

SUPERSTRUCTURE AND HEGEMONY IN MILAN KUNDERA'S "THE JOKE" AND POST-POSTMODERN CULTURAL TEXTS

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INTRODUCTION

In the novel "The Joke" ("Žert", 1967), Milan Kundera demonstrates the mechanism of functioning of the *superstructure*. Under this concept, which was first developed by Louis Althusser, I mean a set of factors that influence society, forming certain hegemony and defining the system of power relations. From the very beginning, the novel's character Ludvik Jahn is reluctant to return to his hometown, the center of which he roamed in childhood and adolescence. In the end, the character confesses that it is not just reluctance, but a hatred that causes this psychological discomfort associated with the perception of the past.

The motif of superstructure corresponds to the motif of cultural transgression and transculturalism discourse in general in contemporary literature and cinema texts of the post-postmodern period. The scholars admit that

The Hegelian contradiction is never overdetermined. Therein lies the difference between Hegel and Marx and between economism and Althusser's reading of Marx. The contradiction between forces and relations of productions cannot explain historical change on its own. It only acquires ruptural force through its overdetermination by contradictions arising in different levels of the social formation. Instead of a direct causal link between base and superstructure, which conceives of politics and ideology as epiphenomena or by-products of the economy, the superstructures acquire their own specificity and effectiveness in the historical process, to the extent that changes in the base do not automatically modify the superstructures (Althusser, 1969, pp. 111, 115). The latter are part of the conditions of existence of the economic level, if only because labour legislation intervenes to organise the process of production (Althusser and Balibar, 1970, p. 178). The superstructures always already contaminate the base¹.

¹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262358457_Althusser, p. 189.

As Dmytro Drozdovskyi argues, “In post-postmodernism, the psychological aspect of reality is evident. Functions of the *psyche* are a resource that makes it possible to combine the real and the imaginary. Post-postmodernistic reality appears as a type of space in which the penetration of the fictitious into the present and vice versa takes place, and the subject of reality cannot fully understand what, in fact, occurs”². The author states continuing his theory of post-postmodernism that “Post-postmodernistic reality is created in a special way and at the same time appears to be split and potentially multiple. In post-postmodernism, the motif of the fragmented person and, as a consequence, the perception of reality as a bifurcated phenomenon (*Atonement* by I. McEwan) has been actualized. Besides, the constructed schizophrenic reality sometimes appears to be the last opportunity to protect from the Truth, which person cannot perceive due to the biological limitation of his own analytical abilities (*Saturday* by I. McEwan). Heroes feel at the intuitive level that there is something more complicated in the organization of the body, memory, brain, the universe but at the moment they do not have adequate tools for understanding these phenomena and their description for future generations (D. Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*)”³.

Discourse and motives of cultural transgression are represented in the contemporary American cinema culture and texts of the XXI Century.

For example, recent Hollywood films demonstrate the tendency of American culture to reveal the idea of multicultural and transcultural representation of the ordinary life of the characters who exploit mimetically the life of ordinary people. This idea of mixture of different people of different nations and races is depicted, for example, from the first episodes in the movie “The Good Doctor”, which represents a story about the doctor with autism disorder. In the film, we see actors of Mexican, Chinese and white American origin. This is an example of transculturally oriented Hollywood films accepted and appreciated by people of all nations and all races in different countries. The idea of global/globalized village is represented in the mentioned film in which the situations and collisions happen in a local American hospital in St Bonaventura.

² Drozdovskyi, D. (2019). Philosophical and Genological Features of English Post-postmodernistic Novel: Typological Characteristics. *English and American Studies*, 1 (16), p.

³ Ibid. P. 152.

Let me remind you about another film that is based on the *Sherlock Holmes* discourse. In the American movie “Elementary”, you see Mr. John Watson transformed into Joan Watson, a woman of a Chinese origin. In addition, Sherlock is not a British (originally Scottish) character but a person who belongs to the American mafia family (his father is a big boss) and who lives in New York and becomes an outstanding police consultant. This movie also represents the idea of the place with people of different origin.

