SPATIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN MARTYRS' REVELATIONS *(PASSIO SANCTARUM PERPETUAE ET FELICITATIS, ACTA MARTYRUM)*

Anca MEIROȘU
Independent researcher

Abstract: *In their last moments of life, many of the martyrs experience a state of exuberance due to receiving divine messages, which encourage them, alleviating their natural fears of execution. The world beyond, the road to the world beyond, the preceding evidence of this spiritual journey are presented as sensory-laden spaces, in which reality is not completely abandoned, but in which the disposition, dynamics and versatility of the elements transgress its conventions. In* Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, the intermittence with which these spaces invade the inner space of two of the characters generates a cinematographic seriality, translated by the intertwining of narrative instances. The intensity of the descriptions strengthens the hope of salvation and acquires, through the voice of Perpetua and Saturus, the contours of a testimony of faith. The present paper aims to analyze the way in which space appears in their revelations, as a symbolic indicator of the states that martyrs experience, offering a complex view of their relationship with the divinity.*[1]

Keywords: *spatium*; *pastor*; *martyr*; *time*; *revelation*

a. The indestructible connection between space and time

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant defines space as a necessary, a priori representation: "Space is a necessary representation, *a priori*" (Kant A24) and as a "pure intuition": "Space is not a discursive or, as is said, general concept of relations of things in general, but a pure intuition" (Kant A25).[2] Emphasizing that the act of knowledge has a sensory dimension and an intellectual one, Kant has put into circulation a transcendental philosophy, in which the emphasis falls on the way of receiving, interpreting the world, and not on the actual way in which the world itself, as an external object, is built and organized.

Compared to the linearity of historical time (the axis we look forward, to the future, and backward, to the past), the three-dimensionality of the

[1] Some months ago I published a short presentation of the passions of Perpetua and Felicitas: "Perpetua," *Convorbiri literare* (June 2020): 168. Online https://d56c82fa-293d-46a9-9b33efe914beffb3.filesusr.com/ugd/6ef4f1_d53328f20f7943429e6e16ff0f73b4e3.pdf.

[2] On the meaning of intuition in the Kantian system, see Wilson (247-265); Cummins (271-292); Falkenstein (165-193).

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

physical space allows humans to capture the elements around them with less anxiety, given that their multitude constantly shifts attention (on the forward-backward, left-right, bottom-up axes), and the senses are fully saturated with information.[3] For example, the mountain ranges, the hills and other landforms preserve their material characteristics very well, so that humans find in them a refuge, a constant landmark in their passage through life. And yet, the impression that space does not flow like time is unfounded. Space and, by extension, all the creatures that populate space flow precisely because they incorporate time: they are born, live and grow old, because the buds of time develop in them. If we look at the surrealist paintings of Salvador Dali (1904-1989), we notice that a constant of his style are the flattened, flowing watches. In *Persistence of Memory*, these clocks appear in the vicinity of mountains and the sea, even hanging from the branches of leafless trees; an ingenious way to illustrate how time insinuates itself into space and merges with it, and how ephemerality of the moment manages to dominate matter.

In the twentieth century, the Russian Mikhail Bakhtin paid special attention to the unity of time and space (in his words, the “chronotope”, with an obvious emphasis on the factor "time"), which he took from the exact sciences[4] and adapted to aesthetic realities, showing that it governs the structure of the literary work.

b. Space and time in hagiographic literature

Whenever we read a literary work, we discover that the different epochs of humankind leave their mark in a parallel reality, in which space is revealed to readers through descriptions of the surrounding nature, of objects, of buildings and so on. But this amalgam of descriptions is, in essence, only a projection of the writer's inner space. The fact that s/he pays attention to certain elements, while not mentioning others, paves the way for a deeper understanding, in psychological terms, of this option.[5] In literature, the transfiguration of space and time meets the survival requirements of literature itself, because “written

[3] For some time now there has been talk on the four-dimensionality of time. This fourth dimension is the principle of non-Euclidean geometry. See Hyslop: “The whole problem of the advocates of a fourth dimension is to find a basis for non-Euclidean geometry. Euclidean geometry is admittedly based upon the three dimensions, and they assume that this new kind of geometry requires a new differential principle” (7).

