JOURNEY AS SELF-REFLECTION - KAIKŌ TAKESHI'S "ESCAPE" FROM JAPAN

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Abstract
This paper sets out to analyze Kaikō Takeshi's travelogue "Kako to mirai no kuniguni – Chūgoku to Tōō" ("Countries of Past and Future – China and Eastern Europe"), which describes Kaikō's first experience of Eastern Europe and China. As a writer who got to be well-recognized for his reportage writing and novels based on his own experience, Kaikō's initial struggle abroad turned out to be the opportunity that lit his inner desire to continue searching for the truth, leading him towards the exploration of the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, which is the writing he is still most well remembered for today.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, Japanese literature, postwar literature, travel writing, socialism
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1. Introduction

Kaikō Takeshi is well recognized as a reportage writer whose experiences abroad, mainly his covering of the Vietnam War for *Asahi Shimbun*, influenced his fictional writing and led to the creation of his most well-known novels and short stories. The most acclaimed amongst these is *Kagayakeru yami*, also known as *Into a Black Sun* in English. However, Kaikō's first experiences abroad, which guided him toward becoming a newspaper correspondent from different regions, are often overlooked, and are only briefly mentioned in articles discussing his travel writing. Kaikō travelled abroad for the very first time in 1960 at the age of 29, when he visited China from May 30 to July 6 as a member of a delegation of Japanese writers.[2] After returning to Japan in July, Kaikō left his homeland again to visit three socialist countries in Eastern Europe, namely Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. His wish was to visit these countries in order to compare them to the socialist China, the newly-established country he was deeply impressed with only a few months before. Although Kaikō travelled through Eastern Europe in hopes of discovering the perfect actualization of socialist ideas, which he had already experienced in China, his writings reveal that he instead discovered more than just mere comparison. His experience abroad strongly influenced his later career, and helped him acknowledge that the relationship between reportage and fiction is one that is not divided by precisely established borders, but is instead unstable and changing. With my analysis

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of his Eastern European experience, as he portrays it in his travelogue covering the experience, I will show the importance of his travels of the year 1960, which guided Kaikō towards a new understanding of what literature is.

This paper will attempt to prove the thesis as stated above by analyzing Kaikō's travelogue *Kako to mirai no kuniguni – Chūgoku to Tōō* (*Countries of Past and Future – China and Eastern Europe*), covering both China and Eastern Europe, and his short essays, which were his first reflections on the travels published immediately after his visit. As his opinion on his first experiences abroad changed over time, I will also include his reflections, which are documented in the essay collections published in the 1970s and 1980s, such as *Pēji no haigo* (*Behind the Pages*). This paper will primarily focus on his experience in Eastern Europe and only briefly compare it to his impressions of China. I believe that the materials mentioned above will prove to the reader that Kaikō's first experience at writing an in-depth reportage of his visit abroad was crucial for the formation of a new style of journalistic writing, for which he is remembered today.

2. Background of Kaikō's Travel to Eastern Europe

As previously mentioned, Kaikō traveled abroad for the first time in the spring of 1960, when he left Japan to visit China; however, his month-long stay abroad was not the only time he spent away from Japan that year. Kaikō left for Europe only a couple of months after his return from China and eventually spent almost half of 1960 abroad. Kaikō appeared in Japanese literary circles in the late 1950s, gaining popularity with the publication of his short story "Panikku" ("Panic") in the literary magazine *Shin Nihon bungaku* (*New Japan Literature*) in 1957. During the same period, Kaikō also joined the association publishing the magazine, namely the New Japan Literature Association (*Shin Nihon bungakukai*). The New Association for Japanese Literature, which was striving to develop a type of literature that would reflect the new democratic society of the early postwar Japan, often sent its member writers to attend literary conferences abroad. As it was closely connected with the Japanese Communist Party at the time, however, their reports on the literary activities of other countries mostly featured countries with socialist or communist regimes.[3] Kaikō's closeness with the association might have been one of the initial influences and the source of inspiration for his visit to China and Eastern Europe. While he did not travel to Europe as a correspondent of the association or its magazine, it is still important to be mindful of his connection and possible influences. Traveling to socialist countries thus presented a good opportunity for some of the younger writers to prove themselves as good observers, who are interested in and willing to explore the literature of foreign countries and learn how to implement their

[3] These visits include Tokunaga Sunao's attendance at the Second Writer's Congress of Soviet Union in 1954, and Abe Kōbō's attendance at the Second Czechoslovakian Writer's Congress and his consequent travel throughout Czechoslovakia and Romania.

achievements into their own writing, as well as report back on the state of affairs in these countries. Having returned from abroad, Kaikō frequently wrote of the strong impression his first trip to China had on him (Kaikō, 1979: 275), and stated that his first experience on the continent led to daily vivid shocks (Kaikō, 1979: 278).