1. Superstructure and Czechoslovakian Society in “The Joke”

The scholars who investigate the novel “The Joke” outline that this text has been variously labeled as realistic, political, ideological, and psychological in genre by different reviewers. Justifications for such categorizations seem quite equally available. The author’s outstanding style of narration with its four first-person narrators and their internal monologues, as Craig Cravens (2000) suggests, are enough evidence to register this multi-perspectival novel as a psychological one. He believes that “such a narrative method has come to be associated with the type of novel known as the “psychological novel,” practitioners of which such as Faulkner, Woolf, Beckett and Joyce, often employ multiple perspectives to assert the subjective nature of experience and thus display human consciousness as isolated, unique and idiosyncratic.” However, these techniques of multiple narration, polyphonic composition and fascination with numbers (especially number 7) are what most readers and reviewers have noticeably lingered upon as structural devices in this novel.⁴

In the Neo-Marxist theory provided by L. Althusser, there is a concept of *superstructure*. Yu. Pavlenko, a Ukrainian scholar, points out that “Althusser views ideology as part of a superstructure that legitimizes substructures, that is built in economic and social relations. Althusser denies the possibility of scientific ideology, which was mentioned, in particular, by Vladimir Lenin, because ideology and science are based on different epistemological bases and are connected with different social practices. The questions of truth or error do not relate to ideology, because it establishes a set of norms that orient individuals to a particular relation to the world and the society in which it lives. That is, ideology is a separate system by which people perceive, evaluate, “experience”,

⁴ Masoomi M. (2012). Narration in Milan Kundera’s *The Joke*. *Academic Research International* Vol. 3, No. 1, July 2012, p. 100.

perceptions that have formed in them, relative to the real conditions of existence. Moreover, this system of representations may consist of concepts, ideas, myths, and images”⁵. “Liu Kang argues that Maoism is a critical resource in Althusser’s inquiries into the problems of superstructural elements such as culture, ideology and politics, in his search for an alternative modernity”⁶.

Exploring different concepts of discourse (as a factor of ideology), Yu. Pavlenko concludes that “the further development of the concept of political discourse is found in Laclau and Mouff: discourse is the primary space that constitutes social reality as such in a society devoid of ontological. The totality of hegemony is a complex game with empty meanings, which is ascribed universal meaning. This principle of “lack” is interpreted according to Lacan as “lack of Being”, so that ultimately the discourse through constructing social differences and attributing content to them performs an ontological function, acting as a substitute for being”⁷.

Analyzing the approaches of Marxist criticism, Peter Barry points out that the focus of this interpretation practice is on the analysis of the *material* world, since Marxism itself is the antithesis of the philosophy of *idealism*.

The past in M. Kundera’s novel represents the efforts of the new authorities to build socialism in Czechoslovakia, but the path to socialism lay through forms of totalitarian control over society. Masoomi M argues that in the novel

the action of the novel centers on the story of Ludvik, the protagonist, who comes from a small town in southern Moravia and who becomes a fervent political activist during his university days in Prague. He tells how the joke of the title – a postcard (Optimism is the opium of

⁵ Pavlenko Yu. (2010). *Anthropological dimensions of ideology*. Thesis for a Candidate of Science Degree in Philosophy. 09.00.04 – Philosophical Anthropology, Philosophy of Culture. M. Drahomanov’s National Pedagogical University. Kyiv, p. 13.

