

I: Anti Utopian Characteristics in *The Orphan Master's Son*

The present thesis analyses Johnson's late novel *The Orphan Master's Son* in the light of the theories of negative utopia. Anti Utopian notions of myopia, fragmentation, destruction, loss of the order and the political disruption in the novel *The Orphan Master's Son* proves it as dystopian in character. The aim is to reveal dystopia as the subject matter of the given novel. *The Orphan Master's Son's* inherent debate over the change of the approach to science in aftermath of the demise of the pro-Enlightenment modernity will be identified. Adam Johnson's *The Orphan Master's Son* deals with the issue of scientific optimism and its underlying factors. Scientific disciplines like genetic mutation and biotechnology have witnessed fresh innovations and inventions like mechanical hounds, fire machine, manipulation of genetic code and others. These new techniques are supposed to bring relief and comfort in man's existence. Human lives should have been enhanced by the latest scientific inventions. People are usually optimistic about the scientific inventions and innovative ideas. However, the same scientific ideas and innovative concepts begin to rule over human life. Product of genetic mutation are brought up in such a way that they will have to donate their organs to the wealthy business tycoons. Scientifically manipulated beings are actually no less than human beings are. The researcher claims that far from doing betterment of humanity, genetic science has put the seed of rift and chasm including anxiety, fear and paranoia in Jun Do's, the protagonist's life, so the optimism of the redemptive power of science has resulted in to dystopia in *The Orphan Master's Son*.

The characters in the novel are important to preserve the theme of negative utopia. Major character of the novel Jun Do is living in scientifically advanced but politically shattered North Korean society factured by violence and power struggle

including loss and betrayal. His reality of life is more alarming and dangerous than he left behind. The main character of this novel Jun Do belongs to the youth generation of North Korea who is forced to live in metropolitan location of elite and rich people who later on forgets his real name, cultural identity and his own background being lost in the midst of totalitarian government. He becomes invisible inside the maze of political mayopia. His identity crisis and loss of agency makes him invisible. *The Orphan Master's Son* demonstrates how dystopian view and disillusionment affect the lives of people in North Korea. The obsessive search for the separate political cultural model in North Korea resulted in crisis, conflict, and perpetual unrest

The narrative complexity of the novel further proves its dystopian character. *The Orphan Master's Son* is written in the grey zone. The work is situated in North Korean society where Jun Do is lost in emptiness and hollow of modern scientific development. He is deviated and hanged between several problems. *The Orphan Master's Son* reflects the political and social unrest in North Korea. *The Orphan Master's Son* is preventative of people's history, a bottom-up rather than top-down view of a country in flux. Adam Johnson's work moves back and forth in time and focusing on small events and everyday people, Johnson breathes life into history by describing the effects of larger-than-life events on the average citizen.

Dystopia is a general and wide-ranging term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, fiction, and cultural and politics. Dystopia is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objective, efforts of betterment of humanity. In essence, it stems from a recognition that enlightenment of human kind is not possible, rather, it is a grand narrative. For this reason, anti-utopian concept is highly skeptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and instead focuses on the relative truths of each person. In the dystopian

understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. Dystopia relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, knowing always that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative, rather than certain and universal.

Fractions of modernity project are scattered throughout *The Orphan Master's Son*. A selection of those dystopian notions relevant for the upcoming analysis of negative utopia in Johnson's *The Orphan Master's Son* will lay the foundation for the reasoning of the paper. Johnson seems to be profoundly interested in the counter-enlightenment impulse in the novel, its open anti-rationalism. In *The Orphan Master's Son*, Johnson reconsiders the disillusionment of the enlightenment values and the related critique of humanism. *The Orphan Master's Son* concerns itself with the conflict between rationalism, emotionalism, and religion, which are considered different, but equally considerable ways of thinking. The novel's protagonist, Jun Do, displays model citizenship, he finds himself a victim of the government's calculated whims, including his frequent transfer among the county's worst jobs—tunnel soldier, kidnapper, naval spy—before being sent to Prison 33, a prison modeled after North Korea's present-day concentration camps.

Different critics have given multiple criticisms to this novel depending on its various aspects that the book touches. Critics have not left a stone untouched to criticize the book which shows the universal recognition of the book. The critic, Zadie Smith, says:

The Orphan Master's Son opens with a chapter so crafty (and complete as a story), that the rest of the novel must inevitably disappoint, following a kind of thermodynamic law of literature.