In his travelogue Kaikō writes that before his departure to Europe, his main wish was to experience the unknown, to be able to have fruitful discussions on literature and art with representatives of each country and to compare the everyday reality of the Eastern European countries to the new and booming socialist society, which he had witnessed in China. As traveling to these countries was limited during the early 1960s, Kaikō's visit depended on official invitations from organizations representing each country. His first European visit began with an invitation from the Romanian Peace Committee, which officially invited Kaikō and the art historian Miyagawa Torao to visit the country on the occasion of the Katsushika Hokusai Festival organized on the 200th anniversary of his birth, where Miyagawa held a special lecture. Invitations from the Czechoslovakian Writer's Union and Polish Ministry of Culture followed (Kaikō, 1993: 563), which led Kaikō and Miyagawa to their three-month-long visit of Eastern Europe. Miyagawa continued his visit even further, travelling to East Germany, and also to Western Europe. During the time of Miyagawa's travels to East Germany, Kaikō stayed in Poland for a few days longer and returned to Japan in November 1960 via Paris, staying in each country three to four weeks. In the travelogue, Kaikō also expresses his wish to travel to East Germany with Miyagawa (Kaikō, 1961a: 210); however, spending four months of the year abroad had taken its toll and Kaikō decided to skip the rest of the travel and return to Japan alone.[4]

As Kaikō needed invitations from organizations from each of the countries he had visited, it can be concluded that traveling to this region was not available to everyone, which increases the importance of his report.[5] Kaikō's role as the Japanese representative, who reported back on his experience to the Japanese audience, was thus that of someone striving for an in-depth report, which proved to be more difficult than he had imagined. The reason for that is partially the fact that his visit to Eastern European countries came at a time of various unprecedented social changes both in Japan and Eastern Europe. While most of Japan was involved in intense protests against the revision of the original 1952 United States–Japan Security Treaty (Anpo), scheduled to happen in 1960, which Kaikō followed in the media throughout his travels and mentioned frequently in his travelogue, Eastern

[4] Kaikō did travel to East Germany only a year later with Ōe Kenzaburō.

[5] According to the "Cambridge History of Travel Writing", the very idea of "Eastern Europe" has been closely associated with restrictions both on travel and writing. While the late 1950s were the era of a general "thaw" and of partial opening of these countries to the world, the Hungarian revolution in 1956 caused the policing of travel and mobility to intensify again. (Das, Nandini, Youngs, Tim, ed. "The Cambridge History of Travel Writing", Cambridge University Press, 2019, 292)

European countries were separated from the rest of the world by their oppressive socialist governments, which resulted in frequent revolutions and protests, most of which were met by strong repression.[6]

Kaikō's experience in China and Eastern Europe was first described in shorter articles published in the magazine *Sekai* (*The World*). His reportage covering his experience in China was published in issues No. 178–181 from October 1960 to January 1961, while his Eastern European reportage was covered in the subsequent issues from February to April 1961, No. 182–184. The title of his serialized series of travel reportage was "Konton no soto de" ("Outside the Chaos"), with the subtitles being "Chūgoku no tabi kara" ("From a Journey to China") and "Tōō no tabi kara" ("From a Journey to Eastern Europe"). The main title of the series, "Konton no soto de," is believed to be referencing the Anpo protests, which were happening throughout Japan during his visit, with the title implying that the author intended write it from the perspective of someone who is outside Japan, thus distancing himself from Japan with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the state in his home country (Ōkubo, 1987: 257). The travelogue covering his experience abroad was published on April 20, 1961 by Iwanami Shoten under the previously mentioned title *Kako to mirai no kuniguni – Chūgoku to Tōō*. In the prologue of the travelogue, Kaikō states that while he did edit some passages and the travelogue might consequentially differ from the articles he had originally published in *Sekai*, the content had not been changed (Kaikō, 1961a: i).

In the prologue, Kaikō writes that his travelogue is comprised of the notes which he had written on cigarette boxes, theatre programs, and other pieces of paper, which he had held close during his travels. This implies that at least certain parts of his travelogue had been written en route, while the text was finalized after his return to Japan. However, having written down his impressions throughout his travels and collected them to make a whole, Kaikō found that his work was full of repetitions, contradictions, and misunderstandings, and he believed himself to be jumping to conclusions in many situations (Kaikō, 1961a: i). According to Kaikō, his travelogue is nothing more than a sketch of a tentative reality by an insufficiently informed novelist (Kaikō, 1961a: iii-iv). His own introduction to the travelogue thus shows the reader the struggle of the writer/journalist, who wished to portray his experience objectively, but met with uncountable difficulties in achieving his main goal.

3. Travelogue Kako to mirai no kuniguni – Chūgoku to Tōō

Writers traveling on official invitations frequently had to consider both the sponsors of their travels, as well as their audience. As mentioned previously, due to limited international travel at the time, Kaikō's audience was not familiar with the region,

[6] Amongst the recent protests and revolutions, the 1956 Poznań protests and Hungarian revolution should be mentioned.

and so a part of his responsibility went to his readers, who wanted a sincere description of the reality of these countries. On the other hand, however, having his visit sponsored by the governmental institutions of these socialist countries, Kaikō had to be careful when publicly exposing the information his sponsors might have wanted him to keep for himself.

