CATCH-22

War as a subject has been pervasive and central concern to most of the writers since the beginning of the Twentieth Century. It is also to a great extent a reflection of the impact of the two world wars. But if one tries to judge Catch-22 (1961) from the viewpoint of the other war novels, it may not seem to fit in the pattern of the traditional war novels as Heller does not deal with the institution of war though he presents war in the novel, but with the oppression of the individual under the institution of the military bureaucracy and the crest of the individual’s quest for freedom. All the major war novels, though differ in some points, appear to have in common two basic principles: fighting for one’s side which is better than one’s enemy is justified and heroism is always greater than cowardice. But Heller’s presentation of war in Catch-22 holds opposite view. It says both the views are worse as they practise the same tactics. Heller stresses that cowardice if it helps one to be alive is better than meaningless heroic-self-sacrifice which results in death and victory has no meaning to one who is dead. Heller in his novel Catch-22 shows how the high-sounding theories and reasons for the justification of war become ineffective when the actual war takes place. Though Heller sets the action of Catch-22 in war time and engages his characters in warfare, it is not really a novel about the war but the individual’s struggle for freedom against the tyranny of
bureaucratic military institution. Heller merely uses war to bring out the oppressive features of the military institution whose rules drive men crazy. Heller says that the system which misuses man's power over his own life and the institutions which are a fierce threat to the basic maintenance of individual freedom. Heller through Catch-22 presents the struggle of the individual to free himself from the tyrannical clutches of the institution, while the institution of military bureaucracy through its irrational administration of justice, economics and with its myopic goals tries to deprive him of his freedom and reduce him to the state of mere inanimate objects.

Heller through the military personnel like Colonel Cathcart, Cargill, Scheisskopf, Korn, General Peckem, Captain Black and Milo Minderbinder shows the inhumanity, tyranny and oppression of military bureaucracy in its attempt to crush the spirit of the individual and deprive him of his freedom. The military bureaucracy exploits war for personal advantages. For Doc Daneeka, the medical officer war is "God send" to make money, for Captain Black war helps to give vent to his sadistic impulses, for Colonel Cargill, to become successful with his ineptitude, for Colonel Cathcart to get his picture appeared in the Saturday Evening Post, for Colonel Korn and General Peckem to get ahead, for Scheisskopf to practise his innate parading, for Milo Minderbinder, the mess officer, to become rich.
The military bureaucracy concerns itself more with the exploitation of the individual for trivial, self-serving ends rather than the official objective that is supposed to justify its use of power—winning the war. The military bureaucracy is indifferent to the lives of its squadron men, the only thing it cares for is the name and impression they would make for the selfish Colonels and Generals. The military institution fills the men of hierarchy with the meaningless aspirations and causes the victimization of the subordinates. Colonel Cathcart wants to become a general in accordance with the competitive spirit of the institution. He constantly raises the number of missions to get his picture appeared in The Saturday Evening Post. When he realizes that he can not conduct prayers before each mission without excluding the enlisted men, he volunteers his group for the mission of Avignon which kills Snowden. His hope to get some casualties in order to speed up things so that he can get into the Christmas issue shows the indifference of the military bureaucracy to human life. The fact that the military institution cares more for reports than for people is shown through his remarks when Yossarian flies twice over a bridge at Ferrara, and destroys it during the second time, but gets Kraft killed in the process,

It's not that I'm being sentimental or anything. I don't give a damn about the men or the airplane. It's just that it looks so lousy on the report. How am I going to
The Colonel's main concern is not the death of Kraft but how he will explain it in his report. In order to show his courage the Colonel volunteers the lives of the other men. He, with his constant raise in the required number of missions the fliers have to fly, frustrates the men even to the extent of plotting to assassinate him.

The military bureaucracy cynically changes the rules often that people live and hope by and fill them with depression and insecurity.

They were in a race and knew it, because they knew from bitter experience that Colonel Cathcart might raise the number of missions again at any time.

Hungry Joe, the veteran combat flier illustrates the psychological effect which the military bureaucracy creates in the combat men by arbitrarily changing the rules they live by. He finishes his missions but fails to be free from the institution. His constant waiting to be sent home drives him to craziness and he gets eerie and ear-splitting nightmares that keep everyone in the squadron awake. The agony of waiting to discover if this time he will actually receive his reward is so unbearably great that ultimately Joe prefers combat to his

2. ibid., p. 39.
Every time Colonel Cathcart increased the number of missions and returned Hungry Joe to combat duty, the nightmares stopped and Hungry Joe settled down into a normal state of terror with a smile of relief.3.

The military bureaucracy detests the individual initiative. It tries to find excuses to eliminate the individual if he has a mind.

