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Relations of Power, Knowledge and Language in Haruki Murakami's *The Strange Library*

Mitarik Barma

Jadavpur University in Kolkata, India

Abstract

Michel Foucault in his book *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* notes with reference to Jorge Luis Borges' work how language forms an invisible labyrinth of repetition while becoming its own mirror as it places "the infinite outside of itself". In Haruki Murakami's *The Strange Library* we are faced with a narrative that not only draws our attention to the fictionality of the text as a language game but also the variance of interpretive freedom it offers to the reader. Thus it essentially raises the question of authorship as well as the human condition of being always already inside the labyrinth of language, culture and discipline. The aim of this paper is to explore the themes of discipline, imprisonment, and textuality as implicated by the text *The Strange Library* as well as to discuss the problematics involved with the relationship between the author, the text and the reader with reference to selected writings of Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and Tzvetan Todorov.

Keywords: Haruki Murakami, Michel Foucault, *The Strange Library*, Textuality, Discipline.

1. Disciplinary power and its relation to the body

As Michel Foucault notes in his *Discipline and Punish*, the basic goal of disciplinary power was to turn the human being into a docile body which at the same time will also act within a system of production. In the text, entitled *The Strange Library*, authored by Haruki Murakami, what we find is a parallel to Foucauldian idea of disciplinary power and its relationship to body, sexuality and the technologies of the self.

At the very beginning, the speaking subject, a little boy is seen to be visiting a library, where rules and regulations must be followed. The books that he wanted to return to the library, *How to Build a Submarine*, *Memoirs of a Shepherd*, shows his interest into technical knowledge, that is to say in specialized discourses, situating the little boy as a scholar in the vast discursive network of knowledge. His youth in contrast to the old man he meets, points to the naivety of the speaking subject, while also establishing the old man as a regulative force, representing the ancient rules of language in which one becomes always already situated. By 'fixing' the boy within the regulatory space of the library the old man prepares the boy for imprisonment within the library basement, at the center of the labyrinthine network. As Foucault notes,

"The general form of an apparatus intended to render individuals docile and useful, by means of precise work upon their bodies, indicated the prison institution, before the law ever defined it as the penalty par excellence." (Foucault, 1995)

From the very beginning the reference to sheep and shepherds and the passive nature of the boy scholar indicates that he is already a docile subject. As Dreyfus and Rabinow notes following

Foucault, the development in Western political thought is threefold. Traditionally it was concerned with the just and good life of the individual.

“Political thinking was that art which, in an imperfect world, led men toward the good life, an art which imitated God’s government of nature.” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982)

During the Renaissance however under the influence of Machiavelli,

“Practical, technical knowledge was raised above metaphysical considerations, and strategic considerations became paramount.” (ibid)

The third development in Western Political thought is what Foucault referred as *raison d’état* where the authors of police and technical manuals formed the policy and regulatory disciplines whose aim is neither the good life nor to aid the prince (state) but

“to increase the scope of power for its own sake by bringing the bodies of the state’s subjects under tighter discipline.” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982)

In the text we find that the boy scholar is interested lies in the tax-collection system during the Ottoman era. The three books that the old man supplies to the boy on this topic are: a. *The Ottoman Tax System*, b. *The Diary of an Ottoman Tax Collector*, and c. *Tax Revolts and Their Suppression*. Looking at the titles it is not very difficult to link them to the three-fold division in the development of western political thought. *The Diary of an Ottoman Tax Collector*, which by its title suggests to be the most subjective account among the three can be linked with the Classical Political idea of the West, where the focus was on the subjects of the state. *The Ottoman Tax System* can be linked to the Renaissance political idea, where the focus of political power shifts from subjects of the state to the state itself and finally *Tax Revolts and Their Suppression* can be linked to the tactics of *raison d’état* where regulatory systems works for the suppression of individuals and for the sake of the system of power itself. As Foucault notes in his Stanford lecture,

“...from the idea that the state has its own nature and its own finality, to the idea that man is the true object of the state’s power... a kind of animalization of man through the most sophisticated political techniques results.” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982)

