

Dissertation Abstract

Erica's dissertation, "Exceptional Modernisms: Conceptual Writing in Composition-Rhetoric," proposes that a rereading of modernism in composition-rhetoric can successfully respond to pedagogical challenges that arose after the death of the author problematized the writing subject. While modernist artists and writers were experimenting with alternative composing practices, composition instruction focused on the principles of clarity and correctness. The result was a problematic reinforcement of an Enlightenment modernism, invested in objective logic, and a Romantic modernism, devoted to subjective aesthetics: a bifurcation which has limited the scope of composition-rhetoric pedagogy. Using Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity* (i.e., decadence, avant-garde, kitsch, modernity, and postmodernism) as a methodological tool, Erica reconsiders the potential for modernism in composition-rhetoric, taking into account previously excluded, or exceptional, approaches. As a result of this rereading, her project introduces a contemporary *progymnasmata*, or set of writing exercises, informed by conceptualism and influenced by the composing methods of conceptual writers such as Kenneth Goldsmith, Caroline Bergvall, and Christian Bök. Erica suggests that conceptual writing offers a methodology that encourages students to think about writing as performance, choice, imitation, and transformation in ways that disrupt authors and readers as sites of meaning. As a result, students become more aware of the relationships and movements involved in the composing process and are challenged to experience their writing habits differently.