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“A room in the hotel Alphaville”:

An essay on surveillance and exposed bodies in Haruki Murakami's *After Dark*

## **Summary**

This essay analyses the novel *After Dark*, written by Japanese author Haruki Murakami. It examines, from a Foucaultian perspective, how the novel presents a modern panoptic society. It is discussed how surveillance and objectification are connected and how they behave within the panoptic structure. Also, it is discussed how certain characters in the novel, both male and female, respond with fear to such a society and how this fear is portrayed in different ways because of their respective genders. With regards to gender theory, there is material from Judith Butler and other gender theorists included in the essay, theorists who highlight questions such as objectification and dichotomous structures. The conclusion is that there exists a panoptic fear in the novel and that men and women react differently because of their roles within that social structure.

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## 1. Introduction

*“The walls have ears – and digital cameras.”*

- Komugi in *After Dark*

The quote above, taken from Haruki Murakami's novel *After Dark*, voices a concern with the panoptic gaze. One of the tools that is used to point at surveillance in *After Dark* is a camera that watches over people, which is not an unknown motif in the literary world. Probably widely influenced by George Orwell's *1984* Haruki Murakami decided to use it in his novel *After Dark*. It is easy to prove a connection to the panoptic gaze through *After Dark*'s use of a camera, even more so since the camera in the novel has the ability to observe all people at all times, they are never able to hide. This feeling of being watched and also being part of the watching is best expressed by people like Takeshi, Shirakawa and Eri in the novel, who feel the threat of the “watching system”.

If we take a look at the content of the work *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* by Michel Foucault it brings up western society's justice system and how it has evolved in later centuries. Therefore it is an explanation of the prisons structural development in terms of power relations. Foucault outlines how the methods used for punishment have changed from direct torture and public execution to the prison system which in modern times has come to include a constant surveillance of each individual, the panopticon. Although this was seen as a way of making it more humanitarian Foucault means that it has resulted in a different sort of oppression and objectification. He says that it is true that the body is not tortured and oppressed in the same way it used to be, but this is because the target has changed. The new focus is the soul, which would probably be what they said in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which today is more widely referred to as the mind (Foucault, 1975, p.21). Moving away from the body meant moving away from the concrete, something you could see and touch. The result was a reality far harder to grasp. In the quote above Murakami has taken a saying and extended it to point out that surveillance has evolved to become absolute. It is no longer the case that someone might overhear you, someone most certainly will either hear or see whatever you do. In this essay it will be argued that an analysis of the contents in *After Dark* brings to mind these theories of the panopticon and other theories about space and privacy.

Foucault uses the term “the carceral system” to include the panoptic prisons' methods of rehabilitating and keeping prisoners in check. The methods include moral improvement and surveillance practice; all methods used to principle the delinquent. However, the carceral system has spread outside the prisons and built up a body of knowledge through influencing other institutions to adept its methods (Foucault, 1975, p.294). The character Takeshi in *After Dark* talks about a trial he went to where he could not assert where the evil came from but he knew that it was there, like a huge octopus with too many arms. That he chooses to use this imagery connected to a court expresses his concerns with the justice system and their powers of surveillance in society. Comparing the over-ruling system to an octopus paints an image of a system of power that has too much control and influence and at the same time has avoided being controlled, both features symbolised by the many arms an octopus possesses. This is the picture of modern, Japanese society that this novel paints. Thereby, Murakami's writing touches upon ideas that have been discussed by Foucault, Butler and Bakhtin, all people that focus on hierarchic relationships.

The big brother-type observational power is mostly just implied in the novel. However, I will show through examples from the novel that the reader becomes part of the narrative camera and interacts in the hierarchy, which indicates that this view of people comes from the people themselves. The readers are surveying themselves and thereby making themselves into bodily objects of spectation. The power struggles that we witness in this novel are partly the individual versus the overruling system and partly man versus woman. What the novel does is that it brings up these themes and develops them in connection to each other, so as to tie it all to the effects of surveillance, whether “self-surveillance” or surveillance done by someone else.

In this essay there is division between panopticism and body theory. Theories concerning the panopticon and body theory are similar in that what is looked at is objectification. However, panopticonism is based on conscious objectification in the sense that people are watched for a specific purpose. Body theory is more concerned with objectification depending on gender or general exteriors. Basically, one is being objectified as a human being in possession of criminal tendencies and on the other hand as an object based on sex, looks, etc. Both theories are relevant when discussing *After Dark*, and because of their differences I have divided them into separate sections.

This essay will begin with a section about the panoptic representation in the novel. Following this discussion is a part of the essay which deals with body theory and what *After Dark* expresses concerning gender. This essay will focus specifically on the characters Eri and Shirakawa in the novel who are watched by the narrative camera (and also by the readers) in different ways because of their different genders. Eri's personal sphere is penetrated while we only take part of Shirakawa's exterior, which is in line with the theory on the traditional male gaze which objectifies women from a male perspective. However, it will be shown that male objectification takes place also, just in a different way but by the same male gaze.

*After Dark* was published in 2004. It is different from Murakami's earlier works, at least with regards to his longer novels. Since starting his career in the 60s, when he was already in his thirties, he has released over ten novels, many of them released during the 90s and 00s. Murakami has released a biography concentrated on his passion for running, a gathering of stories about birthdays from different authors including his own, several articles, translations of favourite American authors, and so on. Yet his work stays together, in either content or character or theme, or all of the above. When you pick up a book by Murakami it often does not take more than reading the first couple of sentences to recognise that simple, modern, concise and daring style. As a statement about what literature should be, Murakami has been a challenge. His work has been either hated or deeply loved, specifically for his use of modern language and modern topics. In relation to this essay, similarities in content between the novels by Murakami are of most interest. Factors relating to power and surveillance occur very often in Murakami's works. Examples include *After Dark*, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* and *1Q84*. These are all quite recent novels. However, the forms of surveillance that Murakami has chosen to include in the novels differ, and the issue is not always prominent.

The characters are often very similar in Murakami's novels. The setting is mostly Tokyo, where Murakami himself lives. The main character is often, if not almost always, a middle aged man who is confused about life. Around him are mysterious women who are either the goal of his quest or helpers on the way. *After Dark* diverges from this. The novel does not present just one main character but several, both men and women, with equal focus on them all as there are chapters devoted to all of them. As we will see, there is a purpose showing different people doing different things with equal focus on them all, since it brings to mind that this is not just about one person in society, but rather that this is about society itself. We follow a myriad of people when

we read this story and even though it situates people in relation to each other, most of them never even meet. What ties them together is something different.

