

Mobility Infrastructure, Literary Ethics, and Anti-Colonial Politics

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Abstract: This paper explores the entanglement of literary ethics and anti-colonial politics in Kirim Kim's novella, *The District along the Railway*, by analyzing and interpreting its ethical structure while addressing the historical context of colonial Korea via the ethical literary criticism terminology elaborated by Zhenzhao Nie. The ethical structure of Kim's work is transposed over the railway which is representative of the modern mobility infrastructure developed mainly through Japanese colonialism in the early modern period of Korea, which embodies the colonial modernity. Starting with the inception of railway construction and culminating with its finalization, its ethical line is constituted of a series of ethical conflicts between modern ethics of money and traditional ethics of solidarity as ethical knots, focusing on the fracture of a Korean family. The ethical value emerges in Kim's critical representation of both ethical context (i.e., money and solidarity) which encourages contextualizing literary ethics historically, while positing an alternative moral for colonial Koreans through his manipulation of metaphor in the arena of anti-colonial politics.

Keywords: mobility infrastructure; colonial modernity; modern ethics; traditional ethics; colonial politics; anti-colonial politics

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标题：移动性基础设施、文学伦理、反殖民政治

内容摘要：本论文探究了金起林的中篇小说《铁道沿线》所表现的文学伦理和反殖民政治的相互关系。为此，笔者在使用聂珍钊文学伦理学批评中的用语对该作品的伦理结构进行分析和解释的同时，还研究了殖民地朝鲜的历史性脉络。金起林作品中的伦理结构，建立在近代初期主要由日本帝国主义发展起来的代表性近代移动基础设施，即作为殖民地近代性体现的铁道之上。该作品的伦理结构与铁路建设同时开始，并在完工的同时完结，由近代的金钱伦理和传统的关系伦理间的一系列伦理矛盾组成。此时，这些伦理矛盾都围绕韩国家庭的解体而发生。本论文在对近代伦理和传统伦理的批判性再现中寻找《铁道沿线》的伦理价值。在历史的脉络中思索文学伦理，考量文学伦理和反殖民政治的相互关系，深入思考针对殖民地朝鲜人的替代性伦理。

关键词：移动性基础设施；殖民地近代性；近代伦理；传统伦理；殖民地政治；反殖民政治

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Introduction: Literary Ethics and Mobility Politics

This paper explores the entanglement of literary ethics and anti-colonial politics in Kirim Kim¹'s novella, *The District along the Railway* [鐵道沿線]² (1935-1936), by analyzing its ethical structure, as well as addressing its historical context, colonial Korea, in Ethical Literary Criticism's terminology, elaborated by Zhenzhao Nie. Additionally, this exploration also focuses on the railway, the mobility infrastructure as a material base conditioning the work's ethical structure and circumstance, which thus helps interpret its anti-colonial politics.

In his recent article, Nie defines Ethical Literary Criticism as “a critical

1 Kirim Kim graduated from Nihon University [日本大学] in 1930. After returning to Korea, Kim, influenced by I. A. Richard and drawing from Western intellectualism, devoted himself to criticizing capitalist civilization by publishing a corpus of work comprising hundreds of poems, dramas, novels, literary critiques, and essays, thereby co-organizing the most significant Korean literary modernist group in colonial Korea, Guinhoe [九人会].

2 All quotations from the Korean original in this article are my translations.

theory for reading, analyzing, and interpreting the ethical nature and function of literary works from the perspective of ethics” (Nie “Ethical Literary Criticism: A Basic Theory” 189). For him, reading literary texts primarily entails analysing and interpreting the ethical structure of literary texts. As textual structure constituted of the contexts of human thoughts and actions, ethical structure refers to a complicated whole, one comprising a constellation of human relations (i.e., ethical relations between figures), thoughts (i.e., figures’ process of thinking), actions (i.e., the appearance and objective recording media of thoughts), and norms (i.e., the ethics for thoughts and actions). Notably, the ethical structure of narrative in literary texts is composed of an “ethical line,” that is, a linear structure that enables the process of beginning, developing, modifying, and resolving an ethical question in a certain literary work. Relatedly, “ethical knots” refer to ethical contradictions and collisions by which the ethical line engages in shaping the narrative ethical structure by interconnecting ethical knots (Nie, *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism* 258-266).

