

Beyond the Dichotomy of Resistance and Collaboration: A Reappraisal of Kim Saryang's *Nostalgia*

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The novel *Nostalgia* (*Hyangsu*) portrays the Korean independence movement inside Manchuria in great detail and lets us understand the sentiments of the Korean people who were forced to suffer a tremendous amount of pain and were faced with numbing dilemmas at the time. Unlike many other fictional novels or narratives that describe collaborators as people who felt completely comfortable in cooperating with the Japanese authorities, Kim Saryang tried to portray them from a different perspective while also appreciating the complicated nature of the situation they were put in. Kim did not only portray their heroic deeds but also described their frustration and pain. As a result, some people interpret this novel as a narrative supporting cooperation with the Japanese authorities, while some interpret it from a completely different perspective. Yet these views do not matter because the essence of this novel is that it portrays the cries of distress of the colonized population as realistically as possible. Kim Saryang is special because he never gave up being a person who was completely vulnerable to a situation that would force him to agonize over and repeatedly question his own stance. He did not succumb to a forceful power and did not yield even when tempted by soothing consolation. Kim was a person who wanted to see the colonized situation of Korea, and his own position inside that system, as it was, and as he was. Although at first he was enchanted by the aesthetic point of view raised by a Japanese intellectual named Yanagi Muneyoshi (Yanagi Sōetsu 柳宗悦) and even borrowed some of his motifs for use in *Nostalgia*, he was able to see through what the implications would be if he were to remain inside such mindset. He refused to give up without a good fight and was not afraid to confront ugly truths. Such efforts inspire and enable us to believe that a simple dichotomy should be overcome in our quest to understand the nature of the Japanese colonization period in Korea.

Keywords: Resistance, Collaboration, Kim Saryang, *Nostalgia* (*Hyangsu*), Yanagi Muneyoshi (Yanagi Sōetsu 柳宗悦)

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Introduction

Kim Saryang 金史良 (real name Kim Sich'ang 金時昌 1914-1950) was a Korean writer active during the Japanese colonial period. He published numerous works in Japanese that “criticized” the colonial policies of Japanese authorities; however, he also published some works (especially after 1942) that are now viewed by many as having “supported” the colonial authorities in Korea. In the spring of 1945, barely half a year before liberation, Kim left Korea to join the Korean “Righteous Army” and eventually returned to his hometown of Pyongyang to help build a new Korean nation after liberation from Japanese rule in August of the same year. After the Korean War broke out in the summer of 1950, Kim followed the Korean People’s Army as a war correspondent as they advanced southward and reportedly died while retreating from the warfront.¹

One of his most renowned works, *Nostalgia* (*Hyangsu*) is one of the very few works of literature that portrays the Korean Independence movement in Manchuria from a realistic perspective. *Nostalgia* is a short story that describes with incredible depth and poignancy, how colonized Koreans actually “felt” during this time of great suffering. It is rather amazing how this work has mostly been forgotten despite its great significance.

Nostalgia was first published in 1941, in the magazine *Bungei shunjū* 文芸春秋 (in 1942 it was republished in the second collection of his works entitled *Hometown*). In *Nostalgia*, the protagonist Yi Hyeon 李絃, carrying no luggage, ventures off to Beijing, boarding a train that is packed with passengers traveling to Manchuria and Northern China. Even though the stated purpose given on his request for a travel certificate was to visit China in order to survey old artistic artifacts, local authorities are quite suspicious of Yi Hyeon because his brother-in-law, Yun Jangsan 尹長山, is a political operative (i.e. independence fighter) active in Northern Manchuria. Yi Hyeon, having heard that his sister and his brother-in-law who left Korea in 1919 are now living in Beijing, travels there at the request of his mother to find his nephew Musu 蕪水. When Yi Hyeon arrives in Beijing, however, he is confronted with a shocking reality. Not only has his sister Gaya become an opium dealer, but her husband Yun Jangsan has abandoned her for the wife of his subordinate Pak Jun, who is now in prison! Yi Hyeon’s nephew Musu, son of Yun and Gaya, has joined a Japanese special force unit so that his parents will receive a lighter sentence if they are captured by

1. An Usik, tr. Sim Weonseop, *Kim Saryang pyeongjeon* [A Critical Biography of Kim Saryang] (Seoul: Munhak gwa Jiseong-sa, 2000).

Japanese troops.

While walking through the streets of Beijing, Yi Hyeon comes across some Goryeo celadon and some white Joseon porcelain in an antique shop. Upon seeing these two pieces of earthenware he literally hears “their voices” imploring Yi Hyeon to take them back to Korea. They are asking him for “salvation” and to Yi Hyeon, it as if this request is being made by his own sister. He virtually hears his sister screaming for help through the voices of the ceramics. Yi Hyeon, who is carrying money given to him by his mother with instructions to deliver it to his sister, instead decides to use it to buy the ceramics. After buying the pieces he returns to Korea.

Korean scholars started to take interest in Kim Saryang during the 1990s, but the novel *Nostalgia* was only placed at the center of scholarly work on Kim after the year 2000. The very first scholar to take notice of *Nostalgia* was Kim Yunsik. Finding the internal conflicts of a writer who uses both Korean and Japanese to be of particular interest,² Kim Yunsik attempts to trace how Japanese was integrated in the minds of Korean writers like Kim Saryang by examining a scene in *Nostalgia*.³

Another scholar, Kim Jaeyong, interprets Kim’s works as “resistance literature” and regards *Nostalgia* as a work that deals with the issue of “people being polarized and becoming one of two possible options: collaborators or resistance fighters.”⁴ He further argues that, because of censorship and the intervention of Japanese authorities at the time, the “resistance” of the characters, and even the “resistant voice” of the author himself are not at all “evident” in the story.

Kim Cheol has been very critical of the current trend to praise the works of Kim Saryang and criticizes *Nostalgia* as an “unquestionably collaborative piece of writing.”⁵ Other scholars have also been critical of Kim Saryang and describe

2. Kim Yunsik, *Ilje malgi Hanguk jakga ui Ilboneo geulsseugi ron* [A Korean writer’s Japanese writing during the last years of the Japanese Occupation] (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2003).

3. While sitting on a bench in the park with his sister Yi Gaya, Yi Hyeon happens to see an old friend named Itō 伊藤, who was now a Japanese military officer. Upon seeing Itō, his sister, a former independence fighter and now an opium dealer, runs away in fear that she might be apprehended. Yi Hyeon, in his attempt to stop her, inadvertently shouts “Wait!” in Japanese instead of Korean. Kim Yunsik draws the conclusion that in Kim’s subconscious mind the Korean language is dominated by the Japanese language.

4. Kim Jaeyong and Gwak Hyeondeok, *Kim Saryang, jakpum gwa yeongu* [Kim Saryang’s works and studies about his works] (Seoul: Yeongnak, 2008), 411-427.

