

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Ironizing the Heroic Struggle for Dignity in Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*

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fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in English**

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This thesis entitled “**Ironizing the Heroic Struggle for Dignity in Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead***” submitted to the Central Department of English Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Anup Acharya, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* ironizes the heroic struggle which is fought to gain dignity. War is always supposed to be heroic as people get involved in war in the name of sacrifice, patriotism and dignity but it is actually not other than the political representation of society or nation thereby hiding the dirty political game. In fact, war is the excessive exercise of power, the use of force to cause physical harm, death and destruction through brainwash. Mailer shows his characters alienated from life that is full of pain and problem, death and destruction but not filled with heroism and dignity to ironize the so-called heroic war.

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Introduction

1.1 Mailer's world:

Norman Mailer, one of the most prolific and notorious writers of the late twentieth century, is both highly distinctive in his style and in many ways representative of his time. Mailer was born in Long Branch, New Jersey on January 3, 1923. His parents Isaac Barnett "Barney" and Funny "Fan" (Schneider) Mailer, were Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. When Mailer was several years old, his family moved to Brooklyn, where he attended Boys High School. In 1933, Mailer entered Harvard to study aeronautical engineering. During his time at Harvard, he took many electives in literature and worked on the university's literary journals, *The Harvard Advocates*. when he published his first story, *The Greatest Thing in the World*, he was selected as the winner of "story magazine's" annual collage fiction contest. He practiced, multi careers including as a producers, director and actor in film, rifleman and artillery observer in the U.S. army in the Second World War. Mailer also served in the Philippines with 112th cavalry from Texas; those were the years that formed his internationally best selling war novel *The Naked and the Dead* and earned overwhelming popularity and critical acclaim.

Norman mailer, like many other prolific writers, has produced works in a number of genres and several genres of book-length nonfiction. He wrote numbers of books based upon various subject matters from politics to war and racism. His writing reflects the literary history of the last hundred years, from early naturalism to experimental works that blend fact and fiction, history and novel. Violence, sex and power are major themes of Mailer's novel. He writes about American culture, world

war and other outstanding features of time of post war era. He also depicts the metaphorical version of American culture and the human behavior which applies to all human kind in general because they share most common feature of day to day life. John Thompson comments about mailer's career, "like the writers of the old modern literature days like Yeats, Pound and Joyce he makes up for himself a theology, a psychology and even a pharmacopeia" (276). This supports that mailer is not singular in his approach.

During 1960s, Mailer wrote *The Armies of the Night* (1967) combining fiction and nonfiction narrative, which won both the National Book Award and Pulitzer prize. His other books like *An American Dream* (1965) and *why Are we in Vietnam* (1967) are also nominated for National Book Award. In 1970s, Mailer returned to a book of same intense proportion as *The Naked and the Dead* with the *Executioner's song* (1979), a non fiction about life and execution of convicted murder Gary Gilmore. Within this, his other books include *Barbary Shore* (1951), *The Deer Park* (1955) *Death of the Ladies* (1962), *The Pres-dental Papers* (1963) and *Cannibals and Christianity* (1966).

In addition to these books, Mailer also had written, produced, directed and acted in several films like *wild 90* (1967), *Beyond the Level*, *Maid Stone* (1971) etc. In 1959, Mailer published *Advertisement for Myself*, a collection of essays, letters and fiction on the subject of politics, sex and drug. From beginning to present, mailer's intellectualism and combative temperament drew him into journalism. In 1955, Mailer co-founded the magazine *Village Voice*. He was the editor of *Dissent* from 1952 to 1963. He also wrote short stories, such as *A calculus at Heaven*, *The Language of Men*, *The Time of Her Time*. In his recent work, *How the Wimp Won the War* (1991) Mailer puts commentary on the U.S. victory over Iraq in the Gulf war and in *Why are*

We at War (2003), he criticize George W. Bush and his quest for empire. For decades he has been one of Americas best known writers, dabbling in film making, getting in public debates and being arrested for stabbing his wife.

Writers such as Bellow, Mailer and some others were trying to differentiate between the American dream and its achievements. The Beat Generation writers of 1950s were escaping from false American dream values by countering with the real and revolutionary ideas. Their novel depicts the bitter reality of American culture and human psyche that are essentially motivating all human activities. Admits the unparalleled openness of the conflict between black and whites, Mailer appeared to leave the social matter at the spot and take more controversial subject matters of his writing. So his novels are the details of many levels of interplay between the subjective and objective world. Mailer's heroes are destined to push against all limitations all that would repress all its dizzying heights of violence and absurdity that he had seen in contemporary American life. Mailer's novel presents a hopeless society with institutional, sexual and natural violence, crisis of humanity, degeneration of value in American society, existential crisis, power politics, and disillusionment of American dream and psychic effect of war on the people. Barry H. Leeds analyzes his works in terms of two major themes. He writes, "two major themes loom large in all of mailer's fiction that of social ills and that of the plight of the individuals in contemporary society". (4) In the same way Raymond Rosenthal expresses his views on Mailer and his writing technique as "actually his novels with a close group of character as *Wuthering Heights* because emotional and psychic presentation of character is one dominant aspect in his writing". (271)

As a novelist his prose is powerful but plain, complex in theme yet very near to reality and vulgar but artistic. His attitude towards realistic literature is very positive but not

always constant. Mailer says that writing does not visualize only what is obvious and general, it deals with the deeper and inner parts of a society and individuals must be given a focus. He writes on the theme of anxiety, depression, frustration, alienation, violence and absurd human condition of the modern man. He frequently writes about the psychological problems and sexuality. Though Mailer received great honor still he is also criticized by the feminist for his false treatment of female characters and open sex in his writings. Mailer also gives the American literary continuum established by the social novels of the thirties. The influence of Farrell, Steinbeck and Dos Passos can also be seen in his writing. Written in journalistic details, vivid description of the agony and triumph of army life along with flashback that tell the story of each individual character and written in third person narration are some of the technical and stylistic devices of mailer's writings.

1.2 Mailer's Notion of War

Norman mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* is a war novel which ironizes the so-called heroic war. It also shares the sense of moral rectitude found in so many narrative about war. It is the story of a handful of exhausted soldiers who are charged with mission on the Japanese fictitious island called Anopope from which few will return alive. Throughout the novel, American platoon suffers from anxiety; alienation, horror and frustration and find their life absurd during the war. Still they got victory by chance, but it has no meaning at all because it was gained through their absurd condition and friend's death.

Mailer's novel presents its characters alienated, having no mutual coordination and understanding, and are badly victimized by power morality. There is ideological solidarity between them. Here in the novel, animosity between soldiers and officer eclipses any sense of national or ideological solidarity. Mailers fighting

men routinely characterize the officer class as antidemocratic, anti American even fascist. Here mailers characters are divided into two folds. One who practice real democratic ideals and another, who practice antidemocratic, even fascist ideals. In the novel, Mailer's fighting men are not in the battle field but are obsessed in their personal life. They are not fighting for noble principles as "freedom", "justice" and "democracy" but only to exit from war and because of fear or sense of personal shame.

