# BREAKING PORCELAIN:
# A JOURNEY IN THE CURATORSHIP OF INHERITED MEISSEN SHARDS

# BREAKING PORCELAIN:

## A Journey in the Curatorship of Inherited Meissen Shards


by

Michaela Howse

13436511


*Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Visual Arts in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University*

Supervisor: Dr Ernst van der Wal

March 2017

# DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis/dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: March 2017

# ABSTRACT

Breaking Porcelain is a personal journey in the curatorship of inherited porcelain shards. A Meissen porcelain collection, once belonging to my great, great grandparents – German Jewish collectors in Dresden – was stolen by the Nazis, partly lost and partly bombed in the firebombing of Dresden, later in part recovered from the destruction, and then further held in East Germany until the remains of the collection, a great deal of it broken, were finally returned to the family. Broken and scarred, the porcelain fragments I have inherited serve as memorials that bear the evidence of their complex pasts. At the heart of the curatorial project lies the intention to understand the value and relevance of these porcelain fragments today. This involves exploration into the contexts that informed them during their history as well as appreciation of the effects they have had on people's lives in the recent past.

# CONTENTS

List of Figures viii
PROLOGUE xi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1
- Breakdown of Chapters 12
- Historical Overview of Literature 14

CHAPTER TWO: UNPACKING OBJECTS 23
- A Brief History of Meissen Porcelain 32
- A Brief History of the von Klemperer Collection 36
- The Villa and the Garden Today 47
- Meissen Today 68
- The Catalogue of the von Klemperer Meissen Porcelain 74

CHAPTER THREE: WHY COLLECT? 83
- The Significance of Collecting for the von Klemperers 93
- Collecting in Nazi Germany 97

CHAPTER FOUR: NEGOTIATING INHERITANCES 109
- A Memorial to Dresden's Destruction 114
- The Fragile Individual 120
- Fragments 125
- My Own Collection 130

CHAPTER FIVE: APPROACHING CONTRADICTION/TOWARD RECONCILIATION (CONCLUSION) 137
- Toward Reconciliation 142

BIBLIOGRAPHY 147

# LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1. Entrance leading to a courtyard in Innsbruck, Austria, where violent events took place on the 'night of broken glass', Kristallnacht, November 1938

Fig. 2. The main *Residenzschloss* courtyard under renovation, July 2016

Fig. 3. Life size sculpture, self-portrait, by anonymous Austrian artist at an address in nnsbruck of *Kristallnacht* violence.

Fig. 4. Detail

Fig. 5. Some teenagers at the memorial of those who died in Innsbruck during *Kristallnacht*, November 1938, at the Landhausplatz

Fig. 6. The famous Meissen signatures or backstamps, dating from 1725 until today

Fig.7. – Fig. 9. Interior views of the von Klemperer's villa in Dresden, showing the collection of Meissen porcelain

Fig. 10. The family von Klemperer photographed amongst their collection. Ralph, my grandmother's father, is seated on the right

Fig. 11. Charlotte and Gustav's graves, next to Gustav's mother Henriette, in the Jewish cemetery of Dresden

Fig. 12. Graves in the grass of the Dresden Jewish Cemetry

Fig. 13. The wild verges on the way to my great, great grandparents home

Fig. 14. An overgrown plot along Wienerstraße where a villa most likely once stood

Fig. 15. An old driveway leading to makeshift sheds where villas would have previously existed

Fig. 16. A dilapidated, damaged villa along Wienerstraße. The railway line is visible in the background

Fig. 17. The corner of Wienerstraße and Gellertstraße where the villa once stood

Fig. 18. Detail

Fig. 19 – 20. Views of the Großer Garten

Fig. 21. Two girls on the grass of the Großer Garten

Fig. 22. Unmarked 'memorial'

Fig. 23 – 24. Pathways through the Großer Garten

Fig. 25. View of the empty grass in the Großer Garten

Fig. 26. and Fig. 29. Fragments like zen stones on the grass of the Volkswagen factory

Fig. 27. Reflections inside the factory

Fig. 28. Reflections outside of the factory

Fig. 30 – 33. Views over the Elbe of Dresden's Altstadt today

Fig. 34. The cover of the Bonhams catalogue accompanying the 2010 auction

Fig. 35. An assortment of figures from the von Klemperer collection

Fig. 36. Two twin vases made for Augustus the Strong photographed for the von Klemperer catalogue in the 1920s

Fig. 37. The remains of one of the vases originally made for Augustus the Strong photographed for the Bonhams auction catalogue in 2010

Fig. 38. Brochure design by Herbert Bayer exemplifying elements of pastiche, 1936 (in Marien 2006:270)

Fig. 39. "Women and girls photographed before being shot. The murder squad consisted of a Latvian SD guard platoon, SS- und Polizeistandortfurer Dr Dietrich Schutzpolizei-Dienstableilung and Latvian Police Battalion 21", in The Good Old Days (Klee et al. 1991:131)

Fig. 40. "A group of women and children above the death trench, just before they were murdered", near the Baltic in Latvia, in The Good Old Days (Klee et al. 1991:131)

Fig. 41. A photograph taken by a Gendarmerie Oberwachtmeister. "Those women still alive were finished off like wounded game (the coups de grâce)" reads the caption under this picture in The Good Old Days (Klee et al. 1991:161)

Fig. 42. Detail of a well-known image taken by German photojournalist Richard Peter of the view from the Dresden City Hall tower toward the South in 1945. Available online at https://iconicphotos.wordpress.com/tag/richard-peter/

Fig. 43 – 44. Views of Schoenmakerskop coastline in Port Elizabeth

Fig. 45. My grandmother sleeping

Fig. 46. The Frauenkirche in 2016

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.

Derek Walcott

Fig 1. Entrance leading to a courtyard in Innsbruck, Austria, where violent events took place on the on the 'night of broken glass', *Kristallnacht*, November 1938

# PROLOGUE

Described by some as a war crime, a crime against humanity, the baroque German art city of Dresden was bombed on the 13th of February 1945 by allied forces. A lorry packed with four crates of pieces from a famous collection of Meissen porcelain that had been seized from the German Jewish family von Klemperer, my family, was bombed that night, while the lorry was parked in the main courtyard of the *Residenzschloss*.

Almost ten years passed before the lorry and its wares were excavated from the rubble, but the porcelain that was retrieved disappeared without a trace into the East German state's porcelain museum, remaining irretrievable by my family for over forty years. It was finally returned to the family in 1991. Three quarters were given back to the Dresden Porcelain Museum as a donation, and a quarter of what had been recovered, relatively undamaged, was auctioned in the same year through the auction house Christie's, in London.

A second, and much more surprising auction took place in London in 2010. A box containing badly damaged pieces of our porcelain that had not been sold at Christie's was mysteriously uncovered in a storeroom of the Dresden State Porcelain Museum. After the shards had been painstakingly pieced together, the porcelain was returned to the family. It was a miracle to uncover new evidence of our pre-WWII presence in Dresden.

The event of the auction of a few of the least damaged pieces from this uncovered box proved a great success for the auction house of Bonhams, London. It was the first time in its history that broken porcelain had been sold, and so success-

fully. After the auction, the proceeds were shared amongst the families of the twelve grandchildren of the von Klemperer collectors. My grandmother, Mika Abel, nee Ida Charlotte von Klemperer, one of these twelve grandchildren, divided her share into a further eight parts, one for each of her eight grandchildren. (My grandmother was seventeen in 1937 when she left Dresden for South Africa with her parents on a German boat, never to return to live in Germany again. The entire von Klemperer family ultimately had to flee Germany, to countries as far afield as South Africa, Zimbabwe, America and Australia, leaving the Meissen collection and many other rare art collections behind them).

As an inheriting grandchild, I used my share, an eighth of a twelfth of the money from the sale of the broken pieces (still a substantial sum) to return to university in 2012 to pursue my art studies. It was a long drive from my home to university. A wild road led from where I lived, along the ocean, through seagull-infested dunes on the edges of sprawling suburbs, past sewers, an enormous film studio, townships spilling repair shops, prostitution crossroads, eventually through wine farms, until it finally reached the arguably pristine and historical university town of Stellenbosch. I remember that the 'brokenness' of the landscape I moved through was striking. It felt war damaged, devastated by separatist politics, without a language in which differences were communicable. Along the road it was clear that the poor were not being heard. Their anger raged in fires through the mediums of protest and burning tyres. I found myself pondering what an appropriate response to an historical inheritance of disadvantage and loss could be, a situation wherein vital bonds and connections between people had been broken. This early questioning of mine foreshadowed the theme that was to come, handed down through the inherited Meissen shards.

Just before the 2010 auction at Bonhams, those pieces of porcelain that were so severely damaged that they would be of no commercial value, were divided up into twelve lots and shipped off across the globe to the collectors' grandchildren who were still alive or, if not, to their families. A box went to South Africa, to Port Elizabeth, to my grandmother's home, to be split again amongst her three children.

I was in Port Elizabeth when the surprise box of shards was opened. The pieces were laid out like

brightly coloured bones on the dining room table. I remember trying not to look in the direction of the cacophony of fragments, but at the same time, wanting to stare deeply into what seemed the evidence of catastrophe. The colours – glazes of brilliant jades, coral reds and sunshine yellows – drew me in like poetry. But the pieces were tattooed with ash-coloured speckles and clouds and dark brown hues from the heat of the firebombing and from having been buried in the crates, inside the lorry, compressed under the ground, for so many years.

What lay on the table was a bright, but darkened sea of porcelain shards, a mass of undeniably scarred things. The selection revealed a figure of Minerva, a crashed temple, plates, shards of animals and birds, and many headless figures. Even the tiniest shards of a swan, with the elegance of its neck vanished, and with one distinguishable eye left on one of the pieces, had a weight to them. At the time I was disturbed by the fact that this collection, already only a twelfth of the most valueless leftovers, would have to be divided up again, but I could not affect the decision of the generation above mine, to whom the shards were given.

I could choose one piece for myself during my mother's turn to select something – a plate broken into three pieces, with a phoenix on it – and I borrowed a sculpture my mother had selected of a Chinese marching boy in a long gown, without a head, both of which I brought back with me to university. The pieces exemplified my exploration into the value of fragments, of what has been broken. My hypothesis was simple. Whether I was referring to a phenomenon in South Africa at large or the Meissen shards, broken 'things' (people, places, landscapes, families, communities or objects) would always have a story.

CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

1

Fig. 2. The main *Residenzschloss* courtyard under renovation, July 2016

Edmund de Waal, a famous British potter and author, wrote a seminal essay for the catalogue published by Bonhams for the event of the auction of the broken Meissen pieces in 2010, which dwelt on the imaginative possibilities the shattered remains of the once famous collection inspired in him. De Waal's secular Jewish family had shared a similar fate to that of my own, and the book that he published in the same year as the auction, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010), traces the journey of his family's collection of Japanese *netsuke* (hidden during the war, that he later inherited) along the lines of his own family's diaspora.

Inheriting broken porcelain is nothing like inheriting powerful Japanese *netsuke*; whole, tactile little sculptures that fit in a person's pocket and traditionally work as enabling totems. In de Waal's words, a *netsuke* is "a small, tough explosion of exactitude" (2010:15), and as a response – through the narrative in his book – "it deserve[d] this kind of exactitude in return" (2010:15). For de Waal, as an artist – a potter – the nature of his response was imperative as he felt it was his "job… to make things" (2010:16). My response to the inherited broken Meissen cannot be one of "exactitude in return". What I have is an uncomfortable puzzle. The missing pieces, needed to restore the object into a whole and exacting shape, are irretrievable. They are either buried deep beneath the newly-renovated *Residenzschloss* courtyard in Dresden, or they have disappeared, blown to another location during the bombing, or been burnt to ash.

Tensions undermining a 'clear' response to the broken porcelain have influenced my creative responses since the inherited shards became the subject of my Master's research in 2012.[1] To name the destruction clearly was what W.G. Sebald suggested in response to the destruction of Dresden in *On the Natural History of Destruction* (2004), a collection of essays about the bombed German cities and the absence of the trauma and suffering that was caused existing in written memory. In his book, many examples of people turning to absurd activities, like immersing themselves in classical music, or reverting to strict daily routines that totally disregarded the calamity of the situation they were in, describe so aptly the oscillations that exist between being with loss in a plain way and feeling its consequences, as Sebald suggests, and the need to be distracted from it, to look away. These oscillations create a rhythm "of looking, and looking away" (Sebald 2004:viii – ix), characteristic of my own experience with the broken shards.

The broken porcelain nevertheless inspired me to question the value of a shard, something that has been broken or damaged and left over, that bears the scars of a violent past. In thinking about the value of a shard in relation to an understanding of the past, and with regard to an imagination about the future, the broken porcelain shards become like crucibles. Through them it is possible to think also of the value of what has been described as a South African inherited reality of fragments (de Kok in Nuttall and Coetzee 1997), the result of local lengthy 'wars' – of apartheid especially. The broken Meissen shards are 'haunted objects'. [2] In the present, through their presence, due to the visible scars and breaks they evidence, they reference the past. Their shades are an intrinsic part of their physicality.[3] As Daniel Birnbaum describes Eija-Liisa Ahtila's artwork *Today* (1996/97): "*The past is present*. Something has happened: an accident, a catastrophe, a tragic event" (*own emphasis*, cited in Farr 2012:137).

Jacques Derrida and Jan Verwoert discuss the implications of attempting to take care or possession of particularly a haunted object. Verwoert explains in an excerpt from "Living with Ghosts: from Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art" (2007) that the result can be a "precarious state of limbo" (cited in Farr 2012:154) where one is drawn into a kind of struggle with the object. He begins to make a claim for the 'living force' of an object, the result of an object's past.

1. I also wanted "to make things" (de Waal 2010:16) like de Waal. Initially I wanted to make porcelain, something precious and lasting, from the waste materials around me, challenging the notion that what has been discarded by history has no value. An oscillation, however, developed between the need to create in an inspired way and the need to 'curate' or 'to care for' the shards and their related histories. An uncertain path, partly in response to the theme of loss, with regard to my role as artist, inheritor, caretaker and/or curator was inevitable.

2. The word 'haunted' in cultural studies and related disciplines is not meant to refer directly to ghosts. Its interpretation is more subtle. In an extract from *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* "Memory, History, Forgetting" (2004), by Paul Ricour, the term hauntedness, or what haunts "described by historians of the present day… stigmatises the 'past that does not pass'" (cited in Farr 2012:69)."Hauntedness is to collective memory… a pathological modality of the incrustation of the past at the heart of the present" (Ricour cited in Farr 2012:69).

3. As is clear in the book by South African author Marquerite Poland of the title *Shades*, and other local sources, 'shades' can refer to the 'spirits of ancestors', or, as The Free Dictionary online states, to a "disembodied spirit; a ghost" or a "present reminder of a person or situation in the past".

> If … one seeks to (re-)possess an object, what then if that object has a history and thus a life of its own? Would the desire for possession then not inevitably be confronted by a force within that object which resists that very desire? In his book *Spectres of Marx* (1994) Derrida describes this moment of ambiguity and struggle as follows: 'One must have the ghost's hide and to do that, one must have it. To have it, one must see it, situate it, identify it. One must possess it without letting oneself be possessed by it, without being possessed of it' (cited in Farr 2012:154).

Verwoert questions this stance, however, regarding whether it is really possible to possess the historical 'force' behind a haunted object, what one might consider the shades of an object. "[D]oes not a spectre consist to the extent that it consists, in forbidding or blurring this [possessing] distinction? In consisting in this very undiscernability?" (Verwoert cited in Farr 2012:154). In this regard, Verwoert continues, that

> [t]hings that live throughout time cannot, in any unambiguous sense, pass into anyone's possession. For this reason they must be approached in a different way. Tactically speaking, the one who seeks to appropriate[4] such temporally layered objects with critical intent… must be prepared to relinquish the claim to full possession, loosen the grip on the object and call it forth, *invoke it* rather than seize it (*own emphasis,* cited in Farr 2012:149-150).

To invoke is an important concept implying that a more delicate and sensitive process is required to suggest what is implicit in the physical presence of something broken.[5] It emphasizes the necessity for indirect means of facilitating knowledge, echoing the need made explicit by 'memory-workers' and the authors of *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* (2011) Erica Lehrer, Monica Eilleen Patterson and Cynthia Milton, who, in the context of educating people about pasts that are painful to accept, explain that

> confrontation [cannot be] the sole communicative posture of endeavours to leverage the past in the present. Memory-workers [must] explore other modes, including attempts to kindle social aspirations like empathy, identification, cross-cultural dia-

4. I am not dealing with an object of pure appropriation, spliced from life and inserted into a new "abstract" (Verwoert cited in Farr 2012:153) context for "analysis" (Verwoert cited in Farr 2012:153). There has been a very particular pathway, a history of events that have coalesced and led incrementally to these pieces becoming mine to work with. As for an act of appropriation that is more of a dislocation from a past and a place in Europe, the object finds itself in a new environment, the moment in time being today, and the place, South Africa. In this new context, for the object to "mean something" (Verwoert cited in Farr 2012:149), it needs to be contextualized, according to Verwoert, in terms of its present surroundings and in terms of the cultural backdrops of the pasts that have informed it.

5. According to Derrida, "[t]he task is", quotes Verwoert,

> "to learn to live with ghosts" and this means to learn "how to let them speak or how to give them back speech" by approaching them in a determined way that still remains undetermined enough to allow them to present themselves: "To exorcise not in order to chase away the ghosts, but this time to grant them the right, if it means making them come back alive, as revenants who could no longer be revenants, but as other arrivants to whom a hospitable memory or promise must offer welcome – without certainty ever, that they present themselves as such. Not in order to grant them the right in this sense but out of a concern for *justice*" (*own emphasis*, in Farr 2012:154).

> logue, to recognize multiple perspectives, or to catalyze action (2011:1).[6]

A critical question of how one deals responsibly with an object like the broken porcelain is further brought to light by the authors. They write:

> Thinking about curation not only as selection, design, and interpretation, but as care-taking—as a kind of intimate, intersubjective, interrelational obligation—raises key ethical questions relevant in an age of "truth-telling": What is our responsibility to stories of suffering that we inherit? … Is the goal of curation to settle, or rather to unsettle established meanings of past events? Is it to create social space for a shared experience of looking, listening, and talking, creating alternative relationships and publics, for constructive meaning making and action taking? … And shadowing all of these questions is the ever-present need to ask which "we" is inquiring, deciding, acting—and on whose behalf (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:4).

These are difficult questions to answer. If I am honest, in curating the porcelain I am answering and acting firstly on behalf of the broken porcelain. As Lehrer *et al.* ask, "[h]ow do we—as scholars, curators, artists, activists, survivors, descendents, and other stakeholders—attempt to bear witness, to give space and shape to absent people, objects and cultures?" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:4) The porcelain cannot speak, yet it has been a silent witness to history. It has 'witnessed' directly and indirectly the same forces at play during Nazi times that have contributed to its preservation and its destruction, as well as having been a witness to the absolutist forces behind warfare – the bombing of Dresden by allied forces in particular. That it has survived until today might arguably entitle it to a testimony[7] to its survival. The question of how to bear witness is as Lehrer, Milton and Patterson describe "among the challenges confronting those who wish to invoke the difficult past in order to quell—or do justice to—its hauntings" (2011:4).

Verwoert's suggestion to *invoke* the force or being of an object, or its past, as Lehrer *et al.* suggest, is an important method of curatorship. In this thesis I invoke the past by exploring some of the contexts that have informed the broken porcelain's history since its inception at the Meissen factory in Germany until today. This curatorial journey has further not been without the expe-

6. The authors refer to events such as the Holocaust, or violent genocides, evidence of which is hard to bear at its most 'confrontational'. In an introduction called "Witness to Witnessing", the authors express concern, that

> [i]t has been made depressingly clear that depictions of humanity's vilest deeds do not diminish our capacity for future crimes. If knowledge of the facts of atrocity is no longer seen as a panacea, neither is confrontation the sole communicative posture of endeavours to leverage the past in the present.

Bringing to account an example of a particular view regarding problems in Holocaust representation, Ulrich Baer describes that "[f] or several decades after the end of World War II… debates [about representing the Holocaust] invoked tropes of the 'unspeakable,' the 'ineffable,' and the 'limits of representation' … (cited in del Pillar Blanco and Peeren 2015:422). About today, however, Baer writes that

> [t]he very word *Holocaust* triggers a surge of derivative and familiar mental images, most of which originate with a number of news photographs taken by the Western Allies in 1945 after the liberation of the camps in Austria and Germany. Even when part of laudable efforts to document and commemorate, these once-shocking and now ubiquitous images may lead today to the 'disappearance of memory in the act of commemoration'. They represent the past as fully retrievable (as simply a matter of searching the archive), instead of situating us vis-à-vis the *intangible presence of an absence* (*own emphasis,* cited in del Pillar Blanco and Peeren 2015:423).

rience argued for by Derrida and Verwoert that occurs in the taking possession of a 'haunted' object. The broken porcelain's affects – its ability to inspire people to action or to move the imagination – have been experienced. In my mind, what is bestowed upon objects in our regard of them, what develops through the extent to which we are moved by their histories, become the *agencies of the inanimate* that are able to move us in turn. Further to my desire to mark and claim specific times and emotions through drawing and the altering of everyday materials, I was moved to return to the places marking the porcelain's history; Meissen, Dresden, London and even Port Elizabeth, and to spend time with my grandmother, engaged in a form of exchange and transposition, and, during this time and these processes, to collect the physical traces, made and found, of my experiences.[8]

Hence my research question that began as an enquiry into what to do with a broken inheritance has matured into a question concerning the agencies of the inanimate broken porcelain. I ask, in relation to its contexts and history, what role the shards can play in the distance between the political image (what *appears* to be, today) and what has happened (what was *experienced*). The research question is context dependent in the sense that an understanding of contexts relating to the shards is needed to answer a question of how the broken porcelain might perform in relation to such contexts. Answers to the research question hence play out in numerous ways.

Firstly, the context of Dresden being bombed in 1945 toward the end of World War II is one that has had a considerable impact on the 'life' of the porcelain. It is during this event that the porcelain was nearly destroyed and permanently damaged. Today Dresden has, to some extent, been rebuilt as an exact replica of the baroque art city it once was. There is, however, little outward evidence of the devastation that existed, physically and psychologically, to the city at the end of the war (Sebald 2004; A Loesch, personal communication, 1 July 2016). The broken porcelain that still bears the scars of the bombing and being buried underground for many years becomes a powerful witness of traumatic events, the evidence of which is difficult to trace through the vestiges of collective memory belonging to Germany itself. The damage to the porcelain can serve as an indicator and reminder of the violence and trauma of that period.

7. In Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman's *Mengele's Skull* (2012), a fascinating account of the process of the identification of Joseph Mengele's skeleton by forensic scientists, the authors refer back to the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, a trial which saw the 'birth of the witness' as evidence against war crimes. As Shoshana Felman argues, "[t]he legal default of a witness constitutes a legal testimony in its own right" (cited in Keenan and Weizman 2012:12). In the book the authors also infer that objects that are witnesses are entitled to a testimony, a legitimate process that can be traced back to ancient Greek legal practices. The object is represented by a "society of friends" or advocates, according to Miguel Tamen (cited in Keenan and Weizman 2012:26) – "objects take on agency through their interpretation, speak by virtue of their 'friends' – those people who gather around them and construe them" (Keenan and Weizman 2012:26). This is "precisely because of the 'epistemological problem… of being able to tell what counts as legitimate 'communication' of [an] object's needs' or claims" argues Tamen (cited in Keenan and Weizman 2012:26). In the case of my own broken porcelain shards, in lieu of their testimony, I act as one such 'friend' through which the shards acquire agency.

8. My resultant collection, as described in Chapter Four, has more to do with the experiences and memories preserved in its fabric, than the material objects themselves.

The story of my own family and ancestors that owned the original Meissen porcelain is another important context that informs the shards. The family itself was damaged by war. Charlotte and Gustav, the collectors of the porcelain were secular Jews, and their three sons and their families were regarded as Jewish too, even though the three sons and their spouses had converted to Christianity and all their children were christened and confirmed in either the Catholic or Lutheran church. Classified nevertheless as German Jews they were forced to leave Germany to safety in other parts of the world. They lost a large portion of what they had accumulated, including the porcelain collection and many other rare art collections that were stolen by the Nazis in the late 1930s. The damaged porcelain is a late reminder of the dislocations they suffered and the challenges they faced in their need for survival.[9]

The broken porcelain fragments eventually being received by the descendents of the original collectors in the 21st century has had a considerable impact. The distribution to all corners of the globe of the most severely damaged porcelain resulted in an interest on the part of family members in their past, their cultural heritage, and in renewing family bonds. From many global destinations, after receiving the damaged porcelain once belonging to the famous collection of their ancestors, Gustav and Charlotte von Klemperer, the descendants, motivated by the inheritance of the shards, met each other, mostly for the first time, in Dresden in July 2016. According to the conversations that I had with a number of family members during and after the three day reunion, the event exceeded everyone's expectations. About 130 out of around 150 living descendants around the world were present, evidencing seven generations. Official family business involved the signing of names where they appeared on an enormous printed family tree that ran the full length of an upstairs wall at the hotel where the festivities were held. The family was graciously received by the city of Dresden on their first evening, and further provided for by the city of Dresden with tours of the city, of their ancestors' graves and properties, and of the famous state art collections.

This journey in curatorship of inherited shards has spanned time and geography. The scope of my research, however, focuses on understanding what curatorship is, that taken simply, means *to care* for something. To care for something broken invites a greater complexity wherein the lost

9. My grandmother, who grew up with the porcelain in her grandparents' home in Dresden, provides another unique context and an important living link to the collecting era before the war. The broken shards are a reminder of the suffering hidden in her 'political' story. Beneath an enduring strength in and love for South Africa, and in spite of having no regrets about her life having drastically changed its shape with the war, she nonetheless still suffered the political circumstances of her childhood in Nazi Germany and early adult years in South Africa, being ostracized due to being regarded as both Jewish as well as a German 'enemy alien'. The broken porcelain is a rare sign of the kind of suffering interwoven into her lifetime.

portion – what makes the object ‘imperfect’ – motivates questions regarding its history. A simple dictum might be that ‘broken things have a story’. Within a framework informed by both curatorial and memory studies, it is possible to think of the object as witness, as having a testimony, and as a kind of memorial,[10] that brings the weight of the past to bear in the present. To curate the broken porcelain is hence not only to care for the object itself, but also to allow the less visible contexts that have touched and informed the shard their ‘visibility’.

Real memory,[11] individual subjectivity, and “difficult knowledge” (Lehrer *et al.* 2011) – what is difficult to consume but nevertheless implied by the broken object as evidence or testimony – is emphasized in the face of collective national memory, absolutist modernist imagination, and master narratives. I operate within the context of a post-apartheid South Africa. However, it is not the case, in my belief, that society is able to look back at a circumscribed era that is past. There are no clearly designated ‘pre’ and ‘post’ categories. The situation in South Africa regarding apartheid is one that echoes Claude Lanzmann’s belief about the Holocaust not being past,[12] providing an interesting arena for ‘memory work’. Broken fragments, I would argue, must be faced, attended to, and understood within an environment where the ideologies that were behind their becoming ‘fragments’ are arguably still in effect. The notion of recovery or healing, or ‘nation-building’, as the rhetoric defining South Africa’s process since the legendary Truth and Reconciliation Hearings has been (de Kok cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998), takes place within a context where, in my experience, the effects of apartheid still govern everyday realities and where even the ideologies that underpinned its politics are present today.

My theoretical premise, informed by the zeitgeist of the postcolonial and postmodern in the sense that voices that are discordant with master narratives and modernist ideologies come to be of importance, is brought into practice through the art of curatorship. In this regard, in an article based on the industry of curatorship in France, authors Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollak (1996) suggest the development of a new position from within the museum curating sphere, that of the *auteur*; a curator more akin to a film director with much higher stakes as an individual leader as opposed to the traditional, behind-the-historical-scenes of the museum role of institutional curators (Heinrich and Pollak in Greenberg *et*

10. It is important to qualify what is meant by a memorial, versus, for instance a monument. In *Imaging the Unimaginable: Holocaust Memory in Art and Architecture* by Neville Dubow, the author explains:

> Conventional wisdom tends to confine the concept of monument to a static object, a memorializing thing; whereas memorial implies a process by which memory is kept alive. Thus a standard definition, such as that given in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, gives monument as ‘a structure intended to commemorate’. Memorial is given as ‘a sign, a token of remembrance’ (2001:3).

Dubow goes on to remind his audience that memorials can take many forms other than “those which are architecturally structured: there are memorial lectures and memorial publication” (Dubow 2001:3), as well as performances, for example. He prefers to use the term ‘monument’ “when its usage is celebratory or designating a historical marker”, and ‘memorial’ for “those structures and institutions whose essence is more *reflective and contemplative*” (*own emphasis*, 2001:3). “Monuments outwardly proclaim something. *Memorials invite introspection and interpretation”* (*own emphasis,* Dubow 2001:3).

11. Real memory, as opposed to recorded ‘memory’ or history (see Footnote 65) is personal, made and stored only in the duration of the life of an individual.

12. I feel about apartheid similarly to the way Claude Lanzmann expresses himself about the Holocaust. “The worst crime”, he has said, “simultaneously moral and artistic, that can be committed when it is a question of realizing a work dedicated to the Holocaust is to consider the latter as *past.* The Holocaust is either legend or present. It is in no case of the order of memory” (cited in Assmann 2006:266).

*al.* 1996).[13] The auteur takes on a more "personalised" (Heinrich and Pollak cited in Greenberg *et al.* 1996:235) role than the 'depersonalised' role of the traditional museum curator, optimising a full variety of curatorial structures at their disposal.

As *auteur*, I take liberty with the traditional discursive space of the thesis, choosing a ritualistic action that incorporates the mediums of time and memory into my structure. I take on the performative act of unpacking a suitcase, into which has been packed the traces of the visual journey that was inspired by the broken porcelain, the broken porcelain itself, and other important objects. The process of unpacking objects, and their related pasts, allows for various contexts to emerge in a way more related to the act of recalling. Being able to open and close the suitcase for periods means time becomes an incubator to give credence to recall, and to take seriously, in practice, the method of remembrance.[14]

By means of both an exhibition and thesis, and through the practice of curatorship, my aims are to communicate something of the contexts, which include the Holocaust, that the porcelain has survived, in a manner that *invokes* (Verwoert cited in Farr 2012:150) the imagined 'memory' of the porcelain. In doing so I respond to the research question concerned with what role the shards can play in the distance between the political image and what has been experienced, by revealing some of the potential roles and agencies of the inanimate fragments. The Meissen shards have ignited imaginative possibilities, for one, in my family itself and have also inspired a response in the mediums of drawing, photography, collecting, and related practices. Rather than presenting a body of work, however, what is meaningfully substantiated through the exhibition and thesis is first and foremost the taking up of a curatorial stance in relation to the broken porcelain focused on the preservation of the porcelain as it is.[15]

Both the exhibition and thesis rely heavily on writing as a form of curatorship, and more specifically "writing with images" (Elkins 2008).[16] In his book project of the same name, James Elkins refers to the abilities of author W.G. Sebald who pioneered the creation of texts that consist both of images – normally black and white photographs – and words. Images are not used tautologically, as illustrations. They are used to expand the experience of the reader who reads both word and image as one poetic. The thesis as

13. The auteur, acting more like a 'freelancer', responds to the need for communication to reach people outside of their internal gallery or museum scene where circulation can become self-referential, serving an elite institution and group of people, forgetting the most crucial factor in their work is the audience, and their reception and understanding of the work.

