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Berlin, Spring of 1995. While a group of neo-Nazis are preparing an anniversary bash of disastrous proportions, an old physics professor returns to Potsdam to atone for his sins, an Italian postdoc designs an experiment that will determine the fate of the universe, and, in a room at Le Charit?, a Holocaust survivor tells his tale to the willing ear of a young psychologist. Who is that talking cat, why do ghosts of SS soldiers roam the city, and what is Speer's favorite actress up to?

Omega Minor Details

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From Reader Review Omega Minor for online ebook

Nick says

Imagine my excitement when I was introduced to another doorstop tome previously off my radar. Put out by Dalkey. Grappling with the aftershocks of the holocaust. This had promise before I even opened the the cover.

Here are some thoughts, just riffing on things I thought about while reading Verhaeghen's novel:

From reading the other reviews on goodreads, it would seem I might be the only one to be reminded of Delillo's Underworld while reading Omega Minor. I almost omit this comparison, as I doubt the veracity of that likeness since no other reader has tied the two novels. But both are searing novels. Delillo focusing on America's joint addictions of consumption and entertainment; Verhaeghen's excoriation of Germany before, during, and after the war. Both offer maximalist views from on high of a very specific time and place (though Omega Minor jumps around the globe and clock). Both are granular in their construction, juxtaposing multitudinous plot threads to weave a bigger whole.

I would have loved if Minor was pared down and ended 100 pgs before its conclusion. It seemed Verhaeghen struggled to tie the threads, closing the novel coherently. I was left questioning a major character's motivations, and confused of the ultimate fate of another protagonist.

All in all, Omega Minor is a success in the Holocaust Novel-vein, taking its rightful place alongside Levi, Weisel, and the laundry list of other name checked holocaust writers. I loved what Verhaeghen did with this novel, he managed to be resolutely impactful but also unpredictable in his construction.

Maarten says

If a book could buzz, this one would. Omega Minor balances baroque descriptions with life-like storytelling, deeply philosophical thoughts with hard science, history with absurdity. The premises are familiar enough, to the point of weariness: Nazi's, Jews, The Bomb, and the gray academic life of the author's own alter ego. But in the hands of Verhaeghen, these subjects are twisted into a post-modern tale so stupidly ambitious that what impresses most in the end is how he almost, but not quite, manages to pull it all together into a climactic finale.

Be warned though, it is not an easy read. There is no lack of characters or storylines, and I too caught myself flipping back to previous chapters often. Verhaeghen's writing style is at times over-wrought with adjectives and details. But then again, this is exactly what constitutes the special charm of Omega Minor: An all-too-blatant demonstration of ambition and skill that is only forgiven because the story nevertheless continues to captivate. Luckily the reader will find out quickly whether this is more than he can stomach, as the first chapter is a perfectly functional deterrent for the weak-willed.

One final remark: I read this book in Dutch, but an English translation by the author himself is widely available.

Drew says

I guess I'm in the minority here, but this one doesn't do it for me. Does disliking an erudite, heartfelt, Holocaust meganovel make me a monster? I hope not.

I'll start with the good: Verhaeghen's a smart guy, and *Omega Minor* is a correspondingly smart book with an intricately conceived (though not, I think, successfully executed) plot concerning the memoirs of a Holocaust survivor, the development of the atomic bomb, and a neo-Nazi plot to reorder Berlin, and their various interconnections. If this is your cup of tea, then have at it. But be apprised:

(1) There are many, many erotic scenes, and almost none of them are good. It's hard to explain exactly why, although MJ rightly notes that there's a whole lot of spurting and semen. Plus, they're all very similar, which gets weird when the practitioners aren't referred to by name and the timeline jumps around between WWII and the late 1990's. They're also distracting in their length and their lack of relation to the plot; I gather that this novel is supposed to be a celebration of life, and an affirmation that life will go on after the bomb, after the genocide, after any cataclysmic event. This is probably what all the semen is for, but I'm not really a fan, and the scenes don't have a closer tie to the plot than that.

