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# Drawing Back the Curtain

On the Place of Space in Visual Rhetorics

**QUICK ON THE DRAW** Fifteen years before Lloyd Bitzer would pen his landmark essay—which would thoroughly shape rhetorical studies for years to come—Daffy Duck was hot on the trail of the rhetorical situation. In 1953, the Looney Tunes episode *Duck Amuck* explored the nature of rhetorical situatedness by placing Daffy in a scenic contest with his own animator.<sup>1</sup> *Duck Amuck*, in just a brief seven minutes, was able to illustrate the complex constellation of exigence, audience, and constraint that would become the theoretical formulations outlined in Bitzer’s well known work, “The Rhetorical Situation.”<sup>2</sup> Through time, *Duck Amuck* has proven to be more than just a prescient iteration of Bitzer’s essay. Instead, the animated short diverges from his “rhetorical situation”—which focuses on *place*—and explores the complex phenomenological concept: rhetorical *space*. *Duck Amuck* is able to elucidate (shall we say illustrate?) this phenomenologically opaque issue in a way Bitzer’s essay cannot precisely because it is drawn. In what follows, I explore the value of “the drawn” as it bears on the distinction between, and interdependence of, rhetorical place and space. I submit that drawing can provide a “spacious” supplement to the narrowly “placed” thinking which has dominated rhetorical studies, and by proxy, visual motion rhetorics.

Before I do, I must acknowledge with the reader that such a claim comes with a burden. Presented as a series of questions, I must answer exactly why drawing should be unique in restoring *place* to its proper *space*? Why is place dangerous to begin with? What power does it wield? Why is space different, or superior, to place? And, lastly, why is the placing problem unique to motion visual rhetoric? Below, I treat these questions in reverse order, beginning with *Duck Amuck* as a theoretical canvas.

**DRAWN AWAY: ON DUCK AMUCK** From the outset, Daffy Duck exhibits the tension that arises when the expectations of place are undermined by shifting spaces. He enters the animation cell from stage right dressed in renaissance fencing garb. He shuffles across the cell against a backdrop of a late medieval castle drawbridge. The castle quickly disappears as he proceeds from right to left. That is, the castle visually decomposes into simpler colored shapes, then graphic lines, and ultimately back into white nothingness. Daffy, standing bereft without an opponent, turns to the animator and demands a scene in which to perform. The next minute or two shows Daffy cycling through different backdrops. Each time, he prepares for the new backdrop by with proper attire and a suitably scripted improv that seems to fit the imagery. And, each time, he is thwarted by the animator who alters the scene behind him leaving Daffy in a frustratingly incongruent position. In short, whenever he conforms and establishes a place, the space changes.

This theme of incongruence is foregrounded in the next few sequences. After manipulating the space behind Daffy, the animator manipulates the space between expectation and fulfillment. First, the animator decides to draw without sound. Daffy resorts to holding signs in order to communicate. To retaliate, the unseen animator brings back sound but not in ways which conform to the drawn object. The guitar Daffy plays sounds like a gun or a donkey. The animator continues to throw Daffy into incongruities by toying with cinematic commonplaces like “contract obligations,” “genre,” and “shooting a close-up.” In short, what he expects (*lit.* to look ahead) is not what he “sees.”

The animator ratchets up the incongruence to the level of irony in a sequence of reversals and doubling. The animator inverts beginning and end and light and dark. Where he wants one, he gets the other. Finally, to ultimately disrupt Daffy’s claim to his rightful place in the scene, the animator doubles Daffy’s identity by pausing the film reel. At that moment, there are two of him visible at the same time. His place has become places and this simply is intolerable for Daffy. Finally, fed up with his unstable standing, he demands to know, “who is responsible for this?!?” Bugs Bunny is revealed as the unseen animator chuckling at his own mischief. Mischief—a word which connotes a “bad conclusion”—summarizes the episode’s litany of incongruities and drawn ironies.

