

I. An Introduction to Irony

It is quite a difficult task to draw the history when irony has been used as a rhetorical and dialectic device in literature. Irony has been used as a device all the way from the Greek comedy through Socrates, on to Lucian, to Erasmus to Swift and down to modern times. It is likewise easy to see the concept of irony of fate coming down from Greek tragedy. The Greek word 'eiron' from which irony is derived meant a dissembler, one who says less than he thinks. 'Eiron' in early Greek comedy was a character who represented himself as less than he was to the final imposter. Socrates was bitterly referred to 'Eiron' because of annoying way of pretending ignorance and humbly questioning his interlocutor until that person convicted himself out of his own mouth. Regarding the concept of irony Wayne C. Booth clarifies:

For both its devotees and for those who fear it, irony is usually seen as something that undermines certainties, opens up vistas of chaos and either liberates by destroying all dogmas or destroys by revealing the inescapable canker of negation at the heart of every affirmation. It is thus a subject that quickly arouses passion. (9)

In this extract, it is clarified that irony is a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is opposite of that expressed by words. It means even the praiseworthy expressions are used to express condemnation.

The different kinds of irony recognized in English criticism was put forward by Bishop Cannon Thriwall in 1833 AD. For instance verbal irony is a statement in which meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is expressed in the statement Alexander Pope's in *The Rape of the Lock* writes, "It gives me much, replied the Peter again, who speaks so well should ever speak in vain"(53). Likewise, Jane Austen opens *Pride and Prejudice* as, "It is a truth universally

acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife; a part of an ironic implication is that a single woman is in want of a rich husband”(56). Bishop Thirlwall defines verbal irony as, “a figure which enables a speaker to convey his meaning with greater force by means of a contrast between his thought and his expression, or to speak more accurately between the thought which he evidently designs to express, and that which his words properly signify” (355). Eleanor N. Hutcheans, remarks that the verbal irony is a discrepancy between the implied meaning and the surface expression.

Similarly, the another type of irony is dramatic irony. It involves a situation in a play in which the evidence or reader shares with the author’s knowledge of present or future circumstances but the character is ignorant. The character unknowingly acts in a way the audience recognize to be inappropriate to the actual circumstances. Writers of Greek Tragedy, who based their plots on legends whose outcome was already known to the audience made frequent use of this device for instance Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*. Likewise, arriving at last at the consideration of dramatic irony, Hutcheans cites Thrillwall and clearly presents the ironist as an arranger and writes:

The dramatic poet is the creator of a little world, in which he rules with absolute sway, and may shape the destinies of the imaginary beings to whom he gives life and breath according to any plan that he may choose. Since however they are man whose actions he represents, and since it is human sympathy that he claims, he will if he understands his art, make his administration conform to the laws by which he conceive the course of mortal life to be really governed. (357)

In the identification of Irony Eleanor, N. Hutcheans talks about cosmic irony or irony of fate. Cosmic irony is attributed to literary works – in which – a deity or destiny or fate or the course of the universe is represented to manipulate events and the protagonist believe in false hopes only to frustrate and mock him. This is a favorite device used by Hardy. She further emphasizes on fatal irony and writes:

In irony of fate, the playwright's role as lawmaker for his character, and on the correspondence of the playwright's laws to those which he believes [...] his character. The nature of the deception is that the apparent sign of good is the real sign of evil, and the appearance of evil the sign of good. Thus fate, as represented in the play, carries out her intention through the presence of loading to their opposites.(361)

Thus, irony of fate is a condition of affairs or events of a character opposite to what was or might naturally be expected. It results to the contradictory outcome of events especially good against evil or evil against good.

The next irony is romantic irony. This term 'romantic' was introduced by Friedrich Schlegel. It is like a mode of dramatic or narrative writing. In this writing, the author builds up the illusion of 'representing reality' to shatter that the author, as an artist, is the arbitrary creator and manipulator of the characters and their actions. This type of irony involves a self conscious narrator. For instance: use of romantic irony in Lord Byron's poem. Friedrich Schlegel, speaking of Romantic, irony that is ironic he says that:

More than all other kinds of literature, ironic literature, can, be free from all commitment to the real and the ideal, hover on the wings of poetic reflection midway between the artist and the artifact, raising this

reflection to a higher power and a higher skill and multiplying it as in
an endless series of mirrors. (360)

Here, according to the above quoted lines romantic ironist's situation is the mixture of self creation and self destruction, s/he involves in a process of growing or becoming whose world is unpredictable and chaos.

The another type of irony is Socratic irony. Socratic irony is represented in Plato's dialogues (4th century BC). The philosopher Socrates usually assumes a pose of ignorance. He provides his eagerness to be instructed and modest readiness to entertain adverse opinions proposed by others. Upon continued questioning, the opinions turn out to be ill grounded or lead to absurd consequences.

Unlike Socratic irony, structural irony involves the creation of a naïve hero or a naïve narrator or a spokesman. It depends upon the knowledge of the speaker's ironic intention. It is shared by the reader, but is not intended by the speaker. The naïve hero's simplicity or obtuseness (selfishness) leads him to interpret an affair. But, the knowing reader pretends to share with the naïve hero but ultimately alter or correct the naïve hero's intention. D.C. Muecke in his article Image of Irony proposes irony as phenomenon that exhibits imagination. There are certain metaphors, images and dramatic situations that tend to recur when ironists consciously visualize their concept of its nature. These metaphors, images and dramatic situations are seen in three groups: the older archetypal images of irony can be shown to have affinities at the symbolic level, the psychological level, with the archetypal images of knowledge and power, the related phenomena of voyeurism and sadism.

These all have same sample, basic structure as shown in fig: 1

Thomas Mann highlights the objectivity of irony by speaking about epic novel as:

Its greatness is mild, restful, serene, wise - objective". It keeps its distance from things, has by its very nature distance from them: It hovers over them and smiles down upon them [...]. The art of the epic is Apollonian art as the aesthetic term would have it, because Apollo, distant marksman, is the god of distance, of objectivity, the god of irony. Objectivity is irony and the spirit of epic art is the spirit of irony. (400)

The word irony is used here in the sense of art itself, a universal affirmation, which, as such, is also a universal negation, all embracing crystal clear and serene glance which is very glance of art itself that is to say: a glance of the utmost freedom and calm and of an objectivity untroubled by any moralism. This passage gives a series of identifications that is the novel = epic = Apollo = distance = objectivity = irony = art + universal affirmation = universal negation = freedom and calm.

Similarly another critic A.R. Thompson, in his study of irony, writing of Ibsen says:

In a poem of late fifties "On the Heights" he describes how the young artist learns to live 'above life's line of snow' and watch his home burn down, his mother buried, his sweet heart wed to another, without emotion except for the aesthetic effect of pictures ...Up here on the fells must be freedom and God/Men do but group, in the valley. (402)

So in this passage it is clarified the aesthetic phenomenon of irony.

Similarly, Plato's myth of the cave in which the knowledge of the philosopher is opposed to the ignorance of the un-philosophical shows us more. The philosopher, released from the imprisonment in the shadowy cave, climbs up to where he can look upon the light of the day and see the sun as it really is. Here, in this myth, besides the vertical contrast of above and below, we have five additional symbolic opposition: light dark, free bound,, mobile immobile, one many, and reality illusion. There are also oppositions of values: meaning-absurdity, and happiness-misery. All, that is needed to the primary opposition of knowledge ignorance.

The second movement takes the opposite direction; instead of revaluing the victim, it devalues the ironist. The feeling that the god of irony is not God but Satan, not Apollo but Asmodee. God and Satan are identical, is very common; the little trick that God and Satan joined in playing on Job. For Baudelaire, laughter was satanic. If irony can be seen as satanic, so can knowledge itself. Knowledge is always liable to be forbidden as it was in the beginning. Fraust, too, had an appetite for knowledge as well as for sensual pleasures.

One of the things that fascinated Thomas Mann, as it had Friedrich Schlegel in the late eighteenth century was: the ambivalence of irony. For instance the address of a verbal irony is equally aware both of what seems to be the case and what is really the case. Likewise Morgenstern's poem *ViceVersa* is about the unobserved observer being himself observed unaware by God. Also, a portrait of someone smiling where in reason for smiling is represented in the painting may be interpreted either as an ironical portrait of someone smiling with foolish self satisfaction.

