

FERENC TÓKE

Comparing the Tropes of Silence in David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, and Winfried Georg Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction*

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Abstract

This paper compares the tropes of silence found in David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, and Winfried Georg Sebald's *On The Natural History of Destruction* using the methodology of New Historicism. These three works deal with World War II traumatic experiences: the Holocaust, the internment of Japanese Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the strategic bombardment of German cities. The first question of the analysis focuses on the possibility of processing trauma experience through silence and questions whether remembrance is a more effective way of healing trauma. The process of coping with trauma reveals where the boundaries of representation lie and offers opportunities to expand them. It raises a second question concerning the role of visual representation in coping with trauma experience. The current study scrutinizes the characters of these three works to answer these questions while considering the historical context. The issue is closely related to Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory and the theme of intergenerational trauma. The analysis's main points also involve language use and its connection to visual representation, the mental and social factors surrounding trauma experience, and the effects of war on characters..

Keywords: history, memory, trauma, World War II, Holocaust, David Guterson, Art Spiegelman, W.G. Sebald

Introduction

Some aspects of war trauma resist the powers of depiction.¹ This paper attempts to reveal the internment camp background and air raid survivors' silence as represented in literature. These questions were answered by analyzing three representative works: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, *A Survivor's Tale*, David Guterson's *Falling on Cedars*, and Winfried Georg Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction*. The listed works address the Holocaust, the internment of Japanese Americans, and air raids on German cities. Though much research has been done on the topic of trauma literature, the novelty of my paper is that it focuses on the comparative analysis of three literary works with different genres and highlights the persistent importance of writing about the taboo of silence.

¹ Friedländer, Saul. "History, Memory, and the Historian: Dilemmas and Responsibilities." *New German Critique*, no. 80 (2000): 10.

The present study investigates whether it is more effective to process the trauma experience through silence or understanding and remembrance.² This issue relates to the concept of postmemory introduced by Marianne Hirsch and the theme of intergenerational trauma which is the shared mental representation of large-scale trauma suffered by the ancestors of a group.³ Postmemory describes the relationship that second generation survivors bear to the personal and collective trauma of those who came before. They remember only using stories, images, and behaviors they grew up in. However, these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply that they constitute memories in their own right.⁴

The second question concerns the role of visual illustrations. Art Spiegelman uses the mixed genre of graphic novels and cartoon to expand the perspective of representation. W.G. Sebald's (pseudo)historical witness literature utilizes photos of bombings to shed light on the taboos of German collective memory. David Guterson's historical novel uses highly visual language. Since these three works deal with specific historical events, a third question arises: whether these pieces of literature are sources of unconventional history.⁵

However, prior to further analysis, the key terms of this study require clarification. According to Hayden White, the past is comprised of events that once existed but no longer do.⁶ He also uses the concept of historical past, which includes the studied and represented traces of the past.⁷ It merits attention that historical past is only a highly selective version of the past but is understood as the totality of history. Ankersmit, following White's footsteps, states that the notion of the past as historical experience suggests the existence of an objective reality outside human influence.⁸ He also highlights that history is constructed.⁹ Moreover, Ankersmit introduces the concept of memory to historiography. He argues that memory is strictly within the individual's domain.¹⁰

Multidirectional memory is a key term concerning my research. Michael Rothberg created the concept, according to which historical memories interact with each other.¹¹ He

² Kisantal Tamás, *Túlélő történetek: Ábrázolásmód és történetiség a holokauszt művészetében* (Budapest: Kijarat Kiadó, 2009), 35.

³ David Matz, Eric B. Vogel, Sandra Mattar and Haydee Montenegro. "Interrupting Intergenerational Trauma: Children of Holocaust Survivors and the Third Reich." *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* vol. 46, no. 2 (2015): 186.

⁴ Marianne Hirsch. *The Generation of Postmemory* (Columbia University Press, 1983), 5.

⁵ Szélpál Livia. „A történelem jövője, bevezetés egy nem hagyományos történetírás (unconventional history) elméletébe” *Aetas*. vol. 22, no. 1 (2007): 136.

⁶ Hayden White. *The Practical Past* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 13.

⁷ White, *The Practical Past*, 13.

⁸ Frank Ankersmit. *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford University Press, 2005): 4.

⁹ Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience*, 4.

¹⁰ Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience*, 5.