(1a) People will surely disagree with me about this, but I'm not crazy about the way Verhaeghen treats his female characters. There are several, and they're distinct from each other (as opposed to, say, *The Sea Came in at Midnight*) and some of them are even impressive, like the physicist looking for the MAGNETIC MONOPOLE.* But I'm pretty sure the book still fails the Bechdel test, and worse, the one trait all the female characters share is treachery or deception. I'm almost willing to believe Verhaeghen is just trying to make a point about how most men *view* women, except for the fact that they tend to do things that are *objectively* treacherous.

(2) His prose is too prolix. I don't actually mean that--I mean it's purple, and at times almost puke-inducingly florid. Other reviewers have noted that this style works best during the Holocaust reminiscences (I suppose because that's one place where you can never be too dramatic), but I'd go further and say that's the only place it really works at all, besides the descriptions of Goldfarb as a young Harvard student, where the style actually fits perfectly. He also has a gift for pseudo-profound aphorism, which could be used well but usually isn't. Few of his "profound" lines stand up to scrutiny or strike one as particularly original. For instance, "Scars are what make a woman beautiful." Or this: "These slow fat boys, gasping for breath, these toothless graybeards, these amputees from the Eastern Front are the ridiculous Wagnerian dragons that guard the last gate of the Reich that once stretched all the way from the North Sea to the Ural." Toothless graybeards? That's straight out of *A Game of Thrones*. I'm not saying all this is terrible writing; I'm just saying it's not my style, and it might not be yours either.

exception to (2) Like I said, this style works really well for Goldfarb's meditations on life, love, and physics. E.g. "Hannah had spread a spoonful of hot butter on Goldfarb's toasted soul and devoured it in two or three bites--as if said soul was a frozen breakfast waffle. Which, in a sense, it truly is."

(3) The biggest problem, maybe, is that (view spoiler)

(4) There is, inexplicably, at least one typo every two pages. Loose instead of lose, tome instead of tone, of instead of or. I don't understand--nobody from Dalkey edits these things? It's distracting. And in the unlikely event that Verhaeghen did it all on purpose as some sort of metacommentary on the unreliability of text and specifically secondhand accounts or copies, I have *no patience* for it, I tell you.

So if none of that dissuades you, you'll probably love this. Everyone else seems to.

*Don't ask.

Coralyn says

I loved this book, which I actually read some time ago, shortly after it won the translation prize. After I got past a rather unappetising sex scene at the beginning of the book, the mixed bag of fact, fiction and fantasy was a delight! It is a big book, but the reader quickly forgets that once drawn into the different lives and experiences of the various characters during this wonderful voyage through contemporary human experience, culture and history.

Jonfaith says

This chunk of pulsating ambition greeted me unaware in a bookshop a few years past. I politely asked my wife if she would buy it for me for Christmas. She obliged, and I read it in a frantic tear, really only pausing to buy her sister who lives in Berlin a copy. Then, it was over and I thought and pondered and moved on. There isn't much that has clung to me in the subsequent years. Maybe between Europe Central and The Kindly Ones I developed a Nazi Fatigue. I don't know.

Erin says

all i can possibly say is wow. epic. huge. for those who read vollmann's europe central, and felt the vastness of what he covered and how he told the story, this is a good next book to read. verhaeghen was his own english translator for this edition, and i think it was a brilliant move on his part. words are so infused with meaning, particularly in this story, that a less capable translator could have made an english edition truly terrible.

verhaeghen is at his best when writing from the perspective of an old man reliving the atrocities of german occupation in wwii--his experiences as a jew in berlin in the 1930's forward. it is impassioned writing, and i admit to shedding a tear here and there. that said, verhaeghen manages to be passionate without being hammy or melodramatic. there are a number of viewpoints in the story, told from first person, and the shift between characters is sometimes subtle. in the beginning, before you really know each character, it can be a bit confusing, but, by sticking with it, the story unfolds properly.

give yourself time to read this one. its not a light read or easy one. i had to stop reading this at night before bed because my brain just could not shut down -- i'd read the night away, or lay there in bed, unable to sleep, processing everything i had read.

this is a strong 4. there are moments that i found myself doing some light skimming, points where maybe an editor could have shaved some words, and that is the only reason this is not a 5. i picked up this book because of the cover, and because it had heft. i was looking for a brilliant read, and found one.

