

**REPRESENTATION OF TIME: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF REAL AND SURREAL  
ELEMENTS IN JOSEPH HELLER'S *CATCH 22*:**

**By**

***Dr. Sarala Krishnamurthy***

***Polytechnic of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia***

***Abstract***

Surrealism is a movement that derives from psychology and embraces widely disparate genres such as art and literature. It has been defined as pure psychic automatism, by which one proposes to express either verbally, in writing or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought. In other words it is dictation of thoughts in the absence of all control exercised by reason, outside of all aesthetic and moral preoccupation; for example, as seen in dreams. According to Freud, dreams can be analysed through free association to bring to surface desires and longings suppressed in the subconscious and unconscious. The suppression of desires leads to neurosis. Surrealist painters absorbed the notion of idiosyncrasy in Freudian psychoanalysis while rejecting the underlying madness or darkness of the mind. Painters, such as Salvador Dali, are described as surreal because of the juxtaposition of the abstract and concrete in the form of disturbing and incongruous images in their paintings. This kind of depiction has come to be accepted as a characteristic style of surrealism. In literature, surreal writers have expressed a disdain for literal meanings given to objects and focused on the undertones, the poetic undercurrent that infuses their writing with an uncanny, eerie spirit. Surreal writers seldom organise the thoughts and images that they present and most people find it difficult to understand or analyse their writings.

One of the most significant works of protest literature written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* which has given an expression to the world cutting across all climes and culture. *Catch 22* has been described variously as a war novel, a protest novel and most importantly, a *surreal novel*. While several attempts have been made to analyse the novel in Marxist terms and from the psychological point of view, up until today the surreal elements in the novel have not been explicated. This paper is an attempt to explore the real and surreal elements in the novel through a stylistic framework with a particular focus on the representation of time.

## Introduction

As a cultural movement Surrealism has influenced two genres primarily: Visual arts, and writings of avant-garde thinkers. It was a movement that broke away in a radical manner from tradition and was a form of protest against all classical beliefs of art forms. At its core the surrealist movement was concerned with transformation, with extending the notion of limits and, surpassing human thought and endeavour. Surrealism introduced a new way of looking at life and love, and it adopted images which, at the surface level, looked incongruous and absurd. It attempted to look for and go after deeper and more subliminal meanings of existence hidden in the garb of external superficialities. Surreal artists tried to express themselves in many different ways, such as paradox, absurdity, and through depiction of grotesque images and irrational thought.

## Surrealism

Surrealism has been described variously as a movement. While acknowledging the difficulty of finding a label for Surrealism, Kenneth Cornell(1964) describes it as an “implication of an exploration of the labyrinth of the unconscious, a reconciliation of dream and reality” (138). Henry Peyri (1948:42) claims that Surrealism had a twofold purpose: firstly, it was a courageous clearing of whatever was worn out and effete in literature and secondly, it was to open up literature to the “domain of dreams and even insanity”. Surrealism is noted for its capriciousness, its inconsistency, its disregard of causality and for the vividness of its images. He explicates this further stating that the two-fold liberation of the subconscious results in one domain leading to a third: “the unchaining of the imagination”. According to him it is “the most intelligent denunciation of *war*.”(*Italics mine*)

Surrealism in literature is an expression of automatic writing. The Surreal poet believed that stereotypical language blocks true consciousness and untrammelled thought. Language brings with it, its in-built constraints. It is irrevocably linear and, in a certain sense, it is undeniably an inadequate instrument to capture the colours of fancy and imagination. At the same time, as Mathews(1970) points out, it is the most available

means by which a man may exercise his freedom from controls: socio-political, ethical, moral, literary and artistic. It represents the means by which the tension between hope and despair, life and death, past and future, real and imaginary and, communicable and the incommunicable can be expressed. At a certain level these polarities are not perceived as diametric opposites but, indeed, are conceived of as extensions of each other. Surrealism can serve as a medium for an idealised pure consciousness. Employed in this manner, language becomes, as Raymond Williams (San Juan Jr:2003:34) notes, not communication but illumination, even self-illumination with an emphasis on “the experience itself rather than on any of the forms of embodying or communicating it”.

