

# HUMOUR, HEGEMONY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CONSCIOUSNESS: A GRAMSCIAN READING OF MILAN KUNDERA'S *THE JOKE*

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## ABSTRACT

*The Joke* was published in the dying years of Stalinist orthodoxy in Czechoslovakia, offering a wide range of irony, dark humor, and narrative polyphony to reveal how the dominant political structures control consciousness, force conformity, and punish dissent. The comic discourse and the political power intersect in Kundera's text, creating a fruitful ground for an analysis of ideology. This study examines the use of humor in the novel as a mode of communist resistance and as a means of diagnosis that illuminates the instability and coercive nature of communist hegemony in the context of the Cold War in Czechoslovakia, using Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and struggle for cultural consciousness. The study is qualitative and employs textual analysis grounded in Gramscian cultural theory, supplemented by secondary theoretical frameworks from cultural materialism, literary sociology, and critical discourse analysis. The results show that the novel functions as both a tool of resistance and an indicator of ideological weakness. The ironic postcard the protagonist Ludvík writes is an unplanned yet significant gesture of counter-hegemonic speech, with an unequal impact that reveals the performative fragility of dominant ideological consent. The findings of this study suggest that Kundera's comic mode is a form of 'war of position' in which subaltern consciousness challenges hegemonic narratives at the level of everyday cultural life. Humor is no trivial matter but rather a place of struggle within hegemonic discourse, revealing its internal tensions and potentially generating other forms of feeling and collective memory.

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## INTRODUCTION

Humour and politics have always held a tenuous place in the field of literary and cultural theory. Comic discourse is a particularly charged political discourse in contexts where the mechanisms of consent and coercion meet most clearly: the authoritarian context. In Milan Kundera's first novel, *The Joke*, irony and dark comedy lie at the very core of the critique of the ideological hegemony of the communist regime in post-war Czechoslovakia. The young student's sardonic postcard, interpreted as true subversion, and punished with out-of-proportion institutional force, is a kind of economy of the mechanisms by which totalitarian regimes police the limits of permissible consciousness. This paper proposes that a Gramscian perspective offers the most fruitful theoretical tool for analyzing the ideological functions of Kundera's humor, for it helps to reveal and contest the mechanisms of hegemonic domination.

This enquiry is significant in light of several scholarly advances in literary studies, political theory, and cultural sociology. The study of Gramscian approaches to literary and cultural analysis has recently been revitalized, especially in post-socialist and postcolonial studies (Pozzoni & Quattromini, 2024). From folklore to conspiracy beliefs: A Gramscian approach to conspiracy theory studies (Genealogy, 2024; Sotiris, 2022). At the same time, the field of humour as a political and ideological construct has also seen significant growth, with scholars researching comic discourse as a means of resisting, criticising, and working around the constraints of hegemony (Lockyer & Pickering, 2005). In this wider context, Kundera's writings have remained the subject of scholarly engagement, especially regarding issues of memory, identity, and resistance under political repression. The intersection of these three fields, however, remains underexplored in the

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current literature, and this paper seeks to fill this gap. Browning and Brassett (2023) have claimed that humour is a soft form of power, used to construct consent by rendering "ideologies" natural, appealing, or merely funny, and that, when used in opposition to the regime, it is a kind of counter-hegemonic Gramscian "war of position."

Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which is part of his *Prison Notebooks*, is essential to grasping how dominant classes not only exercise force but also create intellectual and moral leadership and gain the 'spontaneous' consent of subordinate groups through cultural and ideological means (Gramsci, 1971). The concept of hegemony in the framework of state socialist regimes, in which the party apparatus not only proclaimed itself the vanguard of the ideology but also the body that governs, operated differently and sometimes paradoxically. Theoretical research in recent years has further developed Gramscian analysis, with a specific focus on the dynamics of authoritarian hegemony (Filippini, 2017), an analysis well-suited to the study of cultural resistance in the context of the Cold War, in the East as well as in the West. Perhaps most particularly, Kundera's fictional world is one in which the struggle for hegemony by subordinate groups occurs quietly, through cultural means rather than openly political ones, a concept called the 'war of position'. In the broader context of Central European intellectual resistance, Jukic (2025) has placed Kundera. His literary project was essentially about the restoration of a humanist consciousness capable of withstanding the ideological ravages of the twentieth century.

