



**Can Martha Know? Can Mary Serve? Changing Places in the
University**

Dorothy A. Lander
Antigonish, Nova Scotia

Abstract

This research article illustrates my historical and critical narrative approach to tracing and reconstituting the social-spatial practices of the polarized cultures of service and knowledge within the university. I explicate the transformative work involved in shifting discursively-constructed boundaries that have historically determined the rightful place for service workers and knowledge workers. I engage with the over determination of meaning embodied in the story of Martha and Mary and the Christian legacy of the medieval university. I interlace these themes with an auto/biographical excursion into the minutiae of everyday practice in a Canadian and a British university. I re-present the voices of difference from mutual storytelling at a British university, tracing the trajectories of service workers, knowledge workers and students as they negotiate service and knowledge terrain. This research raises possibilities for remapping the epistemic terrain of the university by offering alternative speaking positions, and alternative places for men and women across the bounds of service-knowledge.

Introduction:

Martha: Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.

Jesus: Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:40-42)

The biblical and historical persons of Martha and Mary constitute a mapping of the subject positions of serving and knowing, in which knowing occupies pride of place. Mary “hath chosen that good part” (i.e., hath positioned herself in that good place) whereas Martha is “left... to serve alone.” Where is my part, my place and my choice within this dualism as it is mapped out today on the university campus? Where am I left? As a woman, a cook, a farm girl, a manager, an organizational theorist, a social science researcher, a student services educator and a perpetual student, I resolutely locate myself in both service work and knowledge work. Throughout my practitioner-based action research in Canadian universities and in my doctoral research in the U.K., I was forever straddling these gendered places and subject positions.

My research voices my resistance to the historical and Christian cartography of the Western university as a polarized knowledge and service organization, where men are unrelentingly drafted into knowledge terrain, and where women are unrelentingly drafted into service terrain, just like home. Changing the course of history necessitates revisiting history, and tracing the coordinates in order to move on and redraft a new order.

Can I Know? Can I Serve?

My research gives expression to my desire to understand and reconstitute the spatial social workings of the service-knowledge cultures of the university that so absorbed me in my everyday work practice. I desire to trace and then shift the historical boundaries of the university cartographies² of gendered social practices. These same boundaries that normalize subject positions barely contain the counter-hegemonic bodies “jostling for semiotic space” (Morgan & McWilliam, 1995, p. 113). The university calendar, campus directory and the organizational chart are the more accessible print cartographies. My research project of reconstituting the university as a service organization articulates these print cartographies with the cartographies of lived, embodied experiences of knowing and serving.

As a manager of residences and food service in a small, rural, co-educational, largely undergraduate Canadian university until 1994, I reported to the Vice-President of Administration. I worked out of basement offices beneath the student dining room and hard by the daily clatter of the dishwashing machine. On this campus, the service sites of residences, dining room, laundry, maintenance shop, boiler room and the ancillary administrative offices are largely on what is called ‘lower campus’. The main academic building is on higher ground and houses classrooms and lecture halls; it connects to the office tower which ascends from computer services in the basement past administrative

and faculty offices on the middle floors, through to the top sixth floor and senior academic administration offices. The wall of glass in the faculty lounge and the offices of the President and the academic Vice- President afford Foucault's Panopticon of the institution. Dripping with irony, 'sixth floor' is a choice metonymy for senior administration.

Students en route to class from lower campus residences pass through the maelstrom of glutinous institutional cooking odours, billowing black bunker oil exhaust, and mucous laundry steam. They make their way to the air-conditioned main classroom section and faculty office tower which are sealed off from the contaminating sounds and smells of service. The Students' Union building across the parking lot from the academic tower houses union offices and professionally-designated Student Services offices such as Health and Counselling, Careers, Financial Aid, Chaplaincy, and Dean of Students. Staff Appreciation Day explicitly for non-teaching staff often excludes these Student Services professionals who have academic credentials and teaching experience.

Some North American universities choose to designate this department as 'student affairs' to distance service providers with knowledge credentials from the devaluing implicit in the service moniker. There is a similar distancing principle in the currently popular service learning, a teaching/learning method to offer students meaningful community service experiences that they intentionally connect with academic learning. Invariably the community services that students connect with their academic work are located off campus and typically emphasize health care, the environment or charity – removed from the unfashionable services of everyday practice in the university community.

