When Philostratus is visiting a friend in Naples — or so the writer wants us to believe in the foreword to *Imagines* (1.4.23ff) — and he discovers a portico near his friend’s house which opens to the West and looks out over the Tyrrhenian sea, he is surprised mainly by the panel-paintings set into the walls, ‘paintings which I thought had been collected with real judgment, for they exhibited the skill of very many painters’. He wants to talk about these paintings, and is given the chance when his host’s young son asks him to explain them. He begins his long series of explanations of the paintings with the painting in which (part) of the myth of Scamander was represented:

‘Have you noticed, my boy, that the painting here is based on Homer, or have you failed to do so because you are lost in wonder as to how in the world the fire could live in the midst of the water? Well then, let us try to get at the meaning of it. Turn your eyes away from the painting itself so as to look only at the events on which it is based. Surely you are familiar with the passages in the *Iliad* where Homer makes Achilles rise up to avenge Patroclus, and the gods are moved to make battle with each other. Now of this battle of the gods the painter ignores all the rest, but it tells how Hephaestus fell upon Scamander with might and main. Now look again at the painting; it is all from Homer. Here is the lofty citadel, and here the battlements of Ilium; here is a great plain, large enough for marshalling the forces of Asia against the forces of Europe; here fire rolls mightily like a flood over the plain, and mightily it creeps along the banks of the river so that no trees are left there. The fire which envelops Hephaestus flows out on the surface of the water and the river is suffering and in person begs Hephaestus for mercy. But the river is not painted with long hair, for the hair has been burnt off; nor is Hephaestus painted as lame, for he is running; and the flames of the fire are not ruddy nor yet of the
usual appearance, but they shine like gold and sunbeams. In this Homer is no longer followed.’ (translated by A. Fairbanks)

In his description Philostratus follows a long literary tradition. From Homer on, who set the tone with his description of Achilles’ shield, Greco-Roman literature tried to integrate the other art forms—sculpture, architecture, painting, textiles, music and dance. If I restrict myself to the period in which the texts of the New Testament came into existence, I can point to the novel Daphnis and Chloe which opens with a description of a painting as an introduction to the plot of the narrative; the Tablet of Cebes, an ethical treatise in the form of an explanation of a painting; a little later in time, the treatises by Lucian Essays in Portraiture, and Essays in Portraiture Defended (where various statues are described and evoked) and Zeuxis or Antiochus (on the methods of painting); and somewhat more modestly, the description by Josephus of Vespasian’s triumphal march with his sons after the war against the Jews, the description especially of the pegmata, the moving stages on which events from the war are portrayed from the viewpoint of the Roman victors, ‘and the art and the magnificent workmanship of these structures now portrayed the incidents to those who had not witnessed them, as though they were happening before their eyes’ (Bell. Jud., VII. 132-152).

Showing that Philostratus’s text is part of a literary tradition is not to deny that it has something special. Of the 65 paintings which are described in an expressive and interpretative way, there are only a few of which it can be said, with more or less certainty, that they relate to an actual painting. Obviously, our knowledge of classical painting is limited but even if we take this into consideration, we are left with a body of descriptions in Philostratus which are generally fictional: descriptions of paintings which exist only as literature. In a certain way this is not that strange, because that is

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the way this started in Greek literature: Achilles’ shield only existed as a literary artifact in the Iliad.

Therefore, Philostratus made Horace’s advice his own in a special way — ut pictura poesis. Thus his text can also be seen as a way to read narrative texts:

— one determines which myth is being imagined; which selection has been made; who the characters are and how they relate one to the other.

— one determines the temporal and spatial relationships of one object to another: distance, closeness, the way of approaching or going away, the relative positions on the right or the left, over or under, what comes first chronologically etc.;

— only that which is unexplainable, unintelligible, unexpected demands an explanation;

— any possible ethical judgment needs to be explicated.

This book will try to develop this way of reading applying it to a part of Luke’s text. Texts evoke images which, in order to give access to the text, need to be catalogued, analyzed, synthesized. The Philostratus text can obviously not be used as a model. He was a sophist. His texts are demonstrations of his own potential and not a way to practise a method. That is not the point. In literary science modern methods have been developed which we will also use in this book. The following study seeks to be part of the exegetical tradition which is open to the combination of the visual and the linguistic characteristics of a text.

