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Japanese-American internment novels“

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1. Historical Background and Definition of Terms	3
1.1. Before Internment	3
1.2. Japanese Internment in the U.S.	6
1.3. Japanese Internment in Canada	11
1.4. Japanese-American Literature	15
1.4.1. Joy Kogawa's Obasan (1981)	18
1.4.2. Cynthia Kadohata's The Floating World (1989)	19
1.4.3. Julie Otsuka's When the Emperor was Divine (2002)	21
2. Theoretical Background	22
2.1. Cultural memory Studies	23
2.1.1. Individual and Collective Memory	24
2.1.2. Communicative Memory and Cultural Memory	25
2.1.3. Family Memory and Generational Memory	28
2.1.4. Trauma Studies	30
2.1.5. Memory in Literature	34
2.1.6. Memory and Identity Construction	36
3. Analysis	38
3.1. Acts of Remembering and Narratological Framework	38
3.1.1. Stories and Triggers of Memory	39
3.1.2. Points of View, Narrative Structures and Japanese Internment	45
3.2. Construction of a Japanese-American Identity	50
3.2.1. Connections to a shared Past	52
3.2.2. Trauma and Memory	59
3.2.3. The importance of Silence	63
3.3. Breaking the Silence	71
4. Conclusion	72
Bibliography	76
Abbreviations	79
Appendix	80
English Abstract	80
Deutsche Zusammenfassung:	81

INTRODUCTION

„All our ordinary stories are changed in time, altered as much by the present as the present is shaped by the past. Potent and pervasive as a prairie dust storm, memories and dreams seep and mingle through cracks, settling on furniture and into upholstery. Our attics and living rooms encroach on each other, deep into their invisible places.” (Kogawa 30)

The relocation and internment of citizens of Japanese descent in North America following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, is remembered as a ‘dark chapter’ of American history. After 1946, when the last camp in Tule Lake, California, was closed, memories of this period were scarcely broached in literature. One reason for this may be the obviously traumatic nature of these events; another, that in Japanese families it is traditionally seen as preferable to remain silent, rather than burden other members of the community with hurtful or ‘shameful’ memories (Roxworthy 120; Seko 1; Kawano #3). Yet, the behavior of those who witnessed what happened firsthand, still deeply affected later generations’ self-perception. They struggled to come to terms with the unspoken horror (see Yogi 126, 137). The reasons for the reluctance to break the silence may of course differ greatly for each individual and within each family. There are numerous instances that showcase how the events within the camps remain largely untold as those who had lived through them chose not to share their negative experiences – even within family circles¹. Nonetheless, starting from the 1960’s, this topic gradually received more attention in literature (see Yogi 126), as several authors included the experiences during Japanese internment in their novels (Yogi 147).

In my analysis, I will discuss the importance of the transmission of intergenerational and family memory and the construction of a Japanese-American² identity, as well as differences and similarities in narrative techniques within three selected novels by

¹ This silence of family members is remarked upon in several accounts by Japanese-Americans (e.g. Julie Otsuka’s interview with Kelly Kawano), papers (e.g.: Seko 1), and also within the novels chosen for this analysis.

² For the sake of conciseness, from this point on, ‘Japanese-American’ will be used as an umbrella term for all citizens of Japanese descent in both the United States and Canada.

Japanese-American authors. By looking at the works of three authors belonging to similar communities of *Nisei* and *Sansei* (2nd and 3rd generation) Japanese-Americans, I will investigate the modes of 'remembering' within the novels – who remembers, what is remembered and how it is remembered. As fictional representations of family memory can function as a means to break the silence imposed by cultural conventions and trauma, an analysis of narrative modes and strategies can offer valuable information on the collective and cultural memory of Japanese internment, as well as the self-perception of the affected community. The way trauma is represented and how the listeners or readers react to it can heavily influence the way in which the self is perceived and vice versa (Brinson 42). Thus, I argue that the act of retelling the Japanese internment experience and the narrative techniques used to do so play an important role in the construction of postwar Japanese-American identity.

With regard to the theoretical framework, this paper will draw from the concepts of cultural memory studies, as explored and related in Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara B. Young's extensive handbook *Cultural Memory Studies* (2008) and again by Astrid Erll in her more recent publication *Memory in Culture* (2011). Here, I will focus on the concepts of collective and individual memory and their interplay (see, predominantly, the concepts of Aleida and Jan Assmann). Moreover, I will include family and generational memory as explored by Jürgen Reulecke within the aforementioned handbook. Furthermore, this paper will be concerned with the narrative techniques typically employed in novels that concern themselves with the process of 'remembering'. I will draw from Birgit Neumann's essay "The Literary Representation of Memory" (2008) and Wolfgang Müller-Funk's insights on narratology of cultural and collective memory. With regard to trauma studies, I will include insights from the works of Cathy Caruth, Jeffrey C. Alexander, Neil J. Smelser and Susan J. Brinson, as well as Hilde Lindemann Nelson's work on narrative repair of damaged identities. In the course of my analysis, I will thus draw connections between the narrative techniques and the respective portrayals of Japanese internment. Moreover, I will also investigate similarities and differences between the three novels with regard to their representations of family memory and the effects of silence on the collective and cultural memory of Japanese-Americans.

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

The internment of people of Japanese ancestry in both the USA and Canada severely disrupted the lives of more than 130,000 people (about 112,000 in the USA and approximately 22,000 in Canada) and has since been regarded as one of the most damaging civil rights violations committed by the government of the United States in the twentieth century (Robinson 7). It was, however, not a joint measure by the two governments (Robinson 70).³ The policies were drafted and signed in short succession, and while some of the underlying reasons for internment were similar – mainly racial bias in combination with war-induced fear and a prospect of economic gain –, the driving forces advocating it differed between the two countries (Robinson 188). While in the United States, the policies of exclusion were predominantly pushed by high ranking military officials and interest groups along the West Coast, in Canada, the military was hardly involved in the matter. Most of the support for restrictions of Japanese-Canadians came from an elite group of politicians and lobbyists from British Columbia (Robinson 53).

The two countries also neither communicated, nor matched policies concerning the relocation camps, nor was the decision to intern an entire ethnic group on racial premises a mere reaction to the attack on Pearl Harbor (Robinson 34, 42). Rather, prejudices and distrust against the Japanese immigrants dated back to the first Japanese settlers that came to North America (Robinson 11).

1.1. BEFORE INTERNMENT

The very first Japanese to come to the USA arrived in Hawaii in 1868 to work on sugar plantations as so-called *dekasegi* (sojourners), and while most returned to Japan after the end of their contracts, some decided to stay. Others decided to move on towards the continent, resulting in settlements along the Pacific Coast in California and British Columbia (Robinson 11, 13). A surge in Japanese immigrants came after the passing

³ Nevertheless, Canada was known to look to the United States as a guideline to measure and adjust their own reactions to various international events (Robinson 47).

of the Chinese Exclusion Acts in the USA and the Canadian head tax on Chinese immigrants – measures based on racial prejudice that banned all Chinese workers from entering the countries, leaving farmers along the coastal areas in desperate need of laborers (Robinson 11; Yogi 126). Japanese workers replaced many of the Chinese, which resulted in a rise of settlers of Japanese descent from 2,039 people in 1890 to 72,157 settlers in the U.S. by 1910 (Daniels, Kitano, Taylor and Arrington xv, Robinson 11). In contrast to immigrants from other Asian countries, the Japanese workers were allowed to bring their wives with them to America, which promoted the development of stable Japanese-American communities (Yogi 126). Most of these immigrants worked as farm hands in rural areas, found work on fishing boats or in fish canneries, or as domestics for white households. After having accumulated enough money, many decided to buy or lease their own land for farming or to establish businesses (Robinson 13). According to the Immigrant Act of 1790, first generation immigrants (*Issei*) from Japan were not granted the right to vote and were not allowed to obtain certain licenses, their children born in America, however, were considered American citizens. In Canada, it was possible for *Issei* to adopt the British nationality. Nevertheless, regardless of citizen status, Japanese-Americans in both countries were still largely discriminated against (Robinson 13).

Even though most settlers adapted to a Western lifestyle, their success in business and congregation in separate Japanese communities soon raised suspicion and resentment among their white neighbors in both the USA and Canada. Xenophobic circles also highlighted their comparatively high birthrate and limited ability to speak English as reasons for concern for the 'sophisticated western culture' (Robinson 14). Notably, these topics that can still be found in most anti-immigrant propaganda, today. When Japan dominated in the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905), the perception of the Japanese merged with fears of the 'yellow peril' and white-supremacist ideologies, and created a hostile climate towards immigrants. In the following years, several laws (such as the Alien Land Act of 1913 or the Immigration Act of 1924) were implemented to curb the flow of immigration and limit the rights of Japanese- (and other Asian-) Americans (Daniels, Kitano, Taylor and Arrington xv, 12; Robinson 18; Yogi 126). In order not to upset their international connections, Canada did not restrict landownership, yet, other discriminatory laws were passed that directly targeted Japanese-Canadian businesses (Robinson 21).

Even though public outcry against the Japanese settlers was largely silenced during the First World War – as many *Issei* joined the army and Japan was allied with Canada and the USA – after the war ended, the anti-Japanese movement again gained momentum. Positive propaganda by the Japanese communities, showcasing their loyalty, patriotism and assimilation to the American way of life could not hold against the wave of xenophobia and revival of white-supremacist ideas of the 1920s. Japanese-Americans were commonly portrayed as ‘unassimilable’ and a danger to “white racial purity” (Robinson 20). In response, young adult *Nisei* in the United States created the Japanese-American Citizens League (JACL) in 1930 to lobby for the interests of their generation and battle unfair legislation. In 1936, the Japanese-Canadian Citizens League (JCCL) was created as the Canadian counterpart. Nevertheless, the second generation of Japanese immigrants still faced discrimination and were mostly restricted to menial jobs (Robinson 23-4, Daniels, Kitano, Taylor and Arrington 12).

The 1930’s also showed a further deterioration of international relations with Japan, as results of the Great Depression and Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1931. The American government viewed the attack with disdain and tried to exert pressure, without entirely alienating Japan as a trade partner. This, however, did not have the intended effect, as Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936 and looked towards Nazi Germany as allies (Robinson 25-26). In the wake of Japan’s military operations in China, the USA became increasingly worried about the loyalty of the *Issei* and *Nisei* populations (especially in Hawaii)⁴, but took no decisive actions against Japan.

Even though the sympathies in Canada similarly shifted as a result of Japan’s continuing military operations, the Canadian government was rather indecisive in the implementation of policies leading up to the Second World War – mostly because of internal conflicts of interest. Furthermore, even though Canada and the U.S. established the Permanent Joint Board of Defense in August 1940, the coordination of policies between the two countries was minimal (Robinson 26-27, 32, 34).

Since Japan was seen as a possible future enemy after the declaration of war on Germany in 1939, Canadian citizens of Japanese descent were not allowed to get

⁴ The first official mention of the possibility of internment camps for Japanese-Americans behaving suspiciously was made by president Franklin D. Roosevelt on August 10, 1936 (Robinson 27).

military training or help in the war effort – allegedly to avoid “race riots” against the *Nisei* (Robinson 32-3, 43). With the beginning of the war, the U.S. ceased trade with Japan and ordered the Pacific fleet to Pearl Harbor as a demonstration of military power and to pressure the Japanese government to renounce its claim on Manchuria – to no avail. On the 27th of September 1940, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, forming the alliance that would later be known as the Axis Powers. On December 7, 1941, Japan finally launched its attack on Pearl Harbor, resulting in the loss of 2,390 lives of American soldiers and civilians, wounding 1,178 people and wiping out most of the war ships stationed at the American military base (Robinson 34, 44).

Rather than being the immediate counter to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the decision to confine Japanese-Americans evolved over the following weeks – mainly as a result of the economic and political situation (Robinson 70). Although the fears of subversion and espionage were not completely baseless,⁵ they were largely built on hysteria, suspicion, and hostility from even before Japan’s airstrike. These sentiments were then further nurtured by influential figures along the West Coast, who were motivated by fear, racist beliefs, or prospects of profitable economic opportunities (Robinson 29-30, 42). Keeping in mind the lack of evidence for subversion, internment could only be presented as a logical solution, precisely because the protection of North America that was intended by the West Coast was not necessarily dependent on “meeting and neutralizing actual threats” (Robinson 71). It was only in this situation, where race was portrayed as an indicator of culture and political loyalty that Japanese internment could be brought forward as a feasible strategy (Hayashi 3).

1.2. JAPANESE INTERNMENT IN THE U.S.

⁵ It was clear that there had been some espionage by Japanese nationals smuggled into the communities through consulates or as language students. Yet, their number or influence was minimal at best. In early 1941, decoded Japanese messages were used as an argument for the need of strengthened security by proponents of internment, even though they rather provided evidence that the spies Japan tried to recruit from within the American community were not people of Japanese descent (Robinson 34-6, 41). Further surveillance, raids, commissions and reports on Japanese-American espionage revealed similar results (Robinson 36-41).

Right after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the FBI arrested and detained about 1,300 *Issei* and several *Nisei* from a previously compiled list of 'suspects', even before the declaration of war on Japan on December 8, 1941, which rendered all Japanese nationals enemy aliens. The government additionally imposed a number of restrictions on residents of Japanese descent. This included a special curfew, confiscation of weapons, radios, cameras, and a variety of possibly dangerous goods. Moreover, the Japanese consulate, press agencies, and fishing businesses had to be shut down, and all bank accounts belonging to Japanese aliens were frozen (Robinson 45-6).⁶ The confiscations, as well as the fear of owning Japanese items are major topics that occur in both U.S. American and Canadian novels on Japanese internment (see Cheung 5). *When the Emperor was Divine*, for example, repeatedly portrays the arrest of the family's father in the night of the attack on Pearl Harbor as one of its most disturbing episodes. Demonstrations of loyalty by *Issei* and *Nisei* before and during the war did little to change public sentiment, and several *Issei* and *Nisei* already predicted their internment, when they saw themselves as suspects under constant surveillance. Ultimately, it may have been the lack of community coherence and inexperience in mobilizing support that played a major part in sealing the fate of the Japanese-Americans (Robinson 38-9, 60-1).

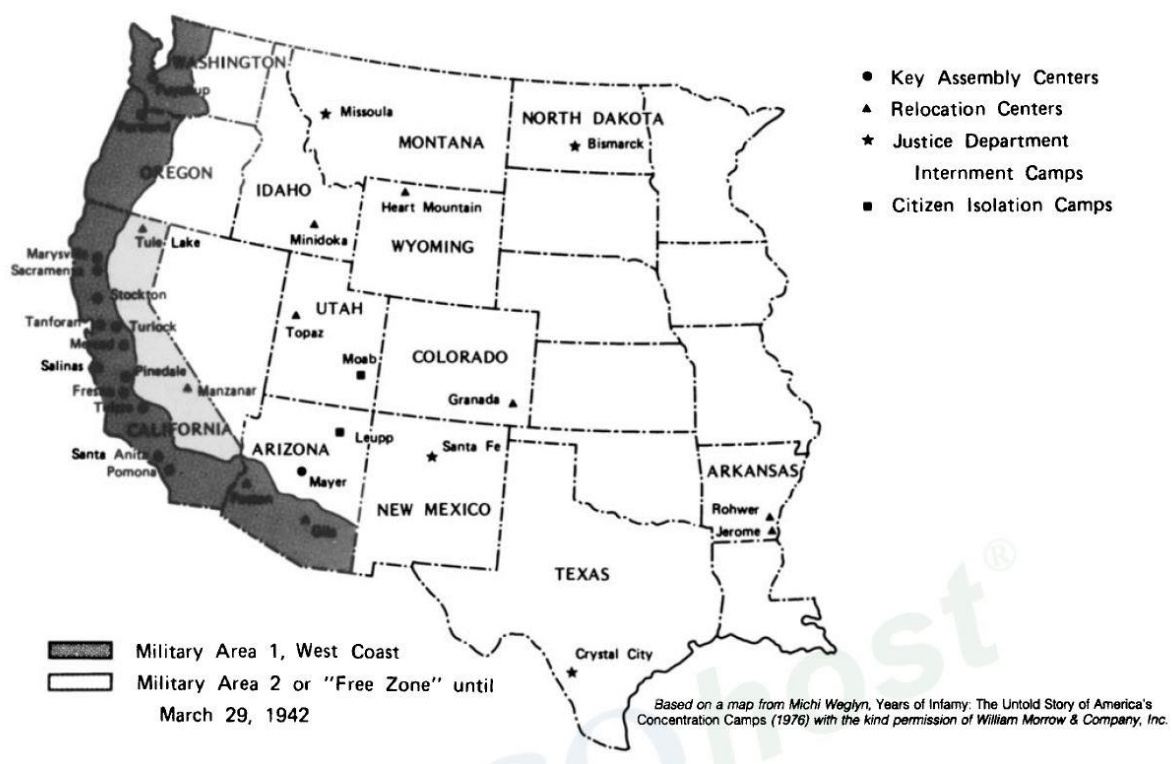
What started in Hawaii as a discussion about the possibilities of forced evacuation and confinement of the resident Japanese-American population under martial law, soon became a hot topic throughout the nation (Robinson 45). The press and circles of West Coast whites further engaged in spreading rumors, fake news and exaggerated accounts of Japanese subversion, pushing the politicians to lobby for action (Hayashi 3, Robinson 49-50). While some politicians tried to stave off wholesale confinement, the fear-mongering and coordinated campaigns showed results: On February 19, 1942, president Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, giving the military the authority to expel citizens from designated areas along the West Coast (Robinson 65).

Within days, 109,427 Japanese inhabitants were rounded up and brought to military holding centers. These so-called 'assembly centers' were hurriedly set up, temporary facilities, where the Japanese-Americans were crowded together without a semblance of privacy under unsanitary conditions. The girl in Otsuka's *When the Emperor was Divine* remembers her experience being confined in the former horse stalls at the

⁶ They could subsequently only be accessed for 100 dollars per month for living expenses.

Tanforan race track, where “there were gnats and flies and the awful smell of horses and the sound of the neighbors on either side fighting until late in the night” (Otsuka 43) – a glaring contrast to the comfort of their stately family home in Berkeley. The dismal episode at the holding centers, though brief, left a lasting mark on the Japanese-Americans as the first taste of inhumane treatment and arbitrary regulations (Robinson 89-90). Supplies were purposefully restricted as to not give the outward appearance of ‘coddling’ the confined, while more permanent camps were constructed further inland (Robinson 87-9). Moreover, the internees were only allowed to bring as many belongings as they, themselves, could carry. Thus, most of the possessions and all the immovable property of internees was either hurriedly sold off at dumping prices or given into the custody of friends or designated institutions (Robinson 84, 86). Largely taken by surprise, the Japanese-Americans failed to stage any successful resistance, and most decided to support the government and cooperate (Robinson 75-7).

Starting on June 1, 1942, the internees were transferred from the assembly centers to the ten camps further inland.