In recent days, there has been an increasing awareness of: the relativity of irony or the potential inter changeability of ironist and victim. Ironist and victim thus

being on the same level, we find new 'horizontal' images of irony designed to express the newly perceived elements of equivocation, dilemma paradox, ambiguity, doubt and other such dualities. One such image is that of the ambiguous drawing, for example: the solid cube that turns itself while we look into a hollow box. Another, more frequently encountered, is the mirror, the third is the double-whether Doppelgänger changeling or identical twin. A fourth is the blind or opaque surface that might not conceal something unpleasant.

Likewise, the images of irony is cleared that "we have looked for so long at foggy landscapes reflected in misty mirrors that we have come to like fog" (53).

Another American critic, Benjamin De Mott mounted an attack on the irony that ends "not in positions but in universal hostility-hostility to all positive assertion, reflection of any lines of intelligence available to ordinary men"(110-116).

Finally, we can conclude as: Vertical Irony is imagined from the ironist's point of view; Horizontal Irony sees from the point of view of an ironist who is also a victim or sees himself as a victim; and Prolean Irony sees from the view of victim or potential victim who resents not so much his victimization as his loss of contact with the ironist in other words from the point of view of a victimized reader or critic.

David S. Kaufer, in his paper "Irony, Interpretative form and the theory of Meaning "answers the question 'what made a particular content ironic.' There are three specific purpose of this paper, viz: to illustrate the diversity and familiarity of ironic phenomena, to investigate the essential properties of irony as an interceptive form and especially the aesthetic role of binary opposition in ironic perception and, to suggest the extensive contributions: A theory of irony as interpretative form promises to the theory of meaning and inter subjective understanding. Irony can be examined as ironic species, roles and functions. Irony can be partitioned by two principal species:

speaker ironies and situational ironies. Speaker ironies must be reported in statement of state of affairs pledged his own destruction; irony structures three distinct roles relative to it: (1) ironists; (2) observers of irony, and (3) victims of irony. Irony functions rhetorically by allowing a speaker to achieve emphasis through negation specially, it permits a speaker to emphasize a particular proposition by pretending to contradict it. For instance by claiming an unconditioned love for spinach, the ironist makes all too clear an unconditional hate for it. Furthermore, rhetorical theorists Cicero and Quintilian have found irony a particularly effective strategy. Also, Republicans, for example, commonly ironize Democratic positions before Republican audiences and vice-versa.

Ironist can also design elaborate equivocations to appease audiences who harbor incompatible beliefs. According to Herodotus, the Delphic oracles cast their predictions ambiguously lest they violate the expectations of any audience petitioning it. For instance: “If Croesus goes to war he will destroy mighty empire” This is revealed as – “How Croesus lost his kingdom”. So irony is to ambiguity what hoaxing is to deception. If Socrates is our prototype, for example, we may agree with Cicero that irony is embarked by wit and intelligence. But if conversational sarcasm is our prototype we will be inclined to associate irony with the sardonic (mocking).

D.S. Kauffer, taking irony as an interpretative form, writes his passage as an example, “Tommy’s mother told him he could not eat peanut, butter and jelly sandwiches because they were not good for him. Taking his mother’s advice seriously, Tommy resolved never again to eat peanut, butter and jelly sandwiches” (457). This shows that peanuts and butter were found to be highly proteinous than jelly. Likewise, as stated in these lines, the pairs war/peace, love/hate, birth/death are examples of standard analogic opposites. Wars are not intellectually inherently ironic

but become so when declared on the acknowledged day of peace. Also, there is nothing ironic about love but that ironies abound when the children of unremitting enemies fall in love.

In irony, speaker meaning and situation meaning are disregarded in favor of statement meaning D.S. Kaufer cites condition an example as:

Under normal condition when John is asked 'What he meant by the statement. It's raining.' John thus condition when John will thus say he meant what his sentence conventionally meant. But he can say 'it's a beautiful-day' when he still sees 'its raining'. In doing so, he builds and aesthetic contrast out of the perspectival differences that were implicit in his utterances all along. (460)

Furthermore, the significance of statement meaning in irony can also be known in this statement:

If a piano is about to fall on the head of the speaker without his knowledge, the observer interprets the speaker as an innocent victim of irony and the speaker's statement is understood to betray and irony, [...] ironies are aesthetically constructed. Without perspective differences regularly underlying the interpretation of a sentence, text or interpersonal situation there could be no ironies. A meaning can be nothing more than a perspective and a perspective itself implies other to be considered. (461)

Claire Colebrook begins with interrogation as. "Is irony a figure of speech that might be explained from within a theory of meaning? Or is irony itself a theory of meaning?"(5) He takes Richard Rorty definition of irony. Richard Rorty describes irony as: a position, attitude, personality, point of view or way of speaking. For "the

ironists recognize that all we have as a way of speaking there is nothing beyond all vocabularies” (6). Rorty’s idea of irony as a philosophical attitude as in accordance with a long tradition (running from Socrates to Kierkegaard) that understands irony as a point of view adopted towards language or meaning.

On the other hand, John Searle’s very brief definition of irony as an indirect speech act defines irony in this way. “as a specific relation between speaker, meaning and sentence meaning” (6). So we might need to draw a distinction between irony as a figure of speech and irony as a theory of meaning. John Searle’s definition can be clarified through an example. If we utter as sentence ‘The window is open’ in a very warm, stuffy room where the windows are all closed, what we mean- the speaking meaning or context-specific meaning could be clearly recognized as ironic. This simple example of Searle is particularly uninteresting and does not really seem to be a case of irony while understanding as a type of speech-act.

As another instant, let us take a line of William Blake’s ‘Songs of Innocence and of Experience.’ “Then cherish pity; let you derive an angle from your door” (8). The phrase employs the conventions of eighteenth century moral songs and takes the form of a pious, religious platitude. If we don not think in this context, if we think (Like Blake) that the morality of pity is a way of keeping the poor in their place, then we read the phrase ironically. In another phrase from Blake. “And I am black, but O ! My soul is white” (8). means we are all deep down, but can also be understood by saying that much anti-racist moral rhetoric assumes that whiteness is still equivalent to humanness. In this case of Blake, if we know that a phrase of this type being uttered ironically we do so because we recognize it not as a moral truth but as a way of speaking as a received assumption, as an inherited or acquired context limited moralism. Irony as a theory of meaning which is defined in opposition to a strong

sense of justification for both Rorty and Searle for both, irony is a sign of philosophy's maturity and depends heavily on a sense of context and background assumptions.

For Rorty, irony is. "a recognition that we are nothing other than our context and assumptions, and that questions of justifications, foundation and representation stop there – at where we are, at our particular and contingent perspectives" (11).

For Searle irony "explains and is explained by the way of our context and background assumptions work" (11).

Claire Colebrook wants to agree these two points to the contrary to Rorty and Searle. The first concerns Rorty's idea of irony as the possibility of a post-metaphysical –attitude that would be more literally critical than philosophically. By looking closely at complex-irony, and in a particular modern irony, a resignation to the contingency of one's language game seems peculiarly difficult, if not impossible. For once style or rhetoric is seen as style or rhetoric then inevitably raised.

Secondly, Irony also generates a position in which our self-definition also seems no longer a question of self – definition. If irony depends upon the position of a speaker in relation to context, and the shared recognition of audience, how can this position and recognition be known? We decide, irony, according to Searle, on the basis of clear misuse of language, a phrase being employed against the run of our background information or assumptions. But what if irony is directed towards that context or background ? How, then, do we know whether a speech-act is ironic? In modern irony, for example, it is not clear who is speaking, whether it is the point of view of an ironically delimited of speaking whether it is our accepted context. The whole point of seeing many modern forms of irony is what we question is precisely our background assumptions as "assumptions. The object of irony is not the specific

meaning or value expressed, but a way of speaking in which morality is nothing more than the assumed meaning or ordinary language of one's context.

Irony as a performance of the question of meaning? Searle's indirect speech act is understood as indirect because of the circumstances in which it is uttered. Blake's moralisms might be recognized as ironic if we know better; while Socratic irony achieves its force because the sophist himself concedes defeat. In many ways, what makes irony recognizable in these instances is the possibility of attaining the speech act to a speaker, type of speaker or position. For Searle, irony depends on the difference between speaker – meaning and sentence-meaning. Socratic irony by the position of moral autonomy; and while Blake's songs are not attributed to an identified character; they are example of a style of voice or way of speaking. Michael Dummett writes:

There is a general convention whereby the utterance of a sentence, except the social-context is understood as being carried out with the intention of uttering a true –sentence and if we cannot be sure whether an utterance is ironic we are forced to ask ourselves about our own way of speaking. (Qtd. Colebrook 21)

This Statement clearly explains that there is no linguistic sign or convention to signal sincerity. But nothing is more obvious that there can not be a convention that signals sincerity. It follows then that:

That plight of the actor is always within us. There is no known, agreed upon, publicly recognizable convention for making assertions. Nor could there be a sign or convention; for making such a sign it could always be quoted, used insincerely or uttered ironically [...] Irony,

then can not be a question of the meaning of what is said. Irony, rather, follows from the meanings, autonomy. (21)

To read ironically, is taken an utterance as saying something other than what is meant (by the speaker) or understood (by the limited audience). Socrates' sophist use the term word 'Justice' but the meaning of justice already exceeds any account they give of it. Blake's speakers use words like 'pity' but don't understand that the very meaning of pity demands submission and (recognition) resignation. Modernist irony, however, is directed to ways of speaking in which the autonomy of meaning –is necessary capacity for quotation and feigning and for exceeding the speaker's intent becomes the object of irony itself.