Concerning the storyline of *After Dark*, first of all, the story takes place during one night only, beginning at about 12 am and ending at about 8 am, and every chapter has a clock that shows how far into the night we have reached with each chapter. The basic outline of the story is that it begins as we float over the city, watching it from above. Here the narrator is presented as a camera. Next, the narrative camera zooms down on a café where one of the main characters is introduced. Her name is Mari Asai. She soon meets Takeshi, a man who knows her sister Eri Asai who everyone says is very beautiful and who works as a model. We learn that Eri is trapped in a deep sleep that she has not woken up from for a long time. Shirakawa is an office-worker who earlier that evening abused a Chinese prostitute called Cricket in a love hotel called Alphaville. Mari is asked to come to the hotel to help out because she can speak Chinese and so she is asked to interrogate the girl. The night moves on and we learn fragments of these characters' lives. In every other chapter we are watching Eri and these chapters are very different from the rest of the novel in the sense that Eri never gets to speak, only the narrating voice is present and explains what Eri is going through. As we watch her sleep unusual things start to happen in the room. The TV turns on and displays a man sitting in a room with a mask on, staring at Eri. As the novel moves on Eri is transported into that room, we do not know how, and she is trapped. We understand that these must be dreams or some other form of unconscious material that we take part in. In the final scene Mari lies down next to her sister who by all appearances starts waking up after Mari kisses her, just as Sleeping Beauty (which is also the nickname Eri has throughout the novel). In the end, Mari decides she will go to China to study and she and Takeshi decides they will have a date when she comes back. The office worker Shirakawa is never caught, at least not as far as we know. The night is over and the story ends.

## **2. The Panoptic Gaze in *After Dark***

To understand what the panoptic gaze is one must first understand what the panopticon is. Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish*, which contains his theories on the panopticon, was first published in 1975 and still today stirs deep argumentation. Foucault means that what resulted from the authorities' need to observe and control the individual was the panopticon. Designed by Jeremy Bentham in 1791 it was designed as the optimal system for observation (see appendix 1).

Bentham meant that it was a new way to keep the mind in power over the senses (Bentham, 1791, p. 49). The construction has this circular form to make sure that all the prisoners, which are situated along the walls of the building, can be observed by a small unit in the middle, which the prisoners in turn cannot see. This guarantees the possibility for constant and absolute observation and control over what the prisoners do. However, the idea is not that the person watching keeps the prisoners in check. It is the inmates themselves who know that they are being watched and therefore they become self-observant so as not to divert from the norm and draw attention. The image asserts the connections between the panopticon and an octopus, an image used in *After Dark*, as it actually looks like a creature with many arms.

The robot-like office-worker in the novel, Shirakawa, who abuses a Chinese girl in a love hotel, is threatened by what is called the panoptic gaze, a construction that bases its means of control on absolute surveillance. The gaze affects his whole life. Shirakawa has a family, a decent job and he looks normal and works hard. He is by all appearance a normal middle-aged man. Even so, Shirakawa is a restrained person and looks extremely tidy and perfect only on the outside. We learn in the novel that he explodes and abuses a girl for no apparent reason. Shirakawa is detached from his internal side and only focuses on his external body. This behaviour in itself makes an implicit connection to Foucault's theory on body discipline. Shirakawa's issues are inculcations of this certain perspective. Shirakawa suppresses many feelings so they do not show on the outside, a mental attitude which through habit has become his normal state. He has divided himself up between body and emotions, where the body rules out the emotions. This can be seen when he does not recognise the bag of clothes that he stole from Cricket, because this is so far from the well-mannered person he sees himself as (Murakami, 2008, p.135). He thinks that keeping his body in check is what matters to the all-seeing eye. And so, Shirakawa's characteristics are presented as an example of what can happen in a panoptic society as his bodily focus reflects his underlying fear of the panoptic view. Also notable is that he is caught on tape by a security camera, which proves that everybody is being watched everywhere, even in a love hotel, and that the panoptic fear is not without cause. There is a reason for a violent person like Shirakawa to be scared. It shows that no one and no place is an exception to the gaze and that people like Shirakawa are very likely to be caught. However, since it is the camera in a love hotel no part of the authoritarian legal system caught wind of this, at least not when the novel ends. Instead an underground system surely related to the mafia, that has part in

the prostitution of Chinese women, starts searching for him. Here power is to some extent in the hands of a criminal system. As was demonstrated with Shirakawa above, Murakami makes connections to surveillance (the camera), criminality (Shirakawa) and body discipline (Shirakawa's perfectionist behaviour and body/emotion dichotomy), all of which are themes typical for Foucault.

The kind of society presented in *After Dark* is built upon the same idea as Foucault had about the carceral system. From these thoughts one can draw the conclusion that if methods that are used on delinquents (a situation which is problematic enough in itself as it produces a dichotomous relationship between "them" and "us") are not only used on them but are also used outside prisons without our immediate knowledge of it happening, the result becomes an incomprehensible system of use. It could be everywhere or nowhere. In prisons we know who is watching. We know why, even though we might not agree to the methods as solutions, but still we are a majority watching a minority if we remain within the law and not outside it. The idea is that adapting carceral systems in society results in anyone being a possible criminal and creates suspicions about everyone. It enables people like the mafia in *After Dark* to use the panoptic gaze. It is also deeply seductive in a sense since it tickles the modern person's will to adapt and please others, the features of a docile body. And so, there is a behaviour that is sustained by the panoptic society. Foucault says that

The carceral system combines in a single figure discourses and architectures, coercive regulations and scientific propositions, real social effects and invincible utopias, programmes for correcting delinquents and mechanisms that reinforce delinquency (Foucault, 1975, p. 271).

By "the invincible utopias" Foucault stresses the impossibility in the carceral system, as it rather sustains delinquency than erases it. It does however have "real social effects", as is portrayed in *After Dark*. The world presented in *After Dark*, 21<sup>st</sup> century Tokyo, represents exactly this problem with today's forms of reality. The camera in the novel tries to penetrate the private spheres of the people in the novel, to grasp their perception of reality, a carceral method that threatens a person's own ability to cope with his or her "possible delinquency". That is why we watch Shirakawa *as well as* Eri. It should be noted that reality, as always in Murakami's works, is relative. This is also connected to the panopticon. For example, we and the camera watch mirrors

capture people's reflections even after they have stepped away from the mirror. A woman lies in a mysterious sleep that she cannot wake up from, and we end up watching (perhaps even being part of) her dreams. These scenes alone are there to put the possibility of controlled reality into our heads, as we are not just seeing the exteriors of the people we are watching. This represents the fear people have of the panopticon, which here actually comes true: it is even able to get inside their heads. It also points at how surveillance not necessarily tells the truth.

David Garland points out in his review "Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish' - An Exposition and Critique" that "the initial reaction to Foucault's work has had the all or nothing character of uncritical praise on the one hand, and out-of-hand rejection on the other" (Garland, 1986, p.847). Garland praises the initiative in *Discipline and Punish* yet he criticises missing perspectives in Foucault's analysis:

Had it focused on some of the other norms which social and even penal agencies try to inculcate—such as *literacy, cleanliness, health, responsibility, independence, stability*, etc.—its critique would not have been so easily made. (Garland, 1986, p.878. Italics added by me).

Similarly, C. Fred Alford questions Foucault's theories on the panopticon's function in prisons. In fact, he starts by stating that the panoptic method is used in very few prisons, which would mean that it is not the threat that Foucault claims it to be. Secondly, the result of the constant surveillance is not that the inmate feels threatened, they actually want to be noticed, and this is the situation that does not happen. The people responsible are just supposed to "hold the body" of the prisoners (Alford, 2000, p.131). Neither the normativity nor classifications of prisoners are problems to prison authorities, all the attention the prisoners receive is when they are counted. "As far as the count is concerned, one inmate is exactly like another" says Alford (2000, p.133). With regards to *After Dark*, I think the point Garland makes about literacy, cleanliness, health, responsibility, independence and stability as focus in penal institutions makes us understand Shirakawa even better. To focus on these things in the concentrated form that penal institutions can do, all with the purpose to change that person, to make him better, is also bound to pressure. Shirakawa is highly literate, clean, healthy (physically), responsible, at least towards work, and he is independent, as far as we know. He uses stability to hide his instability. If these are the things that penal agencies focus on, Shirakawa passes unnoticed, but he still remains unstable.