While comical, the episode is remarkably poststructural. In one viewing, an informed audience would recognize Derrida’s erasure or even his polemic against phonocentrism at work.<sup>3</sup> But, the continued dissonance and redrawing that happens throughout the episode reveals something that has been hard to trace even in Derridean terms. The formal register of the film, its direct reference to the animating process itself, discloses a penetrating commentary on *the issue of spacing*. Each iteration of Daffy’s frustration is “situated” in the spatial alterities which are “drawn out” by the pencil or paintbrush. Thus, more than erasure or phonocentrism, the cartoon overtly demonstrates that place, as situation, is *utterly tied to the way space is drawn out*—understood both literally and phenomenologically.

The cartoon’s genius is that its content register not only complements these formal insights but extends them. Daffy Duck, the ambitious actor in the episode, has an eye towards recognition. He aims to be the triumphal fencer, the do-good farmer, the adventur-

ous skier, or even the charming sailor. But none of these common places are available long enough for him to IDENTIFY himself in any one of them. Thus, he cannot be recognized. The value of his acting, its recognizability, is highly dependent on a self-presentation made visible by stable and continuous roles/places. Recognizability, to be identifiable, is the force and power of acting and Daffy is thwarted at every turn. At one point he is distorted beyond recognition as a strange quadruped. At another time, he is fully erased and left only as his voice. The power of identification is always at stake. The writer's testify to exploring this power in that they set out to ask whether a character (in this case Daffy Duck) would remain recognizable *as* that character if they severely altered its appearance or disjoined its constituent elements (voice, body, etc.). Through the content register, the cartoon speculates about how the power and place of self-presentation is made vulnerable precisely through drawn spacing.

These two registers, the *form* of drawn space and the *content* spacing which stunts power and force, both pivot on the fulcrum of place. Whether it's Daffy's frustration or the subtle formalities of drawn lines, both angles suggest that place is dependent on spacing. What is more, they suggest that the power to persuade is a derivative of the space/place relation. Put in these terms, the cartoon clearly echoes down through the chambers of both classical and contemporary rhetorical theory. The classical advocacy of common-places shares the cartoon's central assumption: place is persuasive power. And, as alluded to in the beginning, Lloyd Bitzer's essay on the rhetorical situation outlines the same interplay of conditioned place and rhetorical force at work in the cartoon. Still, one unique difference divides historical rhetorical theory from *Duck Amuck*. In a word, spacing. For all of their similarities, the cartoon avoids the pitfalls facing classical and contemporary rhetorical thought which has trended towards narrowly "placed" theorizing. As we shall see below, without bearing witness to the space/place interdependency, the rhetorical situation can very easily drift into representational tribalism. If rhetorical inquiry is narrowly placed, or situated, then the Burkean pillars of division and identification can become ossified as twin places always locked in struggle. In this vein, the messianic allure of consubstantiality becomes corrupted and converted into either a covert metropolis (the one place which consumes all others) or a utopia (the no place which results from the rejection of the former).

So, this is precisely my conjecture: that if rhetorical theory privileges *place* and neglects space then it will run aground in these theoretical aporias. Since theoretical aporias are difficult to visualize, my conjecture requires further development, I will try to unearth the seeds of these conceptual problems in the recent history of the discipline. This will only render a vague sketch that can, thereafter, be fleshed out in the specific practices of film rhetorics. Only then will it become clear what was self-evident in *Duck Amuck*: that this drawn space, while a bane to self-presentation, may be a boon to rhetorical theory.

**THE POWER OF PLACE IN RHETORICS** While *Duck Amuck* brings the interdependency of power and place into close proximity, in rhetorical theory the two have a more protracted relationship that has only come into view over time. While their relation may well reach into the earliest epoch's of rhetorical thought, for the sake of brevity and clarity, I need only to survey the last half-century in order to crystallize their bond. Namely, since the 60s, rhetoric has put great emphasis on *place* as the very seat of its disciplinary power and focus. This decade was tremendous time for a renewed academic interest in rhetorics. The *Rhetoric Society of America* was forming; Kenneth Burke's work was fairly established, and new academic journals were forming.<sup>4</sup> Richard McKerrow points out that, within the discipline, rhetorical inquiry was shifting from objective Aristotelian categories to the more conditional aspects of rhetorical influence.<sup>5</sup> Bitzer's 1968 essay solidified that shift by offering a lexicon for the newly minted rhetorical situation. His formulation of exigence/audience/constraint was uncategorical while remaining somewhat Aristotelian. The path for the situational to supplant the deontological was paved. The emphasis on rhetorical place, though only embryonic at this point, was to be formidable.

