George Orwell's nightmarish visions of a society in the future where men would be subjected to impersonal, totalitarian forces figure amongst the most renowned literary texts of the twentieth century. His writing clearly draws on several genres: historical allegory, as he observes the evils of fascism and communism in the world between and after the world wars; science fiction, as he portrays a world in the future ruled by technology, scientific materialism and political manipulation; journalism as he instils vivid realism and clinical precision in his readings of society; and satire, as he attempts to read the general trends and tendencies of his era and warn against the blindness and ignorance that can lead to cultural or political enslavement.

The extract to be analysed here is taken from what is probably Orwell's most famous novel, *1984* (along with *Animal Farm*, the political fable allegorising the Russian revolution) written in 1949, in other words after the dramatic and devastating rise and fall of Hitler and the horrors of the second world war, and at the very beginning of the cold war, as Stalinist Russia gave a new face to tyranny and oppression. The passage is taken from part 2, chapter 9, and the reader quickly realises s/he is in the heart of the narrative. Winston, the protagonist, is clearly known to the reader who has been following the story from the beginning, and the book he is passed during the Hate speeches suggests a new and ominous development in the plot. Although this is only a short extract from a long and complex work, it offers clear insights into the world Orwell was portraying. The life of the individual bureaucrat, subjected to the whims and dictates of the state, is clearly seen through Winston's recent life. The way the state functions, imposing beliefs, facts and even emotions on its citizens, is illustrated by the descriptions of Hate Week. And the suggestion of a secret or subversive resistance is built up by the suspense around the book, the way Winston reads it, and its contents. The passage also illustrates the way Orwell uses narrative strategies such as setting, the flash back and focalisation to capture his reader's imagination. I shall explore the question of narrative technique first, to see how the omniscient narrator is controlling the story, before looking at the theme of the individual, the body and the inner life, contrasted with the collective, external, machine of public life. The question of reading, and textual subversion, will be considered last of all.

The narrator's omniscient voice is clear from the opening words “Winston was gelatinous with fatigue”, as we realise straightforwardly that the narrator has access to the life and inner thoughts of his protagonist. Narrative omniscience is then revealed by a different technique, as the narrator suspends the time of the narrative a the end of paragraph one, to create a huge flashback covering the whole of the preceding week: “he had worked more than 90 hours in 5 days...Now it was all over” “On the sixth day of hate week”, “Each time Winston broke off for one of his spells of sleep” “By the third day”, “On the morning of the sixth day”, “At twelve hundred exactly”. It is only towards the very end of the passage “With a sort of voluptuous creaking” that the narrator returns us to the initial situation and continues the description of his arrival at Charrington's shop. This analepsis may have several purposes, but it certainly creates a sense of suspense since in the second paragraph we understand that Winston is nervous about patrols, and that he is carrying “the book” which he has “had in possession for 6 days”, but despite the definite article, we do not yet know what book it is.
The flashback not only describes the nightmarish behaviour of the crowd, but narrates the intriguing encounter during which Winston is passed the book (“a man whose face he did not see had tapped him on the shoulder”. And Winston’s instant understanding that “it would be days before he had an opportunity to look inside it” only makes sense when we realise that as a result of state affairs, the workers from the Ministry will be required to rewrite history. The delay caused by the flashback also allows the reader to understand better why Winston feels so utterly exhausted, and can also help explain why the sensation of reading gives him such sensations of delight.

The extract from the book he reads is another means by which the narrator shifts his voice and his position in the text. As soon as the reader reaches the words “The theory and practice of Oligarchical Collectivism” they know that they are now in a text within the text, reading the exact words Winston is reading, and that a different narrative voice has thus taken over. This creates an interesting narrative effect which also enforces the power of the external narrator who can move in and out of the text. At some points the narrative voice is absent (in the quoted paragraph from Goldstein’s text), sometimes present detailing recent events and showing strict control of the plot, and sometimes intimate and secret, as the world is seen through Winston’s eyes, thus encouraging the reader to identify with Winston.

Winston is indeed the only character with any psychological depth in this extract. He is presented as a single, vulnerable, acutely sensitive individual, thus creating a striking contrast with the brute force of the crowd he observes during hate week. In the opening paragraph of the extract, he is seen not only as individual, but as almost breaking up, as if his life were draining out of him (“gelatinous” “weakness of a jelly” “frail structure of nerves, bones and skin”). The reader also has the impression that he is so drained of energy that his body ceases to function as a coordinated whole, but as a sum of parts (hand, blood, lymph, shoulders, feet, joints, knee, sin of his leg). When this description is compared to the massive crowd scene, we see that the crowd too seems to be made of parts of bodies (white faces, arms, skull, bony arm, ). The reader gradually gains the impression that the state functions by taking over the very bodies of the people, as if they have no independent physical existence. In Winston’s case, however, he seems acutely aware of what the state is doing to him, which we can later link to his role as a subversive voice or presence in the state machine.

