

T.C.
BEYKENT UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE of SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE and LITERATURE

**The ‘desire’ for writing, remembering and laughing is
constituted in the minds of human beings who are in a quest
for the survival of their souls against the ceaseless
‘lack of being’**

M.A. THESIS

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YEMİN METNİ

Sunduğum Yüksek Lisans Tezimi, Akademik Etik İlkelerine bağlı kalarak, hiç kimseden akademik ilkelere aykırı bir yardım almaksızın bizzat hazırladığıma and içerim.
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ÖZET

Edebiyatta önemli yeri olan okuma ve yorumlama teorisini (reader's response theory) kullanarak, Milan Kunderanın *Gülüşün ve Unutuşun Kitabı* adlı eserini inceleyeceğim. Psikoanalizi esas alan okuma ve yorumlama teorisi, okuyucu veya izleyicinin bir edebi eseri nasıl algıladığı üzerine yoğunlaşır. Bu teoride amaç okuyucunun ve izleyicinin üzerine yoğunlaşmak, ve bir eseri okurken veya izlerken neler hissettiğini, duygusal olarak nasıl etkilendiğini, edebiyatın amacının ne olduğunu ve yazar tarafından anlatıldığı şekilde dünyayı nasıl algıladığını incelemektir.

Bir sonraki aşamada edebiyatta psikoanalizden faydalanarak gülmeyi, unutmayı(hatırlamayı) ve yazma arzusunu yorumlayacağım. Unutma(hatırlama), gülme ve yazma tepkilerini, baskıya ve mutsuzluğa karşı insanların sığınakları olarak görüyorum. İnsanların özünde bütünlük ve denge içinde olma arzusu olduğunu gözlemliyorum. Bu arzu, evrenle bir bütün içinde olma dürtüsü yaratır. Bu dürtü ile başlayan süreç aslında hiçbir zaman tamamlanamayacak bir süreçtir ama insanoğlu varolmanın sebep olduğu bu yokluk (lack of being) hissini daima doldurmaya çalışmıştır ve çalışacaktır. Bu fikri destekleyeceğine inandığım bazı kavramları inceleyip açıklayacağım.

Tezimi desteklemek amacıyla dilin aracılığı ile psikoanaliz yapmak için dilin kullanımlarından mecaz, mürsel mecaz, çeşitleme, polifoni, kelime düzeni, syntax ve tekrarlama yöntemlerini analiz edip açıklayacağım. Fikirlerimi, anlayışımı bütünlük içerisinde olduğuna inandığım referanslarla destekleyeceğim. Amacım fikirlerimin üstün olduğu gibi bir sonuca varmak değil, tezimi savunurken referanslarımdan faydalanarak yorumumu kuvvetlendirmek olacak.

ABSTRACT:

I will examine Kundera's book, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* by using the reader's response theory, which is an important tool in literature. Reader's response theory focuses on the reader or audience and their experiencing of a literary work. It is the study of how we feel as we read a literary work, what literature aims to do, how literature affects us morally, or how we perceive the world described by the writer.

Then I will elaborate on Psychoanalysis of Forgetting, Laughter and Writing with respect to 'Reaction to death of the Soul'. I claim that remembering, laughter and writing are the reactions, the weapons of the people who are oppressed and unhappy. The soul desires unity and stability. This desire creates the urge to become a whole being in harmony with the universe. This is a process which can never be completed but people have always tried and will always try to fill that emptiness which 'lack of being' causes.. I aim to explain some concepts and express my ideas about the argument which I have mentioned earlier.

I will analyse and interpret different uses of language, like metaphor, metonymy, variation, polyphony, parataxis, syntaxis and repetition in order to support my thesis which is based on psychoanalysis through language. I will support my ideas with references to what I believe are in harmony with my comprehension. I am not going to dispute the supremacy of my comprehension to my references which point to the interpretation of my thesis.

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I. Introduction

I have chosen *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* by Milan Kundera because after having read this book by Kundera. I have read several books by some other writes before making a decision and I also have read other books by Kundera, *Ignorance* and *Identity* but I have decided to study on *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. It has stood out among other books especially when I have learnt that he was deprived of his Czechoslovakian citizenship by the government because of his *Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. In my thesis I aim to concentrate on three interdependent philosophies, laughing, writing and remembering. I make use of psychoanalysis and psycholinguistics to analyse these concepts and to show to the reader that they are the main desires of Kundera's characters. I first give brief information about Kundera and the concepts laughter and forgetting as they are mentioned in the Book of Laughter and Forgetting. Then I will write an overview of the book and Kundera's use of laanguage. I explain the words graphomania and totalitarianism which will be used often in the body part of my thesis. The body part of my thesis starts with the Reader's Response Chapter in which I become a part of my thesis by quoting from the book, sharing the same feelings with the characters and Kundera, and practising the approach personally. In the next chapter I prepare the reader for my thesis and I explain some key words like desire, lack of being, and happiness. In the next three chapters I present remembering, laughter and writing as the main sources of happiness and I use references to support this idea. In the next two chapters named psycholinguistics, by making use of language I support myy ideas and I also comment on Kondera's psychology by examining his use of language. In the conclusion part I summarize the main points and represent my three interdependent philosophie, this time as defense mechanisms with reference to Freud.

1. Milan Kundera as a writer

The Czech writer Milan Kundera, was born in 1929. He studied music, film and literature at university in Prague. He moved on to become a professor at the film faculty of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts. He also published poems, essays and stage plays. In the same period of time he joined the editorial staff of the literature magazines *Literarni noviny* and *Listy*. Kundera joined the Communist Party in 1948, as many other Czech intellectuals did at that time. In 1950 he was expelled from the Party. After graduation in 1952 he was appointed lecturer in world literature at the Film Academy. He joined the Communist Party once again and stayed on from 1956 to 1970. In 1953 he published his first book of poems. Kundera got known after his three volumes, *Laughable Loves*, written and published between 1958 and 1968. In his first novel, *The Joke*, he dealt with Stalinism. After the Soviet invasion in the spring of 1968 Kundera lost his permission to teach and his books were removed from all public libraries in the country.

Kundera moved to France and became a guest professor at the University of Rennes in 1975. Since 1981 he has been a French citizen. During his years in France he also wrote material in French. He lives in Paris with his wife, Vera Hrabankova. Since 1985 he has given only written interviews because doesn't want to be misquoted.

His other works include *The Joke* (1967; Eng. trans., 1982); *Laughable Loves*, a collection of short stories originally published in the 1960s (Eng. trans., 1974); *Life Is Elsewhere* (1969; Eng. trans., 1974); and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984; Eng.

trans., 1984). In *The Art of the Novel* (1988), *Immortality* (1991) *Testaments Betrayed: An Essay in Nine Parts* (1995), *Slowness* (1996), *Ignorance* (2002) Articles written by Milan Kundera are *An Introduction to a Variation* (January 6, 1985), *Key Words, Words I Love, Problem Words* (March 6 1988), *The Theatre of Memory* (2003), *Goytisolo's Changed Perspective*. (2005)

Kundera, has won international recognition at the age 52 in 1981. He won 16 awards so far. His books have been translated into more than 20 languages, he has won such awards as the Prix Medicis in 1973 in France, and he went to New York in 1981 to accept the \$11,000 Commonwealth Award for Distinguished Service in Literature. The next year he won the European literature prize. In 1985, he won the Prize of Jerusalem.

Kundera is a man who can not forget. Although he writes essays and letters in French, he continues to write all his fiction in Czech and to set all his stories in the city where he grew up. Kundera's own work represents an attempt to preserve his own past and his memories of a country he will most probably never return to.

1.1.Terms 'laughter' and 'forgetting' in Milan Kundera's work.

Forgetting:

Once upon a time, a man stepped from the communal caves, saw the pain of the life around him, and in his anguish and pride tried to force the universe to tell him why it must be so. Why must there be pain and suffering? Must man forever endure strife and misery? How can he make life happier and nobler? Moral philosophy is still involved in such questions, and one cannot be certain that it has gone much beyond the answers given by the earliest questioners. Each new writer who writes about moral subjects enters a rich and subtle conversation with the past. In this conversation, advancement of understanding seldom occurs by leaps of discovery. It occurs, rather, by making modest additions to the stock of the past by the slow refinement of old ideas, by the expression of inherited conceptions in new terms, and by the extension of old meanings into new situations. (Schaar 13)

I believe that each and every of us has always been having such a conversation with her/his past in order to reexperience several feelings and to avoid being nobody. Our past becomes a part of our beliefs and characters. We do not want to admit that it is not the exact story left in our minds. "She was thrilled by the thought that every thing she long ago experienced was still with her, surrounding her in her loneliness and speaking to her". (Kundera 1996:58) What is left in our minds is what we choose to take with us as we move farther. Kundera's characters do not live the present time, so they are trying to express their identity and to give meaning to their lives through their past. This is a psychological reaction. This reaction stems from their need to constitute peaceful and happy identities by manipulating their memories. Frankland makes use of Freud to explain this kind of identity construction. "Freud, especially in his theories of primal

fantasies and screen memories, explicitly recognizes that humans constitute their identity in part through their own fictions''. (Frankland 147)

The Book of Laughter and Forgetting tells this subtle conversation that characters have with their own pasts in order to confront new situations and to keep their souls alive. As its author defines, "It is a book about laughter and about forgetting, about forgetting and about Prague, about Prague and about Angels''. Official forgetting is not my main concern, but it is the first big wave that hits identity because to remember details means, emotional continuity. When the bridges between the past and present are destroyed in a nation, identities become subjects.

"It is 1971 and Mirek says: The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting''. (Kundera 1996:4) We all struggle against forgetting. Why do we struggle against forgetting? Why do we think about the past, talk about the past and why do we feel an unexplainable, awkward happiness as our minds travel in time? "The self is a history, but not *just* a history. It is also all that can be deduced or extrapolated from that history, especially the consciousness of the present and the contemplation of the future. The self lives in three time dimensions, and self-alienation might mean the loss of any one of the three, though the loss of the past is the most frequent and most important''. (Schaar 214)

Laughter:

Different kinds of laughter are given in Part 3, The Angels: “Laughter? Do people ever care about laughter? I mean real laughter, beyond joking, mockery, ridicule. Laughter, an immense and delicious sensual pleasure, wholly sensual pleasure...” (Kundera 1996:79) Kundera claims that there are mainly two kinds of laughter; The devil’s laughter and the angel’s laughter. “Things deprived suddenly of their supposed meaning, of the place assigned to them in the so-called order of things (a Moscow-trained Marxist believing in horoscopes), makes us laugh. In origin, laughter is thus of the devil’s domain. It has something malicious about it (things suddenly turning out different from what they pretend to be), but to some extent also a beneficent relief (things are less weighty than they appeared to be, letting us live more freely, no longer oppressing us with their seriousness).

The first time an angel heard the devil’s laughter, he was dumbfounded (...) the devil’s laughter which is terribly contagious, spread from one person to another. The angel clearly understood that such laughter was directly against God and against the dignity of his works (...) Unable to come up with anything of his own, he aped his adversary. Opening his mouth, he emitted broken, spasmodic sounds in the higher reaches of his vocal range (...) the devil’s laughter denoted the absurdity of things, the angel on the contrary meant to rejoice over how well ordered, wisely conceived, good, and meaningful everything here below was ”. (Kundera 1996 86-87)

What function does laughter have in lives of a bunch of people who have become subjects as a result of totalitarianism? When and why do they laugh? “Our natural freedom is, during the course of our lives, frequently opposed by various constraints, and

the partial release of these constraints produces a feeling of free joy in living, without the presence of any end, and this mental state is reflected in laughter. The laugh, which always expresses liberty, may take many forms but in its pure form it is always an emotion of play, which is essentially, as Kant says, activity for its own sake. For this reason purposeful intellectual activity is not accompanied by laughter. Laughter is aroused whenever the normal course of affairs is suddenly interrupted without the arousal of intense emotion”. (Piddington 185)

Laughter is sometimes innocent, sometimes evil as Kundera puts it. It is the sound of a rebel, or a child. When someone laughs so hard he looks as if he is crying, and two so called opposites can be observed together. It is interesting to observe that in both cases tears come out of our eyes. All these different kinds of laughter are ‘wholly sensual pleasures’ for human who suffer throughout their lives, especially when they look back to find their past. Salter quotes an observation which Nietzsche makes in his book *Will to Power*: “Perhaps I know best why it is man alone who laughs; he alone suffers so deeply that he had to invent laughter. The most unhappy and melancholy animal is, as is reasonable, the cheerfulest”. (Salter 480)

1.1. Overview of ‘The Book of Laughter and Forgetting’

Milan Kundera, in his book, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* affects the reader through emotional concepts. The effect of political issues in Prague can be observed through culture, lives and spirits of the people in the whole book. Kundera is also strongly influenced by the situation of his country. However, the whole inspiration that gave birth to the book seems to be about the spiritual pain of human. Each of us has a unique way of struggling against the pain of the spirit within, even if the causes of pain differ. Kundera wants to make certain things clear and tells his reader beforehand what his book is about. In the book, different aspects of human existence are analyzed, and experienced. The novel does not have a single narrative progression. It is written in seven parts with a structure which Kundera thinks is similar to polyphonic music. The book mainly considers the nature of forgetting in every way, in history, in politics and individually. However, according to reader's response theory, which I will make use of, it is more for us readers, to tell what the book is about.

Having done a detailed reading of the book, I have realised something which is worth mentioning. Of all those who have read the book, some readers love it so much that they can not even stand reading criticisms, some others hate it. This is the best reaction that a work of art could ever get because I take it as the simplest and the purest reaction which proves that this book talks to our feelings in a harsh way that some of us can not accept to hear. It is hard to accept because it is about forgetting which I would interpret as the death of the soul, and laughter which I would call a rebellious sound which aims to bring freedom to the soul. If we remember the way we were, we restore our existence as an identity, and if we laugh, I mean really laugh, the way Kundera explains, we ignore pain, conventions and society.

I was quite moved by the book but I could not find a satisfying answer to the question why, before I read the newspaper 'Guardian Limited' online. The arts correspondent Charloote Higgins wrote, "The novel that means most to men is about indifference, alienation and lack of emotional responses. That which means most to women is about deeply held feelings, a struggle to overcome circumstances and passion, research by the University of London has found... Women, by contrast, most frequently cited works by Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Margaret Atwood, George Eliot and Jane Austen. They also named a 'much richer and more diverse' set of novels than men, according to Prof Jardine. There was a much broader mix between contemporary and classic works and between male and female authors ".

"We found that men do not regard books as a constant companion to their life's journey, as consolers or guides, as women do," said Prof Jardine. "They read novels a bit like they read photography manuals." Women readers used much loved books to support them through difficult times and emotional turbulence, and tended to employ them as metaphorical guides to behavior, or as support and inspiration.

(<http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,,1747821,00.html>)

My personal interest especially in memories and in other concepts, laughter, love and pain must be the main reason of my choice. After I have read *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, I have read my own diaries and have found people and various feelings I never want to forget. That is why I put myself under the category of women readers whom Prof. Jardine has mentioned. It is a book worth studying and has a lot more things to say under the light of psychoanalysis which I would like to learn more about.

1.2.1 Kundera's use of language

Gliserman, in his book *Psychoanalysis, Language and the Body of the Text* mentions the importance of the text's body and its interpretation. "I hope to contribute something to current discussions of trauma. In looking at the body within the context of a group of novels, I discerned trauma at the center. Each novel lays out the history and ramifications of some trauma, making each into a discourse on pain and its directional paths past, future, inward, outward, or transcendent". (Gliserman10) I have learnt that the presence of a body in the language creates the possibility to make a psychoanalysis of that text.

In investigating the presence of the body in the language of the text, I bring together the description and analysis of language which Noam Chomsky forged and the sensitivity to the presence of the body in language which Freud articulated as psychoanalysis. The general contribution of this work is to a growing field of body studies. In bringing this synthetic analysis to literary language, literary critics, teachers of literature, and historians gain a new dimension to seeing the body of the text as something that has hitherto been described in relatively flat ways. Specifically, I am adding a major element to aid in the analysis and perception of the body in literature by examining the

syntax of the text (sentences, paragraphs, and chapters) as bodily gesture, appearing in the shape of both desire and despair. I see the body as embedded in the syntax of the sentence.... (Gliserman 10)

I aim to apply this method to Kundera's work. I aim to make a psychoanalysis of the text and Kundera by examining the chapters and the words. It is about how the writer presents what he has to say. Every word Kundera uses means something to him and tells something about him. I will try to find out his fears, desires, despairs and traumas in the body of the text. I will use the parts of the book as a tool for the method. People discuss if Kundera writes novels or short stories but I think he writes novels consisting of parts in order to prevent the reduction and rewriting of his texts. He also aims to go deep down into the hearts of the readers with his seven intense parts. "Variation form is the form in which concentration is brought to its maximum; it enables the composer to speak only of its essentials, to go straight to the core of the matter". (Kundera 1996: 226)

The Book of Laughter and Forgetting has seven parts and the most important one for the writer is part four in which a woman called Tamina appears. It is also the largest part of the book. She reappears in parts six and seven. He names two parts the same, 'Lost Letters', and the title 'The Angels' also appear twice. Parts one and four, with the same name, concentrate on the never ending wish to reconstruct the past. He uses a metaphor to express the feelings of the suffering woman to the reader. "I imagine the world rising higher and higher around Tamina like a circular wall, and that she is a bit of lawn down at the bottom. Growing on that bit of lawn, there is only a single rose, the memory of her

husband ‘’. (Kundera 1996 115) This endless desire is the trauma of the characters Mirek, Tamina and also Kundera in this sense.

In part three ‘The Angels’, laughter and the kinds of laughter are the main subjects. Kundera uses the same adjectives, ‘real laughter, sensual pleasure laughter’ over and over again. He uses another metaphor to explain the feeling of being in a group, belonging, enjoying with the group and somehow, being out of the group. ‘’..a circle closes up, and if you go away from it, there is no way back...I left the circle and have not yet stopped falling ‘’. (Kundera 1996:92) Kundera uses the symbol ‘golden ring’ to define loneliness. If a ring falls, it will make a sound and that sound will make us aware of the broken silence. The breaking of the silence will remind Tamina of her loneliness in that suddenly realized silence, so she does not make a single sound to avoid that moment. ‘‘She fears for the golden ring (that tuning fork of silence) and keeps it convulsively in her mouth‘’. (Kundera 1996:144)

I think part six named ‘The Angels’ tells the story of the very beginning of Kundera’s devotion to memories. Most of this part tells about the ‘organized forgetting’ which his country had to face and its effect on individuals. He mentions Kafka several times because he thinks they share the same destiny. ‘‘Kafka had been aware of their ignorance. In his novel, Prague is a city without memory ‘’. (Kundera 1996:215) In this part Tamina returns to share this feeling of lack of memories with Kafka and Kundera. This is the part which at last, Tamina forgets her husband because Kundera sends her among children. ‘‘Children have no past and that is the whole secret of the innocence of their smiles‘’. (Kundera 257) Children symbolise happiness and a life without remorse which is

impossible for an adult. "Is she still looking back...? No not anymore". (Kundera 256)
Tamina dies at the end of this part. I see this ending inevitable because forgetting can not be forgiven in this book. In other words an individual who forgets, dies.