The use of humour, in this case, is no innocent or apolitical phenomenon. Comic modes of discourse, such as irony, satire, absurdism, and dark humor, are now known to be forms of ideological labor, in which they reveal the irony, the contradictions, and the gaps in dominant discourses while simultaneously enabling the creation of alternative structures of feeling (Salem, 2021; Kuipers, 2015). In the case of authoritarian regimes, however, humour has always been an important means of subaltern opposition, partly because of its subversive, covert nature, which offers some immunity from the direct assault of institutional power. *The Joke* is a work of comedy that is primarily used to declare truths rather than simply to entertain: this is a quality that is present throughout Kundera's entire body of work, and is especially noticeable in his depictions of the comic in *The Joke*, which is used to articulate what the dominant ideological framework is unable to speak. With the famous beginning: "It all started with a joke", the novel's comic discourse is announced as the core of the narrative, as is its catastrophic involvement with political power, in a manner typical of Kundera's economy (Kundera, 1992, p. 3). In her recent essay on Gramscian common sense, Crehan (2022) has demonstrated that humour and irony are among the main means by which subaltern subjects can express their estrangement from dominant ideological structures without yet having the vocabulary to offer an overt challenge to them.

From a methodological point of view, this paper is written in a qualitative textual analysis style, grounded in the principles of Gramsci's cultural theory. Secondary theories from cultural materialism, literary sociology, and critical discourse analysis are brought to bear on the close reading of Kundera's narrative techniques, including his polyphonic structure, the use of irony and the narrative voice, and comic episodes. This interdisciplinary approach enables a complex description of the interplay and integration of the novel's formal and thematic elements, which create and challenge the hegemony of ideas. The paper is not intended to provide an exhaustive exegesis of *The Joke*, but to point to the specifically Gramscian aspects of Kundera's comic practice by reading closely and selectively.

This question is not limited to Kundera's novel. How comic discourse challenges and refrains from hegemonic structures is as pressing as ever in the analysis of contemporary political culture, as shown by scholarship on authoritarian populism, political humour, and cultural resistance over the last few years (Lockyer & Pickering, 2005; Sotiris, 2020). The Gramscian interpretation of *The Joke* presented here is not only a contribution to the field of Kundera studies and to the history of cultural resistance in the era of the Cold War, but also a theoretical model that can be extended to other literary and cultural contexts where humour serves as a means of ideological struggle. Research on political humour in authoritarian settings has overwhelmingly focused on contemporary media and political communication rather than on Cold War literary texts (Wang-Kaeding, 2025; Beck & Spencer, 2025). In the case of Kundera, comic discourse is shown, particularly clearly, to be a counter-hegemonic practice, with important implications for the study of literature, politics, and culture generally.

Although there is a substantial body of research on the role of humour in totalitarian regimes, little attention is paid to the ideological aspects of humour through a Gramscian lens in Milan Kundera's *The Joke*. The paper focuses on existential or political topics. However, it fails to examine the role of comedy in the exercise of hegemony and the role of humour as a space of counter-hegemonic resistance. This gap impedes comprehension of the power dynamics woven into Kundera's novel. The purpose of this study is to examine *The Joke* in the light of Antonio Gramsci's ideas on hegemony, counter-hegemony, and the struggle for consciousness, and to show how humour is used to control ideology and to resist it within the communist apparatus in Czechoslovakia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The harsh criticism of Milan Kundera's *The Joke* has evolved alongside politics, with the Cold War-era understanding of anti-Communist satire shifting toward more philosophical and formalist interpretations. Although the novel's themes of irony, ideology, and human fallibility have been well established, the political role of humour as an ideological discourse has not been fully developed. The literature review traces the critical landscape of *The Joke*, pointing to major interpretive traditions and identifying the gap this study addresses: the need to develop a Gramscian interpretation of humour as a cultural location of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

Western critics, when *The Joke* was first translated into English in 1969, focused mostly on the story as a dissident novel, a direct attack on Communist oppression. It is a comedy of political cruelty, and laughter is used as an ironic weapon against ideological absurdity (O'Brien, 1992). These readings highlighted the autobiographical and historical background of Kundera in his early career in the Stalinist regime, which placed him as a Czech Solzhenitsyn, a man who had to be a

witness to political terror. However, this oversimplified Kundera's work, turning it into political satire. Kundera's use of laughter goes beyond protest; it represents an existential ambivalence and mocks not only authority but also the illusion of the individual's self-righteousness. *The Joke* is a spiritual reflection on the irony of morality, but not political revenge (Petro, 1999).