Marc says

This is quite a challenging book. Verhaeghen wrote an encyclopedic novel in which various historical episodes and stories flow together: an evocation of life in Berlin in the 30s and 90s of the last century, the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany including the Holocaust, the development of the atomic bomb, and the experiences of cognitive psychologist Paul Otherman (autobiographical?) in the 90s. Also stylistically it is a very mixed novel, with purely narrative pieces, fragments of introspection, expositions on cosmological phenomena and theories of physics, etc. Sometimes the pace is very high, then the time almost stands still. And fans can also enjoy in many, many pages of steamy sex and excessive violence. "Omega Minor" looks like a blend of "Berlin Alexanderplatz" by Döblin and - closer to us - "V" and "Gravity's Rainbow" by Pynchon. In other words, Verhaeghen competes with the greatest and shows that he is an all rounder. And that's no small feat.

But... there are some issues, at least to me. Verhaeghen almost constantly uses a style that I would call "muscled prose", or "prose on speed", reminding me a bit of Don DeLillo: long strings of words, very expressive descriptions with emphasis on the extreme, and in the second half of the book quite a lot of unexpected turns. Of course this can be functional, but after 600 pages of this bombardment of showmanship you ask yourself what this is all leading to, what is the author telling us? In the end it looks like Verhaeghen is just laughing at us and our naivety to belief whatever story he tells us. I'm sure other people can delight in this literary fire work (as is obvious in lots of reviews on these GR-pages), but to me it was just too much: less is more, I guess.

Nathan "N.R." Gaddis says

Let's get the first thing out of the way because then it'll be feed=visible. I'll be recommending *Omega Minor* to you. A big thumbs up. Not genius ; but big thumbs up. "N.R."=stamp of approval.

The rest of this Review will be of two parts.

The generation of Shoah survivors is coming to an end. Their words, their stories, their evidence will remain. The epistemological questions will remain. We will continue to ask those questions and depend upon finding their answers in words. But will the words of the survivor generation be sufficient for this and future generations. Insofar as our truth is structured like a fiction and insofar as truth is transmitted/preserved/raised-up in narrative voices, won't our and future generations need to continue to narrate, insofar as narration is possible, those events we know as Shoah? Or will only the texts, narratives, stories, witnesses and evidences of the survivor=generation suffice for demonstration of truth ; locked-up in cabinets of sacred unapproachability which removes itself further from us with each passing generation. To bear witness to Shoah is to preserve it for itself but also to maintain its truth for us ; the erasure of either side desacralizes the mundane truth, displacing it into a Beyond. But the truth is that Shoah was always here.

Thus the question remains, how do generations which come after the survivor generation bear witness to the Shoah? How do we narrate it? Structure it? Story it? Evidence it? Preserve it? *Fictionalize* it? Paul Verhaeghen's novel belongs in that matrix of questions.

The second portion of my review is less urgent. It would seem that *Omega Minor*'s similarity to a Richard

Powers novel (*The Gold Bug Variations* is the only I've read) is no accident. It was Powers who recommended Verhaeghen's book to Dalkey Archive. What I mean here is slightly two-fold ; both are the recent kind of science fiction novel in which science is treated within a fiction -- not the speculative, spacey, etc genre stuff, but fiction which treats science as science within itself. But (the second-fold) does so in a literary fashion which, while not dumb-as-dirt, is certainly not going into Joycean empyrean space. Everything's in place but nothing aspires too far. Like with Powers ; but not like a McElroy who can take science and weave it into his fiction tighter than a Chupiaq woven basket. Don't let that get you down ; the sciencey=knowledge stuff is short ; but the other half, the Shoah narrative portion, is really quite into the lyrical range.

And final note ; given my reading *Omega Minor* so shortly on the heels of *Europe Central* one notices the degree of economy in Vollmann's noveling. The main strand of this 700 page novel would have fit as one of Vollmann's dozen main strands in his 800 page novel. And you wouldn't have missed a thing.

---Also, Vollmann would not have sacrificed his 120 pages of footnotes for publisher's convenience!

