OPEN WORDS: ACCESS AND ENGLISH STUDIES
Vol. 9, No. 2 (March 2016). DOI: 10.37514/OPW-J.2016.9.2.02
ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online)
https://wac.colostate.edu/openwords/

Remixing the House of Lore: Theory, Practice, and the New Graduate Scholar

Paul Butler
University of Houston

Maurice Wilson
University of Houston

Nidhi Rajkumar
University of Houston

Kate Highfill
University of Houston

Rose Pentecost
University of Houston

Georgeann Ward
Lee College

Ben Good
University of Houston

Rachael Sears
University of Houston

Liz Blomstedt Keating
University of Houston

Jessie Casteel
San Jacinto College

Introduction: Why North? Why Now? Remixing the Legacy of *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*

Paul: Since its publication in 1987, Stephen M. North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field (MKC)* has acquired an unlikely disciplinary identity: as a lightning rod for controversy and debate surrounding, among other things, the methodological communities the author creates and his concept of "lore." In a 1988 book review, David Bartholomae calls *MKC* "the imperialist's vision of the native," or teacher, one both "odious" and "untrue," and he critiques what he says is North's reduction of the field to "class war, with 'practitioners' as the working class, 'scholars' as the alienated intellectual class, and 'researchers' as the rising bourgeoisie" (224). In *The*

ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online).

Harvard Educational Review, William Irmscher problematizes the same theory-practice dichotomy when he claims that "[w]hat [North] does not say is that practitioners can get along without the researcher in the daily task of teaching, but the researcher is less likely to be able to get along without the practitioner" (515).

The relationship—and tension—between theory and practice, researcher and practitioner, come into focus in *MKC* through North's concept of "lore," which he defines as "the accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs in terms of which Practitioners understand how writing is done, learned, and taught" (22). How does North's metaphor of a "House of Lore," which Irmscher calls a "sprawling old manse" built on individual and communal knowledge (513), square with the knowledge created by theory and research in a once-emerging discipline? Asked differently, how does the role of "Practitioner," and his or her contribution to the making of knowledge, fit with the other methodological communities in North's taxonomy, such as historian, ethnographer, critic, clinician, and experimentalist, among others?

That question is central to the tension underlying North's book, and it is a question that has endured in the years since its publication. In fact, it is perhaps the main question Patricia Harkin asks in "The Postdisciplinary Politics of Lore," one of her three articles responding to *MKC*. Labeling practitioner lore "postdisciplinary," meaning that because lore is not "disciplinary," per se, it "adapts" and its "strategies do travel to other [nondisciplinary] situations," Harkin goes on to state, "Lore, then, *is* theory" (134; emphasis added). For Harkin, that is to say, lore is theory in at least some circumstances, including "[w]hen, through a process of informed intuition, practitioners do what works" (134). In his review of North's book, James Raymond sounds a concordant note, arguing that "practice, even practice expressed in a textbook, can be a theoretical statement" (94). Similarly, in trying to discover the role of lore in teachers' knowledge, Louise Wetherbee Phelps asks, "What, then, does practice offer theory" (883)? Her answer, complicating North's notion of lore in important ways, is that "*practitioners provide theory with interpretation, criticism, testing, adaptive strategies, refinement*" (884; emphasis hers).

The way in which practice and theory are interanimated in composition studies today is also taken up in Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt's 2011 *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*, described by the editors as "a collection that uses North's book as a framing context within which to explore the methodological, theoretical, and institutional currents of composition's recent evolution and to anticipate future developments for the field" (1). In "The Epistemic Paradoxes of 'Lore': From *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* to the Present (Almost)," an important article from Massey and Gebhardt's volume, Richard Fulkerson helps illuminate the theory-lore relationship by showing the ways in which the two are interconnected through narrative and observation, shared qualities, he argues, of both practitioner lore and research-driven ethnography:

> Although contemporary empirical research, being qualitative, resists

> making either value judgment or procedural recommendation, it shares with lore the fundamentally narrative and observational grounding for its work. That is, both lorists and ethnographers mostly tell stories. (60)

Clearly, those *stories*, as well as the apparent dichotomy between practice and theory, impressed the graduate students in a recent seminar I taught on research in the field of composition studies. The class examined not only past but *current* discussions of North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, including the Massey and Gebhardt collection. Ironically, despite the importance of MKC to new scholars entering the discipline, North makes little mention of graduate students, a "community" at the very heart of the study of writing theory and practice, both then and now. What's more, even Massey and Gebhardt's recent *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition*, which revisits and updates North's ideas, also excludes the voices and stories of graduate students entering the field.

In both instances, that omission is significant, a claim Irmscher seems to acknowledge when he writes that aspects of North's text are invaluable to "graduate students interested in composition as a specialization" (515). Graduate students occupy a liminal status in rhetoric and composition. Before entering doctoral programs, many have taught as adjunct instructors or high school teachers, tutored in writing centers, or worked as professional writers or editors. Now, through their studies, they are inculcated in the *theory* of the discipline—reading, writing, and translating knowledge—even as they bring North's practitioner *lore* to their own classrooms, always aware, as Harkin points out, that "[w]e should not accept lore uncritically" (135). Thus their perspective on North's book is unique, for they have often created their own lore, or seen it enacted by others; at the same time, they have read about and discussed theories in seminars in which the notion of lore is sometimes ignored or regarded with suspicion or disdain. The result is a unique way of looking at theory and practice together, of "remixing," if you will, the House of Lore in ways that yield a critical new understanding of methodology.

I have seen this new understanding at work in graduate students' observations of composition classrooms—their written accounts of observing fellow classroom teachers as an assignment in my Teaching College Composition course. In those observations, the theory and practice, research and lore, come together, and graduate scholars are able to see the ideas they have read about at work—how they play out practically in college classrooms. They wonder why a theory of teaching writing seems to succeed in one classroom, but not another. They observe a teaching practice at work and ask if there is theory, or research, to support it. Thus they discover that theory and lore, North's "Practitioner" and "Clinician"—or "Critic," "Historian" or "Philosopher"—are inextricably linked. One informs the other, cannot exist without the other. Theory and practice, scholarship and lore, are joined together in important methodological ways.

What is fascinating about the roles graduate students occupy is that they are

developing, in Harkin's words, "strategies that use the power of lore, that have a reasonable chance of earning the academy's institutionalized respect" (135). They begin with North's categories—Practitioner-Experimentalist, say, or Historian—but then collapse them, expand them, reconceptualize them, introducing their own narratives—new ways of thinking about the field that make new knowledge for composition in the twenty-first century. They are working within and outside the boundaries North imposes, each of them mixing the methods of practitioners, on the one hand, and scholar, researcher, theorist, on the other. What is the result? The constant upheaval shows that knowledge is, indeed, always being made, and the making of knowledge goes in several different directions: it moves across theory and practice, across institutional lines, into the technological realm that encompasses diverse sites of investigation. These new scholar-practitioner-lorists have refused to be categorized or classified, moving into the very heart of disciplinary practice, breaking new ground in composition studies.

As practitioners, they recognize the value of the lore they create, the narratives they implicitly write, along with their students, their colleagues, their teachers, and their mentors. They see it as lore redrawn, retheorized, remixed, through the knowledge they gain every day not only inside but outside the classroom. The lore comes from hours poring over papers at the local coffeehouse, from the individual or group conferences they hold with their students, informed by Janet Emig, Mina Shaughnessy, David Bartholomae, George Hillocks, Richard Straub, and, of course, Stephen North. The ideas move backward and forward, in and out of the theory-practice they are developing as they research, write, teach, read, and think.

