

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Futility of War in Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*

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Abstract

Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* dramatizes the protagonist General Cummings, and common Soldier's futile existential struggle in war. Cummings' heroic struggle and effective military techniques becomes futile because the war is won by chance and coincidence. The victory becomes worthless to him. It causes him a sense of failure and he realizes his futile struggle which gave nothing except pain, suffering, death and depression. Still he gives continuity to his futile task. Like Cummings, common soldiers are also condemned to fight repeatedly though the war has no meaning.

Contents

	Page
I Introduction	1-10
General	1
Critical Responses on <i>The Naked and the Dead</i>	6
II. Modern Dilemma and Existential Crisis	11-31
Modern Dilemma	11
Alienation and Fragmentation	15
Existential Crisis	18
Kierkegaard, Faith and Existence	20
Nietzsche and the Dead God	21
Heidegger, Being and Existence	24
Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism	26
Camus and the Absurd	28
III. Futility of War	32-53
Alienation	32
Will to Power and Morality	37
Anxiety and Despair	42
Absurdity and futile Struggle	46
Failure Frustration	59
IV. Conclusion	54-56
Works Cited	

I Introduction

General

Narman Mailer, a novelist, nonfiction writer, essayist, journalist, social critic, screenwriter, and a public persona, was born in Long Branch, New Jersey on January 3, 1923. While at Harvard, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in aeronautical engineering in 1943. Mailer begins writing in earnest, contributing to the "Advocate" working at his first two novels, and winning in 1941 "Story Magazine's" annual college fiction contest, his interest in literature especially in fiction grew even before his graduation. He practiced multiple careers including as a producer, director and actor in film, rifleman and artillery observer in U.S. Army in the Second World War before he turned to writing devotedly. When Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* was published in 1948, it earned overwhelming popular and critical acclaim and made him a great writer. But Mailer had to struggle a lot before he got the recognition in his literary career. Even today after garnering numerous literary awards, including the National Book Award and two Pulitzer Prizes and after being repeatedly mentioned as a contender for the Nobel Prize, Mailer was relentlessly criticized by detractors for his views on sex, violence and politics as he was applauded by admirers for his bold experimentation. Some of his early novels like *Barbary Shore* and *The Deer Park* were not given much credit even by the publishers though he had already established himself with *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). In 1959, Mailer published *Advertisements for Myself*, a collection of essays, letters and fiction on the subject of politics, sex and drugs.

Mailer's *An American Dream* (1965) and *Why Are we in Vietnam* (1967) are nominated for National Book Award. During the 60s he also developed a hybrid literary form, combining fiction and nonfiction narrative in the *Armies of the Night* (1968) which won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award and brought him both popular and critical acclaim. Mailer returned to a book of the same intense proportion as *The Naked and the Dead* with the *Executioner's Song* (1979), a non fiction novel on the life and execution of convicted murder Gary Gilmore. In addition to these books, Mailer also had written, produced, directed and acted in several films. *Wild 90* (1967), which Mailer produced and directed was an adaptation of his book *The Deer Park*. His second film, *Beyond the Level* (1968) received positive reviews but did not draw audiences, and his third film, *Maid Stone* (1971), based on *The Armies of the Night* received mixed reviews. In his recent work *Why Are We at War* (2003), he criticized George w. Bush and his quest for empire. Mailer wrote number of books based of various subject matters and is regarded as one of the great writer of his generation.

Mailer has a variety of subject matters from politics to war and racism. Michael Glenday listed his writing in terms of political attachments. For him Mailer was "one of the most politically engaged writer to have emerged in the United States after world war II and one of his greatest achievements is to have translated political crisis into moral and spiritual term" (6). These lines suggest that mailer writes about the contemporary political situation of his time. Because of the great destruction of world war, religious values, morality and human belief

is destroyed. These contemporary issues are captured in Mailer's works. Richard foster writes, "War is his external subject matter in *The Naked and the Dead*; but his internal theme is the "crisis in human values" - identity, humanity, man, and the nature of their enemies in our time" (10). His novels present a hopeless society with institutional, sexual and natural violence. So, crisis of humanity, degeneration of human value in American society, existential crisis, power politics, disillusionment of American Dream, and psychic effect of war on the people are the major thematic concern of mailer's work. Barry H. Leeds analyses his works interms 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). That shows the problems faced by the individual because of the destruction of war. He writes about the psychological, cultural and historical aspects of the American society. Harold Bloom characterizes mailer as "a historian of the moral consciousness of his era, and as the representative writer of his generation" (48). Mailer was never satisfied with U.S. foreign policy and growing barbarism in American culture. Carol and Walter Benn Michael pointed out that Mailer has depicted "the psychic narrow of American culture and the growing vulgarism in modern life" (qtd. in McCann15-16). Mailer says that writing does not visualize only what is obvious and general, but also deals with the deeper and inner parts of a society and individual must be given a focus. He writes about the American culture, world war 11 and other outstanding features of the time of post war era. He also 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 honour still he is also criticized by the feminist for his folly treatment of female characters and open sex in his writings.

Mailer is a follower of Hemingway for presenting a gallery of characters, in a bold and innovative style. Kathryn, Vanspanckeven writes, "Mailer is able to change his style and subject matter many times. In his appetite for experience, vigorous style, and dramatic public persona, he follows in the tradition of Earnest Hemingway. His ideas are bold and innovative" (106). 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 writings. Written in Journalistic details, vivid description of the agony and triumph of army life along with flashback that tell the story of each individual characters and written in third person narration are some of the technical and stylistic devices of mailer's writings. Barry H. Leeds remarks, "Another device used periodically by mailer is the chorus, by which in a stylized manner he is able effectively to introduce the opinions of many enlisted man on a single topic within a short space" (16). These lines show that mailer, through technical devices also shows the contemporary social reality. Raymond Rosenthal expresses his view on Mailer and his writing technique as "actually his novels deal with a close group of characters as *Withering Heights* because emotional and psychic presentation of character's behaviour is one dominant aspect in his writing" (Curly 271). As a novelist his prose is powerful but plain, complex in theme yet very near to reality.

Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* is a war novel which shows the futility of war. It is the story of a handful of exhausted soldiers who are charged with an impossible and futile mission on the Japanese fictitious Island Anopope from which few will return alive. The novel has no particular hero; the American Reconnaissance platoon led by General Edward Cummings goes to the Island to fight against the Japanese army. They suffer from anxiety, alienation, horror and frustration and find absurd life during the war that is senseless still they struggle hard and at last the platoon is able to capture the island by chance. Though they got victory by chance but it has no meaning at all because of their absurd condition friend death and useless struggle. From the war Mailer learned the futility of human condition and this novel is a concrete representation of human weakness and of the society created by such weakness. The tragic title of the novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, symbolizes the crisis in human value, religion, morality human fate and identity in our time.

This text is focused more on the existentialism and Mailer as a novelist deals with absurd human condition and the human futile struggle in this absurd world. Albert Camu's concept of "absurdity" and Nietzschean concept of "will to power" and some other existentialist ideas are major focused areas in the text. These observations are oriented to the question: why the soldiers struggle hard bearing all kinds of pains, sufferings even at the risk of death and violence for the futile war? The basic hypothetical solution for this problem is assumed that the novel presents the character's heroic fighting bearing all kinds of pains sufferings, anxieties, frustrations and horror for futile war whose root cause is for existence.

Therefore, the study does not focus much on racial and political issues. It rather focuses on the concept of existence or absurdity and its role in shaping character's activities and their behaviour. However, the writer's biography and political ideology does not need exploration in this existential interpretation of the text where characters are the centre of the study.

Critical Responses on *The Naked and the Dead*

The Naked and the Dead, the first novel by Norman Mailer has remained something of an enigma to the literary critics since its publication in 1948. There are some alleged evidences that are meant to prove the novel's meaning in terms of Mailer's biography, personal political ideology, contemporary situation and culture and so many others. The early responses of the text and novelist by the reviewers and critics were based on Mailer's own political affair, personal war experience and the contemporary socio-political situation. Because Norman Mailer himself was something of an enigma for the contemporary world as he was breaking away from the convention and norms. There may be no better example of the way the world has changed around Norman Mailer than the recent critical esteem showered on his writings and his world view.

