In 1984, College English printed M. Elizabeth Wallace's impassioned précis of her Part-Time Academic Employment in the Humanities. In this seven page document, Wallace summarizes work done on the problem of the "part-time situation" in the early 1980s—this, mostly empirical research on the extent to which undergraduate courses are staffed by poorly paid (if well-qualified and hard-working) teachers, many of whom aspire, or once aspired, to the professoriate (580). Wallace contends that it is this "dismal scenario" that paradoxically sustains "the dignity and status of the profession" as a whole, that is, of a professoriate in English (586, 585). More pointedly, Wallace makes clear her ambivalence about the situation: to teachers stuck in the nontenure-track ranks of teaching work, she wants to say "Get out"; find better work for yourself; "It's easier ... than you think" (586). But she also understands the complex and often specifically theoretical allure of academic work. In 1984, Wallace states succinctly the problem of teachers who deserve better—better working conditions, better pay, better professional consideration—than what they are getting, but who don't, for complicated if not exclusively personal reasons, want to give up or move on.

In the nearly two decades that have passed between Wallace's statement of the part-time situation and today, organizations of teaching work in and around English departments have not improved. But in that time, and partly in response to that time, strong and strengthening political movements around the status of nontenure-track labor have begun to contest the institutional policies that made this once seemingly exceptional situation a durable reality. In books, articles, and profes-
sional conferences, academic labor in composition is increasingly an issue not only for study and debate but also for coalition building and collective organizing. Largely separate from such efforts, scholars, teachers, and administrators have submitted for the field’s consideration a number of carefully considered proposals for reforming the use of part-time and nontenure track labor in composition. Clearly, some of these (Journet, for example) have made headway toward improving local arrangements. Nevertheless, it’s hard to think that anything less than a collective organization of teachers aimed at exercising direct, ongoing pressure on composition program administrations will be able to remedy the current situation. This recognition—usually thought in the terms of a necessarily materialist approach to struggles around academic labor—is conventionally the point at which one discovers as so many superstructural mystifications the activities of research and disciplinary work in composition. That is, the moment at which one realizes that bad working conditions for teachers in the field aren’t likely to be solved by academic professionals’ reform proposals is usually the moment at which one apprehends the complicity of publishing and published work as in a number of ways determining these conditions. Articles published in research journals aren’t just insufficient to address real conditions of work; they are more or less completely the problem in the first place (Vandenberg).

With all of this in mind, it is nevertheless my purpose here to suggest that projects oriented toward the problem of reading composition research might well harbor some usefulness to directly materialist projects to change organizations of work in composition. Recent proposals for professionalizing the field’s contingent teachers have offered a way of rethinking the division of labor between academics and teachers in the terms of producers and consumers of teaching scholarship (Murphy; Harris, “Meet”). I want to argue here that, although such proposals have their argumentative weaknesses (Bousquet, for example), they might be useful in one dimension at least: by reframing the problem of work effectively in the terms of a market for composition research, they suggest some political projects toward the end of making contingent teachers count in this field as readers.

In its brief disciplinary history, composition has certainly already seen a negative, exploitative politics of readers and reading, which has been described most notably by Stephen North in the terms of the devalued work of practitioner lore. But contemporary developments in the field, especially around the situation of composition research that
tends increasingly towards “theory,” might make it possible to force some change in these political arrangements. Composition’s theorists—in North’s terms, its new “Philosophers,” “Historians,” and “Critics”—might, I suggest, find productive ways to support teachers in their own projects to change this politics and its discipline-forming dynamics for the better. To my mind, this could (potentially, at least) mean supporting and extending a more affirmative politics of reading as (again, potentially, at least) a re-formation of the discipline of composition.³

Marketwork in Composition

For among many other things, theory recruits a labor force into English. . . . [And] theory must promise to recruit. . . . In the circumstances of English departments, however, it’s less the morality of potentially false advertising or broken promises at issue than how best to take advantage of what opportunities might exist in order to realize politically what the changing composition and expectations of a labor force might make possible.

—Evan Watkins

Given the kinds of recent writing done on the subject of work in composition—for instance, and importantly, Eileen Schell’s *Gypsy Academics and Mother Teachers: Gender, Contingent Labor, and Writing Instruction*—it seems almost a shame to try to approach the problem of work through an analysis of composition scholarship because not only does the genre of the meta-conversation about the purposes of scholarly research seem hopelessly distant from the realities of teaching on the ground, as it were, but, also, if we have learned anything about how research is conceived for part-time and adjunct teachers of composition in contingent writing instruction, it’s that it isn’t supposed to go on for those workers at all. In this context, a focus on the purposes of research in composition—even, for instance, on the purposes of research on work in composition—doesn’t just ignore the kinds of exclusions that scholarly research seems to name; it also threatens to reinscribe the very kinds of moralizing imperatives that separate research and teaching in the first place. As Schell and others have remarked, it’s a cruel system of professional advancement that privileges research over teaching even and especially for those who have the least time to produce it: part-time and adjunct teachers, writing program administrators, and graduate students, all mostly women.⁴
Nevertheless, as in my epigraph above, research, at least as (comp) theory, is never too distant from how a labor force in English comes to be organized. Schell’s analysis is an extremely important consideration of how, for instance, the notion of “psychic income” for contingent teachers in composition mystifies actually bad working conditions for these (mostly female) workers (41). But it doesn’t very accurately register that what Watkins calls the composition and expectations of a labor force in English can change—in terms of its relation to “theory” as recruitment, for instance—while still being subjected to the same structural limitations on its place in the field. True, for a materialist politics like Schell’s (with its emphasis on the collective organization of teachers), such a phenomenon is probably better addressed in local practices of organizing. But for an examination of the role of reading composition research in these struggles and their outcomes—my purpose here—such a change in what would count as a solicitation to work is important to consider.