There are three important implications to distill in this oversimplified historical beginning. The first is to see that this revision in disciplinary focus was not an abandonment of the rhetorical tradition but rather a renewal. While Bitzer turned from one kind of classical thinking, the deontological and categorical, he revived another with reference to the classical idea of common places. The second implication, embedded in the first, is that—linguistically—situation is interchangeable with place. The third conclusive implication is that SITUATEDNESS (or place) was to become the currency of rhetorical inquiry and invention. But, situatedness, as *placed* thinking, would not be a monolith. The debate about nature of place evolved in the 70s. Richard Vatz, in 1973, challenged Bitzer's assumptions about the origins of the rhetorical place.<sup>6</sup> He asked whether the place was given or do rhetors create it. Shortly thereafter, Scott Consigny, in 1974 challenged Bitzer's assumptions about the nature of the rhetor in those places.<sup>7</sup> In some ways, extending Vatz's questions he wondered about what bearing the rhetor's own nature might have on the nature of rhetorical place. Critically, neither would substantially challenge the primacy of place as a paradigm but rather extend it. Any corollary question of space did not surface. Ironically, even though the nature of the rhetorical place may have been stretched, its position as the operative paradigm was actually reinforced by the debates. In other words, disputing the nature of any focus simply affirms that *it is the focus*.

Another notable factor—a rhetorical emphasis on temporality—emerged in the rhetorically situated thinking of the later decades of the 20th century. These decades inherited and nourished the centrality of place by continuing to focus on the means of discovering (or establishing) situated sites of persuasion. Rhetorical theorists understood that if a rhetorical act was to have influential power to change something there at that site, then the rhetorician must become keenly aware of any opportune moment of engagement. Thus, place was read temporally as a “moment” of intervention. Thinking of that place of rhetorical intervention as a space was simply not a major part of the episteme. This new

interest in the temporality of rhetorical situation would further solidify the primacy of placed thinking and also lead to further marginalization of space.

Amidst this development, the literature on rhetorical power was curiously “displaced.” Freudian literature on drives, Foucauldian accounts of institutions, and Burkean literature on motives were not being discussed in close relation with the rhetorical situation...yet. The power of place operated in the background as a natural corollary to rhetorical strategies of place. This changed in the next few decades when rhetorical thought began to widen its understanding of place and its potentially hazardous influences. Power would become a central concern, and its visibility posed threats to the primacy of placed thinking. In the 80s and 90s, rhetoric took on lateral questions of situational conditioning. The literature began to address the ways in which the temporal opportunity of rhetorical situatedness was informed by phenomena that were not actually present in that place. For example, to engage a rhetorical place a rhetor may need to understand deeply inscribed social norms or inherited customs, etc. At first glance, it might appear that rhetorics had initiated a turn to space in the socially sensitive works of Karen Lefevre and others.<sup>8</sup> But a socially conscious rhetorical situation remained tied a temporal phenomenon. In the socially informed model of rhetorical engagement, to discover or create an opportune moment for rhetorical action, one must understand the social network which reinforced that moment. But, a close examination of that social matrix would drive the inquiry back into the fold of the temporal. It came to mean that to understand social matrices one needed to know its historical formation. Once again, the power to persuade was found in a place, and that place was defined temporally. Nevertheless, these advancements would put power on the stage beside place; because, to recognize that a place was socially informed was to indirectly affirm that there are other places!

At this point in history, the discipline was forced to face the inherent risk in culling out specific places for rhetorical opportunity, even if they were kairotic. In other words, power was becoming more visible and more dangerous amidst placed thinking. Finding “places” was epistemologically presumptuous. Even more so, to wield the power to discreetly separate some event, myth, or person out from their history or socially inscribed conditions—in order to persuade—was to perform an act of violence. In other words, denoting place for anyone “other” than the self would be an act of the power. Interestingly, much like the debates of Vatz and Consigny, this new awareness of risked violence did not actually remove place from the center of rhetorical inquiry. Instead, place gave way to displacement and its temporal conditions gave way to atemporality. So, by negation, at the end of this history place somehow still defines the questions of rhetorical investigation. Recognizing its tyrannical trends, rhetoric has moved its inquiries into the atemporal world of the posthuman and the multi-places of the ecological and networked world.<sup>9</sup> In terms of place, rhetoric’s main impulse has turned against itself with now place exceedingly difficult to locate. In sum, place and power had been promising but had become too perilous. As a result, the advocacy for a nomadic rhetoric and a dispersed and displaced rhetorical agency has become vogue.

