



Point Omega: A Novel

By Don DeLillo

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A brief, unnerving, and exceptionally hard-hitting novel about time and loss as only the bestselling and National Book Award-winning author of *White Noise* and *Underworld* can tell it.

In this potent and beautiful novel, the writer *The New York Times* calls “prophetic about twenty-first-century America” looks into the mind and heart of a scholar who was recruited to help the military conceptualize the war.

We see Richard Elster at the end of his service. He has retreated to the desert, in search of space and geologic time. There he is joined by a filmmaker and by Elster’s daughter Jessica—an “otherworldly” woman from New York. The three of them build an odd, tender intimacy, something like a family. Then a devastating event turns detachment into colossal grief, and it is a human mystery that haunts the landscape of desert and mind.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

[Signature]Reviewed by Dan FespermanIt's hardly a new experience to emerge from a Don DeLillo novel feeling faintly disturbed and disoriented. This is both a charm and a curse of much of his fiction, a reason he is so exciting to some readers and so irritating to others (notably George Will). And in the 117-page *Point Omega*, DeLillo's lean prose is so spare and concentrated that the aftereffects are more powerful than usual. Reading it is akin to a brisk hike up a desert mountain—a trifle arid, perhaps, but with occasional views of breathtaking grandeur. There is no room for false steps, and even the sure-footed will want to double back now and then to check for signs they might have missed along the way. Holding down the book's center is a pair of inward-looking men: Jim Finley, a middle-aged filmmaker who, in the words of his estranged wife, is too serious about art but not serious enough about life; and the much older Richard Elster, a sort of Bush-era Dr. Strangelove without the accent or the comic props. We join them at Elster's rustic desert hideaway in California, where Elster has retreated into the emptiness of time and space following his departure from the Bush-Cheney team of planners for the Iraq War. Elster had been recruited to serve as a sort of conceptual guru, but he left in disillusionment after plans for the haiku war he preferred bogged down in numbers and nitty gritty. Finley hopes to coax Elster into sharing that experience while the camera rolls. He envisions a minimalist work in which Elster will speak in one continuous take while standing against a blank wall in Brooklyn. Anyone recalling the Bush aide who anonymously boasted in 2004 that the Administration would create our own reality to reshape the post 9-11 world will easily detect echoes of that dreamy hubris in Elster's big declarations. As the two men float ever further from the moorings of the cities they left behind, the going gets a little tedious. One suspects DeLillo is setting them up for a fall, especially when Elster maintains they're closing in on the omega point, a concept postulating an eventual leap out of our biology, as Elster puts it, an ultimate evolution in which brute matter becomes analytical human thought. DeLillo delivers on this threat with a visit by Elster's twenty-something daughter, Jessie. From there, the dynamics of human tensions and tragedy take over, laying bare the vanity of intellectual abstraction, and making the omega point loom like empty words on a horizon of deadly happenstance. Along the way, DeLillo is at his best rendering micro-moments of the inner life. That's all the more impressive seeing as how Elster himself seemingly warns off the author from attempting any such thing, by saying in the first chapter, The true life is not reducible to words spoken or written, not by anyone, ever. From time to time, at least, DeLillo proves him wrong. *Dan Fesperman is the author of six novels, most recently The Arms Maker of Berlin. His next, Layover in Dubai, will be published in July by Knopf.*

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

As nearly every reviewer of *Point Omega* noted, it is hard for an author of as many great books as Don DeLillo to write anything that will not be assessed in the shadow of his earlier work. They then proceeded to do so. Some critics, noting that this novella is not nearly as enmeshed with American life as the author's longer works, defended DeLillo's right to do something different. Others saw continuities with recent titles, claiming that in *Omega Point*, DeLillo finally achieves the mystical minimalism he sought in books like *Falling Man*. But many critics saw *Omega Point* as an attenuated version of the author's best work or, at worst, a kind of self-parody. But all seemed so fascinated by DeLillo that even if *Omega Point* is just a shadow of his best-known works, they were willing to stand in it for a little while.

From [Booklist](#)

In a house in the desert, two men play a waiting game: Jim Finley waits for his host, Richard Elster, to decide whether he will appear in Finley's planned film. Elster is to stand in front of a wall and explain his

role in planning the war in Iraq. Finley believes that Elster's unedited defense would be self-revealing, that the unblinking camera eye would elicit some truth larger than words. Elster, wary, toys with Finley. Gazing at the desert, he thinks in terms of geologic time, justifying himself with theories about humankind's longing for extinction. His ability to find consolation in pure theory, however, is flustered by the arrival of his daughter. Although readers will suspect early on that Finley's film will never be made, the direction of this drama is still hard to predict. Framed by an account of a man obsessed with Douglas Gordon's art installation, "24 Hour Psycho" (Alfred Hitchcock's film slowed to glacial pace), this slim novel is rich with ideas about objectivity and complicity, and time and transformation. Its subject is a satisfying next step from DeLillo's 9/11-themed *Falling Man* (2007), although, compared to the devastating conclusion of that novel, this one feels almost bloodless. Its spare topography will prompt close analysis, but, ultimately, it's no more self-revealing than its war-architect subject. --Keir Graff

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Raul Joyner:

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