Deeply rooted in the naturalist and realist vein with which Mailer's career began. *The Naked and the Dead* has attracted a number of responses from the literary critics, not all of them in favour of it. One of the powerful experimental fiction critics of the post war American literature Josephine Hendin comments.

Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* dealt with the fight, in World War II, for an imaginary Pacific island, Anopopei. Using the

traditional framework 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 issues of ambition, appetite, and individual strength. (224)

This answer proves that the novel is written in the naturalistic tone that shows the struggle which is based on power relation. Post war American writers wrote novels on the theme of emotion and fascination with aggression. He analyzes the novel in terms of violence and destruction in war. He says that hunger for power, drug addiction, sexual humiliation, bravado and violence are captured in Mailer's novel. Because of the aggression of Cummings' anger, Hearn is sent to head a platoon on a mission with minimal chances of success and he is killed there.

Mailer has also shown prodigious talent through extra-literary involvement in film making, politics and controversial social issues. He is able to capture his personal political ideology in his writing. Leo Brandy listed *The Naked and the Dead* in terms of political attachment. He says that this novel gives more focus on the ideological 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 real central character, certainly no hero, and a plot that focused less on the war with the Japanese than 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 John M. Kinder analyzes *The Naked and the Dead* from Mailer's biography and his personal experience. According to him, Mailer himself was involved in Second World War and he is able to reflect the realistic depiction of World War II and their physical and mental torture of the common soldiers through his personal experience as an infantry man during the world War II. 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 II. Drawing upon his own experience as an infantry man, mailer takes great care to high-light the brutality of combat and physical and mental abuse suffered by common soldiers through out the war. (3)

Mailer also gives the American literary continuum especially established by the 30s novel. In the novel, he shows the social ill and plight of the individual which is similar with the novels of great depression to some extent. Barry H. Leeds analyzes *The Naked and the Dead* from the contemporary social ills and the problems faced by the individuals. He saw pessimism in American society because of the great depression, frustration, alienation, hopelessness, and the plight of the characters. He says:

The Naked and the Dead, drawing it's subject matter different from that war, proceeds on the two levels: the sickness of society and the flawed nature of individuals which engenders and perpetuates that sickness. Mailer's vision of American society as it is represented in

the American army is one of object pessimism. In conjunction with his treatment of individual soldiers and officers, it more closely approaches despair than any novel he has written since. (10)

Another critic Frederick R. Karl finds 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 character's conflict with machine or fate. Individual problem and struggle for survival 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 Passos, Norris, possibly Conrad and Melville. The focus was man versus machine, or fate; man as the butt of whatever lies in store for him, or ruled by ideologies he can not comprehend. Victory, if it comes, is the result of blunders, chance, even misadventure, in this respect. All this Mailer 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)

Commenting upon *The Naked and the Dead* Daniel Spicehandler 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, his world is indeed a world stripped of hope. Within this hopelessness, however, is the germ 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, "neant". The noda of the early Hemingway is at least clouded in aromatic idealism gone sour. Mailer's world is a world stripped of hope. (36)

Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* stands as one of the most powerful books of the post war era because of varieties of criticism and opinions, it has aroused among the literary persons. A fiction, as a form of art, is presented to the reader in the form of word. So, it is open to multiplicity of interpretation. The raw material for any kind of interpretation is language of the text. The language can be twisted to focus on some particular points so that numerous interpretation to a text could be offered. Therefore, the researcher is going to interpret the novel from the existential perspective which is also the dominant pattern of the text.

II. Modern Dilemma and Existential Crisis

Modern Dilemma

The life of modern Europeans is more complex than that of previous age. The consequences of the first and Second World Wars gave rise to new thinking and modes in the diverse areas of life and literature. As a result they started to look at themselves and their civilization from a different points of views. The belief in the stability and security of life and civilization proved to be illusive. Human mind was ruled by anxiety, absurdity and uncertainty; reason could not drive away pervasive signs of darkness, ignorance and injustice. The intellectuals began to feel that they were living in a broken world in which old values seemed beyond recovery. Literary world was also not untouched by this turmoil because literature is the product of society and it's civilization. The modern writer started to give expression to the troubles and uncertainties of the post war period in their works. Picturing this situation sharply, Norman Mailer became an outstanding novelist and a great literacy figure with a shaping influence upon the upcoming generation.

Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* was published in 1948. So, to understand the novel deeply it is necessary to understand the historical background of modern America because any literary creation is affected by the historical and social events of the contemporary time. The novel is based on Second World War and many of the authors who wrote about World War II were intended upon using the battlefield experience as a means of exploring issues of individuality and community in a modern mass culture. Their concern about such

matters has its roots in the years between the wars, during which these soldiers and authors came to maturity. The years between the two world wars were marked by the Great Depression, the rise of facism and human absurd condition. At the same time, the prodigalities of the Jazz age and the subsequent failures of capitalism that resulted in the 1929 stock market crash rendered socialistic ides palatable to many intellectuals and workers. Mark Shechner remarks:

The major writers of the post war era have all been acutely attended to political history and to it's characteristic modern themes: war, brutality, depression and unemployment, the implication of money class and ideology, and especially the individual sentiments and sensibilities that grow out of such a history. (196)

The post war America is very much paradoxical, chaotic, problematic and pessimistic.

The great depression in the United States caused worst and longest economic crash, lasting from the end of 1929 until the early 1940. Beginning is the United States, the depression spread to most of the world's industrial countries, which in the 20th century became economically dependent on one another. It saw rapid declines in every factor. It caused unemployment and hundreds of thousands roamed the country in search of food, work and shelter.

M.H. Abrams says:

In the radical '30s' the period of the Great Depression and of the economic and social reform in the new Deal Inaugurated by president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, some authors Joined radical

political movements, and many others dealt in their literary works with pressing social issues of the time. (208)

Many prominent American writer of this era wrote novels based on the same time alienated by what they perceived as the crassness of American culture.

The 1940's was dominated by World War II. United States isolationism was shattered by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. The successful use of Penicillin by 1940 revolutionized medicine, developed first to help the military personnel survive war wounds and later it also increased survival rates for surgery. The first eye bank was established at New York hospital in 1944. Unemployment almost disappeared, as most men were drafted and sent off to war. The government reclassified 55% of their jobs; allowing women and blacks to fill them. In 1943, virtually all the single women employed, married women were allowed to work. Japanese immigrants and their descendants, suspected of loyalty to their homelands, were sent to internment camps. Everywhere the death, destruction and wounded news was heard. Japan surrendered only after two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. America emerged from World War II as a world superpower with huge international responsibilities, challenged only by the USSR. While the USSR subjugated the defeated countries and the U.S. implemented the Marshall plan, helping war torn countries to rebuild and rejoin the world economy. Disputes over ideology and control led to the cold war. After the war, America entered an "age of Anxiety". The politics of America were influenced by two great fears. First, there was the fear of bomb, many Americans were sure that there would be a war with the Soviet Union

using atomic bombs. Also, in the late forties and early fifties, fear of communism became a national sickness. Communism was treated as a contagious disease, and anyone who had contact with it was under suspicion. Senator Joseph Mc Carthy led the country on a "witch hunt" against "communist" intellectuals, writers and Holly wood figure. He seriously hurt the lives and careers of many Americans who were not really communists.