That composition research has become progressively more “theoretical” since its strong emergence as a field in the 1970s is a proposition that shouldn’t require much argument. It can be registered in any number of ways: in an awareness of changing patterns in scholarly citation in the field, in descriptions of out-and-out “theory wars,” or in designations of how consequential composition research will be or has been theory. Within this narrative of the becoming-theoretical of composition, however, there is a more substantial distinction to be made, one that minds the force of Watkins’ emphasis on the effects of theory. While it’s easy to observe how the fine points of continental philosophy creep ever more surely into the official discourse of teachers of writing, it’s surely more to the point to ask after the purpose that this theory serves in the field itself. To anticipate my point, the arrival of theory as the main strain of composition research might become substantially a matter of reorganizing how work is done in composition programs.

In Composition in the University, Sharon Crowley argues that the paradigm shift announced with the emergence of process pedagogy was very much a matter of making students in composition classrooms the objects of a newly legitimated research enterprise (191; see also “Around”). Other commentators on the real history of this moment—like North, for example—point to the renegotiation of professional roles this newly legitimated research helped accomplish: the demotion of teachers to passive recipients of the official knowledge. To me, it seems possible to combine these two historical insights into the recognition of an institutional process in which basically positivist research has been progres-
sively reworked into a theoretical form. This process would certainly begin, as Crowley and North suggest, in the ignoble birth of a scholarly literature capable of legitimating the distinction between researcher and teacher. But it would find its completion in the systematic dismantling of the epistemological priority given to the production of the sort of research that could be called, as North did, “the making of knowledge in composition.”

Peter Vandenberg’s “Composing Composition Studies: Scholarly Publication and the Practice of Discipline” usefully extends both Crowley’s and North’s observations on the history of composition research into an account of this literature’s emergence as a product. In the 1980s, Vandenberg argues, key figures in the rise of composition like Maxine Hairston accomplished more than a reorganization of research or a renegotiation of professional roles in composition. He argues that would-be academic professionals in compositions like Hairston established a market for research in composition, a market whose effects can be seen in precisely the contemporary working conditions for teachers that Schell and others protest. It is published scholarship that “defines the dichotomization of labor in rhetoric and composition,” Vandenberg writes, meaning that the presumed (market) relations between producers and consumers of scholarly texts actually makes possible the social distances and material inequalities maintained between different workers in the same field (26). In a familiar critique of market economics, Vandenberg asserts that this market is more or less a completely mystifying field, the fictional locus of a symbolic operation whose only purpose is to exacerbate the unjust distinctions between academics as “professionals” and teachers as “clients” (20). In short, Vandenberg decries this market as a fiction covering over a more properly structural and material exploitation.

In a twist on his argument symmetrical to but opposite Crowley’s provocative claim at the end of Composition in the University, Vandenberg asserts that the market established between producers and consumers of composition scholarship has outlasted its usefulness for professionals in composition. As rhetoric and composition has “solidified as an academic field, the need to destabilize teaching in order to create a market for ‘research’ has subsided,” he writes, indicating that there are academics in composition who would like to sever ties with the teachers impoverished by their gains (27). But like Crowley’s own proposal for the abolition of first-year writing requirements in colleges and universities, Vandenberg’s assertion of the elimination of the market for composition research—a
market that potentially unites scholars and teachers in composition—is somewhat untimely. In actuality, as I will discuss, a recent outbreak of proposals centered on the problem of bad working conditions for composition teachers has renewed the need to evaluate this market and the opportunities it might present.

In *Everyday Exchanges*, Watkins argues that markets are generally conceived—by economists, capitalists, and critics—as the already-existent domains in which stuff (like writing) can be identified as something like economic resources. In this sense, a "market for composition research" would be, as Vandenberg asserts, merely the kind of mystifying field in which writing turns into a resource that can be traded on a market of a quite different type: the job market, all of which nets not exactly actual money but a job, a position, or positional gain. Viewed this way, a market for research can never be useful to those who don't "produce": produce the research market, on the one hand, as a mystification of exploitation, and produce research commodities, on the other, as a means for exploiting the positional gains this market makes possible.

However, if, as Watkins suggests, markets are not in fact already given but rather must be made by the hard work of consuming, then a market for research in composition appears as something quite different (17–19). According to this logic, some highly differentiated collective of readers does the work of constructing markets through which something like writing can be transformed into a positional or economic resource. Granted, one consequence of such an understanding of a market for composition actually intensifies the mystification thesis that Vandenberg advances. In this understanding of such a market, the mystification becomes more active, tending toward something like the willed reproduction of structural inequalities—perhaps, even, the refinement of these inequalities, for if a collective of readers constructs a market for research in composition, it necessarily affirms the kinds of exclusions and judgments that establish a strict hierarchy of positional value in the first place. Moreover, such a collective, through its "marketwork"—consuming practices—proliferates the field within which such distinctions can take place, thus making available more and more opportunities for naturalized judgments.

