



# Exposing Institutionalized Illogic: Rejection and Manipulation of Patriotism in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*

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Received: 26 Mar 2026; Received in revised form: 21 Apr 2026; Accepted: 25 Apr 2026; Available online: 28 Apr 2026  
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**Abstract**— *One major target of critique in Joseph Heller's Catch-22 is the culture of American patriotism in the 1960s, shaped by wartime exigencies with great factionalism and antagonism. Through the figures of Yossarian, Snowden, and Milo, Heller exposed patriotism not as a noble ideal but as a tool of exploitation that confines and victimizes individuals within institutionalized illogic. The disillusionment of patriotism arises when attaching soldiers' deaths to a greater –yet often hollow –political purpose, as in Snowden's case. Additionally, Milo and his syndicate further exemplify the manipulation of war and patriotism, as the logic of gaining the greatest profit subsumes and commodifies ostensibly moral values, even capable of producing a humanitarian catastrophe. Heller's portrayal of patriotism as both a moral and economic construct critiques the disjunction between the idealized notions of national loyalty and its practical deployment to perpetuate systems of abuse of power, violence, and greed. By dismantling the presumed sanctity of patriotism, Catch-22 ultimately demonstrates how such constructed virtues can reduce individuals to expendable matter, coerce subjects into complicity or resistance, and naïve-yet-horrifying opportunism, thereby exposing the pervasive force of institutionalized illogic over human life and moral agency.*



**Keywords**— *Catch-22, Joseph Heller, institutionalized illogic, patriotism, rejection, manipulation*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Joseph Heller's 1961 novel *Catch-22* is considered a representative anti-war and black-humor novel. Located on the fictional island of Pianosa, Italy, and centering around American Captain Bombardier Yossarian, it explores the never-ending flight missions and those conventional 'daily practices' in Yossarian's bomber squadron, with Yossarian being one of the "most lunatic yet most logical(Brustein, 1961, p.7)" soldiers. *Catch-22's* fragmented and bitterly humorous description of the last days of WWII, Yossarian becoming "anguished witness to the ghoulis slaughter"(Brustein, 1961, p.8), has triggered reflective

responses to the real nature of war.

### 1. *Catch-22's* Absurdity

Integral to *Catch-22* is the notion of absurdity, illustrated by Heller's usage of "nonsense, satire, non-sequiturs, slapstick, and farce"(Ramsey, 1966, p. 104). One noteworthy aspect of this characteristic is Heller's exaggeration of the insanities of and around Yossarian, reaching an extent beyond the area of possibility. For instance, Yossarian's moving the bomb line on the map of Bologna(Heller, 1961, p. 123), Dunbar's cultivating boredom to increase his life span to escape the imminence of death(Heller, 1961, p. 9), and Milo's shameless attempt

to create chocolate-covered cotton as food (Heller, 1961, p. 268).

Such ridiculous and illogical plots achieve a humorous effect by challenging readers' ideas of conventions. However, the subject of such absurdities is sullen, fierce, and tinged with bitterness—the death of the soldier in white, the disappearance of Dunbar and Nately's whore, Milo's maddening and amoral concentration on gaining profits, etc. These tragedies instantaneously reverse readers' expectations of a joke while provoking a greater sense of horror. Heller referred to his *Catch-22* as a critical book with a subversive nature, aiming to reveal “certain faults or shortcomings in the make-up of the individuals' characters as in the make-up of a society” (Heller & *The Realist*, 1962, p. 274). In Heller's own words, *Catch-22* is almost an encyclopedia of “chaos, disorganization, absurdity, cruelty, brutality, and insensitivity” (Heller & *The Realist*, 1962, p. 276). Within such an atmosphere, *Catch-22* seems to persuade its readers that it is the conventional standards produced by the society in which they are situated that lack any logical consistency. The only way to tackle such principles is the “insanity” that this society has defined.

