which most nearly resemble these sources of visionary illumination are gemstones.212

Another aspect to this relates to what Marshall McLuhan identified as the irresistible ‘light through’ quality of Gothic stained glass windows, which were used early on by television to much advantage.213 The light coming through the screen meant it was a more involving process for the viewer than simply light being projected onto a screen, as in cinema. It beckons to something beyond, to something other-wordly. Scholars of medieval culture have suggested that stained glass windows and latticework in Gothic art served to provide an object where the over-powering space of infinity could be defined in some small way, given a certain portion and thereby made more ‘apprehensible’.214

John David Edbert, a US writer on popular culture, has argued that since about 1995, technologies of light - ‘luminous technologies’ - have dominated over technologies of matter.215 ‘Thus, with the iPad, the destiny of the computer is revealed, as the transformation and etherealisation of all of its component parts into organs made out of light.’216 French philosopher Paul Virilio fears our traditional architecture - our urban walls and gate ways - have given way to a plethora of media channel openings instead. These are portals to information and communication networks and diverse new technologies,217 a shift that in turn dematerialises us. When Huxley spoke of the doors of perception - paraphrasing the great mystic William Blake, I don’t think he had in mind this kind of media floodgate that we currently live in. But, as the old saying goes, it is no use locking the stable door after the horse has bolted. McLuhan argues a primary function of art is to make tangible and subject to scrutiny the nameless psychic dimensions of new experience: ‘...the role of art is to create the means of perception by creating counter-environments that open the doors of perception to people otherwise numbed in a non-perceivable situation’.218

212 Ibid, 88.
215 Edbert, The New Media Invasion, 120.
216 Ibid, 122.
217 Kellner, "Virilio, War and Technology", 115.
218 McLuhan, Through the Vanishing Point, 241.
SECTION 2: Archive Fever, Time and the Fast Forward Life

Chapter Four: Experiencing the Present as an Object of Future Memory

This chapter examines philosopher Jacques Derrida’s notion of archive fever, but with a variation that sees it projected into the future. This relates to the phenomena of living in a mode of being which experiences the present as the object of a future memory. This idea has its origins in literary theory, or more precisely, narratology, the field of academic research examining fiction and how it operates. Researchers have adopted the term *prolepsis*, to explain a phenomenon in fiction where the narrative jumps ahead of itself and talks about an event which is in the future. I am proposing that this phenomenon has spread to our everyday life, through the frenzied archiving and recording of events, to create an on-going process of transforming the present into the past (by anticipating it as a future memory).

As a way into this idea, I thought it appropriate to start with a 19th century classic literary character, Alice from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, as a means of grappling with the idea of memory in reverse. In the sequel book, *Through the Looking Glass*, published in 1873, instead of going down the rabbit hole, Alice climbs up onto

Figure 37. Clarissa Regan. *Talking Heads*, 2011-2013. 130 x 120 x 44cm. Ceramic, two-way mirror perspex, glass, table, light.
the mantlepiece and slips through a mirror. The mirror glass has become a sort of silvery mist and so she emerges on the other side. This mirror motif, a frequent artistic and literary device down the ages,\textsuperscript{219} deals with appearance, illusion and reality. As the late Emeritus Professor of Neuropsychology at the University of Bristol, Professor Richard Gregory comments about mirrors: ‘Illusions jolt us out of naive acceptance that seeing is direct, reliable knowledge.’\textsuperscript{220} As such, mirrors provide a useful mechanism in my studio artwork to provoke confusion and ambiguity, and hopefully prompt a new perspective. Mirrors provide sight without touch - as do computers. Devices such as the \textit{iPhone} and \textit{iPad} have attempted to integrate touch into the operation, but they omit the sense of depth, the three-dimensionality of everyday objects. In fact my project is, in part, concerned with the idea of looking behind the mirror, or the mediated screen, as a way perhaps of thinking in reverse and seeing what is going on from another perspective. On a number of occasions I used mirrors (thinking about the digital screen

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\textsuperscript{219} For an excellent overview of the role of mirrors in history, mythology and science, consult: RL Gregory, \textit{Mirrors in Mind} (Oxford: WH Freeman, Spektrum, 1997).