Nevertheless, what's potentially useful in an understanding of markets of this type is the way in which it tends to reframe in political and practical terms the kind of "economic realities" that are supposed to always and everywhere constrain what we do. More importantly, perhaps, markets in this sense define for composition a field of more or less
economic practices united—paradoxically enough—by the kind of highly refined discriminations of positional value that everywhere seem to divide up workers engaged in similar tasks. That is, while Vandenberg’s dichotomy between “professional” and “client” name, experientially, two very different kinds of participation in the work of composition, Watkins’ description of markets connects these two very different experiences through the marketwork that subordinates one to the other. Quite different from any understanding of the ostensibly economic realities of composition of work (which must be, in large part, imported from outside of the field in more and less mystifying ways), “marketwork” shows how the kinds of positional gains represented by professional status can be articulated within the field constituted by composition marketwork—and, potentially, be made to serve very different ends.

With Watkins’ concept of marketwork in mind, it maybe possible to see how what is commonsensically designated by the term “theory” bears the stamp of not just professional innovation in the domain of composition’s established academics but also the after-image of a differential reception in a market composed at least partially of regular teachers. Of course, especially in the time period described by Vandenberg, marketwork itself has been subjected to the maintenance of disciplinary boundaries as the constitution of what Vandenberg calls an “epistemic court” (26). Nevertheless, today, for a variety of reasons (and not least among these the rise of “theory” in composition), this “court” might be forced open to modification by precisely those teachers who Vandenberg claimed would be abandoned. Calls to professionalize what Schell calls contingent composition labor, for instance, might well provide good, if not ideal, opportunities to force Vandenberg’s market for composition research to more equitable ends.

**Once More on Lore**

While it seems to me that very few if any compositionists find themselves engaged in the same kinds of research that Watkins does with markets and marketwork, there are several who have elaborated what I take to be a suggestive and correlative model in “lore.” Introduced by North in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, lore names something like practitioner knowledge: the local, everyday knowledge of practice upon which teaching is built. Granted, there are some significant differences between any sense of a market in which writing can be turned into resources and the conservative, indifferent and undifferentiating realms of lore that North describes. However, between marketwork and some
version of an accumulation of lore, there is, I think, some significant and productive similarity. In any case, it's not absolutely necessary that lore should line up with the analyses of markets I have presented so far in any tidy way. In my description of a market for composition research, lore appears itself within the field not as some kind of orienting concept but rather as the positive contribution of all teachers—including part-time, adjunct, and graduate student teachers—to a market that would have all believe it only traffics in writing.

As a very general focus on teaching over research as the real productive work of composition, something like lore already enjoys a high regard in the professional literature. A history like Joseph Harris's *A Teaching Subject* invokes this sense of the field in its very title, for instance, while many books and articles argue, implicitly and explicitly, that the teaching of composition is the field's only thing of value. To be sure, it's easy to equate lore with what most composition literature holds in high esteem: work in the classroom, work with students, a life of work dedicated to the craft of teaching writing. North identifies lore as a body of knowledge connected with the everyday realities of the work of teaching: preparing particular lessons, teaching particular students, drawing up particular evaluative criteria, and so on. Lore is tied into solving classroom problems in a way that most teachers of composition find both compelling and familiar: it represents especially well the practical solutions that teachers must implement on an everyday basis (North 23–27).

Here, however, I want to return to the specific sense of lore offered by North and later taken up by Patricia Harkin: lore as teacher work that does not know its limits. Again, according to North, lore's boundaries are ill-defined, and it admits much reduplication of effort and little innovation. Practically, lore comprises everything that everyone has tried in a composition classroom, and, especially, anything that anyone has told about their own teaching practice. Lore takes stock syllabi, assignments, and teaching techniques and adapts them, *ad hoc*; it even takes more specifically disciplinary research and transforms it to its own ends. This last is most specifically troubling for a professional literature, as it routinely misinterprets into practice the field's carefully constructed academic arguments and conclusions (North 27).

This ill-mannered lore has always posed an epistemological problem for a professional literature in composition, even and especially when, as someone like Vandenberg asserts, it served as the negative term against which composition research and scholarship claimed their positive exist-
The problem of "misinterpretation" threatens, at least theoretically, the ideals of knowledge transmission that professional-client relationships presume on their face. (Practically, of course, any visible failures can simply be folded back into the scheme as warrants for more work.) In any case, lore's specifically "pragmatic logic" extends well beyond the limits of an epistemological frame and into specifically political and material organizations of the field (23).

In her contribution to the 1993 WPA conference "Composition in the Twenty-First Century: Crisis and Change," Ann Ruggles Gere proposes the formulation of "action research" for writing program administrators that nicely articulates some of the ways in which I want to discuss North and Harkin's lore (128). For Gere, action research allows WPAs—workers in the field who are not, nevertheless, always researchers in the disciplinary sense—to refocus their administrative work in terms of collaborative research. While Gere certainly imagines such a shift in practice as encouraging something like the more properly professional incorporation of WPAs into composition, Gere does not advocate it for this reason exactly. Rather, pointing to potential crises in staffing and working conditions faced by teachers who work for WPAs (not, necessarily WPAs themselves), Gere imagines "action research" as a way for WPAs to stake the work they already do to a research-based as opposed to administrative hierarchy of position. Gere understands well enough the injustices perpetrated by both versions of this hierarchy, but she also understands that political incorporation into a research-based hierarchy also supports the peculiar (and by no means innocent) agencies of tenure. In situations like writing program administration, where one person is often made to enforce the ostensibly economic realities passed on by this or that organ of university or college administration, an alternate form of political incorporation, especially insofar as it could be shared across individuals, might significantly strengthen the positions of both WPAs and the teachers who work for them. In Gere's formulation, action research names the conversion process by which the largely unrecognized work of writing program administrators is linked to research-based hierarchies of position.

