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A reflection on pandemic Covid-19 in Dean Koontz novel the Eyes of Darkness

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Abstract

The phenomenon of COVID-19 has been described in literary works such as the work of Dean Koontz. This study aims to highlight the attempts that the female character in the Novel encounters in her struggle against the patriarchal domination. The research method used is authentic realism approach with a content analysis by focusing on objectivity and reality, clarifying the text so that it can identify the elements in the text substantially by using the existing data and theories. The findings reveal that this approach allows the researchers to see more clearly the contents of the main character in the Novel.

Keywords: Authentic realism; Telekinetic; The Pandora Project; Pandemic COVID-19.

Una reflexión sobre la pandemia Covid-19 en la novela de Dean Koontz “Los ojos de la oscuridad”

Resumen

El fenómeno de COVID-19 se ha descrito en obras literarias como el trabajo de Dean Koontz. Este estudio tiene como objetivo resaltar los intentos que el personaje femenino de la Novela encuentra en su lucha contra la dominación patriarcal. El método de investigación utilizado es un enfoque de realismo con un análisis de contenido al enfocarse en la objetividad y la realidad, aclarando el texto para que pueda identificar sustancialmente los elementos en el texto utilizando los datos y teorías existentes. Los hallazgos revelan que este enfoque permite a los investigadores ver más claramente los contenidos del personaje principal en la novela.

Palabras clave: Auténtico realismo; Telequinética; Proyecto Pandora; Pandemia COVID-19.

1. INTRODUCTION

Christina Evans was married to Michael Evans for twelve years but was divorced from him the same year she lost her twelve-year-old son, Danny. Tina started her career as a dancer in the Lido de Paris, a gigantic stage show at the Stardust Hotel, Las Vegas, where a multimillion-dollar show could be stage year after year. She stayed there for two and a half years and realized that she was pregnant. She took time off to carry and give birth to Danny, then to spend uninterrupted days with him during his first few months of life.

When she was twenty-eight, she became a choreographer for a two-bit lounge revue, a dismally cheap imitation of the multimillion-dollar Lido. Then she moved up through a series of smaller positions in larger lounges, then in the

small showroom that seated four or five hundred in second rate hotels. In time, she directed a revue, then directed and produced another. She was steadily becoming a respected name in the closely-knit Vegas entertaining world, and she believed that she was on the verge of great success. Almost a year ago, shortly after Danny died, Tina had been offered a directing and co-producing 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 (p. 9).

Then she had to direct the new show titled *Magyck*. In less than seventeen hours, at 8:00 p.m. December 30, the Golden Pyramid Hotel would present an exclusive, invitational, VIP premiere of *Magyck*, and the following night, at New Year's Eve, the show would open for the general public. It was when she met Elliot Stryker, introduced by Helen Mainway, the wife of Charles Mainway. Charles was the general manager and principal stockholder of the Golden Pyramid Hotel. Elliot Stryker was Charles' attorney and the best one in Vegas.

Several minutes past midnight, after the rehearsal of *Magyck*, Tina stopped at a twenty-four-hour market to buy a quart of milk and a loaf of whole-wheat bread, she saw a boy who resembled Danny sitting in the front passenger seat of a cream-colored Chevrolet station wagon. The boy was about twelve, Danny's age with thick dark hair, nose, and a rather delicate jawline like Danny's. That night after she saw the boy in the car, Tina dreamed that Danny was alive again and

was calling her name. She was awakened by a loud sound in Danny's room. There, she saw the easel- chalkboard had toppled Danny's Electronic Battleship game on the game table and knocked it to the floor. The words 'Not Dead' were written on the chalkboard. Before she left home for Magyck premier night, Tina went into Danny's room to box up Danny's clothes. She saw the easel-chalkboard had been knocked over again, and the two words were printed on the slate. Tina suspected her former husband, Michael, had been playing a cruel prank on her. That afternoon, when Vivienne Neddler, Tina's cleaning woman, was mopping the last corner of the kitchen floor, she heard a clattering sound in the living room. She saw four framed eight-by-ten photographs were swinging back and forth on the picture hooks that held them. The remaining two flung off the wall and dropped behind the sofa. The AM-FM tuner in Danny's old room made very loud noises. The doorknob was covered with ice. The three model airplanes that were hung on the ceiling were spinning around and around. The bed rose three or four inches before crashing on the carpet several times.