Clevinger had a mind, and Lieutenant Scheisskopf had noticed that people with minds tended to get pretty smart at times. Such men were dangerous, and even the new cadet officers whom Clevinger had helped into office were eager to give damning testimony against him. The case against Clevinger was open and shut. The only thing missing was something to charge him with.4

but they soon find an excuse to try Clevinger and in the farce of Clevinger's trial, every role is acted by Scheisskopf

Clevinger was guilty, of course, or he would not have been accused, and since the only way to prove it was to find him guilty, it was their patriotic duty to do so. He was sentenced to walk fifty-seven punishment tours.5

In his concentration on precision parading Scheisskopf illustrates the militaristic tendency to reduce people to automatic mechanisms, with himself pushing the buttons. In

3. ibid., p. 73.
4. ibid., p. 94.
5. ibid., p. 106.
court-martialed Clevinger for making recommendations for improvement of Cadet morale (which Clevinger was asked to do), Scheisskopf personifies an institutional tendency to repress initiative and foster utter conformity. And in performing at Clevinger's trial as both prosecutor, judge and defense Counsel, Scheisskopf serves as a symbol of harsh authoritarian justice. The fact that the power struggles have pushed the most cowardly and irrelevant man to the top of the pyramid is, of course, one of the final ironies of *catch-22* and Heller calls Clevinger a very serious, very honest and very conscientious dope, for he blindly believes that whatever the military institution does is right. As a consequence to his belief in the military bureaucracy, he is inhumanly prosecuted, sentenced and disappeared in the end.

The power struggles that take place between the Captains, Colonels and Generals make the men suffer. Heller attacks the absurdities of the military bureaucracy through Scheisskopf's insane obsession with parading, Cargill's ability to make 'losses' in business, and Captain Black’s Loyalty oaths. Scheisskopf's love for compulsive parades shows the mad emphasis of the military bureaucracy as means instead of ends. Soldiers are taught parading in their basic training in order to help them develop a sense of solidarity and group efficiency which they must learn to apply to the real and advanced problems of warfare. But as he is fixed in that early stage of military
training, a non-combatant by principle, personality and preference, Scheisskopf is totally divorced from reality. With its standards of bureaucratic efficiency, military bureaucracy makes mediocrity triumph over ability. Colonel Cargill is another tool which the military institution uses to oppress the men in the squadron. Colonel Cargill serves two of Heller's purposes, one to satirize American business tactics and the other to expose the absurdity of military logic. In civilian life Cargill is known as a dependable man for a fast tax write off because he could run the most prosperous enterprise into the ground. Colonel Cargill with this expertise succeeds as a marketing executive and is sought by the firms which are eager to make losses for tax purposes. The commanders in the military bureaucracy in order to build their empires use one person against another. General Peckem welcomes Colonel Scheisskopf's arrival as he can pose Scheisskopf against Colonel Cargill in the endless "devide and conquer" routine of oppressive authority, he can build a pyramid under Scheisskopf, there by increasing his own power and can have one more colonel to use against General Dreedle, his acknowledged war time "target". The military bureaucracy all the time delegates its responsibility in order to engage itself in power struggles. The officialdom does nothing but shows off.
As struggles between generals like Peckem and Dreedle at the top destroy the efficiency, vicious power struggles between people like Major Major Major and Captain Black weaken the efficiency in the middle echelons. Captain Black typifies the 'blackest' of all villains whom the military bureaucracy produces in Catch-22. Since his work is non-combat, he has plenty of time to engage in power struggles and to enjoy the discomfort of those whose job is combat. When Major Major's promotion to the squadron commander, dispels his high hopes of becoming a squadron commander, he operates cheap and unjust tricks to make Major Major unpopular. Though he launches "Glorious Loyalty Oath Crusade" strictly to cripple Major Major, it creates confusion and intolerable extra work which the enlisted men are burdened with.

Every time they turned around there was another loyalty oath to be signed. They signed a loyalty oath to get their pay from the finance officer, to obtain their PX supplies, to have their hair cut by the Italian barbers.  

The symbolism of this situation is clear, in many areas in modern life, the actual creator has to carry an ever-growing hierarchy of empire-building vice-presidents, managers and third-assistant chiefs. The people who are actually engaged in the fighting are now

Without realizing how it had come about,

6. ibid., p. 147.
..... discovered themselves dominated by the administrators appointed to serve them. They were bullied, insulted, harassed and shoved about all day long by one after the other.7.

The military bureaucracy gives more importance to records than people. Doc Daneeka registers his name on various flight rosters so that he can collect flight pay, but quite interestingly he stays safely on the ground. Since he is listed as aboard Mcwatt's plane and does not parachute out, the officialdom lists him as dead. His protest is of no avail. It is logically "impossible" for him to be alive. His pay stops and death benefits go out to his wife. She ignores her husband's letters explaining everything after Whitcomb's formal letters and several large insurance checks convince her of the reality of her widowhood. Apart from the satire on the Quick adjustment that war-widows can make, the ironic justice administered to the greedy Doc, Heller's emphasis is on the mechanical nature of the institution of military bureaucracy which proves that records are more real than people. Mudd is killed in the air but since he has not signed before the flight, officially he did not go aloft and according to official records he is alive and Doc Daneeka is officially dead. Both Mudd and Doc Daneeka symbolise the death-in-life and the life-in-death, that the institution of bureaucracy can create. Colonel Korn presents the real nature of Military Bureaucracy when he tells "to act boastfully about

