

The Idea of a Twenty-First Century University: New World A-Coming

Douglas E. Oakman

For if we deem [corporative organization] indispensable it is not because of the services it might render the economy, but on account of the moral influence it could exercise. What we particularly see in the professional grouping is a moral force capable of curbing individual egoism, nurturing among workers a more invigorated feeling of their common solidarity, and preventing the law of the strongest from being applied too brutally in industrial and commercial relationships. —Emile Durkheim¹

Passion Flower: The Ecology of a University

Join me in your mind's eye. Imagine, as I do just now, a walk through an alpine meadow. The sun shines brightly against a crystal blue sky. All around stand snow-capped mountain peaks. Nature's multicolored carpet, strewn with flowers as though to welcome the gods, stretches before us, indeed all around us. Even in this exalted place, we see a landscape teeming with

life. Busy insects buzz to and fro. Small foraging animals scurry out of our way. Spiders spin enormous webs. Off in the distance, mountain goats scamper up a rocky incline.

We happen to notice a single, glorious flower. Perhaps there are few like it in all the earth. It luxuriates in bright yellow, red, and green colors, inviting to the eye. The bees too are marvelously attracted. Here we have come all this way into the heights, away from the common bustle of life, to enjoy this rare vision. A few other plants like it are in the vicinity, but our flower seems unique in a verdant alpine world. This special ecological niche has supported it through countless generations. Rooted in a rare soil, the plant has grown toward the brilliant light.

Here high above the daily smog, things seem clearer. Change the temperature a few degrees or composition of the atmosphere, and this ecological niche and the life it supports would erode away. The uniqueness of its beauty, and the reverent attitude toward the world that it evokes, would succumb to scorched earth or glacial cold.

This brief flight of fancy suggests an analogy, hopefully not unduly forced, that guides the thoughts of this evening's talk about the idea of a twenty-first century university. For universities are like that rare alpine flower, and the culture and social arrangements that give rise to universities are like that glorious alpine height. We can enjoy it now, and the vistas that it permits, but its ecologies are delicate, and endangered today every bit as much as natural habitats might be by global warming or sudden ice age. We are called upon to begin to think about all things ecologically, to practice conservation of endangered social institutions as much as of natural resources, and to exercise extraordinary care in relation to the delicate evolutionary fruits that human culture has bequeathed us. We are also called to see that many of the same forces that threaten the natural environment also threaten the social and cultural environments. If we have stood upon the shoulders of giants, their work, labor, hopes and dreams even more today deserve our loving respect in the forms of study and discus-

Contents

- 1 The Idea of a Twenty-First Century University: New World A-Coming
Douglas E. Oakman
- 7 Academic Animals: Making Nonhuman Creatures Matter in Universities
Charles Bergman
- 8 Grading Poetry in December
Alison Mandaville
- 11 To My Students of Poetry
Alison Mandaville
- 12 Lifelines and Storms on the Winedark Sea
Eric Nelson
- 13 Recent Humanities Publications
- 16 Commencement Address
Earl Lovelace

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sion, *ora et labora*. Universities such as you and I are privileged to inhabit are not only deeply rooted culturally, but also conservatories of rare visions and hopes. All the riches of human culture, and memories of disastrous human failings, are treasured and subject to critical inquiry and discussion here. This evening's talk is dedicated, therefore, to the clear promotion, preservation, and even enhancement of that educational mission. Indeed, it is a vision that underlies important elements of our own PLU 2010 document.

The History of an Idea

Interestingly in the light of the current global ferment, the oldest universities in the world are Asian and African—the University of Nanjing, China (from the third century CE) and the Al-Azhar University of Cairo (founded in the tenth century CE). The oldest European university, the University of Bologna in Italy, was founded shortly before 1100 CE. The Universities of Oxford and Paris appeared not long thereafter. Many other European universities came into being between 1100 and 1500 CE. The oldest university in the Americas is the National Autonomous University of Mexico, from 1551. Harvard College was founded in 1636; William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), Princeton (1746), and the University of Pennsylvania (1749) followed in succession.

The idea of Pacific Lutheran University, of course, has many complex roots in the culture of the West. As Philip Nordquist's excellent Centennial History makes clear, PLU not only has roots in the specific history of Scandinavian immigrant aspirations, but also in Athens and Jerusalem, in both the philosophical schools

of ancient Greece and the wisdom traditions of biblical Israel. Indeed, the words *Academy* and *Lyceum* evoke the philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle. The words *school* and *scholar* derive from the Greek word for leisure, *schole*, since in the ancient world education was the privilege only of the leisured elites. Latin words *education* or *curriculum* identify central concerns of institutions of higher learning: *education*, from *educare*, is related to bringing up or rearing, while *curriculum* specifies a "race course" of study. Perhaps most interesting of all, the words *professor* and *profession* come from the Latin *professio*, which has to do with the public avowal or declaration of truth or the public exercise or practice of intelligence. We depend upon many more such ancient words and concepts, and thankfully we have not yet escaped their powerful influences.

Medieval European universities supplied important institutional structures for the modern university. Most importantly, the word *universitas* itself indicates an association of scholars organized for the purpose of learning. The medieval associations or corporations provided organizational models for many of our present arrangements. At Oxford University, for instance, students formed colleges to share room, board, and study. Emile Durkheim, in his fascinating history of higher education in France, gives an amusing account of drunken, rampaging students in Paris during the Middle Ages who, beyond the powers of the provost, had to be hauled back to their colleges by a posse of sheriffs.² Thank God, that kind of student life is all but over!

The European universities developed the degree system with the bachelor's, master's, and

doctor's levels of attainment. The curriculum of the European university was structured in terms of the liberal arts and professions of law, medicine, and theology. The seven liberal arts, central to undergraduate instruction, prepared for the professions. The *trivium* (the three-way crossroad rooted in reason or speech) consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, while the *quadrivium* (the four-way crossroad rooted in number) consisted of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. In the modern period, the scientific method would become another important organizational scheme as indicated in our own Divisions of Social and Natural Sciences. Indeed, the prominent German social philosopher Jürgen Habermas supposes that all our knowledge is rooted in three basic human interests: the interest in prediction and control expressed through science; the interest in social liberation expressed through the social sciences; and the interest in interpretation of human experience expressed through the humanities (the human or spiritual sciences, as the Germans call them).