In *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*, Massey and Gebhardt speculate about how North's text will be approached upon its fiftieth anniversary (roughly twenty years hence), saying they expect to see less change in the field at that time "unless another book comes on the scene to attract and/or irritate scholars the way *MKC* did" (9). The editors question whether North's book will still be part of the scholarly and professional conversation in the year 2037—"included in graduate syllabi and works-cited lists, for instance"—and they respond, "We expect it to be, both as a representative of an ambitious effort to develop a view of the composition scholarship of its day and as a part of—and stimulus to—the growth of our field over the decades that followed" (9). As Massey and Gebhardt's important collection shows, and as North's reception among my graduate students demonstrates, *MKC* has had a critical influence on the field, and the continuing relevance of the text shows no sign of abating in the next two decades.

My students' reading of North's book also shows me, as scholar and practitioner, the value of refusing to accept any imposed taxonomies or prescribed ideas. Theory and practice, scholarship and lore, are dynamic and evolving, informing each other in ways that create unexpected forms of knowledge in the world. The graduate students' individual responses to North's text, and to the scholarly reception

it received, are featured below in their own stories of how they mix—and remix—theory and practice, scholarship and lore, the role of practitioner and historian or experimentalist or critic, to "make knowledge" in every aspect of their research and teaching. That knowledge, in its many iterations, suggests the future of the field—and it is an exciting future for all of us.

The Value of Context: Remixing North's Practitioner and Historian in a Scholarly Identity

Maurice: When I first began teaching writing as an undergraduate at Florida A&M University, a historically black college or university (HBCU), I'd had no formal teaching preparation. Instead, I modeled my practice after Mr. H (my composition instructor of two semesters and, like myself, a person of color). I often queried Mr. H about what he did in the classroom and why he did it, and the knowledge I gained from those discussions with him influenced my development as a writer as well as my pedagogy and teaching philosophy. I was not only his student assistant but his protégé, of sorts, as he shared with me the writing habits and patterns of error he frequently encountered in the writing of his mostly black students—students who entered college from disadvantaged economic and academic backgrounds not dissimilar to my own. I spent the summers during high school as a writing tutor for struggling minority students in the Chicago Public School system. I had always strived to improve my own writing, but it was during this time that I committed myself to a lifetime of helping other student writers improve theirs.

Naturally, I was especially interested in understanding the best practices for teaching other minority students to write well. I wanted to help these students understand the expectations of writing in college, expectations for which I felt unprepared, particularly as I entered first-year writing courses as a non-traditional learner informed largely by my military writing experiences with the army writing style—with standards that include using short words, short sentences (15 or fewer words), short paragraphs (no more than 10 lines), and one-page letters and memorandums for most correspondence, as outlined in Army Regulation 25-50, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*. However, Mr. H, also an army veteran, helped me to realize how the writing requirements in one institution naturally segue to writing in other institutional contexts, where concise, grammatically correct writing is emphasized. He taught me an important lesson about teaching writing: that my experiences with writing in the army and in the HBCU demand and require that I adapt my writing skills and, subsequently, my teaching techniques to different contexts. Ultimately, I am, quite naturally, at odds with any taxonomy that fails to consider how the conditions that shaped me as a writer (and subsequently as a writing teacher) matter to the field of composition.

I think North's *MKC* largely ignores the contexts that shape practitioners' lore, and I find that omission serious—and unfortunate. As Victor Villanueva indicates in

his *Changing of Knowledge* chapter, "Rhetoric, Racism, and the Remaking of Knowledge-Making in Composition," North "never quite gets…to the realization that there are biases at play—…never gets to acknowledge, or maybe even realize, the biases in his gaze" (122). While I do agree that "the nature of structural racism…allows one to ignore the bigotry that nevertheless obtains," I would not suggest that such omissions in *MKC* make North structurally a "bigot" but, rather, as Villanueva concedes, "a victim of his time," insofar as *MKC* is unable to fully appreciate the conditions that shaped my learning, my understanding, my knowledge—knowledge that is my contribution to the field (Massey and Gebhardt 123, 124). The basis of my knowledge, then, is informed by "lore," as North suggests, but I make no apologies for "lore," as it continued to form the basis of my practice and scholarship in my subsequent writing instruction experiences with the diverse student population at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and the predominantly white, male students at the US Military Academy at West Point—writing contexts for which scholarship alone could not adequately prepare me. Louise Wetherbee Phelps discusses the importance of North's study to a newly developed writing program at Syracuse University, and when I apply *MKC* to my own diverse teaching contexts, North's work, still relevant today, offers "a concept of lore that became a provocative and fertile focus for…thinking about teachers' knowledge" (868).

The various writing contexts I inhabit—and the lore that inhabits them—have shaped my role as a writing Practitioner, and, in keeping with North's taxonomy, as a Historian. I am drawn to composition as a historian because, as North tells us, "[history's] internal structure is a familiar and comfortable one: a narrative, a kind of story" (69). My story is filled with narratives, with stories wrought from lore, from practice, from a deeply personal background. Yet my role as historian departs from North in at least one important respect: unlike what he characterizes as "Composition's Historian inquiry" (77), which signals linear movement, my work, and my approaches, are not dependent, as he claims, on "some notion of 'progress'" or a pattern that moves "from the bad toward the good" (77). Indeed, my history is counter-history—my story, counter-narrative, the antithesis of linear, or inevitable, progress.

Beyond North's "Frontier Settlement": Remapping Lore through the Porous Boundaries of Practitioner, Critic, and Researcher

Nidhi: I had never planned on becoming a teacher, and the fact that it happened was entirely serendipitous. I began as an illustrator with training in design, but the unexpected happened when, shortly after graduating, my alma mater, the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) in New Delhi, invited me back to teach in the Department of Design. NIFT had a state-of-the-art design education, but being a pioneering design institute that was just twelve years old at the time, it had no established pedagogical programs to train its new crop of designers who were, for most part, inexperienced

teachers. Faced with this situation and no other recourse, I initially developed a customized pedagogy fashioned from my experiences as a student. I identified and imitated the techniques, methods, skills, even the mannerisms of my former teachers, especially those I recalled as being popular among my fellow classmates, such as starting with theory before demonstrating practical illustration techniques. Simultaneously, and as importantly, I mentally documented and avoided all aspects of their teaching unpopular among us when we were students. A few of those aspects included assuming we were familiar with obscure historical concepts no longer in vogue or spewing a list of French terms like "haute couture" without explaining what they meant.

By supplementing my experiences, both as a former student and as a teacher, I gradually enriched my own pedagogical practices, which I shared with my junior colleagues on several occasions. I had, oblivious to North's formal definition of Practitioner Lore, created and disseminated my own "accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs" that add up to the way teachers understand "how teaching is done" (North 22). I based my pedagogical practices on this lore for almost a decade and sought no other means to teach because to me lore was and remained legitimate pedagogical knowledge.

This is why North's idea of the "House of Lore" "as a 'very rich and powerful [body] of knowledge'" resonates with me (27). North's attempt to name and, therefore, define lore in terms of its past and present in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, gives lore and Practitioners a chance for a legitimate scholarly future, on par with other disciplines. As Patricia Harkin explains, in a nod to the ongoing importance of North's ideas in *MKC*, practitioners "evoke disciplinary language, not to produce knowledge, but to solve a problem. Lore, in this context, elides without denying the opposition between theory and practice" (134).

That being said, it is hard to extend the same support to North's taxonomy and definitions of various methodological communities, especially of the Critic. According to North, the critic is someone who establishes a canon of texts, interprets them, and develops theories about these texts and their interpretation. North states that the critic's methodology, one commonly used in literature, is limited in Composition to what he calls "little more than a frontier settlement" (116). North's definition of the very role of the critic is problematic when applied to Composition Studies, because writing is not restricted to "hermeneutics," or interpretation, and any pedagogy based strictly on such a methodology is practically unsustainable in the reality of the fluid composition classroom.

