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# The Art Of Novel Milan Kundera

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Let the Old Dead Make Room for the New Dead

Identity

Encounter

Life is Elsewhere

Life Is Elsewhere

The Art of Joy

The Art of Fiction

Testaments Betrayed

Milan Kundera's Contribution to the Art of the Novel

Jacques and His Master  
Farewell Waltz  
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The Book of Laughter and Forgetting  
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The Joke  
Agnes's Final Afternoon

*The Art Of Novel Milan Kundera*

*OMB No. 1658126254078 edited by*

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## **JAZMYN BLACKBURN**

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### **Let the Old Dead Make Room for the New Dead**

HarperCollins

"After Farewell Waltz there cannot be any doubt. Kundera is a master of contemporary literature. This novel is both an example of virtuosity and a descent into the human soul."

—L'Unite Set in an old-fashioned Central European spa town, Farewell Waltz poses the most serious questions with a blasphemous lightness that makes us see that the modern world has deprived us even of the right to tragedy. In this dark farce of a novel, eight characters are swept up in an accelerating dance: a pretty nurse and her repairman boyfriend; an oddball gynecologist; a rich American (at once saint and Don Juan); a popular trumpeter and his beautiful, obsessively jealous wife; and an disillusioned former political prisoner about to leave his country and his young woman ward. It is perhaps the most brilliantly plotted and sheer entertaining of Milan Kundera's

novels. Written in Bohemia in 1969-70, the book was first published (in 1976) in France under the title *La valse aux adieux* (Farewell Waltz), and later in thirty-four other countries. This beautiful translation, made from the French text prepared by the novelist himself, fully reflects Kundera's own tone and intentions, and offers an opportunity for both the discovery and the rediscovery of one of the very best of a great writer's works.

### **IDENTITY**

Thames & Hudson

"A thoughtful, intricate, ambivalent novel with the reach of greatness in it." —John Updike "It is impossible to do justice here to the subtleties, comedy, and wisdom of this very beautiful novel. Milan Kundera is an artist, clearly one of the best to be found anywhere, who says that the good (and evil) that issues from men's souls matters much more than the deeds of a State. And he says it with passion, with good humor, and with love." —Salman Rushdie All too often, this brilliant novel of thwarted love and revenge miscarried has been read for its political

implications. Now, more than a quarter century after *The Joke* was first published and several years after the collapse of the Soviet-imposed Czechoslovak regime, it becomes easier to put such implications into perspective in favor of valuing the book (and all Milan Kundera's work) as what it truly is: great, stirring literature that sheds new light on the eternal themes of human existence. This edition provides English-language readers an important further means toward reevaluation of *The Joke*. For reasons he describes in his Author's Note, Milan Kundera devoted much time to creating a completely revised translation that reflects his original as closely as any translation possibly can: reflects it in its fidelity not only to the words and syntax but also to the characteristic dictions and tonalities of the novel's narrators. The result is nothing less than the restoration of a classic.

Encounter Harper

From distorted self-images to brutal portrayals of friends and fellow artists, the portraits of Francis Bacon account for one of the most remarkable aspects of the work of the British painter. This work looks at his stylistic distortions of classicism and his famous deformations. Milan Kundera provides an introduction explaining his personal response to Bacon's work, exploring the paradox that lies in the faithfulness of the distorted images, and linking Bacon's genius with that of Samuel Beckett, both working at the outer limits of their art. France Borel's essay sets Bacon's works in the context of his life and influences and explains his approach to portraiture.

*Life is Elsewhere* HarperCollins

"An elegant, personalized integration of anecdote, analysis,

scholarship, memory and speculation. . . . Not since Henry James, perhaps, has a fiction writer examined the process of writing with such insight, authority and range of reference and allusion."

—Russell Banks, *New York Times Book Review* "A magic curtain, woven of legends, hung before the world. Cervantes sent Don Quixote journeying and tore through the curtain. The world opened before the knight-errant in all the comical nakedness of its prose." In this thought-provoking, endlessly enlightening, and entertaining essay on the art of the novel, renowned author Milan Kundera suggests that "the curtain" represents a ready-made perception of the world that each of us has—a pre-interpreted world. The job of the novelist, he argues, is to rip through the curtain and reveal what it hides. Here an incomparable literary artist cleverly sketches out his personal view of the history and value of the novel in Western civilization. In doing so, he celebrates a prose form that possesses the unique ability to transcend national and language boundaries in order to reveal some previously unknown aspect of human existence.

