
J Botha

ABSTRACT
In this paper some elements of the reading process of Luke 12:35-48 are analysed according to the theory of Wolfgang Iser. Two problems are stated in the introduction, namely the impossibility of accounting for the reading process exhaustively in one all-encompassing theory, and the difficulty of "applying" Iser's theory, which is proposed as a theory of the reading process and not a method for analysing the reading process of an actual text. After a short exposition of the philosophical background and the main elements of the theory, a description of some elements of the reading process of this particular text is given. The paper concludes with a short reflection on the viability of this theory for a practical reception analysis.

1 INTRODUCTION
Almost two decades have passed since the publication of Iser's first attempts to formulate a theory of the reading process (Iser 1970; 1971). We are more than a decade removed from his final and major proposal of this theory: Der Akt des Lesens (1976, ET 1978). Between these two, Der implizite Leser was published in 1972 (ET 1974), consisting of ten essays on prose fiction from Bunyan to Beckett which are an application of the phenomenological theory of reading. His short essay Interaction between text and reader (1980) is a cento of excerpts from Der Akt des Lesens and can serve as an abridged introduction to his theory. By now, his theory has been thoroughly digested and evaluated by the scholarly community. We might say that it has reached the status of a "classic" theory of reading/reception: in most introductions to modern literary theory, one finds a section on Iser's theory. To set the stage for what is to follow, I want to quote a few receptions of this theory of reception:

Het werk van Iser bevat naar mij mening geen wezenlijk nieuwe visie op de verschijnselen die de literatuur-wetenschap bestudeert, en Iser ontwikkelde geen nieuwe probleemstelling. Bovendien is het voorstel - althans in deze formulering - niet geschikt voor empirisch onderzoek (De Vriend 1978:47).

Is there anything left to read for Iser's reader? (Barnouw 1980).

Iser is able to cover his New Critical tracks in part by the introduction of a barrage of terms drawn from a number of different disciplines. Several critics have wondered, however, whether this terminological overload accomplishes
any purpose other than short-circuiting the reader's intellectual system (Holub 1984:100).

I am proposing that Iser's critical text becomes the itinerary for a wandering viewpoint which fails to reach a destination in a metacritical landscape whose co-ordinates (object/subject, text/reader, artistic/aesthetic) disorient the stability of the discursive map. Without the fixed points of the compass the journey is unthinkable; the attempt to fix them is to discover their variability and instability. Without our conceptualizing map we cannot proceed; to proceed, however, is to discover the unreliability of the co-ordinates which provide, not safe conduct, but entry into a labyrinth (Freund 1987:148).

...Iser's case is a problem, because to my judgement, the theory itself is completely unusable (Bleich 1987:4).

From these quotations it is clear that Iser's theory is at least very provocative. This paper is not intended either to defend Iser or to launch a new attack on him. Neither is it intended to participate in the debate on the value and limitations of the theory as such. Within the framework of our theme, Readers and readings of Luke 12:35-48, the aim of this paper is to analyse the reading process of this passage, illustrating some of Iser's concepts. But on this very point, we run into a problem: what Iser proposes is a theory of the reading process, and not a method of analysing the reading process of an actual text. We may ask whether it is not anomalous to apply a theory - is that not already making a method of it? Add to this Bleich's remark about the non-usability of the theory and our task seems to be very complicated. On the other hand, in the light of the criticism that the theory (in practice, or when applied) closely approximates the idea of "close reading" of New Criticism, some form of analysis (a disguised form of close reading?) might well be possible.

Nevertheless, with our theme in mind, we can hardly afford not to have a paper on the theory of Iser - one of the major theorists of reader-response criticism. Taking its claim seriously, we might say that with Iser's theory we can describe the reading process which takes place in all the different approaches to our text, whether materialistic, tradition-historical, psychological, rhetorical, or whatever. Iser's theory attempts to give an all-encompassing and exhaustive theoretical description of the (any) reading process (cf Freund 1987:135). In order to do this, Iser worked out a complicated terminological system, using terms and concepts from such varied approaches as formalism, Gestalt psychology, speech-act theory, phenomenology, systems theory, information theory, communication theory, existentialism and poetics. In his efforts to reconcile such divergent components, he was not always successful - giving rise to the kind of comments quoted above.