⁶ Yan, F. (2018). “The ‘Althusser-Mao’: Problematic and the Reconstruction of Historical Materialism: Maoism, China and Althusser on Ideology”: *Comparative Literature and Culture* 20. 3: URL: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3258&context=clweb>, p. 2

⁷ Pavlenko Yu. (2010). *Anthropological dimensions of ideology*. Thesis for a Candidate of Science Degree in Philosophy. 09.00.04 – Philosophical Anthropology, Philosophy of Culture. M. Drahomanov’s National Pedagogical University. Kyiv, p. 16.

the people! A healthy atmosphere stinks of stupidity! Long live Trotsky!) to a naïve yet exasperatingly patriotic girlfriend, named Marketa, whom he was trying to impress – leads to his expulsion from the party and university, army service among the politically unwanted and several years in the mines of Ostrava, where he also experiences a tragic love affair with Lucie. Later Ludvik plans to revenge on Pavel Zemanek, his former party comrade who played a crucial role on his ill-fated life. Ludvik tries to seduce Zemanek’s wife, Helena, during her visit to Moravia as a radio reporter. But this turns out to be another joke on Ludvik himself, since he learns that Zemanek himself wants to get rid of Helena. Ludvik succeeds in his revenge plan, on the surface, but this does not make him victorious; the story ends in Helena’s suicide attempt and Jaroslav’s heart attack⁸.

Control is explicated in the novel in situations of remembering a student’s past, when Helena Zemánková is called in for questioning to find out what Ludvik wrote to her in a postcard. The peculiarity of the situation is that the “institute of power” already knows everything that is written in the postcard, but nevertheless there is pressure on the student, who eventually decides for a while to move away from an unreliable according to the *System* (Institution of Power) views friend Ludvik. Another student is also summoned to party meetings and given a preventative talk about moral standards and rules of conduct in a socialist society.

The society of Czechoslovakia in the past is a panoptic, using the metaphorical and eloquent image provided by Michel Foucault. This panoptical system establishes forms of total control over everything, and clearly defines the norms of ethics and morality, the departure from which will signify the failure of the builder of communism or socialism. Such influences actualize the idea of a superstructure when an individual is exerted by cumulative influence from different sides so that he or she adopts the pattern of behavior and constructs the type of identity required by the System. Studying at university is in no way a form of freedom and self-discovery in “The Joke”, but of constant fears. Helena returns to normal communication with her friend only after the permission from the System. That is, the private in the novel is entirely dependent on ideology and the system of power relations that seek to control the personal level of

⁸ Masoomi M. (2012). Narration in Milan Kundera’s *The Joke*. *Academic Research International* Vol. 3, No. 1, July 2012, p. 100.

communication. As a consequence, there are injuries, the desire for the character to renounce the past and escape from it.

The past is associated with the protagonist with control, freedom, and pain. Although the character ironically points out that today there is an excess of another type in the world, when freedom has become too much obsessive and everything is allowed, but the past is also marked for him negatively. He is afraid of meeting others because they will force Ludvik to discover those memory cavities that the hero of the novel wants to hide and never return to them. “Superstructure denotes the result that is the consequence of a set of causes, that is, the interaction of several, not one, factor (in this case economic). The idea of totality and interaction of causes is aimed at refuting a simplified understanding of the directly proportional relationship between base and superstructure”⁹. “This also includes the concept of relative autonomy, which demonstrates that, despite the links between culture and the economy, art is to some extent independent of economic forces”¹⁰.

The latter statement is criticized in the novel, more precisely criticized for trying to turn the university and social life into an instrument of ideology.

“Althusser makes an important distinction between what can be called state power and state control. State power is exercised by the so-called repressive structures”¹¹. “However, the state also exercises its power in a more veiled manner, allegedly defending internal harmony in society and using what Althusser calls ideological structures or a state ideological apparatus. These include institutions such as political parties, schools, the media, the church, the family, and the arts (including literature), which fuse ideology – a set of ideas and positions that are in the interests of the state and the political system”¹².

2. Ideology and Homelessness

M. Kundera’s novel underlines the motive of homelessness and abandonment. The friend whom Ludvik once helped now gives his accommodation in order to help his old friend to have the dreamy

⁹ Barry P. (2008). *Introduction to Theory: Literary Studies and Cultural Studies*; [trans. into Ukrainian from English by O. Pohynaiko]. Kyiv: Smoloskyp, p. 194.

