

*Awakenings*

(on Silvia Kolbowski and the Psychical Politics of Resistance)

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the psychical and political implications of 'Looking', 'Knowing', and 'Acting' through the video-works of New York-based artist Silvia Kolbowski. Through a sustained engagement with two works, *A Few Howls Again* (2010) and *If it should turn out to be true* (2014), I consider the technical format of the videos in relation to the resistance of the unconscious mind - psychological operations safeguarding repression and denial. Whilst it may be the body of Ulrike Meinhof and the words of Jacques Derrida and Hanna Arendt that are 'awakened' in the works, I argue that it is the spectator who undergoes their own *psychical* awakening. By operating on the level of psychoanalytic practice – the techniques and operations offered up within the analytic situation itself – I contend that Kolbowski's works generate sites of counter-resistance and, by working *with* resistance to force resistance *against* resistance, have the acute power to begin to transform the psychically invested spectator within their present social and historical moment.

Primarily engaging with Freudian psychoanalysis, particularly Freud's writings on psychoanalytic technique, this thesis also works to press the resistance of the unconscious mind up against political resistance to consider what is at stake for the subjective individual when placed between this collision. From this, I then turn back towards psychoanalysis to argue that analysts themselves have an important role to play in combatting denial and regression outside of the clinic and within the social - for this the work of Hanna Segal is invaluable. The central presupposition is thus: if we cannot look at ourselves and bear the complexity of the mind then we are doomed to regress, deny, and retreat. If we cannot overcome the resistance of internal, psychic life, then political resistance becomes an impossible mirage.

## Contents

1	List of Illustrations
4	Introduction
12	Looking
22	Knowing
32	Acting
40	Conclusion
43	Illustrations
57	Bibliography

## List of Illustrations

Cover Image. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:02:10. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 1. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:02:10. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 2. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:02:15. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 3. Scan of *Stern*, June 16, 1976. (Source: Storr, p. 111). © *Stern*

Figure 4. Gerhard Richter, *Tote (Dead)*, 1988, oil on canvas, 62x67cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA. (Source: <https://www.gerhard-richter.com/en/>). © Gerhard Richter

Figure 5. Gerhard Richter, *Tote (Dead)*, 1988, oil on canvas, 62x62cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA. (Source: <https://www.gerhard-richter.com/en/>). © Gerhard Richter

Figure 6. Gerhard Richter, *Tote (Dead)*, 1988, oil on canvas, 35x40cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA. (Source: <https://www.gerhard-richter.com/en/>). © Gerhard Richter

Figure 7. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:02:21. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 8. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:02:30. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 9. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:02:33. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 10. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:02:35. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 11. Silvia Kolbowski, *Model Pleasure V*, 1983, 8 photographs, 7 black & white and 1 colour, each 8x10inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 12. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:02:50. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 13. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:08:10. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 14. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:08:12. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 15. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:08:15. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 16. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *A Few Howls Again*, 2010, video loop, black & white and colour, silent, 00:04:20. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 17. Silvia Kolbowski, *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:04:17 and 00:02:48. Installation view, *A Letter Always Arrives at its Destinations*, La Panacée, Montpellier, France, curated by Sébastien Pluot. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 18. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:00:01 [Derrida Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 19. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:00:01 [Arendt Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 20. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:00:25 [Derrida Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 21. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:00:29 [Arendt Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 22. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:00:34 [Derrida Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 23. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:00:38 [Derrida Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 24. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:00:45 [Arendt Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 25. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:01:02 [Derrida Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 26. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:02:12 [Arendt Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 27. Silvia Kolbowski, Video still from *If it should turn out to be true*, 2014, two video loops on adjacent screens, colour, silent, 00:01:51 [Derrida Screen]. Image courtesy of the artist.

[Note the timings for *A Few Howls Again* are taken from the monitor version]

## Introduction

*'The audience was assembling. They came streaming along the paths and spreading across  
the lawn'*

-Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*<sup>1</sup>

*'A film fell over her eyes, shutting off the present. She tried to recall her childhood; then  
gave it up'*

-Woolf, *Between the Acts*<sup>2</sup>

*Note: Curtains closed. Thick red velvet. Weighty.*

Oedipus failed to see, the blind-seer Tiresias warned, and Antigone acted. Oedipus, blind to the truth. Tiresias, knowing of the truth. Antigone, acting upon her knowledge. For Oedipus could not see that he had wedded his mother and murdered his father, that only his exile, as predicted by the oracle, could end the plague devastating Thebes; for Tiresias knew of this terrible truth and tried to warn; for Antigone, after the death of her father Oedipus, fought back against the violence of King Creon's rule. The city of Thebes harbours these three key players, and this thesis charts this trajectory, examining the psychical and political implications of 'Looking', 'Knowing', and 'Acting' through the video-works of New York-based artist Silvia Kolbowski.

Born in Argentina and working in New York, Kolbowski's artistic practice gravitates around the relationship between the spectator and the unconscious, the psychical and the political, and how forms of resistance are historicized, remembered, or indeed forgotten. Oscillating within these modes of critical enquiry is a concern with the role of the unconscious in the social, the psyche's investment with its external surroundings, and how, as Kolbowski herself has suggested, 'aesthetic methodologies [can't] be disentangled from an address to

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Woolf, *Between the Acts*, p. 136.

the psyche'.<sup>3</sup> Since the late 1990s, this address has been primarily mediated through the medium of video and film. The flux of this core set of concerns is one which brings forth a crucial need to acknowledge, in the words of Kolbowski, the 'spectator's psychically invested capacity to block out truth'.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, scholar Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen suggests that Kolbowski aims 'for the creation of a new relationship between reality, image and language...for an intense involvement of the viewer'.<sup>5</sup> Kolbowski's practice is one in which the position of the spectator and modes of spectatorial address are bound together, fused in an acknowledgement of the spectator's psychic capacity for denial. The modes of engagement are thus predicated on these psychical assumptions. This thesis works directly from this position of denial and from the processes of the unconscious mind - operations of repression and resistance, mental activity not mediated by the knowing, conscious mind, psychological operations which lie at the heart of psychoanalytic practice and technique. Tiresias decries: 'He [Oedipus] came seeing, blind shall he go...When you can prove me wrong, then call me blind'.<sup>6</sup>

Two video-works by Kolbowski entitled *A Few Howls Again* (2010) and *If it should turn out to be true* (2014) serve as starting points to consider the relationship between the unconscious and the spectator. Commissioned by the 2010 Taipei Biennial, *A Few Howls Again* is a stop-motion photo animation that resurrects the body of Ulrike Meinhof, the German journalist, political militant, and co-founder of the Red Army Faction (RAF), raising her from the grave and spurring her back into action. Meinhof's once lifeless body is awakened and revived. The same can be said for Jacques Derrida and Hannah Arendt, whose words are recovered in *If it should turn out to be true*. Comprised of two quotes by

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<sup>3</sup> Silvia Kolbowski, Susan Silas, Chrysanthe Stathacos, 'A Conversation with Silvia Kolbowski', *MOMMY*, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014, <http://www.mommybysilasandstathacos.com/2014/11/10/a-conversation-with-silvia-kolbowski/>, [accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017].

<sup>4</sup> Silvia Kolbowski, 'Psyche-Specificity', *Out of Place*, Spring 2017, produced for Skulptur Projekte Münster 2017, available via: [http://www.silviakolbowski.com/projectarticles/munster%20text\\_kolbowski.pdf](http://www.silviakolbowski.com/projectarticles/munster%20text_kolbowski.pdf), [accessed 8<sup>th</sup> May 2017].

<sup>5</sup> Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen, 'Not Only on the Wall: Silvia Kolbowski: Art as Discourse', in *Silvia Kolbowski: inadequate...Like...Power* (Vienna: Secession, 2004), p. 127.

<sup>6</sup> Sophocles, 'King Oedipus', in *The Theban Plays*, trans. E. V. Rieu (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 38.

Derrida and Arendt on war and technology playing parallel on two adjacent screens, Kolbowski infects their words with an algorithmic code, thus activating and awakening them in the present moment of today.

Whilst it may be the body of Meinhof and the words of Derrida and Arendt that are awakened in these works, I argue that the spectator is placed in a destabilizing position through which they undergo their own *psychical* awakening - how it is through the very medium and format of the video that the spectator is made vulnerable to what the British psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas refers to as the unbearable complexity of the mind. Citing a foundational principle of psychoanalysis that the individual is 'a psychic entity, possessed of a mind divided between interacting logics of consciousness and unconsciousness', Bollas writes that 'Most people...find consciousness of this aspect of the human condition...simply too hard to bear'.<sup>7</sup> This knowledge is unbearable as to acknowledge this inner conflict would lead to the catastrophic realization that one is no longer oneself, that one's actions, feelings and desires are uncontrollably dictated to by another ruler submerged beneath consciousness, a sentiment similarly expressed by D. W. Winnicott when he writes that there is a 'pain that belongs to' accepting the unconscious, the unspeakable unknown, 'as part of the self'.<sup>8</sup> If we cannot look at ourselves and bear this complexity then we are doomed to regress, deny, and retreat. If we cannot overcome the resistance of internal, psychic life, then political resistance becomes an impossible mirage.

Jacqueline Rose's timely and urgent discussion of resistance in *The Last Resistance* is crucial in laying out the entangled correlation between these two types of resistance. Suggesting that resistance is itself a troubled and somewhat inconsistent word, Rose proposes that 'in political vocabularies, resistance is the passage to freedom'.<sup>9</sup> Resistance within political lexicon is tied to ideas of liberation, to a fight against an oppressor that will emancipate or that will work as a step towards greater freedom. For psychoanalysis, however, resistance

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<sup>7</sup> Christopher Bollas, *Being a Character: Psychoanalysis and Self Experience* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), pp. 239-242.

<sup>8</sup> D. W. Winnicott, 'Thinking and the Unconscious', in *Home is Where We Start From* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), p. 169.

<sup>9</sup> Jacqueline Rose, 'The Last Resistance', in *The Last Resistance* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 21.

is conversely 'blind obeisance to crushing internal restraint', it is 'the mind at war with itself, blocking the path to its own freedom and, with it, its ability to make the world a better, less tyrannical, place'.<sup>10</sup> Here, Rose sets up a direct correlation between the resistance of the mind and political resistance. This inner psychic conflict is damaging, Rose suggests, so much so that it restricts the actions of the individual and with it impedes positive social change. Consequently, subjective, psychic transformation comes forth as a vital requisite of societal transformation.

Rose's reading comes by way of Sigmund Freud. Freud's writings on resistance chiefly concern the role of resistance within the analytic situation, its hindrance to progress, and how such resistance may be overcome and worked-through. As Freud identifies: 'The patient brings out of the armoury of the past the weapons with which he defends himself against the progress of analysis'.<sup>11</sup> Resistance serves as a barrier for repression, a dam against which the task of analysis continually pushes. Of course, it was Oedipus who resisted acknowledging the fulfilment of his tragic destiny. Of course, it was Antigone who resisted the oppressive regime of King Creon.

