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The period of time after World War Two was a time of a great shift in the way people thought about things. With the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, people began to question ethics and morals of the world around them, authority, and themselves. The questioning of society, humanity and authority, religious change, political and personal reactions and the paranoia felt by the world in this era can be seen reflected in the texts "Catch-22" by Joseph Heller, "Hiroshima" by John Hersey, the song "Fitter, Happier" by Radiohead, and ~~the~~ a Sydney Morning Herald article titled "Pentagon shooter feared vast conspiracy". While these texts all look at similar issues of the cold war era, many of which still permeate society today, the authors approach them in different ways.

In "Catch-22", a questioning of society can clearly be seen. The novel is essentially a satirical text on how immoral and corrupt society is, with particular reference to its absurd nature and the role of authority within it. Colonel Cathcart is a clear representation of the corrupt military system in "Catch-22". He is only self-interested,

and ~~man~~ feels no sorrow or compassion for Yossarian, as viewing him as cowardly and simply a nuisance getting in the way of his personal advancement. The absurd nature of society ~~can~~ ~~is~~ ~~explored~~ ~~when~~ commented on by Heller ~~as~~ with the chaplain's guilty verdict. ~~Exp~~ Heller also includes capitalism in his novel, with Milo Minderbinder being the clear indication of this. Milo will do anything for profit and constantly refers to the syndicate, saying "It's good for the syndicate, and we're all part of the syndicate", revealing an almost communist view of society. This profit motive comes to a climax when Milo bombs his own squadron, ~~and~~ killing people. He waves it over, saying that the profit overrules the loss of life. Here, Heller is clearly satirising society's easy acceptance of money to soothe ethical qualms. ~~Therefore~~ Heller uses many techniques within his satire, including many crazy contradictions and ridiculous farce to emphasise his questioning of society's absurd nature. For example Yossarian wants to call Luciana, but he rips up her number. Doc Daneeka being 'dead' and the situation Major Major Major Major has conjured up to stop seeing people are both

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ridiculous. They tell whoever wants to see Major Major, "No, he is in so you can't see him!" "Well when can I see him?" "Whenever he is not here".

The black humour present in *Catch-22* is used to create a tragic comedy, but the issues that lie within it regarding society are still quite relevant today.

~~Thus~~ we can ~~not~~ come to these conclusions by looking at ~~the~~ modern day texts, like the story of John Beckett. This man believed conspiracy theories about the government in regard to the September 11 terrorist attacks. The language he used in his blogs, ~~demonstrated~~ like that he was working towards, "establishing the truth of events such as the September 11 demolitions," clearly showed his attitude towards the government. The word demolitions suggests that the government did it, not terrorists. This man actually believed conspiracy theories, not like in *Catch-22* where they are simply humorous.

Texts of this era ~~were~~ commonly questioned humanity and the meaning of life, and John Hersey's new journalistic style of mixing fact

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With fiction ~~and~~ presented the events surrounding the dropping of "Little Boy" on Hiroshima to the world in a new light. Hersey's almost post-Hemingway style of writing uses short sentences which make the ordinary become extraordinary, and without using extensive detail and description we get an idea of the horror felt by the six characters. "~~the~~" "The whitest white she had ever seen", and "a woman with a whole breast sheared off" became meaningful and provoke emotion within us, a result of Hersey's subtle but inherent bias.

Humanity within the novel is ~~presented~~ represented via the character's experience of the bomb, for example Mr Tanimoto had to keep reminding ~~him~~ himself that the "Slimy living bodies" were human. The way these six characters view their survival is very simple, and put down to simple coincidences and chance. This shows the frailty of life, and people's reaction to reading this ~~no~~-story prompted them to question the meaning of life. Catch-22 clearly sends us the message that there is no fixed point for the human condition, self-interest is essentially what will keep you alive.

The world's reaction to ~~the~~ Hiroshima was astounding. People no longer took the words of authority at face value, and they began to question the ethical implications the dropping of the bomb had. They began to wonder, how can we play the role of God and simply eliminate 100 000 lives in an instant?

~~Religion~~ Religion also began to become a questionable ~~and~~ fundamental of society, and in 'Hiroshima' can be seen emphasised by Hersey in his choice of a Methodist pastor and a Jesuit priest for two of his characters.

He questions the sanctity of religion, when he tells of how Father Kleinsorge takes his suitcase full of money and frantically runs past countless ~~and~~ trapped people screaming for help. No matter the morals religion held, with the devastation "people could not comprehend or tolerate a wider circle of misery" ~~than~~ than their own. Biblical references and sometimes almost biblical language is used in Hiroshima, for example "people were too weak to get ~~up~~ and go farther from the burning city", and "the river of death".

The result of the reactions people had to realising the corrupt nature of society and

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humanity led to a sense of paranoia and anxiety, which ~~was~~ prevalent in many texts including Catch-22. Yossarian represents this, as he is so scared of dying, and says "They're all trying to kill me." Cleunger tells him, "they're trying to kill everyone," to which Yossarian replies, "And what difference does that make?"

~~Yossarian~~ ~~also~~ ~~says~~ Paradoxes fill the pages of this novel, with war being a poignant example.

"He was told that he should not kill, and he didn't. Then he was in the army, and was told to kill. So he killed". Yossarian cannot comprehend why anyone wouldn't want to preserve their own life, which is ironic because he is supposed to be ~~really~~ serving his country sacrificially. His confusion is reflected in the narrative structure of the novel being all over the place and not in chronological order, and with humorous contradictions, for example a passage reflecting Yossarian's paranoia reads, "~~They~~ "Strangers he didn't know tried to shoot him everytime he went up in the air to drop bombs on them, and it wasn't funny at all."

Yossarian's refusal to fly any more missions and self-preserving actions like flying over the target twice ~~and~~ lead to his contempt for authority, and readers being able to see the view

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that says society doesn't look after us or protect us, we must help ourselves and trust no one.

This leads to a political reaction ⁱⁿ ~~to~~ the post-WWII era, with the ethics of the bomb fresh in people's minds. An extract from 'Hiroshima' reads "they were the first great experiment of atomic power", the word experiment conjures up images of experimenting on animals, and people at the time of the dropping of the bomb did think like this. They thought nothing of the loss of Japanese life. Hersey's writing style leads us to be sympathetic towards the survivors, and we see the resilience of the Japanese people. They have no hatred ^{towards} ~~for~~ America for doing this to them, they simply get on with their lives with a stoic acceptance, saying "Oh well, it can't be helped" like Mrs Nakamura. This survivor mentality is unifying for the survivors of the bomb, and they call themselves "Hibakusha", ~~meaning~~ meaning survivors of the bomb.

"Fitter, Happier" is a text that confirms the fact that these issues surrounding paranoia and conforming to a set social structure are still present and relevant in ~~so~~ modern day society. The song

uses haunting piano music, and a computerized voice for the lyrics to emphasise how society conforms to a set procedure. Everyone does the same things, considers the same morals right. ~~An extract~~ The song criticises this notion of society, ~~and~~ with an extract reading, "Empty and frantic, Like a cat, Tied to a stick, Driven into frozen winter shit, (the ability to laugh at weakness)".

The extract is cynical of the way people ~~to~~ would ~~that~~ laugh when they hear 'frozen winter shit,' but they have just laughed at the weakness of the people who have done this to the cat. This cynicism and dark view

This cynicism and dark view of the world is reflected in all these texts, with nihilism and the questioning of society and ~~humanity~~ humanity still being relevant in today's society. The ways of thinking represented in all these texts effectively shape our understanding of how we have changed, and the role ~~of~~ that dropping the bomb had in doing this.

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