Georgina Koutrouditsou says

Η παρακ?τω κριτικ? δημοσιε?τηκε στο Mon petit cafe de Humanite :

<https://monpetitcafedehumanite.wordpress.com>

Ο 20ος αι?νας θεωρε?ται «σ?ντομος» σ?μφωνα με τον ιστορικ? Eric Hobsbawm. Ωστ?σο τα γεγον?τα που συν?βησαν κατ? τη δι?ρκει? του δεν μπορο?ν να χαρακτηριστο?ν ?τσι καθ?ς συγκλ?νισαν τ?σο πολ? την ανθρωπ?τητα που η απ?ρροια τους κρατ?ει ως σ?μερα. Το *Omega Minor* ε?ναι ?να μυθιστ?ρημα που βασ?ζεται στον παραλογισμ?, που τελικ? γινε πρ?ξη. Ε?ναι ?να μυθιστ?ρημα για το π?ς η ανθρωπ?τητα στρ?φηκε εναντ?ον του ?διου της του εαυτο?, και ?σως δεν διστ?σει να το ξανακ?νει.

Βρισκ?μαστε στο Βερολ?νο του 1995, λ?γα χρ?νια μετ? την πτ?ση του Τε?χους και 50 χρ?νια μετ? το τ?λος του Β' Παγκοσμ?ου πολ?μου και την αυτοκτον?α του Χ?τλερ. ?λα τα παραπ?νω αποτελο?ν τον ?ξονα που περν? ?λο το μυθιστ?ρημα και π?νω σ' αυτ?ν χτ?ζονται οι αφηγ?σεις και τα γεγον?τα.

Ο κεντρικ?ς ?ρωας του βιβλ?ου, ο μεταδιδακτορικ?ς ερευνητ?ς φυσικ?ς & ψυχολογ?ας(;) Π?ουλ ?ντερμανς, π?φτει θ?μα νεοναζιστικ?ς β?ας και στο νοσοκομε?ο ?που νοσηλε?εται ?ρχεται σε επαφ? με τον μυστηρι?δη γ?ροντα ταχυδακτυλουργ? Ντε Χ?ιρ. Αναπτ?σσουν μ?α σχ?ση ακροατ?/βιογρ?φου-αφηγητ? και η πορε?α της ζω?ς του πρ?του αλλ?ζει ριζικ?. Αν στ?χος του μεταδιδακτορικ? ερευνητ? ε?ναι η Μν?μη, ο Ντε Χ?ιρ αποτελε? το καλ?τερο πρωτογεν?ς υλικ?. Ε?ναι ?μως ?τσι;

Μετ? απ? τις 100 πρ?τες σελ?δες, που μπερδε?ουν κ?πως τον αναγν?στη για την θεματικ? του βιβλ?ου, εισερχ?μαστε στην ιστορ?α του Ντε Χ?ιρ ξεκιν?ντας απ? το Βερολ?νο της Δημοκρατ?ας της Βα?μ?ρης. Με μια εξαιρετικ? αφηγηματικ? μαεστρ?α παρακολουθο?με την ιστορ?α τ?σο της π?λης-πρωτε?ουσας ?σο και της ζω?ς των κατο?κων της στην γραμμ? του χρ?νου. Η ?νοδος του

Ναζισμο?, ο ρ?λος και οι αντιδρ?σεις των ανθρ?πων, η δραματικ? αλλαγ? στις ζω?ς των Εβρα?ων, το ξ?σπασμα του Β' Παγκοσμ?ου Πολ?μου, τα Στρατ?πεδα Συγκ?ντρωσης, το τ?λος του πολ?μου και η ε?σοδος των Ρ?σων αλλ? και των Συμμ?χων στην π?λη και τ?λος το χτ?σιμο του Τε?χους της Ντροπ?ς.