Life Is Elsewhere Polis Books

*New York Times Bestseller* "Inspired. . . . Kundera's most brilliantly imagined novel. . . . A book that entrances, beguiles and charms us from first page to last." — *Cleveland Plain Dealer* Milan Kundera's sixth novel springs from a casual gesture of a woman to her swimming instructor, a gesture that creates a character in the mind of a writer named Kundera. Like Flaubert's *Emma* or Tolstoy's *Anna*, Kundera's *Agnès* becomes an object of fascination, of indefinable longing. From that character springs a novel, a gesture of the imagination that both embodies and articulates Milan Kundera's supreme mastery of the novel and its

purpose: to explore thoroughly the great themes of existence.

*The Art of Joy* Harper Collins

A chance encounter leads a man to spend the afternoon with an older woman, now a widow, who escaped him fifteen years earlier. Neither of them doubts that the day will end in disgust, but for one intimate moment each finds a way to overcome mortality. Written in 1969, before Milan Kundera was known to English-speaking readers, this story renders male and female characters painful equals, and prompted Philip Roth to admire its 'detached Chekhovian tenderness'.

*The Art of Fiction* HarperCollins

"After many years of believing that I never dream of anything, I dreamed of Africa." Over a decade after leaving her three sons behind in Liberia, Hannah Musgrave realizes she has to leave her farm in the Adirondacks and find out what has happened to them and the chimpanzees for whom she created a sanctuary. *The Darling* is the story of her return to the wreckage of west Africa and the story of her past, from her middle-class American upbringing to her years in the Weather Underground. It is also one of the most powerful novels of the decade, an unforgettable tale of growth and loss, and an unstinting exploration of some of the most troubling issues of our time: terrorism, race, and the contact between the first world and the third. Hannah Musgrave, the narrator of *The Darling*, tells us she first travelled to Africa in the mid-1970s, to escape prosecution for her radical political activities with the Weathermen. Arriving in Liberia to work in a medical research lab, Hannah – also known by her alias, Dawn Carrington – meets Woodrow Sundiata, an official in the ministry of public health, and they fall immediately in love. Courting with

Woodrow, an intelligent, ambitious man, means encountering his other life in his ancestral village of Fuama – a life that could scarcely be more different from Hannah's affluent childhood as the daughter of a bestselling pediatrician. Hannah and Woodrow start a family, but she feels herself to be somehow estranged from her life in Liberia and curiously detached from her husband and three sons. Still in search of herself as her children grow older, Hannah develops a closer and closer bond with the chimpanzees at the lab, whom she calls "dreamers." During the early 1980s, Liberian society grows more unstable, until an illiterate soldier named Samuel Doe brutally overthrows and assassinates the president. Hannah's courageous intervention with Doe leads to Woodrow's release from detention, but at a price: she must return to the US, leaving her family behind. Hannah feels that her dreamers will feel her absence more deeply than her family will. In the US Hannah briefly reconnects with her parents after years of estrangement before returning to her friends from her underground years. One of them, Zack Procter, is involved with a plan to spring Charles Taylor – an attractive Liberian politician – from jail, and Hannah involves herself with the plot, genuinely believing that Taylor will bring social democracy to west Africa. Hannah gets permission to return to her family in the mid-1980s, and decides that this time things will be different: she will take charge of her home life, ousting Woodrow's young cousin Jeanette, and she will build a sanctuary for her chimpanzees. But Charles Taylor has also returned, and his slow and bloody rebellion against Doe leads, eventually, to a night of horrific violence in which Woodrow is murdered and Hannah's teenaged children disappear. Amidst

chaos and almost unbelievable bloodshed, Hannah has time only to move her dreamers to Boniface Island before facing the heartrending decision to escape Liberia, leaving her children behind. More than ten years will pass before she can return to discover their fate, and understand her own.