14. Marcel Proust's first theorizing of memory in the early 1900s "emphasis[ed] that involuntary memory (arising unexpectedly instead of being sought) is a response to cues from all the senses" (Farr 2012:19). "If an image or sensation out of the past is to be truly recognized in the Proustian sense", writes Roger Shattuck in an extract from *Proust's Binoculars: A study of Memory, Time and Recognition* (1964), and not merely recollected, it must be summoned back by a related experience in the present and after a period of absence. For, if an image remains constantly present, it obeys the cinematographic principle, freezes into habitat, and it can be manipulated only by the intelligence. The original experience or image must have been forgotten, completely forgotten, a circumstance which turns the elapsed… [time] into a true gap. … True memory or recognition surges into being out of its opposite: *oubli* [forgetting] (cited in Farr 2012:40).

15. Politically, I feel the importance of being cognizant of voices and stories that are the result of violence and fragmentation, over the need to assert my own voice. It is suggested by Hans Ulrich Obrist that one of the most important skills of curatorship is the nurturing of conversation (Obrist 2015). To truly listen is perhaps a first step in any kind of useful conversation with regard to a state of fragmentation that is shared and to realise ways of thinking and living within such a context.

16. In this thesis I have chosen a conceptual landscape format that accommodates photography as a main concern. Through a generous allowance of space, the thesis also aims to emphasise the journey form inherent in the process of curatorship of the shards. These decisions do, however, contribute to a much higher page count than is normally expected in a thesis of this kind.

a text and book object and the exhibition, also as a text and installation, provide two very different spacial and political forms wherein "writing with images" (Elkins 2008) is possible. The exhibition is a concise and highly edited experience, with photography and sound providing windows into time. A sense of time, past, and extending into the future, is an unspoken theme of the exhibition. Both the exhibition and the thesis, through their different formats and use of photography in relation to words, aim to provide layered views into time and the contexts that shroud the shards and contribute to them being 'haunted'. Paramount in both experiences is the sense of a journey that comes through the experiences of reading words and viewing images in particular relation to one another. This journey is meditative, reflective, and intent on relaying a sense of the depth of the story behind broken things. In both the thesis and exhibition, the pieces of broken porcelain remain the sentinels, material and central, at the eye of the discursive storm.

A curatorial method of preserving fragments 'as they are' also develops around the collection of the handmade traces, which are a response to the polemics embodied in the inheriting of broken porcelain and that are stored in the suitcase. To choose not to alter or transform the broken porcelain but to preserve it as it is makes it easier to register the agencies of the fragments – to detect changes in the environment that are a direct result of their presence. Similarly, to preserve the collection of handmade traces as they exist in the suitcase, is to take up a position in support of the preservation of the agencies of the inanimate, of fragments particularly, a stance discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. Answering the research question involves representing the contexts that have informed the broken porcelain as well as those the broken porcelain has inspired, without it having been repaired, restored to its former appearance, or transformed into a new creation.[17] Such a stance focused on preservation is a necessary first step in answering the research problem questioning what role the shards can play today.[18]

17. Many artists choose to turn what has been left as a remainder by time or violent events into new creations. Ai Weiwei's *Straight* (2008 – 2012), for example, transformed 90 tons of steel reinforcement bars left mangled after the Sichuan earthquake into an undulating landscape made from the straightened rods. This is a different step and approach in dealing with memorial-like remains. As is discussed in Chapter Three, Ingrid de Kok writes of the necessary role artists can play in the metaphorical 'gluing together' of what has been discarded and left broken, in the reimagining of the future. But, first, and with regard to South Africa's fragments, she suggests that the "fragmented, mutilating shards" be properly felt and seen and understood on their own terms (cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:62).

18. It is an important research question to ask when seen in view of the fact that we are entering a critical time in relation to Second World War history and the history of the Holocaust. As Aleida Assmann elucidates, "we are approaching the shadow line, which will turn the Holocaust from 'contemporary history' [when historians experience the memories of living witnesses] into 'remote history' [when historians rely on interpretations of the past]" (2006:267). The last of the witnesses who can testify to what really happened during these periods will have passed away. Hence, the preservation of the damaged porcelain in its *memorial* form of today is important, if it is to have a role to play as evidence that can consistently inspire questions regarding its history. It asks questions about the past due to its disturbing appearance, rather than as similarly to the "ubiquitous images" described by Baer (cited in del Pillar Blanco and Peeren 2015:423) (see footnote 6), which seductively provide easy answers to questions regarding 'difficult pasts' and gaps in collective memory. The broken porcelain as memorials keep history alive, and memory in circulation, which is of the utmost importance in the context of Holocaust representation today. Their reality as enigmatic shards keeps the alignment of the past consistently open to the present, and the questioning of history present and continuous.

## Breakdown of Chapters

This chapter, my introductory chapter, concludes with a literature review in line with the chronology of the 'life' of the porcelain, focusing in more detail on a few select authors.

Chapter Two, entitled 'Unpacking Objects', begins the personal journey in the curatorship of the shards. It involves a process like this. I walk 'down below', through history and personal experience, rather than 'from above', through a lens of theory. In an essay, "Walking in the City", Simon During describes de Certeau presenting

> a theory of the city, or rather an ideal for the city, against the theories and ideals of urban planners and managers. To do so, he does not look down at the city as if from a high-rise building. He walks in it. Walking in the city turns out to have its own logic, or as de Certeau puts it, its own 'rhetoric' (1993:153).

The narrative structure is aimed at recreating the experience of first encountering the shards, and relies on the process of being at home with memory and a suitcase packed full of objects. The focus is on a personal beholding of the value of what lies inside the suitcase,[19] rather than a reflection in theory on curatorship or the polemics inherent in the reality of the porcelain's survival. This personal beholding has a "rhetoric of its own" (During 1993:153), providing a slower coming to terms with the porcelain (while a more critical and socially oriented reflection of contexts develops in Chapter Three). It includes an in-depth looking back to the time of the porcelain's inception through the story of the beginnings of the Meissen factory and allows for the historical contexts of Meissen and the collecting family to emerge. I also recount, in a wayfaring manner, the everyday nature of a first exploration of Dresden. Apart from the porcelain, the heavy catalogue of Gustav and Charlotte's Meissen collection that was published in 1925 is also unpacked and contemplated, its contents providing valuable information with regard to the complexity of the collection.

Chapter Three takes leave of the suitcase and asks the more philosophical question: 'Why Collect?' The chapter is aimed at emphasizing the bonds that form between people and what they collect. Collecting involves the nurturing and appreci-

19. See footnote 109 in relation to the relevance of the intentions of South African anthropologist Steven Robins, who chose to secure, firstly, a personal account of and response to evidence of the Holocaust that emerged in his own family.

ation for and even preservation of the contexts that inform objects. This is brought into harsh contrast with what happened through Nazi Germany's art looting process, which was not collecting but rather theft. The horror of the Holocaust and the detritus of the Nazi project emerge in relation to this process. The chapter also introduces the view of an alternative collector, Walter Benjamin, who collected against the backdrop of the rise of Nazism and fascism, representing an alternative answer to "Why collect?"

Chapter Four, 'Negotiating Inheritances', is aimed at understanding the value of what I describe as four 'things' I have inherited along this journey of curatorship, namely: *memorials*, an understanding of *the fragile individual,* the knowledge of *fragments*, and, returning to the suitcase to contemplate what remains, *my own collection*. This chapter draws on one of the last most important contexts that have informed the shards, namely the destruction of Dresden by allied forces. Through descriptions of what lay behind the intentions of this warfare, a sense of the contentiousness of the event is explored. A sense of the fragile individual eclipsed by seemingly greater forces and beliefs also becomes evident. The lack of authentic recollections about the event, certainly in literature as Sebald emphasizes, and even in the city's architecture and memorials today, further becomes a case for the strength of the memorial-like structure of the broken Meissen that references so clearly Dresden's destruction and lasting injuries. Fragmentation as a state, exemplified by the aftermath in Dresden post 1945, and even Germany prewar and, arguably, South Africa post apartheid, gains mention with regard to what positive processes such a state can facilitate, as well as the inherent vulnerabilities. The chapter includes an exposition of historian Klemens von Klemperer's literary metaphor of 'the stones and the cathedral', in which he poses the question of how to live between the two poles, of reality (in ruins – the stones) and idealism (that holds within it a desire for perfection and completion – the cathedral). This tension of perfection versus the vulnerability inherent in incoherency and fragmentation is explored. As for my own collection, I highlight some of the issues mentioned above in the choice to keep my collection of fragments and the memories it preserves intact and undisturbed in the suitcase.

Chapter Five, my conclusion, 'Approaching Contradiction/Toward Reconciliation' is a final opportunity to come to terms with the ambiva-

lent signaling of the broken porcelain in terms of the intentions and forces it embodies: the ability to create, nurture and care for human life in its complexity, and in contrast, as represented by the violence of Nazism and warfare, the ability to destroy this. It presents a final moment to also revisit the significance of the family reunion in Dresden, an event that represented strengths and successes that are as much a part of the story of survival, of the porcelain and of the family, as the darker aspects of history that have played their part.

## Historical Overview of Literature

A broad range of literature has accompanied my learning of the different periods in the life of the porcelain, since its inception at Meissen in 1710, to its place and relevance in South Africa today. I have read widely to gain insight into historical contexts, and specifically toward a theoretical focus in memory and curatorship.

Following the chronology of the history of the porcelain, to begin, Janet Gleesan's *The Arcanum* (1998) is an entertaining and invaluable telling of the story of European porcelain's discovery and the first trying years of the Meissen factory. Meissen, from its beginning until today, is further documented in the richly historical and well-illustrated account, *Meissen*, by John Strandam (2000). Dresden, in the time of Meissen's beginning and under the rule of Augustus the Strong, was the infamous Baroque cultural centre as described by Anne Fuchs in her indispensable book *After the Bombing: Pathways of Memory from 1945 to the Present* (2012). This remained true of the city up until the time the von Klemperers began their collection towards the end of the

20. Klemens von Klemperer provides personal contextual information about this period in the family's lives in his historical memoir, *Voyage Through the Twentieth Century: A Historian's Recollections and Reflections* (2009), providing an interesting view into the fact of the family's 'Jewishness', a 'racial' fact, but without any particular religious or cultural bearing. They were secular Jews, although confirmed in the Christian faith and assimilated into the life and culture of Dresden.

19th century. Anette Loesch, the chief curator at the Porcelain Museum in Dresden, has written an indispensable article in German, "*Das Schicksal der Porzellannsammlung Gustav von Klemperer*" (2004) – The fate of the porcelain collection of Gustav von Klemperer – providing a detailed account of the collectors and the history of the collection from its beginnings right up until the time much of what was uncovered from the bombing was donated back to the museum after 1991. The writings of Sebastian Kuhn, the current porcelain specialist at Bonhams in London, are also helpful and are based predominantly on the article by Loesch. Kuhn writes the informative introduction to the collection in the catalogue published by Bonhams in 2010, taking care to especially emphasize the uniqueness of the collectors' passion and interest, at a 'golden' time in the collecting history of Germany.[20] In 1928, *Porzellansummlung Gustav von Klemperer*, a catalogue of the collection, was published by the von Klemperer family. I have translated parts of this catalogue to use in my research. It provides evidence of the complete collection, beautifully photographed, and is an unequivocal account of the intentions and ambitions of the collectors.

A critique of the golden period in Germany Kuhn describes, as it begins to change under the rise of National Socialism, develops through the work of Walter Benjamin. *Reading Walter Benjamin: Writing through the Catastrophe*, by Richard J. Lane (2005) introduces Walter Benjamin as a German Jewish intellect and writer, who writes against the rise of fascism transforming Germany towards the end of the von Klemperers' lives. In *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction by Ben Highmore* (2002) Benjamin's projects are also highlighted as a force against modernity. Highmore's work provides invaluable perspectives on theories of the 'everyday', elucidated as responses to modernity in general. Through Benjamin's works, such as *The Arcades Project* (1999), Benjamin is unveiled as a radical collector with an emphasis on the detritus of his own century. He is also revealed as a traditional collector of rare books in his lyrical essay "Unpacking my Library" (1968). On collecting as a pastime and philosophical theme, both Susan Pearce's books *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (1995) and *Collecting in Contemporary Practice* (1998) have been particularly useful.

After 1938, with National Socialism increasing in power, and my family having just escaped Germany, a dark era of history is ushered in. Amongst a plethora of literature, the most moving, informative and compelling accounts of this period are provided by *The Good Old Days: The Holocaust as Seen by its Perpetrators and Bystanders* edited by Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen and Volker Riess (1991), *The Language of the Third Reich,* by Victor Klemperer (2000) and the film *Shoah* directed by Claude Lanzmann (1985).[21] All aid the collective body of historical evidence of the Holocaust and in their frankness and honesty have had an enormous impact on my understanding of events of the Holocaust and its influence in the present.[22] How the Holocaust is represented and dealt with from an architectural and curatorial perspective, as well as issues around representation and remembrance, are discussed in Neville Dubows's *Imaging the Unimaginable*: *Holocaust Memory in Art and Architecture* (2001). The continuing problem of the Holocaust's remembrance and representation is further deliberated in a number of texts in the fields of trauma theory, memory studies and cultural studies, for example, in Aleida Assmann's article "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony" (2006) as well as in the work of local Stellenbosch academic Steven Robins in his essay, "Silence in my father's house: memory, nationalism, and narratives of the body" (1998) and recent book, *Letters of Stone*: *From Nazi Germany to South Africa* (2016).

Both the Holocaust as well as important critical theory on fragments and remains – about what haunts the present and recent past – is given complex consideration in the essays collected by Maria del Pillar Blanco and Ester Peeren in the *Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (2015). In these essays, from Jacques Derrida on "Spectographies", to Anthony Vidler's "Buried Alive" on the uncanny ruins of Pompeii, to Ulrich Baer's "To Give Memory a Place: Contemporary Holocaust Photography and The Landscape Tradition" (2015) that deals specifically with photography of sites of atrocity, some light is further thrown upon a theoretical position informed by a need to reconsider past violences and their effect on 'voices' of the present.

Dresden's bombing in 1945 saw a quarter of the von Klemperer porcelain collection almost destroyed at its centre. In *On the Natural History of Destruction* (2004)**,** the author W.G Sebald

21. *The Good Old Days: The Holocaust as Seen by its Perpetrators and Bystanders* is a powerful and haunting collection of documents; letters, diary entries and official documents, as well as snapshot-like photographs that were taken by insiders of the most horrific atrocities of the Holocaust. More disturbing than the content of the photographs themselves, is the revealed psychological process underway in the German soldiers by which these acts are normalized under the banner of the Nazi vision, as referred to in Chapter Three. Klemperer's is also a harrowing account of how the language used by the Third Reich slowly bewitched a nation into thinking and using concepts which have had lasting and devastating consequences. *Shoah*, by Claude Lanzmann, is groundbreaking in terms of Holocaust representation and the recording of testimony, to this day. It uses no archival footage, but instead relies only on footage of the sites as they were during the making of the film, and on descriptions and interviews with witnesses and survivors. The viewer is forced, through their own imagination, to come to an understanding of the events.

22. The context of survival of the Second World War is characterised by dislocations, often violent, resulting in periods of life fast becoming discontinuous memories. This also had a profound effect on complex identities. Although the subject of a person, rather than an object, becoming a fragment, made an outsider due to contexts changing, does not feature extensively in my thesis, interesting reading in this area can be found in *Exiles and Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler*, by Stephanie Barron (1997) and the extensive double volume book of voices and photographs called *Diaspora*, by Frederic Brenner (2003). Further, the writings of German Jewish authors, including Walter Benjamin, have provided interesting lenses to outsider complexities, some of these works including *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters* edited by M Hofmann (2013), and selected works by Stefan Zweig.

describes the violent bombing of the German cities, including a description of the military might that supported it. Sebald advocates for a hiatus in German collective memory with regard to the devastation of that period. He finds no authentic accounts by Germans in their literature of the events that they suffered, and is of the opinion that the real catastrophe was never dealt with in the German consciousness. His argument is aided by that of Anne Fuchs in her important work, *After the Bombing: Pathways of Memory from 1945 to the Present* (2012). Fuchs' study locates the bombing of Dresden and its aftermath in the public imagination clearly in the field of memory studies. The book refers to the bombing as an 'impact event' and describes the related 'impact narrative' that is created that continues to fail to close the gap between real experience and a politicized representation of that experience. Both these texts are not simply historical accounts of events, but offer critical ways into understanding trauma and its affect on collective memory.

A general anthology of essays on narrative, trauma and forgiveness, assembled by Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, has proved incredibly useful, with the writings therein spanning many topics related to the importance of memory and psychological recovery. Many articles give prevalence to the South African context with reconstitution and recovery challenges of its own.[23] "Wor(l)ds of Grief: Traumatic memory and literary witnessing in cross-cultural perspective" by Stef Craps (2010) refers to circumstances following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings, describing the necessity for the relating of traumatic events across diverse cultures and in different situations as a means of healing. Ramsay Liem in his article "Silencing Historical Trauma: The politics and psychology of memory and voice" (2007) looks particularly at Korean immigrants in America and their ability to both remember and speak of their experiences in the Korean war. People have memories, even if they do not express them, Liem confirms. As he suggests, safe spaces for remembrance to happen, in which one can break silences about past traumatic experiences, are of the utmost importance.[24]

Certain books have become paramount in developing a theoretical lens for viewing my subject and guiding me in the taking up of a definitive stance in the field of curatorship and the nascent field of memory studies. A broad range of articles in curatorship have circumscribed the space of inquiry, offering different thinking on the role

23. Ingrid de Kok has written a fascinating article called "Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition" which appears in the anthology *Negotiating the Past: the Making of Memory in South Africa* edited by Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (1998) about South Africa's reconciliatory challenges post the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings. Both de Kok's essay in particular and the book in general provide a critical context for looking at both the 'miracle' and shortcomings of the TRC. De Kok further outlines some very important challenges facing artists who attempt to deal with the recovery of memory and reconstruction of fragmented societies.

24. In Chapter Four I hope to show that the expression of German suffering related to the Second World War, especially in East Germany, found little authentic expression. Two recent films that have been particularly useful in giving some context to the silence and further, the kind of oppression felt by Germans inside East Germany after the war under Soviet rulership, are *The Lives of Others,* directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (2002), and *Barbara*, directed by Christian Pezold (2012).

and positioning of the curator. Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollak's essay "From Museum Curator to Exhibition *Auteur*" (1996) has been particularly useful, and the collected experience of Hans Ulrich Obrist described in *Ways of Curating* (2015). Ian Farr's collection on *Memory* (2012) has also been indispensable,[25] providing excerpts on thinking about memory and its representation by authors from Marcel Proust and Maurice Halbwachs,[26] to Pierre Nora, Paul Ricoeur and Nicolas Bourriaud.

*Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* by Erica Lehrer, Monica Eilleen Patterson and Cynthia Milton (2011) is a seminal text that includes chapters by practitioners who deal in their own way with the challenge of curating 'difficult' histories, importantly locating the discussions within the field of museum, heritage, and curatorship practices. The concerns represented underpin the leitmotif of my study as a whole, offering critical balances to the questions of how to curate not only the physical object, but also its shades. The authors also build on Maurice Halbwachs's theme (see footnote 25), asking how one can evoke what is implied through the survival of a material structure, what Monica Eileen Patterson in an introduction entitled "Materiality and Memorial Challenges", in questioning the agencies of the inanimate, substantiates, that "[o]bjects and buildings also have lives, and exert influence and control over the people who engage around and with them…" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:145).

Patterson proposes the term "counter-museum"[27] in an essay called "Teaching Tolerance through Objects of Hatred: The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia as 'Counter-Museum'" (2011), which highlights museums that inspire dialogue and are interactive and proactive about taking into account what lies behind the materiality of objects and or structures. Patterson "designate[s] museums like the JCM, which seek to engage visitors as active participants in dynamic, continuing memorial processes as opposed to presenting them with fixed or ossified history through the creation of monolithic, static representations of the past" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:66). The Jim Crow Museum displays racist memorabilia, which are objects that can hurt and offend. Contextual knowledge about the items and facilitation of debates on contemporary issues around their agency is critical – the "agencies of the inanimate" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:145) are taken into account.[28]

25. Primo Levi's *The Voice of Memory: Primo Levi (interviews)* edited by M. Belpoliti (2001) has also been particularly useful, emphasizing the act of writing as a form of memory in itself.

26. Maurice Halbwachs began to theorise the notion of 'collective memory' in the 1920s – something invisible that nevertheless is experienced as real. Halbwachs did so in relation to the permanence of the structure of a family home and its objects, in relation to which (if they remain), one develops a sense of one's own, or of a group's, continuity (Halbwachs cited in Farr 2012:47). He believed something intangible builds in relation to the known space as objects and even walls shift and adjust while sharing in the growth and changes that occur in a family.

> Why does a person become attached to objects? … Our physical surroundings bear ours and others' imprints. Our home – furniture and its arrangement, room décor – recalls family and friends whom we see frequently within this framework. … things are part of society (Halbwachs cited in Farr 2012:47).

"[E]ach object appropriately placed in the whole recalls a way of life common to many…" (Halbwachs cited in Farr 2012:48). Something intangible and invisible 'collects' in relation to the consistency of objects or the structures of a home. Halbwachs prepares the ground for questions brought into focus by the authors who question how it is possible to bring 'to life' and assert the reality of more than the materiality of inherited structures such as Halbwachs's family home and set of objects, or of statues, architecture or monuments for that matter.

27. Lehrer *et al.* explain:

> In Germany in the 1980s, a new genre of monument emerged that sought to reposition memory out of the stagnation of state custodianship and into the hands of citizens actively involved in memory work.
>
> These 'counter-monuments,' as they were termed… spoke to the sense that memorials had become not receptacles for memory but rather tools for forgetting, their very existence excusing and enabling people to *dis*engage with the past (2011:66).

The idea that a number of curatorial interventions, including interactive displays and the relating of contextual knowledge in discursive ways, effects the experience of what an audience understands about the visible and less visible dimensions of objects or artworks on display, is no new understanding to curatorship. I will briefly highlight a few more texts that reveal how curatorship takes into account the affects of objects.

The movement of 'New Museology' has been concerned with the decentralizing of authority at work in traditional museums, behind the objects on display as well as in museum curatorial practices for many years.[29] Patterson claims, "[p]erhaps the greatest impulse behind New Museology has been the shift from maintaining museums as elite temples built upon the authority of select experts to establishing more inclusive and inviting forums for learning, dialogue, and exchange" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:55). Most importantly, "New Museology has emphasized the discursive nature of objects" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:62). Opaque ways of determining the meaning and status of objects are brought into question and how curatorial devices and discursive interventions can work to evoke different responses are explored. This is evident in the work of Ivan Karp and Fred Wilson, exemplified in their essay "Mining the Museum" (1996). There has been emphasis furthermore on how the gallery, through its long and changing history, functions 'gesturally' in the reception of artworks and objects, as an additional contextual space that is suggestive, as expressed by Brian O'Doherty in his essay "The Gallery as Gesture" (1996). What is highlighted by O'Doherty in his texts, including the seminal *Inside The White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1986) is the effect on reception and understanding based on the tripartite agreement between objects and artworks, the gallery or space of their exhibition, and the audience. The gestural positioning of objects and artworks within designated distinctive spaces[30] and how they are discursively contextualized has a great deal to do with their impact and reception.[31]

Bill Brown touches on shades or the related 'agencies of the inanimate' in his essay "Thing Theory" (2001). Agencies of the inanimate are also brought beautifully into relief through the study in forensic aesthetics of the identification of Joseph Mengele's skeletal remains in the potent little book, *Mengele's Skull: The Advent of a Forensic Aesthetics* by Thomas Keenan and Eyal

28. The JCM strategies are based on the awareness that objects have power to harm and offend without proper care being taken by staff with regard to the nature of the encounters. Caring for this reception of the objects on display is at the heart of what it means to curate. The JCM is unique in that it is housed inside a university and not visibly open to the public. There is a broad range of interactive media on view and a number of staff who facilitate groups or individuals on their visits to the museum. At the JCM there is furthermore an engagement with not only "the material world as a witness to and source of… conflict" – attention is hereby not only focused on the objects themselves, it is brought to bear on the contexts that surround the objects and on society at large – even the audiences' own current prejudices are brought to light (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:66).

29. For a detailed analysis of museology and the distinctions which have led to what is known as 'New Museology', see "New Museology" online *by* Zsófia Frazon (2012).

30. The museum can be regarded as a ritualised space (Duncan 2000). Galleries and museum spaces for viewing art are further liminal spaces – threshold spaces – suspended from everyday life, places where the meaning and reading of objects and artworks can be affected and suggested extensively (Duncan 2000). Placing an object into this space, comes with questions about the responsibility of how it should be 'cared for'; to what extent are points of conversation on offer in the form of contextual dialogue with the piece, and to what extent is its history represented and how, as a means of caring for both the object, and the audience.

31. The Holocaust Centre in Cape Town exemplifies an act of contextualising harrowing imagery, imagery that on its own might deliver a very different message, perhaps one of shock, which is not their intention. Their aim is to capture their audience in a way that leads safely to the intended message of the exhibition. In the context of this centre, there is a greater value placed on a pedagogical experience, to capture the racist ideology behind the Nazi regime and what led to the Holocaust, and to relate this to an experience of racism in South Africa. Like the project of the Jim Crow Museum, they are getting closer through their management of contexts to what Lehrer defined as the role of memory-workers, "attempts to kindle social aspirations like empathy, identification, cross-cultural dialogue, to recognize multiple perspectives", (at the cost, nevertheless, of the horror or shock value that lies behind some of the imagery).

Weizman (2012). The forensics perspective is useful, as Anselme Franke explains,

> [f]orensic aesthetics brings into view the way in which boundaries are currently drawn and stabilized, transgressed and shuttered… forensics is called upon after the fact: in the aftermath of conflict, crime and violence, when limits have already been breached, fractured, violated… The borderland investigated by forensic aesthetics is one in which the categories of living and dead, subjects and objects, past and present are brought into question (Keenan and Weizman 2012:overleaf).

I was influenced early on by the literature of Edmund de Waal, namely by his journey-type memoir *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2000), and by his response to inheriting a collection of objects belonging to a European Jewish heritage.[32] Sebald's work of fiction called *Austerlitz* (2001*)* also left an indelible impression on me about the work of the recovery of memory and of the haunting nature of what cannot be easily resolved or 'put back together' so to speak. Both books were works of art in response to a theme, in de Waal's case to his inheritance and in Sebald's case, to traumatic memory. It is not always the case, however, that the literature I have read and relied on has fitted exactly with my subject matter. *Curating Difficult Knowledge* poses one interesting contradiction.

Curating the shards in the present means "curating difficult knowledge" as Lehrer *et al.* suggest. However, important to note is that the 'difficult knowledge' in the examples in the book imply pasts that involve pain or suffering. The authors describe histories which are given expression through special exhibitions, in museums and through memorials, where an innovative attempt has been made to deal with significant pain, that it does not go misunderstood and unremembered. What complicates this notion for me is the fact that the past the broken porcelain represents and the stories I have inherited have not been defined by suffering alone. What unites the papers in *Curating Difficult Knowledge* is the "nature of their common historical subject matter: violent, tragic, gruesome, horrific, and painful" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011: 7), which is at odds with the complexity of my subject matter. In the curation of the shards, I am curating the complexity of survival. While there has undeniably been suffering in the contexts involving the porcelain,

32. On the subject of an inheritance from the past and one's response to it, Edmund de Waal offers a very personal response in the memoir-like story of his German Jewish family's collection of *netsuke* ornaments, that like the broken porcelain, tell an indirect story about the contexts of family and the places where they have lived and been and the effect of the Second World War and Nazism upon these contexts. *The Hare with Amber Eyes,* as well as the article he wrote for the Bonhams magazine on the collection, "From the Ashes" (2010), inspired me early on to trace the story of my own inheritance and think of an appropriate response. In the article he asserts that the broken porcelain pieces are stories in themselves. Arguably, they have 'memory'. A second novel by Sebald captures this theme so poetically. Austerlitz (2002) is a very different approach to the theme of the loss and recovery of memory. Austerlitz, a Jewish child who was sent away to be brought up under a different name in a different country is the personification of a shattered heirloom. The novel is haunting in that Austerlitz's loss is not resolved. His identity remains fragmented. Austerlitz himself remains a haunting memorial, a reminder of the violence of dislocation inherent in war.

the pieces *survived* the clutches of the Nazi ruling powers and the firestorms of Dresden. The time of the firestorms was described as a hell on earth, yet, they were not a fragment of the horror that was luckily *survived* by the family, who managed to *escape* the Holocaust.[33] The past is "difficult", not only because it involves pain and suffering to some extent, but because it is complex[34] – there are success stories, of having evaded the worst horrors, and of lives that were also very happy as a result of dislocating change.[35] Some texts, that of my grandmother, as a text, a living presence, and of the event of the gathering of the von Klemperer descendants in Dresden, have no literary counterparts for analysis and review. Yet one can read between the lines into the gathering, my coda, the success of generations, prosperity, in spite of their loss and diaspora. I consider these wordless texts important 'works' that have also had a considerable impact on my thinking. In these I have been able to read the reality of survival and success, and to recognize, similarly to the material – porcelain – the elusive but beautiful qualities of fragility, endurance and strength.

33. For an intimate portrayal of this horror, see footnote 21 making reference to the 1985 documentary *Shoah*, by Claude Lanzmann.

34. My inherited past is "difficult" in Lehrer, Patterson and Milton's terms because it is one that does not fit in with presiding expectations. As the authors explain:

> The notion of 'difficult knowledge'… can be traced to educational theorist Deborah Britzman, who distinguishes it from 'lovely knowledge" … 'Lovely knowledge' is easily assimilable, the kind of knowledge that reinforces what we already know and gives us what we are accustomed to wanting from new information we encounter. 'Lovely knowledge' allows us to think of ourselves—due to our identifications with particular groups—as, for example, timelessly noble, or long- suffering victims, and to reject any kind of information about ourselves or others that might contradict or complicate the story. The North American pioneer myth of hardy settlers courageously conquering bare wilderness free for the taking, or immigrant narrative of foreigners who were welcomed and succeeded in pulling themselves up by nothing more than their bootstraps… are examples of such lovely tales (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:7-8).

35. I have a very strong and lucid memory of a moment in recent times with my grandmother, aged 95. We were sitting outside her small cottage, enjoying the sunshine. We were staring into a large, fairly ugly cracking perimeter wall with her little lawn around us unmowed and darted with weeds. A huge unkempt magenta bougainvillia was in bloom over our heads. There was a blue sky, and we were sitting on two rather shoddy plastic chairs. There was nothing glamorous, nor enviable to the outsider eye about our experience. But she was overwhelmed by the beauty and peace of what we were enjoying. She said repeatedly, "If only Hitler knew what he had done for us". Although both she and my grandfather came to South Africa independently of each other with little but their lives, and although they suffered the prejudices from many sides for being both Jewish and German, they loved life in South Africa, and were soon an embedded part of the local wilderness areas, society, and the South African political scene, turning their backs on their German pasts without regret.

CHAPTER 2

# UNPACKING OBJECTS

# UNPACKING OBJECTS

# 2

At my feet is a very old suitcase with two compartments. There is a main compartment, the full volume space of the length, breadth and height of the solid dark casing and dividing this into an upper and lower compartment, is a drawer made from canvas. I have packed the suitcase very carefully. There is a plethora of handmade things placed in order of their weight and in accordance with their material qualities. There are drawings and paper-like objects in the upper tray compartment. What is heavy has been packed into the bottom of the case, like ballast in the bowels of a ship,[36] to keep it balanced, and a good depth in the ocean.