III. 1: Map of military areas and relocation camps during World War II (Daniels, Kitano, Taylor and Arrington xvii)

All so-called 'relocation camps' or 'reception centers' had been erected in isolated, scarcely inhabited areas with circumstances ranging from desert climates to swamps with minimal consideration for comfort or privacy (Robinson 95, 105). As described in *When the Emperor was Divine*:

“At Topaz the bus stopped. The girl looked out the window and saw hundreds of tar-paper barracks sitting beneath the hot sun. She saw telephone poles and barbed-wire fences. She saw soldiers. And everything she saw she saw through a cloud of fine white dust that had once been the bed of an ancient salt lake.”
(Otsuka 48)

Similar to the assembly centers, the food quality at the camps was kept low and though there were medical facilities, medical care was primitive at best. Schools, sports clubs, newspapers and other elements of community life were established by the inmates and sponsored by the government, but only insofar as could be justified as necessary (Robinson 105-6, 112).

The life within the camps was, on the one hand, more leisurely and peaceful than outside, especially for the children. Yet, on the other hand, inmates suffered greatly from the humiliation, the injustice and boredom of internment, as well as the disruptions of family unity and hierarchies (Robinson 109).

Apart from 'troublemakers', the confined Japanese-Americans were gradually allowed to leave camp. Quick resettlement further inland had, after all, been the initial goal of relocation. Yet, the execution of this plan was significantly slowed by the military, as the 'loyalty' of the inmates could not be proven and relocation had strengthened public sentiment to see Japanese-Americans as the enemy (Robinson 120-25) – a circumstance some inmates who were allowed to venture outside of camp had to experience firsthand: “They said they’d been shot at. Spat on. [...] Life was easier, they said, on this side of the fence.” (Otsuka 66-7) Apart from workers, the military was looking towards Japanese-American men as possible recruits for the war. To circumvent the issue of unproven trustworthiness, the infamous 'loyalty questionnaire' was handed out among all internees. Some of the questions were badly phrased and the inmates were not sufficiently informed about the form's purpose, resulting in considerable chaos and long-term problems. Those who failed to answer questions concerning their readiness to join the U.S. army, or forswearing allegiance to the

Japanese emperor with 'yes', were termed disloyal and subsequently further segregated within the camps (Otsuka 99; Robinson 123-24, 128).⁷

As another result of the questionnaires, the main argument for internment – the unproven loyalty of Japanese-Americans – was muted. In the light of the subsiding threat of a Japanese invasion, military leaders were hard-pressed to find arguments to justify further internment that were not based solely on racial bias (Hayashi 2, Robinson 128). Yet, it was not until January 2, 1945, that the West Coast mass expulsion orders were repealed and the internees could resettle outside the camps. The last relocation center in Tule Lake was finally shut down in March 1946 (Hayashi 2). Apart from approximately 3,000 *Issei* and 1,327 *Nisei* who agreed to repatriation to Japan, most internees chose to either return to their former West Coast homes, or settled as groups in the vicinity of the camps (Robinson 166-69). A remnant of this latter trend are, for example, the congregations of Japanese-Americans in Arkansas, mentioned in Kadohata's *The Floating World*.

In the face of widespread discrimination and the loss of most of their property and assets in the course of internment, the Japanese-Americans struggled to re-establish their existences. The possessions left in the care of state-appointed custodians had to a certain extent been forcibly sold off at prices far below the actual value, and storage facilities had been vandalized or pillaged (Robinson 84). Though in the years following the war the attention paid to the fate of the former inmates was not particularly great, starting in the 1960's, the general sentiment started to shift in favor of the Japanese-Americans and their fight for reparations. Next to several official apologies by the government, all those directly affected by Executive Order 9066 were allotted a redress package of \$20,000 (Robinson 180, 196-97).

Yet, even with regard to the move for compensation, the Japanese-Americans were unable to unite their community to fight for a common goal. Mainly due to the hardships Japanese-Americans had to suffer in post-war years, and due to the effort, they had to make to compensate for what was lost and to rebuild their community, there was only little development regarding redress movements, artistic or literary projects (Yogi 125). As young *Nisei* and *Sansei* learned about their community's history, they pushed those

⁷ The so-called 'no-no boys' were mostly young adult men, who were afraid to be drafted against their will (Robinson 128). Their plight became the topic for John Okada's novel *No-No Boy* (1957).

who had lived through internment to speak about their experiences. Nevertheless, many former internees refused to address the topic, as they felt that “no amount of compensation could make up for the hardships they had suffered, and considered it better to move on with their lives and distance themselves from the past” (Robinson 191-92; Yogi 126), leaving many of the *Sansei* generation in desperate need of answers. The different stances of the generations, varying between willful forgetting, forced remembrance and an inability to articulate traumatic experiences are a recurring topic in Japanese-American literature (see chapter 1.4.).

1.3. JAPANESE INTERNMENT IN CANADA

The outrage and shock at the attack on Pearl Harbor also struck fear into the hearts of many Canadian West Coast residents. When Canada declared war on Japan on December 8, 1941, the immediate measures taken by the government were similar to those of the United States. Japanese-Canadian individuals considered ‘dangerous’ were rounded up and sent to prisoner of war camps, fishing boats, radios and cameras were seized and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) was charged with conducting warrantless searches on Japanese-Canadian homes. In *Obasan*, the protagonist vividly remembers the confiscation of her uncle’s fishing boat: “‘What a beauty,’ the RCMP officer said in 1941 when he saw it. He shouted as he sliced back through the wake, ‘What a beauty! What a beauty!’ That was the last Uncle saw of his boat” (Kogawa 25). Moreover, Japanese language newspapers were pressured to close, a special curfew was instigated, and all residents of Japanese ancestry were required to get registrated (Robinson 47, Wong 22).

However, while in the USA the military had played a significant role in advocating internment, the Canadian military saw no merit in the expulsion of all Japanese-Canadians. This exposed the main reasons for public hysteria against the ‘Japanese threat’ as essentially unjustified from the perspective of national security (Robinson 54-5). Nonetheless, influential figures pandered to the popular anti-Japanese sentiment and pushed for the relegation of all people of Japanese heritage from the West Coast to work camps further inland (see Kogawa 103). Similar to the Japanese-Americans, the Japanese-Canadians were dazed by the sudden hostility and commenced to demonstrate their patriotism. As expressed in *Obasan*: “[...] we’re doing Red Cross

work, buying War Savings bonds, logging for the war industries and shipyards, benefit concerts – the regular stuff.” (Kogawa 97). Nonetheless, they, too, were unable to mount any meaningful resistance to the policies implemented by the government (Robinson 33). With the beginning of February, the first wave of *Issei* and *Nisei* men were sent to road construction work, leaving many of their families without support (Robinson 56). When prime minister W. L. Mackenzie King signed the order-in-council P.C. 1486 on February 24, 1942, the relocation of over 22,000 Japanese-Canadians – about 80 percent of whom were Canadian citizens – from the West Coast was officially authorized. (Robinson 69, Wong 22). On the 30th of September 1942, the last Japanese-Canadian was removed from the West Coast, where they were not allowed to return until the end of the war (Robinson 98).

The consequences were rather similar to the proceedings in the United States: many families were unable to prepare or tend to their possessions, and had to sell their property at bargaining prices. This resulted in considerable bitterness, as the properties that were left behind were given into the care of a specially appointed custodian, who was furthermore given the authority to sell whatever he deemed necessary, without the rightful owners’ approval (Robinson 91-2; Wong 22). The frustration becomes apparent in *Obasan*, when Aunt Emily talks about their grandfather’s Cadillac:

“[I]t was sold by the government for \$33. Handling charges came to \$30 and the amount Grandpa finally received was \$3.00 and a few pennies. ‘Next thing we expected was to owe the Custodian money for the services done in relieving us of all we owned,’ Aunt Emily said.” (Kogawa 45)

Protests against the harsh treatment were ineffective and only led to the ‘troublemakers’ being sent to prisoner-of-war camps, from where they were not allowed to return until the end of the war (Robinson 94-5; Wong 22).

The relocation camps were located in the Slocan Valley, an area about 500 miles inland, where the Japanese-Canadians were brought to abandoned mining towns. Overall, six towns were opened for inhabitation: Kaslo, Greenwood, New Denver, Sandon, Slocan City, and later also Tashme. In contrast to their U.S. American counterparts, the internment sites were not fenced in, but the inmates were nonetheless under constant surveillance and could not leave the camp area unless especially authorized (Robinson 115). Moreover, the authorities in charge made no

pretense of the camps being more than a temporary solution and put only minimal effort into their management. The houses were generally in poor condition and unfit to provide proper shelter from the Canadian winter. While fuel, as well as primitive medical care and a censored postal service was provided, the inmates had to organize food, newspapers, schools and community life themselves – resulting in poor standards and low morale all over (Robinson 115-16).

Additionally, to limit government expenses to a minimum, in February 1943, the farmland belonging to Japanese-Canadians was sold off, and the proceeds used to fund internment. This measure was backed by British Columbian politicians to further deter Japanese-Canadians from returning to the West Coast. The termination of internment, however, was not considered an especially urgent matter by the government – for much the same reasons as in the United States: there was considerable apprehension of negative reactions of the public (Robinson 117-19, 125). To facilitate a gradual opening of the camps, starting from June 1942, *Nisei* were allowed to resettle in eastern towns, provided the towns agreed, and they were able to find employment. Due to the widespread hostility towards Japanese-Canadians and legal restrictions on housing and permits, however, only few were able or willing to migrate east before the end of the war.⁸ The negative public sentiment even concluded in the call for wholesale deportation of the internees to Japan once the war was over. This racially motivated ostracism was echoed by the higher echelons (Robinson 125-127).

In August 1944, prime minister Mackenzie King proclaimed the decision that all those Japanese-Canadians deemed loyal, who were willing to resettle in eastern provinces according to a preset quota, could regain their citizenship rights. They would, however, have to contend without any form of official aid, and were severely restricted in their actions. ‘Disloyal’ internees, as well as those who wished to leave for Japan would be stripped of their Canadian citizenship and deported. The choice was elicited under pressure in the form of a repatriation survey. Not answering was assimilated with disloyalty (Robinson 172-74). This rather unethical course of action led to the deportation of about 4.000 Japanese-Canadians. Moreover, in February 1946, another law was passed that would give the government the right to arbitrarily expatriate all

⁸ Montreal, as the only major city accepting Japanese-Canadians without special restrictions was the most common place for former internees to settle (Robinson 127).

Japanese nationals regardless of their wishes. Therefore, those *Issei* who had decided to stay, were faced with constant fear and uncertainty about their futures (Robinson 178). The deportations were discontinued only after heavy criticism by the United Nations and outspoken objections by the public (Wong 22).

Once the war was over, the situation slowly started to change. By December 1946, most of the 'voluntary' repatriates had left the country and the remainder had dispersed throughout the country and became integrated into the various communities. Only the West Coast remained barred to resettlement until April 1, 1949, and by then only few decided to return (Robinson 178-80, Wong 22). Resulting from the changed outlook, it was then also possible for Japanese-Canadians to start a movement for redress – mainly for the losses suffered from the forced sales of their property. As in the USA, however, only little attention was paid to either the former inmates or critical reflection on internment and deportation. Only from the 1970s onwards, Canada started to put effort into programs for education and remembrance concerning the injustice of internment. A redress package was agreed upon, largely following the U.S. American model, which resulted in reparation payment of \$21,000 per person in September 1988 (Robinson 186, 197-98).

In conclusion, the internment camp experience for Japanese-Canadians was harsher than in the United States regarding the climate, treatment of inmates, opportunities for establishing themselves even after removal, and governmental support in doing so (a fact that is also mentioned in the novel *Obasan*: Kogawa 40-41). Perhaps most crucially, the forced sales of property left most interned Japanese-Canadians effectively uprooted with nothing to return to and a rather small budget to recover from the loss. Apart from such measurable consequences of internment, the inability of Japanese-Canadians to prove their loyalty through military service may have had considerable effect on postwar discrimination (Robinson 133-34, 142, 161). The open hostility and inability to combat prejudiced legislation resulted in psychological suffering as well. Many internees experienced family breakdowns, the hopelessness and apathy within the camps, as well as the fearful anxiety of an uncertain future (Robinson 134).

While the novel *The Floating World* describes a Japanese-American family in the aftermath of internment, *Obasan* and *When the Emperor was Divine* offer a more personal insight into historical events and showcase the shift in sentiment within the affected community – from dazed compliance to helpless rage or complete abjection.

These descriptions are especially valuable to understand the family relations and reactions by the respective protagonists that are further investigated in the analysis chapters. The novels included in this analysis offer insights into the effect of generally known factual proceedings on individual families. Thus, they enable the reader to glimpse the long-lasting emotional impact of internment – a facet of history that is often misrepresented by the media and obscured by those directly affected.

1.4. JAPANESE-AMERICAN LITERATURE

When talking about Japanese-American literature, it is important to view it in the context of the broader genre of ‘Asian-American literature’, a term that was coined in the 1960s to “promote political solidarity and cultural nationalism” (Cheung 2). Even though there was considerable literary output by Japanese-Americans even before World War II, until as late as the 1970s, it had been general practice to lump all literature by authors of Asian background together under this umbrella term (Yogi 125). Only in what has been termed the ‘second phase of Asian-American Studies’ a distinct interest in the differentiation between the various countries of origin began to develop. This sparked an interest in a distinct Japanese-American writing culture and the changes it underwent in the course of history (Poppenhagen).

Among the earliest writers of the *Issei* generation were some authors that produced literary works in English, such as Carl Sadakichi Hartmann or Etsu Sugimoto. These, however, were part of the educated elite, as most of the early immigrants were farm workers and did not have much time or energy to spare on acquiring advanced English speaking and writing skills (Yogi 126-27). The literary community among the *Nisei* was much more vibrant. Most adapted their writing style to the American traditions and contemporary trends, reflecting their wish “to claim those traditions as their own” (Yogi 129). Nevertheless, the *Nisei*, who were often described as the generation bridging Japan and America, often found themselves in the crossfire of international politics and many expressed their struggles with this dual identity in their works (Yogi 129). Especially during internment, their loyalty to either America or Japan was put to the test – while some decided to fully commit to being as ‘American’ as possible, others felt betrayed and disillusioned with the proclaimed American values of equality. The different stances can be observed in what has been subsumed under the term ‘camp

literature'. Some authors, such as Toshio Mori, advocated for optimism in the face of hardships, others, such as Toyo Suyemoto, however, voiced their criticism (Yogi 132-33).⁹

In the years following internment, there was only comparatively little literary output from Japanese-Americans. Nevertheless, some works like Mine Okubo's graphic novel *Citizen 13660* (1946) or Kazuo Miyamoto's novel *Hawaii: End of the Rainbow* (1964) were early examples that directly addressed the episode of internment. Other examples of internment literature that, up until now, are a common staple in literature classes in schools and universities are Hisaye Yamamoto's short story "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" (1951), Monica Sone's autobiography *Nisei Daughter* (1953) and Joe Okada's previously mentioned novel *No-No Boy* (1957). In the wake of the redress movement of the 1970's more Japanese-Americans decided to put their camp experiences into words. This led to the publication of the widely-received memoir *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973) by Jean Wakatsuki Houston and James Houston or Mitsuye Yamada's poem collections *Camp Notes* (1976) and *Desert Run* (1988). The topic was also addressed by other influential *Sansei* poets of the time, such as Lawson Inada and Janice Mirikitani. A well-received work of the 'new' generation of *Sansei* writers is *The Floating World* (1989) by Cynthia Kadohata, which calls to attention the multiple facets of Japanese-American identity and is one of the works discussed in this paper.

A notable fictional rendering of the internment experience, Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor was Divine*, which will also be included in this analysis, was published in 2002, followed by a more recent work by David Mura, named *Famous Suicides of the Japanese Empire* (2008). Mura's novel follows the struggles of a *Sansei* Japanese-American trying to come to terms with his family's past and closely resembles Joy Kogawa's famous novel *Obasan* (1981) in its depiction of silence within a family and the impact it can have on the identity construction of later generations (*Densho Encyclopedia* "Famous"). In Canada, Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981) holds a special position, as it is the first novel to directly address Japanese internment in Canada.

The emerging interest of many *Sansei* writers in their own Japanese-American literary heritage led to the publication of the anthology *Aiiieeeee!* (1974) by editors Frank Chin,

⁹ As literature published in camp newspapers or other media was censored, open criticism was not possible and was therefore craftily hidden in metaphors or allusions (Yogi 133).

Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. Even though this milestone publication served to draw attention to Asian American literature, it was criticized for its shortcomings regarding the limited range of Asian countries it included and the questionable approach to American nativity and “dual personalities” as unifying characteristics of Asian-American writers (Cheung 2, Poppenhagen). Concerning historical publications and chronicles, several detailed works were published in the 1960s and 1970s that greatly raised public awareness about Japanese internment. Perhaps the most notable, due to the broad range of its scope is *The Great Betrayal* (1969) by Audrie Girdner and Anne Loftis. It was widely reviewed in academia along with other comprehensive works such as Allan Bosworth’s *American Concentration Camps* (1967), *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (1969) by Bill Hosokawa or Roger Daniels’ *Concentration Camps, USA* (1970) (*Densho Encyclopedia* “Great Betrayal” #1, #3; Robinson 191).

Recurrent themes in Japanese-American literature include the difficulty of coming to terms with the Japanese-American identity and intergenerational tensions, mostly between *Issei* and *Nisei*. In this regard, the traditional Japanese concepts of *on* (obligation), *giri* (indebtedness) and *enryo* (reserve, constraint) play an important role (see Yogi 132-139), as they can pose restraints on how well the characters are able to voice their opinions and feelings both within the family and in the larger social community. Moreover, in later publications by *Sansei* authors and playwrights, questions of space, place and rootedness feature prevalently (Yogi 147).

Next to works by Japanese-Americans, there are several notable publications by American authors. Perhaps one of the best known, due to its fairly successful movie adaptation in 2002 is David Guterson’s *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1994). An earlier, and the first full-length adult fiction work on the topic is *City in the Sun* (1946) written by Karen Kehoe, an American employee at the Gila River internment camp during the war, who recorded her observations from the viewpoint of a Japanese-American family of internees (*Densho Encyclopedia* “City”). Furthermore, there are several romance novels that feature interracial love stories such as Danielle Steel’s *Silent Honor* (1996) or Jamie Ford’s *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* (2004) (Yogi #The Camps as Experienced, #Novels Influenced).

For this analysis, three adult novels were chosen that address topics of Japanese internment, family coherence and identity construction from different angles. By looking

at the historical episode of Japanese internment from the viewpoint of fictional characters spanning three generations of Japanese-Americans, they give unique insights on the workings (or perceived workings) of social interactions – such as the transmission of family memory.

1.4.1. JOY KOGAWA'S *OBASAN* (1981)

Joy Nozomi Kogawa (née Nakayama) was born June 6, 1935 as the child of two *Issei* immigrants in Vancouver, British Columbia. During her childhood she experienced firsthand the blatant racism during and after the Second World War, and was interned at a relocation camp in Slocan together with her parents at the age of six. (Wong 161-2, CE #1-2).

