

T.C
İSTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE



**FUNDAMENTAL EFFECTS OF WWII ON THE FIRST AND
SECOND GENERATION OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM AND
THE NOVEL *CATCH-22***

M.A Thesis

NURGÜL SARSILMAZ

İSTANBUL- 2012

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İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ

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ABSTRACT

FUNDAMENTAL EFFECTS OF WWII ON THE FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM AND THE NOVEL *CATCH-*

22

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This thesis analyses the fundamental effects of WWII on the first and second generation of abstract expressionism and the novel *Catch-22*. The first chapter gives information on the historical background of the World War-II period which the paintings were produced and the novel was written, and clarifies the aim and methodology of the study. The following chapters analyze the historical background, cultural aspects, human psychology, philosophical influences of the war by combining their impact on First and Second Generation of Abstract Expressionism and the novel *Catch-22*. The conclusion presents the aim of the thesis and depicts the impact of the war and its conclusions over the works of art and *Catch-22*.

Keywords: WWII, Character, Abstract Expressionism, Style, Theme

ÖZ

İKİNCİ DÜNYA SAVAŞI'NIN BİRİNCİ VE İKİNCİ NESİL SOYUT DIŞAVURUMCULUK VE *MADDE-22* ROMANI ÜZERİNDEKİ TEMEL ETKİLERİ

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Bu tez, İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın birinci ve ikinci kuşak soyut dışavurumculuk ve *Madde-22* romanı üzerindeki temel etkilerini incelemektedir. İlk bölüm, resimlerin üretildiği ve romanın yazıldığı dönem olan İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın tarihi alt yapısı hakkında bilgi verir ve çalışmanın yöntemini açığa kavuşturur. Daha sonraki bölümler ise, savaş döneminin tarihi altyapısı, kültürel yönleri, insan psikolojisi ve felsefi etkilerini, Birinci ve İkinci Kuşak Soyut Dışavurumculuk ve *Madde- 22* romanı üzerinde birleştirerek ele alır. Sonuç bölümü ise, tezin amacını sunar ve savaşın etkilerini tekrardan göstererek onun sonuçlarını sanat eserleri ve *Catch-22* romanı üzerinde sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İkinci Dünya Savaşı, Karakter, Soyut Dışavurumculuk, Biçim, İçerik



To “My” Family

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the detonation of atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, nothing was the same anymore all over the world. As many countries were devastated enormously, America was, probably, the only nation to profit from the war. As the war interrupted the collaboration of Japan with Germany and Italy and caused the economic and technological recession in Japan, America was the only power after the attack on Pearl Harbour. From blue jeans, Coca-Cola, McDonalds to economical, political and cultural spheres, directly or indirectly, the world was under the American influence. American supremacy was also valid and suitable for the artistic arena. Europe was under the dominancy of dictatorships and artists, intellectuals were not free to produce their works. Many artists and writers found salvation in flight to the United States. Thus, Paris lost its prominence and New York became the centre of art. However, it was not only European artists who caused the rise of the art in America. Political, economical, cultural and philosophical developments within the nation were also forming the background of the artistic outputs. All of these developments shaped the works of artists and writers, and inspired them to create their distinctive styles. The artists called their artistic genre, generally, as “Abstract Expressionism” and divided it into many sections. First generation of Abstract Expressionism including sub-genres of Action Painting and Color-field painting was representing hardly-painted works which were carrying the traces of war heavily. Whereas, the follower of Second Generation, consisted of mostly women painters, reduced the traces of war in their works. The writers were another group that really felt the oppression of the war. Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* created a big sensation in the country in terms of reflecting the devastating effects of WWII on people. Addition to the effects of the WWII, traces of the Korean War was the sensational elements that changed the direction of literature and Abstract Expressionism to a sharper point. Thus, it can be put forward that after the devastating end of the WWII, historical events, cultural developments and philosophical influences, which affected the psychology of people, gave way to the birth of a new genre in art and shaped the content of the literature. First Generation of Abstract Expressionism, with the follower of second generation was the distinctive artistic innovations that shaped the painting; *Catch 22* was also the work which reflects the effects of WWII on characters, theme and style.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE UNITED STATES (1945-1960)

After the devastating end of the WWII in 1944, the United States entered into the Cold War period during which the world was bipolarized by the supernatural powers of the United States and Soviet Union. The foreign policy was designed to rescue the world from the spread of communism. Containment policy, backed up with Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, and the Korean War were the leading political affairs dealing with communist threat in the U.S history. Containment of communism was also valid in the national arena, and McCarthyism was the influential instrument to restrain communism.¹ Economically, it was a prosperous era due to the rapid growth of industrialization and mass production. Socially, it was called as “Age of Consensus” but, psychologically it was an era of turmoil feelings. Effects of the WWII were heavy on human psyche and as a result, senses of alienation, dehumanization, escape of reality and distortion were born. The philosophers that gave meanings to these feelings were Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Jean Paul Sartre, whose perceptions on existentialism and unconsciousness shaped the philosophical background of the Cold War era.

A. Political Upheavels Of The Country

1. Cold War Period Between Us & Ussr

Cold War is a term that is used to describe the relations that developed primarily between the United States and Soviet Union from the mid 1940s until 1990s. After the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harries Truman became the president of the United States in 1945 and “Cold War” was the theme of Truman’s presidency both at home and abroad. The immediate source of the conflict between the United States and Soviet

¹ McCarthyism: It was a term which defines the dense anti-communist doubt in the USA from 1940s to 1950s.

Union was the “power over world”. Both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to expand their influence at the expense of the other. “Now that the war had been won with the final defeat of Germany and Japan, what should be done about conquered Germany and Soviet occupied Eastern Europe? Since the European imperials withdraw their power over the colonies in Asia and Middle East, who might win them as friends, who provide military bases, resources, and markets?” (Bailyn 774). The world was split into two power blocks: America was following activist, expansionist, globalist, and capitalist diplomacy with a strategic theory. On the other hand, Soviet Union was dominating Eastern Europe with its socialist, communist ideology. “Americans favored universalist or Wilsonian measure to inhabit post-war aggression, while the Soviets trusted only traditional power arrangements- alliances and spheres of influence” (Bailyn 775). This bipolarization of world was the basic tension of the Cold War period.

2. Containment Policy Of The United States

The contest with Soviet power had grown even more intense in the early years of the Cold War era. In series of actions, the Soviets were trying to expand their power and influence. As Bailyn says, by the end of 1945s, besides dominating most of Eastern Europe, Soviets controlled Outer Mongolia, parts of Manchuria, and northern Korea. They had annexed the Kurile Islands and regained from Japan the southern half of Sakhalin Island. They were also obtaining pressure on Turkey and Greece in order to access to the eastern Mediterranean. On the other hand, the United States was following a foreign policy of containment to cause the fall of Soviet Union and its satellite nations. Its main aim was to prevent spreading communism to non-communist countries. By the time, British government, who could no longer afford financial aids to Greece and Turkey, informed President Truman that they would have to cut off aids. On March 12, Truman announced his word that became known as “Truman Doctrine”. He supported that if one nation would fall into the hands of communism, like domino pieces other countries would follow it. Thus, Truman believed that if Greece and Turkey fell to the communists, all the Middle East might be lost. Truman declared that:

The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure. (Bailyn 776)

He asked Congress for four hundred million dollars in military and economic aid for Greece and Turkey and the Congress appropriated the necessary money. “Although the Truman Doctrine was a response to a specific a crisis, it heralded the birth of a broad policy of resistance to Russian expansion in everywhere” (Garraty 445). Both ideological and humanitarian reasons, the United States felt obliged to protect this strategically important area and provide necessary prosperity and social health. The ideas of George F. Kennan contributed a lot to the United States’ foreign policy. Kennan advocated a policy of “long term, patient but firm and vigilant containment based on the application of counter-force as the best means of dealing with Soviet pressures” (Garraty 456). Meanwhile, the State Department was preparing strategy for a general European defence “against totalitarian pressures”. Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, announced an economic reconstruction plan called “Marshall Plan” in 1948. Through the plan, Marshall sent more than 12 billion dollar American aid to nineteen European countries including Turkey. The aid enabled a recovery in the economy of those countries. “The Marshall Plan brought the Unites States an extraordinary amount of goodwill in Western Europe” (Bailyn 776). The United States declared that it was their policy to sustain principles of individual liberty, free institutions and genuine independence in Europe through assistance. By the 1952, the focus of the program had shifted from recovery to military assistance. Thus, Marshall Plan became an important step in the United States’ foreign policy to contain the spread of communism in European nations. Believing that a formal military shield should be added to the economic assistance of Marshall Plan, North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington in 1949. The United States, Canada, and much of Western European countries agreed that “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered as an attack against all of them, and in the event of such an attack in each country would take necessary actions including use of armed forces” (Garraty 457). It

means that NATO would provoke arms race with the Soviet Union and it would allow troops to combat without declaration of war. NATO passed in the British and American legislatures primarily because of the immediacy of the Soviet threat and Truman accepted that it would help Europeans to resist spread of communism.

3. Korean War

Containment policy of the United States not only acted in Europe but also in Asia, Middle-East, and Far-East. After the WWII, Soviet Union and the United States divided Korea into occupation zones at the 38th parallel. North Korea was ruled as “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea” and South as “Republic of Korea”. The friction between two local governments was intense and both sides were asking military aids to conquer the other. Soviet Union gave North Korea tanks, but Washington was afraid to give its ally Korea offensive weapons. On September 15, 1950 thousands of troops under the Democratic People’s of Korea moved across the 38th latitudes in promise of victory, and United States’ president Harry Truman ordered troops to assist South Korea. Under the commander of McArthur, troops landed at Inchon and invaded North Korea. American air craft began to strike against bridges on the border between North Korea and China which led China to enter the war. The war lasted three years and two million people including NATO members lost their lives. In 1953, armistice was finally signed. South- No side won the war and North Korea line was set near 38th parallel again. Korean War was the first hot war of the Cold War period. It also demonstrated the strengths and the limitations of the United Nations. Furthermore, “The Korean War completed America’s global policy of containment and marked a revolution in American East Asian relations” (Bailyn 783).

4. Mccarthyism

Additionally; internal as well as external dangers appeared to threaten the American nation in the post-war era. On February 10, 1950, Joseph McCarthy, a prominent Senator from Wisconsin, gave a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia. He

claimed that there were numerous communists working in the state department. He never identified these figures or produced evidence against them, but he was able to create “an anti-communist hysteria” (Garraty 255) in America. “Because of McCarthy and his fellow witch hunters, many innocent people were accused and killed during the fifties. For instance, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were accused of being spy to Soviet and they were found innocent after they were executed” (Garraty 256). After that incident, McCarthyism caused a national discomfort, paranoia and hysteria in the United States. Everybody began to suspect each other; there was no trust among the people. Like the “Salem Witch Crafts” of 17th century, people who were pointed or told to be communists were caught up and punished. School teachers, college professors, authors, journalists, poets and many artists were accused of being communists or pro-communist. In order to catch the spies in the nation, besides the CIA, some organizations were founded. House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was the leading one that went on for years claiming to find “reds” in the schools and churches.² Americans worried about that communists may form a government in the USA. Thus, they created a discomfort in the country to catch reds. Since the color of the Communist party flag and arm-bands were red, it was called as red scare. With the presidency of Eisenhower, hysteria of McCarthyism lost its effectiveness, however it had already achieved to prevent spread of communism within the nation.

