

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest: Novel into Film

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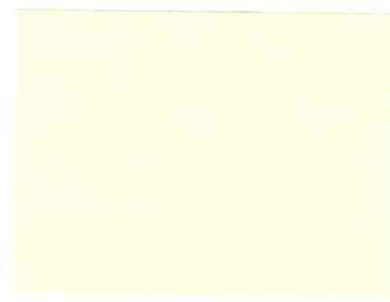
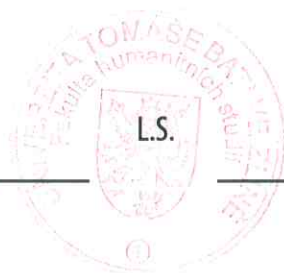
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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce pojednává o rozdílech mezi románem Kena Keseyho *Přelet nad kukaččím hnízdem* a filmem Miloše Formana z roku 1975. Hlavním účelem je poukázat na přesné alternace a určit důvody, proč byly tyto změny provedeny, s ohledem na záměr a vizi. Na téma románu Kena Keseyho již bylo provedeno mnoho výzkumů, ale jen málo lidí se ponořilo do podtónů oceňované adaptace Miloše Formana. První část nastiňuje obecné pozadí obou umělců a teorii adaptace. Druhá část teoretizuje o skrytých zprávách a tématech prezentovaných v obou verzích příběhu a porovnává tyto dva diskurzy na sémantické úrovni. Srovnání hlavních dějových bodů a postav nám prozrazuje, že určité části jsou věrně zachované románu; bylo ovšem provedeno mnoho změn tak, aby vyhovovaly Formanově narativní a tvůrčí vizi, zejména s ohledem na postavy Náčelníka Bromdena a Randla P. McMurphyho.

Klíčová slova: adaptace, román, Ken Kesey, Miloš Forman, *Přelet nad kukaččím hnízdem*

ABSTRACT

This paper covers the differences between Ken Kesey's novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and the 1975 movie by Miloš Forman. The main purpose of this paper is to point out the exact alternations and pinpoint with what intention and vision in mind these changes were made. Much research has been done on the topic of Ken Kesey's novels, however not many delved into the undertones of Miloš Forman's award-winning adaptation. The first part outlines the basic background of both artists and fundamental theory of adaptation. Second section theorizes on the hidden messages and themes presented in both versions of the story and compares the two discourses on a semantic level. The comparisons of the main plot points and characters tell us that certain parts are kept faithful to the novel; however, many alterations were made to fit Forman's narrative and creative vision, especially considering characters Chief Bromden and Randle P. McMurphy.

Keywords: adaptation, novel, Ken Kesey, Miloš Forman, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

Psychological asylums are misrepresented and dramatized in literature and film and usually aren't the focus of the story but serve only as a tool for character development. This precedent is broken in Ken Kesey's novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* as the asylum creates an uneasy atmosphere and drags the spectator or reader into the story itself. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the asylum is a metaphor for the real world, where the asylum's workers represent a so-called "combine" (the government) which is described as one big machine. While the "combine" is the government, the mentally challenged are the citizens under the iron hand of Nurse Ratched. Another interpretation of the asylum, which is a symbol for a 'closed' society, could be a death camp, as it is described in the novel by Randall McMurphy who was previously in one, thus making the connection. The asylum is portrayed as a machine that destroys individualism in each of the patients so they can fit into the machine as cogs and move society forward. This phenomenon can be seen by following the story of Randall McMurphy who symbolizes resistance which leads him into an abyss where he eventually loses his mind. The book was written in the 1960s when the means of treatments of the patients in these institutions were highly controversial and bordered on the unethical, especially regarding lobotomy which befalls McMurphy at the very end.

The book is heavily inspired by Ken Kesey's own experiences as he was a part of a government project where students were paid to test psychedelic drugs. These experiences can be witnessed in the form of asylum and its patients. He himself worked in an asylum itself for a while. Ken Kesey also regularly visited a Native American reservation with his father as a kid and saw the slow destruction of the village by the corporate institutions. This concept is portrayed by the memories of Chief Bromden and his recollections of the past.

We can see the clear influence of the cold war in which the American government declared a war on communism. McMurphy can be also interpreted in this fashion as the American government fighting for freedom against the tyrannical and authoritarian Nurse Ratched who represents communist ideology, due to her manipulation of the rules and of the patients as well.

This type of thinking can be linked to the movie's director Miloš Forman as well as he fled from the Czech Republic which was under the communist regime at that time. Forman's other movies explore this similar topic of freedom and totalitarian regime. Great examples could be *The People vs. Larry Flynt*, *Hair*, or *Goya's Ghosts*, all of which deal with similar settings and social issues. Miloš Forman created these movies to spread awareness

of the dangers of totalitarian regimes as he himself had to flee from them thus making him value his freedom even more than your average American. As Forman said in an interview in 2008: “The Communist Party was my Big Nurse”. This quote itself speaks volumes on Forman’s stance towards these ideas and how it corresponds with Kesey’s views.

Recreating a world and a story depicted in a different medium is a process that undergoes many individual interpretations and multiple answers to questions like “What will be omitted? How do we portray this exact feeling of this character? Do we change the character’s motivation or his role in the movie? How do we condense the book into a few hours of screen time while still displaying the creators’ message?”

Answers to these questions will lead to the finalization of the adaptation according to the vision of the creator of the new discourse. As I mentioned before, Kesey and Forman had matching views on subjects described in Kesey’s novel. Forman knew how and in what way to utilize these ideas and create an Oscar-winning masterpiece while abiding by the original text.

It is impossible to create an adaptation that will suit all fans of the original work, as each person has their own subjective opinion on how the adaptation should look like in their mind. *Lord of the Rings* is a good example, which has won 11 Oscars and is universally accepted as a successful trilogy, is it truly a good adaptation? Hardcore fans might tell you otherwise, because most characters, plots, and world elements were changed to suit the movie genre. The fact that both sign systems require something different must be understood to truly grasp the scope of adaptation.

It's always difficult to recreate the descriptive parts of the book through the film media. The human mind is a wonderful tool that creates the picture of the described event and sticks to it throughout the entire book. That’s also why people often complain about the looks of characters and places when the movie adaptation comes out. The actors usually read the book and try to understand the role they play in the story and portray them in the manner the director and themselves see fit. The score plays an immense part in the movie, setting the tone, and showing us how the characters feel or how we, the audience, should feel.

To my best knowledge, very few publications can be found in the literature that addresses the issue of adaptation of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and its distinctions.

Recently we can notice a spike in adaptations, reboots, or remakes which has become a norm nowadays due to their high monetary value. Figuring out what makes a good adaptation is nearly impossible as changing the sign system from novel to movie can be a tricky process that may result in a complete butchering of the original text as we learn time and time again.

This thesis will target the exact differences between the original novel and the adaptation of the same name by Miloš Forman. A short part of the thesis deals with a summary of both authors and the story and a theoretical part describing the basic terminology of adaptation and semiology of text and film.

The paper is targeted at others interested in the art of adaptation who would like to delve into the problem of this specific art form and perhaps expand upon it, finding new connections or references to the original discourse.

The thesis starts with the question “How different is the movie from the original book” a question that can be applied to any successful or unsuccessful adaptation, in this case however it applies to the adaptation of the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. The analysis itself would be the answer.

The first part, as I mentioned, focuses on both authors respectively, establishing their historical background and their motives that lead them to create their works of art. This is crucial to fully understand and comprehend what led both artists to create such works. I will also refer to other papers talking about the life and the work of both authors, highlighting the most important concepts.

Section II outlines the basic terminology of film adaptation and the methods used while analyzing the discourses. This chapter is necessary to lay the groundwork for the next section.

Section III will be devoted to the analysis itself. Covering the range of differences within the movie to convey the basic disparities within the discourse. The third section logically follows the theoretical part and the terminology. I will try to construct an objective image, carefully listing the reasoning behind the changes made.

Section IV summarizes the results of this paper and draws conclusions.

I. THEORY

1 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

This chapter looks closer at the individual lives of both Ken Kesey and Miloš Forman, thus helping us understand what motivated them to create such memorable works of art. The second part of this chapter appertains to the historical context of the artworks, this thesis discusses in detail.

1.1 Ken Kesey and Miloš Forman

Ken Kesey was an American writer, born on September 17 in 1935, La Junta, Colorado. “He was raised by his dairy farmer parents in rugged Springfield, Oregon, where he grew to be a star wrestler and football player.” (Biography 2016).

He developed a love for theatre; however, he received a Fred Lowe Scholarship due to his accomplishments in wrestling. He was also considered “a hero of the countercultural revolution and the hippie movement of the 1960s.” (“Ken Kesey | American Author | Britannica” 2022).

Kesey married his high school sweetheart Norma Faye Haxby in 1956, and after briefly considering a career as an actor, he relocated to Palo Alto, California, when he won a scholarship to Stanford University's graduate program in writing. Thanks to this program, he met a few of his lifelong friends and fellow writers Larry McMurty, Robert Stone, Wendell Berry and Ken Babbs.

One of the most influential experiences Kesey undertook was volunteering as a paid test subject at the Veterans Administration Hospital, where they tested the effects of mind-altering drugs. Later, to earn extra money, Kesey took on a job as a night attendant at the Psychiatric ward at the same hospital he was volunteering as a test subject, where he also worked on his new novel “*Zoo*”. “Watching the patients there convinced him that they were locked into a system that was the very opposite of therapeutic, and it provided the raw material for “*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.” (Lehmann-Haupt 2022)

These events culminated in his most famous novel “*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*”, year-later turned into a theatre and after that adapted by Miloš Forman into film. After he finished his next work “*Sometimes a Great Notion*”, where he focused on values connected with conflict and which was also adapted into a movie, he wrote about his travels with the Merry Pranksters group, *Kesey's Garage Sale*, *Demon Box*, and *The Further Inquiry*.

In 1988 he finished his first children's book titled *Little Tricker the Squirrel Meets Big Double the Bear*. Kesey and his 13 graduates from the creative writing course at the University of Oregon put together a mystery novel called *Caverns* under the pen name O.U Levon, which meant backwards novel University Oregon.

He settled down with his family at his father's farm and in 1992 he published a comedy novel *Sailor Song*. Two years later he finished his last western-oriented novel *Last Go Round* and died on November 10, 2001, at the age of 66.