To my mind, the reading process is far too complex to be accounted for by one single, all-encompassing theory. Thus, instead of claiming to analyse
the reading process of our passage in Luke, this paper will rather attempt to describe some aspects of a possible reading, in an endeavour to illustrate some aspects of Iser's theory. Any attempt to record the reading process exhaustively is, to my mind, impossible. Tannehill (1986:6) very adequately speaks about the "myriad temporary interpretations, anticipations and adjustments" of the reading process. The discussion of the reading of the text which follows might well be called an "expanded reading", or an attempt to describe aspects of the process which takes place in a first reading when the text is still unknown to the reader. But before we get into that, some philosophical background on Iser's theory might be illuminating.

2 PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATION

Any account of interpretation and of reading presupposes a number of assumptions about the nature of meaning, understanding and communication. Usually meaning is conceived of either as that which arises from the words and presuppositions of the text, or as that which the author or reader (as subject) means. Ricoeur (1976:12-14) talks about the "objective" fact of the text as against the "subjective" act of intending or making sense. The implication of either of these two suppositions is that there is one correct meaning inherent in the text or that there are as many meanings as there are readers. According to Maclean (1986:123) these two positions correspond approximately to the "logicist" and "historicist" accounts of meaning. The "logicist" account argues that meaning is an ideal object which can be identified and re-identified by various individuals at different times while the "historicist" account claims that meaning is a historical event which is determined by the context in which it occurs and also by the historical situation of its interpreter.

Such assumptions and the problems caused by each, lead to even more fundamental philosophical and linguistic questions about (a) the nature of meaning, (b) its relationship to history, (c) the relationship of semantics to pragmatics, (d) the relationship of experience to knowledge and (e) the relationship of particulars to universals. The question of how far a text determines its own meaning and to what extent that meaning is determined by the reader, is anything but simple to answer. "For this reason, theorists of interpretation are ineluctably drawn into wider philosophical, psychological and linguistic debates" (Maclean 1986:123). Reading and interpretation occupy a conceptual field that is extremely wide-ranging and very difficult to define.

In reader-response criticism a whole catalogue of different kinds of "readers" have been proposed by different theorists. Lategan (1985:5-8) classifies the proposals into two main categories, namely, readers "in" the text and readers "outside" the text. These categories roughly fit the distinction made above between "logicist" and "historicist" accounts of meaning. Within these options, Iser tries to take up a middle position (Iser 1978:9-10). He wants to straddle two sides of a fence, one text-centered and hypothetical, the other
reader-centered and empirical (Freund 1987:143). And being in the middle means running the risk of being criticised from both sides, which is actually the case with Iser. Iser's critics in general agree that his theory is ultimately text-immanent (or "logicist") in spite of his endeavours to account for the reader "outside" the text as well (cf De Vriend 1978, Barnouw 1980, Koopman-Thurlings 1984:398, Holub 1984:103). The explanation for this ultimately text-immanent (or "logicist") position of Iser can, to my mind, be found in his strong dependence on a phenomenological starting-point for the description of the reading process (cf Iser 1971).

