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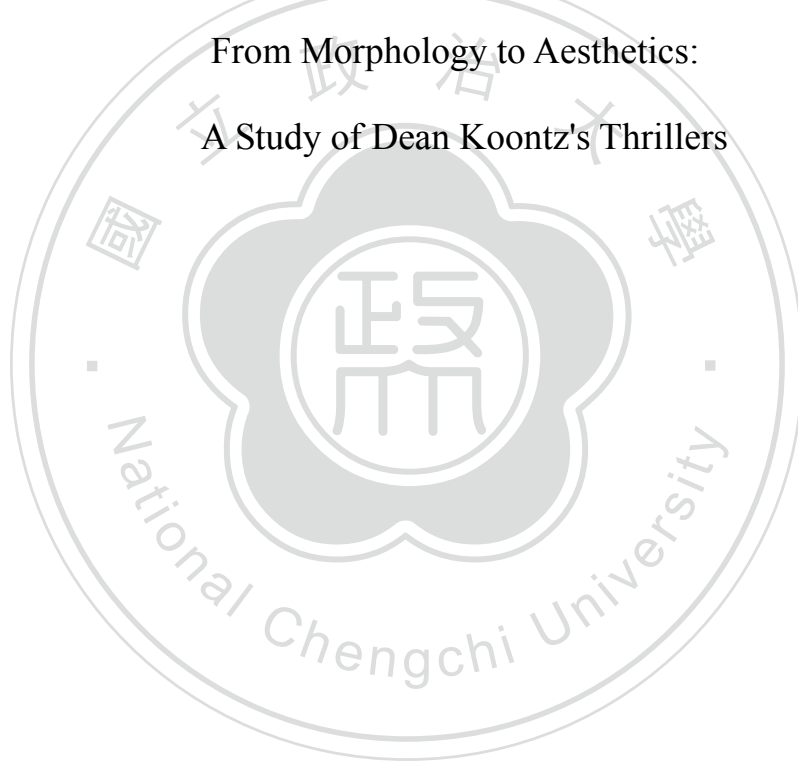
指導教授：陳超明先生

Advisor：Chao-ming Chen

從形態學到美學: 丁.昆士的驚悚小說研究

From Morphology to Aesthetics:

A Study of Dean Koontz's Thrillers

研究生：李姮陵 撰

Name：Heng-ling Li

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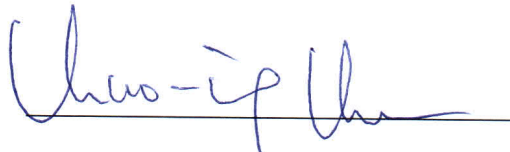
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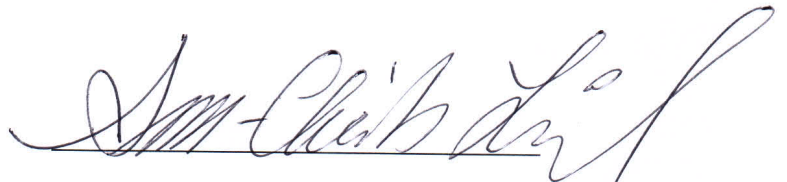
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Heng-ling Li
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Chao-ming Chen
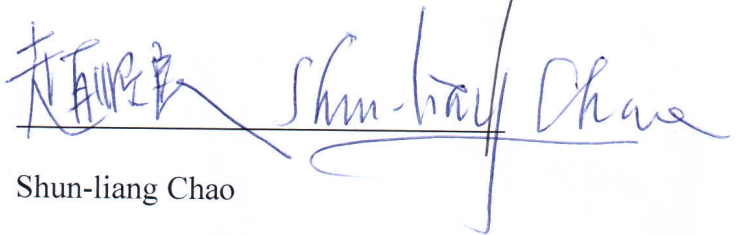
Chao-ming Chen

Professor Directing Thesis

Sun-chieh Liang

Sun-chieh Liang

Committee Member

Shun-liang Chao

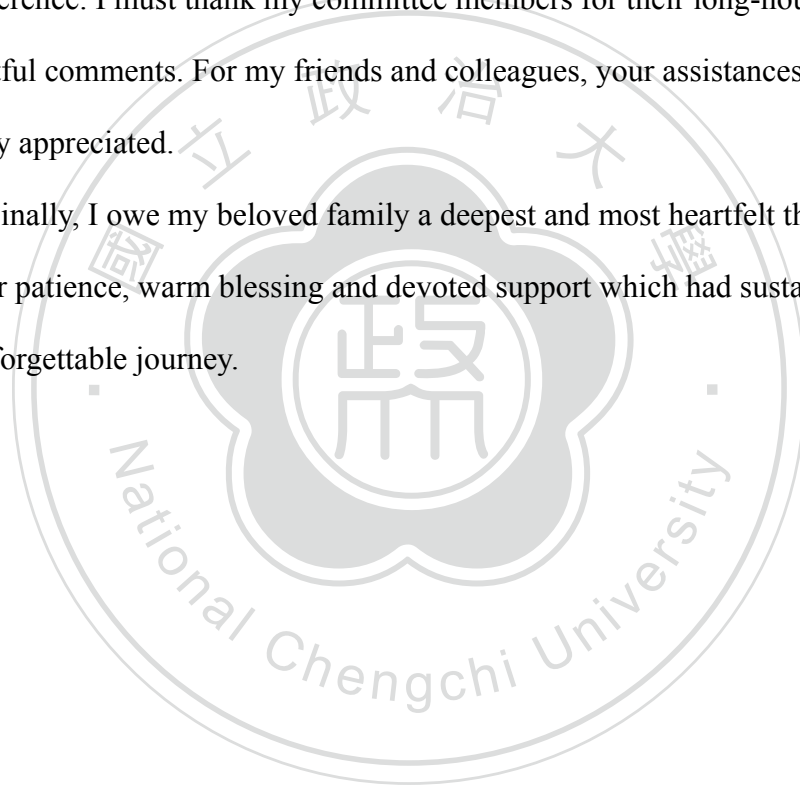Shun-liang Chao

Committee Member

Approved:

Lin, Chih-hsin

Chih-hsin Lin, Chair, Department of English

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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班

碩士論文提要

論文名稱：從形態學到美學: 丁.昆士的驚悚小說研究

指導教授：陳超明

研究生：李姮陵

論文提要內容：

　　在去經典化的後現代情境中，大眾小說從低俗、不入流的文本中擢升為熱門的文化研究題材。過去二十年，大眾小說的相關研究不勝枚舉，其方向不外乎是從文化研究的觀點，探討資本主義社會與文本商品化的文化現象以及從結構的內涵中，建構大眾文學的形式與指涉。大眾小說以公式化寫作(formula writing)為主，但類似故事以不同的形式組合與文本相互指涉(intertextuality)的運作，往往帶給讀者創新的感受，將我們從純粹的結構思維拉進入美學層次。本文將針對此美學議題，提出討論，從狹隘的結構與形態論述出發，來分析大眾驚悚小說的美學意涵。

　　本文選擇了三本美國當代驚悚作家丁.昆士(Dean Koontz)的驚悚小說(thrillers)*Watchers, Mr. Murder* 以及 *Phantoms*，運用 Propp 在故事形態學(*Morphology of the Folktale*)一書中所提出的敘述功能(narrative functions)以及戲劇人物(dramatis personae)來分析此小說的敘述形式，指出此敘述功能的複製，並非 Koontz 小說成功的唯一要素，而是要從形式美學的觀點出發，才能透視其小說的獨特性與大眾性。因此本文進一步使用 Santayana 在其 *The Sense of Beauty*一書中形式(form)之美學理論來探討文本的美學脈絡。

　　Propp 在 *Morphology of the Folktale* 中提出了敘述功能及戲劇人物兩個觀念來分析任何公式寫作的基本架構。敘述功能與戲劇人物的夾雜運用，產生了小說結構的複雜性。從此一形態學的理論出發，來檢視 Koontz 的驚悚要素，不得不進入美學的討論，才能完整地看出小說吸引人或成為 bestsellers 的特質。Santayana在 *The Sense of Beauty* 中提到美學最重要也是最有特色的問題就是形式美。他解釋並歸納出事物的形式美，存在於 "對稱性(symmetry)"、"單一形式的多樣性"(multiplicity in uniformity)"以及"心靈自然的創造性(the spontaneous creation in mind)"等形式標準。從形態與結構的研究進入美學的範疇，正是本文的主要架構。

本文第一章分析美學的基本論述，從 Propp 的形態學到 Santayana 的形式美學作為本論文的理論基礎；第二章討論 *Watchers* 中的敘述功能及戲劇人物如何體現對稱性的美學元素；第三章試圖挖掘 *Mr. Murder* 裡符合單一形式的多樣性之美學結構及角色設計；第四章則是分析 Koontz 如何善用心靈自然的創造性來運用類型(types)及想像力(imagination)的結合，幫助塑造 *Phantoms* 中的 The Ancient Enemy 一角；第五章總結本文是如何結合大眾小說的結構研究及美學思維，突破以往驚悚小說的狹隘結構與公式論述，也超越文化研究忽略文本的內在性與美學性，希望透過挖掘驚悚小說的美學價值，來解釋大眾小說的大眾性與美學之間的關係，重新定位驚悚小說的文學地位與小說家 Koontz 在此文類寫作的獨特性。

Abstract

During the recent two decades, the reputation of the popular genre, especially of those popular fictions, has been raised from chintzy stories for the purpose of entertainment to literary or cultural works, attracting great attention from academics. Popular fictions have been studied culturally and structurally to probe into the social phenomena and cultural significance. Known as the formula writings, popular fictions employ the intertextuality and the various combinations of elements used in similar stories to create the freshness for the reading experience, and, by those narrative strategies, elevate themselves into the realm of aesthetics. Here, the noted American thriller writer Dean Koontz's three novels, *Watchers, Mr. Murder,* and *Phantoms,* are brought into discussion. Using Propp's ideas of 31 narrative functions and the dramatis personae in his *Morphology of the Folktale* alone with Santayana's three elements in the beauty of form stated in his *The Sense of Beauty*, this thesis strives to see through the regular formula writings and uncover their aesthetic uniqueness in these three thrillers. The three elements in terms of the beauty of form discussed here are "symmetry," "multiplicity in uniformity," and "the spontaneous creation in mind." This thesis aims to pinpoint the aesthetic values in popular thrillers, illustrating the relationship between the popularity and aesthetics by morphologically analyzing the finite patterns and structures and aesthetically unspooling the beauty elements in them. It is anticipated to relocate the position of popular thrillers in literature and to redefine Koontz's status as the master of popular and classical thriller writings.

Chapter One

Introduction

… all cultural products contain a mixture of two kinds of elements:

conventions and inventions. Conventions are elements which are

known to both the creator and his audience beforehand—they consist

of things like favorite plots, stereotyped characters, accepted ideas,

commonly known metaphors and other linguistic devices, etc.

Inventions, on the other hand, are elements which are uniquely

imagined by creator such as new kinds of characters ideas, or linguistic

forms." –John G. Cawelti, "The Concept of Formula in the Study of

Popular Literature.

In locating the merits of any cultural product, Cawelit argues that both

conventions and inventions contribute to the success of an artistic work. It is indeed

true that any literary work, classic or popular, is built upon conventions and

inventions. Genre conventions, particularly, delimit and delineate the nature of a

particular genre while inventions open the unlimited possibilities, cultural and

aesthetic, of a specific work (87-92).

Thrillers are defined as a genre which conventionally consists of some

"thrilling" elements such as suspense, tension, terror, uncertainty and excitement

(Kotker 11-19). To enrich the story with these elements, thriller writers strain to create

or invent scaring plots to intrigue their readers. Some typical plots, such as serial

killings, supernatural or mystical intervention, or melodramatic violence, are

repetitively employed by these writers to satiate those thrill-seekers with

horror-pleasure. The repetition of such plots tends to produce formulas of popular

thriller writings. As one of the most celebrated thriller writers in popular literature,

Dean Koontz is aptly recognized as formula writer and, with this formula writing, he

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earns his reputation as a bestseller author in the United States. However, while many studies of thrilling writings are often focused on the dramatic or shocking effects of these writing patterns and structures, especially in Koontz's works, there emerges a necessity of viewing or recognizing this genre writing, conventional or inventive, from the perspective of aesthetics as we try to deepen the study of Dean Koontz's thrillers. Why do Koontz's "formula" writings dominate the popular fictional market while many other thrillers fail to intimidate their readers with similar formula plots? What are those conventions? And what are those inventions in Koontz's works? Are these conventions or inventions situated in structural or cultural contexts? Or are they just aesthetical concerns? These are the questions this thesis is concerned with.

Researches of horror or thrilling writings tend to analyze morphologically the conventions or patterns in the structure of horror movies and fiction. In Jody Kolodzey's dissertation "Seeing Believing: Morphological Considerations of the Depictions of Religious Folk Groups in Late 20th Century Hollywood Cinema," the author utilizes the narrative analysis developed by V. Propp and Theodor Adorno's idea of "the cultural industry" to examine the act of villainy in murder in late 20th century Hollywood movies in the aspect of both culture and religion (1-24). Another study, Rhiannon Mckechnie's "With Terror in Their Hearts: A Structural and Textual Analysis of Gender, Transmission, and the Enjoyment of Horror in Slasher Films and Contemporary Legend," compares the contemporary horror legends and slasher films textually and structurally to analyze the modes of their transmission and the enjoyment provided by them (1-24).

Some focus on single narrative function to develop their studies. Take Arthur Andrew Brown's "'A Man Who Dies…': Poe, James, Faulkner and the Narrative Function of Death" as an example. In his dissertation, death is identified as a fundamental principle of narrative function which provides material, enables the

language and the act of narration, and humanizes literature in the stories of Poe, James and Faulkner (1-24).

Besides formula plots and structural analysis, many studies of thrillers deal with cultural or social issues projected in these thrilling novels. For the past twenty years' studies of Dean Koontz's works, most of these 26 essays or books discuss the cultural or social implications of violence delineated in the novels. For instance, D. W. Taylor's "Mainstream Horror in Whispers and Phantoms," which investigates the reflection upon the serious issue of children abuse in Koontz's two novels, *Whispers* and *Phantoms*, answers the question how Dean Koontz combines his own abused childhood experience with the psychological illness derived from it to write into reader's heart of darkness (97-111). In Laura Elizabeth's doctoral dissertation entitled *The Social Construction of Gender as Represented in Popular Fiction, 1990-1997*, the traditional gender stereotype discovered in Koontz's novels is analyzed in order to make a comparison with the other contemporary form of mass media (1-24).

Other studies, such as Richard Laymon's "In the Midst of Life" and Michael R. Collings' "Dean Koontz and Stephen King: Style, *Invasion,* and Aesthetics of Horror" focus on the uniqueness of his writing style. While the former gives an overall analysis of the features and main characters in Koontz's novels, trying to present the horror effect that the author creates through his writing, which fuses the science fiction with horror (80-96), the latter compares and contrasts Dean Koontz's and Stephen King's writing styles and the characteristics of their fictions, justifying that the similarities such as theme, images, and devices shared by them actually stem from elements within the genre itself (63-79).