Kogawa started her writing career by publishing poetry collections titled *The Splintered Moon* (1968), *A Choice of Dreams* (1974), *Jericho Road* (1977) and *Six Poems* (1978). Her first novel *Obasan*, which will also be the focus of the following analysis, is largely autobiographically inspired and was published in 1981 (Wong 162). It was greeted with great acclaim by readers and critics as the first novel to openly address the hardships and injustices of Japanese internment. It is listed as one of Canada's 100 Most Important Canadian Books by the Literary Review of Canada (CE #Joy Kogawa, #Obasan) and garnered the Books in Canada First Novel Award in 1981, as well as the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation and the Authors Association Book of the Year Award in 1982 (Wong 162). In 1986, the novel was republished in the form of a children's picture book titled *Naomi's Road*, and in 1988 as a Japanese young adult novel under the name of *Naomi no Michi* (Naomi's road).¹⁰ Kogawa's next novel *Itsuka* (1992)¹¹ can be seen as a sequel to *Obasan*, in which the reparation movement and the struggle of formerly interned Japanese-Canadians to receive recompensation is taken up. In both *Obasan* and *Itsuka*, one of the recurring themes is the protagonist's internal struggle with breaking the silence and making her hurtful past publicly known in order to receive redress and some sort of closure. In her latest novel *The Rain Ascends* (1995), Kogawa addresses the very different topic, but

¹⁰ The title was translated by the author of this paper.

¹¹ This novel was republished in 2005 in a revised version under the title *Emily Kato*.

similarly emphasizes the moral difficulties of speaking out when family bonds are at stake (see Wong 163).

Apart from her work as a writer, Joy Kogawa has been very active in educating people about the injustices suffered by the Japanese-Canadian community during and after World War II. As such she has received numerous honorary degrees and was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 1986 and the Order of British Columbia in 2006 (Wong 162, Joy Kogawa #About).

The novel *Obasan* has been included by many scholars into the list of important Asian-American novels, regardless of Kogawa's Canadian origin. This may be attributed to the novel's finely nuanced fusion of politically charged content and literary finesse (see Wong 16). Kogawa tells the story of a middle-aged Japanese-American woman, who looks back on her life and her own experience in the internment camps. Even though the story seems fragmented and disorganized, it is held together by a number of recurrent images and metaphors (see Wong 19). The timeline starts with her visit to her aunt, Obasan¹², but the chronological order is broken up repeatedly by flashbacks and memories. The protagonist, Naomi appears as a first-person narrator, who tells her story in turns through the eyes of her young self in the past and her adult self in the narrated present. The text is interspersed with various factual documents (including letters, official notices from the government and newspaper articles) or her aunt's diary entries that serve as triggers for Naomi's memory but also supplement information on things that eluded her or were kept from her. In a sense, *Obasan* "not only contains a story to be read but is itself a story about reading" (Wong 22). The construction of the text renders it largely "self-sufficient", meaning that without much research, the reader is able to grasp not only Naomi's emotional renegotiation of her own identity, but also the sociohistorical background of the times (Wong 22).

1.4.2. CYNTHIA KADOHATA'S *THE FLOATING WORLD* (1989)

In contrast to the *Nisei* Japanese-Canadian, Kogawa, Cynthia Kadohata was born a *Sansei* (third generation) Japanese-American in 1956 in Chicago. During the war, her

¹² The Japanese word obasan (おばさん) translates to 'aunt'. This is not to be confused with the similar sounding word obaasan' (おばあさん), which means 'grandmother', and will later on appear as the name of another character in Kadohata's *The Floating World*.

father's family was confined in the Poston camp on the Colorado River Indian Reservation and her father served with the U.S. army for a short time. Her family continuously moved to different places across America, mostly due to the father's work situation as a chicken sexer (Cynthia Kadohata #About, Yu 120). Kadohata published her debut novel *The Floating World* in 1989. The novel was generally well received, her following novels *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* (1992) and *Outside Beauty* (2009) were, however, less successful (Yu 125). Apart from adult fiction, Kadohata also published several books for young readers, which address themes of Japanese internment, overcoming traumatic situations and family solidarity.

These themes are also apparent in *The Floating World*, which can be described as a coming-of-age novel with strong autobiographical traits. *The Floating World* features a family of three generations of Japanese-Americans, who, during their joint travels across America, try to negotiate their own identity. These circumstances resemble Kadohata's own life in many points. For example, Kadohata openly draws from her own family's situation of what Alexandra Ganzer terms "para-nomadic movement" – continuous travels resulting from economic necessity rather than choice – and concludes her protagonist's narrative with the seemingly paradoxical acceptance of the state of perpetual movement as a 'home' in itself (see Ganzer 205, 210). Similar to Kogawa's *Obasan*, the story is told through the eyes of a female protagonist in first-person narration. The twelve-year-old Olivia vividly recounts her life as the eldest daughter of a Japanese-American family in the 1950's in a largely chronological order. As such, Kadohata's literary debut highlights the social and economic circumstances of a newer generation of Japanese-Americans who had not lived through the war.

While this view on the experience of Japanese-Americans in the aftermath of internment was applauded by several major Asian American scholars and critics, some fictional elements and historical inaccuracies in Kadohata's *The Floating World* have resulted in criticism (Yu 125). Nevertheless, it can be argued that this unusual property of her characters allows for a unique and interesting view of a postwar Japanese-American family (see Yogi 147).

1.4.3. JULIE OTSUKA'S *WHEN THE EMPEROR WAS DIVINE* (2002)

Julie Otsuka was born in Palo Alto, California on May 15, 1962 as the daughter of an *Issei* (first-generation) father and a *Nisei* (second-generation) mother (Nakayama #5-7). Her debut novel *When the Emperor was Divine* was published in 2002 and was an instant success. The novel was largely inspired by her own family's history, as her grandfather was apprehended by the FBI immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and held captive at various camps for 'dangerous enemy aliens'. Her mother, uncle and grandmother spent three years interned in Topaz, Utah (Kawano #2). Despite the rather personal character of the internment experience, much of the book's content is based on research, since the topic was scarcely talked about within her family (Kawano #3). Like Kogawa and Kadohata, Otsuka felt the need to remind society of the injustices done to the Japanese-Americans during World War II, telling their story from an insider's point of view (Kawano #12-13). Her second novel, titled *The Buddha in the Attic*, addresses the fates of so-called 'picture brides', who were lured to America by the prospect of a rich marriage. For this second novel Julie Otsuka was awarded the Pen Faulkner Award for Fiction in 2012, while *When the Emperor was Divine* garnered the Alex Award and the Asian American Literary Award in 2003.

When the Emperor was Divine tells the story of internment through the eyes of various characters in first-person narration – first through the eyes of the mother, the girl and the boy, then in joint narration by both children; it closes with a short chapter titled "Confession", related from the father's point of view. In contrast to the other two novels, Otsuka's narrator is omniscient, using the various characters as focalizers. This gives it a unique dynamic, especially with regard to the children's narration. The story covers the timespan from the issue of the evacuation orders to roughly one year after the end of internment, when the father is released.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

To understand the following concepts, the term ‘memory’ needs to be defined and put in the context in which it is understood by scholars of memory studies and, more precisely, cultural memory studies. According to Astrid Erll, there is widespread agreement that memories are the product of the process of remembering – an ability, rather than an entity. ‘Memory’, as well as its counterpart ‘forgetting’, can only be observed and studied through individual acts of remembering (8). Judging from this definition so far, it becomes clear that memory is the result of a very subjective, individual process, which seems almost impossible to study and difficult to draw viable conclusions from that would apply to anything past the individual person. Yet, if the circumstances in which memories are recalled are taken into consideration, it can open up new possibilities for academic studies. Astrid Erll defines memory as “an expressive indication of the needs and interests of the person or group doing the remembering in the present” (8). Thus, by focusing on the discourse in which the acts of remembering take place and how they may influence the possible forms of memory, memory studies have opened up a field for productive academic research.

The following chapters will give an insight into the concepts of individual and collective memory, their interplay and the special subcategories of family memory and intergenerational memory. Yet another area of memory studies that will be vital for the following analysis is concerned with traumatic recall – the remembering of (or inability to remember) certain experiences that caused severe disturbances in the lives of individuals or whole communities. While the concepts of trauma and recollection have often been employed in studying the memory of sexual abuse in childhood or the Holocaust, there has been a certain reluctance to use this framework to study other traumatic events – mainly because of what Hodgkin and Radstone identify as the fear of giving the impression of trying to downplay the abovementioned atrocities (7). For this same reason of avoiding an assumed comparison to the Holocaust, many Japanese-American former internees are reluctant to tell their stories: “Why draw attention to yourself when there are so many people who have suffered fates far worse than your own?” (Otsuka in interview: Kawano #4).

Such worries about whether or not it is proper to address an issue should, however, not hinder the efforts of calling to attention the traumatic quality of the Japanese

internment experience. Trauma should not be valued according to a ranking system or assumed hierarchy. Hence, every traumatic experience deserves attention and should be treated as equally valid. Moreover, the silence of those traumatized can result in ignorance, lack of interest or misperceptions of many others within the community.¹³ The issues and effects connected to the importance of communication and trauma will be taken up again in chapter 3.2.

2.1. CULTURAL MEMORY STUDIES

The question of how to draw from individual acts of memory on the workings of collective recollection is one of the main points of cultural memory studies – and also its most criticized assumption (Erll 7). It confronts scholars with the problematic distinction between historical fact and memory, the external ‘realities’ and the seemingly ‘imaginary’. One argument for the validity of cultural memory studies is the changeable nature of its representations according to the respective social frameworks, political situations and conventions typical for the respective medium or genre in which they are expressed. This means that expressions of memory can take on several very different, but academically equally valuable forms and meanings (Erll 17; Kunow and Raussert 11). As Erll terms it, recollection “proves to be a fundamentally political phenomenon with strong ethical implications” (4). Thus, rather than providing a factual account of the past, memory is contingent on the predominant discourse, the group’s mentality and the needs of the remembering community in the present (Confino 77-78; Erll 7). Moreover, as a discursive construct, memory can be made use of to create consensus in a community, to establish a sense of group identity and a shared set of values (Erll 17).

Cultural memory studies have, in the course of the last three and a half decades, emerged as an increasingly transnational and multidisciplinary field of study, ranging from philosophy and history to psychology and neuroscience, among others (Erll 2).

¹³ This can, for example, resurface through inappropriate acts of speech, such as Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s faux pas in March 2018, following Congresswoman Colleen Hanabusa’s address concerning the continuation of funding for maintenance of Japanese internment memorials, to which he had responded with “Oh, konnichiwa”. His actions were criticized on account of racial stereotyping, and, though apparently well-intentioned, hinted at the lingering misconception that, even now, Americans of Japanese ancestry are somehow still perceived as foreigners (Hansler).

Starting in the 1980's, in the wake of poststructuralism and developments in media technology (such as the internet), there has been renewed focus in this field for yet another reason: "historical transformations" – what Erll termed the eventual loss of the generation that experienced certain events, such as the Holocaust, firsthand (4,5, see Assmann 112, Vansina 24). This implies that individual memories collected by these people will gradually transform from "communicative memory" (knowledge that can be directly passed on in the form of written or oral communication) to "Cultural Memory", to use the terminology coined by Jan and Aleida Assmann (see Erll 4). As both the Japanese internment and the Holocaust happened during the Second World War and, therefore, approximately at the same time, the same shift from communicative memory to Cultural Memory can be expected to happen within the next decades. The realization of this 'disappearance' of what is deemed valuable life experience understandably sparked a new interest in the concepts of memory, intergenerational memory and family memory. Even more so, as the recollection of historical events, especially if they had a traumatizing effect on the respective community, is often perceived as a 'cherished possession' to be inherited by later generations. Thus, for better or for worse, it no longer counts as individual, but rather collective property (Hodgkin and Radstone 10).

2.1.1. INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

This, again, takes us back to the question of in how far memory can actually be perceived as belonging to an individual and how much of the act of remembering is truly the work of the individual mind. Maurice Halbwachs, one of the 'founding fathers' of memory studies and one of the first to draw attention to the collective nature of memory, argued that *all* memory is dependent on what he termed the "cadres sociaux" - the "thought patterns and cognitive schemata" that define the way we observe and remember reality (qtd. In Erll 16). Additionally, he identified the shared versions of a past within a group (e.g. within a family) as "collective memory", that can be passed on between the members of the respective communities and, in turn, serve to influence the way other events are remembered (Erll 16). In other words, it is a circular structure in which collective memory serves as the adhesive that binds groups of people together while, at the same time being formed by the communities. Moreover, the term collective memory can be used for the shared consciousness of the past of any group, starting

from two people to whole nations (Assmann 109, Corning and Schuman 1). Numerous other scholars have since adopted Halbwachs' views on the transition of cultural knowledge for their own concepts, such as Pierre Nora's "lieux de mémoire" or Jan and Aleida Assmann's "Cultural Memory", to name only a few.

It is true that the only way to draw conclusions about collective memory is through the observation of its physical manifestations: individual acts of memory (Erl 16). Yet, even in assuming the stance of memory being an intrinsically social phenomenon, there are different views on how far individual acts of memory are truly generated as personal expressions. Ernst van Alphen even goes as far as to restrict the influence of the individual on the creation of memory as he describes it as inevitably connected to a shared culture – an 'experience' of the past that is contingent on current discourse, rather than a voluntary, controlled retrieval of stored facts (van Alphen 24-25, 37). This way of seeing memory becomes especially in connection to traumatic recall – where victims are subject to the repeated experience of the traumatic events. Nevertheless, it also points out how memory is necessarily directed by the mindset of collective – a culturally predetermined phenomenon, rather than an individual expression of the self (van Alphen 37). By this definition, all human interaction, be it with the past or the present is fundamentally grounded in the social conventions and discourse of the time. While it is necessary to keep in mind that it is not scientifically possible to formulate definite interpretations of memory that hold true for all members of a society, the viewpoint that all memory is connected to the social background nonetheless grants a framework that makes it be possible to gain insights concerning the collective consciousness and mentality of a group.

2.1.2. COMMUNICATIVE MEMORY AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Jan and Aleida Assmann made a further distinction in Halbwachs' abovementioned concept of "collective memory": while Halbwachs was careful not to include traditions and other cultural transferred values, they should not wholly be excluded from the discussion of collective memory. The Assmanns proposed the sub-categories of communicative memory, which would constitute of our everyday interactions and "lifetime" experiences (within the last 80-100 years), on the one hand, and Cultural

Memory¹⁴, on the other hand. The latter category includes the collective knowledge of myths, events and ceremonialized memories from the distant past that form the backbone of a group's perceived collective identity (Assmann 110, Erll 30).

	Communicative Memory	Cultural Memory
Content	history in the frame of autobiographical memory, recent past	mythical history, events in absolute past ("in illo tempore")
Forms	informal traditions and genres of everyday communication	high degree of formation, ceremonial communication;
Media	living, embodied memory, communication in vernacular language	mediated in texts, icons, dances, rituals, and performances of various kinds; "classical" or otherwise formalized language(s)
Time Structure	80-100 years, a moving horizon of 3-4 interacting generations	absolute past, mythical primordial time, "3000 years"
Participation Structure	diffuse	specialized carriers of memory, hierarchically structured

III. 2: Distinction between collective memory and Cultural Memory (Assmann 117)

The boundaries between Cultural and communicative memory are fluid and can allow for certain events to exist as both at the same time, becoming so-called "communicative generational memories". Such events are described by Erll, rather vaguely, as "lived experience [...], a component of temporally limited, group-specific worlds of experience, as events which had an effect on individuals' lives" (31-32). While it is close to impossible to exclude any part of experience from "events which had an effect on individuals' lives", it nonetheless makes sense to argue that clearly disruptive events, such as the Second World War in general, the Holocaust or, indeed, Japanese internment should be considered as 'impactful', and should thus qualify as 'communicative generational memories'. The extent to which such episodes of history

¹⁴ The term for this concept is translated from the German "Das kulturelle Gedächtnis" and is here capitalized to avoid confusion with the more general meaning of the term (see Erll 27).

can enter into the realm of communicative generational memory depends for a large part on its representation in the media and the importance assigned to it by the respective community (Erll 32).

Cultural Memory, in this understanding, consists of socially constructed versions of the past, which can transcend generations and serve to unite communities and set them apart from others (Assmann 110-11, Erll 29). In contrast to Cultural Memory, communicative memory is what is born out of everyday interactions. It does not require institutions or specialists that facilitate remembering, but as such, cannot transcend beyond the timespan of approximately “three interacting generations” (Assmann 111). To further exemplify this, we can observe that (especially concerning oral history) there is ample information regarding the recent past of the aforementioned ‘three generations’, while details about a more distant past are scarcely remembered. Regarding the foundational history of a community, origin stories and myths, however, there exists, again, a profusion of information (Vansina 116). These memories of the distant past are highly formalized and institutionalized and thus constitute what the Assmanns called “Cultural Memory”. As successive generations shift the past of “communicative” memories further into the future, the timeframe in between the communicative and Cultural can be termed “the floating gap”, in the words of the anthropologist Jan Vansina (24). Similar to other events that took place during the Second World War, the memories of Japanese internment are nearing the point of this “floating gap”, where concrete, orally transmitted memory – which Vansina calls “recent oral tradition” and Halbwachs understood as “collective memory” – will become scarce (Assmann 112, Vansina 192). In response to this realization, many *Sansei* authors voiced their wishes to preserve their ancestor’s stories and to “record a way of life [...] which seemed in danger of dying away” (Yogi 143).

Even though Vansina’s realizations are mainly based on cultures in which oral transmission of history is (or was) still prevalent, Jan Assmann states that also in literate societies there is a break between the living memory of the past eighty years, after which dates and descriptions from history books and monuments take over as memorized content (Assmann 113). This also means that written records of the past are vital tools to keep memory alive beyond the scope of the “floating gap”.

2.1.3. FAMILY MEMORY AND GENERATIONAL MEMORY

Family memory and intergenerational memory are two of the main points of interest for this analysis, as the dynamic of passing on personal experiences between the generations plays an important part in all three of the selected novels. According to Astrid Erll, family memory is defined as a “typical intergenerational memory” that is mainly communicated through oral stories and social interaction within the family (Erll 17). It can be understood as a subset to collective memory, in that it is responsible for how individuals perceive their identity, but is at the same time restricted to one family unit. Within this unit, memory is passed on (usually repeatedly) by those who experienced it firsthand and becomes part of the family’s shared memory pool (Erll 17). In this manner, family memory can be seen as one of the most important sites of observable communicative memory which can be studied to gain a deeper understanding of the reception and application of learned historical knowledge. The memories which are passed on are not always historically and factually accurate as they are generally shaped “according to the storyteller’s needs to create meaning” in the present and portrayals of events and actions in the past are naturally influenced by loyalty towards other family members (Erll 56). This is especially observable in the tendency to heroize ancestors, as was the result of a study on the transmission of historical consciousness by Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall (ch. 1). As such, family memory is an important factor to ascertain cohesion and stabilization of shared values within the family unit, as shared memories are repeatedly re-narrated. This last point is highly interesting regarding the connection of a family to the greater community it considers itself a part of. Family memory functions as an important constituent for identity formation on a lower, and perhaps more emotionally loaded, level than the Cultural Memory that is shared with a broader group of people.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, another aspect that features both in the greater scope, as well as within family units is generational memory. For a better understanding, a definition of the term ‘generation’ may be necessary, as it is rather ambiguous in its usage. For one, in its most common sense it is used to describe the “natural sequence” of grandparents, parents and offspring that assumes a natural gap of about thirty years in between them (Reulecke 119). Its second meaning denominates the procession of societal structures and groups people (or rather “cohorts”) according to their year of birth. Lastly, a ‘generation’ can also allude to a

more abstract group of people who grew up during a particularly formative time in history, such as wars or other radical upheavals. According to the “imprint hypothesis”, they may share certain behavioral traits, habits or ways of perception that stem from the experiences of that time (Reulecke 119, 123). The ‘imprint’ of having lived through Japanese internment, for example can be perceived in the shared reactions of several older family members in the three selected novels.