5. Kim Cheol, “Dugae ui geoul: Minjok Damwharon ui jahwasang geurigi” [Two mirrors: A self-portrait of the national discourse], *Sangheo Hakbo* 17 (2006), 157.

Kim's work as "conforming to the situation"⁶ or as "camouflaged gestures of collaboration."⁷

These polarized evaluations of Kim Saryang's literary works demonstrate that most scholars and researchers have approached it from a "nationalist" perspective. Put simply, these scholars have sought to delineate a single, consistent position – one of either resistance to or collaboration with the Japanese – through which to label Kim Saryang and the entirety of his colonial period work. If these previous studies are any indication, however, we can clearly see that the nature of Kim Saryang's works and his political intentions cannot be adequately gauged through a nationalist framework.

While it is true that Kim Saryang never picked up a weapon himself, he did everything he could to condemn Japan's violent oppression of Korea. Rather than directly fighting oppression when it grew more severe, he chose to take a step back and continue writing. In this way, Kim is seen as combining two conflicting attitudes and is a unique figure in the history of colonial Korean literature. Walking a fine line between resistance and collaboration, Kim tried to reveal the barbaric nature of Japanese colonial rule by highlighting the suffering of people under oppression. *Nostalgia*, which narrates the experiences of people who happened to be born in a colonized country and were forced to live the reality of colonial oppression throughout their lives, is a manifestation of such efforts.

Nostalgia is also a story about Kim Saryang since he himself was one of the Koreans oppressed under colonial rule. Kim, deeply aware of his position as an "author," constantly questioned, doubted and struggled to define himself.⁸ *Nostalgia* reflects these inner struggles in its narrative structure. *Nostalgia* is not the work of a person with a consistent political position or singular agenda; rather, it is the work of a person who struggles endlessly with a shifting political situation.

Kim Saryang made some interesting choices when writing *Nostalgia*. For example, Kim Saryang based the general outline of the text on his travel essay "Stuck with Enamel Shoes"⁹ with several changes made to the details of the

6. Choe Gwangseok, "Kim Saryang ui Ilboneo munhak yeongu" [Study of Kim Saryang's Literary works in Japanese] (PhD dissertation, Gyeongnam University, 2007), 134.

7. Kim, Hakdong, "Minjok munhak euroseo ui jae-Il Joseonin munhak" [The Literary works of Koreans living in Japan as part of the National Literature], (PhD dissertation, Chungnam University, 2006), 70.

8. See Kim Saryang, *Kim Saryang zenshū* II 金史良全集 [Complete collection of Kim Saryang's works] (Tokyo: Kawade shobō 河出書房, 1973), 142, for an example of this self-doubt.

9. "Stuck with the Enamel Shoes" ("Enameru kutsu no horyo" エナメル靴の捕虜, *Bungei shunshu*

story. In “Stuck with Enamel Shoes” he wrote that while he originally hoped to find some Goryeo or Joseon porcelain in Chinese antique shops, he was not able to find any. In *Nostalgia*, however, the protagonist is able to find some porcelain. It should be noted that this storytelling device demonstrates the influence of Yanagi Muneyoshi (Yanagi Sōetsu 柳宗悦, 1889-1961) on Kim Saryang. Yanagi’s stance vis-à-vis Korea was unique in that, although sincerely sympathetic to Korean people and Korean culture, he was not able to overcome his own Orientalism. Although originally accepted by Kim Saryang, this scene in *Nostalgia* can be seen as Kim’s departure from the views of Yanagi.

Yanagi Muneyoshi’s Influences in *Nostalgia* and the Eventual Parting of Ways

1) Yanagi’s Porcelain and Kim Saryang’s Porcelain

While, as found in the travelogue “Stuck with Enamel Shoes,” Kim Saryang was unable to actually find the Korean ceramics he was looking for in Beijing, Kim places two Korean ceramics – a Goryeo period celadon piece and a Joseon period white porcelain piece – in the text as its climactic point, endowing them with the voice of the protagonist’s sister Gaya. The following paragraph portrays how Yi Hyeon, the protagonist and narrator of the novel *Nostalgia*, came to encounter the ceramics at a Beijing antique shop.

It was without question, a piece of Goryeo celadon.... ㉠ The celadon was saying.

文艺春秋, 1939.9) is a travelogue written by Kim when he visited China for a one-week trip just before his graduation from Tokyo University. This travelogue later served as a preliminary source of information for the novel *Nostalgia*. In fact, *Nostalgia* was literally based upon this journal, as we can see from many similarities between them. For example, in “Stuck with the Enamel Shoes” Kim recorded his meeting with a person named “M,” who ultimately became the model for a character inside *Nostalgia*. However, there are some differences between these two texts as well. In “Stuck with the Enamel Shoes,” Kim revealed that although he wished to find some porcelain pieces from some Chinese antique shops, in the end he was not able to find any; however, in *Nostalgia*, the main narrator finds them. We can see that the experiences from his travel were used as templates for the situations that appeared in the novel.

“Stuck with the Enamel Shoes” is a title derived from an unfortunate encounter with a shoe seller. After failing to find any porcelain items, he was tricked into buying some enameled shoes at the shoe store instead. The shop owner ensured him that the shoes would last for years; however, they started to hurt his feet and fell apart only after a few days of use. Kim Saryang described himself as a “hostage” of those enameled shoes and decided to tell the shop owner (if he ever saw him again) that the shoes lasted for five years. He also said, at the end of the travelogue, that this incident earned him a hobby of observing people’s shoes.

“I’ve been waiting for you for a long time. You cannot imagine how long I’ve waited for you. I have been scared, feeling suffocated and sad.” Perplexed, and overwhelmed by sadness, Yi Hyeon asked the shop owner to flash some light upon the shelves, as he was sure that other ceramics would be in pain and would be screaming as well.... ㉞ “Save me. Me too, me too.” “I will,” he shouted in his mind as he picked them up. “You are from Korea. Being from Korea, ㉟ you want for the love and comfort of people from your home. That is your very nature,” he thought. One of the ceramics was without a doubt white porcelain from the Joseon Dynasty. This color, which masks a feeling of melancholy, is the face of the Joseon people. The other was a broken piece of celadon. Brownish black in color, it had sustained damage in the neck area and moaned in pain. It was solid like iron and vibrated bitterly when tapped with a finger – a sound that seemed to include the deathlike voice of his sister. ㊱ “Ah, that is the voice of my sister, asking for help, asking to be saved,” he shouted.... Purchasing these two pieces of porcelain, he suddenly felt extreme excitement and joy, as if he had saved his own sister who had been suffering for a very long time.¹⁰

Yi Hyeon describes the color of the white Joseon ware as “containing sadness and frustration within its glow” (*hikari o hisometa uino aru ukanu iro* 光をひそめた 憂ひのある浮かぬ色) and defines it as the embodiment of “Joseon people’s faces” (*tashikani Richō no hitobito no kao* 確に李朝の人々の顔). He also hears (or feels) a “sorrowful” (*hitsū na* 悲痛な) vibration that sounds like the “dying moan of his sister” (*shino yōna imōto no umeki goe* 死のやうな姉の呻き声).

