

CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM IN KEN KESEY'S *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*
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Behind most cultures worldwide is a common aspect amid all of their histories: the presence of a savior. A savior is one who sticks to his own doctrinal beliefs and, often times in a very selfless manner, submits himself to the needs and wishes of his followers. A savior's actions often affect others in a very direct or a very indirect way. An example of a direct action could be the savior's dashing into a blazing structure and saving a trapped infant from the impending fire or the act of putting himself in debt to feed and clothe an ill-fortuned family. An indirect action, though, often occurs when the savior pits himself against a devious and corrupt force in either a forceful or peaceful fashion, yet almost always with the foreknowledge that only imprisonment or death can result. The ultimate return of this action would not so much lead to the relinquishing of former corrupt ways, but it would give faith to those for whom the savior was fighting so they could continue in their struggle against oppression. In both American and English literature, this savior is a common character who often sets the moral tone for a work. Even though the savior comes in many different forms, the life surrounding literature's most renowned savior, Jesus Christ, provides a common structure that many books utilize. One such story soaked in Christian symbolism is *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in which author Ken Kesey often compares and models the main character Randall McMurphy after Christ. Although McMurphy's doctrine and social mores are not quite as fundamental as Christ's, some similar messages break through as he plays savior for the patients of the mental ward of a hospital. Through both direct and indirect acts of servitude on behalf of the fearful patients and against the corrupt Nurse Ratched, McMurphy leads the way to salvation by way of a number of events that parallel Christ's entering of the sinful world, his recruitment and teaching of the disciples, the Pharisees' persecution of him, and his ultimate destruction at the hands of a corrupt and evil opponent.

For there to be a savior somewhat resembling Christ, two things are needed: those needing to be saved and a setting where evil is the dominating force. Upon the entrance of the savior, a sense of selflessness must be acquired as it is his duty to serve the needy and oppressed. McMurphy assimilates himself into the role of a Christ-figure quite quickly, working to heal the patients and present to them the first steps to salvation.

The appearance of Christ in the sinful world¹ and of McMurphy in the manipulating ward² was the beginning of their jobs as messiahs. Before Christ assumed this tedious job, he came to the prophet John the Baptist who, prior to the arrival of Christ, people had often questioned on the issue of whether or not he was the messiah; he had always dutifully replied that he was not the messiah but was indeed a precursor of him.³ In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the

¹ C.I. Scofield, ed., *The Holy Bible, King James Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909), *The New Testament*, Matt. 1.

² Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (New York: Signet, 1962), p. 25.

³ Scofield, *op. cit.*, John 3: 28.

patient Ellis performs a similar role. Ellis is a product of electrotherapy which is a medical procedure just short of lobotomy. As a result, he now adorns the walls with his arms outspread as if the hospital has nailed or crucified him there,⁴ and he serves as a warning to the rest of the patients not to resist the therapeutic power of the hospital. More importantly, though, Kesey uses Ellis as the precursor of McMurphy, foreshadowing the future use of the torture-treatment on McMurphy, the result of which is his 'crucifixion.'⁵ During the Biblical event in which Christ asked to have John the Baptist baptize him, John replied, bewildered, that he had more of a need to have Christ baptize him than the other way around, but, in response, Christ said to do it anyway for the righteousness' sake. John then 'suffered him' by cleansing him with the baptismal waters.⁶ Kesey also alludes to this event, a bit more wittingly, when McMurphy enters the ward shaking hands and making greetings, only to come across the crucified Ellis standing in a puddle of urine. McMurphy then states, in his own version of 'suffer it,' 'My name is R.P. McMurphy and I don't like to see a full-grown man sloshin' around in his own water.'⁷

After Christ's cleansing, he went about and healed the people in need, especially those afflicted with physical ailments, for example a dying leper, a centurion's servant, and a feverish mother.⁸ McMurphy, too, is described as a healer. Bromden, one of the patients on the ward who is receptive to McMurphy's teachings, describes a run-in with a Disturbed-ward patient who asks for his attention:

I couldn't sleep much the rest of the night and I kept seeing those yellow teeth... asking to Look me! Look me!... That face, just a yellow, starved need, come looming out of the dark in front of me, wanting things... asking things. I wondered how McMurphy slept, plagued by a hundred faces like that, or two hundred, or a thousand.⁹