This short itinerary demonstrates that, through many decades, rhetoric has been infatuated with the idea of place to the neglect of space. What is critical here is that the laser interest in place, by way of rhetorical situation, was not a *prima facie* problem. It was originally restorative. It was a renewed energy source for rhetorical force. Still, it ossified over time because of the neglect of space. Place gave way to palace and power gave way to superiority. After passing through the hermeneutics of suspicion, rhetoric emerged with an aversion to the notion it set out from. All the while, as *Duck Amuck* seems to bear out, spacing, if it had been considered more directly, could have—and still might—prevent the implosion and collapse of place. It would be easy to both dismiss and decry this retelling if did not continue to resurface. While rhetoric has conceptually expressed concern over hegemonic practices that might coincide with the idealization of place, it nevertheless seems to reintroduce them in more specific rhetorical practices. Specifically, in the field of visual rhetorics, the allure of place continues to return.

**INTERLUDE: ON SPACE** I offer a (skippable) interlude here, before we narrow the discussion of rhetorical practices of place, in order to sketch the conceptual relationship between place and space. I have been proceeding with assumptions about their difference and their interdependence but have not defined them with any detail. Here, I will do so in a cursory manner. I will lean on the philosophical reflections of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Jean-Luc Nancy for my outline. Their descriptions of space and place suggest that the two underlie the power available to any agent. What is more, their work suggest that power and place, without consideration of space, is destructive. Therefore, any examination of rhetorical force must refer to the operations of space.

It is important to note that these thinkers do not operate within the framework of physics. Space, for all of them, is not a simple material condition. Nor do any of them treat space as a Kantian schematic for understanding. Rather, space is a lived phenomenon. Space, in their systems, is a way of describing human agency, visibility, and power within a shared dimension. In simplest form, space is a relationality. Given this emphasis on power and recognition, their models of space can directly inform the constellations emerging in *Duck Amuck*, the history of rhetorics, and can be extrapolated into the field of film rhetoric.

For Lefebvre, the interdependency of place and space is established from the outset.<sup>10</sup> Place is almost impossible to see unless it is described in relation to space. This is because the interactions of multiple spaces can be qualified as places. More technically, Lefebvre sees three interlocking spaces at work in every social arrangement. There is the upper “conceived” spaces of planners and bureaucrats, the lower “perceived” spaces of ambitious citizens, and then, finally, the interplay of the two in a “lived” space. Spaces, seen in this manner, are fluid motions threading through one another. Places, alternatively, are the concentrations of the coordinating flow of spaces. A place might be a moment or monument which congeals any combination of those fluidities. Rhetorical power is discovered in these places, however momentary. What is more, without the undulations of interacting

spaces, places of resistance or freedom would turn to dust and hegemony might go uncontested.

For Micheal De Certeau, the inverse is the case. Space must be described in terms of place. Put differently, places beget spaces of power and resistance.<sup>11</sup> To recall, place is not a simple location and space is not a simple empty plane. The former, place, is more akin to a concentrate. It is the fixture of a name, a monument, or a public building. Places order reality. They cannot coexist in the same spatiotemporal dimension. They are defined in their fixed and ordered relation to one another. Space, on the other hand, is a dynamic relationship waiting to be initiated around and in those places. This is difficult to conceive because we are inclined, due to our Newtonian heritage, to think of space as the sheer nothingness in which these places come to rest. But, such an inclination would forever inscribes an aporia: if space is empty, then whence the place? But for De Certeau, space is the interactive fluidity initiated in those places. In some way, the building, the monument, and the pathways, are undermined, morphed, and reconfigured by spatial action. In contradistinction to Lefebvre, rhetorical power is found in spacing.