Grice has argued that discourse is regarded by certain principles. Among these principles the co-operative principles (CP) is the supreme – one about CP, Grice says, "Make your conversational contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or directions of talk exchange in which you are involved" (Qtd. Holdcroft 504) under CP falls four maxims of talk they are:

(a) Quantity (M. Quam):

(i) Make your contribution as informative as it is required (the current purpose of exchange.)

(II) Do not make your contribution more informative than it is required.

(b) Quality (M. quail) : (i) Don't say what you believe to be false.

(ii) Don't say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

(c) Relevance (M.R): Be relevant

(d) Manner (M.M.) : (I) Avoid obscurity of expression

(ii) Avoid ambiguity

(III) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)

(IV) Be orderly.

Regarding irony, Grice says: “ the apparent violation of a maxim is involved in irony for instance : it ‘x’ has left his friend ‘A’ utterance of ‘x’ is a fine - friend “will be ironical. There are two different ways of understanding this : irony involves a certain sort of contrast between what is said, and what is implicated. Irony involves a certain sort of contrast between a pretended saying and what is implicated by the pretence.

Grice wants to suggest that the proper way to understand an ironical text, or contribution to one, is not in terms of the frequency of ironical utterances it contains, but in terms of its being an expression of an ironist’s attitude of the world. The politics of Enmity practiced by Bougan Susan Marson analyses the critical distance and playfulness that characterizes the tone of the texts. How does it imply as regards the speaking subject ? Is irony not freedom which is to say that movement that transports us beyond ? Irony thus progresses at the same place as consciousness.

Susan Morgan writes:

Irony in turn combines incompatibles the social and the individual, the comic and the tragic. Telescoping heterogeneous words and qualification, both masculine and feminine, [...] conciseness with its indiscrete questioning it ruins all definition tirelessly reviving the problematic element of any solution Irony means uneasiness living in discomfort. (145)

In this extract, it clearly mentions that irony accentuates the importance of the speaking subject and the addressee in statements marked by their double meaning Genet’s writing thus employs irony as a particular modality of negation, since, saying ‘a’ becomes the equivalent of meaning “not a”. The speaking subject is divided, for its manifest role and its explicit message hide the masked intention and underlying

meaning. Irony is an indirect form of attack that imitates the adversary, which is one of the reasons why philosophy, as war of words, has paid great attention to the rhetorical play, and in this respect, the Socratic discourse is exemplary. In a text on Kierkegaard, the philosopher Sylviane Agacinski emphasizes the political aspects of irony, which should be kept in mind for a reading of Jean Genet. In its subjective vanity, irony always threatens institutions, the established order, the power of the state, persecution, even death, is its destiny: Antigone, Socrates, Christ. Irony is then less a provocation than a means of resistance. Derrida quotes William Blake to show irony as, “Thy friendship oft has made my heart to ache/Do be my enemy for Friendship’s sake” (Qtd. Marson 144). Further, he argues:

From now on the two concepts [friend / enemy] come over and are continually interchangeable. They embrace each other. as if they loved one another, is the spiral of hyperbole: the open enemy [and Blake declares in ordering him to declare himself: be my enemy], the true enemy, who is a better friend than the friend. (146)

A little further on, Derrida generalizes Blake's paradox, revealing its implication:

It is a question each time of what it means to declare: war, love, friendship. The difference between the two orders of the declarations hesitates between two truths, two logics, of negation and of denial, as between logic of lies and logic of the unconscious. These two logics cannot avoid haunting one another[...]. (147)

Generally, Genet emphasizes the paradox implied in wanting to fight for liberation from political domination while respecting religious law, and shows this way what the energy can often be found inside the revolutionary movement. For

instance: people did not know that Marx wrote *Das Kapital* with his ass sitting on pink silk cushions, that he therefore wrote it to combat that pink silky softness. This relates to the irony the politics of enmity. In anthropology in question, Stanley Diamond treats the indigene as an object may define himself as relatively free, but that is an illusion or an irony. For in order to objectify the other, one is, at the same – time compelled to objectivity the self. On this score, the anthropologist betrays himself as inevitably as he does the native when he examines. Therefore, whom Levi Strauss, when Stanley Diamond take to be both the most representative and the most elusive of contemporary anthropologist argues that, as the offspring of colonialism, “anthropology-reflects, on the epistemological level, a state of affairs in which one part of mankind treats the other as object” he tells us only half the truth. The other half is critical. For the anthropologist is himself a victim, and his power decision is a fiction, embedded as it is in the exploitative foundations of civilization. Unless the anthropologist confronts his own alienation, which is only a special instance of a general condition, seeks to understand its roots and subsequently matures as a relentless critic of his own civilization, the very civilization which converts man into an object, he cannot understand or even recognize himself in the man of another culture or that other man in himself.

The split between the person and the professional reaches the limits of irony in the study of man. It is, of course, prefigured in military and civilian bureaucracies, in the organization of the state of itself; wherein the person adapts to a single status and a professional ethic, the ethic of domination. The “professional” anthropologist is an alien although perhaps because he claims the whole of the Western tradition for his ancestry. Claiming everything, he is in danger of being nothing. Indeed, he is estranged three times over: first in his own society, along with the generality of his

fellow citizens; second, in the choice of his professional, and finally, in relation to those whom he studies. Such an anthropologist much sooner or later gets entrapped in the predicament of irony.

By politics of irony, it is understood as – the bridge that is constructed to erase the discrepancy between what is and what appears to be. This concept is used to explore the then existing society by pointing out the necessary changes to be made in the society. It has a great usefulness in the struggle of colonization. It may be understood as a way of reading against the discourse of apartheid the politics of irony may be an important component in a new humanizing non – racialism that reaches beyond apartheid.

It is to be noted that-the greatest challenge of the South African revolution is in the search of new ways of thinking and new ways of perception that will help to break down the closed epistemological structures of South African oppression. The challenge is to free the entire social imagination of the oppressed from the laws of perception that have characterized apartheid society, it is included in the politics of irony.

Politics of irony helps to find out the words to speak out boldly against injustice in dangerous times throughout the South African society. Many people who in other circumstances would have been less than artists have had to become more than artists through the interplay of irony. In the struggle for justice, irony not only is expendable but also a liability. There is a strong urge to downplay native identities and roots, preserve unity, mend divisions, and in general produce a national culture. At the same time, there is resurgence in racialization and ethnos a truly decolonized South Africa. The decolonized post apartheid South Africa, would, not only be a society in which blackness no longer mattered as categories, but in which it would be possible for the victims of the past- no longer to experience themselves as victims

such a society would be categorized by politics of irony, of apartheid – including apartheid thinking discourse and to achieve a post apartheid South Africa.

‘Politics of Irony makes one aware of the complex truth that nothing can be granted and has a role to play in bringing readers to political consciousness by making them reflect deeply on the nature and implication of raising of consciousness by making them reflect deeply on the nature and implication of raising of consciousness. Politics of Irony, thus, appears as an important component of the struggle for liberation as one negotiates the tension between insisting on the narrative of oppression while continuously also interrupting it so as not simple to repeat it. When apartheid culture came both a private and public condition, defining a cultural sensibility, Afrikanerdom significantly lost much of its ‘ sense of irony. How are we to understand ‘the politics of irony’ then !the statement is cleared in the context - not only through the territorial brutality of apartheid and white indifference to black suffering but also through the cruelty of the white people entitled, through a system of institutionalized supremacy to do a number of things to black bodies. These deeds are speaking harshly to a black person, stamping with both feet on the head or chest of a black body; roasting a black- body over flames to obliterate evidence of murder.

Here, it appears to be constructing a relation of inverse proportionality between apartheid culture and irony as power of the one increased so the reach of the other decreased; revealed as ‘Politics of irony’.

