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HOW TO DO THINGS WITH CONTRADICTION: EXPLORING HUMOUR IN JOSEPH HELLER'S *CATCH-22*

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This article explores humour in Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22* as arising from the evocation of conflictive frames in structures of contradiction. Contradiction and contrariety are analysed in terms of Werth's (1999) text world model of discourse, in which antonymy is one of the functions that contributes to the creation of text coherence. Humour arises in structures of contradiction in *Catch-22* either (a) because the incompatible properties which appear in the contradictory structures are interpreted to be applicable in different cognitive domains and the simultaneous perception of the two properties is humorous; this process gives rise to what Apter (1982) defines as a cognitive synergy; or (b) because the contradictions are irresolvable and are part of arguments of faulty logic which, by means of relevance-based conversational implicatures, should be understood in the light of the critical nature of the novels. It is further argued that two narrative voices are manifested in the opposite terms which form part of the contradictions, thus reflecting a conflict between an "official" and a "personal" point of view of the events. Moreover, a sustained process of reversal takes place in the novel, in such a way that of the two narrative voices which are manifested in each of the terms of the contradictions it is the official version which is finally accepted as "true", even if contrary to the facts.

INTRODUCTION

The present article explores the ways in which humour is created in the novel *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller as a process which involves three stages: first, the perception of a clash between conflicting frames which are evoked by lexical items in a relation of contrariety, such as, for example, *crazy/sane*, or of contradiction, such as, for example *crazy/not crazy*[1]; second, the resolution of the incongruity by interpreting the compatibility of the two apparently incompatible terms; third, the modification of the reader's schemata regarding assumptions and expectations which

[1] For a detailed account of the discourse functions of negative statements in the novel *Catch-22*, see Hidalgo-Downing (2000).

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form part of world knowledge and of the fictional discourse. Both the humorous effect and the coexistence of the opposite terms which describe a single entity are explained by means of a cognitive approach to text interpretation, in which the search for text coherence determines the processing of the apparently incompatible terms as meaningful and ultimately humorous. For this purpose, Werth's (1999) text world model is adapted and expanded by incorporating other relevant notions from cognitive psychology (for example, Apter's notion of *cognitive synergy*) and from literary theory (the notion of *narrative voices*).

The methodology of analysis and discussion of the present article follows the principles of the tradition of linguistic stylistics;[2] this means that the aim of text analysis is to discuss *how* given meanings and interpretations arise in a text by means of the observation of linguistic choices and their recursion in a piece of discourse. Thus, Short (1995: 53) observes that "the main purpose of stylistics is to show how interpretation is achieved, and hence provide support for a particular view of the work under discussion". The purpose of stylistic analysis is not necessarily that of providing new readings or interpretations of texts, but, rather, that of explaining and systematising the linguistic mechanisms which give rise to such readings and interpretations. In this sense, stylistic analysis of texts contributes to linguistic theory by testing the linguistic models and their adequacy in the interpretation of a variety of discourses, while it also contributes to literary theory by providing insights regarding the nature of the linguistic features which are stylistically significant in a given work.

The present article is divided into the following parts: the first section introduces contradiction and contrariety as stylistic features of the novel *Catch-22*; the second section is a discussion of the concepts of contradiction and contrariety in linguistic theory; the third section deals with approaches to humour in current linguistic theory; finally, the fourth section presents a text world approach to the analysis and interpretation of contradiction and contrariety and the creation of a humorous effect in *Catch-22*.

1. NEGATION AND CONTRADICTION AS STYLISTIC FEATURES IN *CATCH-22*

The novel *Catch-22* tells the story of a group of American soldiers in World War II. One of the idiosyncratic features of the novel is the recursion of arguments of circular logic and of contradictory statements, exemplified by the famous catch 22 itself: a soldier may be grounded and may be sent home if he is crazy; however, in order to be sent home, he has to make an application, but the fact of making an application is an indication of the rational capacity of the soldier; this means that if he applies, he is not crazy. This type of argument is repeated with different variations in a variety of situations and is complemented with a tendency to describe

[2] Recent representative works in the stylistics tradition are Carter (1982), Carter and Nash (1990), Short (1996), Verdonk and Weber (1995), among others. The works of these authors have developed ultimately under the influence of classical works such as Jakobson (1960) and Halliday (1973).

entities in terms of contrary or contradictory terms, as in example 1 below, from *Catch-22*:

> 1. 'Do you really want some more codeine?' Dr. Stubbs asked. 'It's for my friend Yossarian. He's sure he's going to be killed.' ...
> 'That crazy bastard.'
> 'He's not so crazy,' Dunbar said. 'He swears he's not going to fly to Bologna.'
> 'That's just what I mean,' Dr. Stubbs answered.' That crazy bastard may be the only sane one left.' (*C-22*: 144)

In this extract, an entity (*Yossarian*) is described in terms of two contrary properties (*crazy/sane*) and the exchange is perceived as humorous (at least by some readers!).

Both the pattern of circular logic and the recurrence of negatives have been observed by different literary critics (see Hunt 1974, Nash 1985, Seed 1989, Ruderman 1991). Thus, it has been pointed out that the recursion of these features in the novel *Catch-22* contributes to the creation of a feeling of uncertainty — both in the characters of the novel and in the reader — with regard to the distinction between what is real and what is unreal, and also with regard to other basic oppositions, such as those between life/death and true/false. The present article contributes to previous studies on *Catch-22* by exploring how such oppositions are manifested in linguistic relations of antonymy and contradiction and by explaining why they are perceived as potentially humorous. Furthermore, the adequacy of a cognitive model of discourse such as Werth's text world theory is tested and modified accordingly.

1.1. Structure, plot and voices in *Catch-22*

One of the most frequently discussed aspects of the novel *Catch-22* has been its structure, especially with regard to the establishment of a possible chronology of the events and the identification of two main plot lines (see, for example, Burnham 1974, Nagel 1974, Seed 1989, Pinsker 1991). Although the discussion of the structure of the novel goes beyond the objectives of the present discussion, the identification of the two main plot lines is significant insofar as the two different lines are closely connected with the manifestation of two different narrative voices in the novel. Thus, a difference is established between the psychological time line which develops the story incrementally as it is remembered by Yossarian, the protagonist, and the linear time line which follows the progressive increase in the number of missions to be flown by the soldiers as imposed by one of the higher officers, Colonel Cathcart (see Nagel 1974).

Similarly, it may be argued that, parallel to the establishment of two distinct time lines, there is a process of alternate focalization on two different groups of characters which manifests two narrative voices. By focalization I am here using Bal's term used to distinguish *who narrates* from *who sees* (See Bal 1996: 115).

Thus, the third person narration at times gives voice to the view of events from the perspective of Yossarian and his friends, while, at other times, it gives voice to the view of events from the perspective of the higher officers. In the former case, as argued by Seed (1989: 53), the role of Yossarian is that of "a voice to articulate horror and incredulity", or, to say the least, a humane perspective on the events, thus keeping hold of a reality which seems to progressively escape the characters' grasp as the novel progresses. In the latter case, the perspective presented from the viewpoint of the higher officers gives voice to what is presented as "the official version" of the story, a version which is dominated by bureaucracy and acts of pretence and deceit at an institutional level.