Chapters two through twenty four (plus appendices) comprise a very long epilogue, reversing Johnson's usual trick of making the first two-thirds of a book a prologue of red herrings, whopping you with a left-field climax irrelevant to the buildup. And the trick usually works. (12)

Here, Smith sees the very bonding of the novel. She analyzes the patterning, chaptering and other multiple fractions of the novel. Smith praises the trick of the writer to make the first two-thirds of a book a prologue. George Daniel looks the novel as one of the best and an excellent novels of the literature. He is enchanted by the magical language of the novel. He appoints:

Though *The Orphan Master's Son* is only two-thirds of an excellent novel, the book as a whole has a lot to recommend it: an abundance of vivid character detail and insights, wonderful language, and Johnson's scary ability to walk a grueling mile in very strange shoes indeed. (Readers of "The Child In Time" and "The Innocent" will find themselves half-convinced that Johnson himself once lost a child in an unexplained kidnapping, or that he personally spent some sweaty hours dismembering a corpse with a hack-saw). Sadly, after a bravura beginning, he loses control, starting with the shooting in the restaurant.(2)

The novel has touched the multiple aspects of modern life. In one vein it displays the characteristic of immortal and true love in other sense it talks about the varieties and change in the nature of love in the span of time. Kermit Lansner is of the view that:

What strikes me about this book is the lasting impression it's left on me. I read it last summer and still find myself thinking

about it and talking about it a year later. I recently finished another book and my wife asked me to compare it to any two others as a point of reference. Better than one book we'd both read, I said, but not as good as *The Orphan Master's Son*. For contemporary fiction, this one sticks with you. (13)

Here Kermit believes that Johnson does a fine job in painting the lead character Jun Do, as well as the secondary players. Although all these critics have raised different issues in this novel, the issue of dwindling scientific optimism is totally absent in their reviews and consistent commentaries. Science has robbed man of his manhood. Science is expected to enrich human comfort and minimize labor. But science has denuded the humanity of human beings as it misused my totalitarian rulers. It has denuded the manhood of man. The issue of scientific optimism and Jun Do's implicit view on the systematic denudation of manhood is increasingly new and untested issue. Jun Do's denuded manhood is miserable and heart-rending. That is why the researcher has picked up the issue of the critique of scientific optimism in *The Orphan Master's Son*.

The issues of the life in the dystopian age and society are what these novels are clearly concerned about. The setting of novel carries dystopian features and the writer's descriptions often evoke the accounts of dystopia. Gothic elements including the ubiquitous reign of darkness, forsaken sites, the scenes set at the cemetery and others increase the civilization decadence. Moreover, the whole city is suffering from misunderstanding, broken family relationships, cultural decadence as well as nostalgia towards past. Selfishness crosses boundaries because they provide love and affection to their children based on their success and achievement.

Jun do, is degenerated into neurotic and Paranoid because of the condition of ageing parents, totalitarian political system and the sadist government head, Kim Jong Il's character His degraded condition in dystopian world is described as:

His mind and his flesh had separated, his brain had sat high and frightened above the mule of his body, a beast of burden that hopefully would make it alone over the treacherous mountain pass of Prison 33. But now as a woman ran a warm washcloth along the arch of his foot, the sensation was allowed to rise up, up into his brain, and it was okay to perceive again, to recognize forgotten parts of his body as they hailed him. His lungs were more than air bellows. His heart, he believed now, could do more than move blood. (Johnson 54)

The critique of Enlightenment universals is central to the thinking of the philosophers of the post-modern period. *The Orphan Master's Son* happens to scrutinize its main protagonist's rationalist thinking. The novel is a contemplation of the modernity's strategy of betterment of humanity with scientific advancement. The poststructuralist thinker Jean-Francois Lyotard took into consideration both scientific and narrative knowledge. The conclusion he arrived at was that the scientific knowledge was actually marked by a contradiction because "scientific knowledge cannot know and make known that it is the true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative kind of knowledge, which from its point of view is no knowledge at all. In short, there is a recurrence of the narrative in the scientific" (Sarup 136-7). The scientific knowledge, so to say, can only prove its superiority with the help of the narrative. In other words, "Lyotard showed that science was like all other human activity" (Drolet 25). The dystopia theory considers science's "degradation." Furthermore, Jacques Derrida, also stands up against the Western tradition of

rationalist thinking and its premise of reason, formed by the search for certainty and termed “logocentrism” (Appignanesi 77). Logocentrism is, also in the dystopianist vision, seen as invalid and subject to deconstruction. Though *The Orphan Master’s Son*’s main protagonist Jun Do, primarily affiliates with the logo centric way of seeing the world, his reasoning inevitably simultaneously involves the deconstructive impulse - the tendency to subvert itself.