In most of the cases, irony becomes a tool used by the rhetoricians, writers, creators, authors and was based upon their intention. But, now, the meaning of irony or the ironical meaning comes through interpretations. The readers generate ironical – meanings through reading the text. The ironical meanings depend how the readers interpret while going through the text. So irony acts as a boomerang to the powerful

(users) themselves. The ironical meaning arising from readerly interpretations gets intertwined with the then socio-political beliefs. Politics of irony refers as to the writer's political beliefs as much as it points to those of the readers.

II. Politics of Irony in Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist*

Merhing, the protagonist is a dominating South African industrialist of the German descent. Prophetically, *The Conservationist* is situated at the point where white history ends and the black history resumes. And an even more explicit indication in this regard is not to be missed. Referring to the return of the body, almost the very last words of the novel, 'he had come back' are a direct paraphrase of the great rallying cry of the African National Congress in the fifties "Afrika! Mayebuyel!"- 'Africa! May it come back!'"(77).

The Conservationist is clearly moved by a deeply felt and profound prophecy. But to define more completely the exact nature of its historical consciousness, some further points must be made. For there is a certain contradiction between the novel's prophecy and its observation. While the black world is presented in the novel's realistic mode, it is shown as historically disabled. The Indian intermediaries in the chain of exploitation are motivated only by a compelling need to maintain their own precarious position, while the black farm workers lack all the resources of historical effect. There is thus, precisely, a gap that is bridged, for it is formally achieved. Part of reason why the body rises for example, is because of the formal power of irony in the novel: the more it is suppressed, the more certainly it will rise. Merhing, too is always ironically caught in the novel by all the material and psychological trappings of his own privilege. On its own this ironic power would become inadequate where it is not linked to the novel's other formalism: its symbolic mode. There is indeed a modal elision in the novel which fuses its realism and symbolism and issues in the prophetic vision. Thus, the body does not just represent the oppressed black world, but becomes one, through the network of novel's symbolic structure, with the force of nature dispassionately undermining the system which treats human being with less

effective concern than it does nature itself. And in this way the logic of the storm becomes clear not only is it prophetic, but it represents at a symbolic level, the power of nature which turns on the arrogant with ironic certitude. *The Conservationist* represents a movement when the imminent downfall of white supremacy seemed absurdly manifest, but the precise means of its achievement were still unclear.

Though Mering is presented as the conservationist of the farm, ironically, he is an exploiter:

Mehring went to his farm almost every weekend. If he had put his mind to it and if he had more time, he knew he could have made it pay, just the same as everything else. But then there would be an end to tax relief, anyway; it would be absurd. Yet the land must not be misused or wasted and he had reclaimed these 400 acres of veld, few years ago. (22)

So Mehring purchased the farm not to conserve the resources of the land and not for the betterment of the country people but to conserve his own power, possession and his way of life. The farm is his heaven for seduction, tax reduction and escape from the stress of daily work in the city. He defines and constructs his own truth and value which depends upon random and unsuitable sexual encounters, unlimited meditation upon death and alienation from his family. The misery he has created finally becomes unbearable and leads to his destruction, he has to be destroyed.

The critical ironical point is seen when the corpse of an unknown African was found, in the same place Solomon was found unconsciously and the same land was burnt. Gordimer that broke up on the other side of the river presents a rare concept of rebirth through the holy fire. The fire jumps across the river and severely burns a portion of Mehring's property. It stops far short of the cattle, but it devastates his

favorite resting spot in the third pasture. Even the water reeds and willows are badly burnt. These, all the natural disaster made him to create an irony of fate. Not only his family members, society but also the natural disaster made him alone and alienated. He walks in despair and realizes just how selfish Antonia his mistress is, just like his son Terry.

Merhing is at the pivot of all his deeds. Anything he does is not for the society but to satisfy his own greed for women and wealth. He has not gone to the country to change the low economic status of the local by investing his capital but by purchasing the farm, he wants to conform to a fashionable practice among those in his class who acquired farms as tax break and places for entertainment. On the other hand, he wants to preserve his power, status, possession, his privileged way of life. Thus the farm is only the other side of his business. His “hankering to make contact with the land (...) seems to be bred of making money in industry” (22). It shows the discrepancy between what Merhing thinks and what he does resulting into the rise of ironical stand.

Mehring’s conservationist attitude doesn’t believe in the preservation of nature but believes in the wise and sustainable cultivation of the earth’s resources. The conservationist approach is essentially uninterested in the inner qualities of the environment but interested in the potentiality of the environment to serve human purposes. His environmentalism asks a question of what human purposes the nature is being conserved for and on whose behalf. “A farm is not beautiful unless it is productive”(23). Here the discrepancy between preservationist and conservationist is manifested and irony is inherent. The land for him is beautiful not as land, but as a farm that is used productively. The relationship between preservation and violation extends throughout the novel far beyond his attempt to conserve the guinea fowls on

his farm. The sexual incursion is described as a perverted communication only “ when interruption can not really disturb the deep level of pre- occupation at which it has been established” (128). Mehring’s finger engaging the girl’s vagina is a monologue is sterility. “ His finger [...] roamed amid the curly hair in no hurry” (129). “Oh god knows how long it went on the finger was able to enter, many time” (130). This monologue explicitly identified with the sterile desert over which the plane is passing. This fundamental notion of preservation finally extends no further than self – preservation, and the book emphasizes this as a masculine notion by connecting his colonialist exploitation of the land to the exploitation of women.

Mehring purchases rather than inherits the farm, boast that he has no need to cultivate it, and can rarely persuade his son, the sole remnant of his divorce, even to visit it. To support the image of himself a predatory adventure, he initially asserts that he buys the farm as a place of recreation. As the narrative unfolds, he marshals a whole arsenal of pathologically over determined reasons for his purchases that the farm is an escape from city- life, a status symbol and a place of retreat. He scolds Jacobus for allowing the African children on the farm to collect and play with the eggs of the guinea fowls. But their play with the eggs seems to show as a means of announcing their claim to the land. This is the round about politics of irony that the author is clearly mentioning. Mehring decides to plant chestnut trees imported from Europe, and refers in English vocabulary as, “[f] air and lovely” (184). Place which is a gesture of European conquest remarking the native landscape. Now it comes to clear that why Mehring is so often associated with European colonial heritage. Like a colonialist:

He had to keep half an eye on everything, all the time [...] to pick up a working knowledge of husbandry, animal and crop, so that he could

not easily be winked by his people there and could plan forming operations with some authority. it was amazing what you could learn if you were accustomed to digesting new facts and coping with new situations , as one had to do in industry. (23)

These attitudes of Mehring reflect the hidden mentality of colonizers and confidence of some one who possesses the whole.

Mehring wants to portray the land in a different way as a conservationist but he has no curiosity about the original inhabitants of the land. His deep inner pride of ownership, his self sufficiency on his farm and the coherence of his meditations are shattered when the dead body of the unknown African is found on the farm. This is the way how Gordimer wants to Show the self – reflexive character of irony. The fire blackens Mehring ‘s field, it follows the centers on the third pasture “ [s] ame thing every year but since he has had the farm; but this time the reeds are destroyed, never before” (94). Fire is followed by the account of the feast celebrating the initiation of Phinea ‘s wife as a spirit medium. She rejects many foods. She has been touched by genuine visitations of the old faith. She calls herself ‘isalukuzana’ “ the lizard that is the indication of an old woman” (166). She “feels the amantong in her shoulders” (169). It means she feels pain between the shoulder blades. She is haunted by the dream involving animals as ancestors, “snakes that are men” (166). She is nevertheless perceived as, “a poor creature” (166). “a nuisance to everyone” (168).

