

The Art of Prediction in Dean Koontz's the Eyes of Darkness

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ABSTRACT

Dean Koontz's book *The Eyes of Darkness* discusses themes like secret government activities, biological warfare, and people fighting against evil. This paper examines how the story predicts future events and deals with uncertainty using Rescher's ideas on forecasting. It looks at how characters handle unexpected situations caused by the Wuhan-400 virus. It draws comparisons to real-life events like the COVID-19 pandemic. The study uses close reading to explore important themes and how characters react. It shows how the novel warns about biological weapons' moral issues and societal impacts. This research shows how literature can predict real events and start conversations about scientific progress and crisis management.

1. Introduction

Modern science aims to understand and explain the universe through materialistic, rather than spiritual or supernatural, explanations. While spiritual and supernatural accounts may offer emotional or explanatory value, they cannot be tested by scientific methods, which rely on falsifiability and empirical evidence. This practical view of science is closely linked to technology, especially with the advancements of the Industrial Revolution. This focus on applied science may explain why much of 19th and 20th-century science fiction emphasizes technological advancements over other scientific fields like mathematics, biology, or psychology (Roberts,2006). Science fiction is a genre of literature that explores imaginary worlds and futures. While it is seen as mere entertainment, there have been instances where these stories have eerily predicted real-world events. Some examples of novels and writing give real predictions about important events that take place later in the real, for example, the development of the atomic bomb. In H.G. Wells's 1914 novel *The World Set Free*, a scientist creates a weapon of mass destruction that can destroy entire cities. This was eerily similar to the development of the atomic bomb in the real world, which occurred just a few decades later (Tripp,2015). Delany, (1977) defines it as:

Science fiction is the only area of literature outside poetry that is symbolistic in its basic conception. Its stated aim is to represent the world without reproducing it. That is what dealing with world of possibilities and probabilities means. (Delany,1977,197). According to Patrick Parrinder, (2013), Hugo Gernsback coined the term "scientifiction" in 1926 to describe the content of *Amazing Stories*, a magazine he edited. Later 1929, he changed it to the more melodious "science fiction." This renaming trend continued, as seen in the transformation of *Astounding Stories* to *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1938. Initially, the term was mainly linked to magazine stories and anthologies. It wasn't until the 1950s that "science fiction" started being used for paperback novels. Essentially, Gernsback played a crucial role in shaping the genre and its terminology. Francesco Verso believes that science fiction is valuable because it allows writers to construct believable worlds and explore potential futures. They can create different scenarios with varying levels of believability to predict how technologies might be used and their effects. By blending storytelling with technological development, science fiction writers can inspire innovation and speculation about how technology will evolve in our society. Verso suggests that authors can offer multiple hypothetical scenarios to suggest ways to implement new technologies. In his work, he tries to foster dialogue between science fiction writers and researchers, especially on topics like climate change and the Anthropocene, to provide different perspectives on future possibilities (Liberati, and Verso, 2022). Verso emphasizes the importance of the contrast between science and science fiction. While science deals with facts and real phenomena, science fiction explores imaginative possibilities and scenarios that don't exist yet. Without posing hypotheses and asking questions, science would merely describe nature without innovation. Similarly, literature must integrate scientific discoveries into its narratives to remain relevant. Science conducts experiment in controlled

environments, whereas science fiction experiments in uncontrolled ones, generating ideas and stimulating reflections on technology's applications through emotional connections (Liberati, and Verso, 2022).

The perception and influence of science fiction have evolved over the past seven years. Previously, it lacked the credibility and support to make a significant impact. However, today, science fiction has gained recognition and respect, allowing it to make meaningful contributions to our understanding of society, as well as research and development. It is now taken seriously by both society and companies, providing valuable insights and perspectives on various issues (Verso, 2018). Using science fiction as a model or tool for future development is a relatively new concept. The relationship between science fiction and science fact has been longstanding, with stories and movies inspiring scientists, engineers, and developers, and scientific breakthroughs fueling the creativity of writers, filmmakers, and artists. Shedroff and Noessel, in their 2012 book "Make it So," explore the connection between interface design in science fiction and real-world applications. Shedroff, associated with the California College of Arts' MBA in Design Strategy program, and Noessel, the Director of Interaction Design at Cooper in San Francisco, conduct a thorough analysis of technology and user interfaces depicted in science fiction. They examine how these interfaces have evolved and what lessons one can draw from them (Johnson,2011).