Through a sustained engagement with the psychoanalytic theories of Bollas and Freud, amongst others, this thesis works to press resistance against resistance, that is to push the resistance of the unconscious mind up against political resistance and, in doing so, consider what is at stake when the psyche, both conscious and unconscious, encounters this collision. To have knowledge of, as well as to then acknowledge, one's unconscious mind is a painful experience, one that requires long drawn-out treatment and an uncomfortable self-examination. Rose diagnoses that 'Resistance is blindness. It is the strongest weapon or the bluntest instrument the mind has at its disposal against the painful, hidden, knowledge of the unconscious'.<sup>12</sup> Rose's reading not only underscores the immense difficulty of acknowledging one's own unconscious, ergo one's own potential and capacity for

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<sup>10</sup> Rose, 'The Last Resistance', p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XII, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), p. 151.

<sup>12</sup> Rose, p. 19.

aggression and violence as dictated by the Oedipal paradigm and early infantile development, but also the fraught role of resistance in (un)covering such knowledge. Rose's assessment is one which paradoxically recognizes resistance as both a debilitating barrier working to conceal the unconscious mind ('bluntest instrument'), and an impacting force that has the potential to break down this barrier and uncover the painful, unbearable complexity of the human mind ('strongest weapon'). To then place resistance against resistance is to test these instruments and to probe their limits – to examine the tension between a resistance which incites regression and a resistance which uncovers and exposes.

This thesis stakes the claim that *A Few Howls Again* and *It it should turn out to be true* induce a reality-thinking that works *with* resistance in order to breach the dam of the unconscious, to bring forth the complex swathes that is the human mind, and to begin to reconcile the individual, that is the psychically invested spectator, with that which has so long been hidden behind a barrier of pain and anguish. By specifically operating on the level of psychoanalytic practice, in particular sites of resistance exhibited within the analytic situation itself, Kolbowski's works stage their own resistance. This is not to say that the works 'repeat' or 'perform' psychoanalysis as theory, but that they structurally engage with the mechanisms of psychoanalytic praxis in such a way that, like psychoanalysis itself, the works have the acute power to transform the psychically invested spectator within the social and political, whether that be a reconciliation with a forgotten, denied past, or to be returned to the scene of childhood and the drives and impulses that simmer under the surface of consciousness. The effect of this is not a purging catharsis as Freud might have seen it (or indeed did see it when writing on the dramatic reception of *Oedipus Rex*), but instead an unsettling encounter and collision of resistance against resistance, one that begins a process of strengthening the ego against the forces of the id.

Writing on one of Kolbowski's earlier projects from the late 1980s, Schmidt-Wulffen puts forward the suggestion that 'Little progress has been made in art towards developing a specific, critical stance...an aesthetic voice that does justice to today's political problems'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Schmidt-Wulffen, 'Not Only on the Wall: Silvia Kolbowski: Art as Discourse', p. 118.

Kolbowski achieves just this, twisting the aesthetic modalities of her work in such a way that 'today's political problems' are dealt with through a continuum of work configured to engage the spectator in their present historical and political moment. To revive Meinhof, Derrida, and Arendt is to project them into *now*, into a climate in which, to quote Mignon Nixon, we are 'afflicted...by a manic negation of reality'. Nixon cites the 'realities of climate change, nuclear armaments, the pain of others' as examples of mass reality negation, realities which become increasingly worrying when placed against a landscape of regression. As such, Nixon rightly determines that there is a 'psychical reality we may be forced to confront for our own survival'.<sup>14</sup> It is only when we find knowledge of this inside truth that we can then turn towards external reality with our eyes open, accountable for our own unconscious. Kolbowski's work edges us closer to this painful, terrible reconciliation.

Oedipus failed to see. The first section of this thesis examines the act of 'looking' in *A Few Howls Again* in relation to psychoanalytic praxis. If rising from the couch and returning the gaze of the analyst is a sign of resistance and acting-out in analytic treatment, then what are the implications of Meinhof rising and looking back – breaking the frame and forcing us into a charged visual encounter. I argue that it is through this site of resistance, of meeting the gaze of a woman against whom aggression has been continually flung, that we are impelled to look back at ourselves and our own violent tendencies. Rather than focus on Meinhof's wider biographical history, this section will consider Meinhof from within the work – Kolbowski's Meinhof and the narrative the video provides in order to think through the specificities of this encounter.

The blind-seer Tiresias warned. The second section examines the looped repetition of what can be seen as a type of prescient knowledge. The quotes from Derrida and Arendt, the former from 2001 and the latter taken from 1958, eerily seem to predict the distant future of today and its concerns with hacking, digitised terror, and the destruction of speech and knowledge. To loop these quotes is to repeat them, and for psychoanalysis to repeat is to resist. As Freud determines, to repeat is to present the neurosis as resistance in the present

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<sup>14</sup> Mignon Nixon, 'Crazy', *October*, 159 (Winter 2017), 7-13 (pp. 12-13).



again and again.<sup>15</sup> In bringing these quotes to the present, to now, the work challenges the role the past can play in the present, posing the past as a productive, affective site through which to combat today's negation of reality.

Antigone acted. Finally, I consider what types of action the two video-works may incite, or indeed promote. What can we learn from these two sets of figures (Oedipus, Tiresias, Antigone, and Meinhof, Derrida, Arendt), and what steps are to be taken once we breach the dam of the unconscious and work-through our capacities for violence and the guilt that arises from such exposure? Antigone and Meinhof were quick to act and both met similar fates. So what do we do with this new-found knowledge? Do we act and resist as they did, or do we wait tentatively, cautiously, seeking out a precise moment of intrusion?

This final section also turns back towards psychoanalytic practice to consider what role psychoanalysts can play in fostering an ethics of reality-thinking for themselves and within their practice; how analysts must become aware of their own responsibilities within this fight. Hanna Segal has polemically argued that 'we must look into ourselves and beware of turning a blind eye to reality', that analysts must be cautious of their apparent neutrality. This section works with Segal's radical recalibration of psychoanalysis and its relation to the social, spotlighting her repeated assertion that 'Silence is the real crime'.<sup>16</sup>

It is also the aim of this thesis to begin to awaken a series of cross-cultural connections – to embrace, as Kolbowski herself does, the past and the voices and figures which lie waiting to be recovered. Oedipus, Tiresias, and Antigone are three of these people, themselves central to psychoanalytic theory, yet all seemingly lost in the writings which surround them. Raising them from the grave and awakening them, summoning them to the present, is to place them upon the dais, to allow their voices to rise and to be heard once more.

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<sup>15</sup> See Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)', p. 151.

<sup>16</sup> Hanna Segal, 'Silence is the Real Crime', *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 14 (1987), 3-12 (pp. 10-11).

The stage is set, the curtains poised to open. And once they do - if they do - the action which follows will not only be played against a backdrop of negation and regression, but it will also be defined by the players upon that stage - how they navigate that terrain and the obstacles encased within it. The script is their own, ready to be performed and acted-out.

## Looking

*'why did you turn? / why did you glance back? / why did you hesitate for that moment? /  
why did you bend your face / caught with the flame of the upper earth / above my face?'*

-H.D., *Eurydice*<sup>17</sup>

*'The audience had reached their seats. Some sat down; others stood a moment, turned, and  
looked at the view'*

-Woolf, *Between the Acts*<sup>18</sup>

*Note: Curtains steady. Hushed silence. Anticipation.*

In 'On Beginning the Treatment', Sigmund Freud considers the functional and symbolic role of the couch in psychoanalytic treatment. 'I hold to the plan of getting the patient to lie on a sofa while I sit behind him out of sight', Freud begins, immediately setting out the spatial and visual parameters of the analytic environment.<sup>19</sup> The couch performs a significant role in coordinating the spatial dynamics, creating and maintaining the analytic frame, as well as correlating the efforts of the analyst with the participation of the analysand. Although this 'arrangement has a historical basis', Freud reminds us, 'it deserves to be maintained for many reasons'.<sup>20</sup> The first of these reasons is personal: 'I cannot put up with being stared at by other people for eight hours a day'.<sup>21</sup> Looking, therefore, enters the frame of his discussion. As in most depictions of this now iconic situation, the patient reclines on the couch with their head propped up on a pillow and their legs outstretched. What is

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<sup>17</sup> H.D., 'Eurydice', in *Modernism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 445.

<sup>18</sup> Woolf, p. 108.

<sup>19</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'On Beginning the Treatment (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis I)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XII, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), p. 133.

<sup>20</sup> Freud, 'On Beginning the Treatment (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis I)', pp. 133-134.

<sup>21</sup> Freud, 'On Beginning the Treatment', p. 133.

important here is that the patient, if in compliance with these rules, faces away from the analyst. As the analyst listens to their patient speak, they themselves give over 'to the current of...unconscious thoughts' and, Freud elaborates, 'I do not wish my expressions of face to give the patient material for interpretations or to influence him in what he tells me'.<sup>22</sup> For if the patient were to 'read' the analyst's face (their expressions and reactions) then the transference situation may be blighted, new resistances encountered, and old ones muddled. To break this frame is to resist the analysis and to act-out, with this psychological resistance a destructive rebuttal against remembering and uncovering.

To look in the analytic situation is a sign of unconscious resistance. It represents a breakage and, for many analysts, a hindrance to progress - another obstacle to work-through.

Writing on Freud's demand for 'a renunciation of visual contact between analyst and analysand', Mignon Nixon assesses that 'One function of the couch...is to keep analyst and analysand apart, to prevent them from becoming visually, or reflectively, entangled'.<sup>23</sup>

What happens then if this frame cracks and the analysand peers over their shoulder – if their gaze meets that of the analyst, or if they refuse to lie still? What would happen, say, if that patient snapped open their eyes, rapidly twisted their head towards you, the analyst sitting out of sight? If they refused to comply with the rules and rose from the couch? It is through this situation of resistance that we meet Ulrike Meinhof in Kolbowski's *A Few Howls Again*.

Lying on her back, body outstretched, head reclined, Ulrike Meinhof fills the screen (Fig.1). Her eyes are firmly shut and her matted, thick hair rests against the grey surface beneath her. The still, silent image is black and white. We can see a black line curled across her neck, but at the moment we are not sure what it could be. A hair maybe? No, it's far too thick. A slab beneath her neck props up her throat like a small peak, the left side of which descends towards her chest which is covered by a plain, slightly creased shirt. The setting is clinical, stark and bare. Suddenly, unexpectedly, the black and white flashes into colour (Fig.2). We now see that the black line across her neck is a deep purple – the sign of a bruise.

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<sup>22</sup> Freud, 'On Beginning the Treatment', p. 134.

<sup>23</sup> Mignon Nixon, 'On the Couch', *October*, 113 (Summer 2005), 39-76 (p. 50).

Meinhof's shirt, the slab, and the backdrop turn to cold shades of blue. Here, Meinhof is played by an actress, yet this disquieting image of her lifeless body is a recreation of Meinhof's death photo, taken shortly after she was found hanging in her prison cell (Fig.3). This same image was also appropriated by Gerhard Richter in his cycle of fifteen photo-paintings entitled *October 18, 1977* (1988), three of which depict Meinhof's stiff, pale cadaver (Fig.4-6).

