

Black Inc. Book Club Notes

TITLE: Factory 19
AUTHOR: Dennis Glover
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SUBJECT: Literary Fiction

Book description

*They tell us that human happiness lies only in the future.
But what if it really lies in the past?*

Hobart, 2022: a city with declining population, in the grip of a dark recession. A rusty ship sails into the harbour and begins to unload its cargo on the site of the once famous but now abandoned Gallery of Future Art, known to the world as GoFA.

One day the city's residents are awoken by a high-pitched sound no one has heard for two generations – a factory whistle. GoFA's owner, world-famous tycoon Dundas Faussett, is creating his most ambitious installation yet. He's going to defeat the internet's dominance over our lives by establishing a new Year Zero: 1948. Those whose jobs and lives have been destroyed by Amazon and Uber and Airbnb are invited to fight back in the only way that can possibly succeed: by living as if the internet and the smartphone had never been invented.

The hold over our lives by Gates, Bezos, Musk, Zuckerberg and the rest starts to loosen as the revolutionary example of Factory 19 spreads. Can nostalgia really defeat the future? Can the little people win back the world? We are about to find out.

'Like Orwell, of whom he has written so brilliantly, Dennis Glover's work is charged with courage, intelligence and purpose. He is the complete writer, and one made for our times.' —DON WATSON



About the author

Dennis Glover, the son of factory labourers, grew up in a town just like Factory 19. Educated at Monash and Cambridge universities, he has made a career as one of Australia's leading speechwriters and political commentators. His first novel, *The Last Man in Europe*, was nominated for several literary prizes, including the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction. *Factory 19* is his second novel.



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Praise for *The Last Man in Europe*

‘This is a richly imagined piece of writing, which provides a fascinating insight into the mind of one of the great thinkers of the last century.’ —**AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW MAGAZINE**

‘Dennis Glover’s account of Orwell is so compelling and so wonderfully written that I read it all in one go. It’s a ludicrously ambitious premise for a novel, but somehow – exhilaratingly – Glover pulls it off. Ten out of ten.’
—**ANNABEL CRABB**

‘As the ice caps melt and fake news sticks in our throats, *The Last Man in Europe* makes *Nineteen Eighty-Four* bite all over again.’ —**THE AUSTRALIAN**

‘*The Last Man in Europe* is clearly the product of a love of Orwell’s work ... It is a remarkable and timely book.’
—**FRANK BONGIORNO, THE MONTHLY**

‘I doubt literary biography will ever recover. Glover is so good with character, place and politics. He’s so clever telling you all you need to know while pretending you know it already. Great with pain. You never have a sense that Orwell is rattling down a familiar track. Each step is into the unknown. It’s thrilling.’ —**DAVID MARR**

‘*The Last Man in Europe* ... is a unique and thought-provoking work, intellectually challenging and emotionally rich. It will likely compel readers back to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* — never a bad thing — and force them to take a look at the world around themselves, to consider warnings unheeded.’ —**TORONTO STAR**

‘This imaginative work is an unexpected treat for fans of George Orwell. The Barcelona scenes are especially memorable, cinematic in their brightness. The more you know of Orwell, the more you will enjoy it. This, finally, is the biography—even though a novel—that Orwell deserves.’
—**THOMAS E. RICKS, WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE AND AUTHOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER CHURCHILL AND ORWELL: THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM**

Discussion Points

1. The book is set in a near-future Hobart that has seen a declining population since the closure of Dundas Fausset’s Gallery of Future Art. What kind of a man is Dundas? Why did he choose Hobart as the location for Factory 19?
2. We are told the story of Factory 19 by narrator Paul Richey after the events have played out. Discuss the structure of the book and Paul’s retrospective narration of the decisions he, Dundas and Bobbie made in their attempts at building the past.
3. The intrusion of digital devices in our lives is an oft-debated topic. Discuss the idea of technology as intrusion and how you interact with your own devices.
4. In the book, The Department of Everyday Life Administration attempts to revert language to an earlier form by eradicating memes/emoticons. Do you think this is a bad thing? How does technology change our communication?
5. Dundas believes that the past will triumph in its second iteration because lessons have been learned from past mistakes. How does this play out? Do you think the concept of utopia is achievable?
6. Discuss the political ideologies looked at in the book and the issues of trying to recreate past structures of power in a modern society.
7. Nostalgia plays a big part in the story of Factory 19. We find at the end that the factory is a monument to Dundas’ lost childhood. What era would you recreate if you could, and why?
8. In a newspaper clipping that Paul reads to Dundas and Bobbie, the factory is accused of populism, relying on young people unhappy with ‘surveillance capitalism’. Has our society reached a tipping point in relation to surveillance capitalism?

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9. One night in the beer tent, Penelope realises that the band is playing music written in the 1950s. Paul observes, 'It was our first intimation that keeping people in 1948 might not be as easy as we thought.' Why do you think the workers begin to move forward in time?

10. At Bobbie's speech to the workers announcing the new Digital Device Police, Barney observes that the chanting crowd is 'like that novel – the one written in 1948'. Why do you think Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is mentioned here? What parallels are there between the worlds of both books? What other mentions of Orwell and his works appear in *Factory 19*?

11. How did you think the book would end? What do you think about Paul and Penelope's decision to abandon *Factory 19*?

12. What does the book say about power, privilege and wealth? How does Dundas – a rich white man – differ (or not differ) from the Gates, Bezos, Musks and Zuckerbergs that he believes are ruining the world?