Servant leadership and stewardship (Block, 1993; Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1998) serve to conflate liberal and market discourses of the contemporary university in an appeal to the impartiality of consumerism and the student-as-customer. These discourses bestow on university leadership the superior moral sensibilities of the service worker without surrendering the privileged positions in the knowledge monopoly. Servant leadership serves to counter the undemocratic taint of command-and-control and ego-driven hierarchical leadership; seldom is there recognition that renamed servant leaders might need to learn a different knowledge or apprentice themselves to experienced service workers. The knowledge involved in serving others "is not known... It is a knowledge that the subjects do not reflect. They bear witness to it without being able to appropriate it. They are in the end the renters and not the owners of their own know-how. Like that of poets and painters, the know-how of daily practices... belongs to no one" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 71). Schuster (1998) makes it clear that it is the moral superiority of serving others that servant-leadership is willing to appropriate, stressing there is 'little' attendant knowledge:

The Latin word *servus*, or *slave*, was the root for the term *servile*. *Servile* labor was the lowest kind, the demeaning sort, subhuman even, that had *little to do with using your head* [italics added] and everything to do with pushing a broom, or cleaning a toilet, or, as I learned later through the work of a budding servant-leader, shining shoes. *Servus* was also the root word for *service*, and, of course *servant* (p. 271).

I was on the originating committee for Staff Appreciation Day, held annually for service workers. I participated in devising the rituals that reproduce the service worker

identity as outside knowledge, an identity contiguous with broom pushers and toilet cleaners, an identity that has much to do with dirtying your hands and “little to do with using your head”. The day featured a ceremony in which ten-year staff including myself have been honoured with heraldic-style medals, ‘SERVICE’ engraved black on gold. This is iterative coding that serves to bodily mark off difference from the black and gold university ring worn exclusively by graduates. My entitlement to both markers effectively compartmentalized my serving and knowing functions. For day-shift staff, attendance is compulsory at the May afternoon appreciation ceremony held during working hours. Faculty are encouraged to attend. Time off for changing clothes and ‘cleaning up’ is scheduled before the event to afford service workers the option of changing from uniforms to street-wear. Following the ceremony, a buffet luncheon is served featuring sandwiches, tea sweets, one immense celebratory cake inscribed with the school colours, and non-alcoholic fruit punch. The president hosts an RSVP evening gala in the same facility for faculty, administration and their spouses/partners in late summer. An open bar reception is followed by waited service for a three-course meal featuring prime rib and select wine for each course, culminating in post-prandial liqueurs and coffee. From my service-knowledge frontier, I was able to attend both events.

As a self-financing doctoral research student in the U.K. until 1997, my serving and knowledge positions were blurred: I reported to no one but myself; I was allocated study space shared with other research students, along the same corridor as professors’ ‘rooms’. On this large urban, comprehensive university campus, the halls of residence encircle the campus. The historic clock tower overlooking the idyllic boating lake and parkland is the focal point of the campus. The adjoining halls enfold the arched entrances to the quadrangle. This prized facility houses the offices of the Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, and Bursar next to the Great Hall; the Law Department with its oak-panelled library, Philosophy, Theology, and the Classics take pride of place around this quadrangle. The Director of Catering and Residential Services and his office staff occupy basement offices here, whereas the managers and line staff occupy offices in halls of residence each of which has its own dining room. Other academic departments typically occupy their own building with location determined by traditional affinities. Other than the halls of residence and the conference centre on the fringe, most of the service departments are centrally located in or adjacent to the Students’ Centre just beyond the quadrangle. There was no designated student services department on this campus; rather, a personal tutor from academic staff is assigned to each student to combine advisory support for the tutee’s academic progress and ‘pastoral care’ – favoured term for personal advising (Earwaker, 1992; Wheeler & Birtle, 1993). Earwaker (1992) confirms the service-knowledge divide in the U.K. He knows of no books or practical guidance “which challenge the prevailing conception of student support as ancillary to the main task of higher education” (p. viii).

As a service manager in Canada, I wore natural-fabric street clothes and soft leather shoes, indistinguishable from knowledge-worker wear. Meanwhile janitorial, housekeeping, laundry and food service staff in my department wore colour-coded, polyester uniforms labelled with their names. Use and care of their uniforms and the allowance to purchase safety footwear were outlined in the collective agreement. “When they issue uniforms, they issue skins” (Goffman, 1974). As a doctoral student in the U.K., I toiled most days in the comfort and anonymity of jeans, sweats, and trainers, realigning

to the stiff packaging of chic dress and makeup for scheduled seminars and supervisory meetings with professors.

Foregrounding of minutiae is a critical step in my research process of forgetting to take for granted the everyday practices of the university. ‘Telling tales out of school’ is the unbalancing act of not taking differences for granted – of explicitly naming practices in terms of compliance to and deviation from the boundaries that mark off difference (Lander, 1997). The service-knowledge discourse constructed in institutionalized relations authorizes and sustains an understanding of the ‘normal’. And “since these things have been made, they can be unmade, as long as we know how it was that they were made” (Foucault, 1988, p. 37). My self-interrogation, “Can I know?” and “Can I serve?” became the impetus for my research into the hows and whys and wheres and what ifs of serving and knowing in the university.

