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**The Literary Conventions of
Apocalyptic Science Fiction:
A Study of Dean Koontz's *The Eyes
of Darkness* (1981)**

By

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Abstract:

This research paper is an attempt to study the literary conventions of the sub-genre known as apocalyptic science fiction and the methods employed by contemporary American writer Dean Koontz (1945 –). Koontz's novels have won claim as science fiction thrillers of suspense based on the incorporation of several elements of horror including an anticipation of Covid-19 in his novel *The Eyes of Darkness* (1981). Forty years ago, Koontz mentioned one fictional biological weapon which he named 'Wuhan – 400;' a name that has truly become an enticing warning associated with Covid-19, the pandemic hitting the entire world of late. For this purpose, this study tends to explicate the conventions of apocalyptic science fiction as employed in Koontz's novel so as to trace the marked similarities between the writer's fictional virus, 'Wuhan – 400' and the real global pandemic 'Covid-19.'

Keywords: Apocalyptic – Science fiction – apocalypse – global pandemic – revelation – symbolic visions.

ملخص :

الموضوع الرئيسي الذي سيطر على كتاب الخيال العلمي هو نهاية العالم التي جسدها في مجموعة من المواضيع الفرعية مثل الكارثة ، والبقاء على قيد الحياة ، ونهاية العالم ، وما بعد نهاية العالم ، وديستوبيا. يتناول هذا البحث النوع الفرعي من الخيال العلمي المروع وتستكشف الطرق التي يتعامل بها الكتاب الحديثون والمعاصرون مع الأزمات والكوارث الكونية. الرواية قيد المناقشة هي عيون الظلام (١٩٨١) بقلم دين كونتز. في هذه الرواية ، يذكر كونتز سلاحًا بيولوجيًا وهميًا يدعى ووهان -٤٠٠ ، وقبل حوالي ٤٠ عامًا من تفشي المرض العالمي ، فيروس كورونا (كوفيد -١٩). يسلط البحث الضوء على خصائص الخيال العلمي في نهاية العالم كما وردت في الرواية. كما أنه يميل إلى استخلاص أوجه التشابه بين فيروس كونتز الخيالي "ووهان -٤٠٠" والوباء العالمي الحقيقي "كوفيد -١٩".

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخيال العلمي – نهاية العالم – الأحداث الغير مفسرة – وباء عالمي – الكشف – الرؤى الرمزية

1. INTRODUCTION

Science fiction is a genre of speculative fiction dealing primarily with imagined elements that do not exist in the real world. It includes a wide variety of futuristic concepts, and its texts are often set in the future, in the space, or in an entirely unknown universe. Science fiction also includes human or human-like elements working on some new implementations that lead to or prompt new discoveries. The experiments and technological applications introduced by science fiction novels are most likely sophisticated and uncanny in their nature. Relying on the basic science fiction convention that what is currently impossible may be probable in the future, most science fiction novels are designed intentionally with glimpses of approximation and susceptibility to be partly or wholly applicable in the future.

As a literary genre, science fiction has been also called the "literature of ideas," as it includes a wide range of themes and imaginative ideas dealing with issues such as: time and space travel, mind control, alternative histories, aliens, and extraterrestrial life forms. Likewise, with its future setting, science fiction propounds the potential consequences of technological and scientific innovations and advances. Margaret Atwood distinguishes Science Fiction from the novel indicating that:

SF can graphically explore the following five issues: the consequences of new proposed technologies, the nature and limit of what it means to be human (e.g. cyborgs), the relation of humanity to the universe (using quasi-religious images), the proposed changes in social organization (utopia and dystopia), and the realms of the imagination by taking us boldly and daringly where no one has gone before (e.g., outer-space, inner-space, cyberspace).

These distinctive features imply an avowed necessity for incorporating certain glimpses of realism in Science Fiction. The gap between the present and the imaginative future has been eventually narrowing to a degree that it may nearly collapse in few years. Gwyneth Jones indicates that "reality and science fiction are moving into such close conjunction that science fiction is no longer the strange reflection and artistic elaboration of current preoccupations: the mirror and the reality have almost become one" (qtd. in McMahan 4).

One of the central themes that gripped the imagination of science fiction writers is the end of the world; a theme which they conveyed under a collection of subthemes such as catastrophe, survival, apocalypse, post-apocalypse, and dystopia. Therefore, Science Fiction has become the dominant vehicle "for the expression of visions of apocalypse and catastrophe." Evan Calder Williams believes that Science Fiction can help people

see that ‘the world is already apocalyptic’ (149). During the twentieth century, the word ‘catastrophe’ became increasingly linked with the ideas of ‘progress’ and ‘technology.’ (i.e. the advance of new means of transportation increased the rate of accidents). In this concern, Doane has a similar view, as she defines ‘progress’ as “the destruction of an existing state of affairs so that it can be replaced by a new one (etymologically, ‘catastrophe’ – from the Greek kata (over) and strephein (turn) – means an ‘overturning of a given situation’” (228). Notwithstanding, Luckhurst labels ‘Progress’ as “the expression of, or reflection upon, the terrors and delights of technologized modernity” (170). Based on this idea, much of the catastrophic accidents seem as consequences of modern age technology with its advancement and introduction of destructive tools that have become viable means and material for catastrophe fiction.