Kaikō and Miyagawa arrived in Karachi on September 14 1960, after briefly stopping in Manila and Bangkok. After spending a night in Karachi, they continued their travels past Cairo and Athens, stopping in Bulgaria, the first Eastern European country they encountered. They spent the night in the capital Sofia (Miyagawa, 1963: 10). Their path to their first destination, which was Romania, is not described in Kaikō's travelogue. However, Miyagawa wrote and published a travelogue covering his own experience titled *Higashi Yōroppa to no taiwa* (*Dialogue with Eastern Europe*), which was published by Azekura shobō in 1963, in which he describes the beginnings of their travel from the moment they left Japan. It is interesting to see that Kaikō not only leaves out the mention of Miyagawa as his traveling companion, but he also does not include Bulgaria as one of the socialist Eastern European countries he had visited. It can be argued that having stayed in Sofia only for a night and having not been officially invited to the country, Kaikō decided to focus on the three countries that he could observe in detail over many weeks. As we will see in the analysis of the travelogue, Kaikō was also wary of making strong statements about the state of each country, having changed his statement and opinion multiple times during his visit, in the months, and again in the years after his return.

3.1 Kaikō's Eastern Europe in Photos

The travelogue *Kako to mirai no kuniguni – Chūgoku to Tōō* is divided into two parts, the first covering China and the second covering Eastern Europe. While the Chinese part is separated into four chapters, each covering about a week in a different city, the Eastern European part is separated into three chapters, each covering one of the countries. Every chapter begins with a singular photo taken in the named country and includes a short description of what the photo portrays. Moreover, the original edition of the travelogue includes an extra photo page, printed on thick, glossy paper, featuring two photos from China and one photo from Eastern Europe. Altogether, only four photos taken in Eastern Europe are included in the travelogue.

Kaikō travelled to Europe carrying two cameras; a half-sized Olympus Pen, which he received from Olympus, a Japanese camera company, and a Fujica 35, which he used for taking photos in color. Knowing he had two cameras with him can lead his readers to believe that the few photos included in his travelogue are his own; however, comparing his photos to those in Miyagawa's travelogue brings us to the conclusion that most of them were actually taken by Miyagawa. Photos included in Miyagawa's travelogue are copyrighted as his work (Miyagawa, 1963: 3), while the authorship of the photos included in Kaikō's travelogue is not stated. As it is difficult

to state which photos were Kaikō's and which Miyagawa's, I would like to instead focus on the titles or descriptions of the photos included in Kaikō's travelogue, as I believe the way he described or titled the photos tells us a lot about his approach to his travels. The first of the photos included in the travelogue, which was in fact taken by Kaikō, is a photo of cutlery from Auschwitz, titled "The wounds of the grassy knolls of Auschwitz are still exposed even 16 years later. The forks look like hands" (Kaikō, 1961a: opening page). His choice of a mound of cutlery to convey the horrific history of Auschwitz stimulates the reader to imagine the horrors millions of people experienced in the concentration camp, especially with his drawing of the connection between forks and human hands in the description of the photo. This can be understood as Kaikō's attempt to objectively portray the reality of the place and its past horrors and is in line with his attempt to journalistically stay objective while conveying the strong emotions he felt when visiting the camp. Moreover, Mikołaj Melanowicz, Professor Emeritus of Warsaw University, who was helping Kaikō as a guide during his first time in Warsaw, writes that during their walk around Auschwitz-Birkenau, Kaikō dug out a spoon and bones in a certain spot, slightly covered with water, and took photos of them (Melanowicz, 2018). This information helps us understand that Kaikō had a certain vision of what he wanted his travelogue's readers to gain through his work, adjusting the environment for the photo to have the strongest possible effect on the readers.

While the abovementioned Auschwitz photo is the only of the photos of Eastern Europe in Kaikō's travelogue which can be traced back to Kaikō, two out of remaining three photos included in the travelogue were taken by Miyagawa. These photos are titled "Bucharest Market" (Miyagawa, 1963: 14) and "Rendezvous under the statue of Jan Hus - City of Prague" (Miyagawa, 1963: 37) in Miyagawa's travelogue; however, their titles are very different in Kaikō's travelogue: Miyagawa's "Bucharest Market" is described as a "Free market in Bucharest, where products from private arable land within collective farms are bought and sold freely" (Kaikō, 1961a: 123), while "Rendezvous under the statue of Jan Hus - City of Prague" has the caption "There is a statue of Jan Hus of the Reformation movement in the city center of Prague. Two young lovers contemplate their apartment" in Kaikō's work (Kaikō, 1961a: 151). Through these different descriptions, it is interesting to see not only the difference in perception of the two Japanese observers, but also what one can consider to be Kaikō's objective for the inclusion of these photographs in his travelogue. As Barthes writes, captions of photographs, or the text accompanying a certain image, has the purpose of connoting the image, or of helping the reader better understand the content of the image (Barthes, 1977: 25). According to Barthes, only in a few rare cases, does the text produce or invent an entirely new signified which is retroactively projected into the image itself (Barthes, 1977: 27). While we can see Miyagawa's captions as a simple duplication of the images themselves, as he merely names the location portrayed in the photographs, Kaikō goes a step further. Might it have been due to his deeper insight into the conversation of the individuals portrayed in the images on account of his interpreter, or his own imagination, Kaikō's goal with