Bromden also witnesses the entrance of McMurphy onto the ward and senses the power emanating from his hand as he greets the patients and shakes their hands. When the two finally get around to shaking hands, Bromden says that his 'hand commenced to feel peculiar and went to swelling up... like [McMurphy] was transmitting his own blood into it.'¹⁰ Perhaps one of Christ's most renowned cases of miracle-healing was the one in which he raised the recently deceased Lazarus from his grave.¹¹ Sticking to the mold, McMurphy, too, 'raises the flesh' of Bromden.¹² Bromden is not dead, but his sexuality is, and the messiah of masculinity, McMurphy, equating

⁴ Kesey, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁶ Scofield, *op. cit.*, Matt. 3: 13-15.

⁷ Kesey, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁸ Scofield, *op. cit.*, Matt. 8.

⁹ Kesey, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹¹ Scofield, *op. cit.*, John 11: 1-12: 11.

¹² Margaret Church and William T. Stafford, eds., *Modern Fiction Studies* (New Jersey: Purdue Research Foundation, 1975), Vol. 2, No. 2, "Ken Kesey's Psychopathic Savior: A Rejoinder," by Robert Forrey, p. 227.

the sexual organ to the soul,¹³ induces Bromden to have an erection¹⁴ by telling titillating tales of women and rekindled manhood.¹⁵ Christ, following his doctrine stating that 'he that is greatest among you shall be your servant,'¹⁶ also acted on behalf of all of his followers and their need at once, rather than just one at a time, and subjected himself to the tortures of crucifixion in order to pay for their sin. McMurphy, too, acts in an indirect fashion submitting himself to pain on behalf of the patients.¹⁷ He breaks Nurse Ratched's office window, cutting his hand,¹⁸ and he later attacks her and rips off her uniform, exposing her femininity, and ultimately sacrificing himself since the response to the attack is his lobotomy. According to Bromden, 'We couldn't stop him because we were the ones making him do it. It wasn't the nurse that was forcing him, it was our need.'¹⁹ The first stages of McMurphy's presence in the fearful domain of the hospital, based on the entrance of Christ into the world, is productive and beneficial to the patients whom he is first introducing to the path of salvation.

To lead mankind to salvation, Christ needed a little more than just miracles, he needed an (almost) unfaltering backing and a receptive audience. With that he recruited the twelve disciples and sent them to cleanse evil spirits and spread the word of the Lord. McMurphy, following suit, does the same by 'recruiting' the patients in the ward as his own disciples whom he then reteaches the arts of their manhood. Even with the miracles, though, Christ and McMurphy both have a hard time convincing everybody of their plausibility, and, eventually, other's doubts lead to their downfalls.

The relation between Christ's disciples and McMurphy's patients is an important one in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Allusions linking the two groups litter the book's pages, some bearing little or no importance and others forming the basis for the rest of the story. One of the first events to transpire between the Christ and the disciples was when he actually recruited them. He taught them his lessons, led them on a trek to salvation, gave them the power to cleanse men,²⁰ and made them 'fishers of men'²¹ so that they could help him lead the rest of mankind to salvation. One locale, for example, where Christ took the disciples to teach them was on a boat in the Sea of Galilee.²² Kesey makes a direct connection with this when McMurphy takes eleven patients and the doctor (thus his twelve 'disciples') on a fishing expedition on the open seas to teach them about manly life and how to reclaim it.²³ Prior to the leaving of the ward, the patient Ellis, who is not going, bids farewell and tells another patient to 'be a fisher of men,'²⁴ directly alluding to Christ's expedition. The trip is a success with the

¹³ Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁴ Kesey, op. cit., pp. 189-190.

¹⁵ Bruce Carnes, Ken Kesey (Caldwell, Texas: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1974), p. 14.

¹⁶ Scofield, op. cit., Matt. 23: 11.

¹⁷ Carnes, loc. cit.

¹⁸ Kesey, op. cit., pp. 172-173.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 267.

²⁰ Scofield, op. cit., Matt. 10: 1.

²¹ Ibid., Matt. 4: 18-19.

²² Ibid., Matt. 8: 23.

²³ Carnes, loc. cit.

