On Wednesday the 26th August, I went to the Playhouse theatre in London to watch the play ‘1984’. The play is an adaptation of the novel by George Orwell, which was published in 1949 and created for the stage by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan. The play is set in 1984 and depicts how Orwell imagined the world to be like in the future.

‘It’s a dystopian world’

Airstrip one (previously known as Britain) is governed by ‘The Party’ who’s leader is ‘Big Brother.’

‘Big Brother’ can see and hear everything you do. During the play the main character, Winston, carries out multiple actions which break the Party’s rules. The opening scene, shows Winston writing in a diary whilst speaking aloud his thoughts. In the diary he writes about past events which in the party’s mind is wrong. ‘The past does not exist only the present and the future’.

Further into the play the audience sees Winston falling in love with Julia who together commit the crime of having a sexual relationship. This liaison takes place in a secret room that Big Brother cannot see. Together, they dreamed of drinking coffee, eating chocolate and living a normal life.

My thoughts on the play

I really enjoyed 1984 and I found it very interesting and extremely well performed. Two features of the production which stood out to me were the blackouts and the use of film. Blackouts would be used with a duration of about four seconds so that characters could enter and exit the stage without being seen. When the lights came back on, the actors would be motionless until another few seconds passed. The use of these blackouts created an effect of suspense and the element of surprise. By projecting filmed scenes on to the stage, a real sense of tension and atmosphere was brought to the audience. This was created from the use of different camera angles and the use of zoom. Another positive element is that it reduced the number of scene changes that took place during the play. In addition, it improved the fluidness of the performance.

At times I found some parts rather confusing and hard to understand. For example, some sections were repetitions and it wasn’t made clear or explained why they were repeated, which led me to become a little confused. It would have been better if there was a reference as to why these scenes were repeated or if an explanation was provide in the programme.

All in all, I thought it was an incredible performance and I would definitely recommend it to others.