Several scholars have repeatedly, and in various contexts, mentioned the "map" that North attempts to create, and, to me, the term "frontier settlement" brings up another vivid cartographical image similar to North's description of Composition. This cartographical imagery problematizes the definition of Critic because, as illustrated by Lance Massey in "The (Dis)Order of Composition," North's "realist landscape" is one in constant transition and, hence, without definite frontiers. North

also acknowledges that the topography of Composition is "pulling-apart," or as Massey writes, a "more politically palatable (term)…fragmenting" (305). Massey cites Gesa Kirsch, who believes that Composition as a field has evolved and "is characterized by …methodological diversity" (qtd. in Massey and Gebhardt 306). This further blurs already indefinite boundaries.

These blurred lines make it hard to resolve the conundrum that if there is no boundary to start with, how can the Practitioner be limited to any non-existent, indefinite, ever-changing "frontier"? The definition of the Practitioner-Critic partially holds its ground when the Practitioner, as a maker of knowledge regularly exposed to the gaps inherent in repeated pedagogical procedures, becomes aware of and is forced to comment on these various pedagogical shortfalls. Here, the Practitioner is the Practitioner-Critic but in a limited sense. For a Practitioner to be a critic, as per North's definition, the Critic must necessarily take on the role of Practitioner-Researcher as well. According to North, Researchers are "those who adopted modes of inquiry geared to lead them to more 'scientific' knowledge" (135).

Why do I find it necessary to adopt the additional role of "Researcher" as well? Looking back at my past teaching experiences and my present role as a graduate student, I see that I regularly straddle North's categories of Practitioner and Critic. While I have benefited from self-created lore year after year, I also repeatedly face recurring gaps in pedagogical practices. In the process, I have found myself contributing significantly to establishing a canon of texts, interpreting them, and developing theories about these texts and their interpretations, but I could only do this when I moved into the role of *researcher* as well. Like the critic, I began to seek and establish my own set of canonical sources of knowledge—textual and otherwise—which I then went on to interpret and theorize, but this role was informed by the context of the courses and the challenges they presented, inadvertently pushing me into the secondary role of the Practitioner-Researcher. In other words, to be a Practitioner-Critic and examine the *how* of improving student performance, it became equally necessary to adopt the constant cycle of examining, testing, and modifying in an almost scientific manner that constitutes the very role of *researcher*.

Indeed, the reality of the classroom made it evident to me that the moment the teacher shines a light on the flaws in pedagogical processes, the Practitioner inevitably becomes a Critic, and the instant the Practitioner-Critic attempts to correct the situation, the boundaries between Practitioner-Critic and Practitioner-Researcher dissolve. The Practitioner-Critic can only remain effective when, per force, he or she takes on the role of Practitioner-Researcher, thereby pushing the frontiers of the discipline forward and nullifying the boundaries of North's definitions. For me, North's categories necessarily became remixed in productive—and inevitable—ways.

This cross-category movement is reinforced when the entire Practitioner-Critic-Practitioner-Researcher cycle repeats itself and results in the creation of recognized, formal scholarship. An acknowledgment of the role of the researcher

promises both Practitioners and Lore a great deal of academic power and respect. The reality of the classroom, the source and destination of pedagogical knowledge, necessitates that North's boundaries be opened or at the least made porous. It is only when this multiplicity of roles is addressed, acknowledged, and remixed that the idea of scholarly legitimacy for Practitioners and their Lore can eventually be realized.

Resisting *MKC*: Lore, Practitioner-Philosophers, and North's Revealing Omissions

Kate: I bristled at North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*: each section, all the categories, the concluding remarks. The whole book. At first, I thought this was due to his tone regarding Practitioners because I identify as one. I considered whether North's categorization of practitioners as relying too much on "lore" and not enough on more scientific inquiry angered me simply because it suggested that practitioners were "lesser" or because it suggested I needed to fit into another of his categories, as a critic, historian, or philosopher, for example, if I were to be a "real" Rhetoric and Composition member. I also wondered if I was just being put off by the implication that my work should be more clinical and less personal, that I could either "research" or "practice" and that these were somehow not *teaching*, that they were somehow better than teaching.

I felt much like Lynn Z. Bloom, who notes in "The World According to North—And Beyond" that her first brush with North, despite her generally positive feelings, left her finally dissatisfied, and eventually disillusioned, with his work, because "I was—and to this day remain—a teacher, not a practitioner of teaching" (31).

In addition to these problems, I found critical pedagogy's absence from the text surprising. Where were Paulo Freire (who remade our understanding of the teacher's role in the classroom), Ira Shor (who offered his attempts at critical pedagogy for all to critique and learn from), and Henry Giroux (who linked critical pedagogy to social problems through theory)? Why did North cite Freire as influential for Ann Berthoff but not consider Freire's contributions to the field? (94)

As I ruminated on this, I turned to my own, admittedly limited, experience as a teaching assistant teaching Composition I (the first semester of first-year writing) at a small, Midwestern state university. I started my master's program jittery and terrified as I followed the recommendations and syllabus our Composition Coordinator had created. Quickly, though, I began to metamorphose into a teacher concerned (perhaps tending toward obsession) with how to best help my students become better writers and critically conscious citizens of the world. This evolution did not take place in a vacuum; I spent many hours reading and discussing theory and pedagogy with my fellow students, my mentors, and the non-tenured instructors with 20 plus years of experience teaching writing—North's practitioners. Everyone showed a marked interest for student learning and writing improvement; most wanted students to develop critical thinking skills and confidence as writers. The best, most dedicated instructors wanted more: students able to engage the hard work of illuminating the

world's social, cultural, racial, class, ethnic, gender, and environmental oppressions, among others. These teachers taught, gathered evidence of their outcomes, reflected, read, and re-wrote their assignments, tweaked pedagogies, tossed readings, tore at their hair until they began to see their classrooms working as they wished. None of them would fit into one of North's categories. They practiced a keenly researched pedagogy reinforced by lore and theory as best fits the needs of their students.

Given my role as a Practitioner, it may be surprising that I also identify as one of North's Philosophers, labeled by North as "one of Composition's most important groups" (91). I agree with North that the philosopher's impulse is "to account for, to frame, critique and analyze the field's fundamental assumptions and beliefs" (91). North is also on point when he writes that "a Philosopher of Composition ought to be able to figure out which are the best and which are the worst ways to teach or research writing" (96).

Yet North makes other claims about Philosophers that I regard with far more circumspection. I am doubtful, for instance, when he writes that Philosophical inquiry "deals not with things in the world, hands on, directly—like Practitioners, or Experimental Researchers, or even Historians—but with the operations of reason, in this case by focusing on its manifestations in the Philosophers themselves, and in the activities of Composition's other inquirers" (96). With this statement, North seems to focus on separating the results of philosophical thought from the act of inquiry. He doesn't allow for a more interconnected role between Philosopher and Practitioner. Indeed, what Bloom calls North's "take-no-prisoners approach and language" are problematic because, as she points out, they "seem more to abuse his subject than enlighten it" (38). Bloom echoes my own feelings as a Practitioner-Philosopher—and all of the complications that role entails—when she writes, "North's complaints about fuzzy or flawed methodology cast progressively more doubts on his categorization system, rather than on the research he is analyzing" (39).