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid, 238.
as a mirror), or two-way mirrors, as a way of seeing both through the mirror and also catching a reflection. In the work *Talking Heads* (fig. 37, 38 & 39) I collected a number of these two-way mirrors (available as off-cuts at perspex stores) and had them glued together into a box. I hand-built two heads: one female, one male from clay and fired them in a glossy, metallic silver glaze. I deliberately omitted the mouths on the figures, and created a very smooth surface on their faces. They are both placed within the confines of the two-way mirror boxes, in which they can see each other, but only through the confusing medium of the mirrored surface. They have been placed on a high-tech modern glass desk, and are facing one another. The two-way mirrors act to disrupt the communication between the two people. The use of the mirrors causes the light to refract in surprising ways, causing the viewer to look again, and walk around the installation. I chose the silvery metallic glaze to heighten this response. My figures are attempting to talk through the mediation of technology, but the communication is disrupted. In the repeating loop of watching oneself, direct dialogue is confounded.

To return to my earlier point about prolepsis and the Lewis Carroll narrative, the literary character Alice discovers everything is in reverse order in the alternate world: the Jabberwocky poem is written back to front, people live their lives backwards and she encounters the White Queen, who can remember events on both sides of the time

Figure 39. Clarissa Regan. *Talking Heads*, (detail), 2011-2013. 130 x 120 x 44cm. Ceramic, two-way mirror perspex, glass, table, light.
continuum, as well as experiencing the present. The White Queen explains the advantages of living backwards: essentially her memory works both ways. So when the Queen begins crying out loud, Alice does not know what is wrong, but the Queen explains she is going to prick her finger on the sewing needle. Despite her having the memory of the injury about to happen, she cannot prevent the event. For French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, this ability has the attributes of a paradox: ‘In the singularity of paradoxes, nothing begins or ends, everything proceeds at once in the direction of past and future.’\footnote{Gilles Deleuze, \textit{The Logic of Sense} (London, Athlone 1990), 80.} Unlike the actor Brad Pitt ageing in reverse in the 2008 film \textit{The Curious Case of Benjamin Button}, the White Queen is not essentially about the ageing process, but more a reflection of the idea of causality and potentiality. Nineteenth century author Lewis Carroll is examining the difference between ‘events, things and states of affairs’\footnote{Ibid, 9.} according to Deleuze. He says:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Here events, differing radically from things, are no longer sought in the depths, but at the surface, in the faint incorporeal mist which escapes from bodies, a film without volume which envelops them, a mirror which reflects them ... Alice is no longer able to make her way through to the depths. Instead she releases her incorporeal double. It is by following the border; by skirting the surface, that one passes from bodies to the incorporeal.}\footnote{Ibid, 9-10.}
\end{quote}

The phrase ‘flashback’ in literary terms is quite commonly understood. The technical term for this is ‘analepsis’ - or the pause in the action in a story, where something from the past is recounted or a memory enacted. When you read a book, and move the bookmark along, usually everything on the left is the past - already known - and to the right is the future and not known. But in fact, the present for the reader is already somebody’s else - the author’s - past. Philosopher Paul Ricouer calls this ‘presentifying the past’\footnote{Currie, \textit{About Time}, 5.} and according to UK academic Mark Currie, this area has been extensively explored through themes of memory, reliability of the narrator and other aspects of retrospect. He has put forward the idea that the reverse has yet to be fully examined and he relates this mode of anticipation to everyday life.