The last spatial commentator, Jean-Luc Nancy, has a directly phenomenological understanding of space. In agreement with the former two, space is not a strict Newtonian category. But, unlike them, space is not necessarily a political one either. Space is a posture of world formation.<sup>12</sup> Nancy's central notion is that being can never be enclosed by any singularity—whether it be hegemonic, spatial, placement, work, religion, identification et al. The world is a multiplicity but not a utopia of unrelated and flattened dispersion. This is important because while nothing is utterly unified it is also not nowhere. Rather, all being is being-in-common or being-in-relation. Space, for Nancy, is the very nature of that relatedness of all things. The multiplicity of beings have a quasi-unity which coincides precisely in their differentiation. *This* thing and *that* thing are distinguishable precisely because of the space they share between them. It is what they share, space, that gives them their different places. It is precisely their differing, like Pyramus and Thisbe's wall, wherein they come together. It is both the means of their touching and their departure. In terms of place, this thing is *there* and that thing is *here*, both in place, precisely insofar as they share space-in-common between them.

These three theses on space and place highlight their conceptual interdependence and retrospectively cast light on the first two movements of this essay. *Duck Amuck* effortlessly demonstrates that Daffy Duck's recognizable self-hood and identification are only in place and are only powerfully persuasive in relation to space. Likewise, these insights suggest that rhetoric's inherited difficulties of dispersed agency and atemporality are attributable to its myopic interest in place and a corresponding neglect of space.

**THE PLACE OF POWER IN VISUAL RHETORIC** At this point, the issue of space, introduced in *Duck Amuck*, demands a hearing in the field of rhetorics. Put differently, I need to link the cartoon with the academic realm of rhetorical theory in order for the former to have a positive effect on the latter. That is, so they do not remain mere parallels. To do this, the first two movements of my argument must be re-centered in a shared field of examination. If I recast those movements in simpler terms, the first as visual space and the second as rhetorical space, then my testing ground arrives ready made in visual rhetorics. The turn to visual rhetoric is not a mere convenience nor is it incidental. It has a very purposeful rationale. In many senses, it's the only rhetorical laboratory wherein the problem of space can be acutely exercised and treated. Besides being a clear touchstone for *Duck Amuck* and rhetorical theory, visual rhetorics are uniquely interested in depicting the elusive concept of space. Even more narrowly than mere visual rhetoric, moving visuals (e.g. film/cinematic rhetoric) are able to more profoundly manifest space through the shifting of the perceived objects. Whereas static visuals may imply space in abstraction moving visuals aim to manifest it time and again. Thus, visual rhetoric, and in particular cinematic rhetoric, brings the generic rhetorical trends of placed thinking into sharp spatial relief. But, what is paramount, it is only by tending to these rhetorical problems at the level of visual rhetoric that we can acquire the corrective tools that *Duck Amuck* has intimated. As I proposed in the introduction, it is precisely the nature of *Duck Amuck* as DRAWN which makes its consideration of space apparent and accessible. And by implication, it is this very tool which can be drawn from visual rhetoric and leveraged a paradigmatic corrective for the placed myopia of rhetorical theory.

As a brief caveat, but also as the very foundation of my exposition, it is worth noting that a clear discipline called the "rhetoric of film" is elusive. As a field of study, it remains inchoate and in dispute. While there are a few scattered essays and rhetorically sensitive film books, there are hardly any definitive guides. This may be the promising value and fertility of the field but it may be also the result of the aforementioned problem of placed thinking. That is, the disputes about the nature of the field might be the result of assumptions regarding its boundaries or proper place. But whatever the reason for the ambiguity it does not present a problem for examining space and place in such a nebular discipline. In fact, it is precisely these disputes and uncertainties in film rhetoric which testify the value of spatial thinking.

David Blakesley's edited volume, *Terministic Screen*, sketches the blurry outlines of this field by tracking the convergence of rhetorical thought and film theory. In so doing, his overview provides a perfect petri dish for spatial fermentation. He points directly to the ways in which rhetoric's deepest aims are often fleshed out in visual planes. In his introduction, he refers to Kenneth Burke's description of rhetorical systems as "ways of seeing." This ocular admission opens the considerations of place. In Blakesley's description there are two kinds of seeing at work in visual rhetorics. Both of them are heavily influenced by place. One is the literal position of viewing where place account for the spatiotemporal location of a viewer or of the thing being viewed. The other is that conceptual constraining which is defined by the historical and lateral networks of both the viewer and the object

being viewed. In crude terms, it is seeing with the eyes and seeing with the mind. What is not so crude is the both are *placed*.