In contrast to this, the term “generationality” is used to describe particular features of such a generational identity. This, can either refer to the characteristics resulting from collective experience that groups or individuals attribute to themselves, or it can refer to such features that are ascribed to a group from the “outside” in order to differentiate them from other ‘generations’. Similarly, with regard to Japanese-Americans the terms *Issei*, *Nisei* and *Sansei*, are used both to express their position in the family lineage, but also to form groups according to preferred or expected behavior (see Reulecke 119, 122).

The distinction of social groups according to ‘generations’ has been criticized as an analytic parameter, as it is said to create clusters of people in hindsight and thus ignores the natural passage of time in favor of rather arbitrarily installed segments. The generational approach is fairly useful, however, if one bears in mind the historical influence on the self-positioning of individuals on a personal and historical level. This includes not only their respective sets of values, meaning-making strategies and modes of reception, but also their memories, which change and evolve along with their circumstances and stages in life (Reulecke 112, 121). The differentiation of generations according to their lived experience is especially useful when analyzing Japanese-American internment literature. While the *Issei* were largely adults, many of the *Nisei* generation were still adolescents or children when they were interned, and most of the *Sansei* Japanese-Americans were born well after internment had ended. This suggests that the experience of Japanese internment and its aftereffects differs greatly between generations and merits further attention when addressing questions of intergenerational memory in literary works.

Additionally, intergenerational memory plays a crucial part when it comes to mental processes such as passing on certain issues (such as the resentment of some Japanese-Americans towards the American government) or refusing to do so, both of which can cause breaks within family units that may have serious consequences for

communities. This issue is particularly highlighted in *Obasan*, as the protagonist's brother completely breaks off contact with his aunt (Obasan), as a reaction to her silence regarding emotional and family matters. The legacy of senior generations can be recorded intentionally in the form of literature, art or design, or passed on unintentionally – as for example the “fear” mentioned in Kadohata's *The Floating World* (146).

One of the ‘intentional’ ways of passing down memory can happen in the form of writing (see Lachmann 306, 308). Be it in the form of diaries, autobiographies, or letters, thoughts and feelings become accessible to others and may be used as a source around which other family members can structure their own perception of self (Davis 13-14). Especially in Kogawa's *Obasan* the importance of written memory for the reflection on the family's past becomes obvious, but also in *The Floating World*, the grandmother's diaries play an important role in the construction of the protagonist's identity. In opposition to what Aleida Assmann terms “functional memories” – facts that are generally easily accessible and relevant for the identity definition of the whole group –, through the medium of the diary, recollections that are not part of the collective memory can be “stored” indefinitely (qtd. In Assmann 110). As shown in the novels, by reading about the thoughts and actions of older family members, the protagonists, assign meaning to this ‘lost’ memory and integrate it into their own perception of identity.

Nevertheless, what is collectively remembered can be equally essential to identity construction as contents that were not directly passed on. In theory, a younger generation without inherited negative connotations to certain events or groups of people, could “provide society with a fresh look at itself” (Eyerman 71). This assumption also seems to play an important role for the opinion of some of the novels' characters. For example, Kogawa's *Obasan* and *Uncle* intentionally withhold knowledge and memory from the children in order to spare them from having to deal with the trauma created by war and rampant racism. The final message of the novel, however, contradicts this notion, as it points out the equally damaging effects of not knowing.

2.1.4. TRAUMA STUDIES

To understand the role trauma plays in *Obasan*, *The Floating World*, and *When the Emperor was Divine*, this chapter will give a short insight into the area of trauma studies

– a subgenre of memory studies that received considerable attention from the 1980s onwards. By a rather general definition, trauma is defined as the reaction of a sane mind to a disruptive event, in which the instinctive defense reactions (to fight or to flee) proved to be ineffective (Brinson 40, Alexander 2). After facing an intrinsically life-threatening experience, the victim can suffer from loss of control, terror or long-term effects commonly summarized under the term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Another understanding of trauma from a psychoanalytical perspective describes it as the repressed memories of an event that are too disturbing to logically integrate them into recollection, a wound “inflicted not upon the body, but upon the mind” (Caruth 3). The memory may, however emerge through psychoanalytical treatment or other therapeutic forms of treatment – such as writing literature (Alexander 6).

Traumatic memories are processed differently from ‘normal’ memories, which impedes deliberate remembering, as the recurrence of traumatic memories is outside of the victims’ control and they remain forever present within their minds. As a result, the memories cannot be successfully processed or articulated in the form of a narrative (Bal viii; Caruth 2). In addition, victims often struggle with the limitations of language that hinder them in relating their experiences to others. In other words, traumatic experiences cannot easily be integrated into a discursive framework in which they can be rendered meaningful, due to a lack of tools to express them, rendering them “failed experiences” (van Alphen 26, 36). What trauma consists of, is, therefore, both the event itself, as well as the knowledge of the mind’s incapability of processing what has happened (Caruth 6). Naturally, the failure to communicate traumatic memories depends for a large part on the historical and cultural situation and the subjective perception of the individual (van Alphen 26, Brinson 41-42). The Japanese, and by extension also the Japanese-American culture, where negative experiences are frequently glossed over so as to not disturb the group’s equilibrium, could render successful negotiation of trauma even more difficult – a circumstance that is showcased by the situation of the protagonist in *Obasan* or the parental figures in *When the Emperor was Divine*.

This points to another aspect of trauma: the socio-cultural level. People’s identity is always formed through the interaction with others. Being subjected to what is perceived as intentional mistreatment at the hands of other members of the same social group, can result in a breakdown of community cohesion and a painful renegotiation of identity

(Brinson 40,41; Alexander 10). Such “cultural trauma” occurs when individuals experience an inflicted event as disregarding fundamental cultural premises, inherently terrifying, and formative for their identity and the perception of past and future (Alexander 1, Smelser 44). Moreover, the effects of such ‘collective trauma’ develop gradually over time, as it is “not the result of a group experiencing pain”, but rather the reaction to the “acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” (Alexander 10; Erikson 1976, 153–54). Thus, cultural trauma directly affects and disturbs the social structures and bonds within a community (Smelser 37).

Since cultural trauma is experienced collectively, it is not necessarily paramount that all members of a certain group directly live through the traumatic events themselves. Rather, it is transmitted through “time-delayed and negotiated recollection”, which renders the aspect of representation even more important (Eyerman 71). How the events are remembered, and whether victims manage to successfully renegotiate their identities, depends for a large part on the way they are represented (if at all possible) and how this representation is perceived by both the traumatized group and the ‘perpetrators’ (Brinson 41, Smelser 44). Therefore, to deal with trauma, it is of vital importance for the listener to find ways to observe and respond, in an act of emphatic witnessing to allow “the pent-up emotions of loss and mourning to be expressed” (Alexander 7), and to find ways to renegotiate and socio-politically analyze the positions of the survivors (Caruth 9, LaCapra 65-67).¹⁵

Written texts can become a powerful tool in expressing and understanding the complexity of trauma, as literature “like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (Caruth 3). Through this medium it becomes possible to address the existence of trauma, while at the same time expressing the inability of characters to consciously engage with their memory. Their silences and recurrent painful episodes of remembering emerge through the text, allowing for the reader to glimpse what means to deal with memories that defy comprehension. Thus, the fictional representation of trauma, as for example in *When*

¹⁵ For a more in-depth analysis, see the chapter “Traumatropisms” in *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence* (2010) by Dominick LaCapra, which further highlights the agency of the witness in overcoming trauma, and the importance of an ‘appropriate’ emphatic response.

the Emperor was Divine, serves to illustrate its impact on the afflicted and facilitates understanding (Caruth 6).

With regard to observable reactions, the traumatic quality of an experience can trigger several known coping mechanisms in individuals. Personal reactions include 'emotional numbing' and the perceived gap between the self before and the self after the incident, which can even lead to a disturbed perception of time altogether. Immediate coping mechanisms encompass the extreme focus on details of the present, the inability to plan for the future or the loss of the ability to enjoy (Brinson 43-45). Some of these features, such as the gap between the selves pre- and post-internment are explored through the characters in Otsuka's novel *When the Emperor was Divine*: In a metaphorical manner, girl writes her name onto a card and slips it out of the window during the train ride to the internment camp (40).

Other, more general reactions can be classified into four categories, according to Neil J. Smelser:

- Suppression: The event is not recognized as real or relevant to the self, leading to a denial of any consequences to the victims' lives or identities. This can be a rather efficient act of psychological defense, as it "banishes the threat and obviates the need for additional defensive activity." (Smelser 51)
- Reversal: The victims express the belief in the event's positive effects or aspects and insist that it had been a "good or necessary experience" (Smelser 52, 54).
- Projection: By projecting the effects of trauma onto a different entity altogether, the victim can rationalize what happened and shift both the effects and the blame away from the self.
- Depersonalization: This reaction entails the denial that an incident had any effect, thus, excluding the self from the affected group, while still accepting the events as part of reality (Smelser 46).

Generally, the responses within a community are varied and often oscillate between evasion and fascination, forgetting and reviving the memory (Smelser 48-49). This characteristic is vividly reproduced in the characters of Kogawa's *Obasan*. While the protagonist's elder aunt, Obasan, completely refuses to speak about what happened during the war, her other aunt is busy raising awareness about Japanese internment, "beaming her flashlight to where the rest of us crouch and hide, our eyes downcast as

we seek the safety of invisibility” (Kogawa 38). The narrator, Naomi, represents a middle ground, in a sense, as she groups herself with Obasan in trying to bury the memory, but at the same time tells her story as the first-person narrator of the novel.

Regarding narrative frameworks, many historical studies of internment, the Holocaust and other cultural traumata, present liberation or reparation in the form of the respective episode’s “happy ending” – the glorious “triumph of democracy over prejudice” that would open up new discussions about freedom or human rights and become part of a patriotic narrative (see Robinson 198). Yet, these superimposed narrative frameworks do not apply when survivor’s memories are concerned (van Alphen 34-35). In most cases, the liberation from internment or redress payments did not bring satisfaction or peace for Japanese-Americans (Robinson 91-92) and thus the assumption of closure in such narratives must be carefully evaluated.

The choice of certain narrative structures for representing trauma serves the important function of making the experience accessible to an audience at the time of its telling (Smelser 41). The need for an emphatic listener to bear witness to the process of putting the fragmented memories in order and to legitimize them in the present is often remarked upon as a crucial factor in the process of healing and reestablishing the self (Bal x-xi). The listener’s reaction provides feedback to the narrator, which again shapes the quality of the survivor’s memory (Bal x, Brinson 40, 42). Hence, a productive discourse about the impacts of Japanese internment can only be achieved through conscious acts of retelling and reception.

2.1.5.MEMORY IN LITERATURE

The reliability of memory and the portrayal of memory in or through fiction have been highly debated with regard to their value as part of cultural memory. As mentioned previously, memory on a personal level is a highly subjective, time-dependent representation of things past that makes any broad assumptions beyond the sphere of individual experience difficult. There is no reliable way to clearly separate the external ‘factual reality’ from the ‘constructed imaginary’. By extension, one might think that this fallibility of memory regarding the actual, factual ‘truth’ would make it even more difficult to accept fictional literature as a source for gaining insights on the workings of a society.

This last statement, however, would only hold true if we regarded history as procession of verifiable facts, unrelated to cultural conventions and literature as a separate entity likewise untouched by historical and social discourse. Considering the knowledge of collective memory, cultural memory and intergenerational memory, what is remembered on a personal level reflects the way a society or a certain group of people think and feel about their past. Likewise, the representation of culture and culture itself are indelibly connected, as “[e]very study of one’s own culture can be read as such a form of self-description, because the description is part of what is described” (Müller-Funk 44).

As literature is intrinsically linked to the meaning-making systems of a society, it can be understood as one of the major vaults of memory available to a community. It can not only facilitate renegotiations concerning identity perception, but can also trigger previously rejected or repressed aspects to reemerge (Assmann qtd. In Erll 24; Lachmann 306, 308). Even within novels, the fictional representations of the world, as well as the narrative techniques used to portray it, depend on the predominant ideas of memory, the ways it is thought to operate, and the strategies for its transmission at the respective times the works were conceived. In this way, next to life writing, novels function as a valuable source for understanding the cultural predispositions that dictate the way in which certain historical events are remembered. Moreover, a fictional setting offers a platform for open experimentation with norms and conventions and, by combining fact and fiction, can offer fresh perspectives on the past (Neumann 334-35, 341). In the way memories of Japanese internment are staged in Kogawa’s *Obasan*, it can combine canonized and rejected memories and reenact struggles of self-reflection for the readers to relate to (see Neumann 340). In this way, fiction could be understood as an “imaginative counter-memory” that challenges the prevalent perception of the past (Neumann 338-39).

The act of remembering and the act of narration are thus invariably connected, and many of the possibilities of narrative discourse can be discerned by analyzing the fictional representations of memory (Erll *Narratology* 213). The three novels selected for this paper show different ways in which remembering may occur and integrate the process into the framework of their stories. While the process of recollection happens in a rather linear and clear-cut fashion in *The Floating World*, both *Obasan* and *When the Emperor was Divine* include passages that try to convey the complicated workings

of traumatic memory by choosing certain textual features, such as changes in tense, or repetitions.

The way in which we narrate our experiences is one of the most important factors for how we perceive ourselves and the world around us. To tell a life story, make meaning of chaotic experiences or draw conclusions from the past, according to narrative psychologists, it is a common strategy to model the narration after the narrative conventions found in novels or drama (Bal ix; Neumann 340). For trauma, as described in the previous chapter, the retelling may be troublesome, as at least parts of the memory are inaccessible to the victims' minds. Thus, in literature, an account of a traumatic event may be represented as a jumbled heap of loosely connected memories, but may nevertheless serve as a way to reconnect to the past, enlighten readers about the experience of trauma and enable a renegotiation of identity.

2.1.6. MEMORY AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Depending on the different groups with which a person associates himself or herself, the assumed identity of an individual (as, e.g. part of a nation or a family unit) can vary considerably. The feeling of belonging is realized through remembering the bonds that connect the self to the respective group (Assmann 113-14). Moreover, should a group of individuals choose to assimilate into a different group, this process usually goes hand in hand with an "imperative to forget the memories connected with the original identity" (Assmann 114). This pressure to renounce one's origins was especially prevalent in the Japanese-Americans' plight: any 'lack of Americanness' or open display of Japanese traditions was first frowned upon and, during the war, understood as a sign of subversion. The distrust towards all things Japanese may have led to a further break of family ties, as is implied by Kogawa's character Stephen, who chooses to completely reject his Japanese heritage and disconnects from his family (Kogawa 155, 268, 276-77).

Within the novels *Obasan* and *The Floating World*, the protagonists try to counter the disregard towards their roots by trying to assemble for themselves a kind of family memoir. Especially the character Naomi in *Obasan* recreates the typical setting of this genre of writing, as she tries to embed "herself in her extended family and [asks] questions about her own sense of identity." (Constantino and Egan 97) She

reconstructs the past by combining not only her own memories, but also those of her elders – depending on their willingness to share them – and various other documents connected to her family and their situation. Similarly, in *The Floating World*, Olivia's story of growing up is accompanied by her emerging desire to understand her grandmother's way of living via reading her diary and integrating some of her grandmother's 'wisdom' into her own life. Both narrators intersperse their personal life story with knowledge and evidence from other sources or and thus render the act of (re)discovering fractions of their past a topic of the story itself (see Davis 37). What is particular to this mode of reassembling the past, is the position of the narrator as someone with a personal interest and emotional connection to what is told, thus drawing more attention to certain details, especially in "the discoveries or explanations that validate her childhood understanding of her parents and grandparents" (Constantino and Egan 97). By constructing the past in literature, the narrator (and perhaps also the author) can then either enforce or challenge their beliefs about past events, creating a form of "countermemory" (see Davis 16).

Similarly, it is possible for previously discriminated groups to reform their own identity through the creation of "counterstories". These are representations of the self that oppose commonly known and accepted "master narratives" and may serve to counter stereotypical notions about a certain group of people (Lindemann Nelson 6). The more voices are added to propagate a group's 'counter image', the more it will be perceived even by those not directly connected to the respective situation. This effect should also hold true with respect to the perception of Japanese-American families and their experiences during and after internment. In telling their story, common misperceptions, such as the 'happy life' of relocated Japanese-Americans (as shown by contemporary newspapers) (Kogawa 231-32, Robinson 123), and their seemingly stoic indifference in the face of forced removal (Otsuka chapter 1, 91; Kogawa 221-22) can be dispelled and shown in the context of their cultural background.

3. ANALYSIS

The following part will provide an analysis of the three selected novels, highlighting the previously discussed concepts and conclusions that can be drawn from them. The first chapter will give an overview over the various recurring modes and triggers of memory, as well as the placement of characters regarding their acts of remembering the past and what textual features are used to describe or reproduce their recollections. Moreover, the treatment and inclusion of Japanese internment in the novels will be analyzed. The second chapter will then illuminate the connections this has to the construction of a Japanese-American identity for the protagonists – how family memory serves to connect all members to a shared past and how traumatic memories are addressed. Lastly, a rather culture-specific phenomenon that occurs in these novels will be highlighted: the importance of silence and non-communication.

The three novels show various viewpoints on how the memory of internment is relevant to the self-perception of characters as Japanese-Americans. Not only do the novels take very different approaches to addressing internment, they also describe the experience from the viewpoint of families of different social backgrounds. In doing so, they each offer valuable insights into the functioning of memory in different family situations, coping strategies employed to deal with traumatic memory, as well as generational differences with regard to identity perception.

3.1. ACTS OF REMEMBERING AND NARRATOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

As described in chapter 2.1, the circumstances in which memories resurface are crucial to how they are perceived. As the process of remembering is sparked by various triggers, several recurring modes of narration and shared imagery occur throughout three novels in question. Next to typical instances of family stories that are passed on and repeated by the family members through communication, writing or pictures, music, distinct spaces and physical objects can serve as starting points for explorations of memory. Moreover, various narrative structures, such as the creation of tension between past and present events or switches in tense are used by

the authors to emphasize the quality of memory, and to integrate the Japanese internment experience into the novels.

3.1.1. STORIES AND TRIGGERS OF MEMORY

As explained in earlier chapters, literary representations of memory can be analyzed as autonomous acts of memory that reflect on the collective perception of the self within a community. Moreover, one of the most vital aspects of collective remembrance within the family is the focus on recollections that emphasize a group's coherence and the bonds between the family members. Corresponding to this, the novels' characters remember episodes, in which well-known stories, such as fairytales, or anecdotes of real events from the family's history are retold in order to create a feeling of homogeneity. By repeating popular tales and myths as part of the community's Cultural Memory, as well as communicative memory that links the generations within the family, the sense of kinship and belonging is strengthened.