Jan Tomáš "Miloš" Forman, born February 18, 1932, was a famous Czechoslovakian film director, screenwriter, professor, and an actor. He played an important part in the Czech New Wave and "was known primarily for the distinctively American movies that he made after his immigration to the United States." ("Milos Forman | Biography, Movies, & Facts | Britannica" 2022)

When he was five, he saw his first silent movie in his hometown Čáslavice which sparked his interest in movies. Both of his parents were taken to concentration camps by the Gestapo. This traumatic event was one of the foundation stones of his hate and criticism of the authoritative regime, a theme that can be observed in his late films. (Šmídmej 2009)

Forman studied and graduated from the Film Faculty of the Academy of Arts in Prague. After his graduation he wrote two screenplays: *Nechte to na mně* (1955; *Leave it to me*) and *Štěňata* (1958; *Cubs*). His first breakthrough was *Černý Petr* (1964; *Black Peter*) a film about Czechoslovakian youth culture, working class, social lifestyle and his second key movie was *Lásky jedné plavovlásky* (1965; *Loves of a Blonde*) with a similar topic and overall pacing; the latter received an Academy Award nomination for a foreign-language movie. This development put him on people's radars and made him a respected young director. The next film he directed was titled *Hoří, má panenko* (1967; *The Firemen's Ball*), which emphasized moral and social issues in Czechoslovakia and was promptly banned by the Communists after the invasion in 1968. ("Milos Forman | Biography, Movies, & Facts | Britannica" 2022)

By that time, Forman was in America directing *Taking Off* (1971) which was a box office failure, as the style he was known for was not suitable for the American audience. Due to this fact, Forman was desperate and basically broke. Michael Douglas, whose father Kirk Douglas, owned the rights to create a film adaptation of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

(1975), asked Forman to direct the movie and he immediately accepted. The movie was an all-around success and became the second movie to win all five significant Academy Awards. His next movie was an adaptation of a Broadway musical *Hair* (1979), which had positive reviews, however, was not financially successful. *Ragtime* (1981), Forman's next movie is an American drama film based on a novel of the same name by E.L. Doctorow. Another Forman's film that won an Oscar was *Amadeus* (1984) with Tom Hulce and F. Murray Abraham in lead roles. After a five-year break Forman directed *Valmont* (1989) starring Colin Firth and Annette Bening. His last films were *The People vs. Larry Flynt* (1996), *Man on the Moon* (1999) and *Goya's Ghosts* (2006).

Miloš Forman died at the age of 86 due to an unspecified illness at the Danbury Hospital in Connecticut.

1.2 Historical context of novel and film

The important term that defines Kesey and his colleagues at the time is Beats, stemming from the Beats movement started by Jack Kerouac, who lived a bohemian lifestyle. Consequently, the term Beatnik was created to belittle and connect said group of people to communists, due to the recently launched Soviet Union Satellite, Sputnik, and their care-free attitude, effectively creating a counterculture to the conservatives at that time. (Wills 2016)

Ken Kesey's experience with psychedelic substances and his Beat way of life, sparked an interest in writing a novel set in a similar mental ward he was tested at the time. Thus, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was written. In 1992's interview, Kesey was asked what the message of the story was, Kesey answered: "it's the same message that's in all my books, that the small can overcome the little by outsmarting it." However, later adaptations took different parts of the novel and turned them into something different, although keeping true to this quote to some extent. (Kesey 1992)

In 1962 the rights to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* were acquired by Kirk Douglas as he wanted to create a stage adaptation. Dale Wasserman was hired to write this play as he was also trying to buy aforementioned rights. After a positive response in Boston, the play went to Broadway, where it failed horribly, starring Kirk Douglas as R.P. McMurphy. Nevertheless, the play became successful over time and inspired the award-winning movie of Miloš Forman. The Broadway play was thereafter revived in 2001 starring Gary Sinise and in 2004 it was profitably staged in London. (Vallance 2009)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest was adapted to screen by Miloš Forman and co-produced by Michael Douglas and Saul Zaentz with Jack Nicholson as R.P. McMurphy and Louise Fletcher as the "Big Nurse". Forman remembers that Kirk Douglas sent him *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and wanted him to direct the movie, however the book was confiscated at customs. Years later when they met in America, Forman pitched him his draft of the adaptation and soon after was accepted as the director. (Rafferty 2008)

As expected, many of the institutions declined the offer, due to the negative and dramatic outlook on hospitals and their procedures, however Oregon State Hospital agreed and even let the filmmakers involve some of its patients as extras. The actors were tasked to learn the movements and gestures from these patients, creating a genuine atmosphere in the movie. This collaboration be that as it may was not left without an incident when one of the crew members left a window open, causing one of the patients to fall out of it and injuring himself. (Dee 2020)

Another issue was tied to the casting choices, as Indians are usually of a rather smaller dimension and Forman wanted the actor of "Chief Bromden" to be as tall as he was described in the book. This complication was resolved by sheer stroke of luck, when a friend of Michael Douglas saw William Sampson Jr. in an auto shop, who later on portrayed Chief Bromden in the film. (Šmídmejst 2009)

Also connected with the casting difficulties was that no actress wanted to play the part of the evil "Big Nurse". Multiple popular actresses: Jane Fonda, Anne Bancroft, Audrey Hepburn and many others were asked to play nurse Ratched, yet everyone declined until Louise Fletcher accepted. (Dee 2020)

The finished film won top five nominations for the Academy Awards including: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress and Writing Adapted Screenplay of Lawrence Hauben and Bo Goldman. In addition to the Academy Awards, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* won six nominations for the Golden Globes and six BAFTA awards. (Nashawaty 2018)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest became an instant classic, thanks to the talent of everyone included in the making of the film. It was a great adaptation, every actor played their part near perfectly, and the director Miloš Forman had a clear vision which he followed. Jack Nicholson was the ideal choice for R.P. McMurphy. "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest was the first film to fully show Nicholson's range. He's charming, annoying, scary and

pitiable as McMurphy initially challenges Ratched for control of the ward and eventually loses to her and the corrupt system.” (Michael Gallucci 2020)

Although the movie was successful all around, Kesey was not happy with the adaptation, in the wake of casting choices. He was not thrilled with Jack Nicholson portraying R.P. McMurphy and did not appreciate the change of “Chief Bromden” not being in the role of the story narrator. Another reason was that some of the promises were not kept by the filmmakers. Due to these facts a lawsuit was filed against the film production. (*The New York Times* 2022)

2 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL'S STORY

To understand the movie adaptation, we need to quickly recapitulate the story.

The book's plot starts with the arrival of a new patient R.P. McMurphy who is pretending to be mentally challenged to avoid work. He brings a fresh view on how the "Big Nurse" Ratched controls everything and everyone and rules with her iron fist, intimidating the ward's patients by possible shock therapy or lobotomy. The whole story is described by Chief Bromden who, similarly to McMurphy pretends he can not talk nor listen, however some of the parts of the book could suggest he suffers from PTSD as he was in war before, thus making him an unreliable narrator. Chief could also suffer from schizophrenia because he feels like everyone is out to get him.

McMurphy, who loves to gamble, bets that he can break Miss Ratched by the end of the week, hence begins the mental warfare between McMurphy and the "Big Nurse". Throughout this battle of wills, we get plenty of the Chief's flashbacks, where we learn about his past, including his electrician training, war service, his Indian village where he grew up, his father, etc. The reader also experiences many delusions and hallucinations from the medications and Chief's deranged mind, seeing the "combine" at work, killing patients and the fog machine clouding Chief's mind.

Over the time, McMurphy realizes he might be in the ward for good. He thought he would serve his sentence and be released, and he becomes more defeated and secluded causing Cheswick, a patient who loved his fight against nurse Ratched, to drown. The stakes are raised after a plethora of incidents including breaking of the nursery window, a boat trip to boost the Chief's ego and the fight with the ward's staff members. Chief and McMurphy who become good friends over the book's storyline, share similar traits and are put through electrotherapy.

The story culminates in a farewell party, where McMurphy smuggles prostitutes and alcohol to the ward. The aftermath is dire, because they all fall asleep and wake up in the morning, just in time for the ward's staff to come in. Billy, a shy patient who fell in love with one of the prostitutes, is found naked in a room with her and Miss Ratched shames him so rigorously he commits suicide, causing McMurphy to attack Miss Ratched. McMurphy is promptly lobotomized and then "saved" by Chief Bromden, who suffocates him with a pillow. Chief then escapes and runs off over the hills.

3 ADAPTATION AND SEMIOLOGY

The following section is about adaptation and semiology and terms connected to both phenomena.

Adaptation is an art form in itself, as creating a faithful and successful adaptation to please both the readers and film studios requires extensive knowledge of both worlds. Directors cannot just take the novel as a script and begin filming, the scriptwriter must make important decisions on what to keep in the movie and what to cut out, essentially stripping the book to the core, while still maintaining certain aspects of the original work. Golden rule for scriptwriters is to keep the script around 120 pages, which compared to standard 300 plus pages long novels might seem like a Herculean task, however there are successful adaptations, for example: *Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003), *The Shining* (1980), *Harry Potter* (2001-2011), *Forest Gump* (1994), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Shawshank's Redemption* (1994) or contemporary *Dune* (2021). (Jones 2010, 31)

Furthermore, creating a movie could be arguably more difficult than writing a book, not to disparage the work and thought that it takes to write an influential and culturally rich novel, but it is usually a one-man job, whereas film takes hundreds of people to produce. Nonetheless, the novel is a more personalized message of the author and his vision of the story he has created and written, which can be lost when a substantial movie studio buys the license and turns it into profit without any effort. Despite that, there are still directors who put passion into their projects and have an exact vision for the movie and work together with every department to bring this vision to the cinema screen.

It should be noted that publishing a book, costs vastly less than producing a movie and the movie industry is much more sensitive to box office flops, thus perpetuating an economically oriented franchises like Marvel or Star Wars, to create one similar and commercially successful movie after another, virtually sterilizing the art of filmmaking in its broader sense. As a result of this fact, safe bet movies which are undoubtedly going to bring money, come first before a real thought-provoking art piece, which is why books, if we omit indie movies that is, are arguably better at conveying proper and original story or meaning.

According to James Monaco (Monaco 2000, 44-45), film is more limited as it operates in real time, whereas novels can end whenever they want. But commercial movies cannot recreate the range of the novel in time, due to the range of screenplay spanning 125-150 pages. However, the movie has "pictorial possibilities" that the novel does not possess.

Monaco (2000, 46) also writes about the freedom to choose from the number of details portrayed in film and the driving tension being the relationship between the materials of the story and the narration of it making film a much richer experience. It is obvious that each media has their own positives and negatives.

Let us look at semiology, which was defined by a Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Semiology also known as semiotics is the study of signs and their usage behavior. Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher presented a theory that semiotics was anchored in pragmatism and logic and defined a sign as “something which stands to somebody for something.” (“Semiotics | Definition, Theory, Examples, & Facts | Britannica” 2022)

This means that linguistics becomes another area of the more general study of systems of signs, thus semiotics or semiology and film, although it does not have grammar, does have a system of “codes”. Hence, each film, and art in general, can be divided into signs and codes which convey meaning. (Monaco 2000, 64)

Two famous quotes, the first by James Monaco: “Film is not a language, but is like language” (2000, 157) and the second by Christian Metz: “A film is difficult to explain because it is easy to understand” (Metz [1974] 1991), speak volumes about how the sign system in movies can be misinterpreted or strenuous to comprehend. That is one of the reasons Peter Wollen borrowed C.S Peirce’s trichotomy of signs and suggested that cinematic signs are of three orders: icons, indices, and symbols. Icons represent a given object by its similarity to it. An index is a sign of an existential bond between the sign itself and its object. Peirce gave an example of a man with a gait, that would be probable evidence that the man is a sailor. Lastly, the symbol, described as a sign that does not need neither resemblance to its object nor any existential bond with it. Peter Wollen explains this phenomena followingly: “You can write down the word “star”, but that does not make you the creator of the word, nor if you erase it have you destroyed the word. The word lives in the minds of those who use it.” (Wollen [1969] 1972, 122-123)

4 REPRESENTATION OF CHARACTERS

The first section of the practical part deals with the depiction of each character from the novel and the movie and compares them both physically and psychologically. However, the narrator Bromden from the novel could be considered unreliable due to the sheer volume of hallucinogenic passages spanning the entire book. Not so in the movie, considering Chief Bromden was not established as psychotic and was even removed as the narrator and switched to the position of supporting role with R.P. McMurphy.

