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X Marks the Spot: An Appreciative Response to Morales's Review of *Landmark Essays On Rhetoric Of Science: Case Studies and Issues and Methods*

Randy Allen Harris, University of Waterloo, raha@uwaterloo.ca

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Alexander William Morales's (2021) shoe in this review was once on the other foot, mine. As an early-career scholar I wrote a review of Alan G. Gross's groundbreaking (1990) *The Rhetoric of Science*. Gross responded with extraordinary grace, which, very fortunately, I don't have to match. Morales has been much kinder to me than I was to Gross. I tried to pick a fight with him and Gross declined. Morales does not want to fight either, so I have only highly appreciative words for him and for his generous recommendation of these two important collections.

There are a few broader observations I would like to make in this opportunity to participate in the *SERRC*, however, beyond thanking Morales for his encomium of the volumes. Most immediately, of course, credit for the importance of the volumes and the praise that Morales has given them belongs overwhelmingly with the scholars I have gathered between their covers. As Morales notes, the essays span well over seventy years (in fact, over a century), ranging from anticipatory arguments and analyses by Charles Sanders Peirce and Richard M. Weaver; through the foundational work of critics and theorists like Carolyn R. Miller, Jeanne Fahnestock, and Leah Ceccarelli; to the developments since the turn of the millennium that are now expanding and redefining rhetoric by an exciting new class of rhetoricians that includes such voices as Michelle Sidler's, Kenneth Walker's, and Ashley Rose Mehlenbacher's. I won't spend much of this response in their praise (the introductions do that), but these two books would be literally empty without their individually inspiring and collectively magnificent work.

Additionally, though, it may be valuable to make a few remarks about the history and intentions of these two volumes, particularly for early-career scholars; about the goals of my two introductions; and about the legacy of the volumes going forward, which will circle us back to the Good Dr. Gross.

A Brief Origin Story

It isn't fully apparent from Morales's review that *Case Studies* is a second edition, or that *Issues and Methods* is its long-frustrated sequel. The first edition of *Case Studies* was one of the inaugural *Landmark Essays in Rhetoric* volumes, conceived and shepherded by the legendary James J. "Jerry" Murphy for his Hermagoras Press. Rhetoric of science had burgeoned over the previous decade to the point where a true accounting of its foundations called for two volumes, one of critical analyses, the other of its theoretical positioning and methodological instrumentation. Which to do first? Jerry and I wondered.

We decided to start with *Case Studies*. In part, this was an answer to Gross, who worried that critical studies in rhetoric of science were 'piling up rather than adding up' (1991, 35); I had rather the opposite view, and this would allow me to show how they stacked up rather nicely. In larger part, it was—and I am extremely heartened that Morales highlights this in his review—because I wanted to gather exemplary works that could serve as templates for graduate students and even for mid- or late-career academics who wanted to join the field. Rhetoric, as Michael Halloran notes, is "a strongly empirical field of study," rooted

essentially in “the particular case” (2018/1984, 78). My intention was to draw an X on the rhetorical treasure map so that people entering the field would know where to dig and, once they had unearthed the jewels and doubloons, how to invest them in their own work, further enriching the field.

Case Studies came out in 1997. Jerry and I thought we should wait a year or so before bringing out *Issues and Methods*; him, to see how *Case Studies* made its way (and perhaps if it would make its way); me, to catch my breath. *Case Studies* in fact did very well; the scholarly publication market, not so much. The bottom dropped out. Jerry sold Hermagoras and its listings, which then changed hands again, and again, and the *Landmark Essays* series bumped around, somehow accruing insane cover prices along the way. But the wheel turned yet again in the mid 2010s. Even Jerry came back. He took hold of the series again, languishing now at Routledge, and we talked about finally putting out that follow-up volume.

But, for two reasons, we realized we needed to bring out another edition of *Case Studies* first. Reason one: something called the internet had come to dominate scientific (and all other domains of) communication, sponsoring some landmark rhetorical analyses along the way. But, reason two, peculiarities of academic publishing that still baffle me had slowly increased the price of the first edition up to where it was now pushing \$200, and the only way to bring it down was to produce a second edition. New work needed to be included and we couldn't allow foundational older work do be driven off the map for financial reasons. So, we brought it out in a way that respected its original structure by augmenting each section with more recent essays, and expanding the introduction not only to position those new works but to chart the development of the field in the twenty years since the book's initial publication.