This was the American traditional ideal of individuality was greatly diminished by the war and post war conditions. People began to feel anonymous, insignificant, insecure, alone, and pressured to conform. The whole world seemed chaos, disorder and destructive. Military force was taken as a supermen power. The war took psychological problems on common people and they felt frustration, anxiety and uncertainty. War gave nothing more than violence, death and destruction. Moral, ethical values, faith and tradition were no longer regarded as absolute. The terrified people of Western world began to think over the role and activities of individual irrational in the existence of human beings. The modern writer started to give expression to the troubles, absurd condition and uncertainties of the post war period in their literary creations and they presented themselves infavour of individualization against socialization. Americans found themselves struggling to come to terms with the meaning of the World War II and it's legacies for the future. Among them Norman Mailer is one of the social critics of this era and he wrote *The Naked and the Dead* with the intention of social awareness about the war which is futile. He wrote about the psychic effects and other problems caused by war on common people as well as soldiers. He wrote

many combat novels based on the realistic depiction of soldiers, their agonies, uncertainties, horror, frustration and existential crisis. He carefully showed the social reality of the contemporary era that the war is futile. By showing the death, violence, destruction and soldiers futile struggle and their absurd condition during the war, he wrote this novel with the intention of social awareness and sensibility that shows the meaninglessness of war.

Alienation and Fragmentation

Modernism is a trend developed in literature and art in 20th century. It is taken as a revolt against the traditional beliefs and assumptions of nineteenth century Europe and America. It is generally used as a way of referring to an aesthetic approach dominated in European and American art and literature in 20th century. Regarding modernism M.H. Abrams writes, "The term modernism is widely used to identify new and distinctive features on subjects, forms, concepts and styles of literature and the other arts in the early decades of the twentieth century, but especially after World War I" (167). It refers to the radical shift in aesthetic and cultural sensibilities evident in art and literature of post - First World War period. The ordered, stable and inherently meaningful world view of the nineteenth century could not continue in 20th century. The contemporary history of 20th century was the immense panorama of futility and anarchy. Modernism, thus, marks a distinctive break with Victorian bourgeois morality, rejecting nineteenth century optimism. They presented a profoundly pessimistic picture of a culture in disarray. The despair often results in an apparent apathy and moral relativism.

The First World War created a crisis in the life of modern man. They failed to get essence and meaning in their lives. What benefits did the nations get which took part in

the First World War? If they did not get any profit by fighting then why did they fight each other? There is no reasonable answer of these questions. People fought for consolidating their power but the war caused only destruction, fragmentation, alienation and decay of modern life. The war decayed the modern life, civilization and development infra-structure. The post-world war generation become spiritually barren, weak and morally corrupt. Economic depression, unemployment, over population acute shortage, political and religious skepticism had increased the hardship of life. The First World War created anarchism, disorder, horror and violence in the modern life.

Because of the World War, the ordered, systematic, moral and organized society had been changed into disordered, immoral, chaotic, sterile and hopeless society. As a result, people became dilemma about what to choose. They had a great problem whether to choose the glorious past and tradition or accept the radical break and anarchy. For the adjustment they had to choose the disorder chaosness and anarchy but they could not forget the glorious and happy past. About the dilemma of a modern man and modernism, Marjorie Perloff says modernism as a "verbal ambiguity and complexity, the emphasis on the divided self, on mask, versus innerself and conduct versus consciousness" (158). Ambiguity, dilemma, fragmentation and alienation play the significant role in modern life.

When the World War I shattered the order, harmony and unity then alienation and unity then alienation and fragmentation became the major issues of modernism. It focused on alienation and fragmentation that play the vital role in their chaotic and fragmented world. Modernism gave the focus upon individual alienation and small pieces of fragmentation because there was no unity, coherence mutual cooperation, harmony

and order and these old values were shattered by the world war. Regarding modernism and 20th century Daniel Hoffman writes:

The violent disjunctions characteristic of twentieth century life the breakup of established economic, political and social institutions, the accelerated separation of the contemporary self from the history of the race, the alienation of the individual in a cosmos felt to be a field of force rather than divinely ordered harmony. (439)

Industrialization, urbanity and the possibilities created by scientific examination and invention made the people selfish and money and matter oriented. As a result individual competition becomes important. Because of powerlessness meaninglessness and cultural estrangement people realized the feelings of separateness.

Religion and God were illusions to the modern man. They were disillusioned with the god when Friedrich Nietzsche said that there is not any god existed in the universe. God give harmony became meaningless and individual became significant in modern time. The concept of "man is alone by birth" was popular. The anguish and alienation of 20th century life were brought to existential mode. These phenomena of existentialism, a mode and philosophy was expressed in the writings of Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus.

In the modern era, people could not find order, peace and morality. So, pessimistic feelings occurred in the mind of people when they fail to achieve what they had expected. All the desires and expectations of modern man were shattered by the world war. Therefore, fragmentation in desire also took place. Even in the culture and society, there could not exist peace and harmony.

Thus, the post war generation of 20th century became aimless, action less, hopeless, alienated, fragmented and spiritually dead. Ethics, morality, religion, order, unity and sacred things were overlapped by immorality, nihilism, selfishness, frustration and alienation. Most of the literatures written in this era portray the picture of the devastation and destruction caused by the war.

Existential Crisis

After the devastating effects of the two world wars especially after the Second World War, people experienced untold suffering thrown into an incoherent, disordered and chaotic universe, the belief in the concept like unity, rationality, morality, value and Christianity was crushed. As the sense of unification collapsed; people felt themselves alien in the universe. There was nobody to accompany them and to share their problems. They were free and responsible for their own actions. Though nobody was there to guide and help them yet they had to struggle hard to save from the existential crisis. Individual identity became important to them and they themselves were responsible and free for their actions. The feelings of loneliness, frustration, anxiety and absurdity accompanied them. The writers of the contemporary era could not escape from the situation and they captured the human loneliness, meaninglessness of actions in their works. Problematic conditions of the modern world became the focal point.

The feeling of utter alienation was the product of the recognition of "Death of God" on the one hand and the catalism of the World War I and II. Not only " God is Dead" as Nietzsche proclaimed, but also all the intermediary values connecting God and man declined. Man lost even the certainties and values of his own existence, which he had originally received from his belief in God. He is thus a castrated and deserted animal

in the overwhelming and the absurd universe. It was fully addressed by the existentialist.

Richard Tarnas says:

The anguish and alienation of twentieth century life were brought to full articulation as the existentialists addressed the fundamental naked concerns of human existence, suffering and death, loneliness and dread, guilt, spiritual emptiness and ontological insecurity the void of absolute values or universal contexts, the sense of economic absurdity the frailty of human reason, the tragic impasse of the human condition. (389)

The spiritual void, sense of insecurity and cosmic absurdity were captured by the writers. Man was just given existence without essence. He was entrapped by morality, fear, uncertainty. No 'supreme being' was there to fulfill the human life.

The term existentialism is used to describe "a vision of the condition of man, his place and function in the world and his relationship or lack of it with God" (Cuddon 316). It is a "Very intense and philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood" (Ellmann and Feidelson 803). The common thesis of existentialist is "Existence is prior to the essence' and most of the existentialists believe in the basic principles like human nature is problematic, paradoxical and each person is like no other. Self realization comes when one finds out one's own uniqueness by himself. All the men of this universe are alone and free and the universe is indifferent to our expectations and needs. But we have been given various chances from among different possibilities and we ourselves are responsible to our lives.

Kierkegaard, Faith and Existence

Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher as well as the leader of the theistic existential movement. He is a strong believer of Christian religion and god. For him, the highest truth is that human beings are God's creature so first of all god exists then only individual can exist if he submits or surrenders him in God. Man can be free from angst and uncertainty in the presence of God.

He strongly criticizes the Hegelian concepts of philosophy or reconciliation and synthesis in which man takes place of god. He supports the idea that the self-realization of a human being comes when s/he takes full responsibility for his/her life. In true sense Kierkegaard is really precursor and the fore-runner in the whole modern existentialist movement. Most of the existentialists follow Kierkegaard in emphasizing that "a moment comes for the individual when he must make an unalterable choice, and that such moments are only the real ones" (805). According to him, there are two options for the individual to choose, either he has to choose god and get redemption from the angst which is known as "ethico-religious" choice, or he has to reject god and his existence and go to perdition.

