From the Editor

If you ever find an occasion to stop and think about how much you really write (and, if you're reading this, I'm guessing you've found just such an occasion), you might be surprised by both the high volume and wide variety of texts you read and write on a daily basis. I'm, of course, using "writing" here to mean more than that which we do for a particular class: think, instead, of all the high- or low-stakes writing tasks you complete as related to particular clubs, hobbies, interests, jobs, and other communities. These tasks might take the forms of things like notes, emails, to-do lists, charts, posts, and more. Given this huge spectrum of possible encounters we might each have with writing, it's perhaps not surprising that the act of writing is itself so highly idiosyncratic. The late writer and teacher Donald Murray calls this feature of writing its "autobiographical" side, explaining, "We are autobiographical in the way we write. . . . I have my own peculiar way of looking at the world and my own way of using language to communicate what I see" (58). This in itself might not seem like much of an earth-shattering revelation, but when we extend this idea out to consider the question of just where these "peculiar ways" come from, we can arrive at some useful insights. And that is precisely the theme linking the five outstanding student essays published in this issue of *Stylus*. Each author attempts to answer this question using different methods and analytical frameworks, but that only seems appropriate: just as there many ways to approach writing, there are many ways to approach the study of writing.

The first essay is Michael Rodgers' "Expanding Constraints." Rodgers uses a series of narratives to explore where his very definitions of what constitutes effective writing have come from and how they've changed over the years. Building out of a rather interesting story about researching a famous dog before turning to the role of creativity in academic writing, Rodgers' essay is both highly entertaining and very insightful. We think, too, you'll find his discussion of the impact of various encounters with writing at school relatable, even if the exact nature of such encounters has differed for you. We also thought you might be interested in tracking the progress of Rodgers' essay from an earlier draft to this final, published version. After reading his essay, take a look at the earlier draft and try to consider why he decided to make the changes that he did. What effect do they have?

Next up is Alcir Santos Neto's "Tug of War: The Writing Process of a Bilingual Writer and his Struggles." Here, the author uses a very different sort of method, relying on a system of think-aloud protocols and coding that might be familiar to you from your own writing class. While he focuses on the struggles of a bilingual writer, we think you'll find Santos Neto's results no less interesting regardless of the number of languages you speak. Santos Neto considers the impact of translating back and forth between Portuguese and English as he writes and the disruptions that causes, ultimately arguing that, by understanding his own process, he's better able to control it and adapt it

to the different situations he faces. Just as our individual experiences with writing in school shape our perceptions and beliefs about writing, so too does our individual use of language play a role, whether that's writing in completely new languages or various vernaculars and registers.

The last three essays in this issue continue to probe the factors that contribute to how individuals see and use writing, but take the research outside of the classroom. In his essay, "Musical and Literary Composition: The Revision Relation," Cody Riebel contributes to research about the revision process by looking at how songwriters describe revising their work. Musicians should especially relate to this essay, but his analysis of these processes is helpful in understanding writing as well. The processes of songwriting and essay writing may have more in common than you first expect.

The next essay is Matthew Ceriale's "The Game within the Games: The Behaviors, Language, and Virtual Norms of RuneScape." Here, Ceriale offers an in-depth exploration of the online role-playing game RuneScape. This might seem like a surprising site of study for writing research, but, given the amount of interaction that takes place in this game through writing, it makes perfect sense. Ceriale traces the progression of social norms through the game as they're promoted by both the game developers and players themselves. It's a fascinating and incredibly thorough look at how one community functions.

The final essay, Alec O'Connor's "The AIAA and its Use of Genre," introduces another, albeit quite different, community: the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. O'Connor focuses on the genres this community uses to spread information amongst its members, explaining how different forms work to achieve different functions. Again, we find a surprising (and surprisingly varied) amount of writing happening in this community.

All of the authors whose work appears in this issue prompt us to reconsider and question what informs our perceptions, beliefs, and practices connected to writing. We are all writers, yet we all experience and think about doing writing differently. This is one reason, I think, why it is often so difficult to adapt our writing to new situations and audiences—the ground seems to always be moving under our feet. Reflecting on the shifting definitions and purposes of effective writing and consider how these expectations develop makes us more mindful of what we're doing and why. And, since writing is something most of us do quite often, that's probably a good thing.

-Matt Bryan

Work Cited
Murray, Donald. "All Writing Is Autobiography." *Writing about Writing*. Ed. Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. 57-65.