

Unpresence: Headlong's *1984* and the screen on stage

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Introduction

Neither the relevance of 'telescreens' in George Orwell's dystopia nor the presence of screens on a stage were something new when theatre company Headlong's¹ Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan created their 2013 dramatization of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Yet the use of video they devised for their adaptation provides some theoretical food for thought because of its meaningfulness, variety and consistency. Moreover, its importance within the production is clearly shown by the fact that projections are described in the script as part of the drama's development. Therefore, I mean to analyse the role of the screen in Headlong's *1984* as a significant example of what can be done – both directly and indirectly – by including video sequences in a theatrical performance.

¹ Headlong is a British Arts Council funded touring theatre company, well known for fostering emerging talents and producing new writing. Founded in 1974, it was formerly called the Oxford Stage Company and took its present name in 2006 under artistic director Rupert Goold, who was still at the helm when *1984* was produced.

Recorded images have been part of theatre performances since the early twentieth century²; towards the end of the millennium, technological advancements have overcome practical difficulties and multiplied opportunities for their use. What is more, the proliferation of screens in daily life has made their presence on stage increasingly imperative for a realistic depiction of the contemporary world. Also, accompanying live action with a display of moving images and texts is a simple way to comply with the widespread habit of attending to several sources of information simultaneously: if the necessity to engage the audience through different channels at the same time could already be perceived as a consequence of a “now” multiple environment in 1967 (Milder 2009: 116), its strength fifty years later is overwhelming. It is therefore no surprise that screens should appear nowadays on most theatre stages not only in either technically or artistically advanced contexts but also as part of rather traditional productions. So much so that they have gradually lost their novelty and the usage of such devices outside avant-guard intermedial experiments is no longer bound to be considered a mere fad.

Though they are no longer the latest craze for theatre productions, recorded (or live-fed) images often play roles that still lack specificity, such as: contributing to the creation of a believable twenty-first-century reality; providing a varied and movable scenery (much like rolled panoramas did in the nineteenth century); or presenting a second (or further) simultaneous dramatic action which could equally be performed live in a more or less definitely demarcated acting area. Icke and Macmillan's *1984* constitutes an interesting example of how video can have on the contrary a quite irreplaceable function as part of a single, consistent narrative. Of course, the production's themes are not irrelevant, yet this particular instance can also be read as exemplifying two essential possibilities video offers to dramatic performances in general.

² For a historical perspective on the question of film and video on stage, see Greg Giesekam's *Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre* (2007).

***Nineteen Eighty-Four's* telescreens**

A dramatisation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is obviously apt to feature a meaningful use of screens on stage. Although in a way that has little to do with the 'reality' Big Brother format, a peculiar kind of television is central to Orwell's dystopia. 'Telescreens' are almost omnipresent in Oceania: they are usually placed so as to command each room entirely (Orwell 1991: 5) as well as open spaces (at least within cities, *ibid.*: 113) and they cannot be turned off (*ibid.*: 2)³. Their importance for the preservation of IngSoc (the totalitarian state's ideology) is paramount⁴ and their role is double: their programmes fill every moment of party members' lives with orthodox words and images, fabricated news and engineered entertainment that nourish their love of Big Brother and strengthen their hate of the system's enemies; and telescreens dominate everybody's actions, not only by issuing orders but also and more pervasively by spying anywhere and at any given time.

Thus propaganda and control constitute the main functions of the telescreens, which are transmitters and receivers at the same time. Though their consequences may be less momentous than those of direct indoctrination and personal mutual snooping (Luegenbiehl 1984: 296-7), they are presented in the novel itself, within the apparently accurate analysis of IngSoc attributed to its chief detractor and enemy Goldstein, as the key technological achievement of the totalitarian state:

With the development of television, and the technical advance which made it possible to receive and transmit simultaneously on

³ There are, of course, exceptions, but significantly extreme: on the one hand, the houses of 'proles' are often free of telescreens, because the working masses are regarded as little more than animals (*ibid.*: 71-2); on the other, Inner Party members can apparently turn them off (although this statement may be part of the illusions to which Winston succumbs on the subject of O'Brien, *ibid.*: 169) because there is no need for Big Brother's communication devices at the core of the system he represents.