For the protagonists of *Obasan* and *The Floating World*, stories that are retold again and again play an important role in their family's everyday life. They can be regarded as the typical manifestations of family memory that connect the generations, while at the same time establishing a feeling of temporal continuity and group coherence (see Erll *Narratology* 213). In *Obasan*, the protagonist fondly remembers hearing typical Japanese fairytales (Kogawa 62-63) and lullabies, but also anecdotes that highlight positive or funny aspects in everyday life. During a joint car ride of the, by the end, rather estranged family members, Uncle and Aunt Emily recount such an anecdote to highlight their connectedness and to generally lighten the mood. They talk about a comical instance in which Stephen found and imbibed a bottle of laxative. "We had some good times,' Aunt Emily says. 'Do you remember at all, Nomi? You were so little'" (Kogawa 261). This is followed by a Haiku that Aunt Emily translates as "As the storm rages ... our drawing closer ... keeps us warm" (Kogawa 261), thus emphasizing the comfort in family community. Interestingly, in Kogawa's novel, mentions of family coherence are mostly interspersed with distinct allusions to Japanese culture. This happens through this particular piece of poetry, or for example by comparing the emotional connections within the family to Japanese sweets: "[they were] intimate to the point of stickiness, like mochi" (Kogawa 24). During the abovementioned car ride,

even the protagonist's brother, Stephen, alludes to his Japanese heritage by making use of Japanese-English pidgin expressions (Kogawa 262).

In Kadohata's novel, after the grandmother's death, the young protagonist, Olivia, takes on the responsibility of relating the familiar stories to her siblings. This includes true stories about their family's past, on the one hand, but also, on the other hand, tales about their grandmother's life that are embellished for dramatic effect – the favorite being what her siblings call the "Murder story" (Kadohata 34). This story seems to display two important features of family memory: on the one hand, it shows the tendency of younger generations to try and heroize their ancestors (see chapter 2.1.3.), as the young, beautiful grandmother is shown to have done 'the right thing' in resisting the 'beautiful man's' advances. On the other hand, it shows how the knowledge of later generations is determined by the story teller's level of knowledge, as well as their personal feelings about the matter. Thus, knowledge shared by the children within the narratives is not only confined to their knowledge of the world, but is also tinted by their intent in telling it, which can have a great impact on the way some events are remembered by the younger siblings. This becomes especially obvious in *The Floating World*, when Olivia, partially out of her own confusion and perhaps also spite, identifies her mother's lover as "the enemy", thus extending his influence on their family as a physical threat and causing her youngest brother to fear for his life (Kadohata 74). In this way, she significantly influences the way he remembers this particular episode. Similar to Olivia, Stephen in *Obasan* is one of the major sources for Naomi to find out about her family's situation. As the adults are shown to be reluctant to diverge facts about internment, racism and war, her older sibling is at times the only one to share his limited knowledge. As the elder, he is in a position to educate his little sister concerning the identity and personal history of family members and friends, but also influences her perception of their situation by presenting some of his deductions (such as his assumptions about their mother's death) as facts (Kogawa 253).

Not only do the children in the novel share their own world of stories, the adults also relate instances from their past, which are again decoded by the children, according to the context in which they are retold. By observing what is told and how it is emphasized by the adults, Olivia's character is, for example, able to read between the lines and deduct knowledge - such as her mother's forced marriage (Kadohata 44) – that is not explicitly passed on to her. Moreover, viewpoints that are passed on through

intergenerational communication can have a significant effect on how identity and identity shaping factors are perceived (see Davis 11). Mainly through their talkative grandmother, Olivia and her siblings learn about a unique way to perceive their surroundings as part of the *ukiyo*, the floating world (Kadohata 3). While this expression is originally used to describe pleasure districts in Japan, for the *Sansei* children, who have never been to Japan, the term gains a new meaning and rather denominates the transient world of motels, gas stations and diners that seemingly 'float' past their family without leaving a lasting impression. This single Japanese word with its new connotation thus becomes a central aspect of Olivia's world view, as it not only influences her self-perception, but also strengthens her feelings of connectedness, both to her family and to the Japanese-American community as a whole.

Next to such stories, other modes of communication can serve as parts of family memory as well. For Naomi's brother Stephen, for example, music seems to play an important role in connecting him to his parents. Not surprisingly, his instruments, as well as his mother's old records are among the possessions he takes with him to the relocation camp in Slocan. When he and his father play music together, it is described as a form of communication in itself (Kogawa 203). Even the less musically talented Naomi appreciates the expressive value of music as a trigger of fond memories binding their family together:

“[...] I am remembering a fugue Uncle used to love – a melody Father composed in New Denver which Stephen developed [...]. A light piece, more sad than happy, but quiet and dignified, as Uncle was, as Mother was. A gentle tune. How well they both hid the cacophony life wrote in their bones.” (Kogawa 294)

Notably, the musical pieces that the characters in Kogawa's and Otsuka's novels hold dearest are either North-American or European. Even though Stephen's *Nisei* father was the main influence in teaching him to play the flute and introduced him to the world of music, Stephen is only mentioned to play songs he learned in school, or classics such as “The Cliffs over Dover” and “Waltzing Matilda”. The records he keeps to remind him of his mother are similarly not of Japanese origin (see Kogawa 149, 203). Yet, if read in a metaphorical sense, even though he later rejects his Japanese heritage, by becoming a musician, Stephen chooses his own way of capitalizing on the knowledge his father passed on to him as an alternative mode of carrying on his family's legacy. The connection through music is also reflected by the children's characters in *When the Emperor was Divine*, who distinctly remember their father whistling or “singing that

song again” (Otsuka 45, 78). During their time in Topaz, music from the radio serves to soothe their worries about their fading memories of their father: “‘Do you know what bothers me most? I can’t remember his face sometimes.’ – ‘It was sort of round,’ said the boy. Then he asked her if she wanted to listen to some music and she said yes – she always said yes [...]” (Otsuka 72) Thus, by playing or listening to music together, the family’s bonds seem to be strengthened, even though they remain silent in speech.

Another recurring aspect that connects the characters of the novels to their heritage is space, and what Neumann calls the “semanticization of space” (339). Space may serve as a symbol for the inescapable presence of “the multilayered cultural past, which is even inscribed in the landscape and architecture” (Neumann 339). In the novels, certain memories are triggered by certain spaces in a process that closely resembles the findings of Assmann and Neumann in what they refer to as “spacial metaphors” (Assmann 158-65; Neumann 339). One such space that is almost invariably linked to memory is the attic – a space that usually holds a number of artifacts that connect the viewer in the present to events and relationships in the past. In the case of Obasan’s house, there seem to be several layers of such spaces of memory. The entirety of her house is depicted as disorderly to an outsider, yet Obasan seems to have her own system of keeping things (and memories) in order. While these ‘orderly’ spaces may suggest “easy accessibility of the past” (Neumann 339), certain spaces within her home seem to be exempt from her domestic cartography of memory. Perhaps the most obvious example is the aforementioned attic that she rarely enters. It serves as a metaphor for the buried memories that are difficult to approach, such as recollections of things that were lost or permanently changed due to World War II. Obasan obviously struggles to reconnect with the memories in storage there: “‘It was in the attic, surely.’ [...] ‘Lost,’ she says occasionally. [...] ‘Everything is forgetfulness’” (Kogawa 27-31). Similarly, the family in *When the Emperor was Divine* discovers a graffiti smeared onto the wall in their “upstairs room” – while its actual content is not further elaborated, the family agrees that what is written there should vanish under layers of paint (Otsuka 111). While this passage can be read as referring to the lingering presence of racism, the mural can also be interpreted as a symbol for the whole experience of Japanese internment that the family is trying their best to forget.

For other, less stationary families such as the one described in *The Floating World*, it is more difficult for family members to tie their memories to particular physical landmarks. While there are general concepts that memories are tied to, such as blurring images of gas stations or motels, what triggers memory for Kadohata's family are mainly keepsakes and trinkets they can take on their journeys. Mostly, they are reminders of especially proud moments in their lives or personal relationships to people who passed away. In all three novels, things that were either received or inherited from family members are shown to hold a special place in the lives of later generations. Kadohata's protagonist hangs on to her grandmother's valise to remember her by, while her mother goes to almost desperate lengths to retrieve a box she identifies as a keepsake from her mother (Kadohata 55). In *When the Emperor was Divine*, the left behind clothes of a lost family member become important keepsakes to the children. The girl insists on wearing her father's watch, while the boy keeps an array of clothes that remind him of his father. Regarding the girl, these artefacts take on still another meaning. She can be viewed as the character that is most keen to hold on to the prewar status quo. As such, her various treasured items not only connect her emotionally to family members, but also hint at the affluent times before internment, when the family was still intact. Things such as her blue scarf from Paris, may be read as a material remnant from a time before the disruption of orderly life. This, she uses to ground her sense of identity in the past (see Green and Luscombe 12). During the train ride to Topaz, the girl utilizes this scarf as a means to recreate her family's image of wealth and even during internment, she is shown to hang on to her habit of browsing the Sears Roebuck catalogue, reminiscing about luxury items that were easily accessible to her (Otsuka 33, 54) – thus creating an especially glaring contrast to the conditions in camp.

Next to trinkets and artefacts that are charged with an emotional value, perhaps the most important triggers for memory are represented in the form of written documents and photographs. While for Kadohata's protagonist, photographs serve the purpose of giving glimpses of her family members' earlier life and facilitate the creation of a connection to her past, in *Obasan's* protagonist, Naomi's, case, they take on an additional role. When Naomi questions Obasan concerning the whereabouts of her mother, she is shown photographs as a stand-in for factual answers (Kogawa 56). Her aunt's explanations that "these are the best memories" (Kogawa 56), however, impart a sense of foreboding, rather than soothing her need for answers. In not knowing what

happened, the reader joins Naomi in her uneasiness about her mother's fate. In this way, Kogawa depicts the emotional turmoil caused by intentionally withheld memories that nonetheless affect all members of the family. Without conveying its content, or rather, by refusing to communicate it, Obasan nevertheless passes on negative emotions and fear to her niece.

For both Naomi and Olivia, diaries from older family members constitute an important source of knowledge and frequently give the characters valuable insights into the personal thoughts of other family members that influence their perception of reality, identity and appropriate behavior. For Kogawa's Naomi, her aunt's parcel of collected documents constitutes the background for her own introspective exploration of her past. It not only contains factual information on historical events, but also grants Naomi a look at her own past from a different perspective. While Naomi is reluctantly confronted with her Aunts accounts, *The Floating World's* protagonist actively seeks her grandmother's wisdom: "When I wanted to know about work, I asked my father. When I wanted to know about love, I asked my mother. But when I wanted to know about sex, I asked my grandmother." (Kadohata 109) Through reading the diary, Olivia understands that there is another side to her irascible grandmother and starts to respect her as a strong independent woman, whose life she can learn from. Notably, Kadohata makes no mention of the grandmother's experience during World War II within the diary, instrumenting it as a source of strength, in contrast to Kogawa's collection of painful memories. Nevertheless, both diaries actively serve the purpose of strengthening family bonds, by contrasting the lived experience of the protagonists with the written memory of their elders.

As such, the three novels mimic what Davis identifies as a common feature of many Asian American autobiographies. Often, the focus of such narratives is on the "individual process of understanding identity" through interaction with the family, mixed with introspection (Davis 2). By portraying different families and their circumstances at a certain point in history, the novels recreate a seemingly subjective social structure that can still function as a valuable source for understanding collective memory (see Davis 7).

3.1.2.POINTS OF VIEW, NARRATIVE STRUCTURES AND JAPANESE INTERNMENT

The collective nature of memory is especially prevalent in texts that are concerned with family relationships. In Asian-American literature, the role of older relatives as a source of knowledge and as a connection to the respective country of origin should not be understated as they are “most often presented as crucial to the formation of the narrating self” (Davis 12). Both Kogawa’s and Kadohata’s protagonists show a deep connection to their older family members as they relate their own life story from within the collective of one distinct family. They elucidate the circumstances of Japanese-Americans from the point of view of a single narrator (apart from the documents included in Kogawa’s novel). In contrast, Otsuka’s protagonists in *When the Emperor was Divine*, tell the episode of Japanese internment from several perspectives, highlighting the differences in knowledge, information, mental dispositions, as well as the norms the respective characters adhere to. Neumann makes an important point with regard to the value of such texts:

“Texts with a multi-perspectival narration or focalization provide insight into the memories of several narrative instances or figures and in this way they can reveal the functioning and problems of collective memory-creation. An analysis of the perspective structure provides information about the social structure of the fictional world and about the importance or value of specific versions of the past [...]” (Neumann 338)

Though mostly narrated in present tense, Otsuka’s novel creates a world in which the experiences of the four nameless family members can be understood as possible stand-ins for the collective internment memories co-existing in the Japanese-American community. Looking at what information is shared between the generations regarding their cultural heritage, as well as the way beliefs are validated through repetition, shows the social nature of experience and, by extension, collective identity (see Neumann 339). Especially the boy’s chapter serves as an example for this particular point, as it highlights the workings of collective memory, when the boy is suddenly confronted with a mostly unfamiliar cultural environment during internment – a point that will be again taken up in chapter 3.2.1.

As Otsuka’s characters are not distinctly identified, *When the Emperor was Divine*, can be read as a ‘memoir of internment’ as experienced by Japanese-Americans as a

collective. This becomes especially obvious in passages where the focalization through the eyes of either character is suspended in favor of an enumeration of facts or exclamations, not directed at or voiced by anyone specifically, such as rules of behavior for Japanese-Americans: "Travel only in the daytime. Do not converse on the telephone in Japanese. Do not congregate in one place. [...] Remember, you're in America." (Otsuka 84). The narrative is further depersonalized in the last chapters that take the position of both children, but at the same time include a wide array of possible generalized experiences of young Japanese-Americans after internment ended. Similarly, in the form of an increasingly aggressive, frustrated rant, the father appears to speak for the entirety of Japanese-American men who were questioned by the FBI, "confessing" to a variety of exaggerated allegations created by war hysteria, that Japanese-Americans were accused of. "I'm the slant-eyed sniper in the trees. I'm the saboteur in the shrubs. I'm the stranger at the gate. I'm the traitor in your own backyard. I'm your houseboy. I'm your cook. I'm your gardener" (Otsuka 143). As such, the internment experience presented by Otsuka is personalized and depersonalized at the same time, presenting the reader with historical circumstances, as well as a possible rendering of the psychological impact it may have had on a generic Japanese-American family. This latter point is especially emphasized with regard to the children. In the beginning of confinement, the unnatural environment causes confusion for the youngest member of the family. The boy is, for example, confounded by seeing so many Japanese-looking men in one spot and continues to see his own father in every "little yellow man" (Otsuka 49). The boys chapter gives insight into the shock of Japanese internment to the particularly malleable minds of young children and the impact the sudden change in environment may have had on their perception of belonging and self.

In many fictitious accounts of memory, the story is narrated from the position of a character remembering and attempting to make meaning of past events that resurface through memory. The most common narrative techniques used for the representation of memory in such a framework are retrospection or analepsis (see Neumann 335). Kogawa's novel follows this pattern, as the protagonist recalls her childhood experiences and tries to reevaluate her current situation and identity. As her protagonist, Naomi, retrospectively relives the experience, the author explores different ways of dealing with trauma through the characters of the family members. The whole novel can, in a way, be understood as a (re-)collection of wartime memories, and

combines Naomi's views as a grown-up with her childhood memories, the adult voice of Aunt Emily through her diary and factual reports from newspapers and official papers. *The Floating World* and certain parts of the girl's chapter in *When the Emperor was Divine* also make use of this technique. It creates tension between the 'remembered I' and the 'remembering I', as the identity of the narrator in the narrated present is dependent on the memories made in the past. A disruption in the narrator's personal timeline or a disconnection from the present identity dissolve the narrative into separate memory fragments, which "indicate the instability of the meaning-making process" (Neumann 336). In *Obasan*, the remembering protagonist is portrayed as struggling with her own identity due to her inability to reconcile her present self with her past (or missing) experience. The novel illustrates her attempt to establish a "stable identity" through the process of admitting that previously repressed past events affected her sense of self and had a meaningful impact on her current situation (see Neumann 336).

The tension between the 'remembering I' and the 'remembered I' can be staged in two different ways, according to Neumann. On the one hand, as represented by Naomi in *Obasan*, the narrator can create a connection to the past through self-reflexive retrospection. The narration returns to the present in regular intervals and thus puts the memories in context with 'current' events. Likewise, the girl in *When the Emperor was Divine* looks back on her time in the Tanforan assembly center and compares it to her present situation on the train to Topaz (Otsuka 43). Another common mode of memory narration, on the other hand, does not explicitly mention the situation of the 'remembering I' within the text (see Neumann 337). As, for example in Kadohata's *The Floating World*, the choice of past tense serves to convey the 'past' quality of what is told, while the situation from which the autodiegetic narrator tells her story is not further specified.

In contrast to Kogawa's and Otsuka's novels, in Kadohata's narrative, the role of Japanese internment is pushed into the background. The story focusses on the experiences of the protagonist, Olivia, and her family during the 1950's, in the aftermath of internment. During their travels, the family's past is hardly discussed and Japanese internment is only directly mentioned thrice throughout the novel, as, for example, in passing the former home of family friends along the highway (Kadohata 171). The effects it had on the family's (and the community's) everyday life are, however, visible through the codes of behavior – within the Japanese-American

community and regarding white North Americans. They hint at the trauma that is still present for the older generations, part of which is inadvertently passed down to younger generations.

While for the protagonist of *The Floating World* the experience of internment lies, decidedly, in the past and is not part of the narrated timespan, in both *Obasan* and *When the Emperor was Divine*, the main cornerstones of internment are integrated into the narrative in a (mostly) chronological order. In *Obasan*, facts and memories about internment are gradually unpacked in the form of analepses, mainly triggered by physical objects, such as the aforementioned diary or family pictures. This technique is frequently employed in contemporary novels to suggest the way in which the subject experiences the progress of time. According to Neumann, the sequence of events is frequently changed, creating anachronies that “illustrate the haphazard workings of memory and thus contribute substantially to highlighting the memory-like quality of narratives” (336). Especially in the boy’s chapter in *When the Emperor was Divine*, the constant jumps along the timeline expose remembering as an “anachronic process” in general, while particularly traumatic episodes, such as the father’s arrest, occur again and again – highlighting their disruptive nature (Bal viii; Erll *Narratology* 214).