Mailers novel *The Naked and the Dead* focuses on irony and Mailer as a novelist deals with ironic condition of fighting men and also foregrounds the ironic reality of so called heroic war. Though the war is supposed to be heroic but on depth reality is different. Mailer's novel exposes the brutal reality of war ironically in its length and breadth. Therefore, the study is more focused on irony than any other issues

1.3 Critical responses on The Naked and the Dead:

The Naked and the Dead, first novel by Norman Mailer, has remained something of an enigma to the literary critics since its publication. Many critics have attempted different possibilities of interpretations of the novel. Being some alleged evidences which meant to prove the novel's meaning in terms of mailer's personal political ideology, contemporary situation, biography and so on. Norman Mailer was something enigmatic for contemporary world because of his break away from convention and norms, the early responses to the text and for him by the critics were based on his personal war experience, political affair and the contemporary sociopolitical situation.

Deeply rooted in the naturalist and realist vain Mailer began his career. *The Naked and the Dead* has attached a number of responses from the literary critics, not all of them in favor of it.

Critic J.M kinder analyzed the text as Mailer's biography and his personal experience. Mailer himself was involved in Second World War, so he is able to reflect the realistic depiction of the world war second and the mental and physical torture of common soldiers through his personal experience as an infantry man during the Second World War .He writes:

Part of mailer's goal in *The Naked and the Dead* is to remind post war readers of what was already being exercised from American 's memory of world war second. Drawing upon his own experience as an infantry man , Mailer takes great care of highlight the brutality of combat and physical and mental abuse suffered by common soldiers through out the war.(3)

Another powerful experimental fiction writer of the post war American literature Josephine Henden analyzes *The Naked and the Dead* as the novel written in the naturalistic tone which shows the struggle based on power relation. He analyzed the novel in terms of violence and destruction in war. He comments:

Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* dealt with the fight, in world war second, for an imaginary pacific island, Anopopei. Using the traditional frame work of the naturalistic novel, he wrote the jungle warfare in terms of Darwinian fight for survival, virtually depoliticizing the war between the Japanese and American's to personal issue of ambition, appetite, and individual strength. (224)

In the same way another critic Barry H. Leeds analyzes *The Naked and the Dead* as structural effectiveness of the novel. He writes:

Perhaps the most impressive thing about mailer's performance in *The Naked and the Dead* is the structural effectiveness of the novel. The control of such a massive weight of material is not often within the ability of so young an author. It should be noted, however, that the

structural success here processed naturally out of a happy choice of subject and setting, and out of extensive emulation of established writer, rather than from over whelming precocity (10)

Another critic Daniel Spice Handler commenting upon *The Naked and the Dead* says that Mailer is unable to subscribe to the particular form of protest which he feels is necessary to the validity of war novel. He says that though Mailer is failed to show the protest yet his world is indeed a world stripped of hope. Within this hopeless, however, is the germs of protest. He says:

What has Mailer learned from war? What is the question asked, the theme expounded in *The Naked and the Dead*? What right has an author to choose the topic of war and neither to protest it or learn something from it? Mailer leaves the reader with no tragic sense. One would suppose that so brutal a description of war must result in a bitter protest. Instead, his war experience teaches nothing, "neat". The nada of the early Hemingway is at least clouded in aromatic idealism gone sour. Mailer's world is a world stripped of hope. (36)

Mailer has also evoked politics and controversial social issues in his writing. Leo Brandy listed *The Naked and the Dead* in terms of political attachment. Brandy sees that this novel gives more focus on the ideology war between Cummings and liberal lieutenant Hearn rather than their Japanese enemies. He writes:

It was a vast fabric of American diversity pitched on a pacific island, with no hero, and a plot that focused less on the war with Japanese then on the metaphysical- political conflict between the liberal lieutenant Hearn and conservative General Cummings fought under the shadow of the constantly encroaching blinding jungle. (113)

Another critic Frederick R.Karl find mixed elements such as naturalism, politics and existentialism in *The Naked and the Dead* .He says that the novel seems pessimistic naturalism with an emergent existentialism. He finds the characters conflict with machine or fate. Individual problem and struggle for survived are the dominant patterns in the novel. He writes:

When Mailer conceived of *The Naked and the Dead* he did so in traditionally naturalistic terms, those of Hemingway, Dos Passes, Norris, possibly Conrad and Melville. The focus was man versus machine, or fate, man as the butt of what ever lies in store for him, or ruled by ideologies he cannot comprehend. Victory, if it comes, is the result of blunders, chance, even misadventure, in this respect. All the Mailer's encapsulates on the island of Anopopei, and it takes heroism out of the war, placing it in the traditional narrative of the individual sunk into a group.(96)

Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* stands as one of the most powerful book of the post war era because of varieties of criticism and opinions; it has drawn the critical attentions from the very beginning of its publication. Many of the critics have focused on existentialism, pessimistic naturalism and so on. But none of the critics has highlighted on the theme of irony which exists in the length and the breadth of this novel if carried out its subtle reading. This thesis is going to fill up this critical gap.

II

Methodology

2.1 Introduction to Irony

Irony is a perceptible contrast between what is said in a statement and what it really must mean, or it is the contrast between appearance and reality. It is also the mocking and complaining use of word to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. It is more generally distancing one self from the message one conveys. Irony can be defined as, in the word of Samuel Johnson's "mode of speech of which the meaning is contrary to the mode". (qtd.in Enright 5) So irony is the expression of one's meaning by saying something which is direct opposite of one's thoughts, in order to make one's remarks forceful. Similarly irony for Rorty "a healthy skepticism of one's own language game, a preparedness to adjust one's lexicon, refigure one's vocabulary and desist from positing any truth or representation outside language".(qtd. in Rorty 80)

The term irony is derived from the Greek *eiron*, a dissembling character in Greek comedy by Aeschylus, to denote a mode of behavior and expression where in the *eiron* more reasonably pretends to be saying or doing one thing while really conveying quite different messages. The word *eiron*, was first recorded in Plato's republic, which means dissembler in speech. Similarly, Latin term *ironia* is used by Cicero to elaborate the rhetoric of irony. Aristotle has defined it in the sense of "self depreciating dissimulation; modesty though only pretended, at least seems better than ostentation". (qtd. in Meuke 16) Irony, especially in its Greek use, is the result of pretence with violence of *eiron*, an ironist, and the self –deception of the alazone, a victim of the irony. That dialectical difference between appearance and reality traits in irony has been later explored as powerful rhetorical and artistic effects and then later as "a discursive strategy" in order to corrode the dominant ethics. Therefore, irony

can be defined as involving disjunction between intended and explicit meaning. A fuller and admirable definition of irony is that of *Oxford Concise Dictionary*:

Expression of one's meaning by language or opposite or different tendency, especially simulated adoption of another's point of view or laudatory tone for purpose of ridicule; ill-timed or circumstances in itself desirable, as if in mockery of the fitness of things; use of language that has an outer meaning for the persons addressed or concerned. (5)

To put it clearly in different terms, irony emerged out of contrast between what is implied by action and what are the actual consequences, what is stated and what is intent.

The scope of irony as a rhetorical enforcement was first available in the irony implied in Socratic dialogue. Such an irony was later called as the Socratic irony. Then, irony was used to mean dissimulation, even non –ironical dissimulation, understatement and parody. Its meaning was again extended in the works of first half of the eighteenth century. At the end of eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the word irony got number of meanings. Therefore the old ways of being ironical were discontinued. What they added in the irony was radical to its concept of its transformation. After that irony had been thought as essentially intentional, instrumental and representative in art. Afterwards irony became double natured observable. It became possible to generalized it and see the entire world as an ironic stage and all mankind as merely players.