Colleges and universities in the United States have a unique history of development as well. Early on, U.S. colleges and universities were founded to prepare young men for the Christian ministry. However in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, other interests began to take shape. Not the least was the impact of the physical and biological sciences. Scientific developments led to the establishment of, or transformation of universities into, institutions of scientific research. Moreover, the state took interest in practical education through the founding of land-grant colleges devoted to practical application of science and technology espe-

cially to agriculture. In the twentieth century, community colleges emerged to support mass education with more access, and professional schools began to take on a life of their own. In the post-World War II period, research institutions became beholden to funding from the national security state. And most recently, institutions of higher learning have had to reckon with consumerist attitudes toward education and the corporate expectations of global capitalism. Overall, we have evidence here of an institution both long-standing and international in scope.

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An Endangered Species

Despite this wonderful pedigree, higher education as we see it today shows numerous signs of ecological distress. In recent decades, a variety of critics and reformers have given voice to this fact: We could speak of the challenges of individualism and the search for educational community; we could speak of open access and problems of adequate preparation for college; we could speak of fragmentation and the search for whole perspective; we could speak of the challenges of diversity; indeed, we could even

speak of the economic pressure to work that steals precious time away from study. Yet, if we do not recognize the root causes of this ecological distress, we are left without necessary insight. Profoundly powerful and amoral (if not exactly immoral) forces are at work in culture, threatening the very foundations of universities. Arguably, chief among these are forces that insistently reduce education either to coercive means or to endless utility. Educational culture, and culture generally, must succumb when all value is reduced to the allocation of ever-more-plentiful technical means toward increasingly scarce (if not altogether vanishing) humane ends. Since the Cold War, academics have worried that the research agenda of universities might be coopted by government money and defense interests. President Dwight Eisenhower famously warned against the “unwarranted influence” of the military-industrial complex that nonetheless has played a prominent role in government and American educational developments. Increasingly powerful corporate business interests exercise similar influence. This influence can be seen in many ways—such as an education defined as merely about technical skills, or the consumerism that would see education as merely a means to a lucrative individual career, or educational outcomes that introduce no serious questions about absolutist claims for nation or market capitalism.

Thus, the values of the older association of the university-corporation are perhaps in basic conflict with those of the transnational business corporation. It was a hallmark of the older liberal arts—designed as they were to form free citizens—that education led again and again back to the

question, Why? For what purpose or end is education? The Renaissance, of course, answered this in terms of the full formation of the human being, the development of all human potentials. Luther saw education not only as the formation and development of innate abilities to care for the neighbor, but also as the shaping of critical intellect so as to make possible life-sustaining theological distinctions. Older Protestant educational institutions in the United States affirmed in the words of the Westminster Larger Catechism, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever." Many private Christian colleges in the United States continue to promote this aim. And the traditional American undergraduate capstone course was the course in moral philosophy.

Education as we see it today, though, seems close to losing its birthright, its wider horizon of purpose. Seeing the end of education as the technical production of ever-more-destructive weaponry, or as training for employable skills and enhanced productivity, dramatically narrows and lowers education's scope. Reduced to absurdity, this kind of education only seems, really, to pursue endless means, and means without End. Such an education, reduced to its technical value in terms of power or wealth, reduced merely to material or efficient cause, becomes a means in search of ends. Perhaps this education is in the end, in the final analysis, utterly meaningless. Ironically, such a utilitarian education transforms human beings themselves into mere tools, mere pawns under the control of some Invisible Hand. Such a utilitarian education comes without the whole truth, at least, and such a big-ticket education comes without certain intangible

human benefits. Like a dog chasing its own tail, this prodigal education forces students to seek the paying career-paths and perhaps even academic short-cuts. Yet educational value which is truly priceless cannot finally be assigned a price!

Our main proposition, again, is that universities are like that delicate flower in that distinctive alpine ecology. The university-corporation or association remains dedicated to discussing and finding the "chief ends of humankind." In its traditional language, but not always with clarity, it has tried to preserve this discussion and purposeful educational aim under terms like "the love of wisdom" or "the search for truth."

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New World A-Coming

In the nurture of Wild Hope and Liberating Love, institutions like Pacific Lutheran University continue to keep Radical Faith with the past. However, with today's devotion to futurism and the prevailing hermeneutics of suspicion, the past can be regarded as an unremitting tale of human woe and oppression, not worth remembering or saving; or the past can be seen as largely unhelpful due to outmoded technology or social arrangements; or culturally significant texts of the past like the Bible or Shakespeare might simply be relegated to the scriptorium as worthless for a sophis-

ticated world-come-of-age. Such views, with varying degrees of nuance, are current in the academy today. And to a degree, they contain truth. But perhaps they also overlook fundamental philosophical questions. Is there indeed anyone without roots in the past? If the past were so completely depraved, how could there be any organic basis for a different present or future? Moreover, how did people in the past regard their own situation? What were their hopes and aspirations, and how did their respective lives and histories play out? And is the past such a dead letter that it is not even still alive and well with us now in spirit? Somehow for the sake of ecology we must come to terms with the past. Concern for truth and wisdom suggests that suspicion needs to be balanced by critical empathy.

Take the fascinating figure of Duke Ellington. His creative life and work spanned the central decades of the twentieth century. Ellington was born in 1899 among the free black populous of Washington, D.C. As a young man, Ellington pursued drawing and art as well as music. In the early 1920s, he made a crucial journey to New York City to seek his musical fortunes. This was during the flowering cultural period known as the Harlem Renaissance. In Harlem, Ellington developed his piano playing technique and his marvelous early jazz ensembles in colorful night-spots such as the Kentucky Club and the famous Cotton Club. Black journalist Roi Ottley writes of this flourishing period, noting its heights and its dramatic disappointments, in his award-winning 1943 book *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America*. Ellington was so taken by Ottley's book, that he was moved to musical composition.