Bohn(1977:200) states that surrealism always depends on an element of surprise. He explicates, “the concept of surprise covers a multitude of attitudes”. For M.H. Abrams (Bohn:1977:201), it is not only surprise that is essential in surrealism, but paradox, which he says, predominates over other forms. He furnishes a useful definition: “A paradox is a statement which seems on its face to be self-contradictory and absurd, yet it turns out to have a valid meaning”. These meanings which are by and large concealed behind the veil of apparent absurdity, when torn away, reveal a surprising validity. Appolinaire(Bohn:1977:202) extends the concept further and talks about two truths: one, a hidden truth and the second, a hypothetical truth, “which causes surprise because no one had dared to suggest it”.

Surrealism has favoured moments of madness, trance and hallucination more than moments of control. Patterns of unconscious mind such as condensation, displacement, figures of dream works are imagined through dream versions. Dissonant images that isolate monological, uniform and mechanical standards in a way that would synthesise the conscious and unconscious lie at the heart of the surrealist concept. The contradictions between action and dream, reason and madness, sensation and representation, psychic trance and primal myth are all resolved in the intrinsic dialectic of the surrealist experience. Breton (San Juan Jr.:2003:35) writes, “there is not only a lack of temporality but also an absolute reign of the pleasure principle”. He explains that there are two other strategies to objectify desire: one, the notion of an object which is “a fortuitous conjunction in the world or mind the significance of which is greater than the

apparent lack of causes would indicate” and second, the foregrounding of “black bile”, a form of ironic or grotesque humour.

Surrealists regarded the unconscious glimpsed in dreams, fantasies and irrational behaviour as the repository of utopian possibilities. Endre Botjar (1990:62) states that such possibilities needs to be articulated through a “new grammar and syntax of art; new **stylistic breakthrough** (*italics mine*) that would subvert the corrupting control of the rational egocentric mind”. He further explains that in surrealism the central point of associated circles is always the poetic. He says “the basic poetic unit of constructivism is the sentence and of surrealism, the image”(ibid).

## **Catch 22**

Joseph Heller’s **Catch 22** burst upon the literacy scene in 1961 and opened to mixed reviews. While some described it as brilliant, “a wild, moving, shocking, hilarious, raging, exhilarating, giant roller-coaster of a book (Herald Tribune), others dismissed it: “it doesn’t given seem to have been written; instead, it gives the impression of having been **shouted onto paper**” (*italics mine*) and “what remains is a debris of sour jokes, and that, in the end, Heller “wallows in his own laughter and finally drowns in it”. The novel was condemned for “want of craft and sensibility”, believed to have “repetition and be monotonous”, it “fails” and is described as an emotional “hodge podge”.

But in the past 40 years there have been several articles that have critiqued the novel. Alberto Cacicedo(2004:461) proclaims, “there is nothing negative about running away to save one’s life” and Yossarian (the protagonist)’ s desire to escape from the requirements of fighting a war not of his making is “an impulse towards ethical, responsible behaviour”. According to Merrill (1986:205), Yossarian’s acceptance of the responsibility to stay alive is, in effect “a paradoxical affirmation of the spirits capacity to transcend the limits of matter”.

Many critics have praised the novel for its harsh indictment of bureaucracy, capitalism and war. Merrill (1986:205) states **Catch 22** is “rife with criticism towards sociological conventions such as unjust legal processes and capitalism”. McDonald (1973:14) believes that Yossarian deserves the title of a hero because at the end he is not a “cop-

out, but one of the many rebels in the tradition of rebels. Aldridge (1979:115) states, "Yossarian's problem ... is that he is hopelessly sane in a situation of complete madness". As Gary W. Davis(1978:68) points out "Heller's demythologising of discourse relates to Yossarian's quest for survival". Where Yossarian represents the human spirit struggling to break free and to escape from involvement in war, Colonel Catchcart, Milo Minderbinder and Lieutenant Scheisskopff, three other characters in the novel, are interested in complete involvement in war for self aggrandisement. For example, Milo Minderbinder is a crass materialistic who has no hesitation bombing his own people for the sake of profit.