⁴ See for instance Varricchio 1999.

the same instrument, private life came to an end. Every citizen, or at least every citizen important enough to be worth watching, could be kept for twenty-four hours a day under the eyes of the police and in the sound of official propaganda, with all other channels of communication closed. The possibility of enforcing not only complete obedience to the will of the State, but complete uniformity of opinion on all subjects, now existed for the first time. (Orwell 1991: 205-6)

As a matter of fact, the symbolical, if not practical, significance of this duplicity is also suggested by the fact that it is one of the few aspects of Oceania's technologies that does not reflect something already in existence, at least experimentally, in the 1940s (see Luegenbiehl 1984: 292), a rare point on which the author chose to depart from this extreme proximity as well as from the general technological regression displayed by his dystopian world (*ibid.*: 293-7; Orwell 1991: 188-9, 193-5). As an emblem of the totalitarian state's pervasiveness, telescreens are therefore extremely likely to appear in any visual rendering of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

What is more, transceiver screens constitute a promising key to a comparison between Orwell's invention and twenty-first-century reality, in that similar objects – smartphones, tablets and the quickly expanding internet of things – are nowadays actually omnipresent. If already in 1984 Umberto Eco could point out that closed-circuit control was no longer a matter of state-of-the-art innovation but something people had grown used to in all public places (Eco 1984: X), thirty years later, routine monitoring is gradually spreading to private lives, for the sake of security, health, communications or just comfort. Eco's contention that this is one of the reasons why *Nineteen Eighty-Four* could be read as a topical book concerning the present, rather than a futuristic totalitarian society, appears to be even stronger after the successful proliferation of personal devices that can indeed record as well as suggest all sorts of activities. The manifold functions of separate existing objects that Orwell unified in the telescreens are currently often performed by smartphones, that can as a matter of

course strike the hours (Orwell 1991: 27), wake up their owners (*ibid.*: 31), notify them of the time for specific activities (*ibid.*: 63), assist them in their work (*ibid.*: 38), provide them with news (*ibid.*: 57-8) and entertainment (*ibid.*: 77) and even monitor sport and fitness performances (*ibid.*: 31-2, 35-7) or check vital functions (*ibid.*: 79). Obviously, this is not to say that IngSoc has triumphed by means of computer science, but that nearly seventy years after its composition and more than three decades after its fictional date it is through the telescreens that Orwell's novel appears to comment on widely felt concerns regarding the protection of privacy and the power of new media. It is therefore to be expected that they should feature prominently in a 2013 dramatization of the book.

The force of this connection and its skilful employment in Icke and Macmillan's work can both be observed by looking at the curious success story of a single line in their script. O'Brien's assertion that the people are not going to revolt because "they will not look up from their screens long enough to notice what's really happening" (Icke – Macmillan 2013: 85) is one of the few sentences in the play that are not taken from the novel. It may be considered a rather obvious interpolation, because the image of people (not) looking *up* from their screens implies that they usually look *down* on them, so it is quite appropriate in the case of handheld devices, but it does not make sense in Orwell's Oceania, where telescreens are set in walls (Orwell 1991: 2). In point of fact, O'Brien's expression does not apply to the world of the play either, for on stage the transceivers are represented by an enormous screen that dominates the acting area from above. This quick but unmistakable breach of fictional reality highlights the dramatic authors' will to emphasize how *Nineteen Eighty-Four* speaks to the present and prompts the audience to compare what they see with their daily experience. Its relevance in Icke and Macmillan's design is confirmed by the fact that not only the words O'Brien uses but also the ideas he expresses do not belong to Orwell's dystopia: in the novel, the masses do not revolt mainly because they are "stupefied by poverty" (*ibid.*: 190) and because "so long as they are not permitted to have standards of comparison, they never even become aware that they are