The ‘wheres and wherefores’ become explicit in my cartographical approach, enjoining historical and autobiographical locators. Mills (1970) maintains it is the political and educational task of the social scientist to continually translate personal troubles into public issues and public issues into their human meaning for a wider variety of individuals. “The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise” (p. 12).

My auto/biographical (Stanley, 1992) entry sets the stage for the what ifs, the reconstituting of the university according to mixed modes rather than the absolutes (Code, 1991) of serving and knowing. In standard interpretations, the biblical story of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Bethany, performs and embodies the absolutes, the binary oppositions of knowing set against serving: the cerebral, contemplative life set against embodied manual labour of ‘careful and troubled’ matters; head work set against hand work. But what if Martha also got to have an idea and Mary also got to use her hands?

These oppositions find their counterparts in the contemporary classifications of the university: academic versus ancillary, academic versus administrative, or academic versus support staff. Nightingale and O’Neil (1994) explicate this barrier to learning: We are not aware of any thorough attempt to observe, describe and analyse the two cultures existing side-by side in most universities, but we believe the divide between academic and general (or administrative and support) staff is one of the most unfortunate complications to attempts to reform universities into learning organizations. (p. 125).

Transformative Research as Changing Places

My doctoral research proceeded on the understanding that unmaking the service-knowledge classifications of the university required an understanding of how this discourse is organized (Foucault, 1988). To Foucault (1977), discourse is the operation of discipline in institutions, relying on the spatial and organizing practices of enclosure, partitioning, functional codification, and differential allocation of spaces. Foucault adds:

[Discourse] introduces the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved... [and] traces... the external frontier of the abnormal. The perpetual penalty that transverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes. (p. 183).

My research appeals to the locatedness of discourse, tracing ‘the external frontier of the

abnormal', but I de-emphasize the anonymity, distancing and inevitability of Foucault's schema of power in favour of the power/capacity of intentional organizational actors and moral agents to resist oppressive power (Lander, 1996a). My research gives primacy and power to the intersubjectivity and dialogue of lived embodied actors addressing selfsame inscribed, acted-upon historical bodies across space and time (Crossley, 1996). I was bent on change through human agency – changing my embodied place and the embodied places of students and service workers. I was bent on rupturing the classifications, the hierarchies, the homogenizing, in short, the 'normal'. My research was explicitly an epistemological project of making a place for the student services practitioner inside the transformative work of authorizing the university as a service organization for first year students (Lander, 1997). I was particular about articulating this knowing-serving place for myself. My research methodology conflates making a place-identity for myself with first year students making themselves at home at the university.

Over the course of one academic year at the University of Nottingham, I created an educational research place for myself in one mixed hall of residence and its everyday life of students, service workers and knowledge workers negotiating their way in place. I took my place in providing the occasions and setting the context for students, service workers and knowledge workers to tell each other their stories of their service encounters in and out of the classroom and to probe each other's stories to create ever new meaning. To create and recreate and author-ize their communal version of university life. This is Randall's (1995) 'restorying' as the process of personal and social transformation. Restorying provides the critical mechanism: to speak and to listen responsibly across multiple subject positions, to pay attention to the locatedness of knowing and so to act co-responsibly (Razack, 1993).

The hall of residence as my research site slanted my inquiry to first year students who were traditional-age undergraduates. The stories of service encounters in this particular setting foreground 'generation' as a social category in analysis of difference. The practices of authority situated in this particular research site have an intergenerational resonance focussed on the student experience. I can speculate that a restorying occasion that conjoined first year students and workers of the same generation might authorize a communal version of university life featuring the common ground of roles beyond student life.

Making and changing places cannot be reduced to any one discipline or theory of knowledge. Transformative research resonates across disciplinary and theoretical boundaries of structure and agency. My research methodology appeals to poststructuralism, feminisms, critical narrative inquiry and complexity theory in the task of mapping multiple subject positions, the locations of meaning and knowledge claims. The place of subjects, knowers and agents is the intersubjective and interdisciplinary frontier of my research, where diverse and overlapping fluxes meet in interspace (Lander, 1997).

Buttimer (1980) captures the ontological, embodied and poetic sense of place-making. Her concept of centering incorporates the security of place alongside freedom of bodily reach into space. For me, centering invokes home and hearth as place and space, structure and agency, acted upon and acting, support and challenge. Centering underpins my conception of the university as a service organization: "an ongoing life process – the breathing in and bringing home which is a reciprocal of the breathing out and reaching

toward the horizon... centering is an essentially creative process authored by people themselves ” (p.171).

