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"WHAT WE HAD INSTEAD OF CHILDHOODS": EXPERIENCE AS REMEMBERANCE IN THE VIETNAM OF KAIKŌ TAKESHI

A Thesis Presented

by

KELLY D. JOHNSTON

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
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Asian Languages and Literatures

"WHAT WE HAD INSTEAD OF CHILDHOODS": EXPERIENCE AS REMEMBERANCE IN THE VIETNAM OF KAIKŌ TAKESHI

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ABSTRACT

"WHAT WE HAD INSTEAD OF CHILDHOODS": EXPERIENCE AS REMEMBERANCE IN THE VIETNAM OF KAIKŌ TAKESHI

MAY 2009

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From the arrival of American ground troops to Vietnam in early 1965 to the fall of Saigon and the takeover by the North Vietnamese in 1975, Vietnam was America's longest war. In Vietnam, as American bombing intensified, the people of Japan were remembering their own wartime past, who had themselves experienced heavy bombing, and they began to empathize with the Vietnamese people. Kaikō Takeshi, a novelist and journalist, attempted to understand the overwhelming traumatic events of his past during World War Two and these feelings were extended to all aspects of his Vietnam writing where the present is haunted by history. By examining Kaikō's first Vietnam novel, *Into a Black Sun*, I will assert how his novel sets the stage for all his later writing and the touchstone for this novel is his catharsis for his war experience. He explores one of the characteristics found within the subgenre of Vietnam War literature and writes about horror in a visceral way that uses all five of his senses to describe atrocity. I also explore how Kaikō utilizes these five senses, but primarily his sense of vision in order to comprehend the trauma of being in Vietnam. His experience in Vietnam caused the psychological blackness and darkness of his past to once again creep into his everyday life. I also discuss how Kaikō's use of food imagery permeates throughout his works and

how food has a lot of resonance for Kaikō because it relates to war and a past of starvation.

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INTRODUCTION

> Language shows clearly that memory is the medium of past experience. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. This confers the tone and bearing of genuine reminiscences. He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter, to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil.[1]

This is a thesis about Kaikō Takeshi, a novelist, essayist, and journalist whose writing registered traumatic feelings of a war he experienced twenty years ago, whose feelings were extended to all aspects of his writing where the present is haunted by history. He was a man who struggled, twenty years after the war in Japan, to grasp and give voice to the psychological wounds and unresolved memories of his wartime past. Over the course of his life, he was never free from the memories, sensations, and images of Vietnam that overlapped and deepened his boyhood memories of death, defeat, and starvation during World War Two in Japan. Kaikō was a writer who was constantly wrestling with the burden of narrating experiences and memories he himself struggled to understand, where his war experiences did not return as simply lingering memories which he could automatically erase from his psyche, but as constraints which were forever disrupting his everyday life.

Kaikō's pivotal experiences in Vietnam represent the self-portrayal of a man whose literature changed from imaginative motifs to more personal themes, and whose life changed as well, shifting from the familiar noises of battleground to the serenity of nature itself. Kaikō himself admitted that the Vietnam experience affected him more deeply than anything he had ever experienced in any other country before or after; that it

[1] Walter Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York: Schoken Books, 1986), 246.

never occurred to him, when he undertook his first assignment in 1964 that it would take the creative effort of more than ten years to get over the Vietnam trauma.[2]

Since Kaikō's death in 1989, other authors and scholars such as Irena Powell and Bruce Suttmeier have researched his life and works. In author Irena Powell's essay "The Two Wars of Kaikō Ken," Powell examines Kaikō's writings about the Vietnam War and discusses how Kaikō's vision of Vietnam can be understood through an examination of his experiences of World War Two. Bruce Suttmeier, an Associate Professor of Japanese at Lewis & Clark College, wrote his dissertation on war memory and trauma in Kaikō Takeshi's novels. Both scholars agree that the way Kaikō wrote about the Vietnam War comes directly from the way he experienced World War Two. In this thesis, however, I will argue that Kaikō's representative Vietnam novel, *Into a Black Sun*, both reflects the earlier scholarship of Powell and Suttmeier of childhood trauma from the war and that the novel is representative of a new subgenre of war time writing that was developed to talk about the specificities of the Vietnam War. Further, I will talk about how the characteristics of this subgenre that is, how the immediacy of the Vietnam War demands a writing style that relies on the five senses are present in Kaikō's novel, and I will also talk about Kaikō's use of food imagery as way to talk about how his novel is different from those written by Anglo-Americans.

I first examine Kaikō as a man of vision and argue how, in Kaikō's case, vision works differently and is privileged over the other senses. I will investigate the overlooked topic, that I have designated the term of darkness versus blackness and how Kaikō utilizes and defines these themes in his writings. I will further investigate the core

[2] Kaikō Takeshi, "Pēji no haigō," in *Kaikō Takeshi zenshu,* edited by Yōko Maki & Michiko Kaikō. (Tokyo: Kabushikikaisha Shinchōsha, 1992), 241.

differences between Kaikō's representations of these two themes, and how vision (which also plays a role in the darkness vs. blackness paradox) works differently than the rest of the senses. Kaikō's writing undertakes a shift in style from the objective to the subjective after his second trip to Vietnam and this furnishes him with the visual memories to formulate a framework for his insights about the war. I also analyze if there is a consistency or a distinction between the two Japanese words "blackness" and "darkness" in *Kagayakeru Yami* (*Into a Black Sun*) and in Kaikō's other works.

I further examine how Kaikō utilizes and plays with the underlying symbolic significance of the shades of his characters to help foreshadow the darkness within his mind. In his best known work of autobiographical fiction *Into a Black Sun*, written in 1968, Kaikō forms an intimate relationship with a Vietnamese prostitute named Tonga. A subtle unity is once again achieved through Kaikō's vision with Tonga and supports all of the implications of the theory of yin and yang.

I next investigate the food imagery of World War Two and how food is utilized in Kaikō's post war narratives. I delve into the ways the *shōsetsu* (novel) genre has dealt with food, eating, and cooking. Kaikō himself has made significant contributions to the contemporary gastronomic novel by unearthing traumatic stories from the past.[3] I survey and focus particularly on Kaikō's food essays, *Saigo no bansan* (The Last Supper, 1982) and make the argument that Kaikō has a continuity with the past by exposing obscure stories from his past, which in turn drudges up feelings of fear, guilt, and obsession in relation to food. I examine the physicality of Kaikō's gastronomic writing, which

[3] Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 171.

possesses a pleasant versus unpleasant quality and also delve into the different ways Kaikō looks at food.

Furthermore, I make the argument that in Kaikō's writings, women simply are incapable of observing "serious" men's food literature and I utilize works by Kaikō's wife, Maki Yōko and his daughter to support this claim. I defend the assertion of Kaikō's "absolute values" which are identified with male cooking and take it one step further, and identify these "absolute values" with the inclusive aspect of offal eating. In *Into a Black Sun*, for Kaikō, the memory of war was a sensitive issue, but one in which he was persistent in returning to, through his writing, where the resistance of food from World War Two was consistently an underlying theme. I also justify Kaikō's dual relationship with food, where on one hand he likes it and focuses on it, but on the other hand, the aforementioned feelings of fear, guilt, and obsession in relation to food create within him a complete loss of appetite.

Finally, I analyze Kaikō as a historical product of war and incorporate other historical products—other prominent Vietnam War authors from the United States and Britain—and explore how their writings aim to heal their psychological wounds and truly emit the *essence* of what they feel. I envision Vietnam literature as a category in and of itself and I stake the claim that the Vietnam War was unlike any other, the ultimate individual experience. In the last chapter I firmly establish a relationship between Japan, Vietnam, and America and assert that American democracy was a contradiction in terms. Along with Kaikō, I incorporate works by Graham Greene and Tim O'Brien and contend that not only did Kaikō question Japan's conflicting position in Vietnam, but American

and British authors also questioned America's position as well—thus, the authors I examine all question the credibility of the war, no matter their position.

These authors who saw the death and destruction of war up close, years later return to the "barren landscape of war as a successful and useful image for contemplating memory itself."[4] I utilize this claim but push it one step further and argue that for the authors I survey, returning to the landscape of war is a counterpart of returning to their childhood. In their recollections of war, Oda Makoto writes in his novel *Contemporary History* that all writers, "found a solace in the vast, harsh, clarity of that expanse, of that landscape, an attractive evacuation of historical traces—even as they acknowledged that the scene showed nothing but the marks of recent history."[5] Every writer is linked by inquisition into the loyalty to oneself and ones ideals, and one's country. Kaikō and other writers write of a present terrorized by history, a present that will always be marked by traumatic memories and experiences of war.

BIOGRAPHY

Born December 30, 1930 in Tennoji-ku, Osaka, Kaikō Takeshi was the eldest son of Masayoshi and Fumiko Kaikō. When Kaikō's father died from a misdiagnosed intestinal typhoid in 1943, his death forced the thirteen-year-old Kaikō to assume responsibility for the household amid the severest national and family crises, World War II. In 1944 all middle and high schools had been converted into factories or other war-related facilities, and all students, including Kaikō, had been commandeered into active

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[4] Bruce Raymond Suttmeier, "Seeing Past Destruction: War and Memory in 1960's Japanese Fiction." Stanford University, 2002, 2.

[5] *Biography- Oda Makoto (1932-): An Article from Contemporary Authors*. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Edited by Van C. Gessel. (Brigham Young University. The Gale Group, 1997, 594.

military duty or production.[6] It was during this time that Kaikō's traumatic feelings from the war were embedding themselves into his soul, feelings that would come to the surface twenty years later, filtered through new traumatic memories of a war.

In returning to middle school after the end of the war in 1945, Kaikō worked at various jobs to supplement the family income. He baked bread at a bakery, chopped up seaweed at an herbal medicine factory, carried loads of tiles at a slate factory, and learned how to lathe and roll metal at an iron factory. Soon after, he graduated from high school and attended Osaka City University, studying English literature.[7] Kaikō spent most of his time writing though, and it was during this time that powerful memories and feelings from the war were beginning to come to the surface. Kaikō recounts in *Kaikō Ken Zensakuhin* (Collection of Kaiko Takeshi's Work and Life, 1973) how his family all sat around the table, their hungry eyes staring into a basket of steamed sweet potatoes. His family consisted of his grandfather (a former property owner), his mother, his aunt, and two younger sisters.[8] These powerful memories became especially meaningful during his Vietnam experience years later, and these feelings deeply affected Kaikō's view of life.

In 1951, he began writing with *Enpitsu*, a literary group through which he met his future wife, poet Maki Yōko and married her in March of 1953. In May of 1951 Kaikō's first novel, *Academia Melancholia*, occupied the entire last issue of *Enpitsu*. In

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[6] *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 182: Japanese Fiction Writers Since World War II*. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Edited by Van C. Gessel. (Brigham Young University. The Gale Group, 1997), 76-77.

[7] Ibid, 78.

[8] *Kaikō Ken zensakuhin*, "*Jibun/Jisaku ni tsuite* [About Me, My Works] Vol. 22 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973). Kaikō makes several references to eating 'only' potatoes and fish during World War II throughout the beginning of KKZ.

July of 1952 Kaikō and Maki had their first and only child, Michiko.[9] Before Kaikō gained literary recognition in the late 1950's he worked in the Public Relations section of the whiskey company Kotobukiya (now Suntory) and wrote advertising copy.[10] With a connection between writing and drinking being evident, Kaikō's career as a copyright seemed to foretell his future as a gastronomic writer. In his spare time, Kaikō continued to write novels, essays, and short stories.

When he had joined *Enpitsu*, he was given free access to the large library of Tanizawa Eiichi, later a professor at Kansai University. In *Zensakuhin* Kaikō writes that he "devoured" everything in Tanizawa's library and there was a hunger that developed within him to write material that would earn favorable recognition.[11] Yet Kaikō was very disciplined and driven. He was a writer, apprehensive of the corruptibility of expressions, and he began dissecting and polishing both words and style to shape his ideas with precision. He was also a writer who had "extreme empathy for humanity and the natural world—contemplating mans relationship with nature, while not evading the cruelty of both human and the natural world."[12] Kaikō wrote in *Zensakuhin* that "the ultimate internal search of the human being" had already been achieved, and he decided to dispense with the labor of "descending into the human psyche." He wanted to erase

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[9] *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 182: Japanese Fiction Writers Since World War II*. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Edited by Van C. Gessel. (Brigham Young University. The Gale Group, 1997), 77.

[10] Morris Low, *Asian Masculinities* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003),

[11] *Kaikō Ken zensakuhin*, "*Jibun/Jisaku ni tsuite* [About Me, My Works], Vol. 22 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973).

[12] Irena Powell, "Japanese Writer in Vietnam: The Two Wars of Kaikō Ken." *Modern Asian Studies.* Vol. 32, No. 1 1998, 220.

himself from his works. He decided to turn himself into a completely detached eye and treat the physical world with the utmost objectivity.[13]

Kaikō won the prestigious Akutagawa Prize in 1958 for his work entitled *The Naked King*. In 1959-1960 Kaikō traveled to China and wrote "Descendants of Robinson" and *The Runaway*. After his trip to China, Kaikō took many other foreign journeys to places like Romania, The Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Algeria. All of these trips provided origins of new ideas and observations for Kaikō's writing.

Kaikō wrote about the Vietnam as a war correspondent for the Japanese newspaper, *Asahi Shinbun* from 1964-1965, contributing weekly reports and completing *Betonamu Senki* (The War Chronicle) upon his return to Japan. This collection of essays provides a factual account into the personal experiences of Kaikō Takeshi and was one of few pieces of war correspondence that filtered back to Japan in the mid-1960's. In *Betonamu Senki*, Kaikō and his cameraman, Keiichi Akimoto, brought their vision of the war in Vietnam to life through the utilization and selection of imagery, as well as through Kaikō's day-by-day account of his experiences.

From his Vietnam experience he wrote two masterpiece novels, *Kagayakeru yami* (Brilliant Darkness, 1968; translated as *Into a Black Sun*, 1980) and *Natsu no yami* (1972; translated as *Darkness in Summer*, 1973), and many short stories on Vietnamese subjects. In the plot of *Into a Black Sun*, a Japanese journalist accompanies a few American "observers" to a small but strategic point in the Vietnamese delta.[14] In *Into a Black Sun*

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[13] *Kaikō Ken zensakuhin*, "*Jibun/Jisaku ni tsuite*" [About Me, My Works], Vol. 22 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973).

[14] *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 182: Japanese Fiction Writers Since World War II*. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Edited by Van C. Gessel. (Brigham Young University. The Gale Group, 1997), 77.

Kaikō's writing transforms from his previous objective style into a more subjective one and the influence of his traumatic past becomes a theme throughout.

Kaikō became a member of the anti-war movement *Behreiren* (Peace for Vietnam Citizen's League), which had its first rally on April, 24, 1965. *Behreiren* was founded by Oda Makoto and consisted of left-wing intellectuals, writers (most of who, like Kaikō, had lived through the Second World War), professionals, and housewives. *Behreiren* was not an organization, but a movement where any individual could take part, if they accepted its three aims: peace in Vietnam, self-determination for the Vietnamese, and an end to the complicity of Japan in the Vietnam War.[15] Kaikō's intensity in the pursuance of anti-war activities in *Beheiren* extended through the media, when on November 16, 1965, a full page anti-war statement was place in *The New York Times*. The statement read, "Stop the killing and stop the Vietnam War."[16]

After his Vietnam experiences, in 1969 the Asahi Press sent him and photographer Akimoto Keiichi on a five-month fishing expedition to twelve countries in Scandinavia, the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Through the 1970s and 1980s, publishers commissioned him to undertake a series of fishing expeditions, and from each expedition he and a photographer (Takahashi Noboru or Mizumura Takashi) produced successful photo journals and essays.[17] Considered a gastronome, in his later years he wrote numerous essays on food and drink, as well as appearing on food-related

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[15] Thomas R. H. Havens, *Fire across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan, 1965-1975.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1985), 55.

[16] Irena Powell, "Japanese Writer in Vietnam: The Two Wars of Kaikō Ken." *Modern Asian Studies.* Vol. 32, No. 1 1998, 227.

[17] *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 182: Japanese Fiction Writers Since World War II*. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Edited by Van C. Gessel. (Brigham Young University. The Gale Group, 1997), 76-77.

or fishing-related TV shows and in TV commercials.[18] From reading these works, it seems clear that Kaikō grew weary of the primacy of vision that is such a prominent theme in this Vietnam works, and in his later years, focused on the auditory rather than the visual. This is demonstrated by his works *Yabureta mayu--Mimi no monogatari* (Broken cocoon--A Story of the Ear, 1986) and *Yoru to kagerō--Mimi no monogatari* (Night and Gossamer--A Story of the Ear, 1986) and *Saigo no bansan* (The Last Supper, 1979) were reflections of this endeavor.

In March 1989, Kaikō found it difficult to swallow, and in April he underwent surgery for esophageal cancer, which had spread into his diaphragm. While receiving radiation treatment, he completed his collection *Shugyoku* (Jewels).[19] On December 9, 1989, while Kaikō was still planning a third trip to Mongolia in search of Genghis Khan's grave, he died after his cancer returned and pneumonia complicated his condition.

[18] Ibid, 78.
[19] Ibid, 76-77.

CHAPTER I

JOINING THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

Cradled there in my loving arms,
He drifted off to Vietnam once more.
I tried my best to soothe him,
But he was already back in the war.

No, not today my brave hero,
Though you've lost so many friends,
He opens his eyes as the dream has past,
But the nightmare never ends.
- Pete "Doc" Fraser, "The Nightmare Never Ends"[20]

Within the subgenre of Vietnam War literature, writers have given us images of Vietnam that have been based on their experiences and knowledge, no matter how sparse, of Vietnam's history. Graham Greene was the first writer who described what he had seen and felt, and what he had witnessed and experienced during the First Indochina War. Kaikō Takeshi was the next writer to burrow into the complexity of the war and venture into the war's horror and fascination. When the Americans got involved in Vietnam, an ever-expanding library of American Vietnam War fiction by which Americans were trying to find a way to understand the War and move on began to appear. Tim O'Brien is a writer who, in his essay "The Vietnam in Me" codifies Vietnam War literature and shapes and describes his experiences in Vietnam, forcing his audience to expand their own understandings and sensitivities about the reality of death, war, existence, and self. From looking at these three authors, I will examine the three aspects they all share and write about and come up with some fundamental characteristics of the sub-genre. In this chapter, I will display how these three authors have created a formal expression of atrocities that makes an audience want to read despite the horrors that they depict.

[20] "The Nightmare Never Ends." Pete "Doc" Fraser. The LZ Sally Poetry Page (Songs from the I-Corps), http://www.lzsally.compopage.html

Writing the literature of the Vietnam War forces these authors to revisit the terrain of past horrors and try to make sense of a war they have been hauling around with them for years. In February of 1994, Tim O'Brien revisits the My Lai, Quang Ngai Province with his girlfriend and then he goes back home. He revisits the very same place where twenty five years ago in 1969, he and his Alpha Company were sent to an area of operation in the village of My Lai— to the scene of a recent massacre. Tim O'Brien wrote of this experience in his *New York Times Magazine* essay "The Vietnam in Me." Upon returning to LZ Gator, a mile from My Lai, O'Brien says, "I'm home, but the house is gone. Not a sandbag, not a nail or a scrap of wire. Weird, but I know this place. I've been here before. Literally, but also in my nightmares."[21] "The Vietnam in Me" carries with it an apparent message: Time hasn't been frozen for twenty five years in Vietnam, O'Brien has. History and time have produced more wars and new landscapes, yet for O'Brien, there is no other war and there is no other terrain. Although Vietnam changed and grew with time, it would always be the Vietnam of 1969 for O'Brien.

In 1969, the world was so conflicted about Vietnam because the generation who experienced it had a lack of trust of the government and its agencies that it has taken a years for the wounds to begin to heal, and for these writers to able to describe what they have seen and felt, the horrors they have witnessed and experienced.[22] O'Brien's essay itself displays this difficulty in understanding or making sense of the war, a war in which O'Brien could not cope with the things he had seen and the stress he had lived under for years. Second of all, because of the worlds ongoing difficulty in understanding and making sense of the Vietnam War, by implying that the war is impossible to understand,

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[21] Tim O'Brien, "The Vietnam in Me." *The New York Times Magazine*, October 2, 1994

[22] I will discuss this lack of trust felt by the world in more detail later in this chapter when I discuss the history of Vietnam.

they have wanted the war to remain a mystery. They have locked it up, thrown out the key, tried to block it from their conscious, and learned to just not care. In "The Vietnam in Me," O'Brien's trip is saying that the world needs to deal with this history that is Vietnam. After reading the essay "The Vietnam in Me," I must pose the question: Why is it that Greene, Kaikō, and O'Brien have to return to their experiences and how do they relate them to an audience who because they were not there are unable to understand what it was like?

I will answer this question by analyzing how Greene, Kaikō, and O'Brien write about horrific things by painting graphic and detailed pictures of their experiences using every possible means to explore how the horror can be something beautiful. By bringing their unhealed wounds into the open, these writers make the world see how atrocity can be fascinating and comprehensible. In "The Vietnam in Me" O'Brien examines the literary form as it presents a related series of experiences set not only in Vietnam and America, but also before and after the war. O'Brien's essay displays the difficulty in understanding or making sense of the war, a war in which O'Brien could not cope with the things he had seen and the stress he had lived under for years. "The Vietnam in Me" is a piece of Vietnam War literature that represents the individual experience. O'Brien focuses on the surface details of daily existence—the everyday routines of war, the jokes, conversations, and the fact that half of the time you don't even know what you're doing, you just *behave*—rather than on larger historical or political questions about the war.[23] O'Brien presents his ordinary soldier or character as someone at the mercy of forces greater than himself, as the victim of a divergent American policy in Vietnam, of uncaring or glory-seeking officers and politicians, or of the natural and tragic hardening

[23] This is also true in O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, which I will also be examining.

that would take place in anyone exposed to atrocity on a daily, hour-to-hour basis.[24] In "The Vietnam in Me," O'Brien has discovered the literary form necessary to write about this atrocity, which Greene and Kaikō had figured out years earlier.