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{221 Giles Deleuze, \textit{The Logic of Sense} (London, Athlone 1990), 80.}
\item \footnote{222 Ibid, 9.}
\item \footnote{223 Ibid, 9-10.}
\item \footnote{224 Currie, \textit{About Time}, 5.}
\end{itemize}
If, in order to look back at what has happened we tell a story - we must also know that the present is a story yet to be told. The present is the object of a future memory and we live it as such, in anticipation of the story we will tell later, envisaging the present as past.225

Essentially, as a reader, you already know there will be a future laying there in wait, in the pages of the book you are holding. It becomes innate as a way of reading, and that you project forward to envisage the significance of the present moment - for example in a classic Agatha Christie mystery where the clue scattered in the text - a gun left on the mantelpiece - and hence you, the reader, can give it a sort of teleological retrospect. The idea of foreshadowing in fiction is usually taken to be a hint of things to come, not an actual proleptic discursion into the future, in which the expected future event is presented as though it is already an accomplished fact. The 1994 film *Pulp Fiction*226 can illustrate the idea of prolepsis at work, or the Greek myth *Oedipus*, where the title character is told he will kill his father and sleep with his mother. For Currie, the practice of reading fictional is a preparation for what is become increasingly common in our contemporary lives. It is a mode of continuous anticipation, where we attach significance to particular moments in our lives, knowing we will later look back in retrospect. In fact the envisaged future is producing the present.

Currie proposes three social trends contributing to this phenomenon:

a) time/space compression,

b) accelerated recontextualisation

c) and archive fever.

It is a form of self-consciousness about oneself - in regards to the future depictions of one’s actions. Before I discuss these factors in depth, I first would like to briefly outline some of the ways it is manifested. My own thoughts on this subject area began a few years ago with an evening out. I’ve been involved in taking photographs many many times on nights out, but the ubiquity of the digital camera photography, allied with social media, and its intrusive incursion into the activities of the night, was unprecedented, in my view. The occasion was a sporting dinner and it began and ended with photography - every single member of the dinner possessed a digital camera or

225 Ibid.
226 Quentin Tarrantino, “Pulp Fiction” (Burbank, CA, Miramax Home Entertainment; distributed by Buena Vista, 1994).
camera phone, and spent the night photographing each other and themselves. Every move on the dance floor was photographed, the walks up to the stage, trips to the bathroom, sitting around the table, or even new application of make-up. Adding to the intensification of these staged photographs was the reflexive nature of the viewing. The images were instantly reviewed, with the participants and others immediately crowding around the camera and then examining each photograph and commenting upon their own and each other’s appearances. The instantaneous nature of digital photography has accelerated the feedback loop. As Currie says:

*In digital photography, the effect is one of foreshortening the present, since the image is consumed almost instantly, consigning the present of a few moments ago to the past and inaugurating an infinite sequence of future presents from which that moment will be represented as past.*

Other ways in which this mode can be seen to operate is through the growing use of personal blogs and websites. Of course, personal diaries are nothing new, and many of them have been written historically with an eye to future publication, but today’s ubiquity of new communication technologies has meant this process has spread far and wide. The camera has taken on the role of the diary and its traditional function in recording the emergence and development of self-consciousness and reflexivity. This mode of anticipation also means that the recording of the event begins to more frequently determine the event, and/or reduce the importance of the experience of that event in the present moment of time. For example, when I was a journalist, I was often called to go out and cover protest demonstrations. Some would be quite local in nature, and the organisers would only get together if we could organise a photographer to come. The recording and archiving of the ‘event’ was creating the actual event. This process - the archiving archive - has been described by French philosopher Jacques Derrida (which will be discussed later in this section).

Therefore I propose the anticipation of the future retrospection of the event can override the experiencing of the event. Think of attending a wedding, where as a guest you may have had to wait for hours while the bride and groom were taken elsewhere for a series

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of staged photographs, or attending a modern concert where vast numbers of the crowd hold up their cameras throughout the evening as a way of capturing the performance, more concerned with recording the event than interacting with the live nature of the music. These instances are so commonplace, that the underlying assumptions are unquestioned. Another relevant point to this is that archiving is now increasingly operating at an individual, not a public document space level, with the advent of the internet and the proliferation of communication technologies. Those three sociological factors, described by Currie, are important trends in influencing this move to prolepsis and I will now outline them briefly.