The Poetics of Changing Places

The body occupies the poetic middle ground of centering. The in-between place of the breathing, eating, speaking mouth renders the body poetic and poised for articulating. Embodied actors articulate meaning in relation to each other and in relation to the here and there of place. My here is your there. The interplay of bodily and subject positions makes it critical and poetic (Bonnett, 1996):

What is central to the poetic is the sense in which no-one initiates it, is wholly responsible for it, or able to control it. It is a matter of coresponsibility. The ‘task’ is the product of a set of constantly evolving mutual relationships, it is the expression of an interplay. ...Each, at any moment, is a provision (i.e. constantly evolving) intersection of the relationships, values that are in play and together constitute the enterprises of authentic teaching and learning. (p. 37)

The poet and the poetic play in the in-between, trespassing and transgressing the boundaries of gendered binary oppositions including service and knowledge. The flesh-and-blood poet and the poetic text are articulated bodies negotiating the spatial trajectories of storying and restorying. They “localize, or give a here-and-now to, a being in the world” (Scharleman, 1993, p. 15). And in the intersubjectivity of mutual storytelling, the poetic also traces the ‘there-and-then’ of becoming. The body and voice become indistinguishable by way of the mouth (Derrida, 1983). The mouth and voice are poised for mediating the elementary and binary choices of the body: right-left, forward-backward, in-out, up-down, before-behind, above-below, here and there, this way or that way (Casey, 1993). Accordingly, the poet’s voice and story mediates discursively constructed asymmetrical pairings to disclose possible worlds, alternative ways of being, knowing and acting.

My epistemic and moral project of telling tales of embodied service encounters resists the enduring hegemonic masculinity (Thornton, 1989) and enmeshed binary oppositions. The ancillary role of women in the home is reproduced in the handmaidens of the university, especially the secretaries, clerks and service workers in cooking and cleaning functions.

Women are ‘other’ to the citizenry here... The status of citizen is reserved for those who are male/academic... but class is of the essence, for ‘education’, the chief product of this place, is considerably more than just book-learning — it is an ineffable grace of mind that only the lineage of centuries can bestow. (Stanley, 1997, p. 3).

Service workers experience the intellectual life of the university as cooks and poets (Lander, 1996b). Knowledge workers experience the intellectual life of the university as philosophers. Service work is recognized as ancillary, as back-up. The knowledge work of the philosopher is recognised as integral to the task of higher education. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nottingham drafts this enduring cartography into the 1993-1994 Annual Report: “This report sets out to tell the story behind the statistics and league tables. The story is first and foremost of human endeavour in a community of scholars and students, *backed up* [italics added] by support staff of the highest quality” (p. 3). My epistemological and poetic project seeks to redraft the subject positions of

service workers to places integral to ‘human endeavour in a community of scholars’, not ancillary, not back up.

Mutual storytelling attends to the authorial and poetic voice of the service worker experiencing the intellectual life of the university. Service workers experience the intellectual life of the university in the minutiae of everyday living. These interrelated truth effects or grids of everyday meaning comprise the rhetorical, ideological system which like “the zigzagging sewing machine moves [sic] from left to right, but primarily preoccupied with the left seam, it links together all terms in ways that are hard to disentangle” (Bal, 1994, p. 35). Table 1 presents some of the binary terms that are brought together in this linking process.

THE GENDERED HIERARCHY OF UNIVERSITY DISCOURSES OF SERVICE-KNOWLEDGE

Man	Woman
Knowing	Serving
Mary	Martha
Philosopher	Cook
Reason	Feeling
Objectivity	Subjectivity
Fact	Value
Culture	Nature
Clean	Dirty
Head	Hand
Self-Reliance	Interconnectedness
Universal	Particular
Public	Private
Justice	Care
Rights	Co-responsibility
Higher	Lower
Patriarchal	Home

Note. This binary ordering adapts and enlarges upon Code’s (1991, p. 274) and Bal’s (1994, p. 35) mapping of ideological structure in narrative. I heed Bal’s caveat that ‘Mary’ attaches to the ‘man’ order of the biblical narrative. The male and female agents in my research are crisscrossing left and right seams of this gendered hierarchy in the stories they tell.

My place-changing project radicalizes the dominant fiction of the university as a knowledge organization in the sense of received knowledge and owning intellectual property. It places service workers as subjects and knowers inside the active learning and intellectual life of the university. The nexus of interactions that constitutes the service encounter in and out of the classroom is epistemically and morally valuable. It is ‘infinite hospitality’:

The infinitely metonymical question on the subject of ‘one must eat well’ must be nourishing not only for me, for a ‘self,’ which given its limits, would thus eat badly, it must be shared...and not only in language. ‘One must eat well’ does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but learning and giving to eat, learning-to-give-the-other to-eat... It is the rule of offering infinite hospitality. (Derrida, 1991, p. 115)

My research project effects change in the subject positions of service workers, knowledge workers and students. I give particular attention to the counter-hegemonic voices of the mostly female service corps, especially their dislodging of patriarchal discourses. The appeal of critical mutual storytelling for me is both its method and its effect: it proceeds by subjects challenging their socially inscribed places and identities through the competing force of their own voices and their own stories of experience; it has the effect of opening up alternative subject positions, alternative possibilities for action, for meaning-making and for self-understanding.