2.2 World of Irony

From the undefined to define irony, we can observe many differences in the term as the tendency of adding and subtracting something in and out of the irony is

going on and on. On the basis of these differences, *Encyclopedia Britannica* divides irony into two categories: verbal and dramatic irony. In verbal irony “the real meaning is concealed or contradicted by the literal meanings of the words” and in dramatic irony there is a theatrical situation in which there is an “incongruity between what is expected and what occurs”. (390) Realizing the dynamic and complex nature of irony, in his book, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1975) Wayne C. Booth categorizes all type of ironies into stable and unstable irony. Stable irony is the irony whose ironic intention of the speaker is shared with the reader by some clues that serve the interpreter to unravel what is implied. The irony in such case provides “literary fixity” of which we can have “absolute,” “univocal” and “fixed” interpretation. The stable irony, in this sense covers all intentional, Socratic, verbal, structural, dramatic and cosmic irony which is univocal and fixed which say one thing and mean another. On the other hand the unstable irony lacks the fixity to offer the ground for fixed meaning. It is rather an attitude towards irony with the belief that there are no logos that can guarantee the fixity or determinacy of the implied meaning. It depends upon the different angles to look at it for the certainty of the meaning. So unstable irony is quite closer to the deconstructive irony. Deconstructive irony has its basis on the conceptual framework of theories of Jacques Derrida and Paul De Man which exposes the impossibility of univocal and stable meaning. The old definition of irony saying one thing and giving to understand the contrary-is superseded by unstable irony. Here now irony is saying something in a way that activates not one but endless series of subversive interpretations.

The rhetorical dimension of irony came into being in Socratic dialogue for the first time which was later known to be Socratic irony. Socratic irony refers to Socratic simulated ignorance in order to enrich his arguments. Socratic irony is engendered

from speaker's pretence 'to be ignorant ... under the guise of seeking to be taught by others. But, ultimately s/he teaches other are by "... investigating the things beneath to the earth and in the heavens...". (Muecke 9) Socratic irony is self deprecation through pretended ignorance in a discussion, feigned in order to advance the search for truth. Socratic irony hides a skeptical, non committal attitude towards some opinions lacking reason at their basis. The ironic effects of such an irony are enriched by audience's knowledge that the speaker is wiser than s/he permits himself/herself to appear. The Socratic irony was also adopted by Cicero and Quintilian.

Verbal irony is a type of trope in that the literal meaning of a statement is negated by the context so that another meaning is understood. Verbal irony is the soul of mockery and satire, but a key point is that it achieves its effect by restraint-for instant, by not making direct criticism, only implying it. Verbal irony can be self directed and have the effect of wry statement. Abrams says that "verbal irony is a statement in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed". (97) Bishop Thirlwall also has similar view with Abrams. Thirlwall sees verbal irony as "a figure which enables a speaker to convey his meaning with greater force by means of contrast between the 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'. (qtd.in Hutchens 35) The method of verbal irony is not blame by praise or praise by blame. Verbal irony incorporated into situational irony where there is reversal of power to indicate a utopian situation. Thus, verbal irony is present in saying the opposite of what is meant and thus is a device to achieve the parody/imitation of language and satire/pretence of situation.

The next type of irony is structural irony. Structural irony serves to sustain duplicity of meaning and evaluation throughout the work. It is also a widely used rhetorical weapon of enforcement. It is very much closer to verbal irony on the ground of speaker's intention. Structural irony depends on knowledge of the author's ironic intention which is shared by the reader. But it is not intended by speaker as in verbal. Invention of a naïve hero is the common feature of this irony. Naïve hero or narrator or speaker's unconquerable simplicity or stупediness leads him to persist in putting an interpretation on affairs. Such type of hero is the main participant in the story. Such type of narrator may be neither stupid, nor credulous, nor demented. He nevertheless manifests a failure of insight, viewing and appraising his own motives. In this regard Abrams says "structural irony; that is, the author, instead of using an occasional verbal irony, introduces a structural feature which serves to sustain duplicity of meaning and evolution throughout the work". (98) The use of the fallible narrator is another structural device to create irony.

Likewise Dramatic irony is a property of narration. Dramatic irony appears when the audience sees a character confidently unaware of his ignorance. The author often lets the reader/audience to know fate's real intentions at the time his characters are acting on the presumption of her pretended ones. It is achieved by lending characters maximum confidence over what they believe and act so that their inevitable reversal of the situation or the recognition of reality generates intense tragic or comic irony. The device to create dramatic irony are-(a) to present a character who unknowingly acts in a way that is inappropriate to the particular situation and (b) to present a character whose speech anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way has the character intended. In the words of M. H. Abrams

...dramatic irony involves a situation in a play or a narrative in which the audiences or reader shares with the authors knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant; in that situation ,the character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstance, or expects the opposite of what we know that the fate holds in store, or says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that the character intends”.(99)

Dramatic irony is something also called tragic irony. The ironic effect of dramatic irony depends on the author’s intention shared with audiences which the characters do not hold. Dramatic irony becomes tragic irony when the demystification of real situation leads to a “typical case involving a victim with certain fears, hopes or expectations who, acting on the basis of these, takes steps to avoid a foreseen evil or profit from a foreseen good, but his actions serve only to lock him into a casual chain that leads inevitably to his downfall”. (Muecke 69) Dramatic irony also occurs in comedy.

Cosmic irony is attributed to literary works in which a deity, or destiny, or the course of universe, is represented as though deliberately manipulating events so as to lead the protagonist to false hopes, only to frustrate and mock them. It is portrayed as a clash between human endeavors and divine villainy in tipping over human hopes and ambition. According to Muecke, the cosmic irony is “irony of the universe with man or the individual as victims”. (23) In the cosmic irony human beings become the puppet in the hand of destiny or supernatural forces. Cosmic irony is also known as irony of fate. It is found in the works of Thomas Hardy.

Romantic irony is a term introduced by Friedrich Schlegel and other German writers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries to designate a mode of dramatic or narrative writing in which the author builds up the illusion of representing reality only to shatter it by reading that the author as artist is the creator and arbitrary manipulator of the characters and their action. It is also called paradoxical irony. It has emerged out of the philosophical and aesthetic speculations about the paradoxical relationship between Nature and human beings. It is the artists distancing him from the work by expressing his awareness of the inevitable limitations of all artistic endeavors. It can express itself by the surprise intrusion by the author into the work, breaking the illusion the work is supposed to sustain. Artistic earnestness stands in contrast to the detachment and playfulness of romantic irony. Romantic irony sees the extension of application of irony from verbal phenomena to events, dramas and fate itself.