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is considered to be one of the founding fathers of phenomenology. Recognising that we cannot be sure about the independent (from ourselves) existence of things, he argues that we can be sure of how they appear to us immediately in our consciousness, whether the actual thing we are experiencing is an illusion or not (cf Eagleton 1983:55). He therefore believes that philosophy begins with an exact, tentative inspection of one's mental processes. This a priori investigation aims to identify the objective logical elements in thought, through a study of the act and structure of consciousness. He claims that consciousness is always consciousness of something. He uses "intentionality" as the term to describe the act of consciousness (noesis or "intentional act") which is conscious of something (a noema or "intentional object"). He believes that the "concrete intuition" of combined noesis and noema can be analysed and stratified according to a rigorous logic after one has eliminated from one's mind all common assumptions about psychological processes. Everything not "immanent" to consciousness must be rigorously excluded; all realities must be treated as pure "phenomena", in terms of their appearances in our mind, and this is the only absolute data from which we can begin. This step is a phenomenological "reduction" in which all that is contingent is "bracketed", leaving only the necessary logical structure available for analysis. The consciousness thus investigated is said to be present outside the context of "real" time (cf Husserl 1964; Eagleton 1983:54-56). When Husserl examines the modes and functions of consciousness, it becomes clear that, for literary theory, the most important function of consciousness is that by which the act of consciousness "completes" the objects of its perception by realising in turn all of their other perspectives which are never all "visible" from one point of view or "aspect" (cf Ingarden 1973:269-270, 305, 332-355). This "concretisation" is done both for objects of perception (e.g. spheres and tables) and, analogically, for abstract objects of thought. The rigorous analysis of the basis of consciousness leads to the discovery of an "intersubjective world" and, by a process of empathy, of other inhabitants of that world. Because Husserl chose to define intentionality and understanding as atemporal events, he was able to reduce communication with other human beings into a set of logical conditions concerning
meaning and expression possessing no contingency whatsoever: his account of meaning is therefore "logicist" (Maclean 1986:125).

As could be expected, this philosophical scheme has drawn sharp criticism from Heidegger and Gadamer who introduced historicity into phenomenology and gave a very different account of the intersubjective world (cf Eagleton 1983:61-66). In order to understand Iser, however, it is important to keep in mind that he used the ahistorical philosophical insights of Husserl as his starting-point. The following analysis is thus an abstraction and should not be confused with any historical reader:

*The implied reader as a concept has its roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader* (Iser 1978:34).

The idea of the "wandering viewpoint" of "the reader" is also a theoretical construction by which he tries to describe in abstraction how the (any) reading process of a text develops.

3 READING, TEXT, "GAPS" AND WANDERING VIEWPOINT

In addition to Iser's own publications, summaries of his theory can be found in most modern introductions to literary theory (cf e.g. Eagleton 1983:54-90; Selden 1985:112-114; Maclean 1986:130-132; and those more specifically dedicated to reception theory: Holub 1984; Freund 1987). In order to give a background for the analysis which is to follow, certain aspects of the theory must be summarised here.

Iser's definition of the reading process is very adequately paraphrased by Suleiman (1980:22-23; cf also Iser 1974:277):

*The act of reading is defined as essentially a sense-making activity, consisting of the complementary activities of selection and organization, anticipation and retrospection, the formulation and modification of expectations in the course of the reading process.*

Reading consists of an interaction between the structure of the literary work and its recipient. Three interrelated aspects of the reading process are presented by his model: (a) there is a text with its supposed schemata or layers of determination and the places of indeterminacy ("gaps") which constitute a potential for the production of meaning (for a critique and adaption of the concept of "gaps" (cf Koopman-Thurlings 1984); (b) there is a reader's processing of the text - his construction or concretisation of a cohesive aesthetic object by means of a synthesising or consistency-building activity; and (c) there are the conditions that give rise to and govern the text/reader interaction (cf Iser 1978:21).

According to Iser the literary text itself can never be grasped as a whole, but only as a series of changing viewpoints. Each viewpoint is restricted in itself and thus necessitates further perspectives. This is the process by which the reader "realises" an overall situation (Iser 1978:68). The reader's acts of comprehension are structured by his attempts to build up a consistent view of
the textual segments as he moves between the shifting perspectives of the text. The governing structure of comprehension is called a foreground-and-background, or theme-and-horizon structure. A narrative text consists of different perspectives between which the reader's wandering viewpoint moves. The four main perspectives in narratives are that of the narrator, that of the characters, that of the plot and that marked out for the reader (Iser 1978:96). As the reader's viewpoint travels between segments his focus on a perspective will form a theme (or foreground) in relation to which the rest are horizon (or background) - until the reader moves on, and the theme of a moment ago will in turn become horizon.