Part two 'Mama' describes the birth of interest in our pasts. Our thoughts and preferences change, and as we change we become more interested in our past. In each paragraph a different character is surprised to realise her/his own changing visions about people and feelings, and as this process goes on, a lot of things become a part of the past. The only thing we can do is to adapt ourselves to our altered identity, others altered identity and feelings. "(...)his wallet is still in his hand, he takes out a hundred-crown bill and puts it in Mama's hand as if Mama were a little girl being sent of far away...and Mama accepts the bill without surprise, quite naturally like a schoolgirl used to adults now and then slipping her a bit of money". (Kundera 1996: 74)

Kundera informs us that, initially part five was entitled 'Who is the Student' but he thinks that dealing with the term Litost is describing the student. He names his characters after famous poets and writers with romantic and anti-romantic attitudes and 'the student' has the honor of meeting and talking with these important people. Kundera is trying to tell us that when the illusion of the 'absolute identity' vanishes, the case of litost also vanishes but this is almost impossible because mankind is imperfect. None of us will ever want to see our ordinary and uninteresting misery. "Litost, therefore, is the characteristic of the age of inexperience". (Kundera 1996:168) Kundera is telling his love for the valuable poets and writers of his country who were not appreciated in their own lands.

Even though he is far away from his country, his sorrow, which is symbolized with a tear, takes him back to the important people of his country. “And so I am watching them from the height of my lookout, but the distance is too great. Fortunately there is a tear in my eye, which is like a telescope lens, brings me nearer to their faces”. (Kundera 1996:176) Kundera gives great importance to certain words because he himself is also affected by some words and lets them into his world of ideas. He has his own way of attracting the readers’ attention to these words. “Lermontov said the word ‘subtle’ as if it were in italics. Yes there are words unlike all others...The student did not know why Lermontov said the word ‘subtle’ as if it were in italics, but I, who am among the initiates know that Lermontov once read Pascal’s *pensee* about subtle minds and geometrical minds, and ever since had divided the human race into two categories. Those who are subtle, and all the others’”. (Kundera 1996:188)

Another example of Kundera’s words is the word ‘proud’. He first introduces the word in the same style with the word ‘subtle’. “The word ‘proud’ was another that came from his mouth in italics”. (Kundera 1996:189) Then one of Kundera’s characters Lermontov repeats the word several times within different contexts on the same page. Another character, ‘the student’, also uses the word to support Lermontov. “...So it is the poets duty to be proud. If he weren’t, he would betray his own work”. (Kundera 1996:190) Kundera thinks that the word proud is, witty and it is not a laughable word. He uses the word ‘noble’ two times in different paragraphs to define the word ‘proud’, both in pages 189 and 190. Later he reuses the word ‘proud’ in harmony with the word

'honest'. "They were equally proud of it, because it seemed to them in the factory, Hard Life herself, that noble goddess, had kissed their brows".

(Kundera 1996: 195)

'Honest' is also one of the words that stands out among others. This time Kundera uses the word in a sentence, and begins the next sentence with the same word which is followed by no other words. It is also in italics. Kundera writes a paragraph about the word to make sure that the reader understands what the word 'expresses' for him. "That was the third word Lermontov said in italics. The word expressed opposition to everything merely ornamental or witty. It expressed opposition to Petrarch's reveries and Boccaccio's pranks. It expressed the pathos of the worker's labor and a passionate faith in the aforementioned goddess, Hard Life ". (Kundera 1996:196)

I think Kundera is a man who knows the psychology of the reader very well and makes use of this advantage to make the reader feel what ever he wants them to feel. 'To say a word in italics' is only one of the methods he uses in order to create this feeling. He repeats the words he wants to differentiate several times throughout the book. He uses a lot of dialogues, and to make the reader feel even more weird, he lets the reader know that he is creating them as he writes. The last part of the book, part seven reminds me of a sensitive and extraordinary person who is trying to explain the world that we have a prejudiced and distorted way of questioning and determining the importance of the events that take place in our lives. Why do we consider certain things important and some others

even not worth mentioning? Who decides what is really important, what is not and from whose point of view?

Kundera uses very simple but interesting examples to make the reader question their habitual values. “During the last two hundred years the blackbird has abandoned the woods to become a city bird...From the planet’s viewpoint, blackbirds invasion of the human world is certainly more important than the Spanish invasion of South America...A shift in the relationships among the various kinds of creation (fish, birds, humans, plants) is a shift of a higher order than changes in relations among various groups of the same kind”. (Kundera 1996:268) He might be trying to prepare the reader for his next idea which calls for a warm up, that sex is a sad thing and kills love.

If I am to sum up my attempt to analyze the body of the book, I can say that it has been designed like a puzzle. Parts do not have an order in any sense and this makes me think that Kundera wants his readers to go through these parts again and again in order to understand and remember them. The novel is questioning the past and is full of paragraphs about the past. It is taking the reader to the characters’ hidden inner worlds. This may be the reason why the words ‘feel’ and ‘think’ are used so frequently. “The issue for the literary analyst is to explore why the writer has made certain choices why, for example, does ‘knee’ show up so often in *Tom Jones* and so rarely in other novels? We move toward understanding that a particular bodily feature is a dominant redundancy or an outstanding singularity by examining the semantic contexts in which the feature appears and attempting to understand the associational network”. (Gliserman 31)

Kundera chooses his words in order to surprise, upset and sometimes to enjoy the reader. This choice is a battle against the undifferentiated flow of everyday events. Milan Kundera's desire towards memories and laughter is reflected in his organization of the novel. "First, aspects of the body are presented on the surface of the novel by being explicitly named. Second, the body is presented in a symbolic manner through spatial descriptions and images such as objects, interior spaces, and environmental shapes. Last, the body is present in the shape, force, and motion of syntax. These categories are heuristic, allowing one to see each of three kinds of images: directly named, described symbolically, and inscribed by syntactic patterns". (Gliserman 30)

One of the concepts that is commonly mentioned is forgetting. The language of the novel serves the concept as it is designed to be reread again and again, like a diary and to be always remembered. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is a model study of the internal difference of a self and of a text. The novel provides evidence for Roland Barthes's theory of rereading: Ejkstein, in his book *The Language of Fiction in a World of Pain: Reading Politics as Paradox*, explains why rereading is essential.

Rereading alone saves the text from repetition (those who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere.) The new discovery, so hard to discern, lies somewhere in the undoing of a self, a text, an authority encountered again and again. For Barthes the reading of each different text tells the same story the reader already knows. But in rereading there is the possibility for the reader honestly to undo her self with the "freshness of the unexpected question". Rereading complicates one's initial impression that *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is a collection of mostly unrelated stories

connected by the themes of laughter and forgetting. As the novel itself explains its form, it is a theme and variations. One notes early on, as Lars Kleberg has done, that laughter and forgetting are not a pair like war and peace or the red and the black. Not a dichotomy, laughter and forgetting have a relationship complicated by each term's internal difference. The form of *The Book*, which means to differ from itself, is the ever-fleeting object enticing the rereader'. (Ejkstein 50)

Kundera chooses the right words to make his work unforgettable and he is practising his lately gained freedom to write about sex, people, politics hidden thoughts and feelings. It is also known that translation is of great importance to him and he translates most of his work himself because he can not tolerate even a slight change in his syntax. Aaron Asher's translation was commissioned and monitored by Kundera himself. He plays with the meaning of the words which he chooses and questions their meanings according to his moods. "Those who are fascinated by the idea of progress do not suspect that everything moving forward is at the same time bringing the end nearer and that joyous watchwords like 'forward' and 'farther' are the lascivious voice of urging us to hasten to it". (Kundera 1996: 246) This quotation is an example of Kundera's different perception of concepts and words.

Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism is modern autocratic government in which the state involves itself in all facets of society, including the daily life of its citizens. A totalitarian government seeks to control not only all economic and political matters but the attitudes, values, and beliefs of its population, erasing the distinction between state and society. The citizen's duty to the state becomes the primary concern of the community, and the goal of the state is the replacement of existing society with a perfect society. There are many differences among totalitarian states but they have several characteristics in common. The most important characteristic is the existence of an ideology that addresses all aspects of life of an individual. Autocracies through the ages have attempted to exercise control over the lives of people by whatever means were available to them, including the use of secret police and military force. (<http://www.bartelby.com/65/to/totalita.html>)

This force which aims to erase the existing society and create a so called perfect one has several interesting effects on individuals and these effects can be observed in each and every person's life in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Milan's characters become graphomaniacs as they react against their death, but not of the body but the soul. What I mean by 'death of the soul is the destruction of an identity by becoming the part of a collective identity without memory. Liobera, in his book *The Making of Totalitarian Thought*, clearly states the problems an identity confronts with. "The most important concept is the idea that crowds eliminate the autonomy of the individual. There is obviously a clear difference between an individual psychology and a crowd psychology. In certain circumstances a crowd psychology is formed; the reasons for this event are varied, being behind a material or an emotional background. What is crucially important

is the existence of a process of alienation in which individuals lose their autonomy and individuality and form part of a collective identity. It is important to remember that Le Bon stated very clearly that individuality was abolished". (Liobera 95) Milan Kundera's characters share the same destiny in this sense, because they are all citizens of a country without memories. They try to avoid this loss of identity by remembering, laughing and writing. The ones who fail to find a way of preserving their identity as a whole, lose the game of life and die. Milan's characters have their battles within their minds. Their freedom is their past and they strongly hold onto it because a human being has certain needs in order to exist.

What are these basic needs and passions which stem from the human condition and which must be fulfilled if man is to remain sane and grow to his full stature? The concept of basic needs which stem from the human condition has taken on increasing importance in Fromm's work. Fromm treated only one psychic need at length, the need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness. He treated it more in terms of 'human nature' than in terms of the 'human condition' (...) In that book he was specifically trying to show that the individual could not tolerate the 'empty freedom' of modern society because it violated the need for relatedness. (Scahaar 45)

Graphomania

As Kundera describes it, graphomania is not ‘the mania to create a form,’ that is, not a mania to create challenging new aesthetic forms and media, it is rather a mania ‘to impose one’s self on others. “According to my calculations,’ writes Kundera, ‘there are two or three fictional characters baptized on earth every second’”. (Kundera 1996:122) This is a very simple definition of the term. I believe that *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is full of graphomaniacs. Most of them do not aim to impose themselves on others. My approach towards every concept in the book calls for a more widened definition of the term. The human psychology under oppression finds several ways to protect individuality. An ordinary person turns into a so called writer when he confronts problems. Even a very talented and intellectual writer may become a graphomaniac for psychological reasons. The feeling of despair, the urge to express oneself or the struggle to avoid losing identity may turn people into graphomaniacs. Porter, in his book *Rousseau’s Legacy: Emergence and Eclipse of the Writer in France* gives an example of a famous graphomaniac and explains why he thinks that he is a graphomaniac :

To some extent Sartre suffered from graphomania throughout his life as writer, although it was balanced at the beginning of his career by an interest in aesthetic questions and by a critical awareness of the significance of form and the value of the artful detour (...) these late works, apart from their length, seem not underedited but practically unedited, either by the author himself or anyone else. In their original versions their apparent formlessness is reinforced by the virtual absence of

tables of contents, notes, or references to any other works in the field except canonical texts by thinkers such as Marx or Freud. (...) it is not surprising that there are probably no more than a few dozen people around the world who have read the Flaubert volumes from beginning to end. (Porter 188)

In Kundera's characters' case, writing serves as a bridge between the past and the present. In this sense the need to write seems innocent, just trying to remember 'Who one is ', to borrow Foucault's ironic phrase. Nabokov makes use of Brodsky to explain the psychology of an émigré and her/his relation with the past.

The allure of the past is indeed strong. As Joseph Brodsky points out, an émigré is necessarily a retrospective being, for the native shore is the only known shore, the only territory that is familiar and thus seemingly safe. Whether pleasant or dismal, the past is always a safe territory, if only because it is already experienced; and the species' capacity to revert, to run backward especially in its thoughts or dreams, since there we are generally safe as well is extremely strong in all of us, quite irrespective of the reality we are facing. We can examine the bridge metaphor more directly by returning to Kafka's bizarre short story. We can see that Kafka's short piece suggests many of the ideas and images central to the experience of exile... It is not a spontaneous fall that threatens the bridge's existence; it is forgetting that will cause the fall and bring about its demise. (Nabokov 4-5)

The fear of forgetting urges the individuals to write about themselves, about the people and the things they love. Most of the characters in Kundera's book have either lost their loved ones or have never found them. They belong to the past because they ignore living in present which means nothing to them. As a result they are isolated, alone and desperate. Graphomania is like a vicious circle. Isolation of people from other people and present events cause graphomania, and graphomania in turn, intensifies this isolation. In Kundera's book, everyone is surrounded by his own words as by a wall of mirrors. I imagine this mirror as the one which a person hopes to look at and see whoever and whatever he wants to see so that he will be moved and satisfied by that reflection.

A human's past is one of the most fundamental problems of human existence, the problem of time. Human beings are unable to keep the experience of the events in their minds for longer than the duration of those events. The moment time intervenes between the events and our experience of them, the experiences become distorted and theoretical. Therefore nobody will remember how those moments exactly were. Even if the events are written right after they have taken place, they will be distorted but this distortion has a positive effect on the writer because the writer will write whatever s/he wants to write (remember) and that piece of writing will give her/him a sense of comfort. This is a kind of defense mechanism and it helps if it is used to a certain extent.

II. Psychoanalytic Analysis of 'laughter and forgetting' in Kundera's work.

2. Reader's Response

As a reader and a student, I always wondered how my teachers had already known which work of art meant what, and what each word symbolized. Most novels we have studied were classics and their authors had already passed away. Even if they had the chance to tell what they really wanted to write about and why, how would they have convinced the reader who interpreted those works differently? "The author, Barthes notes, has always functioned within capitalist society as the 'anchor' of the literary work's signifiers. The author is posited as the centre of the work: the origin of all the work's meaning, the author is also that figure towards which all reading should direct itself. Barthes writes: '*explanation* of the work is still sought in the person of its producer, as if, through the more or less transparent allegory of fiction, it was always, ultimately, the voice of one and the same person, the author, which was transmitting his 'confidences''.(Allen 73)

We students have always felt nervous about telling what we have thought about a book. Culler quotes Barthes to explain why immanent analysis is not favored by academicians. "Academic criticism in France, says Barthes, is hostile to immanent analysis because it associates knowledge with causal explanation and because it is easier to evaluate students' knowledge than their interpretations. A theory of literature predicated on the importance of knowledge about the author's life and times lends itself to examinations and grading". (Culler 51)

Reading is a process of decoding of signs which have various meanings. The text means different things to different people because the reader decodes it according to her/his world view, her/his horizons, therefore there is an interaction between the world of the text as it was constructed and the world of the reader. An important tool for analyzing a literary text is known as readers' response theory because it helps the readers to keep the focus on what the work means to them. In a literary work, the associations that words and images have will largely determine what the work communicates to the individual. The reader always brings her/his, memories of past events; personality traits, present needs and a particular mood of the moment to the work. These and many other elements determine her/his response to the text. Reader response theory frees the reader from having to guess the hidden meaning an author may or may not have been thinking about when he or she wrote a story, poem or play. The production of meaning rejects the idea of a stable relationship between a signifier and its signified. "In semiotics, (the study of signs and meaning) a sign is generally defined as something that stands for something else, to someone in some capacity. Signs are not just words, but also include images, gestures, scents, tastes, textures, sounds essentially all of the ways in which information can be processed into a codified form and communicated as a message". (www.hawthornemedia.com/resources/glossaryf-s.htm) According to Saussure (1857-1913), a sign is composed of the signifier, and the signified. These cannot be conceptualized as separate entities. Signifier is the sound image, and the signified is the idea it represents. Reader response theory discusses the limitless possibility of interpretation because the author's work is just a signified for the reader. "When we try to posit the author as the centre of a literary work, we find that we cannot stop at that

signified. What do we mean by the author? Do we mean that the centre of the work is the author's intention, or his or her emotional needs and desires and anxieties? Is the centre his or her unconscious, or the historical contexts within which he or she wrote? The author, like all apparent transcendental signifieds, turns out to have meaning only as a signifier for other signifieds: aesthetics, psychology, society, history and so on". (Allen 69-70)

On the one hand, if as Barthes told, the author is dead, then Kundera is not the one to determine what the book communicates to the reader. On the other hand, it would be simple and to some extent wrong to say that the only determiner of meaning is the reader. Then who or what is at the center of meaning? Allen makes use of Derrida in his book *Roland Barthes* to question the center of meaning.

Derrida writes: 'the entire history of the concept of structure ... must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center. Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the center receives different forms or names.' (1981:279) When we ask what the centre of philosophy as a structure is, we are confronted with just such a chain of substitutions: Truth, Knowledge, Logic, Nature, Reality, Being, Right, Divinity, Freedom, History, Language, Science and so on. When we ask for the signified of the signifier God we experience a similar substitutive vertigo: First Cause, Prime Mover, Yahweh, Trinity, Allah, the Tetragrammaton, Spirit, Father, the One, Essence, Knowledge, the Eye that Sees, the Hand that Moves, Love, Vengeance, Forgiveness, the Son, the Mother, the Child, Eternity, Law, the Maker, the Great Architect, Justice and so on. (Allen 70)

As readers, we give life and various meanings to a text but sometimes we even change our beliefs and values after reading that text so it would be right to say that we change the text as the text changes us.

A striking feature of Barthes's accounts of literature is how easily reader and text switch places in the stories he tells: the story of the reader structuring a text flips over into a story of the text manipulating the reader. In the entry on 'Texte, theorie du' for the *Encyclopaedia universalis*, he writes that 'the signifier belongs to everyone,' but, he quickly continues, 'it is the text which works untiringly, not the artist or the consumer (...) Celebration of the reader as the producer of the text is matched by description of the text as the controlling force in these encounters. (Culler 103)

Meaning is indeterminate and it is not in the text but in the 'play of language'. Play of language refers to the instability and creativity of language as Derrida underpins in his concept of 'différance'. Decoding the text requires various levels of competence, in other words, the ability and sufficiency to decode texts and to understand how texts work. The 'meaning' then depends largely on the competence of the reader in responding to the structures and practices of the text, which affect us without our knowing it. Texts include statements, assumptions and attitudes because a text is produced in a certain social environment. The reader herself/himself will have ideological convictions and understandings as well. They will be often unrecognized, because this is the nature of ideology, and they will direct the reading and the application of the reading. Each reader uses the physical literary work plus invariable codes, and individual style of reading to build a response both like and unlike other readers' responses.