By way of its association with scholarly inquiry and publishing, "action research" captures the productive aspect of lore that "lore" itself doesn't quite elicit. However, as I want to suggest, articulating lore in the terms of research necessarily gives away the degree to which lore is an alternative form of production in composition—that it works in different ways and "produces" different stuff. So, while Gere's savvy politics of
incorporation has much to recommend it, I think that action research still imagines some kind of writing that might be traded for some version of positional gain. In this way, it still imagines its potentials in terms of an already existent market for composition research. Put bluntly, it seems to me that the immediate point is not to make more researchers who can—in whatever progressive ways—reap the gains of a system of positional hierarchies based on Vandenberg’s “valid academic currency” (26). Rather, insofar as we can, we want to make the work that teachers and administrators already do count more substantially in the positional hierarchies to which they already contribute. The point, as I understand it, is to change the dynamics of a market for research in composition to a point where it can recognize the input of the market workers who are already both crucial to it and subjugated within it.

With the purposes and limitations of Gere’s account in mind, an article like Harkin’s “The Postdisciplinary Politics of Lore” is useful for thinking in specifically political and economic dimensions about the possibilities for scholarship that is not research. An article like Harkin’s does not merely attempt to valorize lore as knowledge production in any neutral sense; rather, Harkin’s article attempts to reposition lore in explicitly historical and political terms. For Harkin, lore might become an initiative with the potential to transform not only knowledge in composition but also professional hierarchies and positional gain.

Specifically, Harkin thinks out not only the pragmatic potential of this approach to knowledge but also its appropriateness for an organization of work in composition after the decline of official “Researcher” or “Scholarly” inquiry. Most clearly, Harkin argues for lore as an epistemology that might replace properly disciplinary inquiry, arguing the appropriateness of an “antiessentialist” way of thinking to the overdetermined social and institutional situations in which composition teachers find themselves (134). Citing Fredric Jameson’s “cognitive mapping,” Harkin argues that lore-as-mapping allows teachers, researchers, and theorists to make the organic practice of teachers an explicitly productive activity (136). In this way, in what Harkin describes as a conference focusing on the teaching practice of a featured guest, a group of expert pedagogues would collaborate with a conference audience to produce what Harkin calls a “kind of environmental impact statement for the teacher’s practice” (136–37). Quite deliberately, this epistemological product reflects very different origins than the traditional conference paper, and it proposes a sort of immediate use-in-making that seems central to lore. However, aside from any question of the propriety of the product to this
or another historical moment, Harkin also considers the valuation of this (admittedly untraditional) form of production. Clearly, the purpose of the conference format is to put the workings of lore center-stage, as it were, and, in so doing, force its value into circulation. Harkin also suggests (for the same reason) that the conference might be conducted using scarce institutional resources for teleconferencing and electronic networking (137–38).

In her proposal, Harkin attempts to introduce a new product for the market in composition research: the teleconferenced impact statement for teaching. But, as any experienced marketer can attest, it’s not easy to change the constitution of a given market from a product backwards. Harkin is clearly trying to wrestle with what are difficult problems: how to articulate alternative organizations of production and work and how to force the value of alternative “products” into circulation. But markets are difficult to change in substantial ways, and attempts to reform them usually run up against the same kind of problems that researchers, teachers, and administrators face when they try to reform teacher lore. However, with a sense that both markets and lore must both be constructed—and, correlative to that, they do not exist in advance, waiting, as it were, for the next new thing—it becomes at least possible to see how such organizations are both resistant to and capable of change. In this way, it is important to understand Harkin’s proposal as one of many such attempts brought to fruition through the peculiar agencies of tenure and sustained or abandoned according to the pragmatic logics of positional gain. Many alternate scholarly products (though not, perhaps, of precisely this kind) have in fact succeeded in the market for composition research: teacher memoirs, for instance.7

As Bruce Homer has argued, however, Harkin’s new format for lore is finally not the same thing as a revaluation of teacher practice in the sense demanded by critics like Vandenberg or Schell (178–79). It does aim to redesign a market that traffics only in writing to the substantial benefit of those who would not be writers. But it does not do much to challenge the existing conditions of an organization of work dependent, as Vandenberg says, on a hierarchy defined by scholarly publication. Bringing “lore to light,” as Harkin puts it, may well be a crucial strategy for beginning to recognize the complicated ways in which organic knowledges are central to this and other fields (138). But the shelter and sustenance afforded by the proceedings she describes cannot on their own terms challenge the ongoing processes of hierarchization within the field.
To begin to appreciate how lore and its "practitioners" might effectively challenge the system of academic professionalism Horner and Vandenberg protest, it is useful to return to North’s original description of lore. Lore is the conceptual lynchpin of North’s argument in his book, which is strange because The Making of Knowledge in Composition is a book about research and scholarly discipline, not about teaching. Mostly, it is a detailed analysis of the methodological proclivities (and missteps) of seven different academic camps in composition: the Historians, the Philosophers, the Critics, the Experimentalists, the Clinicians, the Formalists, and the Ethnographers. In the chapter structure of the book, these camps are divided into two larger groupings: the Scholars (the first three above) and the Researchers (the last four). Against this array of diverse scholars and researchers North pits the Practitioners, the keepers of lore and the main casualties of what he calls a "Revolution" in composition (318–36).