Lines of text start to appear above her body: 'My name was Meinhof; first name, Ulrike' she tells us, 'I was 42 when I was found dead, in 1976, dead, in my cell at Stammheim prison, Germany'. Kolbowski's Meinhof is 'made the subject of prosopopoeiac speech' and 'incantatory phrasing', writes Henrietta Stanford, continuing on to describe Meinhof's revival as 'far from smooth': 'this is not a blithely optimistic or redemptive dream of reanimation and regained utterance'.<sup>24</sup> No, this is not. Meinhof's body refuses to lie down. She rises, awakened, her lifeless corpse stimulated by the fleshy, breathing body of the actress. Over two jerky movements, controlled by the sharp stop-animation of the video, her head twists towards us, her eyes wide open, the whites of which glare against the neutral backdrop and her blue-tinged, pale skin (Fig.7-10). Meinhof looks out, and in doing so breaks the frame. She stares at us, the viewer, the spectator observing her deathly corpse. She meets and returns our gaze. She resists.

Looking back at us, the silently observing spectator, Meinhof not only breaks the frame constructed by Freud's spatial and visual configurations, but also the expectations of both a corpse and a video; the dead are meant to stay dead, and the dead are not meant to look back at us. Interestingly, the psychoanalyst Rose F. McAloon recalls a patient who was unable to follow 'the basic rules of analysis because submitting...was tantamount to death.

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<sup>24</sup> Henrietta Stanford, 'Staying Anxious: Encountering Ulrike Meinhof in Silvia Kolbowski's *A Few Howls Again?*', paper delivered at *Feminist Object(ive)s: Writing Art Histories, a workshop*, University of York, May 2013, available at: <http://www.silviakolbowski.com/projectarticles/Stanford%20on%20AFHA.pdf>, [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017].

His resistance was a life-preserving one'.<sup>25</sup> McAloon's patient refused to lie down and remain on the couch, fearing that his analyst would kill him. Meinhof's resistance is also quite literally a 'life-preserving one' as to lie down is to die and to resist is to awaken. However, more pertinent to this discussion is McAloon's earlier revelation that she must consider 'the effect that his resistance had on' herself.<sup>26</sup> That is, to position this form of acting-out in dialogue with her own unconscious. Schmidt-Wulffen's insightful words on Kolbowski's project *Model Pleasure V* (1983, Fig.11) are pertinent here: 'This appeal to the viewer is further amplified by an intensive gaze: often the women in the photos train their gaze on the viewer, requiring him or her to take up a position in both spatial or moral terms'.<sup>27</sup> The latter of these positions is what McAloon draws our attention to – how it is through an encounter with resistance, specifically a refusal to renounce visual contact, that the analyst is forced to turn towards themselves and consider their own unconscious. In defying the recumbent position and forcefully initiating a junction of visual contact, Kolbowski's Meinhof compels us to undertake the same reflexive manoeuvre.

Snap. Meinhof's eyes flash open as the line 'In the police photo *you* can see I died by hanging' hovers above [my emphasis] (Fig.12). She is addressing us, the viewer. She knows we are watching and she knows where to look. *You* – her glare is accusatory, knowing and troubling. Stanford describes Meinhof as 'weary' and 'introspective', however I find her outward gaze far too demanding and pointed, punishing even, to be described as such.<sup>28</sup> 'In the police photo *you* can see *I* died by hanging' [my emphasis]. *You* and *I* – Meinhof and the spectator, analyst and analysand, a turn of the face and a glare of the eyes, an inescapable encounter. To enter this encounter is to acknowledge Meinhof's gaze as well as one's own, a countertransference as arising through resistance.

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<sup>25</sup> Rose F. McAloon, 'The Need To Feel Like An Analyst: A Study of Countertransference in the Case of a Patient Who Refused To Use the Couch', *Modern Psychoanalysis*, 12, no. 1 (1987), 65-87 (pp. 85-86).

<sup>26</sup> McAloon, 'The Need To Feel Like An Analyst: A Study of Countertransference in the Case of a Patient Who Refused To Use the Couch', p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> Schmidt-Wulffen, p. 122.

<sup>28</sup> Stanford, 'Staying Anxious: Encountering Ulrike Meinhof in Silvia Kolbowski's *A Few Howls Again?*'.

Writing in his 1910 paper 'The Future Prospects of Psycho-Analytic Therapy', Freud first mentions countertransference as the feelings that arise 'in the physician as a result of the patient's influence on his unconscious feelings'.<sup>29</sup> The negative of transference (the projection of the patient's phantasies and desires onto the analyst), countertransference importantly concerns a reverse projection of the analyst's feelings onto the analysand. Annie Reich crucially underscores this reversal in her 1951 paper 'On Counter-Transference'. For Reich, the patient becomes an object onto which the analyst projects past desires and wishes.<sup>30</sup> Reich situates the analyst at the fore, arguing that 'he [the analyst] cannot tolerate the patient who, as a mirror, reflects his own repressed impulses'.<sup>31</sup> A danger to analysis, countertransference has the potential to pull the analyst into such repressed, unconscious territory.

And what lurks within this unknown region? What impulses and drives threaten to exert themselves? Writing only months after the outbreak of the First World War, Freud writes that if we were to be 'judged by our unconscious...impulses' then we would find ourselves 'a gang of murderers', ridding ourselves of anyone 'who stands in our way, of anyone who has offended or injured us'.<sup>32</sup> The unconscious is riddled with such destructive phantasies that lie dangerously undiscovered, wishes that are out-of-touch with reality and are, for the most part, perilously unaffected by the reason of the ego. Impulsive and instinctual, these demands originate within the id, the component of the psyche entirely submerged below consciousness.

Meinhof's cutting gaze and the direct address of the text reflect back at us the violent drives present in all of us since birth, now buried deep within the dark enclaves of the unconscious. It is this direct confrontation, this alarming, fearful turn, the sharp snap of the

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<sup>29</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The Future Prospects of Psycho-Analytic Therapy', in *Collected Papers vol. II*, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Basic Books, 1959), p. 289.

<sup>30</sup> Annie Reich, 'On Counter-Transference', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 32 (1951), 25-31 (p. 26).

<sup>31</sup> Reich, 'On Counter-Transference', p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XIV, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 297.

neck towards us, the spectator, that sets this deathly image apart from other violent images circulated throughout the media. New lines appear, berating her, cursing her: 'cold-blooded sociopath', 'irrational', 'masochistic'. This is a corpse against which aggression is flung even after death - a making visible of violence which tests the psyche's capacity to block-out reality or indeed partake in such destructive projections. Snap. Meinhof's eyes flash open again as the lines 'They declared war on me to avoid my own conflict' and 'They turned me into an alien' hover above (Fig.13-15). Her head twists to the side and her eyes turn towards us as if to transform 'They' into 'You'. *They*, the media, press and politicians who declared war on me, *You*, watching me watching you, *They*, the people watching me now with the same unrecognized aggressive drives. Meinhof's returned corpse throws us into a disrupted position whereby the self we thought we knew, cleaved from the self suppressed and denied, is slowly turned back towards that unconscious adversary. Analysand and analyst become Meinhof and spectator. *You* and *I* – *You*, the viewer now implicated in the violence enacted on *my* body, *You*, Ulrike Meinhof, now risen and resistant, glaring back at *me*, *I*, Ulrike Meinhof, 'terrorist', 'fervent', 'directionless', *I*, staring into your murky pupils, standing accused, seemingly unaware of my own violent potentials. 'Have you eyes, / And do not see your own damnation? Eyes, / And cannot see what company you keep?', Tiresias asks Oedipus.<sup>33</sup> Oedipus failed to see. Meinhof's awakened, resistant cadaver impels us to see. Exposed and ensnared, this direct address holds us accountable and forces us to work towards a reconciliation with our unconscious and the desires, wishes and phantasies that writhe within.

As Freud polemically argues in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 'Like Oedipus, we live in ignorance of these wishes...and after their revelation we may all of us seek to close our eyes to the scene of our childhood'.<sup>34</sup> Here, Freud is of course referencing the Oedipal paradigm, but these words also importantly speak to repression's role in concealing these violent tendencies. We close our eyes, hoping, though not consciously, to forget and to traverse these psychic truths. We witness a darkness we have been engulfed in time and

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<sup>33</sup> Sophocles, 'King Oedipus', p. 37.

<sup>34</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. IV*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 263.



time again; we see seemingly endless, boundless depths, yet do not acknowledge. It is at this location of Oedipal repression that Bollas encounters Freud, an intersection which Bollas uses to suggest that we choose to ignore the 'extremes of mental process' only to submit to the blinding processes of denial.<sup>35</sup> We deny to bypass our own conflicts – a defence-mechanism against the powers of remembering. Our first murderous wish becomes our first repressed impulse, and it is the very blockage of this truth's passage to consciousness that Meinhof's raised body works to undo.

It is important to note that for Freud, as well as many other analysts, countertransference is a negative product of the analytic situation, exacerbated by the patient's own resistance. For the analytic treatment to progress, the analyst will themselves have to work-through their own unconscious thoughts, 'to recognize and overcome this counter-transference in himself', writes Freud.<sup>36</sup> It is for this reason that Freud calls for every analyst to 'periodically – at intervals of five years or so – submit himself to analysis once more'.<sup>37</sup> To do so is to avoid the 'dangers of analysis', that is submitting to their own instinctual demands in the analytic situation.<sup>38</sup> However, it is my stance that this point of resistance and countertransference precipitates a productive, affective site through which the spectator's own unconscious mind, their buried and repressed phantasies and violent potentials, is summoned and exposed. To become 'visually, or reflectively, entangled' is no longer an obstruction or barrier to overcome, but rather a mode of resistance which acts *against* resistance, the 'strongest weapon' (to return to Rose) with which to puncture through into the 'painful...knowledge of the unconscious'. Meinhof looks out at us, and in turn we are forced to look back at ourselves.

It is interesting to then take into account the fact that looking takes an equally invested role in Freud's own reading of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. For Freud, it is through looking that the spectator becomes psychically invested in the tragedy unfolding before them, no longer

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<sup>35</sup> Bollas, *Being a Character: Psychoanalysis and Self Experience*, p. 226.

<sup>36</sup> Freud, 'The Future Prospects of Psycho-Analytic Therapy', p. 289.

<sup>37</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXIII, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 249.

<sup>38</sup> Freud, 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable', p. 249.

obstructing progress or performing as resistance, but instead becoming a crucial site of psychic awakening. At its core, Freud's interpretation of the myth of Oedipus is no less a reading of dramatic, or rather psychic, reception, than it is a substantiation of his own psychoanalytic claims. Crucial to this is Freud's declaration that 'while the poet...brings to light the guilt of Oedipus, he is at the same time compelling us to recognize our own inner minds'.<sup>39</sup> As the play builds subtle increment by subtle increment, Oedipus' and the spectator's horrified reactions run concurrent, their murderous and incestuous first wishes rising to the surface.