Till the First World War, apocalyptic science fiction writers focused mainly on catastrophes and disasters caused by either natural or cosmic factors. After the First World War, they turned to concentrate on the apocalyptic vision and the notion of disaster, revealing the idea that “an imminent end of the world is the only possible solution to apostasy and the decadence of modern civilization” (Collins 9). Following the Second World War and the Hiroshima Bombing, which still warn the world still warn new scientific weapons still warn, writers began to focus on

the end-of-the-world theme. The mood depicted in science fiction during this period was gloomy and pessimistic. Belkharouché notes that “catastrophes were primarily man-made,” and adds that:

humans might easily destroy themselves and their world as weapons became even more sophisticated and powerful. The idea of wholesale destruction and nuclear holocaust gained ground steadily among writers on both sides of the Atlantic, and man was pictured as an agent of racial suicide through nuclear, biological and chemical warfare. (66)

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Definition of the subgenre

Proposing a definition of the term, Leigh explains that apocalypse has “taken on many connotations in recent popular culture.” He continues to trace these successive connotations from “the violent conclusions in the film *Apocalypse Now* about the Vietnam War; to the catastrophic expectations around the year 2000; to the radical upheavals in race, culture, and society in many contemporary novels; to science fiction fantasies about the end of the world” (4-5). Considering its literary value, Collins propounds the idea that an ‘apocalypse’ is “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is

mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world (2). The definition suggested by Collins indicates that ‘apocalypse’ as a genre has its distinctive structure. It no longer signifies just a religious event (the final judgment of God) but also signals the threat of human existence.

Apocalypse, as Moon notes, emphasizes “the disjuncture of the present orders in which dramatic events reshape the lives of human beings and bring an end to the world as we know it” (4). As its original meaning – revelation – proposes, the term ‘apocalypse’ refers to, as Ketterer puts it, “a catastrophic change that results in the demise of old order and the creation of new one. Whether this new order would be utopian or dystopian is often left veiled. Freed from its religious shackles, apocalypse has become a concept that designates “a dialectic, conflict, or tension of oppositions” (8). In other words, apocalyptic fiction is a subgenre of science fiction set in a time period where the fear of a sudden collapse of the world has become widespread.

2.2. History of Apocalyptic Science Fiction

Following the chronological development of apocalyptic fiction, three phases may be traced:

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- (a) The first period corresponds with the relatively few novels and short fiction dating back to the years before 1945. Its defining theme was the decline of human civilization. The decline was precisely a result of a natural catastrophe, the First World War, and the relative advancement in technology corollary to the consequences of the industrial revolution.
- (b) The second period extended from the end of the Second World War to the mid-1990s. Its defining theme was concerned with the nuclear holocaust, conceived in the shadow of the atomic bombings of 1945 and the Cold War doctrine of mutually assured destruction (O'Leary 1999).
- (c) The third phase occupies the period from the mid-1990s to the present. It is marked by the foregrounding of doomsday fears-economic, ecological, pestilential, cosmological-which, while present during the second period, were overshadowed by its atomic dimension. Several events must have contributed to the shaping of its character. One was the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Another was a tectonic shift in attitudes regarding global fundamentalism after 9/11, which led to the replacement of the political binarism of the Cold War by the so-called War on Terror. Perhaps the most significant events from the standpoint of popular culture have been the mounting recognition of the magnitude of the global environmental crisis, and the advent of the Internet, which

has fundamentally changed how apocalyptic speculation is conceived, manufactured, and disseminated.

The root of the misconception regarding the norm 'apocalyptic' is its modern association with the idea of “the end of the world.” Since 1945, “apocalyptic” has increasingly come to refer to any global or earthly catastrophe, or any kind of impending disaster (real or perceived). The Holocaust experience and the nuclear anxiety during the Second World War and its aftermath led to the creation of apocalyptic narratives in the 1950s. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, apocalyptic narrative continued as a subgenre of science fiction, though not as popular as it had been in the 1950s. The renaissance of apocalyptic narratives resumed in the 2000s, linked to the chain of gloomy events that typified the bleak atmosphere of the times, for instance, the terrorist attack of the Twin Towers on September 11 as well as the outbreaks of lethal viruses and epidemics such as SARS and COVID virus. (DiTommaso 476-8)

2.3. Literary Conventions of Apocalyptic Science Fiction

David Leigh points out the major themes of apocalyptic literature as follows: “an imminent end-time; a cosmic catastrophe; a movement from an old to a new age; a struggle between forces of good and evil (sometimes personified in angels and demons); a desire for an ultimate paradise (often

parallel to an original paradise); the transitional help of God or a messiah; and a final judgment and manifestation of the ultimate." Narratives with such themes often includes the following characteristics: visions or dreams by seers or guides, visionary symbols, characters in spiritual turmoil, pseudonymous authorship, mythic pattern preserving a sense of mystery, a crisis situation, a sense of ultimate hope, and a recurring expectation of an imminent end of history or of the world itself. (5)

Disaster, apocalypse, and the end of the world have been primary themes in apocalyptic science fiction. However, in such works, the endings are not always final simply because there is a hint that life will somehow go on. David Seed notes, "Amid the welter of holocausts, nuclear and otherwise, which were published after 1945, there is usually an indication of a surviving remnant or a decisive re-assertion of normal order once the disaster has passed" (113). Collins notes that Amos Wilder observed "the full apocalyptic scenario should include salvation as well as judgment, the new age. The persistence of apocalyptic themes, however, even in secular writings, should warn us against any dismissal of this tradition as something humanity has outgrown. Apocalypticism is born of fears and hopes that are endemic to the human condition" (13).

In addition to the previously mentioned causes of apocalypse, science fiction authors have turned to exploring the

harm humans can cause to their world by their reckless scientific experiments and their neglect of the environment. This is done by portraying settings of global environmental calamities and disasters. The fate of humanity in a future characterized by global warming, refugees from ecological disasters, and pandemics are all featured in such novels as Dean Koontz, *The Eyes of Darkness*. In this novel, the main character is tasked with navigating the deathtraps of a world afflicted by the prevailing apocalyptic conditions.