7. ibid., p. 148.
something" they "ought to be ashamed of". Colonel Korn is a lawyer who specializes in how to evade the law. Like Doc Daneeka, he practises a profession strictly for selfish ends, and like Milo Minderbinder and Mrs. Doc Daneeka he knows how to exploit the chaos of war. He is engaged in currency manipulation and black market operations. He does not care for human life, on the other hand he cruelly oppresses people like Dunbar and the Chaplain when they plead for human life. He is gifted with a sharp tongue which subsides any protests that the people raise against his operation. His conducting the briefing of the bombing the village of defended civilians is a good evidence. He proudly declares that they do not care about road block but for tight bomb patterns and good aerial photographs. He schemes, threatens, coaxes and manipulates people to serve his own ends. He is one of the strong pillars of the institution of military bureaucracy, which oppresses everyone that comes its way. Corporal Whitcomb illustrates how an authoritarian institution thrives on insecurity, truculence and petty rivalries. In short, he fosters the worst traits in man and stultifies the best. He has no intrinsic interest in his job as Chaplain's assistant (personally he is an atheist) but it is his one vehicle for self-assertion, for "getting ahead". He has no sincere interest in writing to the people of the men killed in action. His formal letter is a cynical travesty on "personnel" expression of grief and is

8. ibid., p. 180.
another indication of the trend toward the mechanization of life by the institution. The blatantly careless form in which the letter reaches Mrs. Daneeka is inevitable; it was not intended for "next of kin" at all but for advancement of Whitcomb and Cathcart. The malevolence with which the C.I.D. man, Cathcart, Whitcomb focus on the Chaplain shows the pressures of authoritarian life require that each of them find scapegoats. Not a bit of their hostility toward the Chaplain seems justified except that he is one man who will not threaten them in return.

The victimization of the men, through the unscrupulous Milo Minderbinder, touches the roots of the capitalist entrepreneur, revealing that, behind the compulsive acquisitiveness of the military bureaucracy's capitalistic system lies a completely amoral destructive force which is blind in its operation and totally unconcerned with human consequences. War in Heller's America is merely a means of making money and self advancement, as he says that General Dreedle takes his son-in-law into "military business". Human life loses all its importance and dignity and the system measures man in terms of his merchantile worth as Milo puts it "a thousand dollar's ain't such a bad price for a medium bomber and a crew.".

Human life is simply a commodity which is expendable when ample "reimbursement" can be made. Milo's free enterprise and his inhuman activities like his contract with the Germans, trap the

9. ibid., p. 325.
men on the island in a helpless situation of victimization. While they labour, he profits, they crave to go home he makes them fly his missions and while they die, he expands. The result of the rules of military economic institution is profit for some and on the other hand it is meaningless, inhuman and inane parades for everyone else. Milo makes inhuman deals with the enemies and escapes from them scot free convincing the people that every one has a share in his syndicate. His contract with the Germans to bomb his own squadron suggests the serious moral erosion and human depravity which shocks Yossarian and others. His operations are in a way prove to be a direct military aid to the enemy in order to win the war. The people on the island have three options, they must be a prey to the Cannon, or make a deal with the system or desert not the actual war which tries to preserve political freedom but from the dehumanized, inverted, military economic machine. Milo keeps everyone in the squadron dumb about his actions despite all the deaths and destruction he causes to them. The death of Snowden "hightens the tragic intensity of victimization" by the military institution. The death of Snowden shows that the military economic machine encroaches in every field and robs the men of all their rights and necessitates and make them mere victims of the inhumanity,

If Snowden represents man as flesh, M&M.

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Enterprises regards man literally as a commodity, to be traded, bargained for and eventually disposed of in the market of war.\(^{11}\)

The bureaucratic officials try to do whatever they like and extinguish whatever they do not like. They can order and cancel the parades and create confusion, they can volunteer the missions for their own selfish ends and they can even order a man to be taken out and shot. General Dreedle orders Major Danby to be taken out and shot and he expresses the same desire about the Chaplain when he hangs around the officers' club and also about Colonel Cathcart when he tries to explain the reason why he hangs there. Colonel Cathcart's constant raise in the number of the required missions, Scheisskopf's sickening parades, Colonel Korn's inhuman authority, General Peckem's getting-ahead policy and Milo's black market operations crush the spirit of the individuals and make them long for an escape.

The men of the squadron try to take temporary refuge in the hospital from the oppressing military but even there they are being victimized. The representatives of the hospital institution, Doc Daneeka, his medical assistants Gus, Wes and Major Sanderson demonstrate the corruption, cynicism and inefficiency in military professional life. Doc Daneeka sees medicine not as a public service but as a means of self-enrichment. The one thing he is always interested in is himself.\(^{11}\)

and the only thing he wants to do is 'make dough'. Daneska argues

I know there is a war on. I know a lot of people are going to have to suffer for us to win it. But why must I be one of them? Why don't they draft some of these old doctors who keep shooting their kissers off in public about what big sacrifices the medical game stands ready to make? I don't want to make sacrifices. I want to make dough.¹²

He constantly broods over his health, he is always a very neat, clean man whose idea of a good time is to sulk. He has two assistants to do everything for him, yet "why me" is his constant lament. War to him in the beginning is a God send, as he says,

I upped my kickback fee with those two drugstores. The beauty parlors were good for two, three abortions a week. Things couldn't have been better.¹³

but the terrible thing is

even the word of a licensed physician is suspected by the country he loves. He has been drafted and shipped to pianosa as a flight surgeon, even though he was terrified of flying.¹⁴

Heller chooses him as the best character to put "Catch-22" into its most memorable form. When ever a person comes to him for help he always denies it, when Yossarian begs him to save his life, "it's not my business to save lives" he retorts sullenly.