B. Cultural Aspects Of The Nation

Besides the international political developments, the United States embodied a dozen of cultural changes within the nation after the WWII such as the rise of consumer culture. The immediate years after the war were the period of stability and prosperity for the white American middle class. More Americans were better than ever before in terms of income levels and life-styles. There emerged a material comfort. Apart from the seeming happiness in society, these things made people feel lost because they were confused and lost their belief. The middle class structure in the 1950s was getting

² “Red scare” is a term which was used to define the feelings towards communists after WWII in the USA.

interested in consumer goods. Individuals were ready to demonstrate their prosperity. Bath tubes or showers, flush toilets, electricity, stoves and many other housing apparatus became common in the houses. “Three-quarters of all families with incomes below 4000 dollars a year had washing machines, 60 percent owned automobiles and 93 percent of all homes had televisions.” (Kleiner 442). Revolving charge accounts, easy payment plans and credit cards became increasingly important. People began to buy more than they needed, which gave way to the emergence of consumer culture and mass culture. The entertainment became a major industry in the fifties. Americans started to work fewer hours at higher wages. Thus, they spend twice as much on vacations, travel, movies, and sports. With the post war economic prosperity, birth rates increased the nation’s population. The growth of the “baby boom” generation magnified its impact on society. The growth of families led to migration from cities to suburbs in the post war years, which caused a building boom in housing, schools, and shopping malls. Affluence and consumerism drew Americans into togetherness. “Common cars and clothes, common houses, vacations, common foods gave the impression of a single national commitment to the same good life” (Bailyn 796). People dressed in the same style of clothing, filling their carts with the same standardized products. “Emphasizing similarities rather than differences, Americans insisted on conformity as the national style. Togetherness and belongingness became popular catch phrases” (Bailyn 792). Everything was the same in the Age of Consensus. There was no space for the individual; no space for different behaviour.

Although it seemed that American standard of living and income increased, there were still millions of poor Americans within the nation. Blacks, Hispanics, poor whites and elderly Americans were living in miserable conditions. They were reflecting the other side of the coin, “the Other America” (Bailyn 45). Mostly blacks were discriminated by the dominant white society. They were segregated in schools, restaurants, and in all public spheres. Indians were put into the reservation camps and Mexican Americans were forced to live in small towns rather than cities. Also, women were having limited opportunities for well-paying employment. In short, we can say that besides the external achievements, the United States was facing internal conflicts within the nation such as the social problems mentioned above.

C. Human Psychology After The Secondworld War

Considering the political, economical and cultural prosperities, it might be supposed that such physical achievements would have a sense of well-being throughout the nation. For many individuals they certainly did. However, these prosperous years were also notable for those who worried about abstract questions, personal problems, and subjective matters that exist in the men's mind and difficult to prove. Initially, the domestic fear of communism is a case in point. The unease condition was real enough but the cause of it was not clear. "Red Scare" was the wide spread hysteria that trembled thousands of people. Especially, intellectuals, journalists, poets, and artist were under the great pressure. In fear of being accused of communism, they were restricted in their works, ideas, and words. David Riesman (et al) wrote a very popular book, *The Lonely Crowd* in 1949 and showed that "whereas people used to be morally self-sufficient because of internalized value systems, modern people were entirely dependent on peer group for their moral values and sense of self [...] Instead of being "inner directed"³ they were now "other directed"⁴ (Gardner 443). Due to the political pressure of McCarthyism, people were other directed in the Cold War period. Since they were judged without being questioned, they were to avoid from subjectivity and that was causing even more remote problems, such as loss of identity and alienation. Robert Nisbet described alienation in his book *The Quest for Community* (1953), as "the state of mind that can find a social order remote incomprehensible, or fraudulent; beyond real hope or desire inviting apathy, boredom, or even hostility" (443). Alienation is another aspect of "other directed" concept in which people feel powerless and unable to control their own life's activities. As Karl Marx believed, "alienation is systematic result of capitalism" (Norton 346). The reason for alienation that Marx explained in his work "Alienated Labour" is the inverse proportion between the worker's misery and the amount of work he does. Marx says "the misery of the worker increases with the power and the volume of his production" (Marx 120). With the economical prosperity of the Cold War period, people began to work more and more in the newly founded factories. The mass production of materials was the basic issue of the capitalist economy. As the proletarians were working in the sections of factories, they were alienated to the

³ Inner directed (philosophy): controlled by one's own behaviours, thoughts and values rather than society's rules.

⁴ Other-directed (philosophy): directed by external factors rather than one's own values.

produced material itself. Thus, estrangement emerged between individuals and their human nature. From the cultural panorama, the social structure of the American nation was suitable for alienation because people had grown distant and estranged from each other. As a result of rapid industrialization and urbanization, the gap between poor and wealthy people widened. Marx says about that:

Alienation is apparent not only in the fact that my means of life belong to someone else, that my desires are the unattainable possession of someone else, but that everything is something different from itself, that my activity is something else, and finally (and this is also the case for the capitalist) that an inhuman power rules of everything. (Bottomore 177-178)

When we apply this to society, things that rich people can buy are the unattainable possession of poor people. Addition to the alienation, dehumanization was the other psychological process that became effective due to racial differences. Blacks were described as evil, morally inferior, and persecution of those people became more psychologically acceptable by the white dominant society because the members of the white dominant society were radical and old fashioned that could not accept disparity. Whites dehumanized the blacks by accusing them of being lazy, drunken and dangerous human beings. They tried to justify their discrimination.

Apart from the economical prosperities, cultural developments and political upheavals, the most important element that affected human psychology and feelings was the war itself. It was difficult for the Americans to be involved in the war directly. Veterans, the young people who return home after the war and even the common man on the street were psychologically collapsed. As a consequence of seeing the hardships of the war, they could not adapt themselves to the daily life. Not only men but also their families suffered from the effects of war. They lost their faith in religion, values or any kind of institutions. Life became distorted, meaningless and aimless for them. They had difficulties in communication with people. They became lonelier and introverted, which caused them to alienate themselves from the society. They created their own subjective, imaginary world, escaping from the realities. They did not want to question the reasons or the roots of the events since they feared to come across with the reality.

To sum up, domestic fear of “Red Threat” known as McCarthyism, mass production, industrialization and urbanization in the capitalist system, racial discriminations, class distinctions in the social structure and war time hardships were the happenings that played important roles over the human psychology. Alienation, dehumanization, loss in the sense of faith, and old values, and escapism of reality were among the distinctive psychological distortions of the post war American nation.

D. Philosophical Influences

Philosophical outlooks were the other perspective of the United States’ history throughout the post-war era of 1945-1960. French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre’s “existentialism” and Austrian scientist, philosopher Sigmund Freud’s theory of “unconsciousness” were among the leading ideologies that influenced the American society in terms of cultural, literary, and artistic areas. According to Sartre “Existentialism is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine, also, which affirms that every truth and every action implied both on environment and a human subjectivity” (Caws 24). Existentialists emphasize upon the passion, anxiety and decision of individual man. Existentialist philosophy tries to understand fundamentals of the human condition and its relation to the world around us. It emphasizes freedom, action, and decisions as principles to human existence and rejects rationality. It views human beings as subjects in an indifferent, objective, often ambiguous and absurd universe, in which meaning is not provided by the natural order, but rather can be created by human being’s actions and interpretations. “Man is, indeed, a project which possesses a subjective life, instead of being a kind of moss, or fungus, cauliflower” (Caws 28). For existentialists, man is responsible for his own individuality; but also for all man. Subjectivity, choice, freedom, individual identity, nothingness, and absurdity are the main issues that existentialism deals with. In existentialism, values are subjective since man is the center of the universe; he is the one who gives meaning to the values. His individual conscious chooses to value things. By his explicit awareness of conscious, he constructs his identity. “Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is” (Caws 41). “Being” and “not being” are the

dichotomy of the existentialist philosophy. Thus, “nothingness” is the birth place of human existence. As Sartre says:

Man first of all exists and defines himself afterwards. For the existentialists, man is not definable; it is because to begin with he is nothing. Later, he will not be anything different than what he is. Man is “nothing” else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principal of existentialism. (28)

We can sum up the definition of nothingness with Sartre’s words:

We set out upon our pursuit of being, and it seemed to us that the series of our questions had led us to the hearth of being. But behold, at the moment when we thought we were arriving at the goal, a glance cast on the question itself has revealed to us suddenly that we are encompassed with nothingness. The permanent possibility of non-being, outside us and within, conditions our questions about being. Furthermore, it is non-being which is going to limit the reply. What being will be must of necessity arise on the basis of what it is not. Whatever being is, it will allow this formulation: “Being is that and outside of that, nothing” (Sartre 29- 30)

The last step of existentialism is the “absurdity”. Since the universe, that people live in is absurd, meaningless and most of the time abstract, human beings try to overcome absurdity with the “absurd itself”. Abstract ideas, thoughts or approaches that are claimed to exist might stand as absurd to many other people. Since they are against the traditional, classical and natural orders, the abstract ideas are not welcomed by conservative, traditional minds and are considered as absurd.

As well as Sartre’s ideas, Freud also affected not only the American nation, but also the rest of the world with his usage of psycho-analytic theories. According to Freud, psyche is composed of three different levels of consciousness, including the “pre-consciousness” “the consciousness” and “unconsciousness”. The most significant contribution of him to western thought was his argument for the existence of the unconscious mind. In his psycho-analytic theory, unconsciousness refers to a part of mental functioning through which human actions are done with unawareness. In Freud’s

words the relation between repetition and instinct which is related to unconsciousness is this:

In what way is the instinctive connected with the compulsion to repetition? At this point the idea is forced upon us that we have stumbled on the trace of a general and hitherto not clearly recognized- or at least not expressly emphasized- characteristic of instinct, perhaps of all organic life. According to this, an instinct would be a tendency innate in living organic matter impelling it towards the reinstatement of an earlier condition, one which to abandon under the influence of external disturbing forces- a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the manifestation of inertia in organic life.

(Rickman 158)

Freud, also, claims that socially unacceptable ideas, painful emotions, instinctual desires, traumatic memories are stored in the unconscious part of human psyche. While past thoughts, memories or outcast feelings may be deleted from the conscious, they are still stored in the unconscious and direct the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours of the individual. By using psycho-analytic methods, Freud tries to reveal the repressed thoughts and feelings of human beings. Thus, he forms an exact state of mind about the real personality of individual.

CHAPTER III

BIRTH OF AMERICAN ART: FIRST GENERATION OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

The most obvious characteristic of American painting since 1944, the end of the WWII can be considered as the trend toward abstraction⁵, which causes the each artist to develop a highly personal and unique style of painting. When Paris fell into the Nazism in 1940, during the WWII, the center of the global art was suddenly cut off from the rest of the world. Leading European artist, many of them surrealist, fled to America and New York become the international capital art. “The awareness of being at the center of the international art scene gave the American modernists a sense of confidence and encouraged them to stop imitating imported traditional genres of cubism, surrealism, fauvism and impressionism. They directed American painting into new methods of exploration” (Adams 213). They turned their vision and insights in an ambition for new values like gesturalism and colorfield painting. They rejected the formalist approaches, which narrowed their interpretations in terms of style and content. They assimilated themselves from the traditions, avoid repeating exhausted ideas and looked for fresh directions.

