Abstract: What can a spy story tell us about the effects of neo-colonial nation building on diasporic subjectivity? Kim Sok Pom’s 1957 Karasu no Shi [The Death of the Crow] illustrates the lived experience of postcolonial subjectivity in a contested site overrun by competing imperial powers. The novel focusses on the 1948 uprising on Jeju Island, the subsequent division of the Korean peninsula, exile and diasporic identity. It confronts official accounts of Korea’s post-war past and turns a forgotten history into cultural memory, a central task of national allegory; indeed, the article champions an allegorical reading of Karasu no Shi, despite divergent views outlined herein. In Kim’s text, principal characters are situated allegorically on the Korean stage after Japan’s defeat; they personify varying cultural and political attachments or paradigms. Each exists in a state of profound overlap, with the spy as the linchpin. The spy’s divided state of being resonates allegorically with the experiences of zainichi Koreans in early post-war Japan. Saturated with personal and political meaning, the novel contributes to the fabric of zainichi Korean history with threads that tie to the story of a continuing underclass and disrupts
enduring notions of a homogenous Japan. Kim ultimately articulates possibilities for survival.

**Keywords** Kim Sok Pom (金石範), *Karasu no Shi* [The Death of the Crow] (鴉の死), Jeju Massacre (済州4・3), Zainichi Korean literature (在日文学), National Allegory (ナショナル・アレゴリー)

1 **Introduction**

*Zainichi* Korean literature is conventionally considered to be written by *zainichi* Koreans about *zainichi* Korean issues.¹ *Zainichi* Korean writers and/or their literature are customarily classified into generational categories according to their similarities and affinities. Novels by ‘first-generation’ *zainichi* Korean writers, writing primarily in the late 1940s and 1950s, such as Kim Sa Ryang, Kim Tal Su and Kim Sok Pom², invariably take up the issues of Japanese colonialism, American imperialism, the Korean War, unification and a recovery of ‘Korean-ness’. Novels by ‘second-generation’ writers, writing primarily in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Yan So Gil, Lee Hoe Sung, Kim Ha Gyong and Lee Yang Ji, though diverse, generally focus on racism in early post-war Japan, poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, the sense of alienation *zainichi* Koreans tend to feel in Japan and/or Korea and the painful process of self-determination. ‘Third-generation’ writers, writing primarily in the 1980s and 1990s, such as Tsuka Kohei, Yū Miri, Gen Getsu, and Kaneshiro Kazuki tend to take up a diversity of issues in their novels.³ While their literature is unmistakably informed by the political, cultural and familial implications of what it means to be a *zainichi* Korean in Japanese society, there is debate as to the legitimacy of labelling it ‘*zainichi* Korean’ literature. This is partly because of a seeming lack of attention to issues of ‘ethnicity’ and related political concerns in their literature, but also because of the implications of categorising writers by their ethnicity given that such categorisation may further ‘minoritise’ or

---

1 The term *zainichi* Korean, as opposed to newcomer Korean, refers to Koreans and/or their descendants, whose presence in Japan is a result of Japan’s thirty-five-year occupation of the Korean peninsula, which began in 1910 and ended in 1945.

2 Kim Sok Pom is technically a second-generation *zainichi* Korean but ‘thematically’ and temporally considered a first-generation writer. Kim wrote his name for me in Roman letters, as Kim Sok Pom, on Mar 29, 2002; this was recorded on video tape. Japanese, including Kim’s friends and publishers still referred to him as Kin Sekihan, the Japanese transcription of the Chinese characters that make up his name.

3 Yū Miri is technically a second-generation *zainichi* Korean but ‘thematically’ and temporally considered a third-generation writer.
‘exoticise’ those writers. More recently, writers Choi Shil and Lee Yong-deok are writing prize-winning fiction and making names for themselves as ‘zainichi’ Korean writers in literary circles. Presently, there are no fourth or fifth-generation writers active, however, the number of researchers into zainichi Korean literature is growing. That said, according to 3rd generation zainichi Korean poet, Zhong Zhang, “Recently, zainichi literature is no longer limited to resident Korean writers in Japan but, as a genre, is crossing borders, and becoming an inclusive space for all non-Japanese writers residing in Japan. While the shifts are subtle, some cutting-edge papers concerning ‘Nihongo bungaku’ will no doubt presently emerge in the academy.”

This paper investigates Kim Sok Pom’s 1957 seminal spy story, the spellbinding *Karasu no Shi* [The Death of the Crow]. Miraculously, the novel would have been doomed to oblivion had a Kodansha publisher, Tamura Yoshiya, not happened upon a printed copy in a second-hand bookstore. Tamura was so impressed with the unknown tour de force that he arranged for its publication. Favourable reviews made it the catalyst for Kim’s acceptance into the Japanese literary establishment. Kim writes on a variety of topics including ethnicity, nationalism, racism, assimilation, naturalization and the dilemma of writing in Japanese as a Korean. However, what distinguishes Kim from other zainichi Korean writers is his life-long and unwavering commitment to writing fiction that highlights the 1948 Jeju Uprising.

Several impressive scholars have written analyses of *Karasu no Shi* to date; many touch on the novel’s allegorical features – in particular the duality of the spy. Indeed, experts such as Okaniwa Noboru (1971), Isogai Jiro (1979), Takeda Seiji (1995) and Hayashi Koji (1997) paved the way in Japanese-language research on Kim’s novel and their work merits attention. In this paper, I provide a very close reading of *Karasu no Shi* and evaluate how Kim Sok Pom illustrates colonial history on Jeju Island in South Korea. Kim’s distinctive use of literary devices, such as the trope of the spy, magical realism and surrealism, not readily recognized by Japan-based critics, enrich his profound tale of life and death. Primarily though, I defend reading *Karasu no Shi* allegorically. Such a reading not only helps recuperate aspects of Fredric Jameson’s...

---

4 Zhong Zhang, online discussion, January 18, 2023. See also Nana Oishi’s comments on diasporic literature in the Dec 2023 issue of Border Crossings the Journal of Japanese-Language Literature Studies.


controversial theory of national allegory and challenges hegemonic narratives of (South) Korean independence that still hold purchase today but, most importantly, allows for insights into Kim’s artistic and nuanced representation of difference. I trust that my comprehensive analysis offers an original contribution to scholarship, particularly English language scholarship, on Karasu no Shi.

Methodologically speaking this paper uses archival historiography, literary analysis, cultural theory and qualitative methods, including elements of ethnographical field work. Historiography allows for an understanding of the author immersed in his own particularity yet remains cognizant of societal, historical and political factors that may alter how history is documented over time. I conducted many interviews with key players, particularly Kim himself, between 1999-2003, but also his long-term publisher Tazaki Akira, literary scholar and philosopher, Takeda Seiji, Kim’s friend and celebrated poet Kim Shi Jong, publisher Koh I Samu, poet Zhong Zhang and other well-known intellectuals. That notwithstanding, tensions between individual memories, writer’s intentions and readers interpretations are at play. Not all verbal accounts, including those of Kim Sok Pom, provided decades after the publication of the novel, are immune to inaccuracies or biases. Nevertheless, the first-hand accounts of zainichi Koreans, including those of Kim, are compelling, and I rely on them to contextualize the production, reception and significance of Karasu no Shi. All translations of excerpts from Kim’s text are my own. A historic overview and a discussion of national allegory is followed by a close reading of Karasu no Shi.