Feeling exhausted and slightly tipsy, Tina went straight to bed and slept soundly after returning home from the opening night. She had a nightmare again. Tina was shocked when she went to Danny's room because his room was in a big mess. The airplane models were scattered on the floor, and the closet doors were open; the clothes inside had been previously thrown on the floor. The game table was overturned, the easel lay on the floor; the chalkboard was facing down. The same words were written on it. When Tina returned to her office

that day, the computer had printed 'Not Dead.' 'Danny Alive.' 'Help Me.' 'I am afraid.' 'Get Me Out Of Here Please' 'Help.' 'Not Dead.' 'Not In the Ground.' 'Get Me Out Out.' (pp. 50-53). When she tried to type again, the keyboard was locked. The screen read 'I'M cold and I hurt.' 'Mom Can You Hear?' (p. 53).

In a panic, Tina unplugged the computer cables and the monitor went dark. She cried in alarm when Elliot came and opened the door to the hall. Later, she told Elliot everything that had happened to her that month: about her dreams, her nightmares and the weird things that happened in her house and office. She thought that probably Danny was alive; because she did not see Danny's body; and to be sure that Danny was dead, Tina wanted to have Danny's body exhumed. Because the New Year was approaching and fearing that Michael might contest, it had to be carried out quickly. Tina asked Elliot to be the attorney to handle the case. He would contact Judge Kennebeck to ask him to issue an exhumation order on Tina's request, as the mother of the dead. Unknown to both Tina and Elliot, by the order of George Alexander, chief of the Nevada Bureau of the Network, Kennebeck was to terminate three people: Tina, Elliot, and Michael. Alexander alleged that they know the truth about the Project Pandora which involved Danny's death. Despite the dangers and hardships that Tina and Elliot had to face and endure the search for Danny was not in vain. Danny had been captured and isolated in the Project Pandora laboratories in the Sierra Mountains because he was the only living person among the bus accident victims who survived. Danny had a natural antibody in his blood that helped him from being infected by

the particular virus. Dr. Tamaguchi, head of the installation project, was very zealous to figure out why Danny's natural antibody was so effective against the disease, even though it was an artificial bug (pp. 177-178).

Based on the description above, it can be seen that the Novel addresses gender issues. The female character is very persistent to find out the real truth about her son, Danny. She struggles consciously and with full considerations. She is not only fearless but also adamant about what she had in mind. This study aims to highlight the attempts that the female character in the Novel encounters in her struggle against the patriarchal domination. By starting from the underlying assumptions, the study emphasizes on feminist literary criticism to highlight the meanings recorded and contained in work.

The study questions discussed in this written work are how does the writer describe the obstinacy of the female character in the Novel? How does the writer express the sexuality of the female character in the Novel? What type and form of language does the author use in the Novel? How is the Relationship between the Novel with the author and the Relationship of the Novel with the author's experience?

The theory used is the reader's Authentic Realism approach, particularly female readers. The central features of an authentic realist reading of a literary text consist of relating elements of the text to women's experience to make women more aware of their oppression as a group. Literature is seen as a powerful vehicle for changing women's self-image. In this type of analysis, female characters are described as successful if they are seen to depict women's lives authentically and if

they seem to reflect the experience of the author. Literature and life are thus seen to be connected in the most intimate of ways (MILLS, p 62).

Sarah Mills' Authentic Realism Approach (1989:51) emerges as a reading strategy or model of the relationship between the text and the world. Adherents of this approach believe that women's writing can be discussed based on the Relationship of the text with women's experience. Through this view, literary works can be seen as a potential vehicle to change women's lives because this approach is a method for raising awareness and as a basis for constructing models in other ways of living.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is a content analysis by focusing on objectivity and reality, clarifying the text so that it can identify the elements in the text substantially by using the existing data and theories.