Bollas articulates that Sophocles 'constructs a drama that will evoke within the audience a dense structure of inner associations so subtle and complex that...they invite the acute work of the ego to process them'.<sup>40</sup> The modal configurations of *A Few Howls Again* challenge the very same principles of psychic organization, working with the ego and its perception of violent imagery to not only regulate the instinctual demands of the id, but to bring them forth as sharply defined conflicts to be recognized and worked-through. When Meinhof's eyes meet our own, when we watch her deathly corpse reanimate and come towards us, her neck bruised and skin pale, when we watch Oedipus finally comprehend that it was he who killed his father Laius on the road Thebes and who thereafter married his mother Jacosta, we ourselves begin to discover those hostile, persecutory presences that have remained hidden within the blind spot that has continued to evade our knowledge – that we are, as Bollas has so powerfully drawn attention to, 'possessed of a mind divided between interacting logics of consciousness and unconsciousness'. This knowledge cannot be taught or simply explained; the dynamics of psychoanalytic treatment recognize the mind to be capable of denying truth, and hence calls for a situation of prolonged engagement with one's own unconscious. This interlocked process is in continual flux and must be encountered and experienced, worked-through in a situation where the psyche not only encounters its own textures and depths, but also the impact of such impulses within the reality that surrounds it. 'To remember is always to discover,

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<sup>39</sup> Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)', p. 263.

<sup>40</sup> Bollas, p. 223.

never to recover', declares the British psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell.<sup>41</sup> The resistance created and encountered in *A Few Howls Again* brings us one step closer to this moment of discovery.

This looking back at oneself begins to chip away at the dam that is resistance safe-guarding repression. Whilst the art historian Julian Stallabrass speaks of how *A Few Howls Again* allows the viewer 'to put themselves into the mind of someone who was a terrorist', I conversely propose that it is the video which puts itself inside the mind of the spectator. The unnerving, frightful tremor of Meinhof's movements work with the embattled ego as it wrestles with the id in mediating between conscious and unconscious, know and unknown, seen and unseen.<sup>42</sup> To awaken Meinhof is to make the violence extant in the unconscious visible and knowable – seen by the eyes of the viewer. The prison doors are cracked open; a light illuminates the cave containing Antigone's dead, hanging body. To do so is to strain the psyche's capacity to block-out and deny. Meinhof's revived body drives the prerogative of the psyche to justify violence to its absolute limit, forcing resistance against resistance, ego against id. Meinhof's body looks back. It resists. It challenges the spectator and their place within such systems of violence, visible and invisible.

*They*, Meinhof deplores, *You*, Meinhof accuses. This challenge is crucial and necessary if the ego is to strengthen and safe-guard against later threats from the destructive impulses of the id. This above all takes time and *requires* resistance, something to push against in order to build its own resistance. For Meinhof to look back, to break the frame, is to advance rather than impede – to initiate a countertransference that works with resistance in the process of uncovering. Her glare becomes part of this fight, to hold power accountable, as Meinhof herself did, and to compel us to acknowledge that aggression originates inside, invisible and undetected, manifest externally in the most violent of ways. Meinhof's raised body implores us to take this fight inwards, the return of her still-abused, deathly corpse warning what happens if we fail to take action, when we fail to turn back towards our self

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<sup>41</sup> Juliet Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 315.

<sup>42</sup> Julian Stallabrass and Silvia Kolbowski, 'Sympathy for the Devil: Julian Stallabrass interviews Silvia Kolbowski', *Lalit Contemporary*, 54 (2012), 70-74 (p. 70).

and instead rebut such awakenings with violent projective manoeuvres, defence-mechanisms designed to protect us from a painful, yet inescapable internal truth.

Snap. Meinhof's eyes close and her head lies back against the cold slab beneath her as the line 'She couldn't see reality clearly' hovers above (Fig.16). In fact, maybe she saw reality all too clearly.

## Knowing

*'To be wise is to suffer'*

-Tiresias, *King Oedipus*<sup>43</sup>

*'All their nerves were on edge. They sat exposed. The machine ticked...Tick, tick, tick went  
the machine'*

-Woolf, *Between the Acts*<sup>44</sup>

*Note: Curtains begin to part. Creases in velvet darken.*

Tiresias warned Oedipus that he was 'the cursed polluter of this land', that he had been living in self-induced blindness, seemingly unaware of the truth lying before him.<sup>45</sup> Oedipus sought Tiresias' council, yet upon hearing of his own part in the tragedy, Oedipus chastised Tiresias, casting him away with one final berate: 'Living in perpetual night, you cannot harm / Me, nor any man else that sees the light'.<sup>46</sup> The blind-seer Tiresias warned, yet Oedipus failed to listen, to acknowledge, to see. 'She couldn't see reality clearly', reads the line above Meinhof's stiff body, lying prone on the pale, hard surface beneath her. Just as Tiresias is denounced for not speaking the truth, for fabricating knowledge, and for not 'seeing' what Oedipus himself would like him to see, Meinhof is likewise condemned for 'not seeing' and for failing to see reality 'clearly'.

To say that Meinhof 'couldn't see reality clearly' is to suggest that she could not reconcile herself, or rather give herself over, to the dominant political order of West Germany, that the RAF's violent resistance was the result of a certain 'blindness' or affliction. Reusing to partake in the reality of the established political class or rule, Meinhof and Tiresias fall victim to a reality which is itself ironically governed by a negation of reality, violent

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<sup>43</sup> Sophocles, 'King Oedipus', p. 34.

<sup>44</sup> Woolf, p. 159.

<sup>45</sup> Sophocles, 'King Oedipus', p. 35.

<sup>46</sup> Sophocles, 'King Oedipus', p.36.

projections, and, in the case of West Germany, a haunting return to the violence executed twenty-years prior by its Nazi predecessors. Stanford quotes RAF member Gudrun Ensslin's urgent assessment of the situation: 'The fascist state is planning to kill us all. We have to organize resistance...we have to take action'.<sup>47</sup> Though blind, Tiresias was acutely aware of Oedipus' own denial, suppression, and unconscious censorship. Meinhof too was painfully aware, conscious and sensitive to the oppressive violence and curtailing of liberties that surrounded her. Her journalistic writings pay testament to this awareness. 'She couldn't see reality clearly', accuses an unknown, distant voice, a phrase which could simply be reworded to read 'She was mad, insane, out-of-touch with reality'. Perhaps there is something to be taken from this night, this darkness and apparent madness, something which alerts us to a reality within as well as outside, something largely unseen and known only by few – a reality clouded over and denied in favour of a reality mediated and dictated to by that which is submerged, waiting to be discovered.

Kolbowski has stated that she finds herself drawn to these 'prescient' figures, that is people who 'pre-see' or in some ways predict the future.<sup>48</sup> People who appear to know more or maybe even too much. This somewhat prophetic knowledge is not 'divine omniscience', Kolbowski tells us, but rather results from these figures 'seek[ing] to understand the predominant systems that give form to impressions'.<sup>49</sup> Bollas also perceives that some people are aware of both the psychical flux of conscious and unconscious and the political systems which attempt to, and largely succeed in, governing such logics, and therefore try to account for this condition. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, Bollas muses that these people are philosophers and artists.<sup>50</sup> Neither Oedipus nor King Creon, two succeeding rulers of Thebes, listen to Tiresias. His knowledge seems to jumpstart their defence-mechanisms and the mind's systems of denial. This knowledge is accepted too late for Oedipus to retain his sight, daughters, and home, and acknowledged far beyond the point of return for King Creon to maintain his rule and prevent his son Haemon and his wife

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<sup>47</sup> Gudrun Ensslin quoted in Stanford.

<sup>48</sup> Silvia Kolbowski, email correspondence with the author, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and 8<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Silvia Kolbowski, 'If it should turn out to be true', <http://www.silviakolbowski.com/projectDetail.cfm?ID=30>, [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017].

<sup>50</sup> Bollas, p. 242.

Eurydice from taking their own lives. Once mocked and reviled, Tiresias' knowledge, his warnings and cautions, turn out to be true.

*If it should turn out to be true* is the title of a 2014 video-work by Kolbowski which places a quote from the French philosopher Jacques Derrida and a quote from the political theorist Hannah Arendt side-by-side, separated onto two adjacent screens (Fig.17-19). The former quote is extracted from *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, a book conceived around the 9/11 terror attacks and produced in dialogue with Giovanna Borradori and Jürgen Habermas, whilst the latter quote is excerpted from Arendt's 1958 work *The Human Condition*.<sup>51</sup> For Kolbowski, Derrida and Arendt (as well as Meinhof) inhabit this territory of the prescient figure, themselves awake and responsive to the socio-political climate in which they live, work, and write.

Rather than examine the quotes in relation to Derrida and Arendt's larger philosophical and theoretical projects, the following section will consider the two excerpts in tandem with the filmic mechanisms embedded within the work. The algorithmic code which is shot through the words disrupts and distorts – frustrating both the meanings carried by and through Derrida and Arendt's texts, as well as the spectator's own understanding and reading of the passages. The repetitious cycle of the work, as constructed by the continuous looping of the video, then comes into play. Resistance performs twofold; firstly, manifest through the disfiguring algorithm, and secondly emanating out of the looped, cyclical pattern. For Freud, the compulsion to repeat 'replaces the impulsion to remember', and that 'the repetition is a transference of the forgotten past'.<sup>52</sup> To repeat under the guise of resistance is to bring the neurosis to *now*, to the present. Kolbowski's work undergoes a similar movement and transporting operation, yet, as we will see, repetition as resistance comes forth and creates a situation in which knowledge, psychical and political, rises rather than submerges, is accentuated as opposed to being masked and overlooked.

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<sup>51</sup> For the complete quotes, see Fig.18-19.

<sup>52</sup> Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through', p. 151.

‘If it should turn out to be true that knowledge (in the modern sense of know-how) and thought have parted company for good’, Ardent laments, ‘then we would become the helpless slaves...thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible’.<sup>53</sup> These lines, each word lit with a yellow glow, are set against a bottle-green backdrop. They rest, static and silent, waiting, hovering, anticipating. Meinhof’s body waits in repose, her stationary and immobile body making her eventual awakening all the more alarming. Our eyes scan the lines, reading with growing pace so as not to lose them. We then look to the adjacent screen on our right where we see the lines belonging to Derrida. Again, we read the words, blue on a purple screen. However, by the time we have got to this screen, something is already taking place; the purple flashes to green and the words to yellow. We become distracted by this jump and forget about the words before us, only to now notice that the words to our left have exploded into vulgar, large distortions of themselves, pumped with energy and blown-up four, five-times their size. The letters twist, wobble, and shake, the words now illegible and the sentences destroyed (Fig.20-21). The same can be said for the paragraph on our right through which an erasing current is travelling, washing away the words as it grows and mutates across the screen (Fig.22-23). These effects are the result of an algorithm which has been placed like a virus inside the work, manipulating and deforming the contents of the two screens, playing with their aesthetic and formal qualities, sardonically performing the very critique Arendt and Derrida put forth in these two texts.