oppressed" (*ibid.*: 207)⁵. Also the reference to what is *really* happening clashes with O'Brien's teaching that "reality is not external" (*ibid.*: 249) but exists "only in the mind of the Party" (*ibid.*). Such a general breach of the fictional world's verisimilitude, occurring exactly when a connection with the audience's daily life is suggested, has the markings of a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, designed to jolt the spectators out of the dramatic illusion and prompt a conscious reflection on their part.

The authors' success appears overwhelming, on the one hand, in focusing the attention of both spectators and critics: the interpolated statement was quoted repeatedly in reviews (e.g. Coveney 2014; Maxwell 2014; Richardson 2015; Teachout 2017) and innumerable times in blogs, posts on social media and other non-professional writings. On the other hand, a troublingly large part of those references is either ambiguous or incorrect as to the sentence's origin, thus suggesting the interest they manifest may have been less clear-sighted than Icke and Macmillan hoped. A meaningful example is the internet meme coupling the line with a photo of people watching their smartphones instead of interacting in what is supposed to be a social situation, which constantly presents the words as Orwell's, sometimes specifying they were written in 1949: some felt the urgency to circulate the idea by means of their "screen-endowed devices" rather than giving it some critical thought, in what seems to be a sad confirmation of its validity. The silver lining of this possible cloud is that the adaptors managed to write something that seems to blend perfectly into the original text and draws attention to its twenty-first-century topicality. Michael Coveney summed it up in his comment on the quotation: "Is that Orwell? If so, it's another sign of inexhaustible prophecy; if not, it sounds dead right" (2014).

⁵ Once again, these statements are part of the book-within-the-book attributed to Goldstein, but its analysis is endorsed by both rebel Winston Smith, who finds it articulates his own thoughts (*ibid.*: 200), and Party-man O'Brien, who says its description of contemporary society is correct (*ibid.*: 261).

Headlong's 1984

This is not the place to discuss Icke and Macmillan's dramatisation as a whole: co-devised by a director-playwright and a playwright-director, it is a complex transmediation, the words of which are almost exclusively the novel's, while the structure is theatrical throughout, and thus different on all counts. Yet an investigation of the role played in it by the on-stage screen requires a short reflection on two main interrelated points. Even before that, it may be worth remarking that the production has enjoyed a prolonged and widespread success, which supplements its meaningfulness as an example, for it has engaged spectators from very different backgrounds: it premiered at the Nottingham Playhouse (which co-produced it) in 2013, toured the UK and then opened in London, at the innovative Almeida theatre, in 2014; a few months later it transferred to the Playhouse Theatre, in the West End, where it returned in 2015, after a second national tour, and then again in 2016, following performances in Santa Monica, Boston and Washington; it visited Melbourne in 2015 and then toured Australia in 2017; in 2017 it ran at the Hudson Theatre, Broadway.

In adapting Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for the stage, Icke and Macmillan decided to give full attention to the consequences of two pieces of fictional paratext: the appendix on Oceania's official language 'The Principles of Newspeak' (Orwell 1991: 299-312), and the note referring to it (*ibid.*: 4), the importance of which is proved by the fact that the author was even ready to imperil the American edition of the novel if it could not include them (Icke – Macmillan 2013: 10-1⁶). Their equivalent in a play text would apparently be a note and an essay in the production's programme or in the published version of the script, and as such they would go unnoticed by most spectators. A direct dramatisation of their scientific style and historical-linguistic subject would probably require a second and quite different play. What the

⁶ See Orwell's letters to Leonard Moore, 17/03/1949 (Orwell 2013: 452-3), and to Sir Richard Rees, 08/04/1949 (*ibid.*: 459).