2 Overview and Introduction to Kim Sok Pom and Karasu no Shi

Kim was born in 1925 shortly after his mother left Jeju (Saishūto) for Japan. Kim never met his father, who died in Jeju in 1927. At age 13, as a Japanese national, Kim visited Jeju for the first time and revisited the island several more times during

---

7 See, for example, ‘Subaltern South Korea’s Anti-Communist Asian Cooperation in the Mid-1950s’ (2020) by Yang and Cho.
8 I conducted over 140 interviews. Participants understood the aims of my project and gave permission for me to use the data in the field of zainichi Korean studies. They are recorded, most on video tape, and available on request.
9 In interviews with me Kim generally used the term Saishūto when referring to the colonial period (1910-1945) and used the term Jeju when discussing the post-war era. But he used the term Saishūto when telling me about his first visit to South Korea in 1988, some 40 years after he had last visited (recorded interview, March 27, 2002).
the 1940s. Soon after Japan’s 1945 defeat Kim departed to live in Korea, but poverty forced him to return to Japan in 1946. Shortly after, post-colonial events took a turn on Jeju; when, on April 3, 1948, left wing Jeju islanders carried out an armed uprising in opposition to the American sponsored ‘South Only’ election. According to Kim, ‘American plans to exterminate communists involved sending huge numbers of right-wing police and barbaric terrorist youth groups loyal to Syngman Rhee to the island.’ As Kim describes it, ‘Islanders were forced to spear “communist” family members with bamboo swords, bury them alive, cut off their hands and feet… and other unspeakable acts that are impossible to describe without becoming nauseated.’

Kim told me, “What I heard was so shocking, I am still in shock”. Approximately 30,000 communists and suspected sympathizers were tortured and killed out of 200,000 islanders. The massacre saw 40,000 islanders flee to Japan, giving rise to a distinctive group of zainichi Koreans for whom Kim is a celebrated voice.

The Jeju Massacre remained officially censored in the ROK until 1990 but was also taboo in Japan. “To say you were a victim was to say that you were a Communist. We could not even talk about Jeju itself since both criminals and victims had fled to Japan”. Kim Sok Pom learned about the massacre from relatives and risked his life with his censorious portrait of South Korea in Karasu no Shi. “For decades he had to ensure he had escape routes from public venues”. In fact, Kim Sok Pom is the author’s pen name; he tried to conceal his real name to protect relatives on Jeju Island. However, it was discovered and his relatives were ostracized or blacklisted due to their association with Kim. This, despite the fact that Kim had withdrawn

---

10 Kim Sok Pom, recorded interview, March 1, 2000.
11 Referred to by interviewees as the Yon San Jiken (the April 3rd Incident) and in Western scholarship as the Jeju Uprising, Rebellion or Massacre.
12 Kim, Sok Pom, Karasu no Shi [The Death of the Crow] (Kodansha, 1971), p.114.
14 Kim Sok Pom, recorded interview, March 1, 2000.
16 The term ‘zainichi Korean’ refers to those Koreans and/or their descendants whose presence in Japan is the direct result of Japan’s thirty-five-year occupation of the Korean Peninsula (1910-1945). This term distinguishes them from ‘newcomer Koreans.’ In Takayama, H., "Ghosts of Jeju." (Newsweek Jun 19. 2000), https://www.newsweek.com/ghosts-Jeju-160665
18 Chan Jong Bong, recorded interview, March 20, 2002.
from the pro-communist Sören in 1968. “At that time, people constantly had to consider the divided border between North Korea and South Korea. There were so many actual spy stories”. 

Kim told me “Zainichi Koreans end up writing about politics; it is inevitable. From there you work backwards towards humanity”. Publisher Koh I Samu says, “Socialism and the lives of zainichi Korean labourers always appear in zainichi Korean literature”. It is worth remembering that the majority of zainichi Koreans of Kim’s generation, including Kim, experienced significant poverty in post-war Japan, even during Japan’s phenomenal period of rapid economic growth. The political and material dimensions of zainichi Korean lived experience and Kim’s narrative are irrevocably tied to the question of reading Karasu no Shi as a national allegory, to which I now turn.

3 National Allegory, Cultural Revolution and Transcendence

Fredric Jameson’s 1986 theory that, “all third-world texts are necessarily …to be read as... national allegories” has been widely criticized, most notably by Aijaz Ahmad, as Eurocentric, patronizing and totalising vis-à-vis the non-West. Jameson’s use of the term ‘Third’ world, with its implication that the diverse cultures of Africa, South America, and Asia could be represented as a single cultural entity, and his argument that all third-world texts included a political dimension, were characterised as reductive. “The idea that a privileged, white, American male critic would be making such categorical statements about the ‘Third World’ was itself considered odious by some, so the details of Jameson’s argument sometimes became lost in the uproar.”

---

20 Tazaki Akira, recorded interview July 17, 2000. Also, interestingly, Kim’s real name appears in every work of fiction he has written (ibid).
21 Chosen Sören is the Japanese term for the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan; the Korean term is Chongryon. My interviewees, without prompting from me, used the abbreviated Sören.
22 Kim Yong Tae Rong, recorded interview, May 2, 2000.
23 Recorded interview, March 1, 2000.
24 Recorded interview, October 24, 2000.
Cindi Textor argues against reading *Karasu no Shi* as a national allegory because such an interpretation “runs the risk of reproducing the structures of powers and privilege critiqued in the context of Jameson’s original deployment of national allegory.” But Jameson’s original proposition was the Marxist idea that ‘Third’ World literature offered an important alternative to ‘First’ World literature, precisely because the latter reproduced imperialist hierarchies of power. His thesis critiqued imperialism and its attendant racism on the one hand, and capitalism on the other, as co-constitutive. Jameson was advocating the emancipatory possibilities of literature.

It is true that Jameson’s national allegory is tied to concepts of empire, race and domination. But these concepts inevitably remain linked to any discussion of democratizing literary politics, like two sides of a coin. Related terms like nation, allegory, First-, Second-, and Third- World are laden with nuances that might be deployed to normalize oppressive hierarchies of power. Textor points out that these limitations are also applicable to terms such as ‘zainichi’ and ‘zainichi literature.’ She argues that Jameson’s national allegory works to reproduce the West as dominant and sees “an analogous process at work in the categorization of zainichi literature,” whereby the genre itself might only admit a narrow representation of zainichi Koreans, devoid of complexities and contradictions, and one that would always reproduce Japan as dominant.