Kierkegaard does not believe in crowd. Crowd is untruth, according to him, it is destructive force of true existence. He says, "for a crowd is the untruth" (The individual 809). The existential individual has his being in relation to himself, to another or to god but never in relation to the crowd.

According to him, absurdity was the ground of Christian faith. First of all faith is absurd or paradoxical in its form. Faith looks beyond itself and yet, like ethical choice which is properly concerned with a man's own individual existence, faith deals as

subjective reality. Thus the form of faith is paradoxical it is properly concerned with the reality of another. The Christian doctrine and its quest for objective truth have nothing to do with the Kierkegaardian concept of Christianity. He only believes in the Christianity and the existence of God but not in other doctrines. He argues, "Christianity is therefore not a doctrine, but the fact that God has existed" (Faith, 855).

Existence for Kierkegaard is only possible when one becomes aware of the paradoxical presence of God, Christianity and man. After feelings of sufferings, despair and absurdity we remember God and we are able to transfer our sufferings then only we exist. The only way of tolerating the anxiety of existing is to submit oneself in the realm of God.

Nietzsche and the Dead God

Nietzsche is a German philosopher, poet, and the first important forerunner of the atheistic existentialism. He is the first person who declared, "God is Dead". Man himself is supreme creature so he can do whatever he likes. According to him, philosophical systems are merely expressions of an individual's own being and do not constitute an objective representation of reality; there are no fixed rules and regulations, and source of values. Religion does not provide protection and truth because the God is dead. So this godless world is absurd and Christianity has become the shelter for weak and disabled people. He called Christianity a "slave morality". In about Christianity he writes:

Christianity is called the religion of pity. Pity stands opposed to the tonic emotions which heighten our vitality: it has a depressing effect. We are deprived of strength when we feel pity. That loss of strength which suffering as such inflicts on life is still further increased and multiplied by

pity. Pity makes suffering contagious. Under certain circumstances, it may engender a total loss of life and vitality out of all proportion to the magnitude of the cause. (The Death, 909)

He further writes about Christianity, "In Christianity neither morality nor religion has even a single point of contact with reality" (909). He describes Christianity as the sick religion and corrupt concept implied upon people in the name of sick God.

He also criticized the Western education system that is historically motivated. It only, teaches about the heroic past and makes the people surrender before the heroism. Here the true individualism collapses. It does not serve life rather corrupts it and people become purposeless. Such education can not provide happiness to the people because they always hang themselves in the chain of history whereas for happiness one has to face with the moment. For Nietzsche education should be for the sake of human life and existence. In his essay "On the Use and Abuse of History" he states, "we need it for life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egotistical life and the cowardly bad act. We wish to use history only in so far as it serves living" (152).

In about freedom also he has given his views differently. According to him, when we deny the theological foundations and approve the traditional morality, then only a pervasive sense of meaninglessness and purposelessness would remain. He claimed that every person's basic drive is the will to power. To clarify this point he writes, "Where I found a living creature, there I found will to power; and even in the will of the servant I found the will to be master" (Self Overcoming 771). About command and its risk he further writes:

Commanding is more difficult than obeying. And not only because the commander bears the burden of all who obey, and that this burden can easily crush him. In all commanding there appeared to me to be an experiment and ask a risk: and the living creature always risks himself when he commands. (771)

Life and will are inseparable subjects, where life is there is will. The living creature values many things higher than life itself. This is the will to power, by this will to power makes man able to exist. To think god means to go against the will to power. As there is no God in the world the supermen are the gods. The supermen are the supreme who declare war over masses of inferior men, and are free from any restrictions imposed by the society.

Nietzsche talks about subjective will and objective truth. The objective man is only the mirror which reflects others power only it has not its own power. He is not the beginning and ending, and he has no power to existence. He clarifies objective man in his own words in the following lines, "He (The objective man) is no an "end in himself", he is only an instrument. The objective man is indeed a mirror, above all he is something that wishes to be recognized and understood; he is accustomed to subordination, devoid of any pleasure of other than the afforded by cognition, by mirroring" (Subjective Will 816)

Truth, is presented as an objective. To find out truth and reality one must exist by taking will to power. Nietzsche is just opposite to Christian existentialists because of his atheistic existential doctrine - "God is dead and the god is man's own creation" (816).

Heidegger, Being and Existence

He is the leading figure of atheistic existentialism in Germany and also the founder of main doctrine of existentialism - "Existence comes before essence". In his philosophical book *Being and Time* he has presented the real meaning of "Being" and "authentic life". According to him, to live authentically the individual has to face the various problems, one has to determine one's own existence and create his own possibilities and make right choice and commitments. Choosing is the most difficult task, it is not only the work of feeling but also the intellect. Everyone has his history and its impact upon him, he is bounded by conditions and outlooks inherited from the past. We all human beings are thrown inside the bounded world, with out knowledge of world no one can exist. So, we must have that power for breaking the boundaries then only we are able to prove our being and existence. While talking about metaphysics he writes about "truth" and "being" in this way:

Metaphysics gives, and seems to confirm, the appearance that it asks and answers the question concerning Being. In fact, metaphysics never answer the question concerning the truth of being, for it never asks this question. Metaphysics does not ask this question because it thinks of being only by representing beings as being. (Recollection of Being 879)

Heidegger makes a distinction between being and beings. The being is an individual and here beings mean group or the society. He urges that the involvement of being in human nature is the basic philosophical question. Today people are living in "Oblivion of Being" because they have not got the proper answer of that philosophic question. In this condition Heidegger suggests us to get back our lost being, we have to

return back into the ground of metaphysics then only we can find out the roots of our existence.

He says that the world is the field of human concern not of the other objects. There is no world if there is no man. So, Heidegger focuses on man and his existence in the world. Man's being is a being-in-the world. The relationship between man and the world is the relationship of existential participation and in involvement. Man makes his nature by his own efforts, and he thus, determines his own essence. The authentic human existence is unique, qualitative time in past and future are always co-present. Reality is the matter of intuitive feeling, which can not attain through intellectual knowledge. It is only possible when one individual train his mind that this world of objects is his own and animates himself with a feeling of love that he feels happy.

The individual is aroused from inauthentic existence in anguish and dread. Dread is always an indefinite feeling only but not any specific object as fear is. Dread is the presence of a negative infinity, a loss of both personal and universal being, an entry into positive nothingness. In about dread, he says:

Dread reveals Nothing [. . .] the fact that when we are caught in the uncanniness of dread we often try to break the empty silence by words spoken at random, only proves the presence of Nothing. We ourselves confirm that dread reveals nothing when we have got over our dread . . . what we are afraid of was actually nothing. And indeed nothing itself, nothing as such, was there. (Dread 839)

The self is the specific way one lives in the world of dread and anxiety. Heidegger points out the unavoidable nature of anxiety, a feeling a state that makes apparent in the midst of

all that one had and is that one's existence is not complete and is not absolute, in spite of the urge toward self realization.

Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism

Sartre, a French philosopher, and the leading figure among the existentialists made existentialism widely popular. He has classified existentialism into two groups and he included himself in the atheistic group of existentialism. He propounded his own theory by reflecting on Christianity and God. So he focuses on existence precedes essence as the principle of existentialism. For the purpose of existence one is responsible in his position because there is no one else to care for him. "Existence preceding essence" is the main doctrine of existential philosophy. To clarify the meaning of this new doctrine he writes:

First of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene and only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust towards existence. (*Existentialism* 15)

Sartre says that man himself is everything, so he himself is responsible for his every action because he is free to choose. To clarify about human will and his responsibility he further writes:

. . . there is nothing in heaven; man will be what he will have planned to be. Not what he will want to be. Because by the world. "will" we

generally mean a conscious decision, which is subsequent to what we have already made of ourselves [. . .] Thus existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him. (16)

Sartre says that we have various choices among them we have to choose the best one. For that purpose we must have power of conscious decision which is known as "will" that enables us to choose among the choices. All the time in making the choice we must be careful not only for ourselves but also to the remaining human world. He writes, "To choose to be this or that is to affirm at the same time the value of what we choose because we can never choose evil. We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for us without being good for all" (27).