Μπορε? ?λα τα παραπ?νω να ακο?γονται σαν μια απλ? αναφορ? ιστορικ?ν γεγον?των, ωστ?σο η ?παρξ? τους εντ?ς του λογοτεχνικ? κειμ?νου ε?ναι πολ? διαφορετικ? και κυρ?ως σκοτειν?. Ο Verhaeghen μεταφ?ρει ολοζ?ντανα σκην?ς που η πραγματικ?τητα ωχρ? μπροστ? τους. Ξεκιν?ντας απ? τη Δημοκρατ?α της Βα?μ?ρης και την ?νοδο των προσωπικοτ?ων, ?πως ε?ναι ο Μπρεχτ και την ?παρξη των καλλιτεχνικ?ν καφ? περν?ει στην εμφ?νιση των ναζιστ?ν και εντρυφε? στον παραλογισμ? της ιδεολογ?ας τους, με ?λα τα παγανιστικ? και σεξουαλικ? χαρακτηριστικ? που την δι?πνεαν. Ταυτ?χρονα, παρακολουθο?με τις αλλαγ?ς στις ζω?ς των κατο?κων της πρωτε?ουσας, τ?σο των Εβρα?ων ?σο και των υπολο?πων. Οι σκην?ς β?ας και αναρχ?ας που επικρατο?ν στο Βερολ?νο κατ? τη δι?ρκεια του πολ?μου σοκ?ρουν με την πιστ?τητα τους τον αναγν?στη. Επ?σης, οι σκην?ς που εξελ?σσονται στα Στρατ?πεδα Συγκ?ντρωσης και στους χ?ρους που πραγματοποι?σε ο Μ?νγκελε τα παρ?λογα πειρ?ματ? του, δεν σοκ?ρουν απλ?ς, αλλ? δυσκολε?ουν την περαιτ?ρω «αν?γνωση».

«Τι θα πει ο κ?σμος μετ? τον π?λεμο; Δεν ?μασταν εμε?ς αυτο?; Δεν το ξ?ραμε, μας παραπλ?νησαν; Ακολουθ?σαμε τον αρχηγ?, αυτ? ?ταν το μ?νο μας ?γκλημα και μαζικ? ριχτ?καμε, χαρο?μενοι και πρ?θυμοι, πλην εντελ?ς αθ?οι, απ? τον τελευτα?ο βρ?χο, τον βρ?χο της ανθρ?πινης αξιοπρ?πειας; Πιστε?ω ?τι κανε?ς δεν πρ?πει να ξεχ?σει ποτ? ?τι υπ?ρχει μια τερ?στια διαφορ? μεταξ? μιας πρ?ξης που επετρ?πη και μιας επιτρεπτ?ς πρ?ξης.»

Το μυθιστ?ρημα ?μως δεν αφορ? μ?νο το Ολοκα?τωμα. Παρ?λληλα ο ?ρω?ς μας ?ρχεται σε επαφ? και με ?λλα 3 πρ?σωπα που η εξ?λιξη του βιβλ?ου θα εκπλ?ξει και θα τα φ?ρει σε στεν? σ?νδεση-σχ?ση με τον παραπ?νω αφηγητ?. Αρχικ?, η εξ?σου ερευν?τρια-φυσικ?ς Ντονατ?λα και ο καθηγητ?ς της πυρηνικ?ς φυσικ?ς Γκ?λντφαρμπ. Ο δε?τερος αποτελε? ?τυπα το alter ego του Χ?ιρ καθ?ς ?φυγε απ? τη Γερμαν?α και ?τσι διεσ?θη απ? το εβρα?κ? πογκρ?μ. Στην Αμερικ? ωστ?σο υπ?ρξε μ?λος των φυσικ?ν που συμμετε?χαν στη μελ?τη και δημιουργ?α της πυρηνικ?ς β?μβας. Η ζω? του θα συνδεθε? τ?σο με το Βερολ?νο ?σο και με τις ζω?ς των παραπ?νω ηρ?ων. Εξαιτ?ας αυτο?, μεγ?λο μ?ρος του βιβλ?ου αφιερ?νεται στη φυσικ?, σε θεωρ?ες και επιστ?μονες. Μη ξεχν?με ?τι ο τ?λος του βιβλ?ου αφορ? το «ω» στοιχε?ο μελ?της του Α?νστ?ιν. Τ?λος, η εμφ?νιση της φοιτ?τριας κιν/φου Ν?μπουλα, η οπο?α διατηρε? «σχ?σεις» με τις νεοναζιστικ?ς οργαν?σεις της π?λης, αν και στην αρχ? θα περ?σει απαρατ?ρητη, στην πορε?α θα αποτελ?σει τη λ?ση στο μυστ?ριο που κρ?βει ο Ντε Χ?ιρ.