Yi Hyeon, then, sees the celadon pieces not only as the embodiment of his own sister, but also of all Korean people. By purchasing (therefore “saving”) the celadon with the money given to him by his ill mother, who had instructed him to deliver it to his sister, he rescues the celadon and symbolically “saves” (*sukuiageru* 救いあげる) both his sister Gaya and Korea. Here, Yi Hyeon, the narrator, achieves what the author, Kim Saryang, failed to achieve, thus presumably expressing the aspirations of the author. The scene where the ceramics, Gaya and Korea are equated as objects to be saved is the defining moment of the text.¹¹

It should be noted that the underlined sections in the above paragraph display a striking resemblance the phrasing used by Yanagi Muneyoshi in “Letter to a Korean Friend:”

10. Kim Saryang, *Nostalgia, Kim Saryang zenshū*, 149.

11. The original expression, *sukui ageru* 掬い上げる refers to the act of lifting up. The two verbs *sukui* 掬い and *sukui* 救い not only share the same pronunciation, but also harbor the same meaning of “rescuing.”

Only sorrow could console sorrow. The Goryeo porcelain wares brought happiness and joy to the people of Goryeo every day. Whenever I look at the porcelain piece placed upon my desk, I see sad, lonely tears, suspended inside a calm enamel-glazed container. They even talk to me:

“Life always seems lonely and gloomy (to us). ㉠ For a long time, we Koreans have suffered deeply. Yet no one ever recognizes the pain and the trembling hearts of the Korean people. We put this frustration into our ceramics—friends that we use daily and who will never betray us. Hopefully, our descendants will decide to use them and keep them at their sides. They do not speak out loud, but they do ㉡ want for people’s tenderness and care. Use them well and feel our love. We created them to do just that.”

㉢ Oh my, when this voice comes out from the bottom of a ceramic, I cannot help but touch it with my own bare hands.¹²

In the above paragraph, we can see that Yanagi Muneyoshi wishes to “touch” (lift up) the porcelain, when the porcelain seems to start to say that it has “endured pain (in the dark) for a long time” and wants to feel “warm again” and “misses the people’s tender touch (as well as their love and comfort).” This sentiment is basically the same as the emotion felt by Yi Hyeon when he encounters the porcelain in a Beijing antique shop (the only difference being that Yi Hyeon’s emotional state in *Nostalgia* is a heightened one).

The similarity of these two scenes – one from Kim’s *Nostalgia* and the other from Yanagi’s “Letter” demonstrates that Kim Saryang was deeply enchanted with Yanagi’s aesthetic perspective as well as his sincerity. Undoubtedly, Kim chose to include this scene with porcelain in *Nostalgia* because he was inspired by Yanagi’s earlier description of porcelain that he wished to “touch.” This is only one of numerous examples that suggest that Kim was deeply inspired by Yanagi and his works.

2) Yanagi’s “State” and Kim Saryang’s “Ideology”

There are several sections inside Kim’s *Nostalgia* that were apparently quoted from Yanagi’s works. The beginning section of *Nostalgia* seems to be a gracious response to the last section of *Korean Art* (*Chōsen no bijutsu* 朝鮮の美術). Let us examine the striking resemblance. The following passage is from the opening to *Nostalgia* and is followed by the closing passage from *Korean Art*:

In the beginning, although he was always “interested” in this [culture], it did not

12. Yanagi Muneyoshi, “Letter to a Korean Friend,” in *Kindai Nihon shisō taikei 24: Yanagi Muneyoshi-shū* 近代日本思想大系 24・柳宗悦集 [Grand collection of modern Japanese thinking: The works of Yanagi Muneyoshi] (Tokyo: Tsukuba shobō 筑摩書房, 1975 (1920)), 192.

seem to have the urgency of “ideology.” There seemed to be more important things. ① Thinking about it now though, ② he realized that “ideology” is short-lived while “culture” lives on. The world works in a similar way and proceeds according to its destiny. ③ Korea has its own culture and art, which have shone for a very long time, that needs to be studied properly [“academically”] and developed and preserved. To him, this felt like his own solemn duty and obligation.¹³

② States come and go, yet art lives on.

My Korean friends, ① you work for your people’s liberation relying on politics that tend to shift constantly. Don’t you think that everlasting freedom and independence can come only through art? You should all be more concerned and interested in eternal things. Why aren’t you developing your existing beauty more? Think for a change. The Acropolis’ beams have fallen. The state can no longer fix them or erect them again. Yet, one of those fallen beams is now at the Louvre Museum as an immortal piece of art. What do you think of that?

My Korean friends... ③ Return to your art. Believe me when I say that the driving force that will ensure the longevity of your country is art.¹⁴

Kim’s comment about the difference between “ideology and culture” strongly resembles what Yanagi says about the “state and art.” Moreover, just like Yanagi, who argues, “the return to the country’s art would be imperative in ensuring the country’s survival,” Kim, or the narrator of *Nostalgia*, considers academic study and preservation of Korean culture and art as his “sacred duty.”

It is also important to note that Kim Saryang replaced Yanagi’s term “state” with a new term “ideology.” Kim also concludes that “culture” matters more than “ideology” – similar to Yanagi’s assertion that, “everlasting liberation achieved through art” is better than “political liberation, which could shift or change at any time.”

In *Nostalgia*, when Musu (son of Gaya and Yun Jangsan) volunteers to enlist in the Imperial Japanese Army, Gaya asks Musu, “Are you enlisting because of us or because you developed an ideology (*shisō* 思想) different from our own?”¹⁵ It is apparent that the “ideology” of Yun Jangsan and Yi Gaya is different from that held by Musu. His “ideology” is probably that of imperialism, but, here, the actual meaning is irrelevant. The term “ideology” was not used here to present a particular form of ideology. The word was very carefully chosen, so that neither the author nor the narrator would have to utter the term “state.” Considering the level of censorship that haunted literary works during the colonial period,

13. Kim Saryang, *Nostalgia*, *Kim Saryang zenshū*, 132.

14. Yanagi Muneyoshi, “Korean Art,” in *Kindai Nihon shisō taikēi* 24: *Yanagi Muneyoshi-shū*, 218-231.

15. Kim Saryang, *Nostalgia*, *Kim Saryang zenshū*, 140.

Kim would not have been at liberty to discuss the nature of the so-called “state.” In another example, Kim Saryang describes liberation fighter Yun Jangsan as an “exiled political operative and defines his activities as being merely “ideological.” This “ideology” could possibly refer to “ideology that pursues liberation and independence,” but this type of vague description was actually meant to serve another purpose. The choice of the ambiguous term “ideology” was a strategic one, since Kim Saryang was not allowed to talk about liberation and independence of the Korean “state” (country).