In Kogawa’s novel, the story of Japanese internment starts with the confiscation of the uncle’s fishing boat (Kogawa 25), the family’s struggles of managing their belongings (Kogawa 82) and the first round-ups (26, 88). The events are narrated with Naomi as a young child as focalizer. In this stage of the novel, her limited insights mainly stem from overheard conversations between adults (Kogawa 82, 90-91), a fact that is repeatedly pointed out: “The tension everywhere was not clear to me then and is not much clearer today. Time has solved few mysteries.” (Kogawa 93). In the course of her reluctant reading of the various papers and documents collected in Aunt Emily’s package, Naomi’s childhood experiences are combined with factual accounts by government officials and newspapers, as well as official announcements and legal texts (Kogawa 44, 49, 206-207, 220, 221, 231, 236, 254-255). These rather emotionless reports on Japanese internment are then further mediated by Aunt Emily’s voice through her diary entries, which give further depth to the memories of the protagonist: “I feel like a burglar as I read, breaking into a private house only to discover it’s my childhood house filled with corners and rooms I’ve never seen.” (Kogawa 95). From these three main sources, Naomi’s remembered version of confinement is

reevaluated and reconstructed. The intervention of Aunt Emily through both her diary and dialogues in the narrated present, not only triggers the process of Naomi revisiting these painful events, but also highlights the absence of other voices – most prominently Obasan's – in composing the story.

In *Obasan*, Kogawa combines both the positive and the negative aspects, as Naomi proceeds to remember her past. At first, she focusses on mostly happy memories in her narration and even the camp experience is related seemingly without any resentment. She mentions memories of "Sunday-school outings, Christmas concerts, sports days, hikes, report cards, letters from Aunt Emily and Father, [or] the arrival of the piano in the crowded room where Uncle and Obasan sleep" (Kogawa 190) and points out the pleasant experiences when Slocan started to flourish as a community (Kogawa 190-191). In an almost nostalgic tone, her childhood self marvels at their small hut in Slocan, which she finds comparable to what she would encounter in a fairytale (Kogawa 143). This idyllic picture is only later put into context as Naomi and her relatives revisit their place of confinement: "What a hole!" (Kogawa 139) The only slightly disturbing intermezzos in Naomi's recollection of her "quiet and pleasant holiday" (Kogawa 163) in Slocan, are rather metaphoric in nature. They include violence towards chickens or a dying kitten in the outhouse that hint at the feelings of betrayal of a defenseless subgroup at the hands of a powerful elite (Kogawa 188, 225). Only later, when the family moves once more to work the fields in Granton, Alberta, does Naomi's memory take on a distinctly bitter undertone and the fairytale-esque descriptions are replaced by a curt enumeration of unpleasant situations. In Naomi's timeline, being forced to remember her time on the sugar-beet farm is portrayed as a breaking point, where she has to admit that the experience did indeed affect her: "Is it so bad? – Yes. – Do I really mind? – Yes, I mind. I mind everything." (Kogawa 233) The narrator's unwillingness to dwell on these memories is further emphasized by the use of present tense – while before, the reader and the protagonist are immersed in a past world in which the narration takes place, in this chapter, the story is anchored in the narrated present. This gives it a more immediate urgency that suggest that the psychological wounds received at that time are still very much present for the narrator (Kogawa 230-238).

A common feature of all three novels is that they address the difficulties of returning to a normal way of life after internment ended, pointing out the feelings of displacement

and lingering distrust. This uncertainty about the end of segregation is expressed in Otsuka's chapter on the children's behavior after their return: "Always, we were polite. We said yes and no and no problem. [...] If we did something wrong we made sure to say excuse me (excuse me for looking at you, excuse me for sitting here, excuse me for coming back)" (Otsuka 122). It shows the anxious eagerness of 'returnees' in following the rules and fitting in, while being, at the same time, very much aware of the social and racial differences. In the characters of *When the Emperor was Divine*, this manifests, ironically, in a fear of creating bonds with non-Japanese, as the mother points out that too much familiarity could make others "think you think you're better than they are" (Otsuka 129). Similarly, even years after the end of internment, Kogawa's protagonist still suffers from insecurities due to her heritage and points out how even certain expressions of solidarity can conversely alienate the victims – in what Naomi calls the "icebreaker questions that create an awareness of ice" (Kogawa 271). For *The Floating World's* Olivia, the aftereffects of internment are still visible in the tension of older family members or members of the Japanese-American community when confronted with situations that recreate a semblance of the circumstances prior to internment. She perceives that some of the reasons for the cohesion of her family are not grounded in emotional affection, but rather in such "fears, resentments [and] necessities" (Kadohata 145) – the collective experience of people of Japanese descent living in postwar America. Especially her parents' hopes for Olivia's academic success show their longing for creating a scenario in which their children would have a stable place in society, at odds with their own marginalized situation.

3.2. CONSTRUCTION OF A JAPANESE-AMERICAN IDENTITY

One of the main questions these novels focus on, is the difficulty of negotiating the dual identity of Japanese-Americans. While it is already difficult enough to navigate a way of life that combines two cultures as different as these, the events during World War II and the hostility towards all that is regarded Japanese made the personal dilemma of many Japanese-American citizens with regard to constructing their own identity even more precarious. As can be gleaned from the history chapters, many of the *Issei* immigrants made efforts to establish their own community and continue Japanese cultural practices, whilst, at the same time, trying to stay on good terms with

other Americans. For many of them, who still perceived themselves as Japanese first and foremost, the gradual assimilation of their offspring and their shift in perceiving themselves as part of the American culture may have come as a source of bewilderment. This can be seen by Uncle's reaction to Aunt Emily's behavior in *Obasan*: "*Nisei*, not very Japanese-like," to which Aunt Emily replies: "Why should we be? [...] We're Canadian." (Kogawa 48-49) He, as well as Obasan are shown to be similarly unable or unwilling to understand Aunt Emily's choice of living her life as a single, independent woman, fully committed to her work and what she perceives as her social obligation: educating others about Japanese internment. Uncle addresses the subject of her progressing age from time to time – a point of subtle criticism that is also extended to Naomi in later years, as she, too, remains unmarried.

The transition in identity perception from Japanese to members of the American community was already beginning before the Second World War with the *Nisei* generation, but was greatly disturbed, when all people of Japanese heritage were publicly identified as 'enemy Japanese' regardless of their place of birth. This sudden change is vividly portrayed through the eyes of the children in both Kogawa's and Otsuka's narratives. The confusion starts with their recognition of their outward appearance being similar to that of the hated 'Japs': "Black hair. Slanted eyes. High cheekbones. Thick glasses. Thin lips. Bad teeth" (Otsuka 49). Although the parents try to placate their fears by assuring them that they "look fine" (Otsuka 15), their puzzlement remains: "It is a riddle, Stephen tells me. We are both the enemy and not the enemy" (Kogawa 84). Especially in the boy's chapter in *When the Emperor was Divine*, the dilemma becomes clear. As the outside world identifies the children as distinctly Japanese, they struggle with determining how far they are personally defined by their heritage and to what extent they are supposed to comply with the stereotypes. The non-identification with the 'enemy' can be seen in both *Obasan* and *When the Emperor was Divine*, where the children pick up and repeat the derogative terms, without establishing a personal connection to what it implies. The older members of the families are shown to possess a firmer grasp of their position in society and their collective identity as Japanese-Americans. The alienation in the wake of World War II, however, causes a variety of reactions for the adults as well, ranging from shock and rage (e.g.: Kogawa's Aunt Emily) to frustration or despondent compliance (e.g.: Otsuka's mother figure, Kogawa's Obasan).

There are obvious differences in the level of Americanization of the three families and their social standings before internment, which also determine its impact on the character's self-perception. The following chapters will highlight how the three novels depict the destruction of community and the subsequent loss of the feeling of belonging. They showcase how internment may have affected the intergenerational transmission of values within the Japanese-American community and depict scenarios in which communication or lack thereof can result in different strategies for coping and identity construction for later generations.

3.2.1. CONNECTIONS TO A SHARED PAST

Within all the three selected novels, the hybrid culture of Japanese-Americans is highlighted. The clash between the two cultures and the values and expectations attributed to them are staged as a main theme regarding identity construction and growing up. What is especially striking is the depiction of the level of Americanization of *Nisei* and *Sansei* characters within the novels. Naomi, the protagonist in *Obasan*, is still largely surrounded by distinctively Japanese traditions and speaks the language fluently. *The Floating World's* main character, Olivia, is still (at least passively) familiar with certain concepts of Japanese culture and language, whereas the children in *When the Emperor was Divine* are depicted as entirely embedded in the American way of life. They possess hardly any knowledge of the Japanese language and only very few particular aspects of Japanese culture remain in their everyday routines.

The extent to which Japanese Cultural Memory is integrated in the protagonists' lives seems to give them a stronger connection to the Japanese community and culture in general. For Naomi, integration into the first-generation immigrant circle (represented by her aunt, uncle and their friends) comes as an easy task, since she is introduced to various aspects of the Japanese way of life from an early age. She grows up hearing Japanese lullabies and popular Japanese stories and fairytales (such as the tale of Ninomiya Kinjiro (Kogawa 62-63) or Momotaro (Kogawa 66)), has Japanese toys and eats Japanese meals. Even though her family also embraces parts of American culture, Naomi is depicted as firmly connected to the Japanese way of life. In contrast to her brother Stephen, at first, she is still too young to understand the surging racism towards the Japanese and her position in society. As an effect of relocation, she grows up

surrounded almost exclusively by other members of the Japanese-American community in an environment where the Japanese language is naturally used in conjunction with English – for example during sermons (Kogawa 209) – and Japanese social practices such as frequenting the bath houses together are appreciated by all as natural. Thus, without much ‘outside’ interaction, the young Naomi seems to be largely unconcerned about how her ‘Japaneseness’ might be perceived by the rest of the American population. Stephen, however, already made negative experiences on account of his looks prior to internment (see Kogawa 84) and throughout the novel appears to be far more aware of what it is that distinguishes him. As a result, he actively tries to appear as ‘westernized’ as possible and reacts almost aggressively to typically Japanese aspects of life (Kogawa 155). According to Wong, this behavior may be attributed to the dominance of white North-American cultural norms in society: “For Asian Americans, incomplete assimilation to white standards is more liable to create embarrassment or insecurity than lapses from Asian standards [...]” (Wong 99). In his later life, any reminder of his family’s past seems to come as a disruption of his ‘Canadian’ identity and he is obviously uncomfortable in any situation that reveals his connection to Japan (Kogawa 261, 276-277). As such, his wish to escape the Japanese-American community, forget about the past, and blend in with white North Americans as much as possible mirrors a common strategy among *Nisei* in the years after internment (see Yogi 134). Although, in the end, Stephen is portrayed as successful in re-integrating himself into the Canadian society, the rejection of his Japanese heritage also imparts a sense of rootlessness to his character. Aunt Emily takes a similar position in that she persists in their identification as Canadians. This is a common stance taken by many Asian-Americans “claiming America”, who voiced their desire to be regarded as Americans/Canadians first and foremost (Cheung 6). Aunt Emily does not reject their Japanese traditions but rather eliminates the perceived line between the two cultures, insisting that “everything a Canadian does is Canadian”, even if this should include the telling of Japanese traditional fairytales (Kogawa 68).

In her work on Asian American family memoirs, Davis draws attention to the recurring theme of understanding and accepting one’s past in order to successfully negotiate one’s own identity (47). This understanding of the importance of the past is particularly observable in Naomi’s case. Naomi’s Aunt Emily repeatedly urges her to remember as she will otherwise remain “unable to go or to stay in the world with even a semblance of grace or ease” (Kogawa 60). The gradual discovery of her own deep-rooted

frustration by rehashing her experiences, as well as the final disclosure about her mother's fate are presented as necessary for her to come to terms with her identity, and are accepted as such by the protagonist (see Davis 52; Wong 21, 50).

Similar to Naomi, Kadohata's *Sansei* protagonist, Olivia, and her siblings are also confronted with distinctly Japanese elements during their time growing up. As the novel is set well after the end of the Second World War, their family's roots in Japan are significantly removed from their everyday lives. Nevertheless, there are some aspects, such as using the Japanese form of address, Obaasan, for their grandmother, or certain food articles that still remain to connect them to their ancestry. Through her more or less unrestricted interaction with other Americans, Olivia is able to adapt easily to a non-Japanese environment. Her progressed 'Americanization' and command of the English language is depicted as a source of pride for her and her parents (Kadohata 9). Additionally, she also seems to have a good grasp of the Japanese language. In contrast to Kogawa's Naomi, who is shown to be unable to decipher her grandmother's handwriting, Olivia is able to read her grandmother's diary, which is partially written in Japanese and appreciates her bilingual abilities: "[...] I liked the two languages, Japanese and English, how each contained thoughts you couldn't express exactly in the other" (Kadohata 109). Her parents also maintain some Japanese traditions, such as putting tangerines and mochi on the windowsills for New Year's "the way my mother said her mother always had" (Kadohata 139), or commemorating Obaasan by setting up a shrine in their living room (Kadohata 68).

In this way, Olivia learns about the cultural practices typically for Japanese culture amid American influences. Observing them not only links her to her closer family (as in the case of Obaasan's shrine), but also to the rest of the Japanese-American community. In Olivia's perception, the other Japanese-Americans that found their way to Arkansas were the group she felt most connected to "just as my mother, father, brothers and I were bound to each other" (Kadohata 94). This situation mirrors Davis's findings that in similar literary cases, "subjects identify, to a very strong extent, with the diaspora, rather than with the original cultures and countries" (92). In their collective cultural differences to the rest of America, the group is able to provide a sense of safety and belonging, even though the members are constantly changing due to shifting employment situations. Through her own experience working as a chicken sexer (one of the menial jobs that were primarily taken by Japanese-Americans at the time; see

chapter 1.2.2.), she gains a deeper understanding that their collective status as outsiders is at the same time the prerequisite for belonging with the group (Kadohata 132, see Cheung 6). In this way she discovers one of the lasting effects of internment on the Japanese-American population: the awkward network of connections within a community wary of connecting too much.

Even though Olivia feels positively towards her Japanese cultural background by the end of the novel¹⁶, before the death of her grandmother, her emotions are more complicated. This is indirectly expressed through her love-hate relationship with Obaasan:

“Everytime she took a step toward me I took a step back. Sometimes I ran from her, but I never ran hard. I didn't want her to catch and hit me, but I didn't want to lose her, either. It was our responsibility to keep an eye on each other.” (Kadohata 23)

Her grandmother, as the only *Issei* in her vicinity, is her main source of information concerning her heritage and, in contrast to Kogawa's Obasan, she is very willing to impart various aspects of her life. Olivia realizes the indelible connection to her ancestors, but nevertheless, perhaps because of their difficulty in living together, rejects her grandmother's way of life, stating that she wants “to be the opposite of Obaasan. Anything she does, I never will.” (Kadohata 20) After her grandmother's passing, Olivia learns to appreciate the small tokens that connect her to her past (Kadohata 109).

Perhaps because of her talkative grandmother, Olivia seems to possess some knowledge about her family's past, that dates back to 1875 in Japan, when her great-grandparents were allowed to adopt a family name. Anything beyond the floating gap (what her grandmother is able to pass on) does not feature in their family history. Similarly, in *Obasan*, Kogawa's protagonist is only shown to remember back to a time when her family moved to Canada, even though she is the most immersed in Japanese culture among the three families. The children in Otsuka's novel seem to have rather limited knowledge of a time before the United States. In the novel, the only situations in which life in Japan is mentioned are the nostalgic stories about their mother's childhood, which she shares with them during internment. They do, however, observe

¹⁶ This development may be attributed to the two strong female role models she finds in her mother and grandmother (see Ganser 214).

their parents take pleasure in typically Japanese things, such as their Japanese style garden (Otsuka 68), or eating *umeboshi*, Japanese pickled plums (Otsuka 9).

With this respect, the chapter of the boy in Otsuka's *When the Emperor was Divine* reveals a very interesting dynamic. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the family is abruptly torn apart. What the boy remembers of talking to his father or habits shared by the family seem to be almost stereotypically American (see Otsuka 62). What he is confronted with during internment, however, is that he and his family are considered Japanese. He is questioned about Japanese foundational myths, such as his beliefs about the Japanese Emperor's status – parts of a Cultural Memory he is apparently not particularly familiar with and which did not concern him in his life prior to internment. Thus, what he thinks to know about himself and his position in society are challenged. The novel shows the boy's confusion as a young 'Americanized' *Nisei* Japanese-American who struggles with his new reality of scattered families, broken up communities, and unclear allegiances in the wake of World War II. Things passed on to him as parts of communicative memory from within his closer family do not seem to add up to what is expected of him by the rest of the American community. Even while he, seemingly oblivious of his own hybrid identity, takes parts in games of "Kill the Nazis! Kill the Japs!" (Otsuka 53-4), at the same time, he appears to wonder about how much he conforms to the stereotype of the enemy and whether he should adopt the typically Japanese customs or speech patterns he observes around him:

"The boy put on a coat and stared at his reflection in the broken mirror. His hair was long and uncombed and his face was dark brown from the sun. [...] He narrowed his eyes and stuck out his two front teeth.

I predge arregiance to the frag...

Whatsamalla, Shorty?

Solly. So so solly." (Otsuka 87)

Other than personal habits that the children observe from older family members, some behavior practiced by many within the community is also absorbed and implemented by younger generations – more or less willingly. What Naomi in *Obasan*, calls the "language of the eyes" is a habit she inherits by observing and imitating her mother's behavior – the aversion to looking into a stranger's eyes, as it is perceived as a sign of insolence in Japanese culture (Kogawa 58). She notices how the *Issei* part of her family distinguish themselves from the *Nisei*, who are born in America and grow up "visually bilingual" (Kogawa 58). The next generation, as exemplified by the rather outgoing

Olivia is seemingly unfamiliar with this shyness, which may perhaps be seen as a sign for the elimination of cultural peculiarities in behavior, which prove to be impractical in a different environment.

The anonymous family portrayed in *When the Emperor was Divine* is an upper middle-class family that seems to have integrated into American society to a considerable extent. For the children, who are part of the *Nisei* generation, the remnants of Japanese life seem to be food articles, such as barley tea and rice balls, as well as the few Japanese possessions of their parents. In contrast to the other two works, this novel only includes the two successive generations of the nuclear family – thus, missing the common ‘grandmotherlike’ character as a source of “rootedness”, which Davis identified as a common feature of Asian-American literature (87). In contrast to Kogawa’s and Kadohata’s female elders, the mother in Otsuka’s story fails to provide her children with wisdom and guidance during their time in camp, as she grows more and more apathetic and almost delusional in the course of internment. Additionally, the father is absent until well after internment ends, leaving especially the boy without his role model as a reference for his own behavior.