Yet, among all the dissertations or studies on Dean Koontz, only Linda J. Holland-Toll's *From Disturbance to Comfort Zone: Cross-Generic Strategies in Dean R. Koontz* deals with the pattern and structural of Koontz's novel, in which the

researcher examines Koontz's manipulation of the plot arrangement and his uses of some narrative techniques to fulfill readers' expectations and engage them emotionally in his novels (1-24).

In addition to structural analyses and cultural interpretations, some studies emphasize on the poetics or aesthetics of horror. For example, Aalya Ahmad's "Bordering on Fear: A Comparative Literary Study of Horror Fiction" discusses the definition of horror and analyzes the affective elements in horror stories applying narrative theories. It also senses the lack of studying the fans of horror in academic field and tries to provide a framework toward a poetics of horror (1-24). Another aesthetical study is Scott Preson's dissertation *Horror and Reenchantment: A Supernatural Genre in a Secular Age*, in which the author argues that rather than being just a genre in contemporary popular culture, horror is a privileged literary and aesthetic discourse with roots traceable to modern culture and life. It illustrates how horror fiction or film relates to the cross-pressure of life, which in a way provides resolutions to the struggle of reality and then re-enchants this disenchanted secular world (1-24).

Among all these dissertations, theses and researches of Dean Koontz, some identify Koontz's patterns and structures of the stories, and some praise the aesthetics of horror; however, none of them show care or pay attention to the beauty of the structure in popular thrillers, which, for me, is an important step to bring a morphological study of thrillers (in this case, Koontz's works) to an aesthetical recognition of his achievements in thrilling writings. Rather than studying the reflection on culture and society, I find it significant and important to explore the uniqueness in Dean Koontz's novels, which enables them to surpass other popular writings. My thesis will thus morphologically examine three of Dean Koontz's thrillers and then move from a morphological study of narrative functions (in Propp's

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terms) to an aesthetic discussion of the inventive elements in form and structure. I will situate my analysis in filling the gap between the previous studies of the morphology and the aesthetics of thrillers.

In order to underlie my research, I will apply the idea of "narrative function" in Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* and "the form of beauty" in George Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory*. Propp's narrative function will help me clarify and outline the complicated and intriguing narrative arrangements in Koontz's works while Santayana's illustrations of the beauty of form will be contributive to the analysis of beauty in these narrative functions. To illustrate my ideas with textual analysis in this thesis, I will rely on three of Dean Koontz's novels which completely conform to the three important functions that I will discuss in the section of Propp's narrative function. Also, they serve as specific examples to demonstrate the three beauty qualifications that I will raise, based on Santayana's theory of beauty. These novels are *Watchers* (1987), *Mr. Murder* (1993) and *Phantoms* (1983).

In his *Morphology of the Folktale*, Propp asserts the idea of morphology and defines it as "a description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole" (19). "This work is an attempt to describe the form of a corpus of one hundred fairy tales in terms of their constituent parts and to arrive at a general description of the relationship apparent within the data" (Waugh 157). To illustrate the idea, Propp gives four instances in which the actions are identical yet the actors are varied and later draws the inference that "a tale often attributes identical actions to various personages"(20). Propp then reaches the conclusion that "the number of functions is extremely small, whereas the number of personages is extremely large" (20). That is to say that this characteristic "makes possible the study of the tale according to the functions of its dramatis

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personae" (20). Propp's idea of morphology can be aptly applied to the study of conventions in Koontz's writings, which are efficiently and aesthetically structured with several narrative functions in Propp's scheme and a large category of dramatis personae.

But what exactly is the definition of the functions? According to Propp, "Function is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (21). There are four characteristics of functions:

1. Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale.

2. The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited.

3. The sequence of functions is always identical.

4. All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure. (Propp 21-23)

Given these characteristics, the diverse narratives of fairy tales in Propp's study can be reduced to thirty one functions. These thirty one functions of fairy tales can be divided into three periods: (1) The preparatory section, (2) Plot set in motion, and (3) The ending part. A scrutiny of the structures and patterns of Dean Koontz's writings leads to a finding that the thriller's plot seems to fit in with or be parallel to the thirty one functions that Propp asserts, just like the functions in fairy tales where at the initial scene "one of the members of a family absents himself from home" (Propp 26), in every beginning of Koontz's thriller, the hero always encounters some kind of frustrations, mysteries or obstacles and thus becomes absent physically and emotionally. And, as in the development of the fourth to seventh function where the villain makes a reconnaissance, receives information about his victim, deceives and

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succeeds his deception, the storyline of Koontz's thrillers also stages a villain's period of acquiring information, expanding his power, and increasing the number of his victims.

In the second period, the plot set in motion, the development of the story totally conforms to its division, in which the hero is forced to take action due to the villain's evil conduct. The important functions in this period are "the villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family" (30), "the seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction" (38), "the hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., which prepares the way for his perceiving either a magical agent or helper" (39) and "the hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search" (50). The same pattern also appears in Koontz's thrillers where the killer poses threat, causes harm, or even commits murder to the hero or his family, which leads to the hero's determination to confrontation. Later, in the process of counteracting against the killer, the hero is under attack or faces challenges, in which the emergence of help always follows. At last, the hero comes to the place where his final confrontation with the killer begins (51).

In the ending of the story, the function of "the hero and villain join in direct combat" (Propp 51) becomes the climax of the story. And then the developments divide themselves into two directions. In one path the story ends with "the villain is defeated" (53) while in the other one there still lies "a difficult task is proposed to the hero" (60). After "the task is resolved or accomplished," "the hero is given a new appearance" (62). In the same manner, the exciting direct confrontation is required at the end of Dean Koontz's thrillers. As in Koontz's novels where the good always triumph over the evil, the villain is always defeated at the end of the novels. Moreover, with some extra difficult task that is proposed to the protagonists before completely annihilating the killers, Koontz adds the excitement to his thrillers.

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Propp's idea of "dramatis personae" provides us with another aspect of studying Koontz's thrillers. In the sixth chapter of his *Morphology of the Folktale*, Propp presents the necessity of examining "how functions are distributed among the dramatis personae" (79). He explains: "many functions logically join together into certain spheres. These spheres … correspond to their respective performers. They are spheres of action" (79). To Propp, every dramatis persona that fulfills function in the tale can be distributed into seven different spheres which are spheres of action of the villain, donor, helper, princess and her father, dispatcher, hero and the false hero. Further, every function corresponds to its sphere. Yet we cannot arbitrarily define characters by the functions they fulfill due to the existence of particular personages who fulfill particular functions such as connection and betray.

In Koontz's thrillers we can locate four dramatis personae who always fulfill functions which are attributed into certain spheres. The first dramatis persona is a male protagonist who possesses love and passion to conquer every difficulty. He is attributed into the sphere of action of hero (Koontz, *How to Write Best-Selling Fiction* 139-146). The next dramatis persona is a strong and intelligent female protagonist, described as an extraordinary woman with attractive appearance. She is often placed into both the sphere of action of princess and helper (Munster, *Discovering Dean Koontz* 48). The third dramatis persona is usually a psychopathic series killer who possesses a sick obsession or a weird justification toward his killing. The killer is ascribed into both the sphere of action of villain and false hero. The last dramatis persona is a character with supernatural power. This is a rather complicated one to attribute into certain sphere. If this character is a protagonist, he/she is always put into the sphere of action of hero or helper. If an antagonist, the sphere of action of villain or false hero.

Though many identical functions and dramatis personae are found in Propp's

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fairytales and Koontz's thrillers, it does not mean that this thesis will force the reading of Koontz's writings into Propp's morphological framework. Variant narrative functions and dramatis personae will be introduced to the reading of this horror genre writings. However, through carefully cross-textual analysis of Propp's theory and Koontz's thrillers, we find that the functions in popular writing can fit quite well into the narrative functions which are extracted from the structure of fairy tales. With different arrangement of these functions and the design of impressive dramatis personae, Koontz achieves in creating aesthetics values in the form and structure in his popular thrillers. This is the basis this thesis springs from.

Having been overused by previous writers as a convenient and efficient way of creating appealing plots, those thrilling conventions, whose nature is disclosed by Propp's morphological theory in this thesis, have become a cliché and lost their values in modern popular writings. Thus, to study the conventions in Koontz's writings is not enough to substantiate the fact that Koontz is overshadowing other thriller writers. There is a need to pinpoint the inventive elements in his writings. The inventions in form and structure are closely related to the artistic part or aesthetic concerns. This thesis is then moving from the morphological study into the field of aesthetic study.

In his *Keywords,* Raymond Williams defines aesthetic as follows:

> [A]esthetic, with its specialized reference to Art, to visual appearance, and to a category of what is 'fine' or 'beautiful', is a key formation in a group of meanings which at once emphasized and isolated SUBJECTIVE sense-activity as the basis of art and beauty as distinct, for example, from social or cultural interpretations. (28)

Aesthetic, according to Williams, strongly involves "subjective sense-activity." This subjective sense-activity is where, in the case of fictional reading, a reader is sensibly intrigued to experience the emotional patterns (beauty or horror) of the fictional world

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(28). Koontz's writings are good examples to produce this subjective sense-activity in their unique structures of how narrative functions are arranged and dramatis personae are created. To apply Santayana's study of the beauty in form is thus appropriate in the following discussion of Koontz's aesthetic achievements.

In the third part of his *The Sense of Beauty*, Santayana raises the issue of the beauty of form: "The most remarkable and characteristic problem of aesthetics is that of beauty of form… It is found where sensible elements, by themselves indifferent, are so united as to please in combination" (53). He illustrates his idea by arranging several meaningless short lines into different figures which are presented as ugly, grotesque, and approximately beautiful. Following the quotation, Santayana continues to emphasize the importance of combination in the beauty of form and structure. To him, it is the change of the arrangement of those short lines that affect our feelings toward these figures. Applying his idea to my thesis, I will scrutinize the form and structure of Dean Koontz's thrillers, anticipating the result that: with the play of pattern and the changing arrangement of the same functions in thrillers, Koontz plants the aesthetic values in his works.

To extend my morphological study of Koontz's novels, I will introduce three elements of beauty in form introduced in Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty*. The first element is symmetry. Here, Santayana demonstrates his idea of symmetry by discussing that when the eye runs over a façade, what attract the attention is the "equal intervals" on it, which is an expectation in the mind. If the anticipation can be satisfied by always finding "the same response, the same adequacy," the delight and pleasure are gained. That is to say that symmetry contributes to "that completeness which delights without stimulating." Therefore, according to Santayana, "this kind of symmetry is in itself a negative merit, but often the condition of the greatest of all merits, —the permanent power to please" (59). To analyze the beauty of symmetry in

Koontz's thrillers, a careful examination of the symmetry of functions and dramatis personae will be executed in my thesis.

And then I will explore Santayana's idea of "multiplicity in uniformity" in Koontz's thrillers. By the aesthetics of "multiplicity in uniformity" Santayana means "the feeling of 'crude extensity'" which, is "a feeling of relation" (62). He explains that this "pure sense of extension, based upon the attack of the object upon the apperceptive resources of the eye, is the truly aesthetic value" (63). Here, Santayana employs the stars as an example to explicate the feeling of beauty which generates in our minds while we look upon the starry sky come from the feeling of extensiveness and the feeling of relation. We are moved aesthetically by the infinity of the stars and our relation to its sublimity. In the same manner, we can also aesthetically appreciate killers' limitless power and the great number of victims in Koontz's thrillers, which are both the representations of extensiveness of evil and violence.

Finally, I will focus on the beauty of "the spontaneous creation of the mind." Santayana asserts that "a spontaneous creation of the mind can be more striking and living than any reality, or any abstraction from realities" (111). The "spontaneous creation" he mentions here means the recombination of the empirical experience and imagination. Santayana explains:

> Imagination, in a word, generates as well as abstracts; it observes, combines, and cancels; but it also dreams. Spontaneous syntheses arise in it which are not mathematical averages of the images it receives from sense; they are effects of diffused excitements left in the brain by sensations. These excitements vary constantly in their various renewals, and occasionally take such a form that the soul is surprised by the inward vision of an unexampled beauty. (112)

These spontaneous syntheses are the natural combination of the imagination and the

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accumulative experiences. The examples raised here are the winged man and centaur, which are both ideas that generate feeling of beauty due to the natural combination of human figures and fantastic power. It is this kind of natural combination that can aesthetically touch our hearts.

Relying on Santayana's idea, I will observe the arrangements of the functions and the design of the dramatis personae in Koontz's thrillers to find out how Dean Koontz uses imagination to naturally combine with the reality in order to meet readers' expectations and fulfill readers' longings for excitement and then ultimately creates the aesthetic values in his works.

Starting from 1968, Koontz has published ninety eight novels, among which nearly sixty fall into the categories of thrillers. With the narrative functions and dramatis personae in them which explicitly illustrate the three significant elements in Santayana's the beauty of form, the three most recognized novels as well as three of Koontz's best-sellers in New York Times, *Watchers*, *Mr. Murder*, and *Phantoms* are chosen for this study.

In *Watchers*, the initial development of plots conforms to Propp's several narrative functions in the preparatory period such as #1[1]one of the members of a family absents himself from home; #4 the villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance; #5 the villain receives information about his victim (Propp 26-28). And then, in the plot set in motion, the storyline in *Watchers* is built upon these functions: #8 the villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family; #8a one member of a family either lacks something or desire to have something; #9 misfortune or lack is made known: the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched; #10 the seeker agrees to or decides upon counteractions; #11 the hero

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[1] In this thesis, several narrative functions which Propp asserts are discussed. Here, the numbers in the paratheses are labeled according to Propp's function numbering system.

leaves home; #12 the hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc. which prepares the

way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper; #15 the hero is transferred,

delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search (Propp 30-50). Finally,

functions like #16 the hero and villain join in direct combat; #18 the villain is

defeated; #19 the initial misfortune or lack is liquidated; #21 the hero is pursued; #22

the hero is rescued from pursuit (Propp 51-57) are applied in the ending part of this

novel. Moreover, *Watchers* involves Propp's dramatis personae of hero, princess and

helper, villain, and the donor (as the magic agent).