Yanagi was not under any immediate physical threat and was relatively free (he was not perfectly free as he also had to endure some censorship) to reveal his thoughts concerning the state (whether Korea or Japan). However, for Kim Saryang the colonial oppression was an immediate and real danger that made it necessary to replace certain words that would cause trouble. This difference in circumstance is reflected in their respective descriptions of the meaning and symbolism behind Korean porcelain as will be discussed below.

3) *Cracks in the Symbolism: Yanagi and Kim Part Ways*

Edward W. Said, in his works such as *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, criticizes the West’s ideology of colonialism, which was transmitted to colonized peoples in the form of art and science. He also points out that the colonization process begins by creating a specific “narrative” for the people who are to be ruled and then establishes a particular image (or representation) of them as well. Further, he argues that colonized people make use of certain narratives and images of their own as well, when presenting their own identity and making a claim for the distinctiveness of their own history. According to Said, colonial discourse always tries to construct a “stereotype” about the people who are to be ruled.¹⁶

As Homi K. Bhabha points out, rulers always require the people under their rule to become “one” or “the same” with their rulers, yet they also demand that their subjects remain sufficiently different. This is what is called “colonial ambivalence.” What the colonizer wants, then, is for their colonial subjects to become “almost the same [with the rulers], but not quite.” If the colonized were to become too similar to the colonizer, then there would be no longer be a basis for them to be placed under the rule of the “almost the same” colonizer. Therefore, “becoming the same,” is not something that the colonizer actually

16. Edward E. Said, tr. Obashi Yoichi, *Bunka to teikoku* [Culture and imperialism] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1998), 3-6.

wanted.

Furthermore, in the colonial situation, forms of “mimicry” (or “imitation”) tend to develop regardless of whether it is intentional or something that the colonizer supports. The moment the oppressed people seek to, or even succeed in, completely emulating the attitudes and attributes of their rulers, their fate is sealed. Instead of doing this, they could change certain aspects of what they were emulating. That is where the difference between “simple imitation” and “pursuing hybridity” comes in. Imitation means “almost the same, but not quite,” while “hybridity” means “not quite the same, but fairly similar.” This status of hybridity usually emerges when symbols are transformed into signs.¹⁷

At the beginning of *Nostalgia*, porcelain is presented as the symbol of Korean culture. This representation of porcelain as part of Korean culture is in some ways an imitation (more like an embracing) of Yanagi’s thinking; however, later on in the text, in the scene where the protagonist finds the porcelain and purchases it, the description bears little resemblance to Yanagi’s encounter with the porcelain. Although there is a very similar scene mentioned in Yanagi’s “Letter” (where Yanagi touches a porcelain piece placed upon his desk), the atmosphere described in *Nostalgia* and the atmosphere described in Yanagi’s “Letter” are quite different. While Yanagi just stares at and touches a beautiful piece of porcelain, the protagonist of *Nostalgia* expresses extreme excitement and joy, as if it was not merely a ceramic but his own sister and brother-in-law that he was going to save.

The protagonist in *Nostalgia* was excited to find the porcelain because he was aware of the extreme “sorrow and shouting voices” hidden within. It is true that Yanagi was the one who first discovered the code of “sorrow” in white Joseon porcelain products and the white clothes of the Korean people (a discovery that remains influential with contemporary scholars). His concept of the “beauty of sorrow,” however, is just another concept of beauty – one that is perceived through a specific emotion that can be defined as sorrow. On the other hand, the “sorrow and shouting voices” sensed by the protagonist in *Nostalgia* is that of “pure sorrow,” unrelated to beauty or aesthetics. This is where the aesthetics of Yanagi and the symbolism of Kim Saryang part ways. The observer (like Yanagi) of a painful situation may sense some aesthetic beauty from such an emotionally sad state of affairs, but people actually living such a painful reality would not be able to consider this sorrow a beautiful thing. Therefore, we can see that while Kim showed affinity to Yanagi’s thinking, even to the extent of

17. Homi K. Bhabha, tr. Na Beongcheol, *Munhwa ui wichi* [The location of culture] (Seoul: Somyeong, 2002), 177-191.

choosing porcelain as a central storytelling device, their actual situations were quite different, as evident in Kim's usage of the term 'ideology' and his interpretation, which contrasts starkly with that of Yanagi, of the nature of the porcelain's sorrow.

Kim's departure from Yanagi, though, was not able to solve one last remaining problem. Porcelain was chosen by Yanagi as the "symbol" of Korea and was "fixed" as a "sign" of (Korean) sorrow by Kim Saryang, as we can see from how Hyeon, the protagonist in *Nostalgia*, manages to sense the "sorrow" behind the porcelain's beauty. This "sorrow" is the sorrow of all Koreans, which includes Hyeon (and Kim Saryang). Yet, Hyeon (or Kim) tries to detach himself from the situation even while designating an emotional code of sorrow for the porcelain pieces. As an ethnic Korean, Kim's attempt to separate himself from the collective and observe the (Korean) "sign of sorrow" in a rather disembodied fashion was destined to be problematic.

In the scene where he purchases the porcelain, Hyeon conceptualizes an attitude of "seeking consolation and love" as a "trait" of the Korean people and designates, when thinking to himself, this trait as being "yours" instead of "ours." He tries to separate himself from his brethren and instead become their savior (just like Yanagi, who was an outsider, tries to serve as a sympathetic friend). He (Hyeon or Kim) tries to be something he is not (a non-Korean savior of the Korean people) while remaining himself (a Korean). This type of tension would easily cause internal mental anguish. He wants to save the Korean people, but as long as he remains a Korean, he cannot. This friction creates a paradox. The logical pattern continues to circle, with no end in sight. It just "slides." We can quite vividly see the dilemma of Kim Saryang.

In the end, setting the problem described above aside for the moment, what is important is that Kim was able to depart from Yanagi's stereotypical definition of a Korean concept of beauty. Although he displayed problematic behavior by separating himself from his fellow Koreans, we should remember that his "objectives" are also clearly stated in *Nostalgia*: (a) fulfilling the solemn duty of preserving Korean culture, and more importantly (b) securing the political power and influence of the Korean people (although this goal is insinuated instead of being declared). Since Yanagi stresses the importance of the former, Kim's evident interest in the latter is another difference between them.

Two Kinds of *Nostalgia*

1) Yanagi's *Emphasis on Culture*

Let us revisit Yanagi's perspective. The March 1st Movement, which marks the chronological beginning of the narrative in *Nostalgia*, is what caused Yanagi Muneyoshi to "think about Korea." Yanagi criticized the violence perpetrated by the Japanese police and military and criticized Japanese intellectuals for remaining silent in front of such violence. He evidently felt very friendly toward Korea, as well as the art of the Korean people and was a brave enough intellectual to speak his mind.