In the present article, I defend the following claims: first, the two different voices in the novel are manifested in a type of polar opposition which is recurrent in *Catch-22*, in such a way that the apparently incompatible polar opposites are perceived as compatible because they evoke frames which are coherent within the cognitive domains associated to either of the two different voices. The juxtaposition of the two voices in one description, typically of a person or a scene, partly explains why the descriptions are perceived as funny, as I explain in the sections which follow. Second, throughout the novel, the "official version" of the reality in the fictional world takes over "reality" itself, that is, the apparent is accepted as if it were real. As Seed (1989: 56) argues, "more astonishing than the replacement of actuality by representation, is the characters' acquiescence in the process". The argument put forward in this article is that this process is manifested linguistically as a sustained process of reversal where the terms in a polar opposition which give voice to the official story, to the point of view of the higher officers, substitute the terms in the opposition which give voice to the point of view and version of events of Yossarian and his friends. This process of substitution of a term by its opposite leads to a blurring of boundaries between the two values represented in the term.

1.2. Rhetorical features of *Catch-22*

The recursion of negative words in *Catch-22* has been pointed out by Ruderman (1991: 35) as one of the most significant rhetorical features of the novel. Additionally, other significant patterns discussed by different critics are repetition (Hunt 1974, Seed 1989, Ruderman 1991), the rhetoric of circles or circular logic (Nash 1985, Seed 1989, Ruderman 1991), reversal (Hunt 1974, Seed 1989) and irony (Seed 1989). Repetition is present in the novel both in the development of the psychological time line, since it develops mainly around the progressive incrementation of Yossarian's memory of Snowden's death, and in the multiple episodes which make reference to deficiencies in vision, in particular, the phenomenon of *dejà vu* (see Mellard 1968). Mellard (1974) argues that "dejà vu functions in the novel to indicate the lag between seeing and understanding, between perception and comprehension". In this sense, the phenomena of deficiencies in vision are metaphors for the progressive blurring of boundaries between what is real and what is not real, manifested linguistically also in the oppositions between antonyms and the use of contradictions. Thus, Ruderman observes that, by means of

repetition and "a phraseology of negatives", Joseph Heller makes use of what Ruderman defines as a "language of deficiency" in order "to expose not only the gaping holes in the fabric of society but also the inability of language to give voice to the outrage of the human condition" (Ruderman 1991: 30). Ruderman also points out that the function of humour in the novel is to distract from the obsession with death which permeates the novel and, more particularly, the repeated episode of Snowden's death.

The use of circular logic is manifested linguistically as a form of contradiction, as is shown in the description of the catch 22 in the introduction to the present section. Seed (1989, 57) summarises the function of the rhetoric of circles in *Catch-22* as follows: "the characters are trapped and the rhetorical expression of this entrapment is found in the circle, and specifically in catch 22"; furthermore, the physical embodiment of the circle metaphor is the soldier in white, a soldier bandaged from head to foot and connected to two jars of liquid which, at the end of the novel are periodically exchanged thus making other soldiers suspect there is nobody under the bandages. The image of the empty bandages of the soldier in white and the circularity of catch 22 further point at the inadequacies of language as a system of communication and its self-reflective nature: the catch 22 is a justification for all official decisions, including the catch itself, which becomes "a replacement for rationality itself, all justifying and self-concealing" (Seed 1989: 58).

The phenomenon of reversal is closely connected with the use of negation as the defeat of an expectation and the creation of humorous situations. Seed distinguishes between "inverted" propositions and "self-cancelling propositions", which he defines as follows:

> Inversion will commonly take the form of positive expectations being negated implying a ludicrous redirection of energy. Self-cancellation represents a more complex device because rival versions of an action, character, etc. clash with each other. (Seed 1989: 51-52)

An example of inversion is the proposition "it took months of hard work and careful misplanning", where the negative word misplanning defeats the expectation of the corresponding positive term created by the preceding discourse. An example of self-cancellation is the description of the dead soldier Mudd, who is referred to as a pest and being disliked by Yosssarian even though he is dead. According to Seed, in this kind of complex proposition, one part (Mudd is a pest and is disliked) is only possible if the other part of the proposition suffers a reversal (dead is reversed to alive). Self-cancelling leads to the blurring of boundaries between the real and the illusory. Most of the examples I discuss in the present article have to do with the phenomena of circular logic and forms of self-cancellation, which, as I have already explained, involve the linguistic manifestation of relations of antonymy and of contradiction. However, I argue that in these cases there is also a defeat of expectations similar to the cases defined by Seed as inversions, since the defeat of an expectation forms part of the nature of negation itself.

Finally, irony is another pervasive feature in *Catch-22*, where an "apparently neutral narrative masks a constant irony, implying an alternative to the values of the novel's characters" (Seed 1989: 54). The implication of the ironic humour of the novel is mostly ideological and political, since the chronological inconsistencies of the novel lead to a reading where the paranoid, "right-wing, cold war mentality" of the McCarthy era is superimposed to the period of the end of World War II (see Seed 1989: 69-70).

2. LEXICAL OPPOSITION, CONTRADICTION AND CONTRARIETY

Negation and antonymy are universal linguistic devices used in natural languages to classify experience in terms of binary contrasts which are coded linguistically as opposites (See Lyons 1977: 271; Clark and Clark 1977: 426; Apter 1982: 137; Cruse 1986 (chapters 10-12); Horn 1989: 39; Givón 1984: 351; Werth 1984: 22). In each pair of opposites, one term is typically assigned a positive value while the other is assigned a negative value. Although it has been pointed out that the assignment of these values in linguistic terms seems to be arbitrary, in cognitive psychology the distinction is considered to be far from arbitrary, since it derives from general cognitive principles of the perception of saliency and backgroundedness (see Clark and Clark 1977: 534-35; Givón 1984: 351). Thus, in perceptual phenomena, the term which lacks extent is typically assigned a negative value (*short* vs. *long*). In other cases, such as in opposites like *crazy/sane* and *good/bad*, the term which describes the "normal" or "most desirable" state is assigned a positive value (*sane, good*) while the term which describes a departure from a normal or desired state is assigned a negative value (*crazy, bad*) (Clark and Clark 1977: 539). The fact that in opposites such as these there is an evaluation implies, however, that the assignment of the positive and negative value in pairs of opposites is culturally determined, in such a way that the positive or negative connotation of words is determined by the ideology of a given community —understanding by ideology Fowler's notion of the world view which has become naturalised and taken for granted in a given community (Fowler 1986: 17). Thus many oppositions show a gender bias in opposites such as *master/mistress* or a racial bias, such as *black/white*.[3]

2.1. Contradiction and contrariety

In logic, a contradiction is a complex proposition which is assigned the truth value *False* irrespective of the truth value of the single propositions (Allwood *et al* 1977: 50). Thus 2 is a contradiction:

2. Yossarian is crazy and he is not crazy.

Contradictory terms are traditionally distinguished from *contrary* terms (see Horn 1989: 39), or *complementaries* from *antonyms*, in other authors (Lyons 1977:

[3] For a discussion of gender bias in English vocabulary see Simpson (1993) chapter 6.

279; Werth 1984: 158; Cruse 1986: 197-222). Example 3 illustrates an opposition between contraries:

3. Yossarian is crazy and he is also sane.

A relation of contradiction thus requires the use of syntactic negation, as in 2, and has the logical form *p & not-p*, while a relation of contrariety is an opposition of predicates, as in 3, and has the logical form *p & q*, where *q=not-p* (Escandell 1990: 924) which mututally exclude each other without accepting the possibility of a middle term.