¹¹ Michael Rothberg. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford

favors the productive view of historical memories by arguing that comparing and contrasting memories benefits understanding and remembrance.¹² Rothberg emphasizes the dual nature of memory. It is collective and individual simultaneously: remembrance is an individual action within the framework established by the collective.¹³ The concept of shared memory, which integrates and harmonizes the perspectives of individual memories, relates to this dual nature.¹⁴ Jeffrey C. Alexander's psychoanalytic approach introduces additional levels of complexity to Rothberg's idea by accentuating the fact that the individual has a propensity to repress traumatic experiences from the consciousness, which undermines coping. Therefore, traumatic emotions come from the event itself and the anxiety caused by repression.¹⁵

The different perspectives of experiencing history led Ankersmit to define historical experience as the way a human being of the present experiences the past. The concept involves a duality of feelings. The desire to recover the past creates a moment of love, but the discovery that it is situated in a space enclosed from the present provides a moment of loss.¹⁶ Therefore, the underlying assumption of the essay is to determine how the analyzed works challenge the established limits of trauma representation. Based on Ewa Domanska's definition, Guterson's historical novel, Sebald's (pseudo)historical witness literature, and Spiegelman's graphic novel may be interpreted as historical sources.¹⁷ They belong to the field of unconventional history and are characterized by experimentation with genres. This leads to the conclusion that the past is not a concept with absolute meaning but a multitude of stories within the boundaries of public history.¹⁸ The linguistic turn in the 1970s fostered the emergence of New History, and from that paradigm change, sprouted the different versions of alternate and unconventional histories. The linguistic turn in historiography was first outlined within the intellectual history framework by Hayden White's *Metahistory*¹⁹ in 1973. The described paradigm change resulted in a new historicist literary critique that aims to understand literary works within the historical context. It was created with a particular focus on intertextuality.²⁰ The present study follows the principle that understanding texts results from the interaction among readers, social institutions, conventions, ideologies, and practices, so it analyzes the aforementioned pieces of literature in their historical context.

University Press, 2009), 3.

¹² Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 11.

¹³ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 15.

¹⁴ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 15.

¹⁵ Jeffrey C. Alexander. *Trauma: A Social Theory* (New York: Polity Press, 2012), 10.

¹⁶ Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience*, 9.

¹⁷ Ewa Domanska. "Hayden White: Beyond Irony." *History and Theory* 37, no. 2 (1998): 174.

¹⁸ Szélpál, "A történelem jövője," 136.

¹⁹ Szélpál, "A történelem jövője," 137.

²⁰ Szélpál, "A történelem jövője," 138.

Intergenerational Memory as a Bridge to Healing

The novel *Snow Falling on Cedars* opens with the scene of Kabuo Miyamoto sitting behind the defendant's table. He is accused of murdering Carl Heine.²¹ The two men were born on San Pedro Island. They were childhood friends before World War II. The two characters are on opposite sides, but they are very similar. They served in the US military during the war. Carl in the Pacific War while Kabuo on the European front. Both became fishermen after returning home. Carl and Kabuo show only a few emotions but are loving, caring fathers. Despite these similarities, the war changed their relationship.

Kabuo was sent to camp Manzanar²² and then served on the Western front in the US military. Upon returning to San Pedro Island, he discovered that Carl's mother sold his family's land. Consequently, Kabuo bears hard feelings for the Heine family. Carl fought against the Japanese Empire's soldiers, which altered his feelings towards Japanese Americans. Their conflict is resolved when Carl agrees to return the Miyamoto family's land. Unfortunately, Carl did not live long enough to tell anyone about it, so Kabuo was accused of murder. Racism is unspoken on the heavenly island, but silence still speaks.

Intergenerational trauma is likewise evident. When Kabuo returns from war, he realizes that Carl's mother bought his family's land. It indicates a dual trauma experience for Kabuo. He realizes that San Pedro's people are ungrateful, and he inherited a family feud. It is thought-provoking to see how Kabuo and Carl's characters could serve as a bridge between the two sides. Their fathers once started like them as a possible bridge between the Japanese and Americans, but the war tore those hopes apart as they died.²³ Their story supports the argument that trauma can only be addressed through remembrance and acceptance.

Another protagonist is Hatsue, Kabuo's wife. Her silence requires separate attention from Carl, Kabuo, and Ishmael because her trauma experience is rooted in internment and not in the battlefield. She is torn between two sets of values. The traditional Japanese expectation is that she may marry a Japanese man. However, as a teenager, she is in love with Ishmael Chambers. During her internment in Camp Manzanar, she ends the relationship and follows her family's expectations. Silence becomes her only refuge, because if she speaks out, she reveals intemperance. Therefore, this silence makes her character more Japanese.²⁴

²¹ Daniel McKay. "Captive Memories: Articulate vs. Disarticulated Silences in David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars* and Wendy Catran's *The Swap*." *Comparative Literature Studies* 50, no. 4 (2013): 652

²² Manzanar is best known as one of ten American concentration camps where more than 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II from 1942 to 1945. (Laher, Neal "The Internment," 1)

²³ Cheryl Greenberg. "Black and Jewish Responses to Japanese Internment?" *Journal of American Ethnic History* 14, no. 2, (1995): 6.

²⁴ McKay "Captive Memories," 656.