In *Mr. Murder*, the story structure in the beginning also responds to Propp's

narrative functions in the preparatory period, which are: #4 the villain makes an

attempt at reconnaissance; #5 the villain receives information about his victim (Propp

28). Later, in the second period, the developments of story are established upon

functions such as #8 the villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family; #10

the seeker agrees to or decides upon counteractions; #11 the hero leaves home; #12

the hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc. which prepares the way for his receiving

either a magical agent or helper; #15 the hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the

whereabouts of an object of search (Propp 30-50). And then, the ending part of the

novel involves functions like #16 the hero and villain join in direct combat; #18 the

villain is defeated; #19 the initial misfortune or lack is liquidated; #21 the hero is

pursued; #22 the hero is rescued from pursuit (Propp 51-57). Here, Koontz seasons

his thriller with more excitements and horror by inverting the sequence of the periods

of narrative function. In the middle of the second period and before the ending section,

Koontz adds narrative functions #23 the hero, unrecognized, arrived home or in

another country; #24 a false hero presents unfounded claims; #25 a difficult task is

proposed to the hero; #26 the task is resolved or accomplished; #27 the hero is

recognized (Propp 60-62). To carry out these functions, in *Mr. Murder,* Koontz

employs Propp's dramatis personae of hero, princess, helper, villain, and the false hero.

In the analysis of *Phantom*, the focus will be solely on the shaping of the dramatis persona, the major villain in the story. The major villain, The Ancient Enemy in the novel, performs functions which belong to the villain: #4 the villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance, #5 the villain receives information about his victim , #6 the villain attempts to deceive his victim by using persuasion, magic, or deception, #7 the victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy, #8 the villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family, #16 the hero and villain join in direct combat, #18 the villain is defeated (Propp 28-53).

Conventional in these narrative functions, these three novels, however, involve artistic and inventive structures, each of which carries one of Santayana's three aesthetic elements of symmetry, the multiplicity in uniformity and the spontaneous creation of the mind. Based upon the functional analyses, the study will be an attempt to elaborate upon the way in which narrative functions and dramatis personae constitute the aesthetic elements in Koontz's fascinating writings.

I will divide my thesis into five chapters. Chapter one will introduce my topic, explain the importance of Dean Koontz's thrillers, set up my theoretic framework, and attest the necessity of my study in popular literature. Chapter two will explore the beauty of symmetry on the functions and the dramatis personae in Koontz's *Watchers*. Chapter three will consider the beauty of relation and extension on the functions and the dramatis personae in *Mr. Murder*, which demonstrate what Santayana says the multiplicity in uniformity. Chapter four will focus on the natural combination of imagination and experience on the most dramatic dramatis personae employed in the novel, *Phantoms*. Chapter five will conclude and emphasize the contribution of my thesis by arguing that Koontz's unique and aesthetic plays of patterns and functions

help establish himself to be one of the best popular thrilling writers.

Chapter Two

Symmetry in *Watchers*

In the third chapter of his *The Sense of Beauty*, Santayana explicates his idea of the beauty in form. For him, symmetry is an important element in beauty. Symmetry in form can achieve three effects: first, the harmonious feeling that satisfies viewers' expectation, a static beauty in form; second, the joyful impact that is derived from the violation of harmony, a dynamic beauty in form; third, clarification, a method to apprehend the material better and to enhance the impression on viewers. Santayana's symmetry in form is based on the physiological principle of human beings. People tend to feel disturbed or distracted by imbalance, their eyes while try to focus on a certain thing. That is why the "bilateral symmetry" can create the muscular balance in our eyes toward comfort and economy.

Santayana further explains that this symmetry helps to create a situation in which viewers can obtain pleasure or the feeling of fulfillment from the familiarity with the past experiences without stimulation. He compares this state to a sense of recognition which attracts the viewers with its charm of rhythm in symmetry. Viewers usually have the expectation that their anticipation to find harmony from watching would be satisfied. If the satisfaction fails, a shock feeling will rise. Normally, which follows the shock is "the feeling of ugliness and imperfection" (59). But according to Santayana, if the object itself is interesting, this shock will give us "the effect of the picturesque" (59). This fulfillment of viewers' anticipations is "a permanent power to please" (59). This "power" is the source that delights viewers without stimulating, keeping their inner feeling peaceful.

Moreover, the symmetry in form emphasizes the recurrence of elements, the repetition because produces some identical intervals and individuals, and then provides the condition of unity. The consequence of this condition of unity is the way

how we can relate symmetry to stability. Thus, the unity establishes the harmony, creates a positive status and eliminates any possibility of feeling violated. In other words, symmetry provides viewers with the feeling of static beauty.

But for Santayana, under the circumstance that the object is interesting, unsymmetrical objects can also be regarded as things with the value of dynamic beauty. While symmetry is "what metaphysicians call a principle of individuation" (59), is a criterion that distinguishes or individuates objects—a principle of comprehension, it also achieves the effect of clarification. Our comprehending through intelligence and understanding helps make perceiving more enjoyable. And under the function of clarification, the object perceived thus becomes more impressive.

All these three aesthetic elements in the beauty of the form seem to distinguish Koontz's thriller among other popular writings. In his *Watchers*, Koontz designs an aesthetic framework which interlocks static beauty, dynamic beauty and clarification into the scientific-horror genre.

Watchers is one of Dean Koontz's most celebrated thrillers in his best-sellers list, and also is his favorite one (Gorman interview, 46-47). Its success can be attributed not only to Koontz's unique and skillful playing of the patterns and the elements which are generally applied in popular fiction but also to his artistic technique of rearranging the plain sequence of storyline. In other words, it is the aesthetic values that Koontz creates with the form of the story that makes his novels so unique. The setting, the characters and the structure of the story development are unexpectedly symmetrical. Is it possible that those symmetrical elements in Santayana's term are the key to the success of this novel? Those aesthetic features in *Watchers* seem to echo Santayana's idea of symmetry in form. In order to tunnel out the hidden beauty form and artistic values in this popular thriller, a scrutiny of the

symmetry in the structure of *Watchers* is expected to illustrate both the static and dynamic beauties of the novel.

Drawing on the way in which Daniel Barnes employs Propp's 31 narrative function to map out the story of Beowulf in his "Folktale Morphology and the Structure of Beowulf," I will examine the logical and sequential development in the storyline of *Watchers* in order to give a clear picture of the plot structure of this novel. These narrative functions help us observe the basic structure of the novel. The following is a plot mapped by following Propp's narrative functions, which can be divided into three stages: preparatory section, plot set in motion, and struggle and victory over villain. (Only functions contribute to the symmetry in form in *Watchers* will be mentioned here.)

Using Propp's narrative functions in the analysis gives us a clear picture of how the story is structured. The symmetry between each chapter and the story development also emerge immediately. I will elaborate on several important symmetries to pinpoint the aesthetic elements found in *Watchers*.

First Symmetry:

#[2]4. Reconnaissance	#5. Delivery
The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance.	The villain receives information about his victim. (The villain gets an answer.)
Chapter Two:	Chapter Two:
The minor villain/antagonist of the story, a television repairman named Art Streck, is on duty in Nora Devon, the female protagonist's house. Nora instinctively	By his reconnaissance during the duty time, Streck suspects that Nora was lying and plans to take advantage of her.

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[2] # stands for Propp's "function."

senses that Streck's bad intention so she pretends to be a wife of an officer. In the meanwhile, Streck observes every corner of the house.	
Chapter three: In the meantime, the other major villain (the human antagonist of the story), Vince Nasco, who makes money by being a contract killer, is processing his serial assassin missions where he finds suspicious that the victims that his client assigns are all scientist and doctors. Therefore, he begins to investigate the reason behind their death.	Chapter three: Vince receives the information about the Banodyne Laboratories and "the Francis Project" from one of the victimized scientist, Doctor Hudson. He then relocates his target and intends to capture the priceless genetically engineered super-intelligent dog, Einstein, for ransom.
Chapter four: Here again, Vince Nasco makes another reconnaissance of the project by interrogating another of his victim, Doctor Haines.	Chapter four: Vince successfully acquires more details about the secret of the project and the lab.
Chapter five: This time, Vince Nasco goes directly to the Banodyne lab to collect information about the project. And then he goes to Johnny The Wire, the best hacker of mob in the country, to ask help on hacking into the	Chapter five: An agent of the government NSA, Lemuel Johnson, who appears to be aware of the whole "Francis Project, leads his team to check the situation and collect evidences of the series murder

police's computer system for finding clues that can direct his way on the quest.	cases that the Outsider has done. As we know that Vince can hack into the computer system with the help of Johnny The Wire, we can infer that Vince has already received the whole package of information about Einstein and The Outsider.

In the first half of the story, functions #4 and #5 constantly recur to create the symmetry in form. When Art Streck fulfills the function of reconnaissance and delivery in Chapter Two, Vince Nasco accomplishes same functions in Chapter Three, which generates the first symmetry in form in this novel. Since many modern popular writings have been labeled "the pattern writing," the recurrence of the familiar structure in popular thrillers is a cliché technique. It is true that the fourth and the fifth functions here follow the pattern, an ordinary design in popular thriller. However, Koontz colorizes his story by making two different villains carry out same functions in different levels of villainy. His strategy successfully creates the effects which symmetry in form can provide: first, when we know that Art Streck succeeds in his reconnaissance, the success of Vince's is also anticipated. It is not only because the initial villainous plot always move the story on but because readers themselves unconsciously anticipate a repetition or expect symmetry in form. The correspondence between the two villainies satisfies readers' primitive and physical expectations without stimulation, then creating the harmonious feeling during the reading experience. This is where the static beauty in form starts to spread throughout the novel.

As readers keep reading how Art Streck and Vince Nasco breed their schemes by fulfilling the functions four and five, they cannot ignore the blood-curdling

creature in the woods in chapter one. Without the same proportion of the description

that Koontz draws on the mysterious creature as he does on Art or Vince, or say, the

explicit practice of the fourth and fifth functions, the readers would be desperate to

know what functions or what personages it would work in this novel. Thus, the lack in

portrayal of the unidentified creature becomes an unsymmetrical element in structure.

This is a violation of harmony that we expect. Reader's curiosity is aroused now to

keep turning pages. He is willing to be manipulated by this unsymmetrical strategy;

he is trapped in this dynamic symmetry. This arrangement gives the novel freshness

and variety. In other words, it is the dynamic beauty that Koontz puts into the form of

his novel.

Second Symmetry:

First obtainment of the magical agent	Chapter six:
	#12. The first function of the donor: The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc. which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper. (The donor usually enters the story here.) Travis and Nora try to find out the way to communicate with Einstein. Here, the donor who possesses the special ability (magical power in some degree), Einstein, enters the story "again," or say, enters the story truly because he starts to fulfill the function. (To practice his first function as a donor, Einstein catalyzes the story's correspondence of the seventh situation: "other requests (41)" that Propp asserts in his theory. In searching for an effective method of communication, Travis "is presented with the possibility of rendering assistance (42).")
	#13. The hero's reaction: The hero reacts to the actions of the future

	donor.
	During the constant effort at the communication between human and dog, Travis "performs some other services (43)." In the case, with Einstein's patience and Nora's help, Travis unyieldingly tries out any method and then succeeds.
	#14. Provision or receipt of a magical agent: The hero acquires the use of a magical agent. By wagging his tail in different ways as answering yes or no, pointing the pictures in magazine to indicate ideas and spelling on typing machine to express every trend of thought, Einstein is able to explain the mystery of his life and, more importantly, to warn Travis and Nora of The Outsider's and the NSA's chases. (There is a mysterious connection or telepathy between Einstein and the Outsider, which they can tell location or even the mood of each other's.) Einstein's special ability serves just as a magical crystal ball which can foresee the upcoming danger.
Interval	**Chapter seven** **#16. Struggle:** The hero and villain join in direct combat. After Travis and Nora come home from their honeymoon, The Outsider is spotted having the landlord murdered in Travis' house. The Outsider tries to attack Einstein but is driven away by Travis gunshot. This is the first direct encounter between the hero and major villain. (According to Propp, two forms should be distinguished in this function. In our case, "the hero obtains an agent, for the purpose of

	further searching, as the result of an unfriendly encounter (52), the division would be the element D (i.e., the function 12)." Therefore, as the element D indicates that that its function prepares the way for the hero's receiving either a magical agent or helper, here, Travis will later receive the help from the attorney, Garrison Dilworth.)
Second obtainment of the magical agent	**Chapter seven** **#12:** The process of Garrison Dilworth accepting Einstein's story and their request for help matches the characteristic of this function. It also prepares for Garrison Dilworth's becoming of a donor. **#13:** Travis and Nora's sincerity and honesty convince Garrison Dilworth in believing that helping them is an action out of justice as well as a glory gesture that will colorize his life. **#14:** Although old and gentle, Garrison Dilworth, as an attorney, is professional and effective enough to arrange for the fleeing of Travis and Nora. With the help of Garrison Dilworth, the escape of them is like flying on a magical carpet.

Another important symmetry structure in *Watchers* lies in the process of how the hero gains the help and the magical agent. From chapters six to eight, the recurrence of the function eleven to function fourteen by sequence is strengthened. Koontz's repetition of the twelfth to thirteen to fourteenth functions is strongly connected by the function sixteen which, in chapter seven, allows Travis to join the direct combat with The Outsider. The symmetry here embodies the first effect that symmetry brings into the form, which is the fulfillment of readers' expectations.

The first obtainment of the magical agent is Einstein's special quality of having

high intelligence and mysterious connection with The Outsider spiritually. Einstein's intelligence enables him to provide useful information about the lab and the secret project to Travis and Nora. As to his mystical connection with The Outsider resembles the function of the crystal gazing in fortune-telling, which foretells the upcoming danger. These become the advantages for them in preparing for the confrontation. However, without an effective way to communicate his ideas to Travis and Nora, Einstein's special power can help nothing. Therefore, it is necessary to apply #12 (the first function of the donor) to begin the searching for the solution. And then #13 initiates a series of brainstorming and plans (the hero's reaction) which are followed by #14 (provision or receipt of a magical agent) that describes this first gaining of a magical agent.

The second obtainment of the magical agent is the assistance provided by the attorney, Garrison Dilworth. Garrison is the key character who contributes the possibility of Travis and Nora's flee and their sheltering of Einstein against the menaces. The fulfillment of functions #12 to #13 to #14 is as well an essential process to persuade Garrison into offering his help. Their two obtainments of the magical agent serve as another symmetry in the structure of the story. This symmetry is more unique than others due to its relationship to the interval it produces.

It is important to notice the "interval" between this symmetrical form of their first and second gaining of the magical agent. If we considered #16 in chapter seven to be the interval between the two fulfillments of #12 to #14, it is evident that this interval plays a crucial role in the structure.

The direct combat between the hero and the villain here provides the explanation of the cause and effect of the story development. The gaining of the first magical agent (Einstein's ability of communication) allows readers get the picture of how The Outsider is created in Banodyne and enables Koontz to build up the horror

image of The Outsider, which enhances the tension and thrill of the story. Being satisfied with the details about The Outsider, readers are ready to bask in the evilness of another villain. So, Koontz draws a lot on Vince's preparation in capturing Einstein and his insane bloodlessness to create readers' anticipation that the confrontation between Vince and Travis is approaching. Therefore, when The Outsider sudden jumps into the scene in the very next chapter where it murders Travis' landlord and is waiting for their return from honeymoon, readers can easily connect with the immense fear of Travis and Einstein for the surprise. Koontz's way of staging the dramatic scene greatly increases the scary element in *Watchers*. He surprises his readers, terrifying them out of terror. This is another example of the violation of symmetry creating the joyful impact on readers' mind, a dynamic beauty in Santayana's sense.