[4] In the second half of the 19th century, the German Hermann Minkowski developed this idea in mathematics, pointing out that time represents the fourth dimension of space. From here his student, Albert Einstein, was later inspired by the theory of relativity, which illustrates that time and space cannot be dissociated. For a description of the connection between time and space as it is perceived in the realm of exact sciences, see Minkowski (288-302). About the distinct ways of representing space in different geometric systems, see Mundy (205-226).

[5] On space in literature, see Heffernan (95-119).

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

words become literature when independent of the external world, and cease to be literature when dependent on the external world" (Rothwell 603).

In *hagiographic literature*, the perception of space is deeply influenced by the intimate communion of the subjects with the deity, within the particular type of experiences called *revelations.*[6] Our paper aims to examine this type of extra-ordinary experiences, in which physical reality is replaced by a space-binder, an antechamber of the afterlife, or the very abode of the deity, in which its presence is felt at any step. Hagiographic literature is a source of human models,[7] since it sums up accounts of the martyrdom of historical figures whom the Christian tradition has sanctified.The hagiographic episode that we will analyze next is a very special one, since its transmitters are not witnesses to the atrocities committed by the Roman authorities, but are themselves two of the martyrs, Perpetua and Saturus. Between the two, Perpetua plays a privileged role, in the sense that, during her detention, she had the power and inspiration to record in a personal diary all the moments she went through, which gives them an extra veracity.[8]

Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis is a work so beloved by Saint Augustine that he mentioned it in several *Sermons*, such as 280, 281, 282, 282 completed, 335, 394.[9] The title refers to two young woman: Vibia Perpetua, from a noble family, married, with a child,[10] and Felicitas, a young woman of modest origin, possibly Perpetua's maid, pregnant at the time of her detention. In 203 AD, they were imprisoned along with four others (Reuocatus, Saturninus, Secundulus and Saturus – unnamed from the beginning) at Thuburbo Minus/Carthage (Africa Proconsularis) and executed by order of Emperor Septimius Severus (146-211).

---

[6] See Damnjanovic: "Revelation is the thesis that phenomenal properties are fully revealed to us when we have experiences that instantiate them: experience gives us access to the essence of phenomenal properties" (71).

[7] See Marcos: "Hagiography provided role models and acted as a guide for the construction of Christian identity. (...) Hagiography reached an extensive audience, including the illiterate, as these texts were read in churches on the saints' anniversaries. Furthermore, they were frequently translated, making it an 'international' literary genre that contributed towards shaping the behavior of Christians in very different cultural traditions" (190-191).

[8] However, Perpetua's authority in writing this diary has been questioned since Late Antiquity. See Saint Augustine, *De anima et eius origine contra Vincentium Victorem libri quattuor*: "*De fratre autem sanctae Perpetuae Dinocrate, nec scriptura ipsa canonica est, nec illa sic scripsit, vel quicumque illud scripsit*" (I.10.12). Also, on the authority of Perpetua's writing, see Hunink (147-155).

[9] On Saint Augustine's presentation of Perpetua and Felicitas in his sermons, see Milco (276-295).

[10] Perpetua is defined in terms that refer to her as a person from the upper classes, educated and married: "*honeste nata, liberaliter instituta, matronaliter nupta*" (2.1), to her family: "*habens patrem et matrem et fratres duos, alterum aeque catechumenum et filium infantem ad ubera*" (2.2), and to her age: "*erat autem ipsa circiter annorum viginti duo*" (2.3).

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

The first part of the narrative depicts the frequent visits and repeated attempts of Perpetua's father to make her change her mind about the chosen path of martyrdom: "*me pater uerbis euertere cupiret*" (3.1). These attempts are opposed by a symbolic, cold and sharp response, according to which nothing can be other than what it is: "*sic et ego aliud me dicere non possum nisi quod sum, Christiana*" (3.2).[11] The imprisonment of young people occurs shortly after they received baptism in great secrecy: "*post paucos dies recipimur in carcerem; et expaui, quia numquam experta eram tales tenebras*" (3.5). The request that Perpetua's brother addresses to her, to ask the deity for a message in order to find out what fate has in store for her ("*Domina soror, iam in magna dignatione es, tanta ut postules uisionem*" 4.1) is the essential moment in triggering her remarkable experiences.[12] Perpetua's prayer in prison is a very suggestive image for the relationship between time and space, with priority given to time, in a very Bakhtinian manner. The two categories seem to maintain here a symbolic balance, because during prayer, Perpetua's inner time expands in contrast to the narrow space of prison.