As far as narrative structure is concerned, different critics have pointed out the difficulty in establishing the sequence of events in a chronological order in **Catch 22**. By far, the most detailed analysis of the narrative structure is by Clinton Burhans (1973:242) who entitles his essay, "Spendthrift and the Sea: Structural patterns and unifying elements in **Catch 22**". According to him, the novel can be loosely divided into five sections which cover the main plot and two sub-plots. He states that there is a three part tonal structure to the novel: the first with a predominantly broad, humorous tone, the second from Chapters 29 to 30 to a more consistent tone of "deepening despair whose growing darkness envelops the humour and turns it sick and savage". And the third, where the tone is that of resignation mingled with revelation and release.

Laura Hidalgo Downing's(2003) interesting corpus study of the novel throws light on negation as a stylistic feature in the discourse. She points out Heller's use of contradiction in which two propositions have the same content but different polarity.

**Catch 22** has been subjected to much analysis and even though many critics have commented on the fact that the novel is "surreal in nature", no full length study of surrealism in the novel has been undertaken. Heller himself in one of his interviews states, "My objective is not merely to tell the reader a story, but to make him in particular – to make him experience the book rather than read it" (*Delaware Literary Review*, Spring, 1975). In another interview, he proclaims, "I knew from the start I wanted to develop a sharp contrast between *the realistic and the surrealist techniques.*" (*Italics mine*) ( *Contemporary Literature*:1998:510).

I would like to argue that the lack of chronological unfolding of events, along with the discrepancies and absurdities that occur in the novel is part of the use of real and surreal techniques to create an insane world inhabited by a sane character. The real and surreal elements are mixed up in such a way that one always feels that one is tottering on the edge of insanity. Or else, one feels as if one is in a dream where images move in and out of consciousness and the lugubriousness of events makes one laugh or cry. Surrealism in the novel can be understood in terms of a cline from the merely jocular and absurd to the devastatingly tragic. In between, there are the elements of surprise, paradox, irrationality and illogicality.

My analysis will be at the macro-linguistic level where I examine the notion of text time and narrative time as defined by Gerard Genette(1980). Further, I will also utilise micro-linguistic analysis to focus particularly on the elements of surprise, paradox, illogicality and the absurd as defined by Leech and Short(1969) under Irrationality in Poetry(131-146).

### **Theoretical Framework**

An analysis of the temporal aspects of narration is imperative in the study of narrative as it is closely linked to its content structure. The experience of time is represented in a narrative text and is a constituent factor of both the story as well as the text. "Text time", says Rimmon-Kenan (1983), "is inescapably linear", and it refers to "the linear disposition of the linguistic segments in the continuum of the text" (44). Therefore text time has a spatial dimension.

The most exhaustive analysis of the possible relationship between story time and text time has been done by Gerard Genette in his "Narrative Discourse" (1980) where he analyses Proust's *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*. He classifies the relationship between story time and text time under three categories which he calls: *order*, *duration* and *frequency*. *Order* refers to the sequence in which events are narrated and concerns the sequence in which events actually occurs. *Duration* takes into account the space devoted to the narration of events. A narrative may devote many pages to a monetary experience or leap forward and summarise a number of year in a few words. Finally, *frequency* refers to the number of times an incident is narrated. It may repeatedly

narrate an incident which happened only once or recount once, an incident which recurs in the novel.

According to Rimmon Kenan, (1983) under *order*, it is possible to identify *analepsis*, which is, the flashback and *prolepsis*, which is, the flash forward. Within *duration*, three sub-categories are found: ellipsis, where zero textual space corresponds with some story space, *descriptive pause* in which an entire period of a man's life is summed up in one sentence, and finally, *deceleration*, where the text time corresponds with story time.

Within the last category, frequency, there are three sub-categories, *singulative*, where an incident that occurs in story time is narrated once; *repetitive*, where an incident that happened once, is narrated several times. And finally, *iterative*, where a number of incidents that occur in the story time are narrated once.

## **Analysis**

### **Order**

The forty two chapters in the novel are named after characters and do not represent a strict continuity in terms of time. Therefore, *order*, as defined by Genette(1970), is constantly disrupted in the novel. What unique about this novel is that unlike other novels, here disruption of time is not signalled by linguistic and narrative markers. First of all, all the chapters are entitled by names of characters. In other words, the focus of the chapter is on the character rather than on the events that transpire. In this novel the only way to know that time is passing by, is through the number of mission that keep increasing. Colonel Cathcart keeps changing the goal post by increasing the number of missions that his men have to fly. At different points in the novel it is slipped innocuously into the narration that the number of missions has been increased. The novel opens with Yossarian in the hospital. It is only at the end in the second chapter entitled "Clevinger", that we are told that the Colonel has raised the missions to 50. Yossarian is visibly upset because he has completed 44 missions (p 24). Six pages later, it is stated that Yossarian has completed forty seven missions. In Chapter 6 it is stated that "Hungry Joe had finished flying his first 25 missions during the week of the Salerno beachhead, when Yossarian was laid up in the hospital ... Yossarian did his best to catch up with Hungry Joe and almost did flying six missions in six days, but his 23rd mission was to Arrezzo, where Colonel Nevers was killed, and that as close as he was to