Textor’s arguments remind us how important critical thinking is, but controversial terms do not inevitably perpetuate inequality. Until ‘other’ terms are at our disposal the politics of deconstruction raises questions about whose voices or views can be considered authoritative over others. For example, many zainichi Korean writers, Kim included, do not want fiction by and about the zainichi Korean experience appropriated by the Japanese literary establishment and uphold the label ‘zainichi literature.’ Lay zainichi Korean consumers of the genre also take pride in its privileging of the zainichi experience. Complexities and contradictions permeate the considerable body of ‘zainichi

---

33 Ibid., p.512.
literature’ and the multifaceted characters, plots and writing styles of myriad writers, defy simplistic minoritized stereotypes.

Of late, scholars are rehabilitating Jameson’s theory, particularly in Chinese, Taiwanese, African and Latin American literary studies. Auritro Majumder claims that “Jameson’s essay holds maybe even more relevance today than when it was first published.” Jameson’s theorising about artistic representation as a form of cultural revolution is particularly relevant when considering Karasu no Shi allegorically. Szeman and Majumder skilfully argue that critics overlook Jameson’s claim that aesthetics is a creative site of emancipation – the overcoming of imperialism through its artistic re-presentation. Majumder points out that Jameson has problematized the notion of “cultural revolution” from as early as 1972 to draw attention to the determinate relation between national historical circumstance and artistic representation. Erin Zivin calls attention to how scholars, notably Walter Benjamin and Paul deMan, conceive of allegory, as that which performs, rather than thematizes, political and aesthetic representation.

Significantly, for my analysis of Karasu no Shi, Jameson explicitly tied the notion of national allegory not only to the material tradition of “cultural revolution” but also to the political cause of socialism. In fact, most zainichi Koreans, from the 1940s until the early 1970s, including Kim, were predisposed to socialist goals that addressed a forgotten history, the struggle for political freedom, economic equality and cultural independence. These struggles are still ongoing. In a discussion with Kim about Karasu no Shi, he told me:

When I learned of the massacre I fell into a deep depression and felt there was no point in living. Writing Karasu no Shi finally gave me a reason to live. I

found meaning for my life. I was not a guerrilla fighter; I had no weapon. Overcoming that reality is what I call a cultural revolution. I could only fight with my mind.  

Kim illustrates a clear separation between past and present in Karasu no Shi, namely a precolonial and a postcolonial Jeju. Dawn Fulton points to a certain kind of temporality that informs a national allegory, which signifies “a disjunction between what was and what is no more.” It functions as, “a powerful tool in the reclaiming of lost or stolen history.” For Hillenbrand too, national allegory reclaims the past for colonialism’s “historyless” people. Kim’s evocation of the lost past, however fictional it may be, shows how traces of history inform lived experience in the present.

The complexity of defining Korean nationhood, in particular for zainichi Koreans is another reason Textor resists “allegories of the broader Korean nation.” Yet, Karasu no Shi is set in 1948, before partition, when the concepts of Korean nationalism, socialism and a return to the Korean homeland were valid aspirations for zainichi Koreans, including Kim himself.

Interestingly though, Kim’s ‘Korean nation’ is clearly diffused with conflicting ideologies and influences, not just in later writings, but specifically in Karasu no Shi. Kim’s national allegory is not a simplistic one-to-one mapping that is epistemologically questionable; rather it is layered and thus calls attention to how allegory accentuates diversity. Kim’s characters - the captain, the mother, the best friend, the stranger - when read allegorically, personify - the imperialist, the commoner, the communist and expatriate - positions, mingling uncomfortably in an unstable composition. With this approach Kim suggests there is no single version of nation, history or identity.

Kim’s delineation of the Korean nation is where Textor and I can potentially find common ground, because, as she explains, “Kim’s conceptualization of the Korean nation is ... an imagined construct, deployed for the purpose of creating a space in

---

40 Kim Sok Pom, recorded interview March 1, 2000.
42 Ibid., p.305.
45 Kim Sok Pom, recorded interview March 1, 2000.
which to articulate a specifically non-reified difference as an act of postcolonial resistance.” Textor showcases how Kim manipulates language to communicate the possibility of representing difference and eschewing assimilation. He privileges transcending the particularity of the colonial history and postcolonial circumstances to access the universal, “…because the experience of difference is itself a universal experience.”

In my reading, allegory in Karasu no Shi works in much the same way. Kim’s characters embody different paradigms and ways of being in the world. And, Kim is not solely focused on the colonial history of Jeju – there is more at stake – he is concerned with the transcendence of the individual and, by extension, of humanity. Allegory is a literary device with implications that reach beyond the political and historical; it expresses a character’s inner experience of the transitory nature of the world. The intense focus on his hero’s inner world throughout the narrative until his renaissance at the climax points to Kim’s interest in transcendence and his aspirations for the universal condition.

There are many ways to read Karasu no Shi; it can be interpreted as a fictional spy story, as historiography, or, as a work that scrutinizes the mechanism of language as an authorial source of resistance or representation of difference, as Textor delineates so well. Contemporary research on reader agency indicates that people have little or no rational control over their interpretations of stories. Papova argues that literary understanding is not a conscious decision or a matter of choice for the reader. In fact, Loanna Lung claims that our ability to understand metaphors appears to be an involuntary cognitive process that likely evolved with our linguistic ability.

This calls into question Textor’s contention that to read Kim’s Cheju-do (Jeju Island) fiction as zainichi allegory is to engage in an “interpretive labor”, because such “a figurative meaning is not obviously present.” Surely one cannot simply dismiss

---

48 Ibid.
52 Textor, Cindi, “Representing Radical Difference: Kim Sŏkpŏm’s Korea(n) in Japan(ese).” (Positions: East...
Kim’s readers or indeed the author himself, for whom the ‘figurative meaning(s)’ is(are) obviously present.\textsuperscript{53} Ironically, even Textor herself, admits, despite her “caveats about allegory in effect…” that “the collectivity that Kim cannot but represent in his stories is specifically the Korean minority in Japan.”\textsuperscript{54} She also iterates that Kim’s heroes, including Gi Jun, “occupy an ambiguous position that can be likened to that of the \textit{zainichi} in general.”\textsuperscript{55}

I maintain that Kim’s narrative unambiguously steers readers towards an understanding that the complex and evolving character of the spy represents \textit{zainichi} Koreans in Japan in the early post-war period. It is well documented in testimony, literature and media, that \textit{zainichi} Koreans, of Kim’s generation, repeatedly refer to a lived experience of a split subjectivity, characterised by feeling caught between two cultures. Until the denouement of \textit{Karasu no Shi}, the spy allegorizes such a life: divided across cultures, languages and borders. This paradox – a coexistence of opposites – is what Cowan calls the foundation of allegory because one of the main characteristics of allegory is opposing viewpoints that illustrate conflict.\textsuperscript{56} The \textit{zainichi} Korean exile of the 1950s is the extratextual reality toward which Kim’s allegorical spy points. Gi Jun’s evolution and his coming to terms with his own radical ambiguity is what makes the novel a source of information, transformation, and hope. Even the novel’s title is allegorical; the literal death of the crow is the figurative resurrection of the hero.