The first revelation ("*ostentum este mihi hoc*" 8.1) which Perpetua brings to the reader's attention centers on a spatial link between Heaven and earth: a very high bronze ladder, narrow enough to fit only one person ("*scala aerea mirae magnitudinis pertingentem usque ad caelum et angustam per quam nonnisi singuli ascendere possent*" 4.3), and on either side, all sorts of sharp weapons ("*in lateribus scalae omne genus ferramentorum infixum*"). Beneath the ladder, squatting, sits a huge dragon ("*draco cubans mirae magnitudinis*" 4.4), which frightens in every way, preventing anyone from climbing up ("*exterrebat ne ascenderent*" 4.4). Saturus is the first to climb the steps ("*ascendit autem Saturus prior*" 4.5), and when he reaches the top, he tells Perpetua that he is waiting for her, but at the same time warns her against

[11] Perpetua's reply implies a philosophical point. Perpetua is conscious of the fact that her father hardly knows her true nature and her desires, but, surprisingly, what she demands from him is not this, but something else, namely accepting that she cannot be somebody else. So, the discussion here is about Perpetua's total *acquaintance with herself*, which places the definition of herself in a secondary position. This is to say that sometimes, even when we avoid describing ourselves in a specific way, we still do it automatically by delimitation. This process emphasizes who we are not and shapes our identity through exclusion. On the self-raising awareness and on the acquaintance with the self, see Duncan (2531-2549). On Perpetua's inspiring answer, which encapsulates her sharp attitude towards the family convictions which she does not share, see Pettersen: "Perpetua is portrayed as a vehicle of the Holy Spirit: her life is seen as a profound rejection of both the values of the pagan and the religious traditions of her family" (140).

[12] Here we have the only case of prescriptive revelation of the episode. See Mould: "Some of the most common revelations are prescriptive: revelations that provide people with a specific prompt for what they should do. The most common way people receive this type of revelation is through prayer" (439).

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

the dragon.[13] Perpetua climbs the steps, crushing the dragon's head ("*calcaui illi caput et ascendi*" 4.7)[14] and when she reaches the top, she discovers in front of her a huge garden ("*spatium immensum horti*" 4.8). In the middle of it a gray-haired man in shepherd's clothes is milking sheep, surrounded by thousands of people in white clothes ("*in medio sedentem hominem canum in habitu pastoris, grandem, oues mulgentem ... circumstantes candidati milia multa*" 4.8). He thanks Perpetua for her presence and gives her some cheese to eat ("*de caseo ... dedit mihi*" 4.9). The revelation ends with the awakening of Perpetua ("*experrecta sum*" 4.10), who feels that she is still eating something sweet (similar to the cheese she had before): "*commanducans adhuc dulce nescio quid*" (4.10).

The revelation is followed by several sequences that serve to illustrate the moments preceding the execution of the young people: their appearance before Governor Hilarianus, the successor of Minucius Timinianus, their confirmation of belonging to Christianity and their sentencing to death by fighting wild animals. The young people express their joy regarding the supreme sacrifice for faith: "*hilares descendimus ad carcerem*" (6.6). Returned to prison, Perpetua has a premonitory dream ("*ipsa nocte ostensum est mihi hoc*" 7.3) in which she sees her brother Dinocrates, thirsty and feverish ("*aestuantem ualde et sitientem*"), dirty and pale with pain ("*sordido cultu et dolore pallido*"), coming out of a dark place ("*uideo Dinocratem exeute de loco tenebroso*") (7.4) and approaching a pool of water higher than him, which he cannot reach to drink from ("*propter altitudinem marginis bibiturus non esset*" (7.8). Her dream awakening is presented in the same neutral terms as above: "*experrecta sum*" (7.9).[15]

Perpetua is transferred with the other young people to a military prison ("*in carcerem castrensem*" 7.9)[16] and all are informed that the battle with the animals is to take place on the birthday of Geta, son of Septimius Severus. In her second premonitory dream ("*ostensum est mihi hoc*" 8), Perpetua is shown that her brother manages to reach out and drink from the pool of water: "*piscinam illam, quam retro uideram, summiso margine usque ad umbilicum pueriet aquam de ea trahebat sine cessatione*" (8.2), "*accessit Dinocrates et de ea bibere coepit, quae fiala non decipiebat*" (8.3). The end of the dream is

[13] The dragon, which recalls the mythological Ladon, is the embodiment of evil.