The “zeitgeist” of the post-war era was, also, influential in the birth of pure American painting, Abstract Expressionism. The younger man in the army, who saw the great collections of Europe, associated themselves with the great arts of the old times. They wanted to develop a distinctive art aftermath. The horror, waste, and tragedy of war made it difficult to glorify man and his work, therefore; American painters wanted to depict disillusion and disbelief in traditional institutions. As the American painter Barnett Newman said:

Artists of that generation felt the moral crisis of a world in shambles, a world devastated by a great depression and a fierce world war, and it was impossible at that time to paint the kind of painting that we were doing - flowers, reclining nudes, and people playing cello [...] This was our moral crisis in relation to what to paint. (Arnason 437)

⁵ Abstraction: a kind of trend in painting where the objects are not recognizable or resemble to anything external.

Under the influence of Cold War paranoia and national McCarthyism hysteria, the artists faced a crisis in their works. In order not to be accused of being communists, they censored their paintings. Rather than creating concrete images, they leaned toward abstraction to reflect their messages to the masses. With the help of existentialism and unconscious theory of Freud, they sought to externalize their internal psychological reality via abstraction. Each artist wanted to form his own style by following his unconscious thoughts, ideas, feelings and motivations. The Abstract Expressionists left formal compositions and representation of real objects. They associated their own unique style with their individuality. They emphasized on instinctual elements and depicted the effects of the physical action of the painting on canvas. Every artist of the New York School was developing distinctive formal styles, vocabularies. For instance, as Mendelowitz says:

Jackson Pollock was forming his works by dripping paint on canvas, while Willem de Kooning was interlocking biomorphic forms. Mark Rothko invented his own signature motif of using two or more rectangular clouds of color in vertical canvas and Barnett Newman is recognized by his narrow vertical line or “zip” which transacted broad fields of color. (548)

New York School artists painted their works freely; their abstractions were dictated by the natural movements of the hand, shapes of the brushes and texture of the paints. “Abstract Expressionist painters were the artists who will risk spoiling a canvas to say something in their own way” (Ashton 149). They relied on their own particular experiences and visions, which they painted as directly as they could. They refused to set limits on the emotional content of their painting no matter how ambiguous, irrational and undecorated they are. They, also, rejected pictorial elements that resemble machine made works. Accurately forms that look as if they were drawn by the helps of mechanical devices such as ruler, and non-physiological colors were disregarded by the Abstract Expressionists.

In the genre of Abstract Expressionism, there is no single leading figure or pioneer who painted what first. It is accepted that most significant qualities of artists’ work embody artistic identities that spring from individual’s efforts; yet there are also external factors that shape them. The Abstract Expressionists, in fact, formed a loose

community, meeting frequently in each other's studios and homes, in certain restaurants, bars and galleries. They followed each others' work closely and everybody knew who was painting what, why. However; they never created a consensus about how to paint. They, generally, agreed that past elements and styles were no longer valid and it was that they did not want to paint. Their distinctive styles shaped expansion of the American painting and caused the birth of two sub-tendencies of Abstract Expressionism: "action painting or gesturalism" and "color field painting".

A. Action Painting- Gesturalism

Action Painting, one of the significant steams of Abstract Expressionism, is a product of the post-war period, in which psycho analysis and mechanical equipments were developing. The term action painting was coined by art critic Harold Rosenberg in 1952, in his article "The American Action Painters". In this article, he mentioned that:

At a certain movement the canvas began to appear one American painter after another as an arena in which to act rather than a space in which to reproduce, redesign, analyze or express an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event. (129)

The nature of painting had shifted from a space for picturing things to an arena in which to act. "Action Painters" stress direct performance, so that the observer can respond to the movements whereby the painting was created. The medium and the tools that are used in the paintings have an important role since they facilitate, inhibit and to a degree, control the painting activity. Frequently, the action painters start out without guide or plans beyond their instincts. The painting develops from the painters' continued power to invent, improve and expand. When the painting is completed, it reflects the pure expression of the artist's creativity; reflection of his inner sight in a mixed, crazy like interactions of color, line, tone and action. As Sandler emphasized, "they believed that if, during the direct process of painting, they followed the dictates of their passions, the content would finally emerge" (93). Just as brush strokes are significant aspect of Gesture Paintings, painters developed characteristic methods of

applying paint. They dripped, splattered, rolled and threw paint on to their canvases; with the result that the final image reflects artist's activity in the creative process.

As a reaction to these unconventional methods of action painters, many people criticized and mocked their works. Norbert Lynton talked about those conditions with those words:

There were people who threw the paint on the canvas from a distance, rode bicycle on the fields of works; marked a bag of paint above the surface of canvas and blew up it immediately; rolled a bodily painted nude woman on the material; and used their children to drop paint on their work. (135)

However, despite all these reactions and criticisms, action painting became an admired artistic genre and was followed by many American artists such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning.

1. Willem De Kooning

Willem De Kooning is one of the America's greatest and most influential artists. For his subject matter, de Kooning has centered on the human figure, usually woman, and on landscape both of which he has explored through abstraction. For decade to decade, he has reworked these themes producing endless and controversial images. His style is a process of painting that has traces of brush strokes partially erased or staying as if uncompleted, like statements broken off in mid sentence. He was known for working and reworking on canvases, sometimes over very long periods. His works always look as unfinished as if some modifications are going to be made. De Kooning said that:

I am working for weeks, on a large picture and have to keep the paint wet so that I can change it over and over; I mean, do the same thing over and over... I never was interested in how to make a good painting. I did not work on it with the idea of perfection but to see how far one could go...

but not with the idea of really doing it, with anxiousness and dedication to fight maybe, or ecstasy. (Lake 33)

In some of his paintings, the paint has been scraped thin to reveal artists reconsideration of forms. His works have a sense of openness that everybody can experience. They have the qualities of ambiguity, fluidity and instability which symbolize de Kooning's uneasy way of life. His works have distinctive forms, in which some of the contrasting elements remain distinguished while others are out of recognition. He said "Even abstract shapes must have a likeness" (Sandler 133). Thus, his works include recognizable forms.

Willem de Kooning shared the leadership of the American avant-garde with Pollock and became an influential figure with his work of woman series. The most recognizable piece of the Series was Woman I, which Kooning made after the WWII. Woman I is a monumental image of a seated woman in sundress. "She has exaggerated, platform like breasts, huge staring bug eyes and buck teeth, which make the woman cruel and cartoonish image of grotesque sexuality" (Sandler



185). There is no volume, dimension, and depth in the painting and the human is formed in space. Since de Kooning scraped down and repainted the surface of the painting at least fifty times, it took him two years to complete it. The brushstrokes are recognizable in the painting. They are partially erased and staying as if incomplete. Due to McCarthyism hysteria, de Kooning reflects this hysteric condition in Woman I with the brushstrokes. They look as if they were done by a hysteric, mad person. They are unplanned and uncontrolled.

Willem de Kooning said that "he could sustain the woman theme all the time because it could change every time" (Sylvester, 34). He added that "I began with woman because it is like a tradition, like the Venus, like Olympia... there seems to be

no time element, no period, in painting for me” (34). Woman I raised question of the artist’s personal attitude towards woman. When the critics repeatedly questioned his feelings towards women, he replied that “I like beautiful women in the flesh; even the models in the magazines. Women irritate me sometimes. I pointed that irritation in the women series. Maybe... I was painting the women in me” (Marilyn 1134).

Woman I can be, also, examined and interpreted through the cultural and philosophical outlooks after the WWII. With the end of the WWII, America entered into a period of prosperity and tranquillity. There became an [affluent society] in which everything was a copy of another. From housing styles to clothes, haircuts, family life, and entertainment facilities, everything was the same. The women of the fifties became “icons” who will be remembered in the following ages. Their dresses, high-heeled shoes, hair styles, and manners were idealized and common in those years. De Kooning, who was irritated and dissatisfied with the sight of those common women tried to reflect his reaction in his works. Rather than depicting his ideas directly with the concrete images, he preferred abstraction. He stated his views on the matter by saying:

In a way, I feel the women of the fifties were a failure. I see the horror in them how, but I didn’t mean it. I wanted them to be funny and not to look sad and down-trodden like the women in the painting of the thirties; so I made them satiric and monstrous like Sibyls. (Sylvester 132)

De Kooning depicted the women in a brutal way; wild, huge, and away from reality. He distorted the factual images of women with his brushstrokes, and dehumanized their physical appearances. Another reason for de Kooning to target women in his paintings is the traumatic events that lay in his unconscious. As Sandler says, when de Kooning was three years old, there was conflict and disruption in his family. His parent’s separation initiated the feelings of anxiety as well as the tendency toward ambiguous expression which he suffered throughout his life. Thus, Woman I is suspected to be the imaginary model of de Kooning’s mother. His wife is, also, thought to be the cause of the woman images. But she rejects the claims by saying “That ferocious women he painted didn’t come from living with me. It began when he was three years old” (Lake 134). De Kooning added that “I can paint pretty young girls, yet when it is finished I always find that they are not there, only their mothers” (Sylvester

132). Thus, it shows that it is de Kooning's unconscious feelings, thoughts against his mother and other women of 1950s that directs him to paint the figures like that.

Existentialist thinking which was introduced to America soon after the WWII, affected de Kooning to a great extent. The Abstract Expressionists were not philosophers and they did not illustrate philosophical ideas in their paintings. Yet, they could not help being affected by the intellectual climate of the time. As de Kooning accepted "we weren't influenced directly by the existentialism, but it was in the air. We felt it without knowing too much about it. We were in touch with the mood (Sandler 98). He characterized the modern American metropolis after the WWII as a "no-environment". He called it as a place of mixture, chaos and distorted realities, which creates a sense of "nothingness" as in the existentialist philosophy. As an artist, he tried to survive in the nothingness and demonstrate his identity with his distinctive style. As in the painting of Woman I, which has the traces of existentialism, de Kooning stated the tension between form, "being" and their antithesis "nothingness". The picture is formed in ambiguity and absurdity. The paints, colors are mixed and seem like a blank space at the background. Yet, the woman figure exists and can be recognized in this emptiness. Thus, the figure exists as a "being" out of "nothingness". So, it proves that de Kooning was affected by the existentialist mood of the post-war period.

In conclusion, de Kooning created his abstract painting named Woman I with the means of terms such as dehumanization, distortion, and escape of reality under the traces of existentialist philosophy and unconscious theory that emerged after the WWII.

B. Colorfield Painting

Another significant stream of Abstract Expressionism is the color-field painting. It refers to expansion of colors to a flat surface in contrast to the domination of lines in action painting. In order to maximize the visual impact or the immediacy of colors, the color-field painters including Mark Rothko, Bernard Newman, Clifford Still, found that they had to apply colors in large expanses to draw attention. They eliminated figuration and symbolism, simplified drawing and gesture and suppressed the contrast of light and dark colors in the paintings. They wanted to create a unified area where the chromatic

intensity is equal. They asserted that “We favor the simple expression of the complex thought. We are for the large shapes because it has the impact of the clearness. We wish to assert the picture plane. We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth” (Arnason 446). Drawing was important for color-field painting. However, making so simple paintings was disadvantageous because any mistake in it was easily visible and would destroy the picture. The intentions of the color-field painters were visionary. They applied the color in an open area, which overwhelms the eye with immediacy; shocks the viewer. Simple, indefinite and large expanses produced an “effect of infinity” in the works of color-field painters. To intensify the sense of boundlessness they favored closely valued colors, avoided a sharp transitions in drawing. Goldwater expressed his views about that situation “a simplification of technique and an omission of all detail, a deliberate suppression of nuance and overtone... (could lead to) a single, undifferentiated overwhelming emotional effect” (Sandler 153). The color-field painters carried this tendency to an extreme in the history of art. The leading member of this genre is Mark Rothko whose works can be examined from many aspects.