For ironologist such as Friedrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm, Ludwig Tieck and Karl Solgar, Nature is “an infinitely teeming chaos an overflowing exhaustless vital energy” being in “process of becoming” with a dialectical process of continual creation and decreation, “while human being is “the created [and] soon to be decreated” with limited “thought” and “fixed language,” becomes unable to “acquire [any] permanent intellectual experimental leverages over” the world.(Muecke 23)

Irony implies itself in the incessant paradoxes of life versus failure, and so on. In this context, no human beings can be an ironist in a true sense except as one who builds up of the illusion of reality destabilized by immediate shattering. Muecke summarizes the evolution of irony as follows:

We have seen the concept of irony enlarged in this romantic period beyond instrumental irony (someone being ironical) to include... (Things seen or presented as ironic). These observable ironies –

whether ironies of events, of character (self-ignorance, self betrayal) of situation, or of ideas (for example, the unseen inner contradiction of a philosophical system...), could be seen as a local or universal. They were all major developments, not least the development of the concept of ... cosmic irony or general irony, the irony of the universe with man or individual as a victim. (165)

Muecke saw the development of irony one step further. According to Muecke, the irony of events “turned back towards a consideration of man as an author, for a general word- irony posed the question of man’s ability to comprehend such a world and to act within it”(165-66). In the same way Friedrich Schegel sees the revelation of many on its owning the structure of the text, yet the lexeme, irony means the artists mental stance with respect to his own creations. The artist is “fully aware of the ironies inherent in the very fact of being an artist” (166).

2.3 The Politics of Irony

Irony happens in all kinds of discourse ranging from verbal, aural, visual to common speech to highly crafted aesthetic form of high art to popular culture. Irony is used and understood as a discursive practice or strategy, so the scene of irony is social and political. Irony being a pervasive discursive strategy is associated with discursive analysis- the politics of representation in the practice of cultural studies. Discursive analysis conflates irony with wider historical and cultural contexts and also examines how the knowledge that a particular discourse produces connects with power. Irony happens because of the existence of discursive communities.

The overlapping of discursive communities in general by the complex configuration of shared knowledge, belief, values and communicative strategies are the condition to make the politics of irony possible to happen. The politics of irony

comes to being because of “contact zone” of the “social spaces where different ideologies and culture meet, dash, grapple with each other often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relation of power”(Hutcheon 93). Irony is “Trans ideological” and therefore indeterminist and essentially “risky” in its meaning and politics; that it is always evaluative, with an effective “edge” that cuts its situation into hierarchy of said and unsaid values. Irony is less a creator of new communities than a function of preexisting “discursive communities”, its intentionality belongs as much to the interpreter as to the ironist and that even the ironist’s intentionality must mark itself in an interpretive “frame” that requires the unpredictable intentional activity of the interpreter.

The function of ironic meaning gets its political edge even out of the ironist’s intentional and the interpreter’s interpretative move with a certain attitude towards both the said and unsaid meanings of irony in certain discursive situation. So, the major participants in bringing about the ironic meaning in this game are the interpreter and ironist. Clarifying the distinction between an interpreters and the victim of irony,

Hutcheon further marks out that “the major players in the ironic game are indeed the interpreter and the ironist. The interpreter may or may not be in the intended addressee of the ironist’s utterance, but s/he (by definition) is the one who attributes irony and then interpreters it: in other words, the one who decides whether the utterance is irony (or not), and then what particular ironic meaning it might have” (11). But there is no guarantee that the interpreter will ‘get’ the irony in the same way as intended by addressee. Therefore, Hutcheon calls it a “risky business”. It doesn’t mean that the ironist has very little role with respect to irony. The person called the ironist who intends to set up an ironic relation between the said and the unsaid, but

may not always succeed in communicating that intention. Reading or interpreting is at once reading or interpreting life itself where we read character and value, referring to our deepest convictions. It is because of its very nature of foregrounding the politics of human agency, irony has become an important discursive strategy.

Irony's discursiveness comes out of the interpreter and the ironist as the agents who perform the act of attributing both meaning and motives, and do so in particular situation and context for a particular purpose and with particular means. Therefore this is the study which argues that "politics of irony happens because of such a discursive communicative process in which irony itself comes into being in the relation between meanings, intensions and interpretation". (13) As irony invokes the notion of hierarchy and subordination judgment and moral superiority it explicitly sets up a relationship between ironist and audience which is its political nature. So the semantic and syntactic dimension of irony cannot be treated in isolation, without keeping only "an eye on the receiver, but the other on the surrounding tension filled environments". (Collins 79) From the view point of irony as a discursive strategy, it is not simply an anti-phrastic substitution of the unsaid for its opposite, the said which is then either set aside or partially effaced. Irony happens in the realm between and including both the said and unsaid as it values both.

The ironic meaning is not then simply the unsaid meaning, and the unsaid is not always a simple inversion or opposite of said. It is always different – other than and more than said. The semantics of irony cannot be studied separately from the social, historical and cultural aspect of its contexts of development and attribution because irony happens in discourse. Issue of authority and power are encoded in that notion of discourse. Irony as a speech act involves this broader political frame for irony to come into being. Communicative exchange or discursive activities is a form

of social activity and it, therefore, involves relations of not only real but also symbolic power. Irony happens because of discursive communities already exist and provide the context for both the development and attribution of irony. We all belong simultaneously to many such communities of discourse. The multiple discursive communities to which we each differently belong can not be reduced to any single component such as class or gender. They certainly involve “openly held beliefs, but also ideologies, unspoken understandings, assumption- about what is possible, necessary, telling, essential and so on – so deeply held that they are not thought of as assumptions only”.(Fish 190) Irony maps the micro politics of power relation. So it is neither trivial nor trivializing.

The trans-ideological nature of irony makes it clear that irony can be used and has been used either to undercut or to reinforce both conservative and radical positions. To put it more explicitly, irony can be provocative when its politics is conservative or authoritarian as easily as when its politics is oppositional or subversive. It demands on who is using and attributing and at whose expense it is seen to be. The politics of irony, in this sense, at once forces a distinction between irony that “might function constructively to articulate a new oppositional position and irony that would work in a more negative and negativizing way,” where “the ironist would stand outside, in a position of power”. (16-17) The use of irony from the position of power, especially by the dominant authority generates irony’s conservative or authoritarian function. Such a use makes the irony as a weapon for negating, so it is large destructive. In this context, the notion of irony as a negation appears to be held by almost everyone who has been on the receiving end of an ironic attack or by those for whom the serious or the solemn and the univocal are the ideal. The totalitarian

regime uses or attribute irony in order to materialize dangers in the protective cover of repressive irony.

The conservative function of irony, therefore, is controlled by the one sided serious dogmatic and authoritarian cultures. It is the repressive culture's affirmative and the destructive political function of irony to force the marginal be complicit with the system. It has often been used as a weapon of central culture to dominate marginal culture to keep them obeys in their place.