¹⁰ Ibid. P. 194.

¹¹ Ibid. P. 195.

¹² Ibid. P. 196.

enjoyment on a normal bed (the hotel room bed is awful). The idea of moving, finding yourself outside the world in which you were born is a key one in the novel. The displacements are conditioned by the rejection of the home, which is dominated by control and dictatorship. A situation in which someone has access to your private correspondence can be qualified precisely with the help of the concept of dictatorship, which describes the state of total control of society by the authorities (institutes of power). The past is associated in the novel with military fighting, protests and competitions, and in one episode, the narrator says that the lands of southern Moravia have always been a kind of outpost, from the Hungarians and other conquerors.

In “The Joke”, the motif of the “accursed land” and at the same time “lost land” that no longer belongs to the hero (Ludvik) who is good at fleeing the home place is explicitly explained. The concept of the home in the novel is like a hell, and there is even greater contrast to the title. The past is a dictatorship that is traumatic and at the same times a joke, because everything that happened to the hero of the novel was unnatural, contrary to human nature, for which one of the possibilities for self-realization is *freedom*. However, under the influence of ideology and the presence of hegemony in the Czechoslovak world, freedom becomes a simulacrum, the true understanding of which is unrecognized by the inhabitants of that world.

Ludvik (he is one of four narrators: Ludvik, Helena, Kostka, and Jaroslav) has a deep understanding of freedom when he, having spent days, months and years in migration around other unknown places, in numerous hotels, realizes what *the cult of the key* means: when you are the owner of your own space that no one can fall into anymore. This episode in the novel seems to me semiotically meaningful and a key one: having acquired the key at the reception, the hero finds himself the owner of his own world, in which the source of pain and trauma belongs only to his own past, which also needs to be learned to manage. Further, having gained freedom, Ludvik already lacks freedom only as a potentiality of opportunity: he seeks to build space around him as being cozy and comfortable.

Hence, the image of the bed in the room and the table, which can accommodate only one person, is a central one. Ludvik tries to slide the table to the bed to try to see at least two can sit around that table, but that idea fails. The bed is too low; it looks like a hammock or even a pit into which the protagonist falls. The image of the pit is not accidental in the text: before us the metaphor of the grave and the bed is not a resting place,

but a coffin, a grave for the hero of “The Joke”. Ludvik, on the contrary, does not seek to die, but is ready to meet his own past, which he suddenly crosses in a hairdresser while shaving. The motive of transforming the space of death into the space of life unfolds before the reader of the novel. Realizing the essence of freedom, the character of the novel seeks not only to use freedom as an abstraction, but to form a free life. Freedom means comfort and opportunity to enjoy, which is unacceptable to the communist socialist society full of militaries in Czechoslovakia, where the protagonist lived in the past.

3. Hollywood as a Displacement of Cultural Hierarchies

In this chapter of the research, I will try to represent the key idea of the hybridity associated with the contemporary Hollywood discourse, which remains too little with the American film industry of 1940-s and 1950-s when Vivien Lee and M. Brando were the stars of the American Hollywood playing in Tennessee Williams’s “A Streetcar Named Desire”. In addition, I have mentioned this outstanding film to spotlight the idea represented in T. Williams’s original play and associated with S. Kowalski and Blanche, who is an American aristocrat woman. Stanley is a representation of the new Americans who come from other worlds but who bring the idea of new vitality, new transgression, new brutal sexuality, and new values. T. Williams demonstrates the idea of loss of the old American fundamental ground associated with Blanche’s aristocratic family and her cultural values. Stanley is reckless, rude, brutal but he is a symbol of new America based not on the concept of aristocratic values but on the idea of *melting pot*, of the idea that each person can get his or her benefit and move up the social ladder.