This initial critical rift between political and existential interpretation augurs well for further disagreements over Kundera's aesthetic philosophy. The novel was viewed as a bold challenge to Stalinist orthodoxy by political critics, whereas humanist critics focused more on the tragicomic consideration of human weakness. Neither of them fully explains the structural and ideological complexity of humour or how laughter itself becomes the novel's political language. Structuralist and postmodern readings of Kundera emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, emphasizing narrative form and metafictional play. *The Joke* was an early experiment in polyphony, a form of narrative democracy that is far from totalitarianism. The multi-voiced form of Kundera decentralises power, enabling conflicting worldviews to coexist without synthesis (Steiner, 1998). In this perspective, humour is the stylistic manifestation of epistemological pluralism.

Kundera employs irony as an instrument of philosophical clarity, a device to demonstrate the precariousness of any system of belief (Woods, 2005). These postmodern readings make Kundera identifiable with authors like Nabokov and Borges, as irony is the mechanism that protects against ideological reductionism. Nevertheless, even these subtle interpretations tend to treat humour as an aesthetic practice rather than a historical or political one. They describe the functioning of irony in Kundera but not its political danger. The gap raises the question of how humour plays off ideology, not only as a literary style but also as a cultural practice.

Contemporary theorists of humour have offered conceptual tools for reexamining the use of laughter in Kundera's fiction. Bakhtin situates laughter within the popular opposition: the carnivalesque humour level inverts hierarchies, breaking down the boundary between the sacred and the profane. Laughter is a way of restoring the communal spirit; it temporarily defeats authority in the carnival (Bakhtin, 1984). His theory is echoed in the folk scenes of *The Joke*, especially the 'Ride of the Kings', where laughter puts ideological seriousness on hold, at least temporarily. The laughter Kundera gives, however, is not the utopian renewal of Bakhtinian carnival. It is not a regenerative but a melancholic laughter, which knows its futility. Humour is the reaction to incongruity, the consciousness of the disconnection between the world and the self (Critchley, 2002). In *The Joke*, this contradiction is a political one: it arises from the irrelevance between personal consciousness and the state's requirement of ideological conformity.

The ideas expressed by Critchley and Bakhtin are useful for understanding laughter as a release and a form of resistance, yet they say nothing about how the power structure seeks to steal or suppress humour. At this point, Gramsci goes beyond the concept of repression to analyze power and state that ideology is also performed through the creation of consent. Within this paradigm, humour is not merely a response to oppression, but also a component of the process by which cultural hegemony is negotiated. *The Joke* is placed in the context of the moral development of a writer struggling with history. Kundera's humour is not an escapist one but rather an ethical one; a humanism that does not give itself over to ideology (Ricard & Asher, 2003). However, Ricard does not go on to discuss humour as a field of battle in hegemony, but rather defines Kundera's irony as humanist or sceptical, rather than structurally political. The political mechanics of humour are still underdeveloped, even in some postcolonial or feminist analyses that focus on narrative fragmentation and gendered identity.

The failure of the Party to comprehend irony is an indication of the crisis of meaning: the state will not laugh because it cannot endure ambiguity (Sayer, 1998). This fact points to the Gramscian concept of hegemony as reliant on the control of meaning, yet Sayer does not develop this concept theoretically. The overlap between Gramsci's theory and Kundera's humour has not been properly examined. Gramsci's emphasis on cultural leadership, so-called common sense, and the moral-intellectual development of society is a powerful concept for explaining how *The Joke* approaches humour as both dangerous and necessary. The humour in the novel is ideological money: who possesses it, possesses interpretation.

This paper finds itself at this juncture, where *The Joke* redefines humour through the prism of Gramscianism, transforming it into a site where hegemonic power and anti-hegemonic consciousness engage in a struggle over domination. Instead of interpreting the irony of Kundera as an element of philosophy, the given approach demonstrates its material nature in politics, the way laughter reveals the cracks of the official speech, and the instability of the ideological truth.

Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony offers a strong conceptual basis for *The Joke* not merely as a satire of Communist absurdity but as a dramatization of the conflict over human consciousness in a totalitarian society. Although some political interpretations of Kundera emphasize the repression of states and the inhumanity of the bureaucracy, a Gramscian approach changes the emphasis to the subtler processes of ideology, how the population is made to believe, feel, and think of it as "common sense". In this perspective, humour in *The Joke* can be viewed as a kind of ideological conversation: a space where the rival systems of meaning, official and personal, serious and comic, compete against each other.

Gramsci reinstates power as a process of consent rather than coercion. In his *Prison Notebooks*, he suggests that classes in power do not have to rely on coercion to maintain their power, but rather on their influence on the ideology, culture, and consciousness of ordinary people. This is called hegemony, and it is based on the internalisation of the ruling values by subordinate groups, which gives the social order a sense of naturalness and inevitability. The dominance of a social group may be observed in two forms: as domination and as intellectual and moral leadership (Gramsci, 1971).

When we put Gramsci and Kundera in the same context, we are presented with the image of humour as a dialectical exercise, a space where hegemony and counter-hegemony coexist. It is not only entertainment but the voice of ideological bargaining, the laughter in *The Joke*. It is at the time when common sense fails, and the state version begins to unravel. The

paper argues that *The Joke* displays the omnipresence and vulnerability of hegemony by situating Kundera's humour within Gramsci's theory. The power of the Party is in the capacity to regulate the interpretation, but humour as such can hardly be regulated. Every pun, every ironic remark, introduces an interpretive excess, something that cannot be fully contained. Such excess is consciousness itself: the indestructible human ability to perceive otherwise.

## DISCUSSIONS

In *The Joke*, humour serves as the main tool for ideological exposure. All instances of laughter, irony, or misunderstanding dramatize a struggle over meaning, the very struggle Gramsci defines as the nature of the hegemonic struggle of consciousness. The beauty of Kundera's works is that humour is not merely the opposite of power; it shows that power is deeply rooted in human relations, language, and even memory. The novel is presented as a protracted reflection on the inability to part with laughter and ideology, a paradox that resonates well with Gramsci's view that consciousness is a site of struggle at all times.

Ludvik Jahn and his fateful postcard are the turning point in the novel, and humour is set up as an act of linguistic rebellion. The message of the Joke itself is comic in nature and meant to be shared privately for amusement, but it becomes a tool for Ludvik's destruction. When Party officials intercept the postcard, they consider it a sign of subversion, and the humour is deemed heresy. According to Gramsci's (1971) view, this episode marks the conclusion of the dialectic between common sense and critical consciousness. The common sense in the world of *The Joke* is that all speech is to be employed to serve ideological unity. Laughter, ambiguity, and irony jeopardise that order, since they reveal the artificiality of the "truth". Ludvik has a subversive sense of humour, not because it promotes rebelliousness, but because it kills certainty. Moreover, the ideology has lost its monopoly on interpretation once its meaning becomes ambiguous.

The successive scene with the tribunal is a good illustration of the idea of intellectual and moral leadership as suggested by Gramsci. The ideological state apparatus that is the Party committee carries out its hegemony by converting moral judgment into a collective ritual. The members insist on educating Ludvik to repudiate the Joke before them. Their pedagogical tone is insecure; however, they must make sense of humour to be ideologically sound. The performativity of the system is brought to light at the moment when Ludvik rejects the act of repentance. As Ludvik admits, "I was unable to rise above my own story" (Kundera, 1992, p. 178). His irony and silence demonstrate how absurd the ideological excess is, how the hegemony cannot stand useless laughter.

By so doing, the Joke by Ludvik becomes what Gramsci would call a counter-hegemonic gesture: the one where the critical consciousness is invoked to cut a hole in the veil of collective illusion. It is a gesture, but it is without a movement, nevertheless. The Party quickly regains its power and turns Ludvik into a model, thereby restoring the agreement through pain. Gramsci is also reminding us that whenever there is any form of opposition, it is followed by hegemonic reabsorption, unless it becomes systematic counter-hegemony. The solitude of Ludvik, then, dramatises the failure of individual irony to effect collective change.