4.1 “Chief Broom” Bromden

“Chief Broom” Bromden is the narrator of the novel, he is six feet to six feet eight inches tall as the book switches between his height throughout but due to him being bullied by the “black boys”, making him sweep the ward (thus the “Broom” nickname), he thinks he is small. That changes when McMurphy helps him regain his confidence, consequently making him “big” again. (Kesey 187-188, Pt I)

Another trope connected with Bromden is the fog on his mind essentially symbolizing his mental state, which becomes thicker as he falls into schizophrenia and thinner as McMurphy brings joys of life back and makes the asylum more bearable. The fog also appears in Chief’s military service flashbacks where he draws parallels with the similar techniques used in the army to mask a secret activity or to hide a target. (Kesey 112, Pt I)

Bromden comes from a small tribe of Inuits, where he lived with his father, Chinook tribal Chief Tee Ah Milatoona (meaning The Pine That Stands Tallest on the Mountain) and his mother, a white woman, Mary Louise Bromden. The tribe’s primary livelihood was fishing salmon, but the tribe was forced to sell the land to build a dam, this resulted in Chief’s father becoming an alcoholic and he became “small” like Chief.

Bromden tried to adapt to the new world by playing high school football, shortly attending college studying electronics, and eventually seeing combat in World War II, where he experienced a psychotic breakdown, thus, ending up in the mental asylum. There, he started pretending deafness and dumbness to trick others not to engage with him, effectively cutting himself from the rest of the world. One of the reasons was that Bromden was often ignored and treated like a child and his Indian heritage did not help in that matter as Indians were looked down on patronizingly. However, he utilizes his deafness to his advantage because he frequently overhears important staff conversations. (Connor 2011)

Chief describes the ward as “the combine” an entity that commands everyone to generate corporate interest and treats its workers like cogs in a mechanism, a metaphor for systematic forms of oppression that shape the world. Combine is tied to the previously mentioned “fog”, on account of the “fog” being one of the tools the combine uses on its laborers. All of Chief’s narration, which is unreliable, imaginative, non-linear, and psychotic can be tied to the Indian mythical figure deeply embedded in the indigenous culture, “the trickster” that is known for its tricks, wreaking havoc and all-around chaotic actions. We can easily connect the two. (Connor 2011)

The character of Chief Bromden first saw the light of day after Kesey’s drug fueled afternoon when he came to him in his delirium. Despite not having met a single Indian in his life, he associated peyote (the drug he was taking) with a certain tribe in the southwest. Kesey later changed his comments about the knowledge of Indians and revealed an encounter which undeniably inspired him in constructing Chief’s backstory. “My father used to take me to the Pendleton Roundup in northern Oregon. He would leave me there for a couple of days. I spent time hanging around the Indians living in the area. I used to take the bus back down through the Columbia River Gorge where they were putting in The Dalles Dam to provide electricity to that part of Oregon so the fields could be irrigated. But it was also going to flood the Celilo Falls, an ancient fishing ground along the Columbia. The government was using scaffolding to build the dam. When I first came to Oregon, I’d see Indians out on the scaffolds with long tridents stabbing salmon trying to get up the falls. The government had bought out their village, moved them across the road where they built new shacks for them. “(Ken Kesey 1994)

If we look at Bromden’s portrayal in the film adaptation, we discover that Bromden’s character and story beats related to him stay vaguely similar. The biggest notable change is the omission of Chief’s narration, which causes McMurphy to be the protagonist of the movie. Adapting inner monologues can be a tricky job to do properly in films, making this change understandable.

Forman wanted to present Chief’s physical side as faithfully as he could and with a stroke of luck, he found a perfect actor for the job: Will Sampson. Will Sampson was a bull-rider and a painter of Muscogee descent. After his role in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, he gained recognition and respect and thus started appearing in more major movies such as: *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976), *Orca* (1977), *Firewalker* (1986), *Poltergeist II* (1986) or *Fish Hawk* (1979). (Michener 2012)

Sampson tried to give Indian children a hero to look up to, as there were not many Indian characters painted in positive colours at that time. “There are no Indian heroes for the children, all their heroes are dead, Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, Sitting Bull and all the great Chiefs, they’re all gone”. (Sampson 1975) He even founded the “American Indian Registry for the Performing Arts” for indigenous actors. (Robb 2014)

We can see this kindred message both in the novel and the movie, showing us a different side of Indian culture and helping us understand their struggles trying to preserve their lifestyle or the polar opposite of integrating into the white society. Bromden is in both camps, therefore shedding light on the trying times the ingenious population had to go through.

Chief is, however, portrayed as a sane person in the film, as all the schizophrenic passages are cut. Simultaneously most of Chief’s backstory is discarded, except his father, but overall Bromden acts very faithfully to the novel, sweeping the ward, pretending he’s deaf and dumb but ultimately watered down. At the end, he still arrives at the same conclusions as he does in the book, that is, standing up to the system and escaping the asylum.

4.2 Randle Patrick McMurphy

Randle Patrick McMurphy is the opposite of Chief Bromden, loud, outgoing, dirty-minded, and confident con man. He brings back life to the ward with his antics and perpetually dismantles Nurse Ratched’s command over the patients. However, he does have one thing common with Chief, and that is him pretending to be insane to get out of the hard work at the labour farm where he was assigned in order to avoid a prison sentence on account of his countless fights and sexual deviance.

He is described as a red-haired person with many tattoos across his body accompanied by numerous bruises and scars thanks to his hot-headed nature. Another defining feature would be his brutish stature supported by his hooligan-like style of clothing. An important aspect of his clothing are his boxers “*coal black satin covered with big white whales with red eyes*” (Kesey 74, Pt I), which he was given by Oregon State Literary major “because she said I was a symbol” (Kesey 74, Pt I). These boxers remind us of Moby Dick and Captain Ahab, an important icon in American literature. One of the interpretations could suggest Murphy’s sexuality as he proudly reveals them to the whole ward to see, showing us, he is sexually promiscuous. Another connection we can make is comparing Moby-Dick to Nurse Ratched and Captain Ahab to Randle and his sheer insane pursuit to come out victorious over the big nurse.

Although Murphy might seem slightly simple-minded, his antics prove otherwise, as he robs all his fellow patients' blind with his card knowledge and multitude of bets playing them like a fiddle. This shows that even though he wants others to perceive him as a fool he is ultimately capable of outsmarting just about anyone as we are proven throughout the book.

McMurphy represents freedom, as he tries to bring interesting activities to the patients, which could possibly be therapeutic. This nevertheless infuriates Ratched due to her controlling nature and here comes an important question: is the order or chaos more therapeutic for the patients? Both are shown in extremes; thus, none would seem correct. Conversely, this topic is not covered in my thesis, but indeed it is an interesting question to ponder.

Yet another resemblance we can spot about McMurphy in the novel are the obvious references to him becoming a martyr just like Jesus Christ who can bring salvation to the ward. He becomes a spiritual mentor for the patients, helping them with their psychological state, curing Billy's stutter, making Bromden "big" again or genuinely trying to help Harding. McMurphy even jokingly refers to himself as Jesus getting "crown of thorns" (Kesey 244, Pt IV) when he is brought to the EST room. The EST machine is mentioned by Harding as a "table, shaped, ironically, like a cross, with a crown of electric sparks in place of thorns" (Kesey 62, Pt I). McMurphy eventually does "sacrifice" himself and becomes a symbol of resistance and a legend among the patients, strengthening their struggle against Nurse Ratched.

Ironically, it took a psychiatric hospital for McMurphy to lose his mind.

Despite Kesey's wish to have Eugene Hackman play the role of McMurphy, Forman went with Jack Nicholson, one of the reasons being Nicholson having studied the novel beforehand and even wanted to buy the rights to make a film, however Kirk Douglas was faster. Whilst Nicholson does not look exactly like McMurphy did in the novel, he still carries over many aspects, for example, McMurphy's roguish charm and overall personality. Forman however, decided to play into McMurphy's positive characteristics more, making him a protagonist of the film while keeping him morally grey even black in regards of the statutory rape and his relationship with women overall.

Coming back to his physical side, besides the obvious lack of red hair, Nicholson is not as muscular and old as he is supposed to be in the novel, these are of course details which are often if not always drastically changed to support the director's vision. Nevertheless, his

clothes are rather fitting and visually striking, especially compared to the sterile white clothes of the ward's personnel and patients.

Nicholson's range of facial expression is perfectly utilized, since a good portion of scenes are tailored to capture the faces of patients. We can easily understand what is going inside his head just from looking at his grimace, which is helpful as he connects the audience to the mental institution and immerses them into the world, guiding us through the experience. Although he is far from a "normal" person he still is the closest individual the audience can identify with.

During the period *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was filmed, Nicholson was often improvising in his parts, which was a perfect fit for Forman because when he was filming his older Czech movies, he used non-actors and let them improvise, culminating in hilarious and well-acted moments. Nicholson recalls a scene from the movie when talking at AFI's Night at Movies in 2007, when McMurphy is in the director's office for the first time. That whole sequence was unscripted, and the actor of the director was a real mental hospital director, and that he was trying to impress his daughter who was there. Another scene Nicholson mentions is the basketball game and the spontaneous act of Danny DeVito throwing the ball at the fence instead of passing to others, causing everyone to burst out laughing.

4.3 Nurse Ratched

Nurse Ratched, or "Big Nurse", is the antagonist of the story, depicted as an older woman with pale skin, grey hair, "and each finger the same color as her lips. Funny orange" (Kesey 4, Part I). Best described by Chief: "Her face is smooth, calculated, and precision-made, like an expensive baby doll, skin like flesh-colored enamel, blend of white and cream and baby-blue eyes, small nose, pink little nostrils-everything working together except the color on her lips and fingernails, and the size of her bosom." (Kesey 6, Part I). Her large bosom symbolizes the little she has left as a woman, almost shameful that she possesses such an undeniably feminine feature. At the very end, when McMurphy tore apart her uniform and humiliated her, she lost all authority and the patient started viewing her as a woman, a fact she so desperately tried to mask.

A simple action of pronouncing her name seems to carry negative connotation, as it sounds like wretch or retch, both words connected with negative feelings, perpetuating the obvious evil that her aura bears. The name also sounds like the sound a machine would create, which

aligns with Chief's conviction that she is, in fact, a machine. Her nickname "Big Nurse" could have two different origins. Firstly, Chief describes her "big as a tractor" (Kesey 5, Part I), a theme that repeats throughout the novel, not commenting on her physical size but rather her power altogether. Secondly, it relates to George Orwell's novel *1984*, where the "Big Brother" watches over everyone's actions in similar fashion to Nurse Ratched watching over the ward.