What is most impressive

about Ottley's account, and exquisitely painted in poetic tones by Ellington, is the honesty and candor with which the black experience in America is confronted. On the one hand, there are no illusions about the long history of slavery, the struggles for abolition, or the disappointments of the Reconstruction Period. Ottley recognizes many flawed people within that lengthy history. On the other hand, the reader is transported to the heights by the accounts of the Underground Railroad to Canada, with its poignant secret signal, "Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus,"³ or the powerful social and spiritual hopes evoked by Marcus Garvey and Father Divine, or the original March on Washington Movement of 1940. Ellington himself stands as a complex symbol of the ambiguities of this period. He aspired to royal status, and was called The Duke. He was accused at various times during his life of doing too little for the civil rights cause. Yet when he and his orchestra traveled through the Deep South in the mid-1930s, the group had to stay in their own railcar because of Jim Crow laws. And after Ellington travelled to Europe, where unlike the United States his band members could stay in white hotels, he made the following comment:

The main thing I got in Europe was spirit ... That kind of thing gives you courage to go on. If they think I'm that important, then maybe I have kinda said something, maybe our music does mean something.⁴

Roi Ottley makes clear that Black America looked upon World War II as a war of liberation for "colored peoples" from all racism and discrimination. Understandably, the affront of a segregated army, demanded by powerful home inter-

ests, could only highlight the irony of fighting Hitler's racist policies in Europe. Ottley's book presents a story, but a powerful argument as well: Sometimes soil and root are preparing for the plant's survival and further development. Long before Rosa Parks, anonymous black women were sitting at the front of the bus. Long before the Montgomery Boycott and the rise of Martin Luther King, Jr., forgotten black labor organizers were attempting to acquire civil and bargaining rights through boycotts. But these stories are neglected in our astounding Culture of Amnesia, which promotes superhuman claims for media stars of mere fifteen-minutes' fame and immediate gratification as the best form of self-help.

Ellington, Ottley, and the Harlem Renaissance indeed are fitting subjects for a twenty-first century university. For only if and when we keep Radical Faith by remembering the past—warts and all, disappointments and tragedies, hopes and triumphs—will we give substance to dreams and Wild Hope, and force to Liberating Love. Hope and love cannot be built out of amnesia, but tempered by remembrance and forgiveness, hope and love can be sustained and renewed.

Living More Carefully

Robert Bellah and his colleagues, in their book *The Good Society*, speak of the need for renewed care for all institutions wherein human association is formed and made effective. This clarion call is no less true for universities. These social philosophers define care as "paying attention," and the promise of attention as a "sustainable life."⁵ There cannot be sustainable life when either the environment is destroyed by an econom-

ics without regard for ecology or a politics without regard for a common human future. There cannot be sustainable life when wealth is locked up in fewer and fewer hands, when the capricious law of invisible market forces supplants the intentional justice of constitutional law and courts, or when cultural values like higher education are literally priced out of existence. An education as means without ends is an education without a future. Indeed, the reduction of all value to power or market price is an index of the trouble in which not only higher education stands, but world civilization as well.

To give this ecology-minded care effectiveness, it must be undergirded by sound knowledge and other classical values and virtues, for instance, wisdom as the search for ecological balance, or self-restraint which gives birth to justice and fairness for all. When John Henry Newman delivered perhaps the definitive series of lectures on *The Idea of a University* over a century and a half ago, he argued that the university's central purpose is the teaching of universal knowledge and its chief end the cultivation of intellect. He wrote, "the true and adequate end of intellectual training and of a University is not Learning or Acquirement, but rather, is Thought or Reason exercised upon Knowledge, or what may be called Philosophy."⁶ So too the oldest academic honors society in the United States, Phi Beta Kappa, after which our own Areté Society is modeled, keeps three Greek words as its motto: *Philosophia biou kybernetes*, "Philosophy is life's helmsman." The love of wisdom and the search for truth can surely describe our ultimate educational quest. And this quest is not without human or ecological consequence.

Having a Future With Hope

The twenty-first century university has a crucial role to play in manuring soil for a common future with hope. The university is a place of memory, discussion, and morality (not to be confused with individual success and failure or simplistic moralism). As the great Durkheim saw so clearly, an “attachment to something that transcends the individual, [a] subordination of the particular to the general interest, is the very well-spring of all moral activity.” Durkheim further says if we deem [corporative organization] indispensable it is not because of the services it might render the economy, but on account of the moral influence it could exercise. What we particularly see in the professional grouping is a moral force capable of curbing individual egoism, nurturing among workers a more enlivened feeling of their common solidarity, and preventing the law of the strongest from being applied too brutally in industrial and commercial relationships.⁷

Of this moral sense, Ottley also testifies when he records in his book the following statement by a young Harlem girl during the early years of World War II:

I am a member of a race without a chance to do what it wants to do and without liberty in the whole world. I have been told that this war is a war for liberty for everybody. That is the reason this war is important to me.... It is with great fear that I consider my future under the heel of Hitler. He has said, hasn't he, that I am only half of a human creature?... I shall be glad to wear old shoes not in style. These things are very little compared with the suffering in a world

under Hitler. Each little sacrifice I make, I make joyously. It is for a new world, tomorrow, isn't it?⁸

This statement from so many years ago casts an interesting light upon the global issues we now face, or the claims made for the current war. Why is there fear? or terror? What is real freedom? or liberation for that matter? Or who really represents the high ideals of the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution of the United States? It has not gone unnoticed today that those ideals do not belong to the United States alone, and certainly cannot be merely the ends for a narrow political agenda. They will not be furthered by torture or terror, but perhaps by education. Universities provide spaces for conversations that make us so painfully aware of the terrible contradictions within our cultural lives, indeed within our individual lives. Therein begins final wisdom.

The Idea of a Twenty-First Century University

The twenty-first century university, rooted in Radical Faith, nurtured by Wild Hope, and living toward Liberating Love, provides a home for the world's rich human traditions and long cultural conversations about the best life, and life's purpose. If the university can resist its own destruction at the hands of narrow power-interests or economic-reductionism, it will continue to hold out hope for a world of trouble. Indeed, it takes the world's trouble profoundly seriously as the context for all its deliberations.