The first factor is time/space compression, which has been described by David Harvey in his classic text *The Condition of PostModernity*. Essentially, two great features of capitalism - overcoming spatial barriers to find new markets (essentially globalisation) and the acceleration in the turn-over time of capital (the time it takes for investment to make a return in the form of profit) have created this compression, and hence altered our perception of time. Harvey takes a Marxist approach to examining the impact of labour and capital, stating the capitalist drive to intensify and speed-up production has disorientated and disrupted our social and cultural life. He traces a path from agrarian and seasonal time to factory time. Perceptions of time have also been affected by more recent trends, such as the rapid turnover of goods, electronic control of stock, electronic banking and plastic money.

Adding to the compression is the space issue. For Harvey, the pressure of globalisation to reduce spatial barriers and annihilate space through time is ‘omni-present’. Many innovations from the 19th and 20th century have been devoted to space removal - railroads, the telegraph, car, radios and so on. Harvey: ‘I use the word ‘compression’ because a strong case can be made that the history of capitalism has been characterised by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us.’ The implications of this are also taken up by Stephen Crocker, a UK academic, who argues that these features of capitalism have meant we ‘begin to experience the present as little more than the means

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229 Ibid, 232.
230 Ibid, 240.
to the realization of an expected future event which already appears to be real’. The interval between ‘transmission and reception, investment and return, experience and expectation is reduced to no more than a period of waiting’, which lacks creative or transformative force. Crocker argues: ‘The present becomes an obstacle whose duration restricts our access to a future event - the return of the investment, the reception of a message, that we desperately need to make real.’ In other words, the present is frequently conceived as valueless because it is a period of waiting. Think of being kept waiting at the doctor or dentist, or at an airport. Or waiting impatiently for the computer program to load up, and how that is regarded as ‘down-time’.

A number of other theorists have highlighted the altered temporal state, most notably French philosopher Paul Virilio and Canadian/US media philosopher Marshall McLuhan. For Virilio, the acceleration process in Western society is particularly marked in communication technologies. Essentially, the fusion of the computer with telecommunications has brought simultaneity and instantaneity to our lives. Virilio has

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232 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
Figure 41. Clarissa Regan, *Rear View Orpheus*, (detail), 2008-2013. Ceramic, car mirrors, metal wire, computer. 60 x 40 x 90cm.
linked this speeded-up state - the study of which he calls dromology\textsuperscript{234} - with Einstein’s theories of relativity - basically that time and space are inseparable. For Virilio, digital culture means the transmission of information at the speed of light, effectively erasing the interval between the sending and receiving of a message. It gives us vertigo, inundating our human scales of perception. As Virilio theorist Sean Cubitt notes: ‘Instantaneous transmission of miniaturised data, in quantities baffling to human reason, is the beginning of a new mode of time.’\textsuperscript{235} Reality has ceased being defined by time and space, as in a virtual world, technology allows the existence of the paradoxical state of being \textit{everywhere} at the same time and yet \textit{nowhere}. Virilio states about computer time that: ‘Chronological and historical time, time that passes, is replaced by a time that exposes itself instantaneously.’\textsuperscript{236}

McLuhan was one of the earliest of theorists in identifying the effects of the time/space compression upon humanity. He argued with the introduction of electric media, (which media theorists now include the digitisation process), we are now ‘... in a brand-new world of all-at-once-ness’. ‘Time’ has ceased, ‘space’ has vanished. We now live in a global village.\textsuperscript{237} It is worth including an extended quote from McLuhan:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Transmitted at the speed of light, all events on this planet are simultaneous.}
\textit{In the electric environment of information, all events are simultaneous.}
\textit{There is no time or space separating events. Information and images bump against each other every day in massive quantities and the resonance of this interfacing is like the babble of a village or tavern gossip session. The absence of space brings to mind the idea of a village. But actually, at the speed of light, the planet is not much bigger than this room we’re in.}\textsuperscript{238}
\end{quote}

In my work, \textit{Rear View Orpheus} (fig. 40 & 41) I re-imagined the Greek hero and musician \textit{Orpheus} as female. Also, to explain my way of working, I have chosen to look at mythology and fairy tales - and retell some of these stories in a contemporary context as a way of dealing with complex ideas. Referencing existing classic stories gives me

