

Trauma and Literature
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Lecture – 32
Heller's Catch-22 – Part 5

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'And I'm talking about you too!' the colonel declared, whirling to rage at Yossarian.
'You're going to be good and sorry you grabbed Nurse Duckett by the bosom.'

'I didn't grab Nurse Duckett by the bosom,' said Yossarian.

'I grabbed her by the bosom,' said Dunbar.

'Are you both crazy?' the doctor cried shrilly, backing away in paling confusion.

'Yes, he really is crazy, Doc,' Dunbar assured him. 'Every night he dreams he's holding a live fish in his hands.'

The doctor stopped in his tracks with a look of elegant amazement and distaste, and the ward grew still. *'He does what?''* he demanded.

'He dreams he's holding a live fish in his hand.'

'What kind of fish?' the doctor inquired sternly of Yossarian.

'I don't know,' Yossarian answered.
'I can't tell one kind of fish from another.'

'In which hand do you hold them?'

'It varies,' answered Yossarian.

This is an NPTEL course entitled "Trauma and Literature". We were looking at Joseph Heller's novel "Catch-22". We will look at a certain section from chapter 27, called "Nurse Duckett". It starts with a very vulgar scene about Yossarian sexually attacking the nurse. But then again that the way it is represented we are not quite sure whether we are supposed to sympathize with the nurse or sympathize with Yossarian.

We are looking at a very complex cognitive frame where the difference between sympathy and resentment is very blurred if there is any difference at all. That seems to be the entire culture of representation of the novel, which seems to be quite absurdist at certain points of time where we are not quite sure whether to take it seriously or to take it in a tragic comic way.

Tragic comedy is a dominant sentiment in this novel as is case was several pieces of absurd theatre. There is a section where there is an exchange going on between Yossarian and the Colonel and the Yossarian's friend Dunbar also happens to be there. Yossarian is being interrogated for sexually attacking Nurse Duckett.

He is going to be show caused and there will be some punitive measures against him. But again, he is trying to feign his way out, he is going to feign madman's robe. He is trying to pretend to be madman and then in the process medicalize his situation and get away with it. In a very strange way there seems to be something of a Hamletian quality about Yossarian.

In "Hamlet"; Shakespeare's original play, there too Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, he pretends to be mad at several points of time and that seems to sort of justify some of the very cruel things he does, especially the woman. There is a lot of misogyny in Hamlet, a lot of sexism, a lot of violence, almost vitriolic, verbal violence against woman and of course that gets extended into physical violence and Ophelia gets killed.

But then, every time we were supposed to resent Hamlet's actions, he almost instantly medicalizes himself and pretends to be a madman. It provides some kind of a pseudo quasi justification for his action. This seems to be a similar attempt here on the part of Yossarian as well where every time he is accountable, he held accountable for his actions, he medicalizes himself and of course we talked about how the medicalizing of madness over here is very common trope among soldiers who want to survive the war.

They are doing it deliberately because they are performing madness in certain sense, has a comic effect on certain occasions. This is Second World War mind you, this is in a way before soldier's trauma was medicalized in a proper way. There was no way before the word PTSD came into being. There is all that. These are people who are malingering and pretending to be mad and in the processes going to get away from the shock of the war.

They have suffered the war enough for them to behave irrationally, for them to behave in a way which does not know the difference between tragedy and comedy, between attack and defense. Here is a conversation that is going on between the Colonel and Yossarian where he is being questioned about why he sexually attacked Nurse Duckett.

The doctor addresses Dunbar and Yossarian together and says both are crazy. The doctor cried shrilly backing away in paling confusion. The doctor seems to be confused, the doctor seems to be going pale and that again is a commentary on the complexity of the

condition. The doctors have no idea of what is going on and they seem to be requiring some medical help. Doctors are confused.

“Are you both crazy? the doctor cried shrilly, backing away and paling confusion. Yes, he really is crazy doc Dunbar assured him. Every night he dreams he is holding a live fish and his hands. The doctor stopped in his tracks with a look of elegant amazement and distaste and the ward grew still. He does what? , he demanded.” If we take a look at the choice of objectives, elegant amazement, we do not normally expect this combination.