3. APOCALYPTIC SCIENCE FICTION LITERARY CONVENTIONS IN *THE EYES OF DARKNESS*

3.1. Synopsis

In 1981, Dean Koontz published a gripping thriller: *The Eyes of Darkness*, of which a review in *The Times* states: “Dean Koontz is not just a master of our darkest dreams, but also a literary juggler.” The novel takes place in four days. It is about a woman, Tina Evans, who is mourning the loss of her only son, Danny, whom she lost on a tragic accident. Along with other kids and some counselors, Danny “died” in a bus crash while on a trip to the mountains. A year has passed since then, and Tina is about to look for a fresh start, and put her grief behind her. The Vegas Show, named *Magyck*, is to be premiered, and Tina is very anxious. However, the night before the show, Tina imagines she

sees her DEAD boy in a car; she sees a boy whom she thinks is her son: "The boy was about twelve, Danny's age. He had thick dark hair like Danny's, a nose that resembled Danny's, and a rather delicate jawline like Danny's too" (3). Though it seems to the reader as if she is in a state of denial and that she cannot accept her son's death: "his resemblance to Danny seemed to be more than mere coincidence" (3). The narrator adds, "Seizing on this boy's resemblance to her Danny, she was too easily able to fantasize that there had been no loss in the first place" (4). This incident is followed by a shattering message that she receives. Two words, NOT DEAD, are scrawled on the blackboard in Danny's room. These two words agitate her into an unconscious terrifying journey, as she feels her son is trying to reach out from beyond the grave. Tina teams up with an attorney, Eliot Stryker, whom she meets during the premiere. They go off on a quest together in this book in an attempt to figure out the truth of Danny's death. During the journey of quest, Tina discovers her son is kept in a military facility after being infected with a man-made virus called 'Wuhan-400.'

3.2. Pseudonym Authorship

This book was originally published under the pseudonym Leigh Nichols. In the book 'Afterword,' Koontz confesses he had this habit of using pen names for his novels, but he soon uncovers their tragic deaths. However, in announcing the death

of Nichols, Koontz was not faithful, as he declared that Nichols “drank too much champagne one evening on a Caribbean cruise ship and was decapitated in a freak limbo accident” (323). Later, as *Headline* republished the novel, Koontz had to confess that he was lying in order not to expose Nichols’ true fate: “One bleak and wintry night Leigh Nichols was abducted by extraterrestrials, taken on a tour of our solar system, introduced to the alien Nest Queen, and forced to undergo a series of horrifying surgeries. Though eventually returned to Earth, the author was too traumatized to continue a career as a novelist-but finally built a new life as the current dictator of Iraq” (323-4). He continues, “If you’re ever in Iraq, the surgically altered author will probably be happy to sign copies of these books for you-or will denounce you as an infidel and have you thrown into a prison cell as vile as any sewer. Inquire at your own risk” (324). Koontz announces he no longer uses the pen name of Leigh Nichols and that *The Eyes of Darkness* was reissued in paperback under his real name.

3.3. Symbolic Visions and Dreams

Dreams and visions appear in the majority of apocalyptic science fiction. Flower illustrates, “Vision types seem to parallel these traditional dream types, including message visions, in which a deity appears in order to impart a clear message, and symbolic visions, consisting of symbols that require deciphering by an expert. [. . .] In such cases, the seer does not interpret his

own vision” (104). In *The Eyes of Darkness*, Tina has been plagued by a frequently recurring dream: “a premonition of Danny's eventual return to her, that somehow he had survived and would be coming back into her arms one day soon” (Koontz 5). In this dream, Tina sees Danny, standing on the opposite side of “a bottom gorge,” calling her name:

Meanwhile, the sky grew darker by the second; massive storm clouds, like the clenched fists of celestial giants, squeezed the last light out of the day. Danny's cries and her response became increasingly shrill and desperate, for they knew that they must reach each other before nightfall or be lost forever; in the oncoming night, something waited for Danny, something fearsome that would seize him if he was alone after dark. Suddenly the sky was shattered by lightning, then by a hard clap of thunder, and the night imploded into a deeper darkness, into infinite and perfect blackness. (7-8)

In the dream, Danny is afraid and lonely while Tina is miserable as she cannot reach her son. Tina was accustomed to her son's loss with great bitterness. She thought she had begun to overcome her grief, and continued “to make progress toward acceptance” (11). No sooner that she could hardly overcome her grief than terrifying dreams began to haunt her. She sees this dream the night before the premiere of *Magyck*. The narrator explains that perhaps her anxiety about the public reaction to the

show is what causing her to recall her great anxiety and longing for Danny.

This time, the dream turns out to set her in escalating panic . It becomes an unbearable nightmare for she sees Danny trapped “at the bottom of a deep hole” (55) and:

chained, unable to climb, and the sides of the pit were sheer and smooth, so she had no way to reach him. Then a man dressed entirely in black from head to foot, his face hidden by shadows, appeared at the far side of the pit and began to shovel dirt into it. Danny's cry escalated into a scream of terror; he was being buried alive. Tina shouted at the man in black, but he ignored her and kept shoveling dirt on top of Danny. (59)

In many cases, apocalyptic visions may suggest a kind of change from the current normal order, yet they give hope to people who are already frustrated. No matter how violent these visions appear, “they are at least honest in bringing to expressions feelings that are almost inevitable for people who have suffered at the hands of a conquering power” (Collins 12). Tina has indeed suffered at the hands of DEATH, and through these visions and dreams, she expresses honest feelings. Now she has this hope that her Danny might be alive. This is a sign of ultimate sense of hope, a characteristic of apocalyptic science fiction.

One of the common devices in apocalyptic science fiction is the use of symbolic visions that require interpretation. As Carol A Newsom asserts, “the encoding/decoding of these visions models the trope of knowledge hidden and then revealed. Indeed, since the code is usually not too difficult to decipher, the reader often understands even before the angelic explanation. The text thus construes the reader as an insider, as someone empowered by knowledge” (210).