Mehring, the industrialist and central character, who is also the conservationist, is another version of Bray, a white man in Africa, the liberal hero. Mehring does not see himself as a guest. Here lies the irony. He is indigenous, and his European background is stripped of the complexities of conscience. He is the perfection of pragmatism. Despite his conviction, however, he is, like Bray, a white

man in Africa- thus an embodiment of an alien culture and always in danger of rejection by the local soil:

Pate freckled eggs. Swaying over the ruts to the gate of the third pastures Sunday morning, the owner of the farm suddenly sees a clutch of pale freckled eggs set out a clutch of pale freckled eggs set out before a half – circle of children . Some are squatting; the one directly the eggs is cross –legged, like a vendor in a market . There is pride of ownership in that grin lifted shyly to the farmer’s gaze [...] the cups one of the eggs from land to hand. (8-9)

Ostensibly, the most intense interaction takes place in the passage where Mehring tries to talk and gesture with the children. The perspective is one of emphatic irony the reader is of a sound film with the sound track temporarily shut off. The absolute absence of communication between Mehring and the children clearly amounts to a symbol, the meaning of which pre-figures the much larger process that takes place between black and white throughout the novel. Repeatedly Gordimer demonstrates that the individual living in South Africa is alienated from his own acts of speech. The rigid formalization of speech codes constrains options and leads to partial vocabulary and deficient communication. This is particularly true of the communication between Mehring and Jacobus, his black caretaker:

Jacobus admires the trees although they are nothing to see this small, because he is told they are special trees. He asks a great many questions about them; he thinks this is the way to please, he knows how to handle the farmer [...] I think I can trust that nuts next year that wily character knows he is exaggerating, he may not speak the

language but he understands the conventions of polite conversation all right. (211)

The South Africa of *The Conservationist* is a hallucinatory landscape. Gordimer distorts the truth insidiously by using Mehring as a narrator. The African terrain seems to have the centre appears distorted, but only slightly. It is not as it appears to be, here lies the irony.

Mehring society is repressive, not expressive. the reality in the novel is precisely the problem posed by South Africa a lack of normality, a shared language or vision. Although the reader finds not a word of political (language) dialogue in *The Conservationist*, it may be Gordimer's most effective political expression resulting into politics of irony.

Most literature from the apartheid era examines a national identity crisis, and its reception has high-lighted issues of South–Africa's unique political development. Mehring 's white privilege leads him the air of a more conventional cosmopolitanism : he travels, speaks many languages goes to the right parties, and perhaps most importantly, does-not closely identify with his nationality. He is neither English nor Boer but of German descent. His family emigrated first to the South– west to Namibia. Thus Mehring's family history underscores South Africa's larger claims to the region of Southern Africa just as his German descent places his slightly askance in the white liberal circles that he frequents.

Moreover, Mehring is also an environmentalist, as the novel's title suggests. His conservationism is in direct contradiction with his business which depends on mining. Mehring does not view conservationism as a politics and, despite the contradiction between capital and environment, Gordimer shows that conservationism fails to disturb Mehring's identification with capital. That is, of course, a second,

ironic allusion in “conservationist” that points with Mehring’s business practices and class identity. Thus Mehring’s conservationism is not an alternative identity in opposition to everything else he stands for but a recapitulation of what he stands for, cast in a new discourse that repeats, but also illuminated by placing Mehring askance in relation to the rest of his social circle who are not environmentalists.

Early, in the novel, Mehring finds himself face down on the ground in a posture that duplicates the position of the dead man found on his property. The myopic examination of the land generates a kind of (ironic) contextlessness:

There is sand on his lip. For a moment he does not know where he is or rather who he is, but this situation in which he finds himself, staring into the eye of the earth with earth in his mouth, is strongly familiar to him. It seems to be something already inhabited in imagination. At that point his whole body gives one of the violent jerks, very muscle gathering together overly limb in paroxysm, one of those leaps of terror that land the poor bundle of body, safe, in harmful wakefulness. The abyss is no deeper than a door - step, the landing home. (41)

Not knowing ‘where he is’ is the equivalent of not knowing ‘who he is’ because with his nose to the ground, Mehring has lost his social and historical co-ordinates. The familiarity he recognizes here forms the basis of his identification with the dead man. In imagination, he has inhabited the same spaces as the dead African. Imagination enables empathy and empathy establishes a common humanity. Ironically, Gordimer shows that the universal is the result of a narrowing, not a broadening focus and hence makes an argument against humanitarian values. Writing in the time of social transition, Gordimer sees a ray of hope in Mehring’s capacity to detach sufficiently

from his social context to begin to see the meaning of universal values. Mehring must do more than recognize his common humanity with African in private moments of understanding. He must create a shared context of experience with them, a possibility that he recoils from. Mehring needs the capacity to feel global in South Africa. Despite his failure, the novel suggest how these universal values can create a momentum of solidarity along the horizontal plane of the nation, a plane that is radically tormented in the setting of the novel. Gordimer, however, is far from confident that Mehing's experience might galvanize social change.

Mehring's life on the farm is presented as an antidote to his urban existence and his travels. The farm represent to him, "not the freedom associated with a great plane by those who long to travel, but the freedom of being down there on the earth, out in the fresh air of this place to get away – to from the context of stuffy airports" (23). The contrast between an air plane and "freedom of being down there on the earth" (24) is ironic. Later in the novel, Gordimer uses the airplane's enclosure as a metaphor for white society. For Mehring, the earth, and ironic attitude that is the expression of his interest in the earth, are an antidote to apartheid. It is noteworthy that, although Mehring's conventional attitude is defined by his travel, it is anchoring on earth that is associated with freedom.

By purchasing the farm Mehring informs to a fashionable practice among those in his class who acquired farms as tax breaks an as places to entertain. Although Mehring's 400 acres that had said by his visitors to be beautiful just the way they were, he perceived them as "a dirty piece of land, agriculturally speaking" (22). Reclaiming the land for Mehring is ironic : "a farm is not beautiful unless it is productive. Reasonable productivity prevailed" (23). His inclination to cultivate the land goes against his peers' inclination to preserve it. Here the distinction between

preservationism and conservationism is manifested and reveals the politics of irony. The land for Mehring, is beautiful not as land, but as a farm that is used productively. He does not run the farm for profit, but has it cultivated as a means of conserving it.

Mehring further refuses to romanticize his attachment to the land by rejecting any ideas of the traditional South African Homestead. His failure to re-invent the farm into such a place is a stage in his evolution as a conservationist. early in his possession of the farm, Mehring decides to plant imported chestnut trees, a gesture of European conquest remarking the native landscape. The trees would mark both on affiliation with Europe and a rooting in Africa and would signal his making of himself into a white African farmer His effort to place the trees appropriately, however, fails, and in the process Mehring corrects himself, producing a different, if indeterminate, effect. First, he imagines planting them near the house:

They ought to be near the farmhouse, really a farmhouse as one thinks of one. Two grate round chestnuts dark over the step on a Transvaal farm. It would be something extra-ordinary. But on the other hand indigenous trees could be better in a definitive position [...] Anyway there really isn't a farmhouse yet: that Jacobus could perhaps be fixed up one day but it hasn't the right character, doesn't Look as if it were intended to be a real farm-house. (225)

If the placement of the trees bring up the problem of how to express his mastery over the landscape, then Mehring's hesitation shows that he is obeying a different imperative. He ends up planting the chestnuts on the road that enters the property. This is only the instance in the novel where Mehring uses the place name Transvaal and alludes to its nationalist resonance. But the passage indicates that the national feeling it evokes has a limited appeal for Mehring. If the house is the wrong type of

house, then Mehring is the wrong type of master as well, here lies the politics of irony or the ironical standpoint. Mehring does not wish to re-create an authentic Transvaal farm because it would be exactly that : a deliberate act of re-making. After all, the house did not “look as if it were intended to be a real farmhouse”(226). If Mehring disavows the national myth of the farm, then whose intention does he need ? What Constituency is he referring to? And why should the past of his farm matter since he owns the property and has the means to do what he want with it ? Mehring diminishes the importance of the homestead as an organizing principle of the landscape of the farm to the point where before his flight to town at the end of the novel he is eating drinking, sleeping, and defecating out in the open. He persists in trying to read the character of the place, although he reaches only tentative conclusions.

The other building on Mehring’s farm also interests him. It is merely the remains of a small cottage used to store fertilizer at the third pasture, which is the most remote part of his farm. At the outhouse, Mehring finds a chair left over from a picnic from where he used to bring friends from the city for weekend parties. He prefers to be :

On the roofless steep of a stone out house ... in the middle of the lands no one has ever lived there – who can say people squat anywhere-no one has used it since he bought the place. With a new roof , it would be a better house than any of them has at the compound but that’s out of the question because he has discovered , coming there in the evenings it has the best view of any spot on the whole farm . A guest cottage? – if one wanted such a thing. (204)

He contemplates building a guest house on this spot which has the best view of any spot on the whole farm but decides he does not want to build anything. By scaling all

buildings, Mehring distances himself from national myths of settlement. He tries to know the land in a different way, as a conservationist. His failing is that he has no curiosity about the original inhabitants of the land. Their history does not interest him, and indeed he refers to them as squatters, a term that betrays his white, privileged perspective.