Therefore, you could argue against Garland and say that Foucaultian critique can certainly still be made.

As far as Alford goes, I do not agree with the criticism since it is not entirely relevant. The focus in Foucault was evidently prisons but his wider focus was society at large, how the carceral system was accommodated into our social institutions. Foucault used an instrument mainly connected to prisons to prove a wider point, it did not really matter how many prisons of this sort existed. That is also the reason *After Dark* is in line with Foucaultian ideas: not just because we are taking part of a panoptic system within a prison, but in a more general sense in terms of observation. Yet it is true that he treats the panoptic prisons as if it was the standard model everywhere. The point Alford makes about prisoners wanting to be noticed which Foucault disregards completely, is a valid point and could easily be applied to Shirakawa. Perhaps Shirakawa's outrage was a cry for help. Surely it was, in a sense, but Alford's theory is based on the life of a criminal who is already imprisoned, one whose crime has already been exposed. The way Shirakawa acts by trying to be perfect yet he shows strong oppressive tendencies brings to mind Foucault's theories very strongly as it portrays a man who tries to fit into an oppressive role not in an actual prison but in society as a prison. And also, finally, what Alford says about the authorities in prisons treating "one inmate exactly like another" is to some extent the same type of argument Foucault makes, he just makes different arguments as to why this happens.

In view of Foucault and the other theories around delinquency, let us revisit Shirakawa again. He is self-observant as he restricts himself to a point where he cannot oppress certain feelings any more. Shirakawa knows that he is being watched as any other citizen in a highly modern city like Tokyo. By examining this scene with Shirakawa in his office and we notice how Shirakawa feels about the situation:

The room is dark. Only the area around the man's desk receives illumination from fluorescent lights on the ceiling. This could be an Edward Hopper painting titled *Loneliness*. Not that the man himself feels lonely where he is at the moment: he prefers it this way. With no one else around, he can concentrate ... Unconcerned about the time and effort involved, he can handle all difficulties logically, analytically ... There is no wasted motion, just... the man, and the technical problems he has been given to solve. (Murakami, 2008, p.81).

It is clear that handling his work makes Shirakawa feel useful. “No wasted motion” portrays him as just the type of docile body that a production and information-based society creates, seen from a Foucaultian perspective. A wasted motion could be interpreted as a motion that would reveal him as something else than the asset he is to the company. Even though it is said that Shirakawa does not feel lonely, the situation is still described like this to demonstrate how he oppresses feelings of loneliness along with other feelings. If we examine the word-choices closer in the quote above, we can see that the room is described as “dark” at first, but immediately in the next sentence it is declared that there is “illumination” around Shirakawa’s desk. However, the light described comes from “fluorescent lights”, which means it is not a real light. It is a replica of real light. Since the novel is called *After Dark* it makes sense to reflect on the relationships between dark and light that is portrayed here. If genuine light was present it could work in a dichotomous relationship with the darkness, it could put up a resistance against it. Sitting in this fake light and being threatened by the darkness, works to reflect Shirakawa’s loneliness and fear in this scene.

In contrast to the panoptic gaze we have the reversed situation in the older forms of punishment, where the accused is in the centre and the people stand around watching him as a crowd. This punishment was what Foucault called the spectacle of the scaffold. The event of execution and the fact that people take part in such a dramatic event adds to the spectacle and also to the fact that the criminal is set on a type of stage, the scaffold. This makes the execution more of an entertaining theatre. Graphically speaking, the eyes were directed towards the centre rather than one eye directing outwards, as with the panopticon. Along these simple changes in construction display much of what Foucault is trying to convey, that the power is within the form of observation. When the crowd could witness the punishment, there existed the possibility that the crowd would object, and most importantly, the convicted person knew who was watching him/her. With the panopticon the public opinion disappeared which left one incomprehensible unit with all the power. The camera in *After Dark* is precisely this anonymous. There might be one person watching, there might be thousands. It might not even be a person, meaning a human being.

The spectacle of the scaffold is present at the point when Eri Asai is trapped in the TV and its office-world. There is also a special attention on the reader's function. First, it is declared that we cannot do anything about her situation, even though we want to. The reader is clearly included, “we are sheer point of view. We cannot influence things in any way” (Murakami, 2008,

p.152). However, in spite of declaring that we are powerless in relation to her situation, at the very same page we read this: "Run!" we shout to her. On impulse we forget the rule that requires us to maintain our neutrality. Our voice doesn't reach her, needless to say..." (152). Very clearly stated is the fact that we are following a rule that forces us to keep a distance. It forces us to remain only spectators. We are the spectators of the spectacle on the scaffold, in this case with Eri. Her loneliness, the fact that she is in a victimised state and the constant focus on our role as spectators puts her on a stage where we wait for her fate to be decided. Yet we are at the same time active in the story, or rather, the novel subscribes the actions to us and literally puts the words in our mouths by making us yell "Run!". We think we are passive spectators, but the novel portrays us as active within the story. In a sense, we become complicit with the narrator in penetrating peoples' privacy. An unusual aspect of this novel is this function of the narrator. We are presented with a third-person narrator who is both unlimited and strangely omniscient, who knows what people are thinking at times but who is also described as a distant spectator. Furthermore the reader is included as part of the narrator at a number of instances in this novel, like the scene above, in terms of being 'the watcher', which is also demonstrated at the very beginning of the story: "Through the eyes of a high-flying night bird, *we* take in the scene from midair" and also: "*Our* line of sight chooses an area of concentrated brightness and, focusing there, silently descends to it" (*After Dark*, 2008, p.3. Italics added by me). The reader is pulled into this narrative entity which more often takes the form of a camera than the bird that is talked about here: "Our viewpoint takes the form of a midair camera that can move freely about the room ... Our angle changes at intervals as regular as the blinking of an eye" (Murakami, 2008, p.25). Perhaps some would argue that the narrator consists of a number of people who are watching and does not include the reader at all and therefore "we" and "our" are used. It is entirely possible that there are many people watching from that narrating sphere yet the reader is also pulled into that viewpoint because we are seeing things from his/hers/their perspective, we see what they see, we are also spectators, whether we like it or not. And so, the camera's function in the novel brings the panoptic gaze to mind, not just by its apparent form of an observatory instrument, but because of how it pulls the reader into its realm of spectation and forces us to observe which points to how we are all part of a system, the carceral society. Again the conclusion must be that we are to reflect on spectation, within the novel, but also outside it. There is a sense in this scene with Eri that our spectation hurts her. This is what Foucault calls

repressive violence and he means that this kind of violence is executed throughout modern penal systems, schools, hospitals and mental institutions, etc. only because they are observed.

There is more to panoptic theory than what Foucault lays down, which brings us to the critique of Foucault again but also other theorists who have taken these ideas further. First of all Foucault focuses on one rather slim perspective, the prison, which he may have treated badly, as Alford points out, which Foucault then applies to a huge spectrum, society. Then again, when he moves out of the prison environment, his theories on observation and power stand up better.

