I use the one-hundred-year, transatlantic circulation of Le Corbusier’s grain elevator photographs to tell the story of the short but vibrant life of a mechanized rhetoric. From 1913 to 1969, these photographs were understood in the context of a mechanized rhetoric, and they starred in the iconography of modernity. From 1971 to 2010, the same photographs were contextualized by a symbolic vision of rhetoric. So contextualized, the photographs lost their prestige and became conduits through which postmodernism was introduced into architectural theory—and from there into the American academy. As a case study of rhetoric’s becoming-symbolic, then, this essay foregrounds the opportunity costs of symbolic definitions of rhetoric. It suggests that the twinned introduction of symbolism and postmodernism involved a misreading of rhetorical history.