We do not again normally expect this combination of elegant distaste, but it seems these very complex semantic politics away in a way the words are produced and juxtaposed together in a way which does not make sense all the time and that production of irrationality seems to be a very key representative category in this novel, The constant production and consumption of irrationality.

Irrationality has a narrative strategy as well. I mean the whole process of narrativizing it, it requires the rationality of the instrument of irrationality. Elegant amazement and distaste and the ward grew very still and doctor wants to reconfirm that. He does what? He demanded. He dreams he is holding a live fish in his hand.

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'What kind of fish?' the doctor inquired sternly of Yossarian.

'I don't know,' Yossarian answered.

'I can't tell one kind of fish from another.'

'In which hand do you hold them?'

'It varies,' answered Yossarian.

'It varies with the fish,' Dunbar added helpfully.

The colonel turned and stared down at Dunbar suspiciously with a narrow squint.

'Yes? And how come you seem to know so much about it?'

'I'm in the dream,' Dunbar answered without cracking a smile.

The colonel's face flushed with embarrassment. He glared at them both with cold, unforgiving resentment. 'Get up off the floor and into your bed,' he directed Dunbar through thin lips. 'And I don't want to hear another word about this dream from either one of you. I've got a man on my staff to listen to disgusting bilge like this.'

'Just why do you think,' carefully inquired Major Sanderson, the soft and thickset smiling staff psychiatrist to whom the colonel had ordered Yossarian sent, 'that Colonel Ferredge finds your dream disgusting?'

“What kind of fish? the doctor inquired sternly of Yossarian. I do not know, Yossarian answer. I cannot tell one kind of fish from another. In which hand do you hold them? It

varies answers Yossarian. It varies with the fish Dunbar added helpfully.” They are trying to medicalize themselves in a way which is also quite comic, pseudo-comic because there is this very serious allegation of sexual assault against Yossarian and is probably going to be show caused and suspended from service.

He might be suspended from the hospital but he wants to stay in the hospital because he gets free food, he is taken care of and it does not want to go back to the frontline. He is malingering and is performing madness, is medicalizing himself and the symbol of a do it happening between Dunbar and Yossarian and they are helping each other.

Dunbar creates or fabulize this narrative about Yossarian dreaming of holding a fish. It is just to make it more complicated and confused he keeps adding different details which again make no sense, but the whole purpose over here is to produce irrationalities, is to produce narrative of irrationality. This perception of irrationality which is embodied by Yossarian.

“The Colonel turned and stared down at Dunbar suspiciously with a narrow squint. Yes? And how come you seem to know so much about it? So that is the obvious question, is not that? How some you seem to know so much of Yossarian and what he dream saw, what kind of fish he dream saw and what hand he holds, which hand he uses the hold fish, etc., how does Dunbar know so much. I am in the dream Dunbar answered without cracking a smile.”

“I am part of the dream as well.” This just gets very cognitively complicated, almost funny. The whole point over here is to muddle the doctor’s imaginations and make him confused in a way that it gives up and just recommends more rest for Yossarian, recommends more medicine for Yossarian and in the process recommends them to stay in the hospital because they do not have a clue but what is wrong with them.

The opening line of this opening section in the novel where the doctors do not know if he has jaundice in his liver, but they also do not know if it does not have jaundice in his liver. That is the “Catch-22” situation, the medical ambivalence where they do not know if he is fine or they do not know if he is not fine. He just remains suspended and that is what he wants to stay.

The hospital a way becomes this liminal space between the civilian space and the military space. This is where people come in from the war and go back to the war as well; and sometimes they are more unfortunate that do not go back to die from the war. But this seem to be a buffer between the civilian space and the military space and Yossarian is very much inhabiting and very much wants to inhabit this buffer liminal space between the two zones.

Dunbar makes it more complicated. “He says, I am part of the dream, I am in the dream where Yossarian is holding a fish in one of his hands. The Colonel’s face flushed with embarrassment. He glared at them both with cold unforgiving resentment. Get up off the floor and into your bed he directed Dunbar through thin lips. And I do not want to hear another word about his dream from either one of you.

I have got a man on my staff to listen to disgusting bilge like this. Anti-climax and bathers play a big part. The Colonel is very angry. Listen to all these complications about dreams and he asks both of them to just go away and dismisses them at the moment and he says I do not want to hear about it, I have got a man on my staff, so I have actually hired someone to listen to disgusting bilge like this.”