Horn's classification of opposites is as follows: *contradictories* refer only to the contradictory status of a proposition, that is, it does not apply to lexical items, but only to propositions. Among contraries, Horn distinguishes between the following types: *mediate contraries* or *weak contraries*, and *immediate contraries* or *complementaries* (odd/even). Among *weak contraries*, we can further distinguish between *disjuncts* (black/red) and *polar opposites* (black/white). This classification is reproduced in the diagram below:

a. contradictories: black/not black

b. contraries:

c. weak contraries: d. disjuncts: black/red

e. polar opposites: black/white

f. strong contraries or complementaries: odd/even

2.2. A frame semantic account of antonymy

Frame semantics has been applied by Fillmore in order to explain different types of relations between lexical opposites. Thus, Fillmore (1985: 243) distinguishes between "within frame" and "'cross frame"negation, which he illustrates by means of the following examples:

4.a. John isn't stingy. He's generous.
4.b. John isn't stingy. He's downright thrifty.

Example 4.a illustrates within-frame negation, as the frame STINGY is introduced and kept by establishing an opposition between the positive and the negative terms STINGY-GENEROUS; example 4.b, however, illustrates across-frame negation, as the frame itself is denied in order to introduce a different one. This means that, instead of operating on a scale where *stingy* and *generous* are the polar opposites, a new frame is introduced so as to establish *stingy* and *thrifty* as opposites. The phenomenon of across-frame negation is particularly interesting from the perspective of linguistic creativity, since the introduction of a term on a different scale means that a different set altogether of schematic information is introduced in the discourse.

2.3. Pragmatic accounts of contradiction

Contradictions have traditionally been considered as meaningless and uninformative structures in semantic theory, but several attempts have been made in pragmatic theory to account for the use of contradictions in everyday language. Escandell (1990: 928-29) observes that there have been three lines of research in the field, of which I am interested in two for the purposes of the present discussion. The first one has consisted in the interpretation of contradictions as containing conversational implicatures. Thus, the attribution of two contrary properties in example 1 above would be interpreted as creating the implicature that Yossarian has both properties depending on the viewpoint adopted. The second line of research has been that proposed by Relevance Theory (see Sperber & Wilson 1986: 930), where it is argued that most contradictions are interpreted by ultimately favouring one of the terms in the contradiction over the other. The problem with the relevance-based view is that it does not account for those contradictions where both terms are accepted simultaneously, as is the case in numerous examples from *Catch-22*. Finally, Escandell (1990: 931) proposes a semantic-structural approach to contradiction which hinges upon a distributional interpretation of these complex structures:

5.a. Yossarian is crazy and he is not crazy.
5.a'. In a sense, Yossarian is crazy, in another sense, he isn't.

In Escandell's interpretation, each of the terms in a contradiction is applicable in a different domain (spatial, temporal, or other) referred to in each of the conjoins of the complex structure. Thus, example 5.a above may be paraphrased as in 5.a'. This interpretation is a variation of Fauconnier's cognitive approach to contradiction, which I discuss in section 1.4. below and which is dealt with in depth in section 4.

2.4. A cognitive account of contradiction

Cognitive linguists such as Fauconnier argue that contradiction can be explained in terms of connections between mental spaces (Fauconnier 1985: ix). Mental spaces are cognitive constructs which represent referential structure, i.e., the domain in which a given entity refers into. Fauconnier argues that mental spaces, as cognitive constructs, undergo continuous modifications in discourse and "do not have in principle to be logically consistent" (1985: xxxvi). Thus, a proposition such as "'he girl with the blue eyes has green eyes in the painting" is meaningful because the properties blue eyes and green eyes are applicable to the same entity in two different representational domains (see Fauconnier 1985: 12-13).

If we consider again the example from *Catch-22* illustrated in section 1. above, we can observe how lexical opposition can be accounted for in the terms proposed by Fauconnier. The last utterance in the exchange summarises the process of attributing two polar opposite attributes (*crazy/sane*) to one entity (Yossarian):

6. That crazy bastard must be the only sane one left.

It may be argued that each of the contraries evokes a network of frame knowledge which is applicable in two different domains, in such a way that, considered in isolation, the two properties are incompatible, but, considered together as in the utterance in example 6, they not only make sense but they also create a humorous effect. Thus, on the one hand, Yossarian is crazy in the domain of social behaviour as a soldier, since he is constantly acting in ways which go against what is expected from a disciplined soldier; on the other hand, he is sane in the domain of a human being's more basic instincts, feelings and inclinations, since he does not want to fly the dangerous mission to Bologna in which he might get killed. In a strict logical sense, the attribution of the two properties is anomalous, however, in a broader, cognitive sense such as that defended by Fauconnier and other cognitive linguists and psychologists, it is possible to understand that someone may both be crazy and sane, and that this is perceived as humorous by some readers.

3. HUMOUR AND OPPOSITION

Humour theories have traditionally been classified into three main trends (see, for example, Attardo 1994: 47): the cognitive approach, the social approach and the psychoanalytical approach. While the cognitive approach is based on the conception of humour as incongruity and contrast, the social approach assumes that humour has a component of hostility and aggression, and, finally, the psychoanalytical approach is based on the principle that humour releases psychic energy and involves a process of sublimation. Although the different approaches are not incompatible, each has had a different degree of influence in different disciplines and fields of study. Thus, linguistic theory has been influenced mostly by the cognitive approach to humour, with the consequent tendency to account for humorous phenomena in terms of the incongruity model. However, it must be pointed out that linguistic approaches to humour have also been greatly influenced by Freud's (1966, 1976) writings, in particular by his classification of humorous mechanisms into two general types: condensation —where the meaning of a word exceeds the signifier and creates metaphors and other tropes— and displacement —where two senses of a word are present simultaneously.

The present article develops an approach to humour based mainly on the cognitive incongruity/contrast model, which I discuss in the sections which follow.

3.1. Humour and the incongruity/contrast model

The approach to humour as incongruity is grounded on the assumption that humour arises from the defeat of an expectation, in such a way that one part of the joke, humorous anecdote or word play in some way involves a reversal of the meaning expressed in another part (see Freud 1966, 1976, Raskin 1985, Norrick 1986). This means that humour as incongruity to a great extent relies on the negation or contradiction of a part of the utterance. Thus, different taxonomies of puns include antonymy as one of the linguistic mechanisms which may be exploited

in jokes (see Attardo 1994: 113). Furthermore, in the analysis of puns, a traditional distinction is also established between reversals on the paradigmatic axis, that is, reversals which do not require the presence of the opposite meaning, which is inferred, and reversals on the syntagmatic axis, that is, reversals which require the presence of the opposite term. As is shown in the discussion of opposition in *Catch-22*, most of the reversals in this novel are of the latter type.

Incongruity in jokes is defined by Shulz (1976: 12) as "a conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in a joke". Shulz provides several examples of how the humorous effect arises in various texts because of ambiguities in the lexicon, or in phonetic or structural aspects, as in the famous saying by Groucho Marx below:

7. I ought to join a club, and beat you over the head with it.

Humour here hinges upon the polysemy of the word *club*, since two meanings of the word are evoked in the two co-ordinated clauses, in such a way that the second clause defeats the expectation created by the first clause and leads to a dramatic reinterpretation of the utterance. This is an example of paradigmatic reversal.

