



## Similarities And Differences Of War Depiction In J.Heller's Novel "Catch 22" And Shukhrat's Novel "Shinelli Yillar"

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### ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the similarities and differences of the American writer Joseph Heller's novel "Catch-22" and prominent Uzbek writer Shukhrat (Gulom Aminov)'s novel "Shinelli yillar". While comparing these two novels, we can see some similar war actions at the same time it is clearly evident the differences between works. As a member of the Beat Generation and the post-World War II era, Heller developed a very satirical approach towards institutions, particularly the national government and the military. He was deeply cynical of war, which was best exemplified by the "black humor" of Catch-22, and he explored the difficulties of Jewish experience in postwar America. However, Shukhrat's involment in the Second World War, seeing the ruined cities and villages, defeat and victory, prompted him to record a great novel by "Shinelli Yillar" in 1958.

### KEYWORDS

Beat Generation, black humor, satire, approach.

### INTRODUCTION

It is generally estimated that more than fifty million people lost their lives in the Second World War. Gruesome acts, in which both soldiers and civilians were dying because of absurd desire of some individuals to gain control over the whole world, are not rare in

the novels and the way such deeds are depicted is almost breath-taking. This feature seems to be common for many authors whose books deal with the topic of war.

When reading war novels, it is nearly impossible not to come across passages

where death and cruel actions are being talked about. The intention of the author to present stories and events acting as true to life is achieved by means of high descriptiveness and naturalistic mode of narration, which, on the other hand, the reader may find macabre or even disgusting from time to time.

One can't help but note that in the critical commentary about the fiction of the 1950s and 60s known as "black humor" there is much discussion of what makes such fiction "black", but little of its humor. The most famous expression of this tendency occurs in probably the most frequently cited book on black humor, Max Schulz's *Black Humor Fiction of the Sixties*.

### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

That "Catch-22" engages in broad comedy is readily apparent from its first chapter, indeed its very first sentence. But the reader attentive to comic structure and pattern will not fail to appreciate a passage such as the following: The colonel dwelt in a vortex of specialists who were still specializing in trying to determine what was troubling him. They hurled lights in his eyes to see if he could see, rammed needles into nerves to hear if he could feel. There was a urologist for his urine, a lymphologist for his lymph, an endocrinologist for his endocrines, a psychologist for his psyche, a dermatologist for his derma; there was a pathologist for his pathos, a cystologist for his cysts, and a bald and pedantic cetologist from the zoology department at Harvard who had been shanghaied ruthlessly into the Medical Corps by an faulty anode in an I.B.M. machine and spent his sessions with the dying colonel trying to discuss *Moby Dick* with him. ( Joseph

Heller *CATCH-22* Copyright© Joseph Heller, 1995, 1961. pg)

The only thing going on was a war, and no one seemed to notice but Yossarian and Dunbar. Yossarian is one of the few "normal" characters found in the books, or at least he thinks he is. As the story progresses, it appears that no one is "normal." Values either no longer apply, or do in reverse. In this backwards world of *Catch-22*, where everyone is crazy, Heller uses black humor and satire to make light of an otherwise dismal situation. Satire in the book mainly attacks three general things: senior military officers, professional and business interests, and society's remarkable reliance on forms, papers, rules and regulations.

Professions and businesses are attacked throughout the book. A very humorous example of this is the antics of Gus and Wes, Doc Daneeka's assistants. They are incredibly incompetent, as all they do is bring people to the hospital who have temperatures of 102 and above, painting their gums and toes with a gentian violet solution. The competency of the nurses can also be questioned, and their treatment of a man covered completely in bandages. The only thing the nurses do for him is to switch the bottles of liquid going in and out of his body (Magill 849). The doctors do not know what to do about Yossarian either. He stays to the infirmary for several weeks complaining about his liver. The doctors tell him it is not jaundice but they do not know what it is. Finally, they tell him that nothing is wrong with him at all and let him go.

Another attack of businesses is the story of how Chief White Halfoat and his family were exploited by the American Oil Industry. Wherever they lived, workers found oil

underneath, and kicked them off the land. Then they followed them to the next spot they planned to live. Every place they went there was oil.