It seems to make a comic command. There is a man hired to hear other people's dreams because the doctor does not have a clue and the military officers do not have a clue, so they hire someone who is a known specialist to listen to other people's dreams and that seems to be a permanent position that seems to be a permanent professional position over here.

“Just why do you think carefully inquired Major Sanderson, the soft and thickset smiling staff psychiatrist to whom the Colonel had ordered Yossarian sent, that Colonel Ferredge finds your dream disgusting.” Then the other major he just wants; he is also psychiatrist and he wants to know why Colonel Ferredge finds the dream disgusting. It just gets more and more amusing in a sense.

But again, we do not quite know whether to take it seriously because if this is a dream and these people are mad and mentally very unhealthy, they need medication and

medical help, which not getting at the moment; but the other possibility is also there that they are just feigning, just malingering madness.

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Yossarian replied respectfully. 'I suppose it's either some quality in the dream or some quality in Colonel Ferredge.'

'That's very well put,' applauded Major Sanderson, who wore squeaking GI shoes and had charcoal-black hair that stood up almost straight. 'For some reason,' he confided, 'Colonel Ferredge has always reminded me of a sea gull. He doesn't put much faith in psychiatry, you know.'

'You don't like sea gulls, do you?' inquired Yossarian.

'No, not very much,' admitted Major Sanderson with a sharp, nervous laugh and pulled at his pendulous second chin lovingly as though it were a long goatee. 'I think your dream is charming, and I hope it recurs frequently so that we can continue discussing it. Would you like a cigarette?' He smiled when Yossarian declined. 'Just why do you think,' he asked knowingly, 'that you have such a strong aversion to accepting a cigarette from me?'

'I put one out a second ago. It's still smoldering in your ash tray.'

Major Sanderson chuckled. 'That's a very ingenious explanation. But I suppose we'll soon discover the true reason.' He tied a sloppy double bow in his opened shoelace and then transferred a lined yellow pad from his desk to his lap. 'This fish you dream about. Let's talk about that. It's always the same fish, isn't it?'

'I don't know,' Yossarian replied. 'I have trouble recognizing fish.'

“Yossarian replied respectfully. I suppose it is either some quality in the dream or some quality in Colonel Ferredge. That is very well put applauded Major Sanderson who wore squeaking GI shoes and had charcoal-black hair that stood up almost straight. For some reason, he confided Colonel Ferredge has always reminded me of a sea gull. He does not put much faith in psychiatry, you know.”

“You do not like sea gulls do you? Inquired Yossarian. No, not very much, admitted Major Sanderson with a sharp nervous laugh and pulled at his pendulous second chin lovingly as though it were a long goatee. I think your dream is charming and I hope it recurs frequently so that we can continue discussing it. We would like a cigarette? He smiled when Yossarian declined.”

“Just why do you think he asked knowingly that you have such a strong aversion to accepting a cigarette from me? I put one out a second ago. It is still smoldering in your ash tray. Major Sanderson chuckled. That is a very ingenious explanation. But I suppose we will soon discover the true reason. He tied a sloppy double bow in his opened shoelace and then transferred a lined yellow pad from his desk to his lap.”

“This fish you dream about let us talk about that. It is always the same fish, is not it? This just gets hyper medicalized. Major Sanderson wants to know, he wants to

medicalize everything, so he wants to know why the Colonel Ferredge does not like the dream. He wants to know why Yossarian will not accept a cigarette from him. Everything is attributed to some kind of psychological disorder or a psychological tick.

Why do not you take a cigarette from me and Yossarian responses again very common sensical and very commonplace? I do not want a cigarette now because I just put one out a second ago, it is still smoldering in your ash tray. I had already stolen a cigarette from you and it is already there in your ash tray, it is still smoldering. There is no mental, psychological, deep, profound, existential reason informing my detonation of your cigarette.”

It is just that he just had one second ago and it is still smoldering in other’s ashtray; that is a real, tangible, material, vulgar reason. There is constant proximity between vulgarity and profundity around through the novel which informs the tragic comic carnivalesque absurdist quality that the novel takes attitudly as well as philosophically.

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‘I don’t know,’ Yossarian replied. ‘I have trouble recognizing fish.’

