



The Art of Memory in Exile: Vladimir Nabokov & Milan Kundera

Associate Professor Hana Pichova PhD

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In *The Art of Memory in Exile*, Hana Píchová explores the themes of memory and exile in selected novels of Vladimir Nabokov and Milan Kundera. Both writers, Píchová argues, stress how personal and cultural memory serves as a creative means of overcoming the artist's and exile's loss of homeland. In their virtuoso displays of literary talent, Nabokov and Kundera showcase the strategies that allow their protagonists to succeed as émigrés: a creative fusing of past and present through the prism of the imagination.

Píchová closely analyzes two novels by each author: the first written in exile (Nabokov's *Mary* and Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*) and a later, pivotal novel in each writer's career (Nabokov's *The Gift* and Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*). In all four texts, these authors explore how the kaleidoscope of personal and cultural memory confronts a fragmented and untenable present, contrasting the lives of fictional émigrés who fail to bridge the gap between past and present with those émigrés whose rich artistic vision allows them to transcend the trials of homelessness.

By juxtaposing these novels and their authors, Píchová provides a unique perspective on each writer's vast appeal and success. She finds that in the work of Nabokov and Kundera, the most successful exiles express a vision that transcends both national and temporal boundaries.

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