It is on the behalf of lore (and not the "Practitioners" who have so suffered through their association with it) that North indicts the emergence of composition as a field in roughly parallel terms as have Horner and Vandenberg after him. North explains very concretely how by 1980 the first act of the "'Revolution' in Composition" had come to completion and that lore had been, for all intents and purposes, banished from any serious consideration by composition’s professionals (328). This is not to say that lore was gone in any sense, as North well understood, but, rather, that professional, academic composition could make no use of it. The "Revolution" had been based on what came to hand as armaments in a contest of disciplinary legitimation; in this way, the pedagogical myths supported and endorsed by lore-knowledge appeared as a convenient target for the research enterprise. In Vandenberg’s terms, composition’s professionals established their research enterprise against lore.

Lore itself, though, is not merely a negative entity in North’s description. It is a body of knowledge that may itself take several forms. The most interesting of these for my purposes is lore’s written form (as opposed to its form as "ritual" or "talk") (29). For North, lore as writing is primarily a matter of a sort of "propaganda" about the practice of writing instruction in the specific guises of textbooks, monographs, and teachers’ guides (31). North admits one other possibility, however, conceding that scholarly journals and even books may sometimes become a vehicle for "Practitioner to Practitioner communication" (31). These he describes as often adopting "philosophical trappings" but without any
real philosophical rigor (54). Instead, he describes such articles as “helping” other Practitioners “know what to do” and their variously pseudo-philosophical devices as holding the “complexity” of properly philosophical issues “at bay” precisely in order to facilitate a “turn to practice” (54).

It is difficult to appreciate the importance that these communications’ lack of philosophical rigor assumes in North’s argument without an understanding of the importance of rigor in his book. The entire premise of *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* is something like a methodological clarification of the various scholarly camps he describes; in chapter after chapter, North offers his critical comments on the various methodological improprieties carried out by scholars and researchers in composition.

North reserves no special indulgence for composition’s “Philosophers,” those whose tactics, terminology, and authority are most similar to lore writing (54). Proceeding with reference to specific books and articles, North builds the case that the methodological danger for “philosophical” scholarship in composition is the danger of stepping outside the boundaries of philosophical argumentation. Specifically, North contends that philosophy can have no immediate purchase on reform attempts in the teaching of writing; when it tries to do so, it not only compromises its own conclusions but also invalidates the very claim to method that gave it its status as knowledge production to begin with.

North offers C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon’s *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing* as a paradigmatic example of a good account that gives way to this temptation. These authors, North argues, are not content to make the kinds of claims about rhetoric and its traditions that Philosophers can rigorously make—in North’s terms, for instance, distinctions about a “formalist” versus “epistemic” philosophical perspectives. Instead, Knoblauch and Brannon overstep their authority, and give themselves over to a non-philosophical evaluation of teaching methods that, they suppose, derive from such perspectives (112–15). In other words, North’s charge is that these and other Philosophers in composition have stooped to what he calls a “Scholarly reformism” and an abnegation of their mode of inquiry (115).

Today, in the context of wave after wave of critical theory and popular philosophy in composition, it may be difficult to see the point of North’s insistence on the removal of properly scholarly work from practical affairs of teaching. But in the context of his “portrait of the field,” the point is quite clear: it is precisely Scholars’ and Researchers’
false rigor that facilitates their disciplinary subordination of Practitioners. Practitioners were the figures against which composition’s academics set themselves as academic professionals and, in his terminology, knowledge-makers. And as North somewhat bitterly admits after his tour through the work of these camps and their various alliances, “a fairly strong case can be made, even within the limited confines of Composition, that an ‘essential’ use of knowledge can be to gain power” (360).

In the context of the present discussion of lore and marketwork, what seems useful to take away from North’s descriptions and objections is not his formal distinctions between various kinds of writing in composition, be they academic or practical or, as seems somewhat obvious from this vantage at least, some combination of the two. It is rather to say that precisely in the contemporary context of increasingly “theoretical” writing in composition, such distinctions cannot be made from a formal or textual standpoint. North’s analysis may well have been able to make formal distinctions about the real separation between a properly methodological analysis of philosophical perspectives and the improper use of scholarly warrants in the masquerade of disciplinary power. But today, precisely because of the field’s insistence on accounting for the effects and potentials unleashed by academic work, such an analysis might no longer be possible.

This is simply to say that North's distinction between two kinds of writing—one that offers workers in composition ways to know what to do versus another that establishes that workers don’t know what to do—is precisely what has been historically problematized by the arrival of “theory.” As Lynn Worsham states the case in her contribution to the recent collection Rhetoric and Composition as Intellectual Work, “Theory is driven by a passionate political consciousness that, in seeking to come to terms with the real world, seeks the conceptual tools, the explanatory frameworks, to engineer social change” (104). Theory inhabits the zone between the power takeovers of disciplinary expertise and simplifying practical accounts. It attempts to build “strategies for coping with concrete material situations,” but yet it does so in an engagement that doesn’t hold complexity at bay, as North says of lore (Worsham 103). Theory engages with complexity “because the real world from which theory arises and to which it speaks is itself complex” (Worsham 104).