1. Mark Rothko

One of the most important color-field artists was Mark Rothko. He immigrated to the United States with his Russian-Jewish family in 1931 and moved to New York. After the end of the WWII, Rothko had developed his original style which is non-figurative and non-representational, and aimed to depict man’s fears, tragic distortions, and ambiguous or repressed feelings. Inspired by the simple, loose brushwork, frontal color shapes of both Matisse and Avery, he painted rectangular shapes expanding in the fields of color. By blurring the edges of the rectangles, Rothko softens the contrast between the colors. Without images, symbols and central focus, paintings are designed to absorb the spectator. “Rothko did not want to be seen as a colorist glorifying his paintings, but he wished to make the viewers notice the meanings behind the colors” (Sandler 230). The shapes are aimed to reflect the viewer’s needs, conscious and desires.

The Black and the White is a prominent work of Rothko, which he produced in 1956, in the post-war period. In the painting, there are three different blocks of color put onto each other. The upper field of color is red and narrower than the white and black fields below. The background of the three blocks is painted in an ambiguous color, neither red nor orange. Same as the other works, in this painting Rothko turned to his own inner world rather than criticizing the world around him. He believed that the modern individual after the WWII is tragically divided, so his painting is formed of three separate fields of colors. The fragmentation in the painting represents the distortion of the human figure. “Three blocks of colors represent human division of head, torso, and legs” (Sandler 840). The traditional human figure is dehumanized and distorted by abstraction. Additionally, the colors have symbolic meanings in The Black and the White. The red one is associated with the brutality, blood-shed of the war and the lives that are lost in the war. The black represents the desperate, dark moods of the people after the WWII and the huge amount of white in the middle stands for the hope inside the human beings. To criticize from the political aspects, The Black and the White includes the hidden messages in itself. In the fifties, the United States and Soviet Union were the two super powers trying to overwhelm each other with the cold war policies. Rather than depicting this clash of powers directly, Rothko chose an indirect way of abstraction. The contrasting colors white and black represent the United States and Soviet Union. However, Rothko presents his work in an ambiguous way. The viewers do not know which color stands for which nation for Rothko. Thus, he or she comments on the work according to their inner world, past experiences and backgrounds. Briefly, The White and the Black is another post-war American painting that has the traces of the WWII. With simple fields of colors, Rothko reflects the complex issues of the period.



CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND GENERATION OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

With the successful arise of New York School, artists who developed distinctive styles through abstraction, New York became an important art center. From small towns and college campuses, young artists came to New York in the fifties to be near to their new heroes, de Kooning and Pollock. As the leading figures of the First Generation of Abstract Expressionism were meeting frequently in the “Club”, an organization they founded in 1949, they invited the new artists to their round table discussions. The Club was male dominated; however, the wives of the artists, Lee Krasner, Elanie de Kooning and many other women, including Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell and Grace Hartigan were invited to attend. Thus, Second Generation of Abstract Expressionism, dominated mostly by women, was ascending on the shoulders of the first. Basically influenced by the works of First Generation, these artists had different qualities. Since they were women, their works were lyrical and softer. They did not face with the brutality of the hot war as the male artists who had attended to the army and been to Europe. Thus, their works did not include a sense of angst and tragedy as the first group. They began to return to recognizable subject matters of landscape, figure and life, which are reflecting the hopeful, wishful and optimistic point of views. Their avant-garde paintings were showed at the art galleries of New York and like the First Generation, “they created cooperatives such as Jane Street, Tanager, Hansa and March to meet and discuss their art” (Rubinstein 279). Joan Mitchell was the one who primarily reflected the effects of the war on his painting.

1. Joan Mitchell

Joan Mitchell, who is considered as one of the significant figures of Second Generation of Abstract Expressionism became interested in the works of the Abstract Expressionist painters, such as de Kooning, Rothko, and Franz Kline, the same as the other painters of her generation who attended to the lectures at the Artists’ Club. She was affected by, mostly, de Kooning’s gestural brush strokes, complex usage of color. In her paintings, the brush strokes of the colors are short and suddenly cut. Combination

of colors resemble to the movements of ice-skater. She was a champion ice-skater when she was a child and her unconscious childhood memories affected her works. There are no actual objects, specific forms and realist images in her works and her gestural pictures are formed with the connection of natural world. Her landscape paintings were influenced by her memories she had experienced in her childhood. Her works differ from her older masters in terms of her following a slower method of working and planning before drawing.

Sunflower I, which is the masterpiece of Joan Mitchell, can be analyzed in terms of a woman painter's point of view after the WWII. In the painting, Mitchell uses thin brush strokes, curved lines twisting all around the painting.

The dominant colors are black and white; however, red and blue balls of colors are striking at the left part of the painting.



These contrasting colors, blue and red, represents the gender roles of the society. The red one stands for the women, and the blue represents male community. She depicts the red larger than blue. This shows her will in the society. Mitchell, who reacted against the traditional values of the affluent society of the fifties and became an important woman artist, tries to overwhelm the man dominancy in the picture. Thus, the red ball is drawn larger than the blue one. Under the psychological effect of the WWII, she used dark and a gloomy atmosphere in the painting. The painting's name is Sunflower I and it is expected to be a colorful, lively image of a nature. However; Mitchell disappoints the viewer by using catastrophic, gothic, dark tones in her Abstract Expressionist work. Furthermore; her painting reflects her unconscious feelings, memories with the abstract elements. Since she was a professional ice-skater in her childhood, her lines in the painting resemble the movements of a skater. Contrary to de Kooning's thick layers of paints, Mitchell uses thin brush strokes and adds lyricism to her work, which shows that the painting is done by a woman. Sunflower I, also, has existentialist reflections in itself. Since the subjectivity and the environment are the principal elements in existentialism, Mitchell

depicts the women's condition in the society through her subjective point of view and style. In the painting, the environment, in which the genders live, is an ambiguous, complicated place, and Mitchell demonstrates their existence with the ball shaped symbolic colors. The colors of red and blue exist out of the non-colors of white and black.



CHAPTER V

IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II ON LITERATURE

Apart from painting, the literature was another field that was affected by the war itself. Especially after the war, literature embodied post-war effects. Although society improved financially loneliness, alienation became the social conflicts. In other words, post-war generated suffocated individuals. Gray pictured the period as “By the close of the WWII, the mood had changed” (87) The U.S.A converted into the most influential nation on earth. Although other nations involved in the war invested billions to reconstruct their cities and their industry, American economy was increasing by leaps and bounds. Therefore, effects of war started to be seen in literature too. Rainer Puster told about that in his book “It is not surprising that a war of such magnitude was very often represented in literature” (Puster 12). He also adds “In the United States alone [...] more than four hundred novels about the war published (between 1945 and 1973)” (Puster 11). Some of these novels were related to adventures about war or propaganda of war; literary works started to focus on war. The use of abstract words lost their value in this new world, the writers tried to use a clear and basic language as Hemingway. That’s why to show the loss of the old values and sink into “nothingness”, Hemingway’s style is called “nothingness”. Since the post-war authors noticed the existing values in literature, most of the audience thought there was a huge transformation in literature. As Jason and Graves mention in *Encyclopedia of American War*:

Post-war novels were neither formally nor thematically innovative nor did they have the wide and powerful effects on their audience that many novels about the previous war could achieve. There is some truth to this change, as the first generation of WWII authors did not feel an immediate need to look for new and adequate forms of literary discourse. (297)

Most of the writers were against the war. Instead of mentioning the war to the reader directly, they preferred to give clues, use words which remind the reader war and thus they made them realize that the war was a bad thing that affects their lives totally. Ellen Fitzgerald points about that in the book of *Literature at War* “On the whole [...] the novelist of the WWII rebelled against the war in much more limited ways than their

predecessors had against the First World War [...] (Puster 12). Post-war writers dealt with every piece of problem in life. “The absurdity of everyday life has had a deep impact on the narratives. This absurdity is believed to create the concept called “mass society” (Puster 40). As it is mentioned in the previous lines of the study, the “mass society” is one of the terms that occurred in post-war era and became the subject matter of the novels. It was the period that people began to buy more than they needed, which gave way to the emergence of consumer culture and mass culture. “Mass society” was first used by American social and literary critique Irving Howe in his article called “Mass Society and Postmodern Fiction” Howe explains the term “mass society”:

A relatively comfortable society, half welfare and half garrison society in which the population grows passive, indifferent and atomized; in which traditional loyalties, ties and associations became lax or dissolve entirely in which coherent publics based on definite interests and opinions gradually fall apart; and in which man becomes a consumer, himself mass-produced like the products, diversions and values that he absorbs. (Howe 1992:24)

Howe also clarifies how American writers reflect the individual and mass society as follows “They preferred to reflect American life not through realistic portraiture but through fable, picaresque, prophecy and nostalgia (Howe 26). As a result of WWII, post-war writers (post-modern writers) had difficulty in comprehending the reality, time and the changing values. Thus, they produced works where there is no limitation on time, place and characters. Ronald Sukenick in his novel *The Death of the Novel and Other Stories* points out that:

Reality doesn't exist, time doesn't exist, and personality doesn't exist. God was the omniscient author, but he died; now no one knows the plot, and since our reality lacks the sanction of a creator, there is no guarantee as to the authenticity of the received version. (Sukenick 2003: 41)

The idea of “loss of faith” changed the fact that reality is a relative and questionable subject. Furthermore, what people perceive as “real” is radically shaped, exaggerated or filtered by the works of literature. As a result, it is believed that there is no “one single reality”. Thus, “The real can be reproduced an indefinite number of

times” (Elliott 2000:2). WWII also affected the style of literature and fragmentation of time, structure and character became as an influential device in the literary works. Writers started to use it in order to unify the non-linear narrative. According to Peter Barry:

“Fragmentation is an exhilarating, liberating phenomenon, symptomatic of our escape from the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief. In other words, the modernist (pre-war writer) laments fragmentation while the postmodernist (post-war writer) celebrates it”. (84)

Crucial historical events, shaping the American history such as World War II, The Vietnam war and the Cold War period were criticized in both alternative contexts and forms. War also led to the use of forms such as parody, pastiche, and burlesque in literature.

***A. Catch-22* By Joseph Heller**

Catch 22, which was written by Joseph Heller in 1961, is a fictional novel that reveals the perversions of the human character and society. The novel is set during WWII in 1943 in the island of Pianosa in the west of Italy. It uses third person omniscient narrator. The main character Yossarian is a captain in the US Army Air Forces. Yossarian and his friends try to stand against the system of the bureaucracy since they are inhuman bodies for their officers. Although their colonels increase the number of missions to prevent their wish to go home, no one but Yossarian notices the reason of it. He tries to tell everybody that there is a war outside despite the fact that they call him crazy. He wants to preserve himself from the destructive impacts of war since he witnesses friends die and disappear to enhance their generals’ prestige. Milo Minderbinder is the other character that controls an international black market in all over the world. Like Yossarian, he comments the rules toward his own benefit. He does not hesitate to bomb his own squadron for the deal with Germany. The Chaplain reflects the psychological side of the war on human since he loses his faith in God when he sees murder becomes a merit. Bloom puts forward about the novel that:

Catch-22 obviously appeals to the student who beneath his complacency and hipster frigidity is very confused and afraid. It appeals to the sophisticated Professional the educator, lawyer, professor- who must work at something he cannot fully trust. It appeals to the businessman who does not really believe that his empire primarily serves the public good. It certainly appeals to all the new professionals- the advertisers, publicity men, television writers-whose world is little different from the absurd one Heller presents. (22)

It also portrays the feeling of the counter culture⁶ in America. Heller satirizes war and its values as well as using the war setting to satirize society at large in *Catch-22*. The reader can also come across with the events such as the Korean and Vietnamese Wars in the novel.