Critic Lloyd Lewis argues that "it is the duty of the Vietnam War writer to incorporate the seeming illogic of the war into the structure of his work. The reader, should be "obliged to live the soldier, adrift in an alien universe in which the familiar…landmarks [have] disappeared."[25] Greene, Kaikō, and O'Brien tackle the literary form of confusion and disorder experienced during the Vietnam War and their writing has the potential to communicate to readers the trauma of war experiences into something significant. The works of these writers are prime representations of the things one chooses to remember when you recount a story about things that happened, an essay that makes the world become involved in a historical problem by making the atrocity of the Vietnam War beautiful. By reading and accepting O'Brien, Kaikō, and Greene's interpretations of their experiences, their audience is compelled not only to relive them, but to accept or dismiss the realities that they recount.

Audiences in America experienced an outpouring of Vietnam War literature in the twenty-five years since the fall of Saigon, and although literature did not examine the war in the first few years following America's withdrawal from Vietnam, in the 1980's it began to flourish.[26] Although the Americans are the primary producers of Vietnam War literature, there are many more nationalities that have produced recent accounts of

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[24] Susan Farrell, "The Literature of the Vietnam War." College of Charleston, 2000. http://www.cofc.edu/VietnamRetro/farrell.html

[25] Lloyd B. Lewis, "The Tainted War: Culture and Identity in Vietnam War Narratives" (Westport: Greenwood, 1985), 123.

[26] Susan Farrell, "The Literature of the Vietnam War." College of Charleston, 2000. http://www.cofc.edu/VietnamRetro/farrell.html

Vietnam, both eyewitness narratives and imaginative treatments of the war, such as British author Graham Greene and Japanese writer Kaikō Takeshi.[27] The Japanese have a long-standing tradition of writing about America's wars in Asia, and Kaikō utilizes the Vietnam War to deepen his understanding of the impact of war. While many authors write autobiographical accounts of their time spent in Vietnam, there are those who mold their experiences into fiction. I have already mentioned Tim O'Brien, one of the most renowned writers, who blended fiction and fact pertaining to the Vietnam War. In Greene, Kaikō, and O'Brien's imaginative creations of war experience, they consistently look for literary forms to suitably express their experiences and write of atrocity.

Kaikō Takeshi was a Japanese novelist and journalist, who, like Graham Greene, predated Tim O'Brien. He is best known for his descriptions of the war in Vietnam and like O'Brien, in his imaginative creations of war experience, he consistently looks for literary forms to suitably express his experiences and write about the horror of the war. His writing registered traumatic feelings of a war he experienced twenty years ago that is, World War Two, and these feelings extended to all aspects of his writing where the present was haunted by history. Kaikō examines the literary form as it presents descriptions of Vietnam as not just a place to decimate and napalm, but also as a place to talk to ordinary people who lived there, eat their food and drink with them, make love, and to catch a glimpse of the war from their perspectives.

In this chapter, I will examine how Graham Greene, Kaikō Takeshi, and Tim O'Brien, who each had stories based on their historical experiences in a polarized

[27] When I say "the war" I am not only referring to the Vietnam War, but also to the First Indochina War (1946-1954), which *then* led to the Second Indochina War, or the Vietnam War (1959-1975). Greene did not write about the Vietnam War, he wrote about Vietnam in 1954, at the end of the First Indochina War.

Vietnam, got their audience involved and wrote of the horror and fascination of the Vietnam War. It is believable that although O'Brien lays out the criteria for what constitutes Vietnam War literature, Kaikō and Greene had figured this out year earlier. Chronologically Kaikō Takeshi predates O'Brien, and I will explore how his writing demonstrates all the characteristics that O'Brien insists that are a part of the genre. An examination of Kaikō's works reveals that he understands and embodies the same prescriptions about writing about Vietnam as O'Brien lays out more than twenty years later. Although O'Brien's words are for an American audience, Kaikō's words had already made the Japanese aware of what went on in *Into a Black Sun*.

In the imaginative creations of their war experiences, Greene, Kaikō, and O'Brien, provide their readers with stories about brutally graphic and shocking atrocities committed during the Vietnam War which reveal lingering psychological wounds and, as well as a self-awareness to try to heal these wounds. The war taught these authors that "you didn't always know what you were seeing until years later,"[28] that a lot of what they experienced never sunk in and made sense, and that it just stayed stored in their memory. For these writers, like the continuous nights filled with dreams of terror, although they wake up in a place far, far away from Vietnam years later— in their rooms, their homes, or their new lives; they never wake up completely. There's an atrocity that's horrible and gruesome, a characteristic found within the subgenre of Vietnam War literature that these authors write about in a visceral way that uses their five senses to describe this atrocity. They use lots of great descriptions and write of horrific things by painting graphic and detailed pictures of their experiences using every possible means to make the reader see how the horror can be something beautiful.

[28] Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 20.

Just as O'Brien's trip in "The Vietnam in Me" is saying that the world needs to deal with the history of Vietnam, I will now present a concise history of the country. The history of Vietnam has always been characterized by a continuous struggle for autonomy. It is a history full of colonialism, occupations, and invasions, where periods of independence were temporary. France played a significant role in Vietnam's history, with relations between the two countries beginning in the 19th century.[29] During World War II, Japan invaded French Indochina and retained the French colonial administration as a Japanese puppet. In March 1945, Japanese occupying forces ousted the French administration in Indochina. When the Japanese surrendered to the Allies in August of 1945, this led to a void in power and provided the perfect opportunity for Ho Chi Minh, a Northern Communist revolutionary, to lead a communist revolt against French rule.[30] This marked the beginning of the First Indochina War, which ended with the defeat of the French in Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

The Geneva Accords of 1954 partitioned the country in two with a promise of democratic election to reunite the country. The Vietnamese people were spurred by the nascent ideas of reunification and independence, but this never occurred and the partition itself led to the Vietnam War. The People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union supported the Communist North, while the United States supported the South.[31] In the United States, the Kennedy administration feared that the problems with their Southern regime were undermining the US's anti-Communist effort in Southeast Asia. This fear escalated in 1965 when United States President Lyndon B. Johnson decided to send

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[29] French Indochina was part of the French colonial empire in Indochina, established in 1887. It included the three parts of Vietnam, Tonkin, Cambodia, and Laos was added in 1893.

[30] Michael Clodfelter, *Vietnam in Military Statistics: A History of the Indochina Wars* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 1995), 123.

[31] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam, A History* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 239.

ground troops into Vietnam to secure the country. The war ended in April of 1975 with the fall of Saigon and the North and South were reunited.[32]

Given that, to this day, for the Americans, Vietnam is still a difficult subject to explore and the traumatic feelings about the war cut so deep that they left behind a psychological wound. As Ken Lopez comments, the literature of this war has the "double task of revealing those wounds in the first place, as well as providing the vision and understanding to try to heal them."[33] War literature often poses common issues, issues which have been written about before, deemed as hopeless and departed issues. Yet, the best of these writings are remarkably free of banality and insignificance, and reveal a wound on the individual's soul which, if exposed, has a chance to heal; if concealed, it can only intensify. The Vietnam War expanded prior definitions of warfare, where sayings such as "we have to search the town and then destroy it and all enemy forces" and operations such as search and destroy or "Zippo" missions, and MIA, "missing in action," have since become historical sayings.

Each country had its own reason for becoming involved in the Vietnam War and the American alliance was crucial to many decisions. Vietnam was a war where different understandings and experiences in the way the war was fought was carried out by all of the militants involved. For example, the Australian forces, compared to the American forces fought a counter-revolutionary war, where their tactics were very different from American tactics. There is proof of this in Paul Ham's interview with the Australian

[32] The United States and North and South Vietnam were not the only countries involved in the Vietnam War. Other militants were South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines, all of whom supported the South.

[33] Ken Lopez, "The Literary Legacy of the Vietnam War." FIRSTS Magazine, 1992.

Broadcasting Corporation, who utilizes his book *Vietnam, The Australian War* to support his claims during the interview. In the transcript, Ham states:

> The Australians were crack jungle warfare soldiers. They knew a great deal about jungle combat. They were trained to a very high degree and they were the basis of the team, the Australian army training team in Vietnam. Yet, the American war was a war of attrition initially and the measure of American progress was the body count, the net body count. Were they killing more of the enemy than the enemy's capacity to replace them?[34]

The Australians made an attempt to help the Americans understand jungle combat.[35] They knew that this was the type of war the Viet Cong were fighting, a counter-revolutionary type of combat. The only approach to the Vietnam War should be one of ambush and stealth, where the predatory specificities of combat made it into a war to go out and hunt down the enemy. Yet, in an attempt to broaden the history of their trade and security relationships with America, the Australians tried to remember that they had to see the war through America's eyes and to understand their determination to try to make something of the surging fear of communism. In Australia they justified the war with the domino theory and that justification is itself support for the truth of the theory.[36]

Even though the war was fought by the militants of the South with different tactics, the specificities of the Vietnam War made it unlike any other war soldiers had fought because Vietnam was not a war fought on open fronts, with areas of safety to which soldiers could retreat. There was never a defined battlefield or a safe area. Soldiers were constantly on alert for the enemy**,** and they did not always know who the

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[34] "Politicians Ignored Military Advice on Vietnam with Paul Ham." Australian Broadcasting Corporation October 23,2007. Reporter: John Stewart. Paul Ham. *Vietnam, The Australian War* (Sydney: Harper Collins Books, 2008).

[35] Paul Ham, *Vietnam, The Australian War* (Sydney: Harper Collins Books, 2008), 234.

[36] To justify their actions to support South Vietnam, President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vice-President Richard Nixon put their foreign policy of the 'domino theory' into effect in 1954. The premise behind the theory was that if South Vietnam were overtaken by Communists, then other countries in the Southeast Asian region (Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand) would soon follow, like dominoes.

enemy was. The enemy could be the women and children soldiers thought they were protecting, who were in turn members of the Viet Cong. The soldiers, the war correspondents, the photographers, and the Vietnamese—not one of them really knew how to psychologically deal with the after effects of the war, a war in which over seventeen million gallons of herbicide and insecticide were used to clear vegetation so the Viet Cong would have no place to hide.[37]

More than any other war, Vietnam was an individual experience, where time played out not in days, but in hour-to-hour shifts of survival to stay alive. A lack of trust of the government and its agencies which made one question one's loyalty to one's country, all of these elements led to a loss in the credibility of America's war of attrition.[38] The credibility of the war of aggression began to be questioned all over the world and "the peoples of the world noted with repugnance the U.S. Government's violations of all principles of international law. They demand that an end be put to all these barbarous acts. Such an aggression is threatening Southeast Asia and peace all over the world."[39] Coverage of the war was gradually exposed and the world reaction to the war of brutality was one of dissatisfaction, opposition, and confusion.

This confusion spread to Japan, where paradoxical as it may sound, the traumatic feelings from a war Kaikō Takeshi had experienced twenty years ago were direct representations of the intellectual and political atmosphere of Japan in the 1960's. These

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[37] "Pictures of U.S. Imperialists Aggressive War Crimes in Vietnam." War Remnants Museum (Ho Chi Minh City) accessed March 9, 2009.

[38] In America, the Johnson administration employed a "policy of minimum candor" in its dealings with the media. Military information officers sought to manage media coverage by emphasizing stories which portrayed progress in the war. Over time, this policy damaged the public trust in official pronouncements and as the media's coverage of the war and that of the Pentagon diverged, a so-called credibility gap developed. Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam, A History* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 18.

[39] Professor J. Bernal. Chairman of the World Peace Council, March 1966. War Remnants Museum (Ho Chi Minh City) accessed March 9, 2009.

feelings are demonstrated not only in Kaikō's writings of his political opposition to the United States involvement in the Vietnam War, but also in Japan's role in Vietnam as well. In his collection of short essays written in 1974 entitled, "Pēji no haigō" (Behind the Page) Kaikō writes that before his first trip to Vietnam in 1964, "Vietnam seemed like an unfortunate, far away country where trouble always seemed to be brewing."[40] There was no significant reportage of the conflict circulating throughout Japan before 1965 to cover the conflict which was brewing in Vietnam and in 1964, Vietnam posed no real threat to Japan.

The strife in Vietnam was still a "fire on the other side of the river" for most Japanese, and only a few intellectuals had enough interest or willingness to go there."[41] There was great anxiety on the part of the Japanese people and government about the Vietnam War. At the beginning of the War, when it looked possible that China might get involved, Japan feared that they would be drawn right into the middle of another World War if China attacked the US bases in Japan.[42] There was also concern that Japan's involvement in the Vietnam War violated Article 9 (the no-war clause) or their constitution.[43] Kaikō's motivations for traveling to Vietnam as a war correspondent derived from a need to bring Vietnam into the Japanese public view. He states, "I had an

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[40] Kaikō writes that before the end of 1964 no major newspapers had offices in Saigon. Kaikō Takeshi, "Pēji no haigō" in *Kaikō Takeshi zenshu,* edited by Yōko Maki & Michiko Kaikō. (Tokyo: Kabushikikaisha Shinchōsha, 1992), 267-268.

[41] Thomas R. H. Havens, *Fire across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan, 1965-1975.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1985), 7.

[42] Bases in Japan were used as launching points for the United States Army as a result of the US-Japan Peace Treaty of 1952 (AMPO). Japan was also doing lots of trade with the United States and South Vietnamese army, and this also caused the situation in Vietnam in 1964 to be avoided by the Japanese. Ibid, 22.

[43] Despite the destruction of World War II, in the years that followed most Japanese people looked upon America as the great liberator and strong house of democracy and freedom. When nightly news broadcasts increased during the Vietnam War, as the American bombing campaign escalated, the Japanese, who had themselves experienced heavy bombing, began to sympathize with the Vietnamese people even more. Ibid, 24.

irrepressible dissatisfaction with the controversy and reporting on Vietnam in Japan at the time."[44] Kaikō knew that Vietnam did pose a threat, because for Japan, the war and situation in Vietnam was a "disaster across the sea, dangerous, but not immediately threatening."[45]

Before the first of his three trips to Vietnam, Kaikō's own knowledge of Vietnam had been based on Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, the predecessor of all Vietnam War novels, which had depicted the situation in Vietnam a decade earlier.[46] Greene, an internationally celebrated English author, began his world renowned traveling in part to satisfy his lust for adventure as well as to seek out material for his writing. He was a man who sought out the world's trouble spots, one of them being Vietnam during the First Indochina War.[47] History shows that Vietnam was a dangerous place even in the early 1950s. While Communist insurgents were provoking civil war in the countryside, people in the major cities of Hanoi and Saigon were living in fear of daily bomb explosions, grenade assaults, and targeted assassinations.[48] The Vietnamese were also tired of French colonialism and they had been resisting the French since the beginning of the 20th century. The Viet Minh communist revolutionaries finally defeated the French in 1954 at Dien

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[44] The nightly news in Japan began to show images of the war in 1966 and many Japanese began to see parallels between the Americans in Vietnam and their own involvement in the guerilla war in China known as the Sino-Japanese War 30 years ago. Mitsumasa Tokumoto, Review of *Into a Black Sun*, by Kaikō Ken. *Japan Quarterly* 28 (1981), 290-292.

[45] Thomas R. H. Havens, *Fire across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan, 1965-1975.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1985),7.

[46] Greene was in Saigon as a special correspondent in 1953 for the *Sunday Times* and *Le Figuro*, right before the Viet Minh communist revolutionaries and the French Union had a battle at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, which ended the First Indochinese War. Irena Powell, "Japanese Writer in Vietnam: The Two Wars of Kaikō Ken." *Modern Asian Studies.* Vol. 32, No. 1 1998, 222.

[47] Irena Powell, "Japanese Writer in Vietnam: The Two Wars of Kaikō Ken." *Modern Asian Studies.* Vol. 32, No. 1 1998, 220.

[48] Joe Nordgren, "The Quiet American." *The Literary Encyclopedia*. 30 August 2005. [http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=7512, accessed 28 January 2009.]

Bien Phu.[49] Greene, ever the adventurer, partly based *The Quiet American* on this series of incidents in South Vietnam after the defeat of the French**.** *The Quiet American* seems to have made quite an impression on Kaikō Takeshi, whose own early knowledge of Vietnam had been based solely on the novel. References to Greene's novel appear occasionally in Kaikō's Vietnam War literature.[50]

Another aspect of Greene that intrigues Kaikō is the transformation in his oeuvre from reportage to full-length novels that leads up to the publication of their works. It is significant that both authors took on the role of special correspondents for their respective native newspapers. Kaikō himself noted that he had a particular interest in Greene's *The Quiet American* because it too, like Kaikō's *Into a Black Sun*, "had been preceded by a series of journalistic reports."[51] Kaikō's collection of journalistic reportage, *Betonamu Senki* served as a precursor for his novel *Into a Black Sun*, where Kaikō attempts to reveal his traumatic wounds of the past, as well as provide a level of understanding that might help to heal them.[52] Graham Greene himself says that, "There is more direct reportage in *The Quiet American* than in any other novel I have written."[53]

This incident with Greene and Kaikō, with the transformation from reportage to full-length novels, represents these writers searching for a way to make their audience understand the Vietnam War. Their incident marks the emergence of one of the

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[49] Military historian Mark Windrow writes, "Dien Bien Phu was the first time that a non-European colonial independence movement had evolved through all stages from guerilla bands to a conventionally organized and equipped army able to defeat a modern Western occupier in a pitched battle." Quotation from Martin Windrow. Michael Kenney, "British Historian Takes a Brilliant Look at French Fall in Vietnam." *Boston Globe,* January 4, 2005.

[50] *The Quiet American* is criticized by a Vietnamese writer in Kaikō's *Into a Black Sun*, "I gave him material for the novel. After it came out, I realized that Greene didn't really understand anything about this country. It's a novel written to please European readers." Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 100.

[51] Kaikō Takeshi, *Aruku* Kagetachi [*Five Thousand Runways*], (Tokyo: Shincho buncho, 1975), 147.

[52] Ken Lopez, "The Literary Legacy of the Vietnam War." FIRSTS Magazine, 1992.

[53] Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 139-140.

fundamental characteristics within the sub-genre of Vietnam War literature that these writers share and write about. Both writers search for a way to use great descriptions and begin to write of horrific things by painting graphic and detailed pictures of their experiences using every possible means to make the reader see how the horror can be something beautiful. They look for ways to suitably express their horrific experiences and by bringing their wounds out into the open, they make their audience see these wounds which forces us to expand our own understandings and sensitivities about the reality of death, war, and existence.

Kaikō is intrigued by the manner in which Greene utilizes his reportage in *The Quiet American.* "It is fascinating when comparing the novel with the reportage to observe which experiences he abandoned and which he retained for the purpose of the novel. The common elements which surface occasionally are the front line experience and the opium."[54] Here is where, although Greene was the progenitor of Vietnam War literature, he nonetheless fulfills the criteria that Tim O'Brien's elaborates many years later to express his experiences. One of Greene's front line experiences related in *The Quiet American* is as follows:

> I was in the dive bomber which attacked the Viet Minh post and I was on the patrol of the Foreign Legion outside Phat Diem. I still to this day retain the sharp image of the dead child crouched in the ditch beside his dead mother. The very neatness of their bullet wounds made their death more disturbing than the indiscriminate massacre in the canals around.[55]

A closer examination of a complementary situation reveals a situation which Kaikō Takeshi describes in *Into a Black Sun,* while on the front line with Captain Wain. Kaikō recalls, while sitting out in the jungle, "the recurring visions of the precision the

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[54] Kaikō Takeshi, *Aruku Kagetachi* [*Five Thousand Runways*], (Tokyo: Shincho buncho, 1975), 147.
[55] Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 139-140.

Americans executed in cutting the ears off of enemy corpses as trophies of war and the pungent odors of decaying corpses in the hot jungles where I now sit."[56] What is common between Kaikō and Greene is displayed in the above quotations, that the most astounding behavior could seem normal or rational, considering the elements. For Kaikō and Greene, here was spread before them the horrific physical reality of the war. The elements, consisting of survival amid unthinkable chaos, destruction, and torment led to feelings of moral ambivalence for Kaikō and Greene. Normal moral boundaries had been thrown out: individuals were on their own. For Greene, the massacre of corpses which surrounded him paled in comparison to the amount of precision which was cast upon the mother/son corpses which lay in front of him. The corpses took on a sense of *normalcy* so to speak, massacres were a common, everyday occurrence in Vietnam. "The very neatness of their bullet wounds made their death more disturbing," this, however, extended beyond normal moral boundaries. The sheer reality that such precision had been taken to shoot a child or "cut the ears off enemy corpses" reached a new level, and Greene and Kaikō had captured an experience whose combination of a horrific physical reality with ambivalent moral dimensions reiterated the fact that the individual was on his own. Here is where Greene and Kaikō's writings attempt to create a formal expression of atrocities that makes an audience want to read despite the horrors that they depict.

Hints of public skepticism about one's country, which led to a credibility gap in the 1960's, were already evident in *The Quiet American*. Greene's short and simple novel focuses on the theme of Western innocence and arrogance, and good intentions gone awry, and in doing that, he succinctly anticipated the failure of the half-hearted and

[56] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 131.

conflicted American efforts in Vietnam to a degree even he probably did not expect.[57] Greene probably thought he was exaggerating the descriptions in his writing when he wrote of the American involvement in Southeast Asia in the 1950's. Few people in 1955 would have guessed that his book would seem to be a distillation of it and a precursor of what was to come ten years later.

In regards to Greene's "focus on the theme of Western innocence and arrogance" let us examine once more Kaikō's claim pertaining to the political atmosphere of Japan in *Pēji no haigō*, "Vietnam seemed like an unfortunate, far away country where trouble always seemed to be brewing."[58] Kaikō's own memories of a war-torn past allowed him to ruminate over how his newfound experiences of Vietnam altered his views of the ignorant illusions of the United States. His novel *Into a Black Sun* carries a very powerful ideological anti-war message[59] that which is very reminiscent of *The Quiet American.* Greene's work, similar to Kaikō's, also employs a first person narrative viewpoint focused on the internal struggle of the journalist-protagonist who is trying to understand the conflict around him. Fowler, Greene's British journalist main character, is not as direct a representation of the author's self as is Kaikō's correspondent, but he clearly represents Greene's own political viewpoint about the war.[60] In both novels, the journalist-protagonist is distressed by the war.