²⁴ Kesey, op. cit., p. 198.

capture of fish and an unprecedented outburst of laughter coming from the patients.²⁵ As a messiah of masculinity,²⁶ McMurphy teaches about a manly life consisting of, among other things, whoring, drinking, fishing, and swearing.²⁷ Another very important thing that McMurphy emphasizes is the ability to laugh uninhibitedly. His gospel of laughter²⁸ reaches out to the patients and their senses of humor that an overbearing fear has all but annihilated.²⁹ Through his own observance of the events that take place, Bromden sees how McMurphy watches for the humor in the behavior of the hospital personnel, 'and when he sees how funny it is he goes to laughing, as this aggravates them to no end. He's safe as long as he can laugh... and it works pretty fair.'³⁰ This revives Bromden's memory of his Native American father who also used this tactic when dealing with white businessmen and government men who wanted their land; by laughing uninhibitedly, his father had aggravated and humiliated the greedy white men.³¹ This memory further reinforces McMurphy's teachings and Bromden, even though he still does not have his ability to laugh back yet, realizes that man cannot really be strong until he can finally see the funny side of things.³² From all of this, Bromden, still learning from McMurphy, finally starts to near salvation. This occurs when the McMurphy takes a vote (that wins) on whether to allow the patients to watch the World Series, but Nurse Ratched denies them the privilege. In response, McMurphy leads a strike and assembles the men in front of the blank TV and Nurse Ratched loses her composure and yells at them in a screechy manner³³ that Bromden finds so funny that he almost laughs.³⁴ Bromden is finally on the road to recuperation, though, when an orderly finds his stash of hidden gum and McMurphy makes a joke, at which Bromden chuckles for the first time in years.³⁵ Having gone through his battle against fear and finally regaining his ability to laugh, Bromden remembers what laughter can do,³⁶ all because of McMurphy's help which opens Bromden's eyes to some of the good around him.³⁷ With the advent of Bromden's awareness, McMurphy has already succeeded in following up in some of Christ's footsteps.

Perhaps the most difficult part of Christ's career was his trying to convince others that what he was saying was the truth and getting them to recognize him for who he truly was. McMurphy shares the same sentiment, although, it is more a product of apathy. In literature, one symbol used often to represent Christ is the fish. In fact, in the Greek language the word for fish is ichthys which is an acrostic that stands for Iesous Christos Theou Hyious Soter, or Jesus Christ Son of God Savior.³⁸ This symbol is also seen in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* on

²⁵ Ibid., p. 212.

²⁶ Church, op. cit., p. 226.

²⁷ Kesey, op. cit., pp. 198-199.

²⁸ Margaret L. Hartley, ed., *Southwest Review* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1973), Vol. LVIII, No. 2, "Salvation Through Laughter: Ken Kesey and the Cuckoo's Nest," by Stephen L. Tanner, p. 125.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Kesey, op. cit., p. 104.

³¹ Ibid., p. 86.

³² Ibid., p. 203.

³³ Ibid., p. 128.

³⁴ Hartley, op. cit., p. 131.

³⁵ Kesey, op. cit., pp. 184-185.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 86.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 216.

³⁸ Philip Babcock Gove, Ph.D., ed., *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.:

McMurphy's underwear, which has white whales on it.³⁹ This symbol may identify McMurphy as a Christ-figure to the knowledgeable reader, but the patients in the ward need a little more help. Some of the doubt among Christ's own disciples was shown when, while on a fishing boat, Christ told Peter to cast his fishing nets out into the water at that very moment. After an already unproductive, uneventful day, Peter doubted this carpenter's knowledge about fishing, but threw the nets out anyway. A boat-load of fish was the result, yet Peter still doubted.⁴⁰ Peter was finally won over, though, during a terrible sea storm in which he and his fishing crew was caught. Hearing their cries for help, Christ walked out on the water and bid that Peter come out on the water with him. Peter did so and stood on the water, yet as he neared Christ, the turbulent waters frightened him and he began to sink. Christ then reached out and grasped his hand and stated, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'⁴¹ Bromden, too, doubted and stayed in the 'fog' which enshrouded him, rather than take part in the events that were taking place in the ward.⁴² Bromden is compared to the doubtful Peter and the fog is somewhat compared to the water into which he was sinking. When McMurphy comes around looking for support in a vote, Bromden reports that 'that big red hand of McMurphy's is reaching down into the fog and dropping down and dragging the men up by their hands... dragging them out of the fog.'⁴³ After Christ saved him, Peter finally believed in his powers and recognized him for who he was; Christ asked Peter, 'Whom say ye that I am?' and Peter responded, 'Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God'.⁴⁴ With that and Christ's resurrection, according to the Bible, Peter and the other follower's faith was strengthened; Christ then commanded them to 'teach all nations... to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.'⁴⁵ Bromden also conceded his belief in McMurphy when he stated that he believed McMurphy was a 'giant come out of the sky to save us,'⁴⁶ and, at the end, he proceeded to spread the gospel in the corrupt land after he escaped from the hospital.⁴⁷ He spreads the gospel by being the narrator for this book and telling of the story of McMurphy the savior.⁴⁸ Christ and McMurphy once again both succeed in helping the needy, resulting in the recognition of them as messengers in the employ of the Lord.

