and learning. One team may design a syllabus, which will be standardized for a number of geographically disparate classrooms. Then another team of teachers will use the syllabus in a classroom. Interactive and team learning will supplement if not supplant the lecture. Then still another team will assess the class and the amount of learning that has taken place. In greater part, these new delivery systems are electronic technologies of learning—videos, satellite TV, teleconferencing, interactive software, and e-mail. In the autumn of 1998, I read an article in my hometown paper, the *New York Times*, with this heading: "A New Way to Read the Law at Home." The story reported that Kaplan Educational Centers, a Washington Post Company subsidiary, had opened the Concord University School of Law, "in which students will take all of their courses over the Internet." (Concord is yet another pastoral term.) For those of us who care about access to education, one potential strength of Concord U is that it seems designed for "people whose careers, family obligations or geographic locations make it hard for them to attend traditional law schools." Moreover, Concord is less expensive than other law schools. "The cost, \$4,200 a year for a four-year law degree program, will be far below the cost at most private universities and even less than at many public ones" (Arenson). This is to the good, but one must wonder skeptically about the human connections between teacher and students and among students. Will these classrooms be anything more than a tyrannical machine for punching out credits and credentials of ultimately uncertain worth?

The common denominator of these delivery systems is to "bring the university to the student, instead of requiring the student to go to the university" (Keith 171). The spatial relations and architecture of the university are inexorably altering. The delivery systems also promise a more flexible attitude toward the credential that is the reward of an academic course or program. People are simply going to need more, more varied, and more advanced educational credentials throughout their lives. As a result, the master's degree will be even more popular. Now more than 400,000 Americans receive master's degrees each year, but as recently as 1985, only 289,000 Americans in total had received a master's degree (Calhoun 8). The master's degree can no longer be dismissed as a mere pathway to the PhD or as a plaything. Rather, it may become as crucial to a career as a baccalaureate degree became after World War II. Simultaneously, the postbaccalaureate certificate, which attests to the gaining of some specialized knowledge or skill, is becoming far more common. It can be a route toward the master's, a companion to a graduate degree, or a free-standing achievement. Although the field of education now awards the plurality of certificates, they are flexible enough to appear in any disciplinary or interdisciplinary program. Because of the promising opportunities of certificates, for-profit companies, nonprofit organizations, and universities are competing and partnering with one another as delivery platforms. The winners, an experienced educator predicts, will be "those institutions that employ in their graduate certificate programs the technology base of distance learning, combining it with new educational models that establish learner competence at the center and a business model that can tap into the demand for certificates to enhance employability and productivity" (Irby 26).⁵

[II]

Which institutions will evolve rather than devolve in these surges and currents of history?

Those that have a clear mission, a sufficient financial foundation, and the ability to provide palpable service and benefits to important constituencies—be they the benefits of knowledge, status, economic well-being, credentials, happiness, or personal growth. The major research universities do meet these survival criteria. I do worry, however, about the values that must animate an institution's activities. Articulating these values is far more than performing a rhetorical exercise or dutifully providing some boilerplate for the catalog. For these values must appeal to professional conscience and to powerful audiences, including a wide range of potential funders and learners. They must distinguish the research university from the growing competition from even newer providers.

I have often wondered why a university's statement of values can be so boring—to people who write about universities, live in them, read about them, or pay for them. The fault is partly ours, for we fail to convey the passion for ideas that is a psychic force behind our work, our ardent devotion to what was once baldly called "the life of the mind," and the reasons why we selected this life.⁶ For many of us, especially in the humanities and service professions, the possibility of a fat paycheck was not among our motives when we chose our career. Paradoxically, we freely made this choice out of a deep compulsion and overwhelming desire to dwell with ideas. The beauty of mathematics drew some of us, the narratives and blanknesses of history others, the structure of the atom still others, the sharp beauty of a poem still others, a child's cognitive development still others, the meanings of an alien culture still others. No matter what our individual situation and temperament, we loved—yes, loved—the cauldrons of consciousness, the woks and grandeur of the intellect. Not surprisingly, some of the most eloquent expressions of a desire for learning have emanated from people relegated to the outer precincts, attics, and broom closets of the research university. Outsiders often have a more

open and profound appreciation of our values than insiders do. Such insider ennui and negligence are patently self-destructive.

