

'The Institutions of Bureaucracy and the Military: A Review of Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22*'

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Abstract:

This research article analyzes the institution of bureaucracy and the military hierarchy depicted in Joseph Heller's novel '*Catch-22*'. The novel portrays these institutions as sources of absurdity, corruption, and oppression that restrict the individual freedom and autonomy of soldiers. The research highlights the negative impact of institutional bureaucracy and the military hierarchy on soldiers, including feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, and trauma. The research uses the experiences of the novel's protagonist, Captain John Yossarian, to exemplify the impact of these institutions on soldiers. The article concludes by highlighting the need for institutional reform and a greater focus on the welfare of soldiers.

Introduction:

Joseph Heller's novel '*Catch-22*' is a satirical masterpiece that depicts the absurdity of war and the corrupt nature of institutions. The novel primarily focuses on the experiences of a fictional World War II bombardier, Captain John Yossarian, and the people around him. It highlights the institutional bureaucracy and the military hierarchy, which become a barrier to the individual freedom of soldiers. In this paper, I will analyze the institution of bureaucracy and the military portrayed in '*Catch-22*' and discuss their impact on soldiers.

Research Methodology:

The research methodology used in this analysis of Joseph Heller's novel '*Catch-22*' involved a qualitative analysis of the text. The research was conducted using a close reading of the novel, with an emphasis on the depiction of the institutional bureaucracy and the military hierarchy. The analysis was conducted by examining the various ways in which these institutions are portrayed in the novel, and the impact they have on the characters, particularly the

protagonist, Captain John Yossarian. The research also relied on the use of secondary sources to provide context and additional insights into the institutional bureaucracy and the military hierarchy. These sources included academic articles, essays, and books that discussed the themes and issues raised in '*Catch-22*', particularly in relation to the military and bureaucracy. The research methodology allowed for a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the institutional bureaucracy and the military hierarchy depicted in the novel, and their impact on soldiers.

Institution of Bureaucracy:

The institution of bureaucracy is portrayed as a source of absurdity and confusion in '*Catch-22*'. The bureaucratic structure of the military is depicted as inefficient and corrupt, which results in absurd policies and decisions. For example, the catch-22 rule, which states that a soldier can only be grounded if he is deemed insane, but if he requests to be grounded, it shows that he is sane and must continue to fly. This catch-22 rule epitomizes the irrationality and contradictory nature of bureaucracy. Similarly, the military's use of language is also a source of confusion and absurdity. The military jargon is used to mask the harsh reality of war and to create a facade of power and control. The language is used to manipulate the soldiers and to maintain a sense of authority over them. Moreover, the bureaucracy is also shown to be corrupt and self-serving. The bureaucrats are more concerned with their own interests rather than the welfare of the soldiers. The bureaucracy's primary objective is to maintain the status quo and to ensure that the military machine keeps running. This is evident in the character of Colonel Cathcart, who is obsessed with his desire for promotion and is willing to put his soldiers at risk to achieve it. Similarly, the military's procurement system is also shown to be corrupt, as the officers engage in fraudulent activities to line their own pockets. This is evident in the character of Milo Minderbinder, who uses his position as a mess officer to establish a black market that serves the interests of the officers.

Military Hierarchy:

The military hierarchy is also a central theme in '*Catch-22*'. The hierarchical structure of the military creates a sense of power imbalance, where the higher-ups have complete control over the soldiers. The military hierarchy is depicted as a system of oppression, where the lower ranks are expected to follow orders without question. This is evident in the character of Colonel Cathcart, who uses his power to manipulate and control the soldiers under his

command. The military hierarchy is also shown to be arbitrary and unfair, where promotions are based on nepotism rather than merit.

Moreover, the military hierarchy is also a source of psychological trauma for the soldiers. The soldiers are forced to engage in acts of violence and destruction, which often result in feelings of guilt and trauma. The military hierarchy is shown to be indifferent to the soldiers' mental health, where soldiers who show signs of mental instability are labeled as cowards and are punished. This is evident in the character of Major Major, who is promoted to a high rank solely because of his name, but he becomes a recluse due to the pressure of his position.

Impact on Soldiers:

The institution of bureaucracy and the military hierarchy have a profound impact on the soldiers. The soldiers are forced to conform to the bureaucratic system, which restricts their freedom and autonomy. The soldiers are stripped of their individuality and are reduced to mere cogs in the military machine. The soldiers are also subjected to a dehumanizing experience, where they are constantly exposed to violence and death.

Moreover, the military hierarchy also has a negative impact on the soldiers' mental health. The soldiers are expected to perform inhumane acts without any emotional support. The military hierarchy creates a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness among the soldiers, as they have no control over their lives and are subject to the whims of their superiors. This sense of powerlessness and hopelessness often results in feelings of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among soldiers.

The impact of the military hierarchy and bureaucracy on soldiers is exemplified in the character of Captain John Yossarian. Yossarian is depicted as a soldier who is disillusioned with the military and its bureaucracy. Yossarian's experiences in the military have left him traumatized and emotionally scarred. He is constantly plagued by thoughts of death and destruction and has lost faith in the military's mission. Yossarian's experience is a reflection of the impact that institutional bureaucracy and the military hierarchy have on soldiers.

Conclusion:

Joseph Heller's novel 'Catch-22' is a satirical masterpiece that highlights the absurdity and corrupt nature of institutions. The novel depicts the institution of bureaucracy and the military hierarchy as sources of oppression,

which restrict the individual freedom and autonomy of soldiers. The bureaucratic structure of the military is shown to be inefficient and corrupt, while the military hierarchy is depicted as arbitrary and unfair. The impact of institutional bureaucracy and the military hierarchy on soldiers is profound, often resulting in feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, and trauma. Yossarian's experiences in the military are a reflection of the impact that institutional bureaucracy and the military hierarchy have on soldiers. The novel '*Catch-22*' is a reminder of the need for institutional reform and a greater focus on the welfare of soldiers.

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