Hatsue's father is arrested because of his Japanese origins, and later, the entire family is interned. It is the first layer of her traumatic experience. The second layer derives from the fact that she is torn between social values. She betrays her family by being in a secret relationship with an American boy, a *bakujin*.²⁵

The final product of her realization is a letter to Ishmael in which she explains her feelings:

I don't love you, Ishmael [...] When we met that last time in the cedar tree and I felt your body move against mine, I knew with certainty that everything was wrong. I knew we could never be right together.²⁶

Here she generates Ishmael's trauma. The experience of her internment based on her ancestry is not just a trauma. It also lifts the burden of lies. She is put behind fences, but she finally becomes free. Her marriage to Kabuo is the final capitulation of her inner battle. Thus, the combined trauma of Hatsue and Ishmael ends.

Hatsue is a representation of the Pacific War. However, this battle is concluded in a different manner. In her, the Japanese side achieves victory. Hatsue insists that oceans, like cultures, do not mix. She cannot accept her double identity as a Japanese American. When their relationship ends and Hatsue marries Kabuo, the war from within is projected outside as the man fights on the Western European front. After World War II, Kabuo continued to fight for his family's land. When Kabuo is arrested, the conflict reignites in Hatsue. She wraps herself in the silence of hate towards the Americans. The conflict is resolved only when Ishmael uses his position as an outsider to help the Miyamoto family.²⁷

The protagonist of *Maus*, Vladek Spiegelman, also has a trauma experience connected to racism. He differs from Carl and Kabuo. He tells his story in detail, engaging his emotions. He does not distance himself from the memories. The text's focus is the individual's effort to represent history and the struggle to retrieve personal memory.²⁸

The Germans didn't want to leave anywhere, a sign of all what they did. You heard about the gas, but I'm telling not rumors, but only what really I saw. For this, I was an eyewitness.²⁹

²⁵ McKay "Captive Memories," 655.

²⁶ David Guterson. *Snow Falling on Cedars* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 210.

²⁷ McKay "Captive Memories," 656.

²⁸ Janet Thormann. The Representation of The Shoah in *Maus: History and Psychology*. *Res Publica*. 8, no. 2 (2002): 127.

²⁹ Art Spiegelman. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), 59.

Vladek explains why his accounts of the Holocaust are valid, but he is too close to the events to stay objective. He cannot live and tell his story without emotions.

The role of the bridge emerges again in Vladek's case. However, the scene with an Afro-American hitchhiker shows the opposite. Vladek does not want his son to help him. His son notes that the Holocaust survivor Polish Jew should not be racist. Vladek should be a metaphorical bridge, but he cannot fulfill the role.³⁰ That is why the task inherited by generations after him. Vladek's son, Arthur, helps the hitchhiker. The experiences of the Holocaust do not change Vladek. However, seeing the way his father acts makes Arthur realize that he must be different. He is obligated to write his father's stories so later generations can build a bridge³¹ which adds to the previous argument that trauma and conflict can only be addressed through remembrance and acceptance.

Arthur Spiegelman's relation to his father's story is an example of intergenerational trauma. By recording his father's memories in a graphic novel,³² he re-experiences them. He engages these memories and displays the postmemory phenomenon.³³ The graphic novel conveys the son's pain around the Holocaust, as if his suffering was inherited from the father.³⁴ The signs of distress that Arthur experienced after publishing his work may have resulted from this phenomenon. Postmemory is related to the notion of cultural trauma introduced by Jeffrey C. Alexander. He states that cultural trauma is created when members of a group feel that they are exposed to horrible events, which leave marks on their collective consciousness and determine their future identity.³⁵

The idea of postmemory is related to intergenerationally transferred trauma.³⁶ Research suggests that the children of Holocaust survivors often experience secondary traumatic stress. This implies the need for the children of survivors to process traumatic experiences that their parents have transmitted to them.³⁷ The distress that Arthur experiences may be the result of intergenerationally transmitted trauma. He hopes that if he writes Vladek's story, the burden of his father's legacy will be lifted. Instead, he feels guilty because he made money on people's suffering which reveals an internal battle between staying silent

³⁰ Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*, 99.

³¹ Greenberg. "Black and Jewish Responses," 6.

³² A graphic novel is a fictional story that is presented in comic-strip format and published as a book. (Costello, "History and Memory," 23.)

³³ Lisa A. Costello. "History and Memory in a Dialogic of "Performative Memorialization" in Art Spiegelman's "Maus: A Survivor's Tale." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 39, no. 2 (2006): 23.

³⁴ Thormann, *The Representation of The Shoah in Maus*, 128.

³⁵ Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (University of California Press, 2004), 1.

³⁶ Matz, Vogel, Mattar, and Montenegro. "Interrupting Intergenerational Trauma," 186.

³⁷ Matz, Vogel, Mattar, and Montenegro. "Interrupting Intergenerational Trauma," 186.

or writing further. Eventually, Arthur finishes the story because he realizes that silence is not an effective way to cope with the transferred trauma.