Garland says that

the importance that Foucault gives to the body as a target of social policy and focus of power has opened up research in that area that has been surprisingly neglected in modern social theory, despite obvious importance (Garland, 1986, p.866).

Murakami includes Foucault's aspects of the panopticon as instruments in *After Dark* though it is not a crystal clear connection and does not wholeheartedly agree with Foucault. This is clear mainly because an obvious opinion is not set on all types of observation yet the groundwork for an analysis is certainly there. One problem with a panoptic society is that too much control falls into a small number of hands, and sometimes the wrong hands, as is the case with the mafia and Shirakawa. A positive side lies in the reader's ability to take part of the spectation. To study something is not merely to objectify it in every sense, the purpose may also be to understand. The lesson is to realise that there is power in observation, there is a lot fear of the gaze of the Other and that we are all part of it, for good or bad. Just by reading this we are watching as the camera is watching. The novel expresses that we take part in the spectation and could be fellow culprits. This brings us to how Murakami exposes the question of visual pleasure, a term used in an article by Laura Mulvey called "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". She discusses films and argues that cinematic spectation favours our underlying pleasure in possessing "the look". She says that there exists an

... erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as object. At the extreme, it can become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms, whose only sexual

satisfaction can come from watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other (Mulvey, 1975, p.2).

As Mulvey sums up, she is careful to point out that “None of these interacting layers is intrinsic to film, but it is only in the film form that they can reach a perfect and beautiful contradiction”, which she says is because of the emphasis on “the look” and its shifting nature in movies (Mulvey, 1975, p.7). However, Murakami has adapted a form of narrative cinema by using a camera narrative and he focuses on visual pleasure by making us the spectators, the audience, taking part in the watching. Similarly to Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, whom Mulvey brings up as an example of the importance of the look, Murakami makes us spectators in his narrative and thereby, just like Hitchcock, binds us to our seat as a spectator and participator (Mulvey, 6). We are not only to imagine what it would be like to see everything and as a result reflect on what this power holds, we are actually in power. With that being said, what does that make the camera and us as readers in this novel? It makes us partly responsible for what is happening. We become culprits because of our possession of the power of “the look”.

An article by Julie E. Cohen called “Privacy, Visibility, Transparency and Exposure” considers Foucault among other theorists in this line of work, and in her article we can see how the new theorists have taken Foucault's ideas on the panopticon further. Here the focus has come to include the terms “spatial privacy” and “informational privacy”, with special focus on the US. The arguments extend further though, to include Western society at large:

Within Western culture, vision is linked metaphorically with both knowledge and power. The eye has served throughout history as a symbol of both secular and religious authority .... Claims of privacy invasion are claims about unwanted subjection to the knowledge or power of others (Cohen, 2008, p.184 and 185).

Cohen says that “Visibility is an important determinant of harm to privacy” and she continues to point out that even though this is the case, this fact is being ignored, especially in the US (Cohen, 2008, p.181). She moves away from Foucault's argument by saying that it is not visual observation that is clearly the problem by itself, it is in connection with data-based information that privacy is threatened on all bases. However, Cohen admits that even though it might not appear to do any damage to privacy, even exposure in public places alters the experience of those

places, making the object passive and also intrudes on what feminist theorist Koskela calls “emotional space” (192 and 193). The basic assumption and argument for public surveillance is that it stands for safety. Koskela argues that it also stands for the opposite, meaning danger.

Cohen paints a picture of a person sitting in a café surrounded by exposed cameras as she moves through these theories. The exact same scenario occurs in *After Dark*. In the very first chapters the camera zooms in on a café, finally landing on a certain person sitting there, namely Mari. In fact, Murakami and Cohen use almost the same phrases here. In the case of Cohen, she formulates it in this way: “Let us zoom in on our café-sitting individual” and almost the exact same goes for *After Dark* where it says that “our line of sight chooses an area of concentrated brightness, and focusing there, silently descends to it”, after which the narrative eyes “come to rest on a girl sitting by the front window” in a café called Denny’s (Cohen, 2008, p.194 and Murakami, 2008, p.3 and 4). This comparison suggests that *After Dark* in some sense is a study of people's lives in what are supposed to be public and private spaces, but because of the surveillance the line between them is blurred. And so, in *After Dark* we are presented with some of the negative aspects of the panoptic system formulated by Foucault but also his successors. Perhaps this is partly why the novel is called *After Dark*. Rather than being in the light, being enlightened about what happens around you, you are in the dark, unaware and lost, pulled into a system of self-observation and self-restriction with only the over-ruling source of this system evading and blinding your gaze.

### **3. More on the Intertextuality and Intermediality in *After Dark***

As in most of Murakami’s novels, there are numerous intertextual and intermedial references in *After Dark*. These are references that stretch from paintings to films and to other novels. The references as such broaden the interpretation of *After Dark* in terms of the panoptic theme and at times add a different depth to the characters and their thoughts.

The reference to Edward Hopper for example is worth taking a closer look at. I have chosen a specific painting of Edward Hopper called “Excursion into Philosophy” (see appendix 2). Even though this is not the painting that Murakami is referring to since he does not refer to a real painting by Hopper at all, the sense of loneliness that Murakami mentions can be seen in “Excursion into Philosophy”. This painting was chosen to be included in this essay because it reminds one strongly of Shirakawa. He is clean and proper but lonely, even though he has

company. “Excursion” portrays a middle-age man who gives a clean and proper impression but who seems lost in deep and sad contemplation. In an article about an exhibition with Hopper’s work, Greg Cook says this about Hopper’s paintings:

In Edward Hopper’s world, everyone is lost in an unending rut of office overtime, rattling El trains, cheap fluorescent diners, and bad dates. Everything has fallen tensely quiet. And this anxious, itchy mood haunts even the urban landscapes — perhaps half his work — in which the only person around is you, the viewer. Here every man is an island. (Cook, 2007).

Both the themes which Cook derive from Hopper’s work and his take on the viewer of the painting as important are similar to the analysis in this essay on *After Dark*, especially with regards to Shirakawa. In fact, the paintings by Hopper and the characters in Murakami’s works are often very similar. Most obviously so with regards to the lonely contemplation that both Hopper’s and Murakami’s characters express, but also with regards to style. The same uncomplicatedness and coldness that Murakami uses to portray Shirakawa can be seen in “Excursion”. There are not any abstract features in this painting or deviations or even smudged lines. In fact, lines and squares are clearly marked as to stick out in their faultlessness. The same faultlessness is what engorges Shirakawa. The man sitting in the room in Hopper’s painting looks tired, yet somehow you could get the impression by his stiff posture that he is so uptight that he is about to explode, he wants to turn that perfect room upside down. The man in Hopper’s painting and Murakami’s Shirakawa-character cannot help but to smudge the flawless lines at times, stepping out of their constrained roles.

There is a literary tradition that includes the trial and the camera as symbols and the two are often connected. Except for George Orwell’s *1984*, Kafka’s *The Trial* is also one of the clearer examples and was one of the works that set the symbolic function of this legal institution in literature as a symbol of control and oppression. The story follows Joseph K. who is accused for committing a crime. However, he does not know what crime he has committed, and every official in the novel avoid this subject. Also, Joseph K. does not know who is charging him with the offense. He just calls it the Court. Daniel J. Solove argues in his article “Privacy and Power: Computer Databases and Metaphors for Information Privacy” that

Kafka's *The Trial* best captures the scope, nature, and effects of the type of power relationship created by databases ... Like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *The Trial* presents a fictional portrait of a harrowing world, often exaggerating certain elements of society in a way that makes them humorous and absurd. (Solove, 2001, p.1421).