Pertaining to Greene's political views, he himself says in *Ways of Escape*, "I was condemned by the *New Yorker* for accusing my "best friends" (the Americans) of murder,

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[57] Ken Lopez, "The Literary Legacy of the Vietnam War." FIRSTS Magazine, 1992.

[58] Kaikō Takeshi, "Pēji no haigō," in *Kaikō Takeshi zenshu,* edited by Yōko Maki & Michiko Kaikō. (Tokyo: Kabushikikaisha Shinchōsha, 1992), 267-268.

[59] Irena Powell, "Japanese Writer in Vietnam: The Two Wars of Kaikō Ken." *Modern Asian Studies.* Vol. 32, No. 1 1998, 232.

[60] Philip K. Jason*, Fourteen Landing Zones* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 192.

where I based one scene in which a bomb explodes in a crowd of people in Saigon. They call me ignorant, but what are the facts, of which the reviewer needless to say was ignorant?"[61] Graham once again perhaps thought he was exaggerating the descriptions in his writing in his conviction of what he viewed as America's ignorant, superior, and idealistic involvement in Vietnam in *The Quiet American*. Little did he know that ten years later, the world would be so conflicted about Vietnam; the wound, which had just begun to open in 1955, was oozing with infection in 1965. This denial of the reality of war by the wider world is common to Greene, Kaikō, and O'Brien.

In *Into a Black Sun*, Kaikō's correspondent relocates several times during his stay in Vietnam and like Greene, the war becomes an individual experience when Kaikō begins to question loyalty to his ideals with those of his country. First, he stays at an American advised ARVN camp, which is kept under the watchful eye of Captain Wain.[62] It is through the reporter's observation of Captain Wain, that a clear-cut division in popular political sentiment is seen by the Americans and the Japanese. His response to Wain's inquiry pertaining to Japan's view of the war furthers this fact:

> I'm not in Tokyo. But I can tell you the opinions I find in the Japanese newspapers. This war is an uneven contest and ideology doesn't come into the picture. Charlie Cong is small, poor, and barefoot, and Uncle Sam is huge, strong and rich. And you drop napalm and kill innocent women and children. You're a Goliath, so you should let David alone and stop killing the children.[63]

The quote above suggests that, like Greene, Kaikō actually anticipates the outcome of the war. The reporter's rational response to Captain Wain's inquiry certainly once again

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[61] Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 139-140

[62] ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) was the military of South Vietnam established in 1956 by President Ngo Dinh Diem. During the Vietnam War ARVN participated in many major operations with American troops, once again as a means to combat Communist insurgents from the North.

[63] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun*. (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), 77.

originates from his own experience while living as a young boy under the rule of Japan's wartime regime in the Second World War. The Japanese had this same notion of superiority in World War Two when they thought that they could use their advanced civilization to modernize the Asian common people. This wild belief in themselves and their advanced technology resulted in their military and spiritual defeat in World War Two. A world order based on technical superiority was seen by many Japanese writers after the war as an enemy of the human spirit.

The Americans in Vietnam, as early as the 1950's, thought that Communism *was* the enemy of the human spirit. In 1964, when President Lyndon Johnson called for an international effort to send assistance to the Republic of Vietnam, by the end of the year, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines provided a peak deployment of up to 68,800 troops to South Vietnam.[64] The Vietnam War was part of the United States entrenched hatred of communism more than a belief that they were right, and this belief was fervently supported by other international parties. The countries who supported the South truly did believe that they had to protect Asia from the domino effect. Moreover, it is significant that most of the countries who supported the war effort were once who were geographically in Asia. In Paul Ham's book *Vietnam, The Australian War,* he states that in Australia, "communism *was* real in the '50s, there was a genuine fear of communism at the highest political level and amongst the people. We were of

[64] Philip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: The History 1946-1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 337.

course very, very strongly opposed to communism and terrified of it."[65] Many actually did believe in domino theory and communism was something to be feared.[66]

Like the Japanese in World War II, the Americans entered Vietnam with the firm belief that a technologically advanced war machine could quickly annihilate an unsophisticated and primitive defense force. While living in the ARVN encampment, the Kaikō's reporter notes how poor the relationship is between the Americans and their Vietnamese partners. The Americans eat steak, drink wine, and have showers, and the Vietnamese eat rats and catfish, and wash from the same bowl everyday. The ostensible allies are separated by different lifestyles and cultures, and thus by incomprehension as well. Not only are they symbolically separated by barbed wire, but the reporter writes that they are separated by differing notions of geographical space as well.[67] He observes Captain Wain and his army of men and realizes that the Americans may very well possess the most sophisticated military technology in the world, but their superiority is completely ineffective against peasant people fighting guerilla-type warfare further from the likes of anything they had ever seen. The Americans were not fighting a counter-revolutionary war, they were fighting a war of containment, where success was measured by the amount of peasants they killed everyday. Kaikō, the reporter, does not dislike the Americans, but through his involvement with Vietnam, comes to realize how unjust the American tactics are.

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[65] Paul Ham, *Vietnam, The Australian War* (Sydney: Harper Collins Books, 2008), 237.

[66] In Japan, during the Vietnam War, the Japanese Socialist Party and the Japanese Communist Party looked at opposition to the Vietnam War not so much as a fear of Communism spreading, but as a way to increase their seats in the Diet and expand their political power. This was in stark contrast to the beliefs of the Beheiren (Peace for Vietnam Citizen's League), which was formed by Oka Makoto in 1965. It consisted of left-wing intellectuals, writers, professionals, and housewives. Beheiren was a movement where any citizen could be involved in the political process, a participatory democracy.

[67] Irena Powell, "Japanese Writer in Vietnam: The Two Wars of Kaikō Ken." *Modern Asian Studies.* Vol. 32, No. 1 1998, 238.

The Vietnam War brought political unrest to Japan as the Japanese public's perspective on America changed. Intellectual opinion rose in protest against the American involvement in the Vietnam War and the complicity of the Japanese government, because Japan was cooperating with the United States through security treaty arrangements. Japan also supported the United States by supplying goods to the United States and South Vietnamese forces.[68] The political setting of Japan at this time was the ammunition Kaikō needed to take on the role of the reporter, this time in his homeland where his traumatic war-torn memories had been born twenty years ago, against the United States involvement in the Vietnam War, twenty years later.[69]

Just as Greene had taken ammunition from critics ten years earlier for his conviction of what he viewed as America's ignorant, superior**,** and idealistic involvement in Vietnam, Kaikō also underwent similar circumstances. David Pollack argues that:

> Kaikō's greatest dilemma is to have to decide which of the two (Asian or Western) perspectives represent his own, and the answer to this dilemma—both or neither—is no easier to live with than the problem. If Kaikō believes in anything at all it appears to be the humanity one discovers in doing simple, harmless things. He has a Taoist profound distrust of great ideas and elaborate technology.[70]

Kaikō questions the credibility of American democracy, which is perceived by the Japanese to be impartial, but the war in Vietnam is not impartial, it is anything but. Here is where the definitions of warfare, the "great ideas" so to speak, introduced during the Vietnam War cause Kaikō to feel an extreme skepticism toward the most sophisticated

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[68]Ibid, 225.

[69] Japanese manufacturers were very involved in the business side of the Vietnam War, and did lots of trade with the United States and the South Vietnamese arm, and perhaps even supplied materials for US napalm bombs. Most of the wealth and help that Japan got was a bulwark against Communism. Thomas R. H. Havens, *Fire across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan, 1965-1975.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1985), 22.

[70] David Pollack, *Reading against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novel*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 213, 226.

military technology. Pollack's criticism is has a lot of resonance, for like Greene, Kaikō is somewhat of a "double sided character. On one hand he is the adventure seeking reporter who is compelled to voyage to the problem areas around the world, and on the other hand, he is the writer who had extreme empathy for humanity and the natural world—contemplating mans relationship with nature, while not evading the cruelty of both human and the natural world."[71] Kaikō's duality *does* exist in his decision between which of the two perspectives he represents, he does not dislike the Americans, but through his involvement with Vietnam, comes to realize the unjust nature of the Vietnam War.

It is almost as if the Vietnam literature Kaikō and other prominent authors produced *had* to make atrocity into something beautiful, otherwise there would be no possibility for the uncaring world which is not able to understand what it was like to expand their understandings and sensitivities about the reality of death and war.
This is why Greene, Kaikō, and O'Brien write about the Vietnam War, in order to revisit the terrain of past horrors and try to make sense of a war they are struggling to comprehend. They have figured out the formal expressions necessary to write about the atrocities of the war and relate them to an audience. The fact that they are able to write honestly of these atrocities, with a fervent sense of true horror, while at the same time being able to transform the trauma of war experience into something deeply emotional and meaningful, *this* is what makes atrocity into something beautiful. In *The Things They Carried*, a collection of short stories, the American war veteran and writer, Tim O'Brien shares an unmistakable connection with Kaikō Takeshi's *Into a Black Sun*. Although

[71] Irena Powell, "Japanese Writer in Vietnam: The Two Wars of Kaikō Ken." *Modern Asian Studies.* Vol. 32, No. 1 1998), 220.

published in 1990, twenty five years after the war had ended; the novel is set during the Vietnam War. This is yet another characteristic found within the subgenre of Vietnam War literature, where writing the literature of the Vietnam War forces these authors to revisit the terrain of past horrors and try to make sense of a war they have been hauling around with them for years. For these writers, the past is always a part of the present.

Through the traumatic experiences and memories which they carry, both O'Brien and Kaikō's write of an atrocity that's horrible and gruesome and they write about this in a visceral way that uses their five senses to describe this atrocity. They bring their characters to *life*, by allowing their readers to relive their horrific experiences. Furthermore, it can be noted that Kaikō and O'Brien's writings are similar in the scope that their novels closely involve listening to a combat soldier storyteller over a long period of time. O'Brien is presenting his ordinary soldier or character as someone at the mercy of forces greater than himself and as a casualty of the natural and tragic hardening that would take place in anyone exposed to atrocity on a daily, hour-to-hour basis, and Kaikō is doing the same. By bringing their unhealed wounds into the open, these writers make the world see how atrocity can be fascinating and comprehensible

O'Brien's meditations— of the sensory elements evoking an atrocious atmosphere, and of darkness and light, yet another similarity O'Brien and Kaikō share, as I have already examined in Chapter One—are also seen the stories in *The Things They Carried*. O'Brien himself reflects that,

> Forty-three years old, and the war occurred half a lifetime ago, and yet the remembering makes it now. And sometimes remembering will lead to a story, which makes it forever. That's what stories are for. Stories are for joining the past to the future. Stories are for those late hours in the night when you can't remember how you got from where you were to where you are.

> Stories are for eternity, when memory is erased, when there is nothing to remember except the story.[72]

For O'Brien, the war must be written about as it was or not written about at all.[73] Once again, it is almost as if the Vietnam stories Kaikō and other renowned authors produced *had* to be remarkable--nothing could be omitted, no matter how gruesome or violent. O'Brien and Kaikō's "stories" are outlets for dealing with the terror and wounds inflected on them in polarized Vietnam twenty five years ago**;** moreover, they are representations of an affinity with death that carries with it a corresponding newfound affinity with life. "Sometimes remembering will lead to a story, which makes it forever-" all of these stories and traumatic memories are history, where history's heavy attrition makes wars pass on, into the hands of new politicians and enemies. Yet, for O'Brien, although history changes and isn't eternal, his stories are forever.

Michael Herr, in his book *Dispatches*, a collection of reports which focus primarily on combat and the grunt's experience of the war, asserts that "history, and life itself aren't frozen, you are frozen within that history. Years after a war you can make up any kind of bullshit story you want about it, but still, what happened happened- it's what you remember."[74] These writers are forever frozen within history. History cannot be erased and it can't be erased from the mind. Herr attests that, "What people say is really true, it's funny the things you remember."[75] In their stories, these authors write of such horrifying things, that by painting graphic and detailed pictures of their experiences and

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[72] Tim O'Brien gives numerous talks at universities across the nation pertaining to his experiences in Vietnam. This particular quote has been utilized many times by O'Brien, as it was included in a talk entitled "The Things that Writers Carry." It is also found on his website at http://www.illyria.com/tobhp.html. Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc. 1990), 38.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Michael Herr, Dispatches (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 20.

[75] Ibid, 28.

using every possible means available, they make the reader see how the horror can be something beautiful. They write with a horrific honesty. There is no need to justify what occurs at times of war, for justifications are empty and outrageous. There is only the "story" and the ability to understand the war and self-awareness to try to heal wounds. This is what drives Greene, Kaikō, and O'Brien to write stories, to "join the past to the future."[76]

In *The Things They Carried* there is a particular story called "Sweetheart Of The Song Tra Bong." This story, in contrast to O'Brien's fact-filled "The Vietnam in Me" is the most fictitious, but O'Brien still manages to depict in "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong," the atrocity of the Vietnam War through the utilization of his senses. I have chosen to focus on Mary Ann Bell, who in this story is transformed by her experience of Vietnam and by the darkness that is Vietnam. The story resonates because O'Brien's narrator describes her throughout, and he utilizes his senses to describe how Mary Ann loses control amidst the atrocity of the war. Here the character Tim, whose biography, substantially resemblances the author's own, recalls a narrative told by his buddy, Rat Kiley.

In "Sweetheart Of The Song Tra Bong" Tim O'Brien is not the protagonist of the narrative, but instead bestows the role to an unlikely, yet suitable character, Mary Ann Bell. Mary Ann arrives at Tra Bong, a medical compound where, along with American military personnel, medics share the area with six Green Berets (Greenies). Young and innocent at first, Mary Ann's innocence soon evaporates and becomes consumed by the darkness of the war. She obsessively yearns to learn the ways of the bush, she focuses her attention on learning how to disassemble an M-16 rifle, and no longer pays heed to

[76] Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc. 1990), 38.

personal hygiene. After being on ambush all night long, Mary Ann begins wearing dirty green fatigues and covers her face with charcoal, her M-16 a constant companion. O'Brien uses Mary Ann to depict the transformation of innocence into horror by the war occurring around her. He achieves this by showing how the atrocities of the Vietnam War become exciting for Mary Ann.

Through the association of smell, texture, and sight, and what he feels, Rat Kiley's senses completely come to life when he again encounters Mary Ann Bell. The time begins at midnight, and once again, the late hour provides a reminder of the darkness which our characters carry. O'Brien appropriately opens this scene in the dead silence of night, perhaps as a correlation to the darkness which engulfs his characters. In this scene, Tim O'Brien establishes a natural backdrop which places Rat, Mary Ann's boyfriend, Mark Fossie, and Mary Ann herself in the Special Forces hootch, or hut. Fossie has perched himself outside the hootch where Mary Ann is now staying. The night is cold and foggy, and immediately Rat and Fossie's sense of sound shifts into full effect with the consistent echoes of music being carried their way. The music was, "Not loud but not soft either. It had a chaotic, almost unmusical sound, without rhythm or form or progression, like the noise of nature. In the background, just audible, a woman's voice was half-singing, half chanting."[77] The voice becomes more and more eerie and Fossie can "sense" to whom the voice belongs. By entirely relying on his sense of sound, Fossie can hear the innocence which Mary Ann has lost since her arrival at Song Tra, through the sound of her voice.

Fossie, with Rat not far behind, immediately enters the hootch, upon which the scene displayed before them forces all of their physical senses to spew forth in an

[77] Ibid, 118.

overwhelming fashion. Like Kaiko, whose nose brings him closer to the reality of the war and of the situation itself, Rat and Fossie also rely on their olfactory sense. Rat says:

> What hit you first, was the smell. There was a topmost scent of joss sticks and incense, like the fumes of some exotic smokehouse, but beneath the smoke lay a deeper and much more powerful stench. Thick and numbing, like an animal's den, a mix of blood and scorched hair and excrement and the sweet-sour odor of moldering flesh—the stink of the kill.[78]

Here the contradictory smells and textures alluded to by Kaikō Takeshi, are placed on full display by Tim O'Brien. Compare the glorified smell, "like an exotic smokehouse," which first emanates from the hootch to the disdainful stench, "a mix of blood and scorched hair and excrement," which overtakes all. By incorporating pervasive smells into this scene, O'Brien is able to create a setting for his readers. Rat and Fossie's sense of sight soon merge with sound when they could see, "On a post at the rear of the hootch was the decayed head of a large black leopard; strips of yellow-brown skin dangled from the overhead rafters. And bones. Stacks of bones—all kinds."[79] For Rat and Fossie, the images radiating before them would forever be carried inside them.

Mary Ann emerges out of the darkness, at her throat "was a necklace of human tongues. Elongated and narrow, the tongues were threaded along a length of copper wire, one overlapping the next, the tips curled upward as if caught in a final shrill syllable."[80] It is through this bizarre display observed by Rat and Fossie that Mary Ann unleashes and exhibits all of *her* physical senses. O'Brien once again creates a formal expression of atrocities that makes his audience want to read despite the horrors that they depict—he

[78] Ibid, 171.
[79] Ibid, 119.
[80] Ibid, 119.

displays the atrocities that Mary Ann feeds off of and the rush she attains from these atrocities. He shows how Mary Ann eventually goes postal.[81]

Mary Ann's final revelation encompasses above all, her sense of taste. She is no longer only an organism fed by food daily in order to survive, but her entire corporeal existence now yearns to feed off of the land itself.

> Sometimes I want to *eat* this place. Vietnam. I want to swallow the whole country – the dirt, the death – I just want to eat it and have it there inside me. That's how I feel. It's like….this appetite. When I'm out there at night, I can feel my blood moving, my skin and my fingernails, everything, it's like I'm glowing in the dark and burning away into nothing.[82]

Like Kaikō, everything that was concrete and tangible to Mary Ann has decomposed. She has been engulfed by the darkness and now feeds off of it. This is similar to what percolated through Greene's *The Quiet American*, when he saw the dead mother and her child and was more disturbed by the precision of their bullet wounds than the massacre of bodies which surrounded him. The most astounding behavior could seem normal or rational, considering the elements and normal moral boundaries had been thrown out and individuals were on their own. The narrator writes about the atrocity Mary Ann has become a part of in a visceral way that uses all of his senses to describe this atrocity in a beautiful way. By utilizing all of Mary Ann's senses to show how the atrocity of Vietnam excites her, O'Brien manages to make the atrocity of the Vietnam War fascinating. No longer is she able to regress into the innocent, sweet world she knew – she has now fully transformed into the world of the war, of bush, dirt, filth, and darkness. She represents the descent Rat and Fossie themselves are involved in, when Rat himself

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[81] I have chosen to use the idiom "go postal" here, meaning to go crazy or lose control. I believe it fits into the context well.

[82] Ibid, 119.

once stated, "When we first got here—all of us—we were real young and innocent, full of romantic bullshit, but we learned pretty damn quick."[83]

Mary Ann's descent into the bush parallels Kaikō's desire to return to the darkness and violence of the guerilla jungle world. In the last two chapters of *Into a Black Sun*, the protagonist leaves his life of idleness in Saigon and exchanges it for a life of immediacy back at the ARVN camp with Captain Wain. Like Mary Ann, his flight from a world of innocence into a world of darkness and atrocity illustrates the transformation an individual undergoes during the Vietnam War, and for Kaikō, the pull of Vietnam's black hole of history plunges the soldier and individual deeper and deeper into darkness – an archaic civilization, mountain tribes whose members are black skinned yet covered with tattoos and a culture which is enigmatic.[84] This is the very same pull which Mary Ann clutched as well, the pull that when leaving the hootch the last time they saw Mary Ann, spurred Rat to acknowledge that "in the darkness there was that weird tribal music, which seemed to come from the earth itself, from the deep rain forest, and a woman's voice rising up in a language beyond translation. Mary Ann was already gone."[85] The wild atrocity of Vietnam has pulled in Mary Ann and Kaikō, bringing their primeval physical senses to life.

Kaikō's desire to experience direct involvement in the war leads him back to the Captain, for it is the bush which brings about a complete resurgence of Kaikō's senses. He agrees to embark on a "search and destroy" mission with Wain and the South Vietnamese fighters. Kaikō's direct engagement in the war allows him to lie some of the frustration that burns inside him to rest. "By moving in the jungle, crawling along the

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[83] Ibid, 108.
[84] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 181.
[85] Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc. 1990), 121.

glowing rice paddies, I was like an ox without a herdsman or a dog . . . And tumbling from the hot, black belly of the whale into its bowels, I squirmed on, alive, through the vast, hairy, primeval night."[86] This visionary scene created by Kaiko creates an image of not only Kaikō, but Mary Ann as well, "feeling close to their bodies, feeling their blood moving, their skin and fingernails, everything."[87] Out of the atrocity has been borne a sort of fascination, something beautiful. Here in the jungle, stripped of all pretenses and of all civilization, Kaikō and Mary Ann nonetheless physically survive.

Dark elements of the deep personal experiences of the pain and loss of war pervade the literature of the Vietnam War. Kaikō and Greene were in all likelihood "writing for all those to come who will only have the story to go by, not this generation's experience and O'Brien will continue to write about the war for a contemporary audience. They haven't write for only themselves, but for all those to come who will only have the story to go by, not this generation's experience.[88] They have to make their audience who were not there able to understand what it was like in Vietnam and they have to describe the horror and the beauty. O'Brien says it best when he states, "All writers revisit terrain. It's an emotional and geographical terrain that's given to us by life. Vietnam is there the way childhood is for me."[89] These writers *have* to go back, they have to revisit the terrain that has infected them with the wounds of guilt, depression, terror, and disillusionment. There's a line from Michael Herr in *Dispatches*, when he says: "Vietnam is what we had instead of happy childhoods."[90]

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[86] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 214.
[87] Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc. 1990), 121.
[88] Ken Lopez, "The Literary Legacy of the Vietnam War." FIRSTS Magazine, 1992.
[89] Don Lee, Tim O'Brien Profile for *Ploughshares* Issue #68, Vol. 21/4 (Boston: Emerson College, 1995-96), 199.
[90] Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (London: Vintage Books, 1977), 196.