He has used two terms, "Being for itself" and "Being in-itself" in his most important philosophical book *Being and Nothingness*. He makes clear distinction between these two terms. According to him being in-itself applies to things, things exist in-itself. This means a thing is basically what it is. He writes: "Being is, beings are in-itself. Being is what it is" (The Pursuit 29). If this is the case, then the axiom about "existence precedes essence" cannot be applied to an inanimate object. In case of man: existence precedes essence, so man is being for himself not being in-itself.

Authenticity demands from life a free choice without excuse and without help that presupposes that full responsibility. The adaptation of responsibility, in consequence, causes certain uneasiness of which no one can save oneself. This uneasiness or the anguish is the heart of human existence. Thus existential anguish presents a reality of human life, which has to be faced historically and optimistically

according to Sartre. Talking about anguish, hence the term "Forlornness" from Heidegger Sartre means, "only that good does not exist and we have to face all consequences of this" (Existentialism 21). The anguish of existential man is like the anguish of military officer on whom the life of several men depend but he has to order for attack and for this decision he feels anguish and he himself is responsible for his commitment and for lives of other men.

Camus and the Absurd

Camus, the follower of atheistic existentialism, is basically known for his views on absurdity of human life. For him the condition of man is absurd and his search for any purpose is meaningless and fruitless. The world does not possess any meaning, value or truth. According to M. H. Abrams:

Albert Camus, views a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value, or meaning and to represent human life- in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves from nothingness when it came toward the nothingness where it must end as an existence which is both anguish and absurd. (1)

Camus also believes that man makes himself from his own choices. Such choices lead human beings towards repetition as there is no meaning in the universe but man always aspires to achieve it. How much we try to get happiness from choosing the opportunities that much we have to choose because it is necessary to choose and bear the responsibilities. None of our choices is perfect; all of them create meaninglessness

and nothingness. Though the life is inside the well of obstacles we know, but we have to struggle until our death.

According to Camus, when the choice is made or the absurdity of life is recognized then existence is felt as value in itself. If this life is hopeless and meaningless, he is at once liberated and put in a position to exercise his freedom in revolt against absurdity. He says that when the absurd man becomes aware of his futile living, he is naturally filled with anxiety and helplessness but he does not surrender himself in the mouth of death. Instead, he acknowledges the consciousness of absurdity as a reliable guidance to revolt against the absurdity. In his opinion to rebel is to exist which is happier situation than before. About revolution Camus says:

The theme of permanent revolution is thus carried into individual experience. Living is keeping the absurd alive keeping it alive is above all, contemplating it. Unlike Eurydice, the absurd dies only when we turn away from it. One of the only coherent philosophical positions is thus revolt. It is constant contribution between man and his own obscurity.
(Absurd Freedom 845)

Absurdity does not mean for Camus, the loss of happiness rather "Happiness and absurd are two sons of same earth. They are inseparable" (69). In his essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus" he presents character Sisyphus who makes choice rejecting the command of god. When he has to face the punishment to roll up a rock, he has the feeling of absurdity. But we can't say that he is unhappy. In this point Camus says:

I leaves Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the

gods and raises rocks. The struggle itself toward the height is enough to feel a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

Camus rejects the religion, realistic settings and logic as other existentialists do. There is always a gap in between individual and society or in man and his life. So we have to try to make this gap minimum but this gap cannot be avoided because the world is absurd and meaningless. In this meaningless world we are searching the meaning for our existence.

Contradiction of mind and feeling (heart) is also emphasized in his philosophy. In about contradiction Camus writes, "The mind's first step is to distinguish what is true from what is false. However, as soon as thought reflects on itself, what it first discovers is contradiction" (The Fact of Absurdity 824).

In this way most of the existentialists differ in their views on about God, religion, social values and so many other philosophic terms of existentialism. Though they are divided into groups according to their thinking, they have accepted in single doctrine that is "existence precedes essence".

In *The Naked and the Dead* we find certain qualities of modern dilemma and existential crisis. It is because the novel explores the theme of alienation, failure and frustration, human pain and suffering, death and destruction, human absurd condition and futile struggle. General Cummings, the protagonist of the novel struggles hard during the war bearing all kinds of pains and sufferings. He strictly commands to his soldiers to achieve his goal. But at last he got the information that the war is won by chance accident not by his effective military technique. At that time he realizes his failure and he became sad.

Similarly the common soldiers also suffered from the problem of existential crisis, frustration and futile struggle. Like Sisyphus, they are condemned to fight repeatedly though their struggle is futile.

The next chapter will study about the protagonist Cummings and other common soldiers who struggle hard bearing pains, suffering and exhaustion but they get nothing and they realize their futile existential struggle.

III. Futility of War

Alienation

A person has feeling of alienation when one does not get friendly and sympathetic behaviour from the people around. In the novel, *The Naked and The Dead*, every character finds himself alienated and troubled from the situation and the world. General Cummings, the leading army officer of the American Reconnaissance Platoon who believes in power, order and morality. He wants to control this platoon and for this purpose he commands being an authoritarian. His life is more luxurious than the common soldiers. He is the self-created prophet of a new totalitarianism who commands, in the name of his faith in order and authority, the breaking of men's spirits and the destruction of their wills. The other members of the platoon show their hatred and dissatisfaction towards Cummings. One of the common soldiers says, "what have I got against the goddam Jap?" complains one man, "you think I care if they keep this fugging Jungle? what's it to me if Cummings get another star?" (102). It shows that the common soldiers do not like him and they show their hatred but because of power morality, they are unable to rebel against him. They are not satisfied with Cummings and he is unable to get full support and cooperation from his soldiers.

Cummings is hungry for power and it is the love of his life. He thinks that power and control brings order and it helps to win the war. So, all the time he is busy in commanding and making fighting plan and strategy. When his grand strategy and order becomes weak at Toyaku line, the sense of failure and alienation enters in his mind. The platoon waste their time in insignificant tasks. Knowing this worthless task he realizes

that he had lost his control over his platoon. Such type of alienation and frustration is seen in these lines:

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 emerging from a coma, his hands clasping unclasping endlessly, his eyes staring fixedly at the dim out lines of the ridgepole of his tent. (237)

It shows that he feel himself cheated and alienated form his soldiers. He feels that he had lost control over the platoon. The common soldiers did not support him. That incident shocked him and he could not sleep at night.

When he realizes that he became helpless and alone, he feels a certain affinity with nature the mount Anaka. Indulging a mystical mood, he thinks, "the mountain and he understood each other. Both of them, from necessity, were bleak and alone, commanding the heights" (463). Yet, it reality this affinity is nothing more than a human conceit. From the early part of the novel shows that this affinity was nothing "the naval bombardment was insignificant before the mountain" (20). In reality, even the nature seems indifferent towards him. That shows that even nature did not help him. So, he is totally alienated person.

Towards the end of the novel, when he knows that the battle is won by chance and his effort and plan became failed, he realizes his failure and a sense of alienation enters in his mind.

In the novel every character seems alienated from their friends. There is not mutual coordination and understanding. The second class of officers Hearn and Croft also suffered from such problems. When Croft failed to control his platoon he realizes the sense of failure and alienation. Similarly, the liberal lieutenant Hearn, whose liberal attitude does not work in military. So, he feels a sense of utter alienation. In Mailers novel, the common soldiers are badly victimized by the problems of alienation.

When Wilson is trapped in the jungle by the enemies, he becomes hopeless and feels too much weak. For an hour, he didn't awake because of extreme fear and at that time he felt completely alone:

For a long time he lay still, his hand under his belly to catch the trickling of the blood. Where the hell is ever-body? He wondered. He had realized for the first time that he was completely alone. Just take off an' leave a man. He rembered the Japs who had been talking a few feet from him, but he could no longer hear them. (402)

It shows that when man suffers from physical and mental problems, at that time he feels utter alienation. The above lines show the pathetic and absurd condition of Wilson.

