

[Correspondence between Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) and Thomas Szasz, dated February 28 and March 4, 1963 at <http://www.szasz.com>. Click here <http://www.enabling.org/ia/szasz/kesey.jpg> for scanned image of the original letter from Kesey. Also included here is an email I received from Mr. Kesey on May 11, 2001.
-- JAS]

Mr. Szasz:

I took your letter to my next door neighbor, who is getting is Doctorate in Psychology, and he was much impressed: "Oh, man, Szasz? Yeah. This book of his is the Catch 22 of the syke world!"

Just to give you some idea of your impact in these distant parts.

Certainly you may quote my book. I would consider it an honor. You probably should go through my agent, Sterling Lord, 75 East 55 street, New York 22.

It might also be of interest to note that I got my idea for the book while working as a subject at the Vets hospital in some LSD experiments. It was these first glimpses into that Inner World (using the telescope of chemistry and pharmacology) that gave me my narrator. After this I went to work, and the ten months I spend at the hospital as an aide gave me my plot. I wrote the book on the ward, working a lone night shift, finishing all but the EST scene. I did that scene after, the day after, in fact, I took a treatment with an apparatus that a friend of mine had rigged up for me. So, although the book is fiction, it is rooted in the fact of divers mental states.

An attempt I hope I don't have to duplicate in others books, because some of those states are pretty damned divers.

Yours,

[signed]
Ken Kesey

2/28/63

March 4, 1963

Mr. Ken Kesey
9 Perry Lane
Menlo Park, Calif.

Dear Mr. Kesey:

I was happy to hear from you. Of course, I couldn't help trying to guess how you had figured out so much about the mental hospital game, and my first guess was that you had put in some time as an attendant. But I certainly would have never guessed that you had tried EST: my hat is off to you.

My plan for a collection of essays on mental hospitalization, with a few sample pieces, is now in the hands of one of the editors at Macmillan, who is bringing out my new book ("Law, Liberty, and Psychiatry") in the fall. I shall wait until either Macmillan or some other publisher expresses a definite interest in such a collection and shall then get in touch with your agent. I am convinced that the excerpt from your book would be a standout, and am therefore especially glad that you consent to my making use of your writing.

Under separate cover I am sending you a few reprints which you may find of interest.

Congratulations, again, to a tremendous achievement. Should you ever wish to use my views on your book for promotion, just ask.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas S. Szasz, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry

----- Original Message -----

From: "keseey and/or babbs" <kenk@efn.org>

To: "Jeffrey A. Schaler" <jschale@american.edu>

Sent: Friday, May 11, 2001 1:39 PM

Subject: Re: Szasz site

. Jeff--

Far out! The message just before yours was about Szasz-- who I haven't heard from or thought about for many years.

Boogity boogity...

--Keseey

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