Kesey finally draws this chapter of McMurphy's mission to a close with his Last Fling and capture which are quite parallel to Christ's Last Supper and capture. Before Christ was to die for his cause, as he had prophesied, he and the disciples had time to eat the Last Supper, at which Mary Magdalene covered Christ in ointment as a burial rite.⁴⁹ After that, he and the disciples went to Gethsemane to pray, and he confided in them, saying, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful,

Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1986), "Ichthys," p. 1121.

³⁹ Kesey, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

⁴⁰ Scofield, op. cit., Luke 5: 4-5.

⁴¹ Ibid., Matt. 14: 24-31.

⁴² Kesey, op. cit., p. 126.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 124.

⁴⁴ Scofield, op. cit., Matt. 16: 15-16.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Matt. 28: 19-20.

⁴⁶ Kesey, op. cit., p. 224.

⁴⁷ Carnes, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴⁸ Kesey, op. cit., p. 13.

⁴⁹ Scofield, op. cit., Matt. 26.

even unto death.⁵⁰ Christ then went off to pray by himself, leaving the disciples standing guard. After Christ had returned and found them asleep a number of times, he had tried to wake them, but, meanwhile, the Chief Priests had been able to encroach upon their position in order to arrest Christ.⁵¹ With them was Judas Iscariot, one of the less faithful disciples, who betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver by leading the priests to him.⁵² Afterwards, Judas became very sorrowful over his deeds and went and hanged himself.⁵³ In a much similar fashion, McMurphy is given burial rite after Nurse Ratched has sent him to the Disturbed ward for attacking the orderlies. While awaiting Nurse Ratched's next move- which ends up being electrotherapy for McMurphy- the Disturbed ward nurse salves, or puts an ointment on, his knuckles which are bruised from the fight earlier.⁵⁴ The alarm that is shown in Christ's face as he considers the implications of his demise is also shown in McMurphy when, on the way back from the fishing trip, Bromden describes him as appearing 'dreadfully tired and strained and frantic, like there wasn't enough time left for something he had to do.'⁵⁵ McMurphy's 'Last Supper' was much more like a wild Last Fling than a reserved Passover dinner with the addition of beer, drugs, and prostitutes. As the night goes on, McMurphy, Orderly Turkle, and some other patients drink beer, smoke marijuana, and raid the medicine closet while the patient Billy Bibbit goes to a secluded room with a prostitute that McMurphy has provided. With a plan in place that will allow McMurphy to escape and the patients to have an alibi for the mess in ward, McMurphy goes to sleep leaving Orderly Turkle standing guard; Turkle is supposed to wake McMurphy before the day-shift arrives, but, much like what happened to Christ's disciples, the day-shift finds him asleep amid the wreckage of the previous night's party, allowing for the capture of the entire guilty party.⁵⁶ A parallel is drawn between Judas and Billy Bibbit when Nurse Ratched finds Bibbit with the prostitute.⁵⁷ He immediately blames McMurphy and the other patients for his doings the night before, betraying them, and then cuts his neck after Nurse Ratched has left him into the doctor's office unattended.⁵⁸ As a result, McMurphy's influence as a physical force ends there since the hospital finally subjects him to a lobotomy, but the liberation he has provided gives the patients the will to go on under their own free will rather than under the control of the hospital.

