

chapel—a place of candlelight and flickering shadow reminiscent of T. S. Eliot’s use of the same image in his poem *The Waste Land* (1922)—and descends into madness in a scene that is one of the strangest and most interesting, if disturbing, conclusions to a novel in literature. The countryside is no more realistically described than the city—they are indistinguishable as physical places since neither is treated in any detail—but Barnes’s unique style creates an eerie sense that life is most fully lived at night and in the dark, that “surreality” is more important than daylight “reality” or consciousness. Barnes’s treatment of place in *Nightwood*, like the other aspects of plot and character development, is at the service of the novel’s dark and deeply ambiguous, but ultimately quite moral, theme: that “Man was born damned and innocent from the start, and wretchedly—as he must—on those two themes—whistles his tune.”

—Ronald Foust

## Nineteen Eighty-Four

*Author:* George Orwell (1903–1950)

*First published:* 1949

*Type of work:* Novel

*Type of plot:* Science fiction

*Time of plot:* 1984

*This novel uses aspects of place to suggest the direction and scope of change in a future dystopian London. Place names are emblematic and ironic; locale both influences and reflects characters’ behaviors and states of mind. The general conditions and maintenance of buildings and neighborhood infrastructures correspond to a hierarchy of importance reflecting the changes in values and ideology of the grotesque world order, whose evolution the novel depicts.*

**\*London.** Capital of a future (from the perspective of 1949, when George Orwell wrote the book) political unit called **Airstrip One** in the superstate Oceania that is the setting for the novel. London’s skyline is dominated by four government ministries, whose enormous bulk and tasteless architecture distinguish them from the surviving historical structures surrounding them. Residential sectors of the city segregate members of the unnamed Party from proles (“proletarians”), but both Proles and Outer Party members live in crumbling tenement buildings that are unsanitary, crowded, and poorly maintained. Police patrols are highly visible; posters of Big Brother—the ever-present, seemingly loving personification of the state—are ubiquitous.

The city’s squalor is symptomatic of the Ingsoc government’s disdain for the welfare of its own citizens. This is the result of a change in the fundamental principles and core values of the society; human rights are nonexistent, and all available resources support building and maintaining government structures that administer and preserve the collective. The life of the individual is barren; this barrenness is suggested by lack of luxury, beauty, and privacy.

Inner Party member Winston Smith has a fascination with the past that he acts out by paying clandestine visits to the oldest and meanest areas of the city, where the proles live and work. Because the proles are considered by Inner Party leaders to be beneath concern, their sectors are largely ignored by the government and have become *de facto* museums of prerevolutionary culture, customs, and mores. Only within the prole neighborhoods can Winston enjoy the smell of real coffee, the sounds of unconstrained conversation and songs, and the sights of uninhibited children playing and adults gathering to talk—all of which reminds Winston of his own childhood and suggest the complexity and fullness of prerevolutionary life.

**Victory Mansions.** Run-down London building in which Winston has a flat on the seventh floor. The building has bad plumbing, no heat, a broken elevator, and the inescapable stench of rancid cabbage. The one thing in the building that works flawlessly is its network of telescreens, which broadcast ceaseless propaganda and, in turn, watch residents through television cameras.

**Charrington’s shop.** Cramped, dilapidated antique store in a prole sector of London that Winston frequents. He sees the shop as a microcosmic remnant of the past, but it is, in fact, a carefully maintained surveillance tool. Its upstairs apartment, which Winston rents for trysts with Julia, becomes the place of their downfall. Though infested by biting bedbugs and large, aggressive rats, the room also has a private entrance to facilitate Winston and Julia’s secret meetings. There they abandon themselves to sensuality only because they think the room has no telescreen. However, it does have a telescreen, which, ironically, is obscured by something that would never be found in the home of a Party member—an engraving of a medieval church. The illusion of privacy leads Winston and Julia to incriminate themselves, and furthermore leads Winston inadvertently to betray his abject horror of rats to the Thought Police watching him and Julia through the telescreen.

**Ministry of Truth.** Government ministry building in which Winston is one of many writers who revise historical records to match the government’s constantly changing definitions of

*\*Asterisk denotes entries on real places.*

reality. Each time Oceania's military alliances shift, history must be rewritten to show that Oceania has always had the same allies and same enemies. Winston often rewrites the same news stories many times, making something different happen each time, and he comes to appreciate the power of the government precept that whoever controls the past controls the future.