going home. The next day Colonel Cathcart was therefore, brimming with pride in his new outfit and celebrating his assumption of command by raising the number of missions from 25 to 30 (p 30).

Next we hear of Yossarian (p 60) completing 48 missions is when he is talking to ex PFC Wintergreen. Wintergreen says "40 missions is all you have to fly as far as 27<sup>th</sup> Air force Headquarters is concerned". Of course Yossarian is jubilant because he has 48, but there is a catch. When he complains to Doc Daneeka about the catch, he is told that the colonel has raised the missions to 55 (seven pages later (p. 67). In the next chapter, on p. 74, Yossarian says, "I don't have to fly them" when he is told, "if the colonel says we have to fly 55 missions, we have to fly them". Two chapters later in a chapter name "Major Major" (p. 118) Yossarian confronts Major Major who asks him, "How many have you flown?" "51" replies Yossarian. The next reference to the number of missions in the book is six chapters later. Yossarian finds Hungry Joe grinning from ear to ear and he is sickened.

*"Forty missions", Hungry Joe announced readily ...*

*Yossarian was livid, "But I have got thirty two, god dammit, three more and I would have been through ... (p.189).*

Yossarian runs back into the hospital at that point. After ten days when Yossarian leaves the hospital determined never to fly again, Colonel Cathcart raises the mission to forty five (p. 190) and Yossarian goes back into the hospital again.

In Yossarian's discussions with Clevinger seven pages later, Clevinger mentions "If you hadn't been laid up in the hospital with venereal disease for 10 days back there in Africa, you might have finished your 25 mission in time to be sent home before Colonel Nevers was killed and Colonel Cathcart came to replace him". (p. 197).

But in the next chapter entitled "Colonel Cathcart", Colonel Cathcart raises the missions to 60 and invites the Chaplain to his office with a memo to starting each mission with a prayer.

While all the reports of missions being raised are with reference to Yossarian, during the narration of increasing the missions to 60, Yossarian is significantly absent. Eleven



chapters later Colonel Cathcart raises the missions to sixty five when he finds that Kid Sampson and McWatt have been killed in combat (p. 390). On the very next page it is reported that when Colonel Cathcart learnt that Doc Daneeka too has been killed in McWatt's plane, he increased the number of mission to seventy. Three chapters later, it is reported that the missions have been raised to eighty leaving Yossarian "no time to save himself from combat"... no time to dissuade Nately from flying them ..." (p. 430). Finally, the last reference to mission is towards the end of the novel where Yossarian declares, *"I've flown seventy goddam combat mission. Don't talk to me about fighting to save my country. Now I'm going to fight a little to save myself. The country is not in danger, I am"* (p. 510).

As is revealed in the preceding analysis, the sequence of events does not follow any order. Unlike other novels, analepsis and prolepsis in the novel does not provide continuity to the plot or push the action forward. Here all the uses of analepsis and prolepsis are to other minor characters in the novel such as Doc Daneeka, Chief White Halfoat, Major Major .

With Doc Daneeka, the flashback has to do with his experience with a young married couple who have not been able to consummate their relationship. In Chief White Halfoat's case it is a bizarre recapitulation of his tribe's ability to set up their tents on an oilfield and how the tribe is followed by oil companies in their bid to sink oil wells and make money. After a while, the oil companies start anticipating the movements of the tribe and kick them out of the land before they can even pitch their tents. With Major Major Major Major, the flashback serves to explain how he got his name and how he suffered for the rest of his life till he became a Major. The fragmentary nature of these flashbacks provides details about the many characters that people the world of novel and cannot be considered as essential to the plot. It is interesting that Yossarian's life before the start of the novel, or indeed his childhood or his past is never revealed to us.