Ratched was based on a real head nurse with whom Ken Kesey worked at an asylum. Eventually, when Kesey met her again he realized that "she was much smaller than I remembered, and a whole lot more human". (Kirkpatrick 2001)

The "Big Nurse" is essentially a cold, vindictive, narcissistic, and heartless tyrant with lust for control and she exercises such control by her place of power, drugging patient with psychotics when deemed necessary or stripping them of their privileges whenever a patient displeases her in any way. She became the embodiment of corrupting influence and rule in bureaucratic facilities. The control of Ratched reached not only the patients but the staff as well, carefully picking the right apathetic people that will follow her blindly and blackmailing the director to rule the ward by her iron hand, she also seems to have a complete control of her own emotions, however that part is greatly challenged by McMurphy. Another form of her control is using her own psychotherapy, which humiliates patients into submission and her encouragement of betrayal through the usage of a book, where patients are supposed to rat each other out to gain Ratched's favor and a benefit. "The guy that wrote the piece of information in the log book, he gets a star by his name on the roll and gets to sleep late the next day" (Kesey 14, Part I).

Her nature can be linked to her serving as an army nurse during World War II, innately dehumanizing and emasculating all the patients. She hides this nature behind the facade of her helpful and socially highly regarded job of caring for mentally challenged people, but every now and then she slips and shows her true nature "she has to change back before she's caught in the shape of her hideous real self" (Kesey 5, Part I), although she may appear as an "angel of mercy" (Kesey 54, Part I). This aptitude to present an entirely different persona indicated that the oppressive powers in society gain such recognition through deception. The weak-minded and mentally crippled are not aware of this oppression and become more and more docile and inherently subdued. Such a fact is presented by the synonym proliferated in the novel as the juxtaposition of patients to rabbits and the nurse to "big bad wolf".

Moreover, her group meetings serve as a “pecking party” (Kesey 52, Part I), where patients humiliate each other and point out their shortcoming in a rather cruel manner, all dictated under Ratched, who subconsciously divides the patients as individuals to dominate them and to prevent them from creating a uniformly thinking group. Her only pleasure is getting her way, acting towards patients as children using a condescending voice, keeping things the way, she liked them and pretending it’s the policy or will of the patient.

Randle recognizes her weak spots namely: her sexuality and hatred of chaos, and uses them against her, creating a new environment for the patients and helping them get rid of “Big Nurse’s” shackles. Ratched battles him by administering EST and ultimately lobotomy which, enjoying watching Murphy suffer, ultimately proving McMurphy right and losing authority. Although McMurphy did lose on a physical level, Ratched lost the more important battle.

As was mentioned in chapter 1.2, playing the part of an antagonist was not popular at the time, however Louis Fletcher was prepared for the role. Another fact helping a rather unknown theatre actress at the time was that Forman did not want two big stars clashing in the film. Despite this, Louis Fletcher managed to reach if not surpass the acting level Jack Nicholson displays in the film.

The first time Forman saw Louis Fletcher he immediately realized that she is perfect for the role, although he was looking for a woman with the looks of an “old crone”. She was perfect because Forman eventually decided that a woman resembling a sweet elderly lady would be better, as the audience would not expect her to be so devilish, albeit her hair in the movie mimics devil’s horns. She also possessed “imposing height that made her so powerful as Ratched actually held her back in those years” (Scott 2020)

Considering how Nurse Ratched is portrayed in the novel, most would not pick Louis Fletcher as this character, due to her not exactly matching the description. However, time and time again, we are proven wrong why looks are not necessarily everything. Louis perhaps lacks the “ample bosom” so often mentioned in the novel, or Nurse’s exact age, nonetheless she provides superb acting on her part. Be that as it may, she does possess Ratched’s ice cold facial features and expressions, which are significantly more important.

Forman underlines these features in the film, notably in the circle therapy session, where most of the frames are filled with close-ups of expressions rather than the surroundings and full bodies. Moreover, her ice-cold look she gives her patients when they do not follow her

instructions word-for-word, can be seen when she ominously watches her patients from the window as they are outside.

A contrast we can spot in the first scene where Louis Fletcher appears as Nurse Ratched to McMurphy is in the soundtrack of the film. When we see the car with McMurphy onboard at the start a soothing Indian music plays, but when Ratched appears in the frame a clock starts ticking, building upon Bromden's image of her controlling every small aspect of the ward, even the clock. "The Big Nurse is able to set the wall clock at whatever speed she wants" (Kesey 68, Part I). In addition, comparing the first and second voting scenes in the film shows us how important camera work can be to portray a character's feelings at the moment. In the first voting scene, the camera is steady and often cuts to Ratched, showing us, she has control over the situation; the second scene is structured a bit differently, camera is spinning and focuses more on the patients and McMurphy and does not cut to Ratched as much, presenting us with the fact, that Ratched is losing control.

Her character represented in the film influenced the whole cast even behind the scenes. Everyone slowly started to detest her and felt uncomfortable around her, thus Louis Fletcher decided to show them that she is in fact not a lifeless killjoy and a manifestation of evil by "stripping off her nurse's uniform to reveal a slip and a bra underneath. "It was, like, Here I am. I'm a woman. I *am* a woman." (Schulman 2018). This action helped the cast cope with "mental" torture that they had to deal with.

All things considered Nurse Ratched is a horrifying character, she is real. She can be a teacher, a nurse, anyone with at least some amount of authority or control over our lives. That is what makes her so daunting.

4.4 Other minor characters

Plenty of other minor characters appear in both the novel and the film. Some serve greater roles and others depict a symbol.

Arguably the most important out of these characters is Dale Harding, played by William Redfield. Harding is an educated, married, effeminate gay man. In 1962, being homosexual was regarded as a mental illness, however in the movie he is shown to be paranoid about his wife seeing other men. His education helps him understand the inner workings in the ward and is the "top dog", thus he explains various concepts to McMurphy and the readers. Their interaction is mostly cut from the film as it predominantly serves as exposition, and they

certainly do not become good friends as they do in the novel, defending him against Nurse Ratched and eventually becoming a leader after McMurphy is gone. At the very end of the novel, he leaves the ward as a man on his own, not as a rabbit, with his freedom and the remainder of his dignity.

Another important yet minor character is Billy Bibbit played by at the time upcoming actor Brad Dourif. Billy is a shy, young patient with a bad stutter. He is heavily controlled by his mother who is one of Ratched's friends. He has an anxiety connected to talking to women and falls in love with Candy and Murphy arranges a date with her, culminating in him losing his virginity and briefly becoming cured from his stutter. This event leads to his suicide as he is deliberately humiliated by the "big nurse", defying the authority but paying the highest price for it. His committing suicide affects McMurphy so deeply, he begins to choke Nurse Ratched, which leads to his eventual demise.

Charles Cheswick is one of the first patients to support McMurphy's attempts at rebellion and change against Ratched's authoritarian regime. Although he is loud and easily outraged, he never achieves any change. In the novel he drowns himself after another argument with the "big nurse" where he was not supported by McMurphy. Consequently, McMurphy realizes the reach of his influence and the critical flaw in his choice to conform to the system and stay quiet for once, fueling his hatred for Miss Ratched even further.

Now is the time to mention the staff or "the black boys" in the novel representing "cogs and wheels" of the "Combine". Washington, Warren, and Williams are the hospital aides, blindly following Ratched's every command. Easily manipulated and believing they are doing something good; they beat up, belittle, and physically abuse the patients to break their individuality damaging them both physically and emotionally. The novel portrays their childhood as rough and poor, leading to their lack of education and subsequent terrible work ethic playing into the, at the time, stereotypical, uneducated, and aggressive black man.

Another important member of the staff is Doctor Spivey, a weak man, possibly addicted to opiates, making him a perfect candidate for Ratched to control like the rest of the ward. Spivey plays a larger role in the novel because his self-esteem is reignited together with the other patients' when McMurphy arrives at the ward. McMurphy takes the reins from Nurse Ratched and begins manipulating him, talking him into several of his ideas, like the carnival or fishing trip. Comparably to Harding, he stands up to Ratched after Billy's suicide.

Mr. Turkle is also an essential part of the staff which gives in to McMurphy and lets the patient host a party in exchange for money, liquor, and a night with Sandy (named Rose in the film) who is prostitute and a friend of McMurphy and Candy. He helps Bromden in the novel by untying him from the bed, showing us that perhaps not all staff members are as evil as we might think.

Nurse Pilbow is played by Mimi Sarkisian and carries out all of Nurse Ratched's commands. She is young, catholic, and attractive, with a distinct birthmark often described holding her cross that she wears around her neck. Although she is a catholic, she seems to be unsure with sexuality and feeling of guilt due to the tasks she is forced to perform.

The only positive female character in the novel that is not a prostitute would be the nameless Japanese nurse who McMurphy and Bromden encounter before receiving EST. She seems to genuinely care for her patients and is disgusted with the way Nurse Ratched runs her ward.

Whilst missing from the movie and merged into one of the "black boys", a method often used in adaptation to save time, the nameless lifeguard is a patient who aids McMurphy in realizing that he cannot in fact get out of the ward after serving his "sentence", leading to McMurphy being temporary conforming. He basically serves as a plot point for the story to move forward.

There are more characters to discuss, that is why, I decided to briefly go over the remaining ones in quick succession.

George Sorenson, a patient, and an ex-captain who gets recruited by McMurphy to go on the fishing trip. He has a phobia of anything unclean and McMurphy's protection of him against the "black boys", which is not in the film, leads to McMurphy's first EST.

Martini, played by Danny DeVito is another patient who is delusional and suffers from hallucinations. He appears as a background character both in the novel and the film.

In a similar way to Martini, Bancini is a patient who had to be removed from his mother when he was born, developing mental illness in the process. He always exclaims he is tired and informs other patients that he was born dead.

Sefelt and Frederickson are epileptic patients. Sefelt dislikes his medications and gives them to Frederickson who enjoys taking both doses, because he fears having a fit. Although they are minor characters, they are portrayed rather accurately by William Duel and Vincent Schiavelli respectively.

Ellis, a patient who used to be an acute, however excessive EST turned him into a vegetable. He appears briefly both in the novel and film.

Scanlon is another acute who is involuntarily committed to the ward like McMurphy. He is not fully characterized other than being obsessed with explosives.

Maxwell Taber, played by Christopher Lloyd, is a minor character in the film but serves the readers of the novel as a parallel of what happens to those who question Ratched's authority. Although McMurphy never meets him in the novel as he was on the ward years before him, he is one of the patients present at the time of the story in the film. In the novel, he is repeatedly assigned to shock therapy which makes him completely docile, thus he is released, stripped of all emotion.

This last section is dedicated to the characters fully omitted from the adaptation.

Chief Tee Ah Milatoona, Bromden's father, is not present due to the reorganization of protagonists and complete change regarding to Bromden's past. However, Chief Tee Ah Milatoona, shapes Bromden in many ways, such as the Indian submission to the white man or the oppression of nature. These are tied to the many childhood stories we hear from Bromden.

Following the theme of characters that appear only in the novel, there is the PR agent, who appears as a bald and fat man, possibly personifying the shallow image people see when they imagine an asylum ward. He leads tours through the ward, showing people how well the system works and how happy everyone is trying to improve the overall perception of the mental asylum.

Lastly, Old Blastic, Ruckly and Rawler, all patients who serve minute roles in the grand scheme of things. Old Blastic is murdered by the "combine" in Bromden's fever dream, Ruckly was made into a Chronic due to an unsuccessful lobotomy and Rawler is a patient at Disturbed part of the ward who commits suicide by castration, playing into the theme of Nurse Ratched being a "ball cutter".