One almost waits for the rimshots at the end of such a performance (it has the feel in particular of a more verbally playful Woody Allen joke). Although the ultimate effect of humor such as this may be to contribute to the novel's overall sense of absurdity, it should be emphasized that the immediate effect is laughter, and that the novel's knitting together of such moments is its primary narrative strategy. While "jokes" in the most conventional sense do not necessarily dominate the pages of *Catch-22*, they are nevertheless plentiful, the spirit and substance of comedy like the above does inform much of the novel's exposition, as well as many of its character exchanges. Chapter II, "Clevinger," for example, opens to a brief dialogue between the title character and Yossarian, the tenor of which is echoed in subsequent dialogue as well:

Clevinger had stared at him with apoplectic rage and indignation and, clawing the table with both hands, had shouted, "You're crazy!" "Clevinger, what do you want from people?" Dunbar had replied wearily above the noises of the officers' club. "I'm not joking," Clevinger persisted. "They're trying to kill me," Yossarian told him calmly. "No one's trying to kill you," Clevinger cried. "Then why are they shooting at me?" Yossarian asked. "They're shooting at everyone," Clevinger answered. "They're trying to kill everyone." "And what difference does that make?" (pp. 11-12)

The tone of this interchange is suggestive of nothing so much as the patter of a vaudeville team, and the humor evoked by such a passage clearly relies on the basic strategies

of comedy, surprise and incongruity. In replying "what difference does that make?" to Clevinger's declaration, Yossarian is clearly disrupting the logical case Clevinger is trying to make for Yossarian's "craziness." At first we find Yossarian's defense quite implausible (and therefore are perhaps inclined to agree with Clevinger) but on second thought it makes its own kind of sense.

In "Shinelli yillar" by Shuhrat the war description started in the beginning of the novel:

Старший лейтенент Годинг бугунги отиш қоидаларини билмаган кишини пулемётга яқинлаштирмай жағини айтиб, бир чеккадан машқни ижро этишга жангчиларни чақира бошлади. Қолган взвод ва отделениялар отиш чизиғидан нарида, ёлғондакам ўқ билан пулемётда машқ қилиб турдилар. Атрофда янграётган кичик командирларнинг товушлари бир-бирларини босиб кетарди:

-Юриб бораётган машинага ўн икки ўқда, қисқа ўқ билан оғон! (Shuhrat. *Shinelli yillar*. G'afur G'ulom nomidagi adabiyot va san'at nashriyoti. 1980. Toshkent. B.15)

Shuhrat described the war system in his novel so lively, Battalions, commanders everything was described in details.

In "The catch 22" we can find the description of the war but with black humor. What difference does it make to Yossarian if he is in fact killed that everyone else is a target? The ambiguity ensuing from these disparate responses provokes our laughter. It is this instinctive, largely subconscious reaction, which is prompted by what Palmer terms the "logic of the absurd." Moreover, Clevinger's disclaimer—"I'm not joking!"—ultimately works to highlight his position as the butt of

the joke being set up at his expense, both by Yossarian and by the shape of the scene's own comic logic.

“Are you crazy or something?”

“Why not?”

“Catch 22”

“Catch 22?” Yossarian was stunned. “What the hell has Catch-22 got to do with it”? ...

But they don't say you have to go home. And regulation do say you have to obey every order. That is the catch. (p-9)

Ironically, by the end of Chapter II Yossarian finds the tables turned as he himself becomes the butt of the joke who's absurd but ruthless logic provides the novel its title and controlling metaphor: Catch-22. Doc Daneeka informs him that the required number of missions has been raised (from 44 to 50 at this point), and throughout the rest of the book Yossarian struggles against the inescapable force of Catch-22, sometimes resisting actively and at others more passively cutting his losses in his effort to somehow get the last laugh on the system it represents. Doc Daneeka's explanation of the principle of Catch-22 suggests further the relevance of Palmer's schema; indeed, what is most disturbing about the whole idea of Catch-22 is explicable through its terms. We--and the airmen on Pianosa--are surprised by the obvious manipulation and injustice embodied in this unofficial law. Its main tenet--that anyone who would continue to fly missions after what Yossarian, Orr, and the others have been through would be crazy, but that "anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy" seems a perversely implausible distortion of logic, but at the same time has a certain monstrous plausibility as well. Even Yossarian is moved to admire such a catch, and Doc Daneeka pronounces it "the best there is." If the world of Catch-22 is indeed

"crazy," it is largely because it is so thoroughly informed by the rigorous logic of comedy.

We can see the author's mastership in the description of the nature during the war: Қуёш тик кўтарилиб, дарахтларнинг сояси қисқарди .Иссиқдан майсаларнинг боши эгилди .Узоқ-узоқлар жимирлайди.Гоҳо учиб қолган чигирткаларнинг қаноти товланади.Машқ учун қазилган ерлардан буғ кўтарилади.Жангчилар май байрами олдида олган панамаларини бостириброк кийган,ба'зилари ҳўллаб олган. (17-bet)

Not only is Yossarian repeatedly taken aback by the ubiquity of this logic, but readers of Catch-22 must also be surprised by the unrelenting manifestations of its all-encompassing joke in an incongruous setting of bloody air war and inhuman exploitation where fear and misery are translated into comic pratfalls. A large part of the book's artistic interest, lies precisely in the way in which Heller sustains his comic routines over the course of nearly 500 pages, as well as the way in which he joins these routines into a compelling, albeit highly fragmented, narrative.

