**Aanspreeklikheid.**
Jaco Fouché.
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*Aanspreeklikheid*, replete with examples of criminality and corruption in South Africa as it is, might have been titled *We Are All Very Traumatised*. "Nog treinwaens is aan die brand gesteek. 'n Vrou se dogter wil skei van haar man wat haar telkens aanrand. Iemand se broer is in 'n motorongeluk dood. Iemand is vermoor. Die dossier is weg. Die polisie is oorwerk. Misdaad, korrupsie seëvier" (187). To be sure, there is some truth here—we *are* all very traumatised—and literature does offer a platform for critical reflection. The problem is that many novels fall into the trap of glamourising our wound culture and so never move beyond parochialism. Fortunately, then, Fouché's novel does, at least by the end.

Reminiscent in some ways of Tom Wolfe's *A Man in Full*, the novel explores the spatial, racial and conceptual divides that continue to pervade Cape Town via the lives of men. Moreover, it exposes some mythologies of manhood through its narration of an ageing white man endeavouring, on the surface, to save his literary career, but really attempting to save himself, all the while becoming more exposed and, as the title suggests, more accountable—*answerable*.

When the reader is introduced to the protagonist, Jaco Diehl, he seems a reasonably well-adjusted, albeit reclusive, white middle-aged man residing in Hermanus. The peaceful image of a literary life near the ocean is soon disrupted, however, as a number of unexpected events occur, leading to an assault on Diehl and culminating in the killing of the assailant, Theo, whom the reader is also led to believe recently murdered Diehl's girlfriend, Soraya. Shortly after, Diehl has a nervous breakdown and finds himself in a mental institution along with the investigator on Soraya's case, a fellow named Jansen.

Jansen, if not a man in full, reveals himself to be approachable, interested in people, trustworthy and even fallible, which makes him all the more likeable. He is also an investigator—inquisitive and unrelenting—which reveals something about Diehl's character: he is an unreliable narrator. This is where the novel, like *A Man in Full*, moves to questions of ethicality in its attempts to think about how one gives an account of oneself. Following Judith Butler (19), we might ask: "Does the postulation of a subject who is not self-grounding, that is, whose conditions of emergence can never fully be accounted for, undermine the possibility of responsibility and, in particular, of giving an account of oneself?" Moreover, how do we think about these conditions of emergence when the protagonist is an unreliable narrator? In any case, are we not all unreliable narrators? For we know ourselves incompletely, we know the world incompletely, and we cannot always see how or by what course of events

we have been shaped. How, then, can we define what we ought to do?

Already a weighty question, it becomes even more so when the reader realises there is something about The Talented Mr. Diehl. Something about the happenstance of the first few murders in the novel no longer seem accidental. It is clear: Jaco Diehl is a serial killer hiding in plain sight, a man unanswerable to anyone, yet giving an account of himself. There resides, in his use of language, the very terms and tools by which Diehl gives an account and by which he makes himself intelligible to himself and the reader, something that is not of his making. This 'something' about language is "social in character" and it establishes "social norms, a domain of unfreedom and substitutability within which our 'singular' stories are told" (Butler 21). Thus, as J. Aaron Simmons (86) argues: "If Butler is right, then the basis for morality is not self-identity, but the exposure to others; not self-recursion, but constitutive incompleteness; not a final subjective narrative, but the continual desire and attempt to not close down the task of narrative itself".

It is, then, in his exposure to the reader through narration that Diehl implicates the reader in the question of ethics. For although he does not make himself fully accountable to the reader, this ethical failure—"this affirmation of partial transparency"—gives rise to "a possibility for acknowledging a relationality that binds" us "more deeply to language and to" each other than we previously might have thought (Butler 40). In this instance, then, it is in the relationality between narrator and reader that the possibility of an ethical encounter emerges. The narrator (Diehl) calls readers to accountability by asking of them to confront in themselves their own foreignness, their own likeness to Diehl—a sociopath and serial killer. It is really here that the strength of the novel lies, because it is in this confrontation that Diehl effectively functions as the shadow self of readers, calling on them to give an account of themselves. "Vorentoe, terwyl die reën val en die damme vul en lafenis bring, sal daar ander plekke wees: altyd ander plekke, en later weer warm, dorstige dae, tamheid en die bleekgebrande hemel. En daar sal verdere aanspreeklikheid wees, sonder twyfel" (249).

**Works Cited**

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