The suitcase is heavy and too bulky to shift on one's own. The sides reveal travel labels curdled with age. "Port Elizabeth", they say, in an old fashioned font. The suitcase was brought from Germany, either from Cologne (if it belonged to my grandfather, Ludwig) or from Dresden (if it belonged to my grandmother) to South Africa in the early or late 1930s respectively. Its antique presence and extraordinary weight seem an absurdity next to modern travel suitcases. For the trunk to have survived, the simple evidence of its sustained existence helps direct my thoughts to a very different era in the history of making and craftsmanship, to a time when manufactured objects were made with the expectations of lasting a lifetime, even longer.

The Meissen porcelain boy that I want to unpack has survived almost three centuries, and unprecedented circumstances. I lift up the inner canvas tray from the suitcase, full of drawings, putting

36. According to the Port Elizabeth museum, Ming porcelain was also used as ballast to weigh down the old Portuguese galleons that traveled around the coast of South Africa on their trade journeys during the 16th and 17th century. The famous Ming porcelain from China was prized treasure back in Europe where it was traded and kept as gifts for royalty.

the load aside for the moment. Here is the boy. I unwrap the loose scarves that have been entombing it for safekeeping. As always, I am struck immediately by the colours of the enamel painting. They do not seem to have faded or tarnished at all. The tiny purple and gold flowers that decorate its gown are still ablaze. They look as they might have looked when it was made in Meissen around 1750. The boy's shape is frozen in a pose intent on an adventure – one foot is cast in a permanent marching step, triumphant and determined, below the fold of its material gown.

But it is impossible not to notice the dark swathes, like windswept birthmarks, fading from light brown to almost black, on the white porcelain, reminders of the piece having been underground for so many years and of having been through the firestorms of Dresden. The marks are uncannily present visual evidence of the darker aspects of the porcelain's past, and serve as a reminder of the task ahead, to uncover the less visible dimensions – or the 'memory'– of the shards. Of course, the fact that the boy no longer has a head, adds to its strangeness. The sculpture is quite frightening to hold – unsettling – yet its materiality is simultaneously solid and comforting.

I must curate something "difficult" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:7), a piece that does not "fit" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:7) any common perception of how antique Meissen porcelain sculpture should be. Traditionally, it would usually appear perfect, as new. In this piece, however, to repeat the exclamation by Daniel Birnbaum, "[t]he past is present. Something has happened: an accident, a catastrophe, a tragic event" (cited in Farr 2012:137). Its injuries have furthermore not been inflicted with care. Its head must have been broken off with an extraordinary force and the hole that remains is horrifying to look at. To peer into it, black and dark, surrounded by the broken porcelain body, feels as if one were looking down the barrel of a misshapen gun, a barrel of history, only, just as an 'auratic' object according to Walter Benjamin might do, it seems to be peering back at one.[37]

I turn it carefully in my hands. Its tiny hand in a clenched fist is about a hundredth of the size of my own. The details of its shape are still so articulate with its concerted grips and white porcelain skin. The tiny clenched fists remind me of the sculpture of a deceased Austrian artist that I photographed in a residential courtyard in Innsbruck in Austria in 2013.

37. According to Hal Foster:

> The Benjaminian definition of aura possesses a subjective as well as a historical dimension. On the one hand, an object is auratic if it appears to return our gaze… On the other hand, an object is auratic if it bears the 'traces of the practiced hand' – that is, if it retains the marks of human labour. In direct contrast to the mechanical-commodifed, both these qualities are often active in the outmoded [the debris of history, like the porcelain shards] – the memory of the gaze as well as the mark of the hand – and they intersect in the mystery of the body, the forgotten human dimension that is related in the psychic register to the maternal and in the historical register to the artisanal (cited in Farr 2012:53).

Fig. 3. Life size sculpture, self-portrait, by anonymous Austrian artist at an address in Innsbruck of *Kristallnacht* violence

Fig. 4. Detail

My research had led me to my aunt and uncle's home just outside Innsbruck, with the initial question of "What do you do with a broken inheritance?" I was motivated to find answers with them. But a further and intimately linked question of the visibility of Jews and/or 'Jewishness' in Austria haunted my time there.[38] I cycled with my uncle to all of the sites in Innsbruck related to its Jewish past, and present. We cycled to the sites where people had been terrorized, killed or had committed suicide on that infamous pogrom against the Jews, *Kristallnacht*, in November 1938.

In their introduction, "Possessions: Spectral Places" in *The Spectralities Reader* (2015), María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren explain "a specific place can, willingly or unwillingly, result in a recollection of or encounter with past experiences and perceptions, making the concept of location immensely powerful as well as layered" (2015:395). As they explain, "places are simultaneously living and spectral, containing the experience of the actual moment as well as the many times that have already transpired and become silent – though not necessarily imperceptible – to the present" (2015:395). Doors, reflective half open windows, place names and street names took on new significance in the light of the knowledge of the past. Cycling, very much like walking, and involving a great deal of walking and pushing the bike most of the time furthermore, "affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc. the trajectories it 'speaks'", writes Michel de Certeau (in del Pilar Blanco and Peeren 2015:396) in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau emphasizes the everyday nature of walking as an activity with its own logic, and as a special way of excavating place "closely linked to narrative and enunciation" (in del Pilar Blanco and Peeren 2015:396).

Innsbruck was one of the cities worst hit by the night's atrocities. "Apart from Vienna, where at least 6 people were killed, Innsbruck was one of the bloodiest and most violent scenes of the pogrom in Austria considering its size and the size of the Jewish Community" (Manfred Mühlmann 2015).[39]

Interestingly, there was no indication at any of the original sites pertaining to what had happened. Nothing but a strange and fairly remote memorial in the form of a Menorah dedicated to those murdered on that night was erected in 1997 on the *Landhausplatz* near the city centre.

38. My aunt did not want to display in her home or have visible the broken plates that she chose from the inherited lot that was sent to our branch of the family. She feared having to account for the story behind their being broken. Both my aunt and uncle are devout Catholics and are committed Austrians. Anti-Semitism and the stigmatizing of people who are Jewish is nonetheless still a major concern for them in modern day Austria – Innsbruck in particular. It was only in very recent years that my aunt felt comfortable disclosing to some of her closest Austrian friends the reality of her Jewish heritage. She described to me that being Jewish was too easily assigned as a label, as a kind of "stigma that sticks to you" (G Payr, personal communication, Port Elizabeth, 21 May 2014), and that once 'stuck', does not go away. It is a part of her identity that she has not felt comfortable talking about openly in the society where they have nonetheless chosen to create their lives.

39. "During the night of November 9th to 10th, 1938, Richard Berger, Wilhelm Bauer and Richard Graubart were murdered, many others were seriously injured, among them… [Mühlmann lists more than twenty names]. Josef Adler died two months after the attack as a result of the injuries inflicted on him. 18 Jews were arrested, their apartments and stores destroyed, as was the interior of the Synagogue" (Manfred Mühlmann 2015).

Aside from this memorial, only the private website put together by Manfred Mühlmann serves as a guide to the architecture of the city relating to its Jewish past and to the reality of the November pogrom.

(See Fig. 5)

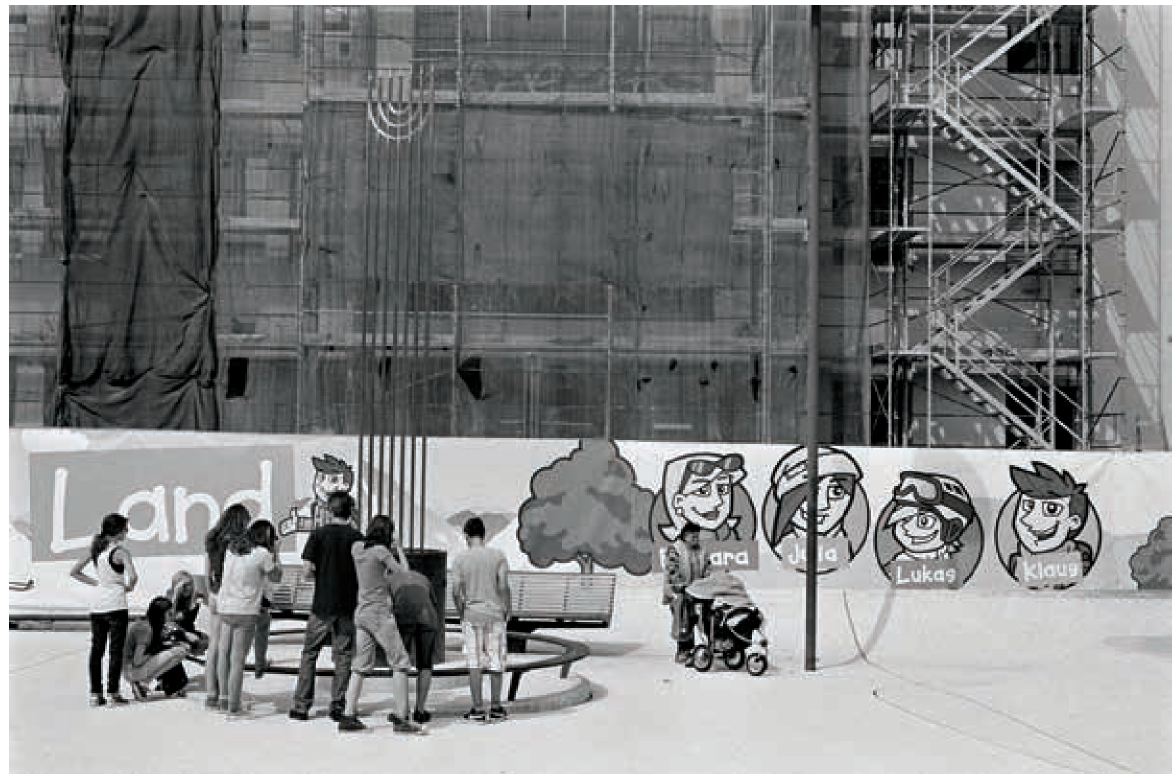



Fig. 5. Some teenagers at the memorial of those who died in Innsbruck during Kristallnacht, November 1938, at the *Landhausplatz*

The sculpture I photographed was a life-sized self-portrait that, like the porcelain sculpture, also had clenched fists and appeared determined in its stance. The sculpture remained in an enclave in the garden of a communal inner courtyard where the artist who made it once lived. It was placed, or left, as if it had no greater significance than the garden hose or plastic chair. But, it had a permeating gaze that was intense, with 'bent arms' with 'fists' at the ends that came away from its 'torso'. Unable to communicate, like the broken boy, it existed like a skeleton from the past (only, the life-sized sculpture could only invisibly bear the imaginable imprints of the life that must have unfolded around it). Both objects were silent witnesses, leftovers from, or rather, survivors of, the time and contexts they were originally made for. Questions hung about the sculpture, like the marching boy, that positioned it in that haunting field of the fragment, with the contexts or 'homes' that originally made them meaningful having been destroyed. It hung about as a shard, orphaned by time.

(See Fig. 3. and Fig. 4.).

The bottom of the porcelain marching boy has lost all of its surfaces. The mark that all collectors of Meissen know to look for, the famous backstamp of blue crossed sword marks, is not there. I take out John Sandon's book on *Meissen Porcelain* (2010) and turn to the back pages where the Meissen signatures that have been used throughout the ages are shown. From the periods described, the boy should have had the two underglaze sword marks *c*. 1740 – 1750 (see Fig. 6, no. 5) or less likely, but possibly, two underglaze narrower sword marks, the Meissen signature or backstamp from the period 1750 – 1760 (see Fig. 6, no. 6).

"The famous blue swords mark derives from part of the arms of Saxony", writes Sandon (2010:118), "for the Electors of Saxony were sword-bearers to the Holy Roman Emperor. This sign of two crossed swords was first used in Meissen in 1724 [14 years since the Meissen factory's inception] and has taken many forms during the centuries that followed".

I remember first reading Sandon's account of the history of Meissen porcelain and the Meissen factory and thinking that reference would certainly be made to the 1945 bombing of the nearby city of Dresden. With the town of Meissen, in which the factory of the same name is housed (which

Fig. 6. The famous Meissen signatures or backstamps, dating from 1725 until today

accounts for much of the city's fame) being so close to Dresden, I had imagined the catastrophic bombing would have caused more of a disturbance in the factory's development. In the broken Meissen I have inherited, the interlinking of the fates of Meissen porcelain and of Dresden's destruction have been intimately forged together. However, Dresden's bombing and its permeating effects are hardly mentioned in Sandon's account. "Meissen [the town] was not destroyed in the Second World War" (Sonttag 2010:14), says another account, a tourist guide – "a wealth of original architecture – mainly from the Gothic and Renaissance period – was preserved".

The Meissen porcelain factory might have been saved from the allied bombs of the Second World War, but reading on in Sandon's book, it seems Meissen as a factory was not saved from having to deal with a number of threats that have contributed to its special character: its resilience (much like the character of porcelain).[40] The fact that Meissen has survived is one of the most outstanding features of its three hundred and six year old history, according to Sandon (2010:7). Reading further into a number of sources on the factory's development it is clear that Meissen has adapted throughout its history to changes in leadership, outsider threats on its secrets, profuse plagiarism, and governmental and royal fighting over its ownership. From Sandon's account of its history, Janet Gleeson's animated *Arcanum* (1998) about European porcelain's invention and Hugh Tait's historical text on *Porcelain* (1962), through to *Fragiles* by Sven Ehmann *et al.* (2008) (an exposition of contemporary glass, ceramic and porcelain practices) to conversations with Sebastian Kuhn (the European porcelain specialist at Bonhams in London), the bones of the beginning of Meissen's story emerge. It is one that has ensured Meissen being cemented in the public imagination for over three centuries, and the stringencies that were endured in its early years have secured its surviving as the best known European porcelain until today.

40. Porcelain is known for its incredible strength as a material. It is fired between 1200 and 1400 degrees Celsius, higher than any other clay material. It is made to endure extraordinary heat and to last.

# A Brief History of Meissen Porcelain

Today porcelain is a fairly cheap and prolific material, but there was a time when it was more precious than gold – in fact, there was a time when it was known as 'white gold', because porcelain was worth more in weight than gold.[41]

The elector of Saxony in the early 1700s, known as 'Augustus II the Strong', loved porcelain. To manufacture porcelain of his own was his long-standing goal. Porcelain was shipped in from the East at great cost to decorate the Royal residences and to be used as prestigious gifts. No one in Europe had mastered the making of the translucent white material, named after the pearly white substance of a shell.[42] Many of the first European attempts at making porcelain included mixing glass in with clay. It was a long time before the secret ingredient of white kaolin was added to the mixture, and the kiln was fired at high enough temperatures to produce the elusive material.

The discovery of how to produce hard paste porcelain was made in 1708 by an alchemist, Johan Böttger, "after lengthy experiments in a squalid dungeon" (Gleeson 1998:xi), while imprisoned in the heart of Dresden. Böttger had been a prisoner of Augustus the Strong's since his first failed attempts to turn base metal into gold. He was kept alive due to his promises of being close to a breakthrough (the kind of breakthrough the king sorely needed to replenish his spoils from numerous wars, and in the hope of offsetting his propensity to spend on a very grand lifestyle). Augustus the Strong was constantly in search of ways to replace the increasing shortfalls in royal coffers. (To produce his own gold, he imagined, would have been a sure way of achieving this.) It was after many years, and with the help, support, and precursory work of the scientist and nobleman Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus, one of the few men who believed in the troubled Böttger's arts, that the imprisoned alchemist found the arcanum for porcelain, instead of gold, which is what Augustus had previously hoped for. It is said that on the alchemist's door Böttger himself wrote jokingly, *"Got, unser Schöpfer at gemacht aus einem Goldmacher einen Töpfer"* ("God the creator has turned a goldmaker into a potter") (Sandon 2010:12). But, the discovery of how to make porcelain pleased Augustus immensely. He poured a great deal of his resources into the

41. As the title The Arcanum, by Janet Gleeson suggests, the search for and protection of the recipe for this precious material, and the lives of particular characters that were involved, was riveting enough not only to become subject material for a book, it was subsequently turned into a BBC series as well.

42. Many online dictionaries confirm that the name is derived from the old Italian word *porcellana*, meaning cowrie shell.

43. Augustus the Strong's love of porcelain placed huge demands on the production of the factory, with Royal gifts being required and greater and increasingly challenging pieces being commissioned to bolster his appearance as the greatest leader in all of Europe and the world. His ambition was to be seen as more powerful and persuasive than not only leaders in Europe, but in the east as well, and he wanted to use the display of his collections of porcelain to achieve this.

continuation of experiments, into finding smaller 'arcanums' for glazes and techniques that would emulate and later better porcelain produced in the East. Augustus's hopes soared for the new factory. His secret processes were the envy of neighbouring countries, in particular, Augustus's long time rival, King Frederick I of Prussia.

The need for the protection of the secret arcanum for porcelain was paramount. The factory was moved from Dresden to the Albrechtsburg fortress, a very secure castle on top of a hill in the town of Meissen. Many of Böttger's contemporaries, people who worked at the factory, were kept much like prisoners due to very low pay. Employees were paid high prices by competing factories if they would defect with some of the Meissen secrets. The way the factory worked to protect its full gamut of secrets was to ensure that the originators of glazes or the person responsible for the materials for the porcelain knew only information specific to their particular task. Ensuring that no one person held too much information was critical. Making employees wait for what was owed to them was another way of holding onto them. Their compromised circumstances were not aided by the further disloyalty of some of the heads of the factories who cheated them out of much of what was due to them. Overall, an atmosphere of secrecy and distrust reigned within and ruled throughout the factory's premises.

Meissen was faced with bankruptcy as a serious threat in its early years, mainly because it had to defend itself as a struggling factory against the likes of the Elector of Saxony himself. Demand for his courts and personal needs far exceeded the speed with which the factory could make a profit through sales of their emergent wares at art fairs.[43] Great costs were required for the setting up of equipment, kilns, and the various manufacturing processes. But Augustus found a way of supporting his passion and his enthusiasm kept the work proliferating. The workforce required to make the wares was nevertheless kept on a shoestring wage.

The factory survived the Augustus years, and while it battled financially, it nonetheless thrived in its production capacities, fuelled by Augustus' passion for new commissions. According to Sandon, the factory suffered greatly during the seven years war, however, that was to come toward the end of Augustus's life, and in 1763 when war ended and Augustus returned from being away in exile, he returned to a decimated Dresden. Sandon

writes that Augustus began with a fellow count, Count Brühl, to reorganise the Meissen factory, "but the two men were heartbroken and died within weeks of each other" (2010:53). Meissen survived being ruled for some time by Augustus's rivals, the Prussian forces, and following this has continued to survive numerous political factions and leaders who have come subsequently, with either a greater or lesser deal of interest in the factory.

What is proven is that what was created in Meissen's turbulent but passionate formative years set it up to last. "Numerous wars have seen Saxony over-run by invading armies, for the country usually ended up on the losing side," writes Sandon. However,

> [s]omehow… the reputation of Meissen was too valuable to allow it to fail… Frederick the Great of Prussia, the Tsar of Russia and Napoleon all set their sights on the Meissen factory, one of Europe's greatest prizes. In the twentieth century Meissen survived Hitlerism and life under Soviet and East German rule. Now under the control of the State of Saxony once more, Meissen has thrived since German reunification and remains one of Europe's most important porcelain factories, where top-quality porcelain is still made in traditional as well as very modern styles (Sandon 2010:7).

To reiterate an important sentiment captured by Sandon "[p]erhaps Meissen's most remarkable achievement is its survival" (2010:7).

It is striking how different it is, or what a different story the Meissen tells, when broken. Yet perhaps, like its famous unbroken counterparts and the factory itself, the greatest quality of the family's broken porcelain is still also the fact of it having survived. From the kilns of Meissen to the royal courts of Augustus the Strong where some pieces would have first made their appearance (most Meissen was originally commissioned for only the most prestigious occasions and persons), into the hands of an interim collector before being bought by the von Klemperers in the early 1900s, the porcelain made its way undamaged through changing environments. It is officially recorded that the von Klemperers bought according to their taste, not for collectable value (Loesch 2004:74) and hence, what made it into their collection would have survived a further very subjective selection process. Once theirs,

the pieces continued to perform as they were intended, remaining intact in spite of being used by the family as was expected, in the motions of everyday life. The porcelain further survived being fairly unprotected in a house filled with children.

It was within my great, great grandparents' family home that a simple collecting love turned into something much more profound. Charlotte and Gustav wanted to live with their collection in their home, and they did, in spite of the number of pieces growing to famous proportions. While in the villa of the couple, each piece of Meissen was recorded, taking up its place in a grand catalogue. It was the fame of the collection that grew in their home that would eventually bring it to the attention of the German authorities, and lead to it becoming of personal interest to Hitler. When the collection was eventually appropriated by the Nazis, it was its fame that ensured the utmost precautions in its safeguarding. Not only was it stored in secret locations, but it was also packed very carefully in crates which ultimately had a role to play in the severity of the pieces' destruction.[44] Charlotte and Gustav's home, because of the dedication that was paid within its walls to each item that established the collection, becomes a very important context in the life of the porcelain. It was home to a special era in private collecting that will never be repeated (Kuhn 2010:22). Their feat required not only the historical context of the times being what they were, but took special people as well – quite like in the

44. On the 9th of December 1943, the porcelain collection was packed into 25 crates and stored in the castle of Rammenau outside of Dresden. Meticulous lists were made about the contents of each crate, including the catalogue numbers of every piece and their dimensions. Each piece was packed very well and very carefully to protect it from being damaged. According to Loesch, both the packing and inventories were handled so effectively that not only did some of the porcelain survive, but it could be easily worked out later exactly what was missing (2004:80).

story of the beginnings of Meissen – to make this possible.

## A Brief History of the von Klemperer Collection

Charlotte and Gustav were an interesting couple. Gustav was the head of the Dresdner bank and well liked by officialdom.[45] Charlotte was an enigmatic woman well known in high society. They were seamlessly assimilated into the life and society of Dresden. Klemens von Klemperer (1916 - 2012) an American historian,[46] and my grandmother's first cousin, writes of the atmosphere in his own home and of the collecting couple, his paternal grandparents:

> The climate of my home was non-political and certainly devoid of any nationalistic taint. My forebears were all men of affairs. Although public-spirited, they stayed out of politics. This may have had something to do with their Jewish background and a certain hesitancy to get involved in public controversies. But my paternal grandfather Gustav von Klemperer, the director of the Dresdner Bank, took his public functions and responsibilities seriously. Under his guidance, the bank became an institution of national and worldwide scope. As a *Geheimrat* (Privy Councillor) he was a much-respected citizen in the courtly city, distinguished, as the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* noted when he died in December 1926, for "his pronounced sense of justice and his iron sense of duty". He and his wife Charlotte were welcome guests at the Saxon Court, and the story goes that King Friedrich August III, a witty and popular ruler, referred to my grandmother, a person of distinct wit and presence herself, as "la Klempératrice"" (2009:9).[47]

Like one other Dresden family, the Arnholds (also German Jewish bankers),[48] the von Klemperers developed a particular love for the Meissen porcelain of the nearby town.[49] It was not their only love, however. They also collected "fine 18th and 19th century furniture, paintings, drawings, Chinese porcelain and snuff bottles, works of art, European ceramics, such as Italian Renaissance maiolica, glass, and a fine collection of miniatures" (Kuhn 2010: 22). But the Meissen porcelain was "closest to the collectors' hearts", writes Kuhn (2010:22). He explains:

45. Gustav held very strong diplomatic relations, being appointed Consul General of Austria-Hungary in Dresden. He also seems to have had "a particular relation to the heir to the throne, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand", writes Klemens. "My grandparents visited in the Konipischt castle in Bohemia, and the Archduke in turn made a stop in Dresden. I remember the photos on the piano in Dresden of the Princes Max and Ernst von Hohengerg, the sons of Francis Ferdinand and his morganatic wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg. According to a letter from my father, when the Archduke visited Leipzig in 1913 for the inauguration of the monument to the Allied victory over Napoleon I in the 1813 Battle of the Nations he sent for Grandfather and revealed to him his plans for imperial reform after his accession to the throne. Nobody knew why he confided this to Grandfather, who was a very apolitical person" (Klemperer 2009:9).

46. For further reading on Klemens von Klemperer's life work and contribution, visit http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/08/world/europe/klemens-von-klemperer-dies-at-96-wrote-of-nazi-era.html?_r=0

47. From the sound of the pattern of their lives, they would have had no idea of the severity of what was to befall people like themselves, assimilated German Jews, in the years soon after their deaths, nor of the schisms that would occur as the result of the fatal process of labelling that tore people from their invested identities, their possessions, and from their histories.

48. The Arnholds were contemporaries of the von Klemperers, who also had a large collection of Meissen. As an online review of the book states, "The Arnhold porcelain collection is the most important of the great pre-war Meissen collections *to have survived intact, remaining with the descendants of the original collectors* Heinrich and Lisa Arnhold" (*own emphasis*). The Arnholds left Dresden early enough to ensure that their assets remained untouched by the Nazis. They had already established branches of their bank in other parts of the world, which ensured both their safe passage out of Germany and that what they had established remained theirs.

49. According to the article by Anette Loesch, it was at the time after joining the Dresdner bank in 1891, that Gustav first bought rare porcelain. It was during his time as a board member of the bank that he supported the porcelain factory Rosenthal & Co in Selb, which is in all likelihood how his special affinity for Meissen porcelain might have arisen (Loesch 2004:73).

50. While it is clear that they were not influenced by any kind of institutional interest, that it was a beloved hobby rather than a competitive initiative, great care was nonetheless taken later on to record the details of the individual pieces in an elaborate catalogue discussed further on in this chapter. The catalogue they produced would become very valuable art historically because nothing quite like it existed at the time. It brought together important contextual information about Meissen and its history, which had not been collated in relation to so many unique pieces before.

> [t]he von Klemperers could be emblematic of a golden age of collecting in Germany, when Berlin ranked alongside Paris and London as one of the great centres of the international art market. Collectors invested not just wealth, but also time and effort in their collections. Supported by the great museum scholars of the day, such as Wilhelm von Bode, Otto von Falke, Justus Brinkman, Max Sauerlandt and Schnorr von Carolsfeld, to name but a few, collectors developed levels of connoisseurship – seldom restricted to a single collecting era – in a way that will probably never be seen again" (2010: 22).

It is important to note that the Klemperers made a point of collecting without any interest related to that of a museum collection – they bought according to their taste – they bought what they liked (Loesch 2004: 74).[50] The collection was dominated by figures, human and animal, and the official thinking is that these were more especially suited to provide relaxing subject matter to be busy with in their spare time (Loesch 2004:74). As Sebastian Kuhn reiterates, "[t]he collection was a *Buen Retiro*, an escape from the stresses of everyday life, to which the von Klemperers devoted every free hour for over thirty years. Their remarkable achievement, in an era of great collectors, was to assemble what Schnorr von Carolsfeld called 'the most important private collection of Meissen porcelain in terms of scope and content'" (2010:22). This was never their collecting intention, however. It just so happened that what they most liked fell within the production period of Meissen between its founding in 1710 and the Seven Years War in 1756, a golden time in the factory's own history (Kuhn 2010:22).

The collection, beautifully photographed, filled every corner of the home of Charlotte and Gustav. As is clear in the images that follow, and as

Fig.7. – Fig. 9. Interior views of the von Klemperer's villa in Dresden, showing the collection of Meissen porcelain

Fig.10. The family von Klemperer photographed amongst their collection. Ralph, my grandmother's father, is seated on the right

the images annunciate, they lived amongst their collection.

The address of the villa was 25 Wienerstrasse. Klemens von Klemperer writes about his grandparents' house, and a childhood that was fated not to last, in the introduction to his historical memoir *Voyage through the Twentieth Century: A Historian's Recollections and Reflections* (2009).

> My paternal grandparents' house in Dresden… was a grand villa surrounded by a large and well-kept garden at the corner of *Wiener* and *Gellertstraße* in the centre of the so-called *Altstad* of the Saxon capital where all the elegant families lived. Our uncles and aunts and a slew of cousins lived nearby and the frequent and lively exchanges between us encouraged us to assume the whole city was ours (2009:9).

As Klemperer describes, where they lived was a beautiful district for Dresden's elite. The sentiment of the times amongst the youth was indefatigable, and it was echoed in the 'golden' ambitions of their parents and grandparents – the times were affluent and the accumulation of wealth and prestige and the growth of complex material cultures was inevitable. The von Klemperer couple lived with a sense of the continuation of the growth they had created and enjoyed. As is evident in a personal transcript written by Charlotte, they collected with love, and for posterity; everything that they had collected and gained they intended to be handed down to their children.

The villa bordered the *Grosser Garten*, an enormous park in the heart of the city that my grandmother recalls walking through every day to get to school. The *Grosser Garten* was also the place where a concentrated rescue effort was taking place after the first bombs fell on Dresden on the night of February 13, 1945. However, just three hours later, while volunteers were helping to carry the rescued bodies out from the ruins of the burning city, and the dead bodies were being brought to the *Grosser Garten* where they were being piled up to be burned, the second bombs fell. In the second attack, the garden and the rescue efforts that had drawn hundreds of civilian helpers were directly hit, decimating the area and the effort.

The von Klemperer couple lived for many years with their collection as they had desired, and

luckily both Charlotte and Gustav died before it was appropriated from the house of their son soon after the pogrom of *Kristallnacht*. They were buried together in the Jewish cemetery of Dresden.

Fig. 11. Charlotte and Gustav's graves, next to Gustav's mother Henriette, in the Jewish cemetery of Dresden

Fig. 12. Graves in the grass of the Dresden Jewish Cemetry

# The Villa and the Garden Today

It is not a far walk from the house in which my grandmother grew up to her von Klemperer grandparents' villa. To get to her grandparents' villa, one turns right after leaving the central station and simply walks all the way along Wienerstraße until the corner of Wienerstraße and Gellertstraße. One walks along empty plots, dilapidated houses, and eerie erfs of foliage where buildings once stood. This is an area where Second World War damage, if one knows about it, is still visible.

Fig. 13. The wild verges on the way to my great, great grandparents home

Fig. 14 Overgrown plots along Wienerstraße where villas most likely once stood

Fig. 15 An old driveway leading to makeshift sheds where villas would have previously existed

Fig. 16. A dilapidated, damaged villa along Wienerstraße. The railway line is visible in the background

The postwar period under Soviet rule is also self-evident. Enormous community blocks of flats cover land along the road from the station toward the heart of the leafy suburb. The landscape since 1945 became the support of another epoch that was to last until 1989. Much has changed since the golden age of collecting in Dresden that my great, great grandparents flourished in. Where their villa once stood, there is no trace of what was there before. The visibility of the Soviet postwar presence, however, is clear.

Fig. 17. The corner of Wienerstraße and Gellertstraße where the villa once stood

Fig. 18. Detail

Before coming to Dresden, I spoke with my grandmother many times about what she remembered. I questioned her about her own family home, about her grandparents' home, and recorded what I could of what she remembered. She often described how I should reach where she grew up. Simply turn right after the station and walk "on, and on, and on, and on" (M Abel, personal communication, Port Elizabeth, May 2013).

On my first attempt, I walked[51] out of the station and along what is today an enormous highway (that eventually turns into a residential area), without the number of their family home with me. I kept only memories of her descriptions of the home. I had to look very carefully at every possibility. I found my grandmother's house, which is still standing, on a second walk from the station, with the right number to confirm its location, but kept no film in my camera.

