



Agnes's Final Afternoon: An Essay on the Work of Milan Kundera

Francois Ricard

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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.

Agnès'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. *Agnès's Final Afternoon* will inspire a sense of wonder and lead you to appreciate the beauty and profundity of Kundera's art.

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