Dean Koontz, a popular American author known for thrilling novels, blends horror, fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and satire in his works. Raised in a challenging environment, Koontz found solace in writing and published his first book in 1968. His novels often explore themes of spirituality, resilience, and the human condition, featuring strong characters and intense confrontations between good and evil. One of his notable works, *The Eyes of Darkness* published in 1981, tells the story of Tina Evans searching for her son, Danny, believed dead but possibly alive. (as cited in Purnamasari et al., 2017). The novel includes elements typical of modern thrillers: a formidable antagonist, escalating tension, psychological depth, surprising twists, and heroic underdogs. Notably, the novel's mention of a bioweapon named Wuhan-400 has sparked speculation due to its resemblance to the COVID-19 pandemic. While Koontz's book is fictional, its narrative and themes offer insights into human behavior and societal values, paralleling real-world crises and uncertainties (Prahuesti,2019).

The story of *The Eyes of Darkness* revolves around Tina Evans, a mother haunted by the question of whether her son, Danny, truly died in an accident a year ago, or if he might still be alive. Tina begins to receive eerie signals suggesting that Danny may be alive, prompting her to seek the truth by planning to exhume his supposed grave. She enlists the help of Elliot Stryker, a lawyer with a background in Army Intelligence and with whom she is romantically involved. However, they soon find themselves targeted by assassins hired by Project Pandora, a covert organization. Convinced of Danny's survival, Tina embarks on a perilous journey to uncover the reality behind her son's fate, guided by mysterious telepathic messages from Danny. As they evade pursuit, Tina and Elliot uncover a sinister underground laboratory where Danny has become the subject of horrifying experiments conducted by a secretive government agency (Kaur, 2020). The Daily Mail suggests that Dean Koontz, renowned for his mastery of suspenseful storytelling, may have also demonstrated a prescient insight into current events with his 1981 thriller. The novel originally referred to a bioweapon called Gorki-400, named after the Soviet city where it was created. However, in later editions, the origin of the bioweapon was changed to the Chinese city of Wuhan, and it was renamed Wuhan-400. This change was made after the end of the Cold War. Some people speculated in early 2020 that Dean Koontz had predicted the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) because of this alteration (Reuters, 2020). While "Predicting the Future: An Introduction to the Theory of Forecasting" by Nicholas Reacher provides theoretical insights and methodologies for forecasting, and *The Eyes of Darkness* by Dean Koontz is a work of fiction, that applies principles of forecasting to anticipate the actions and choices of characters in *The Eyes of Darkness*. Utilize forecasting methods to predict how characters may respond to various situations based on their traits, motivations, and past behaviors within the context of the narrative.

The term "COVID-19" denotes a Novel Corona Virus Disease in 2019, originating from the discovery

of the virus by a scientist named Novel in 2019. Initially identified in Wuhan, China, in late November 2019, this virus belongs to a new strain of coronavirus affecting the respiratory system. Symptoms include a fever exceeding 38°C, dry cough, and difficulty breathing, with a mortality rate of 3%. While 80% of cases recover without specific treatment, approximately 1 in 6 individuals may experience severe illness. Despite efforts to implement lockdown policies to curb its spread. This virus has proven to be deadly, directly or indirectly impacting various aspects of life. Interestingly, in Dean Koontz's novel *The Eyes of Darkness*, a virus named Wuhan-400 is described, resembling the characteristics of COVID-19. This virus is depicted worldwide, including in Indonesia, to combat the virus, it has claimed hundreds of millions of lives globally (Ministry of Health, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has not only resulted in health crises but has also had widespread effects on social, educational, economic, and political fronts, prompting many countries as deadly and share their name with the area initially affected by COVID-19. This intriguing coincidence adds to the mystery surrounding the origins and implications of the current pandemic (Mubasyira et al., 2021).