the captions accompanying the photographs seems to have been to add another layer of understanding for the readers, which might not have been familiar with the environment described in his travelogue. While his caption of the photographs of the Bucharest market seems to only add additional information about the market, the second photograph caption zooms in on the conversation between the portrayed individuals, adding information the reader could not possibly understand solely from looking at the image itself. A similar tendency can be seen in the caption of the last photograph, which was taken in Poland. While the authorship of this photograph is unknown, it portrays two elderly women conversing. In Kaikō's travelogue, it is captioned as "A corner of the Polish countryside. The older women have strong shoulders and like to talk standing up. Their hoods smell freshly of garlic" (Kaikō, 1961a: 179). The caption of this photo is similar in its vivid descriptiveness to the one of the couple under the state in Prague, with Kaikō going as far as describing the smell of the hoods of the conversing women, something the reader would not be able to grasp from the photograph itself. While it is difficult to determine if these captions were an attempt on Kaikō's part to shows his novelistic side, building a story-like setup of individuals as characters in a literary piece, or if it was merely information he received with the help of either his interpreter or his sense of smell, it can be said with certainty that his precise observations show his aspirations as a reportage writer wishing to convey his surroundings to his readers in as much detail as possible.

After his return to Japan, Kaikō spent his time looking through the photos he took at different locations, trying to sort out his memos and re-play the memories of the places he had visited (Kaikō, 1979: 282), so it can be said that the photos helped him remember his experience better. Regarding Auschwitz, one of the most memorable experiences of his visit, Kaikō writes that it would be impossible to convey the horrific scenes he had seen there without a camera. On the other hand, he also notes that once he has a camera with which he can take photos of his surroundings, he tends to forget the places he visits (Kaikō, 1980: 58). Consequently, he did not continue using his cameras much longer, as he wanted instead to rely only on his own eyes.

3.2 Freedom and Literature in European Socialist Countries

Readers of Kaikō's travelogue will quickly notice the attention he pays to the state of the different socialist systems in each country. His eagerness to compare his European experience to the one gained in China led Kaikō to pay close attention to the prosperity of each country, which he perceived to be connected to the concept of freedom, or the lack thereof, in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Poland. Kaikō soon realized that the countries which we tend to call the "Eastern bloc" or "Eastern Europe" are very diverse. While he continued to describe Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland with the expression *Tōō shokoku* (Eastern European countries), he began acknowledging that they might not have that many things in common after all. He writes:

Freedom takes on very different faces in the Eastern European countries within the same socialist system. Certain literary books that are tacitly banned in the Czech Republic are widely read in Poland, which is only an overnight train ride away. Romania has its Romanian expression. China also has its background and the expression it has given rise to. Socialism is a diverse civilization, regulated by tradition, history and national sentiment. (Kaikō, 1961a: iii)

Kaikō's prior expectations about the region, which most likely stemmed from his lack of knowledge, started to change rather quickly. As a writer, he felt he could understand the state of each country by meeting its writers, as well as representatives of its publishing houses and magazines, which is why Kaikō's investigation focused first and foremost on the reading and literary culture and traditions in each of these countries.

At this point, I would like to explore in depth the historical aspects of Kaikō's visit. As mentioned previously, international travel was limited in 1960, and Kaikō needed official invitations to travel to these countries. However, the period in the late 1950s and early 1960s is generally considered to be the time of the "Khrushchev Thaw," when the oppressive measures of the socialist governments began to ease. The easing of restrictions came as a consequence of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which took place between the 14th and 25th of February, 1956. The 20th Congress was the first public event where the cult of personality and dictatorship of Joseph Stalin was addressed and denounced by the First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev, which caused a strong response in the countries with socialist governments. The mid-to-late 1956 brought the Poznań Protests in Poland, where the masses demanded better working conditions, and the Hungarian Revolution, where they protested against the government and the Hungarian domestic policies imposed by the Soviet Union. While the oppressive governments might have eased some of the restrictions, however, freedom of expression and movement was still far from being achieved. Both Romania and Czechoslovakia were examples of countries where Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin did not have strong consequences, with for example the public criticism expressed by writers attending the Second Czechoslovakian Writer's Congress in early 1956 not leading to any immediate changes in the freedom of expression or easing of restrictions regarding the publishing of literature.

In Romania, Kaikō was accompanied by an interpreter named Magdalena. He traveled across many regions of the country and visited different factories and farms, watching movies and stopping in theatres, publishers, collective farms, power plants, and bars. Consequently, Kaikō felt like he succeeded in fully grasping the material successes of the country. However, he could not say the same about what he calls its "spiritual achievements." He points out that one of the leading causes for his dissatisfaction regarding the developments shown to him in this area is his own lack

of knowledge of Romanian literature (Kaikō, 1961a: 138). He notes that not only is he not familiar with the country's literature, but he also can barely name any literary works by non-Romanian writers who even briefly mention or write about the country, making his opportunities to become familiar with Romanian literature very scarce. He writes:

I know nothing about Romania, nor do I know what works have been written or are written about Romania. The Japanese, who are as greedy as octopi when translating foreign literature, have never looked at this country or introduced anything about it. I barely remember Hans Carrossa's "A Roumanian Diary." (Kaikō, 1961a: 136)

Kaikō believed that literature presented the primary way for a person to understand a foreign country (Kaikō, 1961a:136), which is why his one-month-long experience in Romania tasted like "Western food without the pepper" (Kaikō, 1961a: 143). According to Kaikō, the only way of improving this initial impression of Romania was to read the translations of Romanian literary works he received from his interpreter and compare his impressions of the country to what he could imagine by reading these works (Kaikō, 1961a: 143). Kaikō defends his tendency to focus on the publishing situation in each country by arguing that writers have always been and will always be the reflection of each period due to their sensibilities (Kaikō, 1961a: 195).

