stylus
a journal of first-year writing

From the Editor

Have you ever had the experience of looking back at something you once wrote, and not recognizing yourself in it all? I know I have. It's unnerving in its way, but perhaps it's also informative: as writer and teacher Donald Murray claimed, "We become what we write. That is one of the great magics of writing" (71). For that moment when someone else—perhaps a teacher, a friend, a relative, or maybe even someone we don't know at all—read our words, we became, through language, another individual entirely. Or, rather, we became perhaps the impression of an individual. In part, that's always been what I've loved about writing (and reading, too, for that matter). It's that chance to, maybe only briefly, share some headspace with another person, across time and space. But Murray's quote and that uneasy sense of not recognizing oneself in writing should perhaps give us pause. Is it possible that, through writing, we—perhaps unintentionally?—become someone else entirely?

The five writers published in this issue of *Stylus* seem to get at this question, albeit in different ways, by considering the means through which individuals are shaped by their uses of language, and how their identities, in turn, impact their language use. Their methods vary—from self-reflection and analysis to surveys to textual analysis to archival research—but all five share a common understanding that language matters. It does things, not the least of which is shape us and how we see ourselves fitting into the world around us.

The first piece is Amber Steward's essay, "Learning to Loosen the Ties." Steward reflects on her writing processes and how they have changed—or in some cases not changed—over time. Readers familiar with essays such as Anne Lamott's "Shitty First Drafts" or Thomas Osborne's "Late Nights, Last Rites, and the Rain-Slick Road to Self-Destruction" (which was originally published in *Stylus* 2.2 here) should recognize Steward's essay as an extension of those earlier conversations. Readers might appreciate, in particular, her clever and illustrative uses of figurative language, and they might find, too, that they share some of the processes she describes.

Next, we have Shravan Yandra's, "Note-Taking Involving Native and Modern Languages: A Detailed Analysis of My Code-Meshing." Yandra's careful self-examination serves as an exploration of an important subject that has yet to be addressed in the pages of *Stylus*: code-meshing. Drawing on work by linguistics scholar, Suresh Canagarajah, Yandra describes code-meshing as "a process of combining different languages to communicate an idea in a more efficient manner." Yandra uses code-meshing as a lens through which to examine his note-taking practices in a combination of Hindi, Sanskrit, and English. This exploration should prompt useful discussions and reflections on the way all of us combine different languages (including language varieties, such as multiple Englishes) in writing. It should also remind us that even what might be considered more minor forms of texts (such as notes) still work to structure and create knowledge.

The third article, written by Dana Mikkelsen, is titled, "'Write' and Wrong: An Analysis of the Linguistic Differences in Men's and Women's First-Year Technical and Engineering Writing." That title should give you a good sense of the nature of Mikkelsen's investigation, and it's one we think is both timely and highly relevant to the many STEM majors here at UCF. Even non-STEM majors should find Mikkelsen's careful analysis of language use and how that may or may not be connected to identity to be quite compelling.

The fourth piece in this issue is by Taylor Rayfield and is titled, "The Desktop Doctor: Medical Rhetoric in the Emergent Online Context." Rayfield considers the role that medical resource sites play in patients' access to information about healthcare. In particular, he considers how the construction and language of these sites shapes individuals' understandings of medicine and their relationships to doctors and healthcare generally. Rayfield's study demonstrates the value of combining research methods—in his case, he employed both surveys and textual analysis of several websites—to trace how writing impacts individuals' lives.

And, finally, we have Kristina Abicca's, "Navy Women Riding the WAVES: An Analysis of the Changing Generational Discourse for Females in the Navy." Abicca takes advantage of an existing UCF research archive—the UCF Community Veterans History Project, which houses oral histories from veterans—to examine the shifting ways in which women in the US Navy talk about their experiences and the nature of their roles. The stories Abicca describes are fascinating, as are the trends she identifies. Moreover, her research method should prompt productive consideration about how student investigators in Composition I or II might further explore some of the existing archival materials the university collects.

Also, for the first time ever, we are pleased to be able to publish some of the process work that authors completed in their classes along the way to creating the final, polished articles and essays you see here. These materials are presented in their raw, unedited forms in order to offer insight into what these processes really looked like. Research is often messy, even in the best of times, but that is not usually reflected in the final product of a published article. We are grateful to the authors for sharing this material so that others can take a peek behind the curtain and learn about how these articles came into being.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Stylus* and find it to be helpful in your explorations of what writing and research can accomplish. We also hope that you'll consider submitting your own work for publication in the journal; at one time or another, all of the students published here were sitting in a composition class, just like you. To read about their experiences (and, sometimes, struggles)

along the way from receiving an assignment to being published, be sure to take a look at the writer's statements accompanying each piece.

If you're interested in submitting work to *Stylus*, simply ask your Composition I or II instructor to forward the piece you'd like to submit to the journal and we'll take care of the rest. If you have any questions about this process, please feel free to contact me at Matthew.Bryan@ucf.edu.

-Matt Bryan

Work Cited

Murray, Donald. "All Writing Is Autobiography." *Writing about Writing: A College Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014, pp. 66-74. Originally published in *College Composition and Communication* vol. 42, no. 1, 1991, pp. 66-74.