[14] The image of the woman who crushes the head of the evil (which here appears under cover) is to be found in the Bible (Genesis 3.15).

[15] The dreams containing divine messages are widely spread in hagiographic literature. In the text above, they are in some ways associated to the revelations if we take a closer look at the description that Perpetua offers, which ends constantly with her awakening.

[16] On the transformation of a civil space into a sacred space, see Rea: "As demonstrated by her encounter with the tribune, Perpetua employs her education and rhetorical skills while she is in prison. But before she does this, first she transforms a civic space reserved for criminals into a sacred one" (47).

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

illustrated in terms that have already become conventional: "*experrecta sum*" (8.4). An interpretation of the revelation is added: "*intellexi translatum eum esse de poena*" (8.4).[17]

The most comprehensive revelation in terms of details provided by Perpetua is the one before the day of the execution. She sees Deacon Pomponius ("*discincta candida, habens multiplices galliculas*" 10.2) asking her to follow him through hard-to-reach, winding places ("*per aspera loca et flexuosa*" 10.3), arriving together in the amphitheater ("*ad amphiteatrum ... in media arena*" 10.4) where the fight with the animals would take place. The amphitheater houses a large crowd ("*populum ingentem*" 10.5), but not animals. Suddenly, an unpleasant-looking Egyptian appears ("*foedus specie*" 10.6), accompanied by his helpers (*cum adiutoribus suis*" 10.6).[18] Quite simultaneously, a few pleasant-looking young men ("*adolescentes decori*" 10.6) jumped to the aid of Perpetua. Shortly after their appearance, Perpetua's clothing is removed and she is changed into a man ("*et exspoliata sum et facta sum masculus*" 10.7). Her companions begin to anoint her body with oil ("*oleo defricare*" 10.7), an allusion to the Christian sacrament. A man taller than the amphitheater appears. He is wearing a red tunic without a belt, gold and silver sandals, and in his hand a kind of wand and a green branch, on which hung some golden apples ("*ramum uiridem ... ferens uirgam quasi lanista et ramum uiridem in quo erant mala aurea*," "*uir quidam mirae magnitudinis ... discinctatus ... et galliculas multiformes ex auro et argento factas*" 10.8), bigger than the amphitheater. A battle between Perpetua and the Egyptian follows ("*calcibus faciem caedebam*" 10.10), while Perpetua is raised up in the air ("*sublata sum in aere*" 10.11) and manages to step on the Egyptian's head and crush it ("*calcaui illi caput*" 10.11). Coming out victorious from the battle, Perpetua receives the golden apple branch ("*accepi ramum*" 10.12).[19] The tall man kisses Perpetua ("*osculatus est me*" 10.13) and she retreats victoriously through the Sanauiuaria door ("*et coepi ire cum gloria ad portam*

[17] "I realized that he had been delivered from his suffering" (Herbert Musurillo's translation).

[18] In this revelation, the embodiment of the evil is the Egyptian; connections with the Jews' settlement in Egypt should be undoubtedly taken into consideration. The Bible presents this transitory period as an oppressive, difficult, but necessary one in the Jewish people's spiritual becoming; from this perspective, the Jewish departure from Egypt is seen as liberation, as a victory. Perpetua will herself eventually win and retreat through the Sanauiuaria door, the door used by the surviving gladiators. This is to say that Perpetua was not only transformed into a man (so that the fight against the Egyptian could be fair and equal), but on top of that, she was transformed into a winner, into a symbol of courage and determination. Last but not least, this scene shows that being involved in a struggle for faith requires sometimes a physical fight (see Ephesians 6.13), which can be overcome only assisted by God (Perpetua's transformation into a man is the best example in this respect).

[19] Generally, the winning gladiators were awarded a palm branch, a necklace or an honorary spear; see Nossov (167).

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

Sanauiuariam" 10.13). This revelation offers a perspective on the narrative intention to calibrate the categories of space and time: in a large and bloody space like the amphitheatre, a long and hard struggle takes place. Given the perfect correspondence between the two categories, in which neither seems to subordinate the other, the reader has the feeling that he is in front of some cinematic images.