¹² ibid., p. 45.
¹³ ibid., p. 56.
¹⁴ ibid., p. 56.
In the end he gets the same justice administered to him which he has been administering to others. His scheming for getting flight-pay without flying, results in his being classified dead while still being alive. His strange "come-uppance" illustrates again that in a bureaucracy, records are more real than people, and means are more important than ends. The official records declare him dead as he is officially in Mcwatt's plane which crashes into mountains. He appeals to every one for help but no help comes in his way. Even his wife pays dumb ear when he frantically writes to her to do something about his predicament, on the other hand she moves with her children leaving no traces of her address. Throughout the opening chapters, he explains and takes the help of "Catch-22" in order to deny help to others but he himself gets caught in its irresistible web. Gus and Wes, Doc Daneeka's assistants are the best examples to show as to how the medical institution elevates medicine to an exact science. They rush all the men reporting on sick call with temperatures above 102 to the hospital and they paint the gums and toes of the men with gentian violet solution, whose temperature is below 102 and give them a laxative to through away in the bushes and order the men with temperatures of exactly 102 to return in an hour to have their temperatures taken again. Major Sanderson is a conglomerate of all the weaknesses of old-fashioned psychoanalysis, which anticipates some major reforms within psychoanalysis itself. Sanderson is obviously a man who went into psychiatry in order to
study his own psychic disorders, in itself a healthy step, but he also obviously has never been cured. He quickly loses control of the psychiatric interview and becomes, in effect, Yossarian's patient. He is that pathetic kind of psychologist who uses his professional knowledge to assert "superiority" over the patient. But worst of all, he acts on the orthodox view that any deviation from the "normal" is an evidence of maladjustment and failure to confirm is neurotic. Thus Yossarian is "immature" because he cannot adapt himself to arbitrary authority of the institution and outmoded tradition. Heller's implicit criticism here adumbrates the attitude of more progressive psychoanalysts who feel that at a time in history when the Establishment itself is sick, non-conformity may be the only road to psychic health. And Heller seems to be asking what happens when the patient is smarter than the analyst—? for it appears to be that is clearly the case in Yossarian's relation with Dr. Sanderson.

The doctors in the hospital do not treat the patients with love and sympathy, instead, they make mess of human life with their indifferent excessive professional expertise and thereby victimizing the helpless patients,

The colonel had really been investigated. There was not an organ of his body that had not been drugged, derogated, dusted and dredged, fingered and photographed, removed, plundered and replaced.15

15. ibid., p.23.
The nurses boss over men and treat them as objects or things. Man is no different from a bed pan or a gear as Nurse Cramer tells Yossarian:

'Are you crazy?' she scolded virtuously, shaking an indignant finger in front of his eyes. 'I suppose you just don't care if you kill yourself, do you?'

'It's my self,' he reminded her.

'I suppose you just don't care if you lose your leg, do you?'

'It's my leg,'

'It certainly is not your leg!' Nurse Cramer retorted.

'That leg belongs to the U.S. government. It's no different than a gear or a bedpan. The Army has invested a lot of money to make you an airplane pilot, and you've no right to disobey the doctor's orders.'

The description of the soldier-in-white is a remarkable illustration as to how the institutions dehumanize man.

The soldier in white was encased from head to toe in plaster and gauze. Sewn into the bandages over the insides of both elbows were zippered lips through which he was fed clear fluid from a clear jar. A silent zinc pipe rose from the cement on his groin and was coupled to a slim rubber hose that carried waste from his kidneys and dripped it efficiently into a clear, stoppered jar on the floor. When the jar on the floor was full, the jar feeding his elbow was empty, and the two were simply switched quickly so that the stuff could drip back into him.

16. ibid., p. 370.
17. ibid., p. 16-17.

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Both the state of the Soldier in White and the treatment accorded him reinforce Heller's message about the dehumanization of man by the institution of hospital. The way nurses Duckett and Cramer take pride in polishing the operators controlling the soldier's intake and output suggests again that man himself has been reduced to a piece of equipment. They are so efficient in their concern with means, they seem to have forgotten the ends. The artillery Captain sums it up perfectly when he suggests they "hook the two jars up to each other and eliminate the middleman?" 'What the hell do they need him for?" The mummified soldier is the focal symbol in everyone's consciousness as the men contemplate mortality, venereal disease, the relationship between conduct and fate and he symbolizes modern man's fear of becoming a faceless personality.

The impersonation of Yossarian as a dying soldier to comfort the old parents reveals how the doctors try to exploit the squadron men when they take refuge in order to escape combat duties:

'.... you're the handiest one we've got.'

'What are you talking about?' Yossarian asked suspiciously. 'I'm not dying.'

'Of course you're dying. We're all dying. Where the devil else do you think you're heading?'

18. ibid., p. 218.
I have a proposition for you. You let them come in and look you over for a minute and I won't tell anyone you've been lying about your liver symptoms.*

Yossarian drew back from him farther. 'You know about that?'

'Of course I do. Give us some credit.' .... All you've got to do is lie there a few minutes and die a little. Is that asking so much?'