Thus the individual subject is treated as an objective body useful for production for the state only. The scholar boy’s duty is thus to accumulate knowledge, only to satisfy the hunger of the old man. The sheep man on the other hand functions in place of the police. Foucault notes in *The Order of Things* how the seventeenth and eighteenth century police dealt with subjects not under juridical considerations but as a productive, labor force working for the welfare of the state. In his Stanford lecture he notes,

“...What the police see to is a live, active, productive man. Under Louis XIV one manual says, ‘the true object of police is man’.” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982)

Consequently, the police itself as part of the society and falling under different forms of regulatory principles becomes ‘docile’ to such systems of power. The fact that despite having the power of arms the police or the army does not generally try to overthrow the state pertains to the fact that they themselves are bound by different ideological apparatuses such as the law, the idea of good citizenship, nationalism etc. This is one of the reasons why the sheep man is afraid of the old man and his willow stick.

Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish* notes another aspect of the prison—that is of isolation. He notes that the English reforms to the Dutch prison models as outlined by Hanway in 1775 prescribes the positive reasons for isolation of the prisoners as followed:

“isolation provides a 'terrible shock' which, while protecting the prisoner from bad influences, enables him to go into himself and rediscover in the depths of his conscience the voice of good; solitary work would then become... an exercise in spiritual conversion... Between the crime and the return to right and virtue, the prison would constitute the 'space between two worlds' the place for the individual transformation that would restore to the state the subject it had lost.” (Foucault, 1995)

While the scholar boy inside the prison cell does not go through a spiritual transformation, his engagement with the *The Diary of an Ottoman Tax Collector* (Notably, as the title suggests the most subjective of all the three books suggesting further a reference to the Classical idea of politics in the West where man retained his subjective position to a much larger extent) and frequent loss of identity and again return to the older self at once subverts such transformative ideas of solitary prison cell while at the same time makes an implicit reference to Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk's work which often features such themes of transference of identity through an engagement with the other. In *The Strange Library* the boy scholar while reading *The Diary of an Ottoman Tax Collector* becomes the Turkish tax collector Ibn Armut Hasir while in Pamuk's *The New Life* the protagonist notes,

“It was as if a singular world, a complete creation with all its colors and objects, were contained in the words that existed in the book; thus I could read into it with joy and wonder all the possibilities in my own mind... Somewhere in the final pages, I wanted to say I too had come up with the same ideas. It was much later, after I had been totally overtaken by the world the book described, that I actually saw death appear in the half-light before dawn, radiant as an angel. My own death.” (Pamuk, 1998)

The difference between the boy scholar and Pamuk's protagonists is that unlike them he retains his own identity at the end, and thus displays resistance to the reformatory detention as well as the power of language.

Foucault in the *History of Sexuality*, volume 1 notes,

“Not only is sex a formidable secret... but if it carries with it so many dangers, this is because—whether out of scrupulousness, an overly acute sense of sin, or hypocrisy, no matter—we have too long reduced it to silence.” (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1978)

and that,

“Sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations and pleasures.” (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1978)

In *The Strange Library* the obscurity regarding the age of the scholar boy and the implication that he is not an adult limits the discourse of sexuality in the text and yet as an important element to the relationship of power, knowledge and truth at the site of the body heterosexual desire is not exempt from the narrative. If the act of reading can be interpreted as an act of comprehensive gazing then the boy scholar's ability to enter the world of the Ottoman Tax collector's diary is set in contrast against his first encounter with the beautiful girl. (“She was so pretty that looking at her made my eyes hurt.”) (Murakami, 2014) Reading is a silent act, where the text does not have a

