EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

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"Think outside the box." "Don't put me in a box." While literal boxes contain and organize physical objects, we often use "boxes" metaphorically to talk about constructs that define or delimit us and that often seem to inspire us to push beyond them. Reading across the articles included in this volume, a common theme that emerged was the limitations of various "boxes." In these pages, undergraduate researchers explore how different rhetors and genres work within and push beyond the boundaries of definitions, identities, genres, and constraints.

Volume 21 begins with an article examining the intersection of rhetoric, genre, and identity. Taking up the call to study rhetoric in diverse cultural contexts, Anusha Kothari explores the genre of mental health narratives of South Asian individuals posted on the Mann Mukti database. Using rhetorical genre theory to analyze eight narratives, Kothari examines how rhetorical situations and genre features work to transform the taboo surrounding discussions of individual mental health struggles in one cultural community. Karen Quick also seeks to better understand a specific genre, in this case, query letters used by writers to solicit representation for their work. Reporting on her statistical corpus analysis of successful and unsuccessful query letters, Quick offers aspiring writers data-driven information about what might make query letters more successful,

usefully supplementing the anecdotal and often contradictory advice circulating online.

What boxes are student writers working within in the writing classroom, and how might they be broken down? Volume 21 also includes pieces considering the borders and boundaries that constrain writing education and student writers' development. Gabby Bunko's research grew out of her own experiences as a double major in writing studies and literature. Bunko observed that the relationship between these two disciplines was often murky for students and wondered whether better understanding the areas of overlap and disconnect between these two fields might support undergraduate student learning. Using empirical methods—classroom observations, close readings of texts, interviews, and surveys—Bunko unpacks conceptual metaphors circulating in writing studies and literary studies courses to highlight the ways these metaphors reveal shared understandings of language and writing and sometimes obscure divergent perspectives and goals. Isabelle Lundin was also inspired by a phenomenon she observed; as a peer writing center consultant, she witnessed students' reluctance to revise their work, especially in response to peer feedback. Through ethnographic case studies of two writers, Lundin explores the impact of metacognitive reflection on peer review, finding that a structured reflection protocol encouraged student

writers to be open to feedback and supported their attempts to align their rhetorical purposes with their own identities.

Who fits into the boxes of "writing studies researcher" or "effective rhetor"? The long history of *YSW*'s first-year spotlight section demonstrates that first-year undergraduate students are capable of designing, conducting, and circulating research projects that meaningfully contribute to scholarly conversations in the field of rhetoric and writing studies. Nevertheless, undergraduate students may need help seeing themselves as researchers. In her preface to one of the spotlight articles included in this volume, Joyce Kinkead argues that her first-year students' reflections reveal that early exposure to research through a scaffolded, collaborative project helped them realize that research was not "as scary" as they thought it would be and begin to "see themselves as researchers." Kinkead's preface accompanies an article collaboratively authored by her students. In their article, Avery Truman, the corresponding author, and her peers, report on their empirical study of the writing tools preferred by so-called "digital natives." Truman et al. found that while preference for digital or analog tools depends on the context, many of the college-aged participants reported a preference for tools such as gel pens, ballpoint pens, or mechanical pencils and that their writing tool preferences were often connected to their writing identities. Amiee Zhao's first-year spotlight article builds on previous research on the rhetoric of climate activist Greta Thunberg, including that of Sarah Bach in volume 19 of *YSW*. However, Zhao argues that Thunberg's autistic identity is, to date, an under-explored aspect of her rhetorical practice. Drawing on the classical concept of *parrhesia*, Zhao invites rhetoric and writing scholars to consider the affordances of Thunberg's autistic identity, specifically, and the rhetorical strengths of neurodivergent rhetors more generally.

Our cover image, Theo van Doesburg's "Pastoral," playfully speaks to the theme of boxes and constraints that runs through this volume. Theo van Doesburg was a founding member of De Stijl, a magazine and a twentieth-century Dutch art movement that "promoted utopian ideals and spiritual harmony through the embrace of rational design principles" ("Theo van Doesburg"). "Pastoral" was not intended as the work of art itself but as the design for a stained-glass window. This design was sketched on fragile paper, not expected to last beyond its usefulness as a part of the creative process, and was found in the van Doesburg archive after his death ("Van Doesburg Archive"). Nevertheless, we are drawn to this colorful, geometric design and enjoy the way its eight panels experiment with various permutations of its own theme and how the piece, as a whole, riffs on the genre of stained glass windows. The physical piece extended well beyond its expected lifespan, speaking to us today—like the articles in this manuscript, it, too, does not fit neatly into a box.

WORKS CITED

Bach, Sarah. "Our House is on Fire": Exploring the Rhetorical Significance of Youth Climate Activists, An Emerging Discourse Community." *Young Scholars in Writing*, vol. 19, 2022, pp. 40-54.

"Theo van Doesburg, Compositie VII: 'de drie Gratiën' (Composition VII: The Three Graces), 1917." *Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum*, https://www.kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/collection/search-results/wu-3812-theo-van-doesburg-dutch-18831931-compositie-vii-de-drie-gratien-composition-vii-the-three-graces-1917/search/all_fields:theo-van-doesburg

"Van Doesburg Archive." *Nieuwe Instituut*, nieuweinstituut.nl/en/projects/atelier-nelly-theo-doesburg/archief-van-doesburg. Accessed 22 Dec. 2023.