I have read some of Louise Rosenblatt's studies who introduced the reader's response theory in 1938. Among various types of reader's response methodologies, I chose the 'Psychological Response' which was developed by Norman Holland. Holland is a scholar who teaches and writes psychoanalytic psychology, cognitive science and what these tell us about the responses of readers to the literary texts, movies and occasionally the other branches of arts. During the 1970s, Holland and his co-worker at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Murray Schwartz, developed a style of reader response teaching, which they called the 'Delphi seminar.' In the seminar, for the first part of the semester, students and instructors wrote whatever came to their minds (that is, free associations) to poems and stories. In the second part, the students and instructors took one another's free associations. They read these associations as the text to which they responded. The seminars provided those who participated with a sense of their own style of responding to literary texts and to other people. In 1992, Holland published a mystery story based on this kind of teaching, *Death in a Delphi Seminar*.

Holland defines the reader as a psychological subject whose unconscious drives may be studied by examining her/his interpretations of texts. Readers make some errors by omitting and adding as they read. The text of the readers' interpretations of a literary work is the critic's true text. This text is read for its additions or subtractions which reveal the readers' life themes and their personalities'. The processes studied are perceived threats in literature, defense strategies, fantasy strategies, transformation strategies and anxiety reduction. The terms of art are identity theme, fears, defenses, desires, needs, anxiety and guilt.

Lacan has told that 'language creates us', then reader's response method seems to be the best method available to interpret a book. Lacan tells that the interpretations, are all we know of the world and they are made up of two things: language, and images that we have previously experienced. They are previous interpretations. They are not real. They are mental events. Lacan says that though we cannot know the real, in any way whatsoever, we have an obscure sense of it, of its incredible fullness and richness. We want it.

Desire, for Lacan, comes out of the imbalance between what we perceive, language and images, and what actually is, the real. This immense difference is the primary fact of our mental life, like a constant imbalance. The main thing that motivates everything is desire. It is impossible to satisfy this desire, because we cannot know what we want. The real is utterly unknowable. Everything gets in the way because all the mental events create a false view of the world. We can not even really long for what we long for. We are fundamentally confused.

I think there is an important link between what Lacan says and the individualistic reader's response. We will never find a single answer to any question because our answers are not real, they are just interpretations and they are not concrete because they are subjective, mental events. We can make use of individualistic psychoanalysis in a realistic way if we stop claiming that we have discovered the real meaning hidden in a text because there is no hidden, unique reality waiting to be discovered. I think, individualistic method says that the best thing to do is to look inside and to search for ourselves through literature in that we perceive the world through our thoughts which are

structured like language. The only reality possible is the one we create in our minds in order to learn about ourselves and the world as a part of us, and us, being a part of it. What is my sense of reality and what are the things I long for? How do I interpret a novel? As a reader, in order to interpret *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, I am going to ask myself what passages stand out? Which words, phrases, images and ideas did I focus on? How do I feel about them? What in my background makes me feel that way? What, specifically, in the passage triggers that response? I will try to craft a thesis statement by giving response to the work and will support my thesis by quoting and analyzing the passages I have identified.

As Freud has mentioned our ego choices make up our individuality. Perception is one of those ego choices. Each of us creates her/his own *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* from the words that Kundera gives us. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is not just the words on the page, but, rather, a combination of things in the book with my own ways of assimilating reality. “Understanding, for Heidegger, is a dynamic activity, an interaction or dialogue which is never fully completed, never finished, never closed off. Understanding, therefore, is not an activity which people can perform; it is not something that is done; it is a part of being, of existence, of language. In that sense it becomes anti-rationalist, almost mystical, and art and therefore literature assumes a status ‘where the truth of the world speaks itself’. (Eagleton 1983:64) “Language shows rather than tells”. (Birch 5) To understand *The Book of Laughter* I need to begin by understanding my own reactions to the book. “*The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is a model study of the internal difference of a self, of a text. The novel provides persuasive evidence for Roland Barthes's theory of rereading. For Barthes, in rereading there is the

possibility for the reader to undo her self with the freshness of the unexpected question”.

(Eckstein 49)

As Holland did in his studies, I am going to present my most favourite lines from the book by organizing them in a chart to see all the lines together, to try to analyze my choices and to find the relations among those lines if there are any.

<p>1. “It is 1971 and Mirek says: The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting”. (4)</p>
<p>2. “Yes, he was looking back; because nowadays he had forgotten who he had been when he was young (...) he wanted to go back to his correspondence with Zdena, to find there the secret of his youth, of his beginnings and of his roots”. (25)</p>
<p>3. “We want to be masters of the future only for the power to change the past. We fight for access to the labs where we can retouch photos and rewrite biographies and history”. (31)</p>
<p>4. “(...) a prison even though entirely surrounded by walls, is a splendidly illuminated scene of history”. (33)</p>
<p>5. “And all at once, without knowing how, she ended up in an entirely other role, contrary to her expectations, contrary to her wishes and her taste”.(52)</p>
<p>6. “She was thrilled by the thought that everything she long ago experienced was still with her, surrounding her loneliness and speaking to her”. (58)</p>

<p>7. "(...) beauty is a spark that flashes when, suddenly across the distance of years, two ages meet. That beauty is an abolition of chronology and a rebellion against time". (73)</p>
<p>8. "Laughter? Do people ever care about laughter? I mean real laughter, beyond joking, mockery, ridicule. Laughter, an immense and delicious sensual pleasure, wholly sensual pleasure.(...) Bursts of repeated, rushing, unleashed laughter, magnificent laughter, sumptuous and mad.(...) to laugh is to live profoundly". (79)</p>
<p>9. "Living is being happy: seeing, hearing ,touching, drinking, eating, urinating, defecating, diving into the water and gazing at the sky, laughing and crying". (80)</p>
<p>10. "(...) we are glad to be in the world, we are in agreement with being!" (81)</p>
<p>11. "Things deprived suddenly of their supposed meaning, of the place assigned to them in their so called order of things makes us laugh. In origin laughter is thus of the devil's domain. It has something malicious about it. (...) but to some extent also a beneficent relief". (Kundera 86)</p>
<p>12. "(...) the devil's laughter denoted the absurdity of things, the angel on the contrary meant to rejoice over how well ordered, wisely conceived, good and meaningful everything here below was". (87)</p>
<p>13. "There are two laughters, and we have no word to tell one from the other".(87)</p>
<p>14. "Dancing in a ring is magic; a ring dance speaks to us from the ancient depths of our memories". (89)</p>

<p>15. “Bursts of repeated, rushing, repeated, unbridled laughter, explosions of magnificent laughter, sumptuous and mad. They laugh their laughter until the infinity of their laughter... O laughter! Laughter of sensual pleasure, sensual pleasure of laughter...”. (90)</p>
<p>16. “(...) the interpretation of a work of art can not be limited to the traditional theoretic approach; a modern approach is needed, reading by means of praxis, of action, of a happening”. (103)</p>
<p>17. “She laughed until she cried, and she spread her arms and wiggled her body so hard that her head was thrown back and forth on her neck like an upside down bell in the hand of the sexton vigorously ringing it”. (103)</p>
<p>18. “Everyday, she engaged in a kind of spiritual exercise before this picture, trying to visualize her husband in profile, then half profile, then three quarter. Recapturing the lines of his nose and chin, she was horrified every day to notice the imaginary sketch showing newly questionable points introduced by the uncertain memory that was doing the drawing”. (116)</p>
<p>19. “You begin to liquidate people’, Hübl said, ‘by taking away their memories”. (218)</p>
<p>20. “Only her husband had kept asking her questions, because love is a continual interrogation”. (223)</p>
<p>21. “For children have no past, and that is the whole secret of the magical innocence of their smiles”. (257)</p>

“(…) the interpretation of a work of art can not be limited to the traditional theoretical approach; a modern approach is needed, reading by means of praxis, of action, of a happening”. (103) (*number 16*) Kundera claims that a practical application of a branch of learning is necessary so I chose his words as a starting point to begin my own interpretation of Kundera’s work. I think I have a passionate desire to know about the insides of people, and their histories. The past is very important to me and it must be remembered always. The core of my identity involves preserving a sense of self and securing self-esteem by remembering my past and the pasts of the ones I loved, have never loved, and still love. My chart shows that the concepts that have affected me the most are, struggling against forgetting (*number 1*) and trying to find a lost identity or love in the past (*number 2*). I think I am a potential graphomaniac due to my fear of forgetting which is expressed by my choice of numbers 3, 18 and 19. I keep old pieces of papers, photos and items and each of them have meanings. I think I am making a displacement here and ignoring my fears like getting old and dying by looking at those items from the past and as a consequence of these feelings, the words ‘retouch’, ‘rewrite’ (*number 3*) impress me.

It is obvious that I like examining the surface of texts, particularly the ones full of adjectives. I think adjectives have considerable effects on me. They enrich the meaning of nouns and they make them more effective. Nouns lack meaning without adjectives. “Laughter? Do people ever care about laughter? I mean real laughter, beyond joking, mockery, ridicule. Laughter, an immense and delicious sensual pleasure, wholly sensual pleasure. (...) Bursts of repeated, rushing, unleashed laughter, magnificent laughter, sumptuous and mad.(...) to laugh is to live profoundly”. (79) (*number 8*) This expression

of laughter appears twice in the book and some adjectives like 'sensual', 'repeated', 'magnificent' and 'sumptuous' are repeated more than twice. My interest in these words is most probably inevitable. Kundera mentions that these words are taken from a woman's book which is called *Parole de femme* (Woman's word). A gentle, pervasive, and continuing sensual pleasure is explained by using more adjectives which are mostly attributed to women. I experience the feeling of being understood through these adjectives. I have no doubt that my interest in these words also stem from being informed that they were written for women. This is a good example of how a text can affect one's choices. I might be unconsciously forcing myself to think that if it is meant to be for women and women only, then I should be appreciating it.

"There are two laughters, and we have no word to tell one from the other". (87) (*number 13*) Kundera explains these two laughters as the devil's and the angel's laughter. (*number 12*) The devil's laughter is considered as the "Origin of laughter which has something malicious about it. (...) but to some extent also a beneficent relief". (Kundera 86) (*number 11*) I love them so much that I would like to memorize the words used to describe different kinds of laughter. The ones I love the most are the ones with opposite meanings. The rebellious laughter against conventions which suppress our thoughts and behavior and the innocent laughter cherished by being in a group, united. "Bursts of repeated, rushing, repeated, unbridled laughter, explosions of magnificent laughter, sumptuous and mad (...)" (90) (*number 15*) "Metaphors that link laughter and explosiveness ('erupt', 'burst out') touch on an interesting paradox: that the energies of humor, like those of a detonation, are both contractive and expansive. The punch-line, the dry aphorism, are irresistible because they compress so powerfully, imply so much in a

little compass a phrase, or even a single word. Such compression is a classic element in the technique of humor, 'brevity', (expression in few words) we are inevitably reminded, is the soul of wit. On the other hand, when the compressed meanings erupt and laughter bursts out, its waves and echoes persist, and one outbreak is only the signal for the next. The effect of a joke is often to put us in a state of pleasurable instability that welcomes, craves, indeed courts the impact of another joke. This is a requisite of comedy, which depends on expansion". (Nash 13)

A good example for such laughter which expands and erupts is told in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Kundera tells the story of a group of people who had to resist laughter in a funeral. "Yes, they all had to drink the chalice of temptation to the dregs. They all had to live through the horrifying battle against laughter". (Kundera 303) It is just a 'hat' that is the 'seed' of laughter. Papa Clevis's hat is torn off by the wind and gradually falls into the grave. People have to behave themselves in a funeral but they can not resist the devil's laughter. Those lines were some of my favorite ones which I underlined, in that I liked them and thought I would like to reread them again and again. I think, this is considered a sign of moral deformity, but I am one of those rebels who enjoy the devil's laughter. I never want to resist that pleasure of 'laughing until I cry'. (*number 103*) The more unsuitable the situation, the more laughter forces me inside. "We have all had the experience of sensing humor in something heard or read, yet not being quite sure whether laughter would be a respectable act or a confession of our own moral deformities". (Nash 6)

The similarity of the two seemingly opposite concepts, crying and laughter is attractive. There is also unhappiness in laughter. “She laughed until she cried, and she spread her arms and wiggled her body so hard that her head was thrown back and forth on her neck like an upside down bell in the hand of the sexton vigorously ringing it”. (103) (*number 17*) In this part of the book the woman is depicted as someone who has problems and is very lonely. In this case the woman is closer to crying but she is trying to suppress her feelings within laughter. I find this laughter strengthening. I would do the same thing in a similar situation. If I need to discharge myself, why should I choose crying which is a very ordinary way? “After careful consideration of all available facts and theories of the earliest mental processes of our race, we must come to the conclusion that mirth had its origin in sorrow; that laughter was the direct product of tears. Nor are they even yet completely dissevered. Who has not laughed till he cried? Who has not cried herself into hysterical laughter? All theories of humor include an element of unhappiness; all joy has its hint of pain”. (Wells 23) I believe that children are privileged and they only taste the innocent laughter which is purely the symbol of joy because they have no past to look back, nothing and nobody to miss. “For children have no past, and that is the whole secret of the magical innocence of their smiles”. (257) (*number 21*) However, I do not envy children. Every pleasure in the world must be paid for in some sense, and every unique experience must take its place in the mind. Who can claim that crying is only a manifestation of sadness, if laughter is not just a sign of happiness?

If laughter does not always and only symbolize happiness, why do we make jokes even when we are unhappy, stressed or even hopeless? “(...) Freud's second example of nonsense wit is a somewhat melancholy quotation perhaps significant for his philosophy of life: ‘Never to be born would be best for mortal man, but this happens only to a very few.’ By these illustrations Freud uncovers ‘ the sense in the nonsense ’(...) The deeply melancholy implication of Freud's second example about the millions of little people who would prefer never to have been born at all uncovers the hopelessness and quiet despair of so many. By camouflaging this despair beneath the mantle of illogical nonsense, the quotation denies the human tragedy and states with resignation and reassurance. After all, it does not matter. Freud's intention at this point of his reasoning is only to show another technique common to wit and dreams. In this case, it is a technique of making sense by using nonsense and gaining pleasure while doing so”. (Grothjan 8) Laughter, in this case is a hiding place for witty and emotional individuals. Pain is displaced with laughter. “The pleasure in a play with words and nonsense serves to remove suppression and repression. The true pleasure in wit has therefore two different sources or components: release pleasure and play pleasure. Energy is freed from repression; satisfaction is gained and released in the final laughter. A play with words alone does not make a person laugh often or loud. It soon loses its value. The chief source of pleasure in wit is the release of inhibition or of repression”. (Grothjan 14)

There are extra words which permit subtleties and complexities. Let's take the word 'liquidate' (*number 19*) for instance. I think it is a subtle way of saying that 'they are killing peoples' souls. The word liquid has nothing bad about it, but when it turns into an action towards people, it becomes an upsetting and fearsome verb. I find that my favorite lines make it possible for me to create and explore several semantic possibilities within a single thought. "Dancing in a ring is magic; a ring dance speaks to us from the ancient depths of our memories". (89) (*number 14*) What do these words mean? To me it is a teenager's 'belonging to a group' period. The time when friends spend all their time together, talking about the same things, behaving in the same way, believing in the same things and wearing almost the same clothes. I think this association makes me remember and miss my old friends and also myself (the teenage) who used to be a part of a ring. Being outside the ring reminds me of adulthood and the fear of loneliness and boredom.

What about the concept of beauty? I find my own answer to this question. Beauty is a rebellion against time which will be defeated and demolished gradually within time. This answer takes my fears away to a certain extent. As long as we remember all the beauties that we have seen and experienced, including our own appearance, we will be able to travel in our own time machines which are created in our minds. When we get there, the concept of time will vanish as time confronts our beautiful remembrances and it will be beaten by our minds. "(...) beauty is a spark that flashes when, suddenly across the distance of years, two ages meet. That beauty is an abolition of chronology and a rebellion against time". (73) (*number 7*)

Words in this novel are, for me, a kind of potential space in which I can create alternatives and possibilities instead of being faced with emptiness and lack of feelings. I find that I am not interested in the political aspect of the book at all. I do not and cannot take all subjects into consideration, even if I try hard to do it. “(...) a prison even though entirely surrounded by walls, is a splendidly illuminated scene of history”. (33) (*number 4*) I have realized that I have made a great deal of omission while reading. I will call myself an emotion addict because after looking back for my omissions, I found out that the characters of the book, Mirek and his son were put in prison for political reasons and these reasons were also explained in detail but I did not even remember a single reason. Prison is an illuminated scene of history for someone like Mirek! I take Mirek’s perspective as a romantic and extraordinary one and that is the line I choose to remember.

I have also found my very deep fears to be forgotten by others and to forget the ones I never want to forget. As I read the parts about Tamina I realize that the spiritual exercise to visualize someone is, to suffer. “Everyday, she engaged in a kind of spiritual exercise before this picture, trying to visualize her husband in profile, then half profile, then three quarter. Recapturing the lines of his nose and chin, she was horrified every day to notice the imaginary sketch showing newly questionable points introduced by the uncertain memory that was doing the drawing”. (116) (*number 18*)

Tamina’s exercise reminds me of my fear of forgetting the faces of the people whom I loved. As I think that I will never see them again, in a panic, I try to remember their faces or voices. If I can not do that, I try to visualize just the hair or the eyes. I am also keen on remembering my emotions and concentrating on refeeling them. I see my past as a part of

my identity and I am afraid to lose that identity. My past is full of memories from my youth and I guess I am also afraid to lose my youth both mentally and physically. “She was thrilled by the thought that everything she long ago experienced was still with her, surrounding her loneliness and speaking to her”. (58) (*number 6*). Another fear I face in the book is the fear of changing, losing my virtues that I admire and becoming someone else as time goes by. These changes like marriage, having children and getting old which I do not have total control of, may ruin my characteristics and as I realize (if I realize) my transformation helplessly, I sure will suffer. “And all at once, without knowing how, she ended up in an entirely other role, contrary to her expectations, contrary to her wishes and her taste”. (52) (*number 5*)

Cherishing life with laughter and also denying death with it, remembering the past and trying to make use of it for the present. I realize that the lines I choose to remember stand for the things that I long for. Kundera uses words to build up substitutes for the things which are usually left unappreciated, particularly, love. “Only her husband had kept asking her questions, because love is a continual interrogation”. (223) (*number 20*). ‘A continual interrogation’ is a unique and extraordinary definition of love which forces the reader to question their own definitions of love. I searched through the internet and have found out that this sentence about love, is the most quoted one in websites designed for discussion on literature and is mostly quoted by women...