Moreover, the ironic stand point is seen in Mehring's conservationism. His conservationism should challenge his identity as a capitalist : how long can he continue to sell pig iron without confronting the destructive impact of mining ? How long can he justify being a capitalist, if capitalist development is so closely affiliated with the pollution of the environment ? Mehring never asks these questions, however, nor does he conceive of conservationism as politics. Indeed, Mehring seeks in his identification with the land a validation of who he is. The discovery of dead man on his property throws. Mehring's identification with the land off course. whereas Mehring repeatedly surveys his land from various positions, after the discovery of the dead body, he acquires a second orientation to the land, the myopic close – up. It is the interplay between these two voicing position that yields Gordimer's ironic standpoint.

The dead African, hastily buried by the police on Merhing's land, haunts Mehring's landscape. A trespasser without an identity but only a hypothetical story attributed to him, the man intrudes constantly on Mehring's awareness as he tries to reconcile his enormous feeling for the landscape with his fundamental sense of illegitimacy on the land. The novel begins with the discovery of the body at the end of the dry season and then unfolds over the course of a year, four seasons and four changing landscapes : drought, fire, sparing, flood. At the end of the novel, the African whose body washes out of its shallow grave in the flood, is given proper

burial by the African laborers on the farm. Most readers of the novel have read Mehring's anxiety over the dead man along radical lines : an anonymous African has more legitimacy on the land than Mehring, the land's owner. The body functions as the symbol of black consciousness and the threat of revolution that would delegitimize the white presence completely. At this instant Gordimer is successful to portray the ironical politics. However, this understanding is not entirely satisfying. The dead man's belonging or ownership on the land is far from obvious at the beginning of the novel. His fellow Africans disown or declaim him, just as Mehring does. Jacobus, the foreman, identifies the dead man as an outsider to whom they have no obligation:

Dead, dead, finish- The herdsman walks over delicately towards the object and bending, turns his face back at his employer and says confidently , rather as if he had been listening. And now already is beginning to be little bit . He wrinkles his nose, exposing the dirty horse- teeth. You'd better not touch him. You're sure nobody here knows him? It's got nothing to do with any of you here ? he looks very deeply at his herdsman, lowering his head and hooding his eyebrows over is eyes. (16)

Jacobus and the other Africans are complicities with Mehring here in upholding the borders of the farm thus the radical potential of black revolution is something that threatens the farm from the outside.

Mehring's close-ups are ironic and myopic; they make it impossible to see any kind of totality. His promontory descriptions, on the other hand, suggest mastery and conform more closely to imperial gaze's posture. In the promontory views. Mehring believes he acquires a superior understanding of South Africa. His attitude reflects the

consistence of someone who possesses the whole. Moreover, the two contrasting types of description, (close-up and promontory) work together in a kind of irony that articulates the control argument of the novel : how does one integrate surface and depth into one vision ?An ironic ideology entails a compatibility between surface and depth.

Gordimer uses the airplane as the symbol of the cosmopolitan's location and detachment; in the sky, the air-plane passenger occupies an indeterminate space or 'nowhere' as Gordimer says. Mehring seems to think that what happens 'nowhere' somehow does not happen at all. Thus he says of the young girl he fondles illicitly on the plane : “ She need not be afraid of wanting what was happening because it was happening nowhere” (129). Being in this indeterminate space removes accountability and also somehow effaces the act itself. Although Mehring is speaking of the girls, clearly he too does not need to be afraid of what he wants, or to be more exact of wanting what was happening, a passive and ironic construction.

What Mehring sees from the airplane further establishes this impression of weakness. Despite having the ultimate promontory position, Mehring doesn't see much because he must fly over the desert:

Wherever he has come from, there are hours on the way home over Africa when there is nothing down there. Sometimes it's at night ! and all you are aware of is perhaps wave of two or turbulence, a heave from the day flight, clear and even at thirty thousand feet. Sometimes it's [...] of lap of sand, stones, stones in and, the infinite wreckage not of a city or civilization but the home that is the earth itself. (126)

Geology trumps human history, and Africa that is one view for ‘imperial eyes’ is ancient and devoid of humanity. Mehring think of Africa as ‘nothing’ alluding to the second type of ‘dream topography’ that Mehring identifies as the topography of Africa. Yet, because Mehring is looking at the Kalahari and Namib deserts which are geologically ancient, he is not wrong. As a conservationist, he has a special interest in the wreckage of the earth Ironically, speaking, the feminization of the landscape anticipates the sexual encounter in the plane, and the plane ‘buried in space’ repeats the motif of burial, of containment in the earth, that Mehring is obsessed with.

When Mehring asserts “there is a difference between thinking to oneself and thinking as a form of conversation even if there are no answers” (251). He expresses a desire for a changed, or corrected social relation. Moreover, what we see here contains the ironic standpoint, an attempt to correct the ‘lies’ that Gordimer alludes to speak out, to set the record straight through a process of disclosure. The fact that this discloser is a mental exercise and that Mehring think of nowhere to go to hold such a conversation except to a landscape emptied of people is a failing symptomatic of that sensibility that has turned South Africa into nowhere. In this nowhere, there is no disclosure and no accountability. However, Mehring’s conservationist interest in the land is an attempt to visualize a whole. The scene in which Mehring gives the most important promontory description in the novel contains such a mental conversation. And although Mehring seeks this particular place on his farm for its isolation, he acknowledges that what attracts him to it is the sense that t is haunted:

It was never possible to be alone down there. Never lonely. Never feel lonely. It may sound crazy – No, put it another way. A funny thing - You don’t nave to be a believer in a lot of superstition and nonsense

there is difference between thinking to oneself and thinning as a form of conversation, even if there are no answers. (251)

Mehring spends New Year's Eve out in the open, admiring the view. He has rejected numerous invitations for the evening and the holidays. In fact, he has withdrawn to his farm without even repaying to them. He has invited Jacobus to join in his new year's celebration, but Jacobus misunderstands him and waits for him at the house instead. Thus they do not meet.

Gordimer first describes the view that Mehring is taking in and then the imaginary conversation that he has with Jacobus. The view is ironic : a thunderstorm at a distance divides the sky into two scenes : storm on one end and clear, moonlit night near Mehring. There is no sound of thunder as the thunder is too far, so Mehring is surrounded by the silence and the sound of birds. In between, lower on the horizon, he can see the fireworks on the Afrikaner farms.

The key to this description is that it is a sky divided, light on black, a description which suggests a variety of ironical readings about race, but which in the end becomes a more abstract meditation on the relation between time and space:

Every few seconds the whole night undulates with sheet lightning and now [...]. No thunder that tremendous storm is miles away and it's possible, just once, on a night like this, to sit at the point where its element ends and the absolutely calm, full moon lit element begins. It is really two nights at once: just as midnight will bisect two years.

(205)

Mehring immediately thinks that what he is seeing gives him a superior knowledge about the country. With his peers partying in town, he feels, "a sense of superiority" (205). He remembers Antonia crying because she had to leave South Africa into

political exile. But Mehring wonders whether Antonia really knew South Africa at all since she had not known this landscape. The ironic point lies upon what knowledge does this landscape provide that Mehring so confidently feels is superior and why is it distinct from the national feelings of others.

The landscape functions as a kind of revelation of relations: light and dark in muteness, dark and light of a storm, dark and light of a moonlit night, one sky divided into two. What strikes Mehring as significant is the simultaneity, so that division becomes not about blindness but about doubleness and simultaneity revealing the whole. This is not more ironic because Mehring's thoughts immediately move into the social conversation this night made possible between him and Jacobus, and the shared perspective about the farm. There is much of course that is flawed about this imagined conversation. Clearly the social order remains what is but the imaginary conversation establishes in Mehring's mind the basis for a mutual understanding with Jacobus that creates the conditions for the burial of the black man at the end of the novel.

The novel is organized around series of ironic discrepancies : the farm and the location on its border (150, 000) Africans living in poverty and crime, the farm (symbol of Africa contested between white and black) and the city (more unambiguously dominated by white), airplane and land. even the text itself is divided into narrative, quotations and myths, Traveling across South Africa is difficult. For Blacks, it is frequently an act of trespass. Mehring travels regularly along the road from the city to his farm, but the road itself is difficult at times inaccessible, punctuating the remoteness of different locations. These variations also provide ironic dimension to the novel.