While I had always regretted that our two-volume strategy meant we published a book entitled *Landmark Essays in Rhetoric of Science* that didn't include such groundbreaking works as Philip C. Wander's “The Rhetoric of Science,” Carolyn R. Miller's “Kairos in the Rhetoric of Science,” and essays from the formative thickness-of-rhetoric debates, the years during which *Issues and Methods* was stalled were not exactly fallow ones. So, the volume we brought out in 2020 has a much broader array of tools and perspectives than anything we might have published two decades earlier. The book is vastly richer than it would have been because of the scholarship on the argumentative functions of rhetorical figures, the influence of materialist theories, the expansion into visual rhetoric, and the growth of genre theory.

Morales gives an excellent sketch of the architectures of both volumes, and I have to agree with him that the relevance of the structure established in *Case Studies* has stood up very well as a guide to the critical landscape in rhetoric of science (“Giants in Science,” “Conflict in Science,” “Public Science,” and “Writing Science”), though attention to giants has receded somewhat and attention to inscription (and indigitization) practices has correspondingly grown. I also partially share his unease with some of my categorizations in *Issues and Methods*. “The Very Idea,” I am fine with; Morales, too. Every anthology is a museum of sorts, and the very-idea papers would occupy the first wing of a historical museum, the cusp into an archaic period. The essays in that section are no longer alive in the sense that no one in

rhetoric disputes any longer that science is a rhetorical enterprise. But they are essential reading for understanding how it is we got here from a field once concerned only with oratory and literature.

“Through Thick and Thin,” likewise, we’re both OK with. It is anchored in the epistemic debates that emerged concurrently and mutually with rhetoric of science. These arguments, too, are crucial for how we understand ourselves as rhetoricians of science, but not just in terms of our origins. They provide reference points for how ‘deeply’ rhetoric penetrates science, what returns we can expect from instruments of rhetoric when they are trained on the practices and cultural consequences of science, and how broadly we can/should be framing out claims. These are ongoing and unfolding arguments, whose value is more for orienting our future than for memorializing our past.

On the Neoclassical/Neomodern Distinction

Where we start to part company, Morales and I, is over the “Neoclassical” / “Neomodern” distinction I use to categorize approaches that align fundamentally with terministic machinery of the long rhetorical tradition and approaches that look predominantly outside that tradition for their machinery. Morales has reservations about the distinction. I like it. It identifies two general trends in the field; indeed, in rhetoric more broadly. And I am especially pleased with the label “Neoclassical” for the landmark essays that demonstrate the enduring power of methods like kairotic and figurative and topical analysis. On the other hand (though still not on Morales’s hand) I am a bit uneasy about “Neomodern” as the label I use to identify the methods that rhetoric has imported from outside the rhetorical tradition, like Habermassian Communicative Action, Actor Network Theory, or Dao-Discourse Studies. There’s nothing especially modernist about these methods (especially Dao Discourse!); hence the mild discomfort. I was just trying to find a nicely complementary term to *Neoclassical*. I toyed with terms like “Nontraditional” and “Extrarhetorical” for a while, along with such kluges as “Unclassical” and even “Unclassified” but all of them had problems of their own and none made sufficient gains in accuracy or clarity, so *Neomodern* it became. What I am not uneasy about, to be very clear, is neither the quality of the included essays nor the need to identify an augmentative approach to rhetorical theory distinct from methods with a primarily lineal inheritance back to the foundational insights of the ancients.