The revelation of Saturus complements in a way those of Perpetua, as Saturus provides a description of Heaven. His vision is as follows: all the young men have died, and their souls are carried to the East by four angels ("*a quattuor angelis*" 11.2), without touching them ("*nos non tangebant*" 11.2). As if climbing a smooth hill ("*quasi mollem cliuum ascendentes*" 11.3), they turn to a blinding light ("*lucem immensam*" 11.4). They come to a place that looks like a big garden ("*spatium grande... quasi uiridarium*" 11.5), with roses and all kinds of flowers ("*rosae et omne genus flores*" 11.5), with tall trees ("*altitudo arborum*" 11.6) from which leaves are falling down ("*folia cadebant sine cessatione*" 11.6). In the garden, four more angels are waiting, more beautiful than the first ones ("*alii quattuor angeli fuerunt clariores ceteris*" 11.7). The young people advance towards an open space, on a wide road ("*ad stadium uia lata*" 11.8), meeting Iucundus, Saturninus and Artaxius, martyrs as well (11.9). Immediately, they discover some light walls in that place ("*cuius loci parietes ... quasi de luce aedificati*" 12.1). There they are greeted by another four angels and by an old man with a youthful expression on his face ("*niueos habentem capillos et uultu iuuenili*" 12.3). His legs cannot be seen, because he is seated ("*sedentem*" 12.3). The young men walk before his throne (12.5) and with the help of four angels, they are raised and kiss this man, who comforts the pain in their faces ("*osculati sumul illum et de manu sua traiecit nobis in faciem*" 12.5). Upon departure, they meet with Optatus, the bishop, and Aspasius, the presbyter (13.1). Saturus mentions the satiating smell of that space ("*uniuersi odore inenarrabili alebamur qui nos satiabat*" 13.8). His return to reality is worded in the same terms as in the case of Perpetua, with an emphasis on a happy awakening: "*tunc gaudens experrectus sum*" (13.8). This revelation, which has as its point of interest the description of the garden of Heaven, is a perfect example to show the indissoluble union between time and space. Eternity is expressed here by the powerful light, which, without losing a moment of intensity, ends up enveloping all the elements of the description. Space is bathed in light, a light which becomes here the messenger of time, of that continuous and boundless flow, of eternity, which is par excellence the attribute of divinity.

c. The exemplifying and exemplary dimension of description within revelations

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

The above revelations, which are prescriptive and descriptive altogether, enrich the narrative thread of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her comrades by explicitly bringing into its fabric the clues to the divine presence within human experiences. Interestingly, not all young people who choose the path of martyrdom have revelations, but only two of them, namely Perpetua, a noblewoman, and Saturus, who is not mentioned from the beginning.

The presentations combine all three modes of exposition (narration, description, dialogue), but the description has, decisively, the greatest extent, because the subjects' attention falls on the *attributes of space* and the way it is organized, *its constituents*. The exemplifying dimension of the description turns out to be exemplary: in the strict sense, because as it turns out from the depiction of Heaven, here everything exists and unfolds in perfect harmony, in which hierarchies are respected (angels are subordinate to God and, at his command, escort Perpetua and Saturus to Heaven); in a broad sense, because the flow of images transmitted to the subjects becomes the optimal way in which the *divine will* is communicated, *exemplary* by its nature. If in the Bible the divine will is transmitted by word or action (of supernatural origin), in revelations we encounter a reductionist approach to the word and a mostly pictorial representation of the message.

In the episode *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, time is important only from the perspective of the external unfolding events, with reference to the moments which precede the martyrdom. But in the revelations and especially in those frames that capture the world beyond (unlike the worldly spaces or spaces of transit to Heaven, where a fight takes place or an effort is made: the staircase, the amphitheater, the water basin), time freezes like a stone in the middle of space. It offers the image of eternity, of an undisturbed rhythm that identifies with the atmosphere of peace, with the ambiance of the place.

In revelations, the depiction of space *starts from the data of reality*, to which are added *figurative and functional elements* (which emerge from the sacred texts of the Christian tradition: the throne of God in Heaven, the representation of Heaven as a garden full of trees and flowers, the purity of angels accompanying people in Heaven), *some of mythological inspiration*, to which we shall return. This interpenetration favors a transfiguration of space, which, disobeying the laws of physics, becomes an etheric collector of divine intention and word, which the subjects describe in great detail. Due to the transgression of this world, space comes to function as a *mental projection with a comforting role*, in which the subjects acquire the peace necessary for the trials they are destined to go through.