What stands out from this first experience of Romania is the close attention Kaikō showed to literature, especially when determining the success and prosperity of a specific country. The connection between literature and prosperity, and the connection to the degree of freedom in a country become even more apparent during his visit to Czechoslovakia. While there, Kaikō expressed a wish to talk to young writers, poets, and literary critics and was introduced to the editing staff of the literary magazine *Plamen* (*Flame*) (Kaikō, 1961a: 157).[7] During the time he spent with the magazine staff, Kaikō started noticing a tense atmosphere, especially when it came to any discussion connected to politics. Kaikō writes that he felt a certain wariness in their opinions, which seemed to stem from certain political concerns (Kaikō, 1961a: 163). *Plamen* was a monthly journal of the Czechoslovakian Writers' Union, which started publication after the 1959 dismantling of *Květen* (*May*), a modernist experimental journal. It was edited by the conservative literary critic Jiří Hájek (Perina, 1977:134). Knowing that the journal was under strict control of the conservative editor and the surveillance of the Writer's Union, explains Kaikō's impressions and points to his sharp observation skills with which he succeeded in piercing through the walls separating him from these countries, noticing the slight differences in atmosphere resulting from strict opressive forces.

[7] Kaikō describes the magazine "Plamen" as a literary magazine that published articles on creative writing, poetry, reportage, and film and was published as a platform, especially for new and emerging writers.

As he paid close attention to the state of creative writing and publishing in every country he visited, he soon realized that the wariness and political concern of the staff was most strongly reflected in the translations, or the lack thereof, of foreign literature. Kaikō writes that their attitude towards foreign literature was strange, as writers such as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, or Franz Kafka were either not translated or had only one of their works translated (Kaikō, 1961a: 169). The only way for these writers' works to be brought into the country was for one of the newspaper publishers or literary experts to submit a special application to the authorities, as translation of foreign literature was strictly controlled and limited (Kaikō, 1961a: 169). As previously mentioned, in the early 1960s Czechoslovakia was lagging behind other countries in the region, and the freedom of publishing literaturehad not changed much by the time of Kaikō's visit. While Czechoslovakia did get the first translations of certain American novels, such as *The Great Gatsby* (translated to Czech in 1960) and *The Catcher in the Rye* (translated to Czech in 1960) (Perina, 1977: 149), the Prague-born author Franz Kafka, whose work Kaikō often contemplated in his essays, was not fully rehabilitated until years after Kaikō's visit (Perina, 1977: 173-174). Before his travel to Czechoslovakia, Kaikō received the information from Agence France Press that the standard of living in Czechoslovakia was as high as that in France, so while he could acknowledge the developments in the industrial field, the country's stability and high standard of living, he did not understand the need for political caution and wariness (Kaikō, 1961a: 170). While Czechoslovakia had impressive economic growth through the 1950s, the signs of the deterioration were noticeable already at the time of Kaikō's visit, as the country's growth rate had started falling rapidly in the early 1960s (Perina, 1977: 163).

It can be said that his experience in Czechoslovakia somewhat reflected what he initially felt in Romania, and further confirmed his initial suspicions, that the citizens of Eastern European countries do not enjoy as much freedom as he might have imagined, or hoped they would. However, his experience in Poland offered new hope for Kaikō, as it differed greatly from that of Romania and Czechoslovakia. Not long after his arrival to the capital of Warsaw, Kaikō noticed the newspaper stands sold papers he could not find in Prague, such as *Pravda*, *Unite*, *New York Times*, *The Times*, and *Le Monde*. He also noticed that the radio broadcasted foreign channels, which was not something he had access to in the previous two countries (Kaikō, 1961a: 189). As a consequence, Kaikō was initially impressed with Poland, which seemed less strict in regards to publishing foreign literature. He received some works of Polish literature in their English and French translations, which would, as he believed, help him fully frame his opinions of the country. However, as the opinions included in the travelogue are those formed during his travel and not those formed after reading the novels, we may say that his overall perception of Poland in the travelogue is mostly made up of the first impressions of a writer who was not entirely familiar with the country or its literature.

Having visited all three countries, Kaikō felt like he could comment on the differences between Eastern European countries and China, and concluded that in the case of Eastern Europe, their socialist systems were newly built atop of their past Western individualism and were thus different from the one in China (Kaikō, 1961a: 195). Kaikō writes that overall, he failed to see through the walls separating Japan and these countries and did not grasp the actual state of their (artistic) prosperity:

They only nodded when asked something, and no 'dialogue' or 'discussion' could take place. In other words, in a nutshell, I heard the same things as I could imagine sitting in a chair in a room in Japan. I was bored. Of course, this is one reality. I have to admit that. However, there must also be other realities. I would have liked to have been shown that too, but I did not have the time or opportunity. (Kaikō, 1961a: 168-169)