What values should a research university forthrightly embody?⁷

The first is to continue to serve as the site of advanced inquiry and creativity, for the mind and imagination going at full tilt. We test ideas by their originality, which makes us feel surprised (not always by joy); by their magnitude, which should make us feel awe; and by their applicability, immediate or potential, and helpfulness, which should make us feel grateful.⁸

These propositions are, I believe, compatible with a much-cited sentence from Nan Keohane, the president of Duke University: "The modern research university is a company of scholars engaged in discovering and sharing knowledge, with a responsibility to see that such knowledge is used to improve the human condition" (155). Our degrees must represent not the mechanical completion of a checklist of courses, seminars, exams, and papers but the completion of one vital, fertile, restless encounter with ideas and knowledge. Obviously, because the degrees are research degrees, they signify mastery of a field, the well-honed capacity to understand and study an important area of natural or human life. Normally, academic disciplines define a field. However, even the most internally coherent and stable of fields are shifting, changing, and fluid. As a result, mastery of a field demands the ability to live with the instability of mastery and to recognize that established paradigms within fields change. Curiosity must accompany competency. For the mind is pluripotent, capable of encountering and generating many ideas.⁹ The more ideas a learner encounters, the less rigid the schema of the mind should become. Moreover, established borders among fields blur, shift, become reconfigured. Normally, interdisciplinary work—like that of women's studies—defines this process of productive blurring, shifting, and reconfiguration. Crucially, interdisciplinarity is far more than having disciplines

within the arts and sciences shake hands with one another. The handshake must go on between the arts and sciences and the professional schools as well—between biology and business, for example, or between literature and law.

The second value is teaching, teaching how to teach what we know and what we are discovering. In a good research university, teaching is not a command-and-control process in which professors pass information down to graduate students who, either as teaching assistants or, in the future, as faculty members, will pass it down to undergraduates. To be sure, such a chain of dissemination does exist. Justifying it is the belief, generally correct, that professors know more than graduate students, who in turn know more than undergraduates. However, we must supplement the pedagogy of dissemination, the passing down of knowledge, with the pedagogy of mentoring, the nurturing of the student's mind and career. The speech patterns of mentoring are those of conversation, not those of the lecture (or diatribe) with a grateful, trembling auditor.

Moreover, teachers should be able to connect with audiences outside as well as inside the research university. Every protected faculty member (whether tenured or on a long-term contract) should converse about ideas at least once a year with nonacademic groups that will energetically talk back. Nontenured faculty members should be rewarded for doing this. Graduate students should be taught to do it as well. If our ideas have vitality, they should circulate, no matter how gently, beyond academic institutions.

Third, a research university articulates and embodies an ethics of learning and teaching. Obviously, each field has a set of protocols that codify appropriate professional behavior within that field, but there should be an ethical code that all teachers and students must respect. My outline of this code should surprise no one. It insists on honesty, fairness, integrity, freedom of inquiry, and collegiality, that set of communal relationships between cronyism and friendship. Recently, the best codes have expanded to include

freedom from bullying, denigration, and racial and sexual harassment. Even the most brilliant among us should not exploit, use, and abuse colleagues and students.

This expansion of ethical codes both reflects and encourages the fourth value of a research university: the continued creation of a cosmopolitan meritocracy. In a meritocracy, what matters is the activity beneath the skull—not the pigmentation of the skin that covers the skull, not the ratios of Xs to Ys among the chromosomes, not the nationality of the hand that holds out a passport at the United States border. To be sure, William James taught W. E. B. Du Bois and Gertrude Stein at Harvard, both of whom praised him as a teacher, but James's Harvard was not a meritocracy. One of the most admirable features of the American research university during the twentieth century has been its efforts to dilute and eradicate its religious, racial, and gender prejudices. Because the claims that the United States is now color-blind are blind, these slow, laborious, gallant, morally necessary efforts to further the talents of all of us are still necessary.