Four families live in the house today. I remember a big pink sun umbrella outside in the back garden. I walked down the long driveway to the back, recording the beautiful balconies at the front, the low wall and an enormous open garden plot beside the home with its entrance leading all the way down the street to the *Großer Garten*. The walk to the *Großer Garten* leads past beautiful villas that were not destroyed, to the Tiergartenstraße running alongside the park, the place of the original von Klemperer family properties.

With the memory of Dresden's destruction in mind, a walk around the *Großer Garten* provides an uncanny confrontation with Dresden today. It looks as if nothing devastating ever occurred. People of all ages enjoy the park. I remember looking at very old people, my grandmother's contemporaries. If they had grown up in Dresden they would have lived through what is impossible to gain a sense of today.

51. Walking has relevance, as de Certeau has expressed. It is a way of being an "ordinary practitioner", of living "'down below', below the thresholds at which visibility begins" (cited in During 1993:153). I could walk my very own private and personal trajectory, without this being noticeable to an outsider. "The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poem… elude legibility" (de Certeau cited in During 1993:153). The story that walking produces... shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces… remains daily and indefinitely other" (de Certeau cited in During 1993:153).

< > Fig. 19 – 20. Views of the *Großer Garten*

I walked all through the park, aware that there might be some sign of its part in Second World War history, but found nothing but an unmarked stone which could have been the base of a sculpture that was no longer there.

Fig. 21. Two girls on the grass of the *Großer Garten*

Fig. 22. Unmarked 'memorial'

I walked all of the pathways that link up the park and the site where my great great grandparents' villa once stood.

Fig. 23 – 24. Pathways through the *Großer Garten*

Fig. 25 View of the empty grass in the *Großer Garten*

At the town end of the *Großer Garten* is the Volkswagen factory. Interestingly enough there, in its futuristic reflections, on the grass beside the lawns, I found one of the few places where some stones lay, remaining fragments from a decimated city.

Fig. 26 and Fig.29. Fragments like zen stones on the grass of the Volkswagen factory

Fig. 27. Reflections inside the factory

Fig. 28. Reflections outside the factory

Fig. 29.

# Meissen Today

My experience of Dresden's old centre and the *Großer Garten* during my visits in 2013 left a significant imprint. I had wanted to experience my grandmother's Dresden for myself and to visit the dwellings and sites that informed the journey of the Meissen porcelain since its origin.

I learned that Meissen's story resembles that of today's Dresden. Many years since Dresden was devastated by the allies' carpet-bombing strategy, it almost seems as if the losses to the city never happened - the marked injuries have been so well eradicated by new structures that exactly mimic the old ones, while many of the visible scars from the past have been erased. There are no proverbial 'cracks' showing in the centre of the city, and little but an occasional photograph in a museum exhibit evidences how the area was decimated and left broken in the time between Dresden being the once famous Baroque art city of yesteryear and the restored Dresden today. Life continues in seeming perfection.

Fig. 30 – 33. Views over the Elbe of Dresden's *Altstadt* today

THEATERKAHN

52. The story of the many creative directors and artists who brought different styles and skills to the factory is revealed through the changes in style of pieces, but interestingly, the continuing struggle of battles with power that often gave rise to the giving up of artistic freedom, and enormous compromises and sacrifices made by directors and artists, lies partially hidden in its written history.

The adaptations in style, shape, and content of pieces, essential to surviving the tastes and demands of the changing political periods in the Meissen factory's history, can be seen in the pieces on display in Meissen's showrooms and gallery. The cumulative experience of walking through the factory showrooms and galleries, of going on the tour of the making of porcelain, and of observing the examples on exhibition, leaves a sense that the finest pieces from throughout the ages are present and that blemish and imperfections do not plague Meissen porcelain in any way. My experience of Meissen's story through its revealed works was one of unchallenged perfection. Nothing jolts the sense of Meissen's historical continuation as masters in the perfection of the handmade.

In the Meissen factory showroom and gallery there are certainly no relics of catastrophe. Meissen and its galleries evidence the success story John Sandon speaks of, its survival, in what can only be described as conditions of near perfection. In my experience, nothing documented the messiness of struggle the factory went through to keep going and to survive,[52] nor, in spite of a seeming correlation between bombing and something as delicate as porcelain being threatened, is there any registering of the famous porcelain being in any way in touch with the devastation that was wreaked upon the German cities during the war.

The Meissen story in general, in comparison to the story of my own Meissen, seems one of an unscathed perfection, spared from the ravages of war. What is represented stands in harsh contrast to the reality of the broken porcelain shards, which have been entangled and damaged in human history. If thinking about Meissen means relating to ideals of perfection, then the broken Klemperer pieces stop one in one's tracks. That sense of continuation, having been made and having survived without being unalterably changed, having survived without loss, is evidently not the case. Our porcelain was sought after, pulled into a fray of complex desires, and in the process, not saved from catastrophe.

The broken nature of the marching boy becomes a priceless piece in the face of the history of the over three-hundred-year-old factory and what it displays. Firstly, it is testament to Meissen's quality of survival and to porcelain's lasting strength as a material. However, it is also valuable because it is unlike typical Meissen that cannot, through the

evidence of its survival, make reference to any of the devastation or human suffering that has been as much a part of the historical context for Meissen's production, as creativity and determination.

Besides the Meissen factory, I went to the Dresden State Porcelain Museum in the heart of Dresden's *Altsadt*, to see their displays of porcelain.[53] A large portion of their pieces comprise the 63 figures that were donated back to the museum, out of the 86 pieces that were eventually returned to the von Klemperer family in 1991. The pieces are labelled, "Gift of the family of Gustav von Klemperer". But the donation of what was damaged porcelain,[54] every piece of it on display, has been successfully restored to perfection. To the untrained eye, it is impossible to tell that any of it was ever broken.

One cannot easily see damaged Meissen on exhibition, not at the showrooms and galleries of the Meissen factory, nor at the State Galleries Porcelain Museum. Alternative evidence to the overarching narrative of uninterrupted success is rare. Hence the impact of what is represented when seeing the broken remains of the Meissen collection – the certainty that there has been damage and loss to the place and society - grows in significance. It tells a very different story.

## The Catalogue of the von Klemperer Meissen Porcelain

In the suitcase, a large amount of space is taken up by an enormous book-like object. I lift it out from the bottom of the trunk. It is the heavy ballast. Underneath some plastic wrapping for protection, the outer casing is mottled and damaged, discoloured from age, the colour of teabag stained paper. It feels as if it weighs a ton, and it is cumbersome. I loosen the outer casing and pull the heavy contents of the book onto my lap. The casing comes apart in two pieces. "*Porzellansammlung Gustav von Klemperer*" reads the title. "The Porcelain Collection of Gustav von Klemperer". I reach for cotton gloves, but decide after all to feel the pages. The cover of the book is a beautiful pearly cream, and the title lettering has been impressed in gold.

An informal English translation of an article written in German by Anette Loesch, the chief curator of the Porcelain Gallery in Dresden, on the

53. During my time in Dresden, an open ticket to all the Dresden State Galleries was kindly organized by the lawyer dealing in restitution claims for the State Museums, Michael Geissdorf.

54. Many pieces were pulled out of the rubble intact, not damaged at all. These sold through Christie's and some of the undamaged pieces, along with the damaged pieces also went to the Porcelain Museum.

story or ‘fate’ of the collection – “*Das Schicksal der Porzellannsammlung Gustav von Klemperer*” (2004) better describes the value of what I hold. Translated, it reads that in 1926, Gustav von Klemperer asked the famous art historian and curator of the *Schlossmuseum* in Berlin, Ludwig Georg Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1877 – 1945), to catalogue his porcelain. According to the article, von Carolsfeld viewed the publication of the catalogue as a considerable contribution to art history (Loesch 2004:74). Indeed, Loesch asserts that the publication was regarded as the most important contribution of its time to the history of the oldest porcelain factory, and furthermore, that what was being catalogued was notably the most famous private collection of its kind in the world (2004:74).

Gustav von Klemperer passed away before the catalogue was published. He died on the 27th of December 1926. His oldest son Victor (1876 – 1943), who was in his own right a collector of manuscripts, prints, valuable books and art, felt an obligation to fulfill his father’s wishes and preserve his collecting legacy and had the catalogue printed in 1927 (Loesch 2004:74). What is interesting in Loesch’s account of the production of the catalogue is that apparently von Carolsfeld found most of the support in his research process from Charlotte von Klemperer. While very important contributions were made by the famous collector from Leipzig, Georg Wilhelm Schulz, and the creative director of the porcelain factory in Meissen, Eric Hösel, it was Charlotte who knew the history and origin of every piece (Loesch 2004:74).

The catalogue, due to its subject matter and considerable contributions, became a highly sought after piece for private collectors and museums. It records the details of 834 pieces in total, pieces that happened to fall within the formative and most famous years of Meissen’s existence (the Golden period in Meissen’s production, from inception till about 1763).

In the catalogue each piece is recorded with an accompanying description. The date of its making is given and it is assigned to the correct painting school, artisan or sculptor. According to Loesch, the 95 photographic images that have been included were considered an especially unusual and rare inclusion into the publication (2004:74).

The images were printed on handmade paper with the family crest as the watermark, made possible by a man called Jakob Hegner, a printer and translator who, according to Loesch, worked with classical and contemporary texts and found wide appreciation for his typographical work (2004:74). It is hard to make out the specific art historical terms in its original German, but the article seems to read that Hegner designed in an economical way in the style of something called "*neue factual*" as opposed to the baroque style (Loesch 2004:77). Hence the catalogue would have been quite contemporary in its design, in contrast to the overly baroque nature of most of the collection, and most of what is famously Dresden.

Only 150 catalogues were printed, and as Loesch confirms, these were mainly intended for friends and family, for people close to the couple and close to the collection (2004:77). Sebastian Kuhn, currently working for Bonhams in the category of European porcelain, and the person responsible for the successful auction of the broken von Klemperer porcelain in 2010, wrote "A Short Introduction to the Collection", which appeared in the catalogue accompanying the 2010 auction.

Fig. 34. The cover of the Bonhams catalogue accompanying the 2010 auction

In the article he reiterates:

> The lavish folio publication, privately printed in an edition of only 150 numbered copies, was intended to provide a record of the collection for the collector's grandchildren and friends, as well as a contribution to the study of the subject. It is the only complete record of perhaps the greatest private collection of Meissen porcelain assembled since the 18th century (2010:22).

55. Given the destruction of the collection, the photographic plates become a good argument for what Roland Barthes writes about as characteristic of photography in *Camera Lucida* (1984). "I can never deny that *the thing has been there",* he writes (1984:76), "there is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past" (1984:76). "The Photograph", writes Barthes, "does not necessarily say *what is no longer*, but only and for certain *what has been*" (1984:85).

56. In her article, Loesch goes into detail about the way in which the collection was divided up to be recorded, which is a useful index itself as to what existed. She describes the catalogue initially introducing the products of the Meissen factory, the first section comprising the oldest pieces in the collection, still witness to Böttger's day. Then came crockery and 'gallantry', which was divided into subgroups that included chinoiseries (wares decorated with Chinese scenes), wares with harbour scenes as well as wares painted with dry and natural flowers, and then containers, flasks, handles, plates and more. Then there came a section which included containers and instruments of a sculptural character: vases, clocks, chandeliers, candlesticks, baskets; containers in animal form, chess figures, and anything that goes onto a table that has been modelled in a sculptural way.

Fig. 35. An assortment of figures from the von Klemperer collection

57. A crinoline is a stiffened petticoat supporting a woman's skirt popular around the mid-19th century. It is also known as a hoop skirt, or extension skirt. Its design has changed even though its name has been retained as materials and production have improved over time.

If considered briefly that the original von Klemperer catalogue presents a moment or act of curatorship in the life of the porcelain collection, this particular moment provides a lasting place for the 'completeness' of the collection, even though it can only be experienced discursively.[55] Not every piece has been photographed. The full record of the collection is spread across both the images in the plates and the textual indexing. Through the catalogue one gains a sense of the wholeness of the collection, but also of the differences that it comprised, and indirectly a small and limited sense of the taste and subjectivities of the collectors.[56]

The greatest part of the miscellaneous collection was made up of figures and groups of figures. Comedy figures formed the largest group, which according to Loesch was unequalled in terms of its coherency and quality and also in terms of its completeness as a collection in itself (2004:74). Crinoline figures, figures that brought the Meissen tradition world famous regard (famous for their enormous and decorative crinoline skirts)[57] are also an important part of the collection. There are furthermore oriental folk types, beggars, farmers, fishermen, miners, dancers, artisans, mythological, allegorical and religious representations.

The sculpture of the Chinese boy does not appear as a photograph in the catalogue; it has only been written about in the text. There was a pair of Chinese marching boys together in the box of remnants that was sent to my grandmother, both of which my mother kept.

I finally open the cover of the catalogue. I open it towards the end, and land in the middle of the photographic plates. They are immaculate black and white prints. After turning a few pages, I come to the image of two vases that I recognise.

Fig. 36. Two twin vases made for Augustus the Strong photographed for the von Klemperer catalogue in the 1920s

Fig. 36. The remains of one of the vases originally made for Augustus the Strong photographed for the Bonhams auction catalogue in 2010

I have stared at an image of one of these very vases so many times before, but photographed in colour, and in two broken pieces suspended one above the other.

The image comes out of the catalogue of the Bonhams' auction of 2010. It is the illustration to the evocative article that was written for the event of the auction by Edmund de Waal. His article, "From the Ashes", begins in a romantic way:

> Fragments can be more powerful than things kept whole. Visitors to Italy on the Grand Tour sighed over the ruins of Rome, the Piranesian views of temples and places entwined with ivy, crumbling pediments and fallen columns. Here history was made poetic: like the fragments of odes of Antique poets that were pored over by antiquaries and collectors, they seemed to offer a space in which one could imagine the fall of a civilization. A ruin allows you to tell a story in a way that a proud, intact building or object does not. I remember writing about the appeal of ruins in a landscape and delicately setting this out: I thought I understood how fragments worked (2010:20).

But then de Waal goes on to describe his encounter, before the auction, with the broken pieces belonging to the von Klemperer collection. The pieces were spread out together on long tables. He was overwhelmed by the realities of the remnants:

> I pick up one shard after another, turn over a dish to find the cobalt crossed rapiers of Meissen, run my thumb along the edge of a J.J. Kändler figure, weigh a broken architectural detail from a porcelain model of a temple. On these tables are unsteady packs of plates, including several from a hunting service made for Catherine the Great: each plate was chipped or cracked (2010:20).

Then he finds the remains of the vase I see pictured whole in the black and white image of the catalogue. "There is a shard of a vase from 1730 made for Augustus the Strong", de Waal writes, "one of the rarest of all pieces made at Meissen – which lies on its side… But a third of the vase is not there: it is as if a surgeon has cut into the porcelain with three strong strokes" (2010:20).

Unlike de Waal's romantic style, there is little that is romantic about how the collection came

to be so damaged. This history of the collection and the family is briefly recounted in the article, and the out-of-the ordinary nature of the story of the porcelain's fragmentation, excavation and rediscovery is not downplayed. The article ends provocatively: " So these are the porcelain stories. Pick up a vase made for Augustus the Strong in 1730 again. It is a shard, but it has survived not just the ferocity of a kiln, but a terrible century" (de Waal 2010:20).

The moment de Waal can share with the remnants before they are auctioned is the moment just before they find new ownership, and it is a moment around the same time as the badly damaged pieces that fall out of the selection to be auctioned are being sent to the remaining family descendants around the world. I am struck by de Waal's concept of "the porcelain stories" (2010:20). He picks up the vase made for Augustus the Strong and sees latent in its imperfections its history. Its story exists retrospectively. However, the porcelain fragments are about to be auctioned or are already on the move to new and stranger destinations. In the unintended diaspora and scattering of the pieces, their stories will be *continuing*, [58] and in relation to their new environments, perhaps become even more interesting.[59]

The quality of the black and white images, and the *authenticity*[60] of the catalogue, allow me to look down into the book and feel transported back to the time in which the pieces were photographed, the experience of the reproduction is so enigmatic and the aura of the times represented by the images, so tangible. The time between then, and now, seems to disappear, and all the effects of the "terrible century" (2010:20) de Waal refers to are yet to come.

It feels comparable to what happened when the remains of Pompeii were found 'frozen' in time, that a chasm of history opened up between the present and a moment of time from the past, preserved so perfectly, that it captured the imagination of the world. Anthony Vidler accounts in "Buried Alive" a section from his book *The Architectural Uncanny* (1994), for "the nineteenth century's fascination with ruins, and specifically the remains of the ancient city of Pompeii. … What should have remained buried and undisturbed is unearthed, revealing, according to Vidler, a fascination with suspended life" (del Pillar Blanco and Peeren 2015:397). The photographs in the von Klemperer catalogue provide an uncanny confrontation with a time past, with the gilded intentions and glowing ambitions present at the

58. The archaeological journey described by Bourriaud endorses the position of the artist who works within the medium of a journey, investigating the past from the moment of the present. As he explains, "this [journey] takes on a special importance today, since it represents a specific relationship to time: it is the present en route towards the past, in search of its history" (Bourriard in Farr 2012:99 –100). To come to write a history, or to tell a story of what has happened, finds articulation in the present. What is to come is not yet known, yet the future is also present as a latent possibility in the shard as much as is its past. Hence it is very limiting to only register the 'agency of the inanimate' in terms of reflecting backwards. As a witness, the object continues to witness. An act of imagination may also cast the object forward. Hence prescience in the present while articulating the past is conscious of a story that is continuously taking shape.

59. See footnote 4.

60. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1935),* Walter Benjamin referred to the "authenticity of a thing" as being "the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to history which it has experienced" (1968:221).

time the photographs were taken, suspended in their frame. Furthermore, interestingly quite like the reality of the porcelain shard to have emerged from the destroyed city of Dresden, Vidler argues that "[t]he fascination with this buried city… was based on a historical appreciation of the disastrous event, but it also gave rise to what he calls a "metahistor[y]" of the left-over fragment, which (similarly to Walter Benjamin's angel of history)[61] carries on into the future" (2015:398).

I finally make my way in the catalogue to the numbered paragraphs, 515 – 16, under *Meissen Porzellan – Gruppen und Figuren: Pagoden und Chinesen* (Meissen Porcelain – Groups and Figures: Pagodas and Chinese figures)

> *ZWEI CHINESENKNABEN MIT KOHLBLATTHÜTEN*
>
> *Der eine hebt im Stampfschritt das linke, der anderer das rechte Bein, wobei die geballten Fäuste die Bewegung unterstützen. Schleppende, an der Brust offebe Gewänder mit Pelerine, die be idem einen, ebenso wie das ewand, mit purpurnen und goldenen Blumenzweigen gemustert, be idem anderen ganz weiß und golden gerändert ist. Der Kopf des einen beweglich, die Schuhe gelb. Die Kohlblatthüte grün mit purpurvioletten Adern. Vierseitige weiße Natursockel mit einem Belag bunter Blumen und maigrüner Blätter.*
>
> *Un 1749. Schwertenmarken. Modelle wahrscheinlich von Kändler, veilleicht nach älteren Formen. Formennummern 1222 und 1257. Höhe 21 und 22 cm.*

TWO CHINESE BOYS WITH CABBAGE-LEAF HATS

One of them has his left, the other his right leg raised in a stamping step. Their clenched fists accentuate their movements. Their trailing clothes, open at the chest and with a cape are embroidered. One has both the gown as well as the cape embroidered with purple and golden flower branches, the other is completely white with golden edges. The head of one is mobile, the shoes yellow. The cabbage-leaf hats are green with crimson-violet veins. Four-sided white natural base covered with multi-coloured flowers and May-green (light-/pale green) leaves.
About 1749. Sword symbols. Models probably by Kändler, maybe according to older

61. Benjamin writes in this regard of the angel in the following way:

> His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress (Benjamin in Budd 2002:65).

forms. Form numbers 1222 and 1257.
Height 21 and 22cm.

*"Kohlblatthüten"* – cabbage-leaf hats – of course – each of the broken Chinese boys originally had a head. As it is clear in the inventory sent by Bonhams of what was packed into the boxes of remains, there was the shard of a face belonging to one of the marching boy sculptures, a separate piece of the main shard that was found and kept. I put the catalogue down carefully and return to the suitcase. More objects are resting heavily inside it. There is a woven bowl containing an unusually large number of Chinese Ming porcelain shards, worn and washed up from the sea. There is a medium sized parcel wrapped in tissue paper, held together with thin copper wires, and there is a small wire sculpture of a figure, and then, here, yes, there is something very small, a bundle of soft papers. I undo the papers to unravel the tiny mask-like face of the boy. In light green, there is a little corner of the delicate cabbage leaf hat still visible. Most of the piece is made up of a beautiful pale face. But its edges are serrated and damaged. It is motivating in its own way as a tiny relic one can hold, as a piece in a puzzle that will never be perfect or complete. I hold it tightly, as de Waal held his inherited totems of "exactitude" (de Waal 2010:15), but as a *broken netsuke*.

CHAPTER 3

# WHY COLLECT?

# 3 WHY COLLECT?

There are many reasons to collect, and it is not always precious art that is collected. We collect a variety of tokens that have meaning in our lives (Pearce 1995, 1998).

> Nearly one in every three people in North America collects something, and this figure is unlikely to be very different for most of northern and large parts of southern Europe. Some 30 per cent of this population are therefore willing to define themselves as collectors, and to see collecting as a significant element in their lives. 'Collecting' is difficult to define… but clearly the gathering together of chosen objects for purposes regarded as special is of great importance, as a social phenomenon, as a focus of personal emotion and as an economic force (Pearce cited in Belk 1995:10).

I have collected what I have made as well as used and broken things. The activity is a "focus[ing] of… personal emotion" (Pearce in Belk 1995:10) and even a means of expression. For as Pearce writes on the reasons for collecting, "life is fragile, and the creation of meaning in an uncaring world equally so" (Pearce 1998:1).

In the Whitechapel guide to *The Archive* (2006), Ilya Kabakov tells a short story of *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* (1977). He collects the traces and signifiers[62] of his daily life meticulously and with care. He collects everything, without editing in the way that most people edit by choosing certain events worth remembering over others they deem less important, keeping all of the traces of the events.

62. The signifiers in this case are "the visible, tangible object[s]" or material traces (Pearce 1998:5-6), that refer to what is signified – their "symbolic meaning[s]" – the experience they encapsulate.

In an article written by the man in the story on 'Garbage', he writes of everything he collects, that

> [t]o deprive ourselves of these paper symbols and testimonies is to deprive ourselves somewhat of our memories. In our memory everything becomes equally valuable and significant. All points of our recollections are tied to one another. They form chains and connections in our memory which ultimately comprise the story of our life. To deprive ourselves of all this means to part with who we were in the past, and in a certain sense, it means to cease to exist (Kabakov 2006:32).

Instead of parting with any lead that would help define the man through his past or in the present, he creates an enormous interwoven history, a bound complex of objects and their written traces, of materials with indexes and asterisks leading to explanations of the collected objects' significance. For example, about a particular tram ticket, he records, "I went to Maria Ignatievna's with things. It was raining and I didn't have a raincoat, I left it at home" (Kabakov 2006:34). Or, the note corresponding to a needle reads, "I found this on 17 February under the table, but I didn't need it anymore" (Kabakov 2006:34).

While the man's flat is meticulously lined with his collections, the materials are not alone what matter. He has not lined his shelves with memories either, as these are ephemeral (Huyssen in Dubow 2001:3).[63] As Ian Farr affirms in his introduction to the field of memory studies, many artists explore memory – its representation, often through photography; its loss, through abstract forms and performance; its surfacing or resurrection, through the use of triggers and signs; or create places for it to reside, creating spaces both visually and in multi-dimensional forms (2012:12). As in any artist's practice, the collector's practice in this case is to create the possibility for memory's resurrection, by preserving every trace that through recall leads back to a moment in life *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* has experienced.[64]

His collection is made up of what are both the traces of experience and triggers for 'real' memories.[65] He further guards against the failure of resurrected real memory through the use of written explanatory notes correlating with each item. Primo Levi accounts for writing *as* a kind

63. In *Imaging the Unimaginable: Holocaust Memory in Art and Architecture*, Neville Dubow refers to Andreas Huyssen's account of the nature of memory:

> Remembrance as a vital human activity shapes our links to the past, and the ways we remember define us in the present. As individuals and societies, we need the past to construct and anchor our identities and to nurture a vision of the future… [H]owever, we know how slippery and unreliable personal memory can be, always affected by forgetting and denial, repression and trauma, and, more often than not, serving the need to rationalize and to maintain power. (Huyssen cited in Dubow 2001:3).

64. Pierra Nora, in an essay entitled "Realms of Memory" (1984) makes the salient point that if real memory were not so threatened, there would be no need to voraciously hold onto the material vestiges of everyday experiences in the first place. She writes,

> …we must create archives, mark anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies and authenticate documents, because such things no longer happen as a matter of course. These bastions buttress our identities, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need for them. … (Nora cited in Farr 2012:61).

If the 'fragility' of the meaning of the life (Pearce 1998:1) of Kabakov's character did not go unnoticed and unrecognised by the social world around him, if it were not so threatened, he may not feel the necessity as severely to collect its material evidence.

65. Pierra Nora also writes of the distinction between real memories versus what has been collected, what in fact amounts to recorded 'history' rather than memory. "What we call memory is in fact a gigantic and breathtaking effort to store the material vestiges of what we cannot possibly remember, thereby amassing an unfathomable collection of things that we might someday need to recall" (in Farr 2012:62) Hence, Nora writes "[w]hat we call memory today is therefore not memory but already history. The so-called rekindling of memory is actually its final flicker as it is consumed by history's flames. The need for memory is a need for history" (cited in Farr 2012:62).

of replacement of memory in *The Voice of Memory: Primo Levi: Interviews, 1961 – 1987* (2001). In an interview with Anna Bravo and Frederico Cereja, Levi admits "that after forty years I remember most of these things[66] through what I have written, my writings are like a form of artificial ['prosthetic', according to Derrida] memory and the rest, that I have never written down, does not amount to much now, just a few details (Levi cited in Belpoliti and Gordon 2001:223).

Through written recordings Kabakov's character ensures his capacity for holding onto it all. His collected materials and objects and their corresponding notes work as levers that allow him, and perhaps even an outsider to his memories, to recreate his world. In the keeping of traces that lead back to moments of experience, there is a sense of not losing moments of time and lived experience, and hence a sense of preservation so intimately connected with the collecting intention.

Susan Pearce, in *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (1995),[67] writes of the "poetics of collecting" as one of its modes, ultimately concerned with "how individuals experience the process of collecting in their own lives… [i]t is concerned with the meaning of collecting to the collectors themselves, how it affects their lives, and how, cumulatively, the sum of individual collecting habits interacts with social practice" (1995:31). Poetics, along with the word *praxis*:

> together… give the sense of individual creative power which can show how an individual experiences the world both as actor and acted upon. In material culture terms, the imaginative effort to assemble a collection shows exactly this (Pearce 1995:31).

As an individual, *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* collects as a 'lonely' social practice against the collective, as an act of resistance to what is being performed and implied through the social practices of his surrounds. Kabakov explains in the story that the man is treated as an inconsequential fool by the people in his apartment block, someone rarely sighted or taken notice of at all, as if of no significance as a person to his social environment (Kabakov 2006:32). The man who is a plumber is even used by the other adults in the apartment block as a figure with which to terrorise the children (Kabakov 2006:32). Yet all along he is collecting what is denied significance by his community – in a web

66. "These things" (Levi cited in Belpoliti and Gordon 2001:223) of which Levi writes refer to his descriptions of modes of behaviour that developed in the Auschwitz concentration camp, which he survived. To his interviewers, in relation to what he really recalls during conversation and what he remembers as a result of knowing what he has written, says Levi "I should say straight away that I might well repeat things I've already written in my books, it's inevitable" (cited in Belpoliti and Gordon 2001:218).

67. Pearce's account asserts a shift from the study of collections within the European tradition to a study of collecting processes:

> Traditional collection studies have always, and still do, concentrate on that material perceived as 'high culture', and its intellectual coherence is derived from the place it occupies in what gradually, in modernist Europe, emerges as the main disciplines – very broadly those of natural science, academic history, archaeology, anthropology and the history of art (which includes what museums frequently call decorative or applied art. … [W]ork within them has concentrated upon the meaning of individual items or groups of collected material rather than upon the significance of the collecting process (Pearce 1995:6).

Over the next few pages of her book, Pearce sketches a useful and comprehensive genealogy of the growing academic interest in collecting as a process of significance in its own right.

of recording and preserving, he is collecting the details of his own person.[68] Through the act of collecting, he is validating his own presence, his relationships and interactions, the importance of *everyday* small moments – private and arguably also sacred.[69]

*The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* might arguably find solace in the collecting project of Walter Benjamin, who also stood against the insensitivity of the world as to what is outmoded and left out or behind and vulnerable to autocratic, industrialist, and fascist power in particular. Benjamin has been characterised as both a theorist of the everyday[70] (Highmore 2002) and a ragpicker – someone whose "methodological approach to culture" (Highmore 2002:63) is described in Benjamin's own words in the following extract:

> And if we want to visualize him just for himself, in the solitude of his craft and his endeavour, we see: a ragpicker at daybreak, lancing with his stick scraps of language and tatters of speech in order to throw them in his cart, grumbling, stubbornly, somewhat the worse for drink (Benjamin cited in Highmore 2002:63).

Ragpickers have "an uneasy relationship to the everyday life of modernity" (Highmore 2002:63):

> It is the 'career' of those who have been remaindered by capitalist modernization; for instance the one-time craft worker made redundant by industrialisation, or impoverished aristocrats, or the present-day homeless. … Ragpickers, outmoded by modernization, struggle to get by, by finding value in what has been devalued, outmoded (Highmore 2002:63).[71]

As Highmore aptly explains, Benjamin uses trash "the spent and discarded materials that crowd the everyday" (Highmore 2002:61) as an historian, in his approach to history. He explains:

> The focus on 'trash', on the detritus of modernity as it exists in the actuality of everyday life, allows Benjamin to perform a double operation. On the one hand it allows his account of modernity to refuse the lure of celebrating the new, of eulogizing progress. On the other hand it also prevents a sentimentalizing of the past. For Benjamin these two would only get in the way of recognizing the 'now-ness' of everyday life… Debris allows for the radical refusal of progress; it

68. In the story, when the door to his apartment is finally forced open and the meticulously ordered collection is discovered – what is made clear to the observer through the painstaking efforts on show is the overwhelming sense of the fragility of the individual life represented. One of Walter Benjamin's lasting intentions as Ben Highmore has stated was to "redeem the everyday experience of modernity from silence" (2002:65). Kabakov's character, akin to this intention, feels the necessity for communication, for these everyday moments that privately characterize his life to be communicable. The individual – this inconsequential plumber – sidelined by his community, detritus in a sense, becomes the focus of Kabakov's story, in turn akin to the sentiment expressed by Benjamin of the sense of the fragile individual felt in contrast to the machinations of 'progress' rendering the experience of an individual life incommunicable (Highmore 2002:66).

69. Ben Highmore writes in his opening chapter to *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* (2002), entitled "Figuring the Everyday", that "[a]s the notion of 'everyday life' circulates in Western cultures under its many guises (*Alltagsleben, la vie quotidienne*, run-of-the-mill and so on) one difficulty becomes immediately apparent: 'everyday life' signals ambivalently" (2002:1). It can refer to the ordinary everyday-ness of things; repeatable exercises and familiar actions, but it can also refer to a certain quality in these actions, which could, just as easily as it might be regarded as 'boring', be regarded as 'sacred'. Kabakov's character must encounter a plethora of everyday activities, the traces of which he chooses to 'save', to treat as if sacred, worth collecting. As Highmore states, "[t]he everyday is also the home of the bizarre and the mysterious. … The non-everyday (the exceptional) is there to be found in the heart of the everyday" (2002:3). Kabakov's character's collecting habits and the collection he has created is exemplary of this quality.

allows for a vision of history that is nothing if not *attentive to its unreason* (*own emphasis*, Highmore 2002:65).