Different theories of humour (see Freud 1976, Apter 1982, Norrick 1986) defend a view of the phenomenon which consists in the recognition of the incongruity and its resolution at a higher level of processing. Indeed, as Shulz observes (1976: 13), the higher level resolution of incongruity in humour is what distinguishes it from nonsense, where the conflict remains unresolved; thus, the author adds that "whereas nonsense can be characterised as pure or unresolvable incongruity, humour can be characterised as resolvable or meaningful incongruity" (1976: 13). The process is described as consisting of two stages, an initial one where the incongruity is perceived, and a second one where the incongruity is resolved. This two stage process of interpretation of humour is at the basis of different theories such as the isotopy-disjunction model, the bisociation model and the script opposition model.[4] I briefly describe a combined version of the bisociation and the script opposition models below.

3.2. Humour as bisociation and frame/script opposition

Norrick's (1986) analysis of humour combines Koestler's notion of bisociation with schema-theoretic principles. Norrick (1986, 226) argues that humour is a form of bisociation, which he describes, quoting Koestler (1964) as follows:

> the perceiving of a situation or idea L, in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference M1 and M2. The event L, in which the two intersect, is made to vibrate simultaneously on two different wavelengths, as it were. While this unusual situation lasts, L is

[4] For a detailed discussion of these approaches to humour, see Attardo (1994).

> not merely linked to one associative context, but bisociated with two. (Koestler 1964: 35ff)[5]

Norrick further argues that this phenomenon can be adequately accounted for by means of frame semantics, since each of the two frames of reference can be interpreted as conceptualisations which contain schematic knowledge (Norrick 1986: 229). Furthermore, he argues that schema theory is particularly adequate to explain humour because the schema conflict that creates incongruity at a lower level can be interpreted as meaningful at a higher processing level, an approach to understanding that is based on the notion of a hierarchy of schemata. Norrick (1986: 230) further specifies:

> This leads to a hypothesis associating funniness with schema congruence revealed at higher level. The idea of higher-level schema fit, in combination with lower-level schema conflict, lends substance to the traditional definition of humour as "sense in nonsense" or "method in madness".

I will come back to the relation between humour and frame conflict with a higher level resolution in section 4 below.

Raskin (1985) and Attardo (1994) also defend a view of humour in jokes as a semantic-pragmatic phenomenon. Attardo (1994: 129) first describes the process of interpretation of puns as one where two apparently incompatible senses are either discarded as nonsensical or pragmatically processed as coherent. In the latter case, the pun consists of a clash between parts of the text which evoke conflicting schematic knowledge. More specifically, Raskin (1985: 99) argues that humour involves the total or partial overlap of two different scripts with which the text is compatible. He provides the example of the following joke:

> 8. "Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. "No", the doctor's pretty wife whispered in reply. "Come right in". (Raskin 1985: 100)

Raskin explains that the two overlapping scripts are associated to the terms DOCTOR and LOVER, and that the "the two overlapping scripts are perceived as opposite in a certain sense, and that this oppositeness creates the joke" (1985: 100). Thus, according to Raskin and Attardo, the two necessary conditions for a joke to take place are two: 1) that the text is compatible with two scripts; 2) that the two scripts are in some way opposite. Raskin further points out more explicitly the relationship between humour and opposite terms when he argues that some jokes evoke "one of the relatively few binary categories which are essential to human life" (1985: 113). However, by binary terms the author has in mind oppositions such as real vs. unreal and true vs. false, since most jokes lead to a re-evaluation of a situation in such a way that what at first seems real or true turns out to be unreal or

[5] For a more formally elaborate version of this approach see Attardo (1994, chapter 4).

false at the end, an aspect mentioned when discussing Apter's theory in section 1.5. below. However, Raskin does not address the relation between humorous effect and lexical opposition in more specific terms.

The model presented by Raskin and Attardo has two main drawbacks for the analysis of humour in discourse other than jokes. First, the model is limited to the analysis of puns and jokes, like most theories of humour, and, second, Attardo is interested in humour *competence*, that is, humour as a phenomenon which can be isolated from its context of production and which can be explained in terms of a set of rules and a set of scripts available to speakers (Attardo 1994: 259). This means that the model defended by Raskin and Attardo proves inadequate for the analysis of an extended piece of discourse such as a novel. Attardo himself is aware of this limitation (1994: 261). The main reason why this model is inadequate for an analysis of humour in discourse is that a semantic analysis like the one these authors propose cannot explain the way in which readers and listeners process the meaning of texts as humorous and construct worlds which are compatible with the humorous interpretation. This requires a view of humour which combines the semantic analysis which accounts for the relations of opposition and a cognitive pragmatic analysis which accounts for the way in which the humorous effect is perceived and processed in discourse as a dynamic phenomenon.

In sections 3.3. and 3.4. I discuss some approaches to humour which take as a point of departure cognitive principles, which are then taken up in the text world approach to lexical opposition and humour in section 4.

3.3. The components of the humorous experience

I have already mentioned the fact that there is a close connection between the incongruity approach to humour and a cognitive conception of the phenomenon. This cognitive component in the processing of humour is already present in frame and script-based approaches, which rely on the notions of stored knowledge and of processing at different levels of understanding. However, this picture needs to be complemented further. First, emphasis needs to be placed in the active role played by the reader/listener in the process of understanding the joke or humorous text. This process is described by Bernárdez (1984: 113) as a "continuous process of text formulation, correction and reformulation on the part of both speaker and hearer", which leads to different forms of feedback, present not only in conversation but also in written discourse. Second, humour involves not only a contrast between two opposite frames or scripts, but, rather, it also requires that a disruption of the "world" which was initially presented in the text takes place (Bernárdez 1984: 113-14). Thus Bernárdez argues that the main principle governing joke creation is the principle of world-change or world-disruption. Although Bernárdez uses the term world in the sense used in propositional semantics to stand for a possible state of affairs, a cognitive interpretation of the notion may be adopted, as for example is proposed by Cook (1994) for the process which he describes as *cognitive change* in literature. According to Cook (1994: 197-209) the function of many literary texts is to modify the world schemata a reader brings into the reading process. By world

schemata Cook refers to the assumptions a reader holds with regard to what is the case and what is accepted as normal in the society and world he or she inhabits. It may be argued that a process of cognitive change takes place in numerous examples of humour, particularly when humour is part of literary discourse. Thus, humour in *Catch-22* contributes to a process of disruption of the reader's world schemata in such a way that a cognitive change or modification of these schemata is potentially induced.

Furthermore, it must be pointed out that humour cannot be reduced to a purely cognitive process. Thus, Downing (1984: 134) argues that

> the comic experience, then, is not purely cognitive, but has an emotional side to it. What causes laughter is a kind of defeated expectancy...laughter is a safety valve through which the physiological effects of emotion are worked off.

Following Freud, Downing suggests that for humour to take place there needs to be a hint of aggression, eroticism or malice. For Downing, the comic experience is composed of the following set of ingredients (Downing 1984: 139):

a) incongruity: the collision between two unlikely frames of reference.
b) shock or surprise at the perception of the incongruous juxtaposition, aggression or erotic feelings.
c) release of tension through laughter.

This proposal brings together features of the social and psychoanalytical models into the incongruity cognitive model. With regard to humour in an extended piece of discourse, such as a novel, Downing observes that humour takes place as a complex network of incongruities where the comic effect is sustained through "a series of build-ups, leading to climaxes which are then exploded" (1984: 135).