And then, the endangered situation that Travis and Einstein face due to the direct combat after their first gaining of the magical agent contributes to their desperate need of another magical agent, which is the key reason that generates the twice obtainments and thus forms a distinctive symmetry here. A little violation of the pattern Koontz makes here is a technique to connect the aesthetic symmetry tightly together. At the same time, this violation of the rule doesn't affect the fluency of the narration but instead, makes it more appealing and interesting. This is Koontz's way of accomplishing the aesthetic effects in his popular fiction.

Third Symmetry:

	First final direct combat	**Second final direct combat**
#16. Struggle The hero and villain join in	When they finally get back to their house and are ready for the coming of The Outsider,	Right after they get rid of Vince, the alarm that indicates the approaching of The Outsider screams out loud.

direct combat.	Vince shows up unexpectedly with the purpose of killing Travis and Nora and taking Einstein away.	During the shouting, shooting and fighting against The Outsider, Travis is hurt severely and Einstein is taken away.
#18. Victory The villain is defeated.	In order to avoid the bullets, Vince hides in the barn and then falls into the trap that Travis sets for the Outsider. Travis then ends the assassin's life.	When Travis and Nora finally get into the chamber that The Outsider locks himself with Einstein in, they see Einstein lies still in a pool of blood and The Outsider coils himself in the corner like a poor innocent creature, weeping, trembling and begging Travis for ending his pathetic life. Travis gives him a bullet. The Outsider is dead.

The last symmetry is the double confrontation of the hero and the villains in the final chapter. It is the most impressive design of the story that lingers in readers' mind. Very few pulp-fiction writers put two equally exciting confrontations caused by different villains in one chapter to create the double climaxes in the novel. However, in Chapter Nine of *Watchers*, Koontz applies this double-exposure skill to pinch readers' nerves and provide them with opportunities to get into the core meaning of the story.

Unlike the first direct combat which contributes only to the development of the obtainment of the magical agent, #16 ("struggle") here reaches the peak of the story, leading to #18 ("victory"). Chapter nine gives readers a symmetry of the two final confrontations carried out by two villains, Vince and The Outsider. Because symmetry helps in clarification, the differences between the two confrontations can be clearly

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displayed in this arrangement. One difference is the reason behind their actions: Vince kills for pleasure and money; The Outsider kills for revenge and relieve. Another difference is the soul inside their hearts: Vince ends up like a general villain, insisting on his evilness and being defeated by justice. Yet, The Outsider gives up the villainy at the end of the story. He doesn't take Einstein's life when he has the chance to do so. Instead, he asks Travis to end his miserable life as a gesture of mercy. The Outsider's behavior at the end challenges the stereotype in conventions. The virtue of forgiveness, which may exist in a diabolic monster, reminds readers of the Frankenstein's monster of Mary Shelley. Applying clarification, an aesthetic form, to this novel, Koontz presents and emphasizes one of his main issues in the novel clearly and effectively: who is the real monster? To put this aesthetic element in another light, this arrangement of the symmetry function enhances a popular thriller above general formula writings, toward philosophical profundity and complexity. Koontz again successfully shows us his capability of creating a unique work with philosophical and aesthetic values.

Besides the narrative functions which serve as a base for beauty in form, the dramatis personae also function in Koontz's narrative to solidify his concern with the aesthetic form. To examine the dramatis personae in *Watchers* more clearly and accurately, I have listed all these characters as follows, based upon the categories in Propp's scheme.

1. Vince and the Outsider fit into the sphere of action of "the villain," a persona who struggles with the hero.

2. Einstein and the attorney fit into the sphere of action of "the donor," a persona who prepares and/or provides hero with magical agent.

3. Einstein and the attorney fit into the sphere of action of "the helper," a persona who assists, rescues, solves and/or transfigures the hero.

4. Nora fits into the sphere of action of "the Princess," a sought-for person (and/or her father,) a persona who exists as goal and often recognizes and marries hero and/or punishes villain. (the father of the princess is absent in *Watchers*)

5. *Watchers* lacks a persona who fits into the sphere of action of "the dispatcher," a persona who sends the hero off.

6. The number of the persona who fits into the sphere of action of "the hero" in *Watchers* is not limited to single character which, we generally think of Travis, the male protagonist in the story. Besides Travis, both Nora and Einstein can fit in to the sphere of action of "the hero." Their actions in the novel such as "departure on a search, reaction to the demands of the donor and wedding (80)" all correspond to those that are defined as the action of hero in Propp's theory.

7. The false hero who claims to be the hero, often seeking and reacting like a real hero is also absent in *Watchers*.

    Though many characters can be categorized into the types, some of the dramatis personae in Koontz's novel are too complicated to fit into a certain category that Propp introduces in his theory. Koontz's unique characterization reveals his power of manipulating his characters. Two characters can be considered as the unique inventions by Koontz to conform to his beauty of symmetry. They are the female hero and the false villain.

    First of all, an important new dramatis persona "the female hero" is represented by Nora in *Watchers*. One of the special features in Koontz's thrillers is his definition of the hero. Unlike the other novels where the hero is always played by the male protagonist, there are often multiple heroes in Koontz's works. Compared with other works of horror genre where the portraits of the female protagonist tend to create their representative images as the major victims, Koontz's female protagonists always carry out the functions of hero, such as sets off for the searching, confronts the

villain or even rescue the male protagonist/the hero.

Take Nora in *Watchers* as an example, she turns from a flat female character whose victim image is usually applied by the other writers to increase the cruelness of the villain or to manifest the valiant of the hero into a well-rounded, three dimensional female heroine who undergoes the transformation of improvement. Nora is, at the very beginning, a passive prudent, who suffers from the shadow of her aunt abuse. She lives in her aunt's legacy house years long, unable to socialize with people and to accept things from outer world. After Einstein and Travis enter her life, she starts to possess hope and actively request to find out the way to communicate with Einstein and then claims to be one of the champions of Einstein:

> "We can't risk a vet."
>
> "If they do find him," Nora said, "we simply won't give him up."
>
> "They can make us," Travis said worriedly.
>
> "Damned if they can." (Koontz 283)

From this passage, we can clearly see how Nora becomes a tough woman who is not afraid of standing out to protect the one she loves. She is no longer timid and nervous about confronting difficulties. Moreover, at the final confrontation with Vince Nasco and The Outsider, Nora shows her wits and braveness as much as Travis does:

> As she slid across the seat, past the glove box, she popped open the door and snatched up the .38 pistol….She jammed the .38 into his belly and, before he could raise his gun and blow her head off, she squeezed the trigger three times….She was amazed by her own cold-bloodedness. Crazily, she thought that no one was so dangerous as a mother protecting her children, even if one child was unborn and the other was a dog. She fired once more, point-blank, at his chest. (Koontz 459-60)

Bearing a child in her body, Nora's will to protect Einstein has reached an extreme level, which turns her into a fearless fighter. Even the cruel assassin Vince thinks that Nora "looked to be almost as formidable as Cornell himself—a crazy Amazon" (Koontz 461). Nora's transformation and the braveness she behaves at the end of the story reinforce Koontz's recognition of her as a "hero" and a fighter as Travis.

In general, readers usually expect to see the symmetry forms by an invincible hero and a delicate princess. The complementary design of the characters helps to establish the heroic image of the hero. However, this kind of symmetry exposes its shortage of monotony, which traps itself in the demerits of pattern writing: lack of variation and uniqueness. Koontz here creates a brand new idea of symmetry in the protagonists, which is the symmetry between the heroic hero and the heroic heroine. His technique breaks the rule, a stereotype to produce the diversity, complexity and profundity of his story.

This symmetry between the hero and the heroine is widely used in Koontz's thriller. With this characteristic, the female protagonist under Koontz's pen are always more attractive and respectable than those in other writers' works. Therefore, when we analyze Koontz's design by the clarification effect of symmetry that Santayana asserts, we can discover that readers can identify with the female protagonist more closely than usual for they always feel more engaged to meet a well-rounded, dynamic, three-dimensional character. Additionally, it may provide us with a different viewpoint to speculate upon the male protagonist as well. With this beneficial influence, the impression which both characters make on readers will be deeper. Here, Santayana's opinion of the violation of symmetry which generates the joyful impact on viewer's mind is well applied by Koontz because we are surprised, pleasingly surprised by witnessing a delicate princess turn into a fearless Amazon who defeats the villain with admiring braveness.

Secondly, more than merely applying the dramatis persona of "the false hero" to complicate the story, Koontz in his *Watchers* creates a more complex and appealing persona, "the false villain," to challenge readers' stereotyped idea of the antagonist. Many thriller writers tend to focus majorly on building the suspense elements and horror atmosphere in their works through the function of a villain. Those villains stay as flat, static characters during the whole process and usually bear no realistic background or the soft soul inside for readers to feel attached to. These writers often plot the villainy in the dark and then jump out from nowhere, just to fulfill their function. At the end of the story, the villains are defeated by the hero; readers are satisfied for they feel the justice has been done and case closed. But in Koontz's *Watchers*, the situation is more complicated.

In *Watchers*, The Outsider's background and the inner thought are portrayed in detail. Koontz's way is to present to readers the true reason behind its cruelty by describing its terrible inhuman experience in the Banodyne Laboratory and the lair it builds. Unlike other thrillers where the villains always kill for pleasure or psychotic reasons, Koontz's villain somehow possesses the logical reasons, which cause his desire to kill. The Outsider suffers from human's selfishness which makes them create it to serve for them as a deadly weapon. Humans give it the scary deformed appearance to threaten enemies during the war. But they loathe it due to the same reason. A creature with flesh and blood, the Outsider has soul and needs love and care as everyone does. But its scary look makes it impossible to be loved and cared. The pain and loneliness it suffers and the innocence it would rather die to possess offer readers an opportunity to share its awful feeling and sadness. Here, the villain is as important as the hero in *Watchers*. Readers can be sympathetic with The Outsider in pity and fear. Koontz proposes a question for us: Who is the true villain?

The definition of the true villain and the false villain forms another strong

symmetry in the story. In other thrillers, villains tend to be the absolute representative of the evilness. But The Outsider in *Watchers* shows us some qualities which should normally not happen on the common villain:

> It was staring at him, waiting…. Lifting its head, working its jaws, it issued a raspy, cracked, slurred, but till intelligible word that he could hear even above the sounds of the storm: "*Hurt*." Travis was more horrified than amazed…. It had practice speech, finding ways to wring a few tortured words from its fibrous voice box and malformed mouth. Travis was horrified not at the sight of a demon speaking but at the thought of how desperately the thing must have wanted to communicate with someone, anyone. (Koontz 471)

In this passage, The Outsider utters its profound agony which hides behind its great rancor toward the world. Here, instead of seeing a terrifying demon that is ready to take the life of anyone it meets, we witness a miserable creature whose doom is to suffer in every minute it lives.

> "*Mickey*," The Outsider said, and as wretched and strange and barely intelligible as its voice was, it somehow conveyed a sense of terrible loss and loneliness, "*Mickey*," Then it dropped the cassette and clutched itself and rocked back and forth in agony….Fixing Travis with its lantern eyes, it again said, "*Kill dog, kill dog, kill dog,*" but this time it seemed racked with grief, as if it grasped the magnitude of the crime that it had been genetically compelled to commit. It looked at the cartoon of Mickey Mouse on the cassette holder. Finally, pleadingly, it said, "*Kill me.*" (Koontz 472)

The Outsider's final gesture of yielding challenges our stereotyped idea of the traditional villain. Koontz's villain is actually vulnerable, deserving others' sympathy.

Although the world disappoints it, in the end of the story, it chooses to forgive and pay for his sin—by not taking Einstein's life and surrendering its life to Travis. Readers ponder over the reason of his behavior and question the double moral standards at the end of the story. Here, locating the true villain and the false villain in *Watchers* makes another unusual symmetry in the story.

In formula writings, we expect to read the symmetry between a true hero and a true villain. When the anticipation is not satisfied in *Watchers* in which the villain possesses the characteristics of victim and some of the virtues of the hero, the common symmetry is then violated. Koontz's arrangement in this symmetry design fulfills the function of clarification in terms of symmetry in form. Under the structure of this unusual symmetry, readers are offered different perspectives to interpret the story. Compared with the atrocious, unforgivable true villains in other thrillers, The Outsider is in fact a false villain, created by the true evilness of human being.

Like what Mary Shelley does to the monster in her *Frankenstein*, with this design on the characters in his modern thriller, Koontz unbinds his villain from the traditional frame, then achieving the profundity and aesthetics embedded in many literary classics. Koontz focuses not only on creating the horror and suspense in his novels but further on engaging the readers to go deeper down into the core meaning of the works and providing them with the space of rethinking and criticizing. This is another important part that proves beauty and value do exist in the novel by this popular writer.

Analyzing *Watchers* under Propp's scheme, we find that those Koontz's arrangements of the story structure and characters which Propp's narrative function and dramatis personae can be used as the springboard from which to view the beauty of symmetry in Santayana's sense. However, some of Koontz's featuring innovative elements also go beyond Propp's framework and correspond to Santayana's standards

of beauty in symmetry. From this point of view, we catch a glimpse of the simplicity and insufficiency of Propp's theory. It is based upon this aesthetic concern that this study of Koontz's thriller can open our views of interpreting popular writings and, moreover, help us explore more of the aesthetic functions and elements long buried in many popular writings, especially in Koontz's works.

Chapter Three

Multiplicity in Uniformity in *Mr. Murder*

As one of Koontz's countless best-sellers, *Mr. Murder* has reached great

popularity since its publication in 1993, and was filmed into a welcomed television

adaption in 1998. On the way to its popularity, the novel adopts some writing

formulas as other thrillers. Through his masterly arrangement and manipulation of

plots, Koontz carries some aesthetic values that Santayana asserts in his discussion of

form. Its success and popularity lie in this structural artistry. The manipulations in *Mr.*

Murder, especially those that confront to Santayana's idea of "multiplicity in

uniformity," further endow this popular thriller with aesthetic values.

In the third part of *The Sense of Beauty*, Santayana identifies the aesthetic

elements in "multiplicity in uniformity." He first explains that "symmetry is evidently

a kind of unity in variety, where a whole is determined by the rhythmic repetition of

similar." By considering the value that it adds to unification, he indicates that the

unity will thus be "the virtue of forms." Beauty in form is "what specifically appeals

to an aesthetic nature" (61). For Santayana, form is an aggregation with elements

combined in certain manner that constitutes its character of the form. So the

perception of form should not only be situated in the simplest sensation but also

within the consciousness of the distinction and relation of parts. Thus, our sensation

toward objects is actually a response to the object's contents and its characters rather

than the genesis of perception. This working of the consciousness is also a feeling of

"crude extensity." In other words, we have a feeling toward something by extending

the object's character and content to our sensation. This extensity is derived from the

"feeling of relation" (62), which the experiences of distinction, association and

inference have helped to construct in our mind.