## **Duration**

Both Gerard Genette(1970) and Rimmon-Kenan(1983) have pointed out the difficulty of measuring duration in a novel. It is category which is inherently difficult to describe because narrative structure, by its very nature, hastens some sections of the story while

slowing down to delineate in detail certain other sections. One can identify ellipsis, descriptive pause, acceleration and deceleration; but to determine the norm becomes a problem. The use of dialogue represents the slowing of pace and a recapitulation of events as they occur in life. In other words, in deceleration both story time and text time correspond. In **Catch 22**, it is interesting to note that there are large expanses of dialogue which would fall under the category of deceleration.

Between ellipsis and the descriptive pause there is a whole range of possibilities. For instance, there can be acceleration which is a short text segment devoted to a long period of story time and deceleration which is a long section or short section of text time which is devoted to the story. In traditional analysis, Wayne C. Booth(1961) talks about “showing” and “telling” and Lubbock(1963) “scene and summary”, the only one to one correspondence in a novel. For the purposes of this analysis, I have examined all the possibilities, but it is only “scene” and “deceleration” that have significant value. There are several conversations that take place in the novel, but the most important ones are those in which character in the novel are interrogated. To give one example,

*‘What did you mean’, he inquired slowly, ‘When you said we couldn’t punish you?’*

*‘When, sir?’*

*‘I’m asking the questions. You’re answering them.’*

*‘Yes, sir. I –‘*

*‘Did you think we brought you here to ask questions and for me to answer them?’*

*‘No, sir. I –‘*

*‘What did we bring you here for?’*

*‘To answer questions.’*

*‘You’re goddam right,’ roared the colonel. ‘Now suppose you start answering some before I break your goddam head. Just what the hell did you mean, you bastard, when you said we couldn’t punish you?’*

*‘I don’t think I ever made that statement, sir’*

*‘Will you speak up, please? I couldn’t hear you’.*

*‘Yes, sir. I – ‘*

*Will you speak up, please? I still couldn’t hear you.*

*‘Yes, sir. I said that I didn’t say that you couldn’t punish me’.*

*‘Just what the hell are you talking about?’*

*‘I’m answering your question, sir.’*

*‘What question?’*

*'Just what the hell did you mean, you bastard, when you said we couldn't punish you?' said the corporal who could take shorthand, reading from his steno pad.*

*'All right, said the colonel. 'Just what the hell did you mean?'*

*'I didn't say you couldn't punish me, sir.'*

*'When?'* asked the colonel.

*'When what, sir?'*

*'Now you're asking me questions again.'*

*'I'm sorry, sir. I'm afraid I don't understand your question.'*

*'When didn't you say we couldn't punish you? Don't you understand my question?'*

*'No, sir. I don't understand.'*

*'You've just told us that. Now suppose you answer my question.'*

*'But how can I answer it?'*

*'That's another question you're asking me.'*

*'I'm sorry, sir. But I don't know how to answer it. I never said you couldn't punish me.'*

*'Now you're telling use when you did say it. I'm asking you to tell us when you didn't say it.'*

*Clevinger took a deep breath. 'I always didn't say you couldn't punish me, sir'.*

*'That's much better, Mr. Clevinger, even though it is a barefaced lie. Last night in the latrine.*

*Didn't you whisper that we couldn't punish you to that other dirty son of a bitch we don't like?*

*What's his name?'*

*'Yossarian, sir,' Lieutenant Scheisskopf said.*

*'Yes, Yossarian. That's right. Yossarian. Yossarian? Is that his name? Yossarian? What the hell kind of a name is Yossarian?'*

*Lieutenant Scheisskopf had the facts at his finger tips. 'It's Yossarian's name, sir,' he explained.*

In this example, Clevinger has been brought in for questioning and as can be seen, the conversation proceeds from being funny to farcical to absurd. There are several such examples in the book. If one were to do an analysis of Gricean maxims, it would be obvious that all the four maxims are flouted because of the lack of logic in the conversation.