As it turns out, though, it is not the *distinction* Morales is unhappy about. It is the contradictory applications of that distinction by disciplinary gatekeepers (editors, peer-reviewers). Neoclassical methods appear to get only yawns from those gatekeepers. “Where’s the beef?” they want to know. Neomodern methods appear to get procedural dismissals. “Where’s the rhetoric?” the gatekeepers complain. He is understandably frustrated, as are we all when we encounter the closed gates of the person he calls *Reviewer #2* (I prefer *Reviewer B*, for *Bonehead*, though #2 is not bad either, if interpreted scatologically). This is especially troublesome when said Reviewer uses these methodological tendencies to shut out junior and entering scholars—who have not had the chance to go through many gates yet, if any at all—without doing the real work of actually reviewing the papers they find to be unsuitable: a careful outline of what could make them suitable.

I wish I had words of comfort about such reviewers at such gates. I don't. And scholarly gates are complicated. They aren't just one-latch affairs. Lift it, and you're through. But there are a lot of good reviewers as well, who see it as their job to grow the profession by showing people the techniques to get through those gates, not as slamming them shut. You can try to elicit such guidance from reviewers and editors, if it's not forthcoming; or you can back it up and try another journal.

Assembling Scholarly Collections

Getting back to the books at hand, indulge me with one more peek under the hood, please, while we're talking about conditions and procedures of assembling scholarly collections: there are, alas, some brutally pragmatic considerations in assembling such work. While scholars rarely see much financial gain from their publishing, money does change hands. My copyright budgets for these books were extraordinarily modest; two essays alone of *Issues and Methods*, for example, ate almost a third of the entire budget; additionally, there are significant restrictions on page counts, in order to keep the cover price reasonable. Those constraints, along with matters of priority and coverage, of representing different sciences, different methods, and different theories, meant that some truly superb scholars didn't make the final cuts. Rhetoric of Science (+ Technology, + Medicine) is such a rich and vibrant field, with such a slate of smart and creative practitioners, that my various tradeoffs sadly ended up leaving out rhetoricians who have given us important landmarks. I won't catalogue them here, but I wouldn't forgive myself if I didn't at least mention Marouf A. Hasian Jr., S. Scott Graham, and Aimee Kendall Roundtree; all of whom I encourage you strongly to read not just for a sense of where the field is, but where it is going.

I was hugely gratified to see that Morales appreciated my efforts in these books not just at charting out disciplinary patterns in the abstract but charting them out for the specific benefit of graduate students and junior scholars, and gratified even more by his testimony that they helped him navigate his exams and develop him professionally. My two introductions, in particular, are meant to work in concert toward those ends. The *Case Studies* introduction lays out a mostly academic history: the various currents in philosophy, sociology, and history of science that opened rhetorical seams; developments in argumentation studies; the dilation of rhetoric's scope; the growth in technical communication teaching; and the realization that *epistemology* should be rewritten as *epistemologies*, not a hard and univocal rational monolith but a family of ways of knowing that were dynamic, contingent, and negotiated; that is, rhetorical. The *Issues and Methods* introduction comes at our formation from the outside, offering a largely social history to complement the disciplinary history of *Case Studies*: the promise of space exploration and the dread of the nuclear annihilation; the pervasiveness of technoscience; the growing two-cultures divide; and the overall educational eclipse of the humanities by technical and vocational emphases.

The Influence of Alan Gross

Since I started with Alan G. Gross, it is fitting that I close with him, a guy who had his fingers in all of these pies at one time or another. Consequently, he is all over these two volumes, in three essays and in the citations of most of the others. Two other essays are from a volume he coedited, *Science and the Internet* (Gross and Buehl 2017), and a recurrent set of themes are oriented toward another book he co-edited, *Rhetorical Hermeneutics* (Gross and Keith 1997). As you may know, Alan very lamentably passed away in the fall of 2020. I have not disagreed with any scholar for as long as I disagreed with Alan, and I can't imagine missing a scholar more—he was so productive, so engaged, so inspiring, and so infuriating.