The parents know that Yossarian is not their son, still they mourn for him 'What difference does it make?' the mother answered in the same mourning tone, without looking up. 'He's dying.'²⁰, as it is the same fate for every young man who is in the military, and the institution victimizes everyone without distinction. People are continually treated like things not by the enemy who is out to kill them but by their own military institution. Scheisskopf in his blind passion for perfect parades considers 'every means of improvement, even nailing the twelve men in each rank to a long two-by-four beam of seasoned oak to keep them in line'²¹. The inhuman technicality with which the military establishment dominates the lives of the military people is revealed in Major Major Major's machine-generated promotion which symbolises the further mechanization of the lives of the people. The IBM machine promotes Major Major who is still in basic training to Major Major Major not because for his exceptional merit but the

19. ibid., p. 233-34.
20. ibid., p. 237.
21. ibid., p. 97.
addition of the third major sounds good. Its promoting him to Major as a rank than as a first name shows the dehumanisation by the military.

The powerful weapon, which the institution of military bureaucracy uses to control the individual is the law of "Catch-22", the principle behind the obscure military, the unquestionable mad logic which is the supreme inversion in the novel as a whole and gives the novel its title. It is a principle of non-reason by which bureaucracies and other absurd institutions perpetuate themselves. The biggest victimizer and the main cause for every frustration in catch-22 is "catch-22", the unpredictable, whimsical law, the mysterious regulation which the officialdom invokes, whenever they want to find a way out of the mess they have created. Like war and death, it operates by no rules whatever and it is a fact of life that no one can even try to cope up with. Heller introduces it in the very first chapter, "catch-22 required that each censored letter bear the censoring officer's name"22 which seems more or less sensible and harmless. Neither the reader feels its significance, nor Heller reveals it. But the irrational mad logic of "catch 22" is presented through the conversation between Doc Daneeka and Yossarian when Yossarian asks the Doc to ground him:

'You're wasting your time ,'

Doc Daneeka was forced to tell him.

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22. ibid., p. 13.
'Can't you ground someone who's crazy?'

'Oh, sure. I have to. There's a rule saying I have to ground anyone who's crazy.

'And then you can ground him?' Yossarian asked.

'No, then I can't ground him.'

'You mean there's a catch?'

'Sure there's a catch,' Doc Daneeka replied. 'Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy.'

'There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind.33

So the catch is that the Doc can not ground a man unless he pleads craziness and the moment he does so, he is no longer considered crazy because concern for one's own safety in the face of real danger is the process of a rational mind, so Orr must continue to fly until he is killed, that is, there is no means of escape from the absurdity of "catch 22" except death.

The conversation between ex.PFC Wintergreen and Yossarian though offers a look of sweet reasonableness to the definition of

23. ibid., p. 61-63.

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"catch-22", one can see through its superficialness: ex. PFC Wintergreen says that one has to fly only forty missions in order to go home as per the rules of Twenty-Seventh Air Force Head Quarters. But Yossarian cannot go home even though he has completed forty eight missions, because 'Catch-22' says so. As to the question, of what has Catch-22 got to do with it, Doc Daneeka answers,

'Catch-22,' Doc Daneeka answered patiently, when Hungry Joe had flown Yossarian back to Pianosa, 'says you've always got to do what your commanding officer tells you to.'

'But Twenty-seventh Air Force says I can go home with forty missions.'

'But they don't say you have to go home. And regulations do say you have to obey every order. That's the catch. Even if the colonel were disobeying a Twenty-seventh Air Force order by making you fly more missions, you'd still have to fly them, or you'd be guilty of disobeying an order of his. And then Twenty-seventh Air Force Headquarters would really jump on you.'

One must obey one's commanding officer even if one's commanding officer is someone as arbitrary as Lieutenant/Colonel/General Scheisskopf and the group must approve all actions even if they are decided by the ex. PFC Wintergreen. All persons with military experience can easily recognize this definition. The official regulation may guarantee man a certain right, but he must also obey his commanding officer even if the commanding officer's orders conflict with the rules as Colonel Cathcart's do, the men

24. ibid., p. 78.
must still obey them - the extensions into civilian life are numerous, for example a police man may be making an illegal arrest in order to break up a demonstration, but the demonstrators must submit to arrest or else they will be guilty of disobeying the police. And by the time the court asserts the law and free the demonstrators, the police will have accomplished their purpose. This is the kind of "loophole" Brustein sees as symbolised in "catch 22",

catch 22 is the unwritten loophole in every written law which empowers the authorities to revoke your rights whenever it suits their cruel whims: it is, in short the principle of absolute evil in a malevolent, mechanical and incompetent world. Because of "catch 22" justice is mocked, the innocent are victimised, and Yossarian's squadron is forced to fly more than double the number of missions by Air Force Code25.

The complex and the twisting nature of "Catch 22" supports an unrelenting cycle of apprehension and brutality in which the individual is caught and while trying to find a way for his escape Yossarian keeps banging against the oppressive "catch 22" which he is not even sure exists. "catch-22" is the obnoxious law that obstructs Yossarian in his attempts to avoid flying the dangerous missions whose number Colonel Cathcart raises constantly to further his own power and prestige. "The catch - all - catch can" Omnipresent regulation "catch 22" is explained

in the blackest terms in the end of the novel. Yossarian searching for Nately's whore's kid sister, making his way out of the nightmarish world of the "Eternal City", meets the old woman who tells him that the M.P.s have driven all the poor young girls of the brothal home and the right that empowers them to do so is "catch 22":

'What right did they have?'
'Catch-22'

'What?' Yossarian froze in his tracks with fear and alarm and felt his whole body begin to tingle. 'What did you say?'