Lacking clear guidance from their mother, they look towards other members of the interned community regarding their own identity as Japanese-Americans. Whereas the girl forms a group with the other adolescents of the camp with whom she can identify herself, the boy is left wondering about what he should do or believe. He is only able to judge about the propriety of things according to his own limited (and often biased) knowledge. Therefore, his mother’s instructions to hide their Japanese heritage – which the boy does not seem particularly knowledgeable about in the first place – considerably confuse the boy in his self-perception. Shortly before the family’s relocation, the mother declares that they were to have “No more rice balls, [...] and if anyone asks, you’re Chinese” (Otsuka 75). This is followed by an account of the few things the boy knows about China: “In China they ate grass for breakfast and for lunch they ate cats” (Otsuka 75-76). Even though he is portrayed as a rather docile child, who mostly accepts the sudden changes and new rules, he nevertheless struggles to completely obey:

“[A] man stopped him on the sidewalk in front of Woolworth’s and said, ‘Chink or Jap?’ and the boy answered, ‘Chink,’ and ran away as fast as he could. Only when he got to the corner did he

turn around and shout 'Jap! Jap! I'm a Jap!' Just to set the record straight." (Otsuka 76)

At the relocation camp the mother gives them further directions to be careful to "never say the Emperor's name out loud," (Otsuka 52). This marks the beginning of one of the recurring questions in the boy's identity crisis. Similar to the earlier example, his knowledge about the emperor is limited to what he hears from others – through propaganda infused news from outside of camp, or from other internees, some of whom covertly worship the emperor as a god (Otsuka 83). His sources of information often contradict each other and his confusion is further intensified by his insecurity about the beliefs of his father. While his sister insists that their father does not worship the Japanese ruler (Otsuka 61), the rumors the boy hears from others, state that his father was specially confined by the FBI as „a great fan of the Emperor's“ (Otsuka 116). This does not seem to add up to what the boy remembers of his father, who to him appeared so perfectly adjusted to the American way of life. As a result, the boy is unsure how he himself is supposed to align himself in this regard. Similar to his defiance in calling himself Chinese, here too, the boy feels the necessity to somehow try and defy the group's complete rejection of all that is Japanese, and to confirm what he assumes to be his own identity, even if only for himself:

“Whenever the boy walked past the shadow of a guard tower he pulled his cap down low over his head and tried not to say the word.

But sometimes it slipped out anyway.

Hirohito, Hirohito, Hirohito.

He said it quietly. Quickly. He whispered it." (Otsuka 52)

Moreover, he mentions a recurring dream of a beautiful wooden door opening to a room with the Emperor's picture in it which “no one was allowed to see. For the Emperor was holy and divine. A god." (Otsuka 73) He longs to open the door, but is always kept from doing so by various mishaps. Thus, the boy constantly oscillates between the will to identify himself as Japanese, while at the same time rejecting typically Japanese things as shameful – much like Naomi's brother in *Obasan*. In contrast, Kadohata's protagonist, Olivia, benefits from a more communicative environment, in which she can observe aspects of Japanese Cultural Memory, such as the emperor myth, practiced put into context by her older relatives and role models:

“[My mother] admired presidents' wives and liked to know what they ate and wore, liked to know the odd fact that made them human. [...] She'd probably inherited her interest in first ladies

from Obaasan, who used to revere the Japanese emperor and his wife. 'The emperor was a moron,' Obaasan once said, 'but he was still the emperor.'" (Kadohata 27)

What can be seen from the mentioned sections, later generations' awareness of their family's past is for a large part contingent on what their elders want them to know and remember (see Davis 123). This includes more general things, such as language and traditions, but also shameful or hurtful memories that are in some cases deliberately kept from younger generations – for several possible reasons that will be explored in the following chapters.

3.2.2. TRAUMA AND MEMORY

First of all, there are, of course, differences in the way people deal with traumatic experiences, or in the way they perceive certain circumstances or expressions as hurtful. The respective characters not only highlight the differences in perception, but also portray a variety of different responses to the hardships and abuse during and after internment. Upon close reading, the characters are attributed certain behavioral traits that hint at the existence of trauma. The different coping strategies and the depictions of interaction between those traumatized and others that did not go through a similar experience enable a deeper understanding of interactions within families, as well as the larger Japanese-American community.

Perhaps the most obvious depiction of trauma can be found in Otsuka's *When the Emperor was Divine*. When the father is finally reunited with his family after years of confinement, he returns a very different person than what his children remember.

"Although we had been waiting for this moment, the moment of our father's return, for more than four years now, when we finally saw him standing there before us on the platform we did not know what to think, what to do. [...] Because the man who stood there before us was not our father. He was somebody else, a stranger who had been sent back in our father's place. *That's not him*, we said to our mother, *That's not him* [...]." (Otsuka 132-33)

While certain aspects about his outward appearance, such as his missing teeth and tottering gait, already betray the treatment he received during his time in FBI custody, the behavior his children observe in their father describes the obvious characteristics of a severely traumatized man (see chapter 2.1.4.). He seems to be unable to

reconnect to his life before internment and does not remember the surroundings that should be familiar to him, he seems to alternate between paranoia and absent thinking and is unable to take pleasure in what were his favorite pastimes. He rejects joining his family in listening to their (formerly) favorite radio show, claiming that there was “already too much noise” in his head (Otsuka 137). Moreover, his frustrated outbursts of aggression at the smallest disturbances further alienate his family – “‘You think they care?’ he shouted at us as we slowly made our way toward the door. We covered our ears with our hands and kept on walking” (Otsuka 134). This already hints at one of the most powerful messages conveyed by Otsuka’s novel: the disruption and ultimately the destruction of family bonds as an effect of internment, intensified by the unwillingness or inability to communicate negative feelings and traumatic experiences.

During internment, the only information the children receive about their father’s situation come in the form of censored postcards that reveal little to nothing about the physical and mental torture in the camps for ‘dangerous enemy aliens’. They are thus understandably shocked by the transformation of their father, but receive no clarification as to what actually happened: “He never said a word to us about the years he’d been away. Not one word. He never talked about politics, or his arrest, or how he had lost all his teeth [...]” (Otsuka 133). The way in which the children’s lack of knowledge about their father’s situation is portrayed, also shows their inability to put his ‘bizarre’ behavior into context, leading to a vicious circle of alienation that ends in almost complete estrangement. By the end of the novel, the father does not partake in social activities, and lives as a recluse in his own room (Otsuka 137). The last chapter of *When the Emperor was Divine* finally reveals what the father –as a typical example for, and, at the same time, a fused identity of Japanese-Americans that were taken for questioning by the FBI – was unable to communicate to his family. Keeping in mind the theoretical insights from chapter 2.1.4., including such memories of physical and mental maltreatment in family and collective memory may facilitate open discussion about their aftereffects, and a better understanding of certain reactions. Directly addressing internment and shameful or hurtful memories, in the way Otsuka’s and Kogawa’s novels do, might create a discourse in which tensions within families and communities that built up due to the prolonged silence could find an outlet.

The character Obasan in Kogawa’s novel impersonates a rather similar coping strategy to Otsuka’s father figure, though she is portrayed as suffering from a subtler form of

emotional trauma. With regard to her internment experience, Obasan represents the position Smelser identifies as “Reversal” (see chapter 2.1.4.). Rather than acknowledging the hurtful episodes for what they were, she expresses her feelings of “arigataï”, of gratitude for what she experienced (Kogawa 190-191). Through Obasan’s character, Kogawa recreates the popular consensus among some Japanese-Americans, who opted into accepting internment as a “blessing in disguise”, which presented itself as feasible, since the *Nisei*’s position in society was notably improved in the years after the war (see Robinson 191). Perhaps also due to cultural constraints that discourage complaints, Obasan represents a stance of zen-like ‘enlightenment’ that does not require her to come to terms with her own status as a victim of racially motivated expulsion. Similarly, she avoids any mention of her sister’s terrible fate as a victim of the bombing of Nagasaki – perhaps for reasons of protecting the children, perhaps because of her sister’s insistence on keeping it hidden. By the end of the novel, however, Obasan’s inability to even begin to articulate what she knows becomes clear: “Obasan is small as a child and has not learned to weep. [...] Obasan rubs her eyes and tries to speak but the thick saliva coats her throat and she does not have the strength to cough. Her round dry mouth is open. A small accepting ‘o’” (Kogawa 295).

Notably, lacking communication and loss of speech is a recurring theme in Kogawa’s novel. While in some cases this is presented as a choice of behavior, the novel shows the protagonist’s own struggles as she recoils from addressing certain topics and the pain that can be caused by finally expressing traumatic experiences. There are several similarities in the way she remembers the long-lasting hardships due to internment – which the adult narrator is generally reluctant to address (e.g. Kogawa 54) – and the moment the memory of her father’s death from tuberculosis resurfaces: “‘My father’s dead,’ I reply as calmly as if I were offering the time of day. But a few moments after I say it, I find myself collapsed on the sofa with a sharp pain in my abdomen and a cold perspiration forming on my forehead” (Kogawa 252). This passage describes Naomi’s violent physical reaction to verbally expressing the repressed knowledge for the first time, almost a year after the fact. Kogawa not only describes the traumatic quality of losing a loved one, but also hints at the family’s general lack of communication in facing death and grief. The novel’s protagonist is not even sure, whether the fact of her father’s passing was even communicated verbally at the time their family was notified (Kogawa 247). The collective silence in her family seems especially apt to facilitate

Naomi's "suppression" of trauma as a way of coping, as it allows for past events to remain in the grey area between assumption and knowledge.

When the death of her uncle forces Naomi to leave her somewhat comfortable life as a small-town teacher, she revisits the places and memories from her childhood and has to acknowledge the traumatic quality of her memories. The novel shows how the main character transitions from stubborn reluctance to fatalistic compliance when her Aunt Emily's documents push her to remember the painful events. Similar to the scene in which her father's death is revealed, her memories of the time in Alberta are described as fuzzy "sleepwalk years, a time of half dream" (Kogawa 239), hinting at the suppressed pain. Naomi's character, in her struggles to reconcile herself with her past, can be read almost like a personification of a typical description of trauma negotiation, as explained in chapter 2.1.4. Her efforts in sifting through the collected documents, her own recollections and versions of the past she gleans from conversations with her relatives show that the past is invariably consistent of fragments that cannot be successfully understood or reconciled (see McDermott 42). While Naomi first persists in focusing on 'today', rather than joining Aunt Emily in her quest for raising awareness of the past (Kogawa 50-51), in the course of the novel, Naomi becomes more and more aware of her own stagnant situation in life and realizes the need for accepting the past in order to move on (Kogawa 30-31). This development becomes especially prevalent due to the mute Obasan acting as a foil to the protagonist. In the end she follows Aunt Emily's advice to try and "remember everything" and to accept the negative emotions that go along with accepting them (Kogawa 60). As she finally puts her experience into words, her personal losses during and after internment become invariably real to her, but, unlike Obasan, who remains unable to express her grief, Naomi is shown to find her own way to mourn and heal (Kogawa 295-96). Tellingly however, this development facilitating reconciliation is only possible after the family finally allows the traumatic memory of the mother's fate in Japan to enter into their family memory.

Another part of the persistent traumatic effects of internment is mentioned in Kogawa's novel, as "the darkness" of racism and violence would never quite vanish from the lives of Japanese-Americans (Kogawa 82-83) and leave them in fearful apprehension on a time where it would surface again as a rationale for their exclusion. This particular long-term effect of internment is also discernable in Kadohata's description of Olivia's life

growing up in the 1950's. One example for this can be read in the grandmother's worries about attracting attention in public, as she sends all the children inside the motel, whenever a car approaches: "What will people think, with Japanese hanging around like hoodlums at night?" (Kadohata 27) On a broader level, the incident of the arrested gamblers showcases the uneasiness of the Japanese-American community of encounters with law enforcement, as well as the deeply rooted suspicions about being rounded up again (Kadohata 136). The underlying fear manifests in the sudden tension she perceives in the whole Japanese-American community of Gibson, when the police force disperses a gambling ring: "They thought they would be run out of town. When I was older and listened to them discuss the arrests, I could still hear in their voices something of the distress they'd felt, and once in a while I felt it, too." (Kadohata 136-37) But also the portrayal of Olivia's grandmother's self-awareness and apprehension towards *hakujin* (white people) are used to suggest that the trauma suffered by those who lived through internment can still be perceived by younger generations and can become an internalized reaction, even without being explained verbally.

3.2.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF SILENCE

Other than trauma inflicted through internment and exclusion in North America, Naomi's mother and grandmother in *Obasan* are shown to suffer from severe trauma as survivors of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki. As the reader finds out at the end of the novel through the grandmother's letters from Japan that are read to the family, many of their relatives had been severely injured or killed by the immediate effects of the bombing. Those who survived are shown to be incapable to form a coherent narrative about what happened to them. Moreover, it becomes clear that they actively decide to suppress their traumatic memories: they resolve that silence would be the best course of action as "the horror would surely die sooner [...], if they refused to speak" (Kogawa 282-83). This stance is mirrored by most other family members who remained in America.

Yet, there is still another aspect to their silence than the general inability to process their experiences that is to some extent culturally motivated. This is expressed in the

wish of the characters to keep 'harmful' memories from their loved ones. The protagonist's mother, as an example, does not only refuse to share her memories with anyone, but also expressly requests that the horrors they encountered in Japan would be kept from her children (Kogawa 283). It is not until after her uncle's death, that Naomi and her brother Stephen are told about the fate of their relatives. Though the children had already assumed their death (Kogawa 253), the prolonged silence of their other relatives shrouded their mother's absence in mystery – a situation that is pointed out as one of the major uncertainties that keep the protagonist from finding closure and moving on with her own life: "Gentle mother, we were lost together in our silences. Our wordlessness was our mutual destruction." (Kogawa 291). Thus, while it is often portrayed as a noble act to bear the weight of painful memories alone, the three novels emphasize the damage to identity development and family bonds that can result from this choice.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, for many survivors of the Second World War, conversations concerning their negative experiences are often shunned. This phenomenon may be attributed to a mixture of reluctance to draw attention, the belief in the indifference of the rest of the world, and the desire to let sleeping dragons lie. Thus, frequently, inquiries are met with apathy on the part of the victims and the question "Who cares about that now?" In interviews, Otsuka and Kadohata mentioned similar episodes from their own history, and have recycled them in their novels. They point out how the inability to speak about negative experiences significantly influences the way the characters deal with their troubled past. Kogawa's novel even makes the survivors' choice about speaking out one of its main topics.

Naomi, *Obasan*'s protagonist, is confronted with the different strategies in processing her traumatic past, represented by the metaphorical image of her uncle's almost inedible "stone bread" (Kogawa 15; Wong 20-21).¹⁷ The family members in Kogawa's novel represent, and vividly reproduce, the various ways of dealing with trauma and serve as points of reference for Naomi's behavior. The relative she appears to feel most connected to, not the least because she was her main caregiver during childhood, is her aunt Ayako, who she refers to as Obasan. Already in the beginning of the novel,

¹⁷ For an in-depth analysis of the metaphorical use of food in *Obasan* and other Asian-American literary works, see Sauling Cynthia Wong's chapter on "The Case of the Stone Bread" (Wong 19-27).

Obasan is introduced as entirely unwilling to communicate her feelings about unhappy or painful episodes in her life: “The language of her grief is silence. She has learned it well, its idioms, its nuances. Over the years, silence within her small body has grown large and powerful.” (Kogawa 17) Rather than sharing painful emotions with her relatives, she is often shown to deflect questions by turning to religion instead. While Obasan recites prayers, or engages in introspection, her niece and nephew are left to guess about questions that are vital to their understanding of the world. Obasan’s character is thus shown as one of the main sources but also one of the main inhibitors in passing on various aspects of family memory. In keeping her memories and feelings bottled up for decades, Obasan finally becomes incapable of expressing them, her tears and saliva dried up and herself turning to ‘stone’. In the later stages of her life, Obasan is depicted as pitiful, meek and almost childlike in her inability to speak – as a counter to her sister Emily, the emancipated and restless “word warrior”. Thus, Kogawa presents the reader with two extremes with regard to the effects of silence and speaking out, respectively (Kogawa 39).

Moreover, as mentioned in chapter 3.1.1., the particularity of Obasan’s home is often alluded to. Her house, the attic and the refrigerator are cluttered with all kinds of paraphernalia in shoeboxes, cupboards and drawers. Next to everyday articles they contain all the “indescribable items in the dark [...] too old for mold and past putrefaction” (Kogawa 54) – they serve as metaphors for memories that are always present with the characters, but left untouched. All these things and the memories connected to them are thus stored in an eternal state of hibernation. As elaborated in the previous chapter, the past is not forgotten, but also not processed or successfully overcome. To maintain the equilibrium, Obasan is shown to structure her life around a daily agenda of chores, and stays enclosed in her own private museum of unexpressed emotions and truths. Her reclusive position becomes especially clear during the visit of American neighbors, who want to express their condolences, but meet with a wall of silence:

“Her land is impenetrable, so thick that even the sound of mourning is swallowed up. In her steadfast silence, she remains inviolate. [...] She does not dance to the multicultural piper’s tune or respond to the racist’s slur. She remains in a silent territory, defined by her serving hands.” (Kogawa 270-71)

Naomi, on the one hand, admires her aunt’s stoic indifference and seems to adopt a similar reclusive way of life, yet, on the other hand, resents the loneliness that inevitably

comes with it. During her time at home under Obasan's and Uncle's care, she learns to understand their silence in difficult situations, where "speech often hides like an animal in a storm" (Kogawa 4). At the same time, she adopts a preference for silence herself, especially in emotionally charged situations. This leads her to experience conversations with non-Japanese individuals about sensitive topics as especially embarrassing on account of what she perceives as 'lacking communication skills' (see Kogawa 216, 269). Her aversion to Aunt Emily's constant drive to discuss their fates during the Second World War can be read as a depiction of her learned behavior, both from Obasan, and also from her own experience of grief at expressing her father's death. When confronted with the memory, she calls it "the very last thing in the world" she wants to talk about (Kogawa 40). As a reason she expresses her personal view that the active victimization of Japanese-American internees is inappropriate and undignified, "[...] as if they use their suffering as weapons or badges of some kind" (Kogawa 41). This desire for preserving dignity despite adversity and unfair treatment mirrors that of other characters (such as Otsuka's parental figures) within the novels, as well as many others within the Japanese-American community.

Nevertheless, Naomi is also portrayed as the family member that suffers the most from the imposed silence of her relatives – especially concerning her mother, who, according to her knowledge, went missing during a visit to Japan. She expects her older relatives to possess some knowledge of her mother's whereabouts but is nonetheless left in the dark. Whenever she asks Obasan about details concerning the ominous letter from Japan, her inquiries are met with stubborn silence: "I did not have, I have never had, the key to the vault of her thoughts. [...] The greater my urgency to know, the thicker her silences have always been" (Kogawa 31, 55). Even her otherwise outspoken Aunt Emily refuses to disclose any more information (Kogawa 222). Through Naomi's persistent attempts to find out about her past that recur several times within the novel, Kogawa emphasizes the importance of communication for gaining clarity, and the frustration that results from the demands not being met.

This also hints at one of the major reasons for remaining silent that has already been touched upon in the previous chapter: the unwillingness to trouble others with negative emotions or hurtful memories. In *Obasan*, the expression "*kodomo no tame*" (for the sake of the children) is frequently repeated as a mantra by adults that is expressed to, on the one hand, reassure their adherence to collective choices and, on the other hand,

to justify their actions as beneficial to the younger members of the group (see Kogawa 26, 43, 263). Wong identifies the reason for the adults' refusal to communicate as the wish to curb the negative effects of internment. Since the family had received considerable abuse from the respective governments, she sees the silence 'for the sake of the children' as a direct response to internment (see Wong 21). While this aspect can doubtlessly be accepted as a major reason, there are also several other aspects that may have contributed to the adults' reluctance to communicate.