Another radical Trans-ideological political function of irony, is oppositional or subversive. The oppositional functioning of irony is often connected to the view that it is a self critical, self-knowing, and self-reflective. It is used in a positive and constructively progressive way where in it is used as a powerful tool or even as a weapon in the fight against a dominant authority by demystifying or subverting the repression. Oppositional theorist like feminist, post colonialist, gay and lesbian theorist and other marginal use this function of irony. In such use, irony operates in a positive and constructively affirmative way. So, it is the mode of unsaid, the unheard. It has the potential to offer a challenge to the hierarchy of the very sites of discourse, a hierarchy based in social relationship of dominance. For Stallybrass and white, that challenges the capacity to undermine and torn upside down the "politically transformative power".(Hutch eon 30) The subversive or oppositional function of irony has become a most appropriate mode not only for politically suppressed groups but, more generally, for those with the divided allegiance that comes from their difference for the dominant norms of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual choice. Irony enables as Hutch eon further puts:

The marginalized can be heard by the center, and yet keep its critical distance and thus unbalanced and undermine. The complexity and

multivocality of signifying are seen as a means of critique of the metaphysical presupposition both of western white culture ... and also of any black notions of the transcendental black subject, intrical and whole. (31)

Subversive political function of irony has established ironic discourse “counter discourse”. (Hutcheon 184) Irony’s intimacy with the dominant discourses consists in its strength to revitalize the authority and stability in part by appropriating its power. This intimacy is what makes irony potentially an effective strategy of opposition ally since the ironized discourse can point to difference to avoid both imperial and simply oppositional single voicing. The ironized language can allow “alternative of being” through the “alternatives of saying”. (Hutcheon 31) This function of irony, therefore, is “radical and democratizing” as it gives a room for alternative reaction. The irony’s working as self-protective suggests that irony can be interpreted as a kind of defense mechanism. Thus, the irony’s politics is not only relational but also counter discursive. The counter discursive function of irony, which rests on irony’s denial over certainties by unmasking the world as an ambiguous and instable, is frequently exploited in oppositional theories. Such a function of irony’s lies in the realization of the power that lies in its potential to destabilize with critical ends and ideological contradictions so that not to let the marginal resolve into the coherent and potentially oppressive dogma.

The irony, that feminist theorists and other marginal see, as working to deprive hegemonic culture and its critics claim to naturalize or essentialist gender identities. They are said to be able to use irony as particularly potent means of critique of or resistance to patriarchal social restrictions or even essentialist claim to truth. Irony, therefore, is seen as both empowering and embleasuring. And it is often the Tran

ideological nature of irony itself that is exploited in order to recode into positive terms what the patriarchal discourse reads as a negative, in which silencing of women's voice is transformed into the willed silence of the ironic and traditional feminine manner. In this regard Hutcheon labels the feminist writer's development of irony as "IRON" "the familiar household pressing and smoothing device" because of "the appropriation of irony's transgressive, provocative and subversive potentialities into women's domains". The irony is also a "branding device, one that hurts, that marks, and that is a means of inflicting power". (36)

The dialectical power of alterity arises from the said and unsaid. The unsaid is related to the repressed, marginalized and colonized; it is not just unsaid, but unsayable within the hegemonic homogeneous discourse. But irony is a matter of unspoken understandings, which can obviously cut across professional lines. So, just as the uncanny is never "surmounted", the repressed is similarly related to the said in dialectic uncanny fashion; it can be seen as at once constitution and disruptive of any discursive structure or controlling intention. So, discursive irony, therefore, can also be linked with the question of writing alternative histories and unearthing repressed memory.

To put the whole exploration of Hutcheon's political irony in laconic terms, it is political. Both the dominant and the marginalized can appropriate its consolidating as well as subversive potentiality in their own different interests. Hutcheon says that it has an "edge" "can put people on edge" and "is decidedly edgy".(37) Both rebels and conformers use irony at each other, and both suffer from it. As D.C.Mucke reminds, the politics of irony is "like a gyroscope [with] corrective function ... that keeps life on an even keel or straight course, "restoring the balance when life is being taken too seriously "stabilizing the unstable" but also destabilizing "the excessive

stable” where the ironic observer’s awareness of himself or herself as an observer tends to enhance his/her feeling of freedom and induce a mood of satisfaction”. (4) The irony, as Conway and Seery state, “become ‘political’... when [it is] performed in the service of ‘life’” .(2) Irony, in this way, functions as a guide and a disciplinarian. There is much in every personal life, which like wild shoots must be pruned away, and irony is an excellent surgeon. Indeed, irony intensifies or reduces all socio-political ills.

III

Textual Analysis

3.1 Irony over American Troops' Absurd and Futile Struggle

Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* brilliantly unravels the ironic mode to foreground the absurdity and futile struggle of common soldier during the war.

Mailer, while ironizing the heroic war, conveys the political message of absurd and futile struggle that the common soldier has to face during the war, has used irony as a vehicle. Though the war is supposed to be heroic, but on the depth it is the political representation of society and nation to fulfill their selfishness. War gives only anxiety, alienation horror and frustration. War is the excessive exercise of power, the use of force to cause physical harm, death and destruction; the causing of severe mental or emotional harm through brainwash. Only output of war is the naked and the dead people. But all these things were curtailed in the name of dignity and heroism.

Mailer, himself has also served as common soldier, so drawing upon his own experience as an infantry man, he takes great care to highlight and ironies the brutality of combat, physical and mental abuse suffered by soldiers throughout the war.

In the novel, Mailer presents his characters alienated, lack of mutual coordination and understanding. They are failure in mutual cooperation and support to gain the common goal or dignity. There is ideological solidarity between them and are badly victimized by power morality. Mailer exposes all these things to ironies the American platoon's absurd and futile struggle which give them only failure and frustration.

In the novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, every character finds himself alienated and troubled from the situation and the world in such a way that he can not have any sense of heroic adventure. Not only the common soldiers but the second class officers

like Hearn and Croft also becomes the innocent victim of such problems. When Croft failed to control his platoon he realizes the sense of failure and alienation. Similarly, the liberal lieutenant Hearn has also been alienated with his liberal attitude does not work in the army. In the same way, the common soldiers are also badly victimized by the problems of alienation. One of the common soldiers Wilson feels alienated when he is trapped in the jungle by the enemies; he becomes hopeless and feels very weak. For an hour, he didn't awake because of extreme fear and at that time he felt completely alone. As the narrative goes:

Wilson didn't awake for half an hour. He came too slowly, floating back to consciousness uncertainty ...For a long time he laid still, his hand under his belly to catch the trickling of the blood. He had realized for the first time that he was completely alone. Just take off an' leave a man. He remembered the Japs who had been talking a few feet from him, but he could no longer hear them. (402)

The above-mentioned lines express and expose the fact that Wilson's alienated, pathetic and absurd condition created by the bloody war. Minetta, who is also a dominant character of the novel, is in hospital after being injured in the war, doesn't want to go back to the battle field. But rather wants to remain alone in the hospital. He wants to be alienated from war and his friends. Such desire of being alienated is caused by the brutality of war.

While ironizing the war, Mailer not only exposes the sense of alienation but also the sense of anxiety and despair that is caused by the war. Such sense of anxiety and despair enters into the mind when a person cannot see the ray of hope in his life. In the novel, every character is not been filled with the sense of heroism but suffered from fear and uncertainty. For the soldiers there is no more choice. Only the choices

they have are death and life. They have to struggle hard, full of pain and anxiety in order to live. Mailer exposes the platoon's suffering and anxiety and uncertainty in the beginning lines of the novel:

NOBODY COULD SLEEP. WHEN MORNING CAME, assault craft would be lowered and a first wave of troops would ride through the surf and charge ashore on the beach at Anopopei. All over the ship, all through the convey, there was knowledge that in a few hours some of them were going to be dead. (7)

These lines clearly show the uncertainty in the life of soldiers of reconnaissance platoon. This has created anxiety and suffering in the soldiers. If we enter into the common soldier's life the situation is more pathetic. In order to exit the war, most of the common soldiers have to struggle hard bearing all kinds of pain and suffering.