Out of our Great Tradition, I think we as a university community can say publicly and quite clearly who we are and what we do, but we often seem to be

speaking into a vacuum. Liberal arts universities are threatened not only by economic pressures to produce cheap substitutes, but even by faculty failure to assert what has been and will be the central marks of the best undergraduate universities. There are exaggerated claims for the role of technology and for reforms that look more like dilution of content and outcomes. Students should know that they come here to spend time with doctorally prepared, bright, and experienced faculty. They are among an exceptionally caring staff and talented administrators who help it all to happen. Students are not centrally here to be at home away from home, to be in church, or to get a job. If universities do their work well, students are disoriented and reoriented for a lifetime—all of which has enormous implications for family, church, government, and the work-a-day world.

Liberal learning at the undergraduate level sows seeds that only bear fruit as graduates live and learn the value of what was planted. They return again and again to the traditions, the books, the conversations,—to that special community exemplified in the prophets of Israel, Socrates, Jesus, and countless others, named and unnamed, devoted to the search for truth and wisdom that nurtures human dreams and brings solace and creative response in the midst of human conflict and disappointment.

Yes. There must be a new world a-coming—a world that lies beyond the vitriolic hatreds of the present made ever-more deadly through weapons of mass destruction. The new world a-coming is a world of peace and justice, a world in which the coercive politics and exploitative econom-

ics of egoism have given way before a vision of human, indeed ecological, solidarity. In that new world, responsibility will be apportioned according to ability and reward substantially according to need. In that new world, justice both negative and positive will prevail in the development of full human potential and peaceful exchanges between full participants. In that new world, the diverse cultures of humankind—of every kind!—will contribute their gifts. As the Israelite prophet Isaiah saw long ago during the time of another terrifying Assyrian Crisis,

In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his

paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. [God] shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.⁹ Surely such a hope will be close to the heart of a twenty-first century university. The Root is still a living, breathing presence, and the Future that called the Root into being still awaits us. Indeed universities are planted on that mountain, and the purpose of higher education remains human welfare and fulfillment, the nurture of new life and growth out of the tangled roots of the old, and most assuredly—the new world that is a-coming.

Notes

1. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (Tr. W. D. Halls; New York: Free Press, 1984), xxxix.

2. Emile Durkheim, *The Evolution of Educational Thought: Lectures on the Formation and Development of Secondary Education in France* (Tr. Peter Collins; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 114-16.

3. Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 13.

4. Qtd. in John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 175.

5. Robert N. Bellah et. al., *The Good Society* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 270.

6. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University, Defined and Illustrated* (London: Longmans, Green, 1898), 139.

7. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, xliii.

8. Ottley, *New World A-Coming*, 322.

9. Isaiah 2:2-4 (NRSV).

Speech delivered September 29, 2004, Pacific Lutheran University

Academic Animals: Making Nonhuman Creatures Matter in Universities

Charles Bergman

For two weeks of March, 2000, in the vast jungle along Mexico's southern border with Belize, I joined a team of biologists and hounds in chasing and capturing a wild jaguar. I was in Mexico as a Fulbright Scholar. It took us nearly two weeks of hard work and unflagging persistence to locate, track, and finally tree this jaguar in the Biosphere Reserve of Calakmul.

Beyond the exhilaration of seeing a wild jaguar, a particular gesture made by all of us toward the jaguar grabbed my imagination. It happened while the biologists worked with tranquilized the cat, after it had been lowered to the ground. With the animal asleep, these professionals swung into efficient action, weighing it, measuring it, taking samples of blood and fur and par-

asites. Then they fitted the jaguar with a radio collar, which was the main purpose in capturing the animal. One of the most beautiful animals in the world, the jaguar is the third largest of all the cats, behind only the tiger and the lion. Endangered throughout its range in Latin America, the jaguar remains the least studied of all the major felids. Using radio collars, biologists can study—and work to

save—this elusive animal, using the signals from the transmitter to gather data on range, habitat needs, and behavior.

As we worked, each of us stopped what we were doing, in our own time and way, to reach out and touch the sleeping jaguar. It was a simple and reverent gesture of contact, feeling the animal's powerfully muscled body, stroking his magnificent rosette-spotted fur. The jaguar was a powerful, living presence. For over twenty years, I have writ-

ten about wildlife professionally in books and national magazines. I have been privileged to see and study some of the most wonderful wild creatures in the world. Yet touching this jaguar was the experience of a lifetime.

Since returning to the United States, I often find myself evoking this deeply satisfying moment, when the value of a life was contained in a touch. And I find myself wondering what happens to this sense of the presence of animals, this moment of contact with other

creatures, inside the academy. The touching of the jaguar in the Mexican jungle dramatizes for me the absence of the animal as an animal in our universities. Despite important pockets of interest, I am struck by the general lack of concern for animals in universities. It seems to me that nonhuman animals have not fared well in American higher education.

When I refer to academic animals, I am not referring directly to animal experimentation in universities, though this is a related issue. Rather, I refer to the ways academics are likely to conceptualize nonhuman animals—the animals we construct, the animal as it appears in our various discourses. There are various versions of the academic animal, but these abstract versions of the animal are I believe major barriers in our abilities to understand animals more fully and realize more clearly our obligations to the other creatures with whom we share this wonderful life.

It should be clear that the animal movement has penetrated much more deeply into the popular imagination than it has into the academic mind. I say this as a person who writes extensively on wild animals for national magazines as *Smithsonian* and others. Indeed, I published an article on my encounter with the jaguar in the October 2000 issue of *Smithsonian*. The wonders of animal life are on twenty-four hour display on cable TV's Animal Planet station, as well as the numerous programs on the Discovery Channel and the *Nature* documentaries. Perhaps more telling, since they relate directly to the public's fascination with questions about animal minds, is the number of cover stories run in the 1990s by such magazines as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* on the advances in our understand-

Grading Poetry in December

Alison Mandaville

I want to give them all As.
For working out their break-ups and make-ups.
For working out their parents' make-ups and break-ups.
For trying to write poetry about it.
For sometimes writing poetry anyway.
For the way each one became each one each day.
For their confessions of guilt and for not coming to class drunk enough for me to notice.

For the hard choices they made and had to put off.
For the way each one smiled at some point about me.
For their sense of adventure and even their moose-killing sensibilities,
their complete lack of scheduling, and amazing resistance to my own lacks.
For their willingness to try anything I said—even sonnets—once and sublimate all their anger.

For their surprising humility, their abilities of imitation, especially when sounding like Mary Oliver.
For not being Mary Oliver.
For anyway patiently letting me write all over them.