The journey through perspectives and shifting themes and horizons is accomplished by virtue of the reader's incessant acts of ideation, as she/he organizes segments and construes the connection between them, always pre-occupied by gap-filling activities that ultimately produce the synthesis we think of as comprehension or meaning (Freund 1987:144-145).

4 ANALYSING THE READING PROCESS OF LUKE 12:35-48

When we now turn to Luke 12:35, we must (for the purposes of this reception-analysis) presume that the reader has already read the preceding chapters up to this point and that he has not yet read further. On his journey through the text up to this point, the reader has met many characters, such as Jesus, the disciples, Peter, the Pharisees and the crowd. The plot has developed from the infancy narratives and through Jesus' ministry in Galilee; from 9:51 the reader is taken along on Jesus and his disciples' journey to Jerusalem. From the beginning of chapter 12, Jesus delivers a sermon. Verses 35-48 form part of this sermon, which concludes with 13:9.

The reader meets the direct command "gird your loins!" at the beginning of the passage. This command introduces a new theme against the background of the preceding section of the sermon (12:1-33): detachment from possessions and from the cares of daily life (12:13-34) is an important part of readiness (cf Tannehill 1986:246-249). "Εστωσον ὑμῶν αἱ ὀδοφυὲς περιεξωσμέναι is a well-known expression in the New Testament. From the reader's repertoire (i.e. texts he has read earlier and his knowledge of social and historical norms and the total culture from which the text came forth [Iser 1978:69]) he is familiar with the expression. The garments people wore in New Testament times were long, and when hanging loose, inhibited quick movement. Therefore, to facilitate rapid movement, they were girded up against the loins so that the legs could move freely. The expression has become a proverb meaning: Be prepared! Be ready to move immediately and fast!

But there is more information to be filled in by the reader's repertoire in completing the sense-making activity at this point. This proverb is a reference from Exodus 12:11. Now, how does it relate to the ruling metaphor of this
whole section of the discourse, namely that one should be on guard? On

guard for what? In retrospect, the reader might discover a link between this

command and Jesus’ warning right at the beginning of his sermon (12:1): "be­

ware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy". "Gird your loins" is
tantamount to "be ready to move out". To have the house clean of all leaven, and
to have only unleavened bread available for eating is another expression

for having girded-up loins. Saying "Beware of the Pharisees’ leaven" is like

saying, "beware of people who do not have their loins girded", i.e people who

are not prepared. The paradox which confronts the reader in this retrospec­
tion is obvious: the Pharisees are the ones who are supposed to be very par­
ticular about preparedness but now Jesus warns his audience against them.
So we are dealing here with a semantically paradoxical or self-contradictory
statement. That may in itself explain why a repetition is needed: beware of
the Pharisees’ leaven (be prepared) and again: gird you loins (be prepared).

In order to justify the remarks about the relationship between "gird your
loins" and "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees", it must be assumed that

the repertoire of the reader includes a knowledge of Exodus. A modern ex­

ample of this assumed familiarity with an expression is for instance when one
says to another: "hold on to truths that are self-evident". Any American
knows that this is written into the constitution. A reader-response has to be

aware of what an implied (or encoded) reader would assume, understand and
react to. Since we as modern readers are to identify with that implied reader,
but are not members of that society, we now have to learn that code, so that
we can function with that implied reader.

In describing the sense-making process which takes place when the reader
reads the expression "gird your loins" we have tried to illustrate how the
reader fills in the gaps left open by this expression by looking in retrospect at
the textual context of Lk 12:1-34 as well as the cultural context of Jewish
tradition. The reader has looked "back" in the text to the background of 12:1-
34 and he also has look "behind" the text in order to make sense of the first
five words of our passage.