He believed that "religion and art" could bring genuine peace and friendship to the people. He argued that "the future culture of the East" would only be able to emerge from such "friendship (love)"¹⁸ and criticized how "crimes and abuses" were perpetrated [and vindicated] in the name of "the state."¹⁹

His brave remarks touched many Korean people including Yeom Sangseop, who translated Yanagi's works into Korean. Several "letters of thanks" from Korean people who deeply agreed with Yanagi's "Letter to a Korean friend" ("Chōsen no tomo ni okuru sho" 朝鮮の友に贈る書) were appended to Yanagi's "His Travels in Korea" ("Kare no Chōsen kō" 彼の朝鮮行). Yanagi himself also wrote that he was deeply moved and encouraged by such letters.

Yanagi soon began to draw the attention of the Japanese police because of his criticisms and his works were heavily scrutinized and censored by Japanese authorities. He even once said that his own works did not seem like his anymore after censorship because of all the changes and amendments made to them.²⁰ As Kim Brandt points out, most of the articles and writings about the art and culture of (colonial) Korea written or collected by critics and collectors like Yanagi Muneyoshi ultimately contributed to the creation of a larger discourse, which presented the history, geographical position, and identity of the Korean people as justification for the necessity of colonial rule. For example, the Korean Art Museum, which was founded by Yanagi, as well his writings, were in fact funded by none other than the Government General of colonial Korea. The

18. Yanagi Muneyoshi, "Kare no Chōsen kō" 彼の朝鮮行 [His Travels in Korea], *Kindai Nihon shisō taimei 24: Yanagi Muneyoshi-shū*.

19. Yanagi Muneyoshi, "Chōsen no tomo ni okuru sho" 朝鮮の友に贈る書 [Letter to a Korean Friend], *Kindai Nihon shisō taimei 24: Yanagi Muneyoshi-shū*.

20. Yanagi, Muneyoshi, "His Travels in Korea," *Kindai Nihon shisō taimei 24: Yanagi Muneyoshi-shū*

themes of these works evolve around the colonial rulers and their agendas. Landscape, people, objects – all things Korean – were treated as objects of aesthetic observation.²¹

Stephan Tanaka argues that while Japan's "Eastern Historical Studies" (Tōyōshigaku) claimed to pursue objectivity and positivism, in reality it perceived neighboring Asian countries like China and Korea as mere objects and eventually employed an Orientalism-based ideology to justify Japan's rule over much of Asia. In the eyes of the Japanese, Japan was the first in Asia to embrace Western civilization and could therefore claim that their advanced state of development was second to none in Asia. Just like the Westerners who considered Japan underdeveloped, the Japanese now considered other Asian countries as part of the "past" and launched a war as a means to modernize its Asian neighbors.²²

Although Yanagi Muneyoshi was against the idea of war, the entire collection of his beloved Korean porcelain, as well as his own aesthetic perspective, was possible because of Japan's colonial rule of Korea. The "beauty of sorrow" concept was also used to highlight the "energetic" nature of the Japanese people. Yanagi believed that Lafcadio Hearn understood the Japanese people better than the Japanese themselves and wanted to become a "Hearn" to the Korean people, as he discusses in *Thinking of Joseon People*.²³ It was certainly arrogant of him to presume that he could understand Koreans better than Koreans themselves ("I understand you better than you"), yet the people at the time (including Yanagi) did not realize that and many Korean intellectuals were quite impressed and inspired by him – Kim Saryang among them.

Even though he had this type of background and was quite arrogant, Yanagi argued that "the Eastern world should become one, based upon understanding and love." He warned that swords would only be met by swords and that the integration of the Eastern world should proceed through "religion and art." In this regard, then, his perspective and his arguments were different from the general perspective of Japanese imperial authorities.

Regardless of his intentions, Yanagi's "consolation" was a double-edged sword for the Korean people. It was, in essence, a suggestion to the Korean people that they should remain weak and powerless, revealed in the way he argued that Korea and Japan would not be able to become one through politics and in his urging the Korean people to "refrain" from acts of physical resistance.

21. Kim Brandt, *Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the Politics of Folk Art in Imperial Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 7-37.

22. Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 153-187.

23. Yanagi, Muneyoshi, *Kindai Nihon sisō taikēi 24: Yanagi Muneyoshi-shū*, 177.

He argued that the state “mattered less” than (Korea’s own national) culture. Yanagi’s “cultural solution” was, in other words, “to give up any kind of political capability.”

2) *Kim’s Pursuit of “Both:” Preservation of Culture and Achieving Political Power*

To Kim Saryang, preserving and protecting the Korean culture was not the only important task he faced. Rebuilding Koreans’ political power, which could lead to their salvation and independence, was of equal importance. For Kim, then, the determination to preserve the culture of his own people and the sincere hope for the Korean people to become powerful again were two sides of the same coin.

In *Nostalgia*, Kim talks about the solemn duty of the preservation of culture, but he does not say anything about the state or politics. He does use the word ideology and writes that “culture” is more important than “ideology,” but that is the limit to the discussion of the state or politics in the text. By using the word ideology, Kim was able to evade Japanese censorship, and, at the same time, he was also able to hide his true agenda – to work toward building a politically strong Korea.

Unlike Yanagi, who may not have been aware that his idea of non-violence would amount to asking the Koreans to give up any hope of becoming politically powerful again,²⁴ Kim simultaneously pursued cultural preservation and political power, as reflected in *Nostalgia*. Unlike the travel journal “Stuck with Enamel Shoes,” *Nostalgia* presents two kinds of “*Nostalgia*.” The first is *Nostalgia* for the Korean culture that he swears to protect, and the other *Nostalgia* is for political power in the form of independence. Both kinds of *Nostalgia* are present in the novel. We can see that Kim not only had a “nostalgic indulgence” toward Korean culture, but that he was also determined to pursue a political solution to resolve the Korean people’s “Japan problem.”

24. Pak Yuha, “Sangsang-doen mi-uisik gwa minjokjeok jeongcheseong, Yanagi Muneyoshi wa geundae Hanguk ui jagi guseong” [Imagined aesthetic consciousness and the national identity-Yanagi Muneyoshi and the self-composition of modern Korea], *Gieok gwa yeoksa ui tujaeung* [Struggles of memories and history] (Seoul: Samin, 2002).