By the end of the First World War, the American film industry dominated not only the domestic market in the United States but also the movie marketplace throughout much of the world. It presented images of American society and nationhood not only to Americans themselves, but also to countless millions of foreigners who were frequently entranced by the skill and professionalism of American films. Hollywood became the great “dream factory” and one of the most seductive dreams it spun was the dream of a particularly American form of national community¹³.

¹³ Stokes Melvyn, Sipièrè Dominique (2010). Out of Many, One: European film-makers construct the United States, *European journal of American studies* [Online], 5-4. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/8650> (accessed on January 15, 2020).

This is what we can see now in Hollywood industry based on the idea of co-production between different world industries reinforced in one Hollywood project. Moreover, it reveals the idea of hybridity sometimes based on exploiting cultural stereotypes. Hollywood films incorporate various prejudices known around the world in association with different cultures and countries (e.g. Americans eat too much hot dogs and hamburgers with cola, they are reckless and don't care about clothes to wear, etc.; European people are more conservative and aristocratic, they are trying to study the classic arts of the Greek and Roman periods; etc.). Even each country has its world stereotype (Italians are good singers; French are falling in love; British are rational, Americans are pragmatic, etc.). Hollywood film industry of the present days is trying into to unite all these cultural stereotypes and produce a narrative based on this mixture of different prejudices. Hollywood develops the idea of Benedict Anderson about the nations as "imagined communities." They are brought together by a common sense of shared identity and values, together with a perception that – transcending all groups, regions and classes – there is a sense of social cohesion¹⁴.

That is why some critics consider Hollywood films much easier than, for example, traditional European or Japanese, Polish or Ukrainian or other films. Hollywood industry deals with the typical scenes, problems, emotions understandable in all cultural zones. In addition, this causes in some professional film circles a special attitude to Hollywood industry as a kind of McDonald phenomenon: you are recognized everywhere but you do not have your national peculiarities. I read a Ukrainian magazine "Kino-Theater" ("Film-Theater") with a discussion about Hollywood films that were perceived by the film industry experts as a kind of intellectual or cultural junk food. *Junk Hollywood industry* is well known but it is not healthy as it does not provide the national specification of the people of various zones on the planet but demonstrates the idea of the globalized village (by Marshall McLuhan) of people. When you watch Hollywood films like "Avatar", "Lovely Bones", or something like this, you see the love story represented even in the post-apocalyptic time or on another planet.

Therefore, Hollywood reinforces and exploits world known and world appreciated scenarios based on common emotional reactions and responses. Hence, Hollywood is criticized for being too understandable

¹⁴ Ibid.

and not sophisticated or thought-provoking. Hollywood films often appeal to common world emotions and represent the same situations that can be characterized using again well-known Hollywood images of Terminator, Rambo (a hero who saves the planet and the entire world), etc. On the other hand, we have a beautiful woman who reveals the love story, which is obvious for Hollywood industry. The female-character is structured to love a “beast” and have an impact on the male-character. Hollywood films for children more effectively demonstrate this tendency of using world recognizable plots (stories) that have human archetypes.

In this way, Hollywood can be criticized as an industry with no roots. Moreover, Hollywood now is like a simulacrum. However, the grounds for this tendency can be found even in 1960-s when Hollywood directors had a special map of zones in California that can be used for filmmaking about different places on the planet. I mean that if, for example, you needed the Himalayas for your film, you had to go to north California and direct a film there; if you needed the Cordilleras, you had to go to another place in the same state. This example provides that idea of simulacrum, and now Hollywood is considered of a kind of representation of world simulacrum. Using this term I mean that Hollywood can create the atmosphere of potentially any place on the planet or in the Universe.