What Benjamin is concerned with collecting in this regard – outmoded artifacts, images and even text – as a way of treating "actuality" (Highmore 2002:65), or of better excavating the "now-ness of everyday life" (Highmore 2002:65) – must preferably "signal a different temporality" (Highmore 2002:65). What he collects must seem to exist in two different times, in such an evident way that the past becomes simultaneously present in the object or image, and open to critique.

In 1927 Benjamin started out on a project intended to be only a newspaper article on the Paris arcades – *les passages* – "which he considered the most important architectural form of the nineteenth century, and which he linked with a number of phenomena characteristic of that century's major and minor preoccupations" (Eiland and Mclaughlin cited in Benjamin 1999:ix). Over thirteen years the project grew to "gargantuan proportions (Highmore 2002:65), leaving at his death, "a collection of quotes, ideas and historical fragments" (Highmore 2002:65).

They have been subsequently published together as a book, of which J.M Coetzee writes, "*The Arcades*… whatever our verdict on it – ruin, failure, impossible project – suggests a new way of writing about a civilization, using its rubbish as materials rather than its artworks: history from below rather than from above" (cited in Benjamin 1999:back cover) and Peter Ackroyd, that "[t] his posthumous volume suggests that, in [their] incomplete and fissiparous state, [Benjamin's] reflections are themselves an unflawed mirror for the world which he was attempting to explore" (cited in Benjamin 1999:back cover). In a foreword by the translators of the 1999 publication of *The Arcades Project*, Howard Eiland and Kevin Mclaughlin write that

> since the publication of the *Passagen-Werk*, it has become customary to regard the text which Benjamin himself usually called the *Passagenarbeit* or just *Passagen*, as best a 'torso', a monumental fragment or ruin, and at worst a notebook, which the author supposedly intended to mine for more extended discursive applications. … Certainly the project as a whole is unfinished; Benjamin abandoned work on it in the spring of 1940 when he was forced to flee Paris before the advancing German army. Did he

70. Benjamin's "sphere of everyday life" is classified by Highmore as "quintessentially urban. The modern metropolis is seen as a realm where the problem of the everyday is unavoidable " (2002:74). He is positioned as a theorist with a very critical understanding of the workings of modernity. On being classified as a theorist of the everyday, Peter Osborne writes that "everyday life flows through the whole of Benjamin's later writings" (in Highmore 2002:60) but that "it is rarely to be found reflectively, as the object of explicit theorization". Yet the main thrust of Benjamin's heterogeneous projects is to "rescue… the everyday life of modernity from silence" (Highmore 2002:61). Benjamin does so in part by "treating the ephemera of the everyday as symptoms of much larger forces. … Benjamin's 'montage' practice is [also] dedicated to a critical history of the present" (Highmore 2002:73).

71. Benjamin became an outsider due to the political context of his time. "A shadow fell across Europe during Walter Benjamin's lifetime (1892 – 1940). That shadow can be called, variously, National Socialism, the Nazi Party, Fascism, the Holocaust or Shoah. … 'Shoah' can be translated as 'destruction' or 'catastrophe' (Lane 2005:1). Benjamin was outcast by the intelligentsia of his era. He wrote as a German Jew, and "from a German-Jewish aesthetic and philosophical background" (Lane 2005:4). Although he gained considerable popularity in the English-speaking West (Lane 2005:4) he was consistently banned from ever teaching at a university or practising as an academic in his own country.

> leave behind anything but a large-scale plan or prospectus? No, it is argued. *The Arcades Project* is just that: the blueprint for an unimaginable massive and labyrinthine architecture – a dream city, in effect (1999:xi).

Throughout *The Arcades Project*, and in general, Benjamin sought the dialectical image, that which signals in a different temporality, and a way of montage, of grouping what he had collected and created as "a constellation (a montage) of elements that, in combination, produce a 'spark' that allows for recognition, for legibility, for communication and critique" (Highmore 2002:71).[72] But, the fragmentary nevertheless colossal collection that became *The Arcades Project* – "this ostensible patchwork" (Eiland and Mclaughlin cited in Benjamin: 1999:xi) – also further revealed that

> it was not the great men and celebrated events of traditional historiography but rather the 'refuse' and 'detritus' of history, the half-concealed, variegated traces of the daily life of 'the collective' that was to be the object of study, and with the aids of methods more akin… to the methods of the nineteenth century collector of antiques and curiosities, or indeed to the methods of the nineteenth century ragpicker, than to those of the modern historian (Eiland and Mclaughlin cited in Benjamin:1999:ix).

The project was made possible by an alternative kind of collector, a person with a vision of history as J.M Coetzee has described, "from below rather than from above" (in Benjamin 1999:back cover). It also needed a collector's passion, a certain "collecting attitude" (Bal cited in Elsner and Cardinal 1994:99) which Mieke Bal refers to in her essay "Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting" (1994), something that drives the collector to collect more, and a strong belief corresponding with part of Susan Pearce's definition of a collection, that "the collection as an entity is greater than the sum of its parts" (1998:3).

Benjamin's collecting of fragments turned into a project of 13 years. They have been sensitively bound together as Benjamin had grouped them, as a literary ensemble which has the result of:

> induc[ing] in the reader a peculiar oneiric attention. A sort of watchful dreaminess – even a sort of illuminating boredom. Details wash past in waves; quotations loop in

72. Benjamin found a "poetics for apprehending the modern everyday in Surrealism" (Highmore 2002:62), particularly in their use of montage. But Benjamin's "take on Surrealism [was] a dissident one" (Highmore 2002:62). "If Surrealism finds the right field for attending to the modern (everyday life) and performs the poetic operations necessary for apprehending it (montage), it fails to mobilize its tools in a resolutely critical way. While Surrealism finds the mythic in the everyday, it also falls under its spell" (Highmore 2002:62). Benjamin saw its failure in the "lack of attention to the historicity of modern experience" (Highmore 2002:62). His own attention in this regard is "inscribed in his writings in the idea of the 'dialectical image'" (Highmore 2002:62), those "specific constellations that can awaken thought and history from its slumber in the mythic realm of the 'dream'" (Highmore 2002:62).

and out of the elliptical, jagged arguments; polished sentences pitch up from the morass like foil-wrapped sweets discovered on the beach (Kingwell in Benjamin 1999:back cover).

In Ben Highmore's account of Benjamin as an everyday theorist, one who critiques and resists the effects of modernity,[73] he writes that "[e]vident throughout Benjamin's later work are the interlinked themes of the decrease in communicable experience and the problem of finding a poetics that is capable of articulating the actuality of modern life" (Highmore 2002:61). As is suggested by Mark Kingwell's description, perhaps Benjamin, in the incompleteness and strangeness of the infinitesimal details that are gathered together in *The Arcades Project*, posthumously gets close to such an articulation. His collecting and his form of assemblage form a poetics in itself, that does not end with trash, with outmoded objects, or snapshots, but includes fragments of text, invented and collected, all of which inspire a discursive philosophy intent on the radical excavation of reality, that motivates for a discontinuous present; for the rupturing of the present moment. Benjamin saw the necessity for a reappraisal of the processes and byproducts of modernity, a way of stopping history in its tracks, illuminating the possibilities for change inherent in the arguably liminal space brought into being through montage or particular constellations, and in his way of dialectically opposing established narratives. Benjamin's philosophical slant and questioning of reality which foregrounds "the fragmentary, the marginal, the ephemeral" (Lane 2005:4), what is made vulnerable, what has been discarded, what exists on the edges of that which is 'ordained' – the detritus – contrasted the single-minded autocratic visions increasingly punctuating the world around him. His fragmentation was an exceptional form of resistance, not without its own agency, in direct response to the heights of fascism associated with modernity that destroyed him as a subject.[74]

Interestingly, Benjamin as a collector exemplifies not only the sensitive reactionary to socio-political, economic and ecological circumstances. In an essay that he wrote called "Unpacking my Library" (1968), one gains insight into a more traditional collecting interest he pursued to acquire rare books. Such a collecting activity differs from Kabakov's collecting of everyday traces. It is one that takes the collector out of their daily life and the mere circumstantial, into a specialized field of

73. "In modernity the everyday becomes a setting for a dynamic process: for making the unfamiliar familiar; for getting accustomed to the disruption of custom, for struggling to incorporate the new; for adjusting to a different way of living" (Highmore 2002:2). The everyday:

> witnesses the absorption of the most revolutionary of inventions into the landscape of the mundane. …The new becomes traditional and the residues of the past become outmoded and available for fashionable renewal. But signs of failure can be noticed everywhere; the language of the everyday [as a place for the reception of modernity] echoes with frustrations with the disappointment of broken promises (Highmore 2002:2).

74. As Richard Lane reminds his readers in the introduction to *Reading Walter Benjamin: Writing through the Catastrophe* (2005), "[r]eading Benjamin means being aware of a play of forces that were themselves subject to the massively destructive powers of National Socialism" (2005:5). As the title of his book suggests, Benjamin's life and work unfolded in relation to "the shadow" (Lane 2005:1) that fell across Germany during his lifetime (see Footnote 11).

> As is well known, Walter Benjamin did finally attempt to flee from Europe as Hitler moved his armies into Paris. Benjamin left Paris for Lourdes, where he eventually acquired a permit for the USA. Then he moved to Marseilles, where he failed to complete official French formalities for leaving the country. Instead, with a small group of people he crossed the Pyrenees into Spain on foot. Overnight, Spanish entry visas had been nullified, meaning that all refugees fleeing France were to be sent back; Benjamin learnt this news arriving in Portbou and committed suicide during the night of 26 September 1940 (Lane 2002:2).

auctions, bookshops, political bartering, competition and trade (Benjamin 1968: 62 - 67). It is a 'privileged' collecting position, requiring certain affluence, intellectual and economic, to be a part of.

In the essay, Benjamin provides an intimate portrait of a man amongst what can only be described as his beloved books. In the act of unpacking them from boxes, and in contemplating the organization of a library, Benjamin recounts what it feels like to collect the entire "cultural biography" of each object (Pearce 1995:25) – when everything about the object – where it has been, what it holds as potential for further creativity, how it has been made, the story it tells – is valued by the collector. The collected object is given a home within a collector's own home, and everything about it (certainly in the case of books, their potential to create or recreate imagined worlds) is both revered and protected.

As it must have been for my great, great grandmother Charlotte von Klemperer, the more knowledge one has of 'the life' of objects, the more intimate the details of their histories, the deeper the connection and the attachment to 'things' becomes.[75] At least, this is how Walter Benjamin describes what happens to a passionate collector when collecting. In a beautiful passage from "Unpacking my Library", Benjamin writes,

> [e]verything remembered and thought, everything conscious, becomes the pedestal, the frame, the base, the lock of his property. The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership – for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magical encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of his object. … and collectors… physionomists of the world of objects – turn into interpreters of fate (1968:60 - 61).

"True collectors" (Benjamin 1968:61) become bound to the fates of their objects through this intimate undertaking of all that an object has experienced subsequent to it coming into their possession. Collectors share in the object's pasts, their "whole backgrounds" (Benjamin 1968:61), and further contribute, in the space of their lifetimes, to the growing associations with the object.

75. In *Thing Theory* (2009) by Bill Brown, what is interesting is that our connection to things is put forward as having more to do with the object-subject relation than with objects themselves. To regard a thing rather than an object is to denote a certain vulnerability about the subject who owns or beholds it. Brown writes:

> As they circulate through our lives, we look *through* objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature or culture – above all, what they disclose about *us* [our tastes, our likes]), but we only catch a glimpse of things. We look through objects because there are codes by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of subjectivity that allows us to use them as facts. A thing, in contrast can hardly function as a *window.* We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks [for example]…The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation (Brown 2009:140).

76. Wholly secular Jews, firmly embedded within the knowledge cultures of their place and times, Ludwig Wittgenstein (Austrian), Walter Benjamin (German), Hannah Arendt (German), Stefan Zweig (Austrian) are some of the people I have followed through their works and letters. Zweig committed suicide, as did Wittgenstein and Benjamin. They were committed and identified with the practicing of their arts and their ability *to be* in this sense, in freedom. Arendt suffered no less for her ideas, as a perpetual outsider to both Jews and Germans, even in America. Identified with the critical work of philosophy, she is a good example of what has been referred to as a quality through which many German Jewish contributions became known, namely 'critical humanism'. Assimilated, secular identities such as these and even the von Klemperers reveal how embedded and invested people were in the life of the place where they lived , namely in Austrian, German, European history and knowledge cultures. They contributed in turn to the character and survival of these, with more specific contributions to bodies of science, philosophy, art and finance. They were German or Austrian *subjects*. They were active in language and society. Their *subjectivity* was subtly interwoven with the culture and the times in which they lived and moved.

## The Significance of Collecting for the von Klemperers

Charlotte and Gustav were originally Austrian, coming from Olmütz and Prague, parts of Austria before they became Czechoslovakia after World War I, today the Czech Republic. But their work and commitments, how they loved and lived and how they collected, firmly embedded them as a family of Dresden.[76] As discussed in Chapter One, through their occupations and social lives they were an intrinsic part of Dresden's culture. Being collectors furthermore, of Meissen especially, tied them even more closely to the pasts and fates, as Benjamin has described them, of every piece made by a German factory, embedded in Saxony's past and present. Pearce confirms:

> Since the collecting of objects to make collections is part of individual social activity… it is itself part of the culture; but since what is collected *is* culture, in its material aspect, it acts also as a commentary upon culture which creates symbolic perception, knowledge and understanding in its own right (1995:4).

The collection was an "active" (Pearce 1995:4) contribution to the culture they were in. Today the catalogue of the von Klemperer porcelain collection, left over and preserved such as to be able to provide insight into the culture it signifies, could be described as a shard in itself. It has outlived the reality of what it represents, an "era" (Kuhn 2010:22) in collecting history and a 'golden' time in the togetherness of the *whole* collection. As an object that has outlived its times, its physical presence is evidence of what once existed.

> There are differences between the discourse of language and of material culture and one of the most important of these is that, like ourselves but unlike words, objects have a brutally physical existence, each occupying its own place in time and space. This means that objects, again unlike words, always retain an intrinsic link with the original context from which they came because they are always the stuff of its stuff no matter how much they may be repeatedly reinterpreted (Pearce 1995:14).

The catalogue is "the stuff" of its original context's "stuff"; its values, ideals, aesthetics and cul-

ture (Pearce 1995:14). It proves that arguably as "true collector[s]", my great, great grandparents took care not only to posses material objects but to collect with them in turn "[t]he period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership… the whole background of an item" (Benjamin 1968:60 - 61). Collecting for them meant to be both collecting and preserving the pasts of objects, arguably preserving the 'memory' of objects, and simultaneously, as the catalogue proves, to be making contributions to related greater contexts.[77]

Mieke Bal emphasises one of the salient points in the definition of collections which she takes from a textbook for museum studies, *Museums, Objects and Collections* (1992) by Susan Pearce, in which Pearce

> defines collecting through a definition of museum collections, which 'are made up of objects'… which have been assembled with intention by someone 'who believed that the whole was somehow more than the sum of the parts' (Bal cited in Elsner and Cardinal 1994:99).

As previously mentioned, Pearce emphasizes this aspect of a definition of collecting again in *Collecting in Contemporary Practice* (1998): "the collection as an entity is greater than the sum of its parts" (1998:3). The whole starts to communicate a great deal more than the individual objects can alone. The whole starts to reverberate with the greater surrounding cultural swathes of social, political and economic movements that come into play during moments of collecting (Pearce 1995). The whole begins to express its own history. It motivates for the further accumulation of difference that will bring greater value to the collection. The whole provides insights into the complexity of the subjects who collect.

The intimate connection between a collection, or the ability to collect, and the subjectivity of the collector that gets woven in is beautifully expressed in a definition of collecting by Roger Cardinal:

> To collect is to launch individual desire across the intertext of environment and history. Every acquisition, whether crucial or trivial, marks an unrepeatable conjuncture of subject, found object, place and moment. In its sequential evolution, the collec-

77. The collected "magical encyclopedia[s]" (Benjamin 1968:61) and "fate[s] of the object[s]" would furthermore arguably have been bound up with the imagined continuation of the family, one generation after the next, in a life in Germany.

> tion encodes an intimate narrative, tracing what Proust calls 'le fil des heures, l'ordre des années et des mondes' – the continuous thread through which selfhood is sewn into the unfolding fabric of a lifetime's experience (Cardinal cited in Elsner and Cardinal 1994:68).

Collecting is an activity that extends throughout time (Pearce 1998:3). Benjamin's lifetime of collecting could communicate the disconnections and false logic inherent in the modernity in which he lived and the alternative agency of fragmentation as an inevitable outcome. The rhythm and nature of the whole provided "an unflawed mirror for the world which he was attempting to explore" (Ackroyd in Benjamin 1999:back cover).

As a reader of "Unpacking my Library", one is again impressed upon by the impact of a whole collection. For Benjamin, his collection of books, what they promised and suggested together was something to behold, something almost mystical. He describes his overwhelming wonder upon encountering the greatness of "the whole" (Pearce cited in Bal 1994:99), upon encountering the possibility of *a library* of individual books. Like Benjamin, Charlotte and Gustav too were complicit in collecting and becoming a part of the fates of their pieces. Previous and continuing contexts informing every piece of collected Meissen were important. One might argue that even their "difficult" pasts were accepted (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:7). On the question of value, or on what it is about certain objects that attract the selection process over others that do not, Susan Pearce refers to an opinion that mentions a "cultural biography of things" (1995:25) suggesting objects have a "career" determined by "what roles [they have] performed during the course of [their] social life and how [they have] taken [their] various places in patterns of exchange" (1995:25). While Charlotte and Gustav may not have been motivated by the careers of objects to decide whether they liked them or not, these social histories were nonetheless important and an intrinsic part of what was being collected.

It is my view that collectors, be they professional or amateurs, collect the inseparable complex that is the object bound to its "fate" – all that it has encountered. Whether the historical journey of the object is of value, or the terms by which one has acquired the object is most meaningful,[78] when one holds onto objects one holds onto

78. On a visit to the Stellenbosch library during my research, an interesting conversation emerged between myself and the subject librarian, Niel Hendrikse. It was less about research methods, and more about what it means to passionately hold onto objects. He described the pressure he felt to have to throw things away. If I recall correctly, the pressure might have come from a partner, or he was moving, and it was time for a clearing out of the old, and for creating new space. He described a broken vessel that he had picked up. It might have been after a fire. Or it was on a walk with his father. I cannot remember the exact details. However, I remember the point of the conversation. While the broken vessel could easily be labelled as junk by an outsider, and the seemingly obviously choice would be to throw it away, Hendrikse did not want to throw it away. He did not want to throw it away because it was the context that surrounded his finding the broken vessel, and the questions in him that this experience facilitated, that he wanted to preserve. He wanted to hold onto what he remembered about finding it, and the 'magic' he felt in not knowing, but being able to wonder about the original context of the object (Hendrikse, personal interview, Stellenbosch 2015). To a person who is not an insider to the specific memories that an object facilitates, or the imagination that it inspires, what has been collected can look like any old junk. In *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, towards the end of the book, de Waal is remembering a relative named Charles who is on his death bed, and includes a quotation that might have been his spoken words, namely, that "[e]ven when one is no longer attached to things, it's still something to have been attached to them; because it was always for reasons which other people didn't grasp" (2010:346).

historical, sociological, and emotional factors identified with the object. In many cases, like in the example of the Jim Crow Museum of racist memorabilia in Ferris State University in Michigan, recognition of the agencies of the inanimate (Patterson cited in Lehrer *et al.* 2011:145) of the collective – what the objects are able to communicate in the present, due to their pasts – are taken into account and 'cared for'. The impact of the whole, an entire collection of racist memorabilia, is more complex and greater than an item alone. The items together pose irrefutable questions as to the purpose of the collection. The power of racial hatred as an animating force is also hard to downplay on encountering the collection as a whole. The museum must take responsibility for the implications of such a collection, for the gravity of the combined 'careers' of all the objects. The very need for a curatorial intervention is premised upon Pearce's idea that the collection as an entity, the whole, is greater than the sum of its parts.

To reiterate, in the preceding examples, perhaps the salient point of collecting is that there is a great deal more meaning that accompanies objects themselves that is preserved when they have been purposefully collected – privy to the "deliberate intention to create a group of material perceived by its possessor to be lifted out of the common purposes of daily life and to be appropriate to carry a significant investment of thought and feeling, and so also of time, trouble and resource" (Pearce 1995:23). Whether this refers to collecting, in a subjective sense, the traces of one's everyday world, or Meissen, what is known and what can be recorded or remembered about the collected item, is of value.

It is in a collector's interest to understand the "cultural biography" (Pearce 1995:25) of what they hold onto. The object and its related contexts form a complex that is hard to break. Powerful ties, of memory and experience, are less visible, and what comes with the journey of ownership that Benjamin refers to in "Unpacking my Library", is less visible. The result is that collections have extraordinary communicative value. "Collecting and collections are part of our dynamic relationship with the material world" (Pearce 1995:33). Collectors hold positions and take up an activity that is vested in life, and in culture. What is collected, the way it is collected, the contexts that become meaningful as a result of collections, as Pearce has explained, become culture.

## Collecting in Nazi Germany

When Hitler came to power in 1933, he started collecting for a vision that was not symbiotic with reality; it was not symbiotic with the stones.[79] Nazi Germany was a place where art and possessions that were wanted by leadership, were taken, either coersively, or destructively (Adam 1992). Reading between David Roxan and Ken Wanstall's *The Jackdaw of Linz: The Story of Hitler's Art Thefts* (1964), Jonothan Petropoulos's *The Faustian Bargain; the Art World in Nazi Germany* (2000), Victor Klemperer's *The Language of the Third Reich* (2000), *The Arts of The Third Reich* by Peter Adam (1992) and the article on the fate of the von Klemperer porcelain collection by Anette Loesch (2004), the rise to power of National Socialism, through the manipulation of language, culture and art becomes clear. What happened through sophisticated and often violent forms of art theft and looting was the very opposite of what might be considered Walter Benjamin's project, that of the passionate collector's project.

Hitler was passionate, but he was no "true collector" (Benjamin 1968:60 - 61). He laid claim to the art of both public European museums and private Jewish collections, but it was not "the fates" (Benjamin 1968:60) of the objects that concerned him. In the fashion of National Socialism, what was useful to their orthodoxy was kept, and what was contrary to their vision was successfully discarded. What becomes clear from a reading of the destruction that was wreaked during World War II, is that important contexts, living contexts, were purposefully and meticulously destroyed. The authenticity of a stolen object, "the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to history which it has experienced" (Benjamin 1968:63) was destroyed. The stories of previous ownership were erased and what was undesirable about the past was made redundant in the face of the new German idealism. Like de Waal describes the broken porcelain being splayed, as if cut with "three strong strokes" (2010:20) of a surgeon, what was taken from Jewish families and appropriated from art museums and other locations was spliced from reality and cleanly inserted into a new vision of the future.

It was part of racial policy that Jews were made illegitimate citizens of Germany (Petropoulos

79. In Klemens von Klemperer's volume of essays *German Incertitudes, 1914 – 1945: The Stones and the Cathedral* (2001), the idea of a reality of 'stones', an imperfect reality, possibly perceived to be fragmented, is introduced in relation to an unrealistic ideal of a perfection on the other hand, represented by 'the cathedral'.

2000:7). All the details and evidence of their lives and work were officially effaced (Kuhn 2010:22) and their histories destroyed. It is worth recalling Kabakov's character to legitimise the extreme destruction inherent in official processes that was taking place. He writes:

> To deprive ourselves of… paper symbols and testimonies is to deprive ourselves somewhat of our memories… All points of our recollections are tied to one another. They form chains and connections in our memory which ultimately comprise the story of our life. To deprive ourselves of all this means to part with who we were in the past, and in a certain sense, it means to cease to exist (Kabakov 2006:32).

The case of appropriating possessions and works of art from Jewish homes was made easier by the steps that had already been put in place that aimed to de-legitimise and humiliate families. One such process is explained by Anette Loesch. A special law came out on 26 April 1938 that stated that everything Jewish people owned had to be registered with the government so as to enable the German government to decide about whether it was necessary to take measures to bring what they felt was an imbalance in wealth 'into balance' – in line with the German economy (2004:78). Felt in combination with the events of the pogrom night of 9 November 1938, Loesch believes that these factors were the reason in the end, that without too much further deliberation, the remaining von Klemperer family left Dresden immediately (2004:78). They left their entire art collections including the Meissen collection behind in the Tiergartenstrasse in Gustav's eldest son Victor's home.

The story of the acquisition of the von Klemperer porcelain is complicated. On the 22 December 1938, Fritz Fichter (1890 – 1969) who had been the director of the State Porcelain Collection since 1931 and also the director of the State Art Museums since 1933, was officially told that he had to personally see to the exact whereabouts and safe keeping of the collection of "*nach Südafrika abgereisten Juden*" (Loesch 2004:78), of "those Jews that left for South Africa". However, apparently the first transports from the Tiergartenstrasse had already been taking place on the 1st and 5th of December (Loesch 2004:78).

By the time *Reichsstatthalter* Martin Mutschmann, somebody very high up in the office of the gov-

ernment, made an application that the von Klemperer collections be made the official property of the Dresden museums, to become a part of the state of Saxony's collections (on the 17th of October 1942), he could describe the entirety of works of art that had been confiscated in 1938. He listed them as:

> 1. A collection consisting of 836 pieces of Meissen porcelain and 2 pieces of Faience pottery, 2. 56 pieces of beautiful artistic glass, 3. A collection of 13 manuscripts, 549 early prints and 510 rare books, 4. 4 paintings, 5. 12 pen and ink drawings, etchings and engravings, 6. 7 sculptures, 7. 33 carpets of artistic value, 8. 136 pieces of furniture with artistic value and 9. 55 valuable art objects (Loesch 2004:79).

Due to a new law that was declared previously to Mutschmann's request placed on the 25 November 1941, the entire collection of the emigrated Jew Victor Israel von Klemperer had already in fact become the possession of the state of Germany. (Mutschmann's efforts were in the hope of being able to secure the collection as the possessions of local Saxony.)

However, the family had been enquiring about their possessions long before the time that this law that declared the collection would belong to the state of Germany was made. Fichter had also been trying to officially acquire the von Klemperer Meissen collection for the Dresden State Museums, most likely since before the family even left Dresden. (He had realized early on that the von Klemperer collection would make up very nicely for the deficits in the then current State Porcelain Collection, most especially in the figure section).

In an earlier talk in January 1939 Fichter, however, made it clear that von Klemperer had paid all of the taxes he was forced to pay, and so they could not reckon with his pieces being taken based on such a discrepancy (Loesch 2004:79). There was a special department set up in Berlin that saw to the sale of Jewish possessions or art that made sure that museums would be able to buy pieces at a much reduced price. However, in October of 1939, nothing had yet been finalized with regard to the fate of the collection, although the province of Saxony had already made an application to take over the collection (Loesch 2004:79). The family von Klemperer did not accept a proposed auction of the collection that was

planned for 1940, which according to Loesch, added to the in-house delays in the process of deciding what to do about the collection, which in fact won time for the museums to hold onto it for even longer (Loesch 2004:79). It was not until 1942 that the fate of the collection was finalized (Loesch 2004:79).

According to Loesch, in spite of efforts by Fichter and the later appeal by Martin Bohrmann that the collection should remain the property of the state of Saxony, a letter from Hans Posse, the director of the Dresden Art Gallery,[80] back to Bohrmann, made it clear that in fact Hitler wanted the collection after all to furnish the Führer museum that he had planned for his hometown of Linz (2000:79). Hitler decided that the collections from the land of Saxony must be passed on free of charge to the state of Germany. One of the key drivers in Hitler's art appropriations was the vision that he had for the enormous art complex in his hometown. The overleaf of *The Jackdaw of Linz: The Story of Hitler's Art Thefts*, by David Roxan and Ken Wanstall, gives an emotional account of his plans:

> He planned to transform this drab industrial town (Linz) into the cultural centre of the Nazi order and at the same time reduce Vienna, which he hated, to the status of a mere provincial centre. As well as planning collections of paintings, sculptures, coins and armour, he intended to build a library and a vast theatre, and he had detailed plans drawn up to show his ideas for the layout of the post-war Linz…
>
> Popular to contrary belief it was Hitler, not Goering, who was the greatest Nazi plunderer of art treasures, Hitler who amassed paintings, sculptures, books and objects d'art worth millions of pounds belonging to state and private collections in the occupied territories, either by direct confiscation or forced sale, with the sole purpose of creating museums to be built in his honour and containing some of the greatest of European art treasures. This was more than mere vanity… Unlike Goering, who had a general love of art, he had little interest in great masterpieces beyond the fact of possessing them, but he needed to show the people of Linz, where he had spent his boyhood, visible proof that he had made good.
>
> To enable him to carry out his plan, he set up a secret organization… the Sonderauf-

80. According to Petropoulos, "Hans Posse… made his Faustian bargain by accepting the directorship of the Führermuseum… for the opportunity to build the greatest museum of all time" (2004:8):

> Based on the recommendation of the Berlin art dealer Karl Haberstock, [Hitler] first appointed Dr. Hans Posse, a renowned museum director and expert on Italian Renaissance and Dutch Baroque art to oversee his growing collection. Posse, who had been sacked as director of the Dresden *Gemaldegalerie* by the Gauleiter of Lower Saxony (reportedly for lack of political zeal and purchase of 'degenerate' art, was rehabilitated by Hitler and even restored to his old post in Dresden. Hitler named Posse *Sonderbeauftragter des Fiihrers* (special agent of the Fiihrer), a position that granted him the authority to act in Hitler's name. This appointment quickly won Posse over to the dictator's cultural visions; the two met and [began by] discussing the secret plans for the museum... (Petropoulos 1994:111).

trag Linz, headed by the remarkable Dr Hans Posse, director of the Dresden Art Gallery, and including, as well as respected museum officials and art dealers, shadier members of the continental art world, together with highly organized looting units which helped in the work of plunder… (1964:overleaf).