3.4. Incomprehensible Events

Waking up from her dream, Tina hears sounds and noise in the house: “The sound she'd heard had come as she was waking, a real noise, not an imagined one” (8). Tina thinks there is a burglar at home. She heads to Danny’s room but finds no one inside. His room was left exactly as Danny had left it. Tina has not been able to get rid of his belongings yet. Among Danny’s belongings are “several science-fiction-movie action figures” (15). Still in her son’s room, Tina notices two words printed on a black surface: “NOT DEAD.” Tina now experiences mixed feelings: “It was a denial of Danny's death. An angry refusal to accept the awful truth. A challenge to reality” (17). Since then, whenever she enters Danny’s room, she would find these two words written on the chalkboard, though she is certain they had not been written before, and that the board was blank the last time she had been in the room.

In addition to Tina, Vivienne Neddler, the housekeeper, hears sounds while mopping the kitchen floor. She meticulously checks every part of the house in search of the intruder but only finds two photographs dropped on the floor. She believes that was the sound she heard. One of these photos is “a portrait of Danny Evans, as were the other five that usually hung around it. In this one, he was ten or eleven years old, a sweet brown-haired boy with dark eyes and a lovely smile” (37). This is another sign that Danny might be alive. Vivienne puts the picture back, but then she hears the sound again. She goes to Danny’s room and gets shocked as she hears the sound coming out of an electronic squeal inside the room; she also feels the air is cooler there than it is in the rest of the house. Vivienne’s curiosity now turns into fear: “Something was very wrong here. An ominous pressure seemed to compress the air around her.” However, instead of walking out of the room, she felt “a power . . . but which she could not define-drew her inexorably to Danny's room” (38). Sometime later, when gloom and vacancy overwhelm the empty place, more incomprehensible and inexplicable actions occur inside. Danny’s room gets so cold to the extent that frost is formed on the window. The radio keeps turning on and off; the closet door keeps opening and closing. Inside the closet, clothes begin to swing and fall to the floor. Everything in the room moves from its place:

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For almost five minutes the room seemed to have come alive.

And then it died.

Silence returned.

The air grew warm again. (55)

Tina returns home to find the room of her son a mess:

The airplane models were no longer in the display case; they were strewn across the floor, and a few were broken. Danny's collection of paperbacks had been pulled from the bookcase and tossed into every corner. The tubes of glue, miniature bottles of enamel, and model-crafting tools that had stood on his desk were now on the floor with everything else. A poster of one of the movie monsters had been ripped apart; it hung from the wall in several pieces. The action figures had been knocked off the head board. The closet doors were open, and all the clothes inside appeared to have been thrown on the floor. The game table had been overturned. The easel lay on the carpet, the chalkboard facing down. (62)

Throughout the novel, indirect and vague messages supervene the setting as if to provide glimpses of hope that

Danny might be alive. One night after the premiere, when Tina was scanning the list of VIP customers who had not attended the opening of *Magyck*, she was stunned on seeing “an incredible message that the computer had inserted in the list.” Tina gasped in horror at the sight of this horrifying message that held her ability to breathe:

She stared at what the computer had printed, and fear welled in her-dark, cold, oily fear. Between the names of two high rollers were five lines of type that had nothing to do with the information she had requested:

NOT DEAD

NOT DEAD

NOT DEAD

NOT DEAD

NOT DEAD (84)

Shuffling through the pages, Tina also finds the following words:

DANNY ALIVE

DANNY ALIVE

HELP

HELP

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HELP ME (85)

The atmosphere of the office room suddenly grows colder, and computer messages continue:

I'M AFRAID

I'M AFRAID

GET ME OUT

GET ME OUT OF HERE

PLEASE . . . PLEASE

HELPHELPHELPHELP (85-6)

Amidst this prolonged experience of horror and wonder, Tina starts to think that there must be a stranger behind this inconvenience. She wonders how such a stranger could easily gain access to her house and office. She is also perplexed how the temperature could have dropped in such a short time. Suddenly, the computer begins to produce additional data. Tina looks at the screen and reads:

NOT DEAD NOT DEAD

NOT DEAD NOT DEAD

NOT IN THE GROUND

NOT DEAD

GET ME OUT OF HERE

GET ME OUT OUTOUT (88).

Tina begins to have the feeling that she is not alone at the building. She looks again at the screen. Messages disappear and new ones pop up:

I'M COLD AND I HURT

MOM? CAN YOU HEAR?

I'M SO COLD

I HURT BAD

GET ME OUT OF HERE

PLEASE PLEASEPLEASE

NOT DEAD NOT DEAD (89-90)

She wonders if these messages mean that Danny wants her to get his corpse out of the grave, but soon she holds a grip on herself and remembers that Danny is dead. She turns the computer off, but it turns on again by itself. Tina falls into tears; she thinks she is losing her mind. She pulls the computer and printer plugs; the monitor goes dark and the room temperature grows warm again. Such symbolic messages do not only allude to concrete evidence that Tina is unable to hold control over her nerves, but they also refer to some mental instability and perturbation. Tina's psychic

state does not promise any sort of recovery from the ever growing fears and illusions. Her illusions now go beyond nightmares or horrible dreams. The only possible interpretation of the short messages that pop up onto her computer monitor may be a software virus designed by a hacker who is aware of her psychic state and wishes to plant more panic in Tina. The readers may not receive the messages as Tina does simply because she is the only person who is torn by the death of her son. Another sensible interpretation lies within Tina's own heart and mind as the entire visionary episode may be an illusory moment that the writer creates to convince the readers and thrill them while it is all a gimmick created and developed in her own troubled mind.

When she is back, Tina rummages her son's belongings and find a box containing horror stories, and graphic novels. The cover of one of these novels grips her attention:

From the cover of a graphic novel. *Him*. The man dressed all in black. That same face. Mostly skull and withered flesh. Prominent sockets of bone, and the menacing, inhuman crimson eyes staring out with intense hatred. The cluster of maggots squirming on his cheek, at the corner of one eye. The rotten, yellow-toothed grin. In every repulsive detail, he was precisely like the hideous creature that stalked her nightmares.