Another soldier Brown is an insecure young man who doubts his ability as a soldier. He is obsessed with the thought of his wife cheating on him while he is at war. He does not believe his wife and he feels alone during the war; "Listen you've seen enough combat, at Motome to have an idea. 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). Here these lines show that Brown feels insecure and he does not trust his own wife. All the time he realizes the lack of his own wife and he feels bitter

alienation and frustration. During the war, his main concern and anxiety is his wife not the war. While talking to other soldiers, he feels same sort of alienation.

Minetta, another character 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 wants to remain alone in the hospital and for that purpose he decided to pretend to be mentally ill so that he will not have to return to combat. Mailer presents his situation:

Well, you just take it easy, the doctor said, and we'll see tomorrow morning". He jolted down something in his notebook, and went to the next cot. The son of a bitch, Minetta told himself, I can hardly walk. As if to prove it, his leg began to ache a terrible, and he thought with bitterness. They do not care if you live or die here. All they want is to get you back where. You can stop a bullet. They didn't even take stiches, he said once to himself. (279)

It proves that even army doctors are indifferent towards common soldiers' pain and suffering, Minetta shows his bitter agony and anger towards the doctor and feels alone in his miserable condition.

Clearly, an individual alone is powerless and Mailer seems to suggest that a certain heroism can be achieved if one can only find the will to act cooperatively. Red analyzes his situation and that of modern man:

You carried it alone as long as you could, and then you weren't strong enough to take it any longer. You kept fighting everything, and everything broke you down, until you were just a little gaddam bolt holding on and squaling when the machine went too fast.

He had to depend on other men, he needed other men now, and he didn't know how to go about it. Deep with in him were the first nebulae. Of an idea, but he could not phrase it. If they all stuck together...

Aaah, fug. All they knew was to cut each other's throats. There were no answers, there wasn't even any pride a man could have at the end. (548)

This shows that modern man's life is completely alone and he himself is responsible for his position but during the war an individual alone is powerless.

During the war, every soldier feels alone and descarted. Though they are in group but there is not mutual cooperation, understanding and support. One night the reconnaissance platoon is in miserable condition in the jungle. Their clothes are wet from the constant rain and they feel very tired. They have to stand guard duty at night sitting in wet foxholes, frightened at every sound. Miler presents the armies' condition:

Everything was cold and silver in the moonlight, and the hills had become gaunt. The sleeping men in the hollow beneath him were removed and distant. Each men on guard felt alone, terrible alone, as though looking out on the valleys and craters of the moon. Nothing moved, and yet nothing was still. (389)

These lines show that every soldier of this platoon felt alone during the war. They had to obey what the officers said.

Will to Power and Morality

Nietzsche says that every person's basic drive is will to power and s/he values many things higher than life itself. This is the will to power, and this will to power enables man to exist. In this novel, the leading army officer of American Reconnaissance platoon General Cummings is the embodiment of the will to power in Mailer's tale. Cummings is, arguably, the most fully drawn character in Mailer's novel. In him, we can see manifested Mailer's deepest concerns about the shape the future will take. He is an archconservative or a proto-fascist, with distinct ideas about the direction of history. He firmly believes that the future belongs to the reactionary right and for him the only morality of the future is power morality. Mailer writes about his character:

I have been trying to impress you, Robert, that 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 flow only from the top down. When there are little surges of resistance at the middle levels, it merely calls for more power to be directed down ward, to burn it out.

(255)

From the above quotation, we can say that Nietzsche as the source for the General's ideas about power. Power is the love of his life, and individual human beings are no more than chess pieces to be manipulated in his quest to satisfy his need. He believes that those persons who have power morality themselves easily adjust in the society. He says that power functions from top to down.

Cummings became aware of his hunger for power during the war. As he witnessed, from the safety of the command bunker, his first battle unfold before his eyes, he was struck by the power of the commander and thought, "there were things one could do" (45). He conveys this conviction more completely when, in a fit of ecstasy, he contemplates the ramifications of firing an artillery piece one night:

. . . he dwelt pleasurably in many - webbed, layers of complexity. The troops out in the jungle were disposed from the patterns in his mind, and yet at this moment he was living on many levels at once, in firing the gun, he was a part of himself. All the roaring complex of orders, sound and sights multiplied are remultiplied by all the guns of the division, was contained in a few cells of his head, the faintest crease of his brain. All of it, all the violence, the dark co-ordination had sprung from his mind. In the night at that moment he felt such power that it was beyond joy, he was Clam and sober. (440-41)

He rebels in the belief that his mind was the seat of all power and control on the Island. He feels his affinity with the power of gun. In that sense, we really call him power obsessed man.

In his quest to achieve his ends, the general has different "personality garment [s], as lieutenant Hearn puts it. He assumes various possession to appear to be the man any particular audience expects him to be" (81). The degree to which this is calculated or to which it is instinctive is unclear, but it is consistent with his notion of individualism, which is extremely self-centered and calculated. He says, "the trick is to make your self an instrument of your own policy, whether you like it or not that's the highest

effectiveness man has achieved" (82). For him equality is a myth, for the "average" man always sees himself in relation to other men as either inferior or superior" (154). While talking with lieutenant Hearn, He says:

I can tell you, Robert, that to make an army work you have to have every man in it filed into a fear ladder. Men in prison camps, deserters, or men in replacement camps are in the backwaters of the army and the discipline has to be proportionately more powerful. The army function is best when you're frightened of the man above you, and contemptuous of your subordinates. (139)

These lines prove that Cummings believes in power morality and for him it is essential for the military, fear and discipline plays major role in the function of army. For the effectiveness of army power, punishment is also necessary and about it he says, "if punishment is at all proportionate 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).

While talking with Hearn, he discusses about war and the process of historical energy. He describes two types of energy and about potential and kinetic energy, 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, co-ordinated effort, your epithet fascism" (153). About the purpose of war he says, "Historically the purpose of this war is to translate America's potential into kinetic energy, the concepts of fascism, far sounder than communism" (253). He forecasts about the post war condition and says, "after the war our foreign policy is going to be far more naked, far less hypocritical than it has ever

been" (254). He always talks about power and the world created by such power. In this sense, we can call him a power obsessed person, a true representative figure of American government.

The twentieth century world is driven by "machine techniques" he says, and this requires "consolidation" and a civilian version of the "fear ladder" because most men must be "subservient to the machine, and its' not a business they instinctively enjoy" (177). He gives more importance to the matter. Mailer's writing immediately after the war, can see the direction in which united states is headed and has been headed for some time, judging from the downtrodden people depicted in his "time machine" portraits. Cummings, as the most outspoken representative of that direction in the novel aspires to be a Nietzschean superman when he says:

Man's deepest urge is omnipotence and it's not religion, that's not love, its' not spirituality, those are all sops along the way benefits we devise for ourselves when the limitation of our existence turns us away from the other dream. When we come kicking into the world, we are god, the universe is the limit of our senses. (255)

Though superman concept can be found in Cummings but mailer does not appear to favor the superman concept to show the futility of war. He clearly shows the limits and failure of the Generals power.

Another strong character sergeant Croft is like general Cummings. He is totally self-centered soldier, Mailer closes sergeant's "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 toward nearly all other men he hated weakness and he loved

practically nothing" (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). He can not articulate his conviction that "men are in transit to become gods like the General does (323). But he feels it to be true, when he predicts Hennessey's death to himself, he feels certain that it will happens but can not help remembering this failed premonition about the previous card game. He trusts that life has meaning, but rarely can get it. The fulfillment of his premonition about Hennessey" opened to Croft vistas of such omnipotence that he was afraid to consider it directly. All day the fact hovered about his head, tantalizing him with odd dreams and portents of power" (40). He wants the same thing the general wants power.