The way in which art was appropriated and cut from its prior context without concern for what would become of these (in the case of Jewish contexts, these were to be destroyed) strictly followed the aesthetic principles of National Socialism. Peter Adam's *The Art of the Third Reich* gives indispensable insight into the contrived and orchestrated style of not only art under Nazism, but politics as well. What was clear is that the vision of Nazi Germany that was sold was an idealistic vision, created through foul means. The image of the nation that was created through the making and exhibiting of art involved manipulative new works being commissioned, the destruction and elimination of art and artists contrary to the ideals of National Socialism, exhibitions being used as marketing weapons for the new imperial ideal, and, as Jonothan Petropoulos's *The Faustian Bargain; the Art World in Nazi Germany* reveals, the professional art community being further corrupted and conscripted into realising Hitler's goals and Nazism's contrived realities.[81]

The gathering of art for Hitler's vision of the new museum complex did not comprise acts that could be considered acts of collecting. Petropoulous states clearly that the Third Reich was a "kleptocracy" (2000:5). Even historical narratives and myths from the past were decontextualised and perverted to meet the needs of new ideological myths that would transfix Germany's gaze on an evocative but idealistic and unreal image of the future. The pseudo-religious overarching narrative, of a belief in the vision of Nazism as a saving vision, resulted in an abandonment of the individual (of personal memory and experience) in favour of a system of faith, of "faith in the Führer", as SS-Obersturmführer Karl Kretschmer is recorded as having written in his letter to his "beloved wife" and "dear children" (Kretschmer in Dressen, Klee and Riess, 1991:171). In this letter he bemoans not being strong enough to be able to get used to the sight of dead bodies (Kretschmer in Dressen, Klee and Riess, 1991:171).[82]

Paging through Mary Warner Marien's heavily fact-laden *Photography: a Cultural History* (2006),

81. "The Nazi leaders could not have dominated the artistic sphere or have amassed such collections without the assistance of figures in the art world, It was a joint project" (Petropoulos 2000:5). But Petropoulos's argument which runs through two recent books aims to show that while "Nazi leaders relied upon technocrats to implement their ideologically determined policies – including coordinating the deportations by rail and designing the gas chambers… individuals in the cultural realm were also co-opted" (2000:6). "It is striking how the Nazi leaders elicited the cooperation of not just ideological zealots, but also many who were apolitical", writes Petropoulos (2000:6). Petropoulos's title, *The Faustian Bargain,* uses the Faustian metaphor aptly to understand the decisions that were taken by competent intellectuals of the art world specifically, with the purpose of exposing "the various motivations that induced talented and respected professionals in the art world to become accomplices of the Nazi leaders – in most cases to become art plunderers" (Petropoulos 2000:4). Their reasons were undoubtedly complex, but it involved perceiving opportunities in terms of their own work and the advancement of their professions.

82. "It is a weakness", he writes, "not to be able to stand the sight of dead people; the best way of overcoming it is to do it [to murder] more often. Then it becomes a habit. … It's the only thing we can do to safeguard unconditionally the security of our people and our future. … Our faith in the Führer fulfils us and gives us the strength" (Kretschmer in Dressen, Klee and Riess 1991:171).

there are many examples of photomontaged posters and artworks that showcase the methods of collage and pastiche popular in National Socialist imagery. And in the arts described by Adam (2006) it is clear that in the construction of the image of the Nazi ideology, and of Hitler himself, the methods of decontextualisation, theft and pastiche (the creation of new surfaces combining unrelated elements, and in unrealistic relation) were rife. The composition and iconography used in this brochure design by Herbert Bayer for the Berlin Olympic Games shows, "three laudable German types – a soldier, a farmer and a factory worker" (Marien 2006:266) photomontaged into context so that they "loom over an admiring throng at a Nazi Rally" (Marien 2006:266). Another example from the 1920s onwards appears in the Illustrated Press in Germany as they orchestrated Hitler's rise to power through "heroising photographs" (Marien 2006:296) of Hitler, montaged over images of "vast gatherings staged by the Nazis… carefully portray[ing]… him as a powerful, popular leader".

The images were coersive. Adam describes the art of the Third Reich as "[t]he Art of Seduction" (2006:71). He writes that

Fig. 38. Brochure design by Herbert Bayer exemplifying elements of pastiche, 1936 (in Marien 2006:270)

> [t]he National Socialists were masters at inventing and imposing stereotyped concepts and art forms which substituted for genuine artistic and personal experience. The result was the people's total submission to a state aesthetic: stifling to the eye and the sensibilities (2006:10).

Adam describes the engine of National Socialism ploughing its way into every layer of culture. Its very ideological basis was a mixture of appropriated Nordic myths and old concepts remade for the times – like the German *Volk* (Adam 2006:25), for example. There were further the photographic, painterly and photomontaged concepts of Hitler, as well as the kind of exhibitions that eliminated what was considered degenerate art but nevertheless appropriated what was useful for its own purposes (while the Nazis publicly denigrated avant garde artists and pho-

tographers, they simultaneously took advantage of many of their techniques). National Socialism was rich in methodologies of misappropriation and pastiche in the construction of a contrived ideal that sacrificed reality.

Walter Benjamin wrote that "[f]ascism is the aestheticising of politics" (Benjamin cited in Adam 2006:21), but aesthetics also became politics. Controlling the art that was possible was central to the success of the regime. As Adam writes, "it [art] gave [politics]… a false human face. People closed their eyes to the more horrendous side of the regime and wallowed in the artistic window dressing: a bloodless takeover of a nation's entire culture" (2006:21). He goes on to quote Hitler from *Mein Kampf* (1925) who was the first to recognise the importance of the role of art. "He who would win the great masses" he wrote, "must know the key which opens the door to their hearts…" (Hitler cited in Adam 2006:21). And what is even more interesting, Hitler writes that"[o]ne can succeed in winning the soul of a people if, apart from positive fighting for one's own aims, *one also destroys at the same time the supporter of the contrary*" (*own emphasis*, cited in Adam 2006:21).

In relation to Germany under Nazi rule, ethics were driven by aesthetics. Ideals of Aryan perfection co-opted industries, art and social systems alike into administering what were seen to be the requirements for reaching these ideals. A comprehensive language of the Third Reich was created,[83] breeding a system of ethics that was implicitly and simultaneously learnt. Aesthetics was not restrained to a sensory field of appreciation of the visual or auditory in the arts, societies thought and acted in accordance with aesthetic principles that laid claim to the legitimacy of lives. Ethics mirrored aesthetics, and in this sense, the statement made by Ludwig Wittgenstein of "[e]thics and aesthetics and are one" (Wittgenstein cited in Budd 2008:252), became true.

Victor Klemperer (1881 – 1960) (of no close relation to the collecting von Klemperer family) who became Professor of French literature at Dresden University and had taught Romance Studies at the Technical University of Dresden until the time of his compulsory dismissal in 1935, managed to survive the war in Dresden with difficulty, married to an Aryan woman (Klemperer 2000:overleaf). His diaries, which he kept, and which were published in 1988 under the title *I Shall Bear Witness,* have become a very valuable

83. Aesthetics was not related entirely to visual culture. It affected all of the languages that were used. Adam writes, "National Socialist doctrine lived in almost every painting, film, stamp, and public building, in the toys of the children, in people's houses, in tales and costumes, in the layout of villages, in the songs and poems taught in schools, even in household goods" (2006:21). The comprehensive language of the Third Reich extended itself visually and culturally, in every machination it was marched into the hearts and minds of Germans. As Hitler himself claimed, "[w]hile we are certain that we have expressed the spirit and life source of our people correctly in politics, we also believe that we will be capable of recognizing its cultural equivalent and realize it" (in Adam 2006:129). A totalising language that permeated all aspects of life as a weapon for change was a considerable proponent of their success.

resource providing day to day insights into German life under Nazi rule (Klemperer 2000:overleaf). Klemperer takes a very specific look at the source in spoken and written language, whereby concepts were subtly changed or created. It is perhaps a terrifying look into small aesthetic changes that resulted in large-scale fundamental shifts in thought and action.

> New demands led the language of the Third Reich to stimulate an increase in the use of the dissociating prefix *ent-* {de-} (though in each case it remains open to question whether we are dealing with completely new creations or the adoption by the common language of terms already familiar in specialist circles). Windows had to be blacked out {*verdunkelt*} because of enemy planes, which in turn led to the daily task of lifting the blackout {*des Entdunkelns*}. In the event of roof fires, the lofts had to be free of clutter that might get in the way of the firefighters – they were therefore de-cluttered {*entrümpelt*}. New sources of nourishment had to be tapped: the bitter horse chestnut was de-bittered {*entbittert*}… (Klemperer 2000:1).

These were devastating incisions. They worked to normalise the behaviours that the use of the "dissociating prefix" (Klemperer 2000:1) engendered. To Klemperer's dismay,

> a word formed in an analogous manner has widely been adopted: Germany was almost destroyed by Nazism; the task of curing it of this fatal disease is today termed denazification {*Entnazifizierung*}. I hope, and indeed believe, that this dreadful word will only have a short life; it will fade away and lead no more than a historical existence as soon as it has performed its current duty" (Klemperer 2000:1).

The byproducts of Nazi 'collecting', of taking what was desired and discarding what was 'contrary' to their ideals, culminated in events imaginably impossible to witness.

But, they were witnessed.

The contents of photographs and documents that appear in *The Good Old Days: The Holocaust as Seen by its Perpetrators and Bystanders* edited by Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen and Volker Riess (1991) reveal the overwhelming success of the

Fig. 39. "Women and girls photographed before being shot. The murder squad consisted of a Latvian SD guard platoon, SS- und Polizeistandortfurer Dr Dietrich Schutzpolizei-Dienstableilung and Latvian Police Battalion 21", in *The Good Old Days* (Klee *et al*. 1991:131)

Fig. 40. "A group of women and children above the death trench, just before they were murdered", near the Baltic in Latvia, in *The Good Old Days* (Klee *et al*. 1991:131)

Fig. 41. A photograph taken by a *Gendarmerie Oberwachtmeister.* "Those women still alive were finished off like wounded game (the *coups de grâce*)" reads the caption under this picture in *The Good Old Days* (Klee *et al*. 1991:161)

Nazi project in its dissociating ability. The images below were taken by German officers on duty that did not adhere to the rules forbidding photography. They were able to witness the atrocities of the holocaust, only through extreme dissociation, through distinguishing Jewish lives as separate from lives worth living.

These are snapshots, unofficial images that were taken for personal or private use. They are windows into the *detritus* of the Nazi project. As documents they reveal exactly the context that was being destroyed. In these images we see the real destruction of what was "contrary" (Hitler cited in Adam 2006:21) to the idealistic vision of a Nazi Germany.

What was happening in Hitler's accumulation of valuable goods and art had little to do with collecting. How narratives and ideologies were appropriated to contrive an image of National Socialism was not collecting. The evidence of death, of people as waste products, is proof that what was being taken and kept was for a vision of horror, not a vision foregrounded in the stones of reality.

Such destruction comes as a shock when read in relation to the intentions behind something like the original von Klemperer catalogue, the effort and care that went into it being aimed purely at conservation, preservation, and the strengthening of contexts related to the objects.

In Nazi Germany there was a cohesion of all facets of life that led to a complete closing in on everything that supported "the contrary" (Hitler cited in Adam 2006:21) to Hitler's vision of life. There was nowhere left to go for those who did not fit into the vision of a new Germany. In *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* by Judith Butler (2009), she provides a good elucidation of just how aesthetics – the frames of representation – can contribute to create a totalising ethics that in the case of Nazism, was devastating.

> The epistemological capacity to apprehend a life is partially dependent on that life being produced according to norms that qualify it as a life or, indeed, as part of life. … The frames that work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those whose we cannot… not only organize visual experience but also generate specific ontologies of the subject. Subjects are constituted through norms which, in their reiteration, produce and shift the terms through which subjects are recognized (Butler 2009:3-4).

"The frames that work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those whose we cannot" (Butler 2009:3) were increasingly closing in on the von Klemperers as they were for all Jewish families in Europe in the Nazi era. Their lives, like Walter Benjamin's, had been framed as ones that were no longer recognisable as "grievable" lives (Butler 2009). My family was incredibly lucky to have had the means to escape Germany as late as 1938. My grandmother and siblings and her parents Ralph and Lily had left Germany almost a year before Ralphs' brother Victor's family. According to a personal transcript written by Fritz, Ralph's second oldest son, about his parents, it was clear that Ralph had wanted to take the porcelain collection with him to South Africa, but that his older brothers had not considered it to be important at the time. In the end Victor's family left with their lives, and little else. Nevertheless, it was a great deal more than other families.

Forced into a position of surrender, the alternative collector, who took an interest methodologically and philosophically in collecting against the

dictates of fascism, Walter Benjamin, committed suicide in 1940. He cared for the detritus, for the ephemeral and fragmentary and like Kabakov's character, sought to garner the words, or to find a means of communicating, the experiences of the individual caught in the voracious turns of modernity. This was precisely what the Nazi movement tried to quell, the ability of the individual to think for themselves[84] and act based on their own experience, in any event contrary to the greater vision and ideals of the party. Benjamin's *Arcades Project* has been marked by some as a failure, and yet in its failure to conform to the dictates of its times, in its search for a disruption of textual order and an alternative kind of "binding"[85], as a whole, it communicates something about the culture in relation to which it came about, of which the failure to be a coherent part of, should be read as a successful human achievement, not a failure.

The question of "Why collect?" could perhaps be rephrased or also thought about in terms of "Who should collect?" 'True collectors', like Benjamin, even Kabakov's character, and the von Klemperers, had a vested stake in their culture and the value of the individual lives that were subtly interwoven with the materials of their collection, a relationship extending through time. As Roger Cardinal writes, "[t]o collect is to launch individual desire across the intertext of environment and history. Every acquisition, whether crucial or trivial, marks an unrepeatable conjuncture of subject, found object, place and moment" (cited in Elsner and Cardinal 1994:68). 'True collecting' is not an activity that can happen without a real concern and care for the social practices of people, for material culture, and the role of individual lives within it. The process of collecting is binding to an embedded sense of place and time. To truly collect is premised on a commitment, unlike that of the Nazis, to a burgeoning ecology of meaning and materiality.

I turn to the original von Klemperer catalogue once again. As Pearce has written, unlike words, the object has "a brutally physical existence". It is "the stuff of its stuff" (Pearce 1995:14). It resonates with the contexts from which it has come. It lies still and closed on the table. Next to it is the broken marching boy, half embalmed in its swaddling cloth – the loose scarves I returned it to for safe-keeping. The broken boy is unmistakably too, "the stuff of its stuff" (Pearce 1995:14). It is a relief that "[t]here are differences between the

84. See Hannah Arendt's *Eichman in Jerusalem: A Report On the Banality of Evil (2006)*

85. "Questions of narrative order and processes of de-formation ('*Entstaltung*')" (Lane 2005:152) were central concerns that Benjamin explored. Binding was a way of connecting, yet related to "principles of textual openness" (Lane 2005:152), that could through its methods "create… a repeatable experience, a memorialization of the text" (Lane 2005:152). Benjamin worked on the 'binding' until as Lane explains, "it let in more light" (2005:152), as discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

discourse of language and… material culture", that this sculpture also has "a brutally physical existence… occupying its own place in time and space". As an object it will always "retain an intrinsic link with the original context from which [it] came" (Pearce 1995:14). But further to this, the broken boy retains an intrinsic link, through its scars (that unlike words, cannot be reinterpreted) to the contexts, like that of Nazi Germany, which it has survived.

CHAPTER 4

# NEGOTIATING INHERITANCES

# NEGOTIATING INHERITANCES 4

“Treasure is trouble”, my aunt said, handing me one of her broken pieces of Meissen porcelain, a little figure with a mauve jacket and a missing arm. “It’s yours”, she said, knowing my penchant for broken things, especially family Meissen. Inheriting broken porcelain is a strange kind of fortune, giving rise to questions inherent in their broken shapes. Answers may lie in histories, relationships, complexities, and in taking time. In the process of exploring these, and taking time, I have come to a sense of multiple inheritances. It feels important to consider each one, as how these inheritances have an influence in my life in the future concerns me. Hence, in the process of unpacking the last of what remains in the suitcase, in this chapter, I negotiate four different types of inheritances.

Firstly, I have inherited objects, Meissen porcelain shards, which are also *memorials*. They have significance in the family as heirlooms that reference family history. But, importantly, in the context of the city of Dresden and its collective memory, they have a role to play as memorials that reference directly the violence of the destruction of Dresden, and indirectly, the suffering that the event caused. These are, according to Loesch, not easily commemorated in the architecture or public life of Dresden, a city with a unique but uneasy postwar history (personal communication, Dresden, 1 July 2016).

Secondly, through research, I would argue I have also inherited the understanding of a particular kernel at the heart of the problem with moder-

nity, in its extreme forms; war, National Socialism, and the Holocaust. This kernel is something Walter Benjamin, whom I consider my theoretical ancestor, bemoans, namely, the threat of *the fragile individual.* In Chapter Three, the effects of National Socialism on the individual's ability to think for him or herself is brought into focus. However, this theme also surfaces in relation to the force behind military warfare, coming through in the story of the allies' attack on Dresden. I take from this, as an inheritance, the understanding of just how important the protection and nurturing of the individual is, as a defense against a loss of memory and other violent by-products of modernity. Real memory, not only history,[86] is critical to the individual. The loss of the individual implies a loss of memory, and conversely, the loss of memory or the purposeful wiping out of an individual's memory results in the loss of the individual as a person with unique agency. Without a hold on one's individual experience, political narratives opportune in spaces much like in the aftermath of the bombing of Dresden, real memory can be replaced with prosthetic memory – narratives that serve the state or other political factions. In the case of the aftermath of Dresden's bombing, extreme trauma resulted in a state of fragmentation that allowed for an already compromised possibility for expression of German experience – for individual memories to have validity – to be further eclipsed by opportunistic narratives propelled by the media (Fuchs 2012). From a discussion of what leads to the loss of individual selfhood, especially in the context of war, comes the reflective question of what it means in my own research and practice to hold onto what constitutes the fragile individual, and to hold out for the uniqueness of my own memories and experience.

I have not only inherited objects that serve as memorials. I have inherited objects that can be regarded as *fragments*. Fragments, a third kind of inheritance, have their own value and potency. What can a state of fragmentation mean for a country like Germany or South Africa? Klemens von Klemperer explores the value of living with fragments, as opposed to the search for completion and perfection, which arguably, as a state, is not as useful for the creative imagination. The value of fragments comes to be of relevance especially in relation to the last of what I claim as one of my inheritances – a collection of fragments that I have made and collected, that pose their own unique questions with regard to their curatorship.

86. See footnote 65

Hence lastly, in the process of the curatorship of the Meissen shards, I have created something of my own inheritance – a body of work – *my own collection*. What is the value of what I have inadvertently created and kept together? What is it that I am preserving through this collection? Charlotte von Klemperer, my historical ancestor, provides an example of a collector who loved her craft, and whose objects took pride of place in her Dresden home. Each was revered on its own terms. She spoke on behalf of her objects, taking care to collect their histories and details in the catalogue she and Gustav had published. When I look at the objects I have collected, some drawn, some handmade, and many broken, I look through them, as Bill Brown describes what we do with 'things', to the time and experience they represent. It is not the objects themselves that take pride of place in my mind, but what is signified through their presence. They are conduits that capture time spent in the questioning of histories, relationships, and burgeoning complexities. While some drawings might hold artistic value, much of what I have made and collected might also look like 'any old junk' to an outsider. They are personal fragments, traces of experience, and my own 'memorials'. I might argue that I have also inherited an understanding of the role of curatorship. Hans Ulrish Obrist suggests that one should not see one's work complete with one exhibition, but that in fact curatorship should consider "sustainability and legacy" (2015:24). I am not, as my great, great grandparents were, "secure in… [my] dynastic ambitions" (de Waal 2010:20). I am not yet ready nor do I desire to produce a catalogue of my own things. I am sure, however, of the fact that as fragments, they richly facilitate my creative imagination, something not yet entirely spent. To choose to keep my whole collection packed into the suitcase, as a personal archive that I can draw from, preserves the material fabric wherein my memory and experience is subtly interwoven. This collection or archive remains a rich repository for the potential for story telling, a possible next step in the 'legacy' aspect of my research that Obrist encourages.

# A Memorial to Dresden's Destruction

I cannot deny the cultural, political and historical weight of the marching boy and the catalogue that stand together as sentinels, keeping watch over this last exploration into what I have packed into the suitcase. They witness my actions today, but have also been present during previous eras; Meissen in its golden period and Dresden in hers, von Klemperer family life in the villa in Wienerstraße, Schloss Rammenau under Nazi protective ownership, the firebombing of Dresden, years in the Dresden Porcelain Museum, England and the Bonhams' selection, and lastly, my family's homes and my university. It was, however, during the destruction of Dresden by allied forces that they became permanently scarred and disfigured. The destruction of Dresden saw to their being permanently tattooed by the violent forces of Second World War warfare, which was an absolute answer to an arguably also absolute evil at work in Nazi Germany.

Anne Fuchs describes the twentieth century as being marked

> by various violent impact events that arguably have one feature in common: they legitimated violence as a means of realising historical ruptures and new beginnings. In this way, they exemplify what Alain Badiou has called the 'exaltation of the Real', which – according to philosophers such as Badiou and Žižek – is the signature of twentieth-century history. Badiou argues that twentieth-century history unfolded through the paradigm of the decisive war, and the conviction that it would bring about a definitive order. 'In every instance', Badiou comments, 'we can see that this longing for the definitive is realized as the beyond of a destruction. The new man is the destruction of the old man. Perpetual peace is achieved through the destruction of the old wars by total war' (2012:10 – 11).

Something of this force is embedded in the evidence of the shards. In their 'injuries', Badiou's description of the longing characterizing the 20th century for absolutist outcomes and certainties by means of devastating violence, can be read. The broken porcelain becomes comparative to the bones discussed in *Mengele's Skull* (2012), that interestingly

> lead investigators to bullets, bullets to guns, guns to the soldiers or policemen who fired them, and the executioners to the officers and politicians who gave the orders. Behind them there are the ideologies, interests, fantasies, and organizations that animated the violence in the first place (Keenan and Weizman 2012:65).

To take on a forensic perspective as described above with regard to the shards makes sense, as

> forensics is not about the single object in isolation, but rather about the chains of associations that emanate from it and connect it to people, technologies, methods, and ideas – the flexible network between people and things, humans and non-humans, be they documents, images, weapons, skulls, or ruins (Keenan and Weizman 2012:65).

I have spent time discussing the history and value of Meissen porcelain, the family, and what it has meant to collect and to care for the collection in Chapter Two. I have tried to describe a sense of an ecology that is created, and how an embedded sense of people and place emerges, that the investment and specificity Roger Cardinal mentions that makes collecting such an essential part of culture, ties together, in a sense, material and immaterial, object and imagination, and past and future in the moment of collecting. But, in contrast, and in speaking for the breaks and the scars and what is missing in the porcelain, I must give credence to that which sought to destroy this ecology. Firstly Nazi Germany, in Chapter Three, as a kleptocracy (Petropoulous 2000:5) which pulled apart carefully nurtured meanings, violently discarded contexts, and proved exactly what it meant not to collect – and secondly, to the violence of the absolutist intentions Badiou refers to behind “total war” (in Fuchs 2012:11), as is evident in the allies’ destruction of Dresden.

The shards are essentially memorials not only to the fate of my family, but also to the fate of Dresden as a whole. What might they have witnessed of Dresden’s destruction and past contexts not easily visible in a walk through Dresden’s old city today?

George Packer describes the weight of the event of the bombing of Dresden in an article entitled “Embers”, which appeared in the New York Times in February 2010. He describes:

the night of February 13, 1945, seven hundred and ninety-six Lancaster bombers of the Royal Air Force took off from bases in England, flew a zigzag course to Germany, and unloaded more than twenty-six hundred tons of munitions over the city of Dresden. High explosives punched holes through rooftops, blew out windows and doors, and drilled craters into the streets; incendiaries then fell into the gaping wood-frame buildings, igniting thousands of blazes that spread along the through-drafts, from house to house, combining to create a firestorm that had the force of a hurricane. Thirteen square miles of the Altstadt—Dresden's historic centre, on the southern bank of the Elbe—were consumed. A second wave of bombers that night extended the destruction southward and eastward, killing thousands of people who had fled the fires. The next day, four hundred and thirty-one American B-17 planes filled the ashen sky and released seven hundred tons of bombs, over residential areas and rail yards. On the morning of February 15th, the emblematic feature of Dresden's Baroque skyline, the three-hundred-foot, bell-shaped dome of the Frauenkirche—an eighteenth-century Protestant cathedral that had been inspired by Santa Maria della Salute, in Venice—collapsed from the fifteen-hundred-degree heat in its sandstone girders (Packer 2010).

Fig. 42. Detail of a well-known image taken by German photojournalist Richard Peter of the view from the Dresden City Hall tower toward the South in 1945. Available online at https://iconicphotos.wordpress.com/tag/richard-peter/

The firebombing of Dresden was defined as a calamity of enormous proportion. Dresden's bombing was widely perceived as an unnecessary attack[87] on a famously beautiful cultural centre,[88] causing the deaths of thousands of civilians.

Being able to invite memory and emotion about the event, even today, is an important task, as according to W.G Sebald, this was never authentically captured in the writings by Germans about the events. Writing is an important vehicle for collective memory.[89] This suffering is

87. Allies had been carpet bombing German cities since 1942… Far from trying to avoid civilian deaths, the British and the Americans designed their air raids to create maximum chaos, and by 1945 they had perfected the technique" (Packer 2010). Nevertheless, questions arose as to the legitimate needs of the attacks. Its ethics and necessity became a subject of question in the international community. As Fuchs writes, "[i]n the immediate aftermath of the event a public debate arose in the international press about the military purpose and ethical legitimacy of the attack precisely because it occurred so close to the end of the war" (2012:3). In spite of the arguments by the allies for the necessity of the event to "disrupt… communications and transport, destroy… industries, and weaken… morale" (Packer 2010), in short "February 1945 was widely perceived as a wanton attack on a European cultural treasure trove at a time when Nazi Germany was already on the verge of defeat" (Fuchs 2012:6).

88. Amplifications of the gravity of Dresden's destruction grew due to the consensual understanding of Dresden, not as a military or political powerhold, but as a centre for art and culture. The city was emblematic of "a golden age" (Kuhn 2010:22) of not only art collecting, it excelled in the arenas of architecture and music. Its profound currency as an art city eclipsed its political and military significance. As Fuchs recounts, "Dresden's various collections, its Baroque architecture and highbrow cultural history provided the city with an appealing identity that was largely divorced from the political history of the city" (Fuchs 2012:4). Dresden was described as the 'German Florence' or 'Florence on the Elbe' "The work of the Italian Canaletto, alias Bernardo Bellotto (1720–80), further consolidated this image: his view from across the river Elbe angled towards the city and the profile of its Baroque silhouette provided the perfect iconography for Dresden's cultural identity" (Fuchs 2012:3-4). According to Fuchs, the impact and uncertainty that surrounded the event of Dresden's bombing has always remained palpable and has not been resolved. The cultural identity of Dresden as a treasure trove for art gets reinforced repeatedly in ongoing debates against the attack. It remains that "[a]lthough most German cities had been flattened by 1945 and although other attacks were to follow that left a proportionally higher death rate elsewhere, it was the destruction of Dresden that impinged on the popular imagination as an icon of gratuitous and excessive violence (Fuchs 2012:6).

89. As Primo Levi has concurred, writing becomes an important form of memory, especially once one's real memories have faded away. See also Footnote 28.

also not represented in the city's memorials and architecture today, and hence there is arguably no public space for that traumatic memory of Dresden's "difficult past" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011) to reside. In *On the Natural History of Destruction,* Sebald writes that realistic, un-romanticised or non-metaphorical accounts of the real suffering of local Germans during this period do not exist in their literature. In his chapter on "Literature and Air Raids*",* Sebald bemoans that "[e]ven the frequently cited 'literature of the ruins'", of its nature presupposing an unerring sense of reality and chiefly concerned, as Heinrich Böll acknowledged, with "what we found when we came home", proves on closer inspection to be an instrument already tuned to individual and collective amnesia, and probably influenced by pre-conscious self-censorship – a means of obscuring a world that could no longer be presented in comprehensible terms. There was a tacit agreement, equally binding on everyone, that the true state of material and moral ruin in which the country found itself was not to be described. The darkest aspects of the final act of destruction, as experienced by the great majority of the German population, remained under a kind of taboo like a shameful family secret, a secret that could not even be privately acknowledged (2004:10).

It is Sebald's conviction that

> [a]part from Heinrich Böll, only a few authors… ventured to break the taboo on any mention of the inward and outward destruction, and… they generally did so equivocally. Even in later years, when local and amateur war historians began documenting the fall of the German cities, their studies did not alter the fact that the images of this horrifying chapter of our history *have never really crossed the threshold of the national consciousness* (*own emphasis*, 2004:11).

The "pre-conscious self-censorship" Sebald refers to (2004:10) was not further aided by a belief of the Germans in the invalidity of and shame inherent in their own suffering, sentiments which arguably could still have an influence on German society today. Sebald describes further the belief people held that their circumstances were governed and precipitated by a higher order or power, leading them to accept without question the validity of the bombing offensive and the violence that was brought upon them.

> The plan for an all out bombing campaign, which had been supported by groups within the Royal Air Force since 1940, came into

> effect in February 1942, with the deployment of huge quantities of personnel and war matériel. As far as I know, the question of whether and how it could be strategically or morally justified was never the subject of open debate in Germany after 1945, no doubt mainly because a nation which had murdered and worked to death millions of people in its camps could hardly call on the victorious powers to explain the military and political logic that dictated the destruction of the German cities. It is also possible, as sources like Hans Elrich Nossock's account of the destruction of Hamburg indicate, that quite a number of those affected by the air raids, despite their grim but impotent fury in the face of such obvious matters, regarded the great firestorms as a just punishment, even an act of retribution *on the part of a higher power with which there could be no dispute* (*own emphasis*, Sebald 2004:14).

Both an ability to honestly face the trauma of the reality that was brought to bear during and after the bombing, and an ability to recognize and express their own suffering, was made impossible by the extreme nature of the trauma and the various contextual circumstances affecting Germans at that time. The Russians who came to power postwar, further had no interest in the facilitation of any kind of memorial processes that considered the trauma and loss of Germans (A Loesch, personal communication, Dresden, 1 July 2016). It was as if their own suffering, along with the memory of the victims of the war and Holocaust at the hands of Germans,[90] never found expression in works of memory, especially architecturally, in Dresden in an authentic way.[91]

In an article called "Silencing Historical Trauma: The Politics and Psychology of Memory and Voice" (2007), the author Ramsay Liem uses a distinct technique of describing the explicit contextual factors that contribute to the enduring silences amongst communities in cases related to "historical trauma" (2007:153). His study centres around Koreans living in the United States who experience difficulty communicating their experiences of the Korean war for various reasons that are not immediately visible. For example, unless the contexts of both familial Korean culture as well as a reading of their vulnerability in relation to their status in America is understood, interpretations of what contributes to their pervasive

90. In "Embers", Packer writes that

> Dresden's Jews are scarcely remembered. A new synagogue, modernist in design, has been built on the spot where its predecessor was burned down, on Kristallnacht, in 1938… A memorial bench on the Brühl Terrace, the park above the Elbe River walk, has a marker that says "For Aryans Only" and explains that, in 1940, Jews were banned from walking there. A plaque at Dresden-Neustadt station commemorates the Jews deported by rail to Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. And there is very little else. On the apartment house at 15b Caspar David Friedrichstrasse, there is no sign to inform you that Victor Klemperer was confined there, with other Jews, between 1940 and 1942 (2010).

91. According to George Packer, Dresden "has the unstable character of a place with a romantic self-image and a past that it would rather not discuss". Packer explains:

> there is a striking contrast between the post-1989 reconstructions of Dresden and Berlin, whose new architecture often has the quality of what Bertolt Brecht called *Verfremdung*, or the V-effect—estrangement, distancing. Berlin makes little attempt to hide the worst decades in German history. After 1989, the city placed its vanished Jews near the center of its collective consciousness, understanding that this was part of the price of reclaiming its international status. … There is no V-effect in Dresden. The city still sees itself as an ornament of European high culture, and it has gone to great lengths to remove signs of tarnish. East Germany was too poor to rebuild more than a few historic buildings, but in the past two decades most of the city center—the great churches; the Zwinger and Albertinum museums; the Semperoper; the royal palace, known as the Schloss—has been restored. These buildings, now a major drawcard for (mostly German) tourists, are all within walking distance of one another, on cobblestoned streets restricted to traffic, so that the feeling of downtown Dresden is that of a Baroque fantasia (Packer 2010).

silences, even between generations,[92] would be misunderstood.