In the case of Kaikō Takeshi, World War Two is what he has instead of a happy childhood**,** and it is while he is in Vietnam that this "emotional and geographic terrain" must be revisited. During his three trips to Vietnam, Kaikō brings history into his writing. In *Betonamu Senki* (The War Chronicle), Kaikō's collection of journalistic reports, the extent to which Kaikō's feelings from the war twenty years ago maintain his life dominate in the last chapter, entitled, "The Figure of a Killer! The Jungle War….." It's Valentine's Day, 1965. In an hour-by-hour account, where Kaikō recounts how he and his cameraman Keīchi Akimoto, who were part of a small company of Vietnamese soldiers and a few American observers, become surrounded by the Viet Cong. After several hours of desperately running while they are being fiercely attacked from all sides, Kaikō and Akimoto are two of seventeen survivors from the party of two hundred soldiers.[91] During the raid, recollections from his war twenty years ago come to the surface.

Kaikō revisits the "emotional terrain" of his childhood in *Betonamu Senki* when he tells of his experience as a boy in Osaka by a low flying enemy plane that nearly killed him. With much more attention paid to personal detail, Kaikō alludes to this same childhood incident (that he mentions in *Betonamu Senki*) and utilizes it in a more subjective manner in *Into a Black Sun*.

> I felt an immense surge of air plummeting at tremendous speed toward the back of my head. My limbs went numb. And, grappling with my friend, I sank into the mud; and at that instant I looked up. In the glint of canting aluminum wings, against a summer sky of high heaped clouds, I saw a bulbous turret like a giant insect's eye and in it was the 'enemy' with

[91] Kaikō Takeshi, *Betonamu Senki* [*Vietnam War Chronicle*], (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1965), 223-266.

> rosy, shiny cheeks. I thought I saw him smile, at least my eyes believed he did. "[92]

On the 14th day, at 4AM in the morning, Kaikō is reminded of this day in Osaka when his life was in danger when an enemy plane swooped low and nearly took his life.[93] This experience and others, such as returning to his hotel in Saigon after living on an ARVN base, and "always inhaling the familiarity of "'plump' blood,"[94] display the unrelenting influence Kaikō's feelings had over his life. Thereafter he was never free from the memories, wounds, and images of Vietnam that overlapped and deepened his boyhood memories of death and destruction during World War Two.

At the end of Kaikō's "Vietnam Period" in 1974, which paralleled that of the end of the anti-war movement in Japan, his writing still exhibited signs of his struggle to come to terms with the war of twenty years ago and he was still at a loss in the credibility of the war. He wrote of his contempt of Japanese intellectuals and their waning interest in the Vietnam War. Although Japan had not been brought into the war, Kaikō writes in *Pēji no haigō*, "Japanese intellectuals do not fully comprehend the situation in Vietnam. After the Peace Treaty in 1973, everyone was yelling that America had lost. 'In fact, nobody had lost. Nobody had won. And the Vietnamese went on killing each other. This, however seemed to have been forgotten.' Vietnam has disappeared from the agenda."[95] Even in the waning days of the Vietnam War, Kaikō's writings display an awareness of a historical sense of time, causation, and consequences. Kaikō will never be able to abandon the horrific traumatic memories which constantly afflict him. Vietnam, Japan,

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[92] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun*. (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), 195.
[93] Ibid, 229-231.
[94] Ibid, 269.
[95] The Peace Treaty of 1973 which Kaikō mentions refers to the infamous cease-fire in Vietnam declared by President Richard Nixon in 1973. ("Pējī no haigō," in *Kaikō Takeshi zenshu,*vol. 12) 239-240.

The United States—these places would never disappear from Kaikō's agenda, an agenda which revolved around documenting the continuing traumatic effects of war and writing of a present tormented by history.

"All writers revisit terrain." Tim O'Brien revisits My Lai in February of 1994, the very same place where twenty five years ago O'Brien and his Alpha Company were sent to where massacre occurred. O'Brien writes that My Lai was shrugged off by the Americans as a cruel, nasty, inevitable consequence of war. He sums it up perfectly when he writes years later about the massacre in My Lai, "Dear God. We should've bombed these people with love."[96] Upon returning to LZ Gator, a mile from My Lai, O'Brien claims the he is finally home and he is very familiar with this place called LZ Gator. It is a place that O'Brien has not only consciously carried with him over the years, but a place that he visits in his nightmares as well.

Japanese writer Oda Makoto writes in his novel *Contemporary History* that all writers "find a solace in the vast, harsh, clarity of that expanse, of that landscape, an attractive evacuation of historical traces—even as they acknowledge that the scene shows nothing but the marks of recent history."[97] O'Brien, Oda suggests, finds "solace in the vast, harsh clarity" of the terrain he's returned to—he calls it home. For O'Brien, Vietnam is not a place he is simply physically revisiting, it is a place he revisits everyday in his psyche, in his dreams, and in his nightmares. He also "acknowledges that the scene shows nothing but the marks of recent history" when he talks of how the place has now recently changed, where there is no evidence of the grunts (yet another expanded prior definitions of warfare) and their infantry living among the sandbags and surrounded by

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[96] Tim O'Brien, "The Vietnam in Me." *New York Times Magazine*, October 2, 1994.

[97] *Biography- Oda Makoto (1932-): An Article from Contemporary Authors*. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Edited by Van C. Gessel. (Brigham Young University. The Gale Group, 1997, 594.

wire fences to block out the enemy. The area of My Lai was now terrain which was "referable to the bush. No land mines here. No paddies bubbling with machine-gun fire."[98]

For O'Brien, he had designed My Lai to represent "the life of the soldier, adrift in an alien universe in which the familiar…landmarks [have] disappeared."[99] He places himself in Vietnam and America, consistently shifting back and forth from before and after the war. Not only does he present himself as the ordinary soldier, who *was* at the mercy of forces greater than himself and in an alien universe, but also as a man who, twenty five years later returns to that universe only to find that everything that had been familiar to him has disappeared. Upon arriving in Vietnam, the terrain itself had been the alien universe for O'Brien, the grunt and the familiarity of America had vanished. However, he soon became the ordinary soldier, and that which was alien soon became a part of him. Upon returning back to the United States, the familiarity that once was, has become that very same alien universe to which O'Brien traveled from a year ago.

When one recounts a story about things that happened, it's funny the things one chooses to remember.[100] "The Vietnam in Me" is full of O'Brien's stories. During his trip, he can't remember names, but yet quotes:

> So much to remember. The time we filled a nasty lieutenant's canteen with mosquito repellent; the sounds of choppers and artillery fire; the slow dread that began building as word spread that in a day or two we'd be heading back to the bush.
> Now I stand in this patch of weeds, looking down on what used to be the old Alpha barracks. Amazing, really, what time can do. You'd think there would be something left, some faint imprint, but

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[98] Ibid.

[99] I previously introduced Mr. Lewis above, when he utilizes the above quotation and argues that this is the duty of the Vietnam writer. Lloyd B. Lewis. "The Tainted War: Culture and Identity in Vietnam War Narratives" (Westport: Greenwood, 1985), 123.

[100] I previously used this quote by Michael Herr in the preceding paragraph.

> LZ (Landing Zone) Gator has been utterly and forever erased from the earth.[101]

Time hasn't been frozen for twenty five years in Vietnam, O'Brien has. History and time have produced more wars and new landscapes, yet for O'Brien, there *is* no other war and there *is* no other terrain. Although Vietnam changed and grew with time, it would always be the Vietnam of 1969 for O'Brien. The things he remembered, like the choppers and the sheer horror upon being told to go into the bush, this is the Vietnam that exists within him. Revisiting the terrain that used to be the Alpha barracks and being "amazed by what time can do," upon finding nothing but dirt; this is a memory print that O'Brien has stored in his memory for years and he is so attached to the experience that nothing has moved and nothing has gone away. "LZ Gator has been forever erased from the earth," and although LZ Gator no longer substantially exists, it will forever exist in O'Brien's memory and in the stories he recounts. O'Brien has to be able to describe what he has seen and felt and the horrors he has witnessed and experienced, otherwise he will never comprehend the war.

O'Brien's trip in "The Vietnam in Me" is saying that the world needs to deal with this history that is Vietnam in order to gain any closure on comprehending the war. During his trip, more than any other place, O'Brien wants to revisit Pinkville, about a mile east of My Lai where the massacre had taken place twenty five years ago. O'Brien comes prepared, with his girlfriend and guide, to find Pinkville with a compass and old archival maps. Yet, when he unfolds a faded map and points on the spot he wants to find, the villagers cannot figure out where he wants to go. O'Brien reflects, "Lost, that was the Vietnam of 25 years ago. The war came at us a blur, raw confusion, and my fear now is

[101] Tim O'Brien, "The Vietnam in Me." *New York Times Magazine*, October 2, 1994.

that I would not recognize the right spot even while standing right on it."[102] O'Brien's fear over not being able to find Pinkville derives from his *necessity* to revisit the terrain, the horror, and the sorrow. He needs to talk about his past horrors of what he experienced such a long time ago, for this is the only way he can possibly begin to make sense of a war that has been ongoing in his mind for twenty five years. He needs to share his experiences with an audience, with someone. How befitting that O'Brien ends up finding Pinkville in the end, not the villagers; the tree lines and proportions are still familiar to him. O'Brien talks to his girlfriend and finds himself not wanting to leave anything that he experienced left in silence. Even if nobody remembers a word he tells them, O'Brien is able to give expression to the war through his memories and perhaps begin to put to rest the Vietnam that haunts him in his mind. There is an atrocity in My Lai and O'Brien manages to write about it in a visceral way that uses all of his senses to describe this atrocity in a beautiful way.

Despite all of the chaos and horror that O'Brien saw twenty five years ago and still lingers in his mind, he is attempting to find a way to heal these psychological wounds. He can also still find beauty and hope in a place that has scarred him for life, and this is what makes O'Brien's writing brilliant. Physically revisiting Vietnam twenty five years later and noticing that this time The Vietnam that O'Brien revisits in 1994 is not the Vietnam of 1969, and just as had been gradually taking a little bit of the war out of itself and rebuilding itself for twenty five years, O'Brien was beginning to do the same.

Tim O'Brien physically revisits the terrain of Vietnam in an attempt to heal his psychological wounds and Kaikō Takeshi revisits the terrain of Vietnam by revisiting certain scenes that he utilizes as constants in his writing. There is a scene that is

[102] Ibid.

mentioned in *Betonamu Senki*, which later appears in *Into a Black Sun*, and is also included in the epilogue of Kaikō's last story he wrote about Vietnam, entitled *The Natural History of Battlefields* (軍陣の歴史), which appears in *Aruku kagetachi* (*Five Thousand Runways*), 1975. After a battle, Kaikō lies in the middle of the jungle shuddering in shocked silence. Looking up through the mass of thick trees, Kaikō catches a glimpse of blue sky and he hears nothing but the sounds of the forest.

> The jungle had found its voice again. Less than five minutes after the firing had stopped, the inhabitants of the forest had come back to form. Despite the eruption of fire and metal, despite the juddering upheaval, nature had come through unscathed. I took in lungfuls of the humid smell of leaves, and my empty heart was moved.[103]

It is the nature coming back to life, despite all of the chaos and horror that is surrounding it, by painting graphic and detailed pictures of his experience Kaikō uses every possible means to explore how the horror can be something beautiful. Like O'Brien, he still manages to find beauty and hope in a place that has wounded him for life. Kaikō recounted this quote in three of his works and this is an attestation to the things one chooses to remember when you recount a story about things that happened. Kaikō chooses to always remember that through all of the chaos and horror, nature "comes through unscathed." Like O'Brien, Kaikō needs to remember. He finds solace in the survival of nature and this helps him remember and express his experiences. If he remembers and always holds onto the final beauty of nature, then "the eruption of fire and metal," is merely a disturbance. Kaikō needs to find some way to make sense out of the war.

[103] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun*. (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), 230.

The placement of this certain scene into three of his Vietnam related works also suggests that Kaikō is trying to heal his wounds. In *Betonamu Senki*, the scene is incorporated, but with an objective sense to it. In *Into a Black Sun*, Kaikō's placement of the scene is not placed at the beginning or middle, but at the end of the book. This suggests that Kaikō is once again holding onto the notion that despite all of the destructive madness the war has fired his way, if nature can survive then he can survive. In *The Natural History of Battlefields* the fact that Kaikō uses this very same scene in his *epilogue* proves that this is what he *needs* his final words on Vietnam to demonstrate. He is able to give expression to the war through his memories and perhaps begin to put to rest the Vietnam that haunts him in his mind. Like O'Brien, he wants others to know the essence of what he feels.

Snippet by snippet, "The Vietnam in Me" forces Tim O'Brien to revisit the terrain of past horrors and try to make sense of a war he has been carrying around with him for years. There is an atrocity that is horrible and gruesome found within "The Vietnam in Me." O'Brien writes in a visceral way that uses his five senses to describe this atrocity, and these senses, primarily vision, extend into the next chapter and are utilized in order to try to further understand the war. O'Brien writes about horrific things by painting brutally graphic and detailed pictures of their experiences using every possible means to explore how atrocity can be something beautiful and fascinating for his audience. He reaches the epitome of this literary form in "The Vietnam in Me" when he says upon leaving Pinkville with his girlfriend, "I hope she remembers the sunlight striking that field of rice. I hope she remembers how I fell silent after a time, just looking out at the golds and yellows, joining the peace, and how in those fine sunlit moments, which were ours,

Vietnam took a little Vietnam out of me."[104] "Vietnam took a little Vietnam out of me," alludes to O'Brien, possibly for the first time, coming to the full realization that his wounds are starting to heal.

[104] Tim O'Brien, "The Vietnam in Me." *New York Times Magazine*, October 2, 1994.

CHAPTER II

MY LIFE IN DARKNESS

Tim O'Brien points out in Chapter One that you don't act, you just have to *be* and part of doing that is by utilizing your senses. Kaikō Takeshi, who belongs to the subgenre of Vietnam War literature, also relies on his senses in order to try to understand the war. In Kaikō's Vietnam writing, vision is Kaikō's chief sense which in turn, heightens his other senses. Kaikō and O'Brien write well-written narratives which press hard and deep on those human experiences which gnaw at the soul, which have no moral, and which threaten to never let go.

Deeply perceptive and moving, Kaikō Takeshi's writings display his ability to see through the political and military entanglements of the early phases of the Vietnam War in a relatively short period of observation. For Kaikō, the war was pivotal, where he utilized and recalled his vast storehouse of "visual memories" and information from a war twenty years ago to unconsciously double check the accuracy of his other senses. Vision aids him as a memento for the past, where it is possible to still "see" a thing that no longer exists, where the disabling of sight still triggers memories. Vietnam was where something as vital as his sense of vision ultimately became a vehicle for judgement for Kaikō. Throughout Kaikō's writings of Vietnam, he is able to achieve a standard of disclosure about the trauma of his war-torn past is attained through what he sees which is born out of his characters, where much of this vision is based on shades of color, specifically blackness vs. darkness, which are not only physical representations, but spiritual as well, with the incorporation of light. In Vietnam, Kaikō's authorial I/eye surveys a lightness growing gradually darker, a sense of blackness that intensifies.

In this chapter, I will explore how Kaikō uses his five senses, but primarily his sense of vision to order and to comprehend the trauma of being in Vietnam. First I will turn my attention to Kaikō's 1968 fictional autobiography of his time in Vietnam, in order to explore how he has reworked his reporting into a more metaphorical understanding of the horrors and beauty that he witnesses there. Next, I will turn to the collection his reports from Vietnam to trace the origins of the more horrific events from his time there. What becomes metaphorical is his own troubling presence in Vietnam and his position as a survivor of another one of the United States' wars in Asia. What is spelled out in the reporting becomes hidden in the darkness in the novel.

Into a Black Sun is an autobiographical first-person narrative, which some scholars claim is written in the traditional Japanese "I-novel" narrative, while other critics, including Kaikō himself, would refute that claim. Scholar Edward Fowler states, "Kaikō's novel presents the author's direct testimony or confessions, exploring the self by means of the war and the war by means of the self. Kaikō's novel is a direct, authentic reaction to Vietnam rather than artificial fictions."[105] For me, I am placing *Into a Black Sun* in the subgenre of fictional autobiography because I believe the protagonist is a foreign correspondent whose Vietnam experiences reflect Kaikō's own, yet the literariness of the text suggests that some of the events have changed, manipulated in order make the novel flow better.

Kaikō's novel, *Into a Black Sun* takes place in South Vietnam from 1964-1966, the duration of time Kaikō Takeshi the reporter spent in Vietnam. In the novel, the protagonist and narrator, who is nameless, 'reports' and attempts to make sense of his

[105] Edward Fowler, "The Rhetoric of Confession: "Shisosetsu" in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction," (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 4.

Vietnam experiences. The novel is the story about a Japanese journalist who accompanies a group of American soldiers to a small, but critical point in the Vietnamese delta. He is treated very graciously by Captain Wain, a highly ranked United States military officer from the American Midwest. The journalist makes countless trips back and forth from fighting in the jungle with Captain Wain and his men to the capital city of Saigon. The protagonist uses books as the best guide to interpreting the significance and outcome of the war, and these books become dominating signifiers for trying to understand the United States actions during the war. What the journalist *sees* forces him to readjust some of his conceptions about war, however, as the conflict in Vietnam has clearly become a frustrating and huge pitch-black hole. While the journalist records in his journal the daily events, the smells, the sights, and the sounds of Vietnam, he records himself as groping, regretting, and fearing. *Into a Black Sun* overlaps the images from World War Two and Vietnam and sees the human miseries of not just a specific war but of all wars and establishes darkness as a theme.

The novel portrays the protagonist mingling with various classes of Vietnamese in Saigon, joining a US battalion in the bush as a noncombatant, and ultimately realizing that he could not directly involve himself in the war, only watch the war as an outsider. In *Into a Black Sun*, Kaikō links his own past self, as a child who grew up in World War Two era Japan, with the Vietnamese**,** and his journey to Vietnam symbolizes the journey into his own inner dark self. While working very diligently on *Into a Black Sun* in 1967*,* what the protagonist/author has observed did not make the concept of war more understandable to him**—**if anything the glimpse of understanding and light that can be cast on the war only leads him to be left in darkness. The practical and moral darkness

that lies at the heart of Vietnam for Kaikō deceives his understanding of the war in this novel. Kaikō depicts life at the camp in the delta as a festive atmosphere, although the nighttime waiting in the darkness and a daytime trip into a quiet village can turn into a massacre without warning.

The "darkness" theme is an undercurrent in *Into a Black Sun* and it influences every textual event the protagonist experiences and reports on. The title itself is a precursor to the miasma of darkness which permeates throughout the pages of *Into a Black Sun*. The initial title Japanese title of *Into a Black Sun* is: 輝ける闇 *Kagayakeru Yami*, literally meaning "shining darkness." Kaikō's utilization of "輝ける *kagayakeru*," literally meaning "shining," is another symbolic representation of Kaikō describing that which is "light" is often very dark in nature, and what is "dark" is often light on the surface. Kaikō does not even use the word "sun" in his title, that which is, according the English translation, the specific subject of the title itself! He makes "darkness" the subject and incorporates the "kagayakeru" to illuminate the darkness. Although Kaikō writes that he is running "into a black sun," within that sun is "a darkness exploding and, for a second, opening its glittering core and then was gone."[106] By writing that he was "running into a black sun," Kaikō is alluding to the light or "shining" sun which he sees before him, but when he incorporates that the sun becomes a "darkness exploding, opening its glittering core," he is insinuating the darkness which is confined within the sun, the light whose core is enveloped by the impeding darkness. For Kaikō, the darkness within him is forever "*kagayakeru*" shining.

[106] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 214.

Once again, the manner in which Kaikō toys with the words "dark" versus "black" has a symbolic significance of the ever looming darkness which is continually overwhelming Kaikō's vision. If one were to take the words "into a black sun" and literally translate them into Japanese, the translation may be: "黒い太陽に *kuroi taiyō ni*" or even "黒い太陽の中に *kuroi taiyō no naka ni*," both which have literal meanings of "into a black sun." However, Kaikō does not even use the Japanese character "black" in his title and instead he uses the character for "darkness."

Kagayakeru Yami is interestingly reminiscent of the title given to the Japanese translation of *Heart of Darkness*: *Yami no oku*. According to Japanese scholar Hirano Hidehisa, one of Kaikō's biographers, in his book entitled *Kaikō Takeshi: Yami no haseru kobo*, '*kagayakeru yami*' (shining darkness) was chosen after German philosopher Martin Heidegger's phrase '*die helle nacht*' ('the bright night'). Hirano sees great possibilities within Heidegger's work for dialogue with traditions of thought outside of Western philosophy, particularly East Asian thinking.[107] Again, much of Kaikō's vision is based on color, specifically blackness vs. darkness, with the incorporation of light. Kaikō's eye comes to represent a lightness growing gradually darker, a sense of blackness that intensifies. His journey to Vietnam furthermore represents the journey into the darkness within his self.

Kaikō immediately brings the authenticity of Vietnam to life in the opening pages of *Into a Black Sun*. The way in which Kaikō approaches this novel by using blackness to constantly prevail over light, shows a continual foreboding and gloom, a "spiritual" darkness so to speak. While encamped at the ARVN (Army of the Republic

[107] Hidesa Hirano, *Kaikō Takeshi: Yami wo haseru kobo* (Tokyo: Origin Shuppan, 1991), 26.

of Vietnam) outpost, he utilizes vision primarily as his chief sense to release the accuracy of his other senses, in his depictions of the "lush and plentiful" countryside, the colors of the sky--deep and searing blues and grays-- and the never-ending bright green rice fields encapsulate the beauty that can be seen amidst a world of chaos. "I am enamored with the smells of the vegetables, the "sound of naked feet" that mimicked the rattling noise of the big black pods in the spreading trees when the evening breeze floated in. Never had I seen a world where green, muddy paddies would envelope my body upon touching, me squirming through their relentless and unforgiving, revolting muck."[108]

The practical and moral darkness that lies at the heart of Vietnam for Kaikō deceives his understanding of the war in this novel. Kaikō depicts life at the camp in the delta as a festive atmosphere, although the nighttime waiting in muck can turn into a massacre without warning. His sense of sight, or vision, allows him to learn more about his surroundings than he does with any of the other four senses. He uses his eyes in almost every activity he performs, whether reading, fighting, writing a letter, firing a gun, and in countless other ways. As long as there is light, there is always something to see, and yet Kaikō consistently yearns to see the light flickering out of the darkness. It has been proven that vision 'wins' when visual information conflicts with information from other senses.[109] Nowhere is this more apparent for Kaikō than in Saigon.