Such kind of pathetic condition of the soldier is seen in these lines:

Everything was new and they were measurable. They seemed to be wet all the time, and no matter how they set up there pup tents, they would blow down during the night. They could find way to anchor their short tent pins in the sand. When the rain started, they could discover no alternatives to drawing of their feet and hoping their blankets would not become drenched again. In the middle of the night they would be wakened for guard, and would stumble through the moonlight to sit numbly in a wet sandy hole starting at every sound. (39)

These lines shows the pathetic and miserable condition of common soldiers who are struggling hard bearing all kinds of pains and sufferings. When the platoon falls to the ambush, Wilson goes behind a rock and throws himself in the tall grass. He had lain there and was wounded. Mailer presents his pathetic condition in the following lines

that accentuates the gruesome picture of the war which brings only havoc in the society.

The bullet hit him in the stomach with the force of a blow to the solar plexus...He rubbed his belly, planning to get up and rush..."Yeah, Yeah, I'm here," he mumbled. He thought he had spoken loudly, but it was no more than a whisper...Am goanna die, Wilson told himself .A cold charge of fear awakened his body and he whimpered for a moment. He pictured the bullet tearing through his body, ripping apart the flesh inside, and he felt nausea. A little bile welled out of his mouth.' All that poison inside me is gonna be meassin' aroun' now, jus' killin' me".But he drifted away again, settled into the warm lapping content of his drowsiness and weakness. (400)

The above mentioned lines shows Wilson's pathetic condition caused by the war.

In the novel, the General Cummings as having strong belief in power and order is a reactionary. He opines that only good strategy and plan help to win the war. On the contrary, platoon's lieutenant Hearn believes in liberty and freedom. Having differences in their ideologies Cumming always hates and humiliates Hearn. In one incident General forces Hearn to pick up the cigarette which he has tossed on to the floor with the aim to humiliate Hearn. That incident terribly hurts him, "he lay face down on his cot, burning with the shame and self disgust and an impossible impotent anger".(242) It shows a sense of humiliation in Hearn.

Besides, when Cummings realizes that Hearn's liberal behavior will make the troop's hate him because of his authoritative thinking, he assigns him to recon the platoon with the minimal chance of success and with the hope that he will be killed

there. This event actualizes the lack of mutual co-operation and support between the General and the lieutenant.

In the similar manner, when Cummings sends Croft's platoon as reconnaissance platoon lead by Hearn instead of Croft, Croft develops a sense of anger towards Hearn. In one incident during their recon mission, Croft sends Martinez ahead to scout out the trail. However, Croft orders Martinez to report the trails condition to him and not to Hearn. Martinez finds out that the Japanese have ambushes set up on the trail, returns, and reports the dangerous situation to Croft. Croft, knowing what could happen, keeps the report to him, and tells Hearn that the path is clear. Hearn leads the squad down the path and falls into the ambush and killed there. Croft sets up Hearn to be killed. Hearn was lying on his back and Croft feels a sense of relief. Lack of mutual cooperation, help and support in the army is clearly visible through this incident.

In the novel, Mailer not only shows the American platoons lack in mutual cooperation but also shows that they have will to power and they are badly victimized by power-morality. Here, the leading army officer of American reconnaissance platoon, General Cummings is the embodiment of the will to power. He is distinctly drawn character in the novel. As the novel goes:

...the only morality of the future is power morality, and a man who can not find his adjustment to it is doomed. There is one thing about power; it can be flow from the top to down. When there are little surges of resistance at the middle levels, it merely calls for more people to be directed down ward, to burn it out... you can consider the Army, as a preview of the future. (255)

The above lines show regarding the General's idea about power. Power is the love of his life, and he finds it as a preview of future. For him, individual human beings are no more than chess pieces to be manipulated. He believes that those persons who have power morality get easily adjusted in the society. For him equality is a myth, for the "average" man always sees him in relation to other men as either inferior or superior. For General, fear and discipline play major role and these are essential for the military. For him, there is no any space for liberty and humanity rather the effectiveness of army power, punishment is absolutely necessary in war. Another strong character sergeant Croft is like General Cummings. He is totally self-centered soldier, Mailer closes sergeants "time machine" portrait with an emphatic statement, "he was efficient and strong and usually empty and his main cast of mind was a superior contempt towards nearly all other men he hated weakness and he loved practically nothing. There was a crude informed vision in his soul but he was rarely conscious of it." (124) Like General, Croft believes in an ordered universe and in himself, he "had a deep unspoken belief that whatever made things happen was on his side." (9) Croft also wants the same thing that the General wants "power". Croft believes in order. He is driven to obey orders and feels that disobeying or even resenting an order is immoral." (440) His morality, like the general's, is a power-morality. Another thing is that lieutenant Robert Hearn, a liberal person believes in liberty, freedom and dignity over will to power and power-morality. So, after being humiliated by Cummings he feels obsessed however, he cannot resist to it because of the power-morality.

The General considers Hearn's ideals to be leading. Hearn claims to be an egalitarian whose concern is that the enlisted men are treated fairly. When he realized that the troops will hate him sooner or later despite what he does and that Croft is an

effective leader because he is hated he becomes the circumstance seems to prove the general's "fear ladder" perspective on life. When Hearn actually has the opportunity to exercise power that is , to led his platoon towards the victory, he discovers that he enjoys it, "there was an emotion in it somewhere as sweet as any thing he had ever known." (513) It shows even he had the will to power. In the novel, not only the major characters but also common soldiers also have the will to power and they are badly victimized by the power morality and authority but they are compelled to obey and cannot resist because of power morality.

The novel clearly shows the hostility between soldiers and officers that often eclipses the sense of ideological solidarity. Mailer's fighting men have characterized officers as if they are anti-democratic, anti-American even fascist. Red Valens, the most outspoken member of the platoon, provides a nice summation of collective attitude: "they ain't a general in the world is any good. They're all sons of bitches." (104) Not only are they reluctant to perform their duties, but they frequently question the purpose of the war itself. "What have I got against the god dams Japs?" complains one man. "You think I care if they keep fug gin jungle? What's it to me if Cummings gets another star?" (128) Private Rooth, one of the Jewish soldiers in the platoon, offers an even more ominous analysis of military hierarchy: "did you notice how they treated the officers? They step-in staterooms when we were jammed in the hole like pigs. It's to make them feel superior, a chosen group. That is the same device, which Hitler uses while making Germans think they're superior." (52-53) In the novel, the fighting men were not fighting for noble principles as "freedom", "justice", and "democracy", but because of fear and personal shame, both instilled through a constant regimen of physical and mental abuse due to meaninglessness of the war.

Mailer, while ionizing the war, brings his character's indifferent attitude towards war. He also exposes the inner desire of common soldier to be away from war. One of the character in the novel, Minetta does not want to get back again in the war field after being injured. Minetta, who is sent to hospital after his injury and is alarmed when the doctor said he would be able to return to his unit the following day. He interferes with his wound to make it worse in the hope of delaying his release from hospital. He desire to remain in the hospital and for that purpose he decides to pretend to be mentally ill, so that he will not have to return to the war.

In mailer's novel, soldiers are obsessed in their own personal life though they are far away from their homes. They do not care about war or about their mission. One of the soldiers, Brown, is an insecure young man who doubts his ability as a soldier. He is preoccupied with the thought of his wife cheating on him while he is at the front. He doesn't believe his wife and always worried about it. "why, when I think of my wife fooling around probably right this minute, while I'm lying here sweating out tomorrow, I begin to get mad...mad."(17)these lines show that Brown feels insecure and all the time he realizes the lack of his own wife and he feels bitter. During the war, he is more concerned about his wife rather than the war.