‘What does the fish remind you of?’

‘Other fish.’

‘And what do other fish remind you of?’

‘Other fish.’

Major Sanderson sat back disappointedly. ‘Do you like fish?’

‘Not especially.’

‘Just why do you think you have such a morbid aversion to fish?’ asked Major Sanderson triumphantly.

‘They’re too bland,’ Yossarian answered. ‘And too bony.’

“It is always the same fish, is not it? I do not know Yossarian replied. I have trouble recognizing fish. What does the fish remind you of? Other fish. And what do the other fish remind you of? Other fish. Major Sanderson sat back disappointedly. Do you like fish? Not especially. Just why you think you have such a morbid aversion to fish asked Major Sanderson triumphantly. They are too bland? Yossarian answered. And too bony.” The last bit is important. This person Major Sanderson is trying to psychologize Yossarian. He keeps asking questions about fish and he is trying to metaphorize the fish

into something he thinks the fish reminds Yossarian something else. This is Freudian take in a certain sense.

He wants to the fish to the function the symbol to Yossarian, but look at the way Yossarian comes back to the banal reality of fish. He asked deep psychological, which he thinks the penetrating, question that why he resent fish so much. He is hoping for some metaphorical existential answer. But Yossarian's responses is just very reflective of the attitude in this novel. He says they are too bland and they are too full of bones.

“I do not like them because they are too bony.” It is difficult to eat those and also because in terms of taste it is very bland, very material, mundane reasons. The refusal to make do some simple and profound activity is something which novel recurrently shows us.

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Major Sanderson nodded understandingly, with a smile that was agreeable and insincere. 'That's a very interesting explanation. But we'll soon discover the true reason, I suppose. Do you like this particular fish? The one you're holding in your hand?'

'I have no feelings about it either way.'

'Do you dislike the fish? Do you have any hostile or aggressive emotions toward it?'

'No, not at all. In fact, I rather like the fish.'

'Then you do like the fish.'

'Oh, no. I have no feelings toward it either way.'

'But you just said you liked it. And now you say you have no feelings toward it either way. I've just caught you in a contradiction. Don't you see?'

'Yes, sir. I suppose you have caught me in a contradiction.'

Major Sanderson proudly lettered 'Contradiction' on his pad with his thick black pencil. 'Just why do you think,' he resumed when he had finished, looking up, 'that you made those two statements expressing contradictory emotional responses to the fish?'

'I suppose I have an ambivalent attitude toward it.'

“Major Sanderson a nodded understandingly with a smile that was agreeable and insincere.” The juxtaposition of words which are opposites in quality and in the process what happens is the production of paradox, which is a recursive quality in the novel; the production of paradoxes. Smile was agreeable and insincere.

“That's a very interesting explanation. But we will soon discover the true reason, I suppose. Do you like this particular fish? The one you are holding in your hand? I have no feeling about it either way. Did you dislike the fish? Do you have any hostile or aggressive emotions towards it? No, not at all. In fact, I rather like the fish. Then you do

like the fish. Oh no, I have no feelings towards it either way. But you just said you liked it. And now you say you have no feelings towards it either way. I have just caught you in a contradiction. Do not you see? Yes, sir, I suppose you have caught me in a contradiction. Major Sanderson proudly lettered contradiction on this pad with his thick black pencil.”

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Major Sanderson proudly lettered 'Contradiction' on his pad with his thick black pencil. 'Just why do you think,' he resumed when he had finished, looking up, 'that you made those two statements expressing contradictory emotional responses to the fish?'

'I suppose I have an ambivalent attitude toward it.'

Major Sanderson sprang up with joy when he heard the words 'ambivalent attitude'. 'You do understand!' he exclaimed, wringing his hands together ecstatically. 'Oh, you can't imagine how lonely it's been for me, talking day after day to patients who haven't the slightest knowledge of psychiatry, trying to cure people who have no real interest in me or my work! It's given me such a terrible feeling of inadequacy.' A shadow of anxiety crossed his face. 'I can't seem to shake it.'

'Really?' asked Yossarian, wondering what else to say.

'Why do you blame yourself for gaps in the education of others?'