She remembers the man in black whom she had dreamed of the

night before, and ponders: “How could she have dreamed about this hideous creature just last night and then find it waiting for her here, today, only hours later?” (140). She later tells Eliot, “The monster in my dreams is on the cover of this magazine. It's him. Detail for detail” (174).

Curious, Tina picks up the graphic novel from the box and decides to read it. Perhaps she is thinking she may find a clue to what is going on. Tina begins reading the graphic novel in Danny's room. The title page contains: THE BOY WHO WASN'T DEAD. Tina now remembers the words 'NOT DEAD' which appeared on both the chalkboard and the computer screen. The story she is holding now serves as a foreshadow to her son's story:

It was the tale of a boy, Kevin, who fell off a roof and took a bad knock on the head, thereafter slipping into a deep coma. The boy's vital signs were undetectable to the medical technology of that era. The doctor pronounced him dead, and his grieving parents committed Kevin to the grave. In those days the corpse was not embalmed; therefore, the boy was buried while still alive. Kevin's parents went away from the city immediately after the funeral, intending to spend a month at their summer house in the country, [...]. But the first night in the country, the mother received a vision in which Kevin was buried alive and calling for her. (150)

Receiving this vision, Tina is now certain that this vision is a symbolic message from God or may be from Danny that her son is alive. The vision ends with the parents of Kevin having their son's grave opened, rescuing their son, releasing him from his coma, and walking out of the graveyard. This vision seems to be a transitional help from God, which is a characteristic of apocalyptic science fiction. It provides Tina with hope as she realizes the strange resemblance between this story and the recent incidents in her own life: "She had dreamed that Danny was buried alive. Into her dream she incorporated a grisly character from an old horror-comics magazine issue in Danny's collection. The lead story in this issue was about a boy, approximately Danny's age, mistakenly pronounced dead, then buried alive, and then exhumed" (152). She ponders if this is just a coincidence. But then she shuts out all other thoughts and assures herself that her son had been dead when they buried him. He could not have been buried alive. She convinces herself that her dream must be of her own creation, and that there is no external force. Still, more messages are sent to Tina.

Tina is now certain that her son is alive and is sending her messages to come and rescue him. On their way to Bellicosti (the mortician), Danny sends a message to Tina through the radio. Cold atmosphere (snow and freezing) is felt whenever Danny uses his "psychic abilities" (224). Once Tina replies she's on her

way, the air grows warm again (so cold atmosphere is related to messages sent by Danny. Thus, Tina is now certain that Danny is alive, and it seems Eliot is too. Tina tells him, "What's important is that my Danny is alive. There's no doubt about that. Not now. Not anymore. And I gather from your question, you've become a believer too" (225).

Danny sends Tina another dream. This dream is a foreshadowing of what is happening and is to happen; in this dream, Danny sends a message to his mom; he wants her to walk into the place where they are keeping him and take him out. She also dreams that Death (Alexander and his men) are following her but he saves her:

Danny began calling again, and she continued down the dusky tunnel toward him. A dozen times she passed chinks in the wall, and Death glared out at her from every one of those apertures, screamed and cursed and raged at her, but none of the holes was large enough to allow him through. She reached Danny, and when she touched him, the chains fell magically away from his arms and legs. She said, "I was scared." And Danny said, "I made the holes in the walls smaller. I made sure he couldn't reach you, couldn't hurt you." (255-6)

Tina wakes up this time smiling and excited. Once again, there is a strong clue that her son is alive.

On the other hand, two research scientists (Dr. Carl Dombey and Dr. Zacharia) at the Sierra Lab where Danny is kept discuss Danny's situation. They notice unusual things happening to the boy (a spot they don't know whether a tumor or PC maintenance malfunction. Dombey hints that the spot is connected to a change in room temperature which Zach finds to be nonsense. Later, when Tina and Eliot find Danny, the narrator notes,

Tina met Elliot's eyes, and she knew that the same thought was running through both their minds. Could this spot on Danny's brain have anything to do with the boy's psychic power? Were his latent psychic abilities brought to the surface as a direct result of the man-made virus with which he had been repeatedly infected? Crazy-but it didn't seem any more unlikely than that he had fallen victim to Project Pandora in the first place. And as far as Tina could see, it was the only thing that explained Danny's phenomenal new powers. (317)

Therefore, all the events mentioned above seem to be inexplicable, unnatural, and beyond understanding. This is characteristic of apocalyptic science fiction. Apocalyptic events, as Daschke describes, "are so mind-bogglingly incomprehensible that they simply cannot be true in themselves; they must be masking some greater truth that would make the world make sense again" (460).

3.5. Revelation

Though difficult to give a precise definition, Stock states that, “apocalypse should not be thought of as merely a synonym for chaos or disaster or cataclysmic upheaval; more properly we should think of disclosure, unveiling and revelation” (Best5). Literally, the term “apocalypse” means “uncovering.” It is derived from the Greek *apokalyptein* meaning “to reveal something about the world and its workings that was previously unknown to the seer and his audience—and do so by means of sudden and unbeckoned dreams, visions, and theophanies that, by definition, disturb the normal experience of life.” In describing the literary effect of apocalyptic literature, Christopher Rowland asserts that it is an “unmasking of reality” (129). In *The Eyes of Darkness*, the truth is gradually unveiled as Tina and Eliot are searching for clues about Danny’s fate. They meet Carl Dombey at the Sierra lab, where Danny is Kept. Upon their request, Dombey begins to tell Tina and Eliot the story of Danny and what happened to him: “I knew this whole business was too dirty to end any way but disaster. [. . .]. The whole Danny Evans project is the work of a few megalomaniacs” (300-1). Before recounting the story of what exactly happened to Danny, Dombey takes Eliot and Tina to the isolation room to see Danny. Tina finally gets to see her boy. He looks too weak and fragile. Eliot asks Dombey about the reason the boy is kept in this

chamber and whether he is ill, to which Dombey replies,

He [Danny] had a unique disease, a man-made disease created in the laboratory. He's the only person who's ever survived it. He has a natural antibody in his blood that helps him fight off this particular virus, even though it's an artificial bug.