'Catch-22' the old woman repeated, rocking her head up and down. 'Catch-22. Catch-22 says they have a right to do anything we can't stop them from doing."

The M.P.s' action and this justification for their action show that Catch 22 is the sordid principle "Might makes right" but there is no such thing as "catch 22" only the authorities make the men believe that there is, for it is a way of demonstrating their unquestionable obedience. So Yossarian comes to a significant conclusion about the absurd law, cursing Catch-22 vehemently as he descended the stairs, even though he knew there was no such thing. Catch-22 did not exist, he was positive of that, but it made no difference. What did matter was that everyone thought it existed, and that was much worse, for there was no object or text to ridicule or refute, to accuse, criticize, attack, amend, hate, revile, spit at, rip to shreds, trample upon or burn up."

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27. ibid., p. 514.
28. ibid., p. 516.
Aarfy's explanation when he killed the innocent girl: "I couldn't very well let her go around saying bad things about us could I?" is a best example of "catch 22"'s logical procedure and suggests certain kinds of acceptable acts and rationalization. M.Ps arresting Yossarian for being AWOL instead of arresting Aarfy for murdering the servant girl shows that "catch 22" has deep rooted process.

The authorities pretend that "catch 22" is a principle of the Universe but gradually Yossarian realising that in an absurd universe negative forces can no more exist than positive forces, and "catch" means a moral if not a hysterical death and when he comes to understand that he is free to act without worrying about "catch-22", rejects the odious deal and deserts to Sweden so that he can be free of the absurd laws like "catch-22" and understandably the inhuman military bureaucracy.

The institution of military bureaucracy in one way or the other influences almost every individual in the novel. Some people like Clevinger, Chaplain, Major Major Major, Hungry Joe, Snowden, Soldier-in-White fail to understand the true nature of the institution and thereby fall victims to military bureaucracy. Some characters like Colonel Cathcart, Cargill, Scheisskopf, Corporal Whitcomb, Captain Black act as the agents of the institution. Major Sanderson, Aarfy, Heavemeyer are the examples of the bureaucracy.
to show how the institutions make the people insensitive and arrogant. People like Colonel Korn, ex-PFC Wintergreen, Milo Minderbinder manipulate the institution to achieve their own selfish goals. The individuals like Major-De Coverly, Dunbar, Danby, Dr. Stubbs, Mowatt, Orr and Yossarian protest against the tyranny and victimization of the military institution. While Mowatt, Dunbar, Danby and Dr. Stubbs are punished for their rebellion, Yossarian and Orr achieve their freedom through their escape.

The institution of military bureaucracy with its insensitive attitudes oppresses everyone and makes them the victims of the institution. The oppressing situation and the victimization by the military establishment drives the life force of the squadron to the point of lunacy. The air force is an insane and malignant organisation which instead of allowing people to live, create a situation of fear, anxiety, callousness, treachery and violence. Everyone accuses the other one crazy on the island. The lunatic self-contained is not confined to war alone but to the other fields also, military, economic institution's idea of justice which turns the world into valueless wasteland, makes the men insane with its administration of justice. The institution of justice helps the military bureaucracy more to victimize people. They do not even need to have a strong case, they can always administer pseudo-justice and punish people, the trial of Clevinger, and the Colonel's angry outbursts on the Corporal
Popinjay are the best examples:

'Well, you're next, Popinjay. As soon as his trial ends, your trial begins. Get it?'

'Yes, sir. What will I be charged with?'

'What the hell difference does that make? Did you hear what he asked me? You're going to learn. Popinjay - the minute we finish with Clevinger you're going to learn.'

Clevinger's trial and the interrogation of the Chaplain suggests that

justice is a knee in the gut from the floor on the chin at night sneaky with a knife brought up down on the magazine of a battleship sandbagged underhanded in the dark without a word of warning.\(^{31}\)

Major Major's father's speciality in receiving pay from the government for the alfalfa he did not grow is another example of the ugliest insanity of the military economic situation and

Certain redefinitions are needed, if everyone is crazy in a crazy situation in a crazy world interpreted by a crazy intelligence. When Yossarian fails to grasp the chaos and confusion in the world he tries to find out whether there is a sensible law guiding this wieldy world where human existence is feeble, contradictory and contingent upon an infinity of other forces.\(^{32}\)