I do not agree that the world created in *The Trial* is humorous. It is more like being in an uncomfortable nightmare without finding your way out. The situation is certainly more absurd than funny. Solove also says however that the novel presents a “fictional portrait of a harrowing world”, a world that “captures ... the type of power relationship created by databases”. He means that Kafka’s novel includes the type of fear that exists in knowing that there is a superior power that holds all information about you in files. Therefore you can never escape anything you have done in the past, and the past may haunt you forever. This is the situation Joseph K. is going through. He notices that the Court seems to know everything about him, and he is afraid because of this.

The trial has the same shape and function as the spectacle of the scaffold, it is a “modern” version of it. However, there are many other possibilities in terms of punishment, and many more actions that constitute crimes that can lead to some or more types of punishments. It is quite normal to find the justice system hard to understand, and the comprehension of the law is in question in *After Dark* and other works. The court is supposed to stand for justice but in Kafka's novel for example it turns out to be a system of injustice through its lack of being a fair and comprehensible institution. Much of this lies in the fact that the person on trial does not know what crime he has committed. He feels like his whole reality is against him because everybody knows what he has done yet no one informs him of his crime. He is being watched, which creates fear, but he does not know why he is being watched. He, as a criminal, is at a distance from everybody else. Taking it further, you could say that this symbolises many people in society who fear being different because of the judgemental gaze and this system's standards of normality, which they have trouble understanding. In *After Dark* there exists the same situation but the idea has taken a step further, which is not surprising since this is supposed to represent how the idea and practice of surveillance has evolved. Unlike the people in for example *1984*, it is not emphasised that the people in *After Dark* know that they are being watched, even though that is what is happening. Still, even though it is not emphasised, we can still see how the panopticon

and the effects of it are hinted at, as in the scene with Takeshi at the trial. Takeshi is the young man that Mari meets at a café who it turns out knows her sister Eri. He tells Mari about the day when his class went to see a trial and he says this about the criminals that he sees:

They're a different kind of human being. They live in a different world, they think different thoughts, and their actions are nothing like mine. Between the world they live in and the world I live in there's this thick, high wall. At least, that's how I saw it at first. I mean, there is no way I'm gonna commit those vicious crimes. I'm a pacifist, a good-natured guy, I've never laid a hand on anybody since I was a kid. Which is why I was able to view a trial from on high as a total spectator.... As I sat in court, though, and listened to the testimonies of the witnesses and the speeches of the prosecutors and the arguments of the defence attorneys and the statements of the defendants, I became a lot less sure of myself. In other words, I started seeing it like this: that there really was no such thing as a wall separating their world from mine. Or if there was such a wall, it was probably a flimsy one made of papier-mâché. The second I leaned on it, I'd probably fall right through and end up on the other side. Or maybe it's that the other side has already managed to sneak its way inside of us, and we just haven't noticed. (Murakami, 2008, p.96-97).

In a similar way to *The Trial* and *1984* where the court is compromised, Takeshi in *After Dark* says about the trial he witnessed that it felt like there was a wall between him and the criminals and that he felt like a total spectator from high up. We can easily connect this point of view from high up to the panopticon and also to the spectacle but there is a more evident focus on panoptic viewing and power than entertainment, mostly because of the spectators angle. What is expressed here is that when you commit a crime you are *defined* as a criminal, you are placed on the other side of the wall, you are down here while the others, the non-offenders, are up there. A distance is created which results in that the person is not so much a person by definition as s/he is a criminal. As Foucault puts it, these become “the 'monsters', moral or political, who have fallen outside the social pact” (Foucault, 256). In addition, more than just placing people and criminals at two sides of a wall, Takeshi takes it further by also pointing out that the other side of the wall has already “snuck its way inside of us” (Murakami, 2008, p.97). This statement may seem somewhat aloof, but it implies that whatever is on the other side has come in contact with this side. If the criminals are on the other side and Takashi sees himself as a panoptic viewer from high up, he must mean that what has “snuck into us” is the knowledge that what they have on their side is attainable to

us. Furthermore, by using the word “snuck”, he implies that this information was not supposed to leak out. As in the beginning of the novel and as has been mentioned earlier in the essay, Takeshi also talks about an octopus in connection to the trial, but he continues with a characterisation that runs far beyond that of an animal. He says that the trial became a weird creature, a creature that does not die, does not care and in its eyes humans all turn into numbers, signs. This touches upon Foucault's point about modern society, the idea that a good society is based on how stable, ordered and profitable it is. The need to control these things is personified in the shape of an octopus. It also portrays the court and what is supposed to be our justice system, as dark and untrustworthy, as a creature that moves in the dark, doing dark deeds.

The novel further relates to Foucault's idea of docile bodies and production profit when the city Alphaville is mentioned, which in this novel is the name of a love hotel, the same one in which the Chinese girl Cricket was beat up. This is another type of intermedial reference. The name is taken from a film by the same name from 1965, directed by Jean-Luc Godard. The film is discussed in the novel by the characters so as to make the intermedial connection clear. In the movie, Alphaville is a city in the near future where you are not allowed to have feelings and everybody does everything "according to numerical formulas" (Murakami, 2008, p.60). At the beginning of the movie we are introduced to the voice of Alpha 60, even though we do not know it is him or her (although leaning towards masculinity because of the deep voice) talking until further into the film. Alpha 60 is the entity that watches and controls Alphaville. This is not portrayed as a person but rather a mechanical intelligence, a Big Brother without a face, who keeps this productive-based, loveless society going. This idea is very much like Foucault's idea of how modern society views the individual. Around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the mind became a point of interest. With this came the possibility to change a person. And this is the point where Foucault states that the goal became to control people. The norm became effectiveness amongst workers rather than workers being passionate about what they were doing. And this does not just include workers in prisons or factories, Foucault means workplaces all around. It is in view of this context that the love hotel is understandably named Alphaville. There is sex in Alphaville, because "sex does not need love or irony" as Mari states (60). In the city in the film, women are just seen as objects, they are defined by their function, in this case to give birth or to give pleasure. In my opinion, all the women in the film are in some manner portrayed as prostitutes, which is marked by their tattoos, which all of them have somewhere on their bodies. One could

say that they are branded like a product, so as to mark their difference from the men who are allowed to remain unbranded. In the love hotel Alphaville in the novel, women are defined as objects of physical pleasure in the same way, here there is also sex without love. And when they cannot do the things their “meant” to do, i.e. have sex, they are seen as unprofitable. When Cricket is not able to have sex because she has her period, Shirakawa is annoyed, not so much because he cannot have sex with her, but because she is not able to perform her duty as an object of physical pleasure, which is the reason he came there. In this case it is also interesting to note that if Shirakawa had no issues with prostitution, he would be able to change to some other girl, but he cannot, which is interesting in itself as far as Shirakawa's character goes. Linguistic theorist Julia Kristeva points out that menstrual fluids are viewed as a polluted fluid, whilst sperm is not, which is clearly displayed here, in view of the fact that the menstrual blood is disturbing to Shirakawa (Vice, 1997, p.168). It displays some type of anxiety that he feels being at the Alphaville, somehow it is him realising that he is faced not with an object but a woman that bleeds, which disturbs him in his purpose and makes him react with anger.