Although it is considered as one of the signature novels of the 1945s, Robert Merrill puts forward that “*Catch-22* is a novel which tells the issues of 1960s and 1970s” (Merrill 43). However, when the novel is closely read, the effects of the WWII over people can be seen easily. He also depicts the effects of the war over people with the usage of different characters. Furthermore, Heller uses implications about the real reason of the war and wants the reader to see that WWII broke out, because of the competition between capitalism and communism. Bloom explains the reason of giving this title to this book as follows:

Catch-22 is the unwritten law which empowers the authorities to revoke your rights whenever suits their cruel whims; it is, in short, the principle of absolute evil in malevolent, mechanical and incompetent world. Because of *Catch- 22*, justice is mocked, the innocent are victimized. (4)

The Nation, which is a weekly magazine in the United States, also summarizes the book with those words “Below its hilarity, so wild that it hurts *Catch-22* is the strongest repudiation of our civilization in fiction to come out of World War II. (Bailyn, 69)

⁶ Counter culture: It is a sociological term which rejects, protests against or rebels against the elements of mainstream culture.

As it is understood from the brief introduction, the effects of WWII on characters, theme and style in *Catch-22* will be handling in this study.

1. Impact Of War On The Characters

Heller chooses unusual characters to represent the different aspects of human life. As Harold Bloom puts forward “It seems obvious that an inordinate number of Joseph Heller’s characters are, by all conventional standards, mad” (4). Furthermore, he reveals the contradictions of the human and society with the usage of various themes, distinctive style, and structure. “Each joke has a wider significance in the intricate pattern, so that laughter becomes a prologue for some grotesque revelation” (Bloom, 7). Heller’s main goal is to illustrate the absurdity of war and human condition in WWII era. In *Catch-22*, Narrator gives information about the general atmosphere of the WWII period with drawing the reader’s attention to the development of major characters such as Yossarian, Milo Minderbinder and Chaplain, and depicting interactions of human beings throughout the war period.

Firstly, it is necessary to have information about what is going on in WWII period to understand the developments of the major characters. Thus, Heller chooses his main characters to represent some kinds of concepts of the WWII period. For instance, John Yossarian, who is the protagonist of *Catch-22*, represents the individualism⁷ which is a concept of WWII period. Bloom describes Yossarian’s individuality with those words:

The only sanity he desires is his own, not the worlds’; the only joys he seeks are those he can himself generate. He is more Sancho than Don. The comedy of Yossarian is the comedy of romantic man forced to do the dirty work of the world. (25)

Yossarian also protests mass destruction by keeping himself and his works away from war. But it is in vain as he tells “They have a right to do anything; we can’t stop them from doing” (*Catch-22* 416). Nevertheless, Yossarian knew that nothing would

⁷ Individualism: It is a kind of political and social philosophy which stresses on individual liberty and opposes every kind of action of the authority which prevents individual’s freedom.

change the effects, reasons and consequences of war. He knows “All over the world, boys on every side of the bomb line were laying down their lives for what they had been told was their country” (Catch-22 25). But Yossarian’s characteristics are not those of a typical hero. Because he does not risk his life to save others; his main aim throughout the novel is to avoid risking his life whenever possible. Narrator explains Yossarian’s desperate determination to stay alive in World War II like these:

It was a vile and muddy war and Yossarian could have lived without it-lived forever, perhaps. Only a fraction of his countrymen would give up their lives to win it, and it was not his ambition to be among them. That men would die was a matter of necessity which man would die, though, was a matter of circumstance, Yossarian was willing to be the victim of anything but circumstance. (4)

As it is understood from the quotation, Yossarian is against all the destructive effects of war and his only aim is to preserve his individuality. Harold Bloom tells about this:

Yossarian is the man who acts in good faith, to use Sartre’s often repeated phrase. Nothing here is certain except the individual’s recurring assurance of his own response. All he can hope to know is that he is superior to any universal force. (Man-made or otherwise), and all he can hope to recognize is that the universal or collective force can never comprehend the individual. The only sure thing in a swamp of absurdity is one’s own identity. “I think, therefore I am.” (24)

However, he cannot change some of the realities in this period. For instance, people become mechanic and their brains act according to other’s rules rather than themselves as a consequence of war. As Ian Gregson tells “Soldiers like prostitutes and slaves, are as disposable as things or machines” (Gregson, 36). But Yossarian preserves himself from harsh impacts of the war and continues to think as a rational human being as possible, and gives advices to people who are around him. In Chapter 4, Narrator refers to Hungry Joe and his troubles. Yossarian knows how to cure his psychology and narrator mentions this issue by saying:

Hungry Joe was crazy and no one knew it better than Yossarian, who did everything he could to help him. Hungry Joe just wouldn't listen because he thought Yossarian was crazy.

"Why should he listen to you?" Doc Daneeka inquired of Yossarian without looking up.

"Because he's got troubles." (45)

As it is understood from the quotation above, since Hungry Joe is crazy, Yossarian is trying to give him advice and tries to make his health recover. In chapter 12, Yossarian becomes a cunning character and Narrator says:

It rains interminably before the Bologna mission, and the bombing run is delayed, the men all hope it will never stop raining. When it does, Yossarian moves the bomb line on the map so that the commanding officers will think that Bologna has already been captured. Yossarian also gives entire, squadron diarrhea by poisoning the food so that they won't have to fly. The rain starts again. (155)

As the quotation implies, Yossarian is a cunning man and behaves according to the conditions that he is in, and tries to use the events for the benefit of him. As a result of individuality, Yossarian builds a personality which is selfish. His philosophy is established on the self-preservation. Yossarian's goal in life has been survival at the expense of anything else. Moreover, he endures unpleasant hospital stays- for the sake of not having to fly missions. Narrator tells about:

Each morning they came around, three brisk and serious men with efficient mouth, and inefficient eyes, accompanied by brisk and serious Nurse Duckett, one of the ward nurses who didn't like Yossarian. They read the chart at the foot of the bed and asked impatiently about the pain. They seemed irritated when he told them it was exactly the same.

"Still no movement" the full colonel demanded. (13)

As it is seen the doctors are deceived and they believe that Yossarian is ill. Although they have extensive medical knowledge, they fail to realize that ward is faking their illness. Although Yossarian deals with the concept of self-preservation in the beginning of the novel, Snowden's death causes him to lose his nerves, and he plans to kill Colonel Cathcart before he raises the required number of missions again. Some of the war-time realities affect his world-line and justifies his thought about people's being mechanic or worthless. Bloom's quotation summarizes the condition "After Snowden's death Yossarian glimpses the truth: The spirit has gone and man is garbage" (Catch-22 450).

Apart from being mechanic or worthless, Narrator also chooses characters that have the characteristics of being capitalist as a result of WWII. He believes that capitalism led to despair and sense of alienation in the country. Narrator considers that the rise of capitalism is responsible for the ills which his novels indicate:

Whenever there is more money to be made from money than from anything else, the energies of the state are likely to be devoted increasingly to the production of money, for which there is no community need, to the exclusion of those commodities that are required for health, physical well-being and contemplation. There will be many who flourish in this environment of finance, and a great many more who can go straight to hell. (31)

For instance, Milo reflects the capitalist society of WWII. Milo claims in the book "everybody has a share" (Catch-22 62). Like Yossarian, he uses and converts everything into his own benefit. Gregson tells about this "Milo is a cartoon capitalist because exchange value in his dealings becomes everything" (Gregson 33). Moreover, he exchanges the equipments of the military with the goods of the enemy to earn money. In addition to that, Seçkin Ergin mentions that Milo believes "There is no drawback to exchange the parachutes of the military with the Italian oranges to drink a cup of orange juice" (73). This conversation in the novel mirrors his capitalist side:

I distributed my plum tomatoes in markets all over Pianosa under an assumed name so that Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn can buy them up from me under their assumed names at "cents" apiece and sell them

back to me the next day for the syndicate at five cents apiece. They make a profit of one cent apiece, I make a profit of three and a half cents apiece, and everybody comes out ahead. (Catch-22 295)

Narrator also uses characters that are competing with each other. For example in chapter 12, Wintergreen, the mail clerk 27th Air Force Headquarters, wants to sell Yossarian a cigarette lighter. Narrator mentions:

“Do were stolen from quart master.”

“Does Milo know you’re selling cigarette lighters?”

“What’s it his business? Milo’ not carrying cigarette lighters too now, is he?”

“He is yossarian told him. And his aren’t stolen”

“That’s what you think” ex P.F.C Wintergreen answered. “I’m selling mine for a buck piece. What’s he getting for his?”

“A dollar and a penny.” (33)

As it is understood from the quotation, Milo has the control of the all products and goods in military. Although Wintergreen sells the cigarette lighter cheaper than Milo, people prefer Milo. Because people believe that he is a successful and famous businessman, and what he sells is more reliable than others. Moreover, Milo is the symbol of business life. Narrator writes about that with those sentences “They were like Milo’s disunited eyes, which never looked at the same thing at the same time. Milo could see more than most people, but he could see none of them too distinctly” (82).

As it is seen, Milo could think of various economically profitable schemes that most people cannot. Moreover, Milo is given the position of mass officer by Major de Coverley in exchange for fresh eggs and butter. Coverley demands him make plans to go to Malta and Sicily for the food. As Milo has a capitalist mind, he quickly makes his mind, and he does not care whom he hurts along the way. Moreover, he is obsessed with making profits and thinking about money. Milo’s trade and goods expands from the “Piltown town” to “Cedars from Lebanon” (Catch-22 72). Milo is one of the characters who play a static role in *Catch-22* since his point of view towards life does not change throughout novel as opposed to Mud and Snowden. Narrator also uses Chaplain as a major character to depict the reader how the war upsets moral and ethical codes. Before

the WWII started, Chaplain was a rational religious man and has the authority over people, but after WWII he struggles to maintain his faith and fails to do that. Stephen W. Potts tells about him:

Narrator portrays the Chaplain – the sole man of religion in the novel- as sympathetic- if something of a naive weakling. Unlike the majority of characters in leadership roles the Chaplain is no hypocrite; he genuinely tries to live by the ideals he espouses. Like that other victim, Major Mayor, he receives only abuse for his faithfulness. (26-27)

He is also affected by the religious thoughts of people. Because, people think that they have nothing to do with God. Such events cause the Chaplain to realize that religion is not a valuable thing that people respect. Because of the harsh conditions in the war, not only Chaplain but also most of the people lost their faith in God. Potts supports that point of view with this quotation:

As a modern man, Chaplain finds the Bible full of contradictions and questionable assertions, chief among them the certitude of a world in which the good are rewarded, the evil punished. He also thinks that there were no miracles; prayers went unanswered and misfortune trampled with equal brutality on the virtuous and the corrupt. Indeed, the virtuous appear to suffer more. (27)

He starts to think that religion is a tool that the officers use for their benefit as well as the other people. In chapter 23, Chaplain tells about his situation with those sentences “I’m helpless to improve anyone’s life” (Catch-22 309). The Chaplain is troubled that no one seems to treat him as regular human being, and everyone is uncomfortable in his presence. The Chaplain starts to doubt everything, even God. Narrator tells about “It was already sometime since the Chaplain had first begun wondering what everything was all about. Was there a God? How could he be sure?” (339). It is concluded that Chaplain struggles to remain sane despite his troublesome life. However, he is treated as an outsider by everyone, and he gradually loses his control over himself and the people. In conclusion, Narrator chooses Yossarian as major character to depict the troublesome atmosphere through his realistic point of view, and reflects his struggle to preserve his life at expense of everything. Moreover, he makes

Milo as one of the main characters to represent the capitalist society during WWII era. Lastly, Narrator makes the reader have information about how the WWII affected the people and changed their points of view towards life by means of Chaplain.