It has the immediate effect of changing places within the course of telling the story and addressing the other, in learning to give the other to eat. I begin with challenging the socially and spatially ascribed identities that the Mary-Martha story articulates. I move to connecting this exemplary story to my subjective experience as a service worker in a Canadian university and as a student services researcher in a British university.

Revisiting History

The over determination of meaning in the biblical dialogue of service and knowledge lends itself to recursive cartographies, through present and past, through history and auto/biography. These recursions lend themselves to the what ifs, Braidotti’s (1994) ‘as-if’ nomadic mode, opening up in-between spaces, shifting service-knowledge boundaries, renegotiating them in the surplus of meaning. Martha has a speaking voice from her service position in the kitchen – a voice of resistance, commanding Jesus to use his authority on her behalf to bid Mary help her. Mary listening to Jesus at his very feet does not speak and in so doing “hath chosen that good part.” That good part of what whole? Has Mary chosen that good playing part for a female knower, a silent role? Jesus does not obey Martha’s bidding. He rebukes her, sorrowfully repeating her name, “Martha, Martha”; the rebuke is in the context of Martha’s implication that Jesus does not care that she is serving alone. In declaring “Mary hath chosen that good part,” Jesus authoritatively renders Martha’s part in service as ‘other’ and so it has echoed through the ages. In the ancient Semitic world, Mary’s silent presence in all male company is extraordinary – women were supposed to be in the kitchen, so was Mary’s choice a way of resisting normative authority too? Was Jesus pushing the boundaries of hegemonic male authority by lauding Mary’s presence in male company? Or did he honour Mary by placing her in the lineage of the male good, spanning knowing, reason, and head work? What if, as the conversation continued, Martha was invited in with the men or, like Mary, chose to know? What if Mary spoke up and offered to give Martha a hand in the kitchen?

The Greek for ‘part’ is *meros* signifying an inherited right. This sheds alternative meaning on “it shall not be taken away from her.” This reading invokes some

contemporary oppositions: individual rights versus care and co-responsibility, and essentialist versus constructivist discourses on male-female differences (Bal, 1994; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Braidotti, 1994; Code, 1991; Gilligan, 1982). Is Mary classified with the male idea of a patrilineal birthright to know, counterpoising Martha's rightful place in the "care and trouble about many things"?

This overdetermination of service and knowledge serves as a touchstone to circumscribed subject positions of contemporary university women but also to the surplus of meaning: Martha gets to cook and serve in the kitchen, and she gets to speak her mind, but she doesn't get to know; Mary gets to listen to her Lord so she gets to know, but she doesn't get to speak, she doesn't get to serve, to offer the hospitality of home cooking. But what if? This overdetermination manifests itself in the very naming of universities and colleges after the saints. Nowhere do either the namesakes of Martha or Mary appear, although Bethany is infrequently attached to American higher education institutions. The first medieval universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the English-speaking world each have a Jesus College; Oxford University has its St. Anne's College, Magdalen College, St. Catherine's College alongside St. Antony's College, St. Hugh's College, St. John's College and St. Peter's College. Cambridge University has its St. Catherine's College alongside St. John's College, and St. Edmund's College. And the many instances of St. Mary's University revere Mary, the Mother of God, not Mary of Bethany. Nowhere across the globe or the Internet have I found a St. Martha's University. But what if?

My research interrogates the discursive practices of universities in Nova Scotia and in the U.K. to challenge the historical constitutents and normative boundaries that construct, empower and disempower the subject, knower and agent. This is the power-knowledge-discourse nexus that produces the truth effect (Foucault, 1980) of keeping women in their place. But this nexus can also be the productive place of actors and agency where difference is spoken and subjects-knowers-agents change places in these "epistemological borderlands... sites of interface between different knowledges, different knowledge-claims..." (Stanley, 1997, p. 2). From Foucault (1972) and Freire (1970), we understand that naming an object determines what it becomes; the naming itself urges meaning upon us; naming marks boundaries; naming bestows identities. The epistemological possibilities of St. Martha's University oscillate with difference, with surplus meaning, with enriched identities. The biblical trace creates a different dissonance than McDonald's Hamburger University or Motorola University which train industrial workers for the marketplace. After all, St. Martha is the Roman Catholic patron saint of cooks and servants.

Nova Scotia with its 11 universities offers the colonial perspective of the university and its Christian affiliation. The female saints are represented in St. Mary's University, and Université de Ste Anne. Mount St. Vincent University and Mount St. Bernard College inaugurated their all-female institutions with the names of male saints. St. Mary's University that began as an all-male institution has been co-educational since the late 1960s, as has Mount St. Vincent since the 1980s.