5 COMPARING THE NOVEL AND THE FILM

In this segment each subchapter will be designated to the juxtaposing plot points in each media and their contrasting depiction of said diegesis. Every section will be thoroughly commented upon while pointing out the differences including character’s actions or attributes, the overall plot, setting and lastly the effect on the respective audiences. The last section will be dedicated to the parts of the novel that were entirely excluded.

I have also constructed a flowchart with all the important events of both the novel and film which I will be referring to throughout this chapter.

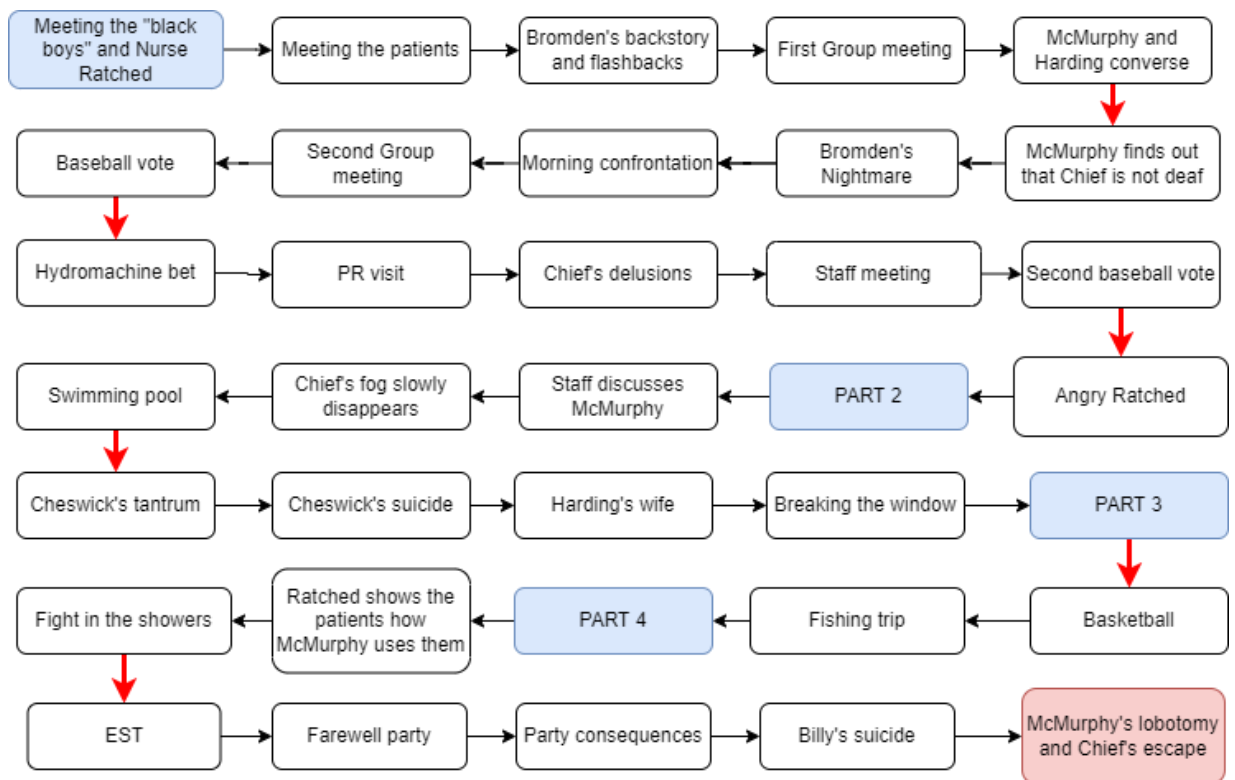


Image 1. Novel story structure flowchart

As I mentioned in chapter 3, novels are typically longer than their counterpart adaptations, thus having more content, which we can clearly see from the flowcharts. This fact brings us to the number of omissions such as Bromden’s flashbacks, the PR visit, Chief’s hallucinogenic sequences, many staff meetings that Bromden eavesdrops on, Cheswick’s suicide, Harding’s wife, second and third breaking of the window, fight in the showers and multitude of other changes which I will be going through.

Another important element to point out, would be the several instances, where the overall plot stays the same, however, the scene is changed to some extent, be it small or large. For example, the fishing trip plays an integral part due to the rejuvenation of the patient’s

manhood and their interaction with the gas station personnel and the ruffians at the dock which is completely removed from the film. These alterations will be covered in the respective subchapters. The subchapters will follow the novel story structure.

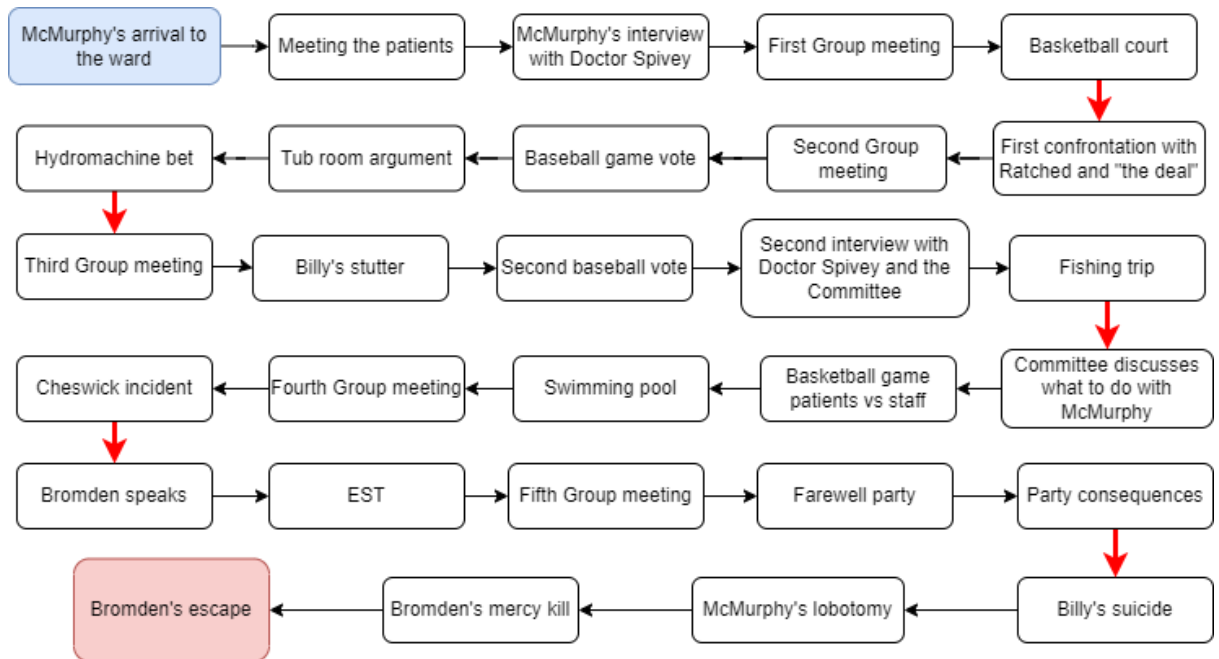


Image 2. Film story structure flowchart

5.1 McMurphy’s arrival and his first interactions

The first scene in the movie depicts a car driving through nature with a wide shot followed by a trucking shot as we hear a serene, calming singing of birds, and howling of the wind moments after we hear a similarly soothing sounds of an Indian tune, which perfectly sets the tone of the film. Here we can clearly see what impact soundtrack can have on the audience and the distinct juxtapositions of the natural setting and the mechanical, monochromatic, dull ward.

After the first scene the film introduces us to the ward’s patients and staff with many establishing shots; here we can see the first difference. Although the first chapter also introduces the characters (“The black boys”, Nurse Ratched and Chief Bromden), the important part to understand is the sentence “It’s still hard for me to have a clear mind thinking on it. But it’s the truth even if it didn’t happen.” (Kesey 8, Part I), which tells us that the narrator Chief “Broom” is unreliable, basically alerting us to take the story with a grain of salt.

In the novel, Ratched berates the “black boys” for lollygagging, informing us, she rules the ward with an iron fist and wants everyone to work like clockwork. This small part is not in the film, although the setting and introduction remain unchanged, except of course, the lack of Bromden’s appearance.

Following the introduction, we are informed by Chief Bromden about the overall function of the ward and the people who visit the patients, including the PR man. Finally, we meet McMurphy who immediately strikes Chief as an unusual patient, with his brassy voice, big stature and who reminds him of his father, a topic which comes up a few times throughout the novel.

If we compare the arrival of McMurphy with the film version, we can spot similarities in McMurphy’s demeanor, he is loud, feels out of place and shows his insurmountable ego. His interaction with his fellow patients is cut short as in the book he has a battle of rhetoric with Harding and shakes hands with everyone on the ward, including the “wheelers, walkers, and vegetables”. However, in the film he shows his surprising and downright vulgar deck of cards, distracting Martini from the game of pinochle which ends this segment opposed to the novel.

The exchange McMurphy has with Harding is amusing and introduces Harding as a smart, responsive leader of the patients with a sense of humor, an attribute the movie version of Harding clearly lacks. Here they become friends even though McMurphy took over his “leadership” position. Throughout this whole encounter we get descriptive passages of how McMurphy looks like, which is mimicked accurately by the adaptation. We can also see Randle’s first interaction with Chief, which is brief in both media, basically McMurphy asking Bromden his name and getting the same response, while Billy answers for him informing Mack he is “just a b-big deaf Indian” (Kesey 22, Part I).

Another comical moment from the novel, would be one of the “black boys” Williams following McMurphy with a thermometer trying to abide by the strict rules. After many tries and failures to measure Randle’s temperature, he calls on the “big nurse” and the first clash is set in motion, although it is cut short, thus informing us readers that McMurphy is not the man to follow rules.

5.2 Interview with Doctor Spivey

After meeting the patients McMurphy is called to Doctor Spivey's office, who, as I mentioned, is played by a real director of a mental institution, Dean Brooks, M.D. This sequence is taken from the fifth chapter of the novel in which the first group session takes place, this changes in the film as the office is a more intimate setting, compared to talking in front of the whole group, leading to a more sincere conversation between Randle and Spivey.

McMurphy's document is read by the "big nurse" as an attempt to belittle him and assert dominance over him. Consequently, she also mispronounces his name on purpose as "McMurry", wielding these small vexatious annoyances to get into his head and potentially painting Randle in bad light, due to the number of crimes committed. This exchange, however, is not in the film and the interview is more straightforward. We can nonetheless spot a few replicas when talking about the statutory rape, "Said she was *seventeen*, Doc and she was *plenty* willin'. So willin', in fact, I took to sewing my pants shut." (Kesey 40, Part I), only reinforcing McMurphy's image of a sexual deviant.

The role of Doctor Spivey is modified in the film, not acting as Nurse Ratched's lapdog, but rather actually leading the hospital, although he appears only two more times in the film. This juxtaposition can be seen in the novel, when Ratched basically runs the group therapy, only letting him explain his therapeutic theory or the group therapy rules, imposing order on the patients again.