Take the sense of space as an example. Space always gives us a feeling of

infinity because it has no limitation and boundaries. The lack of limitation and boundaries comes from our emotions of extensity and feelings of relation. Just as we watch an even, vast, monotonous curtain of color, our experiences allow us to imagine its infinite far edge its vast size under the circumstance where we only look at a part of it vertically. However, the infinity in size doesn't guarantee the aesthetic value of the object. For, Santayana argues that "the pure sense of extension, based upon the attack of the object upon the apperceptive resources of the eye, is the truly aesthetic value" (63). The sense of beauty is derived from the stimulation produced in its viewer's eyes, then allowing him/her to attribute the relation and extension of the meaning to the object. The representation of the material or the content becomes the most important task in form.

The representation of the material is what we name "the form." To achieve the task, Santayana suggests, "[T]he beauty of stuffs appears when they are plain" and "the simplicity of form emphasizes the substance." We don't have to "make a statue of gold, or flute a jasper column, or bedeck a velvet cloak" to spoil the beauty by imposing another (64). Therefore, while the "absolute uniformity in extension is the simplest and most allied to the material" (63), the beauty of the material can thus be fully discovered and unfolded.

That is to say, the more feeling of relation an object gives, the more possible "the absolute uniformity in extension" can be achieved (63). With this advantage, the uniformity in extension can be regarded as the simplest and most allied representation of the material. The object's distinction and aesthetic value can be perceived in an easier and clearer way. It is this compromise between "distinction" and "relation" in an object that Santayana calls "the multiplicity in uniformity" (62).

To make a further elaboration, Santayana uses stars as an example. Stars are beautiful because of the feeling of relation. In Western culture, people regard stars as

religious objects, believing that stars govern their lives and destinies. The same belief also happened in the ancient East where people also thought that stars could indicate the upcoming disaster which influences a country's destiny. Stars are beautiful because of the feeling of relation between objects and the belief.

The multiplicity in uniformity is a form in which the material of unity arouses the feeling of relation, which is what Santayana refers to as the extension, and it also contributes to the quality of multiplicity. It is important for the each part of the multiplicity to possess its individuality because every relation, or every extension, is a distinct part that brings values to the very impression of the uniformity.

The impression of the uniformity can give the values back to every relation and extension to make it easier to touch the viewer's sentiment. This is a cycle that constantly impresses the viewers and keeps them develop their interests toward the object. "Nothing is objectively impressive; things are impressive only when they succeed in touching the sensibility of the observer, by finding the avenues to his brain and heart" (65). When we behold the starry heaven, we see not only the stars and the night but also the "stars in the night." Different compositions of elements in the starry night have its unique uniformity while keeping their individualities at the same time due to our feelings of relation and extension. These relations and extensions can as well allow us to perceive their individualities and the multiplicity of their combinations just as, on one hand, the quality and characteristic of stars give us the sublime conception of it, and, on the other hand, make the starry night more impressive. Therefore, the multiplicity in uniformity can well increase the complexity and profundity of the object and represent its aesthetic value to viewers successfully.

In an analysis of multiplicity in uniformity in Koontz's story, Propp's functions will be employed to illustrate the plot designs and arrangements. What is needed here is to find out how Propp's functions may reinforce the multiplicity in uniformity, an

aesthetic element in the storyline, which Koontz's beauty is built upon.

The following is a list of the functions, which display the beauty of "multiplicity in uniformity in various sections of the story.

Table one: Functions display the beauty of "multiplicity in uniformity" in the preparatory section:

Function	Marty (the hero)	Alfie (the villain)
#1 Absentation: One of the members of a family absents himself from home.	In the very beginning of the first chapter, Marty finds himself in a trance, unconsciously mumbling "I need… I need…" Although still staying in his house, Marty's mind seems to be absent.	A killer/villain who doesn't know his identity travels around cities to execute his assassin mission. He is absent from home. Or say, he seems to belong to nowhere. Home is not a possession of him. After finishing his murder of an old couple, the killer feels a desperate need to find his identity and to own his own family. Therefore, he sets off for his quest.
#2 Interdiction: An interdiction (ban) is addressed to the hero.	The hero fails to fulfill this function in *Mr. Murder*.	From Alfie's monologue, we can presume that there exists some kind of mysterious, secrete organization which even Alfie himself isn't sure about or familiar with. Someone has sent him to fulfill those missions and he is supposed to follow instructions which are programmed in his body, finishing the murder and going back to Seattle where "the bosses he cannot

		recall" is expecting him. This incident can be considered as an interdiction addressed to him.
#3 Violation: The interdiction is violated. (The villain usually enters the scene here.)	Since there is no hero's fulfillment of #2, the lack of his fulfillment of #3 is properly.	The villain, Alfie, denies the execution of the program. The interdiction is violated here when he decides to follow his intuition to set off searching his own life. It is now the real function of Alfie that enters the story—the major villain who is expected to bring chaos to the protagonists even though the reason and the connection are unclear.
#4 Reconnaissance: The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance.		The mysterious connection between Marty and Alfie brings him to Marty's house in Mission Viejo where he can then observes the house and gets the information of Paige and the two girls.
#5 Delivery: The villain receives information about his victim. (The villain gets an answer.)		The villain reads about Marty's profession as a mysterious writer from his novels and learns about the existence of Paige and the two girls from pictures in the study. This is the time he gets "the answer" and decides that Marty is a thief who is somehow identical with him and has stolen the life which used to belong to Alfie.

#6 Trickery: The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings.[3]	From Marty-as-the-hero point of view, Alfie is now the villain who threatens and tries to grab Marty's life. Or worse, Paige's and his two daughters'.	From Alfie-as-the-hero point of view, Marty has already been the villain who attempts to deceive Alfie, stealing Alfie's life and replacing his position in both the family and the society.
#7 Complicity: The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy.	From Marty-as-the-hero point of view, his neighbors, Vic and Kathy Delorios, submit to Alfie's deception that makes them trust Alfie and so let him abduct Charlotte and Emily.	From Alfie-as-the-hero point of view, Paige and his two daughters are the victims, who submit to Marty's deception, believing that Marty is their husband and father, or, they are brainwashed or mind-controlled by the "evil" Marty; therefore they unwittingly help the enemy, Marty, to fight against Alfie.

In the beginning of this novel, Koontz follows the popular pattern of many similar suspense thrillers, blurring the identities of the hero and the villain and indicating the mystical connection between these two opposite personae. One of the most famous examples with a similar design is Steven King's *The Dark Half* (1989), which shares the similar setting and characters with that in *Mr. Murder*. Both stories

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[3] Since Alfie finds out about the existence of Marty and considers him the villain who steals his life, it is from here that Marty carries out both the function of hero and villain.

are about a popular author, who, with a happy loving family, experiences the crisis and dangers involving an evil twin. Yet a close scrutiny of the narrative function and the story structure of these two novels leads to an obvious finding about the differences hidden beneath the formula writing.

Many thrillers tend to follow Propp's pattern: The hero fulfills functions he is supposed to do and the villain follows the same rule as well. The confusion of their identities is mostly the strategy intended to make readers misrecognize the hero as the villain himself. For example, psychologically, the hero (or villain) himself may suffer from split personalities. Or, to describe it in a more supernatural way, for instance, the villain George Stark in Steven King's *The Dark Half*, is the hero's dead twin brother, who comes back from the tomb as an evil counterpart of the hero Thad, who also provides Stark with the mysterious power to exist in the realistic world.

Koontz applies a different way to recreate this popular pattern in his *Mr. Murder*. He challenges readers' fixed concept by having the villain fulfill some of the functions that should be executed solely by the hero. For instance, from the table one, functions #2 and #3, which should be carried out by the hero, are somehow carried out by Alfie, the major villain for he actually fulfills functions #4 and #5 which introduce to readers his villain part in the story. This villain-hero juxtaposition starts the first blur and confusion of their identities. And then, in #6 where the villain carries out his trickery, the third-person omniscient point of view in this novel helps Koontz expose Alfie's and Marty's inner thinking to readers and then makes both of them fulfill #6:

> "I need my life." The voice startled Marty, but its effect was nothing
> compared to the paralytic shock that seized him when he looked up
> from the gun and saw the identity of the speaker… He was wearing
> what might have been Marty's own jeans and flannel shirt, which fit

him well because he was a dead-ringer for Marty. In fact, but for the

clothes, the intruder might have been a reflection in a mirror. (Koontz

123)

Alfie is just like an evil illusion that appears in front of Marty. The unknown intention

in this illusion and the malice carried with it foreshadow the upcoming villainy it is

about to bring.

Anger entered the double's voice for the first time, bitterness rather

than hot fury but rapidly growing fiery: "You've stolen that too, the

words, the talent, and I need it back, need it back so bad I ache".… "I

want what's mine, mine, damn it, my life, mine, I want my life, my

destiny, my Paige, my Charlotte, my Emily—" (Koontz 125)

To Marty, the crazy intruder is a danger that causes great threat to him and his family,

a villain with a mysterious identity ready to smash everything in his life. Yet, to Alfie,

the existence of Marty is a further confusing question and a cruel fact that somebody

has stolen his family and ruined his life:

"Why have you stolen my life?" the intruder asked with what seemed

to be genuine curiosity. His voice was level and controlled, as if the

question was not entirely insane, as if it was actually possible.… "Who

are you?" the double asked.… "What are you?".… "How does this

happen? What now?".… "If I kill you—".… "—do the memories

you've stolen from me become mine again when you're dead? If I kill

you—".… "—am I made whole? When you're dead, will I be restored

to my family?" (Koontz 123-125)

This juxtaposition of hero and villain is a striking impression embedded in readers'

consciousness. Readers are aware of this common scene in thrillers while they are

attracted to Koontz's creative manipulation. Alfie's identify is no longer the focus of

the story while the true meaning of his existence is. A sense of sympathy with the villain is obvious at the starting of a novel.

The raw structure of the story corresponds to Propp's story structure in which the hero and the villain co-exist to perform functions that are assigned to them. It is the uniformity that underlies the story itself even though a similar strategy of blurring the identities of hero and villain is also applied in other writers' works. This uniformity provides a platform for writers to make a great display of the content and the character of the story. Here, Koontz distinctively deranges the performances of functions of hero and villain to achieve crude extensity in the story.

By letting the villain Alfie carry out the hero's functions, Koontz allows his readers to feel pity for Alife, who, appearing as some kind of killing machine, is so longing for a normal life like anyone else. This killing machine who possesses the primitive desires of love and care, harmony, and company is a distinctive dramatis persona, who arouses readers' feelings of attachment and extension on its nature and its meaning in relation to the whole context of the story. His strong yearning for Marty's life, which has an understandable reason behind, adds both the tension and sadness to the story. Not only attached to the hero Marty but also sympathetic with the villain Alfie, readers are exposed to what Santayana calls "crude extensity" in form.

Table two: Functions display the beauty of "multiplicity in uniformity" in the plot in motion section:

Function	Marty (the hero)	Alfie (the villain)
#8 Villainy: The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family.	During the fight between Marty and Alfie, Marty causes serious injury to Alfie. Usually in this function, the villain's	During the fight between Alfie and Marty, Alfie is almost killed by Marty, losing a great deal of

	evil conduct which endangers or already hurts a member of the family irritates hero and then initiates the following functions	blood form the gun shot and fractures his spine by going over the balcony railing and falling flat on the floor.
#9 Mediation: Misfortune or lack is made known: the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched.	Marty needs to protect his family from danger. The misfortune/lack to him is the crisis of losing the original life of peace. He has to face the chaos and problems brought by Alfie and try to solve them.	After having the indirect contact (through phone and hearing their voices) of Paige and daughters, Alfie feels desperately that he needs his life back. The misfortune/lack to him is the life stolen by Marty.
#10 The seeker (hero) agrees to or decides upon counteractions.	Marty is prepared for the following counteraction. Therefore, he has Paige pack and bring all their weapons in case Alfie will show up in any second.	Alfie takes Marty as the villain to fight against. To seek his life back, Alfie agrees to any counteractions against Marty.
#11 Departure: The hero leaves home. #12 The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc. which prepares the	#11 to #14 are important functions which allow hero to receive helps from donor/helper and then the magical agent/object. However,	As a villain and a lonely genetically engineered clone, Alfie has no one to turn to and has to avoid the capture of his

way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper. (The donor usually enters the story here.)	these functions are not fulfilled successfully in *Mr. Murder*. The police would have become the supportive and useful donor/helper, serving as magical agents to Marty. But they find Marty's explanation discredited. So, instead of receiving help form them, Marty has to avoid the police's attention, and even pursuit and then fight Alfie independently.	handlers, of the organization known as "the Network" which creates him. Therefore, in Alfie-as-the-hero point of view, the assistance from a donor/helper or the gaining of a magical agent are also absent.
#13 The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor.		
#14 The hero acquires the use of a magical agent.		
#15 The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search.	Instead of being transferred, delivered, or led as the hero usually does, Marty, in this novel, is the person who leads Alfie to "the whereabouts of an object of search."	Alfie is led by Marty to the cabin in Mammoth Lakes where "the object of search" is waiting and then they can carry out the critical function of the story—#16.

Functions #8 to #10 are the important process, which the major villainy is carried out. The misfortune/lack is understood by Marty and then irritates him to decide upon counteractions. In #8 where the villain causes harm to innocent others, instead of hurting Marty or Marty's family members, Alfie is the one who injures severely and Marty is the one who causes it. Alfie's action here stands for a justified reason: He is rescuing his and the family's lives. The situation here presents a reverse to a common story structure/pattern, and thus once again confuses readers with the

question of the identities of true hero and villain. Or rather, the blurring makes readers unable to distinguish between the true evilness and goodness in the story. This is a very different reading experience from those we have had before. Though we recognize Alfie as the villain in the story, the reason of his coming to the world and the very nature inside him do not allow us to recognize his true identity easily. With these multiple interpretations of the story, readers' perceptions are uncertain as well as extensive.

Following is the reveal of misfortune/lack in the story. However, the misfortune/lack that waits for the hero's solution in common story becomes the double but relative misfortune/lack for Marty and Alfie. In order to solve the problem, Alfie has to carry on fulfilling functions of hero, keeping blurring the identities of the hero and the villain. Both of them become the seeker-hero, trying to regain what they lose—Marty's peaceful life and Alfie's life as a normal human being.

Functions #11 to #14 are those that help the hero receive assistance or a magical agent from donor/helper. However, when Marty asks help from the donor/helper in the novel, the police (represented by the lieutenant Cyrus Lowbock) fail him. Instead of providing Marty with the appropriate protection and support, they tend to believe that the crime is invented by Marty himself for the reason of attracting publicity to sell his new book. Without the help form the donor/helper or the magical agent, the whole story centers on the struggle between the hero and the villain. And this design of the story is what Santayana says about the best way of representing the content and the character of an object—plainness and simplicity. Through this device, we can learn more about Koontz's intention of focusing the issue solely on the hero and the villain--about their true identities, which stand for either goodness or evilness, the multiplicity in this uniformity.