Secondly, the reader can obtain information about the WWII era with the larger than life character's point of view. Despite its WWII setting, *Catch-22* is thought as a defining novel of the 1960s and 1970s. It was during those decades that American youth began to question authority. Hippies, university protests, and the civil rights movements all marked the 1960s as a decade of revolution and Heller's novel fits in with the spirit of the times. As Merrill said in his book "Heller was interested in the personal relationship in bureaucratic authority, he was not interested in the war in *Catch-22*" (Merrill 37). Therefore, Narrator makes Yossarian his main character to depict the personal relationships in WWII era. However, he is different from the ordinary men in that era since the others do not understand the existence of a war outside. In chapter 2, Narrator mentions the situation of the society like that:

Men went mad and were rewarded with medals. All over the world, boys on every side of the bomb line were lying down their lives for what they had been told was their country. (25)

As it is understood from the quotation, although most of the people close their eyes to the realities, Yossarian sees, and observes what is going on around him. Thus, Yossarian can be considered as a "bigger than life" (Potts 60) character.⁸ Because, he preserves himself from the bad impacts of war, and resists the rules of authority. However, the lives and the deaths of the men in Yossarian's squadron are governed not by their own decisions, but the decisions of an impersonal bureaucracy. Moreover, men risk their lives even when they know that their missions are useless, as when they are forced to keep flying combat missions. Nevertheless, Yossarian thinks logically and resists the rules of the authority. For instance, when the Colonel Catchart demands him flying, he behaves as if he is ill and then goes to hospital. He sees himself as the superhuman because he rejects the authority and talks about the doctors:

⁸ Bigger than life character: He is the character who firstly becomes aware of the issues around him and preserves himself from the pressure of the system to sustain his freedom.

Each morning they came around, three brisk and serious men with efficient mouth, and inefficient eyes, accompanied by brisk and serious Nurse Ducket, one of the ward nurses who didn't like Yossarian. They read the chart at the foot of the bed and asked impatiently about the pain. They seemed irritated when he told them it was exactly the same.

"Still no movement" the full colonel demanded. (*Catch-22*, 13)

As the 1950s were the era of conformity, people seemed as they lived in peace, and did not have any problems with the authority. There was only one man who broke the silence: Yossarian. His behavior in Chapter 16 indicates his being captive of his feelings instead of the societies. He meets a beautiful Italian woman named Luciana. After he buys her dinner and dances with her, she accepts to sleep with him. Moreover, Yossarian falls in love with her and asks her to marry with him. She says:

"Ma non passo sposarti."

"Why can't you marry me?" Yossarian asked.

"Perche sei pazzo."

"Why am I crazy?" Yossarian asked again.

"Because you say you love me. How can you love a girl who is not a virgin?" (*Catch-22* 205-206)

As it is concluded, Yossarian does not care about the values of the WWII period and puts the emphasis on his own feelings, and asks Luciana to marry him. Since it is the era of 1940s, it is an extraordinary thing for a man to marry a girl who is not virgin. However, Yossarian resists this dogma, and demonstrates his being a "bigger than life" character by proposing. He puts forward that "a truly compassionate God would not have allowed all the unpleasantness and pain in the world" (*Catch-22* 103). He also asks "Why God would create phlegm, tooth decay or incontinence" (*Catch-22* 104). Yossarian does not believe the existence of God and such dogmas, he ridicules them. Since there was a conservative society or the concept of 'cult of domesticity' in WWII era, his behaviours were found interesting, and people could not comprehend what he

was trying to do. People tried to like far away from realities in their household. The atmosphere in that era pictured like that:

“Women were expected to create a refuge for work-weary husbands and delightful cocoon for children who might otherwise yearn for more exciting horizons. The meaning of interior referred not so much to the heart of man as to the heart of household. The whole man became a wreck physically, morally and mentally. (Abbott 20-22)

In conclusion, since the 1950s were the conformist era and people were pretending to live far away from the troubles, Yossarian’s behaviours do not fit in the era. Furthermore, since he has the characteristic features of the society in 1960s and 1970s, he is considered as a “bigger than life” character in *Catch-22*.

Thirdly, Narrator draws reader’s attention to the interactions among the people in *Catch-22* and which can only be analyzed by Marxist criticism. Due to the industrialization or capitalist system in WWII era, “workers’ labor belongs not to them but to their employers so that workers become alienated from their own labor and its products. This alienation produces what Marx called “misshapen’ workers” (Shelley 249). Workers were not free in their attitudes and “Capitalism turned people into machines” (Peters 108). Furthermore, “Even the staid *Wall Street Journal* now seems comfortable using phrases like ‘worker alienation’ to discuss the problems plaguing the American business world” (Shelley 369). As a result of that, lack of communication occurred between inner self and outside reality. Moreover, outside reality came across with industrialization and WWII. Furthermore, movements of the human beings were mechanical and the spoken and the written language were telegraphic. Ian Gregson tells this issue like this:

In *Catch- 22*, the characters are trapped in a living death, and systematically dehumanized by being compared to animals or things. The book’s occasional habit of significant, but reductive, naming – Mudd, Snowden, Korn, and Black- contributes to the allegorical atmosphere, suggesting that these are personifications rather than characters. (42)

Joseph Heller was affected by the atmosphere of the WWII era and many of the elements of that era are handled in *Catch-22*. For instance, one of the major characters

of the book, Chaplain lives a fragmented life in fragmented time as a result of WWII. Bloom tells:

Instead of taking us in straight line from one point in time to another, the story zigzags considerably ending up only a very little further on from where it began. A tremendous amount of incident, a huge gallery of portraits, and an ambitiously wide range of emotions and effects lie in between. (45)

The horrors of the war cause the Chaplain to have doubt about God, but he tries to preserve his faith. Moreover, Narrator draws reader's attention to the fragmented language which occurred as a result of distorted reality. Gregson tells about the fragmentation of language:

The emphasis on how often the characters do and say and think the same things over and over makes them mechanisms rather than organisms. Swift calls this "the mechanical operation of the spirit" where human behaviour is reduced to mindless, pointless and usually compulsive repetition. (38)

In chapter 1, Yossarian deleted some words from the letters when he was staying in hospital. Narrator mentions about:

All the officer patients of the ward were forced to censor letters written by all the enlisted-man patients, who were kept in residence in wards of their own. It was a monotonous job (...). To break the monotony, he invented games. Death to all modifiers he declared one day, and out of every letter that passed through his hand went every adverb and every adjective. The next day he made war on articles. (*Catch-22* 14)

It can be concluded that Yossarian destroys the communication among people with deleting the words from letters. Narrator also depicts the weakness of interaction among people with the phrases of the soldiers. When Snowden dies in the back of the plane, all that Yossarian can think of to say "there there" (*Catch-22* 54). Although Yossarian knows that his words have no power to comfort Snowden, he does not know what to say. This can be considered as one of the results of WWII over people. Since

people become mechanic with the impact of WWII, they do not know what to do when they coincide with difficult situations. Gregson justifies this situation by adding “War as a subject works extremely well for Heller because it provides the perfect context for destructing the “human” by portraying human beings as broken machines”

(38).

After WWII, the interaction among people was broken and fragmented lives occurred. Moreover, people started to speak without thinking. The conversation between Yossarian and Milo exemplifies the situation better. Milo tells that man in the control towers has a share, and Yossarian asks:

“Do I have a share?”

“Everybody has a share.”

“Does Orr have a share?”

“Everybody has a share.”

“And Hungry Joe? He has a share, too?” (*Catch-22* 62)

The conversation above is an example of miscommunication between Yossarian and Milo who reveal the society in WWII era. Thus, the reader will have information about the general atmosphere of the era by looking the fragmented interactions of characters with each other.

In conclusion, *Catch-22*, which was one of the defining novels of the twentieth century, deals with the feeling of the counter culture in the USA. Furthermore, Narrator illustrates the absurdity of war and human condition in WWII period. Lastly, Narrator tells the atmosphere of the post-war period with drawing the reader’s attention to the development of major characters such as Yossarian, Milo Minderbinder and Chaplain. He focuses on interactions of people during the war period.

2. Impact Of War On The Theme

Capitalism, dehumanization and mechanization are some of the terms which affected people of WWII. Heller makes these terms as subject matters and deals with capitalism, dehumanization and the distorted reality in the book.

Firstly, capitalism is one of the themes that Heller uses throughout the novel. In 1940s, the USA wanted to protect and expand its overseas interests. Thus, American businessmen travelled a lot and visited many countries. Their main aim was to make other countries recognize its power. By this way, it purchased the products of those countries and sold them American goods. Thus, it made money and also protected its interests in overseas countries. Since Heller tells about the 1940s and 50s in his novel *Catch-22*, he uses characters that give clues about the policies of that era. His character, Milo Minderbinder, represents “the capitalist free enterprise society” (Bloom 45). In *Catch-22*, there are also characters that compete with each other. For instance, in chapter 12, Wintergreen, the mail clerk at the twenty-seventh Air Force Headquarters, want to sell Yossarian a cigarette lighter. Narrator mentions:

“Do you want to buy some Zippo lighters?” he asked Yossarian. “They were stolen right from quart master.”

“Does Milo know you’re selling cigarette lighters?”

“What’s it his business? Milo’s not carrying cigarette lighters too now, is he?”

“He sure is Yossarian told him. And his aren’t stolen”

“That’s what you think” ex P.F.C Wintergreen answered. “I’m selling mine for a buck piece. What’s he getting for his?”

“A dollar and a penny.” (48)

As it is understood from the quotation, Milo dominates the control of all the products and goods in the military. Although Wintergreen sells the cigarette lighter cheaper than Milo, people prefer Milo. Because people believe that he is a successful and famous businessman and what he sells is more reliable than other people’s. As the American business owners in 1950s, Milo also knows how to market his products in the

military. The event in chapter 13 exemplifies that situation. Milo takes an egg in his hand and comes near Coverley, and they start to talk:

“What’s that?” Major-de Coverley demanded at last.

“An egg” Milo answered.

“What kind of an egg?”

“A hard boiled egg” Milo answered.

“What kind of an egg?”

“A fresh- hard boiled egg!” Milo answered.

“Where did the fresh egg come from?” Major-de Coverley demanded.

“From a chicken” Milo answered.

“Where is the chicken?”

“The chicken is in Malta.” Milo answered.

