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The form and function of space in the Jonah narrative in Prudentius *Cathemerinon* 7.81–175

Opsomming

In hierdie artikel word 'n analise gemaak van die struktuur en funksie van narratiewe ruimte in die Jona-verhaal soos vertel deur Prudentius (*Cathemerinon* 7). Hierdie verhaal is gekies omdat dit by uitstek ruimte-georiënteerd is. Die analise is gebaseer op 'n verwerking van die teorie van G. Zoran, wat narratiewe ruimte op tekstuele en plot-vlak ondersoek. Ruimte op tekstuele vlak verwys na die topografiese aard van ruimte, dit wil sê van objekte en plekke, asook die beginsel van die teks-perspektief van sodanige objekte en plekke. Die topografiese aard van ruimte behels weer aspekte soos horisontale en vertikale opposisies, kwaliteitstrukture en ontologiese beginsels. Ruimte op die plot-vlak verwys na sinchroniese en diachroniese relasies. Eersgenoemde het te doen met die beginsel van beweging en rus, terwyl laasgenoemde te doen het met bepaalde rigtinge en intensies op die plot-vlak.

1 Introduction

A major component of the ancient hymn, pagan and Christian, is the *pars epica* (Bremer 1979:96), i.e. the narrative or mythic component. In the case of the ancient Christian hymn Topping (1969:36) refers to this component as the *sacred myth*, i.e. the narration of biblical stories, or, to quote Martin (1983:134), the dramatic re-telling of salvation events.

The narratological analysis of these stories in both biblical and post-biblical Christian literature has become increasingly an object of study among

modern scholars.¹ In these narratives, as in any other narrative, we distinguish apart from the narrating activity or narrative discourse (the narrator, the narratee, and the act of narration) also that which is narrated, i.e. the narrated world with its inhabitants and their action scope arranged in terms of time and space.

The aim of this paper is to focus on the *spatial aspect* in the Jonah story as this is told in Prudentius (*Cathemerinon* 7.81–175), the reason being that this narrative has proved to be very much a *space orientated* narrative, to a greater extent than the intertext, the biblical *Jonah*. Our analysis is mainly based on the important article on narrative space by Gabriel Zoran (1984:309–335).

In a narrative, space can be perceived as operating on two levels: the *textual*, which is the most immediate level, for on this level structure is imposed on space by the fact that it is signified within the verbal text, and the *plot* level, in which case structure is imposed on space by events and movements, i.e. by spacetime. We must, however, bear in mind that the reader perceives space and its aspects on these two levels at once, together and one through the other, without being able to separate them. In our analysis, however, we will focus on these two levels separately for the sake of convenience.

2 Space on the textual level

2.1 Narrative space is *verbal* space, the narrative text itself being a *verbal* medium. Language, however, cannot express all aspects of space. Its expression is therefore *selective* in nature: it expresses some spatial units (i.e. places and objects) concretely, others vaguely, others, of course, not at all. A related problem is the concepts of the “completeness” of a spatial object: “Language”, to quote Zoran (1984:313), “cannot give full expression to the spatial existence of any object”. Furthermore, due to the principle of the temporal continuum of language, we have a movement from one spatial unit to another, even where simultaneity is implied or suggested. For language can describe places and objects, as it does events, only in a *linear* way. In this connection we are faced with the complex relation between space and time: “The text exists”, as Zoran (1984:312) indicates, “and is structured first and foremost in time . . . The narrative with all its components, is arranged in time, so that in a certain sense one may speak of a temporal arrangement of space”. Due to this verbal nature of narrative space we thus have two important concepts of textual space, viz. *selectivity* and *linearity*: specific places and objects are selected in favour of others and presented to the reader in a linear way.

2.2 These places and objects can be *described* according to:

2.2.1 their topographical nature, and

2.2.2 the text’s point of view.

1. See e.g. especially Perry & Sternberg (1986:275–322); Culpepper (1983) and White (1985:49–70).

2.2.1 The description of narrative space according to its *topographical nature* comprises such aspects as horizontal and vertical oppositions, patterns of quality, and ontological principles.

Horizontal oppositions refer to binary oppositions such as inside vs. outside, near vs. far, centre vs. periphery, city vs. village, enclosed vs. open spaces, land vs. sea etc.

Vertical oppositions refer to binary oppositions such as up vs. down, high vs. low etc.

Patterns of quality refer not to the location of places and objects, but to their quality, e.g. their colours, types, substances, value etc.