voice outside the reader's head, likewise the exchange between the boy and the girl is silent at her end and is possible only through the scholar boy's comprehensibility of her gestures. However, the girl in the text does not simply signify the narcissistic act of reading or the slippages in the experience of reading interacting between the reader and the text (as it happens in William Gass' experimental novella *Willie Master's Lonesome Wife*), rather her presence is a confirmation of the boy's sexuality as well as a signification of the silenced voice of the feminine within the repressive disciplinary formations. Notably, neither the girl, nor the mother of the boy, both of whom play traditional feminine role of housekeeping and serving has any voice in the story. The only woman who speaks in the text is the female librarian, who is part of the disciplinary functionary and as such only leads the boy to his imprisonment by her instruction to visit room 107. The girl speaks to the boy through bodily gestures and only in his dreams where the boy as an Ottoman tax collector has three wives, is she able to speak. As we may note here, moon, historically, in varying cultures is associated with both the feminine and madness. And in the text, it is the phasing of the moon that affects the girl. As the night of the new moon approaches, the girl starts fading into the background and it is in the night of the new moon when the girl loses her human features to turn into a starling. The starling imagery thus works both as a symbol for internal innocence in the time of darkness, as well as the materiality of the body, sexuality that escapes disciplinary boundaries. The boy's constant preoccupation with the thought of his mother, his obedience to her and finally the disappearance of the 'girl-who-was-a-starling' (who protects the boy from the big black dog like his mother did once) along with his mother's sudden death links the feminine with the idea of motherhood while also hinting at the possibilities of Freudian idea of an Oedipus complex. However, what seems more interesting is how the power relation functions throughout the text. While the boy is unable to leave the prison house at his own will, and the sheep man is afraid of- what happens to be 'a regular willow switch', the 'girl-who-was-a-starling' is not only able to enter in and out of the prison cell at her own will but by helping the boy exercises her own power. As Foucault notes,

"It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as [1] the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as [2] the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as [3] the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as [4] the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies." (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1978)

This implies that each individual is in a network of power relations, working as multimodal points of power and by following the order of regulations or by their exercise of resistance they in either case exercise their power. Initially, the boy is a docile subject who follows first his mother's regulations and then the old man's, however, what we find in the text is a subversion of the idea working behind the prison system for the boy in the end without letting himself being a subject of further docility tries to escape the-law-within-the-library, at the background of his own approaching death. Although, the girl exercises her power by helping the boy, following Foucault one may note that, power relations are

"imbued, through and through, with calculation: there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1978).

And

“this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject”
(ibid)”

That is to say, although the exercise of power by the girl seems out of individual choice, it is also situated within her relationship with the boy. As Ellen K. Feder points out, “that different positions individuals take up or are assigned afford specific arenas for the exercise of power” (Feder, 2011). Positionality inside a narrative upholds its framework but it also maintains the network of power. Likewise, in the relationship to each other and to the overall regulations of law the individual choices are constrained and interdependent. On the other hand, if we were to think the starling as a projection of the boy's own internal innocence, then his final breaking out of the institution of knowledge i.e. the library comes only at his own sacrifice of innocence and his experience of the modes of discipline.

2. Language and textuality

Consequently, outside the library he finds that he is alone, “the sheep man was gone” (Murakami, 2014). He [the sheep man] disappeared “without a word”, “Just as the morning dew had evaporated.”(ibid) These statements bear at the least, twofold implications, at one level, the sheep man as his very name suggests is a docile figure. However, he is a docile body only within the network of disciplinary power. If his very identity is of a docile person then outside the network of such power relations, he no longer exists because there he no longer would be a sheep man. On the other hand, since he disappeared ‘without a word’, his disappearance from the text is the absence of word. His disappearance with the absence of a signifier thus leads us, the readers to the conditions of the text, the apparent textuality of the narrative, the fact that the appearance and disappearance of characters in a fiction is actually the appearance and disappearance of words. Character that is a fictional figure is also formed by characters of a language. At the very beginning of the narrative when the boy enters the library he sees the woman at the circulation desk reading a thick book. She can only see the boy when she stops reading. This is because the boy has not entered the reading room yet, nor had he gone to the depths of the library. Although we, the readers are able to situate the boy within the narrative, he still remains outside the main narrative of disciplinary imprisonment. When the books are returned to the library the woman resumes reading and it is then the boy goes in search for books, descending the stairs. The woman librarian pause in reading to see the boy, and later her resuming of reading when the boy descends the library stairs thus becomes a marker to signify the boy's entry into the narrative of disciplinary formation. Although he is a regular visitor to the library the space beneath the library is unknown to him. And when he knocks on the door to the room 107 (one may note, not only that 107 is a prime number, incidentally the number of Nobel Prize Winners in Literature till 2014, when *The Strange Library* was published, is also 107) the sound echoes in the corridor signifying the repetition and endless cycle of language. The old man, who functions in the text as a disciplinary authority thus in some sense also signifies the ancient rule of language in which man situates himself by entering the labyrinth of language. The old man states to the boy scholar, “To read them [the books requested by the boy] you must use the inner room.” This statement of the old man at one level signifies that in order to read, that is to say, in order to exercise one's intellectual faculty one has to enter into heart of the disciplinary institution following its regulation. One can study about disciplinary functions such as tax collection only within the situated position of another discipline, only to be imprisoned there. On the other hand, it also shows how human beings become entrapped into the labyrinth of language, which they use to