Furthermore, I want to concentrate your attention on the idea that Hollywood co-production creates cultural spheres that represent the world in which we have an ideal harmony of different people taking into account their age, sex, gender, color of skin, etc. Hollywood co-production is as a simulacra based on the representation of the ideal politics that is not easy to achieve in the real life. Anyway, Hollywood films now are based on the co-production principles between different countries, and in the films we should obviously see actors of all races and various ages. The anti-ageism concept is becoming more actively represented in the contemporary Hollywood films in which old men or women retell their personal stories with flashbacks to the past. Thus, we see in the films not only actresses and actors with like-top-model bodies but actresses and actors of different ages and with different bodies. For example, you can see this in the movie “The Hustle” that appeared last year and it deals with some European and American stereotypes which touch also the sphere of personal body. Penny Rust (Rebel Wilson) in “The Hustle” is a woman with extra weight but her behavior in the film is supposed to demonstrate the typical behavior of the American people: reckless and innovative, money concerned and self-oriented.

Penny is a small-time con artist who traps men into giving her money, whereas Josephine is a sophisticated con artist who cons the world's richest men out of their money, whose idol is the legendary unknown con artist "Medusa". The two con artists meet on their way to the French Riviera for the first time. Not willing to take any chance with any competition, Josephine has Penny is "arrested", after which Josephine pays her bail and advises Penny to leave the country. Penny discovers that she was conned by Josephine but begs her to teach Penny her ways. Josephine and Penny execute a complicated con act against multiple rich men called the Lord of the Rings, stealing engagement rings. The plan works at the beginning, but after a while, Josephine refuses to pay Penny because she's an apprentice. Penny and Josephine wager Penny's entire networth of \$500,000 using billionaire Thomas Westerburg, the creator of a tech app called YaBurnt, as their victim¹⁵.

Contemporary American films about the characters who travel to Europe demonstrate the features that help to revise critically the American identity mainly created and shared by media and mass culture. I mean the views of Americans as courageous people ready to travel abroad and ready to overcome all the troubles on their way. However, they can do this because people can eat practically everything as Macdonald's cuisine is not unique and is based on very simple ingredients, etc. US people are ready to sit into the plane and fly for better life. They have the advantageous spirit and they know that money can talk and money are the same stimulus despite the country national currency.

These are the main stereotypes about the American people I the movies. People from the USA are ready to revive in the most difficult life situations because they were brought up in the circumstances that determined their eagerness to struggle for victory. To the contrary, European people are displayed in such films as more naive and more aristocratic. They have money and invest them not in traveling to unknown worlds and extreme destinations but in visiting Monaco expositions or playing in the casinos. These people are more naive and less courageous. They are ready to help people in difficult situation that is why cunning Americans who travel to world famous resorts as in the film can manipulate them.

In "The Hustle", for example, the girl from the USA Penny represents a type of gangsters who are brilliant manipulators and who are

¹⁵ Ibid.

ready for everything to get money. European people can also have illegal income, they can belong to mafia but they are not so innovative thinking and fearless as Americans. In the film about two criminal women, we see that the younger one can eat everything even the shit not to be caught by the police and to get the aim. This metaphorical image is persuadably demonstrated when Penny is being feed by Josephine Chesterfield (Anne Hathaway), a more sophisticated gangster woman. Europe is represented in the movie as a land of big money. The Americans are the new power that needs that money. However, in this seeking of money and this play of life the Americans understand the real values of true humanism and they understand that money is just the instrument. The dangerous traveling give even cunning characters a way to understand themselves and understand the real value of life in a humanistic paradigm. Americans are described as open minded and even extra open minded to the world adventures. European people are more bohemian but their cultivation of arts is sometimes a ritual. However, this identity is displayed as false and not true.

Traditionally *Hollywood* film production considered to be opposite to the *European* cinema. This opposition was based on the principles of film distribution: Hollywood was oriented toward popular success and the income received after the film release was considered an important factor of film industry success. For example, *The Star Wars* was one of the most successful films in the history of the XX Century taking into account this criterion. The European film industry was perceived (and also appreciated) by the film experts as an industry oriented toward the formation of the films that provided ideas, philosophy of social action through images and various experiments, and generally revealed the philosophical aspects of live that is unique in each situation and for each person.