In *The Eyes of Darkness*, Dean Koontz suggests a conspiracy behind the virus, portraying it as a biological weapon wielded by individuals prioritizing power over human morality. Through the term "Wuhan-400" in the novel, Koontz appears to have foreshadowed a catastrophic event that unfolded in reality. To explore this phenomenon, the author intends to employ plot analysis and literary sociology. *The Eyes of Darkness* reflects Koontz's imaginative exploration of a specific setting and timeframe. According to Jabrohim (as cited in Purnamasari et al., 2017), space and time in literature represent societies or social conditions, where various value systems interact. Thus, the novel is intricately linked to the social context in which its plot unfolds, influencing and being influenced by societal values.

The art of prediction in Dean Koontz's *The Eyes of Darkness*

The plot of Dean Koontz's *The Eyes of Darkness* follows a mixed pattern, starting with sequential conflicts before delving into past events and returning to the future. The story begins with Tina Evans, who is grieving the loss of her son, Danny, who died over a year ago. She tries to move on by creating a new show (Prahasti, 2019). Tina, a former showgirl, meets Michael while working at a Las Vegas hotel, leading to marriage and the birth of their son. Despite balancing motherhood and work, their marriage ends in divorce due to differing aspirations and Michael's infidelity. Tina wanted a higher career beyond dancing, which Michael, a blackjack dealer, opposed (Pandin & Widjayati, 2020). At 28, Tina began as a choreographer in a low-budget lounge revue and gradually moved to bigger roles, eventually working in a second-rate hotel with a sizable showroom. She directed and produced revues, gaining recognition in Las Vegas. Shortly after Danny's death, she was offered a directing and co-producing role for a major production at the Golden Pyramid Hotel, one of the Strip's largest venues (Ibid). Koontz states: Almost a year ago, shortly after Danny died, Tina had been offered a directing and coproducing job on a huge ten-million-extravaganza to be staged in the two-thousand-seat main showroom of the Golden Pyramid, one of the largest and plushiest hotels on the Strip (1981, p.9).

These differences in views and personal struggles lead to the breakdown of their marriage, impacting Tina's life significantly. After Tina's divorce from Michael, her son Danny tragically dies in a bus accident during a climbing trip in the Sierra Mountains. These devastating events leave Tina unaware of the profound changes occurring in her life, leading to negative consequences and ultimately depression. An analysis reveals that Tina exhibits symptoms of depression, including persistent feelings of sadness and disruptions in her sleep patterns (Adityaningrum, 2016). As Tina Evans and Elliot Stryker explore their investigation, they uncover clues suggesting a cover-up regarding Danny's death, facing legal challenges and threats to their safety but remaining determined to reveal the truth (Pandin & Widjayati, 2020). The novel hints that Danny's death, along with the deaths of the other scouts, is far more disturbing than the official explanation, prompting influential individuals to conceal the reality (Ibid). With less than seventeen hours before the VIP premiere of her new show "Magyck" at the Golden Pyramid Hotel, Tina, now directing the production, meets Elliot Stryker through Helen Mainway, wife of the hotel's general manager (Ruthven, 1990).

Before the premiere, Tina encounters a boy resembling Danny, leading to vivid dreams and strange occurrences at her house, such as moving objects and messages on Danny's chalkboard, which she initially suspects are pranks by her ex-husband, Michael (Rahmawati & Wahyono, 1945). After the premiere, these unsettling events continue, prompting Tina to confide in Elliot. She suspects Danny might still be alive and seeks to exhume his body. Meanwhile, George Alexander, the chief of the Nevada Bureau of the Network, orders the termination of Tina, Elliot, and Michael as they uncover the truth about Project Pandora, which is connected to Danny's death (Ibid). However, Tina and Elliot persisted in their search for Danny and eventually discovered that he had been captured and isolated in the Project Pandora laboratories in the Sierra Mountains. Danny had a natural antibody that protected him from the virus used in Project Pandora, and Dr. Tamaguchi was eager to study it further.