To continue our discussion on *After Dark*, we are going to look at how the novel is involved in much more than just creating a panoptic society through reference to Foucault and other novels which incorporate the same theme. Systems of observation are the foundation of the society we are presented to in this novel, and this includes the camera in its most basic usage: capturing pictures of people that become objects, bodies, and fact is that male and female characters are objectified differently. And so, next we will look at how the people in this novel point to theories about body theory, the male gaze and traditional male and female gender roles.

#### **4. Exposed Bodies in *After Dark***

*“She knows she will end up as a mere convenient conduit  
used for the passage of external things.”*

- Narrator about Eri from *After Dark*

The quote above is from a scene with Eri where her feelings are explained by the narrator. The exposure is in the form of an invasion of privacy in this novel, both with regards to Eri and with other characters. More than just bringing up that every person is involved and exposed to this judgemental gaze from the Other, this novel often focuses special attention on the different effects the panoptical gaze has on women and men, with a more evident focus on the women, but an equally, if not more, fascinating perspective on men in this context. In this section I will take a closer look at the characters Eri and Shirakawa in relation to gender. At first, they seem to be the opposites of each other. However, I will show that they seem different, much because of their sexes, but also show how they are alike in that they are both under a threat sustained by both gender roles. Because they live in a panoptic society, their bodies are exposed and it makes them feel threatened in different ways. As we have seen, a dichotomy like normative/non-normative seems to be a reoccurring theme in the novel in relation to the panopticon and it acts as a threat. There is also the normal/deviant and male/female in relation to these overall thematic dichotomies. And so, this section will deal with the dichotomy between male and female.

Gender theorists Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan present a good and concise presentation of dichotomous thinking. Features include “difference between two entities, into an opposition” where the parts are dependent on one other yet one part is always valued higher than the other and took this position by excluding the opposing party” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p.24). Furthermore, the two parts need each other to create a whole and also “the subordinate entity can only gain value or move upwards by transcending itself” (24). A dichotomous pair that dominates *After Dark* is this side/that side, as is the case with Takeshi at the trial. There is the same stress on this side/that side in the parts with Eri, for example at the beginning of 5.09 am it is pointed out that “Eri Asai is back on *this* side now” with italics on the word “this” which again stresses the dichotomy between here and there (175). What is also stressed is the difference between female and male, as we will take a closer look at.

Let us first look at the female gender role. Women in this novel are subjected to the male gaze and, as a result, male power. Mulvey says that “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on the female form which is styled accordingly” (Mulvey, 1975, p.3). In this context, let us take a closer look at Eri and the female role she represents in concrete examples from the novel, to see how this description fits perfectly on her. She is portrayed as passive and as a victim, which are both

traditional traits for a female character. Her passive side is mostly linked to her physical state, that she is asleep in a bed. She has chosen to fall into a permanent state of sleep because she failed to deal with the real world around her. With Eri there is a case of the *mise-en-abyme* seen in films, "dream within a dream", where we do not know when we are viewing bodies within dreams or in some definition of reality (actually, the whole novel has this type of *mise-en-abyme* air around it as there exists the idea that every layer is just a picture within picture, as with the reoccurring scene with people looking themselves in a mirror and after they have stepped away, the image remains). With Eri we are presented with her inside, her emotional chaos, while her body remains passive. She is not even active in her dreams. There she is powerless against what is done to her person. What is of most interest with Eri is the fact that she is the one whose mind and dreams that the readers are presented with. That is, Eri is what she represents rather than she herself as a person. As Mulvey observes more generally about women, Eri becomes an

indispensable element of spectacle ... yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. This alien presence then has to be integrated into cohesion with the narrative (Mulvey, 1975, p.4).

The woman's presence that works on the side of the storyline as a type of "erotic contemplation" is actually a perfect description of Eri's role in the novel. The chapters dedicated to her focus merely on her sleeping and then (her) dreams, as a sort of pause in the original storyline. In other chapters her sister Mari and Takeshi talk about her and they put a lot of effort into analysing her. Basically, you could say that the basis for Eri falling asleep is explained, at least there is a lot of material to work with. We have her background, her own view on the situation which she has told Takeshi a little about, we even glimpse into her dreams. Eri is absolutely naked, all her insides and problems are at display. Even though she has gone to such lengths as to put herself to sleep it does not matter. She, her body and mind, is still under the gaze from the narrative camera, and not only that, she is portrayed as a *victim* under it, something traditionally female. Pilcher and Whelehan outline the history of body theory in a concise way in saying that "the body' now operates to identify the realm of people's bodies as an appropriate topic for philosophy" and it is often studied how "men's control of women's bodies as a key to subordination" (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p.6). Simply put, that subordination is what Eri is going through. However, Eri

is more conscious of the subordination than most people might be. Her dreams affirm this: she is never in control of in what way or when she is being watched.

To continue, there is a fact about the camera that needs to be established: the camera appears male. The camera is not said to have a sex as such, but sometimes there is a similarity to the way the camera is watching and the way women are being physically and mentally abused by men in the novel. Perhaps being an accidental and bad translation, at one point we read that "we are peeping on her", her meaning Eri (Murakami, 2008, p.25). Left alone this sentence might not mean much but there is also the connection to the love hotel Alphaville where women are exposed in the same type of way. More than just breaking into Eri's private space as a narratological entity this characterisation makes the camera seem like a perverse peeping-tom, who pushes a sexual dimension onto these female characters. Judith Butler says in her work *Bodies that matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* that

'sex' not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate - the bodies it controls. (Butler, 1993, p.62).

Butler suggests that gender apart from being the norm also creates and sustains bodies based on sex, bodies are being controlled. This is, she says, what Foucault calls the "regulatory ideal". Sex is regulated. Because the norm is to be a productive and respectful member of society, basic sexual drives and, even more so, sexual deviations are oppressed within the person. "Productive power" is the phrase she chooses to use, marking this behaviour as an ever on-going production of sexual beings bound to specific norms. What sex entails is what this productive power controls, bodies are under the power of sex. And this is very much what seems to be happening to the women in this novel, not only by the fact that they are surveyed, but because the surveillance is portrayed as a male entity, one that sexualises the women it watches.