The representation of this institutionalized illogic in the novel is “*Catch-22*,” which is a principle of “absolute evil” (Brustein, 1961, p. 7) and says, “they have a right to do anything we can't stop them from doing” (Heller, 1961, p. 416). The pronoun “they” refers to everyone who feels “at the mercy of their superiors,” including those superiors with a jeopardizing power (Heller & *The Realist*, 1962, p. 275). Facing this malevolent and irremediable loophole, Heller invariably takes the radical side to indicate his anti-militarist and anti-capitalist tendencies.

## 2. Absurdities Applying to *Catch-22*'s Literary Techniques

Along with Heller's radical social discontent, the absurdities also apply to *Catch-22*'s content and its literary techniques. Echoing Yossarian's illogical pursuit of survival, the structure of the novel is circular, with recurrent and alternative scenes of comedy or nightmare. This “circulation” illustrates that Heller used the “characteristic of paramnesia” as the basis of *Catch-22*'s structure (MacDonald, 1968, p. 102). There are two mutually contradictory chronologies in the novel: Yossarian's psychologically punctuated time and Milo's traveling around the world to expand his capital empire. The

“irreconcilability” of the two simultaneously existing chronologies serves the effect of absurdity, enforcing “repudiation of the business ethic” and providing “occasional shocking dissonance” (Solomon, 1967, p. 130).

While the institutionalized illogic of Heller's time is reflected in *Catch-22*'s disorganized and episodic structure, the rhetoric of this institutionalized illogic seems to refer only to other words and thoughts to other thoughts. Heller uncovered that under those subjects of violent absurdities. Those commercial, military, intellectual, and literary institutions were the “recurrent myths of the ‘word’ and a ‘proper’ metaphoric discourse,” which have often been regarded as alternatives of discontinuous languages epitomized by *Catch-22* (Davis, 1978, p. 68). From this aspect, the art of the absurdity has transformed *Catch-22* as a free play of interpretation, in which meaning is always in flux and différance as it “springs forth out of its nonidentity with itself” (Derrida, 1973, p. 85). In this regard, the absurdities of content and structure in *Catch-22* embrace variable and multi-layered interpretations that the book functions as an “encyclopedia” of his disruptive era.

## 3. Différance as a Scope of Analysis

Referring to *Catch-22* as an “encyclopedia” of his era, Heller declares that “What *Catch-22* is more about than WWII is the Korean War and the Cold War.” More broadly, *Catch-22* is concerned with the civilian situation of 1960s America, when the citizens indeed had something like loyalty oaths (Heller & *Detroit News*, 1970, p. 296). This setting was chosen because Heller realized that the ethics “dictated by a wartime emergency (Heller & *The Realist*, 1962, p. 288),” particularly the ethics of “factionalism, antagonism, mortal enmity” (Heller & *Detroit News*, 1970, p. 296), have been carried over into the peacetime of 1960s America, and that “they (American fellow citizens) were at war,” (Heller & *Detroit News*, 1970, p. 296). In this regard, Heller stated that *Catch-22* “does not reflect” his attitude toward the war, as Yossarian's “enemies” of survival are his superiors, and the story is within the context of WWII being almost over. It is American officers and the American government, or the internal affairs of his motherland, that impose dangers upon Yossarian's survival, while Germans and Hitler are scarcely mentioned in the novel.

Therefore, one of the functions of *Catch-22*'s WWII is the satire of the engaged patriotism in Heller's 1960s

America. Or more specifically, *Catch-22* is a renunciation against a “monolithic” society that closes off “every conventional area of protest or corrective action” and a society that aligns “national interests” with personal liberty in the name of patriotism (Heller & *The Realist*, 1962, p. 289).