Finally, Downing distinguishes between content humour and realisation humour. While the former has to do with humour which arises from details of incidents in the plot, situations or characters in a novel, the latter has to do with "the way in which the author's fictional world is conceptualised" (Downing 1984: 137). This means that the humorous effect is produced by the choice of language to represent a situation which in itself need not be necessarily comic. Since the present article follows the principles of linguistic stylistics, it will be concerned with realisation humour, and not with content humour, in *Catch-22*.

One last point which needs to be dealt with more in depth is the explanation of how two opposite terms in a relation of antonymy which may or may not have a comic effect may be interpreted as compatible and coherent. This point is discussed in section 3.4. below, which complements the conception of humour as bisociation and Fauconnier's account of contradiction in terms of mental spaces.

3.4. Apter's notion of cognitive synergy

Apter's (1989) theory of psychological reversals is concerned with the relation between human experience and motivation and it challenges the traditional assumption that personality is a more or less stable entity in order to defend what he calls "The Principle of Inconsistency". According to this principle, personality is inherently inconsistent with regard to some important aspects. Such inconsistency is typical of certain types of behaviour, such as art and humour. Apter proposes the notion of *cognitive synergy* in order to account for paradoxical phenomena such as these.

A cognitive synergy is said to arise in situations where incompatible meanings coexist:

> Situations arise ... in which a whole identity may be seen to have opposite characteristics.... The idea is that the opposite characteristics may coexist in the sense that one is aware of both in consciousness, in relation to a given identity, and that these opposites both contribute something to the full meaning of the identity, or contribute alternative meanings to the identity. Either way, synergies always embody some kind of self-contradiction. (Apter 1989: 141)

In fact, the term synergy is used in other disciplines, such as for example medicine, to refer to the unpredictable effect which is produced by the mixing of two substances, such as drugs and alcohol. In this sense, the incompatible terms in a synergy "work together to produce an effect they could not produce separately" (Apter 1989: 141). Apter gives the example of a chequer-board, an entity which is formed by white squares and black squares, and he argues that, although from a logical point of view the description of the entity in terms of opposite properties is not acceptable, from the phenomenological point of view of how we interpret experience this type of perception and interpretation is not only usual but even prevalent.

This approach not only makes it possible to interpret as meaningful the presence of contradictory features in an entity but, what is more important, it assumes that this phenomenon is psychologically and phenomenologically normal, acceptable and even enjoyable, given the adequate state of mind. This goes against traditional approaches to contradiction and ambiguity as nonsensical, incoherent or, to say the least, highly problematic for a theory of meaning. Givón (1984: 321) observes that, although contradiction is avoided by human beings as rational thinkers, it is used for other reasons:

> Unlike formal systems, humans are capable of compartmentalization, whereby contradictory beliefs held at the same time are rigidly segregated in subparts of the cognitive system, under different *personae*, etc. Further, humans are also capable of *change* or *faulty memory*, whereby they can hold contradictory beliefs in temporal succession. Finally, they are also capable of *contextualizing* parts of their entire belief system, thus

> making the truth of some propositions vary with the change of internal or external context. (Givón 1984: 321)

Thus, contradiction may arise in language use because of internal inconsistencies or complexities of a person's belief system, or because of the effects of change through time or in different contexts with regard to beliefs previously held.

The discussion which follows takes as a point of departure the assumption that contradiction in examples such as those in *Catch-22* is a complex process which requires the joint perception of the two opposite terms in order to perceive the effect produced by the combination of both, i.e. the humorous effect.

In Apter's theory, humour is interpreted as a type of cognitive synergy which involves the perception of two different levels, that of "reality" and that of "appearance"' similarly to what other authors have pointed out: "An identity which gives rise to feelings which are associated with humour *appears*, or *purports*, to be something other than what it turns out to be" (Apter 1989: 179). Further, the relation between real and apparent is such that the real should be in some way perceived as "less than" the apparent (lower in status, in monetary value, in affective value, etc.). This means that an evaluation is carried out in such a way that the term perceived as apparent is valued positively and the term perceived as real is valued negatively. The author gives examples such as Falstaff being cowardly although he thinks of himself as brave and Chaplin as being helpful while being in practice very unhelpful (Apter 1989: 181). In the example discussed above, where Yossarian is described as being both crazy and sane, Yossarian appears to be crazy for one reason (his social behaviour) but turns out to be sane (his will to survive) for a different reason.

Humour may take place in two different ways, either through a transition from a state A to a state B (as in the example with Yossarian), or in a context where the subject is aware from the beginning of the two conflicting meanings (also see Freud 1966). The latter form of humour is typical of make-believe humorous situations, as when a male comedian pretends to be a woman and exaggerates his supposedly feminine attributes.

4. A TEXT WORLD APPROACH TO CONTRADICTION AND HUMOUR IN JOSEPH HELLER'S *CATCH-22*

In Werth's text world model of discourse, antonymy is one of the functional relations which establish coherence in discourse (Werth 1999: 129-30). Thus, discourse is governed by two main principles, cooperativeness and coherence (1999: 49). While cooperativeness determines the nature of the discourse interaction as a constant process of meaning negotiation between interlocutors, coherence determines the relations between new propositions and already existing propositions in the Common Ground of the discourse (Werth 1999: 124). Thus, new propositions which enter the Common Ground of the discourse may either be processed as coherent or as incoherent; in the case where a proposition is incoherent with the

Common Ground, the proposition will either be rejected as irrelevant or "interpreted as a conversational implicature, and incremented as metaphorical, ironic, etc." (Werth 1999: 49).

In the cases where propositions are processed as coherent, a distinction is established between two main types: positive coherence, which is realised by the functions of synonymy, hyponymy, metaphor and metonymy, and negative coherence, based on relations of contrast and antonymy. Werth (1999: 128) observes that "these meaning relations may be defined in terms of frames. In general, we may say that they all require some kind of comparison between two, or possibly more, frames". Werth adopts Fillmore's (1985) notion of frame as a cognitive package of cultural knowledge organised in networks. More specifically, the function of frame knowledge within a text world and in discourse in general is summarised as follows: both worlds and frames are cognitive constructs which organise areas of experience. The difference between the two types of concepts, worlds and frames, is that discourses and texts are cognitive constructs of specific situations, while frames "encapsulate the expectations about how particular situation-types will turn out" (Werth 1999: 104). This means that a frame is an abstraction of recurrent similar situations or text worlds.

The discourse world is the broader context of interaction, including the context; thus, in written interaction, discourse includes the writer and reader(s) as participants and all the knowledge that is brought into the discourse situation by the participants. The text world, on the other hand, is the text produced in the interaction, it is "the story" being told, and it displays a viewpoint. The viewpoint is determined first by means of the deictic parameters of time, place and entity and further by any shifts in these parameters or other world-building predicates. The text world is further fleshed out from the frame knowledge that is activated during the reading process.

This pattern in a way simplifies the complexity of the hierarchy of relations ranging form author-reader, through narrator, focalizer to characters in a text, but it is adequate for an account of the processes of contradiction and antonymy in a text world.[6]

4.1. The creation of humour as a form of coherence by relations of antonymy and contradiction

If we apply the text world model of discourse proposed by Werth for the analysis of antonymy as a function of text coherence, by incorporating the observations that have been made with regard to contradiction and humour in previous sections, the following claims may be put forward:

(1) Humour may be defined as a dynamic process where antonymy and contradiction contribute to the creation of negative text coherence. The perception of

[6] For a detailed discussion of the discourse roles of participants in the narrative situation, see Onega and García Landa (1996) and Short (1996).

the negative coherence is linked to the appreciation of the humorous effect. The process may be described as consisting of the following stages:

> a. The creation of incongruity by two coexisting frames evoked by contradictory or contrary terms.
>
> b. The shock in the reader at the perception of the incongruity (defeat of expectations).
>
> c. The interpretation of the incompatible terms as coherent (perception of the cognitive synergy) and the challenge of previously established expectations and assumptions existing either in previous discourse or in the reader's world knowledge. Laughter may or may not accompany this perception.
>
> d. Modification of the assumptions previously held by the reader and reinterpretation process.