\textbf{4 Reading \textit{Karasu no Shi}}

Set in the winter of 1949, six months after the \textit{Jeju} massacre, \textit{Karasu no Shi} traces the movements and thoughts of a young Korean, Jon Gi Jun, who leaves Japan to return to his native village of Song Ne in Jeju Island upon Korea’s liberation in 1945. Gi Jun’s story and the structure of the novel conjure up the geopolitical position of the island at the crossroads of China, the USSR, Japan and Korea. Jeju Island is

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{53} Zainichi Korean philosopher Takeda Seiji, poet Zhong Zhang, publisher Tazaki Akira, critic Isogai Jiro, are just four examples of ‘readers’ who contend that the spy motif allegorises \textit{zainichi} Koreans temporally speaking. Textor lists others in footnote 3 of her article (2019, p.525).
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 512.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p.514.
\end{itemize}
caught between a number of powerful forces that its inhabitants have little control over. In a short period, the Korean War was set in motion, hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives and the political landscape was irrevocably changed. In line with this, the story takes place over a short five-day span and highlights how Jon Gi Jun finds himself caught in an uneasy intermediary position between dissimilar people, with whom he intermingles - either willingly or otherwise, each of whom allegorizes a differing political and ideological conviction or paradigm. The conflicted hero, at odds with himself, almost loses everything including his own convictions, but ultimately reconciles himself to his circumstances.

The story begins with a description of Jeju Island: the sea, the wind, the wooden houses, the stone walls, the women with baskets on their backs, the market-place, and the meandering road, all of which are set in opposition to an overbearing and unwanted US military presence and the right-wing South Korean police and militias. The former Japanese imperial presence looms in the background. From the steps of the American-controlled police department, where Jon Gi Jun works as an English-speaking interpreter, he can see dead bodies lying under the tired cherry trees, previously planted by the Japanese Army, that line the courtyard. He can also see the Stars and Stripes waving from the roof. In his mind, the Japanese and American presence reinforce each other. “Almost immediately, through these symbols: the corpses, cherry trees and American flag - Kim conflates pre- and post-war imperialism, making them one project.”

In former times they’d crossed the sea and, as part of their ‘Imperialist policy’, had planted rows of cherry seedlings; now only old and knotted trees, their dead limbs piercing the cold... The scars of those dreadful distant days when they’d lost their mother country were affixed to his consciousness like pleats in a skirt. Those were not cherry blossoms. They were the companions of the bayonets, and still reminders of that festering ache.

The nameless town cripple, Denbō Jiji (Old Man Boil), whose ‘job involved pressing his lips against people’s boils and sucking out the pus,’ is in the market-place clutching a bloodied head and demanding that someone identify it. There is trouble in store for anybody brave or foolish enough to do so! The villagers understand that

58 Kim, Sok Pom, Karasu no Shi [The Death of the Crow] (Kodansha, 1971), p.70.
59 Ibid., p.71.
Denbō Jiji is being paid to tell the police the names of those who do recognize the dead communist. Denbō Jiji’s vulgar shouts arguably act as a wake-up call to the reader still slumbering in a veil of ignorance or indifference to Korea’s colonial history.

‘Hey, whoa, hey there, how about some prize money for this head? He’s a handsome one. Hey ladies, sisters how about this sexy guy? Ha, ha, ha, ha. This gentleman is from one of the villages. Don’t you recognize him? Isn’t there anyone who recognizes this guy’s head? Who was he? Tell us for your country. For 100,000 yen.’...The head of the youth, suspended in the winter sun, looked as if it were a face in water. His head had been cut off just below the chin hence he had no neck.

‘Why aren’t his eyes peeled and his nostrils swollen and why doesn’t his tongue hang out of his mouth?’ Gi Jun thought, ‘Why isn’t the agony of his existence, his broken cheated spirit, written on his face?’

The scene of the unaffected old man dispassionately carrying a severed head in a bustling marketplace is unmistakably carnivalesque in several respects. As Danow explains, “The role of the market-place or central square... figures as a principal feature of the carnivalesque... The street is a real-life stage upon which the most unexpected drama may be enacted.” and “the “grand disorder” of the marketplace is... a hallmark of the carnivalesque.” Kim turns the marketplace on its head; what was once a lively bustling centre of life is turned into an exhibition place of death. Another way to read this scene is allegorically; for the separation of head from body may be read as a condemnation of the separation of leadership from the people, as well as a sickening display of the disunity and consequent division of the nation. After all, the drama involving the separation of body parts comes at times of aggressive disintegration of the individual. Indeed, bodily trauma is a prime example of this process of psychological disintegration.

Despite the ubiquity of the phenomenon of bodily separation, there is little conceptual or empirical research dealing with the implications of such fragmentation in Japan but it is well studied in European history. Nochlin notes how anxiety and crisis came to be represented in the works of European writers and artists of the late...
eighteenth century in terms of a partial image, a crop, a fragmentation, ruin and mutilation. These images represent nostalgia and grief for the lost totality of the past from antiquity on. Bainard Cowan explains that, for theorist Walter Benjamin, melancholia resulting from cultural decay – where ruined artefacts end up as fragments – causes an allegorical (rather than realist) way of looking at or experiencing the world – fragments stand in for what once was; “Allegory arises from the apprehension the world is no longer permanent.” Because, to reiterate, allegory transforms things or characters into signs that symbolize something greater than the thing or character in question.

The Surrealism movement attempted to deconstruct certainty with techniques that privileged the fragment, the double image, the chance encounter and the strange juxtapositions of objects. Kim similarly explores the relations between previously unrelated objects such as a bayonet and a cherry blossom – each with a literal but also a symbolic meaning. Kim creates the illusion of distance between symbolic objects so he can reassemble them using the transformative powers of literary aesthetics. But Kim also creates distance through the use of allegorical figures, such as the spy and the ghost, to represent complex characters and places them in unexpected settings. The everyday marketplace and the evil presence of the military and the communist Gi Jun in a western suit smoking American cigarettes, are just two examples of objects or locations that otherwise would remain apart. Arguably, the juxtaposition of two cultural identities creates a third identity, one that results in a hybrid subjectivity that is of a different quality from all that went before, yet retains traces of the old. Kim reminds us of the ways in which history imbues the present with formative qualities through the use of this dialogic process.

Kim thus calls attention to the contradictions that inform lived experience in the peripheries. Auritro Majumder points to another Jameson essay, “On Magical Realism in Film”, in which the latter claims the development of magical realism in the third world signifies “a type of historical raw material in which disjunction is structurally present and which articulates the engagement of the past within the present.” It is

---

65 Ibid.
this structural condition of unevenness or disparity that informs the dialectical relationship between aesthetics and politics. According to Majumder, “Such is the ‘lesson’ that Jameson has in mind.”