Consequently, penetrating such a system that relies on binary oppositions, the concept of *différance*, namely the “strategic note or connection” that points out the irreducibility of temporalizing and the “closure of presence” (Derrida, 1973, p.131), reveals that hierarchies and privileges within this binary dichotomy make no sense. *Différance* renders these systems unstable. The meaning of patriotism can never gain a full and fixed presence, and it is determined by its relationship to other meanings within a system of wholeness, which represents itself as America in wartime emergency. This wholeness that contains various meanings, therefore, is constructed and can be manipulated.

Thus, while one of the targets of *Catch-22*'s absurdities is 1960s American patriotism, this paper tries to interpret the evolving deconstruction of patriotism with the novel's circular narrative of the rule *Catch-22*. Applying the theory of *différance* to illustrate Heller's deconstruction of patriotism, one can discover that Heller tries to disintegrate WWII American patriotism from various perspectives while maintaining a developing pattern. The deconstruction initiates from rejection, proceeds through manipulation and commodification, and achieves complete dismemberment with disillusionment. Therefore, while the occasions around Yossarian intertwine, the shattering of patriotism starts with Yossarian's rejection of dying during flight missions, intensified and ultimately concluded by the devastation from Milo's Syndicate and his simple-minded, naïve transference of gaining profit or not. Throughout this multi-layered deconstruction of patriotism, Heller exposed that the constructed ideal of patriotism is apt to be manipulated and that applying such notions to individuals, trapping them into a “situation of circumstance,” is evil and immoral.

## II. JOSEPH HELLER'S CRITIQUE OF AMERICAN PATRIOTISM

*Catch-22* witnesses the “chickenshit” of WWII, a term defined by Paul Fussell. According to Fussell, chickenshit refers to “small-minded and ignoble” behaviors that have nothing to do with the victory of the war, for instance, “petty harassment of the weak by strong,” “open scrimmage for power, authority, and prestige,” “sadism disguised as necessary discipline,” etc. (Fussell, 1989, p. 80). These accounts suggest that Heller broadened his satire to target the culture that fosters –and even legitimizes –such madness within dehumanizing institutions of his time in *Catch-22*. Conclusively, insisting on being a “fictional narrative,” *Catch-22*, with Heller's great social discontent, comments about “the loyalty oath, the free enterprise system, civil rights, bureaucracy, patriotism, etc.,” with the notion of absurdity penetrates the center of these critical comments (Heller & *The Realist*, 1962, p. 275).

Coincidentally, the publication of *Catch-22* came just twelve months after John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address on 20 January 1961. The speech was said to be based upon the greatest national urgency shaped by the bipolar opposition during the Cold War, Soviet missiles in Cuba that allegedly had nuclear warheads, and the ongoing Vietnam War. The apocalyptic tone of the Address pledged American fellow citizens to raise a struggle against “the common enemies of man” to oppose “tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself”<sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile, such rhetoric echoes Roosevelt's request for a war declaration after the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 –The Americans would fight against the hostility with their righteous might and “remember the character of the onslaught against them.” They would gain the “inevitable triumph” with their confidence in their armed forces and the “unbounding determination” of their people<sup>2</sup>. In this context, democracy –associated with human rights, liberty, and the alleviation of poverty –is presented as requiring an ingrained patriotism as its greatest national urgency. Consequently, ideals of sacrifice, civic responsibility, and active patriotism came to be in especially high demand in the official discourse of American society

<sup>1</sup> Kennedy, J. F. (1961, January 20). *Inaugural address*. The American Presidency Project.

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-2>

<sup>2</sup> Roosevelt, F. D. (1941, December 7). Speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt, New York (transcript). *Library of Congress*.

[https://www.loc.gov/resource/afc1986022.afc1986022\\_ms2201/?st=text](https://www.loc.gov/resource/afc1986022.afc1986022_ms2201/?st=text)

during the 1960s.