interpret [that is to say, 'read', although reading not necessarily means interpretation] the world around them. Foucault notes in his *Death and the Labyrinth*,

“...it must be remembered that it's the Minotaur who watches within Daedalus' palace, and after the long corridors, he is the last challenge” (Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*, 1986)

And that,

“the labyrinth is at the same time the truth and the nature of the Minotaur, that which encloses him externally and explains him from within. The labyrinth while hiding, reveals... and it leads to the splendor of their origins.” (ibid)

However, the labyrinth that entraps the boy scholar does not reveal a Minotaur within but a sheep man, the labyrinth of language thus also becomes the labyrinth of discourse that claims the docility of the subjects and their productive function. The scholar boy at this point is still unable to comprehend how language and discourses are able to constrain his individual will which makes him wonder

“Why do I act like this, agreeing when I really disagree, letting people force me to do things I don't want to do?” (Murakami, 2014)

As Foucault notes in his *Death and the Labyrinth*,

“There are two types of beings in Roussel: those produced by the metamorphosis, duplicated in their being and standing in the middle of this opening, where there is no doubt the question of death; and those whose origin is beyond them, as if hidden by a black disk around which the labyrinth must turn in order to reveal it... The others are ordinary men and women (their description is that of children's tales: simple individualized beings, all good or bad, identified the moment they come into play by established categories); but it's their origin which is barred by a black line-hidden because it's too remarkable, or remarkable because it's shameful. The labyrinth wends its way toward this glimmering light.” (Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*, 1986)

The scholar boy's encounter with the sheep man beyond the darkness of the labyrinthine corridors is in a way man's encounter with himself at the center of the labyrinth of language. Foucault, in line of Heidegger, notes in his *Order of Things* that,

“Man is cut off from his origin that would make him contemporaneous with his own existence: amid all the things that are born in time and no doubt die in time, he, cut off from all origin, is already there.” (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 2005)

The sheep man thus like the Minotaur represents man's situatedness within the labyrinth of language. Foucault also notes that,

“Man has not been able to describe himself as a configuration in the episteme without thought at the same time discovering, both in itself and outside itself, at its borders yet also in its very warp and woof, an element of darkness, an apparently inert density in which it is embedded, an unthought which it contains entirely, yet in which it is also caught.” (Ibid)

While man is trapped inside the labyrinth of language the darkness of unthought not only surrounds his own self but also represents the darkness exterior to language itself which he has no hold of. This may be the reason why the labyrinth in the text is also surrounded by darkness and

only within the labyrinth is light where he sees the sheep man as an inner reflection of himself. The imagery of the doughnut (with a hole at the middle) may have been used to serve similar purpose. Man's discovery that he is unable to transcend the limits of history and language also problematizes his epistemological pursuit for the ultimate meaning. This might be the reason why Foucault unlike Gadamer is not interested in the recovery of the ultimate meaning. He notes in *The Birth of the Clinic*,

“For centuries we have waited in vain for the decision of the word.” (Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, 2003)