North attempts to scientize philosophical practice by linking it to reasoned methodological inquiry aimed at creating historical lineages for comparison, which simply is not what philosophy does. Philosophy ruminates on the causes, effects, contexts, and possible outcomes in order to mold a better future based on a dialectic between the needs of the present and historical understanding, that is, a dialectic based on *lore*. Indeed, as Patricia Harkin suggests, "The experiments of lore are not like the experiments of the recognized sciences. Practitioners rarely have the time, resources, or inclination to conduct experiments that meet standards of reliability and validity" (126). Reading North today reminds us that Composition teachers have always been scholars and researchers simultaneously, and they have worked to assist their students in attaining agency, whether in writing, thinking, speaking, or another activity; this was true even before critical pedagogy gave us the tools and terms to hone and focus our praxis.

Placing people and history into categories as a means of understanding

Composition Studies sterilizes its work, makes it seem less about the reality of confronting social inequality and injustice, racial and ethnic prejudice, and class discrimination, in an effort to bring the field some kind of scientific cachet. Composition does not need science. Composition needs lore. Composition needs teachers informed by their humanity, and that of their mentors, peers, and students, in order to become a united field working to empower the oppressed. As Louise Phelps argues, "*practice being more than knowledge, it humanizes theory*" (884).

Theory and Lore, Lore and Theory: Shall the Twain Meet in "Formalist" Sentence-Combining?

Rose: As a graduate student, a classmate of teachers, and a parent who often receives teacher instruction on how to better help my own children succeed academically despite their challenges, I have been exposed to and often relied upon the lore of the practitioner. At times teachers have ready answers to assignment concerns that arise from the inattentiveness of a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). However, when my children do not respond well, teachers often find themselves making educated guesses about a solution when additional reading, remedial grammar worksheets, and writing practice do not improve the writing experience of someone like my daughter. I remember sitting at the kitchen table with my daughter as words eked out one by one onto a page soon covered in marked-out text as she struggled through a composition assignment.

Certainly some style or method was available to ease the composition process for individuals, not exactly basic writers, but no less stymied when composing a sentence. Year after year, teachers passed along time-honored strategies, that despite my lack of training, I strove to reinforce at home. What was to be done? My daughter was entering the 10th grade and continuing to struggle with composition assignments. This was becoming my eleventh hour, but what might happen should a teacher reach into the archive of lore and dust off a technique first explored during the 1950s? We discovered the positive effects of kernel sentence combining introduced to my daughter and her classmates earlier this year by her English teacher.

Noam Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar, Kellogg Hunt's study of clause length, and John Mellon's subsequent sentence-based studies gave rise to the sentence-combining practices that flourished in the 1970s. Although the practice had been abandoned in the 1980s, it has experienced a resurgence, at least in one 10th grade classroom. By teaching my daughter about kernel sentences and the practice of combining, she was free to start by writing briefer sentences knowing that she had tools for going back and creating more mature structures. What might my daughter's academic future be if not for the formalist studies that led to sentence-combining?

It was from the formalist studies in linguistics that Composition researchers derived model building as a method for studying unobservable phenomena. According to North, the "Formalist inquiry in Composition has focused almost exclusively on

modeling writing" with small sample sizes (241). I am troubled by some of the implications of this research and theory for our teachers, those individuals operating in high-stakes testing situations with large numbers of students on a daily basis. Their educated guesses, model-building, and inquiries are based on a large population and not the few subjects to which Formalists limited their studies. Because every classroom of students is different from another, the effectiveness of a supposition is played out in the classroom by the students' ability to engage in and produce written compositions.

When I think about the numerous teachers who have attempted to discover the key to composition success for my daughter, I am most grateful to those willing to dig into their files or the back of their drawers to find some idea, practice, or technique—their lore—to serve her needs. I am not implying that solutions cannot originate in Formalists' studies and theory. I am saying that the efficacy of those solutions is realized only when the teacher puts the information into practice in a given class. As Victor Villanueva points out, "Linda Flower, our straw formalist, was right when she argued . . . that sheer speculation isn't enough, that we need ways to test what it is we believe in our theory" (129-30).

Flower, like those contributing to sentence-combining practices, recognized that formalist-based hypotheses, model-building, and studies could be meaningful only after the resulting theories had been tested. This testing, conducted in a carefully controlled environment, establishes a foundation upon which the teacher can build. Teachers have to be innovative, often generating instantaneous solutions to challenges presented by the unique learning styles of each group of students. One teacher's lore based on the formalist theories of sentence-combining proved key to a better writing experience for my daughter. I see her success as part of North's ongoing legacy. As Patricia Harkin suggests, "Lore is passed around from person to person and passed on from generation to generation" (126).

Putting the "House of Lore" in Order: Reaching the "Reluctant Clinician" through Inquiry-Based Knowledge

Georgeann: Composition instructor by day and Ph.D. student by night, I was most intrigued by Stephen North's discussion of practitioners and clinicians, two research communities with which I have the most familiarity. While his descriptions of practitioners' "rambling mansion"—the house of lore—might seem disparaging to some, I appreciated his assertion that practitioners' body of knowledge is fragmented, compartmentalized, and possibly even illogical or sloppy. Several years ago, my English division contracted representatives from the WPA to evaluate our composition program, and their assessment was that our program was almost "anarchic" due to our instructors' incoherent statement of overarching program goals and learning outcomes. I was then tasked with leading a committee to revise our master course syllabi, coordinate professional development opportunities, and lead assessment efforts. This

experience helped me understand both the challenge and necessity of putting our "house" in order through critical reflection, communication, and assessment; it also gave me firsthand experience with the reluctance that many composition instructors feel toward the more "clinical" approach.

Eager to engage in deliberate pedagogical reflection, even I have felt like Victor Villanueva's "reluctant clinician" at times (121). Somehow the calculated, empirical approach of clinicians seems counter to the personal, subjective act of composing. When I led my English division's assessment efforts, I encountered many instructors who openly questioned the efficacy of mandated assessment in improving student learning. So thoroughly inculcated in the use of "lore" to shape their practices, the instructors were resistant to measure student outcomes in a more concrete way. They even seemed blind to Patricia Harkin's observation, based on North, that "[l]ore can help us see ways in which solving for one problem causes another" (135). Similarly, Lynn Z. Bloom examines North's critique of clinicians, suggesting that "such research be expanded, in depth and in longitude, to provide portraits of individual student writers as 'whole, complex people,' 'each with steadily improving sources of data, and within a gradually richer canonical framework'" (237). In the same way, instructors must appreciate that data collection is only one part of the assessment process, that analysis of results, dissemination of information, and discussions of pedagogical implications should follow.

North explains that a clinician "regards any contributed piece of knowledge as a portion of [a] larger pattern. A mode of inquiry guided by it will assemble, through a gradual process of accumulation, a composite image—a sort of multi-dimensional jigsaw puzzle, the final shape of which the investigators cannot know" (204). While the "rambling mansion of lore" has many disconnected rooms, clinical inquiry seeks to find a more holistic framework (205). North recognizes the limitations to clinical knowledge yet calls it marketable and accessible to "would be" researchers (205) as it brings theory and practice together by identifying a problem, designing a study, collecting and analyzing data, interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions (implications for research and teaching) (207). In this way, using the clinical approach through institutional assessment measures may help instructors construct knowledge and put our "house" in order.

Complicating Water-Cooler Talk: Documenting Lore as an Ethnographer and Practitioner

Ben: As a Ph.D. student in Rhetoric and Composition, a composition instructor, and a former middle and high school English teacher, I was struck by Stephen North's discussion of how lore circulates, as well as how it is received by the discipline. North acknowledges that "the academic reflex to hold lore in low regard represents a serious problem in Composition," but he also suggests that "[p]ractitioners need to defend themselves—to argue for the value of what they know, and how they come to know it"

(55).