### **Testaments Betrayed** Springer

'This book is a novel in the form of variations. The various parts follow each other like the various stages of a voyage leading into the interior of a theme, the interior of a thought, the interior of a single, unique situation the understanding of which recedes from my sight into the distance. It is a book about laughter and about forgetting, about forgetting and about Prague, about Prague and about the angels.' The Book of Laughter and Forgetting is the most secret of Kundera's novels. This new translation is the first to be fully authorized by Milan Kundera.

*Milan Kundera's Contribution to the Art of the Novel* HarperCollins "A defense of fiction and a lesson in the art of reading." —New York Times Book Review "Testaments Betrayed is to be savored paragraph by paragraph. . . . It must be purchased, read, pondered, and argued within the margins. And frequently reread." — Washington Post A brilliant and thought-provoking essay from one of the twentieth century's masters of fiction, *Testaments Betrayed* is written like a novel: the same characters appear and reappear throughout the nine parts of the book, as do the principal themes that preoccupy the author. Kundera is a passionate defender of the moral rights of the artist and the respect due a work of art and its creator's wishes. The betrayal of both—often by their most passionate proponents—is one of the key ideas that informs this strikingly original and elegant book.

### *Jacques and His Master* Harper Collins

"An intellectual heavyweight and a pure literary virtuoso, Milan Kundera takes some of Freud's most cherished complexes and irreverently whirls them about in acts of legerdemain that capture our darkest, deepest human passions. . . . The tales in *Laughable Loves* surprise and illuminate. . . . Kundera's world is complex, full of mockeries and paradoxes. Life is often brutal and humiliating; it is often blasphemous, funny, irritating." — Cleveland Plain Dealer Milan Kundera is a master of graceful illusion and illuminating surprise. In one of these stories a young man and his girlfriend pretend that she is a stranger he picked up on the road—only to become strangers to each other in reality as their game proceeds. In another a teacher fakes piety in order to seduce a devout girl, then jilts her and yearns for God. In yet another girls wait in bars, on beaches, and on station platforms for the same lover, a middle-aged Don Juan who has gone home to his wife. Games, fantasies, and schemes abound in all the stories while different characters react in varying ways to the sudden release of erotic impulses.

### Farewell Waltz HarperCollins

In their virtuoso displays of literary talent, Nabokov and Kundera showcase the strategies that allow their protagonists to succeed as emigres: a creative fusing of past and present through the prism of the imagination."

## **THE SLEEPWALKERS**

Macmillan

This is the first novel by the author of "Immortality", which won "The Independent" Award for Foreign Fiction in 1991. Milan

Kundera is also the author of "The Book of Laughter and Forgetting".

## LEONARDO'S SWANS

GRIN Verlag

"Slender but weighty. . . . What is moving about this novel is its embrace of what has always driven Kundera, the delicate state of living between being and nothingness." — Boston Globe From the internationally acclaimed, bestselling author of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, an entertaining and enchanting novel—"a fitting capstone on an extraordinary career." (Slate) Casting light on the most serious of problems and at the same time saying not one serious sentence; being fascinated by the reality of the contemporary world and at the same time completely avoiding realism—that's *The Festival of Insignificance*. Readers who know Milan Kundera's earlier books know that the wish to incorporate an element of the "unserious" in a novel is not at all unexpected of him. In *Immortality*, Goethe and Hemingway stroll through several chapters together talking and laughing. And in *Slowness*, Vera, the author's wife, says to her husband: "you've often told me you meant to write a book one day that would have not a single serious word in it...I warn you: watch out. Your enemies are lying in wait." Kundera is finally and fully realizing his old aesthetic dream in this novel that we could easily view as a summation of his whole work. A strange sort of summation. Strange sort of epilogue. Strange sort of laughter, inspired by our time, which is comical because it has lost all sense of humor. What more can we say? Nothing. Just read.

[The Book of Laughter and Forgetting](#) Springer Science & Business

Media

Traces the events of the twentieth century through the experiences of Sicilian-born Modesta, who defies the conventions of her fascist, patriarchal society to rise from poverty and marry an aristocrat without compromising her deeply held values.