Both Derrida and Arendt predict a world in which the truths ‘of the modern scientific world view...will no longer lend themselves to normal expression in speech and thought’,<sup>54</sup> where speech is under threat from conceptual and abstract technological algorithms, and a world in which terrorist attacks ‘no longer need planes, bombs, or kamikazes’ but rather sophisticated virus and computer systems which can ‘paralyze the economic, military, and political resources of an entire country or continent’.<sup>55</sup> Written in 1958 and 2003, these

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<sup>53</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Jacques Derrida, Jürgen Habermas and Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 101.



excerpts are frighteningly relevant in today's political climate - we only have to think as far as the alleged hacking and interference in the 2016 United States Presidential election to acknowledge how unsettling the two quotes are, now dragged into their own prophetically suggested future. Oedipus failed to see and the blind-seer Tiresias warned. Meinhof 'couldn't see reality clearly'. Yet, however pertinent these two pieces of text may be, Kolbowski's video leaves them nearly impossible to engage with. The internal clock of the video ticks, leaving little time or space for the spectator to read and to begin to understand the two pieces of text. The effect is maddening and infuriating. The algorithm simultaneously gives life and 'awakens' these quotes, summoning them into the present and performing their very critique, whilst at the very same time combusting knowledge and meaning (Fig.24-27). As the videos draw to a close, the words exhausted of all possibility, the loop kicks in and reactivates them, instantly returning the words back to their original form only to eventually destroy them once again. We, the spectator, watch again, the loop replaying and re-awakening, replaying and re-combusting.

'More relevant now than when it first appeared', proclaims the blurb of *The Human Condition*.<sup>56</sup> 'Timeless' and 'perpetually timely', it continues, making sure to alert us to its relevance to *today*, whenever that might be.<sup>57</sup> Likewise, Freud advocates treating a patient's illness as a 'present-day force' so as to allow it to come forth not as a product of the past, but rather as an action repeated in the present analytic moment.<sup>58</sup> This assertion is tempered by Freud's earlier statement in the same text that 'the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten...but *acts* it out', the patient '*repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it' [original emphasis].<sup>59</sup> Repetition performs as resistance, whilst also transporting the neurosis or illness to the present analytic situation, forging a dynamic between analyst and analysand whereby the neurosis comes forth as distinct, defined resistance. It is at this moment of action as repetition and repetition as action where the analyst may begin to work within a new space lilting

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<sup>56</sup> Quotes taken from the above cited 1998 reissue from The University of Chicago Press.

<sup>57</sup> In an email to the author dated 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017, Kolbowski herself spoke about the importance of 'timeliness': 'For me, what binds all these works is the question of timeliness. The timeliness of prescience, maybe'.

<sup>58</sup> Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through', p. 151.

<sup>59</sup> Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through', p. 150.

between reality and illness and, through a handling of the transference situation, make the patient aware of this newly uncovered resistance. Repetition within the analytic situation is consequently a reaction-formation defined as resistance, historically viewed by psychoanalysis as an impediment and obstruction, but most crucially now an exhibiting of the neurosis in the present analytic situation. Coupled with the blurb's observation that 'The problems Arendt identified then...continue to confront us today', Freud's reading of the temporal configurations of analysis are made to feel all the more relevant during a time in which historical amnesia seems to have reached an all-time high and reality-thinking has been replaced with action dictated by reaction, defence, and a desire for instant, insatiable gratification. It is from this position of repetition as resistance as dynamic and necessary for progress that we might further consider the role of repetition within *If it should turn out to be true*.

Presented on a loop continually playing the videos again and again, Derrida and Arendt's words become part of a repetitious cycle, simultaneously awakened and destroyed ad infinitum. They play over and over, with each repetition not a new beginning but rather a repeated beginning, one that has been played and seen before. The knowledge presented before us is made abstract and unreadable, inaccessible and meaningless, echoing Arendt's own calculation that if we are to continually 'adjust our cultural attitudes to the present status of scientific achievement', then we will 'adopt a way of life in which speech is no longer meaningful'.<sup>60</sup> This assessment also appears to warn against the dangers of an eternal present and of forgetting the not-so-distant past, a sentiment similarly echoed by the art historian Rosalyn Deutsche in a paper on the British artist Mary Kelly within which she calls for an end to absolutist narratives of history in favour of a progressive history forever in a process of becoming.<sup>61</sup> In shooting the algorithm through Arendt's words, Kolbowski tests Arendt's hypothesis against the present moment. The process of repetition allows these distorted, blown-up quotes to come back and to be read and perceived again by the spectator. The frustration of not being able to read or comprehend this knowledge is worked-through in a dynamic situation of repetition – the past as re-entering the present,

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<sup>60</sup> Arendt, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> Rosalyn Deutsche, 'Not-Forgetting: Mary Kelly's *Love Songs*', *Grey Room*, 24 (Summer 2006), 26-37 (pp. 35-36).

the past as read *through* the present. To present Derrida and Arendt as a 'present-day force' is to reconcile their prescient knowledge from the past with our own present-day lack-of knowledge that we might indeed call denial or the mind's refusal to acknowledge and instead regress. Much like analysis itself, this is time-consuming, agonizing work.

For Melanie Klein, 'we have to go back again and again in analysis'. She states 'it is only by linking...later experiences with earlier ones...that the past and present can come together in the patient's mind'.<sup>62</sup> In linking up Derrida and Arendt with today's political and moral climate, one which favours denial and which is built upon an uneven, top-heavy distribution of power, Kolbowski asks us to consider what types of knowledge we must listen to and learn from, and what role this knowledge can have in a world where material realities such as climate change and the devastating effects of war are denied with as much frequency and shocking conviction as the psychical realities which lie for the most part undetected and unaccounted for. For example, we are still bearing witness to the political, militaristic, and ethical failure of the war in Iraq, yet the United States of America and the United Kingdom continue to bomb neighbouring territories in the Middle East. Most telling is the US State Department Spokesperson John Kirby's response to the damning Chilcot Inquiry published in 2016: 'We're not going to go through it, we're not going to examine it...Our focus, again, is on the challenges we have in...Syria right now'.<sup>63</sup> This refusal of the past and of acknowledging one's role in past militaristic and political efforts echoes President Harry S. Truman's comments after using nuclear weapons on Hiroshima: 'I don't believe in speculating on the mental feeling'.<sup>64</sup> Both Truman as the President of the United States and Kirby speaking on behalf of the US Government indicate how this denial and regression pollutes from the very top. Tiresias, summoned by King Creon, announces with wit and biting irony 'For the blind man goes where his leader tells him to'.<sup>65</sup> Arendt also warns us of

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<sup>62</sup> Melanie Klein, 'The Origins of Transference', *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 33 (1952), 433-438 (pp. 436-437).

<sup>63</sup> See US Department of State, 'Daily Press Briefing – July 6 2016', online video recording, *YouTube*, July 6 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cjo71LkmxzM>, [accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017].

<sup>64</sup> President Harry S. Truman quoted in Rosalyn Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq: Three Studies in Art and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Sophocles, 'Antigone', in *The Theban Plays*, trans. E. V. Rieu (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 152.

the perils of becoming 'helpless slaves' and 'thoughtless creatures' to the systems that govern over us.

This interlocked fluctuation between phantasy and reality must become accounted for and brought into contact with a situation that allows for such a moment of counteraction. The repetition of the video, the 'again and again' created through the loop, denies amnesia to instead activate the mind in processing the information put before us; is it through the repetition that we are able to break down the algorithm and eventually read the lines on the two screens, an operation that might serve us well in combatting regression. As such, the 'again and again' of denial meets the 'again and again' of the loop, a confrontation which returns us to the presupposition of pressing resistance against resistance. An eternal acting-out emerges, and an incessant acting-out is confronted.

If we think about the loop more broadly then - the loop as repetition and the repeating of a certain type of knowledge - we are led back to psychoanalytic practice, for repetition as action brings with it repressed material previously shut-off to the analyst and to the patient. It is exactly through performing this knowledge that the analyst may then begin to work within the transference situation, translating the actions of the analysand back at themselves as a means of acquainting them with it. An 'intermediate region between illness and real life through which the transition from the one to the other is made', writes Freud, thus accentuating a slippage which lies at the very foundation of the psychoanalytic project.<sup>66</sup> Through mediating contact between these two realities, repetition has the potential to induce an awareness, an awakening that is produced directly through repetition. In repeating and replaying the quotes, Kolbowski's work creates a situation through which knowledge is gleaned from the past and summoned in the future of today, not only highlighting the relevance or 'timeless' quality of these texts, but also raising them in such a way that the spectator is placed in a position through which their own reality is destabilized. Much like how locking eyes with Meinhof confronts us with the catastrophic realization that one is no longer oneself, that we are caught in a structural flux between two states of consciousness, that our past impulses, desires and wishes come back to

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<sup>66</sup> Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through', p. 154.

haunt, *If it should turn out to be true* raises a spectre of doubt within our mind that the past may in fact be more significant and consequential than we might ever have imagined.

To now return to Deutsche is to see the temporal oscillation embedded within Kolbowski's work as 'an order of time in which...reimagining never ends'.<sup>67</sup> Drawing upon the tense of the future anterior and quoting Jacques Lacan's now well-worn sound-bite that 'What is realized in my history is...the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming', Deutsche brings forth the future anterior as an almost *psychic* tense, a subject position in which one is attached to their past yet forever and perpetually in the process of becoming.<sup>68</sup> Deutsche clarifies this in a text on Kolbowski's video-work *After Hiroshima Mon Amour* (2008), proposing that 'the meaning of a past event is conditional on an inconclusive future' and that, for Kolbowski, 'The past isn't simply there to be recovered; past events are what will have happened as history mutates'.<sup>69</sup> In looping and replaying the two quotes, Kolbowski's work is forever in its own process of becoming, the meanings of the two pieces of text conditional on what they mean to a society which is *itself* in the process of becoming. There is no closure to this work; no middle or end, only a beginning which becomes lost in its own rhythmic, inexhaustible loops.

'We're not going to go through it, we're not going to examine it', refused Kirby when repeatedly asked to reflect upon a conflict only formally ended five years prior in 2011. If we cannot look back half a decade to a war which still reverberates today, then what hope is there of remembering and accounting for wars waged twenty-seven, sixty-two, and seventy-eight years ago, or two bombs dropped in Japan seventy-two years ago? As Derrida states, wars and organized terror are becoming 'so much more powerful and invisible, uncontrollable, capable of creeping in everywhere'.<sup>70</sup> War, terror, and state oppression are all disappearing from sight, hidden by complex organizing systems, viruses, and censorship. Kolbowski's work pushes back against these advancements by making these warnings, in

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<sup>67</sup> Deutsche, 'Not-Forgetting: Mary Kelly's *Love Songs*', p. 35

<sup>68</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 86.

<sup>69</sup> Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq: Three Studies in Art and War*, p. 22.