This introduces a unique difficulty. Anne Barry points out that these two seeings are intertwined and that interweaving can present some unexpected myopia.<sup>13</sup> In some very real neurological way, the rhetorical seeing (mind) precedes the ocular (eyes) seeing. Research suggests that visual sensations do not proceed uninhibited to their respective brain sites but rather often pass through a warp-speed filter of mood and affect. This filter deflects, rejects, and confirms certain stimuli in such a way that ocular seeing, which is wrongly assumed to be simple “given,” is actually a highly determined seeing. In my terms, that filter is in a “place” and subsequently determines what can occupy that place. Even more, the place has tremendous rhetorical power. Thus, once again the powers of persuasion, specifically in visual form, are intimately tied to the places of possibility. This neuro-visual matrix makes film rhetoric both hard to define and makes viewers highly vulnerable to self-affirmation. That is, when the filter—uncritically—waves in only resonant images.

To put this abstract notion in the terms of *Duck Amuck*, this is the expectation that Daffy Duck has when entering the castle scene. He wants recognition and hopes to achieve this through identification with his placed surroundings. He anticipates, uncritically, that the visual places will be as they should be. His mind’s eye also expects that the objects which occupy those places will behave as expected. Since he demands pure symmetry between his mind’s eye and his actual eyes, he will only permit them to act according to that expectation. Hence, his anger. For Daffy, the objective spatial disruption on the screen presents a conceptual spatial disruption. And, most importantly, both coinhere in this visual matrix. So, visual rhetorics, at work on the neuro-visual complex, suggests that in its dissonance, space reopens and appears.

Daffy’s hostile response also implicates the danger of repressing space in rhetorical theory. Whereas Daffy Duck openly opposes disruption, rhetoric theory has theoretically embraced it by denouncing the tyranny and priority of powerful places. But Daffy’s confession, awareness, and disempowerment are the result of space’s resurgence. Rhetorical theory, neglecting space in large part, has only tried to fight fire with fire. Or, said differently, by fighting place with place (or. places). As a result, rhetoric may not reach the other-minded hospitality it aspires to and instead it seems to develop an incoherent brooding fragility. For example, when faced with a film that visualizes certain powerful common places (patriarchy, sexual exploitation, racial bias, etc) the rhetorical critic is vulnerable to reinvent the priority of place as a mode of resistance. In cartoon terms, when the rhetorical viewer encounters spatial disruption, they often embrace their inner Daffy Duck. They might decry the marginality of a repressed group or identity in a critique of power and place but ironically do so by way of a reiterated affirmation of another power and place. Rhetorical critical practices often overlook that placed thinking, apart from space, keeps recycling its problems.

The claim is clear. Spatial thought is critical to the health of visual rhetorics. But spatial thought is not just important to the viewing experience but is critical to the health of the entire discipline of film rhetoric. This reciprocal paradox—to reject power and place while

appealing to power and place—has created uncertainty about the role of theoretical interpretations of film. In the final section of his introduction, Blakesley notes that David Bordwell and Noel Carroll reject theory tout court which results in a kind of utopic formalism. For Bordwell and Carroll, there can be no grand “place” whence to evaluate films for to do so would be a colonial imposition (though they do not use these political terms). Instead, they call for smaller conventions of analysis which do not elevate a theory to the *place* of interpretive priority. This reveals deep spatial complexity. At the level of a viewer, place can be toxic to the neuro-visual complex and at the level of the discipline it can be toxic to the field.