Seeing the panoramic view of South Africa, Mehring moves closer to rejecting his urban existence: "Oh my God. What a crime to wake up morning after morning in

that flat” (183). It is not only the sight of the beautiful field that moves him, but its hourly transformation that is evidence of life itself, a vitality lost in the city. What he sees is not a still picture but a constant movement:

Everything blends, blends, folds. Everything is continually swaying, flowing, rippling, waning, swaying, surging, streaming, fingering. He is standing there with his damp shoes all wet with the dew and the field he himself is swaying [...] all the softness of grasses is the susurrant of a slight dizziness, hissing in the head. (183)

The scene Mehring admires is man made; it is a field that has been planted with lucerne to feed the cattle. The politics that is inherent is people gets diverted by seeing the natural beauty and will not revolt against the whites (land owners). The another remarkable aspect to mention is:

From where does this phrase come to him ? It comes back, tum-te-tum-te-tum, as only something learned by rote survivors. It's not his [the dead man's] vocabulary fair and lovely. A place in a child's primer where nothing ugly could be imagined to happen, as if such places exist. No wound to be seen; and simply shoveled under. (183-84)

Mehring rejects the romanticization of the landscape, its removal from man's material domain. By realizing that what he sees will never be enough for understanding and that words instead are needed, Mehring concedes that the link across races is not only a matter of the recognition of a mutual humanity but a link that must take place across culture and hence through the materiality of language. The dead man provides much visual evidence of his humanity, but his utter silence leaves a gap, a gap that could only be filled by his presence of a talking subject. Mehring's

own language, fair and lovely, is cliché, inadequate, and false in its emotional and ironic tone.

Mehring's self-sufficiency on his farm and the coherence of his meditations are shattered when the corpse resurfaces in the flood. The corpse travels down stream, polluting the horizontal plane along whose axis most of Mehring's was focused. The ironic changes that occult at this point in the novel transform the surface as a result of attacks from above (rain) and below, the eruption of what is below the calm surface. As the rain begins, Mehring has an experience that prefigures the corpse' re-emergence. He gets his foot stuck in the mud on the remote pasture. The politics of irony, here, is the victimizer himself gets victimized:

He stays three, in this grotesque variation of the position of a runner poised for the starting shot. He could have broken a leg but he is unhurt. He must get his leg out of the mud that's all. It has already seeped over the top of the boot and through the sole and holds him in a cold thick hand round the ankle [...], the more he pulls the greater the vacuum. (228)

The association between what is under the surface and the black African is made explicit here. Mehning reveals a racial anxiety that he has seemed immune to the danger of being pulled in and destroyed is real. The solution to this real difficulty (don't pull up, but try to swim in the mud) stresses once again the ironic politics-horizontality over verticality, echoing the grass swaging in the breeze and its allusion to the democratic.

The resurfacing of the corpse chases Mehring away from the farm, on to the road and toward the city. The crisis Mehring faces on this journey replays the racial anxiety of the foot in the mud, but Mehring will resolve it differently, not by

swimming on the horizontal axis of the surface but by re- asserting his authority as a white man. When Mehring flees the farm after seeing the dead body wash – up, he approaches the city thinking to himself that nothing happened. He thinks comfortingly that he will return to his usual pre- occupations (business, city life, travel) and that all the emotional intensity of his experience on his farm, unshared and unseen, can simply be denied and become nothing. Mehring desires the return to the city as a retrieval of reason. The drive along the familiar road sets things right. This is what Gordimer plays the ironical politics to chase the colonizers from South African territory silently.

The farm, however is not like the airplane. Mehring may want to assert that nothing happened, but the farm is not ‘nowhere’ and the authenticity of its location, stressed by Gordimer repeatedly in her description of the bad omen that leads to it, the crime, poverty, and pollution that border it, all make the journey dangerous for Mehring. He may want to think of the road as an orderly and predictable progression of familiar landmarks, but in this last journey, familiarity breaks down. Already before, he picks up the women hitchhiker, his reason is shaken : he sits staring at a green light not understanding what it means. The woman disorients him completely, the incident turns into a sexual encounter in a dystrophic landscape of industrial pollution and urban decay “this is a dirty place, an over grown rubbish dump, mounds of cyanide waste” (258). Moreover, the surrounding area is an area of old exhausted mines that is now allocated as townships. Mehring, the conservationist who sells pig-iron, is implicated in the creation of this landscape. His disorientation and anxiety increase as he realizes that he is uncertain about the woman’s racial identity. To make matters worse, he is robbed of his privacy in this dystopia.

If nothing happened at the farm, Mehrings now anxiously wonders if something will happen to him here. Will he end up like the man on his farm, trespassing his 'location' and dead? He keeps repeating the phrase Jacobus used when he told him about the discovery of the body on his farm, "we think something is happen but it can only happen to me. They have been there all the time and they will continue to be there" (260). Although as a white man he can travel anywhere, Mehring's anxiety here turns him into a trespasser. Events are frequent upon trespassing, coming out of one's designated and bounded territory. Hence, it is this politics of irony that threatens to change things, to make things happen.

Mehring's complexity with white rule, no matter what his sympathies with Jacobus or the deadman may be on an individual-level, is evident in the novel's denouement: he does not want anything to happen. His desire for death and its corollary, his desire to be memorialized on the land, is a flawed wish to gain some kind of guarantee of the immutability of things, to turn the permanence of death into a final gesture of conservation, a making of the land.

The ending of the novel, however, is less pessimistic than this scene of Mehring's return to town suggests. The Africans claim the dead body and establish an affirmation with their brother whom at first they saw merely as a trespasser. This change of attitude is anchored by Gordimer's use of 'politics of irony' which show that the Zulu oral history is also haunted by forgetting and partial memories. When the Africans on the farm claim the body, they act upon their intimations of the past, listening to what they were deaf too before:

The Amatongo, they who are beneath. Some natives say, so called, because they have buried beneath the earth. But we cannot avoid believing that we have an imitation of an old faith in a Hades or

Tartarus, which has become lost and is no longer understood and working for the spirit.(163)

What is notable about this passage is that it is clearly a translation, Hades and Tartarus are borrowed terms. In this passage, Gordimer suggests the historical origins of the Zulu from the moment of 'breaking of all things'. She helps to inform the idea of a historical beginning from fragmentation and fracture which is crucial to Gordimer's sense of South African history. The burial of the dead body is an attempt to restore the connection to the ancestors. A deep fragmentation persists as Mehring's is absent from the burial, and black and white are in separate territories. Yet Mehring facilitates the burial by paying for it, and this is a meaningful action for this moment.

Just before Mehring fled the farm, Mehring was thinking again of Antonia's warning that no one will remember where he is buried. Going back and forth in his mind between the dead man and himself, he answers Antonia's warning:

No one will remember where you're buried. – Ah! It's not as easy, not as final as that. Couldn't recognize the place when it was burned and then when the reeds and the grass grew so high again, just as if nothing had ever happened. Couldn't recognize- 'find' isn't the word, no one ever searched, it was forgotten, even they never mentioned him again, not even Jacobus. (250)

Politics of irony can be justified in this passage in the way how Mehring answers Antonia. Antonia says 'no one will remember' but Mehring says 'couldn't recognize' bringing the focus back to the visual. The land is so changeable it affords no visual mastery. This passage once again echoes Mehring's anxieties about democracy. His anxiety is with the loss of his own visibility, from visibility comes the assurance of his white power. Memory, which could compensate for this difficulty by marking the

place of burial, is fore shaken both in the hypothetical case of Mehring's burial and in the actual case of the dead African. However, things are not 'easy' or 'final'. Mehring realizes that despite being forgotten, and despite the failure of visual mastery over the landscape, the dead man is eventually remembered as natural forces exhume his body to render him newly visible. In a kind of parable of conservation, this example illustrates that when all else fails, the land preserves the body and urges the memory of the man upon the residents of the farm.

Antonia can say with certainty that Mehring will be forgotten, that the land will be reclaimed by the Africans, and his presence simply erased. Mehring, on the other hand, understands that historical memory resurfaces in bits and in unpredictable ways. History is not immutable; it is dependent on the unfolding present. The land changes constantly, but its changeability is eternal. If conserved, the land can be a cross-historical link. Landscape is a potential bridge along the horizontal plane of the present, close up, that resonates with what is buried in it. If the novel ends by suggesting a gathering into two opposing camps, a rural black Africa and an urban white Africa, it also shows a new coherence: all the Africans, having reclaimed the body, are now one constituency and Mehring falls back to his conventional milieu with the sign of relief. This is Gordimer's way of accounting for the focusing of the apartheid struggle, a streamlining before the final showdown using irony as a dissecting tool.