Dombey notes that this is exactly what fascinated Dr. Tamaguchi, the head of the installation. He adds, "Dr. Tamaguchi drove us very hard until we isolated the antibody and figured out why it was so effective against the disease. Of course, when that was accomplished, Danny was of no more scientific value." As a result, "Tamaguchi decided to test Danny to destruction" (304).

In the above quote, Dombey reveals that Danny has been infected with a man-made microorganism. He then makes another important revelation: "Although he gets weaker every day, for some reason he wins out over the virus faster each time. But each victory drains him. The disease *is* killing him, even if indirectly. It's killing him by sapping his strength. Right now he's clean and uninfected. Tomorrow they intend to stick another dirty needle in him" (305).

While Tina is preparing Danny to get him out of "his prison," Eliot questions Dombey. He asks him about the kind of research going on in this place and whether it is a military one.

Dombey confirms it is: “Biological and chemical. Recombinant DNA experiments. At any one time, we have thirty to forty projects underway.” He explains that for the public record, the U.S. got out of the biological and chemical race but in reality it has not:

the work goes on. It has to. This is the only facility of its kind we have. The Chinese have three like it. The Russians . . . they're now supposed to be our new friends, but they keep developing bacteriological weapons, new and more virulent strains of viruses, because they're broke, and this is a lot cheaper than other weapons systems. Iraq has a big bio-chem warfare project, and Libya, and God knows who else. Lots of people out there in the rest of the world—they believe in chemical and biological warfare. They don't see anything immoral about it. If they felt they had some terrific new bug that we didn't know about, something against which we couldn't retaliate in kind, they'd use it on us. (309)

Eliot believes that racing to keep up with the Chinese, the Russians, or even the Iraqis in a way like that would only make the Americans become monsters, to which Dombey agrees. Tina interrupts their conversation; she is not interested in the morality of using biological or chemical weapons. She demands answers about what happened to her boy and how he ended in such a place. Dombey reveals that Danny has been infected with a man-

made virus called 'Wuhan-400.' Realizing what Dombey means, Eliot states that if "the Chinese could use Wuhan-400 to wipe out a city or a country," then there is no "need for them to conduct attricky and expensive decontamination before they moved in and took over the conqueredterritory" (311).

Once again, Tina interrupts their talk and asks about the reason her son was infected in the first place. Danny confesses it was an accident. He continues the story, "After LiChen defected with all the data on Wuhan-400, he was brought here. We immediately began working with him, trying to engineer an exact duplicate of the virus. In relatively short order we accomplished that. Then we began to study the bug, searching for a handle on it that the Chinese had overlooked." However, as Dombey states, someone got careless and behaved in a stupid way: "Almost thirteen months ago, when Danny and the other boys in his troop were on their winter survival outing, one of our scientists, a quirky son of a bitch named Larry Bellinger, accidentally contaminated himself while he was working alone one morning in this lab" (312). He then declares that though they had procedures to follow in such case, Larry Bollinger did not see it that way:

[He] knew how fast Wuhan-400 claims its victims, and he just panicked. Flipped out. Apparently, he convinced himself he could run away from the

infection. God knows, that's exactly what he tried to do. He didn't turn in an alarm. He walked out of the lab, went to his quarters, dressed in outdoor clothes, and left the complex. [...] Bollinger was probably at the bottom gate two and a half hours after he walked out of the door here, three hours after he was infected. That was just about the time that another researcher walked into his lab, saw the cultures of Wuhan-400 broken open on the floor, and set off the alarm. (313)

It has been, as Dombey points out, five hours since Bollinger was infected. By now, he has begun to develop symptoms of the disease: “He'd used up most of his physical reserves getting out of the lab reservation, and he was also beginning to feel some of the early symptoms of Wuhan-400. Dizziness. Mild nausea.” At this moment, he ran into the bus of the scouts, and it was from there that he probably passed the disease on to them:

When Bollinger discovered they had a vehicle, he tried to persuade them to drive him all the way into Reno. When they were reluctant, he made up a story about a friend being stranded in the mountains with a broken leg. Jaborski didn't believe Bollinger's story for a minute, but he finally offered to take him to the wildlife center where a rescue effort could be mounted. That wasn't good enough for Bollinger,

and he got hysterical. Both Jaborski and the other scout leader decided they might have a dangerous character on their hands.

Before they could decide how to deal with him, the security team arrived, and shot Bollinger. Thus, this story explains how Danny got there and was infected.

At this moment, Danny utters, "The spacemen" as everyone else stares at him. Danny repeats, "The spacemen came and took us away." Dombey concludes, "They probably did look a little bit like spacemen in their decontamination suits. They brought everyone here and put them in isolation. One day later all of them were dead . . . except Danny" (314).

3.6. Trope of Journey

According to Newsom, "the spaces of apocalyptic literature are rhetorically constructed through the trope of the journey, which the seer narrates." However, he notes, "the seer is baffled and disturbed by what he sees or hears and requires the assistance of someone even higher in the hierarchy of knowledge" (209). Lois Parkinson Zamora supports the idea that 'apocalypse' is not synonymous with 'disaster'- although some popular film and fiction make the confusion understandable - but neither does it involve only revelation, despite the term's etymology. Rather 'the apocalyptist assigns to event after event a

place in a pattern of historical relationships that ... presses steadily towards culmination'(13).