What also weighs on Arthur's shoulders is the rivalry with his dead brother Richieu.³⁸ He was Anja and Vladek's first son. Richieu was sent away to an aunt, so he might remain safe. The aunt eventually poisoned him, preventing the Nazis from capturing him. It is challenging for Spiegelman to write about his brother because Richieu died before Arthur's birth. It created a rivalry between them. Arthur had to compete with his brother, who had only one photograph. The child in the photo was perfect in the parents' eyes. The memory made Arthur's feelings bitter towards Richieu because he could never hope to be as good as the ideal brother. Arthur distances himself from Richieu's memory and concludes the intergenerational trauma. Postmemory is finalized in Arthur through the feeling of inferiority towards his dead brother³⁹. The brother experienced the Holocaust with his parents. Arthur felt that he could never be good enough because he got away easily.⁴⁰ This feeling causes a secondary survivor's guilt in Arthur. By recording his father's story in graphic novels, he involves himself in the events.

The cause of Sebald's intergenerational trauma is his father, who served in the Wehrmacht. Sebald studies the representational silence surrounding the topic of guilt, rightful punishment, and air war. Intergenerational trauma is not strongly present in *Air War and Literature*. However, traumatic events affecting generations are exemplified through the image of the woman carrying her dead child in a suitcase after the bombing of Hamburg in 1943. Sebald's father's involvement in the war must have affected the writer's consciousness. Perhaps this is why he is willing to adopt the outsider's point of view by moving to England. He distances himself from his father's involvement.

Through writing his book, Sebald takes up the role of the bridge. He attempts to connect the past and the present by pushing the boundaries of representation. He tries to bridge the representational gap which originates from the fact that the German collective memory does not provide an appropriate framework to express trauma experiences. It promotes the suppression of the past which might originate from a feeling of guilt, or the collectively damaged capacity of survivors to witness, process, feel, remember and express what they underwent.⁴¹ This attitude makes it impossible for the individual memory to confront the trauma experience. Sebald hopes to inspire individual memory

³⁸ Victoria A. Elmwood. "Happy, Happy, Ever After": The Transformation of Trauma Between the Generations in Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*." *Biography* 27, no. 4 (2004): 701.

³⁹ Elmwood. "Happy, Happy, Ever After," 703.

⁴⁰ Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, 15.

⁴¹ Nil Santianez. "Representations of the Void, or, The Language of Silence in the Fiction on the Strategic Bombing of Germany." *Neophilologus* 102, no. 3 (2018): 404

to alter the perspectives of shared memory, which might positively affect collective memory and build a framework to support discourse.

The role of the bridge is also present in Sebald's work through photographs. They are the means through which Sebald deconstructs the images of destruction created by the German cultural memory.⁴² He acknowledges the existence of these images built up from the survivor's accounts. However, the use of photos invalidates these. The photographs show a glimpse of the truth untainted by the human experience. Sebald's goal is to present the past instead of the cultural memory, and in doing so, he broadens the means of representation.

The photographs provide a counterpoint, so together with the text, they paint a more realistic picture. *Air War and Literature* takes the historical facts and how the human mind experienced the catastrophe and then uses these descriptions to build a scaffold that supports appropriate representation. Similarly to *Maus* where the graphic novel format enhances the visual aspects of the events and breaks the silence imposed on the Holocaust by the Nazi regime. They hid the Holocaust by deporting the Jewish people and committing mass murders in remote locations. Their secrecy restricted visual records. At the time of the events, the Holocaust was functionally invisible to the general populace.⁴³ Spiegelman breaks this silence by visualizing Vladek's experience.

The alternative historical nature of Spiegelman's work lies in the use of animal heads. The differences in physical attributes enhance visibility, deviate from historical reality, and give extra meaning to the text. The hybrid body's role is to call attention to the human body's distortion.⁴⁴ The bodies are fully human, and the animal heads divert attention to the torture the body undergoes which makes the pictures and the text interdependent.

When Spiegelman depicts scenes from the present, he draws himself as a human wearing a mouse mask.⁴⁵ It is a sign of his guilt because of his success. In these panels, he sits on a heap of dead bodies whose faces are natural mouse faces. This indicates that Arthur Spiegelman feels his identity is fake compared to those who died in the Holocaust. As he is confronted with his responsibility towards the cultural effects of his work, his form gradually shrinks until he feels like a child trying to do an adult's job.⁴⁶ The only thing that seems to help is his talks with his psychiatrist.⁴⁷

⁴² Karen Remmler. "On the Natural History of Destruction" and Cultural Memory: W.G. Sebald." *German Politics & Society* 23, no. 3 (2005): 49.

⁴³ Orbán Katalin. "Trauma and Visuality: Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and In the Shadow of No Towers." *Representations* 97, no. 1 (2007): 59.

⁴⁴ Orbán, "Trauma and Visuality," 68.

⁴⁵ Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, 41.

⁴⁶ Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, 42.

⁴⁷ Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, 46.