Let me remind the films with great European actors as Marcello Mastroianni, Jean-Paul Belmondo or Catharine Deneuve. The movies with these actors and actresses illuminated the idea of love as an omnipotent power despite the difficult social confrontations and psychological contradictions. Filmgoers became the fans of these actors who created the characters very close to real life problems but as real masters performed stories that represented a confrontation of a human being and reality. Even these actors are associated with the success of the European film industry (they became the symbols of the European cinema of the XX Century). These cinema products demonstrated true human

emotions and difficult life collisions and misfortunes that can be overcome by strong personalities with strong true feelings and emotions.

The phenomenon of film identities was changed completely: these days both in European and American films, we see the actors of different countries who work for the film industry as the international industry that does not follow the old national traditions and principles. Hybridization is a result of a new philosophy that underlines the principle of cultural benefits that can be reached in the cooperation between various schools of film industry actors, directors, staff, etc. Cultural hybridization and transculturalism determine the specifics of the contemporary film industry. These notions relate to the new principles of creating cultural products that are produced on the transnational scale and are not oriented toward some ethnical and national specifics. Films are co-productions as “Cold Blood” or “Value of truth” (about Gareth Jones).

My second point to discuss Hollywood industry as an opposition (I am trying to state this this principle does not work for the XXI Century) to the European films relates to the idea that Hollywood was oriented toward the mass cultural success and strategies and European films tended to be more sophisticated and aristocratic for the filmgoers. I mean that many European films represented the special atmosphere of, for example, Paris or Rome with the accent to the history and architecture of these places that determine this special part of the world. The films revealed a unique artistic and bohemian aura that covered the psychological aspects of the characters in the movies. However, this tendency is not represented in the contemporary European films. Using the notion “European films” I mean those that involve European directors, staff or those that demonstrate the European cities paying attention to their architecture.

European films are grounded in the history facets but this aspect can be incorporated in the contemporary Hollywood films also and be just its part. Let us remind the movie “Hannibal” released a few years ago when in the third episode, Lector escaped to Europe and the scene of the movie was displaced from the States to Venice, Italy. The third part is associated mostly with some psychedelic aspect of the film narration. This transformation of the film narration I guess is also determined by the new landscape that appeared in the third episode. The third part of the movie reveals the traditional European *fleur* that now is integrated to the American films based according to the Hollywood principles.

Hollywood (the same as the US) represents the idea of the *melting pot* and deconstructs the idea of mono-ethnical phenomena. On the Hollywood industry, decorations could be created to produce the idea that

the scene takes place on the ship or in Antarctica, or elsewhere. Contemporary American films mainly demonstrate the same architecture landscapes and urban design of high scrappers and business centers of New York or Los Angeles if the scene happens outside. The postmodern culture displaced the opposition between high art and low art. Derrida, Foucault, and *Baudrillard* deconstructed the idea that there is a significant difference of an opposition between mass/popular culture and classical high culture (Shakespeare was popular in his times but became the center of the Western Canon in Harold Bloom's theory).

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, Milan Kundera's novel "The Joke" represents the mechanism of the influence of superstructure as a set of different forces on the individual that determine his or her behavior and social models. It is demonstrated how the hegemony in society shapes the space of non-freedom around Ludvik, how the power structures seek to control the private space defining ethical and moral boundaries for the inhabitants of the socialist world, which, however, still need to be built.

The past is, in fact, a desire to embody a future that has never come. Building socialism is a reminiscent of utopia, the path to nowhere that ends in flight with no final point. The native home, its own space in which childhood and adolescence took place, is not safe, and, therefore, determines the motive for escaping from the home place to unknown other worlds, because in fact, the socialist system did not allow people to have a private space and freedom of self-realization having an impact on their minds and mental patters.