Sometimes I imagine them going home each day to wash away all my brackets and parentheses,
my suggestions for subtlety, sense.
I see them step clean from this revision to listen:
their own words risen again.

2004

ing of animals' use of language and their mental abilities.

As a society we face important questions about how we can make sense out of animals as autonomous living creatures, as well as our ethical relations with them. There are major intellectual challenges in this, of course, but that does not make the task any less important. Yet inside the academy the resistance to taking animals seriously is pervasive, and not always subtle. To study nonhuman animals in ways that try to accord them value and dignity is still likely to strike most academics as quaintly marginal, even risible, an easily dismissed sentimentality.

Shortly after returning from Mexico, for example, I participated in a conference on animals and representation. Attended mostly by professors in the humanities and in cultural studies, the conference drove home to me the difference between my experience of touching the jaguar in the jungle and the way animals are processed in the academy.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise, but I was still disturbed by the ways in which most of the speakers were willing, almost glibly, to dismiss the animal as animal. Some of the people attending the conference cared about creatures, but for the most part the conference abandoned the animals—talking about what animal representations mean to us and almost nothing about how our representations affect the animals or the ethical issues involved in representation. The creatures themselves vanished under a somewhat strange amalgam of attitudes ranging from post-structural skepticism to more traditional concerns with human superiority, anthropomorphism, and anti-sentimentality. The actual animal seemed almost an embarrassment, a disturbance to

the symbolic field. Highly *literate* people went almost systematically about *ob-literating* the actual animal.

As part of the conference, for example, Jane Goodall was a featured speaker. She spoke not just to the conference participants, but at an open event that produced a huge local crowd, drawn by her commitment to and knowledge of chimpanzees and animals. Anyone who has seen her speak knows that it's something of a cultural phenomenon. Afterwards, however, many at the conference dismissed her forty years of work as sentimental and not scientifically rigorous. Something about her emotional and moral commitment to animals was, I believe, uncomfortable for many. Yet she spoke directly to a huge hunger in the general population for knowledge and a deeper understanding about animals. This is directly akin, I believe, to the desire we all felt in the Mexican jungle to touch the jaguar.

In academic discourses we continue to have trouble speaking about animals in ways that are not dismissive or reductive. For many scientists, the danger is to treat them as Cartesian automata, not autonomous creatures. Their behaviors are explained by instincts, stimulus-response mechanisms or genetic programming.

For humanists, the tendency is to treat animals as little more than allegories of human fear and desire. Or the animal is given up as radically unknowable beneath human representation. Animals in the humanities? It seems almost an oxymoron.

Alienating animals from their own lives is a danger in wildlife biology, as well, where researchers often must separate their personal from their professional responses to the creatures they

study so intimately. The jaguar we fitted with the radio collar will disappear in the biological studies produced from the research. With the data from several collared jaguars, a statistical composite of the jaguar in the area—the jaguar as species—will be constructed. Important information, to be sure. Yet as one researcher told me, studying another tropical species, the composite portrait describes the creature as type, “a platonic animal,” to use her words. Because it portrays a statistically typical animal, it really is a picture of no actual animal.

It's not that these views are wrong, despite a lot of mutual suspiciousness. It's that they each treat animals as though they have no lives of their own. They are treated as if they live somehow outside their own lives, moved by forces over which they have no control, forces that are somehow not them. Denied mind and subjectivity and agency, they are living robots. Their lives are wholly contingent. In what ways can we begin to represent animals that responsibly place them inside their own lives?

Our obligations to the other creatures on this planet is one of the great ethical questions of our times. Yet the prejudice against animals—“speciesism,” as it's been called—slows our progress in sorting out these ethical issues. Compare the progress made recently with other major ethical and social issues. In his now-famous book, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (Avon 1975; 2nd ed. 1990), Peter Singer gave a new academic respectability to animal issues and stimulated a renewed vigor in social-action campaigns on behalf of animals. He also explicitly linked animals with other social liberation movements.

These other movements are

now well established in universities with vigorous multi-disciplinary programs in gender studies, ethnic studies, and so forth. Not so animals. As far as I know, there is no “animal studies program” in any American university. In fact, the phrase “animal studies” does not even exist except as I am here using it informally.

Even making the comparison between animals and historically oppressed people is much more likely to offend the people involved than ennoble the cause of animals. This even though many feminists, like Carol J. Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Continuum 1990), have argued animals and women have both been constructed as “others,” resulting in similar forms of oppression and exploitation for both. Aristotle in his *Politics* likened the human superiority over animals to the rule of the soul over the body, men over women, and even masters over slaves. Yet while we would not now condone language that makes women, say, symbols of the “passions,” or makes Native Americans symbols of, say, “primitiveness,” it is still common to find academics using startling clichés and stereotypes in speaking about animals. Like Shakespeare’s Caliban, animals are still too widely described as grossly mindless, stubbornly inferior, “this thing of darkness.”

Such attitudes are increasingly anachronistic. I do not mean to suggest that animal studies are commensurate with studies of women’s issues or issues in other human groups. Understanding animals present its own unique challenges: animals leave no texts, at least directly, and do not speak for themselves. Additionally, there is the tangled issue of anthropomorphism. Nevertheless, compelling research on ani-

mals in recent decades has dramatically changed our image of animal consciousness and our understanding of our relationships with animals.

We are experiencing an exciting new wave of interest in animals. Animals are moving out of biology and zoology departments and into fields once way out of bounds for them. The conference I referred to earlier, for example, was one of four major international and multi-disciplinary conferences to be held on ani-

The conversation about human-animal relations has been largely dominated by terms derived from philosophical ethics. Other fields are now adding to the conversation in ways that may expand our possibilities for understanding this important dimension of human life

mal issues in the last two years. Also encouraging, the Conference of the Modern Language Association has in the last two years sponsored three panels on animals which might be described as “pro-animal,” that is, which move beyond studies of animal imagery in, say, Shakespeare or *Moby Dick*.

Such conferences are made possible by a wealth of new research on animals in a wide range of fields. For some time, the conversation about human-animal relations has been largely dominated by terms derived from philosophical ethics. Other fields are now adding to the conversation in ways that may expand our possibilities for understanding this important dimension of human life.