While having dinner with the commander of the American advised ARVN camp, Captain Wain, Kaikō cannot help but notice his surroundings. He is far away from the jungle, from the fighting, and far from the darkness, or so he thinks. The protagonist realizes that the constant escape from the darkness that has attached itself to him like a

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[108] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 6.

[109] Hannah B. Helbig and Marc O. Ernst, "Haptic Perception in Interaction With Other Senses," (Liepzig: Grunwald & Martin, 2008), 235.

parasite that is slowly eating itself away in him. This is apparent in the conversation Kaikō has while sipping coffee with Captain Wain, when the protagonist looks around him and notes:

> Sitting in Saigon was like sitting inside the folded petals of a poisonous flower...Saigon remained, the repository and the arena, it breathed history, expelled it like a toxin, Shit, Piss, and corruption. Paved swamp, hot mushy winds that never cleaned anything away, heavy thermal seal over the atmosphere of diesel fuel, mildew garbage, and excrement.[110]

In *Into a Black Sun*, vision has "won," causing Saigon to come alive with smells and textures, just as the protagonist's psychological darkness comes alive through his primary sense of vision, purging emotions of hopelessness and gloominess. The flower "breathing history" raises Kaikō's sense of vision where his visual storehouse of memories comes to the surface. The first two lines of the above quote demonstrate Kaikō's dominant sense of vision, and I believe it is within the folded petals that Kaikō sees again the horrific things that he's seen in his past. Vision also prevails over the shit and piss that Kaikō smells because smell only gives us warning from a short distance away and smells often fade, but vision is prominent and largely takes over the work of reporting the outer world to the mind. Kaikō can *see* that the flower petals are not open, but folded, suggesting that the flower is tainted. Although Kaikō is sitting within the flower, suggesting he is utilizing his sense of touch, his first impulse upon touching the petals in the dark would no doubt be to look for light. The storehouse of visual memories and new sights that Vietnam War have cast upon the protagonist will continue to haunt him for years to come.

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[110] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 7.

In Line One, "sitting inside the petals of a poisonous flower," the poisonous flower is also beautiful but deadly. The flower represents Vietnam and thus the darkness is what happens when you are inside it**.** Kaikō's vision colors how he sees Vietnam and the bright colors of the flower—deep searing blues, yellows, or reds—signifies all that Kaikō sees as being beautiful in Vietnam. It does not matter that the petals themselves are folded, for Kaikō can still see the light and colors that give him delight. However, once the beauty is overtaken by the darkness that *is* Vietnam, Kaikō is thrust inside the flower, amidst a world of death and darkness. Kaikō plays with the symbolic significance that we, as a civilized culture, have given to the terms "light" and "darkness. One often links "light" to purity, good, and the angelic. "Dark" usually represents death, poverty, and evil. For Kaikō, these symbolisms do not apply to everything that is described as "light or dark." What Kaikō describes as "light" is often very dark in nature, and what is "dark" is often light on the surface. Kaikō does not write of the petals being open to the sun, alluding to the lightness that pervades from the flower. Instead, he insinuates the darkness that is confined within the closed petals of a poisonous flower, a flower which blocks out the light and welcomes the darkness. The folded petals of the flower further represent Kaikō's experiences in Vietnam and he is, in a physical sense, drinking in the poison emanating from the flower.

For Kaikō, the war once again becomes pivotal, and he utilizes and recalls his vast storehouse of "visual memories" and information from a war twenty years ago to unconsciously double check the accuracy of his other senses. Kaikō's sense of place, fuelled by his storehouse of "visual memories," coupled with his utilization of vision is impeccable- whether it be where the poverty stricken live on the side streets, the stinking

backstreet where Tonga lives, or his own apartment in a part of Saigon bustling with life. For Kaikō, Vietnam serves as a junction through which his visual memories and information he's accrued in his lifetime darkly comes to the surface.

> Mid-day. At once people crowded the streets of Saigon. It was humid, smelly, everything was sticky with grime, and yet the air itself seemed nourishing. I squatted by the roadside in the gaudy heat, and the fetid street smelled like an unwashed crotch. It was all so like the camps I had drifted through and witnessed twenty years ago; raw lives, straining to live together, all a part of the crush.[111]

One may look at the streets of Vietnam and simply see a "street." Kaikō, however, looks at the streets of Vietnam and is immediately brought back to a war that he lived through twenty years ago. It is evident that when the mind perceives any *idea*, not immediately and of itself, it must be by the means of some other *idea*.[112] Thus, the memories which are in the mind of another are of themselves to another individual invisible. For Kaikō, in the streets of Saigon, vision aids him as a memento for the past, where it is possible to still "see" a thing that no longer exists and the *idea* of darkness which he perceives is by the means of the "other" darkness which was born twenty years earlier.

One often sees shame or fear in the looks of a man, by perceiving the changes of his appearance to red or pale. Thus, by perceiving the changes of Kaikō's appearance, by simply being able to physically "see," doesn't mean an individual "knows." One may simply look at Kaikō and "see" a man who is red, blotchy, and teary eyed from the heat and the raunchiness of Saigon. However, one does not know that the man they are observing before them sees another black hole, where at first, light is the prevalent force

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[111] Irena Powell, "Japanese Writer in Vietnam: The Two Wars of Kaikō Ken." *Modern Asian Studies.* Vol. 32, No. 1 1998, 237.

[112] Hannah B. Helbig and Mark O. Ernst, "Haptic Perception in Interaction With Other Senses," (Liepzig: Grunwald and Martin, 2008), 236.

within the quote above, but as the quote progresses, the landscape is invaded with a physical sense of blackness, and Kaikō's "visual memories" are overcome by darkness. The last two lines of the above quote encapsulate the "visual memories" of terrible years of devastation and defeat. The smell of the unwashed crotch, the touch of grimy, sticky filth, Kaikō once again utilizes his vision as his primary source and the accuracy of his other senses are reeling from the familiarity of the scene. Kaikō's eye serves as a trigger for the dark place that exists within his heart and he emerges from Vietnam with an expanded comprehension of the darkness within his mind.

In the previous quote, "Mid-day." Everything was sticky with grime, and yet the air itself seemed nourishing." Kaikō attempts to understand the war through his sense of smell, but realizes that no matter how much he tries to sweeten his own "vision" of Vietnam and the war, this is a naive notion. As much as Kaikō likes to think of the air as offering some sort of nourishment, the smells are not sweet and he will never escape the darkness which has once again seeped into his soul. Vision has once again taken precedence over smell. This is evident when Kaikō sees everything that is horrific—whether it be the things sticky with grime or the fetid streets—things that he had seen twenty years before, he will always be stunned. Kaikō uses images of light and dark colours of items and objects to help to foreshadow the tragedy that has come to him. This is evident from the very opening of the quotation, when it seems as though day or light mixes with and is soon taken over by the darkness.

Compare the glorified smell, where everything was "humid and smelly," which first emits from the streets to the disdainful stench, where the "fetid street smelled like an unwashed crotch," which overtakes all. By incorporating pervasive smells into this scene,

Kaikō is able to secure a setting for his reader, where light is the prevalent force throughout the quotation but as the quote progresses and grows, the texture is invaded with gloom and disgust. Kaikō plays with the symbolic significance that we, as a civilized culture, have given to the terms “light” and “darkness” once again with the symbolism he bestows upon the “unwashed crotch.” What he describes as “white” is often very dark in nature, and what is “dark” is often light underneath. Anything which is unwashed is dirty and black, and when washed becomes white and pure, purging forth a sense of lightness. Kaikō never suggests that the crotch will become clean, and because Kaikō has created a setting in which the darkness prevails over light, the crotch itself is a black hole that leads him into the heart of darkness. Kaikō’s sense of sight soon merge with sound when they could see, the images radiating before him would forever be carried inside the darkness of his mind.

Kaikō utilizes smell in his depiction of the "fetid street which smelled like an unwashed crotch," as a way to extend his vision. He doesn’t allude to the “fetid street which looked like an unwashed crotch,” but instead displays how his sense of smell of “the unwashed crotch” becomes stronger when he cannot physically see the image of a crotch in front of him. Whereas Kaikō’s eye comes to stand for the core of the dark reality of war, where darkness overwhelms vision, his nose is an extension of his vision and permits an outstanding memory of smell.

Kaikō’s nose brings him closer to the reality of the war. Kaikō observes that the sense of smell is unchanging and eternal one night while having after-dinner coffee with Captain Wain. Wain is curious about the novel Kaikō is planning to write upon his return to Japan (this novel being *Into a Black Sun*), and he tells Kaikō that if he were to write

about anything, it would be man's purpose in life, because smells disappear but one's mission in life does not. Kaikō replies:

> If I want to write about anything, it'll be about smells. I want to write about the different smells around us. The essence of any object is its smells. . . the interpretation of man's purpose changes with time. Smells don't. Sweet papaya doesn't smell of anything much, but its odor doesn't die out, and it doesn't change. I want to write about smells that don't fade.
> It does make me think that perhaps Captain Wain might just be right. If missions were bones, they would last, be exposed after everything else dissolved; but what about bones remained after the smell has gone? No, I can still smell the bones.[113]

What makes a smell is something that is too small to see with your eyeball alone. Smell is often our first understanding that something has changed, as is the case when something is rotting, the smell alerts us to the fact that something is wrong before we see the corpse. Here, Kaikō is utilizing his sense of smell and connecting it to his storehouse of "visual memory", where the smell of a rotten corpse triggers a flood of memories from a war twenty years ago. Smelling that air reminds Kaikō of his connection to the primitive world of animals. By smelling, moistening, and filtering the air he breathes, Kaikō's nose sends signals to his brain which gives rise to the perception of smell. We encounter most new odors in our youth and smells often bring to mind childhood memories. This is why Kaikō doesn't want to forget about the smells and as much as smell can bring up a memory, smells eventually do fade. Vision is still Kaikō's dominant sense and he remembers, dreams, and imagines the bones from a rotten corpse in images of sight. Kaikō's body is reacting to his visual impressions when he sees an important object that he's seen before, like the bones, and this gives him a strong emotional reaction.

[113] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun*, (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 75-76.

When Kaikō smells the scent of a rotting corpse he feels as though he has slipped back into a time twenty years ago and that he is a child at that same scene again.[114] For Kaikō, his sense of smell is personal because it brings back the memory of people and not just things. When a person dies, they are no longer physical beings existing in everyday life. Their presence is no longer seen and there are no more physical interactions with them. Kaikō smells a rotting corpse in Vietnam and is not only reminded of the lives taken from people who were alive during the war of his childhood, but of another person: his father. Of course he will never be able to physically see his father again, but his sense of smell triggers visual memories that existed before his father passed away during the war. When nothing else remains from the past, after the people are dead and after the battles are fought, the smell of things remains unmoved for a long time. "Smell is a great trigger for repressed memories," but even though smell brings back memories for Kaikō, sight is still more powerful.[115] Kaikō's eye is a camera, and no matter how many times he sees a rotten corpse, he will always be stunned and have memories of his father.

In addition to the powerful influence that smell has on his perceptions of Vietnam, Kaikō also forges a connection to Vietnam through touch. Considering his earlier descriptions of the "lush and plentiful" countryside, the colors of the sky, deep and searing blues, and the never-ending bright green rice fields encapsulate the beauty that can be seen amidst a world of chaos. "I am enamored with the smells of the vegetables,

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[114] This is a scene Kaikō writes about in his collection of reportage *Betonamu Senki* [*Vietnam War Chronicle*] in the chapter "17 Times in the Vicinity of the National Border, and the People Who Live There." Kaikō sees a dead corpse thrown on the side of the road and his senses transport him to the same scene twenty years ago when he had been a child used to seeing dead corpses on the side of the road. Kaikō Takeshi, *Betonamu Senki* [*Vietnam War Chronicle*], (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1965), 46.

[115] "Smell can trigger memory." This part of the sentence is taken from Marcel Proust, who in his *Remembrance of Things Past* the protagonist Charles Swann is transported back to his childhood when the smell of a biscuit dipped in tea triggers childhood memories. Lewis Galantiere's abridgement, in his introduction to *Swann's Way*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Modern Library, 1928), xi.

the 'sound of naked feet' that mimicked the rattling noise of the big black pods in the spreading trees when the evening breeze floated in. Never had I seen a world where green, muddy paddies would envelope my body upon touching, me squirming through their relentless and unforgiving, revolting muck."[116] Kaikō's sensitivity to touch is found all over, it is not located in one specific area of the body. Kaikō's nerve endings coming in contact with the paddies flourishing in the muck sends messages to his brain where Kaikō's sense of touch is fully-registered. Kaikō is proficient in sliding off his boots, trampling the stems and wading through the knee-high muddy water of the paddies. He knows what it feels like. His nerve endings allow him to establish the fact that the muck has provided a sort of suction, a pressure, of his body. Touch enables him to imagine being consumed by the muck.

In the above quotation, Kaikō writes about the immediate experience an infantryman encounters at ground level. Yet, instead of focusing his sense of touch on the never-ending numbers of mosquitoes, leeches, and snakes which aggravated him and the jungle rot, which was a relentless cause of pain, he focuses on the mud, which became a constant source of irritation, he focuses on sensations that remind him of his own physical presence. Kaikō, through his sense of touch, once again plays with the symbolic significance that we, as a civilized culture, have given to the terms "light" and "darkness." One generally links "light" to purity, good, and the angelic. "Dark" usually represents death, poverty, and evil**.** What Kaikō describes as "light" is often very dark in nature, and what is "dark" is often light on the surface. In Lines One through Three above, Kaikō initially gives off a pure, good, "light" depiction of the countryside of

[116] Kaiko Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 6.

Vietnam. However, the darkness once again prevails when Kaikō gives precedence to the unbearable, dark, black, cold mud that touches his body.

For Kaikō the muck *is* revolting and unforgiving. Besides killing and perhaps being killed, battling the local pestilence in Vietnam is unbearable. The muck represents Kaikō's experiences in Vietnam and he is, in a physical sense, feeling the unforgiving toxins living within the muck, enveloping his body as he squirms to escape the darkness. The muck is a representation of darkness once more being a constant lack of vision and blackness the physical state which leads Kaikō to become enveloped in the darkness, triggering his sense of touch. Not having a place to sit down or lie down except in six inches of mud, battling the constant irritation brought forth throughout all of Kaikō's body by the revolting muck takes a psychological toll. Kaikō's sense of touch reigns supreme when "sanity is not a state of mind but a pair of dry socks."[117] To kill or be killed is no longer the only sane reason to stay alive. The surroundings exacerbate Kaikō's sense of touch is emerging from the muck and airing out his socks until they are completely dried out is the only way to sanely deal with the hell that was the jungle of Vietnam.

Kaikō utilizes his sense of touch in regards to the heat of Vietnam and he often writes of "everything sweating, festering, and decomposing. The heat of this country has the same effect as "wet" leprosy, which gradually erodes ones flesh."[118] Here, Kaikō not only writes of the constant sweat oozing from his pores, but he also gives life to physical entities- the mess tins, the canteens, the combat boots; everything he touches is sweating and sweltering in the heat. Just like the darkness envelopes Kaikō while he is crawling

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[117] Vincent Canby, "The Vietnam War in Stone's *Platoon*." *The New York Times*, December 19, 1986.

[118] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 7.

and sitting in the muck, so does the heat take on an aura of darkness when its army of feet begrimes and taints everything it touches with sweaty footprints. The heat exhaustion makes Kaikō's mind and "all that was concrete and tangible about me evaporate, leaving one gigantic invertebrate,"[119] where his very flesh does surely feel like it is eroding. Everything is heavy and "sanity is once again not a state of mind but a pair of dry socks,"[120] where everyday drills of taking off his boots and airing out his feet still never stopped the murkiness of the heat from holding Kaikō up, a sponge leaking, against a wall.[121]

Everything that was concrete and tangible to Kaikō has decomposed, leaving him as nothing more than a fat sponge. He has been engulfed by the darkness and now feeds off of it. No longer is he able to regress into the innocent, sweet world he knew – he has now fully transformed into the world of the war, of bush, dirt, filth, and darkness. His sense of touch serves as an attempt to detach from and forget the darkness on which he feeds. Kaikō slips further and further from the innocent, sweet world, where he wishes he were "splashing cold water with my brother, laughing softly, and clapping our hands with shivers running up our spines"[122] into a world of war and darkness. He has become an invertebrate, lacking all sense of touch and reflexes. Kaikō possesses a yearning for paralysis from the darkness which, however, is short-lived and the darkness cannot be repressed. Soon, the countryside no longer represents a mechanism of suppression and "absurdity reached the point of naked cheerfulness."[123] Thus, the innocent person Kaikō

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[119] Ibid, 7.
[120] Vincent Canby, "The Vietnam War in Stone's *Platoon*." *The New York Times*, December 19, 1986.
[121] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 7.
[122] Ibid, 8.
[123] Ibid, 30.

had been, had transformed into a decomposed beings who fed and lived off the fat of the land. Nothing was pure; all was "naked."

All was "naked." The sense of touch comes to represent the sweetness of the war both Kaikō initially attempts to remain a part of. In *Into a Black Sun*, Kaikō forms an intimate relationship with a Vietnamese prostitute named Tonga. For Kaikō, "the emotional expressiveness he attempts to gain out of the sexual relationship,"[124] in order to mask the perpetual darkness, only creates more difficulties in Kaikō's battle to understand the war. For the protagonist, Tonga represents a cultural medium through which he once more tries to comprehend the war. However, he soon discovers that even the physical pleasure he attains is a campaign against the black hole of darkness he cannot escape from. Even sexual orgasms leave him limp and lifeless,[125] where he is left staring aimlessly at vast canopy above him. Tonga comes to represent another black hole, a glittering core, and a penetration into the war itself.

Intimacy recalls earlier unwelcome memories, memories pitted against a darkness waving a victory flag. Kaikō describes one of his sexual orgasms as "a darkness exploding and, for a second, opened its glittering core and then was gone. It was exactly like the clear, blinding void that had appeared behind my eyelids the first time I lay witness to an execution in Saigon."[126] For Kaikō darkness is a constant lack of vision and blackness is the physical state which leads him to become enveloped in the darkness. Behind Kaikō's closed eyelids, although the blackness had physically disappeared, the disabling of sight still triggered the sense of darkness. It can be said that a certain degree

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[124] Edward Fowler, "The Rhetoric of Confession: "Shishōsetsu" in Early Twentieth Century Japanese Fiction," (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[125] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 98.

[126] Ibid, 187.

of spiritual and moral darkness lies within every person, but this darkness will not surface unless given the correct environment. The darkness, however, can emerge and ultimately destroy the person if not checked by reason.[127] When Kaikō's darkness appears, he tries to commit to memory this constant experience and attempts to prevent similar results from occurring in the future. It is ultimately through Kaikō's self-knowledge that he perpetually attempts to gain the power to defeat his inner darkness.

This self-knowledge and attempt to defeat his inner darkness is displayed in Kaikō's utilization and flirtation with the underlying symbolic significance of the shades of his characters to help foreshadow the darkness within his mind. Kaikō attempts to balance this darkness through turning to a woman for help. He thinks that perhaps his relationship will allow him to overcome the darkness that threatens to overwhelm him. Tonga, a Vietnamese prostitute whom he visits a number of times, represents an attempt to achieve this balance. In the theory of yin and yang which is part of the philosophical make up Chinese influenced cultures like Vietnam**,** *Yin* originally meant "shady, secret, dark, and mysterious," while Y*ang* in turn meant "clear, bright, the sun, heat," the opposite of yin. Yin represents everything about the world that is dark, hidden, passive, receptive, yielding, cool, soft, and feminine. Yang represents everything about the world that is illuminated, evident, active, aggressive, controlling, hot, hard, and masculine.[128] Thus, yin represents woman and is black and yang represents man and is white. Yang cannot grow without yin and yin cannot give birth without yang. Everything in the world is really a *mixture* of the two- yin as feminine and yang as masculine. Thus, the aforementioned "emotional expressiveness he attempts to gain out of the sexual

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[127] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Penguin Group, 1999), 89.

[128] Kelley L. Ross, "Yin and Yang and the I-Chi." In *The Proceedings of the Freisian School, Fourth Edition*, (Los Angeles Valley Press, 2007).

relationship with Tonga," is Kaikō's direct representation of the black and white shapes within the circle of yin and yang which represent the interaction of two energies. Tonga is dark and Kaikō is light and they cannot exist without each other.

Kaikō further alludes to the yin of Tonga's being when he describes her as being "an island with fine forests and secluded shores. I had landed there, strolled along the forest verge, and my only need had been to burrow in that soft, dark, warm part of her that concealed passion and yet remained serene. What could be more peaceful than sitting in the dark?"[129] Kaikō's yang needs to interact with Tonga's yin. However, even in the quote above, Kaikō insinuates, once again, his struggle to suppress Tonga's yang, which is continuously overtaking his yin. Kaikō only simply walks along the forest verge, he does not venture into the forest, nor does he explore it. Kaikō's yang, or light, has no reason to become entirely consumed by Tonga's dark, hidden, and passive yin.

Symbolically, Tonga is a black hole and a penetration into the war itself. Within the circle of yin and yang, the white part (Kaikō) increases as the black part (Tonga) decreases and vice-versa. When one part is at its height then the other is at its lowest ebb.[130] Thus, when Kaikō penetrates Tonga and his orgasm is "a darkness exploding and, for a second, opened its glittering core and then was gone," this is in direct correlation to Kaikō's yin, even if just for a second, increasing as Tonga's yang decreases. Yin is the seed of Yang and vice versa, and as such, they form two complementary, yet also opposing forces. However, once again, Kaikō's symbolisms do not apply to everything that is described as "light or dark." What Kaikō describes as "light" is often very dark in nature, and what is "dark" is often light on the surface. The cycle is infinite, with

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[129] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 188.

[130] Kelley L. Ross, "Yin and Yang and the I-Chi." In *The Proceedings of the Freisian School, Fourth Edition*, (Los Angeles Valley Press, 2007).

darkness giving way to light, turning yet again into darkness, and so on. Tonga's yin and Kaikō's yang comes to represent "the myriad of faces, lights, forests, and cities, entangling, flickering in the dark"[131] that Kaikō visualizes whenever moments of burning physical contact are performed.