At last, Mehring's irony turns to himself. Formerly, Mehring expresses his separate peace as an ability to see the "Joke" in South Africa, to convert, for example, the dead African into "a story to be told over drinks" (27). Mehring's irony is continually scoring points off the white South Africans, as well as the Boers and the blacks. towards the close of the novel, however, he is unable to

maintain his ironic detachment. The girl takes his cinema invitation as a joke . Jacobus sees the invitation to see in the New year as a joke . Mehring suffers a double rejection, by woman and black , and becomes a double prisoner, unable to communicate across the sexual and racial divide and unwilling to accept the mechanical surface communication of Johannesburg society. He is left enclosed in his room , paralyzed beside the telephone answering device , receiving its message but unable to respond: “ The machine simply stops listing . Just as he gives no answer” (200). Mehring is hiding in his room to avoid his friend’s funeral. The psychological logic is clear . Mehring converts the dead black into a “ story” to amuse white South Africa . The black is buried without honor. White South Africa then reads the newspaper story his friend’s death , and Mehring refuses to honor him . The events of the subplot boomerang back into the main plot. Mehring’s “story” is akin to the black burial without honor . he tidies up an awkward reality, which remains just beneath the surface ready to erupt again at any point. Mehring’s irony neutralizes the black , but the dead man comes back to plague him from the guilty depths of his own consciousness.

Nadine Gordimer is not a political person : Yet her writing document, decade by decade, shows the impact of politics on personal lives she portrays what an increasingly radical white South African woman felt, thought, and imagined during the rise and fall of apartheid. Within this political and psychological material, she seeks to capture the mystery of life. Gordimer emphasizes that Marcel Proust influenced her as an artist more than any other writer ; yet many would link her name more with the techniques of social realism than with those of stream of consciousness. Still, after writing eleven novels, she chooses as her favorite her sixth, *The Conservationist*, the one that reveals most persistently the interior life of her

protagonist. Thus seeming contradictions make us become aware of this artist's complexity.

Raised in the small mining town of Springs, Transvaal, intellectually Nadine Gordimer soon become an anomaly. A frequenter of the public library, she loved books and writing even as a child. Moreover, the isolation and lack of physical activity she suffered from age ten through sixteen ensured the devotion to words that quickly gave her an extra ordinary command of the English language. Gardiner's remarkable talent as a writer was recognized well before she published her first two volumes of short stories in 1949 and 1952 and her first novel, *The Lying Days*, in 1953.

Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* has pride of place it is perhaps the finest novel to have emerged from the South African tragedy. Gordimer has aggravated her task by casting as her protagonist Mehring are who combines the most offensive characteristics of the master race. Mehring is a pig-iron millionaire, an intelligent cynic who probes ruthlessly the soft underside of liberalism, a temperamental paternalist and a compulsive philanderer. Despite these obvious drawbacks, Gordimer so powerfully render his sensitivity – to the land of Africa- and his inner life that he becomes, if not sympathetic, an intelligible being of his time , place and race. His weakness, or sentiment , is for the land, it is all that is left now marriage, friendships, business have cloyed. Throughout, not always ironically, he is the farmer ' but the irony of his situation be devils him even from the outset, when the body of an unknown murdered black is found on his farm – a body roughly buried there by the indifferent police-he is haunted by this rude intrusion upon his weekend retreat. The body is never far from his mind. It usurps his, the white man's possession of the African earth as, centuries before, Mehring's ancestors had usurped the African inheritance. His treasured desire to lie there after his own death is gradually corroded

by that insistent corpse and we never forget, throughout Mehring's experiences and reveries, its symbolic darkness.

To return to the situation in which all South African writers find themselves, whether white or black, writing in English, Sesuto, Zulu, what –have- we – even if he successfully schools the rapids of bannings and / or exile, any writer's attempt to present in South Africa a totality of human experience within his own country is subverted before he sets down a word. As a white man, his fortune may change, one thing he cannot experience is blackness, with all that implies in South Africa. As a black man, the one thing he can not experience is whiteness, with all that implies. Each is largely outside the other's experiences potential. There is no social mobility across the color- line. The identification of class with color means the breaching class barriers is breaking the low, and the indivisible class-color barrier is much, much more effective from the point of view of limiting the writer's intimate knowledge of his society, that any class barrier has ever been. The black writer in South Africa writes from the inside about the experience of the black masses, because the colour-bar keeps him stepped in its circumstances, can be fined in a black township and carrying a pass that regulates his movements from the day he is born to the status of piccanin to the day he is buried in a segregated cemetery. The white writer, quarantined in his test- tube elite existence, is cut off by enforced privilege from the grater part of the society in which he lives the life of proletariat, the nineteen millions whose potential of experience he does not share, form the day he is born to the day he is buried in his segregated cemetery. At the end of *The Conservationist*, where the body has been buried and “comes back” refers to Mayibuye the black political slogan that means “Come back Africa” back after the years of internal exile and white

domination. It is only beautiful, poetically valid slogan Gordimer hopes that somebody would take note of affirmation.

Summing up, Gordimer exposes the cognitive bias of the Eurocentric Western Intellectual history in *The Conservationist* by subverting the image created by the Western World about the South Africans. Here, she uses irony and shows that Mehring, though he is economically prosperous, but is found spiritually bankrupt. Although Mehring has all the material possessions, becomes alienated. Gordimer shows that Mehring is not the right choice for the land, she ironically legitimize the real-owner of the South African territory is the Afrikanaas. Gordimer uses irony as a power to demonstrate the loopholes of powerless, ruled, colonized South Africans but due to the self-reflexive tendency of irony, the criticism boomerangs upon to the powerful or Mehring, the protagonist, the representation of the high-class ruling elite or colonizer in South African territory.

So, the ironical meaning of the text comes through interpretations by reading thoroughly. The ironical meaning of the text depends upon how the readers interpret the text not unlike authors or creators take the text. This, clearly shows the reference of politics of irony in Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist*.

III. Conclusion

Through the politics of irony, the Western World has created its image of self as a privileged home of reason and has criticized the rest of the world's remoteness from reason. Thus, irony exposes this cognitive bias of the Eurocentric Western intellectual history by subverting its own inauthenticity. This aspect can be revealed in *The Conservationist*. The central protagonist in the novel Mehring has all the privileges and possessions that South Africa has to offer but his possessions refuse to remain objects. His wife, son, and mistress leave him; his foremen and workers become increasingly indifferent to his stewardship, even the land rises up, as drought, then flood, destroy the farm. Thus it shows that even the nature was also asking for the authenticity of land that South African territory belongs to the South-Africans but not to Mehring who was born in Namibia, lives in Johannesberg, speaks English and possesses the German parents, yet shifted to South-Africa. Thus Merhring is portrayed with many negative traits like exploitation, selfishness, alienation, greediness, belongiglessness, originalness, eg- centric, mentally distorted, lack of heroism, immorality and many other animalistic natures. He has purchased four hundred acres of land outside Johannesburg. It is a great irony that he is presented as the conservationist of the farm but in fact he has not bought the farm to save its resources and not to do anything to change the life-style of the local people with the investment. His purpose to buy the land is totally selfish. He is extremely conscious of himself. Because of his greed, he wants to possess everything he desires, for example: women, property, land, etc. without limits and control. By purchasing the land he wants to conserve his power possession, status, his way of life to deduce tax; to escape from the business life of city and more interestingly by seduction of Antonia Here, lies the salient politics of irony. The author Gordimer wants to portray the hidden motif of the conservationist by exposing the superficial reality.

The novel by Nadine Gordimer is written and set in the 1970s when South–Africa was still very much under the apartheid social system and this novel is the protest against that system. The transition period was followed by the of violence, threatened by unpredictable brutality. Races and classes, conventions and codes ferment in a decoration of final showdowns and a mysteriously glimmering hope of unexpected mergers and affinities outlined in the sands of the future. Here, the farm symbolizes the whole country. Mehring is the representative of the white who founded the apartheid system. The fence, the blacks made to keep the blacks out of the farm is now in its meek condition and there are many holes which symbolize the loopholes of the apartheid system is not functioning. The corpse’s haunting of Mehring and his house shows the claim of Africa by those who possess no legal land at all. This is how Gordimer is using irony to portray the real ownership of the African land. Furthermore, children’s play with the guinea fowl eggs is a means of announcing their claim to the land. The Phinea’s wife’s initiation ironically. Indicates the female revolution. The nature also develops against him, the seven years droughts, the August wind, the fire and flood. The blacks take the responsibility for the descent burial of the dead body which is resurfaced by the flood; shows their attempt to restore their connection to the ancestors.

At the end it is found that Mehring has fled to one of those countries, where white people go, thus adopting symbolic territory for himself. This results in to Gordimer’s use of politics of irony that clearly shows the era of South African freedom and downfall of the colonization over that unauthorized and unwelcomed land.

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