Through this method, the researchers determine and develop a particular focus, namely the Authentic Realism approach, by in-depth readings in Dean Koontz's novel, *The Eyes of Darkness*. The reading of the text is done through two stages of literary readings, that is, heuristic and hermeneutic readings or retroactive reading. Heuristic reading is the first stage of interpretation. At this stage, the reader's understanding is aimed at a language that has a referential meaning. In capturing, this requires the reader's linguistic competence to understand the existence of ungrammaticalities (obstacles encountered

in the first reading). From heuristic reading, the reader moves further towards hermeneutic reading (retroactive), that is, the readings based on literary conventions. The reader is expected to be able to explain the meaning of literary works based on the first interpretation. From the understanding of the still diverse meaning, the reader of literary works must move further to obtain a unity of meaning. Readers do a review and comparison towards the back so that it first appears as ungrammaticalities turn out to be a set of equivalent words.

The steps taken in this research are: (a) Determine the text used as the object of research, namely the Novel, *The Eyes of Darkness.*, (b) Conduct two stages of literary readings, heuristics, and hermeneutics., (3) Analyze the object of research, with the following stages: list the discourse that has been identified in the texts; copy the entire utterances from the texts as a kind of marker; connecting with realities or the opposing texts and contradictions in the short stories (does not refer to literary discourse alone); align and compare with discourse or reality outside the texts (gender constructs agreed upon by the community) as an intertextual effort; the results obtained are not just a comparison, but also the thought behind the discourse that emphasizes the social function of the texts which presents an authentic realist approach to the reader., and conclude and compile research reports.

3. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This research will use an authentic realist approach to highlight the Novel written by Dean Koontz. According to the authentic realists

approach there are five elements used to highlight women's writings, that is: (1) Descriptions of determined female figures, (2) Descriptions of female sexuality, (3) The form and language used by the author in the text, (4) Description of the relationship between the text, the author and her/his experience; and (5) Description of the Relationship of the text to the experience of female readers. Only four elements, namely, numbers 1 - 4, will be used to dissect the Novel.

Jane English via TONG (2008:51) states that the terms sex roles and the nature of gender refer to "behavior patterns of both sexes being socialized, encouraged and forced to be accepted, starting with a personality that 'matches the gender' to interests and professions." Boys are instructed to be masculine, while girls become feminine. Psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists tend to define "masculine" and "feminine" within the framework of prevailing cultural stereotypes, which is strongly influenced by race, class, and ethnic factors. Therefore, being masculine in the middle class, white, anglo-saxon, protestant, United States means to be rational, ambitious, and independent; and being feminine means, emotional, caring, and dependent on others.

Wollstonecraft states that if a woman lets herself be treated as an object, means she allows herself to be treated in a way that is not following her status as a whole human being. Instead of taking responsibility for her development to grow into a large redwood tree, she gave up her freedom and let others form her into a bonsai tree. No woman, said Wollstonecraft, should allow such violence to be carried out against her (TONG, 2008).

Shulamith Firestone, via TONG (2008), claims that the material basis of the sexual/ political ideology of women's submissiveness and male domination is rooted in the reproductive roles of men and women. According to Firestone the solution offered by Kate Millet on this issue – the elimination of what is referred to as a double sexual standard has enabled men, and not women to experiment with sex (sex relation), and the adoption of a dual parenting system, in which the responsibility of parenting – is not enough. According to Firestone, it takes more than just simple reforms in the sex/gender system, to free the sexuality of women (and men) from the biological edicts of procreation, and to free the personality of women (and men) from the socially constructed Procrustean prison of "femininity" and "masculinity" which is socially constructed.

Further Firestone said that once women and men are truly free to engage in polymorphous or distorted sexual relations, it is not important anymore for men to show off only their identity and "masculine," or for women showing off only their "feminine" identity and behavior. Freed from gender roles at the biological level (that is, reproduction), women no longer need to be passive, receptive, and vulnerable, sending "signals" to men to dominate, possess, and enter they are (body), to keep the wheels of human procreation spinning. Instead, men and women will continue to be encouraged to mix and match feminine and masculine traits and behaviors in whatever combination they desire.