But on the other hand, deceleration happens every time Yossarian is reported to be flying over Avignon to bomb the enemy base. This incident is single most tragic incident in the novel and it describes Snowden's death. Every time the incident is narration, the pace slows down and Heller delineates every action in great detail. It is also significant because, even though Snowden's death happens once (for obvious reasons) in the novel, it is narrated several times. This recurrence of incidence in text time is studied

under *frequency*. For example, in the mission on which Yossarian lost his nerve. “Yossarian lost his nerve on the mission to Avignon because Snowden lost his guts and Snowden lost his guts because the pilot that day was Huple who was only 15 years old, and their co-pilot was Dobbs, ..... “ and it goes on ...“And Yossarian crept out through the crawl-way and climbed over the bomb bay and down into the rear section of the plane.”( p. 258). In this paragraph there are a series of compound sentences which slows down the pace of narration.

### **Frequency**

*Frequency* as defined by Gerard Genette is the correlation between the number of times an event happens in the text and the number of times it is narrated. If it happens once and is narrated once, it is *singulative*, if it happens once and is narrated several times it is *repetitive* and if several incidents take place and they are narrated together, then it is turned *iterative*.

If we analyse *frequency* in the novel, several interesting facts are revealed. First of all, as has been stated earlier, the novel does not follow a strict chronology. The complex multilayered narration consist of characters and incidents that surface on and off in different chapters and at different points in the novel (though may be in the same incident). The text is fragmentary because of a lack of continuity and also because of the sudden emergence of characters and incidents at different intervals when they are least expected. This element of surprise is part of the surrealistic technique and will be dealt with in greater detail later.

There are about eight to ninety characters in the novel of whom 26 occur in ten chapters or more. Some of them are as follows: Yossarian 40, Korn 25, Daneeka 22, Dunbar 22, Hungry Joe 21, (Cathcart 30), McWatt 21, Nately 21, Black 19, Orr 18, Aarfy 17, Chaptain 16, General Dreedle 16, Ex PFC Wintergreen 16, Nately's whore 15, Snowden 15, Major Major 14, Appleby 13, Danby 13, Halfoat 13, Peckham 13, Clevinger 12, Dobbs 12, Havermayer 11, Duckett 10.(Burhans:1973) For the purpose of this article, I will focus on two characters only: Yossarian and Snowden.

The central and the most poignant incident in the novel in which Snowden dies, is narrated seven times in the novel. The name “Snowden” occurs 15 times in the novel.

The first we hear of Snowden is when Yossarian asks a cryptic and absurd question: "Where are the Snowdens of yesteryears?" (p 39) and he proceeds to translate it: "Où sont les neigeden dans temps?" There is no answer to this absurd question. Thereafter, every time Snowden is mentioned, a little more detail is revealed, till finally, at almost the end of the novel, his death is described in all its horrifying, grotesque glory. The flak has cut him open and when Yossarian loosens his belt, all his guts spill out on to the flood of the plane. Heller, instead of describing the pain and agony of Snowden makes Yossarian the focalizer. Yossarian observes the tomato that Snowden had for breakfast partly digested in the entrails and thinks to himself, "Ripeness is all". In a strange twist of phrase, Heller brings the 'real' and 'surreal' elements together on one plane. Of course, Snowden dies and it is this incident that triggers off the desperation in Yossarian to escape the war and he runs to the hospital. The novel begins with Yossarian in the hospital. The cause and effect are separated by nearly 500 pages of narration.

An integral part of surrealism is a total disregard of causality. As with Snowden's death and its effect on Yossarian, there are several other examples in the novel which show this disjunction between cause and effect and all of them have to do with *frequency* especially of the *repetitive* kind.

To give one example: "**Catch 22**"

Heller defines Catch 22 in the following words:

*"There was only one catch and that was Catch 22 which specified that a concern for one's safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and he could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions".* (p. 52).

*Yossarian saw it clearly in all its spinning reasonableness. There was an elliptical precision about its perfect pairs of parts that was graceful and shocking, like **good modern art** (italics mine), and at time Yossarian wasn't quite sure he saw it at all, just the way he was never sure about good modern art. (p. 52).*

Farce is an integral part of the surrealism technique. Examples of farcical situations abound in the book. Some of them are given below:

1. *"How can he (Appleby) see if he has got flies in his eyes if he has got flies in his eyes?"* (p.52)
2. *"What makes you so sure Major Major is a communist?"*  
*"You never heard him denying it until we began accusing him did you?"* (p. 132)
3. *"I have got a dead man in my tent that nobody can throw out. His name is Mudd."*  
 (p. 195)
4. *"Why should I want to steal a plum tomato?"*  
*"That's exactly what had us both stumped ... and then the man figures you might have some important secret papers hidden inside it ... "* (p. 238)