This passage came to mind last week when, in a graduate course, my fellow students and I questioned several of the research findings in George Hillocks' *Research on Written Composition*. More than one of my classmates felt we should complicate the research indicating that grammar instruction had no verifiable impact on the improvement of student writing; most of us questioned some of the research-supported conclusions regarding revision; and, all of us wondered about the findings that teacher comments do not impact the quality of student writing. As graduate students and writing instructors, we were coming to the defense of our experience-based, practitioner knowledge. We believed, and continue to believe, in lore. Perhaps Louise Wetherbee Phelps best sums up our approach: "Lore is experience that has been expressed, circulated, imitated, sustained and confirmed by repetition, achieving canonical status as 'common sense' through its range of cultural distribution and its staying power" (869).

The truth is, though, that while we value lore and it informs so much of our work, we know very little about this body of knowledge. Few scholars have even broached the topic—North, Phelps, and Patricia Harkin come to mind—and no one has subjected lore to any sustained research study. This seems to pose a serious problem for practitioners, whom North charges to "argue for the value of what they know, and how they come to know it" (55). How, then, can we systematically understand lore, and come to the defense of this body of knowledge?

To truly understand the relationship between theory and lore, we will have to become ethnographers. We will have to study, not only the validity of practices that circulate through lore, but also *how* lore is circulated, distributed, and received in a specific local community—a particular school, a department, a group of new teachers. We will have to get a comprehensive sense of the behaviors and discourses of that community, and we will have to embrace our roles as participant-observers. As North writes, "Ethnographic inquiry produces stories, fictions. Ethnographic practitioners go into a community, observe (by whatever variety of means) what happens there and then produce an account" (277). In one of his rare moments of praise for *MKC*, David Bartholomae acknowledges the value of that account, stating, "[North] is often brilliant in his reading of individual cases as he finds gaps and holes and blind spots" (226).

As a methodology that aims at comprehensively understanding a community, ethnography also enables us to inquire: What kinds of practitioner knowledge do new teachers bring with them to a specific community? Where and how did they accumulate that knowledge? What are the standards by which some practices become codified through departmental meetings, teacher training, and other institutionally sanctioned gatherings? What kinds of practitioner knowledge circulate through "water-cooler" talk?

In many ways, my colleagues and I—and indeed all of us in the field—are

already engaged in some form of an ethnography of lore, however elementary that may be. We are all constantly studying our local communities, documenting its discourses as participant-observers, picking up on effective practices. I think of myself scribbling notes and documenting discussions in graduate courses, recording not only subject-area knowledge, but also pedagogical practices of graduate professors that I may incorporate in my own teaching: *Consider teaching each class session from a different position in the room like Dr. Shepley does?* I find myself reflecting on last week's departmental meeting, where we recorded and absorbed professors' advice on the ins and outs of presenting at academic conferences: *Start up casual conversations. Avoid forced networking.* I see my notes from last month's supervisory meeting, where we discussed our various approaches to teaching a hybrid composition course: *Maria has her students post to online discussions during face-to-face class meetings. Try this?* I think of the contents of the teaching journals that I have maintained for every class that I have ever taught: *Need to figure out a way to raise standards for peer review responses.*

I am already documenting lore, already a participant-observer, and, indeed, we all are. We just need to conduct more sustained, more comprehensive ethnographic inquiries into lore than the ones in which we are already engaged. Richard Fulkerson also advocates for ethnographies of lore, as he questions whether or not "the standards governing the acceptability of ethnography…would be equally applicable to lore and thus could help resolve the question of how to assess lore-based claims" (60). While Fulkerson makes a thoughtful proposal, I contend that it misses the mark a bit. We ought to see ethnography as a means of generating knowledge, not merely as a methodology for evaluating the practitioner knowledge that circulates through lore. Instead of using ethnographic standards as a lens, as Fulkerson advocates, we ought to focus first and foremost on how ethnography can help us understand what lore is exactly and how it functions within particular communities. That focus would help us maintain lore's distinctive qualities even as we investigate its various sites of dispersion and influence.

As a graduate student looking ahead to a future in academe, I like to think that my dual role as an ethnographer-practitioner is one that will serve my own interests, and those of our field. By documenting and reflecting on my teaching practices, as well as the communities in which I work, I can engage in an ethnography of lore that will enable me to understand the value of my experiential knowledge and how I came to know it. As Harkin urges, "We should do all we can to bring lore to light" (138).

From the Bottom Up: Using Practitioner Knowledge and the Role of North's Historian to Formalize Theory

Rachael: As a practitioner lucky enough to have a cubicle surrounded by other practitioners, I have gleaned many teaching strategies by presenting my problems to the group and bouncing ideas off of them. We have varying levels of experience and numbers of years in the field, so some of our ideas are new and some are trustworthy

strategies that have been used throughout the years. Not once in my four semesters at my current institution has anyone pulled out a book of teaching theory to come up with an answer to one of our quandaries. Indeed, even seasoned professors flip through their mental playbook (not a book of theory) when asked what they would do in a particular situation or how they would teach a specific concept. This seems to fly in the face of North's assertion that "Scholars and especially Researchers make knowledge; Practitioners apply it" (21).

As a first-year composition teacher, I am responsible for helping my students progress in their writing. Being relatively new to the field, I was discouraged when I found that my students were resistant to revision, brushing aside my comments and just taking the grade from the first draft. At the suggestion of one of my colleagues, I changed my strategy, requiring my students to submit a revision that included at least one paragraph detailing why they revised particular aspects of their first drafts. I found that the students finally read my comments and actively engaged in reflection about their own writing, thus producing substantially better second drafts.

This lore that North critiques as stuff that "inquiry would show to be a muddled combination of half-truths, myths and superstitions" (23) is the backbone on which composition studies is built. Instead of dictating theories from above and then trying to successfully implement them into the classroom below, what might we discover if we took a more bottom-up approach and transformed good "lore" into formalized theory? That approach might help to resolve the concern Richard Fulkerson expresses: "The key question about lore is Does it work? Which seems to mean that there is good lore (which works) and bad lore (which doesn't)" (54). Using lore-based knowledge as a step to developing theoretical knowledge might solve the dilemma he describes.

Though I passionately identify as a practitioner first and foremost, I somewhat ironically also identify as one of North's historians. I find it essential to construct "knowledge about who and what has come before" (North 66). Do these two roles, Practitioner and Historian, contradict each other? At first glance, they may seem to; however, I think they can complement each other as well. As North points out in his chapter on the Historians, it is vital to search "for an identifiable pattern in some set of features" (North 75). This has traditionally taken place by searching for patterns among books of composition theory, written from the top to be implemented at the bottom. For example, it has long been determined through studies that have evolved into theory that commenting on student papers yields few, if any, results. Yet by implementing a strategy that requires students to respond to the comments teachers make on their papers, I have found these theories to be inaccurate. What if other practitioners tested this practice in their classrooms? What if they arrived at the same results? This bottom-up approach (one based on practice) might eventually overturn years of theory.

The compatibility of history and lore—history and practice—seems to be

precisely what Erica Frisicaro-Pawlowski has in mind. Echoing what many of my fellow teacher-practitioners and I have discovered, Frisicaro-Pawlowski suggests that our most often-used tools of the trade—what we might call the foundation or roots of our "lore"—are also the basis of a new kind of history in the field. She writes, "[O]bjects of study—including textbooks, testimonials, curricular designs, and so forth—continue to form the primary locus of the contemporary historical impulse. The field's historians are more likely to use the material, measureable artifacts of composition as their data, rather than less tangible forms of evidence" (97). History is lore; lore, history. Absent, though, is "less tangible" theory, and, it seems, never the twain shall meet.