The immediate textual context also makes it necessary for the reader (in
order to make sense of what he reads) to determine who is speaking to
whom. Jesus is saying this, but to whom? From 11:53-54 the reader remem­
bers that the scribes and Pharisees were watching Jesus closely in order to
gather evidence against him. So, they (or their agents) might be around. In 12:1
the reader was told that there was a huge crowd when Jesus started to talk.
Yet, he addressed his disciples first (προς τον), which might be an indication
that in what is to follow, either different audiences are to be addressed
and/or that different topics are to be touched on by the speaker. In 12:4 the
audience (still the disciples) is called "friends". From 12:13 the reader
remembers that one of the multitude asked a question. So, although not di­
rectly addressed by Jesus in 12:1-12, the crowd was also part of the audience.
In 12:22 the reader was again told that Jesus addresses his disciples; he also
calls them affectionately μικρόν ποίμνιον in 12:32. Thus it seems that it is the disciples to whom Jesus gives the command to gird their loins. Yet, at this point, because of the presumed presence of the scribes and Pharisees and the stated presence of the crowd, it is not easy for the reader to discern the precise nature of the audience addressed with these words. At this point there remains a "gap", and the reader is left in suspense.

The reader has now taken in the information: Jesus wants his audience to be alert and prepared. Why? What is to follow this command? Tension and a sense of expectation are created.

"Let your lamps burn!" Against the background of the command (to gird up) the reader meets another proverb, also meaning "be ready! be prepared!" By repetition the command is emphasised. There can be no doubt that Jesus wants his audience to be alert. The tension created by the first sentence of the passage is further intensified: be ready for what?

At this stage the wandering viewpoint of the reader is fully involved in the sense-making activity.

The wandering viewpoint is a means of describing the way in which the reader is present in the text. This presence is at a point where memory and expectation converge, and the resultant dialectic movement brings about a continual modification of memory and an increasing complexity of expectation (Iser 1978:178).

One possible application of this statement is that the reader's memory of Jesus' words about hypocrisy and persecution (12:1-12) and not to be concerned about possessions but to focus on the kingdom (12:13-34), converge at this point with the double command, in verse 35, to be prepared. His memory is modified: not being concerned about possible persecution and possessions and being focused on the kingdom now seems to involve being alert and prepared.

The only way for the reader to fulfil the expectation created by the commands in verse 35 and dissolve the tension, is to read further. His wandering viewpoint has changed now to the viewpoint of Jesus' audience: they must be ready, but for what? In verses 36-38 he reads a parable about ἄνθρωποι προσδεχόμενοι, about a κύριός coming home from a γάμος: then a very strange event follows: the κύριος serves his δοῦλοι, to reward them because he found them awake and ready when he came home! (The possible referents of all these words are "gaps" which the reader has somehow to fill in - either from his repertoire or by looking back or remembering what he has already read - if he wants to make sense of the parable. However, for the purpose of this analysis, I shall not try to describe it). For a moment the reader switches his viewpoint from that of the waiting men to that of the κύριος: although my slaves did not know when I would come, they were ready and awake to open the door. Because of their faithfulness and readiness, I shall abandon (momen-
tarily) my role as κύριος and serve them. The reader might switch his viewpoint back to the slaves' viewpoint:

Wow! What a reward! The master serves us! It was certainly worthwhile to have stayed awake and be prepared to open the door,

then to the viewpoint of the narrator: "So you see, dear reader, it makes sense to be awake and prepared".

In verse 39 the reader reads another parable. This time the master (οἶκοδεσπότης) is the waiting party, or rather the party of whom it is expected to be prepared and ready. He must be ready for the unknown time of the coming of the thief. From the cultural code of ancient as well as modern times the negative connotation of "thief" is known. At the end of the preceding passage (v 33) Jesus also used it in this negative sense. It is thus much easier for the reader to make sense of this parable. From the master's viewpoint, he is the one who must be prepared, to prevent the thief breaking into his house. When switching again to the narrator's viewpoint, the reader discovers that the command to be ready involves both slaves and masters (cf Blomberg (1984:79-103) for a discussion of the relationship between the parables). All along, during the reading of these two parables, the anticipation and tension created by the command in verse 35 have been intensified and it becomes more complex since more characters and events are introduced. The use of the makarisms and the amen-expression (cf O'Neill 1959:4) in Jesus' commentary on the events of the parable he narrates, underlines the urgency of the call to be ready and prepared. At this stage some of the tension existing after the reading of the commands in verse 35, is resolved: from the parables the reader now knows that Jesus' audience must be ready for some future event which will take place at a time unknown to those expected to be ready. The future event is of such importance that all-time readiness is obligatory. Yet, in another sense, the reader experiences at this point more tension: What is this important future event? Who is coming so unexpectedly?