In *The Eyes of Darkness*, historical data analysis is indirectly used by the characters to make decisions about the future. For example, Tina decides not to reveal Danny's psychic abilities until she understands what might happen if people find out. Koontz attempts to uncover the conspiracy that underlies the mysterious events. The conflict escalates as Tina Evans and Elliot Stryker seek answers about Project Pandora and its connection to Danny. Through a series of strange occurrences, Tina discovers Danny's unique psychic abilities, which convince her that he may still be alive (Rahmawati, & Wahyono, 1945). Tina says: He must be psychic. He has some power and he's reaching out, trying to tell me he's alive, asking me to find him and save him. And the people who're holding him don't know he's doing it. They're blaming the leak on none of their own, on someone from Project Pandora (as cited in Rahmawati, & Wahyono, 1945, p.10). This quotation highlights a conflict within Tina Evans. On one hand, she believes her son Danny is alive and reaching out to her through his psychic abilities, urging her to find and save him. This extract indicates that She believes that Danny's psychic abilities are real and that he is reaching out to her for help, which influences her decision to search for him.

Tina Evans is cautious about revealing her son Danny's psychic abilities to prevent him from being exploited like a lab rat, showing how past events guide present decisions. Rescher's ideas about handling uncertainty are reflected in how the characters respond to the deadly virus (Mills, 1989). Tina and Elliot Stryker investigate the conspiracy behind Project Pandora and its connection to Danny, aiming to predict and understand the actions of those involved. They discover Danny's psychic abilities, adding a layer of prediction to the narrative. Dr. Carlton Dombey, a scientist involved in experiments on Danny, sympathizes with him and decides to help. Experiments were conducted in a military facility on a deadly virus called Wuhan-400, which accidentally infected Danny and others. Danny was the only survivor due to his unique antibodies, and scientists kept him in isolation to study him. Dr. Tamaguchi, the facility's director, used Danny to test how many times he could survive exposure to the virus, and he survived fourteen times (Jose, 2020). In the plot's anti-climax, Tina Evans and Elliot Stryker successfully infiltrate the Pandora Project building in the High Sierra Mountains. They encounter two doctors responsible for Danny's case, assigned to oversee his condition. Despite initial resistance, one of the doctors, Carl Dombey, eventually agrees to cooperate and reveals a significant secret about Danny's ordeal (Mills, 1989). Dombey said: You have to go back twenty months. 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. 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 microorganisms created at that research center" (Koontz, 1981, p. 308). This quotation reveals that Danny has a rare disease, which is man-made and created in a laboratory. This situation relates to prediction theory as it involves foreseeing and understanding future events based on available information. Tina's belief in Danny's unique abilities and his survival of the virus aligns with the prediction that he possesses a natural defense against it.

The plot twist adds suspense and uncertainty to the narrative, revealing that multiple countries, not just China, were involved in developing this experimental DNA project (Rahmawati & Wahyono, 1945). The use of genetic manipulation techniques to create the virus introduces complexity to the storyline and keeps readers engaged with unexpected developments. Dr. Carlton Dombey, a scientist involved

in the experiments, sympathizes with Danny and decides to help him after discovering the unique antibodies that allowed him to survive multiple exposures to the virus (Jose, 2020). Tina Evans decides to keep her son Danny's psychic abilities a secret, learning from past events to make better decisions in the present. This cautious approach reflects Rescher's ideas about handling uncertainty (Mills, 2008). As Tina and Elliot Stryker examine their investigation, they uncover a conspiracy involving the Wuhan-400 virus, a deadly biological weapon created by the Chinese government.