At the same time, Nie argues that ethical literary criticism’s ultimate goal is to determine literature’s ethical value, which encompasses positive and negative moral values. Stipulating literary ethics as “ethical relationships and moral orders that maintain human relations” in the literary world, Nie stresses an objective ethical analysis and interpretation of literature from the perspective of historicism—instead of an abstract moral evaluation—which posits that literary interpretation has to understand literary works “based on the ethical environment and the ethical context of its particular historical period” (Nie, “Ethical Literary Criticism: A Basic Theory” 190-192). For this reason, Ethical Literary Criticism can be defined as a critical theory that analyses and interprets the ethical structure of literary texts and, from the perspective of historicism, discerns their ethical value.

Using the format of a frame story, *The District along the Railway*—published serially in December 1935 and February 1936—narrates the breakup of a Korean family, ultimately triggered by the railway construction, conducted in a remote mountain village of the Korean Peninsula. In Ethical Literary Criticism’s terminology, Kim’s novella first is deemed to represent ethical conflicts between the positive and the negative moral values. Whereas the former, guided by rational will, represents traditional ethics seeking a bloodline and community, the latter, the modern ethics of money, guided by free will, disturbs the former by seeking to satisfy private interests and instincts. Such ethical contradictions are materialized mainly in the complicated relations around Joni Park’s family members, central figures, who think and act in the direction of following or violating moral norms.

Thus, the relations constitute the narrative's ethical line and knots, thus shaping its ethical structure.

At the same time, seeking an ethical value in Kim's novella necessitates a particular historical context as an ethical circumstance. In this work, it is specified as the time when, after its occupation of the Korean Peninsula in 1910, Japanese imperialism was propelling colonial modernization of the Korean Peninsula, most of all, developing modern mobility infrastructures around the railway, across the country, aspiring to incorporate Korea into the Japanese Empire materially and ideally, which is discussed in the following chapter. Using John Urry's words that "the infrastructures of social life" condition "the movement of people, ideas and information from place to place, person-to-person, event to event" (Urry 12), the mobility infrastructure can be characterized as an apparatus by which the Japanese Empire rules its colony by governing mobilities on the Korean Peninsula (Lee 65-67). In this vein, the mobility infrastructure, the railway, in Kim's work serves as the base that conditions both its ethical structure and circumstance, reorganizing Korean villagers' social lives, including ethical conflicts and their solutions. Focusing on the mobility infrastructure, thus encourages the narrative's ethical value to be determined in relation to the historical context of colonial Korea, which helps understand the literary ethics in Kim's work as testifying to its anti-colonial politics.

To this end, in the following chapter, this paper discusses the railway, the mobility infrastructure as an embodiment of colonial modernity constructed by Japanese colonialism, which, serves as a material base underpinning *The District along the Railway*. Next, after analyzing and interpreting its ethical structure, focusing on collisions between modern ethics of money and traditional ethics of solidarity, chapter three elaborates on the ethical value in relation to the work's historical context, colonial Korea, revealing an entangled relationship between literary ethics and colonial politics in chapter four. The concluding chapter signifies Kim's novella's literary ethics as testifying to its anti-colonial politics.

A Literary World Built on Modern Mobility Infrastructure

Kirim Kim's novella, *The District along the Railway*, opens with a typical scene of a train triumphantly racing along with lightning speed, overpoweringly through everything that exists and, thereby, making them a thing of the past. As a modernist, who was sensitive to but critical of modernization and material civilization in the colonial-capitalist society of Korea, he negatively and meaningfully portrays a landscape in which modernity drastically progresses:

A train is now dashing towards the north into the landscape without ornaments on the East Sea coast. The train with countless feet. 'Piston' muttering. On the back of the train running, yellow sunlight wriggles. Irrespective of mountain, rock, field, river, village, and street, it is constantly darting for a singular destination without reserve nor discrimination. The figure is like the ruthless rush of history completely ignoring all people's intentions. (49)

In the quotation, as representative of modern mobility technologies (Schivelbusch 1-15), the train signifies "the ruthless rush of history," namely, the overwhelming power of modernity that renders not only human environments but also human beings themselves impotent. Thus, the opening scene demonstrates that Kim's work was against the backdrop of the historical period when modernity's power came to dominate the Korean Peninsula.