The disciplinary tribunal is a miniature of the hegemonic order. What passes off as justice is, in reality, a ritual of symbolic cleansing, what the state is trying to do in its efforts to forget ambiguity. The committee's wording is clichéd: "healthy atmosphere," "purity of ideals," "the dignity of the collective" (Kundera, 1992). All the phrases are hegemonic signifiers that impose common sense through repetition. This dynamic is explained by Gramsci, who has an insight into language as power. He contends that hegemony is created by ruling groups, which define the norms of language and the meanings of words. This principle is overstated in Kundera's tribunal: the Party transforms linguistic orthodoxy into a moral law. The Joke turns to sacrilege, and laughter turns to blasphemy. During the Party hearing, Ludvik realizes, "they were not listening to what I meant but to what they needed to hear" (Kundera, 1992, p. 42).

Ludvik's experience resembles Gramsci's description of ideological interpellation, in which individuals internalise the authority's voice. Initially, Ludvik thinks he is being expelled due to a misunderstanding, only to realize it is an epistemological certainty. His irony is transformed into tragic intuition, the understanding that humour is not able to exist in the realm of extreme seriousness. Gramsci may term this an "intellectual rupture" moment when the person realizes the artificiality of common sense, but has no social system to go beyond it. Whereas the tale of Ludvik reveals the violence of coercion, the tale of Jaroslav declares the charms of assent. Being a musicologist who cares about Moravian folk culture, Jaroslav becomes the Gramscian organic intellectual who perpetuates hegemony through cultural mediation. He is sure that the revolutionary principles of the Party may be reconciled with ancient folklore, that the collective happiness of folk song and rite may be in harmony with socialist togetherness.

The dream of Jaroslav comes to fruition with the Ride of the Kings, a folkloric party he organizes to save the spirit of national heritage. However, Kundera puts a lot of irony into the event. What Jaroslav sees as the revival of culture becomes an allegory of ideological corruption. The young participants are deprived of emotional attachment as they perform the ritual mechanically. The merriment and celebration that formerly represented freedom have become a sham, a show meant to present the state of oneness. Jaroslav's failure, through the prism of Gramsci, reflects how hegemony takes over culture. The regime permits some types of laughter and traditions to exist, but in a domesticated form. The folklore becomes propaganda; the humour becomes an instrument. The Ride of the Kings is, therefore, so to speak, a reflection of the so-called passive revolution of modern societies, the dissipation of possible revolutionary energy into the very system that it may be fighting. Jaroslav's genuine nostalgia supports the ideological illusion of harmony. His laughter is hegemonic: it perpetuates the myth that cultural continuity is freedom.

Another aspect of counter-hegemony is highlighted by Kostka, the novel's moral and religious intellectual. Being a religious Christian in a non-religious state, he represents what Gramsci would call an alternative moral-intellectual bloc.

This subculture is structured around spiritual values, not politics. His story counters Ludvik's cynicism and the Party's dogmatism, suggesting that true humour arises from humility rather than vengeance. The conversation between Kostka and Ludvik restates the novel's main question: whether laughter can actually redeem the self or whether the self is condemned to repeat violence. Kostka claims that revenge, like ideology, binds people to circles of domination. He suggests that humour can only be liberating when it is also compassionate, showing common frailty rather than dominance. Here, Gramsci's concept of moral reform can be heard: not only intellectual criticism but also moral restructuring are needed in counter-hegemony. Lockyer and Pickering (2005) claim that irony is especially effective as a form of political humour because it allows for the juxtaposition of multiple, opposing positions and for critique without foreclosing the complexity of social reality.

However, Kundera presents Kostka as noble and naive. His humanism, though real, cannot change structural realities. He is an outsider, tolerated but useless, a voice of morals that is ineffective politically. This ambiguity highlights Kundera's cynicism towards every comprehensive system, even a faith- or morality-based one. The novel, therefore, does not offer a redemptive ideology but suggests that the only truthful response to the absurdity of history is a sense of humour, with all its contradictions. Later in the second part of the novel, Ludvik is out to take revenge on his humiliation by having an affair with Helena, the wife of his former prosecutor, Pavel Zemanek. He intends to take revenge, but ironically, to transform personal suffering into comic justice. However, the scheme fails miserably: the marriage of Helena with Pavel is already ruined, and the revenge of Ludvik only serves to make him even lonelier. Such a twist in the plot changes the very form of humour. The humour that was used to represent rebellion is now one of desperation.