The interview itself happens on the second day in the novel and it is not shown, we only see Randle and Spivey leaving for the group therapy grinning and laughing, telling us they enjoyed their talk. Later, we find out they both went to the same high school, and we can clearly notice how McMurphy meticulously manipulated the poor doctor into doing his bidding, perhaps lying about the high school, while pointing out rules that he does not agree with. In this instance it is difficult to recognize whether McMurphy truly cares about his fellow peers, or whether he is downright selfish and only wants the best for himself. One of the ideas that is brought up by the doctor himself is that of a carnival (the same idea brought by Taber a few years back, comments Bromden). Spivey arguments with a therapeutic value that he so dearly cherishes. Everyone loves the idea, especially Cheswick as he always catches onto anything. Nurse Ratched, however dismisses the proposal and even inconspicuously berates the doctor for not bringing the plan forward on the staff meeting, hiding behind the rules once again, although she evidently wants to keep all the control, and

admitting that an idea from somebody else is adequate, would only undermine her authority. However, Doctor Spivey does not give up and proposes another change to the ward's policy, which was again talked over with McMurphy in the interview, clearing out the Tub room and creating a secondary game room for the acutes to avoid the loud monotone music, that annoys McMurphy, as was previously established and commented on by him. When Ratched presents the problems that would arise from such change, Spivey successfully reasons with a slight staff change. This infuriates Nurse Ratched, but she does not make it obvious and keeps her stone-cold façade. And when everything seems to be discussed and she wants to begin with her meeting McMurphy interrupts her only deepening the aggravation.

Doctor Spivey is described as a "rabbit" by Harding, under the control of the "big nurse" and hints at his possible drug use, which helps the reader understand how Ratched runs her ward with the use of blackmail, "She *doesn't* accuse. She merely needs to insinuate anything, don't you see?" (Kesey 56, Part I). Considering this fact, we can easily see that Doctor Spivey was greatly altered in the film and does not play an important role, albeit he scarcely appears even in the novel. However, the interview part was rendered faithfully and represents McMurphy in a comparable vein.

5.3 Baseball voting

The baseball vote is the first significant clash between McMurphy and Nurse Ratched. It spans for five chapters in the novel, covering not only the voting situation but Bromden's descriptive schizophrenic segments and parts of his background. The origin of Billy Bibbit's stuttering is also revealed. Having said that, the film uses plot points from different chapters of the first part of the book.

In chapter 4 of the novel, we get introduced to Taber, who has indistinguishable attributes and manner comparable with McMurphy, showing us how unsuccessful Taber was, when not following suit and merging the characters into one. In the novel, we find Taber in a position identical to McMurphy's, where he refuses to swallow his pills and soon after the "black boys" administer them anally. McMurphy, however, tricks the Nurse by pretending to swallow the pill and then spitting it out.

This interaction is accompanied by another fragment from chapter 6, where McMurphy unsuccessfully complains about the loud music. Afterwards, Randle reveals that he wants to "get her goat" and encourages other patients to bet on it. Taber bets a dollar. Contrasting this

part to the original work shows us that Forman decided to shorten a prolonged conversation between Harding and McMurphy, about Nurse Ratched, with plethora of allusions to her being a “wolf” and a “ball-cutter”, to a few lines of dialogue.

The following scene is a second group therapy where the first vote to watch the baseball world series occurs. Cheswick is presented faithfully as he goes along with anything McMurphy suggests, sadly the only people that vote for the change are Randle, Cheswick, and Taber. The section that ensues in the novel shows us the negative side of McMurphy, due to the fact that nobody voted, and he vengefully skins all the patients out of their money. His aggravation is quickly overcome as nobody would play cards with him because of their debts. Thus, he comes up with a bet connected to his “escape” to watch the baseball game in a nearby bar. He wants to lift an extremely heavy hydro machine, which is bolted to the ground, and to no surprise loses, basically negating all the patient’s debts, only deepening our suspicion, whether he does these actions for his own benefit or if he truly cares for them.

This part is depicted slightly differently as it is not implied he took all their money in card games and up until now, was a lovable ruffian with a heart of gold and the bet, which is chronologically in the same place as in the novel, feels spontaneous and not calculated. It is up to the viewer to decide and speculate. The outcome is however the same, even the line McMurphy declares when leaving the tub room: “I tried, though,” he says. “Goddammit, I sure as hell did that much, now, didn’t I?” (Kesey 110, Part I)

Right after we move onto the next group therapy, where Cheswick suggested another vote. Seeing McMurphy’s determination in the tub room makes everyone rethink their stance on the matter and 9 patients vote for the change. This is not enough, as the other patients on the ward, who are not part of the therapy, also count. We can notice the subtle joy on Ratched’s face. McMurphy does not give up and goes one by one to the rest of the patients persuading them to raise their hand and vote. His cajolery is unsuccessful until he approaches Chief shouting “Show her that you can do it. Just show her that you can still do it. Just raise your hand up. All the guys have got them up.” (Forman, 45:57), and he obeys. Despite his best efforts, Nurse Ratched adjourned the meeting seconds ago, rendering Chief’s vote useless. Out of spite, seeing how the “big nurse” played him, he sits down in front of the TV set and begins casting a made-up game drawing in the rest of his peers. Ratched watching them from the nurse station with fury in her eyes, orders them to stop. They ignore her and keep chanting and hollering. McMurphy got her goat.

The original novel tells a roughly similar story with a few extra chapters that deal with Bromden's fog issue. These omitted segments will be closely described in the last section of this chapter.

5.4 Swimming pool

Swimming pool section plays a vital part of the story in both works, informing McMurphy that the ward is not a prison, where you can wait out your sentence. Knowing this, Randle becomes a conformist for a few chapters in the novel, however not so much in the movie, as the scene is followed by another group therapy, where, although reluctantly at first, Randle tries to help Cheswick by breaking the nursery window and handing him a cigarette carton which leads to a fight.

In the movie, the swimming pool scene takes place after the fishing trip and the basketball match. Marking the first segment which is not in the same chronological order as the novel. This is important as the next subchapter that will be discussed is a mixture of different chapters of the book, well put together to form a cohesive story, painting McMurphy in a more heroic fashion than he is in the novel.

The swimming pool scene itself is straightforward. We see McMurphy talking to one of the "black boys", after he is pushed away from the side by him with a long bamboo pole. "Sixty-eight days, buddy. Sixty-eight days. What the fuck you talking about, sixty-eight days? That's in jail, sucker. You still don't know where you're at, do you?" (Forman 1:10:20) The main difference being that in the novel he talks to a lifeguard, who is a patient too, rather than one of the "black boys". The lifeguard wants to leave the ward and start working as a pro-footballer again, telling McMurphy "Maybe I couldn't play first string, with this bum arm, but I could of folded towels, couldn't I? I could of done *something*." (Kesey 147, Part II) This is important as the subject of doing "*something*" comes up again when Cheswick also demands that "something" is to be done.

Other than that, there are no significant changes, except the anticipated descriptive parts provided by Bromden and another comparison of McMurphy to Chief's father, a common theme in the novel.

5.5 Cheswick incident and the window breaking

We are now reaching arguably the most extensive change of the plot. That is, Cheswick's suicide. Following the swimming pool realization, McMurphy becomes obedient and

changes his overall manners, scared of the consequences, perhaps trying to come up with a new plan. Cheswick, thinking that McMurphy will support his case, starts demanding back his cigarettes. It should be noted that their cigarettes were rationed, because of McMurphy's skillful gambling talents, winning all their cigarettes, making Randle inadvertently causing this scene. Cheswick goes on rambling, saying: "I want something *done!* Hear me? I want *something done!* Something! Something!" (Kesey 149, Part II), however instead of receiving support from Mack and the other guys, he is left standing alone in the middle of the group, losing all confidence he gained from McMurphy's encouragement and succumbing to the "fog". Right after Cheswick's tantrum, we visit the swimming pool again, where we discover, that Cheswick drowned himself, after telling his friends that *something* might have been done.

Forman, instead of making McMurphy conformist, makes him do *something*. When the group meeting begins where Cheswick's screams, he wants something done, McMurphy, instead of ignoring him, goes to the nurse station, breaks the window, and reaches for the cigarette carton handing it to Cheswick. Nevertheless, the mayhem that breaks out, transforms into a fight which leads to Bromden taking an action and helping Mack in his brawl against the authorities, literally and figuratively.

This scene is an amalgamation of four chapters, namely chapter 18 (the chapter containing Cheswick's struggle for cigarettes and his ultimate demise), chapter 23 (due to the breaking of nurse's station window, acting as McMurphy's counter attack), chapter 26 (where the shower fight which Bromden joins, takes place) and finally, chapter 22 (where McMurphy is informed, that most of the patients are not committed and can leave whenever they want).

The window is broken again, when Ratched informs the men, that they will lose the tub room privilege, because of them neglecting their cleaning duties and "watching the baseball", driving Randle to go to the nurse station again and seemingly "erroneously" breaking the window justifying himself by saying "When did they sneak that danged glass in there? Why that thing is a *menace!*" (Kesey 177, Part III), only furthering his dominance over the "big nurse".

5.6 Basketball

Moving on to the shortest subchapter, which is the basketball match. In the novel, the basketball craze that McMurphy brings onto the ward spans only a few pages in chapter 24.

Shortly after the second window breaking, which McMurphy could not be punished for, due to his feigned foolishness, he manages to persuade Doctor Spivey to bring a ball from the gym so they can practice as a team, using the “therapeutic value” as a successful argument. Spivey and the patients are gaining a good deal of confidence, resisting conformity and Ratched’s control. We also witness a short basketball match, which appears in the film with a key difference. Chief plays a vital part in it, scoring points due to his unmatched stature. This is a small payoff to a scene earlier in the movie, where McMurphy was teaching Bromden how to play basketball, which is a nice touch from Forman and deepens the friendship between Chief and McMurphy. Another miniscule happening, which helps maintain the identity of the original novel, is also kept in the movie, and that is Martini, who hallucinates, passing the ball to people who aren’t there. “Martini kept throwing passes to men that nobody but him could see,” (Kesey 177, Part III).

However, the basketball segment is cut short, when Scanlon breaks the station window with the ball, causing the ball to deflate and the training to stop. This third breaking strikes me as rather over-the-top humorous, considering the two other times the window was shattered, perhaps notifying us how low Nurse Ratched’s power has dropped.

5.7 Bromden speaks

Chapter 24 does not end with the basketball section, on the contrary, one of the most important events happens. Bromden finally talks to Randle. The occasion takes place after McMurphy offers Chief a stick of gum because Geever, the night aide, finds Bromden’s gum hiding spot under his bed. Chief thanks him for the gum and a conversation starts, although Chief is silent for a while, which leads McMurphy to tattle on about how he too, was forced to stay silent while working on a farm and eventually reveal all the other men’s secrets, trying to empathize with Chief. Bromden opens about how “Combine” worked on his father until he drank himself to death. “The Combine had whipped him. It beats everybody. It’ll beat you too.” (Kesey 189, Part III). Bromden compares McMurphy to his father throughout the novel to a great extent, and fears for Randle’s ability to shield himself from the Combine’s power. Chief then explains that being big makes you the target of Combine, and McMurphy did become in all respects big after he broke the nurse’s window. Mack wants to make Chief “big” again and offers him to come to a fishing trip he has been planning at the start of the chapter. Chief accepts.

Here we can observe the key difference between McMurphy from the novel and McMurphy from the film. McMurphy plans to use Chief's strength to win a bet later on, although not explicitly stated by him, Chief notices that McMurphy is laying there "chuckling over some thought of his own" (Kesey 191, Part III). Kesey's McMurphy is a more selfish person than Forman's McMurphy, although both come across as wanting to do some good for the patients. To what extent they use this good for their own gain is debatable.