Of course, to formalize "lore" would require a different sort of history entirely. Instead of examining all of the theoretical texts that have been created, emerging scholars would examine successful practitioners at work. They would have to listen to and record the secrets these masters have to share. With all the years of experience, the years of trial-and-error, surely patterns would emerge indicating what "lore" has been successful and what should be avoided. In this way, practitioners, those who rub shoulders with struggling writers on a daily basis, can be directly responsible for developing theories based on proven practice in the classroom. As North asks, "What can a Historical inquiry tell us about what constitutes a 'useful' reality, or about how writing is 'actually done?'" As a Historian, I want to document the lore of Practitioners and learn what new histories can be forged on a daily basis through classroom lore.

Inventing the New Clinician: Digital Humanities, Technological Tools, and Updating North's Practitioner Knowledge

Liz: Recently, I chose to use digital humanities methodologies to evaluate one teaching practice commonly circulating in Practitioners' lore: a specific approach to peer review in which first-year composition students write response letters to each others' drafts before meeting in group conferences. I first encountered this lore through conversation; another Teaching Fellow recommended it as an alternative to typical in-class peer review assignments where students often provide little more than shallow comments about language or formatting errors on each others' writing. Since this practice has also been written about in professional publications, I followed up on my colleague's suggestion by reading more teacher research about this style of group conferencing. After adopting this practice for three semesters, I had anecdotal evidence of its successes and its occasional failures, and I also had 342 individual response letters written by students to their peers' drafts and posted to our course website. I decided to save each of these response letters as plaintext files, code them, and run them through Voyant Tools, a web-based text analysis program, to see what trends emerged.

As a composition scholar using the tools of the digital humanities in this way, I fit in the Clinician category of North's taxonomy as one who is interested in "the ways in which a particular subject does, learns, or teaches writing" (137). But I also see

my work as being closely bound with my teaching and my identity as a Practitioner. I identify first and foremost as a teacher of writing, and my contributions to knowledge in the field are inseparable from my drive to become a better writing teacher. As a digital compositionist, I am able to use new digital humanities methodologies that North could not have anticipated when he wrote *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* to affirm my teaching practices, making me a Practitioner-Clinician. Even in the far more recent Massey and Gebhardt collection, the authors admit that if they were to write a "Call for Papers" for their collection today, "we would seek out discussions of technology as it has shaped composition research and practice since 1987" (4).

I see these new digital humanities methodologies as giving even the busiest of Practitioners new tools for doing real inquiry on teaching methodologies to confirm or contribute to lore. I found North's assertion that "Practitioner inquiry is most often a combination of informed intuition and trial and error" to be a cautionary but true description of how lore is often shaped and evaluated (45). And as a Teaching Fellow, teaching two classes of 27 students while taking 9 hours of graduate coursework each semester, I can see the validity of North's argument that "the practitioners in the best position to conduct inquiries are those least equipped to do so" (35). But digital humanities methodologies help to address these constraints by allowing for easier and quicker analysis of data than researchers in the 1980s had access to.

I also see these tools from the digital humanities as providing new means for teachers to confirm or shape their own teaching practices, and in turn, test and confirm lore. As Richard Fulkerson points out, one of the primary weaknesses of lore as North presents it is that there is no way to test it. North argues that other methodological communities can confirm lore using their approved methodologies and thus make "true" knowledge, but practitioners can only vouch for the effectiveness of their lore through experiential narratives. Fulkerson argues that this limitation that North places on lore means that "[m]aking any distinction between credible lore and not-so-credible lore isn't an option if there is no test and if nothing can ever be rejected or discarded" (52). But by embracing hybrid roles, we can take these other methodologies and use them to test our lore and support our claims that it does indeed work. As a Practitioner-Clinician, I can test the classroom practices I employ as a Practitioner (in this case, group conferencing) and test them using the skills of a Clinician (evaluating student writing from that conferencing) to determine whether my lore is credible.

The digital humanities provide Practitioners with easy-to-use tools that make these hybrid roles possible, which is crucial because, as North points out, "the Practitioners in the best position to conduct inquiries are those least equipped to do so" due largely to time constraints (35). Voyant Tools, the program I used to analyze my student texts, is web-based and user-friendly, showing great promise as a useful tool for other practitioners to analyze a corpus of their own students' writing or even for a first-year writing student to analyze her own writing. In my own research,

promising trends that emerged from the text analysis of my students' writing encouraged me to continue using group conferencing in my classes while also pushing me to think of ways to improve that pedagogical practice.

One basic example: I noticed that students who wrote longer response letters had greater concentrations of words suggesting substantial revision suggestions, like "paragraph," "solution," "audience," or "example," and I decided to increase the minimum required word count for my response letter assignment in subsequent semesters. This practice is in line with how North envisions the Clinician's role. He writes, "Clinical knowledge accumulates by accretion . . . it approaches the world it studies by examining phenomena again and again, looking at them from different angle, probing them in different ways, aiming to render a composite . . . image" (205). Digital humanities methodologies allowed me to look at my students' writing in a different way and adapt my pedagogy accordingly.

The tools of the digital humanities have helped me better engage in reflective teaching practices, allowing me to combine my own observations with data from text analysis to better shape my teaching practice. These digital analytical tools show me the value of my hybrid role as Practitioner-Clinician. I have also been able to share my findings in different venues, from conversations with others in my department to presentations at conferences in the field, contributing to an ever-growing and ever-strengthening body of lore for writing teachers to rely on.

Making Lore Theoretical: Forging Reciprocal Relationships as Practitioner-Experimentalist

Jessie: I first came to composition lore from a place of urgent necessity. I had just been hired for my first adjunct position, teaching developmental writing at a community college, but I had never taught in a classroom or had any training in composition pedagogy. I was peripherally aware that something called composition theory existed, but I had no time to spare to track it down and train myself from scratch, and it would be some time before I encountered those theories in my graduate work. And yet, all of the sudden I found myself trying to cobble together a syllabus and formulate coherent assignments that would guide the twenty-four struggling students of my first class to freshman-level work. I was keenly aware that stakes were high and time was short. Formal composition theory was, at that time, of no immediate help to me whatsoever.

It was lore that I needed. I spent time in the adjunct workroom, swapping syllabi and assignments and debating methods; I earnestly but unwittingly reinvented the wheel by developing homemade pedagogical theory to suit my own style. Almost everyone I spoke to worked in the same conditions and with the same student population as I did, and I could quickly discern teaching styles and ideological investments in conversation. Lore was fast, lore was local, lore was available, and, most of all, lore was *contextualized*. More than once I was in a conversation with other practitioners and realized that our differing contexts rendered our lore largely

meaningless to each other. But in that sense, it *was* useful—it was quick and easy to discover when contexts were incompatible, so I knew when to discount someone's lore with little wasted time or effort and move on to someone else's. To explain the absolutely crucial nature of context that makes lore so useful as theory in situations like mine, I'd like to illustrate what I mean about lore in an example of its use in experimentation.

Richard Fulkerson helpfully points out that "[w]hat North needed was…some fair way to distinguish credible lore from incredible" (52). As a Practitioner-Experimentalist, for me that fair way is experimentation. There is a long-running and more or less evenly divided clash of lore in the department where I work about why students fail composition. Roughly half of the faculty has long insisted that the majority of failures are due to an acute deficiency of requisite skills. With equal conviction, the other half has held that most failures are instead due to a lack of readiness for the demands of college, as exemplified by those students who neglect to turn in their papers or attend class. Over this past year, our department came together to test the validity of these competing claims by collecting data from each of us on every student who failed our courses. The data overwhelmingly pointed to problems with the demands of college as the issue, and we will be piloting a course next semester specially designed to address the needs of these students with increased individual conference time and counseling support. By next year, we will be prepared to review the results of this pilot course and debate the possibility of opening up more sections of this course model.