And then, in function #15 which should carry out the development of the story

that "the hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search," Alfie occupies Marty's position in the story. He becomes an active seeker, who is led by the mystical power of magnetic connection between him and Marty, thus initiating the climax of the final direct combat.

To Alfie, the pathetic dislocation of his "real identity" evokes readers' relations to some of the dystopia science fictions which discuss about the feeling of alienation and coldness in human relationship that technology causes. How human Alfie is, to feel desperately need to be loved, cared and related? To possess the quality of love and care is one of the most important characteristics of the hero. But at the same time, Alfie's behavior is extremely cruel, twisted and bloodless. Every train of thought in his brain is that distorted, psycho and unhealthy to conform to the very personalities of a villain. To read about Alfie is to read about a story of an innocent victim, a fearless fighter, a loveless creature and a vicious devil. Further, this arrangement of a villain (cyborg) trying to take over a hero's (human) life forces us to face the increasing technology abuse problems. Just like his two handlers' attitude of treating him like nothing more but a tool or a piece of machine has reader's once again hesitate the definition of Alfie's identity. Is he the hero, the villain or even the victim? The multiplicity in *Mr. Murder* continuously challenges readers' capacities of digesting a popular thriller which is carved with complexity and profundity.

Making the villain fulfill some of the narrative functions that are designed for the hero produces such a feeling of relation in the novel. It is this "pure sense of extension" that gives a value to and makes a form so unique and distinct, with the attack and stimulation on its viewers' perceptions (Santayana 63). Every part of this extension and relation of the object doesn't damage the uniformity of it even though it carries the individuality of its parts. Just like the starry sky, every single star or every diverse combination of certain stars can give viewers the various feeling of relations

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and stimulate their imaginations. But when we view the starry sky at night as a whole, it is still a fascinating mysterious existence of tranquility. It fully explains Santayana's idea of "the multiplicity in uniformity." And, it is also the characteristic in form that Koontz applies to raise his popular thriller to an aesthetic level.

Just as J. David Velleman asserts in his "Narrative Explanation": "[A] story does more than recount events; it recounts events in a way that renders them intelligible, thus conveying not just information but also understanding" (1). The "understanding" Velleman says here is what the feeling of relation and extension can achieve, only more. The multiplicity in uniformity helps to convey the understanding to readers well. And that is a way to engage readers into the story well and provide them with better chance to grasp the meaning hidden behind the story.

In *Mr. Murder*, instead of saying that Koontz manipulates the arrangement of the narrative functions to achieve beauty, his bold step of breaking Propp's rule of the 31 functions and using his own complex dramatis personae to fulfill or not fulfill those functions unexpectedly also causes the effect of "crude extensity" and conforms to the aesthetic elements involved in "multiplicity in uniformity." What Koontz does is not simply matching functions and characters up or connecting the dots. He overthrows the old structure of a story with a more complicated and sophisticated design.

Letting Alfie fulfill functions which should be fulfilled by the hero enables these functions to produce more feeling of relations and extensions in the process of reading. These relations and extensions influence the readers' judgments toward the dramatis persona and affect its own identity both in the single narrative function and the whole story structure. For example, when we take only Alfie's evil conduct into consideration, he is a definite villain of the story. Readers' revulsion against Alfie can be fully established. However, when Alfie fulfills the hero's functions, readers witness

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his braveness and firmness of solving the misfortune of his life, engaged with his craving for love and care from others and sense the hidden poorness and innocence of him behind the dark scheme and conspiracy of the Network. It is where the reader's feelings of sympathy emerge from.

By exposing these conflicting personalities in Alfie through the technique of blurring and juxtaposition on dramatis personae and plots, Koontz gives readers opportunities to examine more the story's essence in different lights. This is how the multiplicity influences the uniformity, gives value back to the whole story, makes the story unique and embeds the aesthetic value in it. We can appreciate the hero's qualities in the villain's virtue while realizing the evilness hidden behind. Our stereotyped perception of evilness and virtue is thus questioned and challenged. Yet, the unity of the story still remains. This is how and where the beauty of "multiplicity in uniformity" in *Mr. Murder* remains too.

Table 3: Functions display the beauty of "multiplicity in uniformity" in the end of lack and return section:

Function	Marty (the hero)	Alfie (the villain)
#16 Struggle: The hero and villain join in direct combat.	They both consider themselves the hero and the other one the villain. When Alfie tracks Marty down the bell tower in Mammoth Lake, two of them join in the direct combat. As a hero, Marty tries to protect his family from danger; as a hero, Alfie tries to fight for his family to escape the control of the evil "dead ringer."	
#17 Branding: The hero is branded.	The presence of Drew Oslett and Karl Clocker gives the situation a conclusive definition—Alfie is not the hero, not the husband of Paige and the father of	

	Charlotte and Emily but the genetically engineered clone created by science. The dramatis persona of the hero should falls on Marty.	
#18 Victory: The villain is defeated.	However, Alfie is defeated not by Marty but his handler, Drew Oslett, who is then about to kill Marty and his family. One of Alfie's handlers Karl Clocker has planned to betray the Network for a long time, so he kills Drew Oslett while he is going to execute the Network's instruction of "solving the Stillwater problem."	Dead Alfie is now irrelevant to the following functions.
#19 The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated.	The initial misfortune or lack of the Stillwater is liquidated passively, which, is very different from the usual pattern of a story where the hero actually and actively defeats the villain and ends the misfortune.	
#20 Return: The hero returns.	No hero returns to his home because *M. Murder* lacks a true hero. But we can still regard Marty and Karl Clocker as half (pseudo) hero.	
#21 Pursuit: The hero is pursued.	Both Marty and Karl Clocker are pursued by the Network and the authority.	
#22 Rescue: The hero is rescued from pursuit.	Karl Clocker helps Marty and his family obtains new identities and builds a new life, which rescues them from the pursuit	

	of the Network and the authority for good.	

Koontz's play of blurring identities between Alfie and Marty is interrupted in the last period of the story functions. However, the dramatis persona of the hero is not yet be defined by Marty. Here, Koontz lets a former villain to fulfill the most important function of the hero—one of Alfie's handlers, Karl Clocker, who defeats the real villain, Drew Oslett.

What should be noticed here is the intentional dislocation of the hero and the villain. While Marty and Alfie struggle to defeat each other, Drew Oslett and Karl Clocker join in. With the judgment of Alfie being completely out of control, Oslett gives Alfie several bullets to end his life and unintentionally saves Marty, which in a way makes him a hero. But, carrying the instruction of the Network to massacre the Stillwater family, Oslett is indeed the true villain more vicious than the genetically produced colon, Alfie. So, in the ending part of the story, the branding of both the hero and the villain is getting even more confusing to readers.

It is worth to notice function #18, where the member of the Network, Karl Clocker, betrays his organization by killing his evil partner and then rescue Marty and Marty's family. Koontz allows two protagonists (one at least by far) to fulfill the most important function of the story: The hero should be the one who finishes the villain's villainy or ends the villain's life. This arrangement not only complicates the character of Karl Clocker but also breaks readers' anticipation of witnessing Marty's triumph over Alfie, Oslett, or even the Network.

This derangement of fulfilling of the functions reinforces the helplessness of Marty (who is supposed to be the invincible hero), the innocence of Alfie and the wisdom of Karl (both of them are supposed to be the villains). These are the relations and extensions, which are generated from the multiplicity in uniformity in form. Readers begin to ponder over the meaning of the story itself: Does Koontz attempts to

criticize the corruption of the modern society in which the technology is abused, the respect toward life and human relationship disappears. It is this uncertainty and the chaos of the world order (symbolized in the hero-villain paradox) that creates the aesthetic impressions of multiplicity in uniformity in readers' mind.

The confusing definition of the hero and the villain helps to present the "multiplicity in uniformity" in form in *Mr. Murder*. The unexpected persona fulfilling the opposite functions produces a new and distinct individuality in each function and provides readers with more feelings of relations and the opportunity to uncover the complex or contradictory messages that author tries to deliver. Those feelings of relations and extensions in *Mr. Murder* are so distinct that each of them brings an important value to the meaning of the story, which also enhances readers' impression of the uniformity of the story. Therefore, it forms a cycle which continuously affects readers and increases their interests in various dimensions of the novel. This is one of the greatest merits located in "multiplicity in uniformity."

Chapter Four

The Spontaneous Creation of the Mind in *Phantoms*

Koontz's thrillers are indeed unique in their creation of characters. His distinctive and aesthetic treatments of characters correspond to Santayana's idea of "the spontaneous creation of the mind" (111). This chapter will focus on Koontz's skill of combining conventions (types) and imagination to create the vivid, impressive, and appealing characters in Koontz's *Phantoms* to further underpin the central argument of this thesis. How does he distinguish himself as a popular thriller writer with his aesthetic achievements? His popular thrillers are evaluated not only morphologically (reproduce) but also aesthetically (skillfully reproduce) as artistic products.

Santayana in his *The Sense of Beauty* brings about stimulation to a deeper thought of aesthetic values in characters. Characterization is significant in terms of creativity and aesthetics. For Santayana, "[t]he construction of a plot we call invention, but that of a character we dignify with the name of creation" (109). He elaborates upon the traditional process of creating a character: "the similarities of various persons are amalgamated, their differences cancelled, and in the resulting percept those traits emphasized which have particularly pleased or interested us" (109). Writers tend to categorize characters into types, forcing their readers to stereotype their impressions of characters, which are generated from previous observations and experiences, to demolish the distinctiveness and individuality of characters. Meanwhile, the general impression the readers possess toward the types will be imposed on characters to make them fit into that category. Yet, Santayana believes that every material has its different nature. To him, a character is not a "presentation to sense" but a "rationalistic synthesis of successive acts and feelings" (109). Due to this reason, the old method of portraying characters can be much less satisfying to the

case.

But how exactly do writers classify characters and make use of the classification? Santayana gives us a clear elaboration:

> There is, however, a way of conceiving and delineating character which still bears a close resemblance to the process by which the imagination produces the type of any physical species. We may gather, for instance, about the nucleus of a word, designation of some human condition or occupation, a number of detached observations. We may keep a note-book in our memory, or even in our pocket, with studious observations of the language, manners, dress, gesture, and history of the people we meet, classifying our statistics under such heads as innkeepers, soldiers, housemaids, governesses, adventuresses…. And then, when occasion offers, to describe, or to put into a book or a play, any one of these types, all we have to do is to look over our notes, to select according to the needs of the moment, and if we are skillful in reproduction, to obtain by that means a life-like image of the sort of person we wish to represent. (109-110)

This is to say that we tend to observe characters and classify them with the same traits. Every time we do so, the experience that we get from observation leaves "in our minds some trait, some expression, some image, which will remain there attached to the name of a person, a class, or a nationality" (110). He states that those aggregations of characteristic traits from observing experiences "seem to recall a sensation, and to give vitality to the narrative" (110). But he then argues that the production of the most living, famous characters does not solely rely on this method which gives "the average" type. For example, Hamlet, Don Quixote and Achilles are three of the most distinctive characters in the history of literary works. Santayana believes that those

famous characters are no averages and "their actions and words seem to spring from the inward nature of an individual soul" (210). To create a more striking and living character, he offers a solution—"the spontaneous creation of the mind" (111).

By "the spontaneous creation of the mind," Santayana means the natural combination of "types" and "imagination." Types, in Santayana's idea, are the empirical percepts which synthesize the past observations and experiences. It is a convenient way to create a concrete, life-like image that we are to present through reproduction but at the same time suffers from the disadvantage of meagerness. The empirical percepts have imprinted the stereotyped ideas on the mind to appear every time we encounter a familiar character. And then those ideas of type imprinted on our minds will then impose influences on our feelings and senses as well. Although types help us identify characters, a realization of everyday characters of everyday life may bring no appeal or significance to the story and to readers. It is trapped by the same problems that the convention element[4] faces in popular story, the immutability, monotony and lack of aesthetic value, which is also the reason why readers show less satisfaction in it.

However, Santayana is not degrading the value of conventions or types. Writers and poets are keener and much more sensitive than others to observe and feel things of the nature, to gather and synthesize their experiences. But a great creator needs to integrate the conventions with inventions so as to colorize his creation and to enrich it with aesthetic profundity. To accomplish inventions, a creator can draw support from our limitless power of imagination:

> Imagination, in a word, generates as well as abstracts; it observes,
>
> combines, and cancels; but it also dreams. Spontaneous syntheses arise

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[4] In John Calwelti's idea, the formulas or patterns in popular writing. Here, the convention element is especially stressed as the "stereotyped character."

in it, which are not mathematical averages of the images it receives

from sense; they are effects of diffused excitements left in the brain by

sensations. These excitements vary constantly in their various renewals,

and occasionally take such a form that the soul is surprised by the

inward vision of an unexampled beauty. (Santayana 112)

Different from types, which create averages of images and give readers static feelings

of the characters, imagination, due to its characteristic of amalgamating spontaneous

ideas and natural senses, accompanies excitements and sensations, constantly brings

to readers the pleasure of surprise and the feeling of beauty with these merits.

Santayana further explains how the aesthetic value is developed through

imagination in creating characters by stating that it is not created "according to their

closeness to fact or type in nature, but according to the ease with which the normal

imagination reproduces the synthesis they contain" (112). We find the idea of "the

winged man" pleasant because it is easy and delightful for us to fancy the human can

fly. Or, we value "the centaur" as another beautiful monster because we tend to

appreciate "the glorious suggestion of their united vitality" that diffuses from the

dream of "horse and man melted into one" (113). Thus, since the production of a

character is a process of reproduction, we may assume that a skillful reproduction of

an appealing character depends on the spontaneous creation of the mind, an inevitable

and natural combination of types and imagination.

Inspired by Descartes, Santayana emphasizes that the human's

intelligence—the empirical knowing of the physical world—is finite, while our

will—the power of imagination—is infinite. That is why "the typical characters

describable by the empirical method are therefore few" (113). He stresses his

argument that to create an ideal character that possesses both the values of popularity

and aesthetics, the spontaneous creation of the mind, or say, the natural combination

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of types and imagination is necessary.

The application of the spontaneous creation of the mind to create an unforgettable character is commonly seen in the genre of myth, epic, romance or fairy tale. But in modern popular thrillers, its practice is mostly found in the creating of the plot setting. For example, thriller writers often construct the background of their stories by researching and observing some real cases whose designation can relate readers' emotions or ties to the atmosphere of the story and then use imagination to enrich the story with suspense and excitement. If it is a science-thriller, writers may tend to fuse the existing knowledge of science with his imagination to create a miserable yet appealing dystopia. If it's a mysterious thriller such as many of Steven King's works that deal with the Christian/religion idea of good and evil, a writer thus associates his observation on real people or events with the mythical characters like God or Devil and their supernatural powers to establish the atmosphere in the story.