The research aims to prove that dystopian narrative Johnson employed has the underlying vision of reflecting how social perfection is reaped away by abusive power of state. The research considers that dystopian society projected in *The Orphan Master’s Son* reflects Johnson’s idea on individual and society. *The Orphan Master’s Son*, as socio-political dystopia, depicts the individual’s struggle for identity against an oppressive North Korea powerfully embedded totalitarian government. The research seeks to prove *The Orphan Master’s Son*’s dystopia in socio-political aspects. Applying the dystopian critique propounded by M. Keith Booker, Tom Moylan and others, the research endeavors to explore *The Orphan Master’s Son* as Johnson’ Premonition: how technocratic knowledge in the hands of coercive state, if misused, could be a weapon to torment the people. Those aspects that make *The Orphan Master’s Son* dystopia are expected to be explored as the major quest of the research that based on the Tom Moylan’s *The Scraps of the Untained Sky* and Krishna Kumar’s analyses of theoretical aspects of dystopia seeks to explore *The Orphan Master’s Son* as novel of dystopia.

Barry Lewis, trying to identify the dominant features of dystopian literature, proposes fragmentation and paranoia as examples of dystopian novel. The notion of fragmentation in literary writing concerns the difficulty of the determination of the given novel’s theme. “The dystopian writer distrusts the wholeness and

completion associated with traditional stories, and prefers to deal with other ways of structuring narrative” (127). An unambiguous completion of this novel’s narrative is not accomplishable, due to its dystopian project. The guiding principle of the narration thus becomes distortion. The “uncertainty principle” (127) Lewis comes to mention is undoubtedly part of the style of Jun Do’s narrating strategy, as explained above. Moreover, paranoia, the other prominent concept in terms of the dystopian literature’s critique, is a clearly visible ingredient of *The Orphan Master’s Son*. “The protagonist of the dystopian novel sometimes suspects that he or she is trapped at the centre of an intrigue, often with some justification” (130). The protagonist is afraid of being engulfed and buried under the boots of despotic ruler

This present research examines the failure of scientific optimism in the novel *The Orphan Master’s Son* by Adam Johnson. The protagonist of the novel Jun Do struggles to reconstruct his identity in scientifically advanced but totalitarian society. Through his narrating, he reveals his suffocation and identity crisis in totalitarian North Korean society. The novel begins with the major character’s suffocation due to state’s strict supervision, which has served as the starting point for the crisis in Jun Do’s perception of his own identity, whom looking back at the incident, is now trying to put the fragments together to reconstruct his shattered identity. He becomes like the cog in the machine in totalitarian society. The political life of North Korea revolves entirely around the will and whim of one person: the Dear Leader Kim Jong Il who does his ruling in the model of Stalin. He is a total dictator, and in his system, power and wealth are concentrate in a centralized state to keep control over citizens. personal freedom is not a thing. Every aspect of an individual's life—schooling, work, sex, death—is a gift from the state.

Jun Do feels utterly alone in the world outside the city. He supposes his life nothing than the experiment, as a character genetically damaged. Jun Do becomes a professional kidnapper who must navigate the shifting rules, arbitrary violence, and baffling demands of his Korean overlords in order to stay alive. Driven to the absolute limit of what any human being could endure, he boldly takes on the treacherous role of rival to Kim Jong Il in an attempt to save the woman he loves, Sun Moon, a legendary actress “so pure, she didn’t know what starving people looked like.”.