My lengthy experience in the management of personal services to students at St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) in Antigonish colours this research and inspired the Martha-Mary contrary. The Bethany Motherhouse of the Congregation of St. Martha is in Antigonish and up until 1994, St. Martha's Convent occupied the same hall on the StFX campus as the main dining hall. Members of this religious order living adjacent to the

dining room and the main laundry were the original work force in the food, cleaning and laundry service to students and priests in residence. During my time on this campus, there were still Sisters of St. Martha supervising unionized housekeeping and janitorial staff, but none on staff. Sister Monica looked after the priests' personal laundry, diligently sewed name tags on the athletic teams' uniforms, collected winter clothes for the international students in the Coady Institute and did their washing and mending. I remember her work as a labour of love, as she cheerfully sang hymns all the while. In the early days, the Sisters of St. Martha tended to all the students' laundry and housekeeping too. In 1994, the occupants of St. Martha's Convent were relocated off campus; today there are no Sisters of St. Martha employed in food service or cleaning service at the university. The Marthas now in employment on campus are educators, chaplains, counsellors and administrators. The main laundry has been discontinued, leaving students responsible for their own laundry. The male side of the religious affiliation has its parallel: as of 1997 there are no priests on the teaching faculty although a core of retirees continue to live on campus. Yet the religious trace of the university remains.

The 'instituted trace' (Derrida, 1976) of the university, particularly the boundaries of service-knowledge abides in its Christian affiliations. The university or *universitas* first named in medieval Europe was created by men of God for men of God. The first medieval universities in Bologna, Paris, Oxford and Cambridge at the turn of the first millennium espoused democratic, liberal principles. These first universities enacted papal or imperial 'bull', that is, the rule of law and Christian doctrine. The Church operations of sanctioning, protecting, and financing the medieval university effectively conflated university law with Christian doctrine.

The university signifies then as now a community of teachers and scholars. The rhetoric in the 12th century patterns contemporary notions of the university as self-governing: academic freedom and autonomy, community and collegiality. The rhetoric of knowledge and liberal education as canonical, rational, self-reliant, scientific, universal and male persists in its paradox. Women were barred from the knowledge work of the university until the last century, and women's place outside knowledge persists. Women's experience of the emotional, the relational, the natural, the caring and the particular remains largely unvoiced and outside knowledge. The epistemological borderlands of service-knowledge are contested zones where women's voices are just beginning to be heard in the surplus of meaning.

Re-mapping the Knowing-Serving Terrain

This critical composition spanning history and auto/biography tells of everyday practice; it exposes the discursive practices of the university, the continuities and discontinuities, patterned on medieval patterns of ecclesiastical authority, borne of Christian doctrine. My research at the University of Nottingham exploits critical storytelling and story-listening to open up alternative ways of knowing situated in service. Listen to Rose, Hall Manager for a mixed hall in the U.K., directly addressing Jerome (a first year law student from the Midlands and first year rep) and his lament that there were no 'stodgy puddings' that he was 'used to' served on his first day in hall:

Margaret (the Dining Room Supervisor) has been from the start of term and still is at the moment varying the staff. She is doing a steady job, recruiting, badgering ladies to come back. Probably you'll find ladies washing your sink in the morning, peeling spuds at night as well, so you know sort of a lot of, you know,

cajoling, and persuading to get people to come back – it's time-consuming, not always, a thankless task as well but you know!

Rose is voicing the pulsating rhythms of the embodied service encounter and the interconnectedness of student needs and appetites with staff needs and desires. This is simultaneously a knowledge and a moral encounter. Rose is recognising the consequences of staff shortages and at the same time justifying the positions/actions of her staff as she addresses Jerome and his concern directly. Like the biblical Martha, she takes an embodied speaking position and becomes author of her own deeds. She enacts moral agency.

The 'quality moment' that Sherry, Housekeeping Supervisor, remembers also invokes a home discourse:

I had a quality moment... last term. One of the students was upset. And it was right at Christmas and taken poorly. And I went into his room and he was upset. And I just put my arm around him and gave him a hug. Thought nothing of it. But a couple days later when he came back, he made his way to me to say a special Thank You. It's just nice to be appreciated you know. If you saw somebody upset, you would naturally do that anyway but he made a special point in, to thank me afterwards, which was nice.

The epistemic value of this service encounter is discounted (Bartby, 1990) by Sherry herself when she says, "Thought nothing of it," and "You would naturally do that anyway." It was a non-rationalising, intuitive hug. What is the tacit knowledge that enters into knowing that a hug is the shared nourishment that is called for? Into knowing that the upset student will accept the hug in the spirit in which it was intended? And into believing that it is only natural? Trace the trajectory of the male student who "made his way to" Sherry, "made a special point" to express appreciation. He alights on the right seam of home discourses, of care and co-responsibility. His response affirms Sherry's act and blurs the boundaries between serving and being served. This is the poetic interplay of 'infinite hospitality'.