Language

In this subchapter, I will analyze the language use of the protagonists. In Spiegelman's *Maus*, Vladek uses English to tell his story. However, his expressions are affected by Polish and Yiddish linguistic elements.⁴⁸ His use of English indicates that Vladek preserved his national identity. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that Vladek's English does not perfectly serve the function of communication.⁴⁹

Vladek's English in storytelling has another role. It defamiliarizes the Holocaust. It allows Vladek to talk about the events in a language that remains pure from the taint of the Holocaust. Telling the story in English makes reflection easier. It is a strategy of coping with the events.⁵⁰ However, language for Vladek has a greater purpose. Vladek, besides Polish, speaks three other languages: English, German, and French. These languages are crucial to Vladek's survival. He is kept alive because he speaks languages. He gains an advantage in Auschwitz by speaking English. He teaches one of the Kapos English because the guard believes that the Reich will lose the war, so he needs to communicate with the Americans. For this service, Vladek gets new clothes and extra food. Language is not the only asset that helps Vladek; it is a crucial element.⁵¹

The role of language cannot be denied in Sebald's work when discussing the survivors' accounts of the aerial bombing of German cities. The question is whether language is sufficient to voice the catastrophic events. According to Sebald, the post-war German attempts were unsuccessful.⁵² The complexity of the experiences can only be adequately voiced in similarly complex literary works where language and narration cooperate, creating a multilayered text that gives insight into how the human mind registers the horrors.⁵³

Language has another aspect in Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars*. Characters with Japanese ancestry often use Japanese words. For example, the word '*bakujin*' refers to American people. The Japanese use '*bakujin*' with a negative undertone. The word describes the opposition between the Japanese and Americans. Hatsue, as a young girl, is in love with Ishmael, an American. Their relationship must remain a secret because her family would

⁴⁸ Martín Urdiales Shaw. "Voicing the Survivor of Those Unspeakable Sites: Translating Vladek Spiegelman" *A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics*, 2, no. 2 (2012): 3.

⁴⁹ Shaw, "Voicing the Survivor," 3.

⁵⁰ Shaw, "Voicing the Survivor," 2.

⁵¹ Emily Miller Budick. "The Case of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*." *Prooftexts* 21, no. 3 (2001): 392.

⁵² Prager, Brad. "The Good German as Narrator: On W. G. Sebald and the Risks of Holocaust Writing." *New German Critique*, no. 96 (2005): 76.

⁵³ Santianez. "Representations of the Void," 416.

not allow her to see a ‘*bakujin* boy’.⁵⁴ The most accurate description of the difference expressed by the word is probably given by Fujiko, Hatsue’s mother. She cautions her daughter against the Americans:

The whites, you see, are tempted by their egos and have no means to resist. We Japanese, on the other hand, know our egos are nothing. We bend our egos all of the time, and that is where we differ. That is the fundamental difference, Hatsue. We bend our heads, we bow, and are silent, because we understand that by ourselves, alone, we are nothing at all, dust in a strong wind. Simultaneously, the *bakujin* believes his aloneness is everything, his separateness is the foundation of his existence. He seeks and grasps, seeks and grasps for his separateness, while we seek union with the Greater Life—you must see that these are distinct paths we are traveling, Hatsue, the *bakujin* and we Japanese.⁵⁵

Fujiko is trying to justify that they let themselves be relocated to Manzanar without resistance. The family is described as apathetic during the process. Fujiko does not care where her daughters are in the camp. The only thing that ends her apathy is when she reads Ishmael’s letter. The thought of her daughter ‘seeing’ a ‘*bakujin* boy’ awakens the mother’s rage and makes her feel inconsolable.⁵⁶ She scolds her daughter but keeps the affair a secret. She keeps her family’s name clean from the taint that Hatsue’s relationship with the *bakujin* boy would have caused.⁵⁷

The trope of silence as a means of coping with trauma is a cohesive force in the three works.⁵⁸ In Spiegelman’s *Maus*, silence is essential retrospectively. Vladek is very active during his trauma. Talkativeness is his way of survival, but it is not part of his coping. He expresses that he does not want to talk about the events: “It would take *many* books, my life, and no one wants anyway to hear such stories.”⁵⁹ In his process of coping, forgetting is also a crucial factor. He burns his wife’s diaries because he hopes their destruction will help him forget. As he argues, “I had to make an order with everything... These papers had too many memories. So I burned them.”⁶⁰ It leads to the conclusion that by not talking about the past and destroying written evidence, he distances himself and makes it easier to live with the survivor’s guilt.⁶¹

⁵⁴ McKay “Captive Memories,” 658.

⁵⁵ Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, 98.

⁵⁶ Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, 110.

⁵⁷ McKay “Captive Memories,” 656.

⁵⁸ McKay “Captive Memories,” 656.

⁵⁹ Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, 14.

⁶⁰ Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, 108.

⁶¹ Budick, “The Case of Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*,” 385.