Analysis of the Thematic Focus of *Nostalgia*

1) *Nostalgia's Description of Korean Liberation Fighters in Manchuria*

Unlike other novels that choose to portray the lives of laborers and workers living in Manchuria, Kim Saryang's *Nostalgia* portrays liberation fighters who had both voluntarily and involuntarily moved to the Manchurian region. After the failure of the March 1st Movement of 1919, independence fighters inside Korea chose to move to locations outside the country's borders, many relocating to Manchuria and others founding a provisional government in Shanghai. With such movements in place, armed resistance escalated and fierce anti-Japanese battles repeatedly occurred along the border region of Korea and Manchuria as well as the Northeast region of China and the Littoral province in Siberia.

In response, the Japanese military swiftly commenced a brutal retaliatory campaign, forcing independence fighters to relocate to areas where they could continue to fight the Japanese. The so-called "Manchurian Incident" of 1931 resulted in the occupation of the Northeast region of China by the Japanese Gwandong Army and made it necessary for most of the leaders of the Korean resistance movement to move deeper into China and leave their troops and fellow independence fighters behind. Abandoned troops were forced to stand on their own, without proper leadership. Many of them chose to defect, since the Japanese military handsomely rewarded people who decided to aid in the arrest of independence fighters and as a result, even people who had nothing to do with the resistance were indiscriminately apprehended and punished. The entire Korean population in Manchuria was affected by these events and summarily acquiesced. The Korean independence movement remained active until around 1932, after which it weakened severely. In 1937, after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Japan launched a full-scale invasion of China. In 1938 Japan attacked major Chinese cities and railways, while the Chinese government moved to Chungking (Chongqing 重慶) and continued to fight. This prolonged war finally led to the start of the "Pacific War" in December of 1941.²⁵

The last line of *Nostalgia* gives the date of "Late May of 1938," chronologically positioning the text in the middle of the second Sino-Japanese War and at the time when Japanese troops were attacking Chinese railways. The geographical setting for *Nostalgia* is Beijing, where Korean independence fighters, who had

25. Pak Yeongseok, *Hanminjok dongnip undongsa yeongu* [Study of the Korean People's Independence Movement] (Seoul: Iljo-gak, 1997), 206-267.

been left behind in Manchuria by their leaders, were seeking refuge and hiding. Yi Hyeon's sister and his brother-in-law were among these independence fighters evading the Japanese authorities. Their moral deterioration and defection, specifically as found in descriptions of the actions of the character Ok Sangryeol, are vividly portrayed in *Nostalgia*.

First, however, we should examine the meaning behind the role of the character Yun Jangsan in *Nostalgia*. This character brings to mind the famous independence fighter Kim San (birth name Jang Jirak, 1905-1938), who was born in Yongcheon, Pyeonganbuk-do. After witnessing the failure of the March 1st Movement at the age of 16, Kim San left his home and traveled to Shanghai, Beijing, Guangdong, and Yan'an. In the end, he was charged with spying and then summarily executed in 1938.²⁶ Several aspects of his life, and the many rumors regarding his whereabouts (like his enlisting in the Chinese army or teaching students at a college) very closely resemble the traits of the fictional Yun Jangsan. From this, we can infer the reason for Kim Saryang's choice to place a character like Yun in *Nostalgia*. It seems that he wished to express his secret goal of securing political power for the Korean people once again through the inclusion of the character of Yun Jang-san.

As recorded in "Stuck with Enamel Shoes," we know that Kim Saryang came into contact with some former independence fighters in Manchuria. For example "M," one of the people he met, must have provided Kim with information about independence fighters like Kim San, who may have been used as a template for Yun Jangsan (M himself may have served as the template for the character Musu). In *Nostalgia*, the lives of exiled liberation fighters are portrayed through the character Yun Jangsan, who symbolizes the political prowess of the Korean people, as well as Korean efforts to regain independence.

Interestingly enough, *Nostalgia* also portrays characters with questionable attributes that are quite the opposite of the supposedly heroic nature of Yun Jangsan. One of these is Ok Sangryeol, whose depiction reveals what Kim Saryang actually wanted to address in *Nostalgia*.

26. Nym Wales (Helen Foster Snow, 1907-1997) published his biography under the title of *Song of Arirang*, which was first introduced to Korea when a Japanese version was published in 1959. Nym Wales, who stayed in the Northeast Asian region for seven years, defined Kim San as a most impressive character, and introduced him as a renowned liberation fighter. This book was found in 1959 by Dr. Ri Yeong-hi and later translated into Korean by Song Yeong-in and published commercially. The original text was an English publication of Kim San's oral remarks collected and translated by a News reporter named Nym Wales (Nym Wales & Kim San, tr. Song Yeong-in, *Arirang* (Dongnyeok, 2005)).

2) A Political “Grey Area:” The Raison d’être of the Character Ok Sangryeol

As already mentioned, *Nostalgia* represents Kim Saryang’s strong desire that the Korean people regain their political prowess and capability. Yet, instead of choosing to portray the heroic efforts of liberation fighters, Kim Saryang chose deserters and defectors as his main characters. This choice has been the source of much criticism of Kim and explains why he has been criticized as a Pro-Japanese writer and collaborator.

Since liberation from colonial rule and even through the 1980s, Korean evaluations of the colonial period have, for the most part, been based upon a very nationalistic perspective that perceived “cooperation” and “resistance” as the two major attitudes that most often prevail in “oppressed societies.” This stance allows no room for reconciliation between the two concepts. One must either fight and resist or cooperate and collaborate. It was generally believed in Korea that, in order to break free from the horrific memories of the colonial past and bring justice to the people who brought shame to us all, one must be ready to criticize those who chose to “cooperate” instead of “resist.” Yet, for all the good intentions behind such a sentiment, if we try to see beyond our own nationalistic attitude, we may find that there is a large “grey” area between these two poles.²⁷

Nostalgia vividly depicts these “grey areas” with the character Ok Sangryeol embodying qualities present in those who occupy these in-between positions. Ok Sangryeol represents a conglomeration of the characteristics of those stuck in such conditions. By design, the character symbolizes the conflicts and struggles that can rise out of such situations.

When writing *Nostalgia* Kim Saryang was aware that following Yanagi’s suggestion would mean depriving Koreans of their political future. Kim strongly believed in the importance of Korean culture, just as he was hopeful that Koreans could rebuild their political influence. This is why Kim created the character of Yun Jangsan as a “straight, truthful activist,” a “determined yet reserved character,” and a “bright and meticulous public speaker.” In the eyes of the protagonist Yi Hyeon, Yun Jangsan is an ideal person who, “has no personal doubts and is quite determined to stay on course and solidify his own path.”²⁸

27. Yun Haedong, *Singminji ui hoesaek jidae* [Grey areas in colonized societies] (Seoul: Yeoksa Bipyong-sa, 2003), 10.

28. Kim Saryang, *Kim Saryang zenshū*, 134.

It should be noted, however, that Yun Jangsan – this legendary liberation fighter – never actually appears inside the text. Yun only appears in dialogues set in the past tense. Only mentioned a few times, he resides in the memories of the characters, such as the defector Ok Sangryeol. This suggests that the story of the character Yun is just a portion of what Kim Saryang wished to say.