Similarly, the identity of the spy or the dead communist, is in question, evoking a central tenet of *Karasu no Shi*, in that identifying another human being is no simple matter. The sight of ‘Old Man Boil’ carrying the severed head highlights how little the “majority” is prepared to identify either the perpetrators or the victims of atrocities, be they fictional characters or marginalized peoples. The scene is a powerful metaphor for the “blind eye” people turn when faced with the ugly consequences of colonial history. While Kim’s scene interrogates silence as complicit it also shows how people are forced into silence, to avoid oppression.

5 Doppelganger characterization: spy and covert ally

The trajectory of events at war’s end explains how Gi Jun’s circumstances compel him to become a spy. In 1945, Gi Jun is thrilled to leave Japan and return to a liberated Korea. He and Yang Suni, a childhood friend from the same village, are in love. Together with her brother and Gi Jun’s best friend, Yon Sok, they look forward to a promising future. Like other returnee Koreans, Gi Jun didn’t foresee the civil war that would ensue. In effect, he jumped ‘out of the frying pan, into the fire.’

A young intellectual, Gi Jun accepts a promising job as an English-speaking interpreter for the American military and is proud to serve both his country and the liberating army. In his Western garb, smoking Lucky Strikes, Gi Jun is visibly ‘the handiwork of the US military’ and is despised by the villagers as a traitor. But Gi Jun is not what he appears to be. It is not until the second chapter that the reader realizes that Gi Jun is a spy for the communist partisan guerrillas based at Halla Mountain. It is hard to suddenly grasp that he is the villagers’ covert ally. Using the trope of the spy, Kim emphasizes how easy it is to misjudge and marginalize someone with typecast identity markers.

The spy is the linchpin of Kim’s story and certainly has allegorical resonance. For one thing, Gi Jun’s Korean origins combined with his links to Japan ensure his

---


inscription in the text as a *zainichi* Korean. The trope of the spy is a well-designed illustration of the dialectical nature of allegory as it allows Kim to eschew essentialist colonial/postcolonial constructions of *zainichi* Korean or Korean as fixed identities. Gi Jun’s life is situated between localities, cultures, languages but also political affiliations. Gi Jun finds being a spy almost unbearable. The circumstances that compelled him to become a spy inform the entire narrative and the existential dilemma of Kim’s fictional hero. He must shapeshift, or ‘pass’, to bridge the dichotomous stance his ‘identity’ demands. In short, the spy’s identity, much like that of the over determined *zainichi* Korean, has been utterly subsumed by the interpretations of others and exigencies of survival.

As the political atmosphere changes for the worse, so do the destinies of Gi Jun, his friends and the woman he loves. But Kim tactically refrains from giving a clear-cut description of the uprising and its background until midway through the novel, making it difficult to follow for people unfamiliar with this history. According to Song Hye Wong, Kim’s deferral of the historical details exhorts the reader to take responsibility for knowing ‘their’ *zainichi*, Japanese, Korean or American history.  

Finally, in chapter five, Kim links the neo-colonial problem of nation building and the fates of his characters as the American army began to intervene in local politics,

> About one week after US forces reached Korea, coming ashore at Incheon, when they landed on the island in mid-September, the youth were exhilarated by the thought of a liberating army, even if it were meant to be a temporary measure. As for the islanders, with dubious expressions, they found themselves facing a strange foreign army which had replaced the Japanese occupying forces… Soon it became clear that American military interests and the will of the Korean people were diametrically opposed.

It isn’t long before the US military starts to sponsor attacks on the left-wing organizations on the island. Gi Jun’s friend, Yon Sok and his partisan band are forced to go into hiding. Gi Jun, for his part, wants to quit his job and join Yon Sok in the fight for independence, but Yon Sok exhorts him to keep working for the US military and gather intelligence for the partisans. Gi Jun agrees, ‘for the sake of the communist party and the country.’

---

71 Kim, Sok Pom, *Karasu no Shi (The Death of the Crow)* (Kodansha, 1971), pp.113-114.
72 Ibid., p.119.
People came to openly regard Gi Jun as an enemy… yet by this time Gi Jun had already been assigned a secret mission by the organization by Jan Yon Sok. In this way Gi Jun’s inner world was cut off from his outer world and his agony started. He became a loyal disciple of the US military and he abandoned a grief-stricken Yang Suni.\(^73\)

### 6 Shadow’s and mirrors

Gi Jun must learn to live life as a spy. In order to carry out his counter-intelligence, he is forced to sever all relationships with his compatriots, except for the occasional clandestine meeting with Yon Sok. Lonely, deprived of love and despised by the villagers, Gi Jun wishes he were made of steel. His experience of displacement and dispossession arguably marks Gi Jun as disporic. From time to time Gi Jun finds satisfaction in passing valuable information to the guerrillas, but the price he pays is high because in this role, he must sanction the prison sentences and murders of friends, acquaintances and strangers on a daily basis. ‘Gi Jun didn’t want to reveal the nature of his work even to himself; the fact was, in order not to die in vain, one had to kill even one’s own allies’\(^74\) Gi Jun agonizes because neo-colonial circumstances have forced him to live a lie, forced him to be someone he is not, and forced him to hide his identity. Gi Jun is now situated marginally to both “right” and “left” political cultures, a metaphor for Japanese and Korean cultures. And his experience exemplifies that of so many \textit{zainichi} Koreans, who feel compelled to pass as Japanese to survive in Japanese society.\(^75\) Most notably, his real self gradually becomes indistinct even to himself.

Gi Jun describes himself as “behind a mask” or “behind a mirror”, two enduring Kim motifs. Okaniwa observes, “Gi Jun’s biggest task is to overcome his emotions because in his world, emotions won’t work.”\(^76\) In assuming a mask, Gi Jun does, to some extent, overcome his emotions but in Doing so he becomes dehumanized and

\(^73\) Ibid., p.114.
\(^74\) Ibid., pp.84-86.
\(^75\) Poet Zhong Zhang asserts “Understanding the spy as an allegory of the \textit{zainichi} Korean is the only possible interpretation” (recorded interview, April 3, 2021).
\(^76\) Okaniwa, Noboru, \textit{Karasu no Shi} [The Death of the Crow] (Kodansha, 1971), Afterword, p.328.
increasingly alienated from the people around him. Kim uses the metaphor of the mirror when speaking of his own sense of displacement in Japan, saying: “It feels like I am looking at myself in the mirror at a stranger’s house.”

Isogai effectively argues that Gi Jun is a living paradox and is consciously and psychologically twisted, being “a superbly formed character, whose torn existence and struggle as a member of the Korean intelligentsia under American military control is keenly described.”

Kim emulates Dostoevsky in his use of the double or the shadow figure. At the same time, he highlights Gi Jun’s divided condition by figuratively positioning him between two antithetical characters or shadow figures, his friend, Jan Yon Sok, the communist, and his nemesis, I San Gun, the conservative, who allegorise Korea and Japan respectively. Dostoevsky is well known for surrounding his protagonists with people, who act as ‘vehicles for competing ideological issues.’