“Theory,” as an event in composition, unmakes in principle at least the distinction that North describes as the foundation of the subordination of Practitioners to Scholars and Researchers.
In principle, at least. Unfortunately, as Schell and Vandenberg and Horner and all of the other materialist critics of organizations of work in composition argue, principle alone will not be enough to stay, let alone reverse, the disciplinary dynamics that have led to the current state of work organization in composition—which is precisely why "lore" cannot be abandoned as a historical concept or principle for activism. Lore still names very accurately an important part of the history of composition as a field and a discipline. Moreover, and better, lore might still be of some use in devising strategies for coping with our contemporary situation. After all, as North maintains from the outset, lore is much more than a distinction between kinds of writing; indeed, it is only secondarily a matter of writing at all. Lore is the body of knowledge associated with our field that describes primarily how writing can be given distinctions by readers, not writers, consumers, not producers.

If "theory" is to fulfill its principle in eliminating counterproductive and disabling distinctions between composition's academics and its practitioners, readers will have to find ways to put substantial pressures on writers in the field, for although the reorientation of composition research toward composition theory does progressively eliminate the formalizable division between North's disciplinary knowledge-making and the more egalitarian Practitioner communication, the consequential division between such literatures is, as his account strongly suggests, to be found in its effects on the field. That is, against North's own sense that scholarly writings can be identified by their (inevitably not-quite-perfect) method—that is, finally, as Horner points out, from the perspective of really professional academic work (177)—it may be far more effective to distinguish only between writing that maintains disciplinary distances and writing that operates transversally across these. This distinction, however, can never be gleaned by North's hermeneutic examinations; it can only be assessed in retrospect, in a differential evaluation of a given writing's effects in the field. In short, such a distinction requires not one but many readings, readings in a field that we might still want to think of in terms of lore, if not in the terms of Practitioners, Scholars, and Researchers. 8

Reading against Research
It is in the context of reading and consuming that I would like to treat two proposals for changing organizations of work in composition, both of which appeared in the September 2000 issue of College Composition and
Communication. Michael Murphy's "New Faculty for a New University: Toward a Full-Time Teaching-Intensive Faculty Track in Composition" and Joseph Harris's "Meet the New Boss, Same as The Old Boss: Class Consciousness in Composition" articulate possible—even probable—visions of the future of work in composition. Moreover, both argue explicitly for the professional and even political incorporation of what Schell calls "contingent labor" in organizations of composition. However, what seems to me to be the crucial point in each of these proposals is how each imagines new kinds of professional work for teachers who are not researchers in a traditional sense. In each of these accounts of the future of work in composition, the functional role of some version of North's "Practitioner" is being worked out. And in each case, this practitioner comes to professional responsibilities quite a bit more similar to a consumer than to a producer. Most specifically, these practitioners are imagined by both Murphy and Harris as something like critical, responsive readers—workers, we might imagine, whose reading practices might well change what productive work in composition is supposed to be.

Murphy puts his case directly in the language of consumption. Arguing for a formal recognition on the part of colleges and universities of the de facto permanence of contingent teachers, Murphy imagines what he calls, according to his subtitle, a full-time teaching-intensive faculty track in composition. Murphy is correct to point out that most part-time faculty are skilled and committed teachers who command significant expertise in composition pedagogy and experience as writers in business, technical, and other contexts. From this fact, Murphy draws the distinction between part-time and tenure-line faculty in the terms of the kind of scholarly production I have discussed above: "What separates [teaching-intensive faculty] from traditional faculty is that they either do not have the time or do not have the inclination to write about their reading and classroom experimentation in scholarly ways or to develop a sustained scholarly project around it" (34). Ably and accurately, Murphy conjures an image of contingent teachers and traditional faculty members that highlights the specific difference between the two not in terms of some measure of merit but rather in terms of work time and publishing. With this argument in place, Murphy continues with the following:

Accordingly, then, I suggest that teaching-intensive faculty imagine themselves as active consumers though not producers of scholarship—
that they should be aware of developments in the field and should be able to demonstrate that they have somehow defined their teaching practices thoughtfully in relation to those developments. (34–35)

With this proposal, Murphy puts the relation of tenure-line compositionists directly in the terms of a market for composition research. In short, Murphy proposes the professional incorporation of "teaching-intensive faculty" in terms of the linkage I have tried to explain as marketwork—a linkage that recognizes the importance of constructing markets in whatever positional gains are to be reaped in this field.

Harris's article, also, emphasizes the dynamic that Murphy describes above. In the future organization of work that Harris imagines (not in itself altogether different from Murphy's), Harris argues that composition faculties—here, Murphy's "producers"—need to work toward "good teaching for fair pay" for all teachers in composition (45). And, imagining in the future the goal of "fair pay" as having been met, Harris is quick to offer a vision of how "good teaching" might come about. Harris argues to the researchers and administrators who comprise his audience: "In return for better working conditions, we need to insist that teachers in our programs keep up with new work in composition and that they revise their practices in the light of their reading" (57). In this way, Harris argues to a different audience precisely the same formulation of consuming work for Murphy's "teaching-intensive faculty."