Nevertheless, juxtaposing *Catch-22* and the Address, it seemed that Heller replied to the pledging of patriotism with a radical, stern, and satirical refusal: Yossarian has been searching for every chance to survive throughout the whole book, yet patriotism “feeds on death,” as death specifies patriotism’s “moral, political, and affective linchpin”(Johnston, 2007, p. 161). Heller also once expressed his disillusionment with patriotism: patriotism would be a “virtue” provided people can define the term, and there should be a “popular national cause” that calls upon it(Heller & Moyers, 1989, p. 36). Yet Heller discovered that “all societies we know of” have been governed by “the selfish interests of the ruling class or classes”(Heller and Moyers, 1989, p. 36). Therefore, according to Heller, the virtue of patriotism was unattainable in his time.

### III. REJECTION OF PATRIOTISM: SNOWDEN'S SECRET AND YOSSARIAN'S EPIPHANY

The traumatizing descriptions of Snowden's death derive from Heller's real experience as a bombardier in his 37<sup>th</sup> mission over Avignon. For Heller, in the beginning, the missions were “a lark,” and Heller was “too stupid” to realize their dangers. Yet during the 37<sup>th</sup> mission, the co-pilot went “a little berserk,” grabbed the controls away from the pilot, and plummeted the plane straight down as he believed the aircraft had climbed too steeply and would stall (Heller & *Detroit News*, 1970, p. 297).

This crisis has severely struck Heller as Snowden's death strikes Yossarian. *Catch-22* witnesses dozens of occasions of death, but only Snowden and his belongings repetitively emerge to remind Yossarian with *déjà vu* of his whimpering, freezing death: “Snowden lay dying in back(Heller, 1961, p. 52),” Snowden whimpering “I'm cold, I'm cold” and begging for help while Yossarian can only comfort him by saying “there, there(Heller, 1961, p. 170),” Snowden's name “stenciled in white on the blue duffel bag(Heller, 1961, p. 168)” when he was alive, and Snowden “loses his guts” that Yossarian bitterly finds Snowden's “liver, lungs, kidneys, ribs, stomach and bits of the stewed tomatoes” in the gigantic hole in the middle of Snowden's body(Heller, 1961, p. 449) and Doc Daneeka has to “wash

Snowden” off Yossarian with absorbent cotton(Heller, 1961, p. 267)” as Snowden's pieces have splashed on Yossarian.

This uniquely vivid and overwhelming description of death completely deprives the ingrained sense of patriotism of Yossarian through fear, the survival instinct, the concept of the enemy, and the realization of a death resulting from a “circumstance.” In this regard, the ingrained patriotism establishes an opposition between American warriors of justice and the enemy of fascism, and Yossarian is supposed to serve this collective and almighty goal.

However, Yossarian's stark confrontation with death leads him to grasp “Snowden's secret,” that “man is matter,” and people will be reduced to physical substance if they are dropped out of a window, burnt, or buried. Death entails not only the disappearance of the spirit but also the degradation of the body to mere “garbage”(Heller, 1961, p. 450). Therefore, Yossarian denies his association with the national project of the victory of ‘justice and democracy,’ and this refusal changes the attack on his squadron into an attack on himself. Besides, when Yossarian's sheer pursuit of survival becomes the most urgent request, and he is incessantly thrown into dangerous, lethal flight missions commanded by his superiors, he achieves an epiphany that “there are too many dangers to keep track of”(Heller, 1961, p. 176). People around Yossarian, or virtually everyone, are hostile and deliberate as equal to the German forces, and every one of them is “all out to kill him”(Heller, 1961, p. 176). Ultimately, Yossarian's fundamental desire to live demystifies and rejects this collective patriotism by extending the notion of the enemy, as he defines an enemy as “anyone who's going to get you killed, no matter which side he's on”(Heller, 1961, p. 127).