In *The Naked and the Dead*, chance plays major role through which the battle is won, but not by their heroic effort. Before the reconnaissance platoon can return, the Japanese forces crumble and they are able to secure the campaign's victory not by their struggle but by chance. On the island of Anopopei, chance is to decide the result of human planning. For example, the battle is won by chance. Destruction of main Japanese supply dump and the platoons' ascent of mount Anake are thwarted by their chance encountered with hernest's nest. For this Mailer writes:

The hornets perused the men down the jungle wall and the rock ramp, goading them on in a last frenzy of effort. They fled with surprising agility, jumping down from the rock to rock ripping through the foliage that impeded them. They felt nothing but the savage flick of the hornets, the muted jarring sensation of scrabbling from rock to rock. As they ran they flung away everything that slowed them. They tossed away their rifles, and some of them worked loose their pack and dropped them. Dimly they sensed that if they threw away enough possessions they would not be able to continue the patrol. (545)

The above lines clearly show that it is the chance which played vital role for American reconnaissance platoon due to which they get victory. Their struggle has no meaning at all because it created nothing. The grand war strategies and soldiers heroic struggle brought nothing. They ate victorious by chance not by so-called war strategies and heroic struggle. Indeed, by the end of the novel, Mailer depicts the platoon as possessing conflicting emotions. There is the unavoidable let down and introspection that follows any great enterprise and Mailer says that they all feel pretty much the same way. The serving men are aboard; the boats have picked them up from the beach and are contemplating a continuing treadmill of boredom, misery and fear. By the end of novel, the soldiers feel as if they are sleepwalking through history having been conscious of the war around them. As Mailer writes about them:

By afternoon most of them wert awake. They were still terribly fatigued by they could not sleep any longer. Their bodies ached and they felt no desire to walk about the narrow confines of the troop well, but still they were subtly restless. The patrol was over and yet they had so little anticipate, the months and years a head were very palpable to

them. They were still and the treadmill; the misery, the ennui, the dislocated hour. Things would happen and time would pass, but there was no hope, anticipation. There would be nothing but the deep cloudy dejection that over cast everything. (547)

These lines demonstrate that, the soldier's life is packed with the trial, trouble and tribulation. In fact, they don't have any sense of heroism as a guiding principle for the war.

3.2 General Cummings as an ironical winner:

In mailer's novel, General Cummings, the foremost army officer of the American exploration platoon believes in power, order and morality is the ironic as it contradicts with the expectation of the readers. He is the man having hunger for power and it is the love of his life. He only thinks good war approach and plan that help win the war. So all the time, he is busy in commanding and making fighting plan and strategy. He is an effective military man of considerable intelligence and self-created prophet, who simply cannot manipulate the platoon and accomplish the victory because it is achieved by chance but not by his good war strategy and plan.

In developing of the novel, General Cummings represents the illusion that one can control the force of social or historical process. He aspires and strives to make his will manifest through his control of the army. His 'molding' of the army named the invasion is proof of his "power". He is very old-fashioned and believes in the use of power to structure a society. The structure of the army serves as his model how society should be run. He commands in the name of his faith, order and authority, breaking men's spirits and by destroying their wills. He's presented in primary rational terms, and the things he believes are his emotional and highly informed logic and frightening. He is reactionary in nature and believes that Hitler was right in

predicting a long ascendancy for the reactionaries. In a rational level, he persists in sharpening and maintaining the class distinction existing between officer and enlisted men because he knows that effective command is made up of bitterness and fear from below. He is totally obsessed with power, so he says, “the army functions best when you’re frightened of the above you, and contemptuous of your subordinates.” (139)

In the length and breadth of the novel, Cummings always talks about power and world created by it. While talking with Hearn, he discusses about war and the process of historical energy. He describes two types of energy. As he says, “there are countries which have latent powers, latent resources, they are full of potential energy and as kinetic energy, a country is organization, coordinated effort, your epithetic fascism.” (153) And about the purpose of war he says, “Historically the purpose of this war is to translate America’s potential energy into kinetic energy, the concept of fascism, far sounder than communism.” (253) In this sense, he is the power obsessed person, a true representative figure of American government.

Cummings believes that fear and restraint play major role in the function of army and it is indispensable for him. For the usefulness of army power punishment is also necessary and about it he says, “If punishment is at all proportional to the offense, then power becomes watered [...] the only way you generate the proper attitude of awe and obedience is through immense and disproportionate power.” (256) For this purpose he commands being authoritarian. So, the other members of the platoon show their hate red and dissatisfaction towards him. One of the common soldiers says, “What have I got against the god dams Jap? You think I care if they keep this fug gin jungle? What’s to me if Cummings gets another star?”(102) It shows that the common soldiers do not like him and they show their sense of hatred towards him. So, Cummings is unable to get full support and collaboration from his soldiers.

Cummings sense of failure grows out of his recognition that men can not be controlled as he thought they could. But still he hopes that he could control his platoon by his power. Mailer characterized him “there was every thing he wanted to control; everything and he could not direct even six thousand men. Even a single man had been able to balk him.” (238) This power and belief is endangered when his grand tactic and order becomes weak at Toyaku line the sense of failure enters into his mind. There, the platoon waste there time in not worth mentioning tasks. This worthless task makes him realize his failure. Mailer exposes Cummings’ failure and frustration in these lines:

The process at most times was unbelievable to him and he was suffering the amazement and terrier of a driver who finds his machine directing it’s self, starting and halting when it desires. He had heard of this, military love was filled withy such horror tales, but he had never imagined it would happen to him. It was incredible; for five weeks troops had functioned like an extension of his own body and now, apparently with out, cause, or at least through causes too entangled for him to discover, he had lost his sensitive control. At night he would lie sleepless on his cot, suffering an almost unbearable frustration, there were times when he was burning with the importance of his rage. One night he had lain for hours like an epileptic immersing from a coma, his hands clasping on clapping endlessly, his eyes staring fixedly at the deem out lines of the ridgepole of his tent.(237)

These lines show that Cummings feels himself cheated and that he had lost control over the platoon. This self knowing hurts Cummings and he could not sleep at night.

When Cummings realizes his failure, he begins to recall his own transgression and feels anxiety and dejection. It was Cummings who gave the assignment to Hearn to recon the platoon with minimal chances of success and ultimately he was killed. It was because of Cummings' hate and because of Hearn's noninterventionist attitude. General thinks that freedom and liberty is a matter of personal reliability. So he always humiliates Hearn and assigns him to recon the platoon. But when he heard the news of Hearn's death, he became sad and felt helpless and hapless for this event. As the narrative goes:

He knew why he had punished him; he knew it was not accidental that he had assigned Hearn to recon. Only...for an instance when he first heard the news of Hearn's death, it had hurt him, wrenched his heart with a cruel first. He had almost grieved for Hearn, and then it had been covered over by something else, something more compiled. For days when ever Cummings thought of the lieutenant he would feel a mingled pain and depression. (555)

These lines show Cummings self realization of his misdeed which caused failure and frustration in him.