“Living is being happy: seeing, hearing, touching, drinking, eating, urinating, defecating, diving into the water and gazing at the sky, laughing and crying”. (80) (*number 9*) This is another line which is taken from the woman’s book. It seems like a

very simple answer to a very complicated question. That simple answer is a sign of the urge in me to comfort myself by simplifying complex concepts into easily digestible ones. It gives that feeling of happiness and joy, which is similar to listening to some songs with simple and relaxing lyrics like 'life is life' or 'don't worry be happy'. "(...) we are glad to be in the world, we are in agreement with being!" (81) (*number 10*)

Reader's Response Conclusion:

By practicing the reader's response theory individually, I have completed all the parts of the puzzle. I immersed myself into my thesis, the book, and the approach I have chosen. I have claimed that the desire for writing, remembering and laughing is constituted in the minds of human beings who are in a quest for the survival of their survival of their souls against the ceaseless lack of being. I have tried to prove this by analyzing the interdependent philosophies, Kundera's character's, Kundera's language and myself. I have become a part of the book by using the reader's response theory and by making use of psychoanalysis. I have experienced the book fully and I have observed myself to be able to make inferences for the other parts of the thesis because my thesis is based on psychoanalysis and requires awareness and empathy.

2.1. Reaction to death of the soul (Happiness)

For me 'Reaction to Death of the Soul' is a transition chapter which is necessary before reading the chapters 'Analysis of Writing', 'Analysis of Laughter' and 'Analysis of the Desire of Writing'. These three chapters stem from the reaction to death of the soul, in other words, the desire for happiness.

The way to happiness is not a concrete path put forward to be followed. When all the world's sorrows attack, one after another, taking away our vitality, happiness has to be created in the mind, but how? "Ruminating about happiness, Mark Twain wrote: What a wee little part of a person's life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself". (Parducci 164)

What is happiness? How do people feel happy, how often and for how long? The definition of happiness is one of the greatest philosophical quandaries. I will first elaborate on the definition of happiness. In the free dictionary online, it is simply defined as the state of well being characterized by emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. Laughter, for example is a sign of happiness whereas crying is a sign of sadness. Most of us think that if we forget about the past which had already become a history full of difficulties and sadness, we will seize the day, will make plans for the future which is full of hopes and we will feel happy.

Happiness and desires go together. To feel spiritually alive, human beings have always had a desire for certain 'things' which change from period to period, because life should be more than being physically alive. The ego overrides the soul's craving by wanting

more and more and more. When I use the word 'desire', although I am aware that it will take a lot of reading and effort to fully understand him, I think it will be necessary and useful to mention Lacan's notion of desire, in that, I believe it is closely related to my study. This eternal desire's cause was explained by Lacan (1901 –1981) who was a French psychoanalyst, psychiatrist, and doctor. For Jacques Lacan, human beings have to confront a lack of being. "(...) desire is lack of being, desire is its interpretation". (RabatE 102) According to Lacan, the subject's fundamental emptiness was caused by the first symbolization. From the beginning of his teaching, Lacan noted that for Freud the object is fundamentally lost, and the subject spends his life looking for it. The aim of psychoanalysis is to study on the lack of an object, and this lacking object is at the heart of being. I think this lack of being, may be the reason for the three different reactions (remembering, laughing, writing) of Kundera's characters, which I am working on. The desire for satisfaction may end up in very different forms. However, this desire is due to its nature, never to be fully satisfied.

The drive, is understood and taken up by Lacan in his *Seminar XI* is a *konstante Kraft*, a constant force, an unending requirement imposed on the psyche due to its link with the body, an instigation that, in Mephistopheles' words, 'presses ever forward, unsubdued.'. In this text by Freud on which Lacan comments extensively and to which he adheres without reserve, the drive is a factor that, on finding closed the regressive path to the encounter with the lost object, the object of desire, is left with no alternative but to press forward, 'truly without perspectives of ever ending the march or of reaching the goal.' In this sense, the drive is *jouissance*, not because it has a calming effect, not because it achieves satisfaction or satiety, but because it establishes

the memorable in an act that is inscribed, in relation to the order of the signifying chain, as a deviation or even a transgression; the drive signals the appearance of a dimension of surprise which is essential to the psychoanalytic act and to the ethical acts that define, in a different way, the place of the subject. (RabatE 105)

Lack of being, constitutes desire, and forces us into an insatiable quest for wholeness, a state of being which has never existed and as far as I understand, will never exist. If this is the case and has always been the case, then to the extent that this state of wholeness cannot exist, we can exist. In other words, we struggle to do all we can in order to satisfy the desire for wholeness. This struggle keeps us busy. Our existence as subjects does not lie in the core of our being. Our existence consists in the ideological structures we produce to compensate for our lack of being. For me it has been depressing to understand that I am made up of ideological structures, but it has also given me relief to know that this is human nature. In this case, languages, cultures, and all civilizations stem from this lack. Life, from this perspective, does not consist in achieving wholeness, it consists in desiring wholeness and spending a whole life time looking for it.

People usually focus on abundances like money and possessions but we have the potential ability to perceive a different area of our lives, like inner peace. “Happiness is of two sorts, though, of course, there are intermediate degrees. The two sorts I mean might be distinguished as plain and fancy, or animal and spiritual, or of the heart and of the head”. (Russell 143) What is it that really allows us to feel full? Is it money? Is it power? Is it position? “What then do we strive for besides, beyond, the means-the position, the money, the power by which we presume, so often so vainly, we shall

achieve the goal of living, the good, the deeper satisfaction of the beings we are? Often we do not ask the question, often we do not dare to ask it, or perhaps we repeat some remembered half mystical formula that we were taught and that has lost all meaning for us. It had something to do with the word 'soul' “. (MacIver 18)

If we try to fill up our desires that feed the ego, we may be able to survive the deaths of our souls, at least we can go one step further and desire something else due to the temporary fullness which creates the hope and the will. The soul's needs are complicated and these needs can only be seen and satisfied if we can have a different perspective than the imposed and conventional one. “Happiness is not merely a state of mind nor is it merely a feeling. It is the resonance of the whole being as it moves toward that which fulfils it. It is the harmony within you, as you, the whole you, the animating you, move toward whatever oneness you are capable of becoming. It is the fulfillment that comes in the weaving of relationships that make your world your home”. (MacIver 20)

In Hobbes's definition, happiness is a pursuit, or progress, and attainment simply the punctuation that relieves a life of flow. Locke basically concurs with Hobbes that happiness is a continuous course of pursuit and pause; Locke, however, stresses the stops. He writes; who is content is happy. But as soon as any new uneasiness which, for Locke, is coextensive with 'desire' comes in, this happiness is disturbed, and we are set afresh on work in the pursuit of Happiness'. This pursuit does not, for Locke as for Hobbes, negate the possibility of a basal or cumulative happiness, as Locke writes, in pursuit we seek 'the making or increase of our happiness. (Hume 65-66)

Happiness reminds most of us of sadness at the same time, and crying comes along with laughing. These artificial oppositions sometimes lead to distortion of language, of ideas and of minds. Laughing and crying, forgetting and remembering, happiness and sadness are not oppositions, they have so much in common. “(...) we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater annoyance follows for us from them, and we judge many pains superior to pleasures, when greater pleasure follows along for us when we endure the pains for a long time. (...) one should judge all these matters by measuring together and looking at the advantages and disadvantages, for we make use of the good on some occasions as a bad thing, and the bad, conversely, as a good” (Annas 334)

People think that they need things for happiness but they need to ‘think’, not ‘things’ for the sake of their souls. “Life's meaning must derive from things other than just being alive and possessing things. Happiness is probably one of the things that are worthy”. (Flanagan 4) Themes and meta themes exist in Kundera’s thinking process and they are reflected in his books so that they can serve to reflect upon the same ideas. Some of these meta themes are exile, identity, memories, laughter, life beyond the border (beyond love, beyond art, beyond seriousness), history as continual return and the pleasure of a less important life. For this reason, I will make use of Kundera’s other book, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* too. Kundera’s characters’ struggle in order to save their souls from death. The present gives them nothing to feed their souls with so they choose to remember the past, to write it, and they choose to laugh. How can our past feed our souls with happiness? Parducci, in his book *Happiness, Pleasure, and Judgment: The Contextual Theory and Its Applications*, has an answer to this question. “One assumption

made for applications of the contextual theory is that most of our pleasures and pains occur while fantasizing, daydreaming, anticipating, or reliving the past in our memories. Insofar as we have more control of our imaginations than we have of external events, the possibilities for happiness are greatly extended". (Parducci 4) Happiness is hidden in the past and it can be experienced by writing. The aim in this case, is to keep the soul alive, to go on feeling emotions regardless of their negativities and to cherish the positive emotions. "Memories of the past, for example, do not form part of one's aim, but they could help one to achieve it". (Annas 231)

Kundera's characters live in close proximity to meaninglessness, in other words, the boundary. They can easily find themselves on the meaningless side. For a person to cross the border beyond, is not only the loss of meaning, but also love, faith and happiness, so it is painful to be beyond the border. All Kundera's characters are trying to avoid pain, because happiness can only be felt right after it is lost and they all have lost it and now it is time for them to find it again. For instance, Tamina, the core character of the book chooses to live with the memories of her husband. She suffers but as long as she can feel, she goes on, but when she stops feeling, and forgets her past, she can not make sense of the world any longer and she dies. "Is she still looking back? Does she think about her husband and Prague? No. Not anymore". (Kundera 1996:256) "(...) she had a terrific desire to live. Then she must have had some idea about the world she wanted to live in! She had none". (Kundera 1996:261) She has the desire to live, but she can not take action, can not find something to long for. The desire has been lost. This must be the end of existence. It is no surprise that Kundera saves her from this misery by drowning her shortly after these lines. Another character, Mirek knows that he will be put to prison if

he gets caught with the political documents which he loves so much, but he can not throw them away, because those are the traces of his youth and ideology, his happiness and his connection to his past. "Mirek had known this for a long time. For all of the past year, he had been drawn irresistibly to the idea of prison. (...) No, Mirek could not imagine a better ending for the novel of his life". (Kundera 1996:33)

2.1.1 Analysis of 'forgetting'

In this chapter I will first analyze forgetting through metaphor and metonymy. In the second part of the chapter, I will analyze the same concept through two different characters from two different books. Tamina from *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* and Sabina from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

Psychoanalysis deals with language and interpretation of texts. There are motives and meanings which are disguised within texts. As we practice psychoanalysis, we look at sub-texts, not just texts. For Lacan remembering is understood as phenomenon of the symbolic order and it is related to the signifying chain. According to Lacan, what one remembers is the symbolic history of the subject, a chain of signifiers linked up together, 'a signifying articulation'. Something is remembered only when it is 'registered in the signifying chain'. 'It is the fact that he can forget, that a signifier can be elided from the signifying chain, that makes the psychoanalytic subject distinctive.'

(www.encyclopediaoflacanianpsychoanalysis)

Metonymy and metaphor are functions of language that help us analyze a text. Freud deals with these, especially on the interpretation of dreams, and in his work Lacan sees metaphor and metonymy as fundamental to the workings of the psyche.

While the *écrit* resides on the slope of the unconscious, the signifier is merely inferred on the side of consciousness, as the truth of lived experience that has been representationally transformed. It is, paradoxically, what eludes psychoanalysis but what psychoanalysis seeks to reinterpret. By adding the functions of metaphor and metonymy to the

differential function of the sign in making meaning, Lacan was able to add a spatial dimension to meaning and ontology that was temporal. He was then free to link this "material" dimension to language—or secondary process— because metaphor and metonymy work by the same kinds of laws as do condensation and displacement. Given this logic, psychoanalysis can use its knowledge about the interplay of the sign with metaphor and metonymy to understand the unconscious *écriture* that shows up on a subject's being. In Seminar XI Lacan defined *écriture* as the effects of language leaving perceptual residue in the fixing of an unconscious text. (Leupin 94)

The use of metonym is implicated in Lacan's modeling of the psyche as having the structure of a language. Metonymy is a purely diachronic movement. It separates signifier from signified. In contrast to the vertical motion of metaphor, it is a horizontal movement along the chain of signification. One signifier constantly refers to another in a perpetual deferral of meaning. Metonymy has one part of something standing for the whole. In this sense it mimics the subject seeking the wholeness it had before the mirror stage. Nobus quotes Lacan's words in his book, *Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis* in order to describe the antagonism between desire and the symptom. "If the symptom is a metaphor, it is not a metaphor to say so, any more than to say that man's desire is a metonymy. For the symptom is metaphor whether one likes it or not, as desire is metonymy, however funny people may find the idea". (Nobus 172) Metonymy models desire in that desire cannot cease in the same way that the chain of signification cannot cease. As soon as the object of desire is attained, it is no longer desirable, and the subject's desire fixes on another object. Thus Lacan writes that "Desire *is* a metonymy".

(Lacan 1977:164) Lacan preferred the term metaphor over substitution, and he generated the formula of ‘the metaphor of the ‘Name of the Father’ or ‘Paternal metaphor’.

In regard to the Name-of-the-Father, Lacan divides the signifying sign into two parts. On one side there are messages and meanings, and on the other there is *jouissance* (or the silence of the death drive). Thus, a Lacanian reading or listening will pay attention not only to puns, jokes, slips of the tongue, dream enigmas, and so on, but to wounds that appear in language as well. For Lacan, one cannot read the unconscious in a text, one can read symptoms that have the structure of a metaphor: that in which one meaning can be substituted for another. At this level the word becomes flesh because meaning concerns *jouissance* as well as a signifying chain. In symptoms—which Lacan defined in 1975 as "truth resisting knowledge of *jouissance*"—Lacanian read the unconscious biting into language. At a point where the Real swallows the Symbolic, one can see language and body as material. (Leupin 65)

Lacan analyzes the Oedipus complex in terms of a metaphor because it involves substitution, in this case, the substitution of the Name of the Father for the desire of the mother. The metaphorical axis deals with the selection of linguistic items and allows for their substitution. The metonymic axis deals with the combination of linguistic terms both sequentially and simultaneously. Metaphor can be seen as having a vertical relationship. In this case the line between the signifier and the signified is crossed, as the signifier passes over into the signified and a new signifier is produced. For example, in the metaphor “Love is a continuous interrogation”. (Kundera 1996:117) the various signifiers that might have stood in place of ‘continuous interrogation’ (cure, compassion,

game, illusion) pass through the barrier between the signifier and the signified, joining that object designated as 'love' and become signifieds of the new signifier, 'a continuous interrogation'. Metaphor is the direct substitution of one signifier for another such that the second signifier 'a continuous interrogation' supersedes the first 'love' in relation to the preceding signified 'love' which could have been used with cure, compassion, game or illusion. This process is the basic structure of identification as it occurs in the imaginary since it consists of substituting oneself for another. This is a compression of language which brings the imaginary into play in the linguistic production of meaning. Lacan reads it as the basic structure of the symptom. Lacan links metaphor to condensation and metonymy to displacement. "Metaphor is also the structure of identification, since the latter consists in substituting oneself for another". (Lacan 1993:218) Love is structured like a metaphor because it involves the operation of substitution. "It is insofar as the function of the erastes, of the lover, who is the subject of lack, comes in the place of, substitutes himself for, the function of eromenos, the loved object, that the signification of love is produced". (Lacan 1991:53) What I understand is that, what the lover discovers in the beloved is the object of the lover's own fantasy, and has nothing to do with what the beloved has to offer. And what the beloved believes she possesses as an object for the lover, equally relates to the beloved's fantasy. As a consequence, each of the partners is in a fantasy world, adding error to error when entering the metaphor of love. Homer makes use of Lacan's ideas and also mentions love to explain Lacan's notion of reality, desire and love.

We are always searching for fulfilment, for knowledge, for possessions, for love, and whenever we achieve these goals there is always something more we

desire; we cannot quite pinpoint it but we know that it is there. This is one sense in which we can understand the Lacanian real as the void or abyss at the core of our being that we constantly try to fill out. The *objet a* is both the void, the gap, and whatever object momentarily comes to fill that gap in our symbolic reality. What is important to keep in mind here is that the *objet a* is not the object itself but the function of masking the lack. (Lacan 1991:59)

Events affect Kundera's characters and sometimes they react to these effects by creating metaphors and metonymys. Tamina, who is the most important character for Kundera, unconsciously holds onto her memories with her husband. It is possible to claim that cherishing her memories with her husband is, as a whole, a metonymy because it substitutes her present life which is totally empty and depressing. She incessantly thinks about him in every way even when she talks or listens to other people around her. She does not live, she just exists physically because she has chosen to live in her past instead of starting all over again and moving on in the present time. Her husband could have been just a part of her life but it has become her whole life. The husband stands for Tamina's existence.

In one of his interviews Kundera says that 'metaphors are dangerous and they are not to be trifled with, because a single metaphor can give birth to love.' Metaphors both interpret and shape reality. Laughter, forgetting, angels and children are all metaphors that Kundera uses in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Those metaphors are clues which help me understand Kundera's emotional world. Kundera constructs lightness as a separation from reality and pain. "To laugh is to live profoundly". (Kundera 1996:79) is one of the many metaphors which I admire for its vitality. There are a lot of metaphors

about forgetting, but “The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting” is another unforgettable metaphor among them. Kundera uses children as another metaphor because he thinks that children do not have events which are hidden in their minds. Children stand for innocence, a time a time when they do not have to endure the struggles of adulthood because they have not totally entered the world of metaphors which will get more and more complicated, creative but painful as years go by. Kundera deals with the struggles of adulthood. He questions them, he presents them to us. He presents us ‘forgetting’ through Tamina. My aim is to elaborate on the metaphor of forgetting that I have mentioned above.