Here, Blakesley offers two key responses that bring *Duck Amuck*, rhetorical theory, and spatial thinking under the umbrella of film rhetoric. First he abjures, rightly, that to follow Bordwell and Carroll and abandon place *in toto* would be to homogenize and flatten the very art form that they seek to protect. They would be making film rhetoric, in my terms, a placeless space. In reply, Blakesley reaffirms the need for place in the rhetoric of film by leaning on one of the cognate terms repeatedly associated with place in the above argumentative movements. Namely, power. The rhetorical turn in film studies, he argues, has been characterized by the issue of power. While advocating for “placed” thinking in film rhetorics, Blakesley brings this power to the surface in a minor parenthetical comment. He suggests that rhetorical power is “best understood as situated, partisan acts by virtue of their expression in comprehensible and social symbol systems.”<sup>14</sup> He reaffirms that rhetorical *force* is derivative of rhetorical *situation*. Read as a dictum: in visual rhetoric, power comes from place. Blakesley’s insight about rhetorical power in film can be reconfigured spatially. In sum, films attempt to establish “places” which grant power and rhetorical analysts are trying to “locate” them without upholding them as totalizing. Accepting this claim, provisionally, it immediately evokes a series of nested questions. Can place avoid totality? If not can it avoid obliteration? Might space help, here? More broadly, as Blakesley implies, can film rhetoric be film rhetoric without place? Can it be film rhetoric without space?

**DRAWING TO A CLOSE (SPACE)** This would all amount to a dizzying array of centrifugal questions if there were no potential pathway to coordinate and address them all. By this point, it should be apparent that (at least in this analysis) *Duck Amuck* has proven to have formidable resources for such a pathway. And, as has been intimated all along, this pathway is found in its form as drawn.

Drawing, upon first glance, seems like a juvenile and archaic offering for rhetorical renewal. On the one hand, one wonders how a manual practice like drawing can have any probative value in rhetoric? But, even if one grants that rhetoric is not confined to verbal argument, then why drawing? After all, it is defined by its dispensability. It has long been treated as a temporary scaffold for all sorts of greater aesthetic projects. People buy journals to sketch and then discard them, as it were. But this precise condition highlights two erroneous assumptions about drawing that need to be identified and then reversed in order to appreciate its rhetorical features. For one, when sketchbooks are tossed in favor of

a more permanent object, it is because the drawing is incorrectly treated as a static product. If it were a mere product then it would certainly pale in comparison to the regal sculpture it prefigures. A second, related, misconception is that the dispensability corresponds to imperfections in the artist. Failed attempts, distorted lines, or smudged shading are all correctable thereafter and so drawing is uncritically treated as a weak artistic form.

Recall that in my brief history of recent rhetoric above, when place rose to prominence, two early questions followed. One concerned whether these places were invented or discovered (Vatz). The other question concerned the nature of the rhetor his/herself (Consigny). When these erroneous assumptions are reversed, drawing satisfies these questions. To the first assumption, when inverted, the drawing becomes triumphant over the drawn. Drawing is the active engagement of discovery. Roland Barthes described this exploratory movement of the drawing pencil as a *ductus*, a way. Under this rubric, the drawer is not chiefly interested in “representing” an object. It is the way of movement—of discovery—that is supreme. Remarkably, the pencil touches a surface and its discoveries coincide with its creations. Unlike rhetorical invention, which is always plagued by the question of whether it discovered an idea or created it, drawing aligns this dilemma in one singular action. The uncertainty inherent in rhetorical invention is the result of its theoretical dependence on places. Conversely, drawing’s ability to perform discovery and creation in one motion is a testament to its engagement with space. Barthes expanded on this ductal discovery by distinguishing between *marks* and *marking*. While the former is a collection of notches and strikings on a surface, the latter describes a visual movement of exploration. A marking, he notes, invokes a visual tracing. Drawing is not supposed to be a product but a producing. The dispensability is in full reverse. The drawn decays but the drawing is pure creation.

To the second assumption, the weakness of the artist, Jacques Derrida has noted that so long as the merits of the drawing are found in its motion (*ductus*) then the artist operates in the blind.<sup>15</sup> He is following the way, the discovery, the *ductus*. For Derrida, in some sense, all drawing is the work of the blind drawing the blind. Interestingly, for Derrida, this blindness is precisely what gives drawings its power, or *puissance*. Similarly, Rosalind Krauss, the art critic, has used the lens of graffiti to point out the way that drawing is a matter of life and death for the artist.<sup>16</sup> The drawer’s agency arises in the “confiscation” of space. Graffiti is the seizure of some social space which is then used to testify to the place of the anonymous. “XYZ was here.” Thus, rather than wringing hands of what the rhetor has or does not have when arriving at a rhetorical space, drawing suggests that the rhetor is made in the making. Just as drawing can bring discovery and creation into union, these latter two thinkers suggest that it can bring speaker and audience into that same singular movement.