Following its apocalyptic narrative, *The Eyes of Darkness* begins with the present situation, leading to a catastrophic event. The story begins on Tuesday, 30 December, the night of the *Magyck* premiere. On this night, Tina is introduced to Eliot Stryker; a character who is portrayed as: “a rugged, good-looking man, neither big nor small, about forty. His dark eyes were deeply set, quick, marked by intelligence and amusement” (30). On Wednesday, 31 December, Tina, certain that someone is following her, seeks Eliot’s help. At first, she suspects her ex-husband, Michael Evans, is the intruder, but she realizes that her suspicion was not true. Tina tells Eliot about the incident of Danny’s death. Tina informs him that her son was one of the Jaborski group who always appeared on “Front page of the papers” (94): “Bill Jaborski was supposed to be one of the ten top winter-survival experts in the country. That's what everyone said. And the other adult who went along, Tom Lincoln—he was supposed to be almost as good as Bill. Supposed to be” (95). She adds, “They had the best wilderness clothing and the best down-lined sleeping bags, the best winter tents, plenty of charcoal and other heat sources, plenty of food, and two wilderness experts to guide them. Perfectly said, everyone said” (95-6).

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Tina recounts the bus had suddenly deviated from the road, and everyone was killed. She blames Bill for such a stupid behavior: “Why? Jaborski was the best. The very best. He was so good that he could safely take young boys into the Sierras for sixteen years, a challenge a lot of other winter survival experts wouldn't touch. Bill Jaborski was smart, tough, clever, and filled with respect for the danger in what he did. He wasn't foolhardy. Why would he do something so dumb, so reckless, as to drive that far along that road in those conditions?” (96). Tina then informs Eliot about the unusual events that have recently happened to her (i.e. the messages on the board, the graphic novel, and the dreams). Consequently, Tina asks Eliot to help her open her son's grave, as she never saw his corpse. This marks the beginning of the journey.

On Thursday, 1 January, Eliot meets Kennebeck (a judge) and asks him to re-open Danny's grave. After Eliot returns home, he finds two intruders who try to kill him. They confess they work for a government agency. As the narrative develops, someone knocks at Tina's door and pretends to be a plumber to fix gas leakage. The plumber reminds her of ‘the man in black’: “Tina thought of the graphic novel with the man in black on its cover. She was curious about the story out of which that creature had stepped, for she had the peculiar feeling that, in some way, it would be similar to the story of Danny's death. This was a bizarre

notion, and she didn't know where it had come from, but she couldn't dispel it" (144).

Although Eliot manages to escape, the events continue to escalate as he then realizes that Tina must be in danger. Therefore, he heads out to her place. Eliot finds out that Tina's house was all set on fire, but he manages to help her and they escape together. They continue their journey, and on their way, Eliot tells Tina what has happened since he asked the judge to re-open Danny's grave. Tina tells Eliot about the graphic novel and the similarities between the story and their attempt to exhume Danny's body: "just like Death tried to stop the parents in the story, someone's trying to stop me from opening *my* son's grave" (174). Eliot is chilled by the parallelism between the story and their attempt to exhume Danny's body. Tina and Eliot read the sheets of paper they get out of the man who tried to kill Eliot. The paper contains questions about Project Pandora (Secret labs in the High Sierras). It also includes questions about Tina and the proof she has that her son is not dead.

George Alexander, chief of the Nevada bureau of the Network, learns that Eliot and Tina have gone to Reno (where the 'corpse' lies), so he decides to kill Bellicoti (the mortician) and Pannafin (coroner) so they would not speak up and tell them the truth and thus set up a trap for Eliot and Tina at the funeral home. Tina and Eliot arrive at Bellicoti's house to find him

dead. They were about to be killed, but Eliot kills the assassin first. They learn they are bugged, but they manage to escape again. Now they stay in a luxurious hotel where no one would expect to find them. Tina and Eliot buy a map of the Sierra that could guide them. Tina decides to have hypnosis. She remembers a hypnotist, Billy Sandstone, who lives in Reno. Billy helps Tina and put her in trance. It works; the air grows colder and her hand moves automatically through the map and draws the route. Tina and Eliot borrow an explorer from Billy and a recorder because they hope in case they are murdered, their story would not go unknown. Now they head to Sierra to find Danny. This is the turning point of the story, where the real journey is about to start.

The journey of quest for Danny involves supernatural incidents, which are quite characteristic of apocalyptic science fiction. Tina and Eliot reach a large sign, which look like a hunting lodge. Eliot wonders how they could get through but Tina replies Danny will help them get in, and this is what happens. The gates keep opening one after another so that Tina herself becomes somehow not sure of the kind of boy she's going to find. On the other hand, Alexander discovers that Tina and Eliot have got to the Pandora Project site. He is sure someone from inside is helping them. He tries to call people working there but the phones are out. It seems Danny has interfered with the circuit system. Alexander asks Hansen to let Morgan fly them there despite the bad weather.

Tina and Eliot reach the building where Danny exists; the doors keep opening (as if Danny is really helping them) without being caught. According to Tina, Danny has interfered with a closed-circuit television transmission just as he jammed the submachine gun. A guard observes them but his revolver does not work (again Danny interferes) and Tina and Eliot asks him to just sit down. Eliot ties the guard, then goes search for Danny. Their journey is still rich with strange incidents that keeps providing Tina with the ultimate sense of hope that her son is alive.

The air becomes cold, doors opened (i.e.Danny helps them by giving signs). Tina and Eliot finally reach the isolation chamber, and Tina finally sees her boy. She softly calls his name, as she “had their rational fear that, if she said his name loudly, the spell would be broken and he would vanish forever” (303). Tina succeeds to free her son and get him out of the place. However, what is going to happen next is left open. The narrator concludes:

To everything there is a season, Tina reminded herself. A time to kill and a time to heal. She held Danny close, and she stared into his dark eyes, and she wasn't able to comfort herself with those words from the Bible. Danny's eyes held too much pain, too much knowledge. He was still her sweet boy-yet he was changed. She thought about the future. She wondered what lay ahead for them. (322)

As Curtis observes, “in the chaos of the end comes the opportunity for a new beginning” (7). The representation of endings in apocalyptic fiction is ambiguous and never ultimate. Frank Kermode explains that, “apocalypse depends on a concord of imaginatively recorded past and imaginatively predicted future, achieved on behalf of us, who remain ‘in the midst’” (8). There is a necessary relation between the fictions by which we order our world and the increasing complexity of what we take to be the “real” history of the world.’