\(^{30}\) ibid., p. 104.
\(^{31}\) ibid., p. 105-106.
Though Yossarian is called crazy, he is relatively the sanest among all the characters, as his craziness is always outflanked by reality and out distant by that of others. Also Yossarian's conviction of those who do not positively like him, hate him and are trying to destroy him, "There were people who cared for him and people who didn't, and those who didn't, hated him and were out to get him"\textsuperscript{33} may appear to be paranoid, yet this is sane paranoia as in a world of men at war, every one in real sense is trying to kill him. As the world is irrational with its self-contained persuits, in order to protect himself and to stay alive and free he must take up the irrationality or as Heller puts it 'crazy' as a way out. Dr. Stubbs's comment about Yossarian correctly sums up the situation in the novel "... 'That crazy bastard may be the only sane one left'"\textsuperscript{34}. Individual insanity is better than the institutional insanity of war and that is why Yossarian remains a paragon of right thinking. The conflict in the novel is between the military bureaucracy's "attempt to close all the loop holes of escape, the hero's determination to open them up"\textsuperscript{35} and the protagonist Yossarian's strong determination not to submit his freedom and himself to the tyranny of military bureaucracy is the driving force in the novel. Yossarian in \textit{Catch-22} lacks external freedom though he possesses interior freedom. So he strives to achieve his freedom

\textsuperscript{33} ibid., p. 29.
\textsuperscript{34} ibid., p. 144.
from the regimentation of military bureaucracy. Through most part of the novel the military bureaucracy keeps him under its oppression and deprives him of the three fold freedom and also the three requisites of the freedom. Yossarian does not enjoy psychological freedom or self-realisation as there is no harmony between his motives and the mode of life he leads and he fails to do what he wishes. Neither does he achieve social freedom or self-determination as everything is determined for him by the military bureaucracy and he is forced to act upon its decisions. The only freedom he possesses from the beginning to the end is the potential freedom or interior freedom, as he has the potentiality to resist the manipulation of the military bureaucracy that tries to impair his freedom and make him a slave. Three stages take place in exercising his potential freedom which in its turn consists of three kinds of freedom: freedom of choice, freedom of decision and freedom of action. In the first stage he tries to serve the military bureaucracy with a hope that it might grant him his freedom if he fulfils his duty. When he realises the real nature of the military bureaucracy, he reaches the second stage in which he rebels against the system and he decides to reject the military bureaucracy's 'deal' which promises him a false freedom and in the final stage, prompted by his strong determination to free himself from the military bureaucracy, he deserts to Sweden. At first, like all the others in the novel he acts in accordance
with the system of "Catch-22". He tries to complete the required number of missions in order to be freed from the military bureaucracy. But when he gets an insight into the nature, functions and motives of the military bureaucracy he realizes his utter helpless situation that either death or war, or the military bureaucracy will obliter ate him unless he does something. So Yossarian starts protesting against the oppressing system. He does not disobey the officialdom outrightly. He administers all the techniques that he can: flying to the hospital on the pretext of a bad liver condition and to Rome on leave, poisoning the food with a laundry soap, going naked and marching backward. But all of them fail and ultimately he is forced to go on combat mission. But the threat of death haunts Yossarian constantly as he correctly understands that the world in which he lives is deliberately trying to enslave him and of any thing important to him is his own freedom, freedom from the tyranny of death and military bureaucracy. When he questions Clevinger "what difference does that make - ?" he points at the ultimate observation in which existance preceeds essense. His power of reason helps him understand the fact that nothing can have any reality unless he manages to stay alive and be free. So, he tries to seek the help of all the possible people whom he thinks are supposed to help him - Doc Daneeka, Major Major and the Chaplain. When they disappoint him he realises that Colonel Cathcart will never allow him to have his freedom, it annoys him.
in such a way that when Major Major offers him to fly some milk runs, he strongly protests, as he believes that "Some people are getting killed and a lot more are making money and having fun." He also refuses to fly the dangerous missions for which Colonel Cathcart volunteers his bomber group, as he knows that his flying the missions will only help Colonel Cathcart to achieve what he wants - to have his picture appeared in The Saturday Evening Post, but he is forced to perform the duty of going on a mission to Bologna. After the death of his intimate friend, Nately, he again refuses to fly. When Scheisskopf makes the parades compulsory for everyone, he marches backwards by resting the gun on his hip. When Colonel Cathcart again raises the number of missions to eighty, while he finishes seventy-one, he refuses to fly anymore missions once for all, questioned, what he would do if the military bureaucracy attempts to disappear him: He replies "I'll try to stop them." This decision of Yossarian shows his positive stand and his resolution to fight against the tyranny of the military bureaucracy. Yossarian is a brilliant, sensitive, intelligent person who always understands the situation and the persons exactly. His warning to Clevinger against Scheisskopf "I heard him ... to his dying day he will hate you" reveals that he listens to the tone, motive, quality, context and the spirit of the language. His refusing to accept Major Major's hope that Colonel Cathcart may send him home, shows

36. ibid., p. 135.
37. ibid., p. 506.
his insight into the character of Colonel Cathcart. He is the only sane one left on the island, who realizes that "it does not make a damned bit of difference who wins the war to someone who is dead"38 and the enemy "is anybody who is going to get you killed, no matter which side he is on"39. Yossarian always keeps his integrity and balance in times of crisis. He resists the monetary temptations of Milo rejecting all of his attractive and handsome offers. He is the only person that offers hope of love and sanity in the world of confusion and hatred and he also protests against the nightmarish world where "one minute he was living, one minute he was dead". This absurdity of human life forces him to plan his escape to achieve his freedom and self-respect and he does not find any wrong in his decision.