Το Omega Minor ε?ναι ?να π?ρα πολ? σκληρ? βιβλ?ο και η αν?γνωσ? του αποτελε? ?θλο, ?χι λ?γω του ?γκου του (σ.822) ?σο λ?γω του περιεχομ?νου του. Ο Verhaeghen δε?χνει γυμν? και ?χι καλυμμ?να γεγον?τα που ?σως ο?τε οι ?διοι οι ερευνητ?ς Ιστορ?ας ?χουν μ?θει ποτ?. Οι σκην?ς β?ας, κ?θε ε?δους, διαπερνο?ν ?λο το κε?μενο και χρει?ζεται μεγ?λο ψυχικ? σθ?νος για να συνεχ?σεις την αν?γνωση. Αναρωτι?ται κανε?ς μα γιατ? τ?ση φρ?κη; Το πιο φρικτ? ?μως τελικ? ε?ναι ?τι ?λα ?σα αναφ?ρει συν?βησαν πραγματικ?! Ο ?νθρωπος ?στρεψε τις επιστημονικ?ς του γν?σεις π?νω στον ?διο με σκοπ? να καταστρ?ψει και να αυτοκαταστραφε?. Τελικ? αυτ? ?ταν η Ελε?θερη Βο?ληση που ?λαβε; Η προσωποπ?ηση του Κακο? ε?ναι δι?χυτη σε ?λο το ?ργο ακ?μα και στις τελευτα?ες 200 σελ?δες που αποτελο?ν το καθαρ? μυθιστορηματικ?-φανταστικ? κομμ?τι που προσθ?τει ο συγγραφ?ας θ?λοντας να θ?σει ?να μεγ?λο «αν ε?χε γ?νει ?τσι» σε μια σειρ? πολλ?ν ερωτημ?των που διαπερνο?ν το κε?μενο.

Σε ?λο το κε?μενο ερωτ?ματα Ηθικ?ς ?σο και Φιλοσοφ?ας θ?τονται απ' ?λους τους ?ρωες με σκοπ? να προβληματ?σουν . Επιπλ?ον, οι αφηγ?σεις ?λων των ηρ?ων ?χουν μια διπλ? αν?γνωση και αυτ? ε?ναι το κα?ριο ζ?τημα που θ?λησε να θ?ξει ο συγγραφ?ας: π?σες αλ?θειες υπ?ρχουν, κατασκευασμ?νες ? μη; Η Μν?μη ?πως αναφ?ρει σε μια συν?ντευξη του ο συγγραφ?ας ε?ναι το σημαντικ?τερο για τη ζω? εν?ς ανθρ?που. Ε?ναι αυτ? τα πρ?γματα που θυμ?ται (? που θ?λει να θυμ?ται και ?πως τα θ?λει) που τον χαρακτηρ?ζουν και αν τυχ?ν χ?σει τη μν?μη του (βλ.N?σος Αλτσχ?ιμερ) θα π?ψει να υφ?σταται. Ωστ?σο το βιβλ?ο γρ?φητηκε για να θυμ?σει ?τι τα ?κρα δεν ε?ναι αδ?νατο να κυριαρχ?σουν στη ζω? μας. Ε?τε αυτ? αφορ?ν προσωπικ?ς συμπεριφορ?ς, ε?τε πολιτικ?ς & ιδεολογικ?ς που θα επηρε?σουν μια κοινων?α ολ?κληρη. Και η ?γνοια, ηθελημ?νη ? μη, του παρελθ?ντος αποτελε? κλειδ? για την αν?δειξ? τους.

Ο Paul Verhaeghen ?γραψε ομολογουμ?νως ?να magnum opus για τα εγκλ?ματα, κ?θε ε?δους, που συν?βησαν τον 20ο αι?να. ?να βιβλ?ο κραυγ? για αυτ? που δεν λ?γονται και δεν μαθα?νονται. ?να βιβλ?ο που διαπν?εται απ? τα ?ργα του Κ?φκα, του Ρ?λκε αλλ? και του «Φ?ουστ» του Γκα?τε. ?να βιβλ?ο που θυμ?ζει ?τι το Κακ? δεν καταστρ?φεται ε?κολα και ?τι η φ?ση του ανθρ?που ε?ναι π?ντα δισυπ?στατη. Μετ? την αν?γνωσ? του αντιμετωπ?ζει κανε?ς πολ? πιο κριτικ? ορισμ?να πρ?γματα, ?πως την ζωγραφικ? του Jackson Pollock (βλ. εξ?φυλλο του βιβλ?ου).