“The omission of social and cultural factors in psychological theory occurs despite the fact that these forces are central to the psychological development of individuals. Their impact is obvious in the traumatic events of the modern world. Events can produce emotional responses”. (Espin 15) Kundera presents us a woman called Tamina, to question the matter of preserving personal memory. In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Kundera says, “It is a novel about Tamina, and whenever Tamina goes offstage, it is a novel for Tamina”. (Kundera 1996:227) Tamina's inability to create imaginative connections is clearly shown through her failure to retrieve her lost notebooks. At first, when Tamina is still in Czechoslovakia, her husband, encourages her to keep a diary of their shared life but she does not want to write thinking that this is a mundane chore. After her husband's death she tries to write a diary but the empty pages reveal Tamina's lack of creativity. She is capable of only writing about the “days of dissatisfaction, quarrels, even boredom”. (Kundera 1996:86) Tamina tries to reconstruct her past life by writing down dates and places of its events. “Her project, like Don

Quixote's, is predicated on an ingenuous belief that words and images in the mind possess the power to resurrect the past". (Kundera 1996:89) Tamina shares her past with no one in exile so she can not recall a forgotten event or date. Moreover, she is unable to revisit the specific places that might help her recall events. As a result, she has a difficult time recreating the details of her life. "The transitions immigrants confront often result in loneliness from minimal contact with people who shared past experiences". (Espin 19) It is this obsession with specific details that prevents her from recreating the past more spontaneously, and freely, which finally prevents her from recreating it at all.

Later, her fear of continual forgetting leads her to desperate attempts to retrieve eleven notebooks, left behind in Prague. These eleven notebooks are the symbols of the life she had in Prague. Tamina decides that the only way of regaining her personal past is by getting the notebooks. She asks her Western acquaintances to go to Prague and pick up the diaries at her mother in law's house. I think, through these acquaintances, Tamina is trying to build an artificial bridge between the two countries, a bridge that would allow her past to be carried over onto the new shore. She never tells these acquaintances the true contents of the diaries. Tamina's silence on this issue is tied to the protection of her identity, for she feels that, if her private life were to be made public, she would lose her real identity. When she fails and the diaries remain locked in a desk drawer, two deaths follow Tamina. She is trapped on a strange island inhabited by children, where no past or memories exist. This is the place where she first lost her soul and then her body.

Tamina is worried about the eyes of others. She compares them to "(...) rain washing away inscriptions on a stone wall. Or light ruining a print by hitting photographic paper

before it goes into the developer”. (Kundera 1996:100) She believes that these eyes have the power to destroy or erase the contents of her diaries, which now represent not just her memories but her entire life. To Tamina, privacy and past is important because of her cultural background, but it is not only the cultural difference based on the importance of privacy that prevents Tamina from ever discussing her personal past. It is also her unwillingness to bridge the two cultures because she realizes that it would be impossible to explain her previous life to nonimmigrants in a way that would preserve and display its beauty and complexity. “Tamina had long since realized that if she wanted to make her life comprehensible to people here she had to simplify it. It would have been impossibly complicated to explain why private letters and diaries might be confiscated and why she set such great store by them”. (Kundera 1996:94) So Tamina allows others to believe that the diaries are political documents so that their importance would be obvious and understandable for others.

When Tamina realizes that she will never get her diaries back, she collapses into a faded and lonely existence Tamina voluntarily chooses to turn her outer, physical exile into an inner exile. She is no longer responsive to her customers and no longer lends them her ear, and she does not participate in their conversations, she alienates herself from the lives of those around her through silence. Tamina only silently and mechanically serves coffee and she stops inquiring about her surroundings, and phoning back home to ask about the diaries. The first section about Tamina's story ends in a cold and simple way. “She went on serving coffee and never made another call to Czechoslovakia”. (Kundera 1996:115) We can see that Tamina's silenced existence is reflected in the structural layout of the narrative, for her story is interrupted right after the line about her mechanically

serving coffee. Kundera abandons Tamina's story and begins a new part, which introduces other characters and issues. Not until part 6, forty pages later, does Kundera finally return to Tamina. This gap in the story line represents the narrator's own temporary exile of Tamina. I think Kundera aims to reflect her self imposed exile. The two separated parts of her story, in two different sections of the narrative (parts 4 and 6), also structurally mirror Tamina's own double exiled existence (inner and outer).

Tamina meets a man called Raphael and understands that he represents and offers the attractive lure of forgetting, and she wants to leave Raphael but it is too late for her. When Raphael stops the car and they stand at the top of a clay slope with a bulldozer nearby, she suddenly feels a strong feeling that the landscape looks "exactly like the terrain around where her husband worked in Czechoslovakia". (Kundera 1996:166) She is overwhelmed by a sense of despair but she is "glad for the lost fragment of the past that the landscape had unexpectedly returned to her". (Kundera 1996:166) For a moment, the two worlds have metaphorically merged for Tamina. She has created a bridge between the two shores. Therefore, feeling that her husband remains alive in her grief, just as all memories remain alive in the emotions of people still living, she begins to regret her decision to accompany Raphael. The narrative moves into a free and different discourse to reflect the importance of Tamina's realization. Kundera starts speaking for Tamina. "No, no, her husband was still alive in her grief, just lost that's all, and it was her job to look for him! Search the whole world over! Yes, yes! Now she understood. Finally! We will never remember anything by sitting in one place waiting for the memories to come back to us of their own accord! Memories are scattered all over the world. We must travel if we want to find them and flush them from their hiding places!" (Kundera 1996:167)

Forgetting can not be forgiven so Tamina is being punished by getting what she wants. If she wants to forget, she will be sent away to the place she had always longed to be. She travels in time and finds herself at a point where her husband does not exist in either memory or desire.

Although Tamina's thoughts are powerful and passionate, they are never expressed aloud. On the outside, she remains passive; she obediently joins Raphael's dangerous laughter, a laughter that promises to erase her misery, a laughter that signals forgetting. Raphael truly becomes the messenger of forgetting when he grabs Tamina by the arm and they both slide down the slippery slope of the clay bank. At the edge of the water there is a boat ready with a boy who will become Tamina's new guide. "Tamina's journey is increasingly turning into an allegorical one. As noted by Misurella, it's hard not to see this water as mythical as the Lethe, for instance, the river of forgetfulness in Greek mythology, or the Acheron, the river Dante has dividing the borderland of Hell from Limbo". (Nabokov 53) Tamina is taken to the perverse island of children, an island without past, without memory, without individual distinctions.

Kundera's return to Tamina begins with the announcement that she simply disappeared one day just as she had disappeared from the text. One day a young man walks into the cafe where Tamina works. The reason Tamina breaks her silence and responds to this man is that he differs from all the others; he does not speak about himself but instead directs his sentences at her. He encourages her, "Forget your forgetting". (Kundera 1996:224) He tells Tamina that, "What she calls remembering is in fact

something different, that in fact she is under a spell and watching herself forget”. (Kundera 163) “In the original, as pointed out by Maria Nemcová Banerjee, the conversion of remembering to forgetting is underscored by a common verbal root that the words share—*vzpomínání* (the act of remembering) and *zapomínání* (the act of forgetting) thus remembrance turns into forgetting with a simple flip of a prefix (*za-* instead of *vz-*)”. (Nabokov 51)

Tamina and Raphael depart at the beginning of this section of the narration. When Tamina agrees to Raphael's guidance to go to this place ‘where things weigh nothing at all,’ Kundera steps in to tell us, “And as in a fairy-tale, as in a dream, Tamina walks out from behind the corner”. (Kundera 1996:164) We know that it is a dream so the denial of simile or metaphor in these lines from Kundera's text suggests the opposite of what they say, because fairy tales and dreams are highly metaphorical. These lines are also ironic because Tamina's departure with Raphael quickly changes from a meeting narrated in a realistic fashion, into a fantastic journey. The man offers Tamina the classic vacation line, “Haven't you ever felt like getting away from it all? Where things are as light as the breeze, where things have no weight”. (Kundera 1996:164) Tamina rides off in a red sports car with this young man, whose name, Raphael, is “not the least bit accidental”. (Kundera 1996:166) The critic Fred Misurella uses Kundera's hint and finds out just how Raphael's name is more than accidental by reflecting on the angel Raphael in the Book of Tobit, a story found in the Apocrypha. This biblical story contains parallels to Tamina's story in its concern with exiles and a journey guided by an angel, Raphael, to retrieve something from the past. The story is as follows: “The ostensible setting of the story is the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, where the people of Northern Israel had been taken captive

in the latter part of the eighth century B. C. There, it is said, dwelt the pious Tobit, who, despite his many charitable deeds, became blind and poor. But God heard his prayer, as well as the prayer of demon haunted Sarah in faraway Media, and sent the angel Raphael to save them both. When Tobit commissioned his son Tobias to collect a deposit of money he had made long before in Media, the angel accompanied him and revealed magic formulas which would heal his father's blindness and exorcise Sarah's demon lover, as modeus. Tobias successfully completed his mission and married Sarah". (Nabokov 52)

In the biblical story, Raphael is an angelic mediator who, with his magical powers, fulfills prayers and protects against evil. Tamina's Raphael, on the other hand, although he acts as a guide who helps to retrieve a moment from her past, ultimately proves to be quite different from the helpful biblical guide. In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, this angel is instead a frightening representative of a lifestyle that promotes the dangerous laughter of forgetting, which ends in death. Tamina is guided across the water by a strange boy and then lives on an island inhabited by children, where the narrative turns into an allegorical or fairy tale like unreality.

Tamina's entrance in this world of metaphors and fairy tales become frighteningly true. This also serves to emphasize her inability to use metaphor or her imagination successfully to bridge the gap separating her from her past. Instead, she has repeatedly tried to recreate the past literally by attempting to write an exact copy of the lost notebooks and by planning to send people to retrieve the notebooks. Her failure suggests that such a return or recovery is impossible and that, without an imaginative bridge, all

access to the past is lost. Tamina fails to use her imagination to cross the borders which separate her from her past, and so she is led passively away into a metaphorical version of the human existence. She has chosen for herself, an isolated island with no bridges of any kind, where she is doomed to a timeless, meaningless exile.

The island is represented as one of those utopian worlds built on innocence and inexperience. It is told in the present tense and is depicted as 'enormously' different from the landscape she has left behind. Children are the only occupants of this island, and therefore everything is arranged according to their needs. There is lack of privacy. The children, divided by groups, labeled with animal names, participate in an organized bathroom ritual. Since Tamina stands out as the only mature person among these children, she soon becomes an object of sexual discovery. The children touch her body and explore her. The wingless-fly simile prefigures the change that occurs in the minds of the children. The innocent touching suddenly leads to the desire to cause pain. Kundera explains this sudden shift: "Their only motive for causing pain to someone not of their world is to glorify that world and its law". (Kundera 1996:185) Tamina realizes that she can no longer function in this world of children. She decides to escape the children's island, a place that offers only the opposite of her previous existence. Tamina swims away but she can not reach the shore and she drowns. Despite Tamina's death, the ending provides some sense of optimism. After all, she gets rid of this meaningless world, and she does not have to obey the rules laid out by children and she dies before losing her memory fully.

There is another possibility which comes to my mind about children's island. Kundera's statement introducing the second part of Tamina's story, "as in a fairy-tale, as in a dream (no, it *is* a fairy-tale, it *is* a dream!)" (Kundera 1996:164) hints that all those things may really be a dream. When I think about Tamina's situation, it would be even abnormal if she did not suffer from emigrant nightmares. I have read that these nightmares appear to most people who find themselves away from their homes, in Tamina's case, in exile. The basic situation presented in these dreams all are similar and repetitive in nature. The emigrant tries to find a way back home but generally fails. The emigrant wakes up with a feeling of desperate homelessness and alienation. The second part of Tamina's story follows the general pattern of such a dream. At first, Tamina finds a way to go back. I think the children's island represents the homeland but Tamina does not fit in because she has changed. Her situation becomes dangerous when the children begin to hate her, and her need to leave this world grows stronger and stronger each day. Her attempt to swim back to the other shore, the country of exile, of freedom, fails. Tamina is left all alone in between the two countries, helpless, alone, uncomprehended, and purposeless. I think her story, is integral to the entire of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. The story of Tamina, especially because of her failure, dramatizes the importance of preserving personal memory by holding onto the past.

In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Kundera relates a scene with his father which I perceive as a demonstration of the links between the forgetting of history, and the forgetting of classical music or, in this case, the forgetting of how to speak about classical music. Kundera explains that his father suffered from memory loss during the last years of his life, and was unable to recall enough words to speak coherently. His father wanted

to tell him why Beethoven chose to use variation form, but his memory loss made it impossible for him to transmit his thoughts. Kundera writes that “Through the ten years of his illness Father worked steadily on a long study of Beethoven's sonatas. He probably wrote a little better than he spoke, but even while writing he had more and more trouble finding words, and finally his text had become incomprehensible, consisting of nonexistent words”. (Kundera 1996:220) His father tried to find the words to share his insights about Beethoven with Kundera. “He called me into his room one day. Open on the piano was the variations movement of the Opus 111 sonata. 'Look,' he said, pointing to the music (he could no longer play the piano), and again 'look,' and then, after a prolonged effort, he succeeded in saying: 'Now I know!'" (Kundera 1996:220) Kundera links his father's forgetting to the forgetting of Czech history, as well as to the island where Tamina is forced to live with children who have no memories. “The silence of my father, from whom all words slipped away, the silence of the hundred and forty-five historians, who have been forbidden to remember, that multiple silence resounding through Bohemia, forms the background of the picture I am painting of Tamina”. (Kundera 1996:221) First Kundera’s father loses his memory and then he dies. In the same way, first the history of Czech is destroyed and the country, in a sense, dies. The diminishing of this memory is linked with the disappearance of classical music, and the loss of Kundera’s father's memory leads to his inability to remember the words needed to speak about classical music.

Kundera returns again to the problem of preserving personal memory in exile in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Here, the heroine, Sabina, finds herself in an existential perplexity similar to Tamina's. She is an artist diligently in search of the ‘unintelligible

truth' (Kundera 1999:63) and she cannot live in an oppressive regime that watches and controls her every move. To gain artistic freedom, she leaves her homeland to join the exiles in the West. Unlike Tamina, who abandoned her diaries, Sabina takes along her most private possession, a bowler hat. This black hat, once an item for her love games, acquires greater signifying power in exile. It turns into 'a monument to time past'. (Kundera 1999:87) The bowler hat brings out Sabina's personal past, her life in Czechoslovakia and becomes a central image in this novel. This image incorporates the problems of bridging and reflects the tension between remembering and forgetting.

The bowler hat is an image for the existential problem of memory, but it is an ambiguous image too. The hat brings with it some philosophical questions pertaining to Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the 'eternal return'. "It returned again and again, each time with a different meaning, and all the meanings flowed through the bowler hat like water through a riverbed. I might call it Heraclitus' You can't step twice into the same river 'riverbed: the bowler hat was a bed through which each time Sabina saw another river flow, another *semantic river*: each time the same object would give rise to a new meaning, though all former meanings would resonate (like an echo, like a parade of echoes) together with the new one. Each new experience would resound, each time enriching the harmony". (Kundera 1999:88) Nietzsche rejected this theory after he could find no scientific proof of its existence, but the idea of eternal return is still discussed today. I think it is heroic for man to accept the horrors and the pleasures of life. If our lives were repeated again and again, this would bring along a lot of responsibilities. Sabina takes this responsibility and as she carries the hat with her, she finds different meanings, mingled with the old ones. The hat goes through a series of physical

displacements as Sabina moves further in life. First, it leaves the small town with Sabina to an art studio in Prague. Here, it becomes an item for her love games with Tomas. When she decides to move because of the political events of the 1968 Soviet invasion, the bowler hat is chosen from among many objects to take abroad. The great importance of an awkward object points to Sabina's strong sense of personal and cultural memories and serves as a reminder of her past. Therefore, when Sabina finds herself alone with Tomas in a Zurich hotel room, far away from their homeland, the hat suddenly evokes memories of this past. By carrying the hat with her into exile, Sabina shows that she does not want to part with her past.

New York's architecture and Sabina's paintings unite, and Sabina's ability to see things from a different perspective brings her success. This unique vision, merging the present and the past, brings Sabina both artistic and financial success in the West. "She had no trouble selling her paintings". (Kundera 1999:273). Sabina's past becomes a point of misperception, as symbolized by the inability of another of her lovers, Franz, to interpret the hat's significance. For Franz, the hat is 'an incomprehensible gesture.' (Kundera 1999:88) It is just an object without meaning. "Near the mirror stood a wig stand with an old black bowler hat on it. She bent over, picked up the hat, and put it on her head. The image in the mirror was instantaneously transformed: suddenly it was a woman in her undergarments, a beautiful, distant, indifferent woman with a terribly out-of-place bowler hat on her head, holding the hand of a man in a gray suit and a tie. Again he had to smile at how poorly he understood his mistress. The time for the happening had come and gone. Franz was beginning to feel that the caper (which, in and of itself, he was happy to think of as charming) had dragged on too long. So he gently took the brim of the

bowler hat between two fingers, lifted it off Sabina's head with a smile, and laid it back on the wig stand". (Kundera 1999:85)

Here Sabina is trying to recall her sexual past once shared with her former lover, Tomas by using the hat. The bowler, however, is meaningless for Franz, and he can not hear the 'parade of echoes ... enriching the bowler's harmony' (Kundera 1999:88) Franz fails to respond to Sabina. Instead of explaining the bowler's meaning, Sabina remains silent just like Tamina does in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* and leaves the memories untold. Sabina's fading interest in the past is accompanied by the bowler's disappearance from the text. As she concentrates on the present time, she no longer values the hat, which used to evoke memories of the past. In other words, it becomes an ordinary object, no longer worth mentioning. Such conscious and willful forgetting leads Sabina to her end, just like her forgetting leads Tamina to her end. Sabina has now abandoned her homeland both physically and spiritually. Sabina is no longer able to understand or care about immigrants. She is unwilling to feel sorry for the abandoned ones. She eventually stops reading the long letters which are sent from her small village in Czechoslovakia. "She had suffered, struggled against injustice, been forced to abandon her bleeding homeland, yet was carrying on the struggle". (Kundera 1999:254)

Such an ignorance of the past consequently results in a reductive existence for Sabina. Bergson's description of the negative effects caused by trying to deny the past and living only in the present explains the risks Sabina faces. "Now let us relax the strain, let us interrupt the effort to crowd as much as possible of the past into the present. If the relaxation were complete, there would no longer be either memory or will which amounts

to saying that; in fact, we never do fall into this absolute passivity, any more than we can make ourselves absolutely free. But, in the limit, we get a glimpse of an existence made of a present which recommences unceasingly devoid of real duration, nothing but the instantaneous which dies and is born again endlessly". (Bergson 200-201) Here again, Tamina comes to mind. The children's island on which Tamina spends her last days is a world devoid of real duration. Tamina, like the children, is governed only by the repetitive present moment. She is no longer obsessed with her memories, but this time she falls into the other extreme because she no longer has a past. Such an existence proves to be meaningless. Similarly, Sabina joins the children's world, because she becomes the adopted daughter of an elderly American couple. The old man observes 'every stroke of her brush,' and the old woman calls Sabina 'my daughter.' (Kundera 1999:255) Sabina's transformation into a child represents an escape from responsibilities, but this is a temporary one, in that the old man will soon die, and his wife will abandon Sabina for her own son. And again, as in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, such existence will last only for a short time. Although the artist's death is not presented in the novel, her fear of it is. "She was afraid of shutting herself into a grave and sinking into American earth". (Kundera 1999:273)

Sabina's death is not told in detail and the narrative thread describing Sabina's life seems to be forgotten by Kundera, as if reflecting Sabina's own willing forgetting. This again reminds me of what Kundera has done to Tamina in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Tamina's disappearance from the text is similar to Sabina's hat's disappearance. The black bowler hat's connection to the Nietzschean eternal return can be observed more clearly. "Putting it negatively, the myth of eternal return states that a

life which disappears once and for all, which does not return, is like a shadow, without weight, dead in advance, and whether it was horrible, beautiful, or sublime, its horror, sublimity, and beauty mean nothing". (Kundera 1999:3)

I think Kundera has a strong desire for Nietzsche's repetitive version of history because he thinks that a history characterized by eternal return confronts and resists the temptation of the unbearable lightness of living without memory and meaning. As long as Sabina cherishes her past and her memories, her life is rich with meaning and significance. But once her past is forgotten and left behind, Sabina's presence, along with her bowler hat, fades out of the text. Sabina's fading out of the text, as is the case with Tamina, serves as a frightening reminder that one must incessantly struggle to preserve the past in order to meet a fate different from Sabina's or Tamina's. Kundera has not presented us an immigrant who successfully balances the past with the present but I believe that the books themselves suggest a way to achieve this.