Dystopia is derived from the term *Utopia* itself originally coined by Thomas Moore in his book *Utopia* completed in 1516. Utopia is the blueprint for an ideal society with no crime or poverty. Whereas Dystopian societies are characterized by dehumanizing and totalitarian governments, environmental disaster or other characteristics associated with a decline in society. Dystopia is described as imaginative society that has gone wrong due to the prevalence of “exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, famine, ecocide depression, debt, and the steady depletion of the humanity” (XI, Scraps) and injustice, restriction on freedom, strict punitive legal system. Underlying vision of nightmarish society is to warn the world. Baccolini and Moylan recognize “dystopia as warning” (45) as they find the identical admonitory trope in all cases of dystopian imagination. Observing many dystopia instances, they argue that “dystopia, to greater or lesser extent, has served as prophetic vision, the canary in the cage, for writers with ethical and political concern for warning us of terrible sociopolitical tendencies that could if continued, turn our contemporary world into iron cages.” (2 Dark Horizon)

Our history is full of instances of such expression of fear and horror or its

antithetical desire of harmony, peace, progress and human contentment in the nature. Noticing such fictional account of bad political and social conditions” (Mautner 119) or the beautiful imagination of “detailed pictures of society significantly better than that in which the writer lives” (Eillot 110), Krishna kumar asserts the imaginaries of good or bad society “manifest itself in all ages in all manner of guises (Kumar 103). It shows that human endeavors to express good or bad picture of society is perennial in the human history. People express the desire of good society or utopian society where they can fulfill their expectations and longings that they could not fulfill in their contemporary real society. Similarly people express the fearful imagination of society or dystopian society because they fear of negative tendency in contemporary leading toward degeneration of system. In both of these expressions of good or bad society can be found corresponding to the problematic issues of the society. Whether society is good or bad depends on how one perceives one’s contemporary world, there is yet some degree of understanding as to what is making that society bad or good.

The Orphan Master’s Son demonstrates fearful account of society. What makes the world of *The Orphan Master’s Son*, dystopic is not simply the scarcity of the food but North Korean Government’s policy to control the Districts through resources-distributive mechanism. The nature of the governing system in the *The Orphan Master’s Son* reflects the feature of totalitarian governance that with the help of technology crushes the lives of the dispossessed. Transgression in individual freedom by the ruling system is marked as a characteristic of totalitarian governance. Totalitarian governance functions in arbitrary way that leaves no stone unturned to confirm its own rule. The situation of Jun Do is no different than “canary in the cage” (Johnson 132). He and the world he belongs to are not different from open prison.

They do not have voice to speak against the oppressive rule over them. This state of lack of freedom has become norms or habit in the part of people he represents. His world is so terrible because he is so frightened and helpless due to the difficulties of life. It has no worth to think of freedom if he does not have a food to please his stomach. The most brutal aspect of this lack of freedom begins with one's hunger. The desperation of the society results from the blind policy of restraining freedom. People neither can use their resources nor can they resort to jungle for their survival because an act of entering the jungle is an act of the State's will. The objective of deliberately creating the desperation in the district is to enslave the districts and to use them as their puppet or entertainment. The lack of freedom is background based upon which the state forms structure to use them as their entertainment or amusement.

The dehumanizing use of entertainment as means to terrorize the individual and society what makes the world of *The Orphan Master's Son* dystopian that thrives on the worst treatment of individual. The government's agents represent such oppressive force of totalitarian principle that does not even allow death against the wish of the individual. Such issues of social-politics that are making this world difficult to live are brought into notice to warn us.

War and violence is the root causes of the evil which engulf the peace and Progress. To warn such "policy" of war and violence amid the worst scenario of Poverty and hunger of food, Johnson's narrative self-reflexively warns that if state continues to promote the culture of war and bloodshed, the entire humanity will suffer forever. In order to warn the world he infuses an emphatic voice in his character who shares his pathetic condition as an individual being in worthless battle. How one goes through pain and suffering when he or she losses his nearer and dearer one in the battle that may victimize anyone in the society tells one of the Johnson thematic

intentions. The writer seems to impart the lesson through Jun Do that war and violence is the cause of individual suffering in the society. Individual does not desire it. They even fear of it yet the frequency of war has not diminished. Jun Do tells this grim side of battle before his eyes. He expresses his discontent towards violence:

People don't mean anything to them," Jun Do said. "That's right," the Captain said. "They only care about the story we're going to tell, and that story will be useful to them or it won't. When they ask you what happened to our flag and portraits, what story are you going to tell them?... You were wrong, he said. You were wrong—they are doing it for peace and fucking brotherhood.(Johnson 63_79)

With this awareness, Jun Do for the first time shows his rebellious attitude toward the cruelty made upon them by the state administrator. Jun Do points toward an urge to demolish such government _ "The government that has been threatening ... almost the year."(26) The state wants to maintain status quo. To pursue this objective state uses any means of control over its population. To control the individual, totalitarian government uses technology as surveillance-apparatus. Spying over the individual activities and behaviors, totalitarian government gathers information related to individual behaviors necessary to maintain the regime. Secret police as surveillance apparatus employs terror tactics to control the citizen.