Both of these proposals argue for forms of professional and political incorporation for teachers who are now excluded from both administrative and academic professional hierarchies. In both of these proposals, these forms of incorporation are deliberately articulated in distinction to tenure, and, given the kinds of debates that currently circulate over tenure, the very real pressures it faces, and the variety of calls for its defense, such proposals are likely to provoke objections. In this context it is North—imagining the position of the "new practitioner"—who describes what I take to be one of the most substantial objections to these proposals. In what I have described above as rearguard actions against practitioners in the 1980s, North objects to any offer of "minor enfranchisement" for practitioners into newly reconstituted organizations of work in composition (332). In a subsection entitled "Aftermath: To the Rescue," North objects more specifically to such an enfranchisement via a one-way flow of research-derived knowledge. Such a dynamic means, for North, that "the rescued end up facing more demands than the rescuers" (336). Thus,
in his own way, North points out that the work of consuming—especially
the work of consuming other people's research—is hard work. Moreover,
still following North, we might also recognize that the difficulty of this
work is intensified many times over by what Murphy and Harris both
envision as consumers' revising their teaching practice "in the light of
their reading" (Harris 57).

As Murphy and Harris are both quick to point out, it makes little sense
to oppose on supposedly ethical grounds the formal recognition of a
"second-class faculty" when this faculty already exists in all practical
terms (see Harris 66 n5). Even so, North's point should be well taken, for
what both Murphy and Harris propose is something more than merely the
formalization of a situation brought about by economic realities. Both of
their proposals turn on what is in actuality a redefinition of a market for
composition research. While Murphy is right to argue that many part-time
and adjunct teachers know a good deal about composition research (in
many cases because they were trained for tenure-line composition jobs),
this knowledge of research is generally not a requirement of employment.
Thus, the "formalization," as Murphy puts it, of working conditions on
the one hand and consumption of research on the other hand does not
amount to the same thing (25). The former attempts to provide some
means of incorporation for teachers not adequately recognized or comp­
ensated in research-based or administrative professional hierarchies.
The latter, by contrast, promises already hard-working teachers to whole
new requirements for work.

In a recent issue of JAC, Marc Bousquet finds fault with these
proposals, especially Murphy's, because what they offer is not, he argues,
a "prospective and imaginative excursion into a better world" but rather
an after-the-fact legitimation of established working conditions (506).
Bousquet describes in what should be familiar terms how nontenure-track
appointments have been a reality especially in composition programs for
some time, claiming that "a kind of position held by between one-quarter
and one-third of all full-time faculty and rising steadily upward really
can't be framed as an 'experiment' in 'new' kinds of faculty work" (506).
In this way, Bousquet provocatively describes the function of such
practical proposals not in terms of their effects on an organization of
work in composition but rather on "managerial" compositionists and
their capacity to ignore the real exploitation of workers in composition
they facilitate.

Throughout his article, Bousquet suggests that the distinctions be­
tween academic and teacher, so crucial as Vandenberg and North argue
to the original emergence of composition as a discipline, are being subtly
and not-so-subtly replaced by a scheme distinguishing managers from
workers. Certainly, as Bousquet argues, this sort of organization can be
seen emerging in Harris' and Murphy's proposals. Bousquet's figure of
the "heroic WPA," an institutional worker, is projected out of these
writings as an intervening (and in many cases moderating) influence,
capable of blunting the radical force of the really exploited class of
teachers revealed in accounts like Schell's and confirmed by analyses of
salary, benefits, prestige, terms of employment, and so on. But, in a very
real sense, Bousquet's model also needs Vandenberg's established aca­
demic class, those who now operate more or less completely free of
demands posed to them by mere practitioners. "Theory," as my epigraph
from Watkins suggests, the effective province of these academics—
though not, perhaps, their identification—makes promises about why one
would want to work in composition in the first place.

Harris' and Murphy's proposals, though they may be inflected by the
"pessimistic structure of feeling" diagnosed by Bousquet, might also
provide opportunities for composition's contingent teachers (518). My
understanding of Harris' and Murphy's proposals suggests that one way
for teachers of composition to take advantage of an emergent "manage­
rial" structure in composition's hierarchies is to pit it against the older but
still crucial academic order. Watkins' marketwork, difficult if not impos­
sible under the old system, presents in the era of Vandenberg's ostensibly
free academics the possibility of forcing some accountability in these for
the organizations of labor that sustain their work. Reading as marketwork
can find ways of contesting Vandenberg's defeatist narrative of a schol­
arly secession from actual organizations of work.

What this work might bring to any full-time teaching-intensive
faculty in composition is difficult to predict. In one scenario, as Murphy
and Harris describe, such work might again allow the operations of lore
to be leveraged toward local and even national gains in the economic
incorporation of composition workers. That is, in taking on the burden of
being consumers of composition research, this "second-class faculty"
might exert some significant force over the success or failure of compo­
sition research merely by dint of whatever direction its consuming
practices dictate to markets for research in composition. In an even better
scenario, these teachers would exert some organized force over a market
that has from its inception excluded their work.

However, the likelihood of either of the above scenarios is directly
linked to an aspect of both Murphy's and Harris' proposals that remains
quite undefined. The question of how composition programs and tenure-line faculty-administrators might assess the consuming practices of such a teaching-intensive faculty is absolutely crucial to the force that might be deployed by these market workers. The most likely (and most conservative) arrangement would attempt to leave this faculty as free as possible to pursue their own interests within composition and would not take any careful note of how, exactly, teaching practice was to be revised in light of reading. This scheme, by contrast with a more aggressive sort of monitoring, seems to confer upon such a faculty the benefits of academic freedom enjoyed by their tenure-line colleagues. In actuality, though, such a freedom of reading would be mostly illusory, for without the other freedom of tenure, this *laissez-faire* approach merely confirms that researchers don’t care what teachers read in any case. Worse, this most conservative scenario would certainly erode the degree to which consumer choices in the field, as it were, could put pressure on markets for composition research.