Ontological principles refer to space according to its modes of existence, e.g. the world of man as opposed to the world of the gods/God, or monsters etc.

2.2.2 Textual space can also be described according to the principle of perspective, i.e. “the point of view in the text forces upon the reconstructed space a perspective structure” (Zoran 1984:322). Two types of perspective oppositions within the text can be distinguished:

- * foreground vs. background (listed by Zoran).
- ** internal vs. external (for this concept of perspective cf. *inter alia* Genette 1980, Stanzel 1986, and Lintvelt 1981).
- * The perspective of foreground vs. background implies that at each stage of a narrative the reader will perceive space as “here”, representing the foreground, as opposed to space as “there”, representing the background of the narrative sequence as a whole, i.e. the spatial units and zones of action both preceding and following the spatial scene in question. This applies also to a particular spatial scene, in which there is either a concrete perceptible or an immense undefined spatial background, as well as particular foreground in the reader’s vision.
- ** The perspective of internal vs. external is related to or dependent on whether space is perceived from within the narrative world by one or several or even all of the characters, or from outside the narrative world by the narrator.

3 Space on the plot level

The second major level of narrative space is the plot level. This is space dependent on the plot-line of the narrative, and refers to the integration of the spatial and temporal categories of movement and change, and which Zoran (1984:318) calls the *chronotopos* of the reconstructed world.

Two types of relations within *plotted* space can be distinguished, viz. synchronic and diachronic relations, each type having a different kind of effect on the spatial structure.

3.1 Synchronic relations refer to the concept of motion and rest: “At every point of the narrative . . . some objects may be found at rest and others in motion” (Zoran, 1984:318). However, rest does not imply inactivity but “the state of being bound to a given spatial context, while movement is the ability to cut oneself off from spatial context and to switch over to different contexts” (Zoran, 1984:318).

3.2 Diachronic relations refer to the concept of defined directions in space within a particular narrative according to which “one place is defined as the point of departure, another as the target, and others as stations on the way . . . Thus *axes of movement* in space are determined” (Zoran, 1984: 318–319), a movement being the result of several powers, e.g. intention, will, necessity etc. A station or stations on the way may also serve as deliberate conceived *deviation(s)*.

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4.1 Outline of narrative

If we imagine space, as Zoran (1984:323) suggests, as a series of scenes, then each new shift in space obviously marks a move from one scene to another. Hoek (1978:55–57) lists this spatial indicator amongst various other indicators of scene, e.g. he marks shifts in space together with those of time and person as *episodic* indicators next to *adversative* and *narrative* indicators. According to these indicators we can divide a narrative into its various scenes. The following is an outline of the Jonah narrative based on some of these indicators:

A General introduction to the narrative: the narrator announces the theme of the narrative (81–85)

B Narrative proper (86–172a)

1 Introduction (86–100)

Scene 1: The sins of Nineveh (86–90)

Scene 2: The wrath and mercy of God (91–100)

2 Exposition (106–170)

Scene 3: God calls on Jonah to preach to Nineveh (101–102)

Scene 4: Jonah takes to the sea *en route* to Tarshish away from God.
The storm at sea. Jonah is cast into the sea (103–110)

Scene 5: Jonah in the inwards of a sea monster (111–125)

Scene 6: Jonah is spewed out (126–130)

Scene 7: Jonah travels to Nineveh and preaches to the inhabitants (131–135)

Scene 8: Jonah climbs to a mountain top to watch the destruction of the city (136–140)

Scene 9: Nineveh repents (141–170)

3 Epilogue (171–172a)

Scene 10: God's mercy towards Nineveh (171–172a)

C Coda or Moral of Narrative (172b-175)

God's mercy for all who repent (172b-175)

4.2 Space on the textual level

Moving from scene to scene our object will be to list the various spatial units in the narrative (i.e. places and objects) and analyze their form and function, first according to their topographical nature and then from the text's point of view. The translation is that of Thomson in the Loeb edition (1949:63–69).

4.2.1 Textual space according to its topographical nature

Introduction

Scene 1

86–90: There flourished once a mighty and arrogant nation, given over to evil indulgence, and which in its debased wantonness had in the mass passed all restraint; wherefore being stiff-necked in its stupid pride, it was disregarding the worship of God on high.