On the other hand, the silence in Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars* has a different role. In their case, silence is not only practiced after the internment but before and throughout. This silence is associated with Japanese composure.⁶² Before the internment, Hatsue is rebellious. She does not want to leave San Piedro, but Fujiko convinces her:

You should learn to say nothing that will cause you regret. You should not say what is not in your heart — or what is only in your heart for a moment. But you know this — silence is better.⁶³

She reminds Hatsue of what behavior is expected of her. She immediately recognizes that her mother is right. The trope of silence continues to be the survival attitude for the Japanese community during the encampment. They handle the situation with silent apathy. They distance themselves from the events, similarly to Vladek Spiegelman, but they apply it to reality. The expression “*Shikata gai nai*” mirrors the Japanese mentality of accepting every situation as it is. They recognize that they face constraints in their position, so to protect their consciousness, they resort to apathy. Their strategy for survival is not language, like Vladek's attitude, but silence.

Language in Sebald's work is not a survival strategy. Sebald seeks the appropriate linguistic means to describe the given historical events accurately.⁶⁴ The use of such language raises the question of whether Germans can be described both as perpetrators of evil and as victims of horrible atrocities. If so, then this leads to the assumption that the Allied nations should also be subjected to a dual description which would confuse the traditional ideas of World War II.⁶⁵ The appropriate language that Sebald searches for should be able to assign the responsibility of committing war crimes to the Germans and the Allies.⁶⁶ It should also be able to show both sides as victims of such atrocities. A criticism of such a language could be that depicting Germans as victims would degrade the experience of the Holocaust. Thus, the appropriate language should also include the Holocaust as it is traditionally viewed as a center point of World War II.⁶⁷

⁶² McKay “Captive Memories,” 655.

⁶³ Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, 99.

⁶⁴ Wilfried Wilms. “Speak no Evil, Write no Evil: In Search of a Usable Language of Destruction.” In *W. G. Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, ed. Scott Denham, Mark McCulloh, Walter de Gruyter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 186.

⁶⁵ Wilms “Speak no Evil, Write no Evil: In Search of a Usable Language of Destruction,” 186.

⁶⁶ Wilms “Speak no Evil, Write no Evil: In Search of a Usable Language of Destruction,” 190.

⁶⁷ Susanne Veas-Gulani. “W.G. Sebald, the Air War, and Literature.” In *W. G. Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, ed. Scott Denham, Mark McCulloh, Walter de Gruyter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 336.

Rothberg's, however, refuses the idea of competing memories. He favors the productive view of memories where comparing and contrasting memories enhance representation.⁶⁸ According to Rothberg's view, memories of the Allied air raids and the Holocaust should not be competing for attention. They should both be appropriately represented. In such a discussion, Germans, as victims of war, would not degrade the representation of the Holocaust. In *Air War and Literature* Sebald highlights the lack of appropriate language as a policy of forgetting, which leads to inadequate representation. However, the language Sebald uses is not his only representation strategy. His text is interdependent with the photographs included in his essay. The pictures strengthen the language's representational power. They express ideas by themselves, sometimes forcing the text into a supporting role.

The Void

In the sense of remembrance, the bombing of German cities between 1942 and 1945 seems to be a paradoxical issue. For years, it affected thousands of people and was treated only with silence.⁶⁹ Sebald expresses that the collective German consciousness fails to address the trauma of the air raids.⁷⁰ They try to move forward towards a new beginning without coping with the past. Sebald seeks to resolve the issue by finding the appropriate language to represent the atrocities committed against Germany. He must battle the views that describe the destruction of the bombings as deserved. These views originated in the first articles in Allied newspapers that reported Germany's state and set the tone for further discussions.⁷¹

Even in reunited Germany, depicting Germans as the victims was impossible. The political taboo did not criticize the Allies' attacks on civilian targets.⁷² Sebald does not explicitly express such criminalization of the Allied Forces, but his search for appropriate language suggests this view. By denying the fatalistic approach towards the events, he implies the Allies as perpetrators. Sebald breaks several taboos in his work, but not the one against criticizing the Allies for their conduct during World War II.⁷³

Another form of silence is forgetting. They believe that they will eventually forget what happened if they do not talk about it. Germany focused all of its efforts on the

⁶⁸ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 11.

⁶⁹ Sebald, "Air War and Literature: Zürich Lectures," 4.

⁷⁰ Sebald, "Air War and Literature: Zürich Lectures," 6.

⁷¹ Wilms "Speak no Evil, Write no Evil: In Search of a Usable Language of Destruction," 194.

⁷² Wilms "Speak no Evil, Write no Evil: In Search of a Usable Language of Destruction," 190.

⁷³ Wilms "Speak no Evil, Write no Evil: In Search of a Usable Language of Destruction," 186.

reconstruction, excluding any opportunity to discuss the past.⁷⁴ Post-war Germany showed similar behavior to individuals who experienced trauma. The work kept the German collective consciousness busy, so the unpleasant memories remained unconscious which supports the argument that silence is not for coping but for forgetting.