theatrical authors opted for is a production focusing on the fictional paratext's capital – although unspoken – point that the book dates from a later time in which Newspeak is not the official language and even needs to be described and explained. “Newspeak *was* the official language of Oceania” (Orwell 1991: 4, my emphasis), the note says, and according to the appendix “it was expected that Newspeak would have finally superseded Oldspeak (or Standard English, as we should call it) by about the year 2050” (*ibid.*: 299). It stands to reason, although it cannot be taken for granted, that IngSoc has failed: if “the Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak” (*ibid.*: 52), as clear-sighted plain-speaking Syme puts it, the extinction of the language may suggest the defeat of its inherent ideology.

In this perspective, Icke and Macmillan's script adds to Winston Smith's story a frame situation, a book club meeting to discuss *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Icke – Macmillan 2013: 14-21, 26, 90-2). The annoying presence of a mobile phone (*ibid.* 17-8, 20-1) suggest this might be in the early twenty-first century. The readers' comments seem to hint that theirs is not exactly the spectators' world, though, but rather *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* 2013, i.e. an age for which Big Brother is history, not fiction, when they say for instance that Winston Smith was writing “for the future. For the unborn. For us” (*ibid.*: 15). In the play's final scene, the book club's time is made clear: 1984 “was over a hundred years ago” (*ibid.*: 90). In this reality, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not a novel by George Orwell but an “account” of which very little is known but that Winston Smith, its supposed author, never existed (*ibid.*: 91). Is it truthful? The book club's host only states that the Party must have fallen, since they do not live in the society of IngSoc and they are not speaking Newspeak (*ibid.*: 90-1), but then one of the readers expresses a fundamental doubt⁷: “How do we know the Party fell? Wouldn't it be

⁷ Not by chance, this character is the Mother, who coincides with the proletarian woman who sings while at her daily chores and with Winston's mother, i.e. with the figures that both in the novel and in the play seem to

in their interest to just structure the world in such a way that we believed that they were no longer..." (*ibid.*: 92). She cannot complete her argument, but the audience must do it for her: society as a whole may have undergone a process similar to the brainwashing of Winston, who closes the play by sincerely thanking his torturer (*ibid.*).

The uncertainty that enfolds *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* status and accuracy reflects on the whole production, that employs the same actors, wearing the same clothes, in different roles, including those of the book club members. Instead of smoothing out or explaining any inconsistencies or anomalies in the novel, Icke and Macmillan multiply them. The protagonist's strange premonitions and ambiguous dreams (e.g. Orwell 1991: 25, 30-1) become sudden transitions between scenes occurring at different times, in different places or even on different levels of reality (e.g. from the book club's discussion, through Winston alone with O'Brien's amplified voice and the apparition of Julia in the corridor, to the dialogue with Mrs Parsons and her child, Icke - Macmillan 2013: 21-2) and frequent uncanny repetitions of sounds, sentences and gestures (e.g. the exchange "Is it - ? / Switched off.", voiced by various people and with reference to different devices, *ibid.*: 18, 21, 57, 61 and 84).

As associate director Daniel Raggett put it, "every line is, whether overtly or not, attempting to do more than one thing at a time and – like the principle of doublethink – can express two truths simultaneously" (2013a). A key moment may be one of the book club readers' question "How about you? Where are *you*?" (*ibid.*: 19), addressed to the reader played by the same actor as Winston (if that is what he is) and presumably meant to elicit his opinion and feelings towards the book, followed at once by O'Brien's amplified voice explaining "I am asking where you are. Right now" (*ibid.*). Could the whole action be set in Winston's mind, during O'Brien's 'treatment'? Could one of the readers be *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* protagonist himself,

carry an instinctive partial insight and the fragile possibility of hope for the future.

who occasionally remembers fragments of his life before and during the Ministry of Love's brainwashing? The play gives no answer.