And then, at last, the anticipation and tension created so strongly with the commands at the beginning of the section, explained and enhanced (with additional elements) in the two parables, are (in part) resolved in verse 40: Jesus' audience must be ready for the unexpected coming of the Son of man (υἱὸς τοῦ ἰδωνθρώπου). Yet again, while some tension is resolved (and gaps are filled in) by the mention of the one to come - which makes the call for readiness so urgent - a new gap is created which immediately elicits renewed activity from the reader: who is this Son of man? In a moment of retrospection the reader might remember the identification of the Son of man with Jesus in 7:34. There Jesus explicitly calls himself the Son of man, in the context of eating and drinking - a theme that is touched on again and again in Luke 7-8 and 12:1-34. Although the gap with regard to the identity of the Son of man can be filled in with this moment of retrospection, the uncertainty of the time of the coming is left open: it will happen at some time future to the words and events narrated in this passage. By this use of time (deferment)
the text also elicits the involvement of the actual reader. We know that such a coming has not (yet) taken place. How does the actual reader concretise that?

In discussing the (possible) process which could have taken place when the reader tried to figure out to whom the command to "gird the loins" was given, the reader was left in suspense as to the composition of Jesus' audience at that moment (cf the discussion of v 35 above). In the following sentence, that uncertainty is expressed explicitly by one of the characters in the narration: Peter asks Jesus whether he has given the command to be prepared only to his disciples or whether he includes both the disciples and the crowd still present (v 41). With this question, the theme of verses 35-40 (the command to be prepared for the unexpected coming of the Son of man) moves into the background against which a new theme (the identity of the people who must be prepared) is introduced. The reader might even sense a feeling of relief when reading Peter's question: in the sense-making process while reading the gospel up to this point, one of the puzzling gaps all along to fill in has been the nature and composition of the audience(s) Jesus was addressing. Now here it is: one of the people involved in the story also expresses uncertainty about this! After the feeding of the crowd in 9:10-15, Jesus asked his disciples who the crowd and they (the disciples) thought he was (9:18-20). This switching to and fro between crowd and disciples is thus already familiar to the reader: Jesus feeds the crowd (9:10-17), speaks to his disciples (9:10-17) and again to the crowd and the disciples (9:23ff). This mixed-audience feeling is also sensed by an actual reader of the gospel:

From now on through the rest of the gospel, it will be important to pay close attention to whom Jesus addresses which remarks (Edwards 1981:51).

(In his rhetorical analysis of this passage, Wuellner (1988) has analysed and systemised the different audiences in Luke 12:35-48).

On the alert for this phenomenon and with Peter's question in the foreground, the reader now anticipates an answer or a direct indication by the text as to whom the words spoken in verses 35-40 may have been addressed. When reading verse 41, the wandering viewpoint of the reader might change for a moment to the viewpoint of Peter: I know Jesus calls himself Son of man, so he is somehow coming again (although he is here now) and he is now telling us that he expects preparedness for this coming. And by the way, that promise of a κύριος serving his slaves sounded very good! Yet I am not sure whether it is for both us, the disciples, and the crowd or only for us. So, let me ask.

But, to the frustration of the reader (thus causing new complexity and increased activity in his struggle to make sense of what he reads), Jesus gives no direct answer. Instead he responds with a question (τίς ὁφει...v 42) and a parable about a slave who is appointed to look after his master's possessions while the master is away and who either positively (vv 43-44) or negatively
(vv 45-46) responds to his appointment. Again the reader's viewpoint switches to and fro: between that of the πιστός καὶ φρόνιμος slave, his actions (v 43) and his reward (v 44) and that of the ἀπόστος slave, his actions (v 45) and his reward (vv 46b-48). Yet the gap created by the text is left open. In the information given by the text there is no direct answer to fill the gap left by Peter's question. The reader must fill it in himself.