While contemporary readers of his travelogue easily notice his observation skills and insight into the situations he found himself in, Kaikō's overall impression of his travel was negative. The cause for his negative impressions is two-fold. On the one hand, he implies that he did not understand the countries enough, mostly due to the lack of understanding of their literature. This is what in turn lead him to feelings of disappointment and an overall negative perception of the experience. On the other hand, however, his negative impression come exactly from his sharp observation skills which revealed to him a lacking, failing system in each of the countries, which which contrasted sharply with his expectations. Interestingly, he managed to successfully breach the walls separating him from Eastern Europe, but failed at the same task when he was faced with the situation in China. One difference that can be mentioned as the cause for these different impressions, is the fact that Kaikō did not only have many opportunities to have discussions about literature in China, as he was a member of the delegation of Japanese writers whose purpose was a dialogue with Chinese writers; Kaikō also appeared to be more familiar with Chinese literature in general, reading both the works of Chinese authors,[8] as well as essays discussing Chinese literature, such as for example a collection of essays on the writing of Mao Dun (Kaikō, 1961a: 72-73).

3.3 Stagnation or Stability?

Kaikō was shown around factories, farms, publishers, cinemas, and theaters in all the countries he visited. However, he failed to notice artistic prosperity in any of them. Even Poland, the country he was most impressed by, seemed to have lost all its passion and was stagnating (Kaikō, 1980: 34-35). Prague, the city that strongly

[8] Kaikō for example quotes passages from the Japanese translation of Qin Zhaoyang's theoretical writing on realism in the travelogue chapters covering his trip in China (Kaikō 1961b: 72).

impressed a different traveling Japanese writer only four years before,[9] strikes Kaikō as a place where the voices of younger generations could not pierce through the walls surrounding the country (Kaikō, 1961a: 153). At this point, Kaikō starts wondering whether the socialist systems in Eastern Europe have ceased to be revolutionary, and instead moved towards a state of newly found stability. Kaikō writes:

Will socialism cease to be drama, passion, fluidity, and change and become routine, order, a system, a habit? Of course, it has at last given human life and protection to the multitude for the first time, and it has brought something precious that nothing else but this system could have brought. Its achievements are priceless. (Kaikō, 1961a: 174)

In the travelogue, he still doubts whether his impressions, come from his lack of knowledge (Kaikō, 1961a: 153); however, he cannot shake off the feeling of stagnation. At the same time, he also expresses his concerns about the limitations of travelling on official invitations, which he perceived as one of the possible reasons for his disappointments (Kaikō 1961b: 114). As Kaikō spent only around one month in these countries, he hesitates to pass a final judgment regarding the stability or stagnation of the region. However, he notes that the feeling of stagnation was stronger. He further writes that he could not imagine any sudden change event that could change this stagnation (Kaikō, 1961a: 173). In other words, while Kaikō noticed the tense atmosphere in these countries under socialist regimes, he did not foresee the significant social changes and uprisings that happened both in Europe and in China in the late 1960s.

His first impressions and later reflections, which were included in the prologue to the travelogue passages that he had written during his travels, thus differ slightly. However, an even greater change in Kaikō's views followed in the aftermath of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the Prague Spring (1968). In his essay collection *Pēji no haigo* (*Behind the Pages*), which was serialized in the literary magazine *Bungeishunjū* between December 1973 and October 1977, he writes that reality seems to have been completely the opposite to his first impressions. He looks back on his experience and acknowledges that not only did he not foresee these social changes, but he also feels like the reality he experienced was not truthful, as these changes must have been boiling under the surface even during his visit:

In the socialist countries I visited, such as the Soviet Union, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, I found that in all of them, regardless of the degree of reporting on the situation abroad, or the depth of the situation, drastic changes occurred several years after I visited the region. I realized that these changes were caused by the fact that the situation was the opposite of what I had heard from

[9] Abe Kōbō visited Prague to attend the Second Czechoslovak Writers' Congress and spent two months traveling around Czechoslovakia and Romania. Czech theater production strongly influenced him and gave him the strength to keep experimenting in the field.

politicians, writers, critics, farmers, factory workers, and political commissars at the time I visited. (Kaikō, 1993: 79)

As he points out, he did not only meet and talk with politicians and official representatives of the governmental institutions, but also communicated with farmers and factory workers. However, as Kaikō later realized, one of the features of totalitarian states is that they turn their entire population into diplomats for foreign visitors and make them act as such (Kaikō, 1993: 79). He deplores the fact that he was guided by such "diplomats," which he calls "lying honest individuals," and was thus unable to grasp the actual situation (Kaikō, 1993: 79).

Furthermore, he looks back at his experience in another essay titled "Amari ni mo soko ni aru" ("All Too Present"), published a few years after *Pēji no haigo* (*Behind the Pages*), noting the following:

Apparently, when I was making a toast with someone every night on the trip I was invited to, I could see that a disease was already developing in the depths of those countries. Not only in the depths but also in the rooms of the hotels and restaurants where I often toasted and feasted, where the writers, critics, and journalists who were smiling and cracking jokes seemed to have a great deal of pain and anxiety on their shoulders. But, after all, we were traveling by invitation and had to live with an interpreter from morning to night, day in, day out, with no choice but to follow the schedule laid out by our hosts and with no freedom of movement, not even to go for a walk around the hotel. (Kaikō, 1977: 638)