A more ostensibly radical approach to the reading of composition research, by contrast—one that would have tenure-line faculty and composition program administrators closely monitor how a full-time teaching-intensive faculty consumed and made use of published research in composition—would seemingly solve at least this last problem. If composition faculty and administrators closely monitored what research commodities were consumed, the logic goes, this would allow for the greater and more widespread effect of pressures readers put on markets for composition. But while this is a goal worth working toward, it is not one worth proposing. If anything like a full-time teaching-intensive faculty in composition is to put its own distinct pressures on markets for composition research, much will have to change. It is imperative that composition administrators and tenure-line researchers learn to feel the force of political claims formulated in the reading practices of all those workers in English who would be formalized as a teaching-intensive faculty. But it will probably not be through surveillance and sampling—the arts of institutional recognition and market-formation—that such projects are productively advanced.

Toward the end of *Gypsy Academic and Mother Teachers*, and as a step toward thinking about changing the situation of contingent labor in composition, Eileen Schell emphasizes the progressive work of mentoring and networking relationships among women faculty (80–88). These relationships, in Schell’s analysis, traverse the real distinctions that separate tenure-track faculty from part-time workers in composition
programs, and, by so doing, actually provide means for improving the material conditions of work in English. Schell is right to point out the positive role that tenure-line faculty and administrators can play in extending whatever projects English teachers in colleges and universities have determined for themselves. None of the managerial proposals offered as responses to the crisis situation of contingent labor in composition programs is likely to solve once and for all the systemic and ongoing problems of an organization of work in English. But composition administrators and researchers have—precisely by dint of their investiture in this system of work—a role to play in supporting their colleagues. If part-time, adjunct, and graduate student teachers are not ever likely to be granted once and for all a way of influencing how research is published and positional rewards are distributed in English, tenure-line faculty in English can nevertheless intervene to extend whatever efforts they may already have under way. Through the sorts of collegial relationships that Schell describes, progressive faculty and administrators can work to relay pressures generated by effective political practices of reading composition research through markets for research to professional hierarchies in composition.

"Collegial," of course, hardly manages to convey the sort of political relationship Schell manages to indicate. Far from conventionally academic and conservative relationships between junior and senior faculty, mentoring and networking relationships would have the job of reversing the institutional and pedagogical relationship configured by the investiture of tenure. As Schell indicates through her focus on a specifically feminist and materialist "ethic of care," mentoring and networking relationships between tenured and untenured faculty can hardly be understood by thinking of the "privileged" caring for the "underprivileged" (80–88). Rather, established and invested composition researchers, in the situation I am trying to indicate, would actually become the students of a practical political education in how to extend others' largely unfamiliar reading projects.9 "Faculty development," in such a case, would not make untenured colleagues the recipients of some theory for their practice. Rather, the development in such arrangements would have to do with finding ways to force collective reading practices backwards, in a sense—back as pressures on markets for composition research.

Bousquet ends his critique of the managerial structure of composition by calling on compositionists—as WPAs—to unite with regular teachers in order to become "colleagues among colleagues," suggesting that this is what they "really want" (518). The same might be said for Vandenberg’s
"free" academics, too—that what they really want is not a subjugated labor force across which they can accomplish some seemingly free theorizing or research. Rather, it seems to me, what such a faculty wants is an organization of readers who can help to make actual the promises of theory: what it can accomplish "in principle." To this end, Bousquet is correct again, and in a similarly parallel fashion: professionals in composition must be open to learning from those who are currently "in their charge" (518).

Notes

1. For an introduction to such projects, see NCTE.
2. See Journet; Miller; Murphy; Harris; and Trainor and Godley.
3. See Slevin for an alternate consideration of what it might mean to re-form the discipline around an altered politics of teaching.
4. Schell advances a version of this argument at the end of her second chapter, "Factoring in Gender to the Question of Who Works Part-Time and Why" (49–50). For an indicative account of the pressures facing women in the system of professional advancement I refer to here, including quantitative analyses of women's rates of publications, see Enos. For an historical interpretation of how this situation came to be, see Holbrook.
5. Watkins' point is simply that "theory" of whatever kind is always at least partially engaged with "the persuasion of some fraction of the student population to engage in the lengthy, difficult, and always uncertain process of getting a degree and a job in English" (8). As Work Time argues, changes in theory, insofar as they bear some relation to changes in "the composition and expectations of a labor force," thus appear at least potentially as specifically political opportunities (8, 228–33).
6. For a schematic account of the emergence of theory across venues for scholarly publication in composition, see Olson 29–30.
7. One example of such a non-research-based (but yet still scholarly) product is a collection like Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers and Troubadours: Writing Program Administrators Tell Their Stories. Such collections (and also book-length teacher memoirs) may provide the kind of additions to lore that North identified as valuable and much-needed in the field. However, and more materially, these publications also represent an alternative form of scholarly production that can be used toward individual and collective incorporation into the positional hierarchies maintained in English departments and rhetoric and composition programs.
8. For a description of how "reading" can be conceived in (and against) the terms of a specifically political resistance, see Muckelbauer.
9. Such relationships would also require something on the order of an affective reeducation in the sense indicated by Worsham.

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