The eerie atmosphere of uncertainty thus enveloping the whole production is bound to reflect on the spectators' interpretation of what they see on the stage screen too. On the one hand, video footage, especially with the documentary feel given by fixed camera angles, imperfect resolution and dull colours, is likely to be considered trustworthy for its ostensible objectivity. On the other hand, an audience that has been trained to doubt all dramatic actions' status since the beginning of the performance is apt to wonder what is the source and who is the addressee of those immaterial moving images. Since the production does not feature any metatheatrical breaches of illusion regarding its authors⁸, and the theme of visibility and surveillance is obviously central to *1984* and its plot, these questions are likely to be considered in the play's fictional rather than factual, artistic context. Spectators are going to focus on cameras in Oceania, rather than on operators backstage⁹. However, any answer is bound to be based on what the videos show.

Headlong's screen

In Icke and Macmillan's rendering, Orwell's telescreens are not staged directly, but their constant, dominating presence is represented by a single, huge screen, stretching across the whole stage above the actors, so that the spectacle offered to the audience is split approximately in half along a horizontal plane. The screen seems to be divided in smaller square units, thus giving an impression of unrefined

⁸ There are breaches that signal towards the audience, as discussed below, but references to the performance's spectators do not necessarily draw attention symmetrically to the production's authors.

⁹ For the opposite situation, see Carlson's illuminating article on video and stage space, especially his conclusion that "both literally and figuratively, the operator of the video camera has entered the theatrical frame, and both his images and his actions in creating these images have become a part of theatre's new visual field" (2003: 626).

quality that matches the generally drab and poor appearance of the characters' clothes and objects.

The screened subjects are always directly linked to the live action beneath them, and they fall into four categories:

- (1) close-ups of something happening on stage;
- (2) footage the characters see on telescreens;
- (3) images of events taking place simultaneously elsewhere in Oceania;
- (4) words, presumably representing a character's thoughts.

This numbering corresponds to the order in which each kind of image is introduced. In the very first 'scene' of the play¹⁰, the screen displays a live-fed detail of the diary page the protagonist is writing (Icke – Macmillan 2013: 13-4). Later it shows what characters see on telescreens, when Winston is working, for instance (*ibid.*: 33-4), or during the Two Minutes Hate (*ibid.*: 35-7). Around the middle of the drama, the video projections are once again evidently a live feed, but originating off stage, from an adjacent space, as Winston and Julia enter Charrington's storage room, now their love nest (*ibid.*: 45). Finally, in the course of the torture sequence, words appear on the screen: "Sanity is not statistical" just after Winston has pronounced the sentence (*ibid.*: 74) and "Julia" some time before he cries out her name, thus betraying her (*ibid.*: 88).

The four groups of images presented in the play and listed above correspond to the main functions video can have in a theatre production. In the case of (2) the screen is, in the terms of narratology, intradiegetical, that is to say it belongs to the characters' fictional reality, or, more precisely, it represents a screen in their world¹¹. The

¹⁰ The script does not carry any division in acts or scenes, which would undermine its bewildering lack of borders between different situations. The play was even performed without any interval.

¹¹ The difference is apparent in Headlong's 1984, where the screen on stage does not resemble its fictional counterpart in that it is inordinately big and it is set not at eye level but above people's heads. Furthermore, when characters look at the telescreen, they actually look towards the audience, as if it were on the so-called fourth wall. This is not a problem within theatre

other three categories cover everything that can be shown by an extradiegetical screen, i.e. one the characters do not see because it does not belong to their narrative level. They are based on a spatial classification: the subjects in (1) are on stage, those in (3) in another place and those in (4) out of space. A further distinction might apply to the depiction of things that are not on stage, in that they may introduce ulterior narrative levels (e.g. by showing someone who comments on the main plot, or on the performance, or by shifting from the fictional world to the actors backstage). Yet it is not relevant in the present instance, because everything in (3) and (4) is part of Winston's story and even set at the same time as the live action; the off-stage and the inner space portrayed are always the characters', not the performers' or those pertaining to a third frame of reference.