In general dystopia is understood as opposite of utopia a vision of beautiful society or heaven like society where no pain and suffering distress the inhabitants of the society. In dystopian envisioning of society prosperity and amity among the dwellers of that society becomes the matter of fantasy. Dystopian society, where human being becomes a soulless matter in the eyes of those who govern it, obliges then to do what the state wishes him/her to do. There is no freedom but fear of

freedom. Projecting such that society by one who envisions it has the underlying motif of warning. Where are we heading? This genre of warning warns what if our society goes wrong like the alternative society that is exaggeratingly bad society.

Strength of *The Orphan Master's Sons* comes from the fact that it has employed the dystopian technique of estrangement yet maintain the distressing issue of contemporary society to satirize the modern mass phenomena: how straight is diverting today's youths' attention from social concern. The warning is suggested along with protagonists' awareness of the culprit of injustice that triggers in his the courage to dismantle "Rubbish government"(34). Johnson warns today's society using historical and mythic materials. In this extrapolation of mythic and historical ingredients, and Projecting them in the future, readers are sufficiently informed as to how and what makes the society wrong. In the genre of warning or what Moylan called "didactic account" that it emanates from the projection of "the contradiction of the society that is present on the very first page (148).

The Orphan Master's Son as one of many dystopian novels gives an overview of the bleak and terrible account due to the human action itself. Dystopia literature is important to empower the readers to be inspired to make difference to better people. We humans are given the power of choice. This power of choice has the capacity whether our society possesses utopian ideals of peace, progress and harmony or dystopia ideals of disharmony, death and destruction. The conflict of choices creates chaos and social disharmony. The choice of Jun Do to go against the state's choice to prolong own political system creates conflict. Government controls mass media through censorship and propaganda. Capitol controls the citizen through the mass media which are television and books. Jun Do finds himself entangled in such traumatic torture enforced through governing system. He asserts, "communism, you'd

threaten a dog into compliance, while in capitalism, obedience is obtained through bribes”(32). The control is further enhanced through the control of the economy. Capitol imposed strict laws in the economic front. Every district should work hard and produce goods for the Capitol and left nothing for the Districts. People in the district are forbidden to consume and enjoy their own production. It causes starvation and poverty that has become common things in districts. “I have thought”, says Jun Do, “in District Eleven, you would have bit more to eat than us. You know, since you grow the food (45). Surveillance over the individual through the technology has been one of the issues of individual privacy in the contemporary world. Exaggerating this contemporary issues of individual being spied, Johnson projected them as means to show how the strict control over the citizen can make the life in the society a hell. The images of high-tech means of surveillance indicate one of the worst ways the state uses to control the citizens. Referring to Amey’s discussion on Dystopia, Pat Wheeler says that “unremitting surveillance that in many dystopian societies forces to Internalizes state’s regulatory powers so that it becomes the principle of their own subjection”(1).

Ubiquitous media screw, position locator chips injected inside the body and other means of surveillance are used in the horrified *The Orphan Master’s Son*. To regulate behavior of the individual and make them obedient the state positions the secret police in standby. The sole objection of this surveillance is to instill in the individual at believe that state can know everything. By this belief state tries to ensure system sustainability. Therefore, utopian vision that state prevalence can bring happiness and harmony has been self- reflexively subverted in the dystopian narrative about the *The Orphan Master’s Son*. As Andrew Milner notes that in the dystopian society, the state creates such program to which the dwellers on it cannot resist to the

hive-like society. The reason they cannot resist may be that they are even aware of the mechanized mind of themselves. Milner observes in many dystopian works the trope of resistance:

The situation is for different in recent dystopias and novels, films, and stories. In such works, the hive or machines or machine- hive becomes an important feature or the major setting for the work. The hive or machine is to essential condition of human life. To resist to hive or machine is to rebel against the entire social system, and, as often not, the protagonist is crushed, destroyed, or rendered trivial. In such works the hive or machine becomes the symbol for thing in human social life that can render us helpless, insignificant, and inhuman. (49)