According to SARA MILLS (1989), the third element that needs to be considered by the reader of Authentic Realists in the form of

delivery and language used by the author. It will direct the reader to feel close to the characters and events in the text. The delivery method can be done in writing and orally, both formally and informally.

In this authentic approach, the language the writer uses in the text is critical. Black writers, for example, will undoubtedly use the Black American language. The language of conversation, dialogue, or narrative is widely used in texts. The writer may use short sentences as a model of spoken language; or long sentences as a standard narrative voice. Through language conversation, the text is no longer a series of letters but more like a series of conversations. The reader becomes aware of the voicing done by the characters in the text as if the language used by the characters is a reflection of the speech patterns of certain people.

MILLS (2008) believes that the Realists' Authentic reading approach also involves the author and her life and the author's relationship with the text. Unlike Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, who tried to show that in the discussion of a text, the role of the writer is not essential. The writer is effectively 'dead.' However, most feminists reject this theory because the author's gender is crucial concerning how the text was received by the male critics and how the text is responded to by female readers. Written by a female, it is an attempt at a redefinition of women's experience, and a celebration of that experience. However, written by a man, it would be yet another attempt to take over radical positions and neutralize those (MILLS, 2008:72).

Luce Irigaray via TONG states that women can create women's language by avoiding gender-neutral language as actively as women avoid male language. Trying to hide the speaker's identity from the reader/listener is cowardly (2008).

Writers and characters in texts are often a unity. According to feminist critics, discussing the life of the writer is essential especially if the text is the work of a woman. It seems that the writer has a close relationship with the characters in the text and with the contents of the text. According to Mills, the difference between the writer and the character in some of the essays becomes almost insignificant (MILLS, 1989).

The *Eyes of Darkness*, the Novel, is written by a man, Dean Koontz. However, the Novel explores the struggle of Christina Evans, the female figure, in seeking evidence of her son's death, Danny Evans. Tina Evans was divorced from Michael Evans after being married for twelve years. She lost her only child, Danny, who died in a bus accident in the same year she was divorced from Michael. She had lived and worked in Las Vegas for fifteen years. She began her career as an actual dancer in the Lido de Paris, a gigantic stage show at the Stardust Hotel. The Lido was one of those incredibly lavish productions that could be seen nowhere in the world but Vegas. Tina enjoyed dancing in the Lido; she stayed there for two and a half years, until she learned that she was pregnant. When Danny was nine months old, Tina gains a place in the chorus line of a new Vegas spectacle. She managed to be both an elegant dancer and a good mother. It was not easy for her. Five years ago, when she reached twenty-eight she

got a position as a choreographer for a two-bit lounge revue. Later she also handled the costumer's job. In time she directed a revue, then directed and produced another. She was well-known and respected in the closely-knit Vegas entertainment world. Almost a year ago, not long after Danny died, she was offered as a director and co-producer of a huge ten-million-dollar extravaganza to be staged in the two-thousand-seat main showroom of the Golden Pyramid, one of the largest and richly luxurious and expensive hotels on the Strip. The new show was titled *Magyck!* Because the variety acts between the big dance numbers were all magicians, and because the production numbers themselves featured elaborate special effects and were built around supernatural theme *If Magyck!* Was a hit and packed the showroom for four or five years, as sometimes happened with successful Vegas shows, Tina would be a multimillionaire by the end of the run. If the production was a flop, if it failed to please the audience, she might be back working the small lounges again, on her way down. Show business, in any form, was a merciless enterprise (pp. 9-10). *Magyck!* It was a great success and the most entertaining Vegas show. Joel Bandiri, Tina's co-producer, and Tina were spotlighted in their booths and were rewarded with their thunderous round of applause.