'It's silly, I know,' Major Sanderson replied uneasily with a giddy, involuntary laugh. 'But I've always depended very heavily on the good opinion of others. I reached puberty a bit later than all the other boys my age, you see, and it's given me sort of - well, all sorts of problems. I just know I'm going to enjoy discussing them with you. I'm so eager to begin that I'm almost reluctant to digress now to your problem, but I'm afraid I must.'

“Just why you think, he resumed when he had finished looking up, that you made those two statements expressing contradictory emotional responses to the fish? I suppose I have an ambivalent attitude towards it.” Now, what we can see here is the playing with logic, the playing with emotions, there is just sophistry of the highest order. And in a certain sense, it pretends to be a deep psychological session.

It pretends to be a deep psychoanalytic session where the sufferer is confessing about his psychological problems to the psychologist, but then what we see happening over here is a very slapstick quality of comedy. There are two people bantering with each other with a fish; and Yossarian knows exactly what he is saying and he is just being a ludic, play of logic. He is offering a ludic play, ludic quality of logic wise.

Half-chopping logic put in together, half-chopped logic and just creating or constructing pseudo-logical situation. The pseudo-logicality in the novel is something again very interesting because that corresponds to the absurdist word that a novel is trying to portray in a political sense as well because this is a war, which is absolutely absurd, is killing hundreds and thousands people for no sensible reason.

It is just human greed and the people are getting killed because of some absurd greed logic operating at some high level of that. But for common people like Yossarian, for common soldiers like Yossarian it does not make any sense that who wins the war and who loses the war; and so there is this quality of indifference, quality of ambivalence which is there throughout the novel.

Ambivalence operates as confusion as well as the accommodation of different valences, accommodation of both valences, ambivalence; so both valences are accommodated in a way which is again adding to the confusion, adding to the cognitive chaos in the novel. "Major Sanderson sprang up with joy when he heard the words ambivalent attitude. You do understand he exclaimed, wringing his hands together ecstatically."

"Oh! you cannot imagine how lonely it has been for me, talking day after day to patients who have not the slightest knowledge of psychiatry, trying to cure people who have no real interest in me or my work. It has given me such a terrible feeling of inadequacy. A shadow of anxiety crossed his face. I cannot seem to shake it." This seems to be a reversal over here.

Some type of reverse therapy happening, where the Major Sanderson was supposed to be a psychiatrist, he expresses alienation, he expresses neurosis over here. He says no one understands him because no one seems to know what the problem is and for the first time he is talking to someone, he seems to talk to someone who seems to have some knowledge about their own mental condition.

That in a paradoxical sense creates empathy in his mind, creates something of self-importance in his mind prior to which he had been feeling terribly inadequate. This inadequacy again is part of the neurosis, part of the neurotic condition that experiences. "He says I cannot simply shake it because everywhere I go people are just neurotic, people are unable to understand me."

People are unable to give me any access to the true conditions and that is making me feel inadequate, that makes me feel undervalued and this undervalued inadequacy combined with sadness makes them melancholic in quality in a very Freudian sense. The

melancholia which is devaluation of the self where one devalues oneself because there is no one to value one around us and that seems to be the problem here with Major Sanderson.

“Really? Asked Yossarian wondering what else to say. Why do you blame yourself for gaps in the education of others? It is silly, I know Major Sanderson replied uneasily with giddy, involuntary laugh. But I have always dependent very heavily on the good opinion of others. I reached puberty a bit later than all the other boys my age; you see and that it has given me a sort of well, all sorts of problems.”

“I am so eager to begin that I am almost reluctant to digress now to your problem, but I am afraid I must.” We do not quite know who the patient is over here and who is the counsellor. Yossarian seems to take the other stance, Yossarian seems to ask questions over here. Major Sanderson talks about his puberty, talks about his adolescence, and talks about his lack of confidence.

This blurry the borderline between the patient and the therapist is again reflective of the blurring of borderlines in so many levels in the novel. We do not know who is enemy and who the friend is. We do not know who the invader is and who is the invaded. We do not know who the civilian is and who the military is. We do not know who is rational and irrational. All the notional borderlines, notional binaries are blurry over here.

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Major Sanderson smiled tauntingly and wrote 'Dunbar' on his pad. 'Why are you limping?' he asked sharply, as Yossarian moved to the door. 'And what the devil is that bandage doing on your leg? Are you mad or something?'

'I was wounded in the leg. That's what I'm in the hospital for.'

'Oh, no, you're not,' gloated Major Sanderson maliciously. 'You're in the hospital for a stone in your salivary gland. So you're not so smart after all, are you? You don't even know what you're in the hospital for.'

'I'm in the hospital for a wounded leg,' Yossarian insisted.

Major Sanderson ignored his argument with a sarcastic laugh. 'Well, give my regards to your friend Dunbar. And you will tell him to dream that dream for me, won't you?'

But Dunbar had nausea and dizziness with his constant headache and was not inclined to co-operate with Major Sanderson. Hungry Joe had nightmares because he had finished sixty missions and was waiting again to go home, but he was unwilling to share any when he came to the hospital to visit.

'Hasn't anyone got any dreams for Major Sanderson?' Yossarian asked.

'I hate to disappoint him. He feels so rejected already.'

'I've been having a very peculiar dream ever since I learned you were wounded,' confessed the chaplain. 'I used to dream every night that my wife was dying or being murdered or that my children were choking to death on morsels of nutritious food.'

This is the section where Yossarian talks about Dunbar and again malingering comes in the foreground and how people so pretend to have certain conditions in order to stay away from the war. “Major Sanderson smiled tauntingly and wrote Dunbar on his pad. Why are you limping? He asked sharply as Yossarian removed to the door. And what the devil is that bandage doing on your leg? Are you mad or something?”

Yossarian’s malingering, Dunbar’s malingering those get cited over here. I was wounded in the leg. That is why I am in the hospital for. “Oh, no, you are not, gloated Major Sanderson maliciously. You are in the hospital for a stone in the salivary gland. You are not so smart after all, are you? You do not even know what you are in the hospital for. I am in the hospital for a wounded leg, Yossarian insisted.”

Major Sanderson ignored his argument with a sarcastic laugh. “Well, give my regards your friend Dunbar. And you will tell him to dream that dream for me, would not you?” The quality of dream as a simple playful, superficial activity comes to the form. But Dunbar had nausea and dizziness with his constant headache and was not inclined to cooperate with Major Sanderson.

“Hungry Joe had nightmares because he had finished sixty missions and was waiting again to go home, but was unwilling to share any when he came to the hospital to visit.” We have versions of war, the descriptions of war which is traumatic in quality; someone finished sixty missions and wants to go home, but he does not want to share anything.

There is a lot of neurosis, a lot of psychosis, a lot of trauma in the ward. But it is not represented in a way which is consistent or consistently tragic. There is always this tragic comic quality about drama, which creeps in.

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finished sixty missions and was waiting again to go home, but he was unwilling to share any when he came to the hospital to visit.

'Hasn't anyone got any dreams for Major Sanderson?' Yossarian asked.
'I hate to disappoint him. He feels so rejected already.'

'I've been having a very peculiar dream ever since I learned you were wounded,' confessed the chaplain. 'I used to dream every night that my wife was dying or being murdered or that my children were choking to death on morsels of nutritious food. Now I dream that I'm out swimming in water over my head and a shark is eating my left leg in exactly the same place where you have your bandage.'

'That's a wonderful dream,' Dunbar declared. 'I bet Major Sanderson will love it.'

'That's a horrible dream!' Major Sanderson cried. 'It's filled with pain and mutilation and death. I'm sure you had it just to spite me. You know, I'm not even sure you belong in the Army, with a disgusting dream like that.'

Yossarian thought he spied a ray of hope. 'Perhaps you're right, sir,' he suggested slyly. 'Perhaps I ought to be grounded and returned to the States.'

'Hasn't it ever occurred to you that in your promiscuous pursuit of women you are merely trying to assuage your subconscious fears of sexual impotence?'

'Yes, sir, it has.'

“Has not anyone got any dreams for Major Sanderson? Yossarian asked. I hate to disappoint him. He feels rejected already.” It is almost as if the soldiers who are suffering need to offer some therapy to the therapist because he is just feeling so rejected, feeling so excluded and alienated. Soldiers who are suffering from trauma must come together and provide similar dream activity to the therapist, who does not feel very useful at this point of time.

“I have been having a very peculiar dream ever since I learned you were wounded confessed the chaplain. I used to dream every night that my wife was dying or being murdered or that my children were choking to death on morsels of nutritious food. Now I dream that I am out swimming in water over my head and the shark is eating my left leg in exactly the same place where you have your bandage. That is a wonderful dream Dunbar declared. I bet Major Sanderson will love it.”

This section sums up the attitude in the novel, sums up the emotion in the novel. Here we have a person, the chaplain who gives the very graphic description of very disturbing dreams. He dreams about his wife and children being murdered, they were getting killed in very grotesque ways and that has been described to us in very graphic details.

Wife has been murdered and the children are being choked to death on morsels of nutritious food. They have been choked to death children and that is like a terrible tragedy, unimaginable. But the way it is represented is they are given morsels of nutritious food and that is choking them to death.

We have a paradox over here. “He says now I dream that I am out swimming in water over my head and a shark is eating my left leg exactly the same place where you have your bandage.” Yossarian’s bandages is there in a certain spot in his leg and he thinks that the shark is eating his head and then the bandages on the left leg. There is no juxtaposition. There is no corollary. There is no connect.

It is a completely disintegrated dream, which is quite grotesque in quality. Look at the response of Dunbar over here. That is a wonderful dream, Dunbar declared and I bet Major Sanderson will love it. That seems to be a delicious dream for the therapist and this is something we should convey to Major Sanderson because he will love it, he will dissect it, he will analyze it, and it will give him some sense of importance.

We must convey that back to the therapists and there seems to be with some kind of excitement and happiness. “Sanderson replies. That is a horrible dream Major Sanderson cried. It is filled with pain and mutilation and death. I am sure you had it just to spite me. You know, I am not even sure you belong to the army with a disgusting dream like that. Yossarian replied, thought he spied a ray of hope.”

“Perhaps you are right, sir, he suggested slyly. Perhaps I ought to be grounded and returned to the States. This again gives us a sense of ant-climax over here. This is conveyed to Major Sanderson and he seems disgusted, he seems shocked on his description of the dream and he says you do not belong to the army, it is a disgusting dream in just a perverse person, and you have to be dismissed.”

That sense of disgust that is given towards Yossarian, it just triggers ray of hope in his mind. “Yossarian says that just spied a ray of hope. He says perhaps you are right, sir he suggestive slyly. Perhaps I ought to be grounded and returned to the States.” He ought to be dismissed, to be sent off, and sent back home. We are looking at a very interesting blurring of borderline between dismissal and emancipation.

He is about to be dismissed, there is as the possibility he might be dismissed because he just given a disgusting dream and captain was very irritated with that and he wants to just him to go away. The feeling of being dismissed from the army entirely that brings hope in Yossarian’s mind because that would save him or protect him from any peril of

the war, and the predicament that a war might create into his body, to his self, to his identity.

It is a pre-PTSD universe as in pre-classification of PTSD universe, where these are people who may or may not have these dreams. These are people who suffer mentally because they are able to produce those dreams and describe them at will. The fact that they are able to tell these dreams or describe these dreams, which may or may not have happened.

These are probably pseudo-dreams or quasi-dreams, but the way they can be narrativized in very graphic, grotesque manners grow to show the cognitive flatness they have and it is something which we have discussed already. A sense of cognitive flatness, a sense of being immune to tragedy because they are so numbed by the dailyness of tragedy that is not tragic anymore, just becomes a ritual, routine for them.

It is almost like stimulation which has stopped stimulating them because it is such a normal thing, such a recursive thing, it has been normalized. We see over here as a normalization of tragedy or normativization of tragedy, tragedy becomes a normal over here and the process is also flattening out of any tragic intensity, a flattening out of any tragic grandeur, and a flattening out of any tragic depth.

The deathlessness of the novel is something which we need to pay attention to. It is a very superficial novel, a very deathless novel and superficiality and deathlessness are indicators of the mental health, the mental state of these people who have no death left. They are so numbed by tragedy, so numbed by trauma that they come and experience differently anymore.

It just becomes part of the daily routine like brushing the teeth, they can banter about it, they can joke about it, and they can make grotesque gallows humor about it. But that is the way it is being internalized in the system and the entire narrative, the very postmodernist tragic comic narrative seems to reflect that recursively.