In Karasu no Shi, Yon Sok and Sang Gun mirror Gi Jun’s inner self and reflect the dual nature of his personality. Even the spaces where the two characters dwell signal their opposition in relation to Gi Jun. Yon Sok, who occupies a lofty position on top of Halla Mountain or on U Hill, proud and cohesive, exists almost in the realm of spirits and personifies Gi Jun’s unrealizable authentic side. Sang Gun, on the other hand, dwells in back alleys, on dusty roadsides or in run-down taverns; unsettled and disaffected, he personifies Gi Jun’s dark side. By placing Gi Jun between these binary opposites who are also his shadow figures, Kim suggests three different modes of existence legitimating each one. Additionally, Kim illustrates Gi Jun’s extreme alienation by underlining his increasing ambivalence to the two shadow figures, and yet the spy must resign himself to them both in order to survive. Nonetheless, Gi Jun’s presence is so pervasive that it overpowers the others, ultimately confirming his status as the most important, which privileges his intermediary, even ambiguous, position.

The following passage demonstrates Gi Jun’s alienation from those he most wants communion, the partisans, fiercely committed to the communist cause and the mother country, but tenuous to Gi Jun, and by extension, to zainichi Koreans.

Of late Gi Jun only met with Yon Sok on top of U Promontory. But since the fighting was getting so fierce, they were, more often than not, unable to contact each other. Jon Gi Jun’s best friend, Yon Sok, was the only link he had to Mt Halla…

---

78 Ibid.
Even if there were underground organizations in Song Ne or in the remote villages, Gi Jun had no relationship with them. Yon Sok was like the narrow neck of a bottle. Only through this could Gi Jun just barely manage to come into contact with the atmosphere of the world inside the bottle. If not that, let’s say that Gi Jun’s mission was nothing more than to be an instrument living in the vacuum of a bottle stopped up with a cork.

Later in the novel Gi Jun comes face-to-face with his double, I Sang Gun who, with an almost homo-erotic proclivity, has shadowed him throughout the novel.

Gi Jun was drinking behind the partition as if hiding. Suddenly he lifted his head and saw someone’s shadow. I Sang Gun was standing there and Gi Jun started...

‘You really are something finding me in this dark corner.’
‘Nah, I’m in the bad habit of always sitting in this corner when I come here.’
‘So that means I’ve taken your spot.’ … Gi Jun chuckled and got up. He felt relieved at what I Sang Gun had said but he didn’t quite feel this was a chance encounter.

I Sang Gun embodies stereotypical “Japanese” characteristics of the era; he is the aimless and somewhat debauched son of a prominent conservative, with no particular ideological interests or convictions. Hayashi Kōji refers to I Sang Gun as a ‘Moratorium Man’ because he neither wants to align with the Americans or the partisans. To the extent that moratorium signifies hiatus, interlude or breach, it does indeed convey Sang Gun’s position as an intervening shadow or mirror image of Gi Jun. For instance, Sang Gun, with his self-seeking, devil-may-care attitude, challenges Gi Jun’s intellectual commitment to communism. In broader geopolitical and economic terms, the allegorical significance is instructive; it conjures Japan’s relationship with the US during the US-led occupation of Japan 1945-1952. In the 1950s Japan was neither wholeheartedly committed to American objectives in Korea nor entirely opposed to them albeit arguably subservient to them. This is confirmed by Japan’s somewhat reluctant but compliant role as a weapons manufacturer and base for American operations during the Korean War 1950-1953, which stimulated the Japanese economy.  

---

80 Kim, Sok Pom, Karasu no Shi [The Death of the Crow] (Kodansha, 1971), pp.96-97.
81 Ibid., pp.124-125.
83 Dingman, Roger, “The Dagger and the Gift: The Impact of the Korean War on Japan.” (The Journal of
increasingly disassociated themselves from ideological principles in the post-war period, hence the persuasive symbol of Japan allegorized in the politically ambivalent Sang Gun. While he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Sang Gun is isolated, disillusioned and spiritually bankrupt, under the thumb of his powerful father.

However, Sang Gun’s character also evokes the condition of zainichi Korean youth as well, for then as now, zainichi Korean youth and Japanese youth were physically, culturally and linguistically indistinguishable. This is suggested by the phrase, “without his coat, Sang Gun was the same black figure that Gi Jun was.” It is also suggested by his isolation and disparagement. Complaining, “No one likes me,” he is ostracized by his peers and stigmatized as an “aimless good for nothing drunk.” Japan remains isolated in Asia and zainichi Koreans, especially if sympathetic to communist ideals, were similarly stigmatized in Japan, especially in the early post-war period.

7 Disillusion

Presently Gi Jun is asked by the partisans to terminate his relationship with his lover, Yang Suni. Gi Jun’s predicament of hiding the truth from her mirrors that of many first- and second-generation zainichi Koreans, who also hid their identity, particularly, from lovers. Yang Suni pleads with Gi Jun to give up his interpreting job but Gi Jun is unresponsive, determined not to show any emotion and becomes incapable of relating to her. “He had the impulse to confess but he had his pride. There are things a man will not tell his wife, and it gave him satisfaction and pleasure when he overcame the risk…” At the end of the day she was just a woman.” Gi Jun’s chauvinism causes Yang Suni to curse his Lucky Strike cigarettes, rip a poster of a sexy woman off his wall and bitterly call him a traitor. Their parting becomes explosive, and a silent but seething Gi Jun rapes her. She protests by scratching her nails down his back, sealing their separation. The scene is oversimplified and unconvincing but warrants analysis.

Takeda Seiji argues that Gi Jun is forced to live a lie and wear a mask. He can’t be like a real human and, since that is the case, he wants some compensation. ‘By

---

84 Kim, Sok Pom, Karasu no Shi (The Death of the Crow) (Kodansha, 1971), p.125.
85 Ibid., p.106.
86 Ibid., p.115.
raping Yang Suni, Gi Jun successfully proves he can be a spy, in other words he can achieve a state of being “non-human” and simultaneously obtain some compensation for having to give up his former life and for losing her.87

The ill-fated love affair between Gi Jun and Yang Suni, is also arguably a microcosm of Kim’s allegorical approach to loss and separation. Kim depicts Yang Suni as a symbol of the nation as it was prior to the Korean War by displaying her in traditional white Korean dress, abiding by feminine ethical codes and fiercely loyal to her peasant/communist brother and parents. In short, she personifies communism, the peasant masses and traditional values. The failure of the relationship is thus not only a symbol of the impending national division, but also of the enforced separation from “home” or Korea, experienced by zainichi Koreans. It is widely recognized, even if controversial of late, that the gendering and sexualization of the nation are striking elements in post-colonial literature.88 When evaluating Yang Suni’s character, Yuval-Davis’ hypothesis that ‘women play a pivotal role in the construction of ethnicity and nationality: as biological reproducers and as boundary markers; as transmitters of the culture; as crucial symbols, for example, in notions of the motherland’ is worth considering.89

Rattansi critiques the metaphor of “rape”, “If “woman” is a key signifier of both culture and territory, then the sexual violation of her body is an assertion of masculinist ethnicity, or nationality or race.”90 Gi Jun, as representative of a zainichi Korean position, appropriates his right to Korean space and territory as embodied by Yang Suni. In other words, he stakes out a territorial claim to her body and to the nation, notably, at their separation. Her subsequent death at the hands of the Americans signals the end of an era, the death of communism in the south, and the beginning of a neo-colonial existence for the survivors who stay in Korea or a post-colonial existence for those who migrate to the metropolitan Japan.