Comparing this part to the film can be rather precarious as the chronological order is considerably different. Firstly, it takes place after the fight that breaks out due to Cheswick's tantrum and not prior to the fishing trip but conversely after. Secondly, the content of their conversation is completely unlike to the one I described, except the gum offering. Most of their dialogue takes place in the party chapter of the novel. Lastly, Chief is not presented as a schizophrenic in the movie, and we know little of his background, although he mentions his father and how he reminds him of McMurphy at the farewell party. An equally significant plot point is that the conversation is followed by McMurphy's administration of EST, which happens subsequently to the fishing trip in the novel.

Again, we see Forman's ability to condense unconnected chapters of the book into a singular scene, which last roughly five minutes, but conveys all the necessary information and moves the plot forward, while remaining faithful to the original.

5.8 Fishing trip

Following the novel's plot structure, we arrive at the centerpiece of the story, which is the fishing trip. The key difference that can be seen at the first glance is that in the film McMurphy steals a bus by climbing over the courtyard fence with the help of Bromden. Considering that in the novel, Mack organizes the trip, and the staff knows about it beforehand, this bold alteration, puts McMurphy in more trouble and makes him a bigger target. Another explanation could be related to the time sensitivity of the overall pacing of the movie, which is usually the case for such modification as the key plot of the patients going on a fishing trip is retained.

Doctor Spivey plays a vital role in this section as he is the one who solves the problem that arises when the second "aunt" of McMurphy does not come with a car, making it impossible for all the patients who signed to be transported to the dock. Randle and Candy persuade Spivey to come with them, utilizing his car as replacement. Spivey who has been eyeballing Candy accepts immediately, while stating that "good deal of paper work I can get done on

that boat” (Kesey 200, Part III), yet again disobeying the Nurse, who tries to sabotage McMurphy’s trip by posting paper clippings of how dangerous the sea can be, successfully scaring good majority of the patients.

George Sorenson, who barely appears in the preceding chapters also plays an important role, as he conveniently used to be a captain. His fear of getting dirty however creates a temporary barrier, which McMurphy breaks down, making George their captain. It should be noted, that McMurphy from the novel has no prior experience in neither fishing nor boating, making the omission of George Sorenson in the film more natural, while passing George’s skills to McMurphy, essentially merging them together, which is a common technique used in film adaptations.

Before Doctor Spivey agrees to partake in the trip, Nurse Ratched goes on offense against McMurphy and points out to the patients that Randle is scamming them of their money, which is, to some extent, true. This marks the first time the “big nurse” uses McMurphy’s entrepreneurship against him, trying to turn the patients on her side. McMurphy nervously responds “Sure; I was keepin’ what was left over. I don’t think any of the guys ever thought any different. I figured to make a little for the trouble I took get- “(Kesey 200, Part III), embracing his crooked nature, playing it off as no big deal. Despite his trivialization of the matter, Ratched hit a nail on the head, as patients became more and more suspicious of his antics, some even completely losing trust in McMurphy.

After all the aforementioned transpires, the group leaves for the gas station. The gas station attendants try to offer them services they don’t need, spotting that the party save for McMurphy are “bunnies”. Mack quickly stands up for them and tells the attendants they are dangerous lunatics not to be messed with, giving everyone much needed confidence. We meet a similar group when they arrive at the docks, catcalling Candy hollering “C’mon now, Blondie, what you want to mess with these bozos for?” (Kesey 208, Part III). Even though they gained all that confidence at the gas station, they are not able to use it to tell them off. This fact especially affects Billy as he falls in love with Candy and later apologizes for not sticking up to her.

Another problem arises. Sandra, the other “aunt” that did not come, was supposed to bring a signed waiver so the captain would not get in trouble. Although it might have been a lie, it does not persuade the captain, causing McMurphy to trick him and steal the boat, while the captain is busy calling “a flophouse up in Portland” (Kesey 209, Part III), with a number Randle gave him.

They sail for a while and start fishing while Candy and McMurphy go below to “check for leaks”. The men enjoy the serene atmosphere while drinking beer. Chaos ensues as multiple poles catch fish, and a downright slapstick scene plays out where multiple people try to secure the poles, including Candy who bruises her breast in the process. Here would be a good time to quickly discuss the presentation of women in the novel. All the women that are introduced in the novel, apart from the Asian Nurse that makes a singular appearance, are to some degree portrayed negatively. Nurse Ratched being the obvious example, Harding’s wife being promiscuous, Billy’s mother who is controlling and overprotects her son, Bromden’s mother, who also falls into the category of “ball-cutters”, all essentially emasculating them, whereas Candy and Sandy, whose occupation certainly is not painted in positive light, are presented as mindless pleasure providers, while obeying the men. This polarization of masculinity and femininity can be seen as one of the main themes, however it also represents a struggle between the more negative feminine features and those masculine features that have been, until recently, considered positive. One of these features is all present mention of the women’s breast, which struck me as odd, until the struggle became apparent and was tightly reinforced throughout the book.

Moving on to the last few pages of this chapter, we learn that Doctor Spivey managed to catch the biggest fish, and that they lack life vests for everybody, which serves them as leverage when they ward off the police after they land. The loafers who taunted them when they arrived at the dock have a change of heart when they notice the size of the fish they caught, and they share a beer, and surprisingly even the captain joins them, resulting in a rather wholesome moment.

Comparing the fishing trip, we arrive at several repeating conclusions. Many of the happenings were cut, characters left out and certain details kept. The gas station segment is completely omitted as the patients gain ego due to the trip itself, thus underlining the same basic idea twice was not necessary. Furthermore, the results of McMurphy’s conversation with the captain is the same, they “borrow” the boat and off they go. Forman even decided to keep the slapstick scene, however he merged it together with McMurphy’s and Candy’s intercourse part, which is cut short, due to Martini and afterwards all the guys staring at them through the window. This results in Cheswick, who was up until that point steering the boat, abandoning his position to see what the fuss is about, which initiates the humorous scene of the boat steering right and the men trying to handle the pole, because the fish decided to bite right at that moment of mayhem.

A change that should be noted is that both Bromden and Doctor Spivey are absent in this sequence, nevertheless as I stated before, they play a significantly smaller role in the adaptation.

5.9 The going-away party

Skipping chapters 26 and 27, we reach Chapter 28 describing the aftermath of the electroconvulsive therapy and the going-away party. McMurphy must apologize for the brawl that he caused, or he will be sent back to the Disturbed ward for another EST. He essentially becomes a symbol of resistance for the patients, who idolize him and make up stories about him, constructing him even bigger than before, thus a threat to Nurse Ratched's order.

Chief, who was also sent to the Disturbed is back earlier and he speaks openly for the first time to all the patients, strengthening McMurphy's image, while he is celebrated by all the men for his heroic defense of Mack. Nobody finds it odd that Chief can suddenly listen and speak. The defiance is so strong among the men, that even Harding makes inappropriate comments about Ratched right in front of her, in a true McMurphy fashion.

After a handful of weeks, McMurphy is back from the Disturbed, belittling Ratched yet again. Harding and others decide that the best course of action for Randle would be to escape, however Mack, although agreeing with the assumption, plans to deliver what Billy has paid for in Chapter 26, which is a date with Candy. He concludes that they will throw a going-away party, the last blow to Ratched's authority.

It is here that we finally dive into Billy's background of his controlling mother, who works as a receptionist at the ward. We draw parallels with Nurse Ratched on many layers and see that Billy's mental health is heavily connected with the way he was treated by his mother. Despite the fact he is in his mid-thirties, he is handled like a three-year-old, having to "stop and lean a scarlet cheek over that desk for her to dab a kiss on. It embarrassed the rest of us as much as it did Billy, and for that reason nobody ever teased him about it, not even McMurphy." (Kesey 254, Part IV). Chief once overheard their conversation when they were lying in front of the ward in the grass where Billy expressed that he would like to go to college and have a family. His mother's response was "Sweetheart, you still have scads of time for things like that. Your whole life is ahead of you." (Kesey 254, Part IV), only deepening the reader's pity for the poor soul.

Mr. Turkle, a night aide, and McMurphy settle on a deal, where Candy plays a role “She bringin’ more than the bottle with her, though, ain’t she, this sweet thing? You people be sharing more’n a bottle, won’t you.” (Kesey 255, Part IV). Thereafter, McMurphy, Turkle, Harding, Bromden, Billy, Scanlon and Sefelt wait for Candy and Sandy to arrive. When they do, the party starts, they tell stories, drink wine, dance, joke and laugh, raid nurse’s station and the medical room for pills and coughing sirup to mix with the alcohol. There are, however two moments that almost ruin their merry festivities. Firstly, they almost get caught by another night aide. The situation is saved by Harding’s quick wit, and they continue celebrating. Secondly, Sefelt has a seizure, while having sex with Sandy. Harding sprinkles the pair with pills, commenting “Most merciful God, accept these two poor sinners into your arms. And keep the doors ajar for the coming of the rest of us, because you are witnessing the end, the absolute, irrevocable, fantastic end. I’ve finally realized what is happening. It is our last fling. We are doomed henceforth.” (Kesey 262, Part IV), informing the reader, that this is indeed McMurphy’s final move, in the game of chess he so masterfully played with Nurse Ratched.

The party culminates with Candy accompanying Billy into the seclusion room to take his virginity. Meanwhile, the rest try to figure out the most efficient way to negate the damage they caused. After Harding comes up with a plan, McMurphy asks him why he does not want to come with. He responds with “I want to do it on my own, by myself, right out that front door, with all the traditional red tape and complications. I want my wife to be here in a car at a certain time to pick me up. I want them to know I was able to do it that way.” (Kesey 265, Part IV), showing us the impact Randle had on Harding, helping him more than the “big nurse”.

With the plan created, they decide to wait for Candy and Billy to finish and go to sleep expecting Turkle to wake them up in an hour so McMurphy, Bromden and the girls can leave the ward, sadly Turkle oversleeps and the whole plan crumbles when the “black boys” arrive in the morning.

One of the first key differences in the film would be that McMurphy calls Candy secretly, sneaking to the nurse’s station and avoiding Mr. Turkle until the moment Candy and Rose arrive. Sandy is renamed to Rose for an unexplained reason. Perhaps, because Candy and Sandy sound similar. Another possible explanation could be that the names Candy and Sandy come across as comical when put together.

Before the girls arrive however, McMurphy wakes Chief up letting him know he must leave, inviting him to come with. Chief response sounds familiar to the answer Harding gives to McMurphy in the book, “I can’t. I just can’t” (Forman 1:32:31). On the other hand, after McMurphy indicated how easy it is to leave, he follows it up with “For you, maybe. You’re a lot bigger than me.” (Forman 1:32:39), which is exactly what Chief said to him in the novel, when they first talked. Understanding that Chief sees himself as small at this stage of the plot is interesting as the metaphorical size of a person is a central theme of the novel, despite the fact that Chief never mentioned anyone’s size and is portrayed as sane. The next topic of their dialogue is Chief’s father. Bromden tells Randle the story about how alcohol killed his father, “The last time I seen my father he was blind in the cedars from drinking. And every time he put the bottle to his mouth he don’t suck out of it. It sucks out of him until he’d shrunk so wrinkled and yellow, even the dogs don’t know him.” (Forman 1:33:06). This is the first and last mention of Chief’s father Tee Ah Milatoona and a direct quote from the book as well. Afterwards their exchange is cut short, as the girls arrive and Mr. Turkle is bribed on the spot, in the same manner as he is in the novel.