Consider for example just a few of the titles to have appeared in the last few years, selected to give a sense of disciplinary and theoretical range: Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (Penguin/Random House 1983); E. O. Wilson, *Biophilia: The Human Bond with Other Species* (Harvard 1984); Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Harvard 1987); Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology* (University of Illinois 1994); Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan, *Animals and Women: Theoretical Explorations* (Duke 1995); M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton 1999); Eileen Crist, *Images of Animals: Anthropomorphism and Animal Mind* (Temple 1999); Steven M. Wise, *Rattling the Cage* (Perseus 2000); Steve Baker, *The Post-modern Animal* (Reaktion 2000).

One hopes that this interest in animals is more than a passing academic fashion. My own belief is that this new interest is fueled in large part by the broader social concerns for the fates of animals, whether wild animals increasing facing extinction and endangerment, or captive animals facing all manner of abuses. Another important sign that this interest reflects a deep shift is that our understanding of animals, and their mental abilities, has been changing in recent years. Wildlife and conservation biology have given us a much greater appreciation for the wonders of animals and their complex behaviors. Also, the new field of cognitive ethology, which studies animal mentality as a kind of behavior, is changing our view of the animal mind. While it is a field with many challenges and controversies, we seem to be in the process an almost revolutionary advance in our understanding of animal intelligence.

A good overview to this field can be found in Colin Allen and Marc Bekoff's *Species of Mind: The Philosophy and Biology of Cognitive Ethology* (MIT 1997). Donald Griffin especially stimulated the emergence of the field in such books as *Animal Minds* (Chicago 1992) and *Animal Thinking* (Harvard 1884), arguing that the way to understand animal intelligence was to look not at the stereotypical behaviors of species. Rather, the flexibility, variability, and purposiveness of the individual animal offer insight in animal intelligence. He and other early researchers stressed evolutionary continuity in the emergence of human intelligence. Increasingly, researchers are focusing on understanding animal minds and thought as distinct from human thought. As Marc D. Hauser, professor of psychology and neuroscience at Harvard, writes in *Wild Minds: What Animals Really Think* (Henry Holt 2000), "We share the planet with thinking animals Although the human mind leaves a characteristically different imprint on the planet, we are certainly not alone in this process" (257).

The boundaries between animals and humans are changing. The frontier is porous and the implications for our relationships with animals are great. There is much in the academy we can do on behalf of animals. I hope this new interest in animal studies reflects a concern for the lives of real animals. We need a change in our attitudes toward animals, so that they are not so easily dismissed and forgotten, even as we speak and write about them. Animals are not only texts that we produce. We need an ethos more favorable to animals, more open to the creature as a living presence.

That means more multi-disciplinary

study to help us overcome the limitations of perspective in our individual disciplines. It also means more conferences, more panels, more publications, and more courses in universities. I would urge anyone interested in animal issues to read widely (and wildly?) about animals, ranging beyond the confines of particular disciplines. It's harder to treat a whale as only a linguistic artifact, a symbol, when you learn about discoveries in its mental abilities, for example. It's harder to treat an

animal as a genetic program after savoring the presence of animals in W. S. Merwin's poems.

Most important, I would urge us to pay greater heed to the animals themselves. After the grueling challenges of chasing the jaguar in the rainforest of Mexico—and touching it—one comes away with an increased respect for the animal's intelligence and value. We need to care as much for the worlds of being as we do for the worlds of meaning.

To My Students of Poetry

Alison Mandaville

Numbers are a funny thing. And clots
run into the toilet underneath me
darkening the white as never before.

I am twenty years distant from the eight
years you have been bleeding. You are
twenty years from these clots that are

eight years from ending. We are all on
the downslide of this November, falling
like red, with the early night sky

that leaves us every time in one bare
room where we contemplate languages—
yours, mine, the Greek words signaling

nothing to us, left on the white
board by the colleague of western classical
thought while across time the clots drop

into water, dissipate in a rosy wash
of ink particulate, indefinite, small
communications we see but cannot read.

Fall 2004

Lifelines and Storms on the Winedark Sea

Eric Nelson

...In the trees one hand slowly turns the pages of a letter twenty years old, a man reads his words.

In a year, another ice field will calve itself, a slice at a time, thin, white like slips of paper perfectly unfolded. In the pages he sees a reflection, hears a voice from many directions, a boy, a man, a piece of a field of faces. He is ice, rock, water, paper. — Kevin Miller, “The Importance of Storms over the Years”

This meditation arises out of two conversations. The first occurred about ten years ago with one of my Ph.D. mentors. We were discussing my “situation” (a young scholar clinging to a developing position at PLU by running a landscape business and picking up carpentry work), and considering the inevitable toll it was taking on options I might otherwise pursue. We spoke at length about developing a track as a candidate for a different kind of university. This would take carving out a territorial niche in academia by consistently churning out narrowly focused articles and presentations. My mentor lamented that while commitment to this effort was necessary for advancement, most of what resulted was really not all that meaningful and contributed to a kind of disciplinary osteoporosis. He spoke about the time and consideration that it took to do better, more satisfying, and more substantial academic work.

We also talked about teaching the relevance and vitality of the Classical world to a broader audience. This is, after all, one of the primary callings of our discipline,

and it goes back to the great professor of Greek, Manuel Chrysoloras, whose wide-ranging teaching gave fuel to the Renaissance. We talked about what I was doing at PLU. “Perhaps,” he said, “If you can hang on, you can get a chance not only to do some good work, but also something that really...matters.” I hung on.

The second conversation is currently underway in my Wild Hope faculty seminar, in which we are examining vocation: what it means, how it is recognized, and how it is fostered. We’ve read and discussed biographies and expositions, articles, theories of student development and discussions of best classroom practice, and we’ve also talked a lot about ourselves. What keeps coming back around are questions of what “matters”—really matters—about our disciplines, about our university, and about the roles that we play in the lives we touch. I’m happy to report that we’re all still hanging on.