“enough chickens to lay fresh eggs for every officer in the squadron at five

cents apiece from the mess fund.” Milo answered.

“I have a weakness for fresh eggs” Major-de Coverley confessed.

“If someone put a plane at my disposal, I could fly down there once a week in a squadron plane and bring back all the fresh eggs we need”

Milo answered. “After all Malta is not so far away.”

“You could probably fly down there once a week in squadron plane and bring all the fresh eggs we need.” (*Catch-22* 174-175)

The quotation shows the reader Milo is a successful entrepreneur and has the ability to market his products in a short time. Moreover, as the USA protected its interests in overseas countries, Milo wants to protect his interests in other countries too. He wants to be known by other countries, and also wants them to recognize his power. In conclusion, Narrator depicts capitalism, one of the policies of USA, with his character Milo, and also makes that concept one of the major themes of the novel.

Secondly, as the *Catch-22* is a signature novel of the WWII period, it mentions dehumanization which is one of the results of the war. As WWII brought about serious economic trouble in the world, Across Europe and Asia, the number of factories, transportation, communication systems was reduced. Moreover, agricultural production was low and economy was bad. Therefore, people who live in towns migrated to cities

and started to work in factories to earn money and lead their lives. As a result of those changes, dehumanization era started. Heller also uses dehumanization as a subject matter and most of his characters have the characteristics of dehumanization. Malcolm Bradbury mentions:

This is a world where sanity is madness, madness is sanity, where the human is mechanical, and the mechanical human, and such absurd formula provide both the black humor and the structure of the book. In a world where man is bound to the machine of war organization, where a corrupt technological stem battles (...). There are no just causes; war is fought for the technology and organization; not morality or culture. (212)

As it is concluded from Bradbury's statements, war brought about dehumanization and technological developments. On the other hand, individuality lost its importance after WWII. Heller mentions that problem in *Catch-22*. The soldier in white clearly exemplifies dehumanization problem. One of the soldiers dies in the time of flying missions and the doctors ask Yossarian to pretend to be a dying soldier whose family will come to visit their son. In the beginning of the novel, Yossarian rejects, but later he does what the authority wants. The doctor says "They wrapped a batch of bandages around Yossarian" (*Catch-22* 235). The quotation depicts that the army treats men as interchangeable objects. That's why, they replace one of them with the other, and everyone assumes it is the same person. It means that the concept of individualism does not exist in that era and people live according to others' wills rather than themselves. As Gregson tells:

Commodification turns people into things or machines, and the novel's caricatured imagery reflects this. The soldier in white is the most extreme example "encased from head to toe in plaster and gauze. Yossarian asks the obvious questions about the soldier in white. Yossarian questions whether he is really a person, and not the "stuffed and sterilized mummy". Yossarian goes on to declare that the soldier in white might actually be Mudd. He reduces the soldier in white to plaster and gauze, shortly to the idea of being a "thing". (34)

Furthermore, human is seen as an invaluable object in *Catch-22*. In chapter 10, dead man called Mudd is given a name in Yossarian's tent. "The name Mudd suggests that Narrator's deconstruction of "character" has non-political meaning to do with the essential materiality of the human (Gregson 35). However, the military refuses to accept him as a human being. It means military institution does not care about the meaning of human life of those who die. Narrator tells about that:

Yossarian on the other hand, knew exactly who Mudd was. Mudd was the unknown soldier who had never had a chance, for that was the only thing anyone ever did know about all the unknown soldiers- they never had a chance. They had to be dead. (141)

Pittchard and Wren also have the effects of dehumanization in *Catch-22*. They represent "the do-gooders" (Mona 45) which means that they are the people who do their job obediently and follow the orders of institution perfectly. "They never question the command of the institution." (*Catch-22* 187). It can be concluded from the quotation above, Pittchard and Wren's lives are governed by others, and rules also shape their lives. Although the Colonel Catchard raises the number of the missions, Pittchard and Wren and also the other soldiers do not reject. All of those indicate that most of the people in the novel are mechanic and have lost their individuality. Gregson supports that with those sentences "Caricature makes the human mingle problematically with the non-human so that they threaten to become interchangeable with each other" (37). Other characters are also compared to animals so that the boundaries of the human are constantly called into question. Gregson exemplifies the dehumanization with that sentence "Doc Daneeka is "birdlike" but he also has the features of a "well-groomed rat. The twitching veins behind Hungry Joe's eyes are like "severed sections of snake" (70). As a result, Heller makes dehumanization one of his major themes and mentions it throughout the novel.

Thirdly, Joseph Heller uses distorted reality as a subject matter in *Catch-22*. Because of the industrialization in WWII era, people started to act like machines. Outside reality was broken with world war and also industrialization. As a result, there was miscommunication between inner self and outside reality. Moreover, movements were mechanical, and the language was telegraphic. This systematic aspect of characterization in *Catch-22* fixes the soldiers "in rigidly repetitive patterns which make

them resemble faulty machines” (Gregson 37). Heller also uses the reflections of those elements in *Catch-22*. His character, Chaplain has a fragmented life as a result of WWII. Horrors of war cause the Chaplain to have doubt in God, but he tries to maintain his faith. Yet, people start not to believe in God. As it is seen from the example, Chaplain does not know how to behave and, he struggles to maintain his faith despite many difficulties he encounters. Heller also draws readers’ attention to the fragmented language which occurred as a result of distorted reality. In chapter 1, Yossarian deletes words from the letters when he was in hospital. And Narrator mentions:

All the officer patients of the ward were forced to censor letters written by all the enlisted-man patients, who were kept in residence in wards of their own. It was a monotonous job (...). To break the monotony, he invented games. Death to all modifiers he declared one day and out of every letter that passed through his hand went every adverb and every adjective. The next day he made war on articles. (*Catch 22* 14)

With deleting the words from letters, Yossarian destroys the communication among people. Moreover, since the right to speak is in the hand of the bureaucracy, the language of the soldiers is weak. As Snowden dies in the back of the plane, all that Yossarian can think of to say is “there there” (*Catch-22* 54). He knows that his words have no power to comfort Snowden, but he does not know what to do. This is one of the results of WWII on people. Because people are adjusted to obey the rules of the others, when they come across with difficult situations, they do not know what to do. Furthermore, another distorted reality is seen in Chapter 1. Everyone in the ward is pretending to be ill and waiting for the war to end. No one realizes that situation.

As it is seen, the doctors are all deceived and they believe that the entire ward is ill. Although they have extensive medical testing and knowledge, they fail to realize that the men are faking their illness. Apart from that, fragmented lives occur with the effect of WWII and characters starts to speak without thinking. The conversation between Yossarian and Milo exemplifies the situation better. Milo tells that men in the control towers have a share, and Yossarian asks:

Do I have a share?

Everybody has a share. (*Catch-22* 45)

Shortly, Heller uses distorted reality in his book and makes the reader to see it through the characters.

In conclusion, *Catch-22* is one of the novels that reflect the WWII era in terms of its subject matter. Heller tells the issues of that period with his distinctive technique, rather than to tell something directly, he uses implications and wants the reader to notice there is a war going on. He also shows the effects of the war with the usage of different characters. Furthermore, he uses the themes such as capitalism, dehumanization, and the distorted reality to reflect the issues of WWII era.

3. Impact Of War On The Style

Heller uses different patterns and an interesting style while he is telling the events in WWII era. He makes the readers feel that *Catch-22* is not only reflecting the war, but also the society's itself. Joseph Heller makes his novel unique by using absurd irony, the elements of black comedy, and different usage patterns while telling the events and characters' behaviors in *Catch-22*.

Firstly, Heller uses absurd irony while reflecting the issues of WWII era. As Bloom mentions in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*:

Heller often manages to heighten the macabre obscenity of total war much more effectively through its gruesome comic aspects than if he had written realistic descriptions. (6)

Catch-22 also explores war and bureaucracy and their effects on ordinary people. The greatest irony is that most of the people in the novel think that war is useless, and their point of view towards life is brutal. The New Yorker echoes about that "*Catch-22* is not really a book. It doesn't even seem to have been written; instead it gives the impression of having been shouted onto paper (Bloom 55). Instead of fighting for their country, the characters prefer to stay in the hospital, and pretend to be ill and then go their home. As Robert Merrill mentions in his book called *Joseph Heller* "troops

are not concerned about the outcomes of the war, their main aim was to stay alive in anyway" (117). Yossarian, the protagonist, also shared the Merrill's idea; he believed "it was a vile and muddy war, and Yossarian could have lived without it- lived forever, perhaps" (*Catch-22* 90). Another important irony in the novel is that although most of the soldiers know that *Catch-22* is a nonsense, meaningless, and illegal law, they accept and follow its rules by heart. There is no one who comes against the rules of *Catch-22*. Although Yossarian rejects the Colonel Catchcart's impersonal raising of the number of missions, after Doctor Daneeka's those explanations, he accepts it:

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. Orr was crazy and 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. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them (...). (*Catch-22* 63)

He believes that there is nowhere that he can live. Thus, he accepts Colonel's directions by heart. Bloom tells about that absurd irony by these words:

There is, except for Sweden, really no community that Yossarian can join. An open character in a closed society, he must shun everyone to retain his identity; appear naked among the clothed avoid love while seeking sex; reject a mission that is no longer his. In virtually every situation, he is alone. (24).

Bloom also adds about Yossarian "Within the man-made or man-controlled environment, the hospital seems to offer him the best hope of peace and safety" (88). Another absurd irony takes place in Chapter 31. Although Doc. Daneeka is living, he is officially shown dead. It means paperwork has the power to make a living man officially dead; but Doc. Daneeka wants to improve the situation and sends a letter to her wife in which he told he is alive. Mrs. Daneeka is shocked and wants to learn the truth from the higher authorities. As a result, a letter was sent to her with this writing "HE WAS KILLED IN ACTION" (*Catch-22* 434). As a result, that event depicts the weakness of a soldier's on his life. Furthermore, it shows the reader that a man can be

considered dead by using a pen rather than a gun. Heller also satirizes the medical establishment. Although people are pretending as they are ill in the hospital, doctors believe that the entire ward is ill. Narrator mentions "Each morning they came around, three brisk and serious men with efficient mouths and inefficient eyes" (13). In spite of their long-term medical experiences and knowledge they don't realize that people pretend as they are ill. Furthermore, their treatments are interesting and absurd. For instance, they believe that a daily pill will cure him. Another absurd irony takes place in Chapter 2, called Clevinger. Although there is a war among America and other nations, only Yossarian and his friend Dunbar is aware of that situation. Narrator tells that "The only thing going on was a war, and no one seemed to notice but Yossarian and Dunbar. And when Yossarian tried to remind people, they drew away from him and thought he was crazy" (*Catch-22* 25). In conclusion, Joseph Heller used absurd irony both telling the war-time situations and also society's interaction with each other in *Catch-22*.

Secondly, Heller's novel has the traces of black comedy and Heller uses its elements throughout the novel. Since *Catch-22* is a black comedy novel, the reader can obtain mockery as well as horror in the idea of war. For instance, the event in Chapter 8 exemplifies the black comedy. Lieutenant Scheisskopf asks questions to a soldier called Popinjay:

"I'm Popinjay, sir"

"Popinjay, is your father a millionaire, or a member of the Senate?"

"No, Sir."

"Then you're u shit creek, Popinjay, without a paddle. He's not a general or a high-ranking member of the Administration, is he?"

"No, Sir."