Surrealism also includes an element of surprise. The juxtaposition of diverse images on a single canvas produces surprise and awe on the part of a beholder. While paintings are mainly two dimensional and can bring disparate elements on one plane, language, being unidirectional, only has the temporal dimension and not the spatial. In the novel an element of surprise is introduced through the use of paradox. Appolinaire(Bohn:1977:203) defines paradox as a statement which seems on its face to be self contradictory or absurd ... yet turns out to have a valid meaning. He talks about two truths: one, the hidden truth and the second, hypothetical truth, "which causes surprise because no one has dared to suggest it". Leech and Short in their book "A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry" (1969) describe paradox as "a statement which is absurd because self-evidently false"( 132). There are more than 50 examples of paradox in the novel. Some of the examples are given below:

### **Paradox**

1. *A true prince. He was the finest, least dedicated man in the whole world. (p. 15)*
2. *It was good when Hungry Joe looked bad and terrible when Hungry Joe looked good (p 61).*
3. *McWatt was the craziest combat man of them all probably because he was perfectly sane and still did not mind the war. (p. 68).*
4. *Yossarian's heart sank. Something was terribly wrong if everything was alright and they had no excuse for turning back. (p. 161).*
5. *At the end of ten days, a new group of doctors came to Yossarian with bad news; he was in perfect health and had to get out. (p. 201)*
6. *Now that Yossarian had made up his mind to be brave, he was deathly afraid. (p. 351)*

Leech and Short(1969) state that there are different kinds of absurdity distinguished by such labels such as *paradox* and *oxymoron*. They explicate that poetic language is “nonsense”(131) and they extend the notion of the irregularity of the content of poetry to include vacuity or redundancy of meaning as in *pleonasm*, *tautology* and *circumlocution* or *periphrasis*.

The surreal elements in the book can be explained through the use of some of them. For example in *tautology*, the statement is “vacuous, because self evidently true”(132):

- (1) *How can he (Appleby) see if he has got flies in his eyes if he has got flies in his eyes? (52)*
- (2) *Mudd, the dead man in Yossarian’s text, wasn’t even there.(391)*
- (3) *“Do you know how long a year takes when it is going away ?” (43)*

Another strategy Heller uses to draw attention to the superfluity of war and the need to constantly remind ourselves of the utter waste is through the use of circumlocution. Also known *periphrasis*, Leech and Short(1969) describe it as “ an expression which is of unnecessary length, in that the meaning that it conveys could have been expressed more briefly(132):

- *“Why did you steal it, if you didn’t want it?”*
- *“I didn’t steal it from Colonel Cathcart.”*
- *“Then why are you so guilty if you didn’t steal it?”*
- *“I am not guilty.”*
- *“Then why would we be questioning you?” (440)*

In the example given above, the Chaplain is brought in for questioning and he is accused of having stolen a tomato from Colonel Cathcart. In order to prove him guilty, *periphrasis* is used.

The last examples are those of absurdity in the novel. These examples defy logic and cannot be explained either in terms of coherence in language. But they have a devastating impact in the novel. Some of the examples are:

1. *Yossarian couldn’t understand how Milo could buy eggs for seven cent a piece and sell them at a profit in Pianosa for 5 cent a piece.*
2. *In the middle of the night Yossarian tiptoed out of his tent to move the bomb line up over Bologna. Everybody was very happy next morning. (137)*

With the first example, Milo Minderbinder, the embodiment of capitalism in the novel, is only interested in making a profit for the syndicate in which everyone has a share including the enemy. There are many examples of how he makes a profit by selling and buying across enemy lines. In the second example, everybody is waiting for the bomb line to move so that they do not have to fight. Instead of engaging in warfare and capturing the bomb line physically, Yossarian simply moves the bomb line up and it is believed by all the people present including Colonel Cathcart that they have captured the enemy territory.

