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COMIC MODALITY IN THE WAR NOVEL 'CATCH-22' BY J. HELLER

Modality refers to the ways language can express differing relationships to reality or truth. In terms of grammar and semantics, modality is a collection of linguistic devices, which are used to indicate probability, improbability, intention, obligation and prohibition. In English, modality is often expressed using modal auxiliaries (can, cannot, might, and so on). Modality reflects the speaker's attitude to the statements being made. There are different types of modality, for example, modality concerned with assessments of potentiality is known as epistemic modality, and modality concerned with social interactions is known as root modality. The latter consists of three subtypes, known as deontic modality, intrinsic modality and disposition modality (John Benjamins).

Comic Modality is a type of modality, which expresses the speaker's or writer's evaluation of the situation they are describing for comedic effect (N.Y. Pavlovskaya). There are different methods used in order to create comedic modality, such as irony, sarcasm, paradox, word play, and so on.

Catch-22 by J. Heller is a 1961 satirical war novel, which is set in World War II. The plot revolves around Captain John Yossarian, an American bombardier, who is desperately trying to stay alive. The novel reflects on the absurdity of the war, as the characters try to preserve their sanity while fulfilling their service requirements so that they can be discharged. The main themes of the novel include bureaucracy, farce, tragedy, and the horrors of the war. Despite the darker themes explored, Heller employs various linguistic means in order to create a sense of comic modality.

A recurring literary technique throughout the novel is paradoxical juxtaposition. For example: *Even people who were not there remembered vividly exactly what happened next; Major Major never sees anyone in his office while he's in his office.* The author creates an illogical paradoxical situation, which plays with the reader's logic and creates comedic effect by uniting contradicting ideas to highlight the absurdity of the situation.

Likewise, irony is often used in the novel to induce a sense of comedy: *The Texan turned out to be good natured, generous and likable. In three days no one could stand him; Doc Daneeka was Yossarian's friend and would do just about*

nothing in his power to help him. By subverting the reader's expectation of the situation through use of irony, Heller further creates a sense of comic modality in the novel.

Another important technique in *Catch-22* is wordplay: "*In what state were you born?*" "*In a state of innocence.*" Wordplay and puns are used throughout the novel as a form of dark humour. The author creates comic modality by playing on words in unexpected ways that are both comedic and tragic. This also works to induce a sense of oneness between the reader and the characters. By arousing the reader's emotions, Heller not only draws attention to the subject matter, but encourages the audience to think deeper about why things are the way they are, and how we, as a society, can change them.