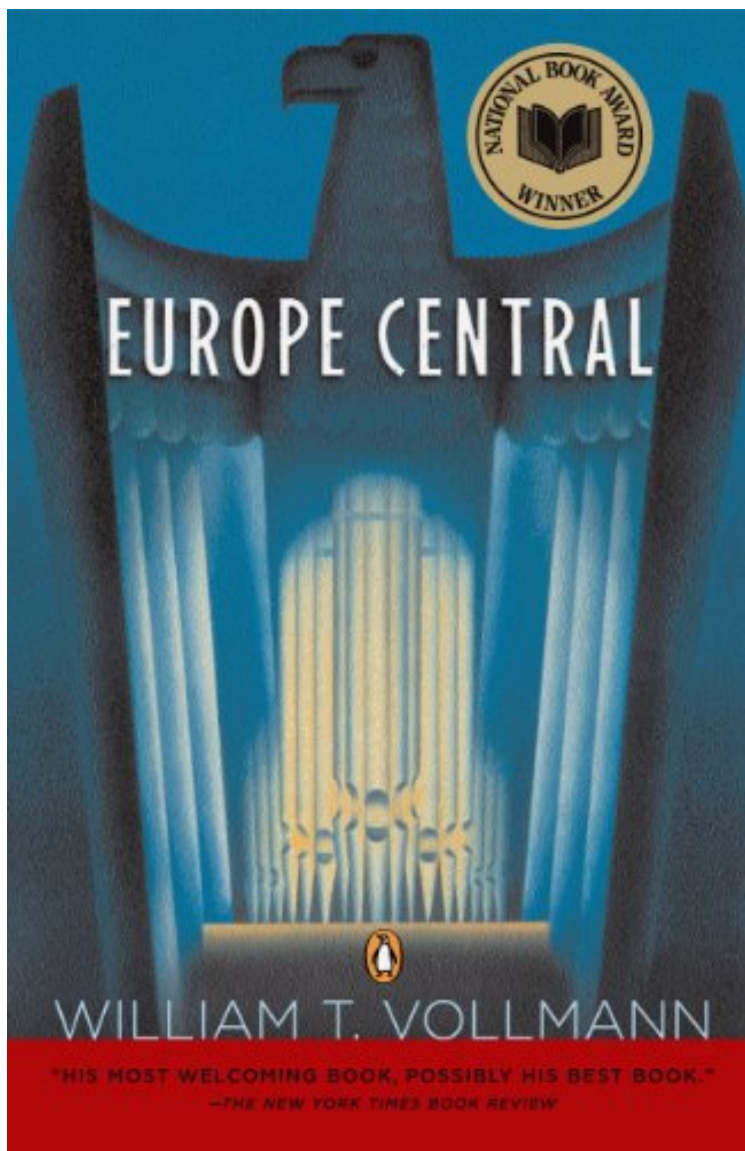


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Europe Central

Von William T. Vollmann

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Von William T. Vollmann : Europe Central before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Europe Central:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 3 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. sehr klisierte rollendarstellungVon anja kyia dragersehr klisierte rollendarstellung, was bei der ambition dieses grossen wurfes als besonders rgerlich auffllt. die plumpe, geschlechtsspezifische adjektivverwendung ist unverstndlich und fillt bereits auf den ersten seiten als strend auf. schade.1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. This book

is awesome
Von Mr O Thorn-Seshold
If you love dark, powerful stories of obsession and history, Vollmann's book will floor you. These interwoven, semi-fictionalised histories of many individuals, German and Russian, in their own struggles for survival, truth or love during the dictatorship era is gripping and completely unlike any other books I've read. If you also happen to be a Shostakovich fan, then this book is one you have to keep next to your bed! Get it, and dare to dive in.
18 von 20 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Disappointing, almost Superfluous
Von E. Z. Lindell
I had entertained high hopes for this book but found it ultimately unsatisfying. The book has occasionally and most erroneously been compared with War and Peace. Where Tolstoi's masterpiece is epic in scope and well structured, Vollmann's work is shallow and unconnected; Tolstoi sweeps the reader away in long chapters with deep and ever-changing characters and then weaves them together into a complex historical tapestry. Vollmann's characters never achieve much depth and the chapters are often not more than two or three pages in length and presuppose an almost unfair breadth of historical knowledge. What is particularly distracting is Vollmann's penchant to jump around in history, thereby ensuring that his narratives are never closely interwoven. The lack of chronological order is a major fault and we never get to see the same historical moment viewed from both the German and Russian side - something that I had really been looking forward to. Having said that, the book did awaken an interest in some of the central protagonists. For instance, I found myself reading up on some of Vollmann's meticulously footnoted sources about General Vlasov. It is perhaps telling that I actually enjoyed reading Strik-Strikfeldt's "Against Stalin and Hitler 1941-1945" a lot more than Europe Central. One long and rather detailed sub-section of the book also had me curious enough to look into the life and music of Shostakovich. The intellectual battle of the great Russian composer against an unforgiving Soviet bureaucracy as described by Vollmann did manage to make an impression on me and I can confidently say that you will be certain to listen to Shostakovich's music in a different light. While the sections on Shostakovich, Vlasov and Paulus were certainly the more structured, longer and therefore more memorable parts of the book, they are not enough to make up for several disconcerted and rather tedious chapters. A reader could in theory skip vast tracts of the book and simply cherry-pick the sections of interest without worrying about missing any overarching theme. In this fashion, the book is somewhat like a dusty history book - only with the key difference that it fails to deliver the knowledge often gained through reading a well-researched work. Vollmann should either stick to history or fiction but should avoid trying the well-nigh impossible task of merging the two into a work of non-fiction fiction.