The conflicts depicted in the novel reveal that Project Pandora is a covert operation aimed at creating a biological weapon known as the Wuhan-400 virus. Interestingly, parallels can be drawn between the fictional Wuhan-400 virus and the real-life COVID-19 outbreak. Both viruses originated in Wuhan, China, and exhibit similar symptoms. This comparison highlights the eerie similarities between the fictional narrative and current global events. Koontz writes: "It's like strep throat or the cold or like cancer because you get it repeatedly if you're lucky to beat it the first time" (Koontz, 1981, p. 301). Furthermore, the intention to use Wuhan-400 as a weapon without the need for extensive decontamination aligns with the concept of radiation techniques in warfare, where biological agents can be deployed with minimal cleanup efforts. The parallels drawn between the fictional Wuhan-400 virus and the real-life COVID-19 outbreak underscore the potential consequences of such experimental biological projects. This connection emphasizes the importance of understanding and controlling radiation techniques to prevent the misuse of scientific advancements.

Dean Koontz employs a reverse storytelling technique to unveil the true events surrounding Danny's ordeal, Tina Evans' son. He reveals that Danny's situation involved an accidental element, showcasing Koontz's imaginative approach to crafting a highly realistic narrative. Dombey admits: It was an accident, Dombey said. 'I've heard that one before.' 'This time it's true,' Dombey said. 'After Li Chen 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" (Koontz, 1981, p. 302). This admission aligns with prediction theory, as it underscores the unpredictable nature of scientific experimentation and the unforeseen consequences that can arise from such endeavors. The conflicts reveal that Project Pandora is a secret operation to create a biological weapon called the Wuhan-400 virus. This fictional virus has eerie similarities to the real-life COVID-19 outbreak, as both originated in Wuhan, China and have similar symptoms. Koontz writes: "It's like strep throat or the cold or like cancer because you get it again and again if you're lucky to beat it the first time" (Koontz, 1981, p. 301).

However, the two viruses differ in their fatality rates. According to Rahmawati and Wahyono (1945), Dr. Dombey provides detailed information about Wuhan-400, explaining that it has a very short incubation period and a 100% fatality rate, based on experiments on political prisoners. This historical data helps the characters understand the virus's potential impact. Koontz portrays Wuhan-400 as far more dangerous than the coronavirus. Aaron Beck (1995) explains that in Dean Koontz's novel, *The Eyes of Darkness*, the Wuhan-400 virus is depicted as more dangerous than the coronavirus, being highly lethal. The novel describes a secret conspiracy involving the emergence of the Wuhan-400 virus. A clandestine group called the Network was created six years before the story's events, with George appointed by the President to develop a reliable intelligence bureau in South America. After three years of progress, the President asked George to manage one of the Network's domestic bureaus in Nevada, which was struggling. The Network operates secretly to remain effective. Additionally, Project Pandora is a military research facility involved in biological and chemical weapons development, despite public claims that the US has stopped such research. The facility conducts various projects, including recombinant DNA experiments, and acknowledges that other countries like China, Russia, Iraq, and Libya are also involved in similar bio-chemical warfare activities. Koontz writes:

When he discovered the nature of the maps, when he realized that one of them was missing, and when he discovered that the missing map was the one Stryker would need in order to find the Project Pandora labs, Alexander felt his face flush with anger and chagrin. "The nerve!" (Koontz, 1981, p. 282). This

quotation shows Alexander's frustration when he realizes a crucial map is missing, hinting at the challenges ahead for the characters. Comparing the Wuhan-400 virus to COVID-19 shows how viral outbreaks can profoundly affect societies and economies. According to prediction theory, pandemics disrupt normal life, as depicted in both the novel and real life. This illustrates how literature, like Dean Koontz's novel, can mirror and anticipate real-world events, such as the societal and economic impacts of pandemics. Using similar techniques, like inventing realistic fictional viruses, helps readers grasp and plan for possible future scenarios (Koolen et al., 2020).