The description of the crowd scene also insists on Winston’s separation or his difference from those around him. It is through his eyes that the reader sees the immense crowd packing a London square (several thousand people, a thousand children, thousands of throats), and the long list of nouns describing the events also shows Winston’s position as onlooker not partaking in the rally: “the processions, the speeches, the shouting, the singing, the banners...”. A similar rhetorical effect of enumeration (or asyndeton) is achieved some lines later (atrocities, massacres, deportations, lootings, rapings, etc” The effect of such accumulations is double. First it seems to suggest the insistent way in which the speaker himself is drumming home the message of his speech. Second, it implies that this is how Eurasia functions, overloading the senses with highly charged words that seem to enforce a few of reality from which there is no escaping. Excess, in any case, seems to be the prime characteristic of Eurasia. Excess because it organises a Hate Week with rallies every day. Excess because of the extreme violence with which political rallies are staged “he gripped the neck of the microphone ...” and the hysterical reactions from the crowd that are being provoked (“delirium”; “feral roars of rage were again bursting from the crowd”) and excess too...
because facts are being obviously and outrageously deformed and history is being rewritten in front of everyone’s eyes, yet no-one, except Winston who stands outside this delirium, seems to notice or care.

The same division between Winston the lone individual, and the faceless collective state is present in the descriptions of his workplace (ironically named the Ministry of Truth,) where the use of the passive voice and impersonal structures suggests the presence of work colleagues submitting to the same intensity and absurdity of work pressures as him, but about which we earn nothing: “no directive was issued, it was known, were brought up, the first job was to stack, often it was enough to substitute”. In fact we learn that “a mighty deed which could never be mentioned had been achieved” thus implying that all personal encounters are avoided because no one can acknowledge the type of work they have just had to perform, as this would mean acknowledging the massive lies and propaganda produced by and for the state.

From the opening of the passage Winston is shown to be intensely sensitive to language (“Gelatinous ws the right word. It had come into his head spontaneously”) but as the extract develops, two very different visions of language emerge. On the one hand there is Winston’s precise, detailed recordings of the appalling scenes around him, and on the other, the violent, excessive rhetoric being used to manipulate the crowds and hypnotize them (“impossible to listen without being first convinced then maddened”). In this case, the pounding lists of words seem to be emptied of any real semantic value as if nothing really had any individual meaning any more (rapings, torture, bombings, lying propaganda, unjust aggressions, broken treaties; newspapers, books pamphlets, films soundtracks). And indeed when news comes through that foreign policy has changed and Oceania is no longer an enemy but an ally, the speaker can indeed continue speaking in the same manner, with the same words, saying the complete opposite. This atrocious onslaught of words used like weapons is one part of the state’s control of language. The other part is the coining of barbaric neologisms to name the way language functions. The only examples in this passage are the “speakwrite”, some sort of fictional computer and the “telescreen”, but Orwell is famous for having coined other such terms in his novel. This manipulative, and violent use of language then contrasts completely with the passage when Winston sits down to read (“from somewhere far away there floated the far shouts of children; in the room itself …the insect voice of the clock…it was bliss”) In the safe haven of Mr Charrington’s shop, Winston is shown to be physically at ease, relaxed, comfortable. His body is no longer the burden it was before, but a source of well-being and harmony (the sweet air on his cheek, his feet up on the fender). The reader, however, may feel less at ease than Winston. First, we realise that this is a highly dangerous activity (he was alone, …no ear at the keyhole). Second the sense of well-being (it was bliss, it was eternity) seem to contrast too starkly with the outside world for it to last. Third ,the author of the book, Emmanuel Goldstein, is probably none other than the Goldstein named during the crowd seen as the public enemy, so we realise the dangers Winston might be running. Lastly, the actual contents of the book appear to be at odds with the sense of well-being Winston feels. The harsh, rather blunt style of the text, and its questionable political codes (“three kinds of people in the world, High, Middle and Low”) and peremptory claims “there have been...essential structure has never altered, will always return, …) contrast totally with his sense of happiness. Clearly reading itself is what he is enjoying rather than the actual text. But Orwell does seem to suggest that the enemies of the state are not necessarily Winston’s potential allies; and if Goldstein is a subversive state enemy he may be just as dangerous as the state itself. In
this case Winston, and Julia, the only other named character in the extract, are even more lonely and vulnerable.

The passage is a brilliant illustration of how dystopia works in Orwell’s fiction, showing a different world, not so unlike ours (the Hate Week is very reminiscent of Hitler’s public meetings) and yet which, having been built as an ideal centrally controlled society where lives would be better, spirals completely out of control to create the worst nightmare imaginable. Orwell’s *1984* is a fictional portrayal of a society gone wrong where political and historical manipulation have perverted all forms of human life. But like all dystopian satires it is also a chilling warning showing how quickly and easily human freedom can be turned into slavery. The year 1984 may have come and gone, but his novel is no less relevant today than in was sixty years ago.