The main part of Christ's mission was to inform and educate the people. Amid the social injustices that the Pharisees and Chief Priests forced upon them daily, the people of Israel merely followed along in quiet subservience. When Christ came, though, they listened to his attacks on the Pharisees and their hypocrisy and false statements and, in response, the Pharisees began to plot the extermination of him. McMurphy, too, comes into the fear-infested ward where Nurse Ratched and her unjust rules are based on the Pharisees' hypocrisies, as were made plain by Christ, and her servile patients are compared to Christ's followers in Israel. McMurphy emulates Christ by presenting the other side of the spectrum to the patients and

⁵⁰ Ibid., Matt. 26: 36-38.

⁵¹ Ibid., Matt. 26: 36-47.

⁵² Ibid., Matt. 26: 14-16.

⁵³ Ibid., Matt. 27: 5.

⁵⁴ Kesey, op. cit., p. 233.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 218.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 258-259.

⁵⁷ Church, op. cit., p. 227.

⁵⁸ Kesey, op. cit., pp. 264-266.

teaching them to recognize Nurse Ratched's corruptness.

Kesey instills many of characteristics of the guileful Pharisees in Nurse Ratched and the hospital. In one case Christ condemned the Pharisees and their outward appearance:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness./ Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.⁵⁹

The hospital's white buildings and the staff's white uniforms are much like the 'whited sepulchres' on the outside, though, on the inside, Bromden draws a picture that contrasts that outer cleanliness; he bears witness to the doctor's meetings where he has to clean and mop, and, through his schizophrenia, he perceives a 'green seepage' that covers the entire room and is derived from the doctors' 'fiendish notions.'⁶⁰ Another thing that Christ emphasized was a teaching of God that said, 'I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND NOT SACRIFICE, YE WOULD NOT HAVE CONDEMNED THE GUILTLESS.'⁶¹ This is related in Kesey's book at several occurrences. At one, Bromden witnesses the seizure of one of the patients who, during the entire trauma, lies in the crucified position.⁶² Nurse Ratched comes to his aid and immediately denies any fault in the happening and then goes to blaming him for neglecting to take the pills she has been giving to him; she also claims that she has no knowledge of what he has been doing with the medicine he has been receiving. Bromden, on the other hand, makes it clear that the patient's pill habits are common knowledge on the ward to the other patients and to Nurse Ratched.⁶³ One other occurrence involving Nurse Ratched's condemning of the guiltless is when McMurphy is sent up to the Disturbed ward after attacking the orderlies. She comes to the ward and tries to make him agree to a plea-bargain that will allow for his pardoning if he apologizes for the violence in the shower room; if he does not apologize, though, then she will subject him to electrotherapy.⁶⁴ Nurse Ratched is also often modeled after this teaching of Christ:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves./ Ye shall know them by their fruits.../ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit./ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.⁶⁵

In the first part of the passage, it states that the false prophets come as wolves in sheep's

⁵⁹ Scofield, op. cit., Matt. 23: 27-28.

⁶⁰ Kesey, op. cit., p. 131.

⁶¹ Scofield, op. cit., Matt. 12: 7.

⁶² Kesey, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 235-236.

⁶⁵ Scofield, op. cit., Matt. 7: 15-19.

clothing, and McMurphy and patient Harding present this idea in one of their discussions. The meek Harding describes Nurse Ratched as a wolf who dominates the rabbit-like patients: 'We need a good strong wolf like the nurse to teach us our place.'⁶⁶ The rest of the passage regards the inability of anything evil or corrupt bringing about something good, and vice versa, and relates to the 'therapeutic' group meetings that Nurse Ratched runs. During these discussion sessions she gets the patients to verbally attack each other by insinuating that something one has done was not right, believing that getting it out in the open and kicking it around will positively effect the patient.⁶⁷ McMurphy disagrees with this method which only hurts feelings and makes the patients shrink in shame, and he states in an argument with the brain-washed Harding, 'You really think this crap that went on [here] today is bringing about some kinda cure, doing some kinda good?'⁶⁸ In another discussion the two talk about the electrotherapy procedure, and when McMurphy asks what the purpose of it is, Harding replies in a sarcastic tone, 'Why, the patient's good of course. Everything done here is for the patient's good.'⁶⁹ Through the course of these discussions, though, Harding finally admits that he and the other patients are only fooling themselves and that the nurse's procedures are unnecessary and sometimes cruel.