Very particular circumstances contribute to "the enforcement of silence related to historical trauma" (Liem 2007:156). Through his examination of "the politics of remembering the past, and locat[ing] silences within the state, community, family, and individual dynamics" (2007:156), very subtle dynamics that contribute to the incommunicability of experiences are made explicit. Liem refers to colleagues' work dealing with incommunicable experiences resulting in silences in communities that substantiate there being extenuating contextual circumstances that render victims or people without a voice. He describes Chilean survivors of torture, for example, experiencing "fears of disclosure in a state regime that branded them 'enemies of the Patria'", or in the "work of memory recovery amongst Guatemalan Mayan women" what was shown was "how the global political climate can at different times censor or afford space for survivor voices" (Liem 2007:156).[93]

It is not easy as an outsider to know what a society thinks and feels, nor to what extent they carry the memory of their "difficult past" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011) along with them. In my experience of Dresden and of people especially connected with its art collections and our family, I had the sense that the past was incredibly important and that acknowledgement of suffering on all sides was genuinely heartfelt. As Ramsay Liem discovers in his intervention into American Korean society, it was not, however, until an exhibition and programme probing individual memory was in place that people had the safe opportunity to express what they really felt and also could shed light on the circumstances preventing their ability to share their memories even with their closest friends and family members.[94]

Much time has passed since Dresden was bombed. However, new evidence such as the broken Meissen that in its memorial form offers no sensationalist rendition of events, but simply bears its scars of the firebombing such that the times have to be acknowledged and cannot be forgotten, are useful, especially if Sebald's thesis is true. The broken porcelain becomes an important memorial if what exists in terms of documentaries and written accounts about Dresden's bombing and its aftermath tend toward sensationalism that, like Baer warns about ubiquitous images of the Holocaust, "lead today to the 'disappearance of

92. It is Sebald's conviction that in Germany "the sense of unparalleled national humiliation felt by millions in the last years of the war… never really found verbal expression, and that those directly affected by the experience neither shared it with each other nor passed it on to generations" (2004:viii).

93. Ramsay Liem organized an exhibition comprising "installation and performance art, documentary film, archival photographs, and interactive elements inspired by and embodying oral history voices" which also had accompanying programmes in the community, as "an innovative way to break the silence about Korean War trauma and foster healing" (2007:169). The exhibition aimed to create "a public space of memory to counter individual, family, and community silences and re-envision the significance of the Korean War in the national narrative" (Liem 2007:169). Interestingly, Liem records the expression of people who wished that the exhibition could in fact be a permanent event. As they said, "[i]nside here, we are safe. When we leave, we still have to watch behind us" (cited in Liem 2007:170). This suggests that "memory and voice are liberated within the space of remembering, but that silence still remains serviceable on the outside" (Liem 2007:170). Although there may be limitations that come with such a memorial type intervention, it also shows the success of initiatives that create a dedicated space for remembrance.

94. According to Anette Loesch, February the 13th, which in Dresden should be a day of remembrance, has in fact turned into a nightmare for those wishing to remember (personal communication, Dresden, 1 July 2016). Instead of standing together, they are forced to stay at home. The day has been taken over by extreme right wing groups that march through the town exhibiting slogans like "Auschwitz + Dresden = 0" (Packer 2010). As Packer explains, the gravity of the event of Dresden's destruction is still being grossly amplified to service radical right wing hatred. Packer describes, "[t]he state of Saxony has a vocal population of neo-Nazis and others on the far right. … February 13th has become an annual occasion for thousands of extremists to converge on the epicenter of German victimhood, the Altstadt". Slogans are bandied about that place the destruction of Dresden on a par with the violence committed against Jews by the Nazis (Packer 2010).

memory in the act of commemoration'. They represent the past as fully retrievable… instead of situating us vis-à-vis the intangible presence of an absence" (cited in del Pillar Blanco and Peeren 2015:423) (see footnote 6).

## The Fragile Individual

Sebald describes the bombing of Dresden very well in *On the Natural History of Destruction* (2004) in terms of its political configuration and the weight of the military force behind it. But further, what can be read into the might of the process of war is how it eschewed vulnerability, subsumed healthy doubt, and entirely conscripted the individual subject into what could be described as its lunacy, its overriding irrationality.

Sebald takes time to describe the enormity of the resources invested in the military's bombing enterprise. An unstoppable force existed that created a need to carry out what had been begun, even "against the dictates of good sense" (Sebald 2004:15).

> [A]n enterprise of the material and organisational dimensions of the bombing offensive, which… swallowed up one-third of the entire British production of war material, had such a momentum of its own that short-term corrections in course and restrictions were more or less ruled out, especially when, after three years of the intensive expansion of factories and production plants, that enterprise had reached the peak of its development – in other words, its maximun destructive capacity. … [s]imply letting the aircraft and their valuable freight stand idle on the airfields of eastern England ran counter to any healthy economic instinct (Sebald 2004:18-19).

The man responsible for driving the operations to their fatal outcomes was Sir Arthur Harris, commander-in-chief of Bomber Command, or 'Bomber' Harris as he was known. He is reputed to have been someone who "liked destruction for its own sake" (Sebald 2004:19). Some commentators claim

> that 'Bomber' Harris had managed to secure a peculiar hold over the otherwise domineering, intrusive Churchill, for al-

> though on various occasions the Prime Minister expressed certain scruples about the horrifying bombardment of defenseless cities he consoled himself – obviously under the influence of Harris and his dismissal of any arguments against his policy – with the idea that there was now, as he put it, *a higher poetic justice at work* and "that those who have loosed these horrors upon mankind will now in their homes and persons feel the shattering strokes of *just retribution*" (*own emphasis*, Sebald 2004:18-19).

Already, the sentiment purported by Harris that was further even supported by the German victims of the air raid, namely that there was a "higher poetic justice at work" (Sebald 2004:18-19) can be picked up. This belief subdued the qualms and resistance of embedded subjectivities and nullified legitimate questions with regard to whether or not Dresden's defeat was a necessary one. The casualties were great even on the allied sides, with sixty percent of lives dedicated to Harris's cause lost.[95]

What Sebald was searching for to come out of Germany in writing about the real life horrors that occurred as a result of Dresden and other German cities' bombing, would have required a brave and terrifying look by a 'fragile individual' at the horror around and within them. Sebald's recommendation with regard to situations of trauma require not flights of fancy away from the horror, but instead "a steadfast gaze bent on reality" (2004:51). The tenacity needed for such an articulation was subsumed by an arguably easier faith in the destruction being "just retribution" (Sebald 2004:18-19), and by a buy-in to a totalizing narrative that subdued individual outcry and expression. Anne Fuchs describes how 'impact narratives' further intervened in postwar Dresden, preventing individual experience from being shared and instead, replaced real memories with a sensationalist prosthetic collective memory that told of the calamity. There was no sense then, it seems, of what the authors of *Curating Difficult Knowledge* describe practitioners trying to do today – to facilitate the emergence of 'the fragile individual' in their sharing of memory and recounting of events – to give a realistic and honest shape to history. Dresden was a city that both physically and emotionally was in fragments, making it vulnerable to excesses in representation and political derivations from the reality of its circumstances. It suffered an 'impact event' as Anne Fuchs explains in her book *After the Bomb-*

95. Until today, "the verdict of historians trying to maintain an objective balance swings between admiration for the organization of such a mighty enterprise, and criticism of the futility and atrocity of an operation mercilessly carried through to the end against the dictates of good sense" (Sebald 2004:15).In an interview in 2013 with Doctor Lupfer, head of provenance for the State Museums of Dresden, I professed to having heard the bombing of Dresden described as a war crime. He assured me, however, that the city was not as 'innocent' as people thought. Even in relation to the arts, Dresden as an epicentre had a role to play in supporting National Socialist doctrine. It was in fact in Dresden in 1933 that the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) Exhibition was first conceived (Lupfer, personal interview 2013). Works of modern art were already being confiscated from the museum collections in that year which were later incorporated into the infamous 1937 'Degenerate Art' exhibition that took place in Munich.

*ing: Pathways of Memory from 1945 to the Present* (2012), namely

> [an] historical occurrence… perceived to spectacularly shatter the material and symbolic worlds that we inhabit… From the perspective of our normal frames and modes of comprehension, impact events appear as seismic historical occurrences that are nearly always defined by extreme forms of violence that turn our known worlds upside down. The emphasis is here on the violent overturning of the social, cultural, and – in the case of extreme trauma – symbolic frames, and the destruction of the material world in which we constitute meaning as social beings that inhabit shared social worlds (2012:10).[96]

The thrust of violence behind warfare in the throes of "healthy economic instinct" (Sebald 2004:18-19) discarded individual vulnerability and subjectivity. Churchill's healthy doubt was subsumed by the inertia of the endeavour, perhaps influenced as well by the determination of Sir Arthur Harris, a considerable personality behind the desire for destruction. Individual subjectivity was further lost in the power of belief in a force greater than the individual. In the aftermath of an impact event, individual memories were also overshadowed by master narratives that subsumed subtlety and healthy contradictions, attests Fuchs (2012).

The loss of the individual's ability to reason and remember in the face of a seemingly more powerful, seductive, or unfathomable power is a theme that not only plagues Second World War history, it is taken up by Walter Benjamin in numerous respects in the "crisis of European humanity" (Lane 2005:190), as well as against the "crisis of Nazism" (Lane 2005:190). Benjamin highlights the precariousness of the fragile human individual when pitted against the ravages of modernity, contributing to an incommunicability of individual experience.[97] In the context of warfare specifically, Benjamin finds expression for this loss in the situation of bomber pilots. What is lamented is the insidious shift that occurs whereby there is the sudden overburdening of a single person – the pilot – who must act not as him or herself, but as a functionary of a greater power, on behalf of God, or state, for example. "In the [very] person of the pilot of a single airplane full of gas bombs", writes Benjamin,

96. After an impact event, there can come an impact narrative, namely "an infectious form of cultural memory that is relayed across diverse genres and media" (Fuchs 2012:12). This further complicates and makes worse the possibility for honest engagement with reality. "[T]he Dresden impact narrative attempted to transmit, manage and contain the overwhelming experience of the city's destruction through a process of continual adaptation and intermedial transposition" (Fuchs 2012:12). Particular and individual responses to the trauma were diminished through a process of identification of the public with a generated image or idealized narrative that worked to maintain the unexcavated distance between reality represented and reality experienced, a hiatus constantly kept up through new permutations of the narrative. As Fuchs explains:

> Impact narratives feed off strong emotional identification alongside tacit social and cultural knowledge. Impact narratives make visible what one might call 'the excess of the Real' at the level of historical occurrence. By referencing the original impact event as an excessive rupture, they summon new re-imaginings and representations that, however, always communicate their own inadequacy. This ineluctable dialectic between the overabundance of images and their simultaneous inadequacy is thus the driving engine, propelling the generation of further impact narratives (2012:12-13).

97. On the realisation of the fragility of the individual, Benjamin explains:

> It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences. One reason for this phenomenon is obvious: experience has fallen in value. And it looks as if it is going to continue to fall into bottomlessness… With the [First] World War a process began to become apparent that has not halted since then. Was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent – not richer, but poorer in communicable experience? … For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that has gone to school in a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body (in Highmore 2002:66).

> such leadership embodies all the absolute power which, in peacetime, is distributed among thousands of office managers – power to cut off a citizen's light, air, and life. The simple bomber-pilot in his lofty solitude, alone with himself and his God, has power-of-attorney for his seriously stricken superior, the state; and wherever he puts his signature, the grass will cease to grow (Lane 2005:183).

According to Lane (2005:183), "[t]he modern management of death is passed over to the single moment". The nature of this moment is quintessential to Benjamin's thought and has its roots in a moment first described by Kierkegaard.

> Kierkegaard's 'moment' is one when God bursts into life and the individual feels summoned to make the decision to risk his *leap into faith*. At such a moment the historical time that separates the individual from Christ loses its significance. Anyone addressed by Christ's message and work of salvation exists 'simultaneously' with Christ. The entire cultural tradition, in which religion is dragged along as a cultural possession and conventional morality, is burned to nothing at that existentially heated moment. … The moment thus understood promises a relation with the 'entirely Other,' it means a different experience of time and the experience of a different time. It promises sudden turns and transformations, perhaps even arrival and redemption, but at any rate it enforces decision (*own emphasis*, Lane 2005:183-184).

A sense of selfhood and embedded memory that contributes to a sense of ethical action, familiar action, in relation to the promise of a greater existence or communion, is diminished. The idea of salvation from ordinary circumstances or of an inflated state narrative that is triumphant, deafens out what is personal. In the liminal moments described by Kierkegaard is a momentary loss of real memory, of embedded experiences in place and time that constitute an individual's moral code, collected over time. In the face of a seemingly 'higher power', the vulnerability of the individual responsible for an extraordinary calamity, is eclipsed.

It would seem that the worst of modernity's culminations eschewed "the fragile" individual (Benjamin cited in Highmore 2002:66) in gener-

al – a person replete with their own imagination, emotions, and memories. In Kabakov's character is a good definition of such an individual committed to the arguably 'sacred' nature of everyday moments – they become his collection of memories.[98]

If Kabakov's character in *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* was collecting the arguably sacred details of his everyday life, the significance of what was implied through his collection, in Kierkegaard's heated moment, is forgotten. It would have to be forgotten in being toward the illusion of becoming something new, or worse still, in order to wipe out the lives of others. Such moments referred to by Benjamin, developed by Kierkegaard, compare with moments that account for Churchill's being swept up by the force of the bombing campaign, as well as the moments beautifully articulated in the documents that have been collected and published by Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen and Volker Riess, namely *The Good Old Days: The Holocaust as Seen by its Perpetrators and Bystanders*. As discussed in the previous chapter, revealed by the letters and unofficial documents of soldiers and insiders to the Nazi regime, is the insidious process by which individuals with just qualms over murdering people, mothers and children especially, have their intuitions washed through with a quasi religious rhetoric intent on securing their faith in a "*beyond*" (Badio cited in Fuchs 2012:10 – 11), destroying memory as to where, and arguably who they are, and have been. Memory is fragile and ethereal (Robbins cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:125),[99] proved by the practice of Kabakov's character who must collect every vestige of every moment to make sure these are pinned to the finite and irrefutable world of physical things. This is precisely so that they cannot be disproven, or "burned to nothing at that existentially heated moment" (Lane 2005:183-184)[100] when individual morality and thought is usurped in the face of "a relation with the 'entirely Other'" (Lane 2005:183-184) – God, Fatherland, State.[101]

I cannot ignore the significance of my collection, like Kabakov's, that symbolises my commitment to the process of developing selfhood Cardinal mentions when making a new decision with regard to who I am and what I am beholden to. The loss of individual subjectivity, of 'the fragile individual', in the face of twentieth century war movements and a resultant loss of memory, is directly contrasted by what it means to collect. Collecting shows an inherent commitment to

98. *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* is a plumber who lives in an apartment block, bound to the urban everyday. His decision to collect is a prescient act of resistance to the overriding contexts that encourage amnesia to be a part of their movements and machinations.

99. Robbins, echoing Andreas Huyssen, writes, "[b]oth personal and collective [memories] are unstable, suffer the degradations of time, the pressures of the present and are often subject to self-serving revision and manipulation as well as the forgetting, silences, denials, and repression that traumas produce (in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:125).

100. In spite of the fact that memory is fragile and ethereal, it has proven to be a "potent rival or partner [to history] in its claim to access, reconstruct, and represent the past", writes Aleida Assmann in "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony" (2006). Assmann writes that "memory had enjoyed little prestige among historians" prior to 1997 when Alan Confino stated that "[t]he notion of memory has taken its place now as a leading term, recently *the* leading term, in cultural history" (Assmann 2006:262 – 263). Assmann writes:

> It was not acknowledged as a reliable source; on the contrary, it was discarded as an undisciplined activity that troubles the clear waters of historiography. This changed in the 1980s when history and memory came into closer contact and were discovered to interact in many ways. … The first question for historians to ask is still what has happened? But it is no longer the only one. Other questions are now being asked… such as: How is an event, and especially a traumatic event, experienced and remembered? What kind of shadow does the past cast over the present? … Such… questions concern less the events themselves than the experience and aftermath of the events in the lives of those who experienced them and those who decide to remember them, together with the problem of how to represent them. [For example], [t]he survivors as witnesses do not, as a rule, add to our knowledge of factual history; their testimonies, in fact, have often proved inaccurate. This, however, does not invalidate them as a unique contribution to our knowledge of the past. Their point is less to tell us what happened than what it felt like to be in the centre of those events; they provide personal views from within (2006:263).

memory and subtle but determined commitment to the embedded self in culture.[102] My collection references who I have been through sacred everyday moments being captured or referenced through making or collecting during a process of curatorship and becoming. I am tied to both the memories and fates of my objects, to my bounded subjectivity that should not be usurped in the heat of a Kierkegaardian moment.

There is an inherent violence at hand in the separating out of a burgeoning ecology, in the dislocation of meaning, the result of "healthy economic [or consumerist] instinct" (Sebald 2004:18-19) perhaps that chooses to break apart a collection and the implied subjectivity at the heart of it. My memories of this journey in curatorship are still new, intrinsically connected to what I have collected, and I feel the need to keep this protected. I am responding as a fragile individual to the violence embedded in the story of the porcelain, a violence that sought to destroy the ecologies of subjects and families, resulting in the loss of lives, obliterated networks, and the existence of damaged fragments of porcelain existing in remote locations around the world. Such a diaspora of fragments calls for a particular kind of strength in the necessity for connection. There is no doubt, however, that an incredible strength also exists – as the original catalogue of the von Klemperer porcelain suggests – in a collection remaining together and whole. The fragile individual who has grown in relation to their collection, whose memories and imagination are tied to their objects and collected traces – when these stay together – remains protected.

## Fragments

In *The Arcades Project* by Walter Benjamin and *The Unfortunates* by B.S. Johnson, the authors favour a fragmentary, incoherent structure for their books over a 'monumentalising narrative', a regimented structure that absolves the reader of uncertainty and a sense of their own vulnerability. Their works have been theorized as "acts of '*Enstaltung*' which both create a related 'principle of textual openness' or radically new approaches to a text's binding" (Lane 2005:152). Both Benjamin in his arrangement of fragments of text in *The Arcades Project*, and B.S. Johnson in the arrangement of his in *The Unfortunates* [103], were sure to "let in more light" (Lane 2005:152) – the

101. Lord Dacre of Glanton, in the foreword to *The Good Old Days* speaks of a very "grim lesson, of the easy atrophy of the human conscience" (1991:xvi). He describes

> [t]he most somber lesson of the Second World War: the fragility of civilization, and the ease and speed with which, in certain circumstances barbarism can break through the thin crust and even, if backed by power and sanctified by doctrine, be accepted as the norm (1991:x).

102. Collecting has been an important part of the 20th century, but in collecting there is no destruction of former contexts to reach a future or imagined "beyond" (Badiou cited in Fuchs 2012:10 – 11). Collecting is not a violent activity. It preserves the pasts of every piece, and gradually, through an inclusivity of difference, grows to come to represent a vision of the future and a present rich in complexity. The destruction inherent in war offensives is an opposite force to the special nature of collecting.

103. "B.S. Johnson was a British experimental writer who lived from 1933 to 1973; his work became effaced and forgotten and is now undergoing a process of recovery and recuperation" (Lane 2005:154). His *The Unfortunates* was the fourth of his seven novels, arranged in moveable sections inside a box, and is central to his oeuvre.

light of experience, present and remembered. Their aim was "an unsettling critical practice… which elucidates and implicates the role of the reader, consumer or collector of a text" (Lane 2005:152). It was their intention that complex individual experiences, thought and lived, and subjectivities would find their way in between the written fragments, and would remain of importance. Self-consciousness, bred in the reader through their necessary choices in navigation of the books and chosen responses, was an intrinsic aim of both projects. The inherent decisions needed pulled the reader into the experience of the work, a fundamental intention of the experimental structures.[104] Set against the fascist contexts they were living in – trying to resist these – through the instrumentalisation of the individual to think and to feel for themselves, even if only in relation to creative projects, was revolutionary. The success of the fascist regime and the brutality of war and mass destruction in general was foregrounded in the ability of the individual, complete with their own imagination and memories, to be usurped by a nurtured faith or belief in the ultimate justice of a 'higher' purpose or power, to which they were merely subject.

The vulnerability that can be productive in the development of self that is felt by an individual subject in relation to an incoherent reality of fragments, as Benjamin and Johnson's projects exemplified, cannot be overstated. This vulnerability, something that breeds self consciousness and sensitivity in a subject, arguably would not exist in relation to conditions of 'perfection' or in relation to seamless narratives that are easily consumed, like the idealized narrative of National Socialism, designed to eradicate uncertainty and independent subjective strength.

In this sense, fragments have agency – they can affect how individuals feel and how they respond to circumstances. In the case of the fragments reaching my relatives around the world, I would argue that shock at the fragments' utter 'dislocated-ness' – the absurdity of the decontextualised shards arriving in places and times that had very little to do with the porcelain's original contexts – made the desire to meet and in some way develop a context around the incongruent existence of the broken porcelain more important. Herein lies the productive agency of fragments. They motivate questions regarding their original contexts. Fragments consistently pose questions with regard to an understanding of the forces that were respon-

104. In *The Unfortunates* are "twenty-seven sections, with the first and last sections marked as such; all the others can be shuffled into any order. It is a book that is both open and ordered, permutational yet structured, alive to the random playfulness of the reader, yet still packaged, coffin-like" (Lane 2005:154). Richard Lane writes that "both Johnson's *The Unfortunates* and Benjamin's *The Arcades* Project problematise notions of textual order and affirm the playful nature of signification divided as such between content and form – as these components impact on the reader" (Lane 2005:155).

sible for their creation. Individual memory and imagination are needed for the reimagining of a coherent context into which the shards once fitted, and to think forensically, of what forces led to them becoming shards – discontinued pasts in the present – in the first place.

To make sense of fragments in the present, to understand where they come from and why they exist, means "recogniz[ing] multiple perspectives" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:1), cross-referencing and relating periods and experience, which requires "empathy, identification" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011:1). Politically and socially, the presence of fragments understood historically is vital, especially with regard to an imagination about the future.[105]

Ingrid de Kok in her essay "Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on exhibition", in relating to the fragmentation in South African post-apartheid society, refers to Derek Walcott's poetic Nobel Prize speech. Speaking of the colonial fracture, not in South African, but Antillean society, he has said:

> Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of the original shape. It is such a love that resembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars (cited in de Kok, in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:62).

De Kok suggests "[t]his gluing together may be the key function of art and cultural education in a time of social change" (cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:62). "But," de Kok continues, "it involves seeing and feeling the fragmented, mutilating shards, before the white scar can be celebrated" (cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:62). Before restoration, fragments need to be understood on their own terms, historically, and arguably forensically also. The glue Walcott speaks of need not be visceral and physical. The glue that holds fragments together could be the understanding that continues to exist from one generation to the next about the set of questions that fragments pose, extending throughout time, productive in terms of the creative imagination that is inspired in each generation in turn.

Thinking about the value of the preservation of fragments, or rather the value of a state where fragmentation is an integral part of society, is of concern for historian Klemens von Klemperer. It

105. Fragmentation is very often underscored by violent circumstances. It is violence or change, rupture or degradation that can lead to incoherency in an environment, or person, to the fragmentation of trauma related testimonies, for example (Keenan and Weizman 2012). Very interestingly, in *Mengele's Skull*, the authors make the point that in the Eichmann trial was the advent of the significance and 'truth value' in the incoherency of witnesses testimonies, which could vouch for the reality of the trauma they were representing. The scholars Shoshana Felman, Annette Wieviorka and Geoffrey Hartman "claim [the Eichmann trial] inaugurated nothing less than a cultural turn toward testimony – the speech of the witness, the first person narrative of suffering or trauma – which came to be called the 'age' or 'era of the witness'" (Keenan and Weizman 2012:11). The authors explain:

> While Nuremberg prosecutor Robert Jackson had worried about the bias and faulty memories of survivors, and thus conducted the trials there primarily on the basis of thousands of Third Reich documents… Gideon Hausner, the prosecutor in the Eichmann trial called upon the survivors of the Holocaust as witnesses because the dramatic and emotional force of their testimony suited his conception of the trial as a form of historical and political pedagogy…. In their book Testimony, Felman and Dori Laub argue that it was often in silence, distortion, confusion, or outright error that trauma – and hence the catastrophic character of certain events – was inscribed (2012:11 – 12)

"It is precisely the witness's fragility that paradoxically is called upon to testify and bear witness" claims Shoshana Felman (in Keenan and Weizman 2012:12). "In short, this new political agency of survivors as witnesses was acquired not *in spite* of the fact that the stories they told were hard to tell, to hear, or sometimes even to believe, not in spite of the fact that they were unreliable, but *because* of those flaws (Keenan and Weizman 2012:12).

was important that he thought about a way *to be*, for as Klemperer writes "[t]he twentieth century was the century into which I was born – *my* century…. [T]o balance the books on it… I will have to write about a century shattered by two world wars that gave rise to all-encompassing political systems – fascism, communism, National Socialism – sustained by tyrannical ideologies" (2001:1). Further, he writes, "the revolutions which fundamentally affected just about all of my contemporaries as well as myself, the socialist-Communist one and the fascist-National Socialist one, shook the world with close to apocalyptic expectations and promises, and left behind *ruins* (*own emphasis*, Klemperer 2001:x).

In his thesis on the German mind before the war, one fragmented, plagued, as Klemperer explains, by 'incertitudes', he shows that it is not easy to sustain the dynamism that is a result of fragmentation in the face of a threatening belief in the certainties of absolutist ways. A state of fragmentation may breed creative advantages, but it also breeds extreme vulnerability.[106]

The fragmentation of the German mind that Klemperer refers to predominantly in his historical account *German Incertitudes, 1914–1945: The Stones and the Cathedral*, suffers from the incertitudes that left it vulnerable to the political potency and absolutism of the revolutionary ideals of National Socialism. He describes:

> Incertitudes" were a chronic condition with the Germans. Ill-defined as Germany has been in her history, she has been in all her political fragmentation less than a state and more than a state, a virtual jungle of principalities, free cities and ecclesiastical territories under the roof of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. The multiplicity of quasi-sovereign units, then, spelled cultural affluence and political impotence and, in the nineteenth century, correspondingly compensatory aggressive nationalism. In short, Geist and Politik were in dissonance in the Germanies and the lack of as well as search for German identity were the leading themes accompanying the course of German history" (Klemperer 2001:xi).

Even though such incertitudes, dynamic and fragmentary, offered Germany the gift of "cultural affluence", it was weak in its autocratic political capacity. Klemperer makes use of the metaphors used by Antione de Saint-Exupery, the

106. Fuchs describes how after the impact event of the bombing of Dresden, its reality of fragments was capitalized on by factions trying to craft their telling of events and communicate ways forward that were ultimately seeped through with their own agendas. This is precisely the opportunity that opens up after an impact event, when life is reduced to fragments. The distance that exists between the unexpressed reality of individuals' experiences and a projected ideal of the future endorses a chasm plagued with precarity, precarity that is easily exploited. Opportunities for the cohesion of a broken reality into a seemingly coherent one through the telling of 'monumentalizing' narratives open up. Monuments are not necessarily designed in order to keep memory alive, as professor Neville Dubow has explained in his published series of lectures *Imaging the Unimaginable: Holocaust Memory in Art and Architecture* (2001) (see footnote 10). Hence a monumentalizing narrative is not necessarily one designed to keep memory active and in question. It can be a means of affixing the meaning of a certain event in such a way that the recovery of real memory and contradictory accounts of what happened are compromised. The opportunism inherent in what lies broken, as shards, cannot be overstated. The political or idealistic narratives that opportune in fragmented situations pose a direct threat to individual subjectivity and hence also to memory. It is precisely in such cases as those in which there have been impact events, where societies, geographies and individuals have suffered devastation that leaves them fragmented and incoherent, like in the case of postwar Dresden, that a real call for curatorship, care for the past and for the unfolding of the present, comes to the fore.

French airman who was lost in flight off Corsica during the Second World War (also the author of *The Little Prince*), to provide parameters for the incertitudes. “Up in the air, in the service of his country – humiliated France – seeing little more than fragments and ruins and ‘stones’, [de Saint-Exupery] kept searching for meaning of the whole and insisting on the vision of the ‘cathedral’”, writes Klemperer. He quotes de Saint-Exupery as having stated: “Men die for a cathedral, not for stones” (cited in Klemperer 2001:viiii).

“The tension between a reality of stones, that is the perception of a fragmented universe” writes Klemperer, “and the search for wholeness of the cathedral is a phenomenon that marks all of humankind in an age that has lost its innocence and is riddled with doubts. It was, however, singularly acute in the German context of the incertitudes” (2001:xii). As George Orwell is quoted as saying at the start of Klemperer’s collection of essays: “The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection” (in Klemperer 2001:viiii), which stands as a behavioural tonic in resistance to what can occur when the image of the cathedral forces reality into a perverse representation of an impossible ideal.

The vision of National Socialism claimed to bring order to a seemingly fragmented universe. Through the monumentalising narrative of National Socialism and the dream of the Fatherland, cohesion and ‘wholeness’ would be restored to what seemed a social and economic reality of ruin. But it was a vision that lost sight of “the reality of stones” (Klemperer 2001:xii), and of difference and complexity. Klemperer writes:

> I have come to understand that in our secular world the insistence of the actual building of the cathedral, in particular in the name of a secular faith, is likely to be a dangerous undertaking. It was the freewheeling dialecticism in the German mind between the quest for the cathedral and the acknowledgment of the reality of the stones which accounts for the dynamics and for the vitality and the triumphs of the German mind. *But once the reality of stones was lost sight of or was explained away*, the dream of the cathedral became a nightmare and the drama, as Fritz Stern called it, of German history truly unfolded (*own emphasis*, 2001:xii).

Fragments – Klemperer’s stones – have agency in that they do not denounce catastrophe. They do

not proclaim coherency, when it has been lost, or when sense has been lost, something Benjamin attempted to communicate. As Lane has written, "[a] reading of Benjamin always runs the risk of imposing unity where there is disunity, solidity and uniformity where there is a heap of broken images, and order where there are myriad warnings of disorder and ongoing catastrophe" (2005:152). As de Kock has further stressed in relation to South Africa and the aftermath of apartheid, society's fragments must be understood on their own terms before 'reconstruction' can occur. Sometimes the original context fragments refer to and the violence they indicate through their precarious survival and existence must be understood. The reality of catastrophe must be felt. "[U]nlike words, objects [and most especially fragments]… always retain an intrinsic link with the original context from which they came because they are always the stuff of its stuff no matter how much they may be repeatedly re-interpreted" writes Pearce (1995:14). They are the stranded and leftover pieces of a discontinued puzzle, the original picture of which can be conjured only through research and education about the past. Fragments facilitate the imagination, with regard to the past and with regard to the future. In relation to a reality of fragments, as Benjamin and Johnson's projects affirm, subjectivity and the sensitivity and vulnerability of an individual is further kept alive.