(2) Humour defined in these terms consists of a dynamic, continuous process which involves the disruption of the fictional world as it has been previously established in the discourse, as pointed out by Bernárdez and Attardo; this process of disruption furthermore takes place in the form of a progressive build-up of incongruities accumulated throughout the novel, as observed by Downing.

In claim (1), stage 2 (the shock in the reader and the laughter as response) constitutes the humorous synergy, that is, the perception of an effect which is different from the addition of the two components in isolation. Obviously, the perception and interpretation of this effect as humorous is reader and culture-dependent.

This process is illustrated by the following example from *Catch-22* and the corresponding diagrammatic representation of the humorous experience in Figure 1.

> 9. Ordinarily, Yossarian's pilot was McWatt, who, shaving in loud red, clean pajamas outside his tent each morning was one of the odd, ironic, incomprehensible things surrounding Yossarian. McWatt was the craziest combat man of them all probably, because he was perfectly sane and still did not mind the war. (*C-22*: 80)

In example 9 the character McWatt is described as being "the craziest combat man of them all" and, at the same time as being "perfectly sane". According to the description of the humorous process as part of the creation and interpretation of text coherence outlined above it may be argued that the following process takes place in the processing of passage 9 as illustrated in Figure 1.

Incongruity is created in the text world by the simultaneous description of an entity (McWatt) by means of two antonyms (crazy and sane). The description

activates a high level frame, which can be generally termed as a WAR frame, while each of the two opposite terms evoke two subframes with reference in two different cognitive domains: *crazy* is applicable in the domain of general human experience, since McWatt does not show the typical reactions of most human beings in war situations, such as fear. *Sane* is applicable in the domain of social experience, more specifically, sanity understood in clinical terms. The two opposites further reflect the two narrative voices mentioned in the introduction to this article. Thus, the evaluation of McWatt as crazy is coherent with the voice which focalizes on the point of view of Yosarian and his friends, while the evaluation of McWatt as sane is coherent with the voice which focalizaes on the official version of events in the fictional world.

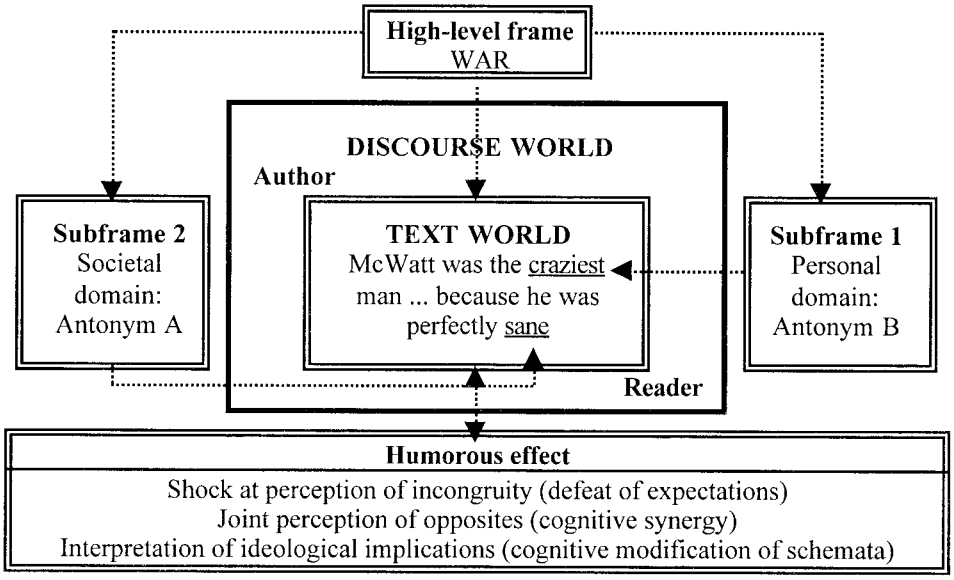

Figure 1

The humorous effect arises, as explained above and as illustrated in Figure 1, by means of a dynamic process which involves the following stages: the shock at the perception of the incongruity between the two frames (*crazy/sane*), which constitutes a defeat of expectations which arise from world knowledge; the joint perception of the opposites and their reference into two different cognitive domains, thus creating the humorous synergy, and, possibly, laughter as an effect; finally, an interpretation of the ideological implications of the cognitive synergy is carried out, with a potential modification of the reader's schemata about the fictional discourse and the theme of war.

In the sections which follow I discuss further examples from the novel *Catch-22* in the light of the arguments presented so far. The examples are grouped in three

sections, depending on whether the patterns of opposition (contradiction or contrariety) (a) evoke frames which are applicable in different domains as example (9) above, (b) are only interpretable by means of conversational implicature, and (c) lead to a blurring of the boundaries between positive and negative terms.

4.2. Contrary and contradictory terms which evoke opposite frames in different cognitive domains

The following examples typically illustrate the phenomenon where two opposite properties are attributed to a single entity, as in example 9 above; in each case, negative coherence is achieved by understanding that each term evokes a frame which is applicable in a different cognitive domain (either societal, or personal/ physical).

> 10. The chaplain was sincerely a very helpful person who was never able to help anyone. (*C-22*: 346)
>
> 11. The only one with any right to remove his belongings from Yossarian's tent, it seemed to Major Major, was Yossarian himself, and Yossarian, it seemed to Major Major, had no right. (*C-22*: 132)
>
> 12. He woke up blinking with a slight pain in his head and opened his eyes upon a world boiling in chaos in which everything was in proper order. (*C-22*: 186)
>
> 13. You see, Italy is really a very poor and weak country, and that's what makes us so strong. (*C-22*: 309)
>
> 14. 'Yes, I know I understand. Our first job is to capture Dreedle away from the enemy. Right?' General Peckem laughed benignly, 'No, Scheisskopf. Dreedle's on our side, and Dreedle is the enemy. (*C-22*: 498-409)
>
> 15. Some of those invitations were mighty generous, but we couldn't accept any because we were Indians and all the best hotels that were inviting us wouldn't accept Indians as guests. Racial prejudice is a terrible thing, Yossarian. It really is. It's a terrible thing to treat a decent, loyal Indian like a nigger, kike, wop or spic.' Chief White Halfoat nodded slowly with conviction. (*C-22*: 60)

The frames evoked in these extracts from *Catch-22*, together with the type of apposition they represent and the cognitive domains they refer into are found in the following table:

	FRAMES	OPPOSITIONS	COGNITIVE DOMAINS
a.	HELPFUL/ UNABLE TO HELP	contradictories	personal/societal
b.	HAVE THE RIGHT/ NOT HAVE THE RIGHT	contradictories	personal/societal
c.	CHAOS/ ORDER	polar opposites	physical/societal
d.	WEAK/ STRONG	polar opposites	physical/societal
e.	ON OUR SIDE/ ENEMY	complementaries	societal/personal
f.i.	INVITE INDIANS/ REJECT INDIANS	complementaries	societal/personal
f.ii.	NOT RACIST/ RACIST	contradictories	$personal_1$/$personal_2$

These examples have in common the description of an entity or event by means of assigning contrary or contradictory properties which create a conflict between personal and societal domains and associated goals and evaluations of these goals. Examples 10 and 11 are of the same type as example (), since they consist of a clash between a personal domain or attitude (McWatt is crazy because he does not fear war, the chaplain has a helpful disposition, and Yossarian has the right to remove the dead man's belongings from his tent because they are in his tent) and a societal domain or aspect (McWatt is clinically sane, the chaplain is unable to help people in practice and regulations prevent Yossarian from removing the dead man's belongings from his tent). In examples 12 and 13 there is a clash between a physical domain and a societal domain, in such a way that the term which refers into the physical domain describes a factual property of the entity or event (the situation is chaotic, Italy is a weak country, it is not a military power) and the term which refers into the societal domain establishes the value that is assigned to the entity in terms of social factors and relations (the situation is in order because there have been no losses, Italy is strong in the sense that it will not attract the enemy's attention, as Germany has done).