Despite his desires and attempts to escape from the darkness that he inhabits through sex, he is unable to wrest himself from their grasp. As we can see, Kaikō's gloomy, yet lucid depictions of the countryside bring his sense of smell, touch, and sight all to the surface in *Into a Black Sun*. However glorifying and fascinating the countryside appears to be to Kaikō in the light of day, the darkness that soon becomes a part of his very being seeps down from the sky and envelopes the countryside into a sense of darkness. This sense of darkness also lends itself to a related theme of obscurity, fuelled by Kaikō's vision and driven by his other senses. Moral issues are not clear-cut and that which ought to be, once again through the application of Kaikō's vision, on the side of light is in fact buried in darkness. Surrounded by threatening shadows, Kaikō feels as if he is decomposing in the still of night, "All that was concrete and tangible about me evaporated, leaving one gigantic, eyeless, earless, invertebrate that, squirming, expanded to fill the room, crawl on the walls, and be engulfed by the night sky."[132] This quote clearly emphasizes the theme of darkness that exists within Kaikō, where Kaikō emerges from the "black" (black taking on a physical entity here) night with an expanded comprehension of the darkness within his mind.

Kaikō's senses of sight, touch, and smell have turned him into a mindless waste, where the impulses of those fighting the war around him are further fuelled by the flames

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[131] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 187.
[132] Ibid, 7.

of darkness that engulf him. His utilization of vision ultimately enables him to "sense" from his surroundings that he is decomposing in the night and then his senses of smell and touch are confirmed. These senses become hallucinatory. As he lies in the still of the night, watching the stars overhead, marking the passing of time and the nightmare that is the war, Kaikō Takeshi imagines himself on the verge of hysteria and that absolutely nothing makes sense in this war. The upsurge of his physical senses turns him into a lifeless invertebrate and it is through imagination that Kaikō might be absolved of the darkness and fear enveloping him.

Kaikō's mind is groping to understand an ordered sequence in nature from the darkness that is dead to the light that is living. We emerge from the bondage of darkness into the light that sets us free. If there were ever any indication of some sense of liberation for Kaikō to become light again, redemption lies in the sheer fact that Kaiko *did* write *Into a Black Sun.* However, before Kaikō wrote *Into a Black Sun* in 1968, there existed among his Vietnam-related works *Betonamu Senki* (The War Chronicle), a compilation of journalistic reports written from 1964-1965. Through his experiences as a war correspondent for the *Asahi Shinbun*, memories of World War II or "the dark valley of the Japanese who survived it"[133] were always in the back of his mind. Twenty years later journalistic reportage was swiftly establishing itself in Japan and images and reports were a means to which the public formulated their impressions of the war. *Betonamu Senki* was a product of this change. *Betonamu Senki* records Kaikō's experiences in Vietnam in an attempt to be as objective as possible by utilizing precise words and familiar images associated with the Vietnam War. Kaikō then wrote the novel-version of

[133] Thomas R.H. Havens, *Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War Two*. (New York: Norton, 1978), 6.

his reportage from *Senki* in his more subjectively written *Into a Black Sun*, written with an 'eye' that had become used to the dark reality of the Vietnam War.

In *Betonamu Senki*, Kaikō and his cameraman, Keīchi Akimoto, through the utilization and selection of imagery, where vision is once more based on color, and Kaikō's day-by-day account of his experiences, bring to life their vision of Vietnam. *Into a Black Sun* contains an intriguing revision of a scene from *Betonamu Senki*. In *Senki*, the chapter entitled, "The Death of a Viet-Cong Boy at Dawn," Kaikō creates a vivid description of the execution and relies on his physical senses to conduct his perception of the incident. He is utterly shaken when he writes, "When I heard the sound of the gun, I felt something crashing inside me. I staggered, became sweaty all over my entire body, and was nauseous."[134] It is with his physical senses that Kaikō is able to execute the precision of his imagery. When Kaiko observes the dark reality of the war with a journalist's eye, darkness once again overwhelms vision and Kaikō's other senses are in check when Kaikō is "staggering, sweaty, and nauseous." Kaikō's sentimental senses reinforce his vision.

This very same theme incorporated within the execution scene in *Betonamu Senki* is revised four years later in *Into a Black Sun*, when Kaikō writes of two additional executions. His first reaction to the first execution he sees is very similar to that described in *Betonamu Senki*. Kaikō is nauseous and his knees shake uncontrollably. However, it is during the second execution that is becomes evident that Kaikō's mind is groping to understand an ordered sequence in nature from the darkness that is dead to the

[134] Kaikō Takeshi, *Betonamu Senki* [*Vietnam War Chronicle*], (Tokyo: Asahi Shibunsha, 1965), 168.

light that is living. He attempts to emerge from the bondage of darkness into the light that will set him free.

When Kaikō sees another execution a few days later, he "does not shake or feel nauseous. Like a person seeing a movie for the second time, my eyes focused on details, on the background."[135] This scene supports the fact that Kaikō must try to control his darkness when it appears and try to prevent the psychological darkness of what he sees around him on a daily basis from overwhelming him. When Kaikō witnesses another execution, instead of feeling nauseous and allowing his darkness to appear, Kaikō tries to learn from his previous experiences and control the darkness approaching him. Peter Henry Buck, the foremost Maori anthropologist of Maori and Polynesian peoples, uses theology and anthropology to examine the genealogy of darkness. He explains the overwhelming sense of darkness that Kaikō is trying to defeat in the above scene: "When one's darkness appears, one must learn from this experience how he or she can prevent similar results from occurring in the future. It is ultimately through self-knowledge that we gain the power to defeat our inner darkness."[136] This is Kaikō, who is attempting to, in *Into a Black Sun*, gain redemption by developing a keen eye that will allow him to emerge from the darkness into the light. Vietnam and the "visual memories" it represents has continuously caused Kaikō to lose common sense and enable the darkness to appear. Without common sense the mind is deteriorated. Kaikō tries to learn from his experiences in the past and prevent them from occurring in the future, (such as those in *Senki*), when an execution once caused him to become nauseous and sweaty, now he

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[135] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press: 1983), 138.

[136] Peter Henry Buck, *Anthropology and Religion: The Era of Darkness* (New Haven: Oxford University Press, 1939), 113.

simply "focuses my eyes on the details, on the background," and common sense allows his mind to process the scene as "harsh reality."

Familiarity with the scene once again comes into play with the reportage of *Betonamu Senki* being revised in *Into a Black Sun*. In *Betonamu Senki*, the chapter entitled "17 Times in the Vicinity of the National Border, and the People Who Live There," contains a scene where Kaikō explains, "There are always crowds of children playing in alleys which smelled of rotten urine and shit. Here I was eating my meal, and over there was a dead corpse. My head began to reel and I felt nauseous."[137] Kaikō's "dark valley" from twenty years ago is triggered by the sights and smells of, in this case, a dead corpse. Kaikō's choice in placing focus on the "children" is a further attestation to the memories of his past, with the aid of his physical senses around him, where Vietnam is never far from post-war Japan.

The smell of the corpse, the sight of the inquisitive children, the sound of everyday life carrying on, and Kaikō reeling in nauseousness, all of these are reminiscent to the execution scene in *Betonamu Senki*. Kaikō's inner darkness appears with the sight of the dead corpse, and as was the case with the first execution he observed, Kaikō loses all form of common sense and allows the darkness to take over. Even in his Afterword, Kaikō writes that after his seventh trip to Vietnam, which lasted around 100 days, he experienced more violent feelings to the point where he was nauseous and sick. Many nights he would have nightmares of his past and present experiences and wake up in a cold sweat.[138] Even after seven visits to Vietnam, Kaikō is still unable to accept the horror of what he sees as normal, and so he reacts by trying to purge the horror from his

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[137] Kaikō Takeshi, *Betonamu Senki* [Vietnam War Chronicle], (Tokyo: Asahi Shibunsha, 1965), 46.

[138] Ibid, 291.

body through trying to vomit. It is evident through this repetition of illness that Kaikō has still not been able to control or combat this psychological darkness, nor learned from these experiences how he can prevent similar results from occurring in the future.

The horror, fuelled by Kaikō's vision and driven by his other senses, is transferred from what he witnesses during the war in *Betonamu Senki*, to the very fact that he *sees*, is revised in the novel *Into a Black Sun*. As he expands his experiences in the novel, moral issues are not clear-cut and those issues which ought to be clear-cut and obvious, are buried in darkness. Surrounded by corpses and bloodstained men, Kaikō writes, "I had eyes only for atrocities. Corpses I found atrocious because I wasn't involved. Were I in any way involved, I would have been able to see beyond them. I'm no longer shaken. I am lurking in the narrow ribbon of a twilight zone."[139] Kaikō further recalls, while sitting out in the jungle, "the recurring visions of the Captain Wain and the Americans cutting ears off of enemy corpses as trophies of war and the pungent odors of decaying corpses in the hot jungles where I now sit, I am numb."[140]

The quotes above are reminiscent of the previously stated words of Peter Henry Buck about how people ought to control their inner darkness in order to defeat this very trauma that threatens to overwhelm them. This quotation embodies Kaikō, who is attempting to gain redemption by developing an impartial eye that will allow him to emerge from the darkness into the light. Kaikō is trying to learn from his experiences in the past and prevent them from occurring in the future, (such as those in *Senki*), when the sight of a dead corpse once caused him to become nauseous, now he has "become numb, no longer shaken" and common sense allows his mind to process the scene as "harsh

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[139] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press: 1983), 71.
[140] Ibid, 141.

reality." The realization of the "harsh reality" of the scene is the only sense of redemption Kaikō possesses in *Into a Black Sun*.

In both *Betonamu Senki* and *Into a Black Sun*, Kaikō's eye comes to represent the core of the "harsh reality" at the core of true existence inside all layers of existence. Through the attainment of a sense of man/self, Kaikō attempts to defeat his inner darkness. The reportage within *Betonamu Senki* was very objective, Kaikō simply saw an object for what it was and recorded his observations, and yet much of his imagery was still embraced by darkness. His shift to not just simply seeing an object, but actually that he uses the crux of his vision to see into the soul of the object in *Into a Black Sun*, proves that his mind is groping to understand an ordered sequence in nature from the darkness that is dead to the light that is living.

Before I discuss the "heart of darkness" theme in regards to the climax of *Into a Black Sun*, which I have been referring to as the underlying commonality of the novel, a brief explanation must be given on the origin of the idiom itself. Joseph Conrad wrote his novella *Heart of Darkness* in 1902 and it tells the tale of the protagonist, Marlow as he recounts, from dusk through to late night, his adventure into the Congo to a group of men aboard a ship anchored in the Thames Estuary.[141] Conrad utilizes many objects as vehicles for his protagonist Marlow to journey further into the "heart of darkness." Thus, "this "heart of darkness" theme, whether Kaikō intended to use it as such or not, is the undercurrent of *Into a Black Sun*."[142] In an interview with Komatsu Sakyo, a popular science fiction writer, Kaikō said he had read *Almayers Folly* and *Lord Jim* by Conrad, which had been translated into Japanese in the 1960's, but never talked about *Heart of*

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[141] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Penguin Group, 1999), synopsis.

[142] For a study of the influence of *Heart of Darkness* on Vietnam War literature in the United States, see Toby C. Herzog, *Vietnam War Stories: Innocence Lost* (London: Routeledge, 1992), 24-31.

Darkness.[143] It is as if Kaikō knew before he even began writing *Into a Black Sun,* that "watching what has been done and watched once, an experience of déjà vu, parallels reading and rewriting what has been written once."[144] Whether he was aware of it or not when writing *Into a Black Sun*, the "heart of darkness" was establishing itself as the underlying theme of his novel.

The epitome of Kaikō identifying with his own past self and with the Vietnamese and his journey to Vietnam symbolizing the journey into his own "heart of darkness" is chaotically displayed in the climax of *Into a Black Sun*. In the last two chapters, the protagonist leaves his life of idleness in Saigon and exchanges it for a life of immediacy back at the ARVN camp with Captain Wain. From within Kaikō is a desire to return to the darkness and violence of the guerilla jungle world. His penchant for flight from a world of innocence into a world of darkness illustrates the transformation of an individual observing the dark reality of the war in Vietnam, where the wilderness lures Kaikō in, and brings his primeval physical senses to life.

For Kaikō, the pull of Vietnam's black hole of history plunges the soldier and individual deeper and deeper into darkness—an archaic civilization, mountain tribes whose members are black skinned yet covered with tattoos, and a culture which is enigmatic.[145] This sense of darkness once again lends itself to the theme of obscurity of both the dark motives of civilization and the freedom of barbarism, as well as the "spiritual darkness" of the protagonist. This obscurity is fuelled by Kaikō's vision and driven by his other senses. When Kaikō and his battalion company are under a Viet

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[143] *Kaikō Takeshi zentaiwa shusei*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Cho Shuppunsha, 1982), 67-69.

[144] Asako Nakai, *The English Book and Its Marginalia: Colonial/ Post Colonial Literatures After Heart of Darkness* (Amsterdam: Editions Rudopi B.V. 2000), 167.

[145] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 181.

Cong attack in the jungle, he sees in 1960's Vietnam what he had seen twenty years ago in Japan, basing much of his vision on color, specifically blackness vs. darkness with the incorporation of light.

> We basked in the bright sun, framing a stand of tall, dense reeds; the stillness was primeval. The vast sky had abruptly unfurled and a castle of cumulus clouds floated clear above the line of trees that dominated the opposite bank- an interminable green wall, a wall so dark and deep it must have stood there since the beginning of time.[146]

In Vietnam, Kaikō's eye comes to represent a lightness growing gradually darker, a sense of blackness that intensifies, and the dimensions that Kaikō's darkness assumes. Kaikō's eye at first absorbs the lightness of the "bright sun" and the vastness of the cumulus filled sky. However, his eye soon reverts to the physical state of blackness, endowed within the deep, green wall, which is intensifying and leading him to become enveloped into the hole of darkness. Finally Kaikō recognizes the darkness and no longer is he basking in the sun, but indulging in the darkness of the looming wall.

Kaikō makes a connection between the wall and the genealogy of darkness when he writes that the wall was "so dark and deep it must have stood there since the beginning of time." Just as Kaikō's eye represents a lightness growing gradually darker, so too was there a period when all that existed was chaos and darkness and the darkness was succeeded by various degrees of light from the merest flicker to perceptible light.[147] However, entities, like Kaikō's wall, always ultimately disappear into the darkness. Kaikō knows that not only is the light is going out all over Vietnam, but it is going out of him as well. Just as history suggests, the darkness will ensue.

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[146] Ibid, 197.

[147] Peter Henry Buck, *Anthropology and Religion: The Era of Darkness* (New Haven: Oxford University Press, 1939), 113.

Kaikō's desire to experience direct involvement in the war leads him back to the Captain, for it is the bush which brings about a complete resurgence of Kaikō's senses. He agrees to embark on a "search and destroy" mission with Wain and the South Vietnamese fighters. Kaikō's direct engagement in the war allows him to lie some of the frustration that burns inside him to rest. "By moving in the jungle, crawling along the glowing rice paddies, I was like an ox without a herdsman or a dog . . . And tumbling from the hot, black belly of the whale into its bowels, I squirmed on, alive, through the vast, hairy, primeval night."[148] Darkness has once again compensated for vision and by transforming himself into a "squirming" image, Kaikō is utilizing his sense of touch as an alternative to reinforce his vision. Out of the darkness has been borne a sort of fascination. Here in the jungle, stripped of all pretenses and of all civilization, Kaikō nonetheless physically survives.

While being attacked by the Viet Cong, Kaikō flings his body into a haven of swampy reeds and observes that the sun was dead and the sky was stained with darkness. The enemy was here and the bullets lanced through the gloom. Orange flames through the darkness pierced the sky and cast an image of a royal city ablaze with lights. For the first time, I saw a ghastly beauty in this war.[149] Once more, Kaikō alludes to the luminescence and beauty that light can cast on the countryside, shadowing the same beauty found within the daylight of his opening pages. As night persists though, the darkness begins to seep into Kaikō's moral being. To survive his own fear and the darkness enveloping him, Kaikō battles it with his imagination. As he lies in the still of the night in a haven of swampy reeds, marking the passing of time and the nightmare that

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[148] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 214.
[149] Ibid, 214.

is the war, Kaikō imagines himself on the verge of hysteria can only use his imagination that there is some sort of beauty in this war in order to survive. His coupling of the words "ghastly beauty" is a further attestation to making "darkness" the subject and incorporating the "kagayakeru" "shininess" (or beauty in this case) to illuminate the darkness. Kaikō describing that which is "light" or "beauty" is often very dark in nature, and what is "dark" "ghastly" is often light on the surface. Ultimately for Kaikō, the darkness within him is forever "*kagayakeru*" shining, like a "ghastly beauty."

In the end, "the outcome of the battle is once again meaningless and prophetic as Kaikō "flees deeper and deeper into the jungle under the fire of the unseen enemy.[150] He is running into a black sun. By writing that he was "running into a black sun," Kaikō is alluding, once more, to the light or "shining" sun which he sees before him, but when he incorporates that the sun becomes "black," he is insinuating the darkness which is confined within the sun, the light whose core is enveloped by the impeding darkness. Alluding to Kaikō's previously mentioned sense of touch, when even intimacy was "a darkness exploding and, for a second, opened its glittering core and then was gone," all of Kaikō's physical senses are alert as he becomes one with the jungle.

Kaikō Takeshi fully utilizes his sense of smell, sight, touch, their inner ears, and taste to describe his experiences in Vietnam. This, in turn, forces readers to expand their own understandings and sensitivities about the reality of death, war, existence, and self. They create settings and bring into play convenient characters, where the reader can almost hear M-16's firing and choppers flying in the background. Through the senses of Kaikō Takeshi, the jungle comes to life. In recording daily events, smells, sights, and sounds, he records himself groping, regretting, fearing; and specifies that something as

[150] Ibid, 214.

vital as “the senses,” can be transformed into different perceptions. Kaikō’s war is peripheral, where memories of a war-torn past are triggered by the sights, smells, touch, and taste of Saigon and Vietnam, a Vietnam which does not consist of napalm raids and guerilla warfare. For Kaikō, the essence and texture of Vietnam would forever remain the same.

CHAPTER III

WITHIN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

> My friend and I----in a trance,
> Praising the nutritious, mountainous beef at Yonekyu,
> Hearing in this vigorous human appetite and bestiality the irrepressible voice of nature,
> With tears at each omnipresent sight of pure and beautiful human nature,
> Sending our embraced and embracing love,
> Even to the serenely world-wise reticent greetings of the old head waitress,
> Showering as members of this crowd our sincere passion over their carefree heads,
> With mysterious energy growing inside us----- calmly left the table.[151]

In Chapter Two I examined how vision was crucial for Kaikō to try to comprehend the horrors of the war. As I have discussed this was a major characteristic of Vietnam War literature. Where Kaikō differs from the other writers of this subgenre stems from his own personal experiences as someone who did not grow up with the benefits of limitless food. As a child of the war and American Occupation, Kaikō often experienced a shortage of good and nourishing food.

In addition to Kaikō's fascination with food in this novel, he has written often about food in his other works, both fictional and nonfictional. This is can understood not only by looking at his own personal history but also because food, eating, and cooking have long been a theme in Japanese *shōsetsu*, which in general, does not accordingly correspond to the word "novel" in the European and American sense.[152] Perhaps because food *is* so ingrained in every-day life and is perhaps taken for granted, the theme of food has played a downsized role as an untended entrée in texts dating from Meiji to pre-war

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[151] Kotaro Takamura, *Takamura Kotaro zenshu vol.1* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1957), 332.

[152] The *shōsetsu,* or novel, is "printed literature for reading and through predation it has ingested essays, criticism, biography, journals, and poetry," and has evolved into something more. My definition of shōsetsu, which is based on Noguchi's**,** will thus include texts eating and integrating other texts. For more on the definition and structure of the *shōsetsu,* see Tomoko Aoyama. *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 12-13.

modern Japanese literature (this topic will be addressed later). Only recently, in contemporary Japanese literature have "food and eating merited a 'sociology of' themselves,"[153] thus flourished in Japanese literature.

Kaikō Takeshi cites the above poem, written by Takamura Kotaro, in full in his collection of food essays, *Saigo no bansan* (*The Last Supper,* 1982), as "the best poem ever written, capturing the true essence of happy, uninhibited eating, free from fear, anger, guilt or obsession."[154] Despite this including this poem in his book, the appetite of the Japanese writer and gastronome, Kaikō Takeshi, never fully captured the essence of happy, uninhibited eating in his works. Instead, Kaikō's gastronomic writing displays continuity with his own past by exposing obscure stories from his childhood, which in turn dredge up feelings of fear, guilt, and obsession in relation to food. This is most evident in his first novel, *Into a Black Sun*. The physicality of Kaikō's writing has a dual nature, in that pleasant things have unpleasant undercurrents. Food after the defeat of Japan in 1945 eternally plagued the gastronome Kaikō and established itself as an ongoing theme in his writing, spanning twenty years from *Into a Black Sun* to *Saigo no bansan*. He was aware of this continuity with the past, where his own past is not the instant past of the war in Vietnam, but the more historical past of twenty years ago. For Kaikō, it is essential for him to deal with the painful memories of defeat.

As Tomoko Aoyama notes in her book *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature*, in traditional Japanese culture, "to talk about food, to desire food, or to be at

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[153] Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott, and Anneke van Otterloo, The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet, and Culture (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 118.

[154] Kaikō Takeshi, *Saigo no bansan* [*The Last Supper*], (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjunsha, Bunshun Bunko, 1982), 131.

all interested in food was generally regarded as vulgar, especially in adult men."[155] The focus on food was that it was not meant to be eaten but rather represented an object of aesthetic and intellectual appreciation**,** and it was unmanly to talk about food. More recently according to Aoyama, during World War Two in Japan, "there was a suppression and oppression of appetite—expressed in the slogan *Hoshigari masen katsu made wa* (Desire nothing till victory)—and to the preoccupation, during and immediately after the war, with food simply as a means of survival."[156] Uninhibited eating and food in contemporary literature seems to have gained its momentum from this suppression and oppression. Pleasure became a vital ingredient in eating and cooking, where the ingredients became more in harmony with nature and its surroundings, including the person who was eating.