Kurzbeschreibung
A daring literary masterpiece and winner of the National Book Award. In this magnificent work of fiction, acclaimed author William T. Vollmann turns his trenchant eye on the authoritarian cultures of Germany and the USSR in the twentieth century to render a mesmerizing perspective on human experience during wartime. Through interwoven narratives that paint a composite portrait of these two battling leviathans and the monstrous age they defined, Europe Central captures a chorus of voices both real and fictional: a young German who joins the SS to fight its crimes, two generals who collaborate with the enemy for different reasons, the Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich and the Stalinist assaults upon his work and life.
From Publishers Weekly
In the small set of America's best contemporary novelists, Vollmann is the perpetual comet. Every two years or so he flashes across the sky with another incredibly learned, incredibly written, incredibly long novel. Two years ago, with Argall, he easily bested John Barth in the writing of 17th-century prose while taking up the tired story of the settlement of Jamestown and making it absolutely riveting. His latest departs from his usual themes--the borders between natives and Westerners, or prostitutes and johns--to take on Central Europe in the 20th century. "The winged figures on the bridges of Berlin are now mostly flown, for certain things went wrong in Europe...." What went wrong is captured in profiles of real persons (Kathe Kollwitz, Kurt Gerstein, Dmitri Shostakovich, General Paulus and General Vlasov) as well as mythic personages (a shape-shifting Nazi communications officer and creatures from the German mythology Wagner incorporated into his operas). Operation Barbarossa--the German advance into Russia in 1941, and the subsequent German defeat at Stalingrad and Kursk--is central here, with the prewar and postwar scenes radiating out from it, as though the war were primary, not the nations engaged in it. The strongest chapter is a retelling of Kurt Gerstein's life; Gerstein was the SS officer who tried to warn the world about the concentration camps while working as the SS supply agent for the gas chambers. The weakest sections of the book are devoted to the love triangle between Shostakovich, Elena Konstantinovskaya and film director Roman Karmen. Throughout, Vollman develops counternarratives to memorialize those millions who paid the penalties of history. Few American writers infuse their writing with similar urgency. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
From Booklist
"We have a Motherland and they have a Fatherland. Their child is Europe Central," muses one of the many sly narrators in this grand matrix of paired stories about moments of truth during the most brutal conflict of World War II, the war between Russia and Germany. Following his landmark opus on violence, *Rising Up and Rising Down* (2003), Vollmann, a master of synthesis and an intense and compassionate writer, presents an epic inquiry into the nature of conscience and survival in catastrophic times. His guiding light is the Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich, who managed to create works of profound elegiac beauty under the murderous censorship of Stalin's regime, and not only

does Vollmann empathetically portray this controversial figure, he also emulates the rich drama of his music. In spite of the massiveness of this zealously researched creation (replete with 50 pages of notes), *Europe Central* is a work of compelling intimacy as Vollmann imagines the inner lives of individuals caught up in an orgy of hate, fear, and apocalyptic violence. Here are provocative portraits of the German artist Kathe Kollwitz; the revered Russian poet Anna Akhmatova; translator Elena Konstantinovskaya, whom Vollmann casts as the love of Shostakovich's tormented life; and the "spy for God," Kurt Gerstein, an SS officer who tries to tell the disbelieving world the truth about the Holocaust. Working, as is his wont, on a monumental scale that embodies the full complexity of the dilemmas and horrors he grapples with, Vollmann opens new portals onto a genocidal war never to be forgotten, and illuminates both the misery and beauty human beings engender. Donna Seaman

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