Yossarian rejects "Catch-22" and the unreasonable 'silence' of squadron authorities and the M & M enterprises towards human suffering. His great human need lies in his hope of being free in Sweden, the land of freedom. With his desertion Yossarian escapes "Catch-22" and all the absurdities it stands for. His desertion represents his capacity to act and his spiritual renewal. Also with his desertion Yossarian not only transcends his own absurd situation but the absurdity that characterizes the existence of every man. Throughout the novel, Yossarian resists the inhuman authority of "Catch-22" and military bureaucracy, his acceptance of the Colonel's deal after his return from Rome is

38. ibid., p. 161.
the only instance that shows him being submissive to the authority of Catch-22. Apparently Yossarian's bitterness that he has fought their battle with no overt support from his friends is one of the reasons why he accepts this private 'deal'. But after his vision of a "strange man with the mean face" he once more protests and refuses the 'odious deal'. The death of Snowden deeply affects him and when he realises that, when the spirit is gone man is nothing but matter and his protest takes a vehement turn. He refuses to wear uniform when the colonels award him a medal for going over Ferrara twice, he embarrasses them by receiving the medal from General Dreedle stark naked and finally rejects their odious deal and Orr's 'miracle of preservance' makes him realise that the only way that is open to him is to escape to Sweden. Yossarian is slow to choose and decide his course of action but when he realizes the full implications of his predicament, he has the clean courage to take the only definitive action still open to him. Actually his long delay in taking this decisive step serves Heller's purpose perfectly because it gives him time to make a complete survey of the system which the institution of military bureaucracy operates that Yossarian in all self honesty must reject.

Yossarian who considers individuality and freedom more important than "status" or official recognition, decides to take the necessary action to achieve his freedom from the bondage which treats human beings as machines. He keeps money and
machinery in their places as means not ends. He is more interested in human freedom than in institutional status. When the institution turns against human values, Yossarian has the courage to remember that there is a higher law than the state, that is the dignity and the freedom of the individual. Yossarian is the most powerful of Heller's individuals who rebel against the institution. In fact he becomes their mouth-piece as he raises all the questions, struggles and conflicts of the men that are oppressed by the institutions. He stands as a Messiah to show the way to the other individuals to avoid the victimization of the institution. One example of resistance triggers another. Orr's safe arrival in Sweden encourages Yossarian escape and Yossarian's decision to escape makes the Chaplain firm to do what he can. So he decides to make life easier for the fellow men and miserable for his superiors. Even earlier Yossarian's protest worries his superiors and they make an offer to send him as they take him as a threat to their control. Because his example might act as a possible contagious as Colonel Korn says

The men were perfectly content to fly as many missions as we asked as long as they thought they had no alternative. Now you've given them hope, and they're unhappy. 40.

Orr's kind of protest which takes those in authority unaware and which their institutions are not equipped with. "Catch-22"

40. ibid., p. 532.
can handle the conventional protest and even at the end, Colonels Cathcart and Korn have plans for dealing with Yossarian if he does not accept their terms but the system can not handle the new, unconventional strategy practised by Orr. He is a pilot with great technical skill but appears vacant, helpless and slightly mad as he keeps getting himself shot down over the Mediterranean and simply giggles inanely when questioned about his peculiar affinity with water. In the end one finds that his ineptitude is a masquerade to deceive the authorities since he does not protest, they do not consider him as a threat to the institution. They consider only overt rebels like Yossarian as dangerous but in fact Orr is the most dangerous of all as he proves for others that it is possible to break this institution and win.

*Catch-22* makes us think and analyse today's world around us which is as bizarre as the world of "Catch-22" and Yossarian's rebellion gives one a positive hope to affirm one's own values, though some critics interpret Yossarian's desertion as an act of selfishness, evasion of profound moral responsibilities and his desertion has been condemned as the irresponsible behaviour of a hedonist, someone who believes that "The only real horror is physical pain and ultimate death". Through most part of the novel, Yossarian remains a conventional good soldier until he

42. Kennard E. Jean, Number and Nightmare: Forms of Fantasy in Contemporary Literature, Archon Books, 1975, p. 45.
becomes aware that there is no escape from the military institution and "Catch-22". He tries to escape from "Catch-22" which says what it commands is right because it is commanded and the illogical must be done because the command says it is logical. As "Catch-22" is the ultimate power that robs the individual of his control over his own life and hands it over to the military bureaucratic institution which prepares fatal and incredible death traps, Yossarian is forced finally to reject not the ideals for which he fought earlier but his continued participation in the war. As his fighting does not help either him, his country or his squadron mates but makes things easier for the sadistic power mongers, he decides to cease fighting the war.

Yossarian, in the end, achieves his psychological and social freedom as he achieves a harmony between his wishes and actions. He wishes to be free of the bondage. So he chooses to rebel against the institution. As a result he rejects the 'odious deal' of the military bureaucracy and deserts to Sweden. He does not allow any external forces other than 'himself' to decide when he makes the decision of deserting to Sweden where he can be free of any coercion or encroachment into his freedom.

*Catch-22* has become now something of an institution that even people who never read the novel, started describing
themselves being in a "Catch-22 situation" not knowing what the original phrase referred to.

Heller through Yossarian's struggle and achievement of freedom in Catch-22 does not preach bare survival but something more than survival - human freedom - as he believes that it is not worth to waste precious life and freedom of the individual for the perpetuation of the institutions.