This scene refers to the inhabitants of Nineveh who neglected to worship God due to their debased wantonness. From a *topographical* point of view we have here space according to its *ontological* principles, i.e. its modes of existence: the *world of man* as opposed to the *world of God*, as it has already been anticipated by the narrator in his general introduction to his narrative. It is to be noted that this opposition according to ontological principles is also an opposition on a semantical level, i.e. the world of man is *hostile* to that of God. This tension between these two spatial modes of existence serves to mark space as *subjective* (cf. Vandermoere, 1976:125), i.e. it is endowed with a particular meaning or symbolism: it marks the initial movement of the plot as one of tension.

Scene 2

91–100: Justice ever merciful is at last offended and aroused in righteous wrath. It arms its right hand with a fiery sword and

brandishes rattling storms and crashing whirlwinds in a cloud of fire and thunder. Yet giving them a brief space for repentance, if haply they might be willing to subdue and break their wicked lust and long-continued follies, the awful Judge, who is yet easily entreated, suspends the blow, the doom pronounced is for a little stayed.

The result of the tension between the world of man and the world of God is indicated in scene 1 and is now presented in this scene as the *wrath of God*. This wrath is furthermore imagined in *spatial terms*: God arms his right hand with a fiery sword and brandishes rattling storms and crashing whirlwinds in a cloud which is described as one of fire and thunder. These spatial objects, however, are used in a *metaphorical* sense, but being concrete objects they serve to *emphasize and vivify* the wrath of God. In the second half of this scene (96–100) the possibility is created that this tension between the world of man and the world of God will in the end be relieved. In fact, the plot has been *structured* by the narrator precisely on this line, for the narrative ends with the same spatial context as the one with which it begins, i.e. Nineveh, the final context being one in which the tension presented in the opening spatial context has indeed been relieved. This is in sharp contrast to the intertext, which ends with the scene between God and Jonah. (For this, see 4.3.2.)

Exposition

Scene 3

101–102: The merciful Avenger calls Jonah the prophet to go and proclaim impending punishment; . . .

Note that due to both the shift in space and time, as well as the presence of an adversative indicator (but in 103), and a new action line (narrative indicator), the scene division falls midway in this particular strophe. This tension between strophe and content is typical of texts such as narrative poems or narrative in verse form.

In this scene a new inhabitant of the *world of man* is introduced, viz. the prophet Jonah, whose relation to the world of God is at this stage implied as positive. From this point onwards the plot will reveal a *two way direction* from the world of man to the world of God, or vice versa, viz. God vs. Nineveh, and God vs. Jonah. As to the ship's crew, see discussion of this aspect in scene 4.

Scene 4

103–110: But he, knowing that the Judge who threatened would rather save than strike and punish, flees in secret and turns his steps privily to Tarshish. He embarks on a tall ship by the gangway

standing ready; the wet mooring-rope cast off, the vessel sails and they make their way over the deep. But the sea grows stormy, and then search is made for the cause of the great peril, and the lot is cast and falls on the fugitive prophet.

The implied positive relation between Jonah and God suggested in the previous scene is immediately shattered in this scene in which we find Jonah fleeing from God and God reacting in the form of the storm at sea. Thus a second *line of tension* between the world of man and the world of God is created, but there is a difference: while Nineveh is a pagan city, Jonah is God's prophet!

The first *place* which we encounter in the narrative, apart from the implied residence of Jonah, is Tarshish, the *anticipated* target of Jonah in contrast to the target God has in mind, viz. Nineveh (see also 4.3.2). This gives us space presented according to a *horizontal* opposition of near vs. far, where the "far", i.e. the anticipated Tarshish, constitutes a *tension line* between itself and Nineveh as the stated target of the narrative seen from the perspective of the point of departure, i.e. Jonah's residence. Four *types of objects* (type of object being one of the aspects of space according to its *patterns of quality*) figure in this scene: the gangway, the ship, the sea, and the lot. At first the gangway, the ship and the sea constitute *symbols of escape* from the world of God, but eventually the ship on the stormy sea and the lot become objects implying *danger* for both the ship's crew and Jonah! The reference to "lot", anticipated by "a search is made", points to another set of inhabitants in the world of man, viz. the ship's crew. But in this narrative they hardly play any significant role (this in sharp contrast to the intertext, (cf. Jauss 1985:5,14). This is confirmed by the use of the passive phrases "a search is made" in this scene, and "is hurled headlong" in the next scene, as well as the phrase "the lot is cast".