"That's good. What does your father do?"

"He's dead sir."

"That's very good. (...) Is Popinjay really your name sir Just what the hell kind of a name is Popinjay anyway? I don't like it."

"It's Popinjay's name, sir" Clevinger added.

"Well I don't like it and I can't wait to rip your stinking, cowardly body apart limb from limb. (*Catch-22* 104)

It can be concluded, soldiers have less rights to say something in the military service. In the conversation, Scheisskopf wants to fight with Popinjay because of his name. Apart from that, there are comic elements in the conversation too. For example, Clevinger's explanation for Scheisskopf "It's Popinjay's name sir" has both comic and absurd elements. Bloom describes his comedy like that "Heller's comedy is his artistic response to his vision of transcendent vile as if the escape route of laughter were the only recourse from a malignant world" (7). In Chapter 18, a comic also tragic event occurs. The protagonist of the novel, Yossarian, wants to stay in the hospital although he has been cured; but Yossarian claims that he sees everything twice. After his claims, he is cured and he is asked to pretend to be a dying soldier whose family will come to visit him. But the family does not know that their son had died that morning. The doctors prepare Yossarian to pretend to be the dying soldier. The comic conversation which is below is passing between Yossarian and his father:

"Giuseppe," he began.

"Yossarian," corrected the son.

"Yossarian," said the father.

"Giuseppe," corrected Yossarian.

"Soon you're going to die"

Yossarian began to cry again. They threw him a dirty look from the rear of the room, and Yossarian made himself stop. (*Catch-22* 237)

It can be concluded from that conversation; military power shapes his existence and does what it wants rather than Yossarian's request. As well as the comic elements, there are also serious topics in the conversation. Doctors ruin the reliance of the people towards them by exchanging the dead soldier with Yossarian. Narrator puts comic elements into the conversation, and draws the readers' attention to those rather than what doctors do. Yossarian forgets that he is playing the role of the dead soldier, and replies what the father says. Moreover, when father calls him Guiseppe, he corrects it and says Yossarian; that creates a comic atmosphere in the novel. Harold Bloom tells about the comic side of him "what keeps Yossarian comic, however, is the fact that he never tries to change the society he scorns, he is quite willing to accept its absurdity if it will leave him alone" (25). In conclusion, Narrator depicts the elements of black comedy via events in *Catch-22*.

Thirdly, throughout the novel, Narrator repeats some usage patterns and these contribute to the content and message of the novel. Ian Gregson comments on his use of repetition by saying “Repetition might imply substance, coherence, fullness. Instead of change and development, there is repetition and aggregation (40). One of the usage patterns that Narrator uses is repetitions; monotonous is one of them. Narrator tells "It was monotonous job. To break the monotony he invented games. He found them too monotonous” (14-15). All of those sentences are said by someone in the hospital, and they give information about the general atmosphere of the hospital. As it is understood, everything goes as it is before, and there is nothing interesting. Furthermore, Narrator gives clues about his style and the reader can conclude that there are repetitions throughout the novel. Death is another repeated word that Narrator uses in *Catch-22*. Since it is a war novel, Narrator usually mentions the concept of murder. In chapter 2, Yossarian is in a difficult situation, and he believes that everybody wants to kill him and Clevinger asks:

"Who specially, do you think is trying to murder you?"

"Every one of them” Yossarian told him.

"Every do you think?"

"I haven't any idea."

"Then how do you know they aren't trying to murder?" (*Catch-22* 26)

Although the novel satirizes the existing situation, it also makes the people remember death. Narrator also causes people to think that war can be result in deaths and defeats. The phrase "I don't know" is the another important repetition in *Catch-22*. In Chapter 38, Yossarian decides not to fly more missions and pilot asks if this is right and the conversation goes on between them:

Pilot: Do you think they will let you get away with it?

Yossarian: I don't know.

Pilot: What do you think they will do?

Yossarian: I don't know.

Pilot: Do you think they will try to court-martial you?

Yossarian: I don't know. (*Catch-22* 506)

As the military has the power to make a comment, soldiers couldn't freely say what they thought at those times. Because if they speak their military service could pass harder than they had thought before. Thus, "I don't know" can be considered as a sentence that reflects the soldiers' situation in WWII period. It also depicts that power is in the hand of the bureaucracy rather than soldiers. Apart from repetitions, Narrator also uses dashes and commas to give information about the thing. He uses them for different reasons. In Chapter 9, he mentions Major Major "In between these two low points- of his birth and his success- lay thirty one dismal years of loneliness and frustration" (*Catch-22* 109). Narrator explains what those two points between the dashes are. In Chapter 11, Heller again gives necessary information between commas. He tells about Major Major "Milo was not convinced and absolutely refused to deprive Major Major of food, even if Major Major was a communist, which Milo secretly doubted" (*Catch-22* 149). In Chapter 17, Narrator also uses dashes to describe Nately's father. "Nately's father - and everyone else's father Nately had ever met- was dignified, wise and venerable" (*Catch-22* 215). In conclusion, Heller makes the reader understand the novel well with the usage of dashes and commas. Apart from repetitions, commas, and dashes; Heller writes some words in italics for many reasons. For instance, in Chapter 4, Narrator mentions Yossarian and tells "Captain Black knew he was a subversive man because he wore eye glasses and used words like *panacea and utopia*, (...)" (*Catch-22* 48). Since it was the WWII era, people were in a difficult situation and they wanted to start a new era where there is peace and harmony. Thus, Yossarian uses words such as *panacea and utopia* to reflect his opinions. Heller also writes foreign words in italics. In Chapter 16 called Luciana, there is a conversation between Luciana and Yossarian:

Luciana: I will come to your room for ficky-fick before I go to my work at the French office. *Capisci?*

Yos: Bullshit!

Luciana: *Cosa vuol dine* bullshit? (*Catch-22* 199)

It can be concluded that he wants to show the reader that those words are not in English, and also he doesn't write the meaning of those words and he leaves the interpretation to the reader. Furthermore, Heller writes the echoing words in italics "He could hear the hollow *boom-boom-boom-boom* of the flak pounding all around him (...)" (*Catch-22* 188). "Aorfy winked encouragingly and jerked his thumb back toward Mc

Watt with a humorous *moue*." (*Catch-22* 188). Heller draws readers' attention to the words in italics and tries to make them think that is a war novel with words such as boom- boom. With the second sentence, Heller wants the reader to see how a man starts to behave like an animal as a result of a war. Heller also writes the orders in italics. In the novel, Mc Watt screams to the soldiers "Dive! Dive!" "Get away from me! Get away!" In conclusion, since Heller wants to reflect the war time atmosphere, he writes some words in italics. Thus, he absorbs the readers to the content of the novel and reflects the difficulties of those times.

As well as absurd irony and repetitions, Heller's novel embodies another stylistic feature of fragmentation in time. As he jumps from one topic to another, he also jumps from one time to another. Bloom tells:

The most significant aspect of the structure of *Catch-22* is its chronology. Behind what appear to be merely random events lies a careful system of time-sequences involving two distinct and mutually contradictory chronologies. (40)

That fragmentation in time shows Heller's characters' fragmented lives and their feeling of belonging to nowhere. After WWII, most of the people could not get rid of their past experiences about war and they neither concentrated on present nor lived in the past. They were in a place like limbo. Bloom also adds:

Examining first part of *Catch-22* dominated by Yossarian, we find a fairly complex chronology. The novel opens at a point midway in the development of the situation, so that "past" events, those preceding the opening scene must be revealed to the reader. These past events are slowly unfolded as the "present" action progresses, but they are both related through conventional flash-backs. (83)

In conclusion, Heller reflects the war-time issues as well as the interaction among people in WWII period in *Catch-22*. He tells the events with his distinctive style and uses absurd irony, elements of black comedy and some different usage patterns in *Catch-22*. All of those elements contribute to the message, content and style of the novel and makes it unique among its contemporaries.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, American art has experienced enormous changes throughout the history. Until the 1940s, it was under the pressure of European styles. However, WWII changed the balances and caused the birth of a pure American art, Abstract Expressionism which is away from old traditional genres. Influenced by the “zeitgeist”⁹ of the American society, their unconscious feelings, social experiences, psychological conditions, each artist developed their distinguished styles. To reflect the effects of war and criticize it, they followed different methods of applying paint. First Generation of Abstract Expressionists including Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman used either thick layers of paint, broad fields of color or straight lines to form their works. Their paintings were carrying hard brush strokes since they felt the effects of the war more intensely in the forties. On the other hand, the Second Generation artists, Joan Mitchell and Helen Frankenthaler reflected the after math atmosphere with their softer lines, symbolic usage of colors, and shapes. Unconscious feelings, existentialist philosophy, alienation, distortion, escape of reality, dehumanization, loss of sense of faith, reaction, absurdity and ambiguity were the main subjects of all these already mentioned artists of Abstract Expressionism.

Toward the end of 1950s, American art of Abstract Expressionism began to lose its effectiveness. Thereafter, the literature started to reflect the effects of WWII with its content, style and characters. Every piece of literature, especially novel, concentrated on war in their work. There was a belief among people “For everybody after Pearl Harbour, it was a war we wanted to fight- a war we knew we had to win” (Gregson 11). While this strong belief was dominating the country, it was inevitable for the writers to mention war. Heller supported this point of view by saying “the war is a perfect objective correlative, as it was for Hemingway in a Farewell to Arms” (Bloom 88). They tried to remind the readers that there was a war outside. They preferred to depict life by means of fable, picaresque, prophecy and nostalgia.

⁹ Zeitgeist: Zeitgeist is the general cultural, intellectual, ethical, spiritual, or political climate within a nation or even specific groups, along with the general ambiance, morals, socio-cultural direction, and mood associated with an era. (Wikipedia)

Most of the novels mention some of the terms which gained importance after WWII. Individualism, mass society, capitalism, dehumanization, fragmentation in time, language and events, broken reality or distorted reality were some of the concepts that really changed the structure of all works of literature. In this study, Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22* was handled and Yossarian was chosen as the protagonist of the novel. He was one of the characters or representatives of the post-war era who rejected the social norms, and tried to stay alive for the sake of him. Heller depicted him differently than the conservative society of the 1950s. Shortly, he was the man who tried to create his destiny by denying the existence of God and religion. He could not dare to be one of the "mass societies". Narrator tells about that "Yossarian was willing to be the victim of anything but circumstance" (*Catch-22* 4). As well as individualism, capitalism also gained importance with the WWII. Since post-war caused the American nation develop their industrialization, the competition among the factory owners increased. The competition was defined by famous critics like the "survival of the fittest". Each factory started to create more attractive advertisements to sell their products. Heller reflected this capitalist side of the period via Milo. He was the one who marketed his products with more profit. While individualism and capitalism were gaining importance in the country, their effects over people were negative. They caused the birth of a new term named "dehumanization". Most of the writers chose characters that have the characteristics of dehumanization. The soldiers in *Catch-22* are an example for this situation. They were reflected like animals or machines. In some of the chapters, Narrator compares characters to "bird, rat or snake". Shortly, he considers them as the "deadly creatures". Lastly, post-war writers use fragmentation in their works. Since they believe the society or character live in a troublesome era, they could not belong to anywhere. Thus, Heller uses fragmented language, time and events to show this disconnection of these characters. In conclusion, not only the painters but also the authors of the period could not stay impotent to the destructive and negative effects of the war and reflected them in their works.

CHAPTER VII

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