<sup>70</sup> Derrida, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 102.

the words of Derrida, 'visible and enormous', looping them into the spectator's present again and again, looping the past into a future again and again, looping that which should not be forgotten again and again.<sup>71</sup>

Jacqueline Rose writes that 'Knowledge will be possible only if we are willing to suspend the final purpose and ends of knowledge in advance'.<sup>72</sup> That is, we must be open to failure and learn from it if we are to reach a solution or cure, be it for conflicts and wars, or illness and disease. *If it should turn out to be true* evidences that there is much to be taken from this statement, that, in fact, there is much to be taken from the past and that there is a history we must listen to and learn from. In opening out this knowledge, in awakening and activating it, propelling it into *now* and leaving it open with no end in sight, Kolbowski reconciles this temporal motion with a psyche so invested in the present that it censors the reality of the past to make way for an unconscious backed and supported by resistance and its own methods of regression. Resistance meets resistance, and the human mind is made to confront a temporality the psyche has continually rallied against. In operating on the level of psychoanalytic practice, Kolbowski's work develops a critical stance so deeply embedded within the work that it stages its own resistance, addressing the mind of the spectator and initiating a fight that once began in an office with a couch.

Seen through the misted eyes of Oedipus, Tiresias was a 'pedlar of fraudulent magical tricks, with eyes / Wide open for profit, but blind in prophecy'.<sup>73</sup> These words come back to haunt. Oedipus sits in Colonus, blind, poor, and alone, exiled from Thebes by King Creon, joined only by his daughter Antigone.

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<sup>71</sup> Derrida, p. 102.

<sup>72</sup> Jacqueline Rose, *Why War? Psychoanalysis, Politics and the Return to Melanie Klein* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), pp. 36-37.

<sup>73</sup> Sophocles, 'King Oedipus', p. 36.

## Acting

*'While they looked apprehensively and some finished their sentences, a small girl, like a rosebud in pink, advanced; took her stand on a mat...and piped: "Gentles and simples, I address you all..."'*

-Woolf, *Between the Acts*<sup>74</sup>

*Note: Curtains drift wider and wider apart. A dark stage comes into view.*

And Antigone acted. She acted against King Creon's order that her brother Polynices should not receive burial rights. She fought against this edict, defying her Uncle by burying her brother alongside Eteocles, the second dead sibling in a pair who fought against each other during a civil war that gripped Thebes. Ismene, dismayed at her sister, refused to partake, reasoning that 'I cannot act / Against the state. I am not strong enough'.<sup>75</sup> Oedipus failed to see, the blind-seer Tiresias warned, and Antigone acted. Alone, Antigone resisted. Upon hearing Antigone's plan, Ismene tells Antigone that she fears for her, that she believes her sister cannot fight against the men of Thebes. Defiant, Antigone responds: 'You need not fear for me. Fear for yourself'.<sup>76</sup>

The stakes are high and the consequences grave in the city of Thebes. We have already seen the blinding, deathly outcome of denial through Oedipus, and the political and constitutional crisis brought on by King Creon's arrogant dismissal of knowledge. This final section will turn back towards psychoanalysis itself to consider what role analysts and psychoanalytic practice can play upon this stage. Indeed, to consider what types of action must be taken in order to oppose this negation of reality and to challenge a compulsion that is quickly becoming an epidemic. Beginning with the presupposition which lay at the top of this thesis, that we must first take this fight inwards towards the psyche, a sentiment powerfully felt in the writings of Nixon, Rose and Deutsche, I will now consider what

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<sup>74</sup> Woolf, p. 70.

<sup>75</sup> Sophocles, 'Antigone', p. 128.

<sup>76</sup> Sophocles, 'Antigone', p. 129.

happens after psychical resistance has been worked-through and how this impervious acting-out can then become action driven by another type of resistance, namely one fighting back against both the destructive, instinctual drives of the id, as well as the aggression and violence exhibited externally through war, terror, and oppressive political regimes. For too long has psychoanalysis remained inside the clinic, hidden behind a paywall and thick, bolted doors. It is time to unlock those doors, to slowly creak them open, to engage with what the pioneering psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche has referred to as a transference into the world – a turn to the social which modifies our perceptions of phantasy and reality.<sup>77</sup>

But before we do this, it must be said that this reflexive turn is available as Kolbowski's work operates on the level of psychoanalytic practice. As we have seen, both videos create and maintain dynamic situations of resistance that work with the spectator in order to address the psyche and rally against the hostile forces of the id. To see this is to begin to understand that psychoanalysis has a very real and very powerful role to play in today's political and moral climate, that it can be utilized, discussed, and debated, summoned into the social and the present moment so as to connect *now* to a forgotten yesterday and an imagined tomorrow. For it is only when we enter this psychically inflected tense that we might then step back into ourselves of yesterday in order to understand ourselves of today.

To now return to psychoanalytic practice is to attempt to reconcile it with the social and to think about what role analysts can play in combatting this widespread denial of reality. For this we must turn to the vital work of Kleinian psychoanalyst, Hanna Segal. Responding to the advent of nuclear weapons post-Hiroshima, the war in Vietnam, and later the Gulf War and the 9/11 terror attacks, Segal's psychoanalytic project is unlike that of her contemporaries. Clinical examples are replaced by real external events, and the individual at war with themselves becomes the individual at war with themselves *in war*. The clinic becomes the social, and the couch becomes the political with the individual lying on top, slowly sinking into its permeable surface. For Segal, when we are 'confronted with the

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<sup>77</sup> See Jean Laplanche, 'Transference: Its Provocation by the Analyst', in *Reading French Psychoanalysis*, ed. Sarah Flanders and Alain Gibeault (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 233-250.



terror of the powers of destructiveness, we divest ourselves from our responsibilities by denial, projection and fragmentation'.<sup>78</sup> This is the guiding principle behind much of Segal's work. This terror of destructiveness is partly 'self-induced and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy', the consequences of which we have already seen through Oedipus.<sup>79</sup> Cyclical and seemingly unending, this fragmenting of responsibility through denial and violent projections becomes the cause of a tragic, repetitious, and instinctual recourse to war and violence. However, most important is Segal's radical move to turn back towards psychoanalysis and the responsibilities analysts have within this fight.

'I think we must first beware of turning a blind eye to reality', Segal asserts, continuing on to stress that analysts have the same destructive drives and defences as other individuals. Whilst maintaining that, at times, it is good for psychoanalysts to remain neutral and not 'take part in political debates as psychoanalysts', Segal contends that 'there are situations in which such an attitude can also become a shield of denial', that like denial fronted by resistance, to hide behind neutrality is to commit a similarly regressive act.<sup>80</sup> This is an important point and one worth sticking with. At its core, this statement rocks the foundations of psychoanalytic practice, especially one that has been, and in many ways still is, hidden away behind doors. Segal takes up Freud's own call for analysts to undergo analysis every five years and drives it against the doors of the office, weakening the resolve of the lock. The prison doors are cracked open; a light illuminates the cave containing Antigone's dead, hanging body. A tug ushers the curtains outwards. When Segal rallies that 'We [analysts] must face our fears and mobilize our forces against destruction', she is no less exploiting psychoanalysis' fear of moving away from the clinic, than she is referencing a fear of 'psychic facts' or 'psychic truths'.<sup>81</sup> And Segal is right. Set against this backdrop of war and regression, psychoanalysis has its own responsibility to speak out and to be heard. Its practitioners can be a part of the fight and be responsible for taking the psychoanalytic standpoint and combatting resistance and denial outside of the clinic. The psychoanalytic community must speak out when they see history repeat itself, they, in the words of Segal,

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<sup>78</sup> Segal, 'Silence in the Real Crime', p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> Segal, 'Silence in the Real Crime', p. 10.

<sup>80</sup> Segal, 'Silence is the Real Crime', p. 10.

<sup>81</sup> Segal, 'Silence is the Real Crime', p. 10.

‘who believe in the power of words and the therapeutic effect of verbalizing truth must not be silent’.<sup>82</sup>

In turning towards one of Segal’s later papers published in 2006 entitled ‘September 11’, we can conclude that Segal’s verbalizing, her not staying silent, may well have fallen upon deaf ears. Towards the end of this paper she reasserts, nearly twenty-years later, that ‘I still think that silence is the real crime’.<sup>83</sup> Between these two papers came the wars in the Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Between 1987 and 2006 came 9/11 and the war on terror. As Segal states, ‘I do not think we can understand the chaos and horror of today’s position without understanding something of its roots’, and the temporal span of these two papers coupled with their repeated, pressing call indicates that we have not learnt and have failed to understand.<sup>84</sup> Historical amnesia is still prevailing. Equally telling is Nixon’s own reinstating of Segal’s rallying cry in 2017, now set against the backdrop of Donald Trump’s reactionary and divisive Presidency.<sup>85</sup> ‘When the Nazi phenomenon was staring us in the face’, writes Segal, ‘the psychoanalytic community outside Germany was largely silent’.<sup>86</sup> Let us not make the same mistake. This is to know that we must take her call and project it further and further into the world – to let these howls be heard again, taken up in such a way that this powerful, now desperate declaration reverberates through other creative, cultural, and political communities. Whilst Segal sees this task as potentially unending, a tone which echoes Freud’s own doubt in 1937 when he questions whether psychoanalytic therapy can ever come to an end, we must still act with conviction if we are to have any hope of combatting this interminably aggressive epidemic.

Kolbowski takes part in this fight, her work participating through a series of counteractions which hold the capacity for denial accountable. Interestingly, the title of *A Few Howls Again* once contained a question mark that has since been removed by the artist. Maybe these

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<sup>82</sup> Segal, ‘Silence is the Real Crime’, p. 11.

<sup>83</sup> Hannah Segal, ‘September 11’, *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, 20 (2006), 115-121 (p. 120).

<sup>84</sup> Segal, ‘September 11’, p. 116.

<sup>85</sup> The final line of Nixon’s paper ‘Crazy’ reads: ‘Silence is the Real Crime’.

<sup>86</sup> Segal, ‘Silence is the Real Crime’, p. 11.

howls are starting to come through, and, if they are, maybe they are here to stay.<sup>87</sup> A tug ushers the curtains outwards, now revealing a stage so frightful, so incomprehensible that to release the rope, to allow the curtains to fly back shut, would be to risk them never opening again. Keeping these curtains open has long been the task of analysis. To bring this to the social is to achieve two equally important things - firstly, to allow these howls to pass into the auditorium, outwards towards the audience, and secondly to open psychoanalysis and its techniques, operations, and its understanding of destructiveness, projection, and the fertile past onto the social. Howls from the couch, howls resisting and defending against that secret, unbearable knowledge, become howls mobilizing against the very same destructive, violent symptoms of denial. Voices raised, projected to the back of the auditorium. Segal has spoken of how 'It is often contended that psychoanalysts can only speak authoritatively of their work in the consulting room', describing the belief that 'Socio-political phenomena should...be left to specialists in other spheres', such as sociologists and economists.<sup>88</sup> It is my belief that psychoanalysis now has its own responsibility to work with these other fields, to open itself outwards, just as it is also the responsibility of these other fields to work with psychoanalysis. As we have seen, in its purest, technical form, psychoanalysis *as* analysis has much to offer a society now exhibiting pathology after pathology, and regression after regression.