Sebald's observation of Germans distancing themselves from the events is supported by one of Kluge's novellas. He writes about an American survey that interviewed the inhabitants of Halberstadt about the city's bombing.⁷⁵ The people conducting the survey found that the survivors are willing to talk about their experiences, but they resort to empty phrases, and they show a lack of emotions. This leads to the conclusion that the traumatic experience damaged the survivors' capacity to remember the aerial bombing.⁷⁶ A void was created in the survivors' minds concerning the traumatic events. The formation of the void is an unconscious process of the psyche to protect itself. The nature of the events made it easier for the survivors to harmonize shared memory and formulate the framework of collective memory.

The phenomena of the void cannot be captured in the other two works. The only similar example is when Vladek burns Anja's journals in *Maus*. It is an attempt to create an empty mental block. However, it is a conscious effort and relates not only to the Holocaust but to Anja's suicide as well. Vladek's actions correlate with Alexander's psychoanalytic approach where traumatic emotions are consequences of the event and the repression.⁷⁷ Vladek faces the events decades later, which means he is also characterized by belatedness. In Vladek's case, repression is a more significant factor than void creation. If void creation and repression are understood within the multidirectional memory framework, concerning the dual nature of memory, void creation may be repression elevated to a cultural level.⁷⁸ The possibility of adding a different point of view to the story through Anja Spiegelman's journals excites the author. However, Vladek burns the journals, creating the duality of feelings described by Ankersmit. Art's desire to retrieve Anja's part of the events creates a moment of love, but the diaries' destruction creates a moment of loss.

In Guterson's work, the void is created to conserve the community dynamics. San Pedro's citizens focus on accusing a Japanese man of a crime he did not commit. Pearl Harbor serves as the initial event since it was the first direct attack on the USA and took away the people's sense of safety. The main enemy is not Germany but Japan because

⁷⁴ Sebald, "Air War and Literature: Zürich Lectures," 6.

⁷⁵ Santianez. "Representations of the Void," 403.

⁷⁶ Santianez. "Representations of the Void," 404.

⁷⁷ Jeffrey C. Alexander. *Trauma: A Social Theory* (New York: Polity Press, 2012), 10.

⁷⁸ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 15.

they are the immediate threat. Therefore, Kabuo's Japanese identity is almost proof that he killed the other man. Here, repression is presented as a characteristic feature of the Japanese community. The cultural narrative is to distance them from the past. This argument is supported by the Japanese mentality depicted throughout the book. The dual nature of memory is precise: the community prefers repression, so the individual cannot move toward progressive coping.⁷⁹

Scars of War

The similarities between Carl and Kabuo can also be recognized in handling their traumatic experience. In one instance Kabuo remembers the act of killing on the battlefield. As he is watching his reflection, he knows he seems cold, but he cannot express why.⁸⁰ Guterson writes:

What could he say to people on San Piedro to explain the coldness he projected? The world was unreal, a nuisance that prevented him from focusing on his memory of that boy, on the flies in a cloud over his astonished face, the pool of blood filtering out of his shirt and into the forest floor, smelling rank, the sound of gunfire from the hillside to the east—he'd left there, and then he hadn't left. And still there had been more murders after this, three more, less difficult than the first had been, but murders nonetheless. So how to explain his face to people?⁸¹

The questions give an emotional frame to the thought process while implying that murder in battle seems more manageable than explaining the feelings left by the act of killing. Kabuo wants to break the silence, but he does not know how. He remembers his father's teachings and tries to express himself with his composure. He wants to suggest that he is innocent by distancing himself from the situation.⁸²

Ishmael is another character with combat experience but as a journalist, he stays an outsider. Ishmael fought in the Pacific theatre and lost an arm at Tarawa Island. This is the only detailed battle scene in the book. Losing his arm corresponds to his lost love which is well presented in the movie. As Ishmael is drifting between consciousness and

⁷⁹ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 15.

⁸⁰ McKay "Captive Memories," 654.

⁸¹ Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, 77.

⁸² McKay "Captive Memories," 654.

unconsciousness, he relives the days spent with Hatsue. He remembers her letter that caused the hatred he felt against her and, soon after, against the Japanese.⁸³ Ishmael feels inferior to Kabuo and Carl. He lost his arm in his first battle, so he could not fight anymore. His physical wound from the war and the wound on his soul caused a traumatic experience that eventually made him lonely and bitter.⁸⁴ Loneliness became his coping strategy. When Ishmael decides to help the Miyamotos, he uses his outsider position. He can finally separate the two traumas and realize his relationship with Hatsue was not meant to be successful.

Regarding Ishmael's war experience, it is possible to see the two traumas in a different light. After his injury, Ishmael developed post-traumatic stress disorder which is a psychiatric disorder that occurs when

(t)he person has experienced, witnessed, or been confronted with an event or events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others, and his/her response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.⁸⁵

The definition applies to Ishmael as he confronted trauma and suffered a severe injury. He shows one of the behavioral patterns associated with PTSD: avoidance which includes diminished interest in activities of the community.⁸⁶ Ishmael observes the community from the outside through the journal's spectacles. His behavior comes with a feeling of estrangement.⁸⁷ He thinks he is unworthy of being a part of the community. The third and fourth aspects of PTSD are the restricted range of effect, meaning the person is unable to have loving feelings and the sense of foreshortened future when the person does not expect to have a career, marriage, or an average lifespan.⁸⁸ After Hatsue, he had the chance to marry. However, Ishmael did not want to feel love because of what happened between him and Hatsue. She also denies understanding in *Snow Falling on Cedars* in her letter to Ishmael. His only hope to cope with the war trauma is Hatsue's love which is taken from him with the letter. The loss of his arm represents the loss of Hatsue.