What transpires when students encounter the official knowledge worker doing service work? Listen to young women in their first year remembering their initial forays into intellectual life. Jeannie, an arts student from the Midlands, and Biljana, an arts student from Eastern Europe, articulate the service encounter around making a course change:

Biljana: I wasn't very happy with a course when I came. I was doing a— and b— combined. And over the summer, I was thinking, I really don't want to do b—... And within the first few weeks, I decided I really didn't like it and I went to the head of the — department. I explained the problem. I explained that I did Alevels for two years before and my ideas of what I wanted to do had changed since. And he was really, I don't know, shitty, with me, that's the only way I can put it. As though you can't change now, blah, blah, blah, you have to change at the end of semester, if you change at all. And that was it, he didn't offer any assistance of any kind. It was so all down to me. He didn't say, "Oh, why do you want to change? "Do you think it's a good idea? This is the alternative." Just "No," full stop. So, I felt bitchy to that. Because there wasn't an assistance that they always say, "You can come to..."

Jeannie: I decided to change courses as well and I didn't have to. I wanted to. And because I didn't like the History part and I really like my tutor. In fact he's a babe, actually he's wicked... so I, I sort of, then I went up to my teacher and I sort of *reasoned* [italics added] with him. "So this is what I think" and he said, "Yeah, that's fine." And he got the necessary forms and stuff and that was it and I was changed within like a week so like it was no problem so that was all right... But I was just like, just taking extra French and dropping History so it was no big deal, really. It wasn't like a big course change.

Both Biljana and Jeannie are zigzagging to and fro: knowledge-service; patriarchal-home discourses; resisting complicity in the left seam of patriarchal discourses. Biljana's repeated use of 'explained' is an appeal to reason. She responds emotionally to the head of department's "Just 'No,' full stop," as the use of the scatological epithet underscores. Her imagined dialogue exploring alternatives positions teacher and student in poetic interplay, embodying reason and emotion, fact and value. Alas, she can only imagine the infinite hospitality of learning to give the other to eat. Jeannie too reasoned with her tutor. She crosses the boundary to home discourses of care and co-responsibility when she says "it was no big deal, really." Jeannie downplays her own congenial, reasoned engagement to empathise with Biljana whose appeal to reason in "a big course change" met with indifference and immobility.

The poetic in-between that animates these service encounters offers a way beyond the epistemic and moral dilemma of living and learning on just one side of the knowledge-service divide. In telling their tales of becoming, the cooks to the philosophers, and the philosophers to the cooks, self as poet moves outward to address and fill the body of the Other (Lander, 1996b). This is letting loose appetite and desire. This is learning to give the other to eat. The historical boundaries shift. Service merges with knowledge. The mind and body are one. Poetic hospitality attends to human desire as constituent of intellectual life.

The intersection of history and auto/biography articulates this long undervalued experience of intellectual life – the experience of Martha and Mary, my experience, and the experiences of Roses, Jeromes, Margarets, Sherrys, 'poorly' students, 'babe' tutors, Jeannies and Biljanas⁴ engaging in the poetic hospitality of the service encounter at the frontier of knowledge. In reconstituting higher education as poetic hospitality, knowing rebounds into service, service rebounds into knowing. In telling our tales of becoming, we can be changing the places of men and women in the university; we can be making the university a hospitable place: Mary gets to speak and serve; Martha gets to contemplate and know.

The story privileges "logic of ambiguity" through its accounts of interaction. It "turns" the frontier into a crossing, and the river into a bridge. It recounts inversions and displacements: the door that closes is precisely what may be opened; the river is what makes passage possible. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 128)

Author's Note

My knowledgeable service co-workers of St. Francis Xavier University (1976-1994) were the inspiration for my doctoral research into the service university as it is portrayed in this paper. I want to recognize two worker-friends from whom I continue to learn about exemplary service: Mrs. Alma MacLean as Coordinator of Residence Services served in my department for 18 years with her head, hands, and heart; and Ms. Mary

Lillian MacDonald (known affectionately as Kitty V.) has served for 27 years as an untitled clerical worker at the Angus L. MacDonald Library, embodying service knowledge in her friendships with students and workers. My doctoral research was enriched and made possible by my co-researchers at the University of Nottingham (U.K.), and I re-present their diverse voices in this paper. Students, knowledge workers and service workers welcomed me to the Hall and candidly shared with me and each other their 'moments of truth', the service encounter in and out of the classroom. Professor Teddy Thomas and Professor John Morgan served up inimitable Welsh hospitality in collaborating with me on my doctoral research (1995-1997) through the Department of Continuing Education at the University of Nottingham.