Το βιβλ?ο βραβε?τηκε με το «Ferdinand Bordewijk Prize» το 2005 και με το «Independent Foreign Fiction Prize» το 2008. Αρκετο? κριτικο? λογοτεχν?ας το συγκρ?νουν με ?ργα του William T. Vollmann, του Don DeLillo, του Thomas Pynchon και του David Foster Wallace.

Charles says

I've just finished reading *Omega Minor* by the Belgian novelist Paul Verhaeghen, a cognitive psychologist now working in the States. Originally published in Dutch, this enormous novel – 700 pages of closely-printed text - was translated into English by its author, winning the Independent Foreign Fiction prize in the process. The English, like the novel itself, is constantly inventive, and slightly quirky; Verhaeghen has stated that he decided to do the translation himself after seeing the lamentable job a professional translator had done of a section of the book, and I can well believe it. It isn't a job I'd have taken on willingly, and certainly not at the rates a work this size inevitably attracts if it's to exist at all. It's a sprawling, superficially confused, engagingly unwieldy sort of book that resists unity of style, that resists, in many ways, any kind of unity at all, except that provided by its existence as an attractive, slightly austere, well-made physical artefact, for which we have, once more, the Dalkey Archive to thank.

The narrative arc of the novel covers much of the last century, with key events clustering around the opposing poles of the Second World War and the destruction of the Berlin wall. Geographically, its heart is Berlin, although long sections are set in New York and Los Alamos, and one short section in an improbably glamorous Bath, a place I suspect Verhaeghen has never seen. It's a book that barely acknowledges a world beyond that defined by mid-twentieth century Europe and the post-war diaspora, except – in the case of Japan - as a target for the nuclear bomb. There's no reason why it should. It has more than enough on its plate as it is.

You can read the rest of my review [here](#).

NickdjSero says

The greek edition is about 900 pages. For about 300 pages i was struggling to read it, thought it was boring, but i was Wrong!!! One of the greatest books i've ever read, the time i dedicated just worth it. Reading it just once certainly is not enough, you cant get deep inside all its meanings and conclusions.

Wim Van says

Wat een immens, overweldigend boek. Een huzarenstuk. En toch maar vier sterren, omdat er hier en daar een stevige taalfout staat. Onder andere twee dt-fouten. Ronduit pijnlijk, zoiets.

Matt says

I suppose the parts I loved outweighed the parts I absolutely hated in order for me to give it four stars.

MJ Nicholls says

Can't stretch to five stars. Close. Paul Verhaeghen is a former Netherlander teaching in Atlanta as Associate Professor of Psychology at Georgia Tech (as of writing). An unlikely candidate to produce a megalithic masterwork—and he hasn't, not really. He has produced an excellent, engaging and complex take on the Holocaust and Hiroshima intertwined with a pulp-ish thriller spiced with embarrassing but sincere erotic moments, full of eminently quotable material (see below) and staggeringly erudite digressions. I have long since abandoned summarising Dalkey books so if a plot breakdown ye be seeking—try Google or its tax-paying rival Alta Vista. Each narrator uses the same lyrical mode of narration and this can make the sudden POV changes harder to follow, but the style works for the most wrenching moments of the Holocaust survivor's tale: where it matters. His skill at turning a strange, profound (or profound-sounding) phrase is seemingly endless, and although his language screams "EPIC!" it has a tenderness and gravity lacking in other books of its ilk—*The Kindly Ones*, for example. PV falters on romance and sex. His romance is forced Foer-like sentiment and his sex descriptions are too genital—all spurts and semen. *Omega Minor*, for those seeking an original take on the Holocaust or simply a work of labyrinthine lyricism, is rarely bland. A dazzling structural success? Perhaps. A triumph of plotting? Perhaps. A frequently witty, delicately horrendous opus *par excellence*? Oui.

Jason Lundberg says

Four narrative strands, seemingly unrelated, sometimes told consecutively in the first person (so the reader has to figure out who's speaking), encompassing 50 years of Berlin history, the Nazi regime, the rise of communism, and the Manhattan Project. Somehow, it manages to not fall apart under its great ambition, and reveals moments of great empathy and emotion. And sex, lots of sex. Nothing is what it seems, and no one,

and the stylistic prose is absolutely compelling through all 700 pages. Winner of the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize and the Flemish Culture Award for Fiction.