The historical period is concretized in the following scene in a compartment on the train. First, through the phrase of "a newspaper featuring the words through 'Ethiopia five times on the same page'" (49), Kim's novella alludes to its temporal setting as when Italy invaded Ethiopia, October 1935, which is almost overlapped with the work's publishing date of December 1935 and February 1936. At the same time, as a framework, the novel unfolds the main narrative, constituted of the conversations between two passengers, as a stage for its second narrative, in which Chambong Park, the narrator, tells his neighbour "lots of different things happened in a remote mountain village because of the railway construction work" (50) ten years ago, presumably in 1925.

In advance of "lots of different things," Park briefly retails the ten years between the main narrative and the second narrative that an isolated mountain village gradually comes in contact with the modern culture, expressed as "the world different from their world" (51), significantly marked by the launch of the railroad. For example, Park explains that there remained 'the dozing villages' deep in mountain valleys until the railway was laid; although, in the meanwhile, 'a steamship carrying the new enlightenment' was bringing many modern products, including hair oil, Japanese cloth, and wool, as well as 'a newspaper featuring the news concerning League of Nations,' to ports in the East Sea coast of Korea, distant about 30 km from the villages (50). Thus, as a modern mobility infrastructure connecting an isolated village to "the world different from their world," the railway makes 'the dozing villages' face the overwhelming power of modernity and thereby triggers "lots of different things" in the village. In addition, by describing the remote village's process of opening as a direct effect of the consecutive construction

of mobility infrastructures—first a new sea route, next, a new road, and finally, a railway —, the novella underscores the significance of the railway as a final stage of mobility infrastructure development on the Korean Peninsula.

Notably, in Korea, modernization is inextricable from Japanese colonialism as modern mobility infrastructures on the Korean Peninsula were predominately constructed by Japanese imperialism even from before its occupation of Korea in 1910; it aspired not only to rule the Peninsula thoroughly but also incorporate it into the Japanese Empire materially and ideally. For example, while inaugurating a cross-channel liner between Busan, Korea, and Shimonoseki, Japan, in 1905, the Japanese Empire launched the construction of modern roads across the Korean Peninsula, seizing local administrative authority in Korea through the constitution of the Japanese Resident-General of Korea in 1906. In addition, just after its occupation of Korea, Japanese imperialism enthusiastically set modern mobility infrastructures in motion. For example, in 1910, the Japanese initiated the construction of the railways linking the four corners of the Peninsula to serve as a central axis of the colonial mobility system, thus enlarging dramatically colonial mobility network to encompass the whole colonized territory. In this vein, most newly inaugurated ports were connected to the railway network, and new roads were intended to underpin the railway network by linking small villages to the railway stations (Huh and Todoroki 176). Using Kate McDonald's words that "the historiography of Japan's modernization is inseparable from the historiography of the railway" (McDonald 70), the historiography of the railway on the Korean Peninsula can be rendered as the historiography of Japanese colonization of Korea. Hence, the railway cannot be characterized merely as "a sort of synonym for ultra-modernity" (Hobsbawm 89) but rather as a synonym for colonial modernity.

As the embodiment of colonial modernity, performing "the ruthless rush of history" with overwhelming power, the railway serves as a material base underpinning the narrative world of Kim's novella by completing a framework and conditioning its ethical structure. First, it opens and completes the narrative framework by linking the main narrative with the second narrative. In other words, it is by taking notice of the formidable mobile-ability of the railway allowing people to travel about 600 km—the distance of about a month walk —within a day that Park, a narrator, starts to tell his neighbor the second narrative, that is, "lots of different things." Also, it is with the railway construction ceremony that the second narrative ends, marked by a train traveling on the newly laid railway. More significantly, the railway shapes the ethical structure of narrative in Kim's work. As "the infrastructures of social life," it reorganizes "the movement of people"

and, thereby, forces people's lifestyle to be altered, imposes considerable impact on people's view of moral value and, accordingly, disturbs the village's moral order by triggering ethical conflicts. For example, a Korean family, composed of Joni Park—a head of household—, his son (Myungshik), daughter-in-law (Yun), and grandson (Jaesoo), irreversibly disintegrates with the completion of the railroading.