Thereafter, Gi Jun, who is soon to be reassigned and transferred to the mainland, makes a trip back to his village hoping to see Yang Suni one last time. But the village

87 Recorded interview, October 25, 2003.
is deserted.

He was standing in the center of the village. There was not a living thing in sight … He thought he may as well peek inside Yang Suni’s house… Standing upright he suddenly felt terrible misgivings… That is when it happened. ‘Hey, I think I hear something’ he thought. ‘Yes, I did’… A young woman wearing white high heels and white chogori was walking towards him. It was definitely a woman. “What is going on?” he wondered, “a woman coming towards me in a deserted village, dressed all in white and wearing heels; that’s not right, and out here…”. The woman, who should have acknowledged his presence didn’t even offer a slight silent bow as she came closer… His head spun as though he were seeing an apparition but there she was clacking her heels towards him. He suddenly shouted, ‘Hey Yang Suni, Yang Suni. It’s me, Gi Jun!’

Gi Jun started after her. But the woman in white slipped into the alleyway and headed left. As if a white wind she floated softly by him and her shoes made no sound. Breathing heavily Gi Jun followed behind. The alleyway into which Yang Suni turned stretched out before him but no one was there.

“Gi Jun is like those first- and second-generation zainichi Koreans, like the author himself, who, when they made the trip, “back home” to the ROK were disillusioned”. Gi Jun’s idealized “home”, as for most first-generation zainichi Koreans, is rooted in childhood memories that have little in common with reality. Korea is always an imaginary illusion.

When Kim first went back to Jeju in 1988, he could not believe how different everything looked and felt. Moreover, he felt concerned for his safety saying, “Tazaki was effectively my bodyguard and we jumped at every loud noise. You could not

---

91 Kim, Sok Pom, Karasu no Shi (The Death of the Crow) (Kodansha, 1971), p.102.
92 Ibid., p.103.
93 Tazaki Akira, a publisher of Bungeishunjū, who worked closely with Kim Sok Pom and travelled with him to Jeju on occasion, recorded interview, July 16, 2003.
94 Although Kim was censured by the ROK for decades, he was simultaneously approached by Embassy officials on a regular basis to visit there as a guest of the state, offered chartered planes etc. Prior to the administration of Kim Dae Jung (1998-2003) to accept such an invitation meant accepting South Korean nationality to get a passport and thus endorsing military regimes. For Kim it was a political ruse and one that he rejected for four decades. His requests to visit as a stateless individual were rejected. He agreed to an invitation to go with a group of writers in 1988 partially because Kim Dae Jung, then in power, endorsed democracy and Kim could travel with a provisional passport. But he also wanted to see family members, pay respects at ancestral graves and do research for his literary endeavors. His visit was controversial in the ROK hence the concern for his safety (Kim Sok Pom, recorded interview, March 27, 2002 and Tazaki Akira, recorded interview, July 16, 2000).
trust one single official”⁹⁵ Other zainichi Koreans who journeyed to the southern state felt equally anxious, unwelcome, or were even arrested upon arrival as communist or Japanese spies, only to serve decade-long terms in South Korean prisons. They were forced to forsake the idealist notion that Korea was “home” and yet they could never consider Japan “home”.⁹⁶

8 Choices and Reconciliation

At the tragic climax of the novel on a visit to a prison camp, Gi Jun is forced to watch Yang Suni’s execution. He battles his emotions to feign indifference in front of his American superiors and eschews Yang Suni’s parents’ pleas for help, refusing to compromise his position, even for love, “like a stone.”⁹⁷ For Hayashi, “Kim presents an extreme representative of the Korean intellectual class at war.”⁹⁸

In contrast, Kim’s striking rendition of the peasant couple indecently quarrelling before their execution has won him the praise of a number of critics because it is “an extremely realistic portrayal of ‘ordinary commoners’ at death’s door.”⁹⁹ Kim assigns this larger meaning—ordinary commoners—to these characters and thus expands their significance as representatives of a cultural truth, which exactly exemplifies how allegory works.¹⁰⁰

Suddenly the old couple got into a terrible argument. They fought with their necks sticking out, like two birds pecking at each other. The old woman’s cries could be heard from all over the grounds, ‘I don’t want to die! Oh, it’s all because of Yon Sok. I’m going to die because you gave me a son from that decayed, spoiled

³⁵ Recorded interview, March 27, 2002.
³⁶ Considerations of home and return continue to exist on the psychical register of identity for diasporic people. Bell (2019, p.22) analyzes dance routines in an ethnic Korean high school in Japan to illustrate contemporary associations between identity and nation states and notes a long-distance nationalism no longer characterised by the desire to return to the homeland.
³⁸ Ibid.
tool of yours and it’s for him I’m being murdered. It’s because of your old putrefied penis, you rotten old man. I don’t want to die.’ The old man took his cue. Twisting in his ropes he kicked her hard showering her with vitriole. ‘You Jezebel! You and your rotten worthless hole! What was it good for? He came out of there didn’t he? And I’m going to die for him too. I don’t want to die either, you ugly bitch.’

The final scene of the novel illuminates the meaning of the work’s symbolic title and illustrates the hero’s hard-won reconciliation with himself and his circumstances. Upon leaving the police station Gi Jun sees the body of a teenage girl, who resembles Yang Suni. A crow, overhead, sets its sights on her. The crow is perceived as smart, mysterious and able to adapt to new circumstances being opportunistic and intelligent. Gi Jun, who is always dressed in black, and, like the crow, is viewed as an unwelcome predator. Both survive by exploiting the death which surrounds them on Jeju Island.

A crow was squawking loudly overhead. Gi Jun glanced up and saw a big one perched high in a dead branch of a cherry tree. Its head wobbled up and down like it was nodding and it made eyes as if searching for ground upon which to place its feet. A girl’s body was lying crosswise under the tree. Only seventeen or eighteen, looking upwards, legs spread, chest contorted, her body faced him. Blood trickled from her swollen half-open mouth. Because her twisted chin touched her shoulder the whole area was soaked in red as if she’d vomited blood… The crow suddenly spread its wings and did a descending dance towards the girl.

Suddenly Gi Jun shoots the crow in one expert shot. The very literal “death of the crow” can be interpreted in a number of ways. The crow, sustaining its life by feeding on the girl, reminds Gi Jun of his own decision to ignore the pleas of loved ones in order to survive himself; his shooting it may represent self-recrimination. The dead crow may also symbolize the part of Gi Jun that died with Yang Suni and his acknowledgement of that loss, even as his stoic resilience safeguards him.