On such culprit is Shirakawa. He is clearly connected to Eri as he is portrayed as her antagonist. In Eri's dream, a man appears as the obstacle, the man sitting with a mask inside the room in the TV. He in turn relates back to the office worker Shirakawa because Eri finds a pencil with his company's name on it and also because she is trapped in an office room later on in the novel. This again relates back to Alphaville with Shirakawa's abuse of Cricket. And so, by

looking at the female role in the novel, we are inevitably led back to Shirakawa. Shirakawa, we are told nothing about except his appearance and what he does for a living. Here lies the noticeable difference between him and Eri. Also, Shirakawa is an active character. He is portrayed as a tough and mysterious criminal. It is not the case that he is an admirable character or that the readers sympathize with him. He is an active and powerful character though, which is a traditional role for a male character, whether good or evil. Also, we think Shirakawa fails to see his emotional problems, at least as far as we know. However, we do not really know because we are never told any of Shirakawa's thoughts and we are certainly not allowed to take part of his dreams. Physical expression is all we witness with regards to Shirakawa, something we do not take part of with Eri. In chapter six the owner of Alphaville, a former wrestler, and one of her employees sit and watch a surveillance-tape to see whoever it was that abused Cricket. Once they find him, they try to do an analysis of Shirakawa based on his looks, similar to what the reader is doing. They actually carry out some good detective work and are the only ones in the novel who plant some possible ideas about Shirakawa. The two of them declare that he takes the key to room 404 without hesitation, which in all probability means that this is not the first time that he has been at the love hotel (Murakami, 2008, p.72). Some information is given, but it is only in the form of speculation. The fact that no explanation is given about Shirakawa works to make him the mysterious criminal whose unattainable position makes him a point of interest, more so than Eri. Also, it is important to note that Eri's mind is exploited while Shirakawa's is not. As mentioned, Eri is surveyed in the most extreme way possible: her dreams are on display and therefore her entire emotional life. *This* type of surveillance never happens to Shirakawa, and might seem to be the most important difference between the two characters. However, that Shirakawa's interiors are not shown leaves an empty space for interpretation, it highlights itself by its non-existence. The result is that Shirakawa is surveyed at an even higher level by the readers, arguably more so than Eri.

Even though *After Dark* is a novel, we can see by the intense focus on who is watching, what is being watched and not watched, that the visual is just as important here as in a film. A traditional tendency is for the narrative gaze, especially in films, to freely exploit the female body and mind, while the male remains untouched. This is based on the premise that "looking" is central to films and therefore the gaze holds a lot of meaning and power. With regards to Eri and Shirakawa it becomes significant to look at the narrative gaze in this story again. Putting focus on

possession of sight, as in this novel with a camera, means creating a specific discourse for the readers to accept as reality. We think that just because it is based on a camera narrative, i.e., because it is based on seeing, it must be true. Yet *what* we see is equally important. This is the basis of focalisation theory and criticism: just because a narrator claims to tell the truth, it does not mean that what s/he shows us is the whole story of how things really are. Following this logic, you can claim that if seeing is truth then not seeing, or being kept from seeing certain things, is lying. Therefore, what we see in *After Dark* is not the truth about how these characters really are. What we see are characters created by what is traditionally called the male gaze because it exploits women and empowers men. That is why Eri and Shirakawa are portrayed as they are, very differently, but they still end up in a similar situation.

The traditional gender roles are problematized at times in the novel though. This fact can be seen in one of the characters from Eri's dreams: The man in Eri's dream who wears a mask of a thin layer and is therefore described as The Man with No Face who reminds one a lot of the office worker Shirakawa (who seems to be wearing a thin mask because of his lack of expression but also because of our lack of knowledge about him) (Murakami, 2008, p.51). The man in Eri's dream symbolises the male gaze, therefore Shirakawa also embodies the gaze, which is not odd as the gaze is male in this novel. Also, however, it should be added that the man sitting in the room inside the TV, this Shirakawa-like character, is covered with dust and is exhausted which tells us that these circumstances are straining for the male component as well (Murakami, 2008, p.49). It seems that both are tired of being at two sides of a wall, one watching the other. Therefore we in fact witness weakness on the male part, maybe only the smallest glimpse from a close reading here, but that does not make it less meaningful. It is not only Eri who is tired and has fallen into a Sleeping Beauty state because of extortion. In viewing of this portrayal, Shirakawa is actually subjected to the male gaze himself even though we barely take part of his thoughts and intentions.

As shown above there are indications which make Shirakawa seem perhaps not equally objectified but still objectified in some sense. I would argue that he is objectified equally but differently, in viewing of the readers' role as surveyors, a fact established in the chapter above. Another fact that contributes to this conclusion is that even some of the characters use the male gaze on Shirakawa. For example we have the owner of the love hotel and her employee. They sit and use a type of surveillance (the scene mentioned above). That means that there are two or

several layers of surveillance here: the women inspecting Shirakawa and the readers in turn watching the women inspecting Shirakawa. Also, as mentioned, it is an example of how Shirakawa is exploited by the gaze. Here he does not hold the power. Instead, the owner of the love hotel, a woman, has taken the powerful role. Therefore she is not portrayed as the traditional female character. Actually, nothing about her seems traditionally female. She is an active character, which is a male character trait. In addition, she is rather masculine overall, both with regards to her former career as a wrestler and now her career as a love hotel owner, and finally she is male because she holds the male gaze. This forms the interpretation that she can use surveillance, the male gaze, to her benefit since she is acting in accordance with male characteristics. Because she is male, which she essentially is, she possesses the power to yield the gaze. It might as well have been a female character with feminine characteristics that used the camera if the purpose was to make a statement that surveillance is connected to femininity. But this it is not the case, and the conclusion is therefore that the gaze, whether used on female or male characters, is still inherently male. Conclusively, the traditional roles for masculine and feminine characters are problematized as Shirakawa becomes objectified and a woman is objectifying him, but even though the surveyor is a woman she holds a lot of masculine attributes which in the end still makes her male and makes the gaze male by extension.

When we now have established that both genders are objectified by the male gaze in this novel we need to look at what reaction they have. What ties Eri and Shirakawa together in this novel is what Mikhail Bakhtin discussed as fear of the grotesque, unofficial body (Vice, 1997, p.160). The fear of the body means the fear of the improper, fear of standing out. Judith Butler explains fear of the body as "a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality" (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p.8). This is the fear that Shirakawa feels, a fear that is connected to the discussion above about the panoptic gaze. The fear of the body has over centuries come to include different things but stayed the same in one area in particular, namely what are actually the natural expressions of the body. Eating and sexuality are examples. Restrictive norms can easily be seen in *After Dark* just as it can be seen in any society around us: there are things that simply are not done, like walking around naked in the streets. However, Bakhtin argues that "the body constantly contradicts the pretensions and ideologies of perfection in its defecation, sneezing, farting, belching, and bleeding" which ultimately results in the body's materiality wanting nothing to do with codes of perfection and discipline (Bell and

Gardiner, 1998, p.85). The non-normative is highlighted, which also sheds light on the normative, which by extension means that what is focused on is the relationship of opposites. There is a revolt against perfection since it embodies an idea of unnatural behaviour. This type of revolt we can see in Eri. She has worked as a model her whole life, appearing in magazines and on television, and is mostly admired because of her good looks. Her sister Mari says something interesting in this context: "This may sound strange, but my sister really is beautiful when she sleeps. Maybe more beautiful than when she's awake. She's like transparent" (Murakami, 2008, p.164). What the novel expresses is that this behaviour, the modelling, becomes destructive because of its restriction to the exterior body, a body that has to be a certain way. Even though her falling asleep is Eri's way of failing to face her problems, she has made a choice to not be part of society any more for a reason. Eri is trying to get away from the "flesh-and-blood world" as Takeshi phrases it and he also mentions that he knows how she feels (162). Somehow this is what has happened to Shirakawa as well. He is playing a role of a robot on the one hand and then turns uncontrollable, aggressive and monstrous. People still need to express needs, no matter how tabooed they have become. The possibility for that is the time of the carnival, means Bakhtin. And so, Shirakawa also revolts, in his own way. This is a destructive form of revolt against oppression. Shirakawa's body is by all external examinations (and there are a lot) perfectly normal in the modern sense of the word. The way he looks relates him to the world, it makes him accepted. Together with the fact that he brutally beat up a young woman, we can see that keeping up appearance is what keeps him sane yet in the end drives him crazy, i e, this is the only way he knows how to express any emotions. He is living his carnival when he beats up Cricket. And so we can conclude that his way of keeping up appearances works until he breaks free of those norms, at which point the built up pile of emotions explode out into an expression of anger. His revolt becomes an aggressive form of a revolt, and therefore a destructive one.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this essay I have argued that the novel *After Dark* is presenting a panoptic society. In here we are presented with the city Tokyo, which is constantly surveyed, and not restrictively by some character or force in the novel, but also by the reader. The reader is presented as an accomplice in the surveillance. Foucault's argument concerning a panoptic society is this: the more that is known about the object the easier it is controlled, which is the basis of modern society today. In