Foucault thus does not search in history a true meaning, nor does he treat history as teleological or as eschatological, rather focuses his attention to the forms of practices which conditioned (and still conditions) history. The problematics involved with the epistemology of the self and the influence of phenomenological and existential philosophers in the twentieth century might have been one of the main reasons behind the concern of the postmodern fictions with the ontological problematics. Brian McHale noted, how the postmodern novel is characterized by being “ontological.” (McHale, 2004) in its narrative focalization. As Vera Nünning points out, while the unreliable narrators mind opens up spaces for possible worlds depending upon different propositional attitudes, the

“intrauniverse relations not only serve as a means to describe the fictional universe in unreliable narratives, they also lay the foundation for an explanation model of narrative unreliability”. (Nünning, 2015)

This is also apparent in *The Strange Library* as the protagonist boy there shifts between the world of Ottoman empire and his own, the library and the outside. However, unreliability is not the key focus here, rather it is a balancing act of spaces and the girl assures him,

“So just because I don't exist in the sheep man's world, it doesn't mean that I don't exist at all.”, (Murakami, 2014)

to which the boy replies,

“I get it. Our worlds are all jumbled together—your world, my world, the sheep man's world. Sometimes they overlap and sometimes they don't. That's what you mean, right?” (Ibid)

Right before the narrative ends the statement,

“No mother. No pet starling. No sheep man. No girl”(Murakami, 2014),

yet again draws our attention to the textual condition of the narrative. These figures as textual constructs, in their formulation and maintenance of the narrative world/s remind us that within the narrative only a meta-knowledge of the outside is possible. Even outside the library the boy is not outside the narrative but only through his ending statement is he able to foreclose the narrative which also forecloses the possibility of their reappearance. At the same time the absence of an Other (mother, girl, sheep man) problematizes the boy's own identity driving him to the darkness of unthought in his solitary self-reflection.

3. The problems of authorship and reading

The text of *The Strange Library* repeatedly draws the reader's attention to its own textual condition while at the same time the images (which were freely chosen by a group of artists

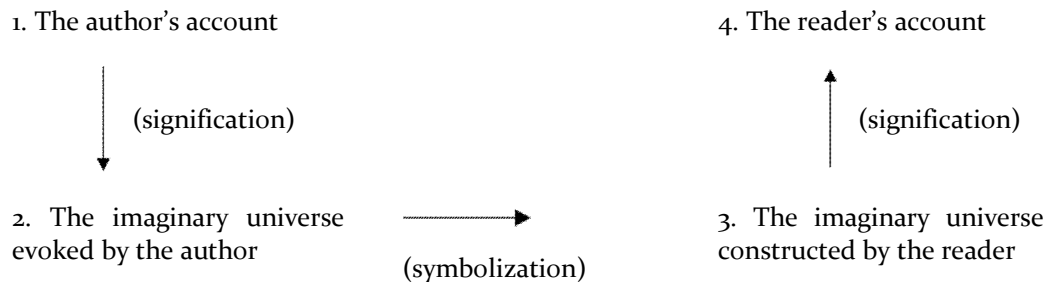
employed by the publishers who assembled them from wide ranging books of different genres) inserted in between the text not only acts as a point of reference for the reader's imagination but also emphasizes the fact that the text is of open signification. The fact that the images were not chosen by the author and that different editions of the book contains different set of images strengthens this point. Such emphasis on the interpretive freedom of the reader also raises the question of authorship, that is to say the problematic relationship between the author and the text. As Barthes notes in his article, *The Death of the Author*,

“in France, Mallarme was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person... For him, for us too, it is language which speaks, not the author...” (Barthes, 2010)

However, language does not speak in itself but only in the presence of a reader, through the act of signification and symbolization. The act of reading thus becomes an act of construction. As Tzevan Todorov notes in his article, entitled *Reading as Construction*,

“Nevertheless, two accounts of the same text will never be identical... these accounts describe, not the universe of the book itself, but this universe as it is transformed by the psyche of each individual reader.” (Todorov, 1996)

For Todorov the stages of this transformative aspect of reading are fourfold:



Here signification refers to the meaning of texts resulting out of formal grammatical constructions while symbolization is the act of interpretation. What Todorov sidelines in his discussion of reading as construction is the fact that all forms of signification carry the possibility of symbolization which effectively makes such distinction between signification and symbolization impractical in certain situated readings. However, he notes that the modern novel dismantling the mechanisms necessary for constructions and by the employment of what he calls, ‘schizophrenic discourse’ problematizes the act of reading. E. D. Hirsch in his *Validity in Interpretation* and later also in the works of discourse analysts such as Henning Nølke, Kjersti Fløttum and Coco Norén’s *Théorie scandinave de la polyphonie linguistique* it has been shown that to comprehend the meaning of a text at the most literal level,

“the reader is effectively subject to certain linguistic constraints. In written discourse, there can be no immediate access to the enunciation itself, to the act of speaking, writing or reading. What is accessible to the analyst as well as to any other reader are the formal traces of the enunciation, the enunciative markers instructing the reader about how the discourse is uttered (or ‘enunciated’). For it is thanks to these formal markers of enunciation – *I*, *not* or quotation marks – that the text defines the interpretive limits” (Angermuller, 2014)

Moreover as Hirsch has noted, often a shared cultural context of the reader and authors is implied in a text as well. Sean Burke notes in *The Death and Return of the Author*, *The Death of the Author* for Barthes comes “in terms of the closure of representation.” (Burke, 1998) And thus texts which tries to abandon the representational aesthetics, texts which are a-referential and pluralistic, that is to say, the texts authored by Mallarme, Sollers, Bataille, Robbe-Grillet and others are not Barthes’ object of attack. Murakami’s text *The Strange Library* likewise as a non-representationalist text, in its emphasis on plurality of signification and symbolization champions the reader’s position. However, Foucault takes Barthes’ critique further by drawing attention to the fact that the idea of authorship should not be limited to the work of fiction but should also include other discursive practices and that the idea of authorship is situated in historical and cultural conditions. As Foucault notes, in certain discursive practices such as in Marxism, or psychoanalysis, the attribution of authorship plays a central function as opposed to the discourses of science. Likewise, in case of literary analysis the idea of authorship determines the interpretation of an individual work. In case of Murakami for example, one might note that the sheep man figure is a recurrent trope (it has been used in some of his other novels such as *The Wild Sheep Chase*, *Dance Dance Dance* etc.), as well as themes of darkness, isolation and loss. On the other hand, as Simon During notes in *Foucault and Literature*, the idea of authorship in Britain is related to the English Copyright Act of 1709, which limited the publishing rights for certain works of certain authors for a period of twenty-one years. However,

“Once copyright lapses, an author is open to market forces, his or her name becomes a commodity, an advertisement.” (During, 2005)

Barthes in his proclamation of the death of author and the championing of the reader’s position does not take into consideration such politics of authorship and canon formation, which invariably becomes the point of attack by literary critiques and authors alike. Late modernist American writer-philosopher William Gass for example in his article ‘The Death of Author’ attacks Barthes on the ground that the critic himself is also the subject of the attribution of copyright laws, and the idea of author function should extend to the critic as well. For Foucault, author is that functional principle by which ‘free circulation’, ‘free manipulation’, ‘free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction’ (Foucault, *What is an author?*, 2010) is constrained. Even though Foucault hoped for a future when the ‘author function will disappear’, (ibid) he notes, it will still have ‘a system of constraint’. (Ibid) Foucault refuses to predict what that constraint might be by stating that it has ‘to be determined or, perhaps, experienced.’ (Ibid) Thus, the indispensability of the author function leads to the indifferent attitude portrayed at the end of the text ‘What is an author?’ where we are reminded that it is not the speaker but the modes of existence, circulation, appropriation of that speech is what we should pay more attention to. As Monika Fludernik notes in reference to Harold Love’s conception of multiple authorship (precursory, executive, declarative, revisionary) (Fludernik, 2009), the authority of the text is not limited to the composer of the text but tied to the whole production system. Fludernik further notes that,