When my rhetoric-of-science career was beginning, as I noted off the top, I tried to pick a fight with him. He had just published *The Rhetoric of Science* and I reviewed it by attacking half the words of his title as either ill-suited to the field or to his book: *The*, because even in 1990 there was already a range of rhetorics of science from groundbreaking scholars, not a definitive single rhetoric of science for him to appropriate; and *rhetoric*, because the book often spent more time extracting and adapting instruments from sibling disciplines (literary studies, sociology, philosophy) than deploying methods more directly from the rhetorical tradition; I let him have *of* and *science* without complaint. I had baited the hook and thought he would bite. Bite? He tucked in his bib and sat down to dinner. Crafty old rhetor that he was, he joined me in complaining about the title. He confesses to imperialism in his use of *the* and admits that “the neo-Aristotelian rhetoric I use is pretty thin gruel” (1991, 35). He also throws *of* and *science* under the bus, for unspecified reasons, and then slanders the entire field. Sure, he implies, I'm laying claim to the field, but it needs a philosopher king like me. After Aristotle, Gross says, “rhetoric attracted only second-rate minds,” and even Aristotle was not operating at his best when he scribbled a few observations about persuasion for the post-lunch, afternoon crowd. I thought I would be getting under his skin by revealing how thin his gruel was. But he reveled in how thin it was because, in his view, the tradition itself was vanishingly thin, and he was here to bulk it up with his importations from philosophy and sociology. He was saving us poor rhetoricians from our second-rate selves.

And that was only the beginning of our contentions. He was easily the most forceful early prophet of a rhetoric whose epistemological and ontological reach was so pervasive that science could not avoid its sweeping gaze—one of the few stances he held that I agreed with—upping the ante to insist widely on a “radical rhetoric of science” (2020 / 1991, 120), a rhetoric that penetrated science “without remainder” (1990, 33; see Crick 2020 / 2014, 145-149). Gross advanced and defended that position against all comers, ... until the day Dilip Gaonkar attacked. His “The Idea of Rhetoric in the Rhetoric of Science” (1997 / 1993) called on us to pull in our sails and return to the modest shores of textual surfaces. While virtually all the major rhetoricians of science rejected Gaonkar's arguments, countering them cogently, Gross lowered his sails, renounced his own earlier claims as rash, and shifted the remainder of his career to textual surfaces (prominently including visuals).

When I developed a book on rhetoric and incommensurability (Harris 2004), a wonderful collection of essays that overwhelmingly treated incommensurability as an artefact of

arguers, Gross's voice was the sole dissenting one, insisting it is a function of good old-fashion, hard-coded textual recalcitrance. That was perfectly fine, of course, couldn't have been better. Dissenting opinions are hugely valuable. But when he reworked his Gaonkar-admonished *The Rhetoric of Science* into the de-radicalized *Starring the Text* Gross included a chapter on incommensurability purporting to compare rhetorical approaches to the problem against philosophical and historical approaches. But he did so by pretending none of his peers (Miller, Fahnestock, Campbell, Ceccarelli, Prelli, ...) had anything to say about the topic and that Harris (2005) never existed. Infuriating.

But, in his way, also warm and caring and deeply committed to our common project, rhetoric of science. Gross continued to work along the surfaces of science for the rest of his career, and his last book was focused solely on the aesthetics of science writing. But, now in his 80s, he also continued to grow as a scholar of science. That final book, *The Scientific Sublime* (2018), was closer to literary criticism than to rhetoric, but it is cogent, insightful, and richly opinionated; it is also his most elegantly written.

So, Alan is heavily represented in the two Landmark volumes, very fittingly because he shaped and reshaped the history of the field, even while he was often swimming against the current. The only other scholars I can think of erected landmarks in their field representing such divergent positions are Ludwig Wittgenstein and Noam Chomsky, which puts Alan in pretty good company. In *Case Studies*, we get a strong-form, historically situated, radical rhetoric of science argument that Newton's *Opticks* reinvented the physics of light solely on the basis of its structure, its timing, its accommodation of the audience, and so on; rhetoric without remainder. In *Issues and Methods* we get him both defending a radically pervasive rhetoric of science and then developing a (non-radical, post-Gaonkar) theory of scientific visuals that hugs the surfaces. He was a model scholar, able to change his mind in a way that few of us can, despite years of investment, and he practiced precisely what he preached. Along the way, he defined and redefined our field and he pushed the rest of us to do so as well.

So, we are almost back where we started. One more step and I will let you go: thanks again to Alexander William Morales for his thoughtful and generous review of these two volumes, and to the SERRC for the opportunity to respond to that review.

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