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{234} Rob Bartram, “Visuality, Dromology and Time Compression” \textit{Time and Society} 13, no 2-3 (2004).
\item \textsuperscript{235} Sean Cubitt, \textit{Simulation and Social Theory} (London, Sage, 2001), 63.
\item \textsuperscript{236} Paul Virilio, \textit{The Lost Dimension} (New York, Semiotext(e), 1991), 14.
\item \textsuperscript{237} Marshall McLuhan, \textit{The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects} (California, Gingko Press, 2001), 63.
\item \textsuperscript{238} Donald Theall and Marshall McLuhan, \textit{The Medium is the Rear View Mirror}: Understanding McLuhan, (Ann Arbo, UMI BOoks on Demand), 46.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
way of thinking out loud, as I believe the concerns are inherently built into the narratives and re-imagined in different contexts or different situations, yet retain their inherent psychological insights. My Orpheus is looking back into a silver computer screen, in an attempt to understand herself and her situation, via her mirror extensions growing from her absent hands. But the computer screen behind her has a cloudy mirror of silver, and reflects insubstantial shadow. I built a slip-cast computer and glazed it with a metallic silver glaze. It reflects, but not fully. She is grasping at shadows, or a reflection of a reflection. I am alluding to a key moment in the classic myth from Ovid’s Metamorphoses239 - the point where Orpheus - having gone down into the underworld to rescue his dead wife Eurydice, looks back at her, and thereby causes her to vanish forever. He was allowed to bring her back on one condition: he walk in front and not look back until they both reached the upper world. But as he reached the threshold of the earth, he turned back to look at her, and so she vanished. Seeking to make the elusive tangible is impossible. Orpheus kills by his gaze, that which he is trying to preserve. This myth has been subject to many artworks and retellings down the ages, including by a number of artists, such Auguste Rodin (fig. 42), George Frederick Watts (fig. 43), as well as a number of plays, movies, music compositions and ballets. My sculpture is a way of thinking about the idea of the impossible gaze, of a desire for the intangible which cannot be grasped.

In my artwork, I used discarded rear-vision mirrors from a car, and attached these to my ceramic figure, in a way suggesting a prosthetic. Running wire from speaker microphones were used to do this. A silver glaze was applied to the stumps of the character’s arms - a reference to the fairytale The Handless Maiden (which is discussed

in greater depth in Chapter Two), and to the idea of the metallic hands being a signifier of a loss of a hand-made life. Finally, I applied a silver colour to the face of Orpheus, as though the sheen of the silver mirror has cast a permanent stain over her face. She has become part of the reflective devices she is looking into. Her eyes are made deliberately blank, her gaze has been suffused and trapped. For French literary theorist Maurice Blanchot, the backwards look is central to the myth: ‘The Eurydice that Orpheus desires is not the visible Eurydice of daylight but the invisible mysterious Other, a being that remains in the realm of the infinite and unattainable.’240 And as Alain P. Toumayan puts it: ‘The experience of the underworld, the experience of the approach of death is an experience of time’s absence.’241 Seeking to find oneself in the glance back at the digital camera screen, to alter time, is an impossible conundrum. To bring my argument back to those three factors identified earlier by Currie (time/space compression, accelerated recontextualisation and archive fever), I would like to now expand further upon the second factor adding to the proleptic mode of being. He cites the continuous novelty of the fashion industry and in-built obsolescence in products as examples of this idea. The cycle of reviving past trends in clothing and other objects has become shorter and shorter. ‘If clothing styles remain the same, frozen by edict, the notion of the contemporary, of the present, would be liberated from its frantic commercial pace and no longer marked by its imminent and immanent obsolescence,’242 Currie says. It produces a commercial logic with its own self-serving value of out-of-date clothing, or design. Harvey also discusses the impact of the volatility and ephemerality of fashions, products, ideas and values. Paraphrasing Alvin Toffler on the throw-away society, Harvey argues it has meant more than just throwing away products and goods like disposable plates and packaging, but also being able to

Figure 43. George Frederick Watts, Orpheus
throw away ‘values, stable relationships, lifestyles, attachments to things, buildings...’