In a text on Kolbowski's practice and its relation to the dynamics of transference, Nixon also stresses the importance of psychoanalytic praxis. Writing that it has become a 'given of contemporary cultural criticism that the theory and practice of psychoanalysis are separable, that psychoanalytic theory has achieved autonomy from the consulting room', Nixon argues that 'psychoanalysis beyond the clinic has sought credibility in academic discourse at the cost of the relational, (inter-)subjective dimension'.<sup>89</sup> For Nixon, this

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<sup>87</sup> Scholar Emily Apter reaches a similar conclusion: 'I think *AFHA?* [*A Few Howls Again*] re-releases those thymotic howls – at least a few'. See Emily Apter and Silvia Kolbowski, 'Silvia Kolbowski with Emily Apter', *The Brooklyn Rail*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011, <http://brooklynrail.org/2011/10/art/silvia-kolbowski-with-emily-apter>, [accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017].

<sup>88</sup> Hanna Segal, 'From Hiroshima to the Cold War and After: Socio-Political Expressions of Ambivalence', in *Psychoanalysis, Literature, and War* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 157.

<sup>89</sup> Mignon Nixon, 'Oral Histories: Silvia Kolbowski and the Dynamics of Transference', in *Silvia Kolbowski: inadequate...Like...Power* (Vienna: Secession, 2004), p. 99.

splitting of theory and practice, clinic and social, is detrimental as it is precisely the intersubjective dimension of analysis, conjured within the transference situation and held in the interplay between analysand and analyst, where the galvanizing power of psychoanalysis lies. If we are to move psychoanalysis to the social, or indeed *back to the social* as Laplanche would see it, to open it out, it cannot be achieved at the detriment of this relationship – a relationship Kolbowski, herself, is sensitive to and makes use of in these video-works, indicating that art and its practitioners have an important role to play in this modification. When Segal highlights the power of speech and the importance of verbalizing truth she too is recognizing the critical importance of this interplay, one which rests upon the most fundamental principle of psychoanalysis: that speech within the transference has the capacity to transform.

Antigone, Meinhof, Derrida, and Arendt all refused to stay silent. So what can we learn from these figures that continue to haunt and make themselves known to those in the present, awakened so as to destabilize and unsettle? For the most part, Bollas and Freud only provide us with answers for why the individual might regress and why that individual might close their eyes to the trauma of the past. For whilst Freud determines that watching *Oedipus Rex* may lead to a catastrophic discovery that we too are cursed, he fails to consider what might happen after this discovery and what actions the individual might take after such a revelation – what would happen if the acting-out of resistance was transposed into an acting-out in the social; a political resistance born out of psychological resistance. Segal provides us with one grave answer: ‘global oppression...leaves desperate terrorism as almost the only weapon for the oppressed. Oppression inevitably leads to rebellion’.<sup>90</sup> Quick to take action, Antigone and Meinhof’s resistance has been derided and condemned by some. But did they act too quickly, and is there something we can learn from their course of action? In fact, even Segal’s rallying cry suggests a need for something urgent and decisive, going against the grain of psychoanalysis itself and indeed Freud’s own rebuttal against shortening the duration of analysis and his repeated call for a long course treatment.

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<sup>90</sup> Segal, ‘September 11’, p. 121.

So if we are to think about Antigone and Meinhof we are instantly greeted by two bleak and troubling tableaux: two bodies, each with a noose around their neck. We meet two people who died resisting. Antigone was sentenced to death by King Creon, only to take her own life by hanging, whilst Meinhof was arrested in 1972 and, after two years of hearings, was imprisoned for eight years in 1974. On May 9<sup>th</sup> 1976 she too was found hanging in her cell, though it has long since been debated whether this action was her own. These deaths take place off-stage in the hollow darkness of a cave and in a sterile prison cell enforced with thick, cold concrete. After sending Antigone to her tomb, King Creon seeks Tiresias' guidance, only to be asked 'What prize outweighs the priceless worth of prudence?'<sup>91</sup> Here, Tiresias offers caution as a remedy. I believe there is a lot to be taken from this diagnosis, an awareness and attentiveness, an alert vigilance that might serve us well. This is not to say that resistance and action are not urgently needed, but rather that caution might aid action and make it all the more penetrating.

Nixon also raises this question, considering how the position of the melancholic may in fact be more productive than it might initially seem. Liting between paralysis and instant action, Nixon speculates that the melancholic 'has the potential to enlighten',<sup>92</sup> questioning that whilst, in the words of psychoanalyst Franco Fornari, the melancholic may still be 'insane', they are 'closer to the catastrophic reality of our times' than he who, 'while apparently undisturbed', is the 'unsuspecting victim of a collective delusion of negation of reality'.<sup>93</sup> This speculation is rife with possibility in a time when 'resistance' and 'protest' have become increasingly ubiquitous terms, when we appear to either hastily jump to action or fail to act at all. Reflection may bring its own risks, such as slipping back towards paralysis or lacking the urgency required for action to be effective, as might the melancholic, afflicted as they are by their own madness and their grieving for an incomprehensible loss, yet, as a proposition, the melancholic offers us a space to slow action without displacing it – to think through the realities facing us and to ensure action is not dictated by impulsive, blinding reactions.

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<sup>91</sup> Sophocles, 'Antigone', p. 154.

<sup>92</sup> Nixon, 'Crazy', p. 12.

<sup>93</sup> Franco Fornari, *The Psychoanalysis of War*, trans. Alenka Pfeifer (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1974), p. 160.

To now turn to Freud's claim that 'if we wish to fulfil the more exacting demands upon analytic therapy, our road will not lead us to...a shorting of its duration' is to reconcile analysis' temporal duration with action in the social.<sup>94</sup> To propose a middle ground between immediate urgency and unending delay is to understand that resistance takes time. It may be born out of an immediate crisis, such as the one described throughout this thesis, yet its response must never fall back into the systems it works to undo, that is a return to defensive-mechanisms and self-induced destructiveness; nor must it fall back into the chaotic structures (dis)organizing the id. Working within this proposed space, one which encourages vigilance and attentiveness *followed* by action, it is now our responsibility to try to account for reality - to develop a critical stance in order to counteract, to act against acting-out, to allow the phantasies flooding the unconscious to rise to the surface only to reflected back, and to help the conscious mind come into contact with its unconscious foe. How do we act? How do we perform upon this stage? 'Silence is the real crime' is not a line to be learnt and memorised, repeated as if read from a script. Instead, it should be adopted and embraced, felt through actions which counter and hold denial accountable.

The lights rise. A couch. A desk. 'Look then, and see; nothing is hidden now', chant the Chorus as the doors to the Palace open revealing Eurydice's dead body.<sup>95</sup> King Creon can only stare in horror. The prison doors are cracked open; a light illuminates the cave containing Antigone's dead, hanging body. A tug ushers the curtains outwards. Snap. Meinhof's eyes flash open. Snap. Her head turns towards us. Words grow, distort, and pulsate. The blind-seer Tiresias warns: 'I say that the killer you are seeking is yourself'.<sup>96</sup> 'Look then, and see; nothing is hidden now', the Chorus chant again. Spotlight - Oedipus sits in Colonus, blind, poor, and alone. Bodies rise and words come back.

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<sup>94</sup> Freud, 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable', p. 224.

<sup>95</sup> Sophocles, 'Antigone', p. 161.

<sup>96</sup> Sophocles, 'King Oedipus', p. 36.

## Conclusion

*'As waves withdrawing uncover; as mist uplifting reveals; so, raising their eyes...they saw'*

*-Woolf, *Between the Acts*<sup>97</sup>*

The curtains have risen, the stage is illuminated. We are not the master; our house has another ruler. The doors have begun to swing open. Some people stare, transfixed, others turn away in horror, twisting in their chair. You can hear shuffling and nervous murmuring. 'The hands of the clock...stopped at the present moment. It was now. Ourselves...All shifted, preened, minced; hands were raised, legs shifted'.<sup>98</sup> The scene does not change. The audience sit, trapped, held between what has happened and what is yet to come, between something known and something unknown. This is the moment of discovery. The curtains stay as they are. 'Look then, and see; nothing is hidden now'. A couch. A desk. The lights burn down on the stage from above.

Perpetually beginning, never ending. Kolbowski's works leave us with a troubling unconscious process, one that is kept alive through the works' repeated transmissions. They activate and awaken something so unbearable that they continue to play long after we leave. They endure, looping through our mind and grating against a psyche engrained in the present, bolstered by denial, the tick tick tick of the videos replaying and edging us one step closer to that moment of discovery. Embattled, resistance meets resistance – the resistance generated through these videos comes into contact with the resistance of the unconscious, mediating through force an intrapsychic conflict between ego and id, phantasy and reality. Our eyes slowly begin to open, turning back towards the stage we had sheltered ourselves from and the reality that surrounds us. Row upon row, we sit aghast. The office has been exposed.

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<sup>97</sup> Woolf, p. 170.

<sup>98</sup> Woolf, p. 167.

The house has lost its shelter. Tick tick tick. Light fills the auditorium. Tick tick tick. Filled with voices and bodies, visitor after visitor, patient after patient, the stage reveals; something has been awakened. It has been my aim throughout this thesis to show that we must not be afraid to go back and awaken these theoretical and cultural connections – how these past voices and figures have much to offer us now as well as tomorrow. The stage has become an emblem of this. This project has also worked towards an understanding that psychoanalytic practitioners must hold on to their beliefs, embracing them outside their clinic as well as within. Their understanding of denial and repression is as much needed today as it has been in the past. The psychoanalytic standpoint of verbalizing truth must be acted upon not only by analysts, but also by those sensitive to these mechanisms. Kolbowski is one of these people. Words need not only come from those in the present; they may be summoned from the past, dug up and recovered, rising and swelling, crashing in against today's shoreline.

Psychoanalysis offers us these tools - it teaches us to make use of the past and to bring it to the present. It also teaches us that the fight begins with the mind. This we must listen to and learn from if we are to have any hope of surviving in this world. Our most primal instinct is to fight to survive. Yet, resistance need not only come through physical action; it begins with the mind and so can also emanate from the mind. We must not be silent – the curtains are open and the stage is our own. Let us not let go of the rope fastening those curtains in place, away from view. Let us keep this scene open, itself a vortex of times, places, and people. Let those howls be heard again and allow those voices to come back. Tick tick tick. 'The hands of the clock...stopped at the present moment. It was now'.

What I have outlined here might be expecting too much of an artwork, or may be overestimating its reach, but, above all, Kolbowski's work produces a space within which we might begin to rethink psychoanalysis and its relationship to what lies beyond its initial parameters, the space beyond the clinic. This is not a 'psychoanalysis of the social', but rather an impacting intervention, taking those operations conjured between the analyst sitting out of sight and the analysand lying on the couch, transferring and modifying them – a new type of transference working within a new space, one institution transposed for another. Maybe, then, transference is what we've been looking for. After all, it is within this



situation where the resistance occurs, where the resistance is encountered and worked-through, where the resistance of the mind is broken down and the psyche is made to confront the horrors of the unconscious. Transference is the adhesive of analysis. *They*, Meinhof deplores, *You*, Meinhof accuses. *You* and *I*. Speech is becoming lost and inaccessible, Arendt laments. Transference takes hold of speech, it allows the voices of the past to come back, it works within the field of language, holding words *and* silence accountable. We have already heard Freud speak of a 'transference of the forgotten past'. We might now want to speak of a transference of an unspoken past, and of the ways in which we might raise those voices and speak of past mistakes and failures, accounting for actions both past and present. Transference allows the curtains to part, lifting them and revealing. Transference, it would seem, allows us to make this move to the social.