2.1.2. Analysis of 'laughter'

What is the purpose of humor? Why do we laugh? Humor is a complex phenomenon. There is no general theory of humor or even an agreed definition. Humor consists of three components: wit, mirth, and laughter. Wit is the cognitive experience, Mirth the emotional experience, and Laughter is the physiological experience. We usually consider laughter to be equal with humor, but there are many instances of laughter that have little to do with humor. Similarly, there are many instances of humor that do not result in laughter. The results will vary according to the mood of the appreciator, the social context, etc. Humor enables us to experience joy even when we confront with hardships. Humor and laughter give people the chance to have new thoughts and to see the world differently. Stress is a negative condition during which we may experience tension, feel unpleasant emotions and sometimes develop a sense of hopelessness. It is comforting to know that people cannot be stressed, depressed, anxious, or resentful and cannot experience humor at the same time. In other words, to be able to experience humor we need to switch to a different mode of comprehension and perception which does not involve much seriousness.

Freud studied humor under the title of jokes. His book, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, was a study on jokes, slips of the tongue, humor and their relationship to the unconscious. He began by dividing jokes into several types, starting with the separation of verbal and conceptual jokes. He described the mechanism of the joke in relationship to both dreams and the unconscious. He thought that the joke is passed through the unconscious and reveals itself in the conscious mind fully formed, but unexpected. Freud distinguished jokes clearly from dreams because he thought that

dreams were completely asocial mental products, while jokes were social. For Freud, dreams were wishes while jokes were forms of social interaction. Freud thought about the contribution of humor to the psyche and to everyday life. In a paper published in 1928, he elaborated on some of his earlier thoughts and ideas on jokes and humor. From his writings it can be understood that he had positive notions about humor. Freud's theory was that the ego was usually forced by the superego to stop pleasure seeking, or to modify its desires to fit the demands of reality. Humor, was a type of triumph of the pleasure principle. This was positive for the ego. Humor allows the ego to enjoy a guilt and anxiety free existence. Therefore, humor contributes to a feeling of strength and pleasure. The superego, acts towards the ego like a good, compassionate parent. In his book, *Beyond Laughter: Humor and the Subconscious*, Grothjan explains Freud's ideas on Laughter. The idea is that laughter suddenly occurs when it is out of control and consciousness. We have aggression, a kind of negative energy in our minds. This has to be discharged somehow. At this stage witticism starts. Our aggressive thoughts disappear into our unconscious 'like a train into a mountain tunnel' in the tunnel the wit work takes place and when it is accomplished our thoughts are not aggressive thoughts, they are disguised and combined with playful pleasure. They come out to the conscious satisfied and transformed into laughter. (Grothjan 255-256)

The first analyst who openly wrote about the positive application of humor was Martin Grotjahn. He believed that his ideas were consistent with Freud's writings. Just like Freud, he believed that humor allowed the ego to temporarily go beyond itself. I think Kundera's characters are experiencing the liberating power of laughter against social requirements. Kundera's characters experience this kind of laughter when Papa

Clevis's hat is torn off by the wind and gradually falls into the grave. That laughter comforts them as it takes them away from the requirements of being in a funeral. It frees them from fear of death, from a single meaning and from sentimentality. Freud regards humor as a rebel against censor. According to Freud, the censor has to be deceived or disarmed in some way. This can be done by means of the techniques of humor. Our sexual and aggressive impulses are repressed by the censor. Incongruity theory is a concept described by Kant who says that humor arises 'from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing'. Defense mechanisms protect the individual against anxiety. Individuals are often unaware of these processes as they operate. Defense mechanisms are protectors and they help facilitate the individual's reaction to emotional conflicts and to internal and external stressors. The individual deals with emotional conflict or external stressors by focusing on the amusing aspects of the conflict or stressor. Humor helps us by replacing depressing emotions with pleasurable feelings. It distorts the first painful meaning so that the event is not so powerful at the end. Humor reduces stress by helping us to see the world with a different perspective, in other words, it shifts the ways in which we think.

I would like to emphasize at this point that stress is greatly associated with the way we think. It is not situations that generate our stress, but the meaning we place on the situations. All Kundera's characters are pessimists, but pessimists make use of humor the most. Optimists laugh the angel's laughter.

In his book, *Beyond Laughter: Humor and the Subconscious*, Grothjan tell us about the interesting features about the optimists. Optimists ignore reality or distort it by seeing it in a way that is nicer than the actual. They are satisfied with what they have and are always full of hopes for the future. In a way, they hold onto pleasure principle and live their lives like babies ‘who knows that Mother will always be there and will take care of him’. It is annoying and unbelievable for the pessimist to observe this never ending expectation of the optimist to have a life full of happiness and kindness. It seems as if optimists never learn from bad experiences because they keep on smiling and believing that everything will be all right. It feels as if they were aliens who never experienced the separation stage that Lacan has mentioned, so they do not suffer any lack of being. (Grothjan 54-55)

Optimists are afraid of the things that suddenly come up and take control without will or reason. Even the oppressed ones, who laugh against everything and everyone, unconsciously try to repress that noisy thing as much as they can because they do not want to lose control. “The instability of irrepressible laughter is an affront to our humanist sensibilities: we do not want to crack up. And we don't want to deal with a world that is cracking up and that cracks us up often without our consent. Fluidity scares us. But our will, will not (and ought not) save us. In some sense or another, we are breaking up, in every instant, whether we choose to affirm it or to deny it, whether we find it sublime or paltry”. (Davis 3)

Kundera's characters mostly make use of the relief and humor theories. Kundera describes two American schoolgirls who are laughing happily over their understanding of Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinocérous*. Kundera describes laughter as the height of sensual pleasure. His characters laugh to relieve the bitterness of living. I will examine Kundera's construction of laughter as a metaphor. In *The Angels*, Part 3 of the novel, he defines two types of laughter: The devil's and the angel's laughter. "Laughable laughter is cataclysmic. And even so, the angels have gained something by it. They have tricked us all with their semantic hoax. Their imitation laughter and its original (the Devil's) have the same name. People nowadays do not even realize that one and the same external phenomenon embraces two completely contradictory internal attitudes. There are two kinds of laughter, and we lack the words to distinguish them". (Kundera 1996:61-62) Kundera expresses the dominance of the Devil over the angels, because the Devil's laughter questions God while the laughter of the angels is a yielding to the order of God's world. Kundera is standing outside the circle with the ones who laugh the devil's laughter because he has been alienated and has lost his innocence. He wants to belong to a circle, to a group of people with similar visions, because he believes that belonging is a part of the human nature but it is too late for him.

Kundera in his book, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, tells us what he feels about belonging to a circle in detail. It is a sad story actually because once you get out of a circle you can not get back to it. Even the planets move in a circle and when a stone breaks loose from one of them, it is inevitably drawn away by central force. He resembles himself to such a stone in that , he fell long time ago and has been falling ever since. There are people who are in the circle till the day they die, and there are people who are

out of the circle. Kundera makes a confession to us that he misses the feeling of being in circle. (Kundera 1996:65-66)

For Kundera, the devil's laughter is the best weapon against authoritarianism, personal alienation and despair. Tamina dies, in a way, among the laughter of angels. There is an imaginary dividing line beyond which things appear senseless. People live close to this boundary, and can easily find themselves on the other side. This idea that there is a border separating the meaningful from the meaningless, and we are always close to that border, to the feeling that life is meaningless, is the main idea that arouses laughter.

“Pain, misery, and sorrow are touched by the magic wand of laughter, raising suffering and distressed men to the lofty regions of inexpressible joy by awakening the feeling of the power of the human individuality. Like tragedy, comedy sounds the depth of the human personality and reveals sources of human reserve energy of which man in his every day life remains entirely unaware”. (Sidis 146) Kundera's characters laugh whenever they want to feel their individuality and practice their freedom against conventions. Pain engenders pleasure and happiness. Kundera's characters are the victims of the cruel system called totalitarianism which erases not only identities but societies, cultures and histories. Another way of resistance and rebellion in order to maintain happiness and identity is, laughing. Kundera's characters' lives lack meaning and they incessantly try to cherish life through memories. This must be tiring and depressing. In such cases, people need to get rid of these thoughts, which is not an easy thing to do. Laughter can be a way out of these thoughts, because the 'devil's' laughter as Kundera calls it, is a pure, illogical and irresistible one.

Davis in his book, *Breaking up (at) Totality: A Rhetoric of Laughter*, focuses on pure laughter. She says that laughter 'convulses us'. I think she means that when we really laugh we depart with meaning, feelings, memories and reason. Before or after laughter, we may have control of our conscious, our thoughts and feelings, but while laughing we don't. In the middle of laughter we experience 'a moment of what Ronell calls 'hijacked existence,' a moment of 'motionless destitution'. A convulsion is an involuntary contraction of the muscular parts. As we can understand from the definition, a convulsed person can not control or rule her/himself, she/he is controlled by laughter. (Davis 30)

In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and *Ignorance*, Kundera's immigrant characters find themselves in new countries, introduced into new cultures. They can not combine that bridge of the past to the present. They experience things which they think they never would experience, they do things which they think they never would do. "The sudden release or relief from a great strain is apt to make people laugh at the least occasion. In wars and forced marches where there are great strain and danger soldiers have been known to laugh at the most trivial accident and remark. In school, in the lecture room, in court, in the popular assembly, in church any trivial incident calls forth laughter. The more dignified the surroundings are, the more solemn the circumstances, the more will the trivial appeal to us as ridiculous". (Sidis 77)

Kundera's characters' priorities have been changed by unexpected forces of totalitarianism and their consequences. They perceive the world through their experiences and these experiences change their meaning patterns. "According to Bergson, there is, then, meaning which is lived and experienced, prior to, and distinct from, logical meaning". (Alexander 79)

As the categorical boundaries which used to protect their minds vanish, they have to discover new meanings in their meaningless worlds. This meaninglessness rules their minds in their new world. As they laugh the devil's laughter under these new circumstances, they know that they would not laugh at these things or people under different circumstances. Their laughter now is a different way of saying good bye to whom they used to be.

In his preface to *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault says the idea for his book arose out of his response to a passage in Borges; it arose 'out of the laughter that shattered all the familiar landmarks of his thought-our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography'. This laughter is not only the laughter that Aristotle attributes to Gorgias, the laughter that opposes meaninglessness to meaning. Rather it is a laughter that shatters what Jacques Derrida calls the very "fabric of meaning" through which the notion of meaninglessness becomes meaningful, through which meaninglessness operates as the dirty underside (the negation) of meaning. This/my book arose out of Foucault's tossing of this metaphor: laughter as an explosion of the border zones of thought. Our categorical boundaries operate as artificial guardrails, protection against what Friedrich Nietzsche calls 'the great sweep of life', which never ceases to overflow our categories.'. A laughter that shatters would laugh with the 'sweep', with what Hélène Cixous, in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, calls the cosmic rhythm that laughs you. Laughter that shatters is an affirmative laughter, arising from the overflow, the excess, and capable of momentarily and instantaneously catapulting us out of negative dialectics by negating negation itself. (Davis 2)

Why does Kundera clearly state that *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is a book about laughter and forgetting? His characters go through a metamorphosis as they try to adapt to a different culture. They carry the injuries and characteristics of having lived in a totalitarian system. Social life laws forces these people to live within a certain set of rules, they constantly have to adapt their thought and actions to the changing needs and values of society. They feel anxious and tense throughout the adaptation period. “Nervous tension lowers a person's resistance not only to tears but to laughter as well. (...) the cynic, who remains connected to his past by a ‘bond of vengeance’ and nostalgic despair, is always already too close to tears to be possessed by the force of Laughter”. (Davis 51) When an individual accepts the rules of the society and ready made ideas, laughter has to be constituted in mind, in order to overcome the rigidity.

Grogin in his book, *The Bergsonian Controversy in France*, claims that the social importance of the comic stems from the rigidity of the ‘body, mind and, character’, which threatens the society to damage the balance between ‘tension and elasticity’. Bergson claims that ‘this rigidity is the comic’ and laughter can be used as its remedial. Bergson used this separation in his book, *Time and Free Will* as the static and the dynamic and the idea of the two selves. On the one hand, there is the monotonous life, which the society and reason has prepared for us, in other words, the static, routine, everyday life. On the other hand there is a dynamic and spontaneous self of the individual in all his potential freedom. In this case the monotonous, the mechanical life is putting pressure on the individual. But society does not accept this mechanization of life passively. It takes revenge through laughter. Laughter is not a product of the conscious. It is a spontaneous act. It is a way of our self expression, our humanity. (Grogin 30-31)

Davis, in his book, *Breaking Up (at) Totality: A Rhetoric of Laughter*, quotes some philosophers to explain the devil's and the angel's laughters which Kundera has written about in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. "Zizek calls the laughter of the cynic "totalitarian" laughter (*The Sublime Object of Ideology*), and Nietzsche (*Gay Science, Beyond Good*), Sloterdijk (*Critique*), and Kundera (*Book of Laughter*) call it 'devilish',. A laughter that Sloterdijk says 'has the energy of destruction within it with crashing crockery and collapsing walls, an evil laughter above the debris'. Kundera in his book *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, tells that the angel's laughter is about meaning, and the devilish laughter points up the meaninglessness of things. It is, as Lyotard suggests, the product of an 'incredulous and insolent joy . . . the laughter of metamorphoses that awaits no one's recognition and enjoys only its ductility. It is a horizontal laugh without assent". (Davis 54) Kundera knows that his characters can not laugh the angel's laughter, because it is the laughter of meaning, order and truth. People who laugh the angel's laughter live in a rationally and beautifully constructed world. These people do not feel alienated; they have the sense of belonging to a world which is familiar to them and to a group of people with similar beliefs and values. "When laughter rings from the midst of these metaphysicians of presence, it is a laughter that celebrates meaning, order, and Truth; Kundera calls it 'angel laughter'. Homo seriosus and the ideologues laugh a 'serious laughter, laughter beyond joking', which 'rejoice(s) in how rationally organized, well conceived, beautiful, good, and sensible everything on earth (is)'. There is no abandonment here. This is a heavily invested laughter. Lyotard says this laughter is the product of a joy that is 'constructive, concentratory'. Both he and Kundera

characterize it as a floating circle dance, a form of self-righteous 'elevation' (in which the laughers (knowers) celebrate their under/standing of the pure presence of the real world, of the order of things". (Davis 33)

Kundera clearly states that there must be some kind of emptiness, lack of emotions, in order to experience the devil's laughter. He claims for instance, that 'love' is not a laughable thing. His book 'Laughable Loves' is about loves which are not real ones, because they are laughable. Pure laughter is only possible when the individual is free of all his feelings and his memories, in other words, when the individual's subconscious is not involved in the process.

Bergson in his work, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, emphasizes the importance of 'the absence of feeling' for laughter to take place. He thinks that emotion and laughter can not be experienced at the same time and says that 'laughter has no greater foe than emotion'. Indifference is required for laughter to take place. He thinks that we could feel pity or affection for someone and we could still laugh 'but we must, for the moment, put our affection out of court and impose silence upon our pity'. (Bergson 4)

I would like to end this chapter with Derrida's words about language and laughter. "In his book *Eating Well*, Derrida explains, 'Our category systems, our genders and genres, are linguistic constructions, and language is anything but stable, Being and truth, as Heraclitus observed, are always already infused with the rowdy force of becoming. Language may indeed be what Heidegger calls the 'house of Being', or at least the 'house of becoming', but any house that perpetually shakes with laughter seems to be less a 'prisonhouse' than a 'funhouse' ". (Davis 72)

2.1.3 Analysis of the 'desire of writing'

Alienation and anti-social feelings produce graphomania. "We write books because our children aren't interested in us. We address ourselves to an anonymous world because our wives plug their ears when we speak to them". (Kundera 1996:126) Graphomania reflects the need to have an audience of unknown readers. Writing can reflect our need for contact with what psychoanalysts call the Other. We are creating a presence which fills that solitude inside us, which takes the place of some ideal 'Other'. In philosophy, a subject is a being which has subjective experiences or relationships with another entity or object. A subject is an observer and an object is a thing observed. In psychology, subjectivity is also the actions that produce individuals or 'I'; the 'I' is the subject, the observer. This concept, the 'Other' was formulated by Jacques Marie Emile Lacan. He is not easy to understand, so I will make use of his thoughts to the extent that I understand him. I think Lacan's emphasis here is on the process of identification with an outside image or entity. " (...) insufficiency to anticipation and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development". (Dor 95) I think this process of identification is the first step towards the manufacture of the subject because the transition into the Imaginary and the Symbolic order starts this way. This is the process that we manifest ourselves through identification with another person. This is the start of a lifelong process of identifying the self in terms of the Other. Without the presence of others, the maturing process is delayed. Lacan considered the self as

something constituted in the 'Other', that is, the conception of the external. This belief is rooted in Lacan's reading of Ferdinand de Saussure and structuralism, and more specifically his belief that Freud's concept of the unconscious prefigured structuralist linguistics. The existence of the Other forces an inevitable disconnect between the ego and its desire, which is the source of the psychoanalytic symptoms. Kundera's characters are all immigrants in search for their individuality but they are lost between two cultures, so it is a high possibility that by writing, they incessantly search for the ideal 'Other', which is in harmony with the complicated situation they are in. Moreover, there is this deepest cause, the lack of being, the alienation and the separation at the mirror stage. The infant must separate from its mother; form a separate identity, in order to enter into civilization. That separation includes some kind of loss, when the child knows the difference between itself and its mother, and starts to become an individuated being, it loses that primal sense of unity and safety that it originally had. This is the tragic entrance into psychoanalytic theory, whether Freudian or Lacanian, to become a civilized adult always brings with it the profound loss of an original unity. Lacan mentioned that there is no absence, loss or lack and there is no language in the Real.