Kaikō's initial impressions, which he tried very hard to resist, turned out to have been correct. He looks back on his travels and mentions that he succeeded in avoiding his interpreter only once and met a writer alone to discuss underground publications and different literary works published and widely recognized in Western countries after World War II. He is told that having read Orwell's *1984*, the writer believed the society described in the book was exactly like that of his own country (Kaikō, 1977:639).[10] While he previously wrote that the degree of political caution in each of these countries was different, being asked not to include certain things in his travelogue or other works was something officials from all three countries had requested of him. Moreover, cultural attachés of these countries contacted him after his return to Japan and inquired about the identities of individuals mentioned in his travelogue, the names of which he did not reveal in his text (Kaikō, 1977: 639). This passage also offers insight into how he had approached the writing of the travelogue, as he had to undergo a certain amount of self-censorship not to harm any individuals by publishing his books, which went against his wish to offer a unique and truthful insight into these societies for his Japanese readers.

[10] Kaikō omits the name of the author and the country of their origin in order to protect their privacy.

As a consequence of his negative first experiences abroad, Kaikō decided to decline any official incoming invitations as a writer. He still wished to travel, but decided to only do so as a temporary newspaper or publisher correspondent:

I had been invited more times, but I soon grew tired of the inconvenience and found that I was much freer and more at ease going out under the title of temporary correspondent for a publisher or newspaper, and could get into the difficult parts and details of the country, so I took [that type of] invitation whenever it came. (Kaikō, 1976: 32)

While he had been strongly limited as a visiting writer, Kaikō acknowledged the freedom the position of a newspaper correspondent offered him, and was more inclined to accept their invitations.

4. Journey as Self-Reflection

While Kaikō did manage to meet many individuals from the literary field, he did not feel like any experience, excluding his visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, had made a substantial impact on him. He writes:

I have to confess that my skin was not cut, I did not shed much blood, and I did not seize many self-improvement opportunities on my journey, like I so desired. My wish was to come into contact with the unknown. (Kaikō, 1961: 154-155)

While he did not achieve any self-improvement or self-transformation, one self-reflective action brought on by the travel was Kaikō's acknowledgment of his childishness, political ineptitude, and lack of knowledge, which made him feel like he was stripped naked as a Japanese (Kaikō, 1961a: 178). One reason for this feeling of self-dissatisfaction can be found in his limitations when using foreign languages. While fluent in French and English, he struggled to find the right words to express his thoughts in Eastern Europe (Kaikō, 1961a: 176). His inability to travel alone, or at least without an accompanying interpreter, can be given as another reason, as he felt that the presence of his companions strongly limited and controlled his own experience. His feeling that the travel was unsuccessful for him personally, and that consequently his travelogue did not succeed in conveying his own experience to the readers, is thus closely connected to the limitations of the format of the official visit, as well as to the language barrier he felt when discussing important issues with representatives of the countries he visited.

However, as much as he struggled during his first official visits abroad, Kaikō did continue to travel and spend long months abroad. After his first uninspiring experience in Europe, he spent a big part of the next decade abroad, traveling and reporting from different countries, such as his reporting on the 1961 trial of the Holocaust perpetrator Adolf Eichmann in Israel, or the Vietnam war in 1964-65. According to Kaikō, this decision arose from a certain urge to leave Japan (Kaikō,

1993: 80). Kaikō moreover strongly believed that separating yourself from a certain country will help you better understand and see that country (Kaikō, 1980: 75):

I go on a journey to forget my "self."
I go because I want to cleanse my 'self,' which has decayed, rusted here and there, the self I sometimes cannot bear to look directly at or stare at any longer. (Kaikō, 1982: 123)

In the short time he spent in Japan between his trips, Kaikō attempted to write both reportage and fiction. However, he found it difficult to feel inspired after having spent months abroad (Kaikō, 1976: 32). He could not find any creative motifs to write about, and no topics impressed him. His initial belief was that traveling and gathering different materials and experiences would eventually lead him to inspiration. However, this did not actually happen after his first two trips abroad. Even after traveling to other regions over the next few years, he had to focus on writing reportage as a correspondent, which limited him creatively. Kaikō writes that the more one focuses on reportage, the less one can write fiction (Kaikō, 1976: 32). As the main difference between the two, Kaikō states that a novel can include elements of reportage, however, reporting, such as writing reportage, cannot include novelistic elements (Kaikō, 1976: 32).

5. The Border Between Fiction and Non-fiction

As mentioned above, Kaikō believed fiction and non-fiction have many things in common. He considered both to be an act of word-choosing in the deepest parts of the psyche, with non-fiction always being a part of fiction (Kaikō, 1976: 32-33). According to Kaikō, a well-written reportage makes it impossible for the reader to discern where the boundaries between reportage and pure fiction are (Kaikō, 1976: 32-33). His attitude towards the similarities of reportage and literature as art forms can also be seen in his appreciation of the films of Andrzej Wajda (1926-2016) and his dismissal of news montages, as Kaikō considered reportage writing to have a higher purpose than purely recording or reporting on a situation.[11] On the other hand, Kaikō's reliance on his own personal experience in the novels that brought him fame in his later years reflects his view on the connection between fiction and non-fiction, as the use of his own experience in his writing helped him create unique fictional works.