In the realm of commodity production, the primary effect has been to emphasize the values and virtues of instantaneity (instant and fast foods, meals and other satisfactions) and of disposability (cups, plates, cutlery, packaging, napkins, clothing etc).

The third factor derives from French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s concept of ‘Archive Fever’. The archive is not memory, Derrida argues, as memory is spontaneous, alive and an internal experience. Rather, the archive requires a place of consignation in an external place - ‘which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction or of reimpersion’. A key feature of the archive is that it does not simply record the past, but is subject to the beliefs, attitudes and interests of individual archivists. Derrida’s insight is how ‘archivization produces as much as it records the event’. This goes to the point about the media that I mentioned earlier, as Derrida indeed says: ‘This is also our political experience of the so-called news media.’ The word ‘fever’ in Derrida’s term is quite evocative. In the original French it is mal d’archive, carrying the implication more of a sort of sickness, as well as fever. As Carolyn Steedman puts it, the mal of the archive is the ‘feverish desire - a kind of sickness unto death - as Derrida indicated for the archive: the fever not so much to enter it and use it, as to have it.’

The other important point about archive fever is its quality of repetition - a recognition that in fact the archive is a form of repeating of the original documents, events, experiences - and that is closely linked to Freud’s description of the compulsion to repeat as the ‘drive toward death’. Freud proposed the death drive after observing a

243 Currie, About Time, 11.
244 Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, 286.
245 Derrida, Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression.
246 Ibid, 11.
247 Ibid.
248 Ibid, 6
249 Ibid, 17.
number of World War 1 victims. They kept repeating their original trauma, in dreams or in unconscious actions. The original memory is repressed and comes out as a repetition of the experience, rather than as a recollection. It becomes a compulsion. Freud also describes how children enjoy games being repeated or stories retold. ‘In the play of children we seem to arrive at the conclusion that the child repeats even the unpleasant experiences because through his own activity he gains a far more thorough mastery of the strong impression than was possible by mere passive experience.’ Derrida says the death drive is destructive and incites forgetfulness - annihilating memory. Because it is impossible to repeat the original, as it is impossible to recover and possess the moment of beginning, for Derrida the archive is a sickness, a movement towards death. The idea of a fever also contains within it the feverish hunt to find something has presumably been lost or that has been kept secret. And as Andrew Murphie puts it, in discussing the volatility of the present, with our computer-driven networked culture, there exists an on-going attempt to ‘reinforce the fragile present’ by turning it into an archive of past repetitions which will allow control of ‘future presents’. This becomes an obsession-compulsion which involves archive fever, Murphie argues:

*We find archive fever in the troubled, technological attempt to reassert the construction of the present moment (and the sense of being in this moment - of presence) in the face of its erosion in time.*

So his argument is that when we lose a sense of control over our own presence in time, when memory and history fail us, we build archives.

An illustration of this point can be seen in the work by contemporary artist Christian Boltanski (figs. 44 & 45). *Personnes* relates to a series he made with items of worn clothing. They began from an association with the clothing depots of concentration camps. Boltanski is concerned with making memories and loss visible. *No Man’s Land* (fig. 41) is a return of a work he had originally executed in 1994. The neatly stacked boxes are reminiscent of a traditional archive. In the first version the boxes contained mementos of a group of workers who had lost their jobs at a carpet factory in England. It was partly about the idea that the job termination was a loss of their lives. In the

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254 Ibid.
255 Ibid, 129.
Cologne installation, the boxes are empty and are filled only *virtually* with the worker’s memories and associations. It is my argument that a sense of a lack of control over our lives, exacerbated by the acceleration and proliferation of information, (McLuhan’s observation springs to mind: ‘Information pours upon us, instantaneously and continuously.’) combined with the rapid developments in communication technologies, have all worked to create a sense of a world defying organisation, a schizophrenic collapse of time-space. Mike Featherstone has argued that encyclopedias evolved out of an attempt in the 18th and 19th centuries to manage the flood of new information then, to classify it and give it order.\textsuperscript{257} The accelerated rhythm of modernity has only pushed our contemporary archiving impulse to new levels and to an extreme temporal loop.