Therefore, Kim's novella can be deemed a work built on the mobility infrastructure. In this vein, it concerns a specific historical context that colonial government was enthusiastically engaging in the railway construction of the Korean Peninsula even such an extent as to cover a remote mountain village; that Koreans thus experienced a sort of ethical confusion, as an aftermath of the engineering work, in the face of "the ruthless rush of history," the overwhelming power of colonial modernity.

The Ethical Structure of *The District along the Railway*

In *The District along the Railway*, the mobility infrastructure does not have any ethical value per se but, as a sort of catalyst inducing an ethical question, conditions its ethical structure, shaping the second narrative. Expressly, the railway construction work incurs an ethical confusion in a remote mountain village by involving the movement of people, namely, the influx of workers, which fluidizes the village's moral order and disturbs its traditional ethics.

The second narrative opens with Joni Park's conversations with his friends concerning the news of the railway construction in their village: "Did you, Joni, hear it? It is said that the railway will be laid here, too" (51). This news causes a massive stir in a Korean village deep in the mountains, which had closed its ears to the modernized will for a long time, instigating villagers' anxiety of the train as "an unintended, new monster" (52). The older people envisage that, with ineffable misfortune, the train will trample on the stillness and tradition of the peaceful village; on the other hand, the younger look forward to it, imagining an incredible miracle to awaken the sleepy village. Even before the train runs, the village's change starts and develops contemporaneously with the engineering work. For instance, over a hundred and fifty workers from the south of the Korean Peninsula, speaking the unintelligible, antic dialects, flow into the village; and simultaneously, the sounds of "Confucius says, Mencius says" in a village school lose their luster; and, in addition, new taverns open here and there in the village, resulting in promiscuous barmaids. These changes are so radical that Myungshik, Joni Park's son, feels "the heart of a traveller who goes away" (52).

More importantly, the villagers, who previously were farmers, begin to earn

money due to the railroading, for example, by becoming wage workers or doing business for them. Consequently, it becomes to be tolerable that, although just sixteen years old, Jaesoo, Joni Park's grandson, goes to the construction site for the money, and that the older folk open shady bars where women work as loose barmaids. In other words, everything that could make money is acknowledged as unavoidable and necessary, if not desirable, in the name of making money. Notably, as villagers' view of moral value is oriented towards money, the village undergoes ethical confusion, as symbolized manifestly in the expression of "the blare of the distant explosive sounds outside the village" (53). In this way, the village is no longer able to maintain its moral order which had been supported by "Confucius says, Mencius says," namely, the traditional ethics of solidarity based on bloodline and community; instead, seeking the modern ethics of money, the villagers become passionate about satisfying private interests and instincts, immersing themselves mainly into acts that allow them to earn or spend money. As money dominates the villagers' view of moral value, traditional ethics loses its power over them.

Kim's novella materializes the ethical confusion by narrating Yun's affair with the railway construction's foreman, which, as the central ethical question, constitutes the main ethical line of the narrative which can be rendered as follows: surrounded by the intoxicating atmosphere generated by her neighbour workers' rackets, also located at the centre of the ethical confusion emerging in the village, Yun initiates and then quickly engages in a torrid affair with the foreman with whom she ultimately elopes. In the meantime, she consecutively experiences her husband's death, her son's vengeance on herself for his father's death, and her son's leaving home. These events, as the ethical knots of the narrative constitute its ethical line.

The ethical structure would be clarified by sifting through the processes of the formation and dissolution of the ethical conflicts. First, Myungshik dies prematurely due to an explosion accident while working hard on the railway construction. Though it could be disregarded as one of many explosion accidents, which sometime happen while breaking rocks or tunnelling through mountains, the explosion killing Myungshik cannot be deemed merely an unfortunate accident considering that the night before the accident, Myungshik slaps Yun's face after realizing her affair. Distracted by the previous night's incident, he cannot concentrate on his work at the construction site, his death needs to be considered the result of the ethical collision. In this