In *The Orphan Master's Son*, Adam Johnson has created dystopian vision that utilizes creative and political engagement. Johnson focus on her protagonist's coming of age in an extrapolated version of contemporary North Korean society. In doing so, he expands the dystopian from by drawing on a range of textual influences to enrich the social detail and the narrative conflict of characters. *The Orphan Master's Son* is about comprehending the lengths to which human beings living under the yoke of servitude must go in order to survive. Set against the backdrop of a totalitarian society whose stark realities are reminiscent of science fiction dystopia, this Pulitzer Prize winning novel attempts to comprehend the lengths to which human beings suffer in totalitarian society. Johnson has demonstrated that there is no single factor contributing in Social disharmony but many factors that cause to make the world hell. In Johnson's narrative he attributes these evils fundamentally to human choices, pointing toward the human choice's position in human life, he weaves several strand of through that provide evidence how human choices lead to if world would be good

or worse. The only choice of sustenance of political system leads it to believe in the curtailing of the individual freedom that might pose as a treat to this choice of system sustainability. The same choice of status quo catalyzes to protagonist an aspiration to go against this system.

One of the brutal aspects of the choice made by the central government is its policy of economic exploitation. The central government manages the resources in such way, which benefits only who are nearer to leaders. The capitol enjoys all the system sustainability such economic exploitation. The capitol contributes to further intensifying the misery and predicament of the people. The same choice of status quo catalyzes to intervene in the public life in most tyrannical way that ultimately begets in the protagonist a vibrant thought to go against this system. Jun Do describes such poverty-trodden state of life in his contrasting it with leader's huge luxury. He describes:

He knew the televisions were huge and there was all the rice you could eat. Yet he wanted no part of it - he was scared that if he saw it with his own eyes, his entire life would mean nothing. Stealing turnips from an old man who'd gone blind from hunger? That would have been for nothing. Sending another boy instead of himself to clean vats at the paint factory? For nothing. (Johnson 89)

In *The Orphan Master's Son* Johnson seems to comment on the same possibilities. Technology itself does not help humanity or create havoc. Its advantage or disadvantage depends on how they are used or with what purpose. The world of *The Orphan Master's Son* is made dystopia because of government's hidden motive to employ these technological gadgetry not to enhance life of the dispossessed but to subjugate them thereby ensuring its own power of exploitation. As Booker notes about

dystopian society, “both thought and feeling are strongly discouraged in this society and much of the technology goes into the development and production of gods designed to hedonistic pursuit of pleasure that will prevent buildup of potentially subversive political energies and for this hedonistic pleasure the dystopia government glorifies science as a main symbol of power” (49). In *The Orphan Master’s Son*, technology has been used as an “Inside, I’m assaulted by the evening propaganda broadcasts coming over the apartment’s hardwired loudspeaker. There’s one in every apartment and factory floor in Pyongyang” (345). It shows that there is technology not for large humanity but for those who possess it and use it in their benefit.

The Orphan Master’s Son also comments on dystopia state of injustice. What is most distressing in life is to endure injustice before the court, which is supposed to curb all injustice and prevent misdoing. However society of *The Orphan Master’s Son*, celebrate their inhuman and unjust political game, like reaping days, in front of the “justice Building” (34) where innocent tributes are selected for their blood in arena that is intended to appease the blood-thirsty Capitol audience disregarding the individual suffering and feeling of terror. People are not allowed to exercise their marriage, love and relationship according to their own will. It depends on the mercy of the state. Jun Do describes the state policy as:

They’re about a woman whose beauty is like a rare flower. There is a man who has a great love for her, a love he’s been saving up for his entire life, and it doesn’t matter that he must make a great journey to her, and it doesn’t matter if their time together is brief, that afterward he might lose her, for she is the flower of his heart and nothing will keep him from her. (208)

Dystopias are negative utopia, images of future so terribly imperfect that given a chance, people would prefer to flee as far as far as their wherewithal can possibly take them. Such nightmarish vision of future runs through the images of “irreversible intractable bureaucratic administration, and authoritarianism and economic exploitation” (Williams 384). Harold L. Berger identified such images of hardship and horror in most of the dystopian literary work. Andrew Milner further explores that the dystopia circumstance of the downfall of human species stems from choices human made for their vested interest. He identifies the state regulation and control as the central trope in the recent dystopian works. He observes:

... this we believe, is why so recent works, dystopian and pessimistic, have central scene in which the protagonist is imprisoned or bound or allowed to walk free only on the condition of perpetual surveillance or control. We find literal binding of the protagonist or strong capture or containment imagery, in every major dystopian works. (49)

The Orphan Master's Son demonstrates the some tendency of human deficiency in choice that lead to chaos and disharmony. The social living of characters is nightmarish, freedom is curtailed, people are suffering from hunger, and thirst, identity is under the erasure. Jun Do states:

The lights start to recede, the patches shrinking like puddles of water drying in the sun. Then I realize that the red lights were people-people, disappearing, their lights going out. I stare out at the screen, unable to wrap my mind around such substantial loss...when war was finally over and people demanded a permanent solution to the genetic problems...designed experiments to restore humanity.(508)

War, genocide, mutation, and genetic experimentation degenerate humanity in the level of machine. The protagonist expresses his dissatisfaction and rebellious thoughts against government of dear leader Kim, that results in the conflict. Government became interested in negating certain genetic predispositions toward undesirable traits in its citizens. These traits – “fear, low intelligence, dishonesty, aggression, selfishness” (123) – were what ultimately led to everything that was bad in society. The government began to try to correct these negative qualities via genetic manipulation; however, the alterations had disastrous consequences when they took effect, resulting in damaged genes.

Human beings are not machine that can be programmed forever. They have emotions, desires and feelings and desires for freedom. If n the state efforts to control the personal freedom of people forever it generates permanent conflict between individual and state. The opening of the novel also casts light upon the conflict and ending also highlights upon the possible conflict. First and foremost, Jun Do sacrifices his own life at the end of the novel for the good of himself friends and everyone in the city he efforts to challenge the totalitarian government. Jun Do, he goes from being an instrument of the state , kidnaps variety of people on official orders and eavesdrops on foreign radio transmissions . Along the way, he commits terrible acts that will haunt the rest of his days, and yet he persistently clings to the goal of survival. Then, unexpectedly, he meets and falls in love with Sun Moon, the country’s most famous actor, “the only person who could take away the pain he’d suffered (503).” His love for her will alter the trajectory and redeem his life.

Johnson,s dystopian attitude towards society can be traced in the use of language too. “Despite the initial silence the counter narrative is often accomplished by way of language.” (moylan 23) Mr. Johnson does an agile job of combining

fablelike elements with vivid emotional details to create a story that has both the boldness of a cartoon and the nuance of a deeply felt portrait. He captures the grotesque horrors that Jun Do is involved in, or witness to, even as he gives us a visceral sense of the world that his characters inhabit. It's a world in which anyone may be an informer, and suspicion poisons relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives. Here, even love is considered a liability, an emotion that gives the government leverage over would-be defectors: one more thing it can take away. David Andrews argues:

Frequently sponsored by the urban elites, yet increasingly practiced and consumed by the populace the ancient city skyline became dominated by sporting venues and monuments, perhaps no better exemplified than in the towering structures of the Coliseum and Circus Maximus in Rome. And it was with the emergence of the modern in 18th and 19th century in Europe sport and urbanization became inextricably entwined. (2)

Johnson by using the language related to dystopia wants to focus upon the possible misuse of language by ruling class elites. Like many works of fiction to emerge from troubled or repressive parts of the world, *The Orphan Master's Son* employs the techniques of magical realism to create a hallucinatory mirror of day-to-day circumstances that in themselves dwarf the imagination. The real-life Kim Jong-il, after all, was often described in terms befitting a comic-book villain: known as "Dear Leader" (44) in North Korea, this dictator, who wore elevator shoes and oversized sunglasses, allowed untold numbers of people to die of starvation during recurrent famines while pumping huge sums of money into the country's nuclear programs; he banished citizens deemed disloyal to prison camps and sent assassins after defectors.

