

English 348

November 6, 2009

Response to "From Christ in Flanders to 'Catch-22'"

The thesis of Eric Solomon's essay "From Christ in Flanders to 'Catch-22'" is: "In the manner of an earlier war's great novels, *Catch-22*, I would argue, is seriously religious" (97). He attempts to prove this assertion by analyzing the Christian implications of the novel, most explicitly Yossarian's role as a "mock Christ" (97). However, after reading Solomon's essay, I disagree with his position that the novel is religious, and counter that it is, in fact, anti-religious.

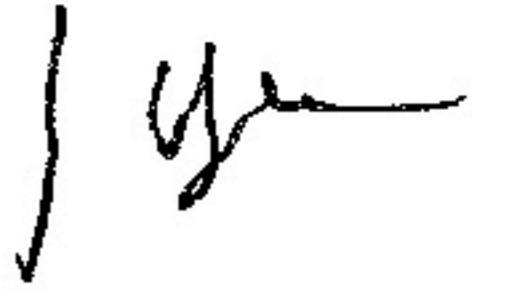
Like the introduction of his essay, the early parts of Solomon's argument are somewhat discontinuous. He calls Yossarian a "mock Christ," and hastily mentions a plethora of Christian references regarding the protagonist, including his "trinitarian role" and his position as a "God figure" for Dobbs, without giving very much explanation of their religious connotations (97). Also, many of the quotes that Solomon uses to associate Yossarian with Christ are too general to be attributed simply to Christ; the fact that Yossarian opposes social wrongs is a trait common to people other than Christians or Christ, and the guilt he feels is an attribute that defines many soldiers during war. As a result, I find that the abundance of Christian references that Solomon attributes to the novel's religiousness to be, in accordance with the general theme of the novel, more satirical than serious, perhaps to satirize the uselessness of religion in war, or perhaps to mock the "Christ figure" as a literary device.

Solomon notes that "the chaplain's vision of Yossarian is comic and absurd" (98). However, he fails to make the connection between the ridiculousness of Yossarian naked in the tree, and the chaplain's subsequent belief that Yossarian is Christ. By not at least acknowledging Yossarian's Christ-like attributes as potentially satirical, I believe Solomon leaves out a very important aspect of the novel, which may be, as a whole, anti-religious. Furthermore, I find it difficult to believe that

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Good

Heller would write a novel with such Christian overtones considering he was born to two Jewish parents, an important aspect that was severely overlooked.

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