There are many descriptions of the real war proposal:

Баравар ўқ узилди .Бўлмади.Аммо самолётлар энди аввалгидек ерни сийпаш даражасида пастга тушмас,мушт кўрсатмасди. Охир чўчиб бошқа ёққа ўтиб кетди.Жангчилар енгил нафас олди. (19-bet)

Heller succeeds both in creating consistently startling comic moments and in tying these moments together in a way that reflects and reinforces the fundamental nature of the joke itself. Palmer describes two kinds of narrative which incorporate gags and jokes. The first gathers such gags into an essentially self-sufficient sequence, while the second

subordinates the gags to an otherwise non-comic story. In the former case, comedy is presumed to be capable of producing its own kind of satisfaction; in the latter, the comedy is employed as a supplement to the story's non-comic core.

While Palmer is perhaps correct to contend that narratives of the first kind are rarely found in practice (especially in literature), *Catch-22* comes as close to this kind of narrative as any text in modern fiction. Further, while such a strategy might seem a threat to narrative unity, in *Catch-22* it actually provides a kind of unity that has previously been overlooked. What has appeared to be an excessively fragmented narrative (or at least a too randomly fragmented one) can be read as a mammoth orchestration of individual comic bits and routines into a kaleidoscopic comedy revue, the cumulative effect of which is to situate Yossarian ever more irretrievably in the world defined by *Catch-22*. The chronological fluidity of the story is partly induced by the logic of an absurdity as overwhelming as this, and is partly an opportunity for the reader to reflect on the logic of the absurd itself as played out under this text's conditions: that a world so irrational, where distinctions between past, present, and future collapse, could actually exist seems implausible in the extreme, yet when judged by the terms of its governing assumptions, the confusions of such a world seem plausible indeed. Thus does one of the most basic of comedic devices—the joke—serve both as the foundation of individual scenes and episodes and as a central organizing principle of the novel as a whole, with consequent ramifications not only for its aesthetic structure but also for any philosophical or political positions it may be presumed to be advancing. Even more examples of scenes and situations in *Catch-22* explicable in terms of jokes and related kinds

of "low" humor could be adduced here—the "atheist" scene between the chaplain and Colonel Cathcart, for example, in which the Colonel "plays dumb" (although he isn't really playing) in his astonishment that atheism is legal, that the enlisted men pray to the same God as the officers, etc. But while many readers might reluctantly acknowledge the book's reliance on such humor, it is the marginal status of this kind of comedy that provokes even admirers to attribute supplemental value to its use in order to "raise" the text to a more respectable and more suitably meaningful level of discourse. The themes of love and war are featured in literature, and inspire authors to write wartime romances that highlight these two themes. The novel "*Shinelli yillar*" also highlights the passionate relationship between Zebo and Elmurod. There are many events demonstrating the love in the novel:

Зебо ўзининг "анвинақа" сўзини Элмурод ҳам ишлатганини кўриб,ялт этиб унга қаради.Элмурод ҳам "анвинақа" сўзини ишқ –муҳаббат ма'носида тўғри тушунган эди.Кўзлар бирдан учрашди.Зебо бирдан қизариб кетди,ерга қаради. (37-bet)

Joseph Heller in "*Catch-22*" writes the only mentions of love and sexuality happen in the realm of the world's oldest profession: prostitution. Many of the men often mistake lust for love, and sex is often used not just for pleasure, but as a tool of distraction and coercion. Nearly all of the women mentioned in the text are viewed primarily as sexual objects, and none of the men are able to establish lasting relationships with women, though we're not so sure a war zone is the best place to look for love.

Again, examining the mechanism of the joke can help to explain why this happens. The



balance between the plausible and the implausible in a given joke is often delicate, and can itself determine the impact of that joke. Palmer argues, for example, that contemporary audiences may see only the implausible in silent film comedies, and therefore judge them to be merely silly. Some audiences at the time, however, attended mostly to the plausible—that is, currently relevant—features and thus, notably, "found them excessively 'black,' too abrasive to be funny." Substituting "serious" or "disturbing" for "abrasive" in this statement, we can perhaps begin to see how contemporary literary critics avoid or overlook the humor of black humor.