The gastronome Kaikō Takeshi, in his chapter entitled *Nihon no sakka-tachi no shokuyoku* (The Appetite of Japanese Writers) states that, in literature "eating, unlike drinking, has tended to be treated as a concubine or mistress."[157] Kaikō utilizes the untended entrée theme, which *has* played a downsized role in texts in Japanese literature, as a correlation to the gender roles which exist within the realm of cooking. Cooking and food have traditionally been regarded as woman's pursuits in Japan. However, Kaikō's metaphor comparing food to a "mistress or concubine" supports the prevalent notion of Japanese literary world that "serious or 'legitimate' literature as being the domain of the adult male rather than women,"[158] and suggests that women simply are incapable of

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[155] Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 131.

[156] Ibid, 131.

[157] Kaikō Takeshi, *Saigo no bansan* [*The Last Supper*], (Tokyo: Bungei Shujunsha, Bunshun Bungo, 1982), 139.

[158] Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 8.

observing the "serious" men's food literature and only capable of simple domestic cooking. The sheer fact that Kaikō utilizes the words "concubine" and "mistress" as opposed to words with more carnal or fleshy connotations displays the criticism to women's cooking that exists within the gastronomic texts of Kaikō. All of the writers Kaikō cites in *Saigo no bansan* are men— and Kaikō writes "as if women had never written about suppression through food."[159] He embodies the texts of male critics, Lu Xun and Yasuoka Shotaro, but neglects to even mention women who wrote about food, such as Kojima Chikako, Okamoto Kanoko, and Hayashi Fumiko. It is not until the end of Kaikō's novel that women, primarily his wife, do appear and eat. However, she is treated as merely an attending guest.

In Morris Lowe's book *Asian Masculinities*, Tomoko Aoyama, a female food critic and senior lecturer in Japanese language and literature at the University of Queensland, asserts in her chapter entitled "The Cooking Man in Japanese Literature" that "the most common reaction of female family members of the cooking man seems to be that his cooking and his discourse on cooking bring conflict rather than harmony to the home."[160] As was previously stated, cooking and food have traditionally been regarded as woman's pursuits in Japan and everyday domestic cooking was usually assumed to be the woman's responsibility, according to the cooking man. Kaikō's wife, the poet Maki Yōko and daughter, Kaikō Michiko, wrote about the tension and conflict that existed within their home over food and cooking. Kaikō Michiko writes, "My mother always cooked according to my father's menu. When mother was cooking busily in the kitchen, father, while drinking and talking at the table waiting for food, became increasingly

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[159] Kaikō Takeshi, *Saigo no bansan* [*The Last Supper*], (Tokyo: Bungei Shujunsha, Bunshun Bungo, 1982), 157.

[160] Morris Low, *Asian Masculinities* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 168.

annoyed because mother only half-heartedly responded to his gastronomic talk."[161] Perhaps because of Kaikō's highly refined taste and rigid principles in relation to food, the food had to be cooked satisfactorily, and pleasure was once again a vital ingredient. Also, if his wife's full attention was not given to his gastronomic talk, Kaikō became critical and edgy because at the center of his literary and culinary pursuit is the male subject, Kaikō, "who eats, cooks, travels, talks, and writes until he dies. Kaiko pursues "absolute" values, which Kaikō's wife considers to be the aim of male cooking."[162]

From within the realm of these "absolute" values identified with male cooking, in this case, Kaikō's cooking, a sense of the male ego can be recognized. Male cooking takes on the role of hobby or sport**.** Maki Yōko herself wrote:

> Men's cooking is dynamic, as opposed to women's cooking, which is private and relative. However, while male cooking may produce absolute gastronomy, women's cooking seeks relative gastronomy—taking into consideration such things as the eaters' likes and dislikes, age, and physical and mental condition.[163]

One can envision that when Kaikō did cook, he was very lavish and grandiose in his shopping, buying a wide variety of cooking utensils, pots, spices, glasses, and silverware. He wanted to attain the ultimate experience of gourmet cooking and eating for the numerous guests he was cooking for. As was already mentioned, common everyday domestic cooking is usually reserved for women, where simply placing a meal on the table and filling the eaters' belly is satisfactory. No amount of grandeur is necessary or absolute.

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[161] Kaikō Michiko, *Jamu no tsubo kara tobidashite* (Tokyo: Shueisha, Shueisha Bunko, 1995), 225-226.

[162] Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 189.

[163] Maki Yōko, *Oishii hanashi tsukutte tabete* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjunsha, Bunshun Bunsho, 1995), 13-14.

Maki Yōko concludes in her writing that, "while male cooking may make money by pursuing the absolute, women's cannot, even though it is the latter that feeds the cooking men."[164] Once again, Maki reinforces the aforementioned typical notion of "serious or 'legitimate' literature as being the domain of the adult male rather than women,"[165] and she suggests that women simply are incapable of observing the "serious" men's food literature and only capable of simple domestic cooking. Women's cooking *is* typically a common domestic task, not philosophical. Men's cooking, on the other hand, possesses a fixation on quality and quantity, where "absolute" values are the aims.

Perhaps Kaikō, who shall be referred to intermittently as "the food man," because of his double-edged relationship with food, on one hand held a certain fear, guilt, and obsession in relation to food, which in turn leads him to have no appetite whatsoever. Kaikō claims that the title itself *Saigo no bansan* (*The Last Supper*) comes from "vague, everyday fears about predictions of overpopulation, food crises, wars, and pollution."[166] On the other hand, Kaikō does possess a fixation on food- he likes it and focuses on it by drudging up memories from his past throughout much of his writing. He utilizes and pursues the "absolute" values of food as a means to filter and incorporate these memories. What Kaikō appreciated and discovered in food was, the revival of various emotions, memories, and sensations that emerged from his experiences of war.

For the food man, the memory of war was a sensitive issue, but one in which he persisted in returning to, through his writing, where the resistance of food was

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[164] In connection to "feeding" the cooking man, or Kaikō, in this case, it is worth noting that, before Kaikō Takeshi gained worldwide literary recognition, Maki had been the sole family income provider.

[165] Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 8.

[166] Kaikō Takeshi, *Saigo no bansan* [*The Last Supper*], (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjunsha, Bunshun Bungo, 1982), 16-17.

consistently an underlying theme. In his Vietnam writing, Kaikō does not simply write about food and cooking. In *Into a Black Sun*, food takes on a scary, absolute, and unpleasant undercurrent where the eater is not just eating for sustenance, but his consumption of food is reminiscent of the way that animals devour flesh—consuming everything including flesh, bones, and the innards. This ferociousness represents the way that man becomes like a wild animal as he fights in the jungles of Vietnam. Not only does the innards represent how man changes during battle, literally for Kaikō, his experiences in Vietnam become like the offal that he hated as a child but that now he comes back to and embraces. While the thought of eating the insides of an animal had been the absolute last resort for Kaikō as a child during the war, he decided that he would rather live and eat guts than die because he was picky. This desire to embrace life had a lasting impact on Kaikō and affected his writing in his later years because he felt that he needed to make up for the starvation that he experienced as a child. Kaikō's later writings, such as *Saigo no bansan*, are motivated by the appetite to escape everyday domestic life and its obligations, where his descriptions of extravagant banquets and gourmet cooking in the pursuit of "absolute" values demonstrate that he is still unable to escape from the past, twenty years ago, where there was nothing good to eat.

Kaikō places much emphasis in *Into a Black Sun* on the practice of offal eating. Much of the emphasis of the food aspect of this text is the correlation between Kaikō the food man writing about dealing with the difficulty of finding food as a child in Japan and attempting to undertake a zoophagan rationale in Vietnam, only to fully engage in a sarcophagan rationale, where he would accept whatever he was offered. In this context, I have defined offal as the eating of an animal's entrails or internal organs. I will refer to

Kaikō's zoophagan rationale as a "meat eating" rationale, with zoophagan representing an extreme form of omnivorousness—that is any kind of meat outside of the "normal" accepted repertoire of meat producing animals such as goats, snakes or squirrels. Sarcophagan will represent a "flesh eating" rationale where the "divorcing of meat from its living origins is preferred."[167] Sarcophagan will include all of the important and tasty parts of an animal that are often thought of as repulsive. For example, the Western American practice of mountain oysters, the testicles of young bulls, is a delicacy that the rest of the United States finds quaint and disgusting.

Kaikō's writing in *Into a Black Sun* is haunted by the misery of a young boy trembling with hunger. A familiarity with death from starvation is apparent when Kaikō observes the Vietnamese villagers praying to the monks for food. This incident appears in *Into a Black Sun* when the narrator Kaikō suddenly is confronted by the memory of a little boy playing the game of "Kokkuri" twenty years earlier with his mother. "Kokkuri" is the Japanese version of the "Ouija" board, where you wait for the stick to spell out a message for you. Once a day, Kaikō's mother would test the fates of "Kokkuri" and was always left exhausted. Once, a despairing Kaikō took his mother's message board and threw it out in frustration. "Kokkuri" wasn't going to give them the answer on where to find potatoes. His mother confronted him, "Who else is going to help us? If you don't

[167] Kaikō utilizes the Japanese word そしし in *Saigo no Bansan*, which I translated as both "meat" and "flesh." This is the transition, from meat to flesh, Kaikō clearly attained in *Into a Black Sun*. I then took そしし one step further and came across the English words "zoophagan" and "sarcophagan." After further research, Noilie Vialles' *Animal to Edible* provided me with a clear definition of the zoophagan and sarcophagan logistics. Noilie Vialles, *Animal to Edible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 128-129.

like "Kokkuri," then get out and find some potatoes! If you can't even do that, then just leave me alone! Go on, tell me where you are going to get some potatoes!"[168]

For Kaikō, the Buddhist monks and villagers in Vietnam are a direct connection to the desperate appetite for food which has plagued him since he was fourteen years-old during the war in Japan. For the little boy with only his "Kokkuri" board to give him hope and who was "only an anemic fourteen year old boy who would do anything for a sack of potatoes, we eked out a living day by day. We had exchanged Mother's meager wardrobe for potatoes, and now there was no wardrobe left."[169] As a boy, he caught lizards and snake fish to cheat his hunger. One can see how Kaikō already beginning to adopt a zoophagan rationale, where even as a young boy, in order to stave off starvation he would utilize every piece of the fish or lizard and even eat the guts and entire head of the animal. For this was what the war had done to young Kaikō, causing him to be simply one animal that fed on other.

This familiarity with starvation again comes to the surface of Kaikō's mind in Vietnam twenty years later when as an adult he comes face-to-face with these very same lizards and fish during a different war.

> The house lizards in this country are, I think, of the same type as those I saw and exchanged as a child in Osaka….in Saigon, I came across them and heard them everywhere, in a hotel lobby, wall of a bar, restaurant toilet, a tent at a military camp. It was 20 years earlier and I was staring at a big heap of potatoes and the dark walls of the storehouse. I remember the time I jumped out of the train window with my rucksack, as the police spot checked our train, me running full-speed.[170]

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[168] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 15.
[169] Ibid, 15.
[170] Kaikō Takeshi, *Aruku Kagetachi* [*Five Thousand Runways*], (Tokyo: Shincho buncho, 1975), 315-316.

In Vietnam, he once again utilizes food as means to explore his memories from twenty years ago. Nowhere in this description is there mention of the extravagance of Saigon, the luxuriousness of the hotel lobby where he stayed while he was there. Instead, for Kaikō, the lizards crawling the walls of the hotel lobby of Saigon are representations of his own struggle for and suppression of appetite during the World War Two.[171] More recently according to Aoyama, during World War II in Japan, "there was a suppression and oppression of appetite—expressed in the slogan *Hoshigari masen katsu made wa* (Desire nothing till victory)—and to the preoccupation, during and immediately after the war, with food simply as a means of survival."[172] Uninhibited eating and food in contemporary literature seems to have gained its momentum from this suppression and oppression.

Kaikō writes of offal as a reaction to the suppression of appetite during the war in Japan and the means of survival that food represented. Once again in a scene in *Into a Black Sun* where the American troops have been ordered to disband a group of peasants who gave gathered around a local pond. The villagers believe the pond possesses a giant fish which has healing powers. The American advised ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) captain, Captain Wain, informs Kaikō of his rather extravagant solution to this problem with the fish.

> Just now, we chucked a few grenades. Next, we'll sweep the pond with machine guns. If that doesn't do the trick, we'll call in a gunship tomorrow and loose off some rockets. That's all we can do." I was dumfounded. "The only other option is a missile." I

[171] I already mentioned this "suppression of appetite" earlier in this chapter. According to Tomoko Aoyama, during World War Two in Japan there was a "suppression of appetite and food was simply a means of survival."

[172] Ibid, 131.

> looked right into the captain's blue-grey eyes, and there was no sign of cynicism or scorn.[173]

This scene brings up some complicated emotions in Kaikō. Whereas the Vietnamese were interested in the fish for its supposed sacred powers, the Americans wanted to destroy the fish in order to remove the potential for subversion. In contrast, Kaikō reflect back on his World War Two era self who can only think about the fish in terms of his remembered hunger. Because of this incident Kaikō begins to experience what I am calling the "sarcophagan rationale", where the fish is not considered to be a sacred animal, but only as a means to appease his hunger. Instead of madly decimating the animal, he would have utilized every piece of the fish. Forever a captive to his past, the guts, bones, and the entire head of the fish represented sustenance; even the repulsive offal is crucial to his survival. Others like Kaikō had this same idea and, because of the lack of food in Japan, no matter how repulsive, offal became a necessary addition to the Japanese diet.

Food offal was almost completely absent from the Japanese diet before the war. In *Saigo no bansan*, Kaikō himself cites Sato Haruo's poem *Samma no uta* (The Song of the Mackerel Pike, 1921) in full as one of the few examples of offal playing a role in pre-war texts. In particular, Lines 13-17, with the assistance of Lines 4-6, serve as a sort of precursor of the role offal was already beginning to play in the pre-war period in Japan.

> That there is a man at supper alone—
> Eating *samma* and
> Is rapt in thought.
>
> A man deserted by his wife sat across the supper table,
> Prove somehow that the happy gathering of that time was not a dream,
> The girl who had an unloving father—
> Having a hard time handling chopsticks,
> Would she not say to the man who was not her father,
> 'I'll give you the *sammas* belly'[174]

[173] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), 20.

Kaikō's observance of Sato Haruo's poem casts one of the first glimpses of what was stated at the beginning of this chapter, that this could be considered the initiation of "food and food offal meriting a 'sociology of' themselves."[175] Fish offal takes on a respective role sociologically when the girl above gives the fish guts and entrails to her mother's lover, not because she has to, but because the man actually likes the offal of the fish. Like Kaikō, he is more than likely willing to accept and try any type of food that is offered him. Perhaps, Kaikō utilizes this specific poem because, like him, the poet also utilizes the "*sammas* (mackerel pike) belly," more specifically animal offal, as a stimulant for his memories. The application of *samma* is also appropriate in the sense that is represents two adverse settings pertaining to the male subject himself: the man eating samma for supper alone at the present and the happy gathering of his family in the past.[176] This is in direct correlation to the setting Kaikō creates in *Zensakuhin*, when he recounts the past during the war in Japan and his family, happy to be together, sat around the table, their hungry eyes staring into a basket of steamed sweet potatoes, if not potatoes, fish.[177] Fast forward to the present, where Kaikō alone was still pursuing the "absolute" values of food in order to incorporate these memories from twenty years ago.

In *Into a Black Sun*, Kaikō emphasizes offal by utilizing the power of Captain Wain as a substitution for offal. It is through the discussion of food and observation that

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[174] Nobucho Miyama Ochner, *Secrets in my Heart: The Poetry of Sato Haruo* (Sophia University: Monumenta Nipponica vol. 44 No. 3, 1989), 279.

[175] Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott, and Anneke van Otterloo, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet, and Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 118.

[176] Nobucho Miyama Ochner, *Secrets in my Heart: The Poetry of Sato Haruo* (Sophia University: Monumenta Nipponica vol. 44 No. 3, 1989), 279.

[177] *Kaikō Ken zensakuhin*, "*Jibun/Jisaku ni tsuite*" [About Me, My Works], Vol. 22 (Tokyo: Shinchō sha, 1973). Kaikō makes several references to eating 'only' potatoes and fish during World War II throughout the beginning of KKZ. For more on postwar food, see "The Day of the Cod and Sweet Potato," in Edward Seidensticker, *Tokyo Rising: The City Since the Great Earthquake* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), especially pp. 159.

food begins to take on the scary, absolute, and unpleasant undercurrents I have already mentioned. In *Into a Black Sun* the protagonist is captivated by Captain Wain's (the ARVN commander) carnal existence.

> [I] used to feel awed whenever I saw a brawny American coming toward me, but now the awe is gone. Once the vitality, whether yellow or white, has drained out through a hole only slightly larger than the diameter of a fountain pen, what remains is little more than a collapsed bag, a jellyfish washed ashore. The captain's intestines, too, were kept from spilling only by a fragile membrane over a trellis of bone.[178]

The food man stares at the well-fleshed figure of the American soldier and sees him not only as a well-fed man, but also as food. Throughout the novel, Kaikō juggles these two thoughts about Captain Wain. He is a man but he is also meat. Kaikō's protagonist is drawn to the powerful build of Captain Wain, whose physical prowess is beyond anything Kaikō has ever seen. Kaikō further observes that the Vietnamese soldiers are all bones and tendons and probably salty, but Captain Wain was tender, fleshy, and juicy.[179] His contemplation of the captain's gastrointestinal tract is about a living organism being fed by a daily schedule of ingestion that has become methodical and sterile rather than ritualized and fruitful. Kaikō can envision the hundreds of hamburgers and the thousands of fries that had been consumed in order to form the body of Captain Wain. For Kaikō, both the gastronome and the once starving child, he wonders if Captain Wain were to burst, his entrails could very well be a gourmet meal, where the quality of his offal was much more important than the quantity.

Food provides more than the energy needed to get through the day; it is cherished and satisfying. For the Americans, who are immersed in the world of fast-food, Kaikō

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[178] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), 8-9.
[179] Ibid,11.

observes that for these transient residents of Vietnam, eating is essentially a quick fix which is best when it takes as little out of you as possible in terms of time, money, and personal investment.[180] For Kaikō, whose desperate appetite for food has plagued him since he was a fourteen year old during the war in Japan, Captain Wain's consumption of food is not one of appreciation, but one of assumption. He assumes that there will always been food in plenty. After this encounter, Kaikō again reflects on his experience during the war in Japan, "Starvation had taken its slow course and left the body hardened. And no familiarity with bodies burned or crushed to death could harden me enough, or cushion that awful sound; and I could see myself becoming that kind of corpse before long."[181] His sense of taste and sound both serve as attempts to detach himself from the dark memories of his past. Starvation is something Captain Wain, whose belly is filled with fast-food, has never experienced. Captain Wain and his daily over-consumption of burgers and fries continue to resonate for Kaikō as being Grade A prime offal.

The situation with Captain Wain representing offal in *Into a Black Sun* serves as a sort of cultural commentary, where his past history produces feelings of fear, guilt, and obsession in relation to food for Kaikō. Being in Vietnam where the natives are starving and are being battled by well-fed Americans brings back memories of his own war with America. Moreover, the horrors of Vietnam that turn men into beasts tearing into flesh of the country itself also have an impact on Kaikō's musings about offal. Kaikō's previous observation of Captain Wain's gastrointestinal tract is representative of this metaphor where "Once the vitality, whether yellow or white…. The captain's intestines, too, were

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[180] Philip K. Jason, *Fourteen Landing Zones* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 193.
[181] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 175.

kept from spilling only by a fragile membrane over a trellis of bone." As we can see Captain Wain is offal, but because of the way that the war destroys everyone it touches, Vietnam itself has become like a digestive system, eating and chewing people up, digesting them, and then spewing them back out. Captain Wain and Kaikō have now become the offal of Vietnam, they taste bad and are thrown out.

Even though he is merely an observer of the action in Vietnam, he cannot escape from being considered as offal. Although Kaikō's historical viewpoint of an Asian man conquered by Americans allows him an extraordinary understanding of and compassion for the Vietnamese, it also allows him to maintain an impartial position that is denied to any Vietnamese. Moreover, his privilege of being merely an observer—and one from a now rich country to boot—also allows him access to the wonders of Vietnamese cooking that are available to him in Saigon. In *Into a Black Sun*, sitting amidst the streets of Saigon, the offal Kaikō is exposed to represents the fact that he is living in between two cultures, Japanese and Vietnamese. As Aoyama notes, "Knowledge and experiences of cultures other than the Japanese have always been vital ingredients in men's food essays and gastronomic fiction."[182] Most of the fare Kaikō eats is not traditional Vietnamese cuisine, but rather a mixture of Cantonese-ized Vietnamese and Japanese, where bean curd fried chicken is eaten with a raw fish dipped in soy sauce. One of the pioneers of postwar men's food writing Kyu Eikan, stated that "the best food in the world is found in Canton."[183] This is demonstrated by the fact that the best food available to him in Vietnam was Chinese food and he eagerly partakes of it when he is in Saigon.

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[182] Morris Low, *Asian Masculinities* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 158.
[183] Ibid, 157.

Yet, as much as Kaikō's birthplace allows him to possess a compassion for the Vietnamese people, and as much as he often feels as if he were living between the two cultures, he is merely an observer of the catastrophe which is unfolding in the lives of the Vietnamese people around him. These memories of his own survival resurface as he is sitting at the table in Chinese restaurants in Saigon and again in the chow halls with Captain Wain in the bush-- the food man is an outsider. Kaikō had survived and escaped death by surviving off the guts of fish during the war in Japan and had learned to cook by himself as a young boy when all he had was his intelligence and determination. This self-reliance had become a very essential part of the food man's everyday wandering life, which had led him to Vietnam. In Vietnam, he saw the resilience of the Vietnamese people in the face of chaos and desolation, but he also condemns himself for feeding off of the experiences and actions of those directly involved on either side of the war. For Kaikō, the war is nothing but offal, and the more he records and examines for his writing, the more his love of offal grows.

