

Kundong Kim

The Double Transformation of Space and Heart
in the Emmaus Story

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A Thirdspatial Analysis of the Lucan Spaces in the Passion and
Easter Narratives Centered on the Emmaus Space
as a Model Space for Readers

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Kundong Kim s.j.

On the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord
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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to explore the spatial potential of the Emmaus story in the Lucan Easter narrative and to understand the practical dimension of the messages of the Emmaus story from its spatial interpretations. This study uses mainly the concept of the Lucan thirdspace—a modified concept taken from Edward Soja’s thirdspace concept presented in his critical spatiality approach—as well as concepts taken from narrative criticism, particularly the distinction between the implied reader and the real reader. The spatial analysis of the narrative consists of three sections: (1) Toward Emmaus (Luke 23:26–24:12), (2) Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), and (3) After Emmaus (Luke 24:36–53). The first-, second-, and thirdspatial dimensions of various spaces in the narrative arc from the crucifixion to the ascension in Luke’s Gospel will be analyzed, always centering on the Emmaus story. The study will further conduct a brief excursus into the tabernacle space in the biblical traditions and into the Qumran community in the Second Temple period in order to place the Emmaus story in its historical and religious context. Finally, it will offer theological reflections on divine presence by looking at the temples in ANE and at the fiery image in the biblical traditions, as well as by deliberating on the meanings of God’s coming into time and space. Ultimately, spatial analysis and theological reflections will show the thirdspatial transformative potential of the Emmaus story/space through the divine encounter and one’s personal relationship with Jesus.

Keywords: the Emmaus story, Luke’s Gospel, Luke and Acts, the Lucan narrative, critical spatiality, thirdspace, the space of relationship, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, narrative criticism, the implied reader, the real reader, the kingdom of God, Emmaus, Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Temple, the tabernacle, divine presence, divine encounter, human experiences of the divine, sacred space, embodiment, bodily resurrection, transformation

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Notes

* The English translations of biblical texts were for the most part done by myself and are so indicated. Where there are no indications, the translations follow the expressions in NRSV.

** For cited texts, “emphasis by myself” indicates that certain words or phrases in the citations were highlighted by myself in order to bring attention to the points I am making, while “emphasis in the original” indicates that the emphases or highlights are part of the original text from which the citation was made.

*** I do not use frequently the geographical term “Palestine,” which can be full of religious, cultural, historical, and political connotations, and I use other terms, such as Judea and Galilee, instead in order to specify the relevant geographical area. However, where the term “Palestine” occurs—unless the context indicates otherwise—I intend it as “commonly used to designate the ancient land of the Bible, the Holy Land—‘from Dan to Beersheba.’”¹

1 Bornemann, “Palestine,” 14. For a brief overview of the history of the region and the usage of the term “Palestine,” see further Bornemann, “Palestine,” 13–17.

I. Introduction

*Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice.*¹

– bell hooks

The present study is a spatial reading of the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13–35) as a narrative. The Emmaus story in itself is a magnificent masterpiece of Lucan narrative. In the context of the entire narrative of Luke’s two volumes, it is a central narrative full of “symbolic” meanings. Luke’s Easter narrative forms an “intersection” between “the time of promise and anticipation” (Luke’s Gospel) and “the time of fulfilment” (Acts), which two epochs and narratives are closely interrelated.² Therefore the location of the Emmaus story in the Lucan narrative already indicates its significance.

Then what can be gleaned from the spaces and places in the story itself? What meanings and implications can those memorable spaces in the story, such as “Emmaus,” “Jerusalem,” and “the way,” have for the characters in the narrative as well as for its readers? Are there any other “spaces” or “places” in the story that can be (re)discovered or (re)interpreted? A nuanced, more encompassing understanding of space is beneficial and necessary for this quest.

Borrowing from the quote from bell hooks above, spaces can be “real” and “imagined.” They are told in a story, but they can have their own stories to tell. They may add colors to the story or to our life, or they may be colored by the story or by our experiences in life. They can be understood or envisaged from our own direct experiences and knowledge of certain spaces or places in life. They can be conceived from the meanings attached to them in a specific culture or society or as they are represented in a narrative. Moreover, with a great relevance to the aim of this study and with a nuanced understanding of the term, spaces can be radically open to abundant potential and various possibilities because they are not to be understood simply as static three-dimensional containers we are put into, but can be socially produced and participated in by those who engage in them, as a French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre, says.³

1 hooks, *Yearning*, 152.