Certainly not all scenes in "Catch-22" are comic in the way we have described. Yossarian's descent into the underworld on the streets of Rome, for example, seems clearly meant to convey a sobering impression (although even here his obvious helplessness finally only reinforces an overall view of him as a comic figure). Furthermore, comedy as absolute as Catch-22 at its most extreme does almost unavoidably provoke consideration of its implications, formal and thematic. It is finally only testimony to the impact of comedy, its capacity to be meaningful in a variety of contexts, that the novel has drawn the weighty interpretations I adduced previously. Misunderstanding and distortion result when the hermeneutic operations involved in such interpretations are insufficiently distinguished from the operations of comedy proper, or these latter operations are disregarded entirely.

In effect, humor is erased as a significant element of the text, becoming merely an incidental effect. Certainly joking in a context perceived as especially serious or disturbing could elicit laughter resonant with questions

(not only "Why am I laughing?" but undoubtedly following from that immediate response), but the joke itself remains separate from such questions, its structure independent of context. The force of a given joke may indeed be related to its context, of course: the blackness of black humor, while often overemphasized, cannot be ignored and is obviously meaningless except through reference to context.

The term "black humor," then, is perhaps most appropriately defined as an unapologetic, unalloyed use of comedy in extreme situations that implicitly raise very large, even profound, questions. Black humor of the sort found in Catch-22 neither trivializes such questions nor foregrounds them, but rather broadens the range of experience to which comedy is relevant.

The conclusion to "Catch-22" has struck many readers as a particularly extreme situation, or at least one with important implications for the novel's ostensible thematic concerns. Many who see "Catch-22" as a satire or a philosophical treatise find the ending a cop-out. Why does Yossarian choose to run away, they implicitly ask, rather than stay and work to change the system? (Although such criticism overlooks the fact that the chaplain proposes to do just that.) Should one conclude that the book is insufficiently serious from the outset, the ending could conceivably seem a transparent attempt to graft on an explicitly antiwar message. A more accurate assessment would conclude that the ending does leave a message, but also point out that it is a message entirely consistent with the novel's preponderant use of comedy. If the world depicted on Pianosa could be changed, surely by the end of this long novel a sign of such a change would reveal itself. Yet Yossarian's lived-world remains essentially the

same at the end as it was when we first experienced it in the hospital ward. Nor are we as readers likely to feel that the conditions of that lived-world have been neutralized, much less altered, by the extended comic treatment of them. Instead, the comedy of *Catch-22* is ultimately no regenerative: its relentless, frequently black humor does not finally call attention to situations, issues, or problems that could be improved, resolved, or eliminated through more concerted human effort. The blackness of the humor, in fact, may be a function of this final despair. In the face of a world so wholly irredeemable, Yossarian's only alternative is to abandon it in a gesture of personal survival. He may have managed to get the last laugh, but it is a feeble one, and his apparent optimism about the possibilities of "Sweden" make this reader feel the joke is still on him.

Possibly what has driven scholars to neglect the role of comedy in *Catch-22* is the sense that under the circumstances portrayed by this novel—war, death, systemic oppression—"levity" assuredly does not seem appropriate. Perhaps there are situations, attitudes, and beliefs that are off limits to comic treatment, but surely comic art can be served only by those who reject taboos of decorum and give free rein to the logic of comedy; the unrestrained play of this logic once unleashed achieves the only truly serious purpose of comedy, which is finally to expose the potentially ridiculous even if what is exposed proves disturbing or offensive. Joseph Heller does so unleash the inherent force and energy of the comic impulse, and this more than its concern with the "alarming inhumanities" of the system makes *Catch-22* a sobering work of literature. Thus, while "black humor fiction" may do little to enhance our knowledge of the "cosmic labyrinth," it does greatly enhance our understanding of the

legitimate reach of comedy: even the gravest or the most exalted of subjects can be submitted to the logic of the absurd. *Catch-22* will not tell you how to live or what to think or even what's worth thinking about. It will tell you what's worth laughing at.

## CONCLUSION

It is essential to mention that one of the critics Anderson says that *Catch-22* took one of life's worst experiences and made it funny. Heller understood completely what soldiers encounter in war and identified with their frustration about being caught in a situation over which they have no control. He turned that frustration into his famous *Catch-22*, an idea that perfectly captures the absurdity of war and the mind-numbing bureaucracy that supports it. Heller's humor, says Anderson, is what makes the bookwork. Therefore, Shuhrat's novel "*Shinelli yillar*" covers the war events, which are more lively and serious.

However, these novels are different in the style we have taken into consideration the theme of war in these novels.

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