The police captain emerges from the station at this juncture saying, ‘I never liked crows.’ The significance of his words should not be lost on the reader. Gi Jun momentarily considers shooting the captain but abruptly turns and shoots the corpse of the girl instead. This symbolic gesture reveals his decision to sever his emotional

---

102 Król, Karol and Hernk, Jozef, “Crows and Ravens as Indicators of Socioeconomic and Cultural Changes in Urban Areas.” (Sustainability, 12 (24), 2020).
103 Ibid., p.138.
link to Yang Suni, and by extension, to the past and the Korea of the past. It signals his decision to accept his role as a spy and overcome any incompatible emotional barriers in order to survive and thus heralds his own survival. Mourning Yang Suni and lost possibilities are no longer viable solutions for a man who intends to succeed as a spy. Kim tests Gi Jun a number of times but, with this final act of shooting the girls’ corpse, Gi Jun proves that internal contradictions can be tolerated, even integrated into the self, and he emerges a successful spy in his intermediary-type identity.

It is easy to assume that Gi Jun nihilistically resolves to remain a spy at the end of the novel, willing to sacrifice love, even himself, in the name of a socialist revolution. However, a close reading of the text demonstrates that as Gi Jun is forced to condone unimaginable suffering, his political convictions are slowly undermined. After he loses Yang Suni, he understands, ‘The party and the country can’t make up for the value of even one of Yang Suni’s tears.’

In fact, in the midst of a massacre it is hard to hold on to any beliefs. Surviving the massacre trumps any political ideology or doctrine. Gi Jun continues to resist the massacre but with a new-fashioned sensibility in which his determination is based, not on a commitment to communism but on Korean independence for the masses. Ki Jun’s responsibility to himself and to the country ‘as a whole’ is to be the best “spy” that he can be. Poet Zhong Zhang says “Gi Jun remains a spy in the name of justice. What took place on Jeju was so inhuman, he had to continue to call for justice”.

Cindi Textor argues that the powerlessness, silencing and marginalization that Gi Jun experiences are the result of a political position he has voluntarily chosen for himself.”

This line of thinking is not entirely unreasonable, however, free will is contingent on power relationships. I would argue that Gi Jun’s ‘voluntary choice’ constitutes recognition of the futility of suffering. In other words, Gi Jun’s decision to remain a spy – marginalised – is strategic. His initial ideological impulse has evaporated and he now privileges humanity and survival over ideology. The price of Gi Jun’s strategy – to remain a spy – is indeed silence and marginalisation, but it enabled him to survive his ‘embattled situation’.

---

104 Ibid., p.119.
105 Recorded interview, April 3, 2021.
that defines him but rather interior strength.

This brings me to the question of Kim Sok Pom’s decision to remain stateless—that is to say, to refuse to align himself with either North or South Korea after 1968. Textor writes, “For Kim, accepting Zainichi as the group to which he belongs is tantamount to accepting the permanent division of the Korean peninsula and the impossibility of a whole and complete Korean nation.” As I see it, for Kim, being a zainichi Chōsenjin is, to the contrary, to positively assert that he is a Korean from a pre-divided—unified—Korea. Stateless zainichi Koreans are uniquely able to articulate this radical position. But it involves significant sacrifice, as did Gi Jun’s sacrifice. Put simply, to choose statelessness means abandoning travel, being misunderstood in Japan and South Korea as pro-North, (and in Kim’s case, in the North construed as pro-South) and thus being vilified or having to live in fear. Moreover, for Kim, a gifted writer of pure literature, to assume this position meant he also forfeited recognition and accolades from the Korean peninsula, until recently, for his oeuvre, not to mention the forfeiture of monetary gain. His Japanese wife always had to work to support the family.

Kim developed a significant Japanese following over time. And, in 1984 the author was awarded the esteemed Osaragi Jirō Prize for volumes 1 to 3 of his novel Kazantō [Volcano Island] (1976-1997). He subsequently wrote an additional 4 volumes, and in 1997 won the prestigious 39th Mainichi Geijutsu Prize for the entire 7 volume epic novel. But Kim told me about his feelings of being marginalized in the literary establishment(s), “I am offside from the North, from the South and Japan. It is the price of being zainichi.”

Kim left the pro-DPRK Sōre in 1968.


Some stateless zainichi Chōsenjin are pro-North, but most are not. International travel is not disallowed but it comes with significant red tape. Travel to the two Koreas though was, and remains, more complicated.

At the award ceremony, he turned to the selection panel, and asked laughing, "Did you really read it?" (Kim S. P. Recorded interview, March 1, 2000). This timeline, 1976-1997, though different to some websites, is accurate (Zhong Zhang, recorded interview Apr 3, 2021).

Recorded interview March 1, 2000. Kim was also presented with a 'Jeju 4.3 Peace Prize' in 2015 in South Korea.
9 Conclusion

This paper contends that Kim Sok Pom strategically uses allegory as a revolutionary strategy to artistically explore the concept of postcolonial identity – and zainichi Korean identity in particular – against the backdrop of the Jeju Massacre in Karasu no Shi. Through layered allegory, Kim illustrates how competing imperialisms generated geographical partition, death and displacement. Jeju and Korea, as we knew it, are gone. The longing for the past and a unified homeland that inform the lived experience of dispossessed exiles not only alert Kim’s readers to Jeju’s forgotten history but draw attention to the discrete zainichi Korean experience. But his message is distinctly universal. Kim’s poetic impulse emphasises the lived experience of ‘otherness’ and resilience. Indeed, today, people the world over still struggle with these issues. Kim told me, “My purpose in writing Karasu no Shi is to depict how people live”. And “At my age, all I know is that people change but it depends how they change. We must face reality”. Kim’s allegorical narrative ultimately functions as a cultural or aesthetic revolution that privileges the malleability of identity. For Kim a resolute emergence from an embattled situation allows for the manifestation of a positive split subjectivity or fluid set of identities. His hero, the spy, realizes his own survival because of his willingness to adapt and transform his identity. He develops a tolerance for contradictions and ambiguity and learns to defy divisive ideologies. Agency is pivotal to survival. Kim was explicit, “Karasu no Shi saved my life; Gi Jun’s affirmation of life at the end of the novel allegorises me as a zainichi Korean”.

Acknowledgements I am truly grateful to Kim Sok Pom, the writer of Karasu no Shi, for generously discussing his work and philosophy with me on many enjoyable occasions. I want to sincerely thank Dr. Theresa Savage, Dr. Susan Peake, Associate Professor Nana Oishi, Jun Yano, Chris Poole and Dr. Hiroko Ide Levy for their helpful suggestions. I also appreciate the contribution of all the participants interviewed, in particular, philosopher Takeda Seiji, and poet Zhong Zhang.

114 Recorded interview, August 1, 2000.
115 Recorded interview, March 27, 2002.
参考文献（Bibliography）

磯貝治良（1979）『始源の光』 東京：創樹社

岡庭昇（1971）「解説『鴉の死』」『鴉の死』 東京：講談社

金石範（1971）『鴉の死』 東京：講談社