The food man's inability to attain absolute closure on his childhood marred by war results in the condemnation he brings upon himself during the Vietnam War. The aforementioned assertion made by Tomoko Aoyama, where Kaikō, "the man who eats, cooks, travels, talks, and writes until he dies, and his pursuit of "absolute" values, which Kaikō's wife considers to be the aim of male cooking" is complicated by his inability to move past his childhood history. In his literature about Vietnam, he is unable to transcend his history and the presence of offal pervades the rest of work. He writes about food in an "absolute" way in which is not the stuff of everyday but something that is either lacking or a feast. This is visible when Kaikō says, "I was paid, had the money

credited on my account in a Saigon bank, ate Cantonese food, and inexorably gained weight. The more havoc I saw, the keener my reports became—a hyena feasting on carrion."[184]

Here is where Kaikō is no longer the zoophagan, he has become the sarcophagan. This shift from zoophagan to sarcophagan is sociologically an attestation to the fact that all around the food man nothing is culturally or ethnically pure anymore. There is no repugnancy when he associates with offal anymore. The food man, who had alluded to Captain Wain as prime offal now considers himself a carnal beast. Kaikō is a "hyena feasting on flesh" where he feeds on the trauma of the war and fervently works hard to avoid corrupting the absolute expressions he yearns so much to perfect. Yet, no matter how many reports or words he wrote, he would never be free from the memories, sensations, and images of Vietnam that overlapped and deepened his boyhood memories of death and destruction during World War Two.

His constant familiarity with starvation is again displayed with his words, "I ate Cantonese food and inexorably gained weight," where the consumption of food has always been one of appreciation, and not of assumption. Food is to be enjoyed in a physically pleasant environment, and in a physically pleasurable way. Food provides more than the energy needed to get through the day, and for Kaikō, it is cherished and satisfying. Kaikō's desire for food during the Vietnam War stems from the starvation which he himself outlived during the war in Japan in years long past. It was a past where those who had attached themselves to the pre-war notion that offal was an unsuitable diet had more than likely starved and "starvation had taken its slow course and left the body

[184] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), 74.

hardened."[185] Now that the food man had financial security, starvation would never "take its slow course" again. He was eating Cantonese food, the "best food in the world," yet even the most basic ingredient obtained in a Cantonese dish, rice, could not even provide him with sustenance twenty years earlier. No matter how deep the food man's intercultural and culinary experiences are, the constant "war guilt and the traditional Japanese disdain for food and money as base and impure,"[186] was always not far from Kaikō's mind. Memories of starvation and death from Kaikō's childhood experience of war fruitfully influence the reporter's necessity to put the war into words.

The self-reliance which had become a very essential part of the food man's everyday wandering life, spread through his role as a reporter in Vietnam, where "he was paid and had the money credited into his account in a Saigon bank," assuring financial privilege. His position put large sums of money in his pockets, allowed him to dine at the most luxurious restaurants Saigon had to offer, and yet left him with large gaps in his sense of self-definition and purpose. He *could* dine with the Vietnamese and interact with them, he *could* financially support what shred of an economy the Vietnamese had, but he *could never* truly enter their experiences and he condemns himself for his lack of involvement in the war.

Ultimately, he is a "hyena feasting on flesh," metaphorically he is a healthy, fully fleshed animal who then suffers from starvation and ultimately becomes excrement. He is the full-bellied reporter who soon starves to dissect his words and style to shape his ideas with precision, who ultimately lays claim that he has "become a desert. I may return alive and weave some words together that shed some light on my motives and ambitions,

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[185] Ibid, 175.
[186] Morris Low, *Asian Masculinities* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 158.

but the effort would be as meaningful as froth churned from behind a ship. I tried, but the words glittered and turned to ash the minute they were written."[187] However, Kaikō IS still the offal of the Vietnam War and he is the male subject who will always be distasteful and thrown out. This leads Kaikō to be afflicted with a lingering unease at being bound to the role of a reporter and he finds this repugnant.

This lingering unease of the male subject struggling to find an escape from his own idleness carries over into one of Kaikō's novels, *Natsu no yami* (1971, trans. *Darkness in Summer*, 1973) which incorporates the recurring themes of the futility of financial privilege and materialistic pursuits and an enthusiasm for food, and offal, continually prevalent in Kaikō's novels. *Darkness in Summer* is a story about a man and a woman, who had once been lovers, who meet again ten years later in Germany. The woman is a scholar and the man a novelist/reporter, a mere observer of other people's wars, sunk into detachment by his professional familiarity with tragedy and chaos. The protagonist and his lover pursue, talk about, and consume food voraciously throughout *Darkness in Summer*. Food is shared as an activity between the two but they are not equally shared by the man and woman. Tomoko Aoyama observes, "The man has extensive knowledge and experience of eating, while the woman, though intelligent, independent, and resourceful, is almost always seen as a student or learner."[188] This becomes evident when the woman often eats things like innards only at the suggestion of her lover and offal becomes an integral part of the novel.

The protagonist's love of offal and lectures to his lover about the topic is apparent when, while having a meal of testicles one night, he tells her that the testicles should have

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[187] Kaikō Takeshi, *Into a Black Sun* (Tokyo: Kodansha America Press, 1983), 193-194.

[188] Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 161.

a little smell of urine. The woman then expresses some astonishment, to which the man replies:

> You don't understand! You must learn about the facts of life. The testicles have nothing to do with urine. They're spongy, rubbery, and very subtle, but not bad. I ate some fried calf's testicles in a Madrid slum bar, with sangria. They had the texture of a steamed white fish served at an elegant tea ceremony dinner. In general, intestine dishes are not to be slighted. Fish, animals, anything, if they kill an enemy, they will eat the intestines before anything else.[189]

The self-reliance which had become a very essential part of Kaikō's everyday wandering life in Vietnam percolates into the protagonist in *Darkness in Summer*. The financial privilege he had earned as a reporter allowed him to dine at the most luxurious restaurants the world had to offer. He was a masculine gourmet who was willing to try the most subtle and repugnant ingredients and despised those who were too weak-stomached to do so. Kaikō once more manifests his post-war hunger theme into *Darkness in Summer* when the protagonist claims that the testicles "aren't bad" and that he has savored the world in which he lives as he has moved restlessly from place to place trying "intestines which aren't to be slighted." The post-war cooking man is a wanderer who is willing to try and eat whatever is given to him, as is represented by the protagonist.

Under her lover's tutelage, the woman is willing to try anything her lover recommends as well and she tries the testicles spoken of in the above quotation. She and her lover enthusiastically eat together and food even takes precedence over sex, when sex is given up to go enjoy the pleasure of eating. The man says to the woman, "You can't have both. You can either have good sex or eat rich foods."[190] The woman gets satisfaction out of the simple fact, not by *what* she is eating, but by the fact that they are

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[189] Kaikō Takeshi, trans. Cecilia Segawa Seigle. *Darkness in Summer* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1974), 20.
[190] Ibid, 42.

eating *together*. However, when her lover denies her a dish of innards and she cannot enjoy that dish with him, she does become agitated. They are fishing one day and the protagonist has just caught a pike in the lake and he intends to release it, as he has done with other fish they have caught. He becomes critical and edgy when the woman, his pupil, still looks at him in disbelief over his experiences of eating the innards of fish. She says to him, "You have eaten it and you know all about it, but you gave me all sorts of excuses why I should not."[191] Due to the fact that the woman's full attention is not given to her lover's gastronomic talk or his passion for offal, this greatly agitates him and so he denies her the fish.

In this novel, *Darkness in Summer,* the characters have a similar shift that Kaikō goes through in the *Into a Black Sun*, where they no longer think of eating offal as something tasty but as something that becomes representative of their relationship and of the protagonist's psychological traumas, which in this novel are not clearly spelled out. *Darkness in Summer* takes on a dark, absolute, and unpleasant undercurrent when the protagonist sinks into a familiar detachment caused by his professional familiarity with tragedy and chaos and in turn, becomes the offal of society. The protagonist sits in his apartment all day and only wakes up long enough to eat pizza. The woman cleans, cooks, and even offers him sex, but all he does is sleep. Financial privilege is meaningless and he is with large gaps in his sense of self-definition and purpose. It is only when there is another wave of the Tet Offensive[192] predicted that the protagonist is brought out of his reverie. The man immediately leaves his woman behind in Europe and ventures off to Vietnam to report.

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[191] Ibid, 143.

[192] The Tet Offensive was a military campaign carried out by the Viet Cong against the Republic of Vietnam and the United States from January to September of 1968.

The woman is enraged and says to her lover:

> You are incapable of loving—not just a woman; you can't even love yourself. So you go looking for danger. You are a hollow explorer. I've heard that tapirs eat bad dreams, but you set out to eat other people's passion, and you'd do anything for it.[193]

At the core of the woman's observations above is the male subject "who eats, cooks, travels, talks, and writes." The protagonist does "go looking for danger" because this type of global wandering is characteristic of the masculine gourmet. Like his desire to eat a lot of kinds of food, in his personal life, the protagonist desires to have a lot of different kinds of experiences. His nomadic aspirations do lead him to look for danger because his "expeditions are motivated by a desire to escape mundane life and its commitments. These expeditions which may involve physical danger is normally possible only for men with some power or financial privilege."[194] How befitting that Kaikō bestows upon his character in *Darkness in Summer* the role of the novelist/reporter, where financial burden is not a concern.

The protagonist's love of offal has also become a very essential part of his everyday wandering life, which had led him to Vietnam, Spain, Africa, and other danger zones. In Vietnam, he sees the resiliency of the Vietnamese people in the face of chaos and tragedy and feels that he is indeed a "hollow explorer." Because he is a hanger on in a war that is not about him or his country, he feels that his presence is like that a voyeur. As a consequence, he blames himself for feeding off of the experiences and actions of those directly involved in the war. For the protagonist, the war is nothing but offal, and

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[193] Kaikō Takeshi, trans. Cecilia Segawa Seigle. *Darkness in Summer* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1974), 190.
[194] Morris Low, *Asian Masculinities* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 164.

the more he records and examines for his writing, the more his love of offal grows. He will always be the solitary wanderer whose love of offal sustains him.

Solitude is something which both the man and his lover are resigned to in the end of *Darkness in Summer*. The man is truly the kind of man his lover accuses him to be; that is, one who is "incapable of loving a woman when he can't even love himself," and the woman is in turn, forced into solitude and resignation. The circle dance that the man and woman follow in *Darkness in Summer* demonstrates this enforced solitude. They savor their world together with urgency as they move restlessly from place to place, finally parting again, to survive separately as best they can. The protagonist is very aware of the futility of his passion for eating and he constantly struggles to find a release from the mundaneness of his life. His mission derives from his gastronomic enthusiasm.

This sense of solitude is prevalent in Kaikō's first gastronomic novel, *Atarashii Tentai* (*The New Celestial Bodies*, 1972). Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, a famous French gastronome, who is said to "have founded the whole genre of the gastronomic essay,"[195] was extremely influential with Kaikō's selection of the title, *Atarashii Tentai*. The title comes from the ninth aphorism of Brillat-Savarin: "The discovery of a new dish does more for human happiness than the discovery of a star."[196] Kaikō's continual focus on food as a personal mission as well as theme in his books, which originated during the war in Japan and came once more to the surface during the Vietnam War, is evident in his invocation of Brillat-Savarin's famous saying. The protagonist of the novel is a nameless

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[195] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 267.

[196] Brillat-Savarin, *Psysiologie du gout*, pg. 37. The English translation is M.F.K. Fisher's in *The Physiology of Taste*, pg. 4. In the Japanese translation of this aphorism (see *Bimi raisan*, trans. Sekine and Tobe, vol. 1, pg. 23) that Kaikō uses as an epigraph to the novel, etoile is translated as *tentai.* Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 163.

bureaucrat called *kare* (he) whose mission is not one of gastronomic enthusiasm, but rather the futility of affluence and an almost forced gastronomic quest, so to speak. He has been instructed to examine the state of the Japanese national economy by observing the food industry.[197]

The protagonist's research begins with inexpensive foods with cheap ingredients, with the focus primarily on offal stews containing liver, intestines, and lungs. At the onset of his research, the protagonist does not eat any of the cheap offal stew dishes offered to him, he is merely an observer. He watches the people in small bars and stalls and listens to the conversations and he concludes that "these eating places on the bottom stratum are the most reliable in the restaurant industry. This is because their patrons pay for the food themselves, out of their own stretched pockets—quite unlike the bureaucrats, who invariably eat out of the company account."[198] Here is where financial privilege once again creeps into the protagonist's observations in Kaikō's work. Those who are financially privileged have large sums of money put in their pockets, and allow them to dine at the most luxurious restaurants, and yet most were left with large gaps in his sense of self-definition and purpose. The patrons who pay for food out of their pockets, they are the ones who appreciate their food and are down-to-earth. Not only is the novel aware of the class differences in the people who eat in restaurants and the type of food they consumer, in this novel Kaikō is critical about the way that the different classes of people pay for the food that they eat.

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[197] Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 163.

[198] Kaikō Takeshi, "Atarashii Tentai," in *Kaiko Takeshi zenshū*, vol. 6, edited by Yōko Maki & Michiko Kaikō. (Tokyo: Kabushikikaisha Shinchōsha, 1992), 304 , quoted in Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature,* 163.

The protagonist then moves onto the next phase of his research and travels to more extravagant restaurants, and this time, he engages in actual eating and spends more money. He goes to many renowned restaurants throughout Japan and although "he tries to stimulate his appetite by thinking of famous banquet scenes in *Satyricon*, he soon reaches the point of engorgement: the inevitable feeling of "nothingness after a banquet."[199] He does not experience the same human communication with the more upper-class gastronomic devotees as he does with the working-class, whose interactions are warm and inclusive. He observes that the patrons of the poorer establishments add "essential ingredients" of human communication to their meals.[200] Once again, at the core of *Atarashii tentai* is the male subject "in pursuit of 'absolute values' who eats, travels, talks, and writes." This is yet another novel about man and the futility of affluence that he feels as a result of his restless wanderings.

The protagonist ends up trying offal at an extremely expensive restaurant in Akasaka and his satiation overwhelms him: "In a moment of aberration, everything collapsed, crumbled, was crushed and shattered. Pleasure, excitement, and intoxication, gone. 'It's over,' he felt."[201] Then, the one thing that the man longs for is plain water. Let us think back to Kaikō's observation in his chapter entitled *Nihon no sakka-tachi no shokuyoku* (The Appetite of Japanese Writers) which states that, in literature "eating, unlike drinking, has tended to be treated as a concubine or mistress."[202] Kaikō is not referring to plain water when he mentions "drinking." He is referring to the fine wines

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[199] Kaikō Takeshi, "Atarashii Tentai," in *Kaiko Takeshi zenshū*, vol. 6, edited by Yōko Maki & Michiko Kaikō. (Tokyo: Kabushikikaisha Shinchōsha, 1992), 434.

[200] Ibid, 304.

[201] Ibid, 512.

[202] Kaikō Takeshi , *Saigo no bansan* [*The Last Supper*], (Tokyo: Bungei Shujunsha, Bunshun Bungo, 1982), 139.

and liquors which people drink, while eating expensive dishes, engaged in lively conversation. Plain water is often regarded as the opposite of exquisite delicacies. It is uncomplicated and pure.[203] The protagonist wanders into the mountains, then proceeds to conquer his emptiness by returning to that which is "uncomplicated and pure" and he drinks the pure water. This is the one instance where the offal the protagonist has eaten is so entirely repugnant that the only possible way he can rid himself from everything he has consumed is by throwing up. It is as if his own innards are eating away at the offal and struggling against it because the offal represents everything that took away his "pleasure and intoxication. Solitude is something which man is resigned to in the end of *Into a Black Sun* and *Darkness in Summer* and in *Atarashii tentai* this ingredient is no different.

It is while Kaikō is attributing the final touches to *Betonamu Senki*, that his obsession with the perfection of words and scenes first becomes apparent in his attempt to convey the overwhelming experiences of his past. The profit he gains from his profession is in direct correlation with the literary offal he yearns for. Upon returning to Japan after his first visit to Vietnam, Kaikō openly expresses his discontent with *Betonamu Senki.* Without even going home, Kaikō was immediately moved to an inn in Hakone, a usual arrangement that publishers usually adhered to in order to insure they received their commissioned material on time. Kaikō accomplished this task in a week, but the work "was an object of shame rather than pride" to him.[204] The collection was written in too hasty a manner and Kaikō knew that war was not a simplistic theory you

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[203] Tomoko Aoyama. *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 164.

[204] Kaikō Takeshi, "Pēji no haigō," in *Kaikō Takeshi zenshu,* edited by Yōko Maki & Michiko Kaikō. (Tokyo: Kabushikikaisha Shinchōsha, 1992), 237-242.

could just simply place on paper, or a collection of hasty reports of a conflict that could be easily resolved. Kaikō's reaction to *Betonamu Senki* is a further attestation to Kaikō wrestling with the burden of accurately chewing events of a present, born out of memories of a past he still didn't understand.

Once again, Kaikō's Vietnam writing takes on a scary, absolute, and unpleasant undercurrent when Kaikō says, "I was adrift in murk, a forlorn fat animal too heavy for its legs to shift its weight. I was a slob, immovable. Not a hyena. Not a reporter. I was infinity's scum."[205] Kaikō was a "slob, scum," like offal itself. He has become a callous animal who feasted off of nothing but the havoc and trash around him. This havoc and trash molded into nonsensical reportage and words which had turned him into a "fat and forlorn animal" which refused to stand up and face the realness of the war. He was an animal who reaped in and fed off the fruits of his profession, whose journalistic reportage discarded important and tasty parts when once again, "the words glittered, and I tried, but they turned to ash the minute they were written." In *Into a Black Sun*, the protagonist of the story never cooks, not once; instead he consumes food in the same way that he pursues knowledge and culture.

Offal takes a completely subversive shift in Kaikō's collection of food essays, *Saigo no bansan*, where it no longer serves as a means to erase and understand the memories of war, or starvation and destruction. Offal is rarely mentioned, and instead Kaikō focuses on gourmet dishes and recipes. However, it is not until the end of the collection that the important and tasty parts become evident. It becomes clear that Kaikō still possesses continuity with the past, which in turn drudge up feelings of fear and guilt

[205] Kaikō Takeshi, *Aruku Kagetachi* [*Five Thousand Runways*], (Tokyo: Shincho buncho, 1975), 190.

in relation to food. In *Into a Black Sun*, Kaikō likes food and he focuses on it, utilizing it as a tool to drudge up memories. In *Saigo no bansan*, after filling and focusing nearly three quarters of the collection with recipes and extravagant banquets, which suggests that Kaikō still does like food, at the end, Kaikō still writes of the repression of food, but now as one of fear and disgust, rather than celebratory and extraordinary. Kaikō began to find food "as superfluous, addictive, deeply disturbing, rather than something pleasurable and nutritious."[206] There is no doubt that fear and disgust are also associated with Kaikō's deteriorating health and numerous gastric problems.

Kaikō is an individual who is pursuant of "absolute" values, the male subject whose culinary pursuit is to "to eat, cook, travel, talk, and write until he dies." Kaikō's life has encapsulated all of these activities. It is Kaikō's confession about the undefined gastric problem which afflicts him later on in his life which demonstrates that despite the pain, the sheer fact that Kaikō *is* talking and writing about his problem in relation to food, is an attestation to his constant pursuit of "absolute" values. Kaikō confesses:

> There's no pain. Nothing is swollen or stiff. And yet there is always this feeling that something is squatting there….I cannot help feeling that the inevitable is on its way. Besides, with no gallbladder, all of my drinking and eating needs to be for quality rather than quantity. The age of expansion, in wealth and arms, ended three years ago.[207]

How befitting that the very same object, food, which had been scarce in Kaikō's life as a boy during the war, was feasted upon and thoroughly digested as a reporter and writer in Vietnam, has ultimately come full-circle in the removal of the gallbladder- the organ that assists in the digestive process. Kaikō didn't have his appendix or spleen

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[206] Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 187.

[207] Kaikō Takeshi, *Saigo no bansan* [*The Last Supper*], (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjunsha, Bunshun Bungo, 1982), 359.

removed and instead, the one organ fails him which allows him to be pain free, gas free, bloat-free and to be able to eat whatever he likes. The food man's cookings, eatings, and drinkings, which were once plentiful during his middle-aged years, are now reduced to a regimented singular diet, like the drifting wanderings of the food man's who, "although he cooks for his family, for his lovers and friends, ultimately he cooks and eats for himself."[208] "With no gallbladder" Kaikō is once again a young boy of fourteen, whose diet was very controlled. More importantly, fats which make the food delicious, are banned from his diet.

Later in his life Kaikō had even more health issues that focused on his digestive system, finally when he was an older man, he began to have difficulties swallowing and so Kaiko knew that death was eminent. At that time, he wrote that the "the inevitable" is on its way." In April 1989, Kaikō underwent surgery for esophageal cancer, which had spread into his diaphragm.[209] The trajectory of Kaikō's life was one of a desolate, deprived childhood during which he suffered from physical hunger, where he later fulfilled his needs with an abundance of, food and fame, and in the end, could not even utilize the tube through which food first passes from the pharynx to the stomach to allow digestion to begin. The food man, who had lived the middle part of his life as a connoisseur of food, no longer obtained the adequate nutrition so that the body can use the food to build and nourish cells and to provide energy. Kaikō's appetite for the extraordinary was now one of survival, as it had been during the war as a child. He has become the offal of his own life, he had been eaten and chewed, digested, and now he

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[208] Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 160.

[209] *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 182: Japanese Fiction Writers Since World War II*. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Edited by Van C. Gessel. (Brigham Young University. The Gale Group, 1997), 76-77.

was about to be spewed out altogether, kept alive only with the assistance of a feeding tube.

Food, eating, and cooking have long been a theme in the Japanese *shōsetsu*. Kaikō Takeshi, the food man, was a writer and gastronome whose writings were an extension of this theme. He was never able to fully capture the essence of happy, uninhibited eating however and his gastronomic writings display continuity with the past by exposing obscure stories from his past, which in turn dredge up feelings of fear, guilt, and obsession in relation to food. Kaikō's writings identify with the cooking man's restless wandering nature and the futility of affluence and financial privilege. He utilized offal as reaction to the repression of food, when after the defeat of Japan in 1945, food eternally plagued the gastronome Kaikō and established itself as an ongoing theme in his writing, spanning twenty years from *Into a Black Sun* to *Saigo no bansan*. Even until his death, Kaikō Takeshi was a man who was in pursuit of "absolute values" and at the center of this pursuit was the male subject who eats, cooks, travels, and writes until he dies."

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