The sense of failure, that Cummings feels when he got information of the war being won by chance and by sheer accident. While the platoon is on the mission, the main battle rises up. At that time, Cummings has traveled to speak with his seniors. Reports tickle in that the Japanese have abandoned their defenses. For this victory, there is no significance of Cummings understanding of power and his war strategies. But it was an mere accident: As the novel goes:

Astonishing reports continued to come into Cumming's desk. It was discovered from questioning the few prisoners that for over a month

the Japanese had been on half rations, and towards the end there had been almost no food at all. A Japanese supply dump had been destroyed by artillery five weeks before, and no one had known it. Their medical facilities had been exhausted; there were portions of the Toyaku line which had been in disrepair for six or eight weeks. Finally they discovered that the Japanese ammunition had been almost depleted a week before the last attack had begun. (554)

This information stunned Cummings and he became disheartened. He realizes that the war is won by chance, not by his strategies. He is presented as a meek and minor soldier.

He realizes his personal failure and futile struggle. The victory becomes senseless and worthless to him. The war and the victory is insignificant and futile to him because he lost his existence. He is regarded as trivial and worthless army. He is no longer important for the war. His active and heroic struggle became futile in result.

Hence, the general Cummings is an ironical winner. All the time he became busy in making war strategy and planning. But at last all these turn out to be useless. His authoritative thought, commands and belief that fear and discipline plays major role in the functioning of army that gave him nothing. But it developed hatred towards him. His common soldiers begin to hate him. He didn't get full support from his common soldiers, so he is defeated. The victory of platoon was his strong desire. All the time he was busy in making war strategies and planning. But at last all these things became useless because war was won by chance which was all beyond the human control but not by his strategies and planning. For what he struggled hard made him failure. His strong sense of hatred towards liberalism killed Hearn. The

entire task became worthless and absurd to him. All his attempts, beliefs and practices became ironic at last. So, he was an ironical winner.

3.3 Failure and Frustration of American Platoon Cause by the Gap between Worthiness and Absurdity:

In *The Naked and the Dead*, failure and frustration occupy a great space. Here, each and every characters of American platoon is suffering from sense of failure and frustration that is caused by the gap between their deeds worthiness and its absurd result. Throughout the novel, all of them struggle hard bearing all kinds of pain and miseries for nothingness. All their deeds bring nothing only failure and frustration which is the central part of novel.

In the novel, the protagonist General Cummings belief in power and order is a reactionary. He is an effective military man of considerable intelligence. He commands his platoon in the name of order and authority. He always talks about power and world created by it. He is reactionary and persists in maintaining the class distinction existing between officers and enlisted men. He is totally power-obsessed and thinks that only good war strategies and proper planning help to win the war. So, all the time he is busy in commanding and making war strategy. But in contrast, the war is won by chance and seer accident but not by his good war strategies and proper planning. This brings the sense of defeat, failure and frustration in him. Information of winning the war by chance made General realize his personal failure and defeat. All the time, he became busy in making war strategies and practicing them. But at last all these things became useless. Thus, the gap between Cummings worthless task and its absurd result developed the sense of ironical reversal in Cummings.

Another important character sergeant Croft also thinks in the manner of general. He rules the platoon with an iron hand, cowing every one. He is also hungry

of power and believes in order and ordered society that is military. The result of Crofts' failure and frustration are some what ambiguous too. There are three folds. First when the platoon finally returns to the beach to wait for their boat, Croft is troubled by the relief he feels deep within himself and he was bothered by the unadmitted knowledge that he had found a limit to his hunger. Secondly, on landing Croft as the platoon is returning to their bivouac, Croft comes to the realization that he had failed. Yet, finally, he has failed because he is lacking both self-awareness and concern for others. Thus, Croft's failure and frustration grows out because of the gap between his thinking and reality which brought absurdity in his life.

Similarly, another character lieutenant Robert Hearn believes in freedom and liberty. He thinks that, to gain people's support one should be liberal and co-operative. Hearn's ideology can not work in the military and he is killed by the contrast between his liberal thinking and authoritative thinking of Cummings and Croft. His liberal attitude brought incongruous result to him.

Not only the major characters but also common soldiers have sense of failure. Throughout the novel they struggle hard. They have different ideologies and choices but they did not work in war. They are compelled to struggle hard. Though they struggle hard but it means nothing to them. At last, they get victory by chance but not by their struggle. This brings the sense of failure and frustration in them because of the gap between the worthless struggle and absurd victory.

In this novel, Mailer uses irony to foreground the brutality of war and meaninglessness. The protagonist, General Cummings' heroic struggle, his effective commands and war strategies becomes meaningless, useless because war is won by chance and by accidents. This causes a sense of alienation, failure and frustration in Cummings. In the same way, other characters also struggle hard bearing all kinds of

suffering but at last all it becomes meaningless and they simply get the death of their friends, alienation, failure and frustration. Victory for them is a matter of useless and meaningless.

IV

Conclusion

It is almost impossible to arrive at a conclusion in any literary work in general and widely-acclaimed work like *The Naked and the Dead* in particular. The power of Norman Mailer this novel lies in the fact that it has drawn the attention of number of readers and critics from the very outset of its publication. Though there are several readings of this text, the present study has drawn a distinct conclusion through the application of irony.

Mailer, while ironizing the war, brings his character's indifferent attitude towards war. He also expresses and exposes the inner desire of common soldiers to be away from war. The sense of failure and frustration caused by havoc created out by war also strikes at the mailer's ironic intention in the novel. Beside that, Mailer has presented all of his characters as having alienated, without mutual coordination, and understanding. They are failure in mutual cooperation and support to gain the common goal or dignity. There is ideological solidarity between them and are badly victimized by power morality.

In the novel, Mailer externalizes the seemingly heroism of all the members of platoon to ironize the American platoon's absurd and futile struggle which give them only failure and frustration rather than the sense of bravery and dignity. As a whole what one can say is that Mailer's fighting men routinely characterize the officer class as antidemocratic, anti American and even fascist. Here Mailer's characters are divided into two folds. One who practices real democratic ideals while other practices antidemocratic, even fascist ideals. In the novel, Mailer's fighting men are not in the battlefield in the sense of truth but are obsessed with their personal life. They are not

fighting for novel principles as “freedom”, “justice” and “democracy” but only to exit from war and because of the fear or sense of personal shame.

General Cummings is a leading character of the novel who holds the officer of the American reconnaissance platoon believes in power and only thinks good war strategy and plan helps to win the war. So, he spends most of his time in commanding and making war strategy. But at last all these things turn out to be useless. His authoritative thought, command and belief that fear and discipline plays major role in the functioning of army developed hatred towards him. He became unable to get full support from his common soldier. The victory of platoon was his strong desire and he spends all his time to achieve it. But at last these things became useless because war was won by chance which was all beyond the human control but not by his efforts. So, this gap between his worthless task and its absurd result developed the sense of reversal in him.

In the same way other characters such as Lieutenant Robert Hearn, sergeant Croft, Minetta, Wilson etc. have the same kind of failure and frustration which is caused by the havoc brought out by war. Hearn’s liberal attitude did not worked in the platoon and that brought incongruous result to him. Croft’s lack of self awareness and concern for others made him failure and frustrated. In the novel Mailer only exposes the fragmented mentalities of his character. With that fragmented mentality how heroism can be achieved? War only brings alienation, fragmentation, sense of heroism and dignity can be achieved through war.

Thus the researcher concludes that Mailer ironizes the heroic struggle for dignity by accentuating the gap existing between worthiness and absurdity of American platoon.

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