Moreover, the fact that all revelations precede these trials demonstrates their *anticipatory, premonitory character* (often reinforced by an interpretation of the message), and the fact that all revelations end with the return to reality,

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

presented as a dream awakening (the verb used is: *expergiscor, expergisci, experrectus sum*) shows that subjects assimilate them to a dream, that there is a clear line between "here" and "there," which consciousness is able to infer. The state of well-being, the joy that follows the revelation (Saturus states, for example, that he awakens with a state of euphoria, *gaudens*, generated by receiving the divine message) is felt as a permanent spiritual duty of the Christian, whatever the tribulations.[20] Saturus is not the only example in this regard: on hearing their sentence, the other young people go cheerfully to the dungeon and await their execution the following day. The tendency to interpret the messages received is a proof that human conscience is always in search of their meaning: *intelleximus passionem esse futuram*; *intellexi me non ad bestias, sed contra diabolum esse pugnaturam, sed sciebam mihi esse victoriam*.[21]

In the revelations subject to analysis, from the point of view of the *interference of the supernatural element (or its attributes) into the reality, two types of space can be identified*: a) *mixed*, in which the physical data of the spaces is kept (the amphitheater prepared for the fight with the beasts, the pool of water), but *in which appears an unusual element* (no beasts in the amphitheater) or a *supernatural element* (the bowl permanently filled with water, placed on the surface of the pool); and b) *simple*, in which *the physical data of the constituent elements of space are hyperbolized* (the endless length of the ladder leading to Heaven) or *metaphorically presented* (the weapons that flank the ladder are in fact the cruel trials that young believers must go through). Within these types of spaces, both *part of the props* (wand, golden apples,[22] which revalue the mythological treasure) and *part of the actions performed are supernatural* (the metamorphosis of Perpetua into a man, the crushing of the dragon's head). However, it is noteworthy that there is one situation in which there is an unexpected integration of some worldly, ephemeral elements into the eternal, divine frame: the fall of the leaves from the garden of Heaven.

From the point of view of the *location of spaces in the universe*, we notice: a) *worldly spaces*, b) *celestial spaces* (the garden of Heaven), and c) *spaces transitory to Heaven* (stairs). All these spaces, but especially those related to the afterlife, are sensory loaded. The senses are very well represented: *uideo* ("I see"); *uniuersi odore inenarrabili alebamur* ("All of us were sustained by a most delicious odour"); *tenuit mihi manum* ("he took my hand"); *adhuc dulce nescio quid* ("with the taste of something sweet still in my

[20] See 1 Thessalonians 5.16.

[21] "We realized that we would have to suffer, and that from now on we would no longer have any hope in this life" (Herbert Musurillo's translation).

[22] The eleventh labor which Hercules had to perform was to pick the Golden apples or the Apples of the Hesperides and bring them to Eurystheus.

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

mouth"); *et ad sonum vocis experrecta sum* ("At the sound of this word I came to")[23] etc. The absence of the laws of physics is added to the huge dimensions of these spaces and to their explicit brightness (young people are carried by angels to the East untouched, the garden of Heaven is bounded by walls of light, which almost blind young people) or implicit brightness (the weapons, *gladii, lanceae, hami, machaerae, veruta*, flanking the staircase leading to the sky, which must have reflected the descending light from above).

It is obvious that the versions of the Bible that circulated in those times influenced the way of representing the spaces and the characters that populate them. The Garden of Heaven (*spatium immensum horti*) is the culmination of the most beautiful thoughts that humans have entertained about the abode of divinity: it has no borders and is bright. The deity is represented in the hypostasis of the Shepherd, sitting on the chair in the middle of the Garden of Heaven, so in a privileged position (*et in medio sedentem hominem canum in habitu pastoris, grandem, oves mulgentem*), or in the hypostasis of the Emperor, sitting on the throne. The predominant color of this space is white, the symbol of purity and devotion: the divinity is gray haired (*canum; niveos habentem capillos*), the angels are dressed in white (*circumstantes candidati milia multa*), the fresh cheese is white (*caseum*).