*'Then the curtain rose. They Spoke.'*

-Woolf, *Between the Acts*<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Woolf, p. 197.

## Illustrations



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8





Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14





Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

No "territorial" determination is pertinent any longer for locating the seat of new technologies of transmission or aggression. ... "terrorist" attacks already no longer need planes, bombs, or kamikazes: it is enough to infiltrate a strategically important computer system and introduce a virus or some other disruptive element to paralyze the economic, military, and political resources of an entire country or continent.

Jacques Derrida

Philosophy in a Time of Terror, 2003

Figure 18

If it should turn out to be true that knowledge (in the modern sense of know-how) and thought have parted company for good, then we would indeed become the helpless slaves, not so much of our machines as of our know-how, thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible, no matter how murderous it is.

Hannah Arendt

The Human Condition, 1958

Figure 19

No "territorial" determination is pertinent any longer for locating the seat of new technologies of transmission or aggression. ... "terrorist" attacks already no longer need planes, bombs, or kamikazes: it is enough to infiltrate a strategically important computer system and introduce a virus or some other disruptive element to paralyze the economic, military, and political resources of an entire country or continent.

Jacques Derrida

Philosophy in a Time of Terror, 2003

Figure 20

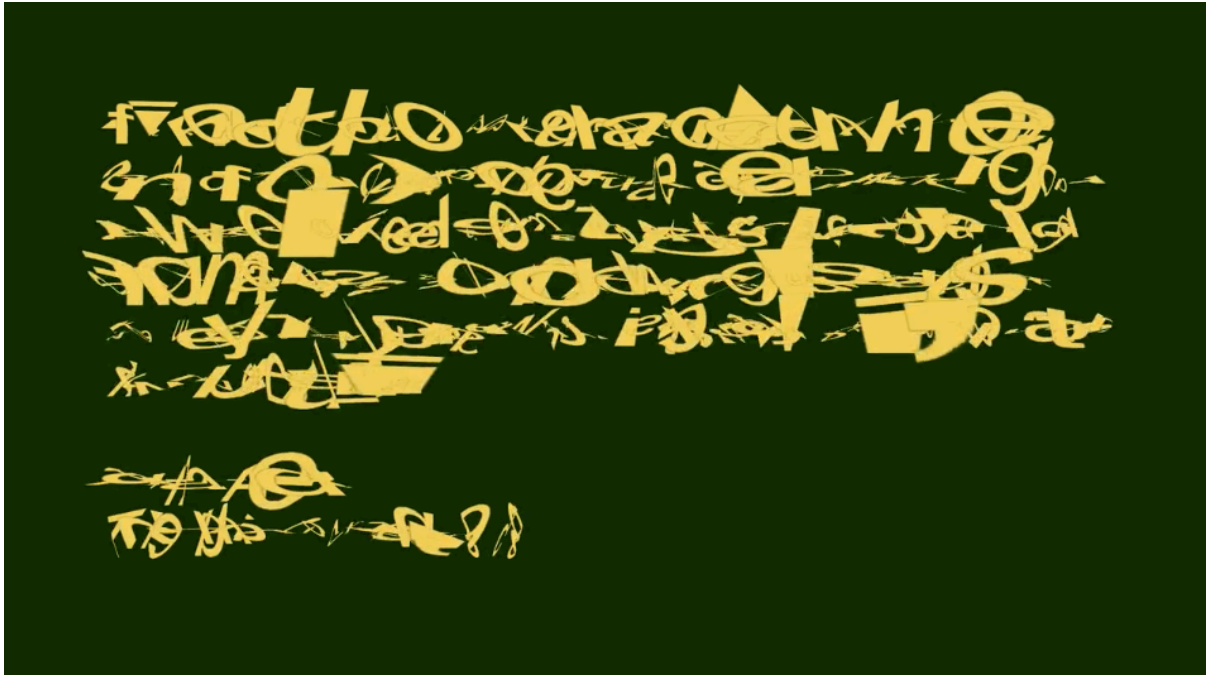


Figure 21

No "territorial" determination is pertinent any longer for locating the seat of new technologies of transmission or aggression. ... "terrorist" attacks already no longer need planes, bombs, or kamikazes: it is enough to infiltrate a strategically important computer system and introduce a virus or some other disruptive element to paralyze the economic, military, and political resources of an entire country or continent.

Jacques Derrida

Philosophy in a Time of Terror, 2003

Figure 22

No "territorial" determination is pertinent any longer for locating the seat of new technologies of transmission or aggression. The "terrorist" attacks already no longer need planes, bombs, or kamikaze; it is enough to infiltrate a strategically important computer system, and introduce viruses or some other disruptive element to paralyze the economic, military, and political resources of an entire country or world area.

Jacques Derrida

Philosophy in a Time of Terror, 2003

Figure 23

It hardly out to be the far-ol-enh oem  
e/n: of O'ny in Aout at late m/r g  
the W v e s e d v a o r e t e s A s A s x o l r o m l  
of \ J h a o n k o r e s N o r o w h g l s t e t i s a t  
t h a y f o u g g e r w h a t t h e d a v o d a e  
h o m m d u t e r

H a p A e d  
T e m e c o t e r n b

Figure 24

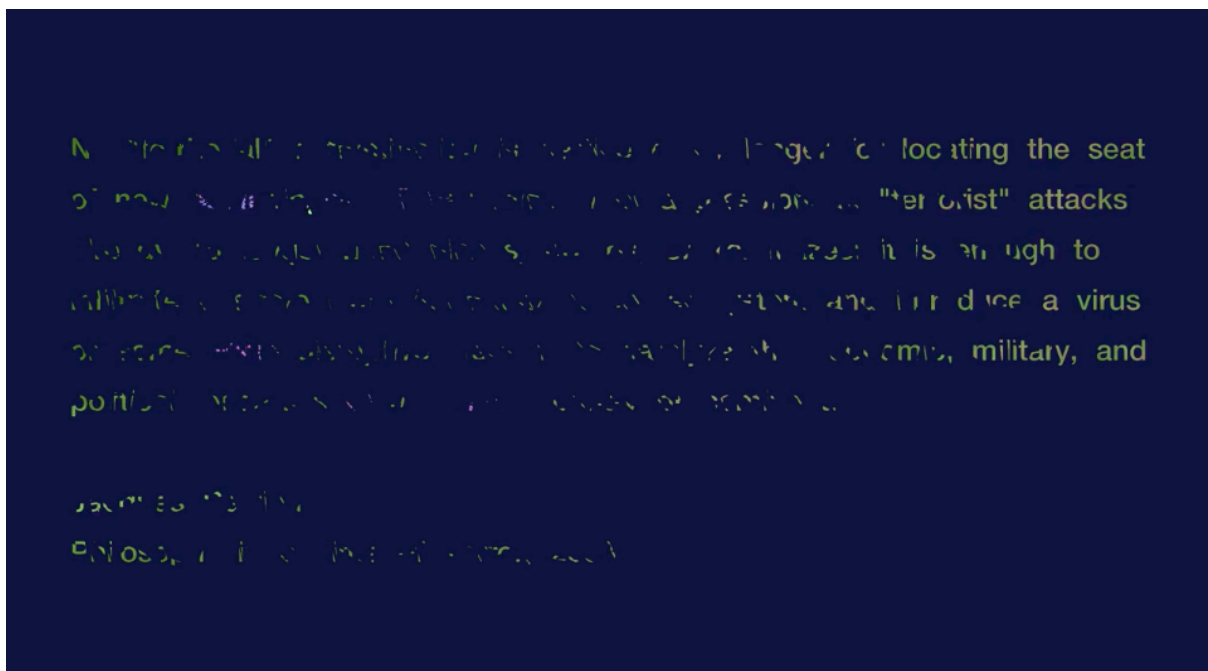


Figure 25

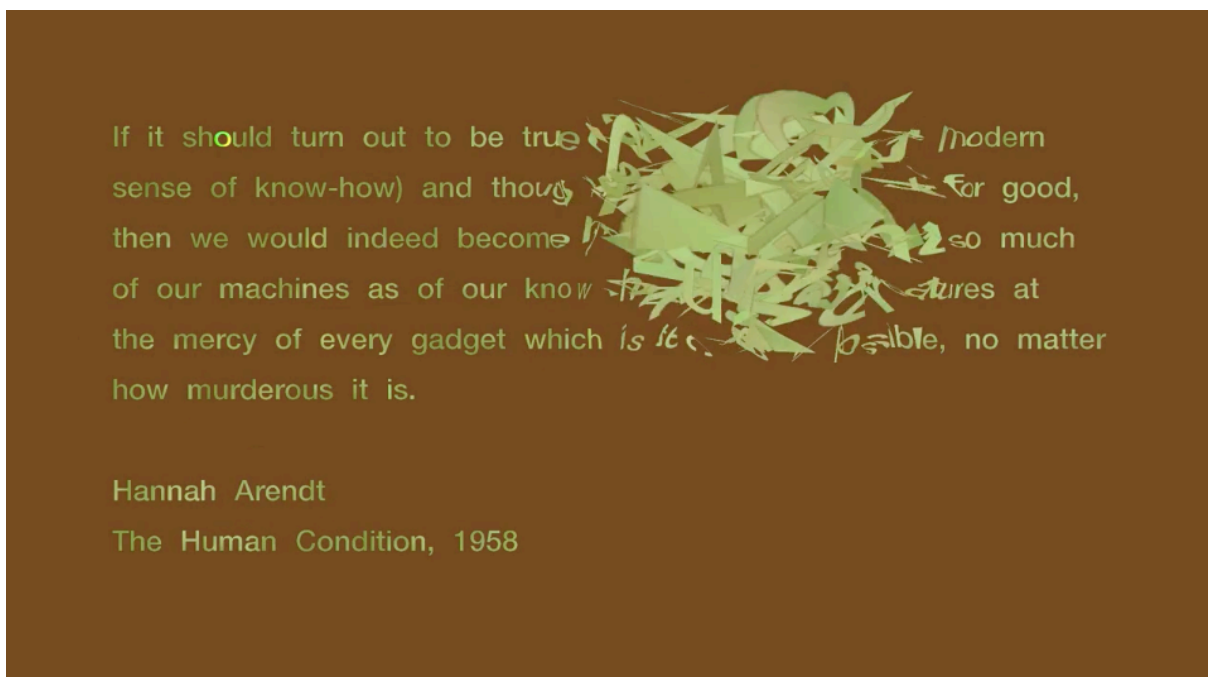


Figure 26



No "territorial" definition is pertinent any longer for locating the seat of new technologies of transmission or aggression. ... "terrorist" attacks are carried out by planes, bombs, or kamikazes: it is enough to infiltrate a power grid, a telephone computer system and introduce a virus or some other digital programme to paralyze the economic, military, and political apparatus of a whole country or continent.

Jacques Derrida

*Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 2003

Figure 27

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