The Pharisees and Caiaphas' plotting to eliminate Christ is also used in modeling the hospital and Nurse Ratched's reactionary character in response to McMurphy. One of Christ's beliefs regarding persecution is this: 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of Heaven.'⁷⁰ McMurphy uses this same type of approach saying that he is a dedicated man who just wants to play poker and stay single and he finally 'says that he would go about his business if people would just let him,' 'but you know how society persecutes a dedicated man.'⁷¹ It this dedication that both the Pharisees and Nurse Ratched want to demolish. In the Bible, the Pharisees often held secret meetings regarding the issue of Christ.⁷² They finally decided on the death⁷³ of Christ only after the high priest, Caiaphas, had declared that the other's fears and ideas were completely wrong.⁷⁴ Similarly, the doctors at the hospital hold meetings that Nurse Ratched heads and where they discuss and diagnose McMurphy's condition and what can be done about him.⁷⁵ They finally come to the conclusion that the most effective way to deal with McMurphy is to let time humble him, but only after Nurse Ratched, much like Caiaphas, has condemned the other doctors ideas on McMurphy.⁷⁶

A crucifixion, of some sort, of the savior is a common aspect in literature. McMurphy follows up in the same fashion when the hospital finally decides to punish him for challenging its authority just as Christ was punished by the Pharisees and Chief Priests.

In the Bible, Christ was crucified at the supposed wishes of the crowd that had come to

⁶⁶ Kesey, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 163.

⁷⁰ Scofield, op. cit., Matt. 5: 10.

⁷¹ Kesey, op. cit., p. 24.

⁷² Scofield, op. cit., Matt. 22: 15.

⁷³ Ibid., John 11: 47-53.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Kesey, op. cit., pp. 131, 137.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 135-136.

hear the proceedings, although, only because the Chief Priest's had urged the easily manipulated multitude to ask for death.⁷⁷ The patients of the ward also betray McMurphy in the same way only because Nurse Ratched can easily coerce them when McMurphy is not present.⁷⁸ At Christ's trial, the governor Pontias Pilate headed the trial and, having to fulfill the wishes of the multitude, ordered the crucifixion of Christ, but, having seen that Christ was a just man, he washed his hands and claimed that he was 'innocent of the blood of this just person.'⁷⁹ When McMurphy goes to the Disturbed ward prior to his first electrotherapy treatment, he is confronted by an old man who states, 'I wash my hands of the whole deal.'⁸⁰ In saying this, Kesey is directly relating him to Pilate in that he is in no way personally responsible for the fate of McMurphy, and he serves, as well, to alert the reader to the nature of the punishment the hospital is about to submit McMurphy to.⁸¹ Christ's final demise was by way of crucifixion; a crown of thorns was mockingly placed upon his head and he was nailed to a cross.⁸² McMurphy, in a similar fashion, is strapped to the electrotherapy table that is cross-shaped⁸³ and a headband of sparks, through which the electrical current is sent, is placed on his head.⁸⁴ Before the procedure, a seemingly fearless McMurphy himself refers directly to Christ's crucifixion when he states, 'Anointest my head with conductant. Do I get a crown of thorns?'⁸⁵ Even though this is not the actual end of the physical McMurphy as it was for the physical Christ, it is definitely the beginning of the end as he starts to rapidly deteriorate afterwards. Despite the ill-effects of the electrotherapy, McMurphy keeps them hidden so that he can still maintain the patients' faith and determination up until their ultimate liberation.

The characterization used in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is all but original. Kesey purposely uses Christian symbolism in close concordance with the acts of McMurphy, turning the story into a modern-day Christ-story with a twist. Even though McMurphy's obscenities and compulsiveness do not quite match Jesus' love and tender mercy, he leads the patients to the rediscovery of their own manhood and ultimately to their own salvation. McMurphy is a true savior who is dedicated to his followers' struggle and to his doctrine of masculinity.

⁷⁷ Scofield, *op. cit.*, Matt. 27: 20.

⁷⁸ Kesey, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236.

⁷⁹ Scofield, *op. cit.*, Matt. 27: 2, 23-24.

⁸⁰ Kesey, *op. cit.*, p. 232

⁸¹ Carnes, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁸² Scofield, *op. cit.*, Matt. 27: 28-29, 35-37.

⁸³ Kesey, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

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