Through Yossarian's “paranoid” notion of the enemy within a justifiable war, it seems that Heller constrained Yossarian into an image of a war coward full of fear. Yet, as mentioned above, the war serves an allegorical meaning that penetrates the core conflict between an individual and a whole institutional illogic. It is the situation of “victims of circumstances” that Yossarian rejects. As death is inevitable for everyone, and the collective, mighty systems of justice, history, victory, and progress will not require his “premature demise,” Yossarian discovers that it is a “circumstance” constructed by other people that victimizes him and all his fellow soldiers(Heller, 1961, p. 69).

Consequently, Yossarian's subsequent reaction after Snowden's death to remove all his uniforms and become naked is a protest against such overwhelming circumstances, as the uniform symbolizes the existence of this collective national project of "fighting for justice." Yossarian's declaration of "I don't want to wear a uniform anymore"(Heller, 1961, p. 267) illustrates his desperate and firmly determined rejection of patriotism, a manufactured notion that forces him to sacrifice his life. He affirms that "only a fraction of his countrymen would give up their lives" to win the "vile and muddy war(Heller, 1961, p. 70)," and that people fight for "the hot dog, the Brooklyn Dodgers, Mom's apple pie" but not for "the decent folk," which further supports his conclusion of "there's no patriotism"(Heller, 1961, p. 9). Furthermore, Yossarian believes that there is neither patriotism nor "matriotism." It suggests that Yossarian is against all the manipulated and manufactured notions that are open to limitless interpretations and might be imposed upon an individual to serve a collective goal. Through Yossarian's total rejection of patriotism and his questioning of "where are the Snowdens of yesteryear"(Heller, 1961, p. 35), Heller expressed his criticism of the grotesque impropriety of ascribing a higher meaning to a man whose guts fall out of a giant hole on his belly.

#### IV. MANIPULATION OF PATRIOTISM: MILO'S SYNDICATE

After Yossarian's rejection of patriotism by extending the bipolar opposition between the soldier and the enemy to a constructed circumstance of survival or death, the emptiness and meaninglessness of patriotism are further exposed through Milo Minderbinder's Syndicate. Milo completely transcends and shatters the constructed significance of patriotism through his frenzy toward generating profits by building his world with merely CEOs and shareholders. For Milo, patriotism is purely irrelevant and inconsequential, and his interest is above national borders and "petty conflicts" of war. Milo's limited interest in patriotism, or his interest in everything except gaining profits, is due to his functioning of the specific object as a prerequisite for benefits.

While Yossarian is still concerned with laudable ideals of justice, might, truth, liberty, patriotism, etc., Milo

replaced these "flamboyant squadron emblems" with his stenciled name in garnish purple: "M&M Enterprises"(Heller, 1961, p. 259). Milo's only concern is his M&M Enterprise, bearing the motto of "What's good for the syndicate is good for the country," and the enterprise benefits when Milo benefits(Heller, 1961, p. 238). Milo's syndicate is "inclusive and international" in that he also deals with Germans, the national enemy of the United States. By engaging simultaneously with opposing sides, Milo dismantles traditional patriotic alignments, manipulating both ends of the ideological divide to serve his own economic obligations. The German planes that landed in Pianosa can have "swastikas painted out," and these symbols of German nationalism are replaced by flat white marks of "M&M Enterprise"(Heller, 1961, p. 260). Milo's heated "deadly capitalist ethic" reaches a climax when he bombs his own squadron because "a contract is a contract and has to be honored." The bombing of his own outfit is part of a newly signed contract with the Germans(Heller, 1961, p. 264). While "wounded soon lay screaming everywhere," Milo further requires "strafe," as this is another clause in the contract(Heller, 1961, p. 265).