In Sebald's view, hope lies with the future of Germany which is emphasized by the photos that show the aftermath of a bombing and the image of rebuilding. Sebald also strives to broaden the representational perspective of the written text by including

⁸³ McKay "Captive Memories," 654.

⁸⁴ McKay "Captive Memories," 658.

⁸⁵ Ron Langer. "Combat, Trauma, Memory, and the World War II Veteran" *Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 23, no. 1 (2011): 55.

⁸⁶ Langer, "Combat, Trauma, Memory," 51.

⁸⁷ Langer, "Combat, Trauma, Memory," 51.

⁸⁸ Langer, "Combat, Trauma, Memory," 51.

pictures. He argues that the German collective does not address the issue of the bombings sufficiently. Instead, they use the rebuilding to remove the collective consciousness from the trauma and deny remembrance. The photographs in Sebald's work depict more than just the destruction. They also present what will be there.⁸⁹ They support Sebald's claim that Germany tries to forget the suffering of the air raids through reconstruction. The most transparent example is the postcard depicting Frankfurt am Main. The caption on the postcard says "Frankfurt – Yesterday and Today" [Frankfurt – Gestern + Heute]. It embodies the German mentality of forgetting instead of confronting the past.

Photographs have an essential role in Spiegelman's *Maus*. The most significant photo is displayed at the beginning of *Maus II*. It shows Richieu. That photograph caused traumatic experiences in Arthur's childhood as he was constantly compared to the idea of the perfect son. The author also includes Vladek Spiegelman's photograph as he poses in a concentration camp uniform. The picture – taken after being freed – symbolized how integral the Holocaust experience was in Vladek's life. Vladek's post-Holocaust life mirrors post-war Germany's mindset. Both seem to bury themselves in the present, so they do not have to cope with the past.

Conclusion

The three literary works show different images of survival and coping strategies for representing trauma. Spiegelman's work describes an active way of survival. It touches upon postmemory and intergenerationally transmitted trauma. Guterson depicts a passive way of survival. *On the Natural History of Destruction*, *Snow Falling on Cedars* and *Maus* paint the silent way of coping. Instead of favoring Rothberg's productive view on multidirectional memory the survivors bury the trauma by creating a mental void on the collective as well as on the individual level.

These works break the silence around taboos. The internment of Japanese Americans affected hundreds of thousands of people in the US. The events were treated with silence until 1988 when President Ronald Reagan officially apologized. This event started a discussion about the events between 1942 and 1945, and the novel *Snow Falling on Cedars* is an essential step in the empowerment process.

⁸⁹ Lilian R. Furst. "Realism, Photography, and Degrees of Uncertainty." In *W. G. Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, edited by Scott Denham, Mark McCulloh, Walter de Gruyter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 221.

Spiegelman's work voices the issue of the Holocaust and second-generation survivors. He tries to understand his father so that he can cope with intergenerational trauma. He uses the graphic novel format to push the limits of representation. He mixes visuality and language, presenting layers of meaning: the animal-headed people, the photos, and the use of his earlier comic. Guterson's visual language accurately depicts the snowstorm, the war, the strawberry fields, and the sea, giving special meanings to his storytelling's natural environment. Sebald provides images of destruction. He voices that the Allies agreed on bombing German civilians and that post-war Germany could not cope with the trauma. He observes that German literature could not counter its instinctive silence around the topic.

These works also try to overcome social and racial gaps through their protagonists. It is successful for Hatsue and Ishmael, Kabuo and Carl, but Vladek fails. The answer to the question of whether silence constitutes an appropriate means of coping with trauma is negative. Silence is the source of intergenerational trauma. These works came to be because of the need for more effective representation. In *Snow Falling on Cedars*, conflict originates from Japanese citizens' internment and the relationship between Hatsue and Ishmael. Proper remembrance and communication lead to resolution. The format of a graphic novel can express details that a written text cannot. The animal-headed characters fulfill roles without words. The goal of photos is to make the comic format more realistic. Sebald's photos visualize the German collective consciousness's desire to forget and attempt to broaden representation. Finally, the analyzed works are pieces of alternative history writing since they show historical events from the perspective of minorities. They can be read as historical sources even though they are pieces of unconventional history. As such their experimentation with genres underlines the authors' struggle to expand the boundaries of collective memory through using unorthodox ways of visual representation in regards of individual memory. The representational questions of trauma literature generate even more questions to this day, as my study points out, following the latest theories of multidirectional and intergenerational memory.

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