To conclude, I want to draw your attention to the fact the transgression, cultural movement through the borders and boundaries is an important part of the contemporary Hollywood films. In this way, I follow and share the position of those critics and cultural experts/thinkers who say that Hollywood is a multifaceted and multicultural sphere of international co-production. National identity as a phenomenon does not exist in the American film industry. We can enjoy the peculiarities of various identities (Mexican, Chinese, Polish, etc.) in Hollywood film when they have a cooperation with others or when they are represented in a transgressed situation. Sometimes the directors use the typical stereotypes to criticize such behavior and to spotlight the differences that may cause problems and collisions. European people do not understand this ability of Americans to do all possible to get the aim for example. The co-productions industry unfolds the anti-sexist and anti-gender protocols

that are the essential part of this business. Hollywood is oriented toward uniting all people of all nations in the common emotions. Moreover, it does not matter whether the situations in the movies are located in the US, in Europe or on another planet. People who watch the films in the cinemas should demonstrate the same ideas based on tolerance, peaceful coexistence, sharing love and support, etc. In this way, Hollywood reveals the idea that culture can support in the politics of uniting people on the planet in order to build a “globalized village”. Contemporary Hollywood movies are oriented toward supporting and implementing through this art the idea of cultural hybridity and transculturation that is an Important part of building a peaceful planet on which people support each other for example in such disasters as the one happened in Australia in the end of December 2019 in early January 2020.

Moreover, I would like to summarize that these days in the film industry we have the result of the philosophical implications that had an impact on the hybridity of film and resulted in the lack of difference between American and European films as mass/“aristocratic”. Latter can be the result of some snobbish cultural prejudices that do not have an impact on the world cultural market today. Global film scale exists in the hybrid forms and according to the principles of transculturation resulted in the film industry in the form of co-productions and cultural mixtures in which all-cultural differences are smashed and dotted.

SUMMARY

In the paper, the author has analyzed the theories and methodology of Marxist criticism related to the issues of hegemony by Louis Althusser. In the Neo-Marxist theory there is represented also a concept of superstructure. The methods exploited by Althusser outline the specific of representation of the “alien” as “my own” loci in M. Kundera’s novel “The Joke”, in which Prague has been depicted as a special space that is comfortable (well-known) and dangerous at the same time for the narrator. M. Kundera creates a space with double architecture: one level of this phenomenon represents the atmosphere of what reveals true emotions, expressions and feelings; however, the second level of this space contains unexpected dangers and is traumatic as it relates to the dimension of control and Soviet (KGB) power institutes. Besides, the author has developed the ideas of hegemony and discussed their representation in contemporary post-postmodern cultural texts of the film industry. The conception about post-postmodernism by D. Drozdovskyi has been discussed and unfold in the research. M. Kundera in a specific

way exploits the idea of hybridity (cultural, memory, etc.). The concept of hybridity is highly essential for post-postmodern cultural texts. For the development of the presented ideas the author has chosen the representation of the transculturation issues in the contemporary American (Hollywood) film “The Hustle” that engages cultural stereotypes and represents a post-postmodern narrative based on the ideas of cultural hybridity as a phenomenon that can provide extra benefits for the cultural consumers. Moreover, the author concludes that the Hollywood industry now is a kind of implicit politics of destroying the differences that avoid the concept of sharing values because of cultural prejudices and oppositions. I share, however, the idea that Hollywood after exploits typical scenarios and simple clichés in the movies, but for the now it is a possibility to create cultural products based on the idea of co-production that will maintain the concept of peaceful co-existence through viewing the peoples of various color of skin and religious beliefs in the movies. Hollywood is a part of the global strategy based on the idea of creating a planet life free of terrorism as what states Henry Perowne in Ian McEwan’s novel “Saturday”. The contemporary cultural discourse exploits the paradigm of neo-Marxist criticism and the conception of superstructure and hegemony, however, these concepts are oriented toward the creation of the benefit by destroying and deconstructing cultural stereotypes used, for example, in American Hollywood film industry.

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