Like most of his works, Koontz's *Phantoms* is a cross-genre novel which involves elements of horror, detective, suspense, science fiction, techno-thriller, mystery and romance. The author believes that, by bridging different popular genres into a single work, the novel can be simultaneously equipped with the merits of multiple genres:

> SF is in part a fiction of ideas, so I took that aspect of the genre for my blend. From horror I borrowed mood more than anything—that cold sense of foreboding eeriness, ineffable but frightening presences at the periphery of vision, which is always a part of good horror writing. From the suspense genre I took a contemporary setting…as well as headlong pace and tension…I felt that I'd really have something if I coupled SF's ideas with horror's mood in a story with a suspense novel's taut pace. (qtd. in Wiater 36)

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In addition to creating the unique atmosphere in the novel, the manipulation of the genre characteristics also helps in evoking the spontaneous creation of the mind to shape the unique characters in the story. In *Phantoms*, the most exceptional and impressive dramatis persona which greatly embodies the spontaneous creation of the mind is the major villain—the Ancient Enemy.

The dramatis persona, in Propp's idea of morphology, is a performer who performs certain sphere of action. The definition of the sphere of action of the villain is constituted by functions #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, #16, #18, #21[5](in the situation of Path A—struggle and victory over villain, the end of lack and return) of Propp's 31 narrative functions. Although performing functions allows one character to be classified into certain dramatis personae, what really builds and reinforces the image and the charm of a persona is how and in what context he carries out these narrative functions. Therefore, in this chapter, I will analyze how Koontz, in making his protagonist carry out villain's functions, fully uses and further manipulates the advantages of the characteristics of cross-genre fiction to embody and enhance Santayana's idea of "the spontaneous creation of the mind." And I will further elaborate on how "the spontaneous creation of the mind" helps establish the ghastly image of the Ancient Enemy and thereby add aesthetic value in *Phantoms*.

The first half of the novel focuses solely on answering one question—what happened to Snowfield? Why several hundreds of people in town had disappeared at all sudden or died in some extremely bizarre situation? In other words, readers are

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[5] #4. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance. #5. The villain receives information about his victim. #6. The villain attempts to deceive his victim by using persuasion, magic, or deception. #7. The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy. #8. The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family. #16. The hero and villain join in direct combat. #18. The villain is defeated. 21. The hero is pursued.

asked to figure out who/what is the villain or who/what causes the chaos. This is a common skill in popular thrillers used to create the feeling of suspense and tension in the story, especially when this unidentified enemy is still committing his villainy. Therefore, Koontz takes the advantage of this characteristic and then decides to give only the information of the left crime scenes to readers in order to represent the villain's performances of functions #4 to #8. In some degree, the fulfillments of functions #4 to #7 are indirectly explained and presented to us when the answer of the riddle is finally made known in the end of the novel.

Moreover, as explained before, in *Phantoms*, Koontz puts several popular genres into his story and applies the characteristics of these genres to manipulate the types which have long existed in readers' minds due to their experiences or observations in previous readings of those genres to influence readers' imagination while they are trying to solve the problem of the story—the identity of the villain.

> Disappointment comes into play when our experiences fail to meet our expectations….Since most of us will never have any first-hand experience with serial killers and must therefore rely on stories to satisfy our curiosity, the assumptions we learn to make are based on the rules we have for storytelling, or, properly speaking, on genre conventions. (Hantke 179)

This passage explains how readers are irresistibly controlled by their past reading experience, the types, and the genre conventions. Therefore, when Koontz's villain (the Ancient Enemy) performs #8 (Villainy): The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family, it performs in numerous ways which makes us connect or relate these murders to different types that we had from our previous readings of various popular genres. For example, when Jenny and Liza, two of the protagonists in *Phantoms*, arrive Snowfield, an alpine resort with breathtaking scenery in tranquility,

Jenny's housekeeper, Hilda Beck, is found dead in the kitchen of Jenny's house:

> The dead woman's face was swollen; it was now a round, smooth, and
> somewhat shiny caricature of the countenance she had worn in
> life…Where flesh was visible—the neck, lower arms, hands, calves,
> ankles—it had a soft, overripe look…
> The longer she looked at the body, the more the skin seemed
> bruised…not even one square inch of visible skin was free of it…
> There were no blatant signs of violence. No bleeding gunshot wounds.
> No stab wounds. No indications that the housekeeper had been beaten
> or strangled. (Koontz 16-19)

The bizarre condition of the dead body has readers recall their past experiences of reading science fictions such as Herbert George Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898)in which the alien invaders slaughter victims with high-tech chemical weapons or as the burst of biological crisis in *Resident Evil* which causes people suffer from the spread of the genetically constructed mutating virus. With these empirical ideas of types, readers quickly fall into the cliché of categorizing characters or story development, akin to those they have read before, into certain types. This is a technique for Koontz to achieve resonances from readers and then use it to obstruct their rational thinking on solving the riddle for the stereotyped idea of types always leads people to the deducible and reasonable answer while the real answer of a great work should take the imagination into account.

One of the major protagonist in *Phantoms*, Jenny, is a doctor, which enables her to make the first explicit examination of the dead body to gather clues for the truth: "She considered about allergic reaction, exotic poison, murder, disease, bacterial or viral even contagious, "plague—bubonic and other forms" (Koontz 19). However, none of Jenny's findings provide any valuable answer to the riddle and to the readers.

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On the contrary, every time Jenny comes up with a possible assumption, readers will fall into a new bond of "types," and their ideas of this type will conflict the previous type, so the bigger paradox formed to help Koontz successfully baffle his readers and arouse their curiosities and motives to keep turning the pages.

The same manipulation of readers' knowledge of types happens again in chapter six where the sisters found their neighbors, Jacob and Aida Liebermann, killed and dismembered in Liebermann's bakery:

> On the other side of the piled cookware, in the middle of the butcher's block counter, lay a large disk of pie dough. A wooden rolling pin rested on the dough. Two hands gripped the ends of the rolling pin. Two severed, human hands…The hands were not bruised or swollen; they were pretty much flesh-colored, though gray-pale… Beyond the butcher's-block counter, set in the long wall on the far side of the room, were three ovens. One of them was huge, with a pair of solid, over-and-under, stainless-steel doors. The other two ovens were smaller than the first, though still larger than the conventional models used in most homes;….None of the ovens was turned on at the moment, which was fortunate, for if the smaller ones had been in operation, the kitchen would have been filled with a sickening stench. Each one contained a severed head. (Koontz 42-43)

This time we encounter a typical psychopathic killing method, which resembles in some kind of sick and malicious jokes of chopping the victim's hands and fixing it on the table, cutting down the head and putting it into the oven. These ways of the twisted but distinctive slaughter ways remind us of those plots depicting dismemberment in novels about serial killers. Readers' connections to a new type immediately overthrow their first speculationabout the situation. And here, Koontz

has his protagonist stresses the conflict again: "Radiation, disease, poison, toxic gas—boy, we sure were on the wrong track. Only other people, sick people, do that kind of weird stuff. Right? Some weird psycho did all of this" (44).

But does the idea of the type of serial killer lead us to the correct way of thinking which puts us closer to the answer? No, it doesn't. This is just another Koontz's trick of guiding us again into the restriction of "types." Due to the limitation of merely considering out of types, readers are helplessly lost in the many possible answers of the riddle the Koontz deliberately designs.

Besides those confusions imposed upon readers, in this arrangement, we can say that Koontz, while having his villain carry out Propp's narrative function 8, allows him/it perform #6 and #7 at the same time to achieve the effect: protagonist in *Phantoms* are deceived and mesmerized by the villain about his/its true identity, thus disadvantage them in gathering useful information of their enemy and preparing for the following direct combat.

Unexpectedly, the reasonable supposition concluded by the description of this chapter responds to the plot in which Jenny suspects the existence of a sinister killer:

> There was something sinister about the phone being out of order when
> a dead woman lay in the kitchen. Perhaps Mrs. Beck had been
> murdered. If someone cut the telephone line and crept into the
> house…The wound should be in the housekeeper's back, and since she
> had died within the past hour. It was also conceivable that the killer—if
> there was a killer—might still be here, in the house. (Koontz 21)

Moreover, when Jenny tries the telephone in neighbor's house, she has encountered a blood-curdling situation akin to receiving prank call from abnormal psychopath:

> This time, however, the line wasn't actually dead, as it had been at her
> own house. It was an open line, filled with the soft hiss of electronic

> static…She began to suspect that someone was on the line, listening to
> her…All Jenny can hear is a "far—away hissing. Like eggs on a
> griddle… Just distant static. What they called "white noise." (Koontz
> 28)

This is like an approval to our assumed version on a psychopathic serial killer. Not only have the killer's ferocity and distorted mentality scared us but the possible closeness of his location has pinched readers nerves for we are all terribly concerned about the protagonists' safety. Right at the moment when we hold the answer affirmatively, one question hesitates us—how did a sick serial killer causes such an unusual reaction on the housekeeper's dead body? How could he make a human body swell like that? Where did those bruises come? Why there is not even a single wound on the corpse? The seemingly possible answer generated only from our empirical knowledge of types is then a new factor that bothers us and complicates the situation.

Another type which Koontz applies to confuse his readers appears in the chapter which the protagonists find the sheriff's dead body in the local sheriff office and the unidentifiable female corpse in the local gallery owner's apartment.

From the description of the searching and examination of the crime scene of the sheriff office and the gallery we know that both the sheriff and the woman had fired several times at someone or something and had scored several. When Jenny examines the sheriff, Paul Henderson's office and tries to collect useful clues, she discovers a .38 revolver on the floor and infers that Paul had drawn the gun to defend himself against whatever the attacker was. She picks up the weapon to observe it and then finds three of the cylinder chambers empty. "The sharp odor of burnt gunpowder told her that the weapon had been fired recently; Sometime today; maybe even within the past hour(Koontz 32)." Later, Jenny discovers three expended cartridges in the room, which surprise her:

If the gun hadn't been discharged into the floor, and if it hadn't been

aimed at the front windows—which it hadn't; no broken glass—then it

had to have been fired with the muzzle pointing into the room,

waist-high or higher. So where had the slugs gone? ... If the expended

rounds weren't in this room, there was only one other place they could

be: in the man or men at whom Paul Henderson had taken aim.

(Koontz 32)

Because there is no "ruined furniture, splintered wood or torn sheet-metal, shattered

plastic" in the office, Jenny can be certain that all three bullets had gone into the body

of the sheriff's aim. But why there isn't even one single drop of blood in the room?

Who is the attacker? What is it? When the question rises up in Jenny and readers'

minds, the incisive shock feeling of chill and horror haunts as well.

The same puzzle appears in the gallery owner's bedroom where the female

victim had fired and scored eight shots on her attacker before she died. But there are

only eight bullets shells on the floor and still not a single drop of blood. "How could

she have made eight hits and not have stopped something? How come there's not one

drop of blood(Koontz 88)?"

Both of the situations reminds readers of the locked room mystery in many of

the detective novels such as Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841)

and John Dickson Carr's *The Three Coffins* (1935). The more the clues point to

similar scenarios in detective genre, the more readers try to employ their rationality to

interpret the information.

And the more readers are trapped in the "types," the more successful Koontz

has perplexed them. It seems impossible for us to understand the caution which a

serial killer or a psychopathic nut would spend on his killing. (By "us" here I mean

readers who are confined by the idea of "types.") The whole thing looks like a

performance by design. But the way it is performed doesn't seem to be by the hands of a "designer" but more like a lunatic wacko. It is in this way which readers are tangled by their complicated thoughts of trying to figure out a reasonable explanation. Nevertheless, Koontz realizes this blind spot of the general popular readers so he makes use of it with the engagement of his imagination to provide the easiest answer to the puzzle which readers have no way to guess right.

And then, the occurrence of the giant moth again recalls our hypothesis of the genetically engineering creature:

> The *moth*. It was fixed firmly to Wargle's face, holding on by some means not visible to Bryce. Wargle's entire head was hidden by the thing…Wargle staggered away, veering downhill, moving blindly, clawing at the outrageous thing that clung to his face. His screams quickly grew muffled; within a couple of seconds, they were silenced altogether…The kite-size insect glided soundlessly across the street…Tal Whitman raised his shotgun. The blast was like cannon fire in the silent town. The moth pitched sideways in midair. It tumbled in a loop, dropped almost to the ground, then it swooped up again and flew on, disappearing over a rooftop. (Koontz 143-144)

The occurrence of the giant moth is the first time an attacker actually shows up in *Phantoms*. So, what can be expected is that readers immediately take this mysterious monster as the villain himself in the story. It is worth to notice that when reading this, all our other positive assumptions or guessing of the answer such as the psychopathic serial killer or the mutating virus vanish in a flash. The attention is suddenly drawn only on the moth. Readers may view this mysterious monster as "something from a genetic engineering lab", "an experiment in recombinant DNA(Koontz 150)" which causes those strange death in Snowfield. This is again the reasonable but limited

relation of the answer concluded by our submission to "types." Koontz further uses this characteristic of readers customarily producing the effect corresponds to his expectation: due to the tendency of sorting information according to the logic of empirical experiences, which is a natural working of the mind that produces a feeling of familiarity and identification to concrete Koontz's story, readers expect to see a swelled, bruised dead body of Stu Wargle just as what we saw of that of Hilda Beck, the housekeeper.

However, when Jenny examines Wargle's corpse, she finds that "the center of the dead man's demolished face was eaten away clear to the bone; all the skin, flesh, and cartilage were gone. Even the bone itself appeared to be partially dissolved in places, pitted, as if it had been splashed with acid" (Koontz 146). The violation of our expectation obscures the skeleton of the answer that we have pieced up by far. Readers are mesmerized, confused, shocked and terrified while these feelings grow stronger and stronger unconsciously as the situation goes more complex. For Koontz isn't blocked in the dead alley of the idea of types in popular genres. Instead, he uses his boundless imagination to accomplish a natural combination of the two, which is what Santayana calls "the spontaneous creation of the mind." This creation of the mind—the brain-eating giant moth—is something tremendous and mysterious like what we will read in myth or epic such as *Odyssey*.

"In the moon's slivery beams, the impossible insect's huge pale velvety wings flapped and folded and spread with horrible grace and beauty" (Koontz 143). The idea of a bizarrely beautiful monster devouring human's brain which represents intelligence is an unusual yet fantastic image which will later contribute to the explanation of the Ancient Enemy's identity and its characteristics. The tremendous size of the moth and its "horrible grace and beauty" enhance the dynamic killing will and vitality as it is combined with the image of a serial murderer. Moreover, the

combination also produces the feeling of aesthetic and strengthens the thrilling elements in the story. This arrangement not only clouds the real answer of the riddle from readers but also exhibits how Koontz makes his popular thriller different from the conventional formula writing.

