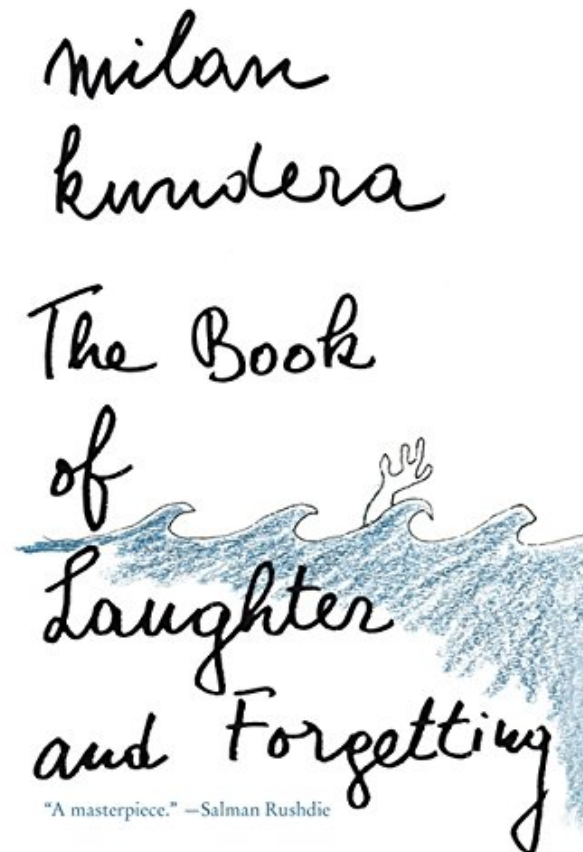


# THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING BY MILAN KUNDERA

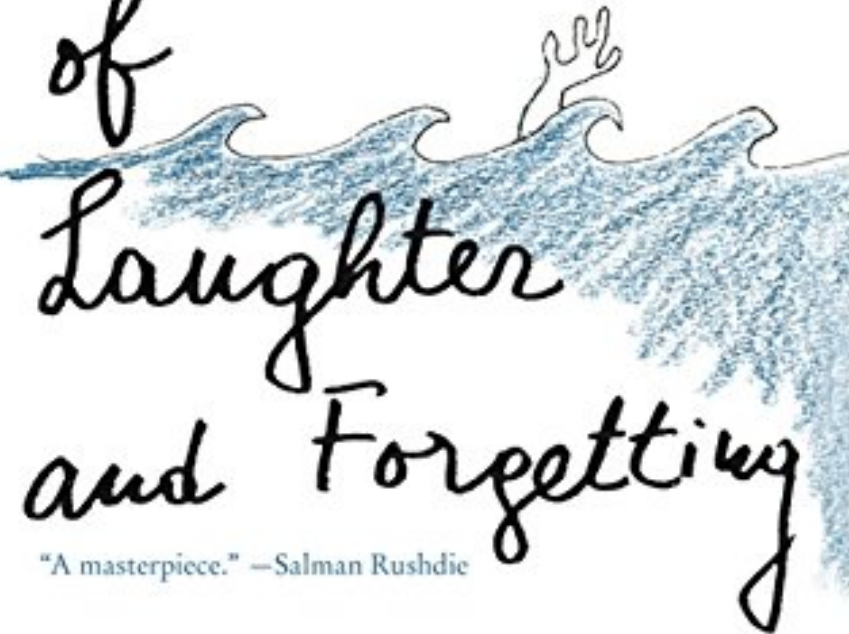


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## Amazon.com Review

In one of the finer modern ironies of the life-imitates-art sort, the country that Kundera seemed to be writing about when he talked about Czechoslovakia is, thanks to the latest political redefinitions, no longer precisely there. This kind of disappearance and reappearance is, partly, what Kundera explores in **The Book of Laughter and Forgetting**. In this polymorphous work -- now a novel, now autobiography, now a philosophical treatise -- Kundera discusses life, music, sex, philosophy, literature and politics in ways that are rarely politically correct, never classifiable but always original, entertaining and definitely brilliant.

## Review

"The Book of Laughter and Forgetting calls itself a novel, although it is part fairy tale, part literary criticism, part political tract, part musicology, and part autobiography. It can call itself whatever it wants to, because the whole is genius."-- New York Times  
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## Language Notes

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**The Book Of Laughter And Forgetting By Milan Kundera.** It is the moment to improve and also refresh your ability, understanding and experience included some enjoyment for you after long period of time with monotone things. Working in the office, visiting research, picking up from test as well as more activities may be completed as well as you should begin brand-new things. If you feel so tired, why do not you attempt new thing? A really simple thing? Reviewing *The Book Of Laughter And Forgetting By Milan Kundera* is just what we provide to you will recognize. And also guide with the title *The Book Of Laughter And Forgetting By Milan Kundera* is the recommendation currently.