Dombey explains the Wuhan-400 virus as having extremely dangerous traits: it has a remarkably short incubation period of just four hours, and once infected, individuals die within twenty-four hours, with most succumbing within twelve hours. He compares it unfavorably to the Ebola virus, noting its severity and the lack of effective antibodies or antibiotics against it. The virus attacks the brain stem, releasing a toxin that swiftly destroys brain tissue and halts automatic bodily functions. This description reflects scenario planning's predictions of potentially deadly viruses that spread rapidly and could cause widespread devastation globally. Koontz writes: "Exactly," Dombey said. "And Wuhan-400 has other, equally important advantages over most biological agents. For one thing, you can become an infectious carrier only four hours after coming into contact with the virus" (Koontz, 1981, p. 307). The characters in *The Eyes of Darkness*, like Tina Evans and Elliot Stryker Dombey, contribute to the story's predictability. As their motivations and actions develop throughout the plot, anticipating their next steps becomes more difficult. Tina's choices regarding her son, Danny, and Dr. Dombey's role in the rescue mission introduce additional layers of indicated predication. Tina predicates that her son is alive and that she can save him.

2. Conclusion

Dean Koontz's novel *The Eyes of Darkness* intricately weaves together suspense, conspiracy, and scientific speculation to create a compelling narrative that explores themes of grief, resilience, and the predictable nature of scientific experimentation. The story centers around Tina Evans, a mother grappling with the loss of her son, Danny, who supposedly died in a tragic accident while on a camping trip with his scout troop. Tina's journey through grief takes a sudden turn when she begins to receive mysterious messages suggesting that Danny might still be alive. As Tina embarks on a quest to uncover the truth about her son's fate, she teams up with Elliot Stryker, a lawyer with a background in Army Intelligence. Together, they unravel a complex web of secrets surrounding "Project Pandora," a covert government operation involving biological experiments. They discover that Danny, along with other scouts, was exposed to a deadly virus known as Wuhan-400, named after the Chinese city where it was developed as a bioweapon. Koontz skillfully integrates elements of suspense and mystery as Tina and Elliot navigate through legal obstacles and threats to their safety. Their investigation leads them to a sinister underground laboratory in the Sierra Mountains, where they uncover shocking revelations about Danny's survival and the true nature of Project Pandora. Dr. Carlton Dombey, a scientist involved in the experiments, reveals that Danny possesses unique antibodies that allowed him to survive multiple exposures to Wuhan-400, making him a valuable subject for study. The novel explores the ethical dilemmas surrounding scientific experimentation and the consequences of manipulating biological agents for military purposes. It raises questions about the boundaries of scientific research and the potential risks posed by advancements in biotechnology. Koontz's portrayal of Project Pandora as a secretive and morally ambiguous endeavor underscores the novel's exploration of power dynamics and the exploitation of scientific discovery for political gain. Moreover, *The Eyes of Darkness* offers intriguing parallels to real-world events, particularly through its depiction of the Wuhan-400 virus. Originally named Gorke-400 in earlier editions of the novel, the virus was later renamed and its origin shifted to Wuhan, China, in subsequent reprints. This alteration, made after the end of the Cold War, sparked speculation when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in 2019, due to the virus's origins in Wuhan. Although purely coincidental, this connection has contributed to discussions about the role of fiction in anticipating or reflecting contemporary global crises. Koontz's novel is not merely a thriller but also a reflection on human resilience and the unforeseen consequences of scientific exploration.

Koontz's novel explores the complexities of prediction, exploring how characters anticipate and react to unforeseen scientific developments and their consequences. Through Tina's relentless pursuit of truth and justice for her son, readers are drawn into a world where the line between fiction and reality blurs, prompting contemplation on the ethical implications of scientific progress. *The Eyes of Darkness* remains a testament to Koontz's storytelling prowess, blending speculative fiction with thought-provoking themes that resonate long after the final page is turned.

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