2 Cf. Backhaus, *Das lukanische Doppelwerk*, 485–486. My translation. Backhaus also notes that “[d]ie ausgeführte lukanische Ostererzählung [Lk 24,13–35] überbrückt die Schlussmarker der Jesus-Vita und den Eingang der Jünger Geschichte.” – Backhaus, *Das lukanische Doppelwerk*, 429–430.

3 “(Social) space is a (social) product.” – Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 26.

I. Introduction

The aim of this study is to search for answers to the questions above which explore the narrative from spatial perspectives. Since the various prominent Lucan motifs in the Gospel narrative converge in the Emmaus story and these motifs are, in turn, echoed in the narrative in Acts, these questions and answers can offer a gateway to interpreting the Lucan narrative from a spatial vantage point.

After this introductory chapter, I will begin the study in chapter II with introducing “the spatial turn” and the methodological tools applied, i.e., the concepts from critical spatiality and narrative criticism. Among many critical spatiality approaches, I will use mainly the concept of “thirdspace” proposed by Edward Soja. From narrative criticism, the distinction of “the implied reader” and “the real reader” will be found especially useful to interpret the narrative in its proper context and to understand the practical dimension of the Gospel narrative. In addition, I will approach the pericope as a narrative in the final form of the text as it stands, although I will also consider, when necessary, precious insights from historical criticism or from social critical approaches to the biblical times. Furthermore, my main focus is on Luke’s Gospel narrative, but, where relevant, examples from Acts will be also mentioned, since I work based on the perspective that is in favor of the thematic and theological coherence between the narratives in Luke and Acts.⁴

Chapter III is a full-fledged spatial analysis of the Emmaus story. For the so-called “Emmaus space”—which term I coined myself—it is worthwhile to have a grander view from the crucifixion of Jesus on the Skull to his ascension in Bethany in order to understand the Emmaus story better in the context of the Lucan Passion and Easter narratives. For this, I will analyze the spaces in the episodes in three sections: (1) Toward Emmaus (Luke 23:26–24:12), (2) Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), and (3) After Emmaus (Luke 24:36–53). In each section, spatial analysis will be conducted to deliberate on the first-, second-, and thirdspatial dimensions of spaces and places in the respective episodes. In each analysis, its relevance to the Emmaus story will not be forgotten. Most of all, the thirdspatial features and

4 For a view to (re)affirm the unity of Luke and Acts from narrative unity, see Green, “Luke-Acts, or Luke and Acts?,” 3–23. For a compact summary of contemporary debates and views of skepsis on the viability of the unity of Luke and Acts, see Backhaus, *Das lukanische Doppelwerk*, 110–118. For a well-informed and carefully considered summary about how one can/should reflect on the “unity” of Luke and Acts, see Backhaus, *Das lukanische Doppelwerk*, 426–441. The summary does not accept the hypothesis of the “unity” of these two books uncritically or unquestioningly, while it recognizes a close relationship between them in various dimensions. Backhaus suggests and affirms their “unity” rather in terms of coherence, intertextuality, and complementarity.

potential of the proposed spaces will usually be considered and contemplated in more detail, but it must be emphasized in advance that firstspace and secondspace are not to be neglected, since they have value in their own right. Subsequently, the chapter will propose a significance of the Emmaus story as a “model space” for its readers. Finally, it will end with a brief excursus into the tabernacle space in the biblical traditions and into the Qumran community in the Second Temple period in order to shed more light on the Emmaus story within the historical and religious context of the Second Temple period.

Chapter IV offers theological reflections on the notion of divine presence in the Lucan narrative. The Emmaus story is a story of divine encounter. Since human beings are embodied beings, they can encounter God only in a temporal and spatial way. In other words, a human encounter with the divine is an occasion in which the transcendent God places himself in space and time for humans. The first section of the chapter will briefly introduce the concept of the holy by Rudolf Otto and the human experience of the holy from the discussions by Ola Sigurdson. The following section will examine the notion of divine presence in ancient Near Eastern religions as well as in Israelite religion. This will be done specifically by considering the temples in ANE and the fiery images in the biblical traditions. These reflections will lead to contemplating on the Incarnation⁵ and embodiment—the transcendent God’s coming into the human time and space—, as well as on eschatological hope and transformation. Finally, the chapter will end with renewed emphasis on the Emmaus story as a model space, especially for its thirdspatial potential with the double transformation of space and heart.

Then the study will end with brief concluding remarks in chapter V, reporting an outcome of this study. In the main body I will at some places add interim summary reviews after extensive analysis on specific topics, as well, so that the threads of my central ideas will be more clearly presented.

5 For the context in which I discuss “Incarnation” in connection to the Lucan narrative, see IV. 3.1. below.