Michael Evans, Tina's former husband, was a blackjack dealer in Bally's Hotel, formerly the MGM Grand. Bally's was getting to be one of the old establishments on the continuously rejuvenating Las Vegas Strip, but it was still one of the most popular hotels in town, and on this last day of the year it was packed. Michael was happy with his

work, 'his salary and his good tips were enough for him, and he was content to coast through the years.' Tina had been working hard to move up from dancer to costumer to choreographer to a lounge-revue coordinator to a producer. Tina's ambition was, in part, what had led to the dissolution of their marriage. Michael had been irritated by her commitment to work. Tina had never neglected him and Danny.

Gradually Michael's displeasure over her desire to succeed was complicated by a darker emotion: He grew jealous of her smallest achievements. She had tried to encourage him to seek advances in his career-- from dealer to floor-man to pit boss to higher casino management--, but he had no interest in climbing that ladder. He became irritable and ill-tempered. Eventually, he started seeing other women. She was shocked by his reaction, then confused, and at last deeply saddened. The only way she could have held on to her husband would have been to abandon her new career, and she had refused to do that. In time Michael had made it clear to her that he had not ever loved the real Christina. He had adored only the showgirl, the dancer, the cute little thing that other men coveted, the pretty woman whose presence at his side had inflated his ego. As long as he remained a dancer, as long as she devoted her life to him, as long as she hung on his arms and looked delicious, he approved of her. Nevertheless, the moment that she wanted to be something more than a trophy wife, he rebelled. Badly hurt by that discovery, she had given him the freedom that he wanted (p. 43).

At first, Tina had accused Michael of the weird things that happened to her lately. After the *Magyck!* she went to look for him to

make sure that Michael was the one who had ripped apart Danny's room. She told Michael about the strange things that were happening at the house three times in the past week. However, then Tina realized that Michael had nothing to do with it. On the other hand, Michael thought that Tina came to see him because she wanted to go back to him. He was very sure that he and Tina would be together again; that they were still young and could start a family with more children, something that he had always wanted, home life, and a proper family life (p. 45).

Tina was in a great shock after seeing so many words written on the computer screen in her office, plus other various signs, plus the dreams and nightmares. She told Stryker that she wanted to have Danny's body exhumed.

I never saw him. That is why I am having such a hard time accepting that he has gone. That is why I am having nightmares. If I had seen the body, then I'd have known for sure. I would not be able to fantasize about Danny still being alive. (p. 62).

She asked Stryker to represent her handled the case. After Stryker talked to Harold Kennebeck about the plan; the death threats against Tina and Stryker came in repeatedly. At four o'clock that afternoon, two men came to Stryker's house when he was preparing the meal that he wanted to share with Tina that night, questioning him why Christina Evans wanted her little boy's grave reopened. One man was carrying a silencer-equipped pistol, and the other put: a length of flexible rubber tubing, a sphygmomanometer for monitoring blood

pressure, two small bottles of amber-colored fluid, and a packet of disposable hypodermic syringes.

4. CONCLUSION

Authentic Realism is constructive to dissect the characters in the text from various aspects: by looking at it from the side of female sexuality; from the side of an influential female figure; from the form of delivery and language used in the text; in terms of the relationship between the text and the author and his/her experience; and from the text side with the experience of women. Each element is seen to look for the relationship between the text, the author, and the experience of women as readers.

Through Authentic Realism approach allows the researchers to see more clearly the contents of the Novel, in this case, how the real female and male figures, both physical, character, and all the elements related to the characters and characterizations. The relationship between the author's experiences with the Novel can also be seen. By knowing the background of the writer, the reader can understand the Novel better because the form and language used by the writer will be reflected in work.

The reader can feel the experiences of the characters in the Novel because the experiences as women may be the same, similar or different. The reader may not or have not experienced by the characters as described in the texts, but have read or heard about similar experiences. Sympathy, emotional, sadness, pity, anger, arise

from the reader because there are similarities between the text and the circumstances around it.

Discussion with the Authentic Realism approach with new concepts and ideas is still possible because there is no absolute truth. Along with the development of new concepts and ideas, discussions that are not initially identified will be clearly expressed.

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