Croft's belief in meaning and order serves him well in the ordered society that is the military. He is driven to obey orders and feels that disobeying or even resenting an order is immoral" (440). His morality, like the Genera's, is a power morality. Therefore he must repress and rationalize away his failure to strictly follow lieutenant Hearn's orders a failure that results in the lieutenant's death.

Another liberal lieutenant Robert Hearn who believes in freedom and dignity also bounded by will to power and power morality to some extent. Though he believes in freedom but he is unable to resist because of power morality. After the General has forced him to pick up a cigarette the General has tossed onto the floor, Hearn, "lay face down on his cot, burning with shame and self-disgust and an impossible important anger because he considers the test of will with the general to have been "an ultimate issue" (326). It has been a display of pure power on Cummings part. This incident terribly humiliates him but because of power morality, he has failed to resist.

The General considers Hearn's ideals to be misguided. Hearn claims to be an egalitarian whose concern is that the enlisted men are treated fairly. When he realizes 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 became the circumstance seems to prove the general's "fear ladder" perspective on life. Yet, when Hearn actually has the opportunity to exercise power, to lead his platoon, he discovers that he enjoys it that, "there was an emotion in it somewhere as sweet as anything he had ever known" (513). That shows that he had also the will to power.

Not only the major characters but also common soldiers have also will to power and they are badly victimized by power morality and fear ladder. Though soldiers did not like General's authority but they are compelled to obey and unable to resist because of power morality.

Anxiety and Despair

As one feels oneself helpless and alienated, the sense of anxiety and despair enters the mind. A person cannot see the ray of hope in life. One regards oneself a failure and nothing else and there is no satisfaction in ongoing life. General Cummings the leading army officer of the American Reconnaissance Platoon feels helpless. When at Toyaku line his order and attempts at control becomes poor then he finds his own troops becoming resistant to his command. He feels helpless and a sense of anxiety and despair enters in his mind. Mailer presents his condition:

The process at most times was unbelievable to him and he was suffering the amazement and terror of a driver who finds his machine directing itself, starting and halting when it desires. He had heard of this, military

love was filled with such horror tales, but he had never imagined it would happen to him, It was incredible, for five weeks the troops had functioned like an extension of his own body And now, apparently without, 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. (237)

It shows that such powerful man feels anxiety and despair when he fails to control his platoon. It is Cummings who gave the assignment to Hearn to platoon with the minimal chances of success and it ultimately killed him. When he heard the news of Hearn's death, he became sad:

He knew why he had punished him, he knew it was not accidental that he had assigned Hearn to recon. only . . . for an instant when he first heard the news of Hearn's death, it had hurt him, wrenched his heart with a cruel fist. 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 prove that after Hearn's death, Cummings feels helpless and he realizes his mistake that he did wrong to Hearn. This incident shocked him and a sense of anxiety and despair enters in his mind.

In this novel, every character suffered form pain, suffering and exhaustion during the war. For the soldiers there is no more choices. Death and life are the choices to them. In order to live, they have to struggle hard bearing pain, suffering and anxiety. The

beginning lines of the novel show the suffering anxiety and uncertainty of life. Mailer writes:

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 Anooei. All over the ship, all through the convoy, there was knowledge that in a few hours some of them were going to be dead.

(7)

That shows that all the soldiers of the Reconnaissance Platoon were suffering from anxiety and uncertainty. Therefore, they could not sleep at night.

The liberal lieutenant Hearn, who believes in freedom, is most victimized and suffering character in the novel. He thinks that freedom is a matter of personal integrity. Because of his liberal attitude, General Cummings assigns him to recon the platoon with the minimal chances of success and he is killed there. Cummings did not like his liberal democratic ideas. So, General forces him to pick up a cigarette which the General has tossed on to the floor. That incident terribly hurts him, "he lay face down on his cot, burning with shame and self disgust and an impossible impotent anger" (242). He feels a sense of humiliation at that moment.

When the platoon fell into the ambush, Wilson took cover behind a rock near the tall grass. He had lain there and he was wounded. At that time he felt alone helpless and pain. Mailer presents his pathetic condition:

The bullet hit him in the stomach with the force of a blow . . . Ah, m
gonna 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 in to the warm lapping content of his drowsiness and weakness. (400)

Mailer presents the very much pathetic and absurd condition of Wilson in these above lines.

In Mailer's novel, the common soldiers are badly suffered from anxiety and despair. Mailer's concern is to the common man. In order to exist in war, most of the common soldiers struggle hard bearing all kinds of pain and suffering. Such kind of pathetic condition of the soldiers is seen in these lines:

Everything was new and they were miserable. They seemed to be wet all the time, and no matter how they set up their 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 alternative to drawing up their feet and hopping 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 show the pathetic and miserable condition of the soldier who are struggling hard bearing all kinds of pains and sufferings. The replacement army is unknown about the land scape of the Anopopei therefore, they feel anxiety to manage everything.

Absurdity and Futile Struggle

Albert Camus says that man makes himself from his own choices; such choice leads human being towards repetition as there is no meaning in the universe but man always aspires to achieve it. None of our choices is perfect; all of them create meaninglessness and nothingness. Being a soldier they have to fight and struggle hard in order to fulfill their responsibility. As an army officer General Cummings believes in power morality and order. To fulfill his responsibility he commands and controls his soldiers like a fascist. To achieve his goal, he gives to assign Hearn at the hopeless attack and he is killed there. Overall labor and pain of the Cummings' pay has no meaning. He struggles so deadly but get nothing only despair and anxiety. By chance the platoon is able to get victory not by struggle, Mailer writes at the end of novel.

For a moment he almost admitted that he had very little or perhaps nothing at all to do with this victory, or indeed any victory . . . it had been accomplished by a random play of vulgar good luck larded into a casual net of factors too large, too vague, for him to comprehend. He allowed himself this thought, brought it almost to the point of words and then forced it back. But it caused him a deep depression. (555)

That shows the futility of Cummings or platoon struggle. The grand war strategies and soldiers' heroic struggle brings nothing. They get victory by chance which is beyond human control, not by heroic struggle.

On the island of Anopopei, chance, is more likely to decide the outcome of human endeavours than any human planning. For example, the battle is won through the chance

destruction of the main Japanese supply dump, and the platoon's ascent of Mount Anake is thwarted by their chance encounter with a hornet's nest. Here Mailer writes:

The hornets pursued 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 rock to rock, ripping through the foliage that impeded them. They felt nothing but the savage flick of the hornets, the muted jarring sensations 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 packs and dropped them. Dimly they sensed that if they threw away enough possessions they would not be able to continue the patrol. (545)

It shows that by chance Japanese soldiers are unable to resist and American Reconnaissance platoon is able to get victory. Their struggle has no meaning at all because it creates nothingness.

At the novel's end, Mailer depicts the platoon as possessing conflicting emotions. There is the inevitable letdown and introspection that follows any great undertaking, and Mailer says that they all feel pretty much the same way. The surviving men are aboard the boat that has picked them up from the beach and are contemplating a continuing treadmill of boredom, misery and fear. By the novel's end, the soldiers feel as if they are sleepwalking through history, barely conscious of the war around them. As Mailer writes:

By afternoon most of them were awake. They were still terribly fatigued but 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 ahead were very palpable to them. They
were still on 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
overcast everything. (547)

These lines show that like Sisyphus, the soldier's lives are filled with the repetition, the
repetition of pain, despair, fear, miseries and futile struggle.

The soldiers transform the dejection into an appreciation of the absurdity of life,
and they begin to sing:

Roll me over
in the clover.
Roll me over,
Lay me down
And do it again.
Ha, past three
I had her on my knee
Lay me down,
Roll me over,
Do it again
Roll me over in the clover. (550)

This song reveals mailer's thesis that the song, like the fate of Sisyphus, is the absurd truth. The repeated refrain with its repeated action, "Roll me over, do it again" is like the wave and its wake, like the ascent and descent of Mt. Anaka life is simply a roundelay. Soldiers like Sisyphus, at least in Albert Camus' version, possess an awareness of their fate that is redemptive.