It is from within these conversations and amid talk of curriculum reform that I write to remind us about interdependent aspects of our university that matter deeply: those of an institution that embraces (even requires) broad participation in a rich and interconnected array of human knowledge, experience, and practice; one that encourages individuals to integrate these with their own experience; and one that offers—in practice—sufficient choices to make such integration possible in an exploration of what matters individually and collectively. It is these combined aspects of education that provide us with what remains relevant, useful, and meaningful af-

ter we have lost our job, or health, or certainty; when death, illness, or circumstances irrevocably alter our landscape; when the courage to love seems beyond us; when we must stand alone; or whenever we arrive at one of life’s numerous dead ends for which education is generally assumed to prepare us. At that time, the threads we have woven of our education and experience become our lifeline, and strands that might have seemed extraneous or superfluous often become the ones that hold among the fray and lead us out (educare) of the labyrinth. The rest is training.

This notion about a university education emanates from my own life, which has been interwoven with PLU for many years. My mother first brought me to PLU in the mid-1960s to hear a concert for children featuring Calvin Knapp. We were headed back to the truck for the long return trip to Allen Point when she stopped and asked me in Red Square if I might like to play an instrument. “The piano,” I remember telling her, “I think I like the piano.” Our family was interconnected with the large and musically gifted Knapp clan, and soon one of the huge old family uprights, one that reportedly came around the Horn, became mine (and the bane of every moving party since), and it carried me to PLU as a piano performance major. When I auditioned for Calvin in 1977, what he, his family, and PLU had provided for me was already long in the making.

But music wasn’t the only thing that brought me to PLU; among many others was fly-fishing. I shared this passion with a member of our church, Bob Mord-

vedt. Dr. Mordvedt also had a passion for clear, engaging, and purposeful prose. He compared writing to fly-fishing: the intended representation, the careful selection of materials and composition of the fly, the knowledge of one's fish, the survey and analysis of water conditions, the crucial choice of presentation. It was a fly-fisherman's rhetoric, and perhaps only an enthusiast would be hooked. Nevertheless, the connections he opened up between these passions and experiences changed how I looked at the craft of writing in ways that served me well as a student and have remained vivid and useful over fourteen years of teaching writing here.

Like many of our students, conceptions of faith also contributed in bringing me to this place. I arrived here with set ideas—very set—about the world. And although my father taught me, in good Lutheran fashion, that “God is big enough to handle the truth,” I assumed that the university would largely confirm my version of both God and Truth. Instead, I discovered (if I may adapt a line from Rick Jones) that many things

were somehow...otherwise. In the midst of a wrenching journey out of music and possibly into ministry, I took a classical Greek class to help get myself re-grounded. I did not find the terra firma that I anticipated: instead I discovered that my world was afloat on seaways of exploring, coping with, and expressing what it meant to be human, and that although the chaos could not be controlled, it could be navigated. Gradually I learned to wade, then to swim, then to sail. Now I teach others to swim, and I hope that what we all do here keeps them afloat—for as the Greeks knew so intimately, the sea is a dangerous place.

The other threads that I brought with me to PLU were not lost. They became entwined in ways that transformed my understanding and experience. It was through a professor's explanation and analysis of Mozart's *Die Krahe* that new ways of understanding literature opened up to me, and I became equipped to wrestle with Faulkner, Homer, and myth. I also discovered a lifeline through a poetry class. With a good deal of prodding, I submitted some of my

work from that class to *Saxifrage* in 1979, and one poem—a poem about the same stormy period we tend to focus on in *Wild Hope*—received recognition before I stored that lifeline away.

However, when several storms struck at once twenty years later, the education that I received at PLU was still there for me—and it held. For if writing is like fly-fishing, poetry is fly-fishing: carefully tying together the bits and pieces of a life, bringing it into focus, and casting it out on life's waters to bring precisely the right thing to the surface. I am not a poet, a musician, a carpenter, or even a fly-fisherman by vocation, just as many of my students will not be Classicists, but I have—we all have—an intertwining of experiences and ways of knowing onto which we hold. The braid often gets started here, and the more strands we can weave into it the better. My hope for this university is that it remains committed to such an endeavor, and that the strands it weaves into the lives of its students will do as well by them in the future as those it has woven have done by me.

Recent Humanities Publications

Jim Albrecht

“What Does Rome Know of Rat and Lizard?": Pragmatic Mandates for Considering Animals in Emerson, James and Dewey.” In *Animal Pragmatism: Rethinking Human-Nonhuman Relationships*, edited by Erin McKenna and Andrew Light, 19–42. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2004.

Susan K. Allard-Nelson

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Theory: The Norms of Virtue. New York: Mellen Press, 2004.

Kathy Breazeale

“Negotiating Catholicism: Religious Identity vs. Regional Citizenship.” In *Religion and Public Life in the Southern Crossroads: Showdown States*, edited by William Lindsey and Mark Silk, 103–25. Religion by Region Series. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira P, 2005.

Tom Campbell

Review of *Pieces of My Mind: Essays and Criticism 1958–2001*, by Frank Kermode. *Magill Book Reviews/Salem Press Online* (March 2004).
Review of *Queer Street: Rise and Fall*

of an American Culture, 1947–1885, by James McCourt. *Magill Book Reviews/Salem Press Online* (June 2004).

Review of *The Victorians*, by A. N. Wilson. *Literary Annual 2004* (June 2004): 801–5.

Kirsten Christiansen

“The Gender of Epistemology in Confessional Europe: The Reception of Maria van Hout's Ways of Knowing.” In *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts. Vol. 3, Seeing and Knowing: Women and Learning in Medieval Europe*, edited by Anneke Mulder-Bakker, 97–120. Turnhout: Brepols, 2004.

“Poetic Piety: The Interplay of Mysti-

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(Continued from page 13)
cism and Catechism in the Late Middle Ages." In *Kulturen des Manuskriptzeitalters*, edited by Arthur Groos and Hans-Jochen Schiewer, 41–59. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 2004.

Paul Ingram

"A Reflection on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue With the Natural Sciences." In *Fifty Years in Science and Religion: Essays in Honor of Ian Barbour*, edited by Robert John Russell, 319–28. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.

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Patricia Killen

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Erin McKenna

Animal Pragmatism: Rethinking Human-Nonhuman Relationships, edited by Erin McKenna and Andrew Light. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2004.

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Alison Mandaville

Featured Poet: Four Poems. *Knock* (June 2004).

"Gap, November 2004": A Poem. *The Matrix* (October 2004).

