

A Place For (A) Thought:
Metaphor and Metonymy in Roman Augural Ritual

The augural formula for establishing a *templum* on the Capitoline Hill preserved by Varro (*Ling. lat.* 7.8-10) and Livy's description of the augural ceremony performed on the occasion of Numa Pompilius's regal investiture (*Ab urb. cond.* 1.18.6-8) have been the subject of intense analysis by scholars of Roman religion. Linderski's (1986a, 2256-89) reconstruction of the rite of *inauguratio* from these texts, including his interpretation of its opaque terminology, formal structure and function, is the most widely accepted. In Linderski's understanding, *templum in caelo*, *templum in terris*, and *templum inauguratum* denote, respectively, the area of the sky in which auspices were taken, the area of the ground from which auspices were taken, and the "inseparable whole" of sky and earth constituted through the ritual performance. He interprets the rite, that is, as an "augmentative and charismatic act" (*inauguratio* is from **aug-* "increase, enlarge") that permanently changes the juridical or religious status of its object, whether a plot of earth or a human being (Linderski 1986b, 338).

Yet how precisely does the rite "entitle" (in Kenneth Burke's sense) the *templum inauguratum*, and in what sense is this ritually-constituted place "increased"? In this paper, I develop Norden's (1939, 85) suggestion that the augur's creation of the *templum* proceeds through mental imagery ("durch den Geist"; cf. Magdelain 1969, 199-201), by drawing on contemporary metaphor theory and cognitive anthropology's theory of tropes. Contextualizing the rite linguistically and culturally, I suggest that its function and meaning depend upon an intricate semiotic mechanism that hinges upon a play between "real" (physical, phenomenal) and "virtual" (symbolic, mental imagistic) locations. Specifically, I argue that through his performance of the rite the augur predicates a series of metaphorical and metonymical "transformations" on the ritually-defined *templum in caelo* and *templum in terris*. By first naming and thus bringing these distinct places into (virtual) existence through his ritual utterances (the augur is said to *effari fines*; the places are *effata*; cf. Bettini 2008, 334-5), and then by "measuring out" corresponding representations of these places in mental space (*metari animo*), the augur is finally able to project these imagined locations (back) upon the physical topography, now as a unified totality combining both sky and earth (Cf. Linderski 1986a, 2226-9). In this way, the augur creates the *templum inauguratum* as a "real" – i.e., ritually significant – part of the landscape. In other words, *inauguratio* changes the religious status of the landscape from unhallowed to hallowed by transforming the "real" (but separate) sky and land into a "virtual" *templum* simultaneously oriented toward both earth and heaven, and therefore capable of serving as a place of mediation between the human and the divine (Cf. Cic. *De leg.* 2.20 on augurs as *interpretes*).

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