If meritocracy encourages individual talent, cosmopolitanism then asks individuals to imagine themselves and act as citizens as well. We possess, at the very least, a dual citizenship, in a locality and in the world at large. As Martha Nussbaum writes, "Each of us dwells [. . .] in two communities—the local community of our birth, and the community of human argument and aspiration that 'is truly great and truly common.' It is the latter community that is, most fundamentally, the source of our moral and social obligations" (52). Surely, the research university must embody, exemplify, and sustain this second community. Doing so will help shape the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. First, it will include more general courses in history, the arts, and ethics. Why, I have asked, does my graduate school not have a cross-disciplinary seminar on the ethics of research? Next, the research university will prepare the ground for cosmopolitanism by exposing false, limited ideas about the other

and about others. After reading Valian, I concluded—in a spirit at once ludic and lugubriously aware of the difficulties of group dynamics—that research universities should institute "schematic workshops." Here, without the cheerleading and easy revelations of bad diversity-training seminars, people would excavate the debilitating schemata that keep in place their pictures of others, so close and yet so far from their self-images.

Fifth and finally, a research university should balance the human connections that have been the heart of traditional learning and teaching with the new technologies of information. If I am cybernetically challenged, I am no Luddite. However, I fear the emergence of the exclusively online classroom, especially if that classroom is conducted for profit by one of the proliferating corporate educational groups. Such classrooms can lack flesh, can lack blood, can lack spirit, do lack the stimulus and correctives of face-to-face encounters. We can imagine Socrates and his students or Sappho and her students or William James and his students communicating by e-mail without doing violence to our notion of their teaching. With a giggle or two, we can imagine a home page for Socrates, Sappho, or William James. However, we cannot imagine Socrates or Sappho or William James wholly online without doing violence to our notion of the soul-to-soul energies of their instruction.

A recent experience has exacerbated my anxiety. In the spring of 1998, the Library of America published two volumes of the writings of Gertrude Stein, which I coedited. The interest in Stein is due in part to the work of feminist critics and women's studies. To publicize these texts, I accepted an invitation from Compuserve to participate in some chat about Gertrude Stein on its *Literary Page* for a couple of months. There were fewer entries on the Gertrude Stein message board than my ego would have preferred, but the wounding of my ego is not the source of my mental perturbations. In praise of my online conversations about Stein, let me say that they were global in scope, replete with

voices that seemed genuinely interested in Stein and literature, and often informative. I learned something from a filmmaker who had shot some footage in an apartment Stein had shared with Alice B. Toklas in Paris. My chat room also represents one of the many alternate systems of learning that the electronic media is making possible. I think, for example, of the highly informative PBS Web site. However, these conversations were also bloated with shallow opinions and misinformation, and it was impossible to tell if knowledge was being deepened and if misinformation was being erased.

The experience reminded me of the need to distinguish among information, knowledge, and wisdom. Information is data, a trickle of data, a stream of data, an avalanche of data. Knowledge selects data for their integrity and then fits them together into significant, deep, broad patterns. In a book about the university, which is notable for its unfortunately too traditional combination of intellectual strength and silence about women, Jaroslav Pelikan argues that the business of the research university is knowledge, not wisdom.¹⁰ Wisdom does exist; it is understanding the why of things (35), which I take to mean the cause, place, proportionality, and consequence of things. Pelikan suggests that the research university may have wise people wandering about, but it cannot guarantee that it will as an institution provide wisdom. Obviously and happily, wisdom may be found in many places outside the research university—in a blues song, in a proverb, even in a scrap of text on a Web site. As obviously but unhappily, the university cannot guarantee that everything it does will be wise, or even, as my experience in women's studies has adamantly shown, knowledgeable. The cosmopolitan research university should, however, provide access to as many knowledgeable voices as possible and to as many sources of wisdom as possible. In brief, it should be at once a forum for conversations and a repository of past conversations, which together provide settings for the gaining of wisdom.