Most readers of this passage have filled in the answer, maintaining that Jesus' reply makes it plain that the preceding passage was addressed primarily to the disciples (church leaders) (cf Ernst 1977:407, Schneider 1977:291, Edwards 1981:65, Schweizer 1982:141, Tannehill 1986:250). How can a reader come to this conclusion? From the calling (5:1-11) and the appointment (6:12-16) of the disciples, the narrator created the impression that they were to have a special responsibility in the future: they were to be sent out on Jesus' authority to proclaim the kingdom of God (9:1-6) and some of them were present at the transfiguration on the mountain (9:28-36). They even had quarreled about who was the most important among them (9:46-48) and in the immediately preceding passage, Jesus addressed them specifically, telling them not to be afraid, for it was the Father's will to give them the kingdom (12:32). With the parable about a slave appointed over the master's household (vv 42-46), the reader might take it to be an allusion to the disciples. When reading along these lines, the answer to Peter's question is that the command to be prepared is given only to the disciples. However, role changing between ημῶς and πάντες is possible and the reader can realise this possibility. In verse 48a the possibility of a role change to πάντες is indeed given. After their long encounter with Jesus, the disciples certainly could not be people who did not know. Thus the command to be prepared is for those who know (v 47, the disciples) as well as for those who do not know (v 48a, the crowd). But the people who consider themselves those who know, the Pharisees, are also still present. Thus, it must again be stressed how important it is to make a distinction between the different audiences in this text. When following the directions given by the text itself, the reader might thus conclude that there is good reason to take the answer to Peter's question as being only the disciples, but that there are also textual indications to take the answer as being both the disciples and the crowd. This is how far Iser would go. For him, a literary text contains "schematised aspects". Not all the information is given in the text. There is a "suspended connectability" between the different aspects which the reader himself has to supply in order to make sense of what he is reading. Different readers might fill in the gap differently.

It might be illuminating to reflect for a moment on the possible function of the different audiences with reference to actual readers (because it is so essential to analyse the audiences when making a reception-analysis of a text). The actual reader should not necessarily be identified with the disciples. What we see narrated (represented) in the gospels as disciples, may
not be the ideal disciple that the implied author wants his implied reader to be. The question, "is this for us or for all?" (v 41) may sound to us like a dumb question. Of course it applies just to us! However, in the way Jesus answers it (by asking a question) which is directed to the people in the story, it turns out to be a very clever strategy of the narrator to point to the mixed audiences he is using in his narration. As the story unfolds with yet another parable, we as actual readers get involved in that narration and begin to realise that the command and the responses appropriate to the command, involve us also as readers of this text (but so also the Pharisees and the crowds and the disciples). So we have in fact three audiences "inside" the text, and at least one "outside" the text. The different audiences are clearly introduced by the author of Luke-Acts, who could have decided that this was a sermon Jesus addressed to the disciples only. He decided to make it a mixed audience. How does one address oneself to all three? Because of the growing pressure (11:53-54), more and more people are attracted to Jesus. By introducing one group (the Pharisees) at the beginning of the sermon by saying "beware of them", we become aware of "them" as if they were overhearing us. They do not appear as an audience in the sermon itself (except by the reference in 12:1, and a possible reference in the parables: the bad slave in verses 45-46). This indeterminacy (of audience) might lead the reader to say: well, it could refer to the crowds and/or the disciples and/or the Pharisees and scribes, and/or me! Thus we must not set out to choose only one and exclude the other.

The switching between diverse audiences might be a device used by Luke-Acts which is comparable to the Jews/Gentile audience-switching in Paul. Thus, what is at issue is not the particular audience at a certain point or moment, but that you are prepared, that you respond, that you believe. If you do that, being an insider or an outsider, one of the twelve or not, a Jew or a Gentile, a man or a woman, is immaterial. Just because you are an appointed apostle of Jesus Christ does not mean that you cannot become a Pharisee as well.