This identification of visual figures and propositional content (of a text) is an important topic also within (modern) cognitive psychology. Within the discourse of this psychology the question is asked on which level of consciousness internal, mental, visual images play a role for people: do they function only on the surface of consciousness or are they at the foundation of human consciousness? The question is how to describe the relationships between visual images and the internal, mental, propositional representations which are more language-like, consisting of the conceptual content of situations and things.² When one thinks

something like 'there is a book on the table', most people have a
concrete image in mind in the form of a combined image— a-book-
on-a-table— but at the same time there is a conceptual
representation with a more or less clear propositional structure
which can be written as ON(BOOK,TABLE). Propositional
representations are only language-like; they are not words but
rather capture abstract, ideational content just as the visual imagery
is image-like and subject to constant adaptations. There are theorists
who have argued that images are not really a separate type of
representation but can be reduced to propositional representations.

Others propose a dual system and accept that there are two
distinct systems for the representation and processing of
information. I present two possible models which are used in
cognitive psychology: 3

A. Paivo seeks to determine the minimal basic differences
between imagistic and propositional representations. He starts from
the following base-ideas:
—two basic independent but interconnected coding or symbolic
systems underlie human cognition: a non-verbal system and a verbal
system;
—both systems are specialised for encoding, organising, storing,
and retrieving distinct types of information;
—the non-verbal (or image-related) system is specialized in the
processing of non-verbal objects and events (i.e. processing spatial
and synchronous information) and thus enters into tasks like the
analysis of scenes and the generation of mental images;
—the verbal system is specialized in dealing with linguistic
information and is largely implicated in the processing of language;
because of the serial nature of language it is specialized in
sequential processing;
—the two symbolic systems are interconnected by referential
links between their basic representational units.

S. Kosslyn in a way reinforced these points of departure,
because he linked them to certain computational models which
could very well explain some processes. In summary we can
present the conclusions of Kosslyn’s theory of imagery as follows:

3 Following Eysenk & Keane I present summaries of the models of
Paivo (p. 209) and of Kosslyn (p. 220).
—visual images are represented in a special, spatial medium;
—the spatial medium has four essential properties: 1) it functions as a space of limited boundaries; it has a specified shape and a capacity to depict spatial relationships; 2) its area of highest resolution is at its centre; 3) the medium has a grain that obscures details on “small” images; 4) once the image is generated in the medium it begins to fade;
—a variety of processes use image files, propositional files, and the spatial medium in order to generate, interpret, and transform images.

This form of psychology forms the basis of cognitive linguistics which, in the first part of our study, will be used as the instrument of analysis. These are parallel discourses which develop on the boundary of various sciences. In our study we are trying to present New Testament exegesis on the front line of scientific discourse. Its reception within the exegetical community will determine whether this is a worthwhile way to proceed.

This part is also the result of intensive cooperation with my colleague here in Nijmegen (Patrick Chatelion Counet). In numerous discussions we developed a possible method of analysis. The text of this theoretical part (Chapter 1) has been taken care of by P. Chatelion Counet but the content is obviously part of a shared responsibility. That is different in Chapter 3 (pp. 53-87) and (part of) Chapter 4 (pp.117-123: the discussion of the story of the travellers on the road to Emmaus) which is completely Chatelion Counet’s responsibility. The careful reader will notice the subtle differences between this chapter and the analyses in the other Chapters (2 and 4) for which I am responsible myself. Together these chapters propose a systematic analysis of Luke 24.

These analyses remain completely text-internal because of the theoretical framework. In the second part of this book the same text is studied from a different framework of interpretation. From existing literature a sociological model of interpretation is introduced (Chapter 5) to understand the Lukan text against the background of a number of text-external data. Luke’s text is about Jesus’ death, his burial, his existence after death. The analyses follow the structure of the text: Chapter 6 is about the burial and the corpse; Chapter 7 about the soul and the body; Chapter 8 about the mourners and the living. These analyses are less experimental
but they use the results of the first part. They are linked more directly to the discourse about these texts in New Testament exegesis. The content of the texts and the way in which the texts are narrated guarantee that, in these analyses too, the figurative aspect of the texts remains the centre of attention. Mythology runs rampant here. The analyses seek to give an insight into the selections which have been made, into the special colour of Luke’s text and into its preferences. In the closing reflections we discuss some ethical aspects. What distinguishes this part of the study from most other exegetical studies is the attention to the opportunities for understanding the text within the Hellenistic culture in which it was received.