Regarding the actions carried out in this space, it is worth mentioning the filial kiss that young people give to the deity (*osculati sumus illum*), or the parental kiss that the latter gives to Perpetua (*osculatus est me*). This kiss is the kiss of peace which establishes the harmony between Creator and creation, it is the symbol of belonging to the Christian community. The theme of peace is thus in opposition to the theme of violence, profiled against the background of the atrocious execution of young people.

As a conclusion, we can argue that within the revelations of *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, space is approached as a twinning of real and imaginary elements. Through the abundance of props and its punctual description, the newly created universe is not only proof of the trust and special attention that martyrs give to the messages received from the divinity, but also of the amazing force to translate human states into words. Thus, the martyrs remain symbolic intermediaries between the two worlds, offering their peers sensory experiences of incomparable color and intensity.

Works Cited

The Acts of the Christian Martyrs. Trans. Herbert Musurillo. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

[23] The translations belong to Herbert Musurillo.

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

Ashbrook Harvey, Susan, Hunter David G., eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Biblia ortodoxă online. 25 Sept. 2020. https://www.bibliaortodoxa.ro

Bremmer, Jan N., Formisano, Marco. *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the* Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Cassels, Walter Richard. *Supernatural Religion: An Inquiry into the Reality of Divine Revelation*. London: Watts & Co., 1902.

Cummins, Phillip. “Kant on Outer and Inner Intuition.” *Noûs* (August 1968): 271-292.

Damnjanovic, Nic. “Revelation and Physicalism.” *Dialectica* (March 2012): 69-91.

Duncan, Matt. “We Are Acquainted with Ourselves.” *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* (September 2015): 2531-2549.

Ernout, Alfred et Meillet, Antoine. *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue latine*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2001.

Falkenstein, Lorne. “Kant's Account of Intuition.” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (June 1991): 165-193.

Fitzgerald, Allan, ed. *Agostino. Dizionario enciclopedico*. Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 2007.

Guţu, Gheorghe. *Dicţionar latin-român*. Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2003.

Heffernan, James A. W. “Space and Time in Literature and the Visual Arts.” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (Spring/Summer 1987): 95-119.

Hunink, Vincent. “Did Perpetua Write Her Prison Account?” *Listy filologické/Folia philological* (2010): 147-155.

Hyslop, James H. “The Fourth Dimension of Space.” *The Philosophical Review* (July 1896): 352-370.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated and edited by Paul Guyer, Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Marcos, Mar. “Religious Violence and Hagiography in Late Antiquity.” *Numen* (2015): 169-196.

Masnovo, Amato. *La filosofia verso la religione*. Milano: Soc. editrice Vita e Pensiero, 1961.

Milco, Katherine E. “Mulieres viriliter vincentes: Masculine and Feminine Imagery in Augustine's Sermons on Sts. Perpetua and Felicity.” *Vigiliae Christianae* (2015): 276-295.

Minkowski, Hermann. “Time and Space”. *The Monist* (April 1918): 288-302.

Mould, Tom. “Narratives of Personal Revelation among Latter-day Saints.” *Western Folklore* (Fall 2009): 431-480.

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)

Mundy, Brent. “Relational Theories of Euclidean Space and Minkowski Spacetime.” *Philosophy of Science* (June 1983): 205-226.

Nossov, Konstantin. *Gladiator: The Complete Guide to Ancient Rome's Bloody Fighters*. Guilford, Conn.: Lions Press, 2011.

Pettersen, Alvyn. “Perpetua: Prisoner of Conscience.” *Vigiliae Christianae* (June 1987): 139-153.

Rea, Jennifer A. “Transforming Civic Space into Sacred Space in the ‘Passio’ of Perpetua and Felicitas.” *The Classical Outlook* (2016): 46-50.

Rothwell, Kenneth S. “Structure in Literature.” *College English* (May 1963): 602-607.

S. Aurelii Augustini. *Opera omnia*. Home page. 25 Sept. 2020. <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/>.

Vierow, Heidi. “Feminine and Masculine Voices in the *Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas*.” Latomus (Juillet-Septembre 1999): 600-619.

Ward, Keith. *Religion and Revelation: A Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Wilhite, David E. *Ancient African Christianity*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

Wilson, Kirk Dallas. “Kant on Intuition.” *The Philosophical Quarterly* (July 1975): 247-265.

BDD-A31956 © 2020 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:01:57 UTC)