“The visual presentation of the text of a novel also counts as an external narrative structure in so far as it is not mimetically motivated.” (Fludernik, 2009)

Murakami’s book even in its external paratextual structure reminds the readers of this whole system of authorship while at the same time acknowledges the importance of the reader as “cognitive agent to solve its interpretive problems” (Angermuller, 2014). As Marie-Laure Ryan observes following Czech narratologist Jirí Koteš, observes following Czech narratologist Jirí Koteš,

“When we speak of *storyworld* the influence comes mainly from cognitive approaches to narrative (Herman 2009), while when we speak of fictional world the influence comes from schools and disciplines interested in the ontological status of imaginary entities: philosophy of language, formal semantics, and more particularly possible worlds theory (Pavel 1986; Doležel 1998; Ryan 1991). Yet the association between storyworld/cognitive approach and fictional world/ontological approach should not be taken in an exclusive sense, for storyworlds can raise ontological issues, and the recognition and evaluation of fictional worlds involve cognitive operations.” (Ryan, 2015)

and that,

“A storyworld is not just the spatial setting where a story takes place; it is a complex spatio-temporal totality that undergoes global changes.” (Ryan, 2015)

Murakami’s book thus in its paratextual signification not only appropriates Foucault’s idea of author-function but also problematizes the fissure between inside and outside of a storyworld.

4. Conclusion

Despite its brevity, *The Strange Library* not only proves to be an engaging narrative, but also a critical one. The issues it raises, critiques, parodies are manifold and an exhaustive discussion of that is beyond the limits of this paper. As we have noted, the library with its dark labyrinthine structure below, seems to signify not only the labyrinthine network of language but also disciplinary and discursive formations. At the center of it the sheep man figure is not a symbol of strength but of docility while at the same time also implying the human condition of entrapment within language and discourses. The labyrinth of *The Strange Library* is thus not like the Borgesian labyrinth of infinite possibilities of language but a trap, a mode of imprisonment. We are not sure if *The Strange Library* is able to provide objective knowledge, since the boy scholar not only chooses to read a subjective account of an economic-judicial function (tax collection) and like Pamuk’s protagonists repeatedly loses his ‘self’ inside that narrative but his final doubt regarding the events of the whole narrative problematizes idea of knowledge itself. His complete loneliness at the end and the thought of darkness inside a library puts him in a position of Cartesian solipsism, where the absence of an Other (e.g. God) only increases his sense of alienation. It is also unclear whether in his interest of disciplinary functions in the obscure past, he is placed as a reference the Foucauldian enterprise to map the conditions of history based on power relations. Unlike the Borgesian characters in the library of Babel, who hope for a book that may contain the essence of all the other books, the boy in *The Strange Library*, is keenly aware of the darkness that surrounds the labyrinth and his own conditions of imprisonment which he must escape. The startling image, as a symbol of body and sexuality also reflects its struggle with the disciplinary functionary and possibilities of slippages. Finally, the boy’s escape from the labyrinth and the disappearance of the sheep man re-ascertain the human conditions of linguistic and disciplinary entrapment for neither the author nor the reader knows what man may become if he is able to escape the labyrinth of language and society. Outside the library, the sheep man disappears, and the boy with his experience would certainly be not a docile body anymore. However, his identity will remain foreclosed, as outside the labyrinth the labyrinth he is also outside the limits of language. The text of *The Strange Library* thus in its manifold symbolizations provides a critique of power and knowledge, and likewise asserts our inability to locate the ultimate truth. It suggests that while ideas of authorship, and identity is always located within the multimodal networks of power/knowledge relationships in the society, truth is also constrained

by the limits of language itself. *The Strange Library* thus complements Foucault's idea of power/knowledge relations in human society and in its critique of the idea of the labyrinthine network of knowledge reaffirms the limits in human condition.

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Mitarik Barma is an MPhil student and Junior Research Fellow in the Department of English at Jadavpur University. He is working on the novels of British writer Kazuo Ishiguro. His area of interest includes Twentieth and twenty-first century fictions, Narratology, Indian theology and epics, Continental philosophy, and Culture Studies.