**Ministry of Love.** Site of Winston and Julia's detention, torture, and reintegration into the Party. One of four enormous pyramidal steel and concrete structures that dominate the London skyline, "Miniluv" has no windows. Standing behind heavily guarded barricades, it is protected by barbed wire and automatic gun pods. Inside, brilliant lights gleam on sparkling clean white walls, which Winston comes to think of as "the place where there is no darkness," a phrase he remembers either from a prescient dream or from his confused memory. The absence of clocks and windows creates a sense that time is suspended or has no influence, an impression rendered more powerful by the contrast with life outside, where all activities are maintained on a rigorous schedule. Thus Miniluv becomes a mockery of heaven, and by extension, Winston's indoctrination and reintegration into the Party by O'Brien become a mockery of the loving inclusion into Paradise and communion with God promised by the saints.

**Golden Country.** Place about which Winston dreams frequently. It is an abandoned pasture that, although once hedged, is being reclaimed by nature. Winston associates it at first with the distant past, and early in the novel, dreams of having a sexual encounter with Julia here; after this dream, he awakens speaking the word "Shakespeare." Less than a month later, Winston and Julia have their first sexual experience in a rural spot outside London that Winston realizes is almost identical to the place of his dreams. In the midst of his first encounter with Julia, the Golden Country comes to represent for him an animal sensuality unburdened by reason, the antithesis of calculation and cold restraint. Such freedom, for Winston, is possible only in a place largely untainted not just by Ingsoc, but also by the political and philosophical milieu from which it has arisen. The disappearing traces of human domination and the return of the pasture to an idyllic state suggest perhaps not just a yearning for the past, but also a hope for the future. Nevertheless, it is a hope so wild that Winston can hardly allow himself to indulge it except in dream.

**Chestnut Tree Café.** Sidewalk coffeehouse associated with Party members who have been reintegrated and subsequently targeted for vaporization. Early in the novel, Winston destroys an exculpatory newspaper photograph of three

enemies of Big Brother whom he later sees at the café, *before* their disappearances but *after* their much-publicized but false confessions. A year later, in the novel's final episode, Winston himself, now a doomed outcast, again sits at the café, drinking sweetened clove-flavored gin, the café specialty, and solving newspaper chess problems. As the telescreen announces a military victory for Oceania's armies, Winston, who throughout the novel has reacted to such questionable government claims with cynical skepticism, can no longer resist proclaiming his joy and his love for Big Brother.

**Oceania.** One of three superstates that cover most of the globe. The superstates are conglomerates of nations and regions that first formed alliances then annealed into new entities under the pressures of revolution. The three states are engaged in a constant state of war and shifting alliances, on which Ingsoc broadcasts interminable news bulletins through the telescreens. Oceania itself comprises the lands of the Western Hemisphere, Australia and its surrounding islands, the British Islands, and part of Southern Africa. The easternmost province of Oceania is **Airstrip One**, which corresponds to what had once been the United Kingdom.

**Eastasia.** Superstate that comprises China, Southeast Asia, Japan and its surrounding islands, and varying portions of Manchuria, Mongolia, and Tibet.

**Eurasia.** Superstate that comprises most of Europe and northern Asia, from Portugal to eastern Siberia. When the novel opens, Oceania is at war with Eurasia; when it ends, Eurasia is Oceania's ally.

—Andrew B. Preslar

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## No Country for Old Men

*Author:* Cormack McCarthy (1933– )

*First published:* 2005

*Type of work:* Novel

*Type of plot:* Crime

*Time of plot:* 1980s

*South Texas and Mexico provide the backdrop for this crime drama, which, although set in the early 1980s, is the modern equivalent of a western "shoot-em-up" story from a century earlier, complete with a sheriff on horseback and a vicious Mexican killer. The historic role of Texas as a territory of outlaws and lawmen is updated when heroin replaces the classic gold, stolen from a stagecoach. While hunting in the hot, barren south Texas plains, protagonist Llewelyn Moss finds the remains of a drug deal gone bad in which Mexican heroin manufacturers, and the Americans*

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