## My Own Collection

I return to the open suitcase. I have unpacked the most important objects, the catalogue and the broken porcelain, but a plethora of more ethereal things that make up my collection fills the canvas drawer that I have set aside and the bottom compartment of the trunk. There are drawings, scribbled transcripts of conversations with my grandmother, incised catalogues, dried orchid flowers, illustrations with text worked into the illustrated lines of white, alien-like orchid plants.[107] There are paper aeroplanes made from the till slips of my journeys overseas, burned into flat shapes with my iron, and objects that I've found that I've cut into and reshaped into birds, feathers, and hands that seem to reach out from the poverty of their materials. One of my favourite objects is a woven bowl full of Ming porcelain shards that really has become the heavy ballast in the bottom of the trunk. When my family walks along the coastline

107. I had been in a car crash on the way to a practice exhibition in Stellenbosch in 2013. I decided to stay with a friend of mine in their flat in Tygervalley in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. It was a strange time, an isolated time, and my friend bought me a Phaleonopsis orchid. I did not like them because of their alien-like appearance and stature as imported epiphytes. They seemed out of place in South Africa. The whiteness of the orchid reflected the environment I was in, and its political 'silence' disturbed me. I turned to the whiteness and silence of the orchids through drawing, keeping in mind individuals and communities who disguised known suffering. I drew the orchid many times and the excavations into its surface of quiet, seeming perfection led me to draw and to question my grandmother in a similar way. Remarks about my grandmother's identity related to being Jewish surfaced, something she did not mention all that much in general.

108. The title of my research – *Breaking Porcelain* – refers to the process of challenging and shattering 'perfection', seemingly perfect surfaces or appearances, like porcelain. I have wanted to reveal the contradiction inherent in the reality of survival, like in the survival of the Meissen shards, for example. I have also wanted to really test the supposed strength of materials. The title also refers to a feeling, however, and not just a verb or a process. To be as *breaking porcelain* is to feel as if one has had what was seemingly perfect, a perception maybe, broken. It is a description of what it is like to feel shattered inside, for example, when the reality of loss is dealt with in a plain way.

Fig. 43 – 44. Views of Schoenmakerskop coastline in Port Elizabeth

in Port Elizabeth where my grandparents' ashes are scattered, my mother especially tries to find fragments of Ming porcelain washed up along the beach, once the precious cargo of a Portuguese vessel wrecked along the coastline just out to sea. Whatever we find is placed in the bowl, making up what is today a considerable yield.

If I am to curate all of these fragments, what I have collected and what I have made, or at least offer an interpretation of their collection as a group of objects, a very long and complex narrative would be required about a personal journey in curatorship that includes the negotiation of both the power of creativity and the negativity of loss.[108] Without this master narrative, however, as they rest together quite peacefully in the darkness of the suitcase today, no coherent tale is visible. Rather, each fragment registers with a "polyvalency of meaning" (Hall cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:182) and potential.

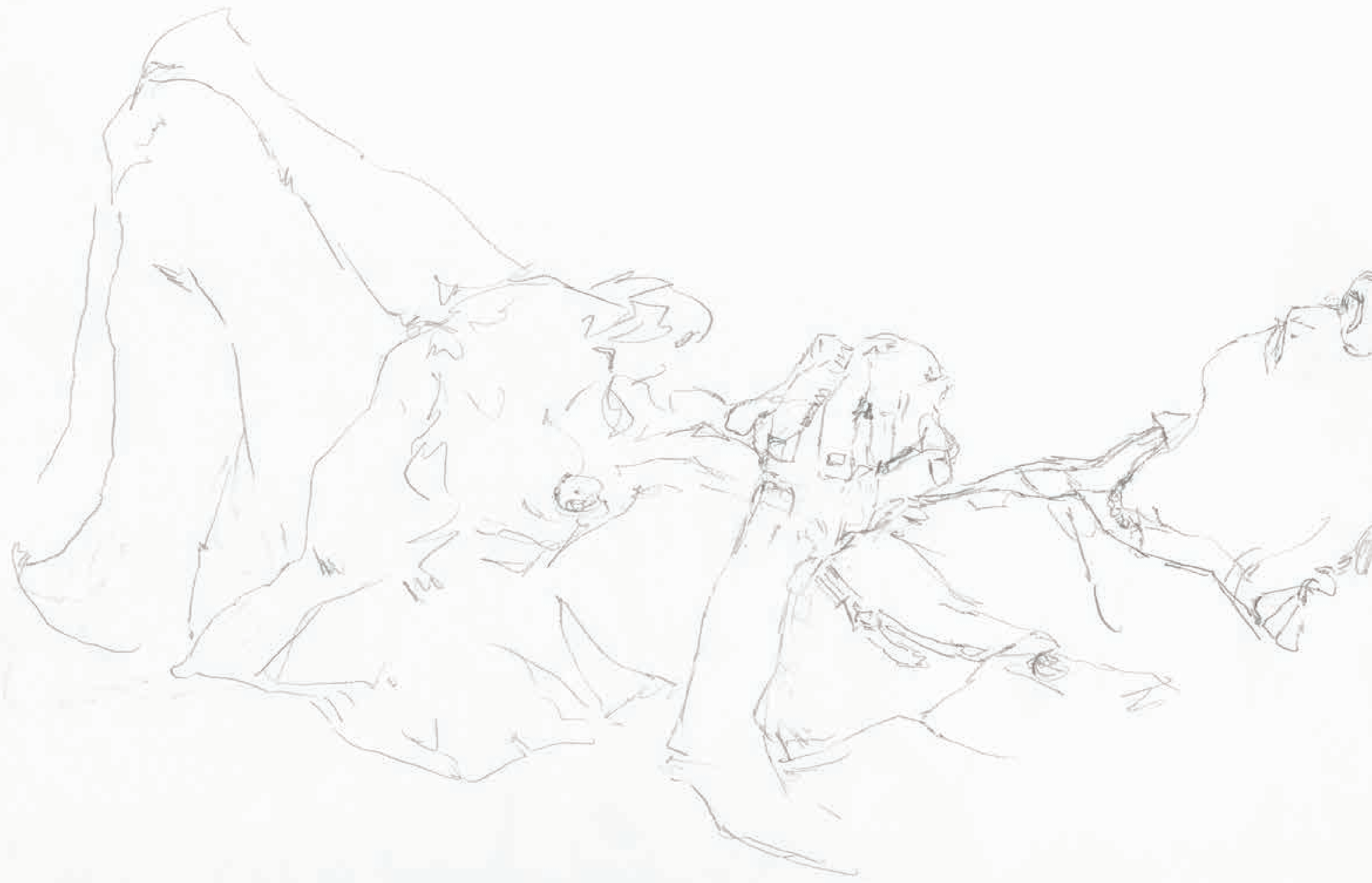
Martin Hall, in an essay called "Earth and Stone: Archaeology as memory" explores how objects are "used to create traces through time – giving substance to memory" (cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:182). Particularly, what he hopes to show is that "objects have an elusive quality – a *polyvalency of meaning* that allows them to carry different meanings for different people at the same time. This quality gives objects – whether small things or public monuments – potency in the construction of memory" (*own emphasis*, Hall cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:182). What am I preserving, or keeping intact through the preservation of my collection? Like Kabakov's character, I am collecting the potential for the reconstruction of a world, that of the subject's – my own – sacred everyday experiences. The collected objects in the suitcase represent my memories. What exists is an ecology of objects and experience interwoven as one fabric that through remembrance and imagination, remains complete and vivid.

What remains most interesting, is what is physically not collected in the suitcase. I take out a pile of drawings that I did while at my grandmother's home in Port Elizabeth. Some scribbled lines of our conversations in charcoal read things like "I wish I would have been allowed to draw, but I was given piano lessons", or "I hate the Germans, they stank under their arms. They never washed" (forgetting that she herself was also originally German). But when I look at the scrawled words, I really remember our breakfasts – how long she

would take to eat her egg, with her memory fading and what we later learnt was a cancer slowly eating away at her energy. She would murmer appreciatively and make little statements like "What a lovely egg'". She would also keep on saying "hello", like a little bird, or a mouse, as if to signal she had not entirely gone to sleep, but was present, even though just sitting up straight and having breakfast was incredibly difficult for her.

When I look at some of my drawings, as it is when one holds the broken porcelain in one's hands, an encyclopedia unfolds in my mind's eye. In the suitcase, also, nothing exists permanently bound or behind frames. Derrida's ghosts are free to roam and to speak at the time of their palpable reception – they hang around like perfume on the pages. In keeping the piles simply carefully arranged according to weight and materials, without any over-arching narrative preventing the specificity of the contexts related to the production of each piece from emanating, there is plenty of "light" (Lane 2005:152) in which memories of experience related to the fragments can emerge. Their lack of narrative-like coherency and the extreme differences in materials act like Johnson's unordered pages of *The Unfortunates*, facilitating the vulnerability of their 'reader' and illuminating the subjectivity of the person who handles the fragments. The agency of this collection of fragments is productive, igniting the imagination and raising questions that require the remembering of contexts that led to their making. In the light between fragments, I can remember the time with my grandmother, with my aunt and uncle, my mother, but with my grandmother especially. In the light between fragments, I can still hear her voice, rough like a crocodile.

Fig. 45. My grandmother sleeping



> To make a collection is to find, acquire, organize and store items, whether in a room, a house, a library, a museum or a warehouse. It is also inevitably, a way of thinking about the world – the connections and principles that produce a collection contain assumptions, juxtapositions, findings, experimental possibilities and associations. Collection-making, you could say, is a method of producing knowledge (Obrist 2015:39).

That knowledge Hans Ulrich Obrist talks of continues to grow as one tends to one's collection, whether through rearrangement or additions or subtractions, "a way of thinking about the world… assumptions, juxtapositions, findings, experimental possibilities and associations" (Obrist 2015:39) are constantly in play.

The strength of a collection is not only that there are attachments of memories to the individual pieces, but as Cardinal has mentioned, that one can read the thread of individual selfhood sewn through the how, what, why and when something was made or collected. The fragile individual exists through their collection. It is something I protect in my privileging of my own memory and experience over the objects for their own sake, in my privileging of a personal ecology inside the suitcase,[109] avoiding the temptation of display and recontextualisation of the pieces.

My suitcase is just the right size to fit into the corner of the study room at home where I work. It is kept company in its antique presence and weight by an antique desk that once belonged to my grandfather. The meanings inside it lie latent in the dark. It is a quiet archive of experience. Like my collecting ancestor Charlotte von Klemperer, I choose to live with my collection.

109. Anthropologist Steven Robins, the author of *Letters of Stone* (2016), in his essay "Silence in my father's house: memory, nationalism and narratives of the body" (1998), recognizes the importance of protecting a unique subjective experience of the evidence that he encountered in his family of life under Nazism – family photographs and letters that were sent to South Africa from an increasingly unbearable situation in Germany. "The fragments of memory and my father's silences around Holocaust memory", he writes, "may be deemed to constitute more 'authentic' and embodied traces of shattering encounters with Nazism than the nationalist narratives of Zionism" (Robins cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:123). Robins explores "the implications of this apparently insoluble solution [the necessity of historical narratives about the Holocaust in the face of potential denial or revision] through a reflection upon a politics and ethics of living with the fragments of memory… [which] may manifest as *a tactic of resistance to totalizing narratives…*" (*own emphasis*, cited in Nuttall and Coetzee 1998:124).

CHAPTER 5

# APPROACHING CONTRADICTION/ TOWARD RECONCILIATION (CONCLUSION)

# APPROACHING CONTRADICTION/ TOWARD RECONCILIATION (CONCLUSION) 5

Hans Ulrich Obrist provides an interesting history of the development of the curator in a chapter called "Curating, Exhibitions and the Gesamtkunswerk" in *Ways of Curating* (2015). The word, as Lehrer *et al.* have suggested, descends from the Latin etymological root, *curare: to take care of* (Obrist 2015:24 – 25). Obrist traces the development of this role from the *curatores* of ancient Rome, civil servants who oversaw "public works, including the empire's aqueducts, bathhouses and sewers" (2015:25) to the *curatus* in the medieval period who cared for the "more metaphysical aspect of human life… [as] priest[s] who took care of the parish" (2015:25), through to the museum *curator* of the late eighteenth century, until today. Today, against a plethora of simplified and reductive definitions, Obrist chooses to describe curating as "cultivating, growing, pruning and trying to help people and their shared contexts to thrive" (2015:25).

There are many permutations and applications of the role of curator, but increasingly, this has been associated with the craft of exhibition making (Obrist 2015). In this regard, as mentioned earlier, curatorship has given birth to what is regarded as the *auteur*, a somewhat "overriding figure" (Obrist 2015:32) who, if seen in a fairly derogatory way, uses artwork "to illustrate his or her own theory" (2015:32 - 33). But, Obrist warns that "[a]rtists and their works must not be used to illustrate a curatorial proposal or premise to which they are subordinated. Instead, exhibitions are best generated through conversations and collaborations with artists, whose input should steer the process from the beginning" (2015:33). In

a society where there is an over proliferation of information and goods – "[t]he exponential increase in the amount of data created by human societies is a basic fact of our time. There is no type of information – documents, books, images, video – that is declining" (Obrist 2015: 24) – the word curator can be too easily taken to apply to any field where simply editorial type choices need to be made. But, as Obrist tries to explain, curatorship is much more than this. "[I]t's important to shape exhibitions as projects of long duration and to consider issues of sustainability and legacy… Making art is not the matter of a moment, and nor is an exhibition…" (2015:24).

The role my collection of fragments might yet play, as well as the answers to my research question of what role the shards can play in the distance between the political image and what has been experienced, are not "matter[s] of the moment" (Obrist 2015:24). The answers to these questions extend through time. In allowing time to pass, a seminal answer to my research question has already been provided. I was lucky enough to be a part of the reunion in Dresden in July 2016, when as a result of inheriting broken porcelain, my family connected for the first time across branches that had had to split up into different geographies as a result of National Socialism and the Second World War. The receiving of the broken Meissen porcelain has already had a role to play in family members exploring the distance between a vague understanding of where they have come from, and first hand knowledge of the country of our ancestors' origins and their place within the family as a whole. An experience of both new relationships and an established intricate timeline helped give each member of the family a sense of how they fitted in and how they are connected to one another. The Meissen porcelain fragments make a powerful case for the agencies of the inanimate, something understood by many curatorial bodies, individuals and institutions, such as the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, for example, as discussed in Chapter One.

In a personal capacity, the role of the broken porcelain as pieces of a puzzle that belonged to a picture I did not know, motivated my journeys geographically, amongst family, and historically. They especially drew me closer to my grandmother through the discussion of memories of her life in Dresden, coming to terms with a Jewish identity,[110] and her experiences of life in South Africa. Like my ancestor Klemens von Klemper-

110. In the time that we spent together, we spoke a great deal about the past, about Dresden, about my grandmother's experiences as a young girl and teenager, and this notion of being Jewish cropped up sometimes. It is hard to say, but in some ways it feels that the conversation brought up a mixture of emotions, that perhaps were useful for my grandmother to express. She would often break into song – German Nazi songs at that – and then into fits of laughter. She was tone deaf and always bemoaned being stopped from singing in school, having her feelings really hurt when she was prevented from singing with her class. She seemed to making up for all of this in the last two or three years of her life. When I was drawing her, which I often did at breakfast or while she was resting, she would just talk to me about how she felt. She had a dedicated audience and a safe environment to share her feelings. A great deal of the time, she would reconfirm that she was Mika, no-one else, as if she was trying to say she could not be defined by any particular group. She was herself. I had my iPhone lying on the dining room table while we spoke, occasionally recording our conversations. "What's that?" she would ask. "It's my iPhone, Gran", I would say. She was quiet for a moment, and then triumphantly told me that she was a "mePhone". Resolving her sense of identity was a theme that seemed to permeate our time together. When I was drawing her falling asleep in the afternoon, she asked to see what I had drawn. I showed her. She said, "You know, I don't look Jewish, but I am". I had the sense that there were feelings she had that in this very late time, she could resolve just a little bit, and let go of them also. She was increasingly tired and uncomfortable, but amidst this it seemed so important to her to know who she was. Herself, was the conclusion she reached.

er described his early life in Dresden, I too am now in contact with my own whole new "slew of cousins" (von Klemperer 2009:9). These are connections that might never have been encouraged had it not been, ironically, for the violence of the Second World War and the bombing of Dresden that both saved and partly destroyed a portion of the Meissen porcelain that in its broken state has served as the instigator for our reconnection in recent years.

In the physical bodies of the broken Meissen porcelain itself, are embedded contradictions that are not always easily resolved. The Meissen pieces communicate ambivalently about the forces that have shaped them. Not only Badiou's violent intentions are evident. The quality of the Meissen handwork that has also been preserved represents an opposing desire to that of warfare. In the surviving shapes of the Meissen shards, great strengths, and a desire to create and to protect are also evident. On the one hand Charlotte von Klemperer takes care to collect the pasts and the present contexts of every piece, pieces that become heirlooms that can be handed down to her children. On the other hand there are the forces of violence that destroy connections and bonds, the lifelines between people, and an ecology made up of the "flexible network[s] between people and things" (Keenan and Weizman 2012:65). Both cases are reflected in the survival of the shards.

The careful hands behind the creation of Meissen, the sacrifices for the sake of creativity that went into perfecting Meissen's techniques, the painters, the sculptors, the owners of the porcelain, their intentions, my great, great grandmother and her collecting love, her care, what went into the creation of the von Klemperer catalogue, the intentions behind recording and preserving – the accumulative effect of all of this stands in harsh contrast to the motivations of mass destruction. But, semi-destroyed and semi-preserved, the heirlooms I have, through their survival, bear the evidence of both these extremes. They are testament to such opposing human forces.

Part of understanding what it means to inherit the broken porcelain is understanding the meanings inherent in survival. It is difficult to consume 'survival'. Just like the broken Meissen porcelain in my possession today, I would not exist if it were not for both the desire to care and to nurture – for the family to stay together and toward a better future – and the desire for absolute destruction inherent in Nazism and the bombing

strategies of World War II. If it were not for the horror of the Nazi regime, my family would never have left Germany and started anew in South Africa. Two refugees from different parts of their country would not have met in Port Elizabeth and started a family. But there is no way that one can be thankful for horror, in spite of turns of fate that have been necessary for one's own existence. Similarly, the reality of the survival of the porcelain, which has relied upon both the strength of the nurturing, collecting and preserving instinct, but simultaneously has been shaped in relation to horror, is not easy to come to terms with.

Survival in itself represents "difficult knowledge" (Lehrer *et al.* 2011). It represents a difficult past often rife with unreason and contradiction. Survival is difficult to celebrate when it references incredible calamity, narrowly escaped, that has also meant the devastating loss of lives. The gathering in Dresden, however, made it clear to me that it is also important that the strengths that contributed to survival – tenacity, character, foresight, and so forth – are acknowledged. All the branches of the family have grown and been successful in spite of the diaspora. Consequences of evil have been turned to good through the incredible efforts of people today connected with Dresden and the family and what remains of the Meissen collection. The success stories that have developed in spite of the violence of history are significant.

## Toward Reconciliation

There are definitely grounds for the shards to perform their role in Dresden as memorials of the bombing of Dresden and the collective suffering this caused, if Anette Loesch has her way. An exhibition of the broken Meissen in Dresden is something Loesch would love to see happen (personal communication, Dresden, 1 July 2016).[111] While it is true that it is difficult to gain a sense of how Dresdeners really feel about the event of the bombing and the Second World War today, especially if only assessed through the city's architecture and memorials, Loesch believes that many people feel a great deal of concern for the past, but keep their memories and emotions to themselves.[112] It seems that the destruction of the city and suffering it caused is an intrinsic part of their identities, even though there may be no reliable and safe vehicle for this expression. The bro-

111. According to Loesch, whether or not the proposed exhibition happens depends a great deal on the interests of the current director of the Dresden State Museums. The directors have been changing. So far, she has not yet been successful with her proposal. It is something, however, that she will keep on trying to turn into a reality (personal communication, Dresden, 1 July 2016).

112. How Anette Loesch and her contemporaries feel could very well be a niche view. There is a great deal of sentiment directed toward Dresden and its people about it being a city that wishes to forget. George Packer in "Embers" describes a conversation with Stephen Adam, the spokesperson for the state art collections of Dresden at the time, held in relation to the renovations that were taking place of the main *Residenzschloss*. Packer describes that "[a]cross the walls of its courtyard, craftsmen… [were] scratching copies of the sixteenth-century palace's decorative motifs, charcoal-colored on white plaster, with such care that the longing for Dresden to be as it once was… [was] almost palpable" (2010). (Packer holds a biased view, in line with the idea that the people of Dresden want to forget their past, rather than confront it, like Berlin for example). Packer recounts what Stephan Adam, whose offices were in the *Residenzschloss* told him "wryly", that "[i]f they could, the people here would rebuild every single building. They want to completely forget. *It never happened*" (Packer 2010). Views like Packer's of the views of the people of Dresden are widespread. It is hence even more sobering to know that there are people, real Dresdeners rather than reporters, who hold very different opinions.

113. Anne Fuchs writes of the consecration of the rebuilt Frauenkirche in 2005 as an "event… staged as a symbolic act of reconciliation that recognised the memory of the past, while gesturing to a new beginning" (2012:2). In Fuchs' view,

> [i]n the cultural topography of unified Germany, Dresden is now firmly established as placeholder for this new culture of reconciliation. It is characterised by what one might call a 'soft consensus' that violent warfare always leaves behind fractured personal, political and cultural legacies that require symbolic healing. Some may argue that this consensus has eroded the sharpness of historical analysis. Others hold that the time has come for the objective hardness of historical judgement to be softened by collective emotions that concern not so much a revisionist reading of the past as the recognition of loss and trauma (2012:3).

ken shards as memorials would have a definitive role to play in the work of memory recovery in Dresden. They are also testament to the strengths and qualities of Meissen porcelain in particular, a further indication of Meissen's incredible reputation of survival. An exhibition could further help embed the collecting family von Klemperer as a family of Dresden, making the racist demarcations that were brought upon people with complex identities appear as ludicrous as they really were.

It is not easy to find fragments of the destruction of Dresden in the main areas of the city today. However, it seems some fragments are definitely being kept by the city. On the night of July 1 2016, the family was gathered for the first official dinner during which members from each branch gave illustrated presentations on their particular branch's history. After the presentations, Victor von Klemperer, one of my cousins (many times removed) and the person who was responsible for organizing the reunion, was handed a piece of the old *Frauenkirche* as a gift by the deputy mayor of Dresden.

The renovated *Frauenkirche* (Church of Our Lady) is probably the strongest architectural symbol for the people of Dresden that references both the city's history of destruction, and its reconciliatory intentions.[113] It lay untouched, in ruins, for all the years during the East German regime, as "a mountain of blackened sandstones overgrown with shrubs, officially declared a memorial against war" (Packer 2010). But in 1990, a group of private citizens in Dresden founded the *Förderkreis zum Wiederaufbau der Frauenkirche Dresden e.V.* (association promoting the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche), launching a very successful fundraising initiative that soon became international in scope (Fuchs 2012:2). Packer further describes that

> [t]he most symbolically important moral and financial support came from Britain—especially from Coventry, whose own cathedral had been destroyed, along with most of the city, by German bombers in 1940. The restoration of the Frauenkirche joined the two cities and former enemies in reconciliation, and a huge gilded cross and orb placed atop the dome upon its completion, in 2005, were fabricated by an Englishman whose father had been one of the airmen in the Dresden bombing (2010).

Fig. 46. The Frauenkirche in 2016

Fuchs further attests to the important fact that

> [i]n contrast to other building projects in unified Germany, the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche was not steered by the city, the Lutheran Church, the state of Saxony or the federal parliament in Berlin: while all these institutions eventually supported the plan, it remained first and foremost a citizens' initiative.

According to Fuchs, because of this, "the rebuilt church is now widely recognised as a fitting symbol of a civic democracy dedicated to a politics of national and international reconciliation" (2012:3).

Almost four thousand of the original stones that had lain in a heap of rubble for over forty years were used in the reconstruction of the church. It is one of the rare places in Dresden where evidence of the past in the form of a mosaic of the much darker original stones is visible between the other tanned squares. As was evident in the giving of the gift of the fragment of the original *Frauenkirche,* more of the original stones must have been saved. It is an interesting literal piece of history to give to our family who were an invested and embedded part of Dresden's past before Nazism and the horrors of the Second World War unfolded. I found it a beautiful link that was made in the giving of the stone, consolidating history and creating a sense of communion or sharing in a long trajectory of suffering. Without many words other than a warm welcoming gesture, the fragment we received, to repeat Pearce again, is unequivocably "the stuff of its stuff' (1995:14). It represents a context and a part of history we narrowly escaped, that our porcelain

# BIBLIOGRAPHY


Adam, P. 1992. *Art of the Third Reich.* New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Assmann, A. 2006. History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony. *Poetics Today* 27: 261-273.

Baer, U. 2013. To Give Memory a Place: Contemporary Holocaust Photography and The Landscape Tradition, in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, edited by M. del Pillar Blanco and E. Peeren. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. 415-444.

Barron, S. 1997. *Exiles and Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Belpoliti, M and Gordon, R (eds.). 2001. *The Voice of Memory: Primo Levi: Interviews, 1961 – 1987*. New York: The New Press.

Benjamin, W. 1968. Unpacking my Library, in *Illuminations*, edited by H. Arendt. New York: Schocken Books. 59-67.

Benjamin, W. 1999. *The Arcades Project.* London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Budd, M. 2012. *Aesthetic Essays.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brenner, F. 2003. *Diaspora*. Amsterdam: Mets & Schilt.

Brown, B. 2001. Thing Theory. *Critical Inquiry*, 28: 1 – 22.

Craps, S. 2010. Wor(l)ds of Grief: Traumatic memory and literary witnessing in cross-cultural perspective. *Textual Practice*, 24: 51-68.

del Pillar Blanco, M and Peeren, E. (eds.). 2013. *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Derrida, J. and Stiegler, B. 2013. Spectographies, in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, edited by M. del Pillar Blanco and E. Peeren. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. 37-52.

de Certeau, M. 1993. Walking in the City, in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by S. During. London: Routledge. 150-160.

de Kok, I. 1998. Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition, in *Negotiating the Past: the Making of Memory in South Africa*, edited by S. Nuttall and C. Coetzee. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 57-74.

de Waal, E. 2010. *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*. London: Vintage.

de Waal, E. 2010. From the Ashes, in *Fine European Ceramics including Porcelain from the von Klemperer Collection*. Bonhams Catalogue. London.

Dubow, Neville. 2001. *Imaging the Unimaginable: Holocaust Memory in Art and Architecture*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town – Jewish Publications.

Ehmann, S; Klanten, R; Gril, S and Commentz, S. 2008. *Fragiles: porcelain, glass & ceramics*. Berlin: Gestalten.

Elsner, J and Cardinal, R. 1994. *Cultures of Collecting*. London: Reaktion Books.

Elkins, J. 2008. *Writing with Images.* [Online]. Available: http://writingwithimages.com/ [9 October 2016].

Farr, I. (ed.). 2012. *Memory*. London: The MIT Press.

Ferguson, B.W. 1996. Exhibition Rhetorics, in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, edited by R. Greenberg, B.W. Ferguson and S. Nairne. London: Routledge. 126-136.

Frazon, Z. 2012. *New Museology*. Available: http://tranzit.org/curatorialdictionary/index.php/dictionary/new-museology/ [10 October 2016].

Fuchs, A. 2012. *After the Dresden Bombing: Pathways of Memory from 1945 to the Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gleesan, J. 1998. *The Arcanum*. London: Bantam Books.

Heinrich, N and Pollak, M. 1996. From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a Singular Position, in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, edited by R. Greenberg, B.W. Ferguson and S. Nairne. London: Routledge. 166-179.

Highmore, B. 2002. *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Hofmann, M (ed.). 2013. *Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters*. London: Granta Books.

Judt, T. 2010. *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. London: Vintage.

Karp, I and Wilson, F. 1996. Constructing the Spectacle of Culture in Museums, in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, edited by R. Greenberg, B.W. Ferguson and S. Nairne. London: Routledge. 180-191.

Keenan, T and Weizman, E. 2012. *Mengele's Skull: The Advent of a Forensics Aesthetics*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Klee, E; Dressen, W and Riess, V. 1991. *The Good Old Days: The Holocaust as Seen by its Perpetrators and Bystanders*. New York: Konecky & Konecky.

Klemperer, Victor. 2000. *The Language of the Third Reich*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Kuhn, S. 2010. A Short Introduction to the Collection, in *Fine European Ceramics including Porcelain from the von Klemperer Collection*. Bonhams Catalogue. London.

Lane, R.J 2005. *Reading Walter Benjamin: Writing through the Catastrophe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

*Shoah*. 1985. Film. Directed by Claude Lanzmann. Paris: BBC Historia.

Lehrer, E; Patterson, M. E. and Milton, C. E. 2011. *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Liem, R. 2007. Silencing Historical Trauma: The politics and psychology of memory and voice. *Journal of Peace Psychology*, 13: 153-174.

Loesch, A. 2004. Das Schicksal der Porzellannsammlung Gustav von Klemperer. *Keramos*, 184: 75-90.

Marien, M. W. 2006. *Photography: a Cultural History*. London: Lawrence King Publishers.

Marino, G. 2004. *Basic Writings of Existentialism*. New York: Modern Library.

Mühlmann, M. 2015. *Sites of the Novemberpogrom 1938 in Innsbruck.* [Online]. Available: http://www.novemberpogrom1938.at/e/Novemberpogrom_e.html [9 October 2016].

Nuttall, S and Coetzee, C. (eds.). 1998. *Negotiating the Past: the Making of Memory in South Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Obrist, H. U. 2015. *Ways of Curating*. London: Penguin Books.

O'Doherty, B. 1996. The Gallery as Gesture, in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, edited by R. Greenberg, B.W. Ferguson and S. Nairne. London: Routledge.

O'Doherty, B. 1986. *Inside The White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. London: University of California Press, Ltd.

Packer, G. 2010. *Embers: Will a prideful city finally confront its past?* [Online]. Available: http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/02/01/embers-2 [9 October 2016]

Pearce, S. M. 1998. *Collecting in Contemporary Practice*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Pearce, S. M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. London: Routledge.

Petropoulis, J. 2000. *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany.* The Penguin Press: London.

*Barbara*. 2012. Film. Directed by Christian Pezold. Berlin.

Pitts, T. 2014. Writing with Images. [Online]. Available: https://sebald.wordpress.com/2014/01/31/writing-with-images/ [9 October 2016]

*Porzellannsammlung Gustav von Klemperer*. 1928. Collection Catalogue. Dresden.

Robins, S. 1998. Silence in my father's house: memory, nationalism, and narratives of the body, in *Negotiating the Past: the Making of Memory in South Africa*, edited by S. Nuttall and C. Coetzee. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 120-142.

Robins, S. 2016. *Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa*. Cape Town: Penguin Books.

Roxan, D and Wanstall, K. 1964. *The Jackdaw of Linz: The Story of Hitler's Art Thefts*. London: Cassell.

Sandon, J. 2010. *Meissen Porcelain*. Oxford: Shire Publications.

Savage, G. 1967. *18th-century German Porcelain*. London: Spring Books

Sebald, W.G. 2004. *On the Natural History of Destruction*. New York: The Modern Library.

Sebald, W.G. 2001. *Austerlitz*. London: Penguin Books.

Sitwell, S. 1949. *Theatrical Figures in Porcelain*. London: Curtain Press.

Sonntag, H. 2010. *Meissen in Meissen*. Porzellan-Manufaktur Meissen: Edition Leipzig.

Tait, H. 1962. *Porcelain*. London: Hamlyn.

*The Lives of Others*. 2006. Film. Directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. Berlin: Bayerische Runfunk Arte.

Von Klemperer, K. 2009. *Voyage Through the Twentieth Century: A Historian's Recollections and Reflections*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Von Klemperer, K. 2001. *German Incertitudes, 1914 – 1945: The Stones and the Cathedral*. Connecticut: Praeger.

Vidler, A. Buried Alive, in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, edited by M. del Pillar Blanco and E. Peeren. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. 403-414.

Zweig, S. 2009. *Wondrak and Other Stories*. London: Pushkin Press.

Zweig, S. 2005. *Twilight, Moonbeam Alley*. London: Pushkin Press.