*Milan Kundera* Vintage Canada

"Kundera once more delivers a seductive, intelligent entertainment ... [with] elegance and grace." — Washington Post Book World "Nothing short of masterful." — Newsweek A brilliant novel set in contemporary Prague, by one of the most distinguished writers of our time. A man and a woman meet by chance while returning to their homeland, which they had abandoned 20 years earlier when they chose to become exiles. Will they manage to pick up the thread of their strange love story, interrupted almost as soon as it began and then lost in the tides of history? The truth is that after such a long absence "their memories no longer match." We always believe that our memories coincide with those of the person we loved, that we experienced the same thing. But this is just an illusion. Only those who return after 20 years, like Ulysses returning to his native Ithaca, can be dazzled and astounded by observing the goddess of ignorance first-hand. Kundera is the only author today who can take dizzying concepts such as absence, memory, forgetting, and ignorance, and transform them into material for a novel, masterfully orchestrating them into a polyphonic and moving work.

**Laughable Loves** HarperCollins

USA Today Bestseller "This is a truly original novel that has earned its place among my favorite works of historical fiction."--

Jennifer Robson, USA Today bestselling author of *The Gown* An exciting, dual-timeline historical novel about the creation of one of Leonardo da Vinci's most famous paintings, *Portrait of a Lady with an Ermine*, and the woman who fought to save it from Nazi destruction during World War II. *Milan, 1492*: When a 16-year old beauty becomes the mistress of the Duke of Milan, she must fight for her place in the palace—and against those who want her out. Soon, she finds herself sitting before Leonardo da Vinci, who wants to ensure his own place in the ducal palace by painting his most ambitious portrait to date. *Munich, World War II*: After a modest conservator unwittingly places a priceless Italian Renaissance portrait into the hands of a high-ranking Nazi leader, she risks her life to recover it, working with an American soldier, part of the famed *Monuments Men* team, to get it back. Two women, separated by 500 years, are swept up in the tide of history as one painting stands at the center of their quests for their own destinies.

### THE JOKE

Random House

"I can't imagine reading this book without being challenged and instructed, amused, amazed and aroused, and ultimately delighted." —John Simon, *New York Times Book Review* Milan Kundera's brilliant collection of essays is a passionate defense of art in an era that, he argues, no longer values art or beauty. With the same dazzling mix of emotion and ideas that characterizes his bestselling novels, the internationally acclaimed author revisits the artists whose works help us better understand what it means to be human. Elegant, startlingly original, and

provocative, *Encounter* combines many of the author's signature themes with personal reflections and stories.

*Agnes's Final Afternoon* Harper Collins

A model of clarity, grace, and intelligence, François Ricard's book joins the great French tradition of the literary essay as a meditation on the writing of Milan Kundera. *Agnes's Final Afternoon* imitates the protagonist of Kundera's novel *Immortality* on the last afternoon of her life. Like all readers of fiction, Agnès steps out of her car -- out of the world of planned routes, responsibilities, and social self -- and gives herself up to the discovery of a new landscape, an experience that will transform her. François Ricard's essay enters into the writings of Milan Kundera in much the same way. The landscape he explores includes a chain of ten novels, composed between 1959 and 1999, and two books containing one of the most lucid reflections on the novel. From *The Joke* to *Ignorance*, Ricard uncovers the richness of theme and character in the novels, their structural composition, polyphony of voices, and innovations of form and subject matter that stretch the boundaries of the novel to a breaking point. Readers need not be familiar with all of Milan Kundera's oeuvre to appreciate this unusual and original book. *Agnes's Final Afternoon* will inspire a sense of wonder and lead you to appreciate the beauty and profundity of Kundera's art.

**The Festival of Insignificance** HarperCollins

Presents a collection of critical essays about the work of Milan Kundera.

### IMMORTALITY

Vintage

Milan Kundera's sixth novel springs from a casual gesture of a woman to her swimming instructor, a gesture that creates a character in the mind of a writer named Kundera. Like Flaubert's Emma or Tolstoy's Anna, Kundera's Agnes becomes an object of

fascination, of indefinable longing. From that character springs a novel, a gesture of the imagination that both embodies and articulates Milan Kundera's supreme mastery of the novel and its purpose; to explore thoroughly the great, themes of existence.

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