5 REFLECTION
A detailed and comprehensive reflection on Iser's theory, as well as on its application to Luke 12:35-48, will take us well beyond the stated purpose of this paper. However, some brief remarks may be appropriate.

5.1 In one of the most recent and comprehensive surveys of reader-response criticism, Freund (1987:152) comes to the conclusion that there is an insurmountable rift between theory and practice in these theories. Reader-response criticisms are thus both generated and destroyed in the dialectical interplay between the monism of theory and the dualism of practice (Freund 1987:154).
In the light of this it should be emphasised again that only certain aspects of the reading process of Lk 12:35-48 have been analysed in this paper and only certain aspects of Iser's theory applied. The necessity of stressing this for a second time is itself an indication of the basic unusability of the theory for a practical reader-response analysis (cf Bleich 1987). To ponder on this point for a moment: Iser's concept of Leerstellen ("gaps") as he presents it, is practically unusable. If the "gaps" in the text imply all the things that are not said in the text, then (in principle) all the books of the world of all time must be seen as possible fillings of the "gaps" in these thirteen verses of one book! Koopman-Thurlings (1984) has analysed Iser's concept of Leerstellen in detail and she is, to my mind, justified in her conclusion that it is unusable in the way he presents it. But because she does sense some value in the concept as such, she radically simplifies and narrows down the implication of the term and, by doing so, presents a practical method for analysing actual texts. It might be a worthwhile exercise to try out her method on a New Testament text sometime.

5.2 In the analysis the linear character of written language was respected and the analysis done accordingly: one textual segment element after the other was introduced and discussed as if this was a first reading of the text. No references to parts of Luke later than 12:48 were thus made, intentionally. This kind of analysis is significantly different from any other form of literary analysis, which usually makes use of a book as a whole. A reader-response analysis along the lines of what Iser proposes is limited to narration. Accordingly, a reception-analysis presupposes a specific view of the nature of the gospel (as genre), aptly expressed by Kelber (1979:14):

...each gospel represents an intrinsically designed universe, with plot and character development, retrospective and prospective devices, linear and concentric patternings, and a continuous line of thematic cross-references and narrative interlockings. The art of interpretation consists in analysing the complexities of narrative construction and comprehend [sic] individual parts in connection with the total architecture.

5.3 In the analysis an example was given of how the different segments of the text could be connected to each other. Iser's model is fundamentally functionalist: the parts must be made to adapt into a coherent whole (Eagleton 1983:81). However, this is but one proposal as to how these connections could be made. From my perspective this analysis is a possible way of reading the text and making connections between parts. More often than not - for various reasons - the reader does not follow the directions of the text. Thus, the way the text is structured is not the only and final determinative factor in my disposition as reader. But the more fundamental problem with Iser's theory and with this kind of analysis is an epistemological problem: the idea that operations of the mind can "somehow" be analysed as if they were going
on in a vacuum. In Iser's theory the mind is a highly abstract construct - and so is the text that provokes the mind's activity.

The reader of Iser's study whose mind cannot be manipulated so smoothly is constantly frustrated in his attempts at testing Iser's assertions (Barnouw 1980:47).

And further: if we consider "the text in itself" as a kind of skeleton, a set of "schemata" waiting to be concretised in various ways by various readers, how can we discuss these schemata at all without having already concretised them? (Eagleton 1983:84). Meaning and reading do not exist in a vacuum and cannot be studied as if they do. Our experience as individuals is social and historical to its roots. It is futile to try to separate experience and also the reading process from actual historical and social contexts and readers, and to try to describe it in abstraction - although I have tried to do this in my analysis of Luke 12:35-48. As it turned out, it was simply my close reading of the text (interlarded with a relatively new set of literary jargon).

WORKS CONSULTED


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J Botha, Centre for Hermeneutics, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, 7600. Republic of South Africa.