The festivities begin in a much more spectacular fashion, as McMurphy wakes everyone on the ward up, hands out drinks from the nurse’s station and lets Candy sing to the men through the microphone in the station. Turkle, who was up until that point busy with wooing Rose, rushes in to see what is going on and chastises them heavily, when suddenly the supervisor comes, however, this time Candy saves the situation instead of Harding. Turkle, seeing the mess the patients made, gives up and turns to drink, letting them do what they want. We can observe the party in its full glory, everyone dancing, drinking, and laughing.

In the following scene the celebration slowly dwindles, as the only ones dancing is Billy with Candy, showing us the affection they foster for one another. McMurphy decides it is time to leave and systematically says goodbye to everyone. Cheswick, who idolizes McMurphy thanks him, a nod to how Cheswick would have parted with McMurphy were he alive at that time in the novel. Billy takes it the hardest, he finally connected with Candy and now his hero is leaving for good. McMurphy offers him the opportunity to come with, Billy responds with “Think I don’t want to? It’s not that easy. I’m not... not ... not ready yet.” (Forman 1:45:29). Again, Forman masterfully combines various conversations that occurred prior to this scene, this time a dialogue from Chapter 22, where Billy says those lines, when McMurphy encourages all the patients to leave the ward and be free. After the proposition McMurphy comes up with an idea of a quick “date” with Candy to please Billy, who seems

disturbed at the moment. He declines at first, but eventually changes his mind and is even partly forced to do it by the men. With Billy and Candy in the seclusion room, McMurphy falls asleep with a smile on his face. Last thing to point out would be, that at the end Chief does want to leave with Mack, despite what he said earlier.

5.10 The ending

Finally, we come to the last chapter, describing the fate of McMurphy and Bromden.

Chief explains that no matter what they would have done, Ratched would know and retaliate back by punishing Billy, causing McMurphy to come back and respond with another act. Ratched slowly goes through all the mess they had created, while Sandy leaves through an unlocked window which is the same window McMurphy was planning on using to escape. Harding secretly implores Randle to also get up and leave, however McMurphy is too drunk and tired to do so. Meanwhile the “black boys” are rounding up the men and realize Billy Bibbit is missing, thus the search for him begins. It does not take long before they find him naked with Candy in the bed of the seclusion room. Ratched is mortified. She begins asking questions to which Billy answers. The answers Billy gives are spoken clearly without stuttering, telling us that Billy was, although briefly, cured. The “big nurse” does not lose her temper this time and unknowingly seals Billy’s destiny by uttering “What worries me, Billy, is how your poor mother is going to take this.” (Kesey 271, Part IV), which throws Billy off-balance, triggering his stutter. What follows can only be described as a desperate howl for help which nobody answers. Billy starts accusing everybody left and right, that it is their fault, that he had to spend the night with such a woman. Ratched tries to comfort him and calm him down and sends him to the doctor Spivey’s office, ironically saying “It’s all right, Billy. It’s all right. No one else is going to harm you. It’s all right.” (Kesey 272, Part IV), despite the fact that she just passed a death sentence on the poor boy.

Doctor Spivey arrives at the scene and is immediately sent to his office to take care of Billy. Unfortunately, he discovers that Billy committed suicide. Ratched, who naively thought she had the situation under control, approaches McMurphy blaming him, fulminating “First Charles Cheswick and now William Bibbit! I hope you’re finally satisfied. Playing with human lives - gambling with human lives - as if you thought yourself to be a God!” (Kesey 274, Part IV). What should be noted is that Cheswick’s death does not seem to affect anyone on the ward and is not mentioned until this very moment, perhaps serving as a catalyst to what happens next. McMurphy gets up from his chair like a robot, breaks the glass door, rips

Ratched's uniform, which reveals her breasts and begins choking her. He is quickly subdued by the staff. We can observe the irony of the situation, when Bromden is describing the machine-like movements of McMurphy, resembling the "combine" worker, however a one with a malfunction, who does not obey Ratched's order, on the contrary, is programmed to do the opposite. Another recurring event takes place and that would be the broken glass door, yet again signalling McMurphy's upper hand. Lastly, the violent exposure of Ratched's breasts, her strongest feminine aspect, destroys her image of a calculating, bureaucratic tyrant, as none of the men can gaze upon her, without remembering them and her frightened face.

After the incident, Sefelt and Frederickson sign out and more acutes follow in their steps, even Doctor Spivey. Ratched spends a week in Medical and comes back with a cast around her neck, unable to speak. While the "big nurse" was gone, the ward was handed to the nice Japanese nurse. McMurphy becomes a legend on the ward, strengthening the spirit of the men. Harding asks Ratched what will happen to McMurphy and learns that he will be back. Harding had enough, he screams "Lady, I think you're full of so much bullshit" (Kesey 276, Part IV) and shortly after Harding signs out, just like he wanted, red carpet and all. Only Bromden, Martini and Scanlon remain.

In the last few pages of the book, we discover that McMurphy underwent lobotomy and was sent back to the ward in a vegetative state, serving as a cautionary tale. However, McMurphy left such a strong mark on the ward, that others convinced themselves that Ratched created a perfect replication of him, calling her "bluff". Scanlon, Martini and Bromden identify most of Mack's features like scars, bruises, and tattoos, save for his "big" arms as Chief proclaims. Yet again, the adjective "big" makes appearance in a figurative manner, portraying McMurphy's remains as small, although his body mass stayed the same. Bromden is particularly convinced that this is not in fact Randle, and decides to suffocate him, so the spirit of McMurphy is free and the "big nurse" loses for good. After the deed is done, Scanlon tells Bromden to leave, however Bromden does not know how. Scanlon helps him by remarking "He showed you how one time, if you think back. That very first week. You remember?" (Kesey 279, Part IV), so Bromden goes to the Tub room, picks up the hydro machine, throws it through the window, and runs to the hills. "I felt like I was flying. Free." (Kesey 280, Part IV)

Bromden then catches a ride with a Mexican guy, who gives him a jacket and some money. He wants to go to Canada, but also stops in Columbia to see if anyone he knows is still there.

“I’d just like to look over the country around the gorge again, just to bring some of it clear in my mind again.” (Kesey 281, Part IV). One detail to point out, would be the reference Chief makes, when escaping, which is the dog. Earlier in the novel it was stated that the dog he was referencing died on the road, possibly foreseeing what Bromden’s fate is, however, that is only a speculation and is up to interpretation.

Comparing the last scenes of the movie with the novel, we realize how well the adaptation is put together. The aftermath of the party is changed to some extent. Firstly, the window is closed immediately after the arrival of Nurse Ratched and then promptly open again by McMurphy when the staff is not paying attention, showing us that McMurphy actually wants to escape. Right before the getaway, he is challenged by Washington who was taking care of Billy, giving him a chance to kill himself, which leads to McMurphy abandoning the idea of escape, despite the fact Washington leaves to see what happened and Candy with Rose waving and summoning him through the open window.

Secondly, Ratched does not comfort Billy whatsoever, which is intentional and depicts her in an even more devilish manner than in the novel, where although she did manipulate Billy, she at least sympathized with him. Thus, causing the viewer to perhaps not condone McMurphy’s actions afterwards, but certainly understand them to some extent.

Thirdly, what Billy says in the movie, about him being forced is somewhat true, he was pressured into the “date” by Randle and thereafter wheeled in by everyone. This strikes me as an odd alteration, as it slightly ruins the image of McMurphy, which was so masterfully constructed to be more loveable and comprehensible, not perfect by any means, but still significantly better than the version of McMurphy from the novel.

Fourthly, McMurphy does not break a window, as it is a one-time event. More importantly, he also does not rip Ratched’s dress to reveal her breasts. This adjustment makes sense, considering the fact that breasts do not play such a significant role in the adaptation, and it would be perhaps too vulgar for the film’s McMurphy to perform this act.

Fifth point is negligible, nonetheless I will list it. Ratched does not explicitly blame McMurphy for Billy’s suicide, although her facial expression says otherwise.

Following the incident, we hear the same music that always plays in the ward and see Harding, Martini, Taber, and Cheswick play cards. Sefelt comes in informing us that McMurphy escaped, Harding does not believe and Bromden is dazed for a moment, hoping that McMurphy would not leave without him.

We see the men sleeping, while the ward staff brings McMurphy back to his bed. Chief gets up, dresses and approaches Randle's bed. He cheers up saying "I knew you wouldn't leave without me. I was waiting for you. Now we can make it, Mac. I feel big as a mountain." (Forman 2:06:02), however as he soon finds out, McMurphy underwent lobotomy and is in a vegetative state. Whispering "You're coming with me." (Forman 2:07:20), Chief realizes he cannot leave him like this and suffocates him. The reason which is given in the movie differs from the motive presented in the novel, however the ultimate solution stays the same. Having said that, Chief understands that this man is indeed McMurphy and not a copy, underlining his sanity presented in the film. Without talking to anyone he goes to the tub room, lifts the hydro machine, and throws it through the window, while the same soundtrack we heard at the start of the movie gradually reinforces the actions on the screen, climaxing when Chief throws the machine. Bromden then runs to the hills and the scene goes into fade-out.

CONCLUSION

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is a masterfully crafted adaptation of the original novel, which contains many different themes. Themes like order, represented by Nurse Ratched and chaos represented by McMurphy, sanity and insanity, masculine versus feminine features and the demasculinization of the patients, sexuality, man, machine, and nature, which is omitted from the film and lastly critique of the usage of barbaric treatments such as lobotomy and EST, which was deemed normal in the 1960s.

Most of the characters were altered in a way to push a certain narrative, which would be portraying McMurphy as a good-hearted misfit and Nurse Ratched as the ruthless tyrant. This marks the biggest change. McMurphy feels much kinder and selfless than in the novel and the exclusion of his gambling antics support this reimagination, including the omission of his indirect cause of Cheswick's suicide. It would be safe to say that he is less morally gray than Kesey's version.

Nurse Ratched is mainly the same, although she does convey the feeling of uneasiness and authority much better, due to the superb acting of Louis Fletcher and the choice of more scenes focusing on the facial expression of characters.

Chief Bromden, the original protagonist, was put to the background and changed the most. He appears as a sane man who we know little of, and that fact stays for the whole movie, except for the one-time mention of his father. Him running to the hills is left more ambiguous in the movie, creating a sense of hope for the viewer.

Harding is portrayed as a minor character who is more stern and not as comical and witty as he is in the novel. There is also the omission of his congenial connection with McMurphy.

The condensation of multiple chapters into a singular scene that convey the overall meaning, rendering the story cohesive is meticulously thought out and executed, playing into the strength and ability of the actors to express themselves, although copious chapters were cut, due to the aforementioned reason.

Consequently, Kesey himself publicly verbalized his discontent with the adaptation, which led to a lawsuit against the film production, however the dissatisfaction of the original creator with adaptations appear to be common particularly when it comes to adapting a novel into a movie.

Forman managed to capture most of the themes of the novel and even improved or added some aspects, for example, the Indian music, the smart casting choices, or the plethora of close-up shots, inviting the viewer to speculate what exactly could be the character thinking. Overall, the screen adaptation is critically acclaimed, receiving five academy awards in all major categories establishing it as a monumental success.

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