Scene 5

111–125: Arraigned, he alone of them all, and condemned to die, for the turning of the urn had made his guilt manifest, he is hurled headlong and plunged in the deep, caught then in a monster's jaws, and swallowed up alive in the vault of its great belly. Passing swiftly over, the prey escapes the futile stroke of the teeth, for he flies unhurt over the tongue without shedding of blood, so that the wet grinders cannot hold the morsel in their bite and break it in pieces; right through the mouth he passes, and beyond the palate. While three days and nights went by he remained engulfed in the beasts's maw, wandering there in the darkness of its inward parts, round and round the tortuous windings of its guts, his breath choking with the heat of the entrails.

Various *objects* and *places* are selected and presented in this scene: the urn,

again pointing to a relation between the world of man and of God, the depths of the sea, and the inside of a sea monster, including various parts of its body: jaws, belly, teeth, tongue, grinders, mouth and palate, maw, inward parts, guts and entrails.

Regarding these places and objects a *vertical* opposition is evident in line 113 between space *on* the ship and space *in* the depths of the sea (up vs. down), related to the opposition *safety vs. danger*, or *life vs. death*, while a *horizontal* opposition becomes apparent in 114 between space *outside* vs. space *inside* the sea monster, which here has the opposite movement: from *death* to *life*, from *danger* to *safety*, for the sea monster in fact becomes *instrumental* to Jonah's *salvation* from the depths of the sea. This is confirmed by the detailed description (in contrast to the intertext) of Jonah's *safe* journey from the mouth to the inward parts of the sea monster. Next the depths of the sea and the sea monster both figure in this scene as two *spatial contexts* which symbolize, as has been indicated above, two *opposing concepts*, danger vs. salvation, while the various members of the monster's body are *symbols of latent danger*, but from which in fact Jonah escapes *unharméd*.

Another interesting *ontological* aspect of space, i.e. space according to its modes of existence, is presented: the world of man as opposed to the *world of sea monsters*. Jauss (1985:6) refers in this instance to "the theme of a hero who is swallowed by a sea monster (as) . . . among the commonest of ally myths" recurring in the mythologies of many cultures.

Scene 6

126–130: From thence, when the third night comes round, the monster retching spews him out unharméd; where the wave breaks at its loud-sounding close and the white spray beats on the briny rocks he is belched out, amazed at his preservation.

Objects and *places* in this scene are the vomiting sea monster, the shore, the waves, the white spray and the briny rocks. Again a *horizontal* opposition is evident, viz. from the inside of the monster in the sea onto land, completing the full circle of movement from safety to danger (from the ship into the sea), from danger to safety (from the sea into the sea monster), and to final safety (from the sea monster onto the shore). Spatial units according to their *patterns of quality* as well as according to their *ontological* principles produce a further significant *opposition*: the shore with its breaking waves and spray and rocks is in contrast to the choking heat of the monster's inside, and they also of course respectively represent the world of man as opposed to the world of sea monsters. Thus another *circle* is completed: a movement from the world of man (ship) to the world of sea monsters, and again back to the world of man (shore), a movement resulting from the tension between two opposing fields of power, and especially with the focus on God's power intercepting and forcing Jonah to go His way.

Scene 7

131–135: Back to Nineveh perforce he turns with quickened step, and after upbraiding and censuring its people, laying their shameful misdeeds to their charge, he cries: “The wrath of the great Judge hangs over you and will presently burn your city with fire, believe ye.”

In this scene Jonah at last turns his step towards Nineveh. Space according to its *ontological* principles is again very much on the foreground, both as regards the world of God vs. the world of Jonah (cf. the word “perforce”) and the world of God vs. the world of Nineveh (cf. “The wrath of the great Judge hangs over you . . .”). Space according to a *horizontal* opposition is also evident: from the shore (near) to Nineveh (far), marking this scene as the turning point as far as the defined direction of the narrative is concerned, for the ultimate and stated target of the narrative has now been reached (see also 4.3.2.).

Scene 8

136–140: Then he makes for the peak of a high mountain, to see from there the thick smoke arise from the jumbled ruin, and the city in a heap of dire destruction, while he shelters under the shoots of a plant that sprouts from many a joint and enjoys a shade that of a sudden has grown up.

This scene refers to Jonah’s retreat from the city to a mountain peak, so that we have in this movement space seen from a *horizontal* as well as *vertical* perspective, i.e. from the city to the mountain (horizontal), and from the mountain top down onto the city (vertical), both *oppositions symbolizing estrangement* between Jonah and the inhabitants of Nineveh. The narrator also uses *patterns of quality* or *spatial qualifications* to emphasize this estrangement:

first by means of the idea of distance between safety (mountain top) and anticipated destruction (city), and

secondly by means of the idea of comfort (shade) vs. anticipated dire circumstances (fire and smoke and ruins).