Thus, lore pointed the way to a question that could be fruitfully addressed via experimentation; moreover, because we are all aware of the context—in the sense that we are all familiar with the same student population, institutional constraints, and each other's various instructional styles—we have a clearer idea how to evaluate the results than we would with any published research we might read. The theory we glean from pedagogical texts is not so readily digested and evaluated because it lacks the critical context that imbues lore by its very nature. As North says, "The Experimentalist's goal is to put together the best design possible under the circumstances" (177), but he neglects the vital place of lore in defining what those circumstances are.

In these ways and for these reasons, lore *becomes* theory for us as composition instructors. It is theory made relevant and concrete. As Patricia Harkin says, "When, through a process of informed intuition, practitioners do what works, they bring a number of disciplinary projects into a concrete problem" (134). Harkin thus joins together disparate strands of North's book. While lore often obscures the exact theory that lies behind its inception, it gives us the ready-made application of theory in contextualized praxis. It is with this understanding of the valuable reciprocity between lore and theory that I approach North's text. It's crucial to me that he establishes the importance of lore in composition not just as a sometimes-accurate ontology, but as a type of understanding particularly valuable to an *art* rather than a science. Methods of

teaching composition, as we all know after even the briefest teaching experience, vary between instructors, learners, and localities. This variability is the heart of what makes it an art, and it is what mandates a different approach to composition—and composition research—than to, say, evolutionary biology. I am entirely supportive of Victor Villaneuva, who cogently enumerates the difficulties of applying the methods of the natural sciences to the study of writing, and instead counsels the centrality of a narrative approach. I believe lore—which is, after all, a species of narrative—is indeed a way to address those difficulties and unite Practitioners and Experimentalists.

Conclusion: Redrawing Boundaries, Remixing Composition's Future

Paul: For graduate scholars in the field, lessons from Stephen North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* are complex and multi-layered. From their perspective, it is clear that North's influential book, to use Erica Frisicaro-Pawlowski's words, "attempts to encompass or bridge multiple subject positions frequently in tension with one another" (99). Those tensions are evident, for example, in students' subject positions as practitioner-historian, practitioner-ethnographer, or practitioner-clinician, to name just a few. Yet the very nature of these overlapping identities seems to contradict one of Frisicaro-Pawlowski's assertions in "Making Knowledge, Shaping History":

> For today's scholars, roles designating where one enters into the intellectual life of the discipline are more clearly cut. Is one a theorist or a researcher? Does one work predominantly with issues of writing and technology, or with issues of basic writing? (99)

Contrary to Frisicaro-Pawlowski's binaries, it seems the roles graduate students have outlined here are anything but "clearly cut"; indeed, they complicate, intersect, and cross boundaries in ways North himself could not have anticipated. Liz Blomstedt Keating, for instance, combines technological tools from the digital humanities with her clinician-based inquiry into first-year student writing, some of her study undoubtedly touching on basic writers, among others. Drawing on digital technology to conduct research—a practice Massey and Gebhardt say they would have liked to feature in their volume—Liz continues to find a central role for lore. As Liz just said above, she is able to test classroom practices like group conferencing as a Practitioner and then use her skills as a Clinician to evaluate the student writing that results from those conferences. Combining the two roles of Practitioner and Clinician allows her to assess the credibility and reliability of her lore. Nidhi Rajkumar sees one function of her Practitioner-Critic role as theorizing about texts, but finds it necessary to test her hypotheses—based in part on lore—and shifting her role to that of Practitioner-Researcher. She thus moves in and out of various roles, her peripatetic dance a way of remixing North's roles with his House of Lore in innovative ways. In the process, Nidhi finds that "[t]he reality of the classroom, the source and destination of pedagogical knowledge, necessitates that North's boundaries be opened or at the least made porous."

While North called then-recent changes in the field "the revolution" in composition studies, the graduate student selections here reveal a different kind of disciplinary revolution that has quietly taken place outside of North's taxonomies. Indeed, that revolution can be seen as related to Massey and Gebhardt's claim that while North's book represented a "watershed moment" in the history of the field, "we now find ourselves on the brink of what may become an equally paradigmatic shift" (5). As evidence of this new revolution, or paradigm shift, take Maurice Wilson, who says he is a historian, in part because, according to North, "[history's] internal structure is a familiar and comfortable one: a narrative, a kind of story" (69). Yet Maurice is also drawing on profound changes in the field involving the personal and its use in academic discourse when he writes, "My story is filled with narratives, with stories wrought from lore, from practice, from a deeply personal background." Each of the graduate scholars here tells a similarly personal story, shaped by changes in the field and the *new* history Victor Villanueva recounts in "Rhetoric, Racism, and the Remaking of Knowledge-Making in Composition":

> The men and women of color who pulled this profession into the world of personal academic discourse, of storytelling mixed with evidence of various sorts, have been pointing to what so many others see, that understanding humanity's humanity can best be attained through telling our own stories of ourselves. (131)

Some of the stories told here are remarkable, helping us to see, as Villanueva puts it, that "understanding humanity's humanity can best be attained through telling our own stories of ourselves" (131). Graduate scholar Kate Highfill is keen on that humanity and about the field telling stories that "confront social inequality and injustice, racial and ethnic prejudice." Kate goes on to say that in finding that humanity, "Composition does not need science. Composition needs lore. Composition needs teachers informed by their humanity, and that of their mentors, peers, and students, in order to become a united field working to empower the oppressed." Like Kate, Jessie Casteel opposes an emphasis on a "science" of composition, instead considering the field an "art." Jessie embraces the ideas of Victor Villanueva, who, she says, "cogently enumerates the difficulties of applying the methods of the natural sciences to the study of writing, and instead counsels the centrality of a narrative approach." Jessie, who identifies as one of North's experimentalists, adds, "I believe lore—which is, after all, a species of narrative—is indeed a way to address those difficulties and unite Practitioners and Experimentalists."

For students like Ben Good, the idea of using personal narrative means devising "an ethnography of lore," a methodology that involves "constantly studying our local communities, documenting its discourses as participant-observers, picking up on effective practices." Ben goes on to describe his original methodology that involves discovering his own stories through others' narratives:

> I think of myself scribbling notes and documenting discussions in

> graduate courses, recording not only subject-area knowledge, but also pedagogical practices of graduate professors: *Consider teaching each class session from a different position in the room like Dr. Shepley does?* I find myself reflecting on…professors' advice on the ins and outs of presenting at academic conferences: *Start up casual conversations. Avoid forced networking.*

Personal academic discourse is also important to Georgeann Ward, one of Villanueva's "reluctant clinician[s]" (121), who concludes, after leading assessment efforts at a local college, that "[s]omehow the calculated, empirical approach of clinicians seems counter to the personal, subjective act of composing." Part of Georgeann's solution, in the spirit of Lynn Bloom, is to propose, as Bloom does, that Stephen North's research on clinicians "be expanded, in depth and in longitude, to provide portraits of individual student writers as 'whole, complex people'" (237). Rose Pentecost also finds meaning in the personal because the formalist practice of sentence combining helped improve her daughter's writing: "What might my daughter's academic future be if not for the formalist studies that led to sentence-combining"? In Rose's case, methodology is intimately linked to the personal, specifically, to her interest in her daughter's ultimate writing success:

> When I think about the numerous teachers who have attempted to discover the key to composition success for my daughter, I am most grateful to those who were willing to dig into their files or the back of their drawers to find some idea, practice, or technique—their lore—to serve her needs.

Indeed, Rose suggests that her daughter's improvement through sentence-combining exercises is connected to North's ideas about theory and practice. She writes, "I see her success as part of North's ongoing legacy." In many ways, though, it was the combination of theory and practice, in the form of sentence-combining, that took a problematic situation and demonstrated, as Patricia Harkin said of North's ideas, that "theory is the conflict itself, the contending with words" (135).