Johnson casts his light upon the state's cruelty upon the people. The citizens of any state have rights to secure life, liberty, and happiness. Instead of providing security to the citizens, ruling elites in *The Orphan Master's Son* promote a mechanism that can benefit only a few people who are under the touch of totalitarian government. A futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Dystopias, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system. The narrator criticizes the bleak picture of the society:

Where we are from, he said, stories are factual. If a farmer is declared a music virtuoso by the state, everyone had better start calling him maestro. And secretly, he'd be wise to start practicing the piano. For us, the story is more important than the person. If a man and his story are in conflict, it is the man who must change....But in America, people's stories change all the time. In America, it is the man who matters.(78)

Johnson emphasizes the sense of the powerlessness of Jun Do in the face of the oppressive and brutal government run by massive bureaucratic institutions. Paranoia is very evident among the characters who live in fear and who are being monitored, betrayed, or manipulated. The standard of living among the classes is lower than in contemporary societies. However, Jun Do questions society although she is in great suffering. The Bureau decides to brainwash everyone inside of Chicago using a technique called memory serum. Jun Do and her friends do not want this to happen (obviously), because that is equal to just murdering everyone.

From the close analysis of *The Orphan Master's Son* through the critical perspective of dystopia, the research concludes that dystopias thrive in socio-political

commentary. Through it is difficult to identify exact intention of the author; Johnson's narrative style in *The Orphan Master's Son* indicates his intention to comment on how state has gone wrong in different phase of history. Much literature can be found dealing with individual vs. state, freedom vs. oppression Dystopia is one of them. It is defined as society characterized by poverty, squalor or oppression. Most authors of dystopia explore at least one reason why things are in that way. Dystopias usually extrapolate elements of contemporary society and are read by many as political warning. Many purported utopias reveal a dystopian character by suppressing justice, freedom, and happiness.

By projecting the precarious world of North Korea Johnson tries to comment on ideal vision of society itself. State cannot be perfectly good. It is in a way a comment on the utopian vision of the society. Utopian vision of the state portrays such vision in which state act perfectly to make the human living in the society beautiful and harmonious. There are many instances. Plato forwards Ideal State in which categorized the freedom according to the characteristic of the individual. Objective of the categorization was to make the strong and self-reliant. But later the same vision becomes the tool of slavery. *The Orphan Master's Son* comments on the same tendency of the human being. Johnson provides several cues as to why and how our living under the advanced state is difficult. The narrative of *The Orphan Master's Son* progresses in such way it let readers guess possible reasons of the perversion in the present time. The story of the totalitarian society in the *The Orphan Master's Son* is no different from the societey of the hell. New form of exploitation and torture replace the old form of exploitation and torture. Human beings have come to the point of the time where they can neither have chance to live in society peacefully nor can they to the nomad state. The main theme of *The Orphan Master's*

Son revolves around the dystopian attitude toward the sociopolitical norms in the totalitarian state. It is said that emergence of the state is for protection of the all people who come under the state. But in reality this utopian vision of ideal state functions only for particular segment of the society. Only the powerful can rip the benefit of the state presence. The world is engulfed by such disparity. The ruling leaders of the nation do not have anything to do but they can enjoy the world's riches. On the other part of the people work hard yet are vulnerable to the scarcity ,hunger death and destruction. Taking advantage of their vulnerability and state power they make the lives of the dispossessed intolerably painful.

To warn such badly guided subtle policy to subjugate larger segments of state under exploitation and repression, Johnson presents the terrible account of totalitarian North Korean Society. The human living under the state cannot be perfectly beautiful and harmonious until they do not recognize the principle of equality and co-existence. In order to critique such lapses in the modern political authority Johnson uses the dystopia “as it resonates with numerous politically motivated critique of modern society.” (174 *The Dystopian Impulse*). *The Orphan Master's Son* is terrible world because the government in it rules with oppressive forces. It compels the weaker and vulnerable to participate in the battle. The objective is cruel. Such cruel objective of killing the innocent in the arena and broadcasting it as deterrent to prevent possible rebellion cannot sustain the political system or status quo. This attitude needs to get reformed.

Our civilization is moving towards uncertain complexity. The human history Of civilization has progressed much but they have not left their primitive instinct. They have developed technologies but that technology is used not to further humanity but to deteriorate the human condition. Such phenomena are severely criticized in *The Orphan Master's Son*. The state should be progressive and life- enhancing rather than life- denying force. Oppression and suppression may prove the opposing voice but not forever. With this implication, Johnson calls for reform in the stated attitude toward citizens demanding to rise from the ashes of destruction.

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