The last type Koontz plays is the genre of horror. In Dean Koontz's thrillers, the author frequently uses the element of supernatural to both provide explanation to enigmatic things and create the extreme horror feeling of the story itself. In *Phantoms*, this technique is applied on further producing readers' misperceptions to the truth. This time, what terrify readers are the attack of the walking dead and the sinister singing voice coming out of the kitchen drain:

> *"Here we go 'round the mulberry bush,*
>
> *the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush."*
>
> The air was filled with a child's singing. A little boy. His voice was
>
> clear and fragile and sweet… The child's voice was coming out of the
>
> drain in the sink, as if he were trapped far down in the pipes… The
>
> song changed again. The sweetness was replaced by a cloying, almost
>
> mocking piety:
>
> *"Jesus loves me, this I know,*
>
> *for the Bible tells me so."*
>
> …Nothing about the singing was overtly threatening; yet, like the
>
> noises Bryce and Jenny had heard on the telephone, the child's tender
>
> voice, issuing from such an unlikely source, was unnerving. Creepy.
>
> (Koontz 201-203)

The mysterious voice comes from the drain happens right after the corpse of the dead officer, Stu Wargle, whose brain is eaten up by the giant moth, woke up and tried to rape Liza in the girl's washing room. We could have taken the voice from the drain as

the playing of recording tape designed by the villain if we were still positive about our assumption on the psychopathic serial killer. But as we've been through the attack of the giant moth and witnessed the coming-back-to-life walking dead, readers easily connect their experiences of reading the horror genre about the evil spirits or vicious ghosts and then to class the situation into "type horror." Consequently, as we test our final assumption to answer all the strange and unexplainable situations in Snowfield, it seems appropriate and reasonable. Just when readers are about to complain the author's laziness of using the easiest solution in his story, Koontz introduces us the most critical character in the story—Timothy Flyte—the author of the book, *The Ancient Enemy*.

It turns out that all the miseries which happened in Snowfield is caused by a pre-historical creature that has existed for aeon and might have been responsible for the extinction of dinosaurs and several mysterious mass disappearances in human history. It consists of a cellular structure very different from all the known organic matter in the world. Most of its tissues are without the cell structure so to enable the Ancient Enemy become the shape-changer. It is capable of imprinting any cell structure of other animals that it has consumed and then mimics it. This explains the appearance of the giant moth and the walking dead of Stu Wargle. And then, we realize that the Ancient Enemy feeds on its victims in an unusual way of enveloping them and oozing an enzyme to dissolve them, thus, gives the explanation to the swelled and bruised corpse of the housekeeper and the local sheriff.

In the note which Koontz writes for the afterword of *Phantoms*, the author explains that his production of the Ancient Enemy is a combination of the imagination and several real, well-documented history events. For example, "the disappearance of the Roanoke Island colony, the mysteriously deserted Eskimo village of Anjikuni, the vanished Mayan populations, the unexplained loss of thousands of Spanish solders in

1711, the equally mystifying loss of the Chinese battalions in 1939…(afterword in *Phantoms*)." But none of these events above includes the hideous murder as what happened in Snowfield. The novel explains that the Ancient Enemy has long lived under the deep ocean and mainly fed on the marine lives. Because it absorbs the prey's mental capacity and memories as it absorbs their bodies. Therefore, those evil and distorted thoughts in its human-victim go into the Ancient Enemy's mind as well. So, not until it starts to feed on human beings has it changed from merely predatory to vicious and sadistic. This provides a suitable explanation to the severed hands and heads in the bakery.

Consequently, from those tragedies happened in Snowfield we can see that Koontz has engaged the imagination to his manipulation of readers' stereotyped idea of "types" to enrich *Phantoms* with multiple merits those types accompanied with. On one hand, Koontz, in each delineation of the murder cases, embeds a certain type, which allows readers to be misled on their interpretations and inferences while following the characteristics of those types. On the other hand, with the support of some documented historical evidences, the author uses his imagination to logically and naturally link all types together to create the story individuality and to satisfy readers request of reading pleasure in his novel. Both achieve the effect of attracting popularity and developing aesthetic value in *Phantoms* for the readers' curiosities and reading desires are continuously evoked until the last page of the novel and the profundity as well as complexity of the story have well presented in this way. Dean Koontz's play on the combination of types and imagination corresponds quite well to what Santayana says about the beauty of "the spontaneous creation of the mind." In this aspect, we witness how Koontz makes his story celebrated and recommended by numerous readers and outstands himself from other popular thriller writers in the world.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Koontz's popular thrillers, *Watchers, Mr. Murderer and Phantoms*, are credited
not only with effective narrative functions but also with aesthetic arrangements in
form. Through a morphological analysis of Koontz's *Watchers* based upon Propp's 31
narrative functions, we have found a symmetrical structure of the plot embedded in
Santayana's beauty in form. The first symmetry of the villains' reconnaissance
manifests how the static beauty is realized by producing the harmonious feeling of
satisfying readers' expectation. The dynamic beauty in form is also achieved by
applying an "unsymmetrical" approach, which is derived from a lack of the
portrayal of the unidentified creature lurking behind the scenes to violate the harmony
that readers have anticipated. It gives the story freshness and variety, arousing readers'
curiosities and eagerness to keep turning pages.

The second symmetry is formed when the double obtainments of the magical
agent occur in the story. This symmetry is more unique in the aspect of its structure
for it is constructed around the interval between the two obtainments of the magical
agent. The cause-and-effect relationship between the first obtainment and the interval
function forms the dynamic beauty, the so-called "joyful impact" in Santayana's term
in *Watchers*. And the hidden aesthetic arrangement, which shows the static beauty of
symmetry, is embedded in the second gaining of the magical agent.

The last symmetry, a rather rare design in popular thrillers in which Koontz puts
two villains together to form the double equally exciting confrontations and climaxes,
achieves the effect of clarification of the beauty in symmetry. It is in this third
symmetry in structure Koontz brings up the key question in *Watchers*: Who is the
monster? Readers' moral and psychological stability is challenged and threatened due
to a dubious and confusing scene of the choice between a spiritual evil and a violent

killer. This is an aesthetic method to construct a reverse solution to the confrontation in the end.

The multiplicity in uniformity embodied in Koontz's another novel, *Mr. Murder,* is a form in which the material of unity arouses the feeling of relation, which is what Santayana refers to as the extension. It contributes to the quality of multiplicity. It is important for the each part of the multiplicity to possess its individuality because every relation, or every extension, is a distinct part that brings values back to the very impression of the uniformity.

In *Mr. Murder*, Koontz plays the blurring of the identities of hero and villain, good and evil, by having the main character perform the functions which belong to his counterpart. Besides the effect of symmetry in form, this manipulation further creates an aesthetic effect in form—the multiplicity in uniformity. This multiplicity constructed on the derangement of multiple values, which is generated from the reading experiences, provides readers with the access to the core meaning of the story. Relations and extensions derived from multiplicity not only contribute to the uniformity of the story but also make it unique and distinctive, carrying the aesthetic values in this popular thriller.

In the several encounters of hero and villain in *Mr. Murder*, both Alfie and Marty repeatedly perform functions that belong to each other. With this strategy, a strategy of deliberately violating Propp's theory, Koontz focuses on the blurring of identities of the hero and the villain. This arrangement arouses readers' feeling of relation and extension, which challenges their stereotyped idea of the arbitrary binary division between goodness and evilness. Readers' sudden feeling of pity for Alfie thus influences their interpretations of the following story. Bearing the suffering, which are usually distributed to victims in the story, the villain in *Mr. Murder* also possesses some virtues of the hero to mesmerize readers' common judgments upon a popular

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thriller and stimulating more relations and extensions of the work

Due to the multiplicity Koontz places in *Mr. Murder*, the villain's complex and conflicting personalities are exposed through Koontz's technique of blurring and juxtaposition of dramatis personae and plots. The villain becomes a synthesis of a pathetic victim, a daring fighter, an alienated individual and a bloodless killer, giving readers the opportunity to examine the story in various lights. This is how the beauty element of "multiplicity in uniformity" manifests itself in its effect of creating profundity and aesthetic values in popular thrillers

In *Phantoms*, Koontz further engages the merits of cross-genre fiction and human's imagination into the Ancient Enemy's performances of the villain's functions to embody "the spontaneous creation of the mind," a beauty element of form which helps create an unique, appealing and impressive dramatis persona in the story. Desperate to solve riddle of the villain's true identity, readers' rational thinking are mesmerized by many bizarre crime scenes which direct to answers like alien invasion, toxic poison or the spread of the mutating virus. As the investigation goes on, evidences gathered are proved to be even more confusing than none. Possible answers like a psychopathic serial killer, mysterious monster, even a malicious spirit, which are deduced by reason, are still paradoxical to a perfect explanation of every phenomenon.

This feeling of uncertainty helps build tensions and suspense in the book. Readers are trapped in these "types," unable to avoid resisting an urge to turn pages after pages to dig out the answer. While providing an answer to the puzzle of the killer, Koontz combines the imagination and the conventions by fusing some real history evidences to explain every phenomenon of the massacre and to portray an appealing, distinguishing yet scaring villain in his thriller. Like *Watchers*, *Phantoms* is more than a terror story. It is a story of imagination and reality.

By manipulating his readers' expectations in reading process, Koontz sends them to a more complicated yet appealing maze of the story. Through imagination, Koontz weaves his thriller into a work of artistry embodying individuality and uniqueness in the shaping of the image of the Ancient Enemy. In *Phantoms*, the interlocking functions of convention and imagination, a kind of spontaneous creation of the mind, helps arouse readers' curiosities and reading desires, engaging the story with complexity and profundity of a serious novel.

Koontz's unique way of writing is not just to decorate the frame of convention with details, but to create invention out of convention, using a distinctive way of arranging narrative functions and shaping dramatis personae. These inventions, under Koontz's manipulation, not only contribute to the uniqueness but also enhance the thrilling and scary elements of his thrillers. Satisfying readers' expectation by the arousing harmonious feeling out of symmetry, Koontz engages them into the story development and feeds them with the pleasure of familiarity. The writer employs the designs of unsymmetrical structure, which violate the harmonious feeling to form the joyful impact (in the case of thriller, the intense shocking effect) and then fill the story with uncertainties. This juxtaposition of the static and dynamic beauties derived from Santayana's symmetry theory in Koontz's thriller successfully pinches readers' nerves, for they can neither be too relaxed nor too nervous during the reading process. Further, the clarification function of symmetry is not only a skill Koontz applies to provide readers with a chance to peer into the true meaning behind those scary plots, it is also a medium for us to realize the extreme evilness of humanity. Being aware of the darkest malignancy in the universe is somehow a curse to the enlightened people because it will always unconsciously haunt their hearts. This is a horror that lasts long, carves deep, and becomes unforgettable.

Multiplicity in uniformity contributes to the uncertain feeling in Koontz's thriller.

Since the degree of horror increases with the feeling of uncertainty, Santayana's beauty element in form enchants Koontz's popular thriller. The blurring between the identities of the hero (Marty) and the villain (Alfie) arouses readers' feelings of sympathy toward Alfie's doomed destiny. On the one hand, we are sympathetic with Alfie's human longing for care and love. On the other hand, we half expect to witness his self-destruction. The more pathetic he is, the more our emotions are engaged in the story. The blurring also indicates the unavoidable deadly crisis of Marty's family. Though engaged with Alfie, readers stand in the same shoe of Marty and his family. As the story progresses, our fear of witnessing the life of Marty's family in danger gradually climbs with our calmness diminishing. Due to the multiplicity in this story, readers fear as the dramatis personae fear. It isn't a shallow fear but a profound one. Readers' fear is realized in the story, so they cannot help but imagine themselves as the victims in it. Knowing the doom is coming but having nothing to do with it is the greatest fear, which Koontz creates in *Mr. Murder*.

The blurring embodies the multiplicity in this novel. When they identify the multiplicity in uniformity in *Mr. Murder*, readers can easily catch the critique that Koontz plants in it. The real reason of Alfie's existence signifies the evil nature of human beings. Living in a world of highly-developed technology, a reader who has read this thriller might be on tenterhook, worrying about a mysterious cyborg coming to take his life back.

The feeling of uncertainty is also effectively created by the spontaneous creation of mind. In Koontz's *How to Write Best-selling Fiction*, the writer claims that "[t]he killer's identity, the why of how to stop him, is more important to the reader than any chase or race against time or anticipation of a violent event" (231). Koontz's emphasis on the narrative tension coming from reader's desire to know the villain's identity is fully demonstrated by the spontaneous creation of the minds in *Phantoms*. The

uncertainty is formed mainly on the mysteries identity of The Ancient Enemy in the story. Manipulating readers' stereotyped idea of "types," Koontz not only keeps us from the real answer of the puzzle but misleads us to many unreasonable and paradoxical inferences. Readers are bothered by the confusion. The confusion produces the panic. The panic generates fear. We are confused by the question of who is the enemy, panic because of the hidden threatening, and fear for the unpredictable danger.

The effect which the spontaneous creation of the mind has achieved is a combination of the frightening elements of every horror genre. Before the exposure of the answer, readers have experienced any kind of fear thoroughly. While the identity of the scary villain of Koontz's production can only be explained as an invention combining imagination and convention, the fearsome quality of the Ancient Enemy, which is increasing for the evil power it possesses, can as well be out of human imagination. As readers move on to another chapter, it is like witnessing the coming of the characters' doom. These characters infect readers with their helplessness and great fear.

His play in form of the story even becomes an effective device to catch his readers' eyes and further to address some social and cultural issues. Koontz's popular thrillers are more than the formula writing; they become the works of imagination and creativity, close to some canonical works. Morphologically speaking, the author's careful design of the structure is where the value of beauty is derived from. It also enriches the works with fascinating elements of tensions and suspense, elevates their literary tastes and makes them both the media of entertainment and the art work shining with cultural, social, and even religious meanings.

However, a morphological approach is not sufficient for a modern thriller writer to compose an outstanding work possesses the value of an artpiece; instead, Koontz

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manipulates this formula to achieve popularity and simultaneously modifies the formula in part to accomplish aesthetics. The success of his thrillers lies in his skillful and aesthetical strategies of employing as well as violating these thriller conventions. To be part of the tradition and outside of the tradition, his thrillers challenge the canon of this popular genre. Just as T.S. Eliot argues in his *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, all artists must stand with the tradition, yet create something new out of the tradition:

> The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new(2396).

It is "this conformity between the old and the new" that ranks Koontz's popular thrillers such as *Watchers, Mr. Murder* and *Phantoms* as art pieces in the thriller tradition. Under the coat of an entertaining production, they are artistically and literarily produced to reach the aesthetic standards close to classical works. This is not only the reason why Koontz has outstood a great amount of other thriller writers for more than three decades but also why he can stand in a supreme and distinctive position in the modern popular literature.

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