Scene 9

141–170: But ah! the saddened people, pierced by grief not known before, is in the agony of death. Commons and councillors, citizens of every age, young men with pale faces, wailing women, rush to and fro in crowds all about the wide city. Resolved to appease the angry Christ with public fasts, they put the habit of

eating from them; the matron, taking off her necklaces, dons dark vestures, and instead of jewels and silk foul ashes besprinkle her flowing hair. The fathers wear the dark robes of mourning all ungirt, the common crowd in lamentation put on coarse haircloth, the maids, with hair unkempt and shaggy like a beast's, cover their faces with black veils, the children lie rolling in the sand. The king himself, pulling away the clasp, tore in pieces his mantle that had the glow of Coan purple, put off his bright jewels, his band of precious stones, the emblem that clasped his brows, and cluttered his hair with unsightly dust. None had any thought of drinking or of eating; the whole manhood had turned from the table to fasting; nay, the cradles are wet with the tears of little ones crying because milk is denied them, for the niggard nurse withdraws the liquor of the breast. The very flocks the herdsmen take shrewd care to enclose, lest roaming at large the cattle put their lips to the dewy grass or drink a draught from the brawling stream, and the sound of their plaints fills the foodless stalls.

This scene has as theme the repentance of Nineveh, and as such constitutes the climax of the narrative. It contains a wide variety of objects and several places. The *objects* listed can be analyzed according to their *patterns of quality*, e.g. *substance*, *value* and *colour*. The various precious objects (jewels, clothes etc.), all with an intrinsic quality of substance, value and colour, are replaced with objects opposite in quality of substance, value and colour, serving indeed as important indicators of a change, not only from value to worthlessness, but also from wantonness to humility and repentance.

As to *places* we have at the opening of this scene the wide city itself, as well as several spatial activities, e.g. the implied room or spatial context of the matron, the fathers, and young girls, the sand in which the young boys lie and roll, the palace of the king, the cradles of the babes, and the foodless stalls of the animals. These scenes are especially important from the text's point of view. For this see 4.2.2(a). At the close of the scene we have also a *horizontal* opposition in space: the enclosed area of the animals vs. the open spaces of grass and streams, also indicative of this change from sin to repentance even in the care of the animals. Add to this the sound pattern: the plaints of the animals in *foodless stalls* longing for the grass and waters, a pattern indeed anticipated by the crying of the babes for food that has been withheld from them: all emphasizing the repentance of an entire city.

Epilogue

171–172a: Softened by these and the like acts, God restrains His short-lived anger and turns propitious, mitigating His awful sentence.

In this final scene the narrator again refers to space according to its

ontological principles by mentioning the fact that the world of man is now, as far as his narrative is concerned, reconciled with the world of God. Thus a circular pattern has been established: at the beginning of the narrative these two worlds were estranged, in the end they are placated.

4.2.2 Textual space according to the point of view in the text.

(a) Foreground vs. background

As the reader moves from one scene to another he perceives each spatial scene as the “here”, i.e. as foreground, while the scenes preceding the particular scene now in his field of vision serve as the “there”, i.e. the background. However, this opposition of foreground vs. background is also present in each scene. One conspicuous example from the Jonah narrative will suffice:

After Jonah’s proclamation of God’s wrath, the inhabitants repent of their sins. At the very outset the narrator relates how the inhabitants run *to and fro throughout the wide city*, stricken with panic. The reference to various characters and their actions adds vividness to this panic stricken movement throughout the city. The narrator then depicts various sequences in various spatial contexts in more detail: the activities of the matron, the fathers, the young girls and boys, the king, the nurse and the crying babies etc., each of which is experienced by the reader as the *foreground*, the particular scene within the focus of his reading, while the reader still keeps in mind, by the synthesis of memory, the wide city as *background* against which these various acts of repentance are realised.

(b) External vs. internal perspective

The Jonah narrative is related in the third person mode (authorial mode of narration), i.e. the reader *experiences events and places through the eyes of the narrator*. The narrator is *omnipresent* and moves from scene to scene, and from one spatial context to another with his characters, especially Jonah. Through his eyes we perceive e.g. how Jonah is swallowed by the sea monster and moves through the monster’s mouth into the belly, or how the inhabitants of the city repent, each in his or her own way. This is called an external point of view as opposed to an internal point of view, used e.g. in the biblical *Jonah*, in the scene in which Jonah prays to God from the inside of the sea monster, so that the reader perceives that situation through the character’s eyes.