This song clearly shows that the soldiers of American Reconnaissance platoon are aware of their true condition of life. Soldiers' monolithic determinations, powerful desire to stand unconquered and individual reasons have no place and no meaning in war. So, their struggle is futile existential struggle.

Failure and Frustration

When somebody can't get success in his goal, he feels the sense of failure in his life and the sense of frustration enters in his mind. At that time, one regards oneself a failure and nothing else, as a result, depression and frustration comes in his life. In this novel general Cummings who is an effective military man of considerable intelligence and self-created prophet fails to control over the platoon and to achieve goal. He command in the name of his faith in order and authority, the breaking of men's spirits and the destruction of their wills. He is presented in primarily ration terms, and the things he believes, in his emotional and highly informed logic are frightening. He is reactionary, and believes that Hitler was right in foretelling a long ascendancy for the reactionaries. Coldly and logically he persists in sharpening and maintaining the class distinction existing between officers and enlisted men because he knows that effective command is made up of resentment and fear from below. He is totally obsessed with power.

Cummings' sense of failure grows out of his recognition that men can not be controlled as he thought they could. Still he is hopeful that he could control his platoon by his power. Mailer characterizes him " there was everything 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 threatened at Toyaku line when his troops waste their times in insignificant task .

The sense of defeat and failure of Cummings is seen in the last part of the novel when he got information that the war is won by chance and sheer accident:

Astonishing reports continued to come into Cummings'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)

That information shocked him and he became depressed. He realizes that the war is won by chance, luck not by his strategies. He also realizes his personal failure and his defeat. He is presented as a weak and worthless soldier.

And it might be the same again in the Philippines. With all his enemies at army, he did not have much chance of gaining an added star before the

Philippines, and with that would go all chance of an Army command before the war ended:

Times was going by, and with it, opportunity. It would be the hacks who would occupy history's seat, after the war, the same blunderers, uncoordinated, at corss-impulses. He was getting older, and he would be by passed. When the war with Russia came he would not be important enough, not close enough to the seats of power, to take the big step, the big leap. (556)

From the above lines, we can say that though the war is won by chance, Cummings is defeated because the agency of victory is not his active military intelligence but rather a chain of chance accidents beyond his control. This makes him hopeless, frustrated and worthless:

Another important character sergeant Croft who is like General Cummings has the same kind of failure at the end of novel. He is also hungry for power and believes in order and ordered society that is military. His morality is like General's power morality. He hates the weakness. When Wilson is wounded during the war, he says' "if a man gets wounded it's his own goddam fault said Croft. (406)

Actually, the journey of Croft is the quest for self-knowledge. Croft undertakes this journey under the pressure of a compulsive desire but he is also fearful, since" it's successful completion will result in the nakedness of complete self knowledge' (106). Croft grows increasingly anxious as he climbs because he senses that he has embarked upon an "internal contest" that will determine" which pole of his nature would be

successful" (544). Mailer leaves it to the reader to decide what the contesting poles of Croft's nature are: Will or instinct? Human or animal? Controller or controlled? The result of Croft's failure are some what ambiguous too. There are three fold. First when the platoon finally returns to the beach to wait for their boat, Croft is troubled by the relief he feels deep with in himself, croft was bothered by something else. Mailer presents his condition:

Deep inside himself, croft was relieved that the had not been able to climb the mountain. For that afternoon at least, as the platoon waited on the beach for the boats that was due the next day, Croft was rested by the un admitted knowledge that he had found a limit to his hunger. (546)

Secondly, on the landing Craft as the platoon is returning to their bivouac, Croft comes to the realization that he had failed. Mailer presents his condition.

He had failed, and it hurt him vitally. His frustration was loose again. He would never have another opportunity to climb it. And yet he was wondering if he could have succeeded. Once more he was feeling the anxiety and terror the mountain had roused on the rock stair way. If he had gone alone, the fatigue of the other men would not have slowed him but he would not have had their company, and he realized suddenly that he could not have had their company, and he realized suddenly that he could not have gone without them. The empty hills would have evaded any man's courage. (552)

Yet, finally, what Mailer leaves us with is Croft's failure. He has failed because he is lacking both self-awareness and concern for others. The last we hear of him is that; "Craft

kept looking at the mountain. He had lost it, had missed some tantalizing revelation of himself and much more, of life everything" (552).

Similarly the liberal lieutenant Robert Hearn who believes that freedom and liberal attitude can gain peoples' support is also failed to exist and he is killed in war. Not only the major characters but also common soldiers are also failed. They have different ideologies and choices but their choices did not work in war. They are compelled to struggle hard for identity.

Futility means quality of coming to nothing or producing no effect. It is used to show the useless or purposeless condition of modern man. In this novel the protagonist General Cummings' heroic struggle, his effective commands and war strategies becomes useless in war when he gets the information that the war is won by chance accidents. It causes him a sense of failure and nothing else. He became sad and a sense of anxiety depression and frustration enters in his mind. The victory is futile to him and he realizes his futile struggle in war that gives nothing only death destruction and depression. Though he realizes that he became a worthless army still he gives continuity to his futile struggle.

Like protagonist the common soldiers also realize their futile existential struggle in war and they are condemned to fight repeatedly though their fight has no meaning. By the end of novel they appreciate their absurdity and sing a song that shows their futile struggle.

IV. Conclusion

The Naked and the Dead by Norman Mailer dramatizes the meaninglessness of war. It also deals with the soldier's futile existential struggle in war which gave nothing except suffering, anxiety, despair and feeling of absurdity. In this novel Mailer has presented army officer with hunger for power and personal failure and other common soldiers with the feelings of absurdity.

The novel is set in the fictitious island of Anopopei in which, the chain of chance and accident plays the significant role where effective military technique and soldier's heroic struggle becomes meaningless. General Cummings, the leading army officer of the American Reconnaissance platoon believes in power and power morality. Power is everything for him but he is unable to control his platoon and defeated. In order to fulfill his responsibility, he struggles hard bearing anxiety, frustration and exhaustion. He spends most of his time in commanding and making war strategies. He is the true representative figure of American authority whose main concern is to get victory. To achieve his goal, he assigns liberal lieutenant Hearn to recon the platoon with the minimal chances of success and ultimately he is killed there.

When he got the information that the war was won by the chain of chance and accidents and his military plan and strategy is failed and has no meaning, 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 considered as a insignificant and worthless army. He is no longer important for the war. His active and heroic struggle became futile in war and the war caused him a deep depression. For him the war gave nothing except death destruction and despair. Though

his grand war strategies and heroic command has failed in war still he does not give up hope and he gives continuity to his futile work.

Similarly the common soldiers are compelled to show their heroic struggle for their existence. Though they have different choice and ideology but are compelled to fight bearing pain, suffering, frustration and despair. They don't like General Cummings but they are unable to resist because of power morality, fear and personal dignity. They face various problems such as Japanese ambushes, sweltering heat, horror, death of their friends and physical as well as mental misery.

Most of the soldiers fight only of fear, personal shame and identity not for justice and democracy. Although they hate the army and have little faith in their mission, none of the platoon member is able to rebel completely against military authority because of power morality. Indeed, by the novel's end they feel as if they are sleepwalking through history, barely conscious of the war around them. They take the war and their struggle as an existential struggle which is futile. For their existence, they have to struggle bearing all kinds of pains, suffering and exhaustion.

By the end of novel, the soldiers transform the dejection into an appreciation of the absurdity of life. They realize their futile struggle and repetition of their unavoidable hardship, pains and miseries and they sing a song. The repeated refrain of the song, Roll me over, do it again shows the futility of their struggle in war like Sisyphus, they are condemned to fight repeatedly though their struggle is futile and they get nothing except death, destruction and despair.

In a nutshell, the overall pain, heroic struggle of soldiers and the effective military technique has no meaning in war. They struggle so deadly but get nothing only death,

despair and anxiety. Individual choice, humanity and reason become worthless in war.

So, their struggle in war is futile existential struggle and the war itself is futile.

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