his book *Power and Knowledge* we see further examples of these ideas. Knowledge, or perceived, possible knowledge, equals power. And what we have in *After Dark* are exactly these ideas. The knowledge we readers gain from the people in this novel work so as to make us powerful in the sense that we can judge them. However, since the people that are watched do not know who is watching them, they cannot judge in return. I have argued that this creates an uneven dichotomy, a hierarchy between the surveyed and the surveyor.

In addition, it has been argued that further hierarchical relationships and problems arise in this novel. The novel is also focused on docile bodies and sexual bodies, a focus that body theorists like Judith Butler have dealt with. This issue we can see in the characters in *After Dark*, in characters such as Eri and Shirakawa who are struggling with identity issues and who are desperately trying to overcome their fears. These are fears based on expectations which are constantly reinvented and sustained by their sexual personas and by their subjection to the male gaze. The point is that issues that Foucault and later Butler presented are still discussed on the literary arena. Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, someone who had committed a crime became part of a theatre in a sense. His execution was public amusement, with him/her on a scene with a crowd beneath cheering or protesting the execution. As the centuries elapsed, the crowd was taken out and replaced by law and those who control the law. The point is that the body still remained through time something you could shape and control, an object, and it still is today (Foucault, 1975, p.138). *After Dark* displays a modern form of this issue, as it shows that it is not only crime that results in panoptic fear, but also the mere fact that you belong to a certain city, sex or state of mind. Why Murakami chose to portray Tokyo and some of its inhabitants in this way must surely be because he wanted to make a comment about how we forget that surveillance is not just a positive means of veering off criminals, but a far more complicated means with its basis in power through control. Why Murakami chose a camera as narrator, and thereby condemning us to take part in surveillance, makes it seem like Murakami wanted us to focus on how we see things and make us critical of the way we see and hear, and therefore also how we read and interpret.

As already mentioned, this is not the only work by Murakami which deals with such subjects as observation and invasion of privacy. His most recent novel is a three-volume work called *1Q84*, a title which makes his relations to Orwell obvious. In relation to *After Dark*, it therefore opens up further interpretation in relation to panopticonism in Japanese society. There is focus on two people in Tokyo in 1984 in this *1Q84*, connected to each other from childhood,

one a teacher and writer, and the other a female assassin who kills men who have done their female partners wrong. The theme of female abuse is continued in this novel, connecting back to *After Dark*. This woman has taken justice into her own hands. There is much more of a traditional fairytale air to this story, however, mostly in view of the romance the two main characters share that goes back to their childhood and which neither of them has let go of. The further we move into the story, the more an alternative reality, called 1Q84, approaches. As to the connections to the panopticon in *1Q84*, which was not focused on in this essay, there is much material to work with. There are other connections to Orwell's *1984* apart from the title, but the novel holds an original story and on closer examination probably leads to different opinions about society than Orwell's novel. There are however many who mention Orwell in the novel. A character called Ushikawa talks about *1984* and how it contains what Orwell chose to call "a crime of thought" (Murakami, 2008, p.115). The idea with this novel is possibly that Murakami takes the theme and subjects that Orwell helped to create and applies it to his own culture and his own time. To apply a Foucaultian perspective on this novel would probably be effective, even though the conclusions might be very different from what we can gather from *After Dark*.

As we have seen, many modern feminist theories can be related to this novel. There is another one that becomes interesting again with relation to Shirakawa: feminist cyborg theory. The robot-like way that Shirakawa has adapted externally becomes the image of his internal self as well. Phrases like "he flicks a switch in his brain" are connected to him and it is also said that, "He gives the same impression as a well-ordered room", something tidy and perhaps even comfortable to some but also inanimate, lifeless, and clinical which to most is rather uncomfortable (82 and 85). We sense that behind this man's mask lurks chaos though. Shirakawa is like a mix between a man and a machine, a cyborg. Donna Haraway discusses a modern theory called cyborg theory. She says that:

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction . . . . Liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility. The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century (Haraway, 1991, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century").

A cyborg is a mixture of nature and technology, of something natural and something artificial, and also something that is connected to life and something connected to death. So it is a build-up of opposites. It should be noted that Shirakawa does not only embody death and artificiality because he is described as robotic. He embodies these features because of the horrible deed he has done. The more immoral he as becomes, the more inanimate he becomes as well. Is he just as Dorian Grey in *The Portrait of Dorian Grey*? Or is he a new Frankenstein, an outcast?

Another way to look at this novel is to study the similarities to film narrative. Since *After Dark* has a camera as the narrator, the connection to films is evident, but there are other filmic functions in this novel. It is only during one night for example, and so it is in realistic time which might not seem like a filmic characterisation, but at times it reminds one of a documentary. Here we have a camera that tries to document everything at night in Tokyo. The whole first chapter contains many parts that seem like directives for a cameraman. This could be studied closer. Also, each chapter is like a scene. The image of the clock that is in the corner also makes it seem like directives for a play or a film. In chapter 14 there is also an example of a style that is shaped as a script or dramatic text: "Eri Asai's room" is the first line and then there is a new paragraph. Many dialogues in the novel also look like the pages of a manuscript, for example this sample:

Kaoru: So these're the guests in room three-oh-two.

Komugi: Three-oh-two, huh? They *look* innocent enough, but they went *wild* in there. You shoulda *seen* the place after they were through with it. (Murakami, 2008, p.71).

Also, the fact that we are constantly reminded that we are in power as watchers is interesting: "As mentioned before, all that we, as pure point of view, can accomplish is to observe, gather data, and, if possible, judge" (108). What can we make of this? Also, further connections can be made to Bakhtin in this context and his idea of "carnival-esque ecriture", which is "suggesting homologies to the narrative strategies and cinematic devices of the films" (Stam, 103).

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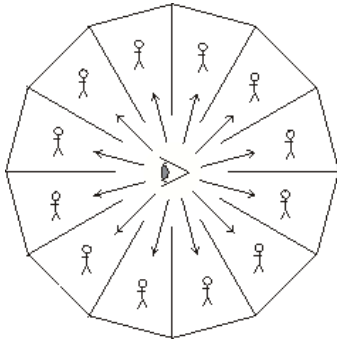
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## 7. Appendixes

### Appendix 1



Sean Tiner's adaptation of the Panopticon to the Internet

Source: <http://whatsmartgrlsreadingtoday.wordpress.com/2011/01/30/discipline-and-punish-part-three-panopticism-3-1/>

## Appendix 2



Excursion into Philosophy by Edward Hopper