It is discernible that Milo's behaviors are absurd and immoral enough to readers that "even the most phlegmatic observer"(Heller, 1961, p. 266) could not stomach. Such behaviors function as an allegory towards abnormal capital phenomena, which ignored the "human and moral considerations for life"(Henriksen, 1997, p. 253) in Heller's era. Milo Minderbinder's legendary entrepreneurship is an exaggerated allegory of the capitalist imperative, one branch of the "American wartime bureaucracy." Satirically, Heller rendered Milo with a performative "loyalty" to his squadron at the end of *Catch-22*, as Milo pompously reproaches Yossarian for his refusal to fly more missions. Milo informs Yossarian in "ecclesiastical tones" that he is "ashamed" of Yossarian and that the deterioration of morale in the squadron is all ascribed to his absence. Yossarian's insubordination will further place the country "in peril," jeopardizing Milo's and his own "traditional rights of freedom and independence"(Heller, 1961, p. 413-414). However, such seemingly justifiable accusations that aim to invoke a sense of duty, sacrifice, and collective responsibility derive from Milo's fury with Yossarian's absence in Milo's syndicate affairs. In this sense, Milo's

“loyalty” is fundamentally reconfigured as an economic rather than an ethical pursuit. This performative rhetoric of American patriotism towards the squadron from Milo masks and legitimizes his private profit. By presenting himself as an “American citizen” whose fundamental rights of freedom and liberty are under threat, Milo appropriates the language of national belonging while simultaneously eroding its foundations, since those he designates as “enemies” are, in practice, interchangeable with his “business partners.” Therefore, Milo’s capitalist desire triggers his hypocritical patriotism. Patriotism still makes no sense for Milo but serves as a discourse tool for a bargain, in this case, to lure Yossarian to return to service and satisfy his syndicate requirements. Patriotism is manipulated for personal enrichment of wealth, and Milo’s dedication to his country is, in truth, his devotion to unbridled private enterprise.

In a broader view, Milo’s activities expose the uneasy convergence of patriotism and capitalist ethics. By incorporating the American government into his syndicate and claiming everyone has a share, Milo further dissolves the boundary between national allegiance and economic enterprise, transforming patriotic discourses into a function of market logic. Free enterprise may ostensibly be subject to governmental regulation, yet Milo interprets his profit-seeking behavior as implicitly guaranteed by the nation’s capitalist ethos of liberty and wealth accumulation. In this framework, patriotism is no longer an ethical commitment to collective well-being, but a flexible discourse that can be mobilized to justify financial opportunism.

Heller thus further deconstructs patriotism, as it can reinforce capitalist ethics, and vice versa, with the language of national loyalty serving to legitimize and obscure the exploitative mechanisms of a profit-driven syndicate. With the pure and naïve conception of his world as something to be maneuvered for the best possible gain of profits, Milo self-evidently believes that everything is profitable as long as one utilizes it appropriately. The war his fellow compatriots are fighting in should be open to the “free market” so that private industries can benefit from it. Meanwhile, since “everyone has a share,” and the maintenance of liberty and democracy of American patriotism, it is not necessary to reimburse the government after bombing its own squadron with the national morale,

because “in a democracy, the government is the people”(Heller, 1961, p. 266). The bombing might also be Milo’s antagonism against the government, as the latter “monopolizes” war and impedes Milo from gaining more profit. Milo’s ultimate pursuit is to “see the government get out of war” and leave the whole field of war to “private industry”(Heller, 1961, p. 266).

In the end, while Milo’s morality is of such simplicity with only two elements, namely gaining profit and seeking chances to benefit, Heller’s revelation of the tumultuous, disastrous aftermath of such morality is the real warning. Milo represents the extent of the “hyperbolicity” of Heller’s culture, in that Milo utilizes the corrupted ideal of freedom to confirm the righteousness to act under the guidance of Catch-22. Patriotism thus becomes a manipulative discourse.