## CONCLUSION

As we can see from the examples given, *Catch 22* does not follow the traditional style of narrating events where the story time corresponds to text time. The fragmentary nature of the discourse is caused by disruption of order, duration and frequency. While at one level the novel deals with a realistic event, which is war, Heller, through his narrative, brings in a surreal element to draw attention to the devastation that the war wreaks on humankind. By refusing to engage in war, Yossarian gets transmogrified into a true hero. It is in moments of cowardice, that Yossarian proves that he is the bravest of them all.

## References

- *Delaware Spring Review* (1975) (Spring).

Aldridge, John W. (1979) "The Deceits of Black Humor." *Harper's March* pp. 115-118.

Bell, Pearl K. (1974) "Heller's Trial By Tedium." *The New Leader* 28 Oct. pp 17-18.

Burhans, Clinton S Jr (1973) "Spindrift and the Sea: Structural Patterns and Unifying Elements in *Catch 22*" *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 4. (Oct.), pp. 239-250.

Bohn, Willard, (1977) "From Surrealism to Surrealism: Apollinaire and Breton", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Winter), pp. 197 – 210.

Booth, Wayne C. (1961) *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Botjar Endre, (1990) "The Avant-garde in Central and Eastern European Literature", *Art Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 1, *From Leningrad to Jinbjana: The Suppressed Avant-grades of East and Central and Eastern Europe during the Early Twentieth Century* (Spring), pp 56-62.



Cacido, Alberto (2005) ' "You must remember this": Trauma and Memory in *Catch-22* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*' in Critique Summer, Volume 46, No. 4, p 357-368.

Cockburn, Alex. (1989) "Review of *Catch-22*." Contemporary Literary Criticism Vol. 63. pp. 178-180.

Cornell, Kenneth. (1964) "On the Difficulty of a Label" Yale French Studies, No. 31, Surrealism, pp.138-144.

Davis, Gary W. (1978) "Catch 22 and the Language of Discontinuity" in Novel: a Forum on Fiction, Volume 12, No. 1(Autumn), pp. 66-77.

Dickstein, Morris. (1977) "Black Humor and History: The Early Sixties." Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties, pp. 91-127.

Frank, Mark. "Eros and Thanatos in 'Catch-22'." Canadian Review of American Studies. Spring 1976: 77-87.

Genette, Gerard, (1980) Narrative Discourse, New York: Cornell University Press,.

Heller, Joseph (1994) *Catch-22*. New York: Simon & Schuster,.

Hidalgo -Downing, Laura (2003) "Negation as a Stylistic Feature in Joseph Heller's *Catch'22*: A Corpus Study" Style Volume 37, No. 3, Fall, pp. 318-341.

Kennard, Jean E. "Joseph Heller: At War with Absurdity." MOSAIC IV/3 Spring 1971: 75-87.

Lubbock, Percy (1963) *The Craft of Fiction*, New York: Viking Press (Originally published in 1921).

Leech, Geoffrey and Mick Short,(1969) *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, London: Longman,

Mathews, J.N. (1970) "Surrealism in the Sixties", Contemporary Literature, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Spring), pp. 226 – 242.

McDonald, Walter R. (1973)"He Took Off: Yossarian and the Different Drummer." The CEA Critic, November pp. 14-16.

Merril, Robert ( 1986) "The Structure and Meaning of *Catch-22*." Studies in American Fiction Vol. 14. No. 2, pp.139-152.

Mullican, James S. (1981) "A Burkean Approach to 'Catch-22'." College Literature 18.1 pp. 42-52.

Pearson, Carol. (1974) "'Catch-22' and the Debasement of Language." The CEA Critic November, pp. 30-35.

Peyre Henri, (1948) "The Significance of Surrealism", Yale French Studies, No 2, Modern Poets: Surrealism, Baudelaire, Perse, Laforgne, pp. 34 – 49.

Reilly , Charlie J. (1998) "An Interview with Joseph Heller", Contemporary Literature, Vol. 39, No. 4. (Winter) pp. 507-522.

San Juan, E. Jr, (2003), "Antonio Gramsci on Surrealism and the Avant grade", Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Summer) pp. 31 – 45.

Seltzer, Leon. (1989) "Milo's Culpable Innocence': Absurdity as Moral Insanity in Catch-22." Contemporary Literary Criticism Vol. 63. pp. 188-193.

Thegze Chuck, (1970) "I See Everything Twice": An Examination of Catch-22, Film Quarterly, Vol. 24, No. 1. (Autumn) pp. 7-17.