Ok Sangryeol is more than a device placed in the novel for the sole purpose of providing the reader with information about Yun Jangsan. Ok is described as a former pupil of Yun Jangsan who has left the independence movement to become a police officer in a special organization. After the departure of his leader in the independence movement, Ok flees from Japanese troops, gives up the nationalist agenda and eventually defects to the Japanese side. He had been a subordinate officer under Yun and was very famous among Koreans for his efforts in battle. This character was carefully conceived by Kim Saryang. *Nostalgia* has six chapters and (other than Yi Hyeon and his sister Ga-ya) Ok is the most frequently discussed person. The entire third chapter is dedicated to him alone.²⁹

When the Japanese troops entered Beijing, the one person who panicked the most, [not knowing] whether to go left or right, was Master Yun. This was the straw that broke the camel's back in regards to Master Yun's ideological sanity. It broke my heart to see him suffer like that.... He could no longer eat and wandered around Beijing clothed in rags. I once found him in a slum distant from the center of the city. I begged him to come with me, and I asked him if he could understand me and my actions. I begged him to come back with me and turn himself in voluntarily ... before things got even uglier...³⁰

In Kim Saryang's eyes, Yun Jangsan was the kind of hero that the Korean people needed. Yun was an honorable character and an icon that Koreans should not give up on. Yet, under the harsh reality of Japanese colonial rule and with a strict system of censorship in place, it was not an easy task to defend a character like Yun or to promote the nobility of such a character in the narrative of a literary text. The author needed another voice to accomplish this task, which, in *Nostalgia*, turns out to be the character Ok Sangryeol. In this regard, the inclusion of this character clearly indicates that Kim was not ready to relinquish the concept of "Yun Jangsan" and the noble intentions this character represents.

The role of Ok Sangryeol character does not end there, however. According to Hyeon (or the author Kim Saryang himself for that matter), Ok Sangryeol is a character that continuously questions, doubts, and defines himself (just like Kim

29. Kim Saryang, *Nostalgia*, *Kim Saryang zenshū*, 138-144.

30. Kim Saryang, *Nostalgia*, *Kim Saryang zenshū*, 142.

Saryang did), in an effort to justify and legitimize his own decision to switch sides. It should be noted that the protagonist Hyeon is immensely sympathetic to the plight and inner struggles of Ok Sangryeol:

I could feel how difficult it must have been for those who had “converted” after a life-long dedication to integrity. Even when they take these wrong turns in regards to “ideological movements,” resulting in much remorse and regret, they still deserve a certain level of trust and honor, since they have loved and cared for the people of their hometown the most. He still “doubts, questions, defines” himself. He wants to be sure that his new decision is the right one.³¹

Ok Sangryeol’s self-doubting, self-questioning, and self-defining, as witnessed by Yi Hyeon, is representative of what Kim Saryang himself had been doing. Kim Saryang depicts a similar type of character, Minami 南, in his debut novel (the novel that made him famous) *Into the light* (*Hikari no naka ni* 光の中に). “Minami” is a Tokyo University student who is actually a Korean youth surnamed “Nam.” He works at a private night school teaching students who refer to him as Minami (the Japanese pronunciation for the Chinese character used for “Nam”). He does not voluntarily divulge that he is from Korea, but a student named Yamada Haruo 山田春夫 and a person surnamed Yi 李 reveal this fact. They criticize Nam for concealing his true identity, and while Nam denies such allegations at first, he examines his own hypocrisy and cowardice. As part of this process of self-questioning and examination, Minami’s personality splits into several sub-personalities, including the one where he criticizes himself, one where he justifies his actions, and one where he observes all of the internal conflicts. These sub-personalities conflict with each other.³² Earlier studies of Kim Saryang all see Minami’s internal conflicts as stemming from the issue of national identity, but this is not actually an issue of “who am I?” but rather an issue of “why do I choose not to reveal who I really am?” In short, it was never an issue of identity, but rather an issue of moral values that concerned a larger community (just like the issue of “collaboration”).

Authors and scholars, from Kim’s contemporaries onward, have continued to debate whether Kim’s works (written in Japanese) represent collaboration with the Japanese authorities or resistance against them. In regards to *Nostalgia* Kim Jaeyong labels Kim’s works as “polarized between resistance and collaboration” and considers the character Ok Sangryeol as being symbolic of the “collaborative”

31. Kim Saryang, *Kim Saryang zenshū*, 142.

32. Kim Seok-Hee, “Gachaek gwa pongno ui gujo: Identity wa yulli uisik” [The structure of remorse and disclosure: Identity and moral consciousness], *Ireo Ilmun-hak* 71, no. 2 (2009), 255-271.

side of Kim, since Ok spies on the activities of Korean people and closely monitors everything related to resistance movements while under the guise of caring for Gaya. Kim Jaeyong bases this conclusion on the assumption that Ok turned a blind eye to Gaya's illegal opium business only because it was neither related to resistance activities nor a threat to the Japanese authorities. Kim Jaeyong also criticizes Kim Saryang for wasting too much time describing people who have transformed into "loyal citizens of the Japanese empire," while not devoting much of the text to the portrayal of people who maintain their identity as Korean people.³³

There is no basis in the text to conclude that Ok Sangryeol wishes to or actually harms his Korean brethren nor does he report Gaya or others to the authorities. Kim Jaeyong counts Yun Jangsan's pupil Pak Jun as the sole character to maintain a Korean identity; however, he is only a secondary character (at the level of valet or beggar) who informs other characters of the whereabouts of Yun Jangsan and Yi Gaya. It would be hard to assume, therefore, that Kim Saryang wanted to present the concepts of "collaboration" and "resistance" evenhandedly or that he was vacillating between those two objectives. He did not vacillate; rather, he just wanted to represent them together.

"Polarization between resistance and collaboration" is a notion that suggests that a group of people who resisted the Japanese rule and a group of people who collaborated with the Japanese maintained a completely separate existence. In *Nostalgia*, however, there are no "pure resistance fighters," and there are no "pure collaborators." All characters have elements of both sides, which is exactly what Kim Saryang is exploring in this text. This is the reason that his works, and most importantly *Nostalgia*, cannot be interpreted from a perspective that draws a distinct line between the concepts of resistance and collaboration – a line that does not exist.

In the early years, Kim Saryang attempted to produce radically critical writing. However, as the violent oppression of the Japanese authorities grew worse, it became impossible to continue criticizing Japanese imperialism. Some writers relented and others stopped writing. Kim too must have expended considerable thought on the matter – whether to conform or stop writing completely. In this situation, Yanagi's suggestion that both the Japanese authorities' violent oppression and the Korean people's physical resistance should be criticized was a soothing one. Colonized people who wanted to escape the situation and its obligations would have found mental refuge in this statement where they only needed to work to preserve the past while doing

33. Kim Jaeyong and Gwak Hyeongdeok, *Kim Saryang, jakpum gwa yeongu*, 423-425.

nothing to change the current political situation; however, Kim could not limit himself to this.