4.3 Space on the plot level: synchronic and diachronic relations

As has been indicated in the beginning, the Jonah narrative forms a complete plot embedded in a hymnal text. Space on this plot level is concerned with the concept of *synchronic* and *diachronic* relations, i.e. with motion and rest on the one hand, and defined directions on the other.

4.3.1 Synchronic relations

The narrator introduces his narrative (lines 86–100) with the spatial context of Nineveh as well as the implied spatial context of God. The inhabitants of Nineveh are involved in activities, especially of the kind that evoke God's wrath, but they are nevertheless perceived as characters *at rest*, i.e. they are, as far as this narrative is concerned, *bound to a particular spatial context*. From what follows it is clear that God, on the other hand, is perceived as a character *in motion*: He views from his world the world of man, and moves in this world, for He is involved in each scene, his omnipresence clearly implied. As God He has the *ability to cut Himself off from one context and move to another*. He thus calls on Jonah at his (unnamed) residence and orders him to go to Nineveh. He makes the sea stormy, lets the monster swallow Jonah and spew him out again, forces Jonah to go to Nineveh, and in the end bestows his mercy upon Nineveh.

The phrase “to go” (line 102) again clearly suggests that Jonah is another character *in motion*: he also will reveal the *ability to move from one spatial context to another*. Thus we find him at the harbour boarding a ship, in the end cast overboard into the stormy sea, swallowed by a sea monster, later spewed out onto the shore, moving on to Nineveh, entering that city, and after his proclamation ascending a mountain peak to watch for the city's destruction. Meanwhile it is also clear that the ship's crew are, according to this narrative, also *bound to a given spatial context*, viz. the ship, and are therefore also characters *at rest*. The same applies to the sea monster, an object bound to the spatial context of the sea. Finally, after the narrator has related that Jonah retreated from the city to a mountain top, he takes the reader back into Nineveh, where the inhabitants indeed move about in panic, but are, in relation to Jonah, bound to the spatial context of the city. This of course, enables the narrator to focus on their repentance and humiliation resulting from their fast: the limited space of the city is made much more forceful by this synchronic situation, i.e. the inhabitants, with no hope of escape, are bound to their city, and thus repent.

4.3.2 Diachronic relations

By moving from one synchronic situation or spatial context to another, we have, of course, also established a *defined direction on the plot level*. The plot reveals the following line of direction or movement: as the *point of departure* we have the residence of Jonah, as stated *target* the city of Nineveh. The fact that the narrator begins his narrative with Nineveh, thus anticipating God's target for Jonah, emphasizes the line of direction along which the plot will be structured. The anticipated place Tarshish, the harbour, the ship at sea, the sea monster and the shore serve as *stations on the way*, of which Tarshish, the harbour, and the ship at sea can be seen as *deviations* on the part of Jonah.

Thus a tension is created between the stated target (Nineveh) and the

anticipated target (Tarshish), which is the result of an opposition between two powers, viz. the disobedience of Jonah vs. the will of God. Thus the storm, the depths of the sea, the sea monster and the shore are instrumental in God's hand to intersect the movement of Jonah along another line of direction, opposing God's will. And the phrase "perforce" (line 131) marks a climactic turning point in this direction. By a will much stronger than his own, Jonah is forced to turn his step at last to the stated target of the narrative. That the tension is not relieved entirely, is clear from the fact that Jonah retreats from the city to the mountain top to watch the city's destruction, which, however, does not take place. The mountain top therefore also serves as final *deviation* (and defiance?) on the part of Jonah, although the narrator makes much less of this than the narrator of the biblical *Jonah*. This is of course confirmed by the difference in plot structure: the Prudentius narrative begins and ends with Nineveh: its sins and repentance, resulting in the mercy of God. The biblical narrative of *Jonah* begins and ends with Jonah: the man of God who could not reconcile himself with the universal love and mercy of God.

Conclusion

We have according to the stated aim of this paper listed and described the various *aspects of space* in the Jonah narrative, as well as their *functions*. We must bear in mind, however, that space is but one of the components constituting the narrative world, the others being characters, events and time. The *ultimate aim* would therefore be to read space in this narrative *in relation to* the other narrative components. By doing this, one will eventually arrive at a better understanding of the poetics and meaning of the narrative as a whole.

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