According to this classification, the four kinds of images appearing on the screen of *1984* are quite different, even disparate, and their progression casual. They seem to share only the aim of letting the audience see something essential that cannot be perceived directly by observing the stage: small details; things the characters themselves watch on a screen; events happening in a separate place; the protagonist's thoughts. As such, they do widen and complicate the dramatic space, but – unlike many of the more aesthetically challenging examples illustrated by Carlson (2003) – they do not question or blur its boundaries and those of the characters' fictional world. Yet in the play these images acquire unforeseen unity and unexpected meanings.

The close-ups of Winston's diary establish the screen's credibility: the moment when the protagonist's nosebleed stains the paper (*ibid.*: 14), in particular, institutes a close, unquestionable link between the action on stage and the moving images above it. Henceforth the

conventions, it is just like middle-aged actors playing the title roles in an old-fashioned *Romeo and Juliet*. Yet it may be worth pointing out that as it is the young lovers, not the more mature performers, so it is the lower and smaller screens, not the huge one looming over the stage, that belong to the fictional world.

spectators are likely to believe the video to be truthful and the events it shows homogeneous with those performed live.

The fact that the screen should 'double' as a telescreen is ostensibly unremarkable. Yet the actors' multiple roles are not casual (an exemplary instance being the reader called the Mother – Mrs Parsons – Winston's mother – the proletarian woman), they set up a connection, sometimes even an identification¹², that may be troubling in the case of the (tele)screen.

The shots of Winston and Julia in their love nest might also be taken for a mere necessity and their black-and-white low quality style interpreted as an equivalent of the room's old and dilapidated appearance. But they do look like footage from a security camera. And what need is there to put their hideout off stage, when their meeting in the country has been played out in the same indoor setting as the other previous scenes¹³? Even the most naive spectators are compelled to face the truth when Julia looks directly into the camera as she realises "They can see us" (*ibid.*: 69¹⁴), seconds before men in uniform storm the room: the audience has been watching the lovers through Big Brother's eyes, a hidden telescreen. After this discovery, the earlier takes of Winston's hand writing his diary may be reinterpreted in retrospect as technologically more advanced products of the Party's ubiquitous and

¹² Group discussions among the cast and the creative team during the 2016 re-rehearsal established "the characters most of the actors play are essentially the same selves, with different lenses applied. The same essence, distilled through different filters" (Cox 2016b).

¹³ The stage design goes through a radical change only for the Ministry of Love scenes.

¹⁴ It is worth remarking that this line contains a meaningful though minor departure from the same passage in the novel, in which Julia says "*now* they can see us" (Orwell 1991: 222, my emphasis) after a picture has fallen, thus revealing a hidden telescreen behind it. In the book, up to that moment, the lovers could only be heard by means of the covered transceiver, while in the play they have been filmed since they first entered Charrington's storage room, as the spectators know very well.

penetrating espionage. The screen has been representing IngSoc's point of view all the time.

The audience's growing awareness can take a further step when the screen shows Winston's thoughts during the torture sequence. On the first occasion, the protagonist expresses an idea that is particularly important to him, "Sanity is not statistical" (*ibid.*: 74; see *ibid.*: 65), the words appear and then O'Brien asserts "I know your mind Winston. I know what you've been thinking. What you're thinking now and what you're yet to think" (*ibid.*: 74). His point could not be clearer: the prisoner's thoughts are open to the torturer and, by means of the screen, to the spectators. His contention is confirmed by the second instance, in which the sequence of events is reversed: O'Brien says "Now, Winston, you know that [how he could stop the torture of room 101] already. You have always known it" (*ibid.*: 87); Julia's name appears (*ibid.*: 88); after pleading to the audience and trying to resist, Winston finally cries his betrayal of the woman he loves (*ibid.*). The Party's representative does actually know Winston's thoughts in advance, or can put them into his mind. By means of the screen, the spectators share in this knowledge and become O'Brien's silent accomplices. The conclusion is terrifying: all through the performance, by looking at the screen, the audience has been playing the role of Big Brother's agents. As Lyn Gardner put it, "merely by watching, we become the Thought Police" (2013).