3.7. Global Threat

By the end of 2019, a new virus called coronavirus appeared which quickly developed into a global disease, causing human suffering. The novel coronavirus, labelled as Covid-19, is a pandemic which originated in China. It was identified first in Wuhan City but quickly spread killing people and devastating the global economy. Great efforts have been exerted in order to control the outbreak of the disease: “Cities have been blocked, air travel banned, ships have been quarantined, and panic-stricken people have been evacuated from China” (Saurabh Bobdey). However, on January 30, 2020, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, declared the outbreak of the 2019-Covid as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Covid-19 has spread to cause human fatalities. Besides, it has

greatly affected the social and economic world order. Still, the origin of the virus is still vague and uncontrollable.

There has been an argument on social media claiming that Dean Koontz predicted the Coronavirus outbreak in 2019 in his book, *The Eyes of Darkness*, which was published in 1981. As a result, the book has become one of the best-selling books. The statement “*Did this thriller predict the Corona virus Outbreak?*” on the cover of a recent publication of the novel raises an impelling query. To examine this question, some points need further scrutiny. Koontz describes a Chinese military laboratory in Wuhan, where scientists have created a made-up virus called Wuhan 400 as a biological weapon. In the book, Koontz mentions that the weapon was created by a Chinese scientist called Li Chen: "It was around then that a Chinese scientist named Li Chen defected to the United States, carrying a diskette record of China's most important and dangerous: new biological weapon in a decade". Similarly, it was a Chinese doctor named Li Wenliang who tried to issue the first warning about the deadly ‘Covid-19’ outbreak. Li was infected by the virus, hospitalized, and then died. The similarity here lies in the first name of both the scientist and the doctor. Though one was a killer and the other one a victim, each one of them was the one who introduced the virus to the world (though in different ways). Dombey informs Tina and Eliot about the origin of the virus,

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They call the stuff 'Wuhan-400' because it was developed at their RDNA labs outside of the city of Wuhan, and it was the four-hundredth viable strain of man-made micro organisms created at that research center. (310)

He continues,

Wuhan-400 is a perfect weapon. It afflicts only human beings. No other living creature can carry it. And like syphilis, Wuhan-400 can't survive outside a living human body for longer than a minute, which means it can't permanently contaminate objects or entire places the way anthrax and other virulent microorganism can. And when the host expires, the Wuhan-400 within him perishes a short while later, as soon as the temperature of the corpse drops below eighty-six degrees Fahrenheit. (310-11)

Though it is not clear whether Covid-19 is indeed a biological weapon or simply an emergence of virus that originated in bats and passed to human through other species, there is a possibility that the virus is man-made – just like Koontz has mentioned in the novel. Koontz also referenced 'Wuhan-400' which is quite similar to the Chinese city where the Coronavirus is said to have been originated. In the novel, Koontz described "Wuhan-400" as

“China’s most important and dangerous: new biological weapon in a decade.”

The symptoms and incubation period of Koontz’s “Wuhan-400” are somehow similar to those of COVID-19. COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. The coronavirus symptoms differ from one person to another; among these symptoms are dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath and brain hemorrhage. These symptoms are just the same as those of ‘Wuhan-400’. Dombey mentions that “he [Larry Bollinger] was also beginning to feel some of the early symptoms of Wuhan-400. Dizziness. Mild nausea.” He then describes other symptoms of ‘Wuhan-400’ as he states, “The virus migrates to the brain stem, and there it begins secreting a toxin that literally eats away brain tissue like battery acid dissolving cheese cloth. It destroys the part of the brain that controls all of the body's automatic functions. The victim simply ceases to have a pulse, functioning organs, or any urge to breathe.”

Regarding the incubation period, they seem to be different in duration: ‘Wuhan-400’ has an incubation period of “only four hours”,

Wuhan-400 has other, equally important advantages overmost biological agents. For one thing, you can become an infectious carrier only fourhours after

coming into contact with the virus. That's an incredibly short incubation period. Once infected, no one lives more than twenty-four hours. Most die in twelve. It's worse than the Ebola virus in Africa—infinitely worse. Wuhan-400's kill-rate is one hundred percent. No one is supposed to survive. The Chinese tested it on God knows how many political prisoners. They were never able to find an antibody or an antibiotic that was effective against it. (311)

On the other hand, COVID-19's incubation period is between one to fourteen days. According to World Health Organization, the most common incubation time is around five days. Though having different incubation periods, 'Wuhan-400' and 'Covid-19' share the same process: the disease is passed from one person to another, which leads to the other person being infected. The intensity of 'Wuhan-400' seems to be fatal ("kill-rate is one hundred percent") but also is that of 'Covid-19.' A large number of people have died as a result of being infected by Covid-19, some of which have died after being infected in a very short time, just like those infected in the novel by 'Wuhan-400.'

4. CONCLUSION

After an intensive reading of the novel *Eyes of Darkness*, it is apparent that Koontz is an artist capable of conveying a masterfully piece of art, where he put his readers through an

emotional painful experience, letting them believe the impossible is to happen. The novel also incorporates elements of apocalyptic science fiction such as the presence of a global threat (Wuhan-400), pseudonym authorship (the novel was first published with a pseudonym), revelation and unveiling of a mystery (as Tina unveils the truth about the death of her son), symbolic visions and dreams (as those received by Tina throughout the novel), trope of a journey (the quest of Tina and Eliot for Danny), violence (represented by the Network Agency under the administered by Alexander), and ultimate sense of hope (shown by Tina's strong belief that her son is alive). The novel also bears the similarities between 'Wuhan-400' and 'Covid-19'; the focus lies on the potential dangers of science and technology. Such traits illustrate that Koontz's *The Eyes of Darkness* is a classic example of the subgenre of apocalyptic science fiction.

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