Real is one of the three orders that Lacan mentioned. These are the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. The Real is located outside the Symbolic. There is no absence in the Real. If the Symbolic is a set of signifiers, the Real in itself is described as undifferentiated and it has no fracture. The Symbolic introduces "a cut in the real", in the process of signification. Therefore the Real is outside language, resisting all kinds of symbolization. Then once we enter the Symbolic, we need language, because language is the cause of our entering the Symbolic. The Symbolic is a linguistic dimension because

Lacan asserts that the concepts of Law and Structure are unthinkable without language. In language elements have no positive existence. They are constituted by virtue of their mutual differences. Symbolic opposition presence/absence implies the possibility that something may be missing from the Symbolic. So I would not be getting too far to think that writing may function as a substitute and a compensation of this loss.

Lacan examines the unconscious based on the guiding rules of structural linguistics. Structural linguistics deals with languages at particular points in time (synchronic) rather than throughout their historical development (diachronic). The father of modern structural linguistics was Ferdinand de Saussure. He believed that language served as a link between thought and sound. According to Saussure language sounds are series of linguistic signs that are arbitrary and they are composed of two parts, a signifier the sound image, either in mental projection or in actual, physical realization as part of a speech act and a signified (the world, things, people, etc). Lacan's idea of how language is structured is largely taken from the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson, based on the function of the signifier and signified in signification system. The starting point for the linguistic theory of the unconscious was a rereading of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. There, Freud identifies two mechanisms in the formation of unconscious fantasies: condensation and displacement. Both are essentially linguistic phenomena, where meaning is either condensed in metaphor or displaced in metonymy. Under Lacan's linguistic reading, condensation is identified with metonymy, and displacement is identified with metaphor.

Lacan notes that Freud's dream and unconscious symbolism analyses is based on word play and associations used by his patients. Lacan says that the contents of the unconscious are aware of the language and its structure. Dor, in his book *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan*, elaborates on this topic. He takes up Freud's work, *Interpretation of Dreams*. Dor gives us a brief summary about the structure of dreams. He tells that the dream has the structure of a sentence, of a writing. 'The important part begins with the translation of the text; the important part that Freud tells us is given in the elaboration of the dream that is to say, in its rhetoric'. 'Ellipsis and pleonasm, hyperbaton or syllepsis, regression, repetition, apposition these are the syntactical displacements; metaphor, catachresis, antonomasia, allegory, metonymy, and synecdoche these are the semantic condensations in which Freud teaches us to read the ostentatious intentions, or the dissimulating, persuasive, retaliatory, or seductive demonstrations, out of which the subject models his oneiric discourse.'" (Dor 22)

Graphomaniacs want to make stories out of their lives. They search for a sense of connectedness with others in the universe. They have a strong desire to write about having been bad, unhappy or unloved. They also have a deep need for compassion and understanding. To connect with others and to express oneself to others help a person feel better. "Art is essential to all of us because every human being is born a creator; that's what the ancient Hebrew poets meant when they said we are created 'in the image of God,' that is to say, in the image of the Creator. Not to be able to write is a learned disability, taught to us in school and at home. All people are writers who can, if they so desire, claim their writing as a personal (and perhaps public) art form". (Schneider xxii)

It is true that people are born creators but as they grow up, willingly or unwillingly, quiet a lot people lose their creativity. Think about children for instance, and they can combine the real world and their own dream world. They play games most of the time, and they go through different moods as they experience different emotions. But they can tell the difference between playing a game and living in the real world because they are consciously creating their fantasy world and visiting that world of creation whenever it is possible.

Kurzweil in his book, *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, compares a child at play to a creative writer and claims that the first creative activity of a human being is her/his games as a child. The child at play creates a world of her/his own and plans everything in this world as s/he wishes. S/he takes this world very seriously and puts a lot of effort and emotion into it. For the child, the opposite of play is not what is serious, but what is real. In other words, the child can distinguish play from reality. The writer goes through the same process. He creates his own world which only belongs to him and puts a lot of effort and emotion into it just like the child. He separates it sharply from reality. Language has protected this connection between children's play and poetic creation. (Kurzweil 24-25)

How can people play their own creative games when they become adults? Brand in his book *Psychology of Writing*, has an answer to this question. He shares his own experiences with the reader and explains how he feels as he writes. He tells us that all his negative feelings turn into positive ones the minute he writes them down. He thinks that writing is the greatest and the most satisfying game of all. 'The impulse to write a novel

comes from a momentary unified vision of life.’ He takes notes and spends a lot of time between sentences or paragraphs. He likes to experience writing, to let go all that he has inside and this experience is very important for him. He thinks that ‘poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’. Poetry takes its origins from emotion recovered in serenity. ‘‘The emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, similar to that which was produced before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind’’. (Brand 9-10) One supreme and powerful game of adults is writing.

How can writing contribute to our well being? What similarities do verbalization and psychoanalysis have? Bracher in his book, *The Writing Cure: Psychoanalysis, Composition and the Aims of Education*, explains the similarities between verbalization and psychoanalysis. He says that the process of verbalization in writing can be very close to that in psychoanalysis because many effects of verbalization can be produced by writing as well. Writing can help us control our feelings and impulses. As we write, we structure our thoughts, we bring them to the conscious which means that we have more control over them. As a result, we have the sense that we can control the effect instead of being controlled by it. (Bracher 147)

When our negative feelings float in our minds, we can not catch them because they are as abstract as they can be, but once we put them down on a piece of paper, we can rule them, control them, because we organize them and we see them. People have fears and worries that they never really deal with. But if they write about those thoughts, fears and worries, they have to think about them, mentally process them, as they write. Some

mental problems are caused by the fact that we don't always process our feelings and thoughts. Writing forces the brain to process its thoughts.

Davis in her book, *Breaking up (at) Totality: A Rhetoric of Laughter*, gives us information about the consequences of 'not writing'. 'The option not to write results in silence, solitude, and ironically an acceptance of one's own banishment'. Writing has a different kind of power. This is called verbal power. If a person refuses to write, s/he at the same time accepts personal and public forgetting. The option not to write diminishes personal memory but writing provides a return to the past. This is not a physical return of course. What an individual needs is a journey of the mind not the body. The mind needs an escape from the cheerless and confined life to get a break and to relax. (Davis 240)

Psychoanalysis supports writing because it assumes that all identities are fictional characters and these fictional characters tell a lot about themselves and their culture. Examining these writings will do a lot of good for both the writers of the documents and the psychoanalysts, because verbal power is full of valuable information. "Examination of the resulting material images, metaphors, riddles or multiple meanings is the business of psychoanalysis". (Bolton 215) This valuable information gained through metaphors, material images and multiple meanings embodies the deepest secrets of the unconscious. "Freud famously made use of 'free association' as a key tool of psychoanalysis, and free writing could be seen as a written version of this method. The idea was taken up by surrealist poet and thinker Andre Breton in the 1920s. Breton experimented with 'automatic writing', hypothesizing that it might bypass thought. His aim was to clear the mind of conscious thinking, to produce material directly from the

unconscious. (...) the method retains some interest for artists and others looking for hidden resources in the psyche that might help uncover meaning and significance". (Bolton 215)

I think this kind of writing is the 'natural writing' as Derrida has mentioned. Kundera's characters are all fond of writing and keeping documents. They are just trying to reveal themselves, their fears, desires and experiences, because writing cures. There is no technique, nothing artificial, but just the soul itself is revealed as it is. The truth inside people comes out without any distraction. This kind of writing is comprehensible because all those words that are written will be the products of the conscious. The conscious will speak the truth which is hidden inside and finding that hidden treasure will lead to happiness.

Couture in her book, *Toward a Phenomenological Rhetoric: Writing, Profession and Altruism*, elaborates on 'natural writing' which Derrida has mentioned. She also explains the relationship between truth and writing by making use of 'natural writing'. Derrida thinks that there are mainly two kinds of writing. Natural writing and the writing we produce as an artifact in the material world. Natural writing is understood within our hearts, it is the divine inscription in the heart and the soul; it is the good and always comprehended. It is disruptive and creative. Natural writing does not represent a stable truth. 'It continually obviates the possibility of our very belief in such a thing'. This kind of writing is natural because it occurs within us. There is no technique, nothing artificial. The other kind of writing is the one we produce as an artifact in the material world. The

perverse and artful is technique because it is 'exiled in the exteriority of the body'.
(Couture 97- 98)

Davis makes use of Lyotard to express his ideas about writing. 'Lyotard, in his book *Libidinal Economy* claims that '(...) writing-for-writing (...) would, rather, be about inviting the affirmative decision to 'let everything go', to let loose the writing in you and watch it move, feel its brilliance crack your shell, blow your mind. In order to exhaust metamorphic potential, the force of effects that travels through us. It would not be about founding an/other identity, solidifying the ego, but about watching this writing interrupt the myth of stable identity.'" (Davis 240)

One of Kundera's characters, a taxi driver, is a good example to give for such cases. "I went across Paris in a taxi with a garrulous driver. He had chronic insomnia. He had it ever since the war. He was a sailor. His ship sank. He swam three days and three nights. Then he was rescued. He spent several months between life and death. He recovered, but he had lost the ability to sleep. 'I have had a third more life than you,' he said, smiling. 'And what do you do with that extra third?' I asked him. 'I write.' I asked him what he was writing. He was writing his life story. The story of a man who swam in the sea for three days and three nights, who had struggled against death, who had lost the ability to sleep but kept the strength to live". (Kundera 1996:126) Consciously or unconsciously, the driver is processing his life story in his mind and is feeling less depressed about it as he writes about it. He would not feel the same if he just talked about it because words would disappear right after they were uttered. "' (...) the written word on paper has a status, autonomy and visible accessibility of its own; you can go back to it. Yet there is also something tentative and provisional about it. All this has a bearing on therapy

conducted around writing rather than focused on speech. There was a time when the spoken word (logos) was considered closer to the speaker's meaning and thus closer to pure thought, while writing was considered secondary, as if no more than sounds rendered into writing; but this isn't generally regarded as either an adequate explanation or even a likely story". (Bolton 47)

All those words the taxi driver uses, as he writes, can tell a lot about him. "Freud tells that the alternative and unconscious meaning of words is the study of psychoanalysis. (...) Poesis means making, creating. We may not all be competent poets, but even without necessarily or even usually realizing it we think of, select and use words which contain a poetic wealth of meaning and emotional significance". (Bolton 45) The taxi driver is not the only character who wants the feeling of tranquility and connectedness. Here are Kundera's characters and their thoughts about writing: "I want to write a book, Bibi said next. 'About the world as I see it'. (Kundera 1996:11-112) "I want to write about myself. Give a report on my life". (Kundera 1996:124) "I have a feeling that my experience inside is worth writing about and could be interesting to everybody". (Kundera 1996:124) 'Hugo says: "I want to write a book, Tamina, a book about love you know, about you and me, about the two of us, our most intimate diary. (...) I want to sweep away all the taboos and tell everything, tell everything about me, about what I am and what I think (...) "(Kundera 1996:156) The taxi driver, Bibi, Hugo. Are all these people writers? "In that sense, the taxi driver and Goethe share the same passion. What distinguishes Goethe from the taxi driver is not a difference in passions but one passion's different results". (Kundera 1996:127)

Under the light of psychoanalysis, what I find crucial for people is to have a passion (desire) in order to be happy and I think that all Kundera's fiction characters are trying to experience happiness through writing, just like their creator, Kundera. Why should they feel happy by writing? What if they have nothing good to write about and they are not motivated by the feeling of relief which has been promised them? People may feel unique, pleased, angry, depressive or relaxed. They may write about things which they never want to forget and as they reread, they live those moments again and again. However, they may also write about things which they detest and they may do this with anger. Writing has a lot of different effects, but most of them lead to similar positive feelings grouped under the same noun called 'happiness'. Anger can be a tool which will be used for motivation in writing and better expression of the emotion itself, and once it is expressed, anger loses its strength.

Brand in her book, *The Psychology of Writing: The Affective Experience*, claims that negative emotions are superior than the positive ones for motivation in writing and supports her idea with interesting examples. Czeslaw Milosz who became well known for his World War II poetry 'stated that during that period he 'was forced by circumstances to write with anger, with indignation'. Black poets Nikki Giovanni, June Jordan, Sonia Sanchez, Ntozake Shange, and Robin Morgan have connected their writing with anger toward the white community. William Gass mentioned that anger was the incentive of his work. (Brand 12)

Happiness and sadness go together in life. One can never feel happy from the beginning of her/his life, till the end. It is comforting to know that one can never feel sad forever either. It is this sadness and happiness incessantly changing places and creating emotions and any form of art. This battle between negative and positive feelings is needed to feel the urge to catch the positive ones, and this vicious circle of life has to go on.

Brand in her book, *The Psychology of Writing: The Affective Experience*, elaborates on this interesting collision of negative and positive feelings and their effect on writers. She thinks that this collision is like a war which fills the writer with both 'agony and ecstasy'. 'During composing, Kafka reported a 'fearful strain and joy' swinging between 'wanting solitude to write and feeling unable to endure life alone'. Sophie Tolstoy mentioned similar feelings in her diary. 'It makes me laugh to read over this diary. It's so full of contradictions, and one would think I was such an unhappy woman. Yet is there a happier woman than I?' 'Conflict makes energy'. (Brand 15)

So the soul survives and people live better lives, but at the end we all die. I think writing can also cure the fear of death. People have always been searching for a way to avoid disappearing and being forgotten. "Everyone is pained by the thought of disappearing, unheard and unseen, into an indifferent universe, and because of that everyone wants, while there is still time, to turn himself into a universe of words". (Kundera 1996:147) To know that one will die without leaving a trace makes death more fearsome and unbearable, but if one can leave behind a written document which s/he has created, that will be the evidence of existence in the universe. That part of one's existence

will remain alive as long as that piece of writing is read by others. Once people believe in this idea they can feel that they will always be a part of the universe. “By writing books, a man turns into a universe, and it is precisely the nature of a universe to be unique”. (Kundera 1996:146) “This makes people feel unique, because, now that they are in a sense immortal, they are different from others and will always remain in the circle of universe. Davis quotes from Cixous’s book *Coming to Writing*: ‘Write! What? Take to the wind, take to writing, form one body with the letters. Live! (...) In the beginning, there is an end. Don't be afraid: it's your death that's dying. Then: all the beginnings. When you have come to the end, only then can Beginning come to you’ “. (Davis 236)

2.1.4 Psychology of Language (Psycholinguistics): Parataxis to Syntaxis

Meaning and Repetition

In the body chapter of my thesis, I use two different kinds of analyses. The first one is psychoanalytic analysis which I have already mentioned in the preceding chapter, and the other is psycholinguistics which deals with mental activity associated with the use of language. I aim to look at the same concepts from a different perspective. Psycholinguistics and psychoanalysis are closely related so I will make use of reader's response theory whenever psychoanalysis is needed to clarify psycholinguistics. "Language is a fundamental basis of thought. (...) Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. The relation between thought and word is a living process: thought is born through words". (Steinberg 32) I have examined reader's response and analyzed my own emotional world by using it. Reader's response criticism deals with psychology, and helps to observe a group's or an individual's responses to a work of art. Psycholinguists try to find out the relationship between language and thought. These studies enable humans to acquire, use, and understand language. They cover the processes that make it possible to produce a grammatical and meaningful sentence out of vocabulary and grammatical structures. The studies of psycholinguistics also make it possible to understand utterances, words, text, etc. Psycholinguistics is studied by people in a variety of fields, such as psychology, cognitive science, and linguistics.

I have tried to see the whole text, which is more coherent and meaningful. In reader's response approach, organizing a text, means organizing thoughts in order to represent and reconstruct the text so that it can give me some answers or make me ask the right questions. I have used psycholinguistics during my search for the coherency of my thoughts. I have tried to find the answers in order to reach the syntaxis, by using the parataxis. "(...) the structural parallels run from music and fiction to life itself and that the understanding of persons who live their lives parallels the understanding of art in moving from parataxis to syntaxis". (Sharpe 28) Parataxis is a literary technique, in writing or speaking. Parataxic sentences are neither long nor complex. The sentences usually have no conjunctions and they are short, simple sentences. It is a style mostly used by historians and writers of crime fiction. Syntaxes is a kind of writing, which is in a sense, the opposite of parataxis. This kind of sentence has a complex syntax. For example, 19th century German academic prose is notably syntactic. While dealing with language, I have tried to interpret the book by producing a syntactic text.

According to psychoanalytic approach, an analysis of the reader and Kundera's work is not different from a patient and his words. In both cases the text in hand will be incoherent and obscure. However, I have been both the patient and the analyst in the reader's response chapter of my thesis. Firstly, I have created my own paratactic chart. Secondly, I have tried to get the syntaxis by reconstructing those sentences because people think through language. The amount of unity in the text will also determine the amount of my mind's coherency.

The elements in the original text which literary interpreters or indeed psychoanalysts have to interpret are paratactic. Interpretation is a process which leads from parataxis to syntax. On the Freudian theory the arrangement of the material of the analysis is, in fact, paratactic. The original form is a connected narrative and the paratactic is created by taking elements out of context in quotation. Recollection is fragmented and incoherent. Let me explain the reasons of this incoherency by using parataxic distortion. In psychology, it is defined as a perceptual or judgmental distortion of interpersonal relations resulting from the observer's need to pattern his responses on previous experiences and therefore defend himself against anxiety. A parataxic distortion in reading comes about when we try to use terms, not to describe reality, but rather in an attempt to delineate it. When people name a thing, they call forth an array of assumptions, only a portion of which may be accurate. The act of naming enhances the perception of one set of characteristics, and lessens the perception of others. This editing of reality is a parataxic distortion. (Sharpe 28-29)

My reader response analysis was distorted because of my gender, racial background, age, etc so I have tried to reveal the mask over my thoughts in order to reach the human being that exists underneath all labels. The more coherent the text gets, the more syntactic it becomes. "So the Freudian case mimics both fiction and life. The primitive narrative, if one existed, is now lost. It has both to be refashioned in such a way that the elements themselves are given a sense by showing what they symbolize and then also reassembled into a coherent unity". (Sharpe 28-29)

He plays with the meanings of words and redefines them. “Kundera plays with the term betrayal. At some points in the novel, he inverts it from its normally negative connotations so that it signifies an act of liberation. These betrayals operate by negating or shifting authority, by refusing to endorse or to sustain the endorsement of philosophical petitions in both literary and meta literary contexts. They constitute a revisionist aesthetic, attacking any teleological assumptions the novel simultaneously advances. Each perspectival swing disrupts its predecessor, dislodging hegemonic imperatives and refusing the comfort of totality, so that the reader's engagement becomes a series of renegotiations. In doing so, they recapitulate our role as exiles in our engagement with the text”. (Newman 103) Kundera defines betrayal as breaking ranks and going off into the unknown, and he thinks that it liberating because he can get rid of his troubling thoughts, conventions and restrictions, but he can also get lost without them. In this sense, betrayal can also be imprisoning. Betrayal will put him and his characters into a world which both possibilities are available. This availability of possibilities is what Kundera has been striving for all his life. Kundera's novel, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, has many semiotic possibilities because of the ambiguous structure of signs. I think, playing with these signs enables Kundera to show human existence as infinitely open to innumerable possibilities, and saves him from the unrepeatability of human life which is limited.