Conclusions

At first sight, the images displayed on the screen in the course of Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan's dramatization of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* might appear to be interesting because they exemplify the full gamut of what video can do on stage without disrupting the play's narrative by introducing heterogeneous material or complicating it with ulterior levels. They magnify details, allow the audience to watch what characters themselves see on screens, show actions that take place elsewhere and provide insight into a character's mind. Yet considered together they are revealed to do something more, i.e. set up a specific

point of view – that of the Thought Police – and assign it to the spectators, thus bringing about a forceful identification on their part. This is a notable achievement on the part of Icke and Macmillan in particular because by making the audience play the role of the Party's élite spy troops the authors push the theatregoers beyond a passive sympathy for the protagonist, towards a more conscious reflection on the responsibility they must assume as part of a society.

The Thought Police is a character that does not appear on stage but is created indirectly by the video footage shown on the screen. It might be called an 'un-presence', not just an absence (what un-presence could mean in Newspeak), but a presence the meaning of which resides precisely in its being off stage, either in the auditorium, as in the case of Headlong's *1984*, or elsewhere. Together with making it possible to create a particular point of view, conjuring up such an 'un-presence' is an essential opportunity video provides to the theatre, not only in the subtle way devised by Icke and Macmillan. The object of recorded or even live-fed footage generally belongs to a different time or place and thus introduces a radical otherness in the context of dramatic performance, that is characterized by actors and spectators sharing the same *hic et nunc*¹⁵.

Twice during the torture sequence Headlong's *1984* highlights the fundamental proximity of players and audience. First when O'Brien invites Winston to speak directly to the people of the future, to the unborn: "the house lights slowly rise" (Icke – Macmillan 2013: 80), says a stage direction, and then "Winston is aware of us watching him" (*ibid.*). Then, when the torturers prepare to realize his worst fear in the world,

¹⁵ This opposition was clearly on the creative team's minds: an emphasis on theatre's uniqueness as a live experience shared by spectators and performers both concludes the 2013 rehearsal diary (Raggett 2013b) and opens the 2016 re-rehearsal diary (Cox 2016).

For the use of video to represent a forcefully different time and space in theatre productions see Dixon 2005 and Carlson 2003 respectively.

Winston looks at people in the audience and pleads with them.

WINSTON: HOW CAN YOU JUST SIT THERE? GET UP!
HELP ME – HELP ME – YOU HAVE TO STOP
THEM – PLEASE GET UP – PLEASE – I'M SORRY –
NO – I'M SORRY (*ibid.*: 88)

On both occasions, spectators are associated with O'Brien. In the first instance, the Party agent specifies "Speak to *us*. [...] *We're listening Winston. We're all watching you*" (*ibid.*: 80, my emphases). In the second, it is Winston's words that implicitly indicate the audience (the only people who are sitting at the moment) and then address them as somebody who can intervene and to whom he apologises. These two dramatic moments strengthen the identification of the spectators with representatives of the Party and more precisely with members of the Thought Police by manifesting it with a technique that is complementary to the one based on the screen, i.e. by playing on proximity rather than on distance.

This whole aspect of *Headlong's 1984* depends on the fact that the audience is a very peculiar 'un-presence' in the theatre, paradoxically sharing the time and place of the characters while belonging to another reality. Consequently, it uses the screen in an uncommon way, subtle but also extreme, as it conjures up not only the object of the gaze embodied by the camera, but also its subject. Nevertheless, it is representative of what may well be the most relevant opportunity video can bring to the stage: the possibility of rendering the 'un-presence' of something that is crucially not there.

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