For Stephen Crocker, the contemporary Western world’s absence of belief in a divine order in the world, or of a belief in fate or karma, means our decisions become enormously important in living our day to day lives. ‘Risk accompanies the perception that the future is the result of human intervention.’\textsuperscript{258} In a secular world, where an ‘unimaginably complex system of social relations that produce the clothes we

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image1.png}
\caption{Christian Boltanski, *No Mans Land*, 2010.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image2.png}
\caption{Christian Boltanski, *Personnes*, 2010. Hanger}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{256} McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage*, 63.
\textsuperscript{258} Crocker, “Prolepsis, On Speed and Time’s Interval”, 496.
wear, the meals we eat and so on, this is the world of Jean Baudrillard’s circulating system of signs - our decisions are made without enough time to gather all the information necessary. Also at play here is the often opaque nature of the causes of our actions and hence the future possible consequences. Crocker says we do not experience the present as part of a project which we are actively and volitionally bringing into being. But rather: ‘We encounter it instead as a set of functions and reactions to pre-formed events that we did not create and over which we effect less and less control.’

Think back to the White Queen of Lewis Carroll, who has the ability to see cause and effect so very distinctly through her knowledge of future actions.

This ability has traditionally been seen to come essentially from retrospection, from contemplation of one’s past self through a process of reflection, as described in St Augustine’s *Confessions*. One of the first philosophers to reflect upon the nature of time (after Aristotle), Augustine’s 4th century description of his life is considered the first Western autobiography. He is cited by most of the philosophers who consider time, from Immanuel Kant, to Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl and later Deleuze and Paul Ricouer. The significance of his book - which explains his sinful youth and later conversion to Christianity, (and through that essentially what it is to be a consciousness in time) - is that in the position of narrator, from the act of retrospective narration, he is, as Genieve Lloyd states: ‘... able to achieve a view of himself as object, which eludes him in the midst of the life he now narrates. His narrated life takes on a unity, a wholeness.’ When you live your life, you experience events as fragmentation.

There are whole sections and years, in fact, of my own life, and my own childhood, I simply have forgotten. A narrator can put things together with unity and meaning. Augustine argues that time is not an ‘objective’ feature of the world, but a ‘distention of the soul’. As Lloyd comments: ‘The self becomes visible through a kind of detachment - it draws back from the mindless world to turn its gaze on consciousness.’ Augustine also argues that only the present truly exists and the past is

259 Ibid, 485.
260 Ibid, 485-86.
263 Ibid, 14.
264 Ibid, 21.
simply a memory of a once-present-moment and also, that the future is an anticipation of a present-moment-to-be. So, instead of using the terms, past, present and future - in fact we should say there ‘are three times: the present of the past, the present of the present and the present of the future’.265

Finally, I would like to connect this mode of anticipation, this distracted temporality of being, to my larger investigation of externalising the self. Prolepsis seems to provide a kind of temporal self-distance, a form of external self-reflection, which, in looking back upon the present, gives an almost teleological point of view. It is a frame that lends meaning and significance to one’s life events. Yet in my view, the attempt to re-capture the moment, to re-peat and re-create what is essentially not there - is doomed to failure. Boltanski says:

> Preventing forgetfulness, stopping the disappearance of things and beings seemed to me a noble goal, but I quickly realised that this ambition was bound to fail, for as soon as we try to preserve something, we fix it. We can preserve things only by stopping life’s course. If I put my glasses in a vitrine, they will never break, but will they still be considered glasses? ... Once glasses are part of a museum’s collection, they forget their function, they are then only an image of glasses... 266

In my work *A Stitch in Time*, (figs. 46, 48, 49 & 50), I was exploring the idea of attempting to control time through the device of film. How the impulse I described earlier, (to archive one’s image through photography, social media, texting and so on) is an attempt to not only stop the flow of time but control it, to enact a sort of prolepsis. In the work, the figure has bound on her back a digital tape. It was a found object, having been discarded from a Sydney television news studio. It bears the note: Tape Has Been Erased. I used the tape from the film canister to strap it to the back of my hand-built clay figure, in the style of a backpack. I was referencing both the magic lanternist of olden days (fig. 22) and was also thinking about the burden of history. Of the digital age we now live in, where analogue tapes have been erased. What does this move across to digital information - and the flood of information unleashed by having what McLuhan