Kundera also shows the importance of preserving repetition in art, in that it provides the work of art with the melodic beauty and gives the sentence the desired importance. When I evaluate this kind of writing from the point of psychoanalytic approach, I see the desire to create a unique and sensitive identity. Such an individual would not be able to

survive without getting into trouble in Kundera's country, because s/he would be considered a libertarian, and in Kundera's country's words, extraordinary and dangerous. "...repetition creates identity. Without certitude imposed from without, the reader's choices, his recreations constitute assertions of identity". (Newman 115) Kundera suggests that a word does not have to be replaced by a synonym because a word is repeated if it is important. When an author develops a long narrative, repetition is a semantic tool used to support it. Following this belief, Kundera does not use synonyms, he uses some of the words over and over again and he directs the reader's attention to those words inevitably. After I have read his books, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, *Identity and Ignorance*, I have realized that he is very concerned about seeing his work as a whole, like the parts of a puzzle, which will be coherent together.

2.1.5 Variations and Polyphony in Language and Psychology

Kundera wrote most of his novels using the techniques of polyphony and variation. Let me give the word's definition both in music and in literature as a starting point for my outcome. Polyphony in music is the simultaneous presentation of two or more voices (melodic lines) that are perfectly bound together but still keep their relative independence. In writing, polyphony is the play among different kinds of writing, essay, dream and narrative in a single text. (www.uwc.ac.za/arts/english/interaction)

“A polyphonic novel is not dialectic between two adversarial positions, but a horde of different positions of varying strength and intensity, which coexist and interact”. (Bakhtin 26) Under the light of this brief piece of information about variation and polyphony, and Kundera's feelings towards them, let me try to explain the reasons I see behind Kundera's choice of writing. Why variations and polyphony? What can be said about Kundera in the frame of psychoanalysis? Kundera believes that variations can express the pain he and Tamina suffer. “It is no wonder then that the variation form became the passion of the mature Beethoven who (like Tamina and like me) knew all too well that there is nothing more unbearable than losing a person we have loved those sixteen measures and the inner universe of their infinite possibilities”. (Kundera 1996:219) Kundera claims that in variation form, the individual parts follow each other like individual stretches of a journey leading towards a theme and a thought. I see the same journey towards Tamina and Tamina stands for a single thought, actually a fearful thought, the fear of forgetting, being forgotten and losing sense of humor.

Kundera clearly differentiates between an adaptation, and variation. His books are a series of variations. All Kundera's novels are composed of seven parts, each one striving to be different and independent. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* has (just like his other books) seven chapters, which consist of a number of stories, memories, forgetting, laughter, angels, pity, and philosophical topics. Kundera bounds the chapters together using the musical principles of polyphony and variation. Therefore different aspects of the same facts are being highlighted, one at a time. The narratives are related to one another because they are the variations of the same concepts. For Kundera, variation form is not just a form, but it is also an attitude towards everyone and everything. He considers the form, as an expression of the writer's ego.

The dichotomy between verse and prose, the lyric and the novel, is for Kundera more than a matter of form. These modes of writing represent for him two incompatible mentalities, two opposite attitudes toward the self, others, and the surrounding world. The lyric, Kundera claims, is unreflexive, emotive. It is a direct self expression of the poet who through empathy strives to merge his ego with the audience's collective spirit in rhyme and rhythm. If a woman weary of breath has gone to her death, dying becomes harmoniously integrated into the cosmic order.... Through poetry, man realizes his agreement with existence, and rhyme and rhythm are the crudest means of gaining consent. An anti-poetic posture grows out of the conviction that between what we think about ourselves and what we actually are there exists an infinite distance, just as there is an infinite distance between what we wish things were and what they are, or between what we think they are and what they are. To apprehend this distance, this abyss, means to destroy the poetic illusion. This is also the essence of the art of irony. And irony is the perspective of the novel. This

explains Kundera's argument that there exists a close affinity between social utopianism and the lyric. Both correspond to the deep-seated human need for stability, predictability, harmony. They create a totalizing universe of discourse closed to critical scrutiny. (Steiner 207-208)

In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, the consciousness of a character is not limited, and it does not become an object. In other words, Kundera does not try to merge with his characters in order to understand them, and his characters are not viewed as if from a distance, and they do not have a predetermined discourse. The result is a dialogue of voices, each embodied in a character. Kundera creates his characters and sets them free. They also serve as a part of the variation form. Kundera mentions that Tamina is the main character and the main audience. All the other stories are variations on her story.

Kundera's polyphonic metaphor is in harmony with his characters and the things that happen to them, because according to Kundera, not only the novel, but also the human life resembles a musical score in its composition. According to Kundera, a musical score must remain unfinished until death. Like a musical score, each of his characters' lives is made up of recurring events. Kundera writes of his characters: "Each one of them has crossed a border which I myself have circumvented. It is that crossed border (the border beyond which my own I ends) which attracts me most. The novel is not the author's confession; it is an investigation of human life in the trap the world has become". (Kundera 1999:218) All of the characters are quite similar. In fact, they seem to be multiple variations of a singular character. The characters in Kundera's novels seem to be his other potential identities. I think he uses polyphony as an exploration of the possibilities of the self. Tamina stands for his weakness and fear and the others are all

other possible Kunderas. His psyche has been severely affected by the memories of those years which were full of too much oppression, lies and difficulties and too little freedom, happiness and variety. Kundera belonged to the generation of young Czechs whose growing up was greatly influenced by the experiences of the Second World War and the German occupation. The experience of totalitarianism might have forced Kundera into a black and white vision of reality. I would argue that the use of variation and polyphony is a rebel against his experiences from a past which was artificial, stressful, frightening and narrow. He is cherishing different kinds of writing in one novel, that is to say, he is cherishing multiple lives and characters in one life because he needs to do so. He does not give up the relative independence of his characters, that is to say his own other possibilities. Unlike his country, he wants to remain unfinished and creative.

Bakhtin defines polyphony as a horde of different positions of varying strength and intensity, which coexist and interact. I think Kundera's emotions and thoughts had been suppressed for too long and began to trouble him in a variety of ways, including affecting his relationships, causing anxiety and depression, and even filling his mind with obsessive, troubling thoughts. But he has found a way out of this cycle and that is to begin, to notice what he had been experiencing. He allows himself to feel his emotions fully. Kundera is experiencing strong emotions and he has a history of trauma and is curing himself through writing in variations and polyphony. I think, Kundera recognizes a truth, even though he has profound sorrow inside, writing gives him space and awareness. All his books are based on the same subject, the life in the communist Eastern Europe, which can be considered to support my ideas. The stories are tools, which help him to show his philosophical and psychological content. Through Tamina, he gets rid of

his fears and troubles. He writes about Tamina, her fears, her mistakes, and he gets rid of those fears and mistakes by killing her at the end of his novel.

III. Conclusion

In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, individuals are trying to find the balance between reason and absurdity. On one hand, reason and order lead to entrapment, in terms of personal relationships. On the other hand, absurdity and rootlessness lead to loss of identity. How each character deals with this dialectic is the main idea of Kundera's novel. Laughter and forgetting are two profound concepts that have triggered my study. I have concentrated on emotions, their sources, reasons and how they are revealed in the frame of psychoanalysis. Emotions make us feel unique, because they take us out of the mundane life of the crowd that enslaves us and weakens our creativity and imagination. Emotions are complicated and can not be put under those black and white kinds of categories like good and bad or positive and negative. "Man desires a world where good and evil can be clearly distinguished, for he has an innate and irrepressible desire to judge before he understands. Religions and ideologies are founded on this desire. They require that somebody be right. Either Anna Karanina is the victim of a narrow minded tyrant, or Karenin is the victim of an immoral woman; either K. is an innocent man crushed by an unjust Court, or the Court represents divine justice and K. is guilty. This 'either or' encapsulates an inability to tolerate the essential relativity of things human, an inability to look squarely at the absence of the Supreme Judge". (Deutsch 12) Kundera saves himself and his characters from this encapsulation, as he holds onto life through memories, humor and writing. The oppression which he had experienced gives vitality to his work. Kundera expresses the pain he feels due to the fate of his country, and he uses his ability to write as a discharge of the nausea that is created by oppression. It saves him from the absurdity of existence . He leads the reader, and himself, away from despair. I have tried

to express my perception of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, in the chapters entitled, 'Reader's Response', 'Psychoanalytic Analysis of Forgetting, Remembering, Laughter' and 'The Desire for Writing'. I have done further studies and I am going to elaborate on my thesis, using different concepts providing me with the answers I have been looking for.

3.1 Defense mechanism is a reaction to death of the soul.

Remembering, laughing and writing are the main sources of happiness, pain and pleasure are siblings. Emotions have unlimited functions in the lives of people who have become subjects as a result of totalitarianism. The mystery of emotions and what they can do to us are my main concerns. Kundera is a writer who is in love with this mystery. He remembers, and this is his greatest pleasure and pain. He goes through hard times but finds peace, happiness and his identity through writing. Kundera takes his characters and leads them to the same path which he has walked because he has an educated ego and an educated ego is reasonable. This ego knows how to react to death of the soul, to create strong defense mechanisms. This explains the reason why, the ones who are trying to find happiness through pleasure principle, can not walk along with him till the end of his novel and die. The pleasure principle is a psychoanalytical term coined by Sigmund Freud. According to this principle people seek pleasure and avoid pain. However, as one matures, one begins to learn the need sometimes to endure pain because of the obstacles of reality. The ego no longer lets itself to be governed by the pleasure principle; instead it obeys the reality principle, which also seeks to obtain pleasure, but pleasure which is gained through taking reality into consideration, even though it is a postponed pleasure.

To put it in psychoanalytic terms, Kundera's survivor characters unconsciously activate their defense mechanisms and seek happiness through the reality principle. In the ego, there are two processes going on. First, there is the unconscious, where the thoughts are not organized in a coherent way and the feelings can shift. There is no logic and no time line. Lust is the important motive for this process. On the contrary, there is the

conscious which strong boundaries are set. The thoughts must be organized in the conscious in a coherent way. More cognition arises here. The impulses from the id cannot be focused on the satisfaction because they must respect the reality of the world and they must also consider the superego. The superego represents the learned (in the process of growing up) set of values and ethics, which gives individual the sense of what is right and what is wrong to do, feel and think. Kundera's characters are anxious. When the anxiety becomes too overwhelming it is then the responsibility of the ego to use defense mechanisms to protect the individual. Anna Freud describes in her book *Ego and Mechanisms of Defense* (1936) the concept of signal anxiety. "As with many important ideas about the mind, Sigmund Freud was the first to mention defenses, in 1894 (!). But his daughter, Anna Freud made the first list, in her pioneering study, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (1936), utilizing material from adults and children she treated". (Blackman xi) The signaling function of anxiety is seen as a crucial one to warn the organism of danger or a threat to its equilibrium. "Anna Freud defines a defense mechanism such as projection, as a mental tool used against an affect, akin to using a hammer to hit a nail." (Blackman 6) The anxiety is felt as an increase in mental tension. This negative feeling is the signal that the organism receives so that it can take defensive action towards the perceived danger.

As Kundera's characters turn to their inner worlds, they find out their true and worst fears and deepest desires. The superego can control them, but it can not get rid of them, they are still powerfully present. Feeling anxious is a state of tension that we need to reduce because it is hard to endure the mental discomfort we experience. One way to do this is by expressing the impulse in a disguised form that society accepts. The aim here is

to outlet aggression. Kundera's characters learn to bring into conscious awareness all the negative thoughts, feelings, memories, wishes, and fears. These feelings are pushed out of consciousness by their defenses. Once these mental experiences are understood consciously, they can begin to live an emotionally open and honest life. A healthy person will use many different defenses throughout life. A defense mechanism becomes pathological when it is used persistently, that will eventually threaten the physical and mental health of the individual. Tamina's situation which is quite different from the others seems to be what psychoanalysts call dissociation. "Freud theorized that dissociation is a process where entire aspects of the personality are split off and become unconscious" (Blackman 76) She simply withdraws from interaction with the world rather than deal with its difficulties and challenges. She separates herself from reality. She is obsessed with her memories and finds herself in the unreal world of children without reason and memory. She also has excessive fantasies. She usually daydreams and she does not take action. Before dissociation takes place, she excessively thinks about her husband and spends hours trying to visualize her husband's face in detail by looking at other faces. Not all defense mechanisms are bad or unhealthy. Some defense mechanisms provide us with self-protection while maintaining a full awareness of the thoughts involved in dealing with the challenge. I am going to mention the defense mechanisms, humor, laughter and writing in order to elaborate and to support the psychoanalytic study in the body chapters.

3.2 Humor as a defense mechanism

Self observation, which Kundera's characters practice through writing and humor is the ability to examine feelings and thoughts through the processes which are called self examination, introspection, meditation and so forth. There is a general prejudice that humor is not important. Until recently it has not been thought of as a serious academic subject. I would argue that it is, on the contrary, one of the most important subjects, along with emotion, ethics and critical thinking. At the university level there are still few courses on philosophy and critical thinking being taught in the world, and none on humor. There are several uses and techniques of humor but in my case, it is a kind of coping strategy which helps Kundera and his characters to change negative emotions into positive ones. It eases their tension, gives them new perspectives, reveals their identities for them to observe and improve and helps them survive in highly stressful situations. It creates meaning and helps them adjust to unbearable or strange situations and control them. It is a major ingredient of happiness. It is also a kind of criticism of ideas, society, culture and politics. It distances them from their painful situation but this is not an unhealthy kind of distancing. It is called aesthetic distance. The idea is that, it is not so bad if they can laugh about it. Lack or loss of humor is considered to be a sign of depression, low intelligence, negative emotions and psychological disorders.

Humor is not a feeling but a philosophy of life. I do not want to call it just a mechanism because I know it can do more than that. This is why I rename it as the reaction to death of the soul. Laughing is a unique action. It is a significant form of therapy. Humor protects Kundera's characters from committing suicide. It helps them

remain human, even under hard conditions. I think it is almost impossible not to have any humor under pressure. Laughter and humor helps them not to take things the way they actually are but to dress them up as something different. When there is absurdity, the best thing they do is to leave themselves in the arms of humor. This is a psychological strategy used by individuals to cope with reality and to maintain her/his self-image.

3.3 Memories as defense mechanism

Freud believed that memories could have both conscious and unconscious aspects. Freud's exploration of the interrelationships between mind, memory and personal identity are among his most interesting contributions to psychology. Freud thinks that remembering is a psychological and a difficult act. As an act it is not only about time; it takes place in time. Though he often writes about memory, it is remembering that Freud focuses on. (Levine 85)

The repression of memories in order to avoid anxiety is a well known defense mechanism in psychology, but Kundera's characters use memories to overcome anxiety. They use their memories to deflect their attention away from the painful and complicated situations they are in. Selective memory is another kind of defense mechanism which suppresses the unpleasant memories, helps identity building and recalls only the pleasant ones.

Every memory is a potential source of emotional comfort; Kundera's characters go back to any point in time whenever they use up the present. It allows them the opportunity to create a past which is subjective and individually constructed. Freud also thought that memories reflected desires rather than the actual events that had taken place. "Freud came to think that what he had taken for memories were instead phantasies, stories reflecting 'internal' desire rather than events in the external world." (Cavell 43)

Kundera's characters have pieces of their lives that hold meaning to them, which may seem meaningless to those around them but that alienation can not harm them because they also have a cultural memory. These memories recycle and they are self-reflective. As a result of this process, a personal myth is constructed in the selective memory process so that they remember the things and people that fit and shape their image of themselves. 'The memory becomes associated with the need; for now when a similar need arises, the organism summons up the remembered perception and 'hallucinates' satisfaction. Freud calls such a primitive need a 'wish'; and he thinks that hallucinatory wish-fulfillment is the model for phantasizing, at whatever age. The content of the unconscious, he says, is made up entirely of such 'wishes'. And he claims that "nothing but a wish can set our mental apparatus at work" (Cavell 45)

3.4 Writing as a defense mechanism (Graphomania)

The strong desire Kundera's characters have for writing can be explained as a kind of healthy defense mechanism. Writing is the creation of a sense of identity, and communication with the reader. I think the kind of defense mechanism Kundera's characters use is sublimation because sublimation can only occur when there is a transformation of a feeling into an activity. Sublimation is a defense mechanism that allows them to act out unacceptable impulses by converting these behaviors into a more acceptable form. In Kundera's characters case, all feelings and thoughts are transformed into words.

The writing can cure because it gives the feeling of joy, comfort and peace to the writer. In Kundera's characters' case, even the idea of writing is quite exciting and relishing. There is a strong and positive psychological effect of having an audience for one's self expression. Writing can function like a psychoanalytic treatment for reducing psychological conflict. Psychoanalytic perspective can offer useful insights into the subconscious, through writing process.

(...) the desires are, in a fundamental sense, expressions of human beings to determine how they ought to live their lives, what they must do, what they should desire, and finally how they must act. The will to self-determination cannot be guided by the experts of rational-scientific knowledge or even by the self-proclaimed representatives of God. The desires are the ultimate origins of freedom, a freedom that is expressed in the language of human speech. Desires in their formative stage are immediacies; they are initially informed by

immediate intuitive knowledge which is articulated in the language of myth, superstition, art, and poetry. (Kiros 64)

In the conclusion part of my thesis, I have tried to restate my perception of the three concepts. These concepts are laughing, writing and preserving personal memory. I have tried to make use of linguistics and psychology to analyze the concepts which I have mentioned. I have made use of philosophers, psychiatrists and writers to improve my knowledge on psycholinguistics and to support my ideas about the concepts.

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