Douglas Oakman

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Solveig C. Robinson

"Eliza Cook" and "Lady Georgiana Charlotte Fullerton." In *New Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by Colin Matthew. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.

"Mary Elizabeth Braddon," "William Howard Russell," "The Indian Mutiny," "The Langham Place Group," "Mudie's Circulating Library," and "Print Technology." In *Encyclopedia of the Victorian Era*, edited by James Eli Adams. New York: Grolier, 2004.

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Jeffrey L. Staley

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"Choosing Between Twos: Apocalyptic Hermeneutics in Science Fiction, the Radical Right, and Recent Historical Jesus Scholarship." In *The Meanings We Choose: Hermeneutical Ethics and the Conflict of Interpretations*, edited by Charles Cosgrove. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity P International, 2004.

"Postcolonial Reflections on Read-

(Continued from page 16)

that while we welcome development, we are fearful of having it drag us into what for us is a chasm of the unknown.

On the other hand there are those of us who do not want to go “Back When”; who have been dreaming of a world that confidently acknowledges the dignity of every human person, the rights of each one to a life; who realize that the challenge of constructing a human world is the adventure worthy of the abundance of our talents and the bounty of our blessings and the breadth of our imagination; who believe that cynicism must be tempered with optimism; who understand that humans everywhere do not need to provide each other with further evidence of their humanity. Because on every continent, we, all of us, have demonstrated in our art, in struggle, in sacrifice, our own resolve to live and create; that the humanity of one is as precious as that of the next; that our children everywhere are as precious; that our diversity is not a new invention, it is as ordinary and as monumentally natural as the variety of blossoms that beautify our gardens, and perhaps as permanent as the different climatic bands that ring the earth. We believe that unless we are prepared to engage each other as equals we shall compromise whatever sincerity lies beneath our acts of benevolence, and like Kurtz be driven—beyond our initial purpose—to the action advocated in the post scriptum to the epistle of his great and noble

intentions: “Exterminate all the brutes!”

And that is why we look to you, the youth graduating here today. Because you will see the world with new wonder and awe, and will step into it with exuberance. For while you owe your parents their joys and happiness at your success, and to make us all proud, you owe yourself to the future. You owe it to yourself, and indeed to all of us, to break new ground, to move out, to spread your wings, to venture into areas unknown to the generations that have brought you up. So that we who have been hesitant to confirm in action virtues that we have been vocal about, who lack the courage to explore the healing potential of humility and compassion, will rejoice to see our children utilize these values to lift us to another level of what it is to be human.

This means that you can no longer be satisfied with limiting yourself to a responsibility only to your family or to the geographic entity that you call your country. You will have to globalize your responsibility, to use responsibility to a family and to country as the basis for the challenge of your equally great responsibility to the changing world.

In his play *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett presents two tramps waiting on an open road. At the end of every volley of the exchanges between them, one or the other concludes that they should move on, they should go. But they do not move because one reminds the other that they are waiting for Godot, a man who

they have never seen and whose time and place of arrival they do not know. In the very last lines of the play, one of the tramps says, “let’s go.” And the stage directions read: “*They do not move.*” Beckett is of course using the paralysis of these tramps to illustrate the absurdity of holding on to a faith that prevents us from moving on. In the rapidly changing world of today when we do have to move on, the faith that best serves us is not one that paralyzes, but one that liberates us for exploring the road of the unknown. Perhaps one of the achievements that will distinguish your generation will be to outline for us the contours of that faith.

The necessity for the human family to do better is all around us, nowhere more poignantly posed than in the great literature of the world. But as you seek to harvest its lessons, you should look not only at what the literature teaches us about ourselves, but at how it teaches: note that it seeks to persuade through a respect for the reader, by showing you rather than by telling you, as an equal partner, allowing you to make up your mind on your own. It shows you also that wherever truth leads is a good place, because it exposes us again to the fact that we humans are foolish and courageous and fragile and noble and afraid, that we make error; and that we perfect ourselves not in the final conclusiveness of a single action, but in the starting again. You, the youth, at this graduation give us another opportunity to start once again.

*“Back When” lyrics by Tim McGraw.

(Continued from page 14)

ing Luke—Acts from Cabo San Lucas and Other Places.” In *Literary Encounters with the Reign of God*, edited by Sharon Ringe and Paul

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“Reading ‘This Woman’ Back into John 7:1–8:59: Liar Liar and the ‘Pericope Adulterae’ in Intertextual

Tango.” In *Those Outside: Non-canonical Readings of Canonical Gospels*, edited by George Aichele and Richard Walsh. Bristol: Continuum, 2004.

PLU Commencement Address

Earl Lovelace

Editor's note: This address was delivered December 11, 2004, and marks the end of Professor Lovelace's tenure as Distinguished Writer in Residence at Pacific Lutheran University.

Chair Edwards, President Anderson, Esteemed Faculty Colleagues, Students, and Friends,

It is an honor for me to celebrate with you this day that is so special to all of us gathered here.

For the University, this year's punctual ceremony is much more than routine. It marks the occasion on which we say farewell to students who have in their special ways enriched and renewed the life of the University and who we must release now to the world for which we have helped to equip them. For family members, friends, and well-wishers of the graduants, it stands as an occa-

sion for pride and for thanksgiving, and perhaps in the case of parents, for joyful relief. For the graduating students, this celebrates the moment that more formally liberates you to your future.

In the best of times we look to the young to continue what we have begun, to add detail and texture to the outlines we have sketched; and on the occasions on which we are not certain of the way forward, we look to the young to come with the optimism of fresh eyes and confident hearts to return us to pathways that lead to the awesome adventure of sustaining ourselves and each other and this planet that is home to us all.

The technological blessings of our time as well as our pursuit of individual freedoms have produced in our world a rapidity of

change that requires from us a speed and variety of adjustments so bewildering that many of us want to go back to anchor ourselves more securely in the world that had provided us with meanings and value.

One of the most popular songs on the radio these days laments, "I miss back when":

When a hoe was a hoe
Coke was a coke
And crack's what you were doing
When you were cracking jokes.*

This song points to much more than nostalgia for the past, it suggests that while we want to accommodate change, we do not wish to do so at the expense of what we see as the loss of our souls, our balance, our heritage;

(Continued on page 15)



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