First, as already mentioned in chapter 1.4., the concepts of *on* (obligation), *giri* (indebtedness, duty) and *enryo* (reserve, constraint) (see Yogi 132-139) are prevalent concepts that define the relationships and behavior in Japanese community and families. Especially, the disposition towards carrying emotional baggage by oneself is deeply connected to Japanese traditional values. This can, for example, be observed frequently in folklore and fairytales. Perhaps to show this, Kogawa includes the fairytale of Momotaro in her novel, including the telling scene of farewell during which the grandparents remain silent and give the outward appearance of contentment in order "not to weight [Momotaro's] pack with their sorrow" (Kogawa 67). Thus, they leave negative feelings unexpressed to "make the way smooth by restraining emotion" (Kogawa 151). With regard to giving an untroubled impression, regardless of the actual circumstances, especially *on* and *enryo* are depicted as a vital aspect of a kind and graceful (*yasashii*) disposition. The third of these three concepts, *giri*, can also play an important part regarding silence. As an example, the mother in *Obasan* implores her relatives in America not to disclose her fate to her children. Thus, for the rest of the family members their prolonged silence can be read as a mixture of obligation to honor the mother's wishes, and their own choice to 'protect' the children from hurtful knowledge.

The adults' preference for *yasashii* conduct and silent perseverance, in turn influences the perception of younger generations. As an example, Kadohata's Olivia is shown to openly favor her mother's "graceful and pensive" disposition over her father's loud cheerfulness, which she perceives as "undignified" and almost childish (Kadohata 45). Similarly, in *When the Emperor was Divine* the mother serves as a role model for the girl, who is described in her attempts to mimic her graceful posture and behavior. The mother is described as a typical *yasashii* figure, at least when trying to preserve appearances to strangers. When asked about her experience during internment she

smiles and distracts from the topic – thereby avoiding conflict or unpleasantness both for herself and her interlocutors (Otsuka 115).¹⁸ Much like what the author herself perceived from her own parents and grandparents, the mother gives an impression of indifference and contentment that would not require self-reflection on the part of white Americans. This mode of behavior, however, facilitates public forgetting, rather than the remembrance of internment as a crucial part of American collective memory. Judging from the children's previously addressed propensity to mimic the adult figures they perceive as their role models, Otsuka suggests that the adults' choice to not disclose anything about painful memories during internment would also leave an impression with later generations to likewise suppress negative emotions and memories.

While Otsuka's novel does not contain any open criticism towards the character's behavior, Kogawa's Naomi is rather outspoken in her resentment of her mother's silence – a reaction that goes along with the author's own fight for raising awareness of the pain and disruption caused by internment. In a poetic passage she reprimands her dead mother:

“In my dreams, a small child sits with a wound on her knee. The wound on her knee is on the back of her skull, large and moist. A double wound. The child is forever unable to speak. The child forever fears to tell. I apply a thick bandage but nothing can soak up the seepage. I beg that the woundedness may be healed and that the limbs may learn to dance. But you stay in a black-and-white photograph, smiling your yasashi smile.” (Kogawa 291)

This appeal can be read to apply to parental figures in general, as it showcases later generations' need for answers in order to understand their own position, even if the immediate response to factual knowledge may result in pain. It identifies communication, and ultimately knowledge about the past, as prerequisites for comprehending and overcoming damaging experiences.

Nevertheless, their painful nature may not be the only reason for memories of internment to be buried; shame is perceived as an intensely hurtful feeling, perhaps

¹⁸ This passage, moreover, hints at the dual concepts of *honne* and *tatemae*. They relate to the propensity of imitating the behavior of other members of the community (*tatemae*) and, thus, keeping up appearances in public, while the expressions of the individual self (*honne*) are only expressed to a select few, such as close family members and friends. These, as well as other concepts connected to the 'Japanese' character are understood as parts of the *nihonjinron* discourses – a rather controversial theoretical discussions about what constitutes 'Japaneseness'. (see Odin 356).

one of the most damaging experiences with regard to the idealized image of dignity, and, according to Woodward, may even transcend generations (McDermott 144; Woodward 98). Within the novels, several characters' reluctance to speak out can be interpreted as motivated by shame or trying to gloss over their humiliation. One such example is the father figure in *When the Emperor was Divine*, who goes to considerable lengths to conceal his pain and tries to maintain his dignity by keeping a seemingly stoic outward expression. The father's wish to remain a source of pride to his children despite his 'shameful' arrest by the FBI "in slippers and a bathrobe" is conveyed through his later instructions to his wife to keep his best suit for the children to remember him by. While the boy feels ashamed of his father's clothes when he was arrested, he nevertheless decides that another man's fate, who was taken wearing Japanese wooden sandals, was "much worse" (Otsuka 84). Like this, Otsuka especially highlights the process by which a particular identity can become a source of shame in itself, in answer to one-sided power relations in a society (see McDermott 146). Moreover, it suggests the close link between shame and trauma, as they are both presented as restrictive forces that remain present with the characters at all time (McDermott 146; Woodward 98) and resurface in ways that are out of the victims' control. What internment invariably triggered for all characters was an acute awareness of their race as an indelible factor that differentiated them from other Americans. Otsuka's and Kogawa's novels both depict their two sibling pairs to experience what can be called 'racial shame' in response to the abuse they received in the form of racist actions and expressions by white Americans. Otsuka's girl and her brother, as well as Naomi's brother in *Obasan* are painfully alert to Japanese things being associated with them in public.¹⁹ After the end of internment, they try their best to blend in as much as possible in order not to be noticed:

"We would listen to their music. We would dress just like they did. We would change our names to sound more like theirs. And if our mother called out to us on the street by our real names we would turn away and pretend not to know her. We would never be mistaken for the enemy again!" (Otsuka 114)

¹⁹ Even the otherwise seemingly clueless Naomi reacts aggressively towards her Japanese doll. However, while this scene lends itself to the analysis as a sign of rejection of 'Japaneseness' (Wong 139), it could very well also be an expression of her confusion and frustration as familiar circumstances change rapidly without proper explanation by her other relatives.

Even other states of being, such as illness, can become a 'shameful' topic that will not be directly addressed. When frequenting the public bath house in Slocan, Naomi is confused as she is shunned by her peers on account of a rumor about her father having contracted tuberculosis. When she tries to find out about the meaning of their behavior, Nomura Obasan, a family friend, calls it "a shameful matter", while her aunt deflects her inquiries: "It is nothing," Obasan says as she washes herself" (Kogawa 195). Again, Naomi receives no guidance and is left to wonder about the reasons for her exclusion, which she inevitably perceives. As it can be assumed that Naomi would find out about the reason eventually, the adults' silence in this case can be read as less motivated by altruistic motifs to protect Naomi, but rather by the elder women's own feelings of shame.

Yet another reason for silence that is repeatedly expressed through the characters' behavior in the novels is guilt. This is directly expressed at the very end of Otsuka's novel as the last statement in the father's confession: "And if they ask you someday what it was I most wanted to say, please tell them, if you would, it was this: I'm sorry" (Otsuka 144). A similar remorseful tone can be found in Aunt Emily's diary entries included in Kogawa's novel, which can be interpreted as regret of the adults that they did not take (enough or appropriate) action to avoid the final outcome. The confirmation that guilt as a consequence of inaction can result in the inability to address the fact is echoed by Kadohata's protagonist, who somehow fails to react to her grandmother's pleas for help as she lies dying. Although it is portrayed as a dreamlike instance, she feels guilty for having "killed" her grandmother (Kadohata 29) and is shown to be unable to relate her own perception of the event to her parents. In the end, her decision to refrain from doing so can be read as an act to avoid causing 'unnecessary' pain to her mother, mirroring the stance of Kogawa's adult characters.

Even though, as Passerini observes in the modes of remembering the atrocities of World War II among the Roma, collective silence can facilitate solidarity and can allow for "meditation and reflection" (247-48), the three novels in this analysis display silence as mostly negative (see also McDermott 143). While the characters do seem to connect through non-verbal activities such as playing music, the many sequences of non-communication or one-sided communication are generally connected to unpleasant situations and emotions. The novels suggest, that silence, if not mediated appropriately, can cause considerable damage to the self-perception of later

generations. By analyzing the various characters' silences in the light of the various dispositions, cultural conventions, trauma response mechanisms, and emotions such as love, shame or guilt that may influence their behavior, the reader can start to understand some of the particularities that may have kept many Japanese-Americans from speaking out about their own experiences during internment.

3.3. BREAKING THE SILENCE

In Kogawa's *Obasan*, the moment the characters face their memories is depicted as a moment of catharsis. Especially for Naomi, the collective reading of her mother's letter serves an important purpose as she is finally able to put her relatives', and specifically her mother's silence into context. This is expressed in a rather lengthy passage in which Naomi directly addresses her mother and reconnects her image of the past (which she remembers mainly from looking at old photographs) to her present situation: "You wish to protect us with lies, but the camouflage does not hide your cries. Beneath the hiding I am there with you" (Kogawa 290). By tying up loose ends of memory to form a continuous narrative for her character, the author recreates the dynamic that hinders many trauma victims from forming a coherent narrative: a disconnection between past memories and the present status.

A similarly cleansing effect is conveyed by Otsuka in her final chapter. Though fragmented and chaotic, the father's final outburst highlights the need to somehow work through the traumatizing experience. Although the chapter is not further commented on in the way Kogawa includes Naomi's final address, the message it sends is equally powerful, as it includes the reader in the process of overcoming trauma. The father's final apology and the question – "Now can I go?" – not only hint at his wish to be absolved from his feelings of guilt, but also to break free from his recurring traumatic memories. The reader, in this instance, is put in the position of the 'emphatic listener', who has to bear witness to the father figure's confession and formulate an appropriate response.

All three novels emphasize the importance of communication or sensitive topics or unpleasant memories within family circles for identity construction of later generations. Conversely, a lack of communication is shown as an impediment for younger family

members in putting their experience into context, as the silence is perceived, but not necessarily understood by the younger family members. Silence and non-verbal communication (such as music) can, under certain circumstances, serve as a mode of expression in itself and thus as a tool to bind the family together in mutual understanding. Yet, complete refusal to communicate or deliberate omission of information in order to 'spare the children' (*kodomo no tame*) can, severely interfere with the younger generations' ability to put negative experiences in context and negotiate their own position in society.

Issei characters, as well as many of the *Nisei* characters are shown as deeply connected to Japanese traditions and motivated by traditional values, such as *on*, *enryo* and *giri*, which play an important role in their communicative behavior. While many instances of non-communication can be read in the light of the wish to prevent further harm to loved family members, emotions such as guilt and (racial) shame should also be taken into account as relevant factors in this respect. The later generations, characterized by the children characters in the novels, are shown to mimic the behavior of the family members they perceive as role models, while, at the same time trying to assimilate to the rest of the American community.

4. CONCLUSION

As compared to early postwar years, the interest in literary representations of Japanese internment has been on the rise, since, due to the 'floating gap', the vivid memories of the generation that experienced confinement firsthand is gradually vanishing. Literature not only provides a medium for preserving such memories, but also allows for 'counterstories' and 'countermemories' that paint a different picture to the publicly acknowledged version of Japanese internment to be discussed and evaluated. As such, literary representations of this particular episode of history may serve to dispel not only the publicly propagated image of happiness or indifference of former internees, but also the notion of many survivors that buried memories cannot hurt later generations. Especially in fiction, clashes between canonized and rejected memories can be reenacted, but, as this paper shows, can also be a potent medium for expressing disturbing or traumatic memories. In this way, Japanese internment

novels may facilitate discourse with regard to experiences that are difficult for victims of trauma to formulate, and may otherwise remain unexpressed and incomprehensible to not only family members, but also to the general public.

Using frameworks from cultural memory studies and trauma studies, this paper analyzed the three novels regarding the narrative frameworks used to depict the act of 'remembering', the ways in which intergenerational memory is passed on among the characters, and how recollections of Japanese internment are included in family memory. As the three novels show, family memory and communication of sensitive topics has a significant impact on identity construction and feelings of belonging. Especially with regard to the communication of traumatic memories, the novels examine how later generations are invariably influenced by their elders' communicative behavior in relating their experiences. Through role models within the family, and especially the 'grandmotherly figures' that recur in many Asian-American family memoirs (see Davis 57), the *Nisei* and *Sansei* characters not only learn to put their Japanese heritage and Japanese Cultural Memory in context, but also adopt certain behavioral traits, such as apprehension towards certain situations or coping mechanisms. In the three novels, the process of finding a way to negotiate the Japanese-American identity and self-perception as belonging to a certain community, is shown to be heavily influenced by the choice of strategies concerning the inclusion or rejection of the Japanese internment experience in family and collective memory.

The novels employ several textual features to present the workings of memory. In Kogawa's novel, the act of remembering is portrayed through the juxtaposition of the 'remembering I' and the 'remembered I'. Next to the protagonist's own memories, several other texts and documents further put her own subjective recollections into context, reproducing the fragmented and selective process of 'remembering' in itself (see Bal x-xi). A similar approach is taken by Otsuka, as especially the boy's chapter presents a seemingly random and unmediated collection of partially recurring anecdotes. Moreover, switches in tense, as for example in *Obasan*, are used deliberately to emphasize that the protagonist's memories of internment are at the time of telling still largely unprocessed, emotionally loaded instances that remained largely repressed, and thus still present with the narrator. Both *Obasan* and *When the Emperor was Divine*, include characters that are used to depict an almost textbook definition of trauma. While Otsuka vividly reproduces the father figure's inability to process his

traumatic experience in what mirrors the common description of PTSD, Kogawa presents two different forms of trauma: the mother and grandmother, who lived through the atomic bomb in Nagasaki are depicted as suffering from trauma as an effect of a clearly life-threatening situation. The family members, who remained in America, however, are shown to struggle with what can be termed as 'cultural trauma' on account of racism and Japanese internment. The aftereffects of the latter episode are still prevalent in Kadohata's depiction of postwar Japanese-American community, as the protagonist perceives the collective tension and fearfulness in situations that are reminiscent of Japanese internment. Next to such depictions of trauma that are presented as possible factors hindering the characters from speaking out, Japanese cultural values such as *on* (obligation), *giri* (duty) and *enryo* (constraint) play a significant role. Perhaps most noticeably, in Kogawa's novel the obligation towards the children, as well as duty towards the mother are brought forward as major reasons for the older characters' silence.

Thus, the three novels chosen for this analysis show how the shadow of a traumatic past may affect the lives of several generations of Japanese-Americans. The authors explore, through their protagonists, the feelings of displacement and rootlessness caused by missing memories kept under lock by the older generations, and the fear of identifying with Japanese values and traditions, whilst also struggling to belong with the national community they were born into. They showcase the difficulty of defining what it means to be an American of Japanese descent and the desire to bridge the gap between these two cultures to form a new set of collective memories and, subsequently, identities.

By addressing questions of identity formation in the wake of unprocessed and unexpressed memories, the novels highlight how indiscriminate alienation of a whole community can affect their feelings of belonging and safety for several generations to come. While these novels present speaking out as a major step in overcoming trauma, nonetheless, the ability to express traumatic experiences generally does not depend on the victims 'willingness' to do so, and it may be a long and tiresome process for trauma survivors to speak out. In the same respect, neither should the final act of speaking out be confused with finding closure. However, as the three novels in this analysis suggest, it can be assumed that later generations may profit immensely from a more open conversation about Japanese internment, both within their families and

in public. These three literary works represent an important step in this regard, as they depict the experience and effects of internment from various points of view and make them accessible to a broad audience – allowing for conductive discourse to happen.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- | | |
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| CE | The Canadian Encyclopedia (see Bibliography) |
| EWB | Encyclopedia of World Biography (see Bibliography) |

APPENDIX

ENGLISH ABSTRACT

As yet another severe violation of human rights that took place in the course of the Second World War, the wholesale internment of Japanese immigrants and Japanese-American citizens in the United States and Canada has received comparatively little attention in public discourse and literature – a circumstance that was partially facilitated by the silence of those who lived through confinement. This thesis examines three adult novels by North American authors of Japanese descent: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981), Cynthia Kadohata's *The Floating World* (1989), and Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor was Divine* (2002). The novels were analyzed with regard to their treatment of the Japanese internment experience and its inclusion into or, indeed, its exclusion from family memory. This paper highlights the representations of trauma, according to Neil J. Smelser's categories and Cathy Caruth's insights, both within the texts and through the texts themselves. Moreover, drawing from Astrid Erll's and Renate Neumann's works on memory and literature, it highlights the narrative frameworks used to convey the process of remembering. As the novels show, the choice to remain silent is not only due to the victims' inability to express their traumatic experience. Also, Japanese cultural constraints, such as *on* (obligation), *giri* (duty) and *enryo* (constraint), as well as the wish not to trouble other family members with hurtful or shameful memories need to be considered as motivating factors. Furthermore, the novels dispel the notion that buried memories cannot hurt later generations. As the younger characters construct their own identities around what they hear and learn from older members of the same community, the importance of communication of sensitive topics or unpleasant memories within family circles for the identity construction of later generations of Japanese-Americans becomes clear.

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG:

Als eine der vielen schwerwiegenden Menschenrechtsverletzungen während des Zweiten Weltkriegs wurde die Internierung beinahe der gesamten Population von Einwanderern mit japanischen Wurzeln in den Vereinigten Staaten und Kanada vergleichsweise wenig beachtet – ein Umstand der teils auf die Verschwiegenheit derer zurückzuführen ist, die die Gefangenschaft selbst erlebten. Diese Arbeit untersucht drei Romane von Japanisch-Nordamerikanischen Autoren: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981), Cynthia Kadohata's *The Floating World* (1989) und Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor was Divine* (2002). Sie wurden in Bezug auf die Einbindung, oder vielmehr Nichteinbindung der Erinnerung an die Internierung in das Familiengedächtnis analysiert. Unter Verwendung der von Neil J. Smelser aufgestellten Kategorien und der Einsichten Cathy Caruths, wurde die Darstellung von Trauma sowohl als Inhalt des Texts, sowie durch den Aufbau des Texts selbst beleuchtet. Des Weiteren wurden, bezugnehmend auf die Studien zu Erinnerung und Literatur von Astrid Erll und Renate Neumann, die narrativen Elemente untersucht, die die Vorgänge des Erinnerungsprozesses reproduzieren. Wie die Romane aufzeigen, ist die Entscheidung zu schweigen nicht nur auf die Unfähigkeit der Betroffenen, ihre traumatisierenden Erlebnisse zum Ausdruck zu bringen, zurückzuführen. Auch japanische kulturelle Aspekte, wie *on* (Mitgefühl, Wohlwollen), *enryo* (Zurückhaltung) und *giri* (Pflicht), sowie der Wunsch, anderen Familienmitgliedern schmerzliche oder beschämende Erinnerungen zu ersparen, werden als Faktoren aufgezeigt. Darüber hinaus wird die Annahme gekontert, dass verdrängte Erinnerungen späteren Generationen nicht schaden können. Jüngere Charaktere werden in der Konstruktion ihrer eigenen Identität stark davon beeinflusst, wie sich ältere Mitglieder der Gemeinschaft verhalten, was die große Bedeutung offener Kommunikation über empfindliche Themen oder unangenehme Erinnerungen in Familienkreisen für die Selbstwahrnehmung späterer Generationen deutlich macht.