On the other hand, Milo’s ultimate tragic schizophrenic illustrates the hazard of Milo’s simple-minded, naïve transference, which represents the extreme of capitalist ethics. Heller endowed Milo with such a mental and moral simplicity that Milo becomes a horrifyingly dangerous person because he lacks evil intent in conducting anti-patriotism activities. This horrible situation is intensified by Milo’s sincerity and loyalty towards the completion of contracts, his struggles to let others empathize with him, and his view of fighting the war for economic benefits. While the former head of General Motors, Charles E. Wilson, claimed, “What is good for the country is good for General Motors, and vice versa,” Milo paraphrases this sentence as “What is good for the syndicate is good for the country,” and without a “vice versa.” This alteration should be taken with cautious seriousness as Milo genuinely means it. By creating a character with such an innocent, pure, and concentrated pursuit of private profit, Heller achieved the simultaneous existence of innocence and destruction. Milo is not “an insidious and conniving power-hungry fascist” but a typical representative of “American business values with the virtues “industriousness, competence, pleasantry, and engagement”(Miller, 1973, p. 385). He is a perfect product of the 1960s American culture, in which “virtues” like patriotism are rejected, distorted, and manipulated. Allegorically, Milo’s success is what Americans generally admire, but the tragedy of such success is foreseeable with

Milo's schizophrenic ending.

## V. CONCLUSION

Heller's *Catch-22* intricately deconstructs 1960s American patriotism, a "virtue" with the absence of "virtuous ideals," but is comprised of bipolar oppositions. Through the scope of différance, patriotism is rejected, commodified, and manipulated as it is a constructed notion open to limitless interpretations and reckless manipulation. Through Yossarian's epiphany about the real nature of patriotism after Snowden's tragic death, and the operations of Milo's syndicate, which acts purely and innocently in the pursuit of profits yet results in immoral, inhumane, and insanely disastrous results, Heller exposes the disillusionment and moral decay that lies at the heart of nationalistic fervor in his era. It further reveals that patriotism in *Catch-22* is not the noble, self-sacrificial ideal appealed by JFK or Roosevelt but a tool of exploitation and survival, distorted by bureaucracy, greed, and violence.

Yossarian's epiphany marks a pivotal moment in the novel, as he comes to understand the brutal futility of the war and how soldiers are manipulated into believing that their deaths serve a greater, patriotic cause. The death of Snowden, with its haunting final words, warns Yossarian that soldiers are apt to be victimized by a constructed circumstance. Yossarian thus grasps the inherent contradiction at the core of patriotism: while it is presented as a noble cause, it is ultimately a mechanism that perpetuates violence and suffering for the benefit of those in power. The attachment of higher meaning to an individual who loses his organs with a gigantic hole bored through his ribs is obscene, and people should be alert to all the manipulated and manufactured notions that might be imposed on an individual to serve a collective goal.

Milo's syndicate further complicates the novel's deconstruction of patriotism by demonstrating how it can be manipulated and exploited for personal gain. Milo's bombing of his own squadron, all for profit, highlights how patriotism in warfare can be reduced to mere transactions. His syndicate, which operates on the same innocent capitalist logic that governs the rest of the war machine, is a clear metaphor for how American patriotism can be replaced and manipulated for a bargain between a government and a private enterprise. Heller's portrayal of Milo as a simple-minded, self-serving opportunist who uses

the war for enrichment and who believes the profit for himself is the profit for the whole country exposes the corrupt underpinnings of a liberty that claims to have a right to do anything.

Ultimately, *Catch-22* offers a scathing deconstruction of 1960s American patriotism by exposing its inherent contradictions and the ways it can be used to justify violence, manipulation, and greed. Through the tragic deaths of soldiers like Snowden and the commodification of war through Milo, Heller revealed the realities behind the idealized image of patriotism. The novel dismantles the notion that patriotism is synonymous with virtue or self-sacrifice, instead portraying it as a constructed "virtue" that serves the interests of those in power while perpetuating the suffering of those at the bottom. In this way, *Catch-22* remains an enduring commentary on the dangers of collectively maneuvered ideals that demand unquestionable allegiance and bipolar oppositions and warns its contemporaries that "ideologies within a wartime urgency" should not be prolonged during a period of peace, as it might trigger antagonism, persecution, and absurdities.

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