But, this analysis is still in want. Drawing may have rhetorical value but it has not yet brought space back in to the rhetorical fold. It is Jean-Luc Nancy who directly links drawing with the opening of space.<sup>17</sup> Nancy, like these others before him, contends that drawing should be understood actively rather than as a passive product. But, unlike them, he suggests that drawing is a practice which bears witness to the very creation of the world.

This creation is primarily a “spacing.” To recall, for Nancy, world-formation is the opening of multiple existent things in their relation to one another. In an idiomatic sense, he says that the world is not an everything but an every-one-thing. It can never be reduced to a singular place or one grand place. Rather, it is a multitude of places. Still, in order for such places be in relation at all, they require spacing. Drawing manifests that spacing when a line is drawn and *this* side of the paper and *that* side of the paper are born. Before the line, there is no world because there is no being-in-relation. Drawing is spacing. It is not spacing because it draws *on* spaces but because when drawing occurs, things are being formed by their separation and their touching.

This abstract reading of drawing is highly useful for treating all of the dizzying questions listed above. For example, how do we have places that don’t dominate each other through tyranny? If we reject the tyranny of place then how do we avoid a utopia of white noise? Is there a way for the neuro-visual complex’s solidified mental spaces to be disrupted? If film rhetoric is vulnerable to a placed tyranny then can it find a middle level convention that can hold it together and keep it dispersed? These critical theorists (and Chuck Jones) offer an answer: drawing. Drawing establishes relation in real time precisely by it being the very enactment of forming beings through spacing. The critical insight of these theorists is that drawing is neither reducible to space or place. Drawings are not places lest they become representations and products. Drawings is not space as such lest it become unformed and choranic mystery. Rather, drawings is the very *unctum* of place and space.

**DRAWING AHEAD** While I have been primarily concerned with what happens in rhetorical theory when *place* is thought apart from *space*, it would be redundant to belabor the point and not return to *Duck Amuck*. Even with all of the analysis, refracted through the issues of place and space, I have said nothing about its status as a “cartoon” or an “animated” feature. The latter term refers to the hardness of the drawing surface. Cartoon is, in fact, connected to the rigidity well known in cartons. Animation, on the other hand, signifies living. So, in closing, *Duck Amuck*, by embodying these two terms, foreshadows the future of rhetorical drawing. Whether on the hard surfaces of place or in the fluid spaces of electrical animation, in all, drawing is rhetorical disempowerment and empowerment *par excellence*.

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<sup>1</sup> Jones, Chuck. *Duck Amok*. 1953; Burbank: Warner Brothers. 2003. Online

<sup>2</sup> Bitzer, Lloyd F. “The Rhetorical Situation.” *Philosophy & rhetoric* (1968): 1–14.

<sup>3</sup> Derrida, Jacques, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Judith Butler. *Of Grammatology*. JHU Press, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Lauer, Janice M. *Invention in Rhetoric and Composition*. Parlor Press LLC, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> McKerrow, Raymie E. “Research in Rhetoric: A Glance At Our Recent Past, Present, and Potential Future.” *The Review of Communication* 10, no. 3 (2010): 197–210.

<sup>6</sup> Vatz, Richard E. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & rhetoric* (1973): 154–61.

<sup>7</sup> Consigny, Scott. "Rhetoric and Its Situations." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* (1974): 175–86.

<sup>8</sup> LeFevre, Karen Burke, and Conference on College Composition and Communication (U.S. *Invention as a Social Act*. SIU Press, 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Trapani, William C, and Chandra A Maldonado. "Kairos: On the Limits to Our (Rhetorical) Situation." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2018): 278–86.

<sup>10</sup> Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Univ of California Press, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Creation of the World, or, Globalization*. SUNY Press, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Barry, Ann Marie. *Visual Intelligence*. SUNY Press, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Blakesley, David. "Introduction: The Rhetoric of Film and Film Studies." *The Terministic Screen*. SIU Press, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Derrida, Jacques, and Musée du Louvre. *Memoirs of the Blind*. 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Krauss, Rosalind. "Cy's Up." *Artforum*, September (1994): 70–75.

<sup>17</sup> Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Pleasure in Drawing*. Oxford University Press, 2013.