Kim Saryang continued to ask, question, and examine himself in regards to the choice of politically “backing off.” This continuous self-censoring only served to make him all the more frustrated and sad. He accepted the fact that the “collaboration” option was an unavoidable one, yet he also acknowledged that such acceptance was a very painful process for all people, even those who had switched sides. The hysteric narrative of *Nostalgia*, which traced the fissures in people’s thinking on these issues, comes from this acknowledgement.

Gaya talks to Musu about his decision to enlist in the Imperial Japanese Army. She asks him whether he was going because of his parents or because he had developed a different sense of priority and loyalty. According to Gaya, Musu cried, and answered that he was enlisting for both of those reasons. She sighs that she is no longer in charge of her own fate. This was the staggering truth of that era. She obviously feels empty; after all the struggles she went through after leaving the country³⁴ and moving to Beijing while carrying Musu, who was a baby at the time,³⁵ her son ends up enlisting.

Ok Sangryeol also tells Yi Hyeon, that his generation was born in a new era and has a different way of thinking. Ok expresses curiosity about Yi Hyeon’s thoughts and sentiments:

Ok said, “I was afraid to be left behind both in terms of ideology and in terms of the times. I believed that the things we did were in the best interest of the Korean people. I only wanted to follow your brother-in-law Master Yun’s guidance and stay loyal. However, our dreams were repeatedly betrayed. We started to change after the Manchurian incident. We fled upon hearing the horns of the Japanese troops. We closed our eyes and thought, ‘what is best course of action for our Korean brothers....’” He then broke down, tears in his eyes, and started crying.³⁶

Both of these scenes of dialogue are from the third chapter of *Nostalgia* and share some commonalities. Musu, Gaya, Yi Hyeon and Ok are all in an emotionally heightened state – either hysterical or crying. The defectors in both dialogues believe that their choices are inevitable because of the situation in which they live. This dilemma and pain was shared by all who lived during the colonial period. They could neither completely cooperate with the Japanese nor completely resist them. This was the dilemma that plagued many Koreans,

34. In the Japanese language, “(home) town” and “state (country)” are all described as *kuni* 國.

35. Kim Saryang, *Nostalgia*, *Kim Saryang zenshū*, 140.

36. Kim Saryang, *Nostalgia*, *Kim Saryang zenshū*, 141.

including Kim Saryang himself. For example, the character Ok Sangryeol officially collaborates with the Japanese, yet he also secretly and sincerely admires his mentor, the heroic liberation fighter Yun Jangsan. In this way, he is a character that tries to walk a very thin line.

Also, through the inclusion of the characters Yun Jangsan and Ok Sangryeol *Nostalgia* becomes a story of “refugees in asylum” with the narrative assuming a “return of the deserters” format. People who had left Korea and were wandering in China are deemed “refugees” in the narrative. Exile is a dark and horrific state of existence for those that experience it, but it is also the source of frustration for those that rule society.³⁷ In their eyes, the refugee issue is a daunting one. They refuse to seek protection of the state and threaten the stability of the state from beyond the limits of its reach. In this regard, the historical background and setting of *Nostalgia* is rather provocative. Even under the extreme censorship of the Japanese authorities, Kim Saryang uses his characters to generate this effect very well.

Kim never hid his state of mind and never ran from his own frustrations and fears. He admitted that he was “hysterical,” and he acknowledged the fact that he panicked and cried. Instead of suppressing his agony, he put it out for all to see by creating the character Ok Sangryeol. He did not turn his back on the reality of the colonial situation, and he faced the fact that he was afraid and documented it. Unlike many other people who lived under Japanese colonial rule, he valiantly recognized that he was in the “in-between” state.

Conclusion: Beyond the Dichotomy of Resistance and Collaboration

Examining Kim Saryang and his works as well as Kim’s fascination with Yanagi Muneyoshi (as well as his eventual departure from him) has not been attempted before. Most studies of Kim’s literary works attempt to understand the nature of Kim Saryang and his works as the product of an agonizing, colonial reality. By considering the Yanagi factor, however, it becomes possible to better understand Kim’s thinking and how it was connected to trends in contemporary Japanese culture, while of course maintaining some notable differences. Similar to Ok Sangryeol’s statement to Hyeon, Kim Saryang was the product of a “new

37. Kim Yerin, “Baeban euroseo ui gukga hok eun nanmin euroseo ui inmin: Haebanggi gwiwhan ui jijeonghak gwa gwiwhanja ui jeongchiseong” [State as the “traitor” and individuals as “refugees:” Geographical nature of the issue of “return,” and the political implications that involved the “returnees” after Liberation], *Sangheo hakbo* 29 (2010), 338-342.

generation.” Whether they liked it or not, Japan was a definitive presence that defined the character of young people living in colonial Korea.

The ruled are always influenced by their rulers in one way or another, and people living in a colonized society are always put in a disadvantageous situation when compared to the people living in the metropole. This is an inevitable condition, of which Korea is not the only example. In Korea, nationalism has played an important role in criticizing colonialism and imperialism.³⁸ As a result, most of the studies of Kim Saryang’s works have tried to determine whether Kim Saryang resisted the Japanese and whether he collaborated with the Japanese aggressors.

In many films and works of fiction set in the colonial period, even those made long after the end of Japanese rule, those who have given up resistance or switched sides are depicted as soulless collaborators who have no regrets and show no remorse. *Nostalgia*, however, written during the colonial period, does not portray them in this manner. It depicts liberation fighters but does not describe them in a very flattering light. Kim chose to describe their frustrations, their predicaments and their hysterical psyche. This is why some see his work as an author who chose to resist the Japanese, while others believe that he collaborated with the Japanese. However, as demonstrated in this article, the essence of *Nostalgia* is Kim’s description of the sorrow and shouts of frustration of all Koreans living under imperial rule. All interpretations and evaluations of the supposed nature of Kim’s work derive from the political stances and opinions inside Korean literary society.

Regardless of the period and region, people can never be clearly divided into two groups, such as those of resisters and collaborators. All individuals possess multiple sides, which lead to internal conflict. The collaboration and inner conflict of the character Ok Sangryeol were problems that Kim Saryang also faced. The characters Yun Jangsan and Yi Gaya, who respectively symbolize political power and culture, represent both the hope and the despair that Kim Saryang experienced. Acknowledging this might be a good place to commence a new generation of studies on the colonial period that will be able to evolve beyond the dichotomy between resistance and collaboration.

38. Yun Haedong, *Singminji ui hoesaek jidae*, 15.