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Rich in its stories, characters, and imaginative range, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is the novel that brought Milan Kundera his first big international success in the late 1970s. Like all his work, it is valuable for far more than its historical implications. In seven wonderfully integrated parts, different aspects of human existence are magnified and reduced, reordered and emphasized, newly examined, analyzed, and experienced.

- Sales Rank: #28686 in Books
- Published on: 1999-04-07
- Released on: 1999-04-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .72" w x 5.31" l, .50 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 320 pages

## Features

- Literature
- *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*
- Milan Kundera

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Astonishingly Wonderful; A Must-Read

By oh\_pete

THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING is a rare and precious jewel. In many ways this is an experimental novel, the seven different parts of the book are compared by the author to Beethoven's variations upon a musical theme. These different variations either describe, converge upon, or dance around the story of Tamina, a Czech exile who ran away from the communists with her husband only to see him die of disease soon afterward. As time passes she becomes obsessed with the mortal fear that she will forget him. She cannot go back to her homeland but she can try to get her husband's love letters back, to bring some of his laughter back into her life, to remind her that she is not alone.

Tamina's homeland meanwhile, still languishes and suffers under the boot of the Soviet Union. The intellectuals who were so excited about communism in the late 1940s can't believe how wrong it goes over the next twenty years and try to correct their mistake. But the Soviets will have none of their "stalking a lost deed" as Kundera calls it--just as the Czechs are succeeding in relaxing the strictures of totalitarianism, in storm the Soviet tanks in 1968, ending the "Prague Spring" and delaying freedom in Eastern Europe for another twenty-one years.

Published in 1978, three years after Kundera escaped the Iron Curtain and set down new roots in France, this book is also an important historical document. (I actually read it for the first time as an assignment for a 20th Century European history class in college in 1991--I'm still grateful to the professor.) It is important because it warns us of the insidious dangers of "forgetting." One of the first things the communists did after crushing the Prague Spring was to fire some one hundred forty-five Czech historians from the universities in an attempt to erase the memory of the people. It is frightening how well they might have succeeded if the Soviet economy had stayed strong for another generation or two.

THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING is touching and erotic, a moving and inspired intellectual feat. It is not humorous, but if you are open to the experience, it will inspire "serious laughter, laughter beyond joking." Kundera has a gentle, straightforward style that evokes rich and vivid images (at least as translated by Michael Henry Heim--I look forward to reading Aaron Asher's in the future). For anyone who has loved, for anyone who has a memory, for anyone who appreciates the freedom we have in this society, THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING is a must.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By John Murphy

A great read the characters are interesting and the story is great.

27 of 30 people found the following review helpful.

Depression and Remembering

By RBradbury451

Kundera could not write *Laughter and Forgetting* without discussing, at some length, their opposites. This overall sad "novel" has elements that are unforgettable. The novel was set in the backdrop of Prague Spring in 1968, when disaffected teachers, writers, and historians, believing that freedom from communism's bone-crushing anti-intellectualism was within reach, were seduced into tipping their hands, only to be crushed by the Russian invasion that followed in August. Tens of thousands emigrated, while hundreds of thousands were banished from their positions of power and influence. Many went to jail.

Similarities between Kundera's characters and my friends during the heady "flower power" days of the late 60's here in the USA made the novel ring sadly true and "universal" on a personal level. We were disaffected with the establishment, we felt empowered by our energy, ideals, and our sense of intellectual, political, and

sexual freedom. But . . . things didn't turn out for us the way we had planned them. While the napalm was flowing in Vietnam, the tanks were rolling in Prague, and the National Guard was firing on the students at Kent state, the mistakes that affected us most severely were those that happened in our relationships with friends and lovers. It is quite true that the state will squash -"like a flea between its fingers"- the individual that steps out of its circle of preferred actors and thinkers. But it's not the state that we have to worry about. The bankruptcy in our lives is usually of our own making, a point which, despite it's railings against the establishment, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* eloquently makes.

While Kundera repeats the sins of the state several times, even opening two chapters with identical accounts of a man erased by the state, his characters fumble with sins of their own. The men, compelled to act out sexual and ego games, lead hollow lives. Ultimately, they must deal with an overwhelming sense of their own failure. The women characters do not fare much better. They get the little joy in life available to them only by forgetting the men they love.

Throughout the book, Kundera maintains that it is only by remembering that we can live and make progress. Kundera says we don't do this very well -- as nations or individuals. We try to re-write history - condemning ourselves to repetitive failure. Sound about right?

The book is as disturbing as it is wise. *Laughter and Forgetting* is a good introduction to the rich and complex work of Milos Kundera.

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