Notes:

1. My choice of epistemological questions was inspired by Lorraine Code's (1991) work on female subjectivity, the discursive construction of knowledge and the re-mapping of the epistemic terrain to value women's experience: *What can she know? Feminist theory and the construction of knowledge*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press
2. Cartography in my place-making project exploits the inherent contradictions of fixed and shifting boundaries. I apply Rosi Braidotti's (1994) nomadic cartographies which "need to be redrafted continuously; as such they are structurally opposed to fixity and therefore to rapacious appropriation... Nomadism... is the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing" (pp. 35-36). Nomadic cartographies mark historical locations, hold contradictions simultaneously, and creatively affirm differences, including sexual difference.
3. I adapt Sally Westwood's (1991) articulation of transformative research as a political and moral transaction and discourse. Transformative research goes beyond participatory action research: "research projects in the transformative mode have to offer those involved not simply a voice but a speaking position through the narrative mode" (p. 83).
4. All names in the tales of service encounters from Nottingham Hall are pseudonyms.

References

- Bal, M. (1994). *On meaning-making: Essays in semiotics*. Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press.
- Bartby, S. (1990). *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. New York: Routledge.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N., & Tarule, J. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice and mind*. New York: Basic Books.
- Block, P. (1993). *Stewardship: Choosing service over self-interest*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Bonnett, M. (1996). 'New' era values and the teacher-pupil relationship as a form of the poetic. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 44(1), 27-41.
- Braidotti, R. (1994). *Nomadic subjects: Embodiment and sexual difference in feminist theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Buttimer, A. (1980). Home, reach and the sense of place. In A. Buttimer & D. Seamon (Eds.), *The human experience of space and place* (pp. 166-187). London: Croom Helm.
- Casey, E. (1993). *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Code, L. (1991). *What can she know? Feminist theory and the construction of knowledge*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Crossley, N. (1996). Body-subject/body-power: Agency, inscription and control in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty. *Body and Society*, 2(1), 99-116.
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Original work published 1967).
- Derrida, J. (1983). *Dialangues*. In E. Weber (Ed.), *Points* (pp. 132-155). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1991). "Eating well": An interview. In E. Cadava, P. Connor, & J. L. Nancy (Eds.) *Who comes after the subject?* (pp. 96-119). New York: Routledge.
- Earwaker, J. (1992). *Helping and supporting students*. Buckingham, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). London: Tavistock.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (C. Gordon, Ed., C. Gordon et al., Trans.). New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1988). Truth, power, self: An interview. In L. Martin, H. Gutman, & P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the Self*. London: Tavistock.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Herder & Herder.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Greenleaf, R. (1977). *Servant leadership*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Holmer-Nadeson, M. (1996). Organizational identity and space of action. *Organization Studies*, 17(1), 49-81.
- Lander, D. (1996a). Freshers as organizational actors and moral agents (abstract). *Conference Proceedings, Ninth International Conference on the First-Year Experience*, July 15-19, 1996, University of St. Andrews, Scotland, 145-146.
- Lander, D. (1996b). The campus transgressions of the cook, the poet and the philosopher (abstract). ASCA workshop proceedings, *Territoriality and Desire, International Conference on Semiotics*, August 6-9, 1996, Amsterdam, 41-43.
- Lander, D. (1997). *Telling tales out of school: Authorising the university as a service organization for first year students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Nottingham, U.K.
- Mills, C. W. (1970). *The sociological imagination*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1959).
- Morgan, W. & McWilliam, E. (1995). Keeping an untidy house: A disjointed paper about academic space, work and bodies. In R. Smith and P. Wexler (Eds.), *After Postmodernism: Education, politics and identity* (pp. 112-127). London: Falmer Press.

- Nightingale, P. & O'Neil, M. (1994). *Achieving quality learning in higher education*. London: Kogan Page.
- Randall, W. L. (1995). *The stories we are: An essay on self-creation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Razack, S. (1993). *Storytelling for social change*. *Gender and Education*, 5, 55-70.
- Scharleman, R. P. (1993). The textuality of texts. In D. Klemm & W. Schweiker (Eds.), *Meaning in texts and actions: Questioning Paul Ricoeur* (pp. 13-25). Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Schuster, J. P. (1998). Servants, egos, and shoeshines: A world of sacramental possibility. In L. Spears (Ed.), *Insights on leadership: Service, stewardship, spirit, and servant-leadership* (pp. 271-278). New York: John Wiley.
- Spears, L. (Ed.). (1998). *Insights on leadership: Service, stewardship, spirit, and servant-leadership*. New York: John Wiley.
- Stanley, L. (1992). *The autobiographical I: The theory and practice of feminist autobiography*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Stanley, L. (Ed.). (1997). *Knowing feminisms: On academic borders, territories and tribes*. London: Sage.
- Thornton, M. (1989). Hegemonic masculinity and the academy. *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 17, 115-130.
- Westwood, S. (1991). Power/knowledge: The politics of transformative research. *Convergence*, XXIV(3), 79-85.
- Wheeler, S., & Birtle, J. (1993). *A handbook for personal tutors*. Buckingham, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.