This change can be explained using Gramsci's theory. Counter-hegemonic action that is still strictly personal cannot produce real change; it is stuck in the rationale of the system it is opposed to. The irony of Ludvik is not a revolutionary one. His laughter does not result in new consciousness; on the contrary, it reveals the emptiness of rebellion and conformity. What is brilliant about Kundera is that, by mocking ideology, he demonstrates that ideology, too, can become ideological; that laughter, in the absence of a mean collective, can transform into solipsism. This collapse restates Gramsci's idea that liberation must occur through some form of organised cultural consciousness, rather than through single acts of dissent. The tragedy about Ludvik is that he cannot transform personal irony into collective criticism. His Joke began with a denial of seriousness, but it ends with the realisation that even laughter can be colonised by power.

The very structure of Kundera's narration is a Gramscian "war of position". Filippini (2017) refers to it as an ideological struggle that does not necessarily involve confrontation but rather the slow transformation of the cultural space in which hegemonic consent is created and reproduced. The various narrators in the novel, Ludvik, Jaroslav, Kostka, and Helena, are symbolic of different ideological orientations. No one has power over others; their voices conflict, revealing the discontinuity of truth in modern hegemony. This multi-voiced structure reflects Gramsci's conception of a society as a domain of conflicting consciousnesses. Both narrators express two types of consent or opposition: Ludvik's irony, Jaroslav's nostalgia, Kostka's belief, and Helena's bewilderment. They all constitute a dialectical chorus that does not allow closure. As the reader switches between these opposing voices, he or she feels what Gramsci would term as an intellectual self-activity, the need to create meaning without authority. Humour affects not only the storyline but also the structure. The interchange between tragic and comic tones offers no moral certainty and invites readers to engage in interpretive debate. This is how Kundera makes art complete Gramsci's vision of literature as the place of ideological education, not didactic but nurturing consciousness into reflection.

Finally, *The Joke* concludes that humour is both a symptom and a solution to hegemony. It displays domination but, at the same time, offers the opportunity for transcendence. As Ludvik faces the emptiness of revenge in the final pages of the novel, laughter is again present, but in a much more muted and self-conscious way: not mockery but recognition. It is the laughter of a man who has a vision of ideology and of himself. Gramsci would refer to this as the emergence of a critical good sense, the point at which consciousness ceases to be passive and becomes self-reflexive. Humour is the mouthpiece of such awareness, the precarious area into which the certitude of power is reduced. Kundera's success lies in the fact that this freedom, even in its transient state, is the most legitimate form of resistance in the context of modernity.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has introduced and elaborated on the Gramscian interpretation of Milan Kundera's *The Joke*, showing that the novel's use of humour is both a diagnostic tool that reveals the mechanisms and fragilities of hegemonic authority and a means of counter-hegemonic resistance. The analysis has demonstrated that Ludvik's ironic postcard indicates the performative fragility of communist hegemony through concepts such as Gramsci's 'war of position,' 'good sense,' and 'crisis of authority.' At the same time, Kundera's use of a polyphonic narrative form represents a critical consciousness that challenges the ideology of monologism at the level of literary structure.

The major contribution of the study is its systematic theoretical link between Gramscian hegemony theory and the politics of comic discourse in Kundera's fiction. This link has been noted but not sufficiently explored in the literature. Theoretically, these results could be enriched by Kundera's studies and by the broader study of literary hegemony, because they demonstrate that humour is not an accessory aesthetic effect but a central point of ideological conflict. The paper resonates with the democratic principles of protecting satirical and ironic cultural expression, especially in the context of authoritarian consolidation, principles that are of critical importance to practitioners in cultural policy and to the advocacy of civil society.

Limitations of the study include its focus on a single novel, the use of English translations, which can lead to interpretive errors, and its failure to address issues of cultural reception. Comparative Gramscian analysis of the role of

humour and counter-hegemonic consciousness in Central and Eastern European literary traditions, such as Havel, Herbert, and Buřhakow, or of the gender aspects of humour and hegemony in Kundera's fiction, which the present paper has not sufficiently addressed, could be a fruitful field for future research.

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