In his afterword to Massey and Gebhardt's *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*, Stephen M. North counters some of what he calls the "[a]pocalyptic stuff" in the edited collection. Attempting to emphasize a more optimistic tone, North points to the writers in the volume who provide "some vision, some path—however utopian or systemically wrenching—whereby a morally, pedagogically, and intellectually defensible form of writing instruction might survive, if not thrive, in higher education and beyond" (324-25). In his efforts to balance what he sees as an apocalyptic vision, North might add to his list graduate student Rachael Sears, who is optimistic about her pathway in the field. Combining the roles of practitioner and historian, Rachael asks, "Do these two roles, Practitioner and Historian, contradict each other? At first glance, they may seem to; however, I think they can complement each other well." The answer, she finds, comes in combining, and in fact, remixing, the elements of North's taxonomy that matter most to her: "As a Historian, I want to document the lore of Practitioners and learn what new histories

can be forged on a daily basis through classroom lore."

In responding to North's *The Making of Knowledge* and its reception, including Massey and Gebhardt's edited volume, the graduate scholars here take up North's recent call for a vision and path toward a sustainable form of writing instruction. By starting with North's categories in *MKC*, mixing and remixing his scholarly taxonomy with the importance of practitioners, and identifying their own roles in original ways, they have rebuilt North's House of Lore for the future, creating new categories with permeable, fluctuating, and evolving boundaries. The "vision" and "path" these graduate students have taken, filled with theory, lore, and much more, leave little doubt that writing instruction, and composition, will indeed survive and thrive in twenty-first century classrooms. Toward the end of his book, North adopts a pessimistic note, predicting that composition is "pulling itself apart" (364). William Irmscher counters that outlook, reminding *MKC* readers that "[c]omposition has battled to survive some of the worst adversities that it could be subjected to" (516). Indeed, as Irmscher intimates about the future of the field, and as the graduate students here affirm in important ways, "The direction is up" (516).

Works Cited

Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Journal of Basic Writing* 5.1 (1986): 4-23. Print.

___. Rev. of *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field* by Stephen North. *Rhetoric Review* 6.2 (1988): 224-28. Print.

Berthoff, Ann E. *Forming/Thinking/Writing: The Composing Imagination*. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Books, 1978. Print.

Bloom, Lynn Z. "The World According to North—and Beyond: The Changing Geography of Composition Studies." *The Changing of of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*. Eds. Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2011. 28-43. Print.

Chomsky, Noam. *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton, 1957. Print.

Emig, Janet. *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1971. Print.

Freire, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. [1970.] New York: Continuum, 2007. Print.

Frisicaro-Pawlowski, Erica. "Making Knowledge, Shaping History: Critical Consciousness and the Historical Impulse in Composition Studies." *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*. Eds. Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2011. 84-101. Print.

Fulkerson, Richard. "The Epistemic Paradoxes o 'Lore': From The Making of Knowledge in Composition to the Present (Almost)." *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*. Eds. Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2011. 47-62. Print.

Giroux, Henry A. *On Critical Pedagogy*. New York: Continuum, 2011. Print.

Harkin, Patricia. "The Postdisciplinary Politics of Lore." *Contending with Words:*

Composition and Rhetoric in a Postmodern Age. Eds. Patricia Harkin and John Schilb. New York: MLA, 1991: 124-38. Print.

Hillocks, George. Jr. *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching*. Urbana, IL: National Conference on Research in English and Educational Resources Information Center, 1986. Print.

Hunt, Kellogg. *Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels*. Champaign, IL: NCTE Research Report No. 3, 1965. Print.

Irmscher, William. Rev. of *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field* by Stephen North. *Harvard Educational Review* 58.4 (1988): 513-16. Print.

Massey, Lance, and Richard C. Gebhardt. "Introduction: Making Knowledge in Composition Then, Now, and in the Future." *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*. Eds. Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2011. 1-10. Print.

Massey, Lance, and Richard C. Gebhardt, eds. *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2011. Print.

Mellon, John. *Transformational Sentence Combining: A Method for Enhancing the Development of Syntactic Fluency in English Composition*. Champaign, IL: NCTE Research Report No. 10, 1969. Print.

North, Stephen M. "Afterword." *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*. Eds. Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2011. 323-25. Print.

___. *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann-Boynton/Cook, 1987. Print.

Phelps, Louise Wetherbee. "Practical Wisdom and the Geography of Knowledge in Composition." *College English* 53.8 (1991): 863-85. Print.

Ray, Ruth E. *The Practice of Theory: Teacher Research in Composition*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993. Print.

Raymond, James. Rev. of *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field* by Stephen M. North. *College Composition and Communication* 40.1 (1989): 93-95.

Shaughnessy, Mina P. *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*. New York: Oxford UP, 1977. Print.

Shor, Ira. *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987. Print.

Straub, Richard. *Key Works on Teacher Response: An Anthology*. Ed. Ronald Lunsford. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann-Boynton/Cook, 2006. Print.

Villanueva, Victor. "Rhetoric, Racism, and the Remaking of Knowledge-Making in Composition." *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*. Eds. Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2011. 121-33. Print.

About the Authors

Paul Butler is Associate Professor of English at the University of Houston, where he teaches graduate seminars on research methods, the public sphere, community literacy/civic engagement, and alternative histories of composition. His undergraduate teaching ranges from first-year writing, advanced composition, and professional writing courses to nature/environmental writing, memoir/creative nonfiction, and multimodal composition. His scholarship focuses on the intersections of style, the public sphere, and digital rhetoric.

Jessie Casteel teaches first-year writing at San Jacinto College. She is also currently working on her dissertation about transdiscursive rhetorics to complete her Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Composition, and Pedagogy at the University of Houston. Her research interests include developmental writing pedagogy, transdiscursive rhetorics, adaptation, and public identity narrative rhetoric.

Ben Good is a Ph.D. student specializing in Rhetoric, Composition, and Pedagogy in the English Department at the University of Houston. He teaches first-year composition and literature courses. His research interests include writing pedagogy, generative rhetoric, and the practices of quoting and paraphrasing.

Katherine Highfill is a doctoral student at the University of Houston in the Rhetoric, Composition, and Pedagogy concentration of the English Department.

Elizabeth Blomstedt Keating is a Teaching Fellow and Ph.D. student in Rhetoric, Composition, and Pedagogy at the University of Houston. Her research interests include first-year writing pedagogy, writing assessment, critical pedagogy, and the digital humanities.

Rose Pentecost is a first year Ph.D. student in Literature at the University of Houston. She tutors international students through the Language and Culture Center in grammar, reading, writing, and listening. She is set to begin teaching writing in studio to freshman architecture students at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture as a teaching assistant. Her areas of interest include African American representation and identity in literature, including self-representation in slave narratives and autobiographical-based novels.

Nidhi Rajkumar is an internationally experienced creative professional with over 15 years of management, commercial, freelance, and academic experience. She is a former Associate Professor of Design as well as principal of a vocational training institute for the garment industry. Nidhi holds Master's degrees in Management and Literature.

Rachael Sears is a high school ELA teacher in the Houston Independent School District and in her third year of the doctoral Rhetoric and Composition program at the University of Houston. Her research interests include post-colonial theory, race theory, rhetoric and composition in Title 1 public schools.

Georgeann Ward is an English and Humanities instructor and the Honors Program coordinator at Lee College in Baytown, Texas. Her research interests include critical pedagogy and composition in community colleges.

Maurice Wilson is a Ph.D. student in the Rhetoric, Composition and Pedagogy concentration at the University of Houston. His current research examines writing instruction at HBCUs and student-veteran writing in composition classrooms.

Open Words: Access and English Studies is an open-access, peer-review scholarly journal, published on the WAC Clearinghouse and supported by Colorado State.

ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online).