265 Ibid.
calls a ‘dense electronic symphony’ circling the earth,267 mean to humans? I glazed the figure with a black glaze, thinking about nighttime and how cinema or theatrical shows need a darkened auditorium. I used silkscreened images onto the clay body of the figure. Images included associations with the idea of the movies - film projectors, drive-ins, as well as a camera obscura. I then refurbished an old Singer sewing machine and placed my ceramic figure in the gap of the original sewing table. I also worked with an antique Kodak film editing viewer, an electric one for field editing. It was originally used to splice film and glue it back together. I was interested in the classic documentary The Man With The Movie Camera by Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov (1929), (fig 48) a silent documentary film following Russians during the course of a day. The film looked at how urban folk worked and lived, and examined the relationship of people to their machines - particularly the film-maker’s camera itself, which became like a character of its own. One particular sequence caught my eye - the

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Figure 48. Clarissa Regan, *A Stitch in Time*, (detail), 2013. Ceramic, Singer sewing machine, tape, reel, film splicer. 100 x 50 x 50cm.
splitting of imagery of a woman at a sewing machine and another woman splicing film (fig 51). I had already found an old second-hand film splicer at an antique shop, and had previously been thinking about the idea of film issuing from the arms or hands of a body, following on from some of my earlier works. One of McLuhan’s passages about the nature of the impact of the fusion of the computer and video-technologies particularly struck me whilst I was building this work. McLuhan was arguing that it may well be discovered during the course of the 21st century that man was not designed to live at the speed of light, and that the new video-related media could well make human-kind implode upon itself without the ‘countervailing balance of natural and physical laws’.268 ‘Caught up in the hybrid energy released by video technologies, he will be presented with a chimerical ‘reality’, that involves all his sense at a distended pitch, a condition as addictive as any known drug.’269 In my work A Stitch in Time I was also thinking about how the person herself, or himself becomes the splicer, how the spectacle of life passing before one’s eyes during the course of a day becomes selectively chosen and stitched together. By recording external events with our little

Figure 49. Clarissa Regan, A Stitch in Time, 2013. (Installation view). Ceramic, Singer sewing machine, tape, reel, film splicer. 100 x 50 x 50cm.

268 Ibid.
269 Ibid.
phones and cameras, are we trying to control this passing parade? To hang onto or subvert time?

To conclude this chapter I would like to raise Roland Barthes’s insight that photography is the advent of myself as other: ‘a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity’.\textsuperscript{270} The photograph represents the very subtle moment when I am neither subject, nor object, but a ‘subject who feels he is becoming an object’.\textsuperscript{271} Barthes goes on to state ‘I then experience a micro-version of death....I am truly becoming a specter.’\textsuperscript{272} In conceiving of the present as an object of future memory, one is looking into death. Death has been displaced in our society - it is no longer tolerated in public, it comes back in the attempt to preserve, conserve and hang on to life. Yet, as Ernest Becker points out in his classic \textit{Denial of Death},\textsuperscript{273} while the fear of death haunts the

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{270} Barthes, \textit{Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography}, 12.
    \item \textsuperscript{271} Ibid, 13.
    \item \textsuperscript{272} Ibid, 14.
    \item \textsuperscript{273} Ernest Becker, \textit{The Denial of Death} (New York, Free Press, 1973), ix.
\end{itemize}
human animal like nothing else, it is utterly repressed. We could not function if we were
to be constantly conscious of our final destiny. We are a paradoxical creature - half an
animal housed in the fleshy casing of a heart-pumping, breath-grasping body that once
belonged to a fish, - says Becker and half symbolic, out of nature, in the stars and self-
conscious. In our attempt to hang on to the fleeting moment, to capture and repeat the
eternal cosmological nature of the now, we are at risk of losing that which we seek.