When looking at the history of travel writing, we can see that the problem of fictionalizing one's experience has been central to the genre of travelogues since their appearance. Depending on the interests of the patrons of their travels, authors had to balance the known and the unknown, the traditional imperatives of persuasion and entertainment, which lead them to be torn between describing what happened and suggesting what could have happened. These challenges frequently led travel writers

[11] Andrzej Wajda was a Polish film and theatre director known especially for his trilogy of war films consisting of A Generation (1955), Canal (1957) and Ashes and Diamonds (1958).

to problems of authenticity and credibility (Hulme and Youngs, 2002: 31). While authenticity and credibility might not present themselves as important issues in the case of Kaikō's travel writing, his own experience clearly shows that travel writing goes past the clear borders between the fictional and non-fictional work. It is interesting to see that, while Kaikō had been unable to write fiction immediately after his return from abroad, he did not dismiss the possibility of using the information collected during his reporting for writing fictional pieces.

I think it would be a good idea to stop writing every week and just continue the interviews, and after a year or two, compile them into one long piece of creative work, keeping the original form of the material. I have a feeling that new and vivid literature could be born from such an experiment. (Kaikō, 1981: 85)

Kaikō hoped to use his experiences of gathering materials and interviewing people for the creation of literature in a truer sense by writing a novel based on what he had seen and heard. He believed that his unique experience as a corresponding writer could lead him to create new, experimental, and vivid literature. His belief that gathering the materials for writing reportage could lead to writing fiction can also be found in his statement that traveling is one of the four main experiences writers need to have in order to be able to create (Kaikō, 1977: 55). As previously mentioned, his Eastern European experience brought him more discontent than pleasure, however one of his following visits abroad led him to the discovery of a new and vivid literature, namely his masterpiece *Into the Black Sun* (1968), a novel based on his experience as a newspaper correspondent in Vietnam. Crossing the borders between fiction and non-fiction, this novel does not differ from his previous work only in content, but also in its deep insight into the human experience. Powell notes a shift from more imaginative to more personal themes in Kaikō's writing, which reflects his traveling experience (Powell, 1998: 221). Moreover, Powell writes that *Into the Black Sun* could be said to belong to the ambiguous genre of non-fiction novel, which is believed to be a cross between reportage, history, and imagination (Powell, 1998: 230).

While Kaikō was not as successful in deriving inspiration from his first experience abroad, he did succeed in seeing through the walls separating Japan and Eastern Europe, clearly showing his intention to seek a well-protected truth, while his honest portrayal of Eastern European reality, and his self-doubt expressed in his first travelogue, show the reader the beginnings of what was to become his unique writing style and approach to experiencing new worlds. It was this wish to experience the unknown and to truly grasp the reality of other countries and peoplethat later led him to become a newspaper correspondentwhose reportage experience inspired him to write more than just non-fictional reports.

6. Conclusion

Kaikō's visits to Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland was only the first amongst many that followed his first official visit of China in 1960. Moreover, his travelogue *Kako to mirai no kuniguni* was likewise not the only report that he wrote based on his experiences. It can be said that while his first Eastern European visit might have been unsatisfactory, it taught him an important lesson of not trusting official invitations to guided visits, and pushed him in a direction that led him to a newly-found creativity. While searching for a mere comparison with China, he instead discovered a new passion that became a central part of his career. The visit led Kaikō towards self-reflection about his voice as a writer reporting from abroad, and about truthfulness towards his readers and himself. This explains why he kept on going back to his first experiences abroad, reflecting on his misunderstanding and searching for his own part in a world in which truth is not easy to find. As Kaikō realized in the years following his first experiences abroad, travelling is crucial to one's creativity, and gathering materials for writing a reportage can inspire one to write something other than non-fiction. While he later worked as a correspondent for newspapers and publishing companies, writing reportages from different parts of the world, as well as from different parts of Japan, such experiences started accumulating within him. In the case of Kaikō, the border between fiction and non-fiction was extremely thin and sometimes almost impossible to discern, which helped him create his own stories about the multiple realities he experienced throughout his lifetime.

Kaikō self-criticism and distrust of his impressions when it comes to the experience of stagnating socialist systems in Eastern Europe points to the pressure, he might have felt to convey the reality of the countries while spending very little time in each of them. It can also be said that especially due to his prior experience in China, his own predictions regarding what he was about to experience, or his own expectations, might have led him in the direction of disillusionment with the reality he ended up seeing. On the other hand, however, it can also make one question whether his statements about the state in these countries, which he begins to doubt in the prologue to the travelogue, might not have been his way of trying to avoid backlash from strong supporters and believers in the success of the socialist system. This experience of self-censure later pushed him towards becoming a newspaper correspondent, which took him to even more dangerous zones, where the pursuit of the truth continued to be his primary goal.

It is also essential here to note the particularity of the time period that Kaikō spent in China and Eastern Europe. In the following years, both regions underwent significant changes, affecting Kaikō and his perception, making him look back on his experience and rethink his impressions. While he believed his travelogue to be a "sketch of a tentative reality by an insufficiently informed novelist" (Kaikō, 1961a: iii-iv), his experience and writing on the topic offer a unique view of the world shown

to him, however false it later turned out to be. His introspective reflections on his time in these countries are especially relevant now, as the stability of the region is again threatened by the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the purpose of which is to repeat the oppression its predecessor practiced during the long decades of tyrannical socialist governments.

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