Because online classrooms promise comparatively cheap, convenient courses, I predict that they will infiltrate and be distributed from the research university more and more aggressively, at first in the professional schools and then in the arts and sciences. Soon we will have many more wholly online classrooms, with hybrid combinations of online and traditional classrooms and with wholly traditional classrooms. What will traditional education be seen to offer in this newly competitive environment? Why will it be desired? One reason will be our facilities. Another will be the nature of our communities, of which facilities are a material part. Our communities, however, will continue to exert their attraction only if they are financially accessible and if they offer the opportunity to learn with humane excellence.

I have suggested that we can achieve humane excellence in a research university if we serve the life of the mind and imagination rationally and passionately, if we learn and teach how to teach, if we practice an ethics of learning and teaching, if we create and sustain a cosmopolitan meritocracy, and if we deploy the new technologies of information in ways that neither romanticize them nor send us fleeing like scaredy-cats to the pencil shelf in Staples.

Is there a metaphor that might capture the something, the non-nothing of a principled research university? As James's metaphor of the octopus did his nightmare of a PhD? Let me offer this: the hub. The hub is the solid, central part of a wheel. So the research university can unite several spokes and sites of inquiry. In a contemporary extension of meaning, a hub is a center of airplane flights. So the research university should be a center of flights of inquiry and the imagination—in the human and natural worlds. Insistently, the hub airport is now a shopping mall as well, offering everything from apples to stuffed zebras, in addition to local delicacies (if it's Vidalia onions, it must be Atlanta). The research university can offer a mall of data, ideas, and voices instead of things. Some may fear that this

abundance will lead to a hubbub, a confusion, but if the task of the research university is knowledge, then its faculty and students can spin significant patterns from these ideas and voices. As it does so, like Edwin Powell Hubble (1889–1953) providing observational evidence that supports a theory of the expanding universe, the research university will generate observational evidence to support an expanding universe of knowledge.

However, let the university avoid hubris, the arrogant conviction that it is capable of omniscience. About 1862, the time of the Morrill Act, Emily Dickinson wrote a poem we know simply as number 568. She had been educated not at a German university but through books, letters, and conversation and at the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary of Mary Lyons. Poem 568, twelve lines long, is a compact narrative about two acts of learning: the first ends in the loss of primal knowledge, the second in the humanly mutual recognition of ignorance.

We learned the Whole of Love—
The Alphabet—the Words—
A Chapter—then the mighty Book—
Then—Revelation closed—

But in Each Other's eyes
An Ignorance beheld—
Diviner than the Childhood's—
And each to each, a Child—

Attempted to expound
What Neither—understood—
Alas, that Wisdom is so large—
And Truth—so manifold!¹¹

(434)

The modern research university is a post-revelation place. The attempts of the people who dwell there to expound have often been successful, wholesome, and good. Nevertheless, wisdom is still large, and thereby elusive, and truth is still manifold, and therefore without absolute manifests or manifestos. The handsome task of the research university is to serve as their volatile, fertile platform.

NOTES

A version of this paper was given at the Conference on the Future of Doctoral Education, sponsored by the Modern Language Association and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, 15 April 1999 and as the invited speech, Postsecondary Education Division, at the annual convention of the American Educational Research Association, 20 April 1999.

¹ The literature on science in the research university is huge, but several essays in Cole, Barber, and Graubard deal with the subject succinctly. For a less even-tempered current account, see Shenk.

² For the sake of full disclosure, let me say that I sit on the board of Woodrow Wilson and cochair its National Advisory Committee.

³ Kolodny has interesting ideas about the reform of the tenure process.

⁴ I defend tenure in my essay "Casting Our Lots with Change: The University and Its Covenants."

⁵ The language of this passage summarizes several of the developments in higher education that my paper has been outlining.

⁶ Graff has suggested that mission statements are boring because they conceal rather than reveal our arguments and disputations.

⁷ I adapt the following paragraphs from my essay "The Octopus and Excellence," to be published as an occasional paper by the Council on Graduate Schools.

⁸ I am grateful to Patricia Albjerg Graham for our conversations about the meaning of research.

⁹ A pluripotent stem cell can "form many body tissues" (Wade F2).

¹⁰ Pelikan is meditating about the relation of Cardinal John Henry Newman's idea of the university, another formidable nineteenth-century model of higher education, to the modern research university.

¹¹ Reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1951, 1955, 1979 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

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