Similarly, in the case of examples 14 and 15 there is a clash between a societal domain or goal (General Scheisskopf as an ally and the hotel inviting Indians to show a non-racist attitude) and a personal domain or goal (General Scheisskopf is a personal enemy, the hotel chooses not to let the Indians). These last examples illustrate the critical and dimension of the novel *Catch-22* towards the military system and people with power.

Extract 14 is particularly significant since it illustrates the petty struggles for power on the part of the higher officers. For general Peckem, the enemy is not really

the Germans, but, rather, the other general on the island, general Dreedle. General Peckem spends his time planning "offensives" against general Dreedle in order to have all the power in his hands. The contradiction in 14 confirms Yossarian's suspicions that the enemy is anybody who wants to kill him and the rest of the soldiers, no matter what side they're on. Indirectly, this seems to suggest that the higher officers are on an equal status with the nazis.

As argued for example 9, in examples 10 to 15 the terms associated to the personal and physical domains are consistent with the narrative voice which focalizes on Yossarian and his friends' point of view, while the terms associated to the societal domains are consistent with the narrative voice which represents the official version, how things should be.

As Givón has observed, a contradiction may arise as an incompatibility between different aspects of a person's belief system or personality. This means that a conflict may arise between different subtypes of personal domains with different associated goals. This type of conflict has already been illustrated in extract 15 above, where Chief White Halfoat criticises racist attitudes while being a racist himself. This type of opposition is further illustrated by example 16 below:

> 16. Colonel Cathcart was not superstitious, but he did believe in omens. (*C-22*: 267)

	FRAMES	OPPOSITION	COGNITIVE DOMAINS
a.	SUPERSTITIOUS/ BELIEVE IN OMENS	weak contraries	$personal_1$/$personal_2$

In this example, Colonel Cathcart is presented as having an internal contradiction with regard to an aspect of his personality or behaviour, being superstitious. It may be argued that this type of opposition also illustrates the distinction between two narrative voices, in the sense that Colonel Cathcart claims not to be superstitious because it is not socially acceptable, although personally he behaves in a superstitious way.

So far, the examples that have been discussed have involved processes of self-cancellation, that is, processes where the second term in the opposition presents a rival version of the reality described. Other contradictory structures are created by means of reversal, that is, by a defeat of the expectation that the first term creates in the discourse. Examples 17 and 18 below illustrate this process; furthermore, they are examples of what Fillmore (1985: 243) calls across-frame negation, or opposition by means of contrasting apparently disparate terms.

> 17. Kraft was a skinny, harmless kid from Pennsylvania who wanted only to be liked, and was destined to be disappointed in even so humble and degrading an ambition. Instead of being liked, he was dead. (*C-22*: 74)

> 18. In short, Clevinger was one of those people with lots of intelligence and no brains, and everyone knew it except those who soon found it out. (*C-22*: 91)

The two extracts above present unusual oppositions between terms that would not normally be related as opposites: in extract 17 we have the opposition between BE LIKED and BE DEAD, and in 18 BE INTELLIGENT/HAVE NO BRAINS. In this sense, the second term in the opposition defeats the expectation created by the first term and induces a reinterpretation of schemata and patterns of opposition. The unusual contrasts make the extracts slightly humorous.

4.3. Contradictions which are resolvable by means of conversational implicature

Unlike the contradictions discussed in section 4.1. above, other contradictions in *Catch-22* are not resolvable by identifying the domains where each of the contradictory terms is applicable. This is the structure typical of the catch 22 itself, which is described as follows:

> 19. 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. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle. (*C-22*: 62-63)

As has already been explained in the introduction to this article, the catch 22 is an argument of faulty logic which involves a contradiction between two propositions:

a. if you are crazy, you can be grounded	*if a then b*
b. if you want to be grounded, you have to apply	*if c then d*
c. if you apply, you are not crazy	*if e then f*
	(f=not a)

Thus, the conclusion of the argument (*you are not crazy*) contradicts the first premise *(if you are crazy)*, so that the proposition *you can be grounded* can never be applicable. The contradiction is deliberately unresolvable and can only be understood within the context of the novel as a whole; more specifically, it will be understood in the light of the critical tone of the novel, in such a way that a criticism is made of the military apparatus and of social institutions in general terms, together with the arbitrary abuse of power on the part of higher officers and of powerful people in general. In linguistic terms, following Werth (1999: 49), the

apparently incoherent piece of discourse is processed as ultimately coherent by recovering a relevance-based implicature which increments the propositions in the light of the ironic tone of the novel.

The following extract illustrates a similar type of contradictory structure within faulty logic arguments:

> 20. 'You still don't understand, do you? We can't really make you say uncle unless you don't want to say uncle. Don't you see? Don't say uncle when I tell you to say uncle. Okay? Say uncle.'
> 'Uncle,' she said.
> 'No, don't say uncle. Say uncle.'
> She didn't say uncle.
> 'That's good!' (*C-22*: 445)

While extract 19 illustrates the pervasive nature of catch 22 logic at institutional level, extract 20 shows how this type of logic is used as an instrument of abuse on the part of people with power.

4.4. Voices and cognitive domains: the subversion of binary distinctions in *Catch-22*

As observed in the introduction to this article, in the novel *Catch-22*, the recursion of contradictory structures manifests a systematic tendency towards the subversion of the distinction between positive and negative and towards the blurring of boundaries between opposites and between binary distinctions. This leads to a more general reflection on the nature of binary categorisation as a conceptualising tool and as an instrument used to organise and interpret experience.

Both in *Catch-22* and in the sequel to this novel, *Closing Time*, it is Yossarian who is presented as the personification of contradiction, as is illustrated in the following extract about him:

> 21. His father had always struck him as somewhat peculiar, rationally irrational and logically illogical, and did not always make consistent sense.... Michael did not always know when he was serious and when he was not, and when he was right and when he was mistaken, and when he was right and wrong at the same time. And Yossarian would profess that he did not always know that about himself either. (CT: 189)

Thus, Yossarian seems to gather in himself the capacity to make compatible incompatible properties such as those listed below (see next page).

Indeed, in *Catch-22* there are characters whose experience of the relations between terms in a binary opposition goes against assumptions and expectations which are deeply rooted in extended social behaviour and cultural patterns. This is illustrated in examples 22 and 23 below, in which it may be argued that a negative

	FRAMES	OPPOSITION
a.	LOGICAL/ILLOGICAL	polar opposites
b.	RATIONAL/IRRATIONAL	polar opposites
c.	MAKES SENSE/DOES NOT MAKE SENSE	contradictories
d.	SERIOUS/NOT SERIOUS	contradictories
e.	RIGHT/MISTAKEN	polar opposites
f.	KNOW/NOT KNOW	contradictories

term, which defeats the expectation created by a corresponding positive term which precedes it in discourse, also denies the prototypical features associated to that positive term:

> 22. 'Oh, shut up,' Dunbar told Clevinger. Dunbar liked Clevinger because Clevinger annoyed him and made the time go slow. (*C-22*: 29)

> 23. Dunbar loved shooting skeet because he hated every minute of it and the time passed so slowly. 'I think you're crazy,' was the way Clevinger had responded to Dunbar's discovery. (*C-22*: 52)

In these two examples, the positive terms LIKE and LOVE create expectations regarding agreeable experiences and feelings which will be associated with them; these expectations are denied by introducing terms which evoke disagreeable and negative experiences, such as ANNOY and HATE. The humour arises from the perception of the unusual association between predicates which would normally exclude each other.

Similarly, other entities are described by means of contradictory or contrary terms, in such a way that the distinction between the positive and the negative value is cancelled and the two terms are identified as synonymous, rather than opposite:

> 24. This sordid, vulturous, diabolical old man reminded Nately of his father because the two were nothing at all alike. (*C-22*: 311)

> 25. 'My only fault,' he observed with practiced good humor, watching for the effect of his words, 'is that I have no faults.' (*C-22*: 405)

This process of subversion of the typical expectations evoked by a given experience is taken to an extreme in the following two examples, which make reference to two characters in *Catch-22*, Hungry Joe and Captain Flume respectively:

In extract 26 below, the expectations which arise from a given experience are defeated because, for Hungry Joe, the perception and reaction to events takes place in the opposite way to what is normally expected:

> 26. Every time Colonel Cathcart increased the number of missions and returned Hungry Joe to combat duty, the nightmares stopped and Hungry Joe settled down into a normal state of terror with a smile of relief.

> Yossarian read Hungry Joe's shrunken face like a headline. It was good when Hungry Joe looked bad and terrible when Hungry Joe looked good. Hungry Joe's inverted set of responses was a curious phenomenon to everyone but Hungry Joe, who denied the whole thing stubbornly. (*C-22*: 73)

Hungry Joe is described as having an inverted set of responses, in such a way that when the number of missions is increased he looks good, while when he's not on combat duty he looks awful. This leads to an inversion of the process in which an experience which would normally be evaluated as negative (the increase in the number of missions) is evaluated as positive (he looks good), while a positive experience (the periods of rest from combat duty) is evaluated as negative.

A similar process can be said to take place in Captain Flume, who is unable to distinguish between his dreams and his waking states. Captain Flume tries hard to stay awake all night because Chief White Halfoat has threatened to kill him during the night:

> 27. Each night after that, Captain Flume forced himself to keep awake as long as possible. He was aided immeasurably by Hungry Joe's nightmares. Listening so intently to Hungry Joe's maniacal howling night after night, Captain Flume grew to hate him and began wishing that Chief White Halfoat would tiptoe up to his cot one night and slit his throat open for him from ear to ear.
>
> Actually, Captain Flume slept like a log most nights and merely dreamed he was awake. So convincing were these dreams of lying awake that he woke from them each morning in complete exhaustion and fell right back to sleep. (*C-22*: 76-77)

In this extract, the distinction between DREAMING/BEING ASLEEP and BEING AWAKE becomes blurred by means of a recurring pattern of dreams within dreams, where the captain dreams he is awake and never gets enough rest.

The pervasive character of inverted values in society is revealed towards the end of the novel *Catch-22*, where the reliability of so many apparent values we take for granted, without questioning the sincerity of the acts behind them is questioned. This is summarised in extract 28 below:

> 28. How many winners were losers, successes failures, rich men poor men? How many wise guys were stupid? How many happy endings were unhappy endings? How many honest men were liars, brave men cowards, loyal men traitors, how many sainted men were corrupt, how many people in positions of trust had sold their souls to blackguards for petty cash, how many had never had souls? How many straight-and-narrow paths were crooked paths? How many best families were worst families and how many good people were bad people? (*C-22*: 520-21)

What has been suggested more or less implicitly previously in the novel *Catch-22* is now expressed directly: the terms in an opposition which are associated with the official or pretended version are revealed as having an inverted value, that of the corresponding opposite term (winner=loser, success=failure, wise=stupid, etc). This illustrates the final stage of the continuous process of reversal which takes place throughout the novel mentioned in previous sections of the present article.

The process by which values are inverted is described as being discovered by the chaplain in the following way:

> 29. The chaplain had sinned, and it was good. Common sense told him that telling lies and defecting from duty were sins. On the other hand, everyone knew that sin was evil, and that no good could come from evil. But he did feel good; he felt positively marvelous. Consequently, it followed logically that telling lies and defecting from duty could not be sins. The chaplain had mastered, in a moment of divine intuition, the handy technique of protective rationalization, and he was exhilarated by his discovery. It was miraculous. It was almost no trick at all, he saw, to turn vice into virtue and slander into truth, impotence into abstinence, arrogance into humility, plunder into philanthropy, thievery into honor, blasphemy into wisdom, brutality into patriotism and sadism into justice. Anybody could do it — it required no brains at all. It merely required no character. (*C-22*: 459)

To sum up the observations made so far, it may be argued that the recursion of structures of contradiction and contrariety in *Catch-22* is closely connected to two relevant themes in the novel: on the one hand, the breakdown of the human capacity to interpret, organise and categorise experience with regard to basic binary oppositions, such as crazy/sane, good/evil, dead/alive, among others. This aspect is also closely linked to the manifest blurring of boundaries between what is real and what is unreal, what is true and what is false, and what is factual and what is pretended. As was observed in section 4. on humour, the exploitation of these oppositions is considered to be typical of many humorous texts. Furthermore, the recursion of contradictory structures in *Catch-22* is connected with the expression of a critical stance towards the military system and institutionalised behaviour in more general terms.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The discussion of the nature of the contradictory structures in *Catch-22* in the preceding sections can be summarised in the following points: (a) There is a close connection between the phenomena of contradiction and contrariety on the one hand and humorous effect on the other. This has been explained by arguing that both contradiction and humour typically take place by means of the denial of an expectation or assumption which has been created previously in the discourse. (b) Contradictions should not be analysed as problematic or incoherent structures, but, rather, as structures which constitute "cognitive synergies"; this means that the

contradictions are interpreted as coherent at a higher processing level, where the terms are considered to be applicable in different domains or where the contradictory structure is understood to create a relevance-based implicature. (c) In the cases of contradictions where each term is applicable in a different cognitive domain, a frame semantic approach to coherence is proposed, which permits the systematisation of the lower level schemata evoked by the contradictory terms in higher level organising frames which create what Werth (1999: 124) defines as negative coherence. (d) With regard to the role played by the structures of contradiction and contrariety in the fictional world of *Catch-22*, I have argued that the recursion of these structures is closely connected to the expression of two narrative voices, in such a way that one of the terms in the opposition reflects the official version of the story, while the other term in the opposition reflects the point of view of Yossarian and his friends. The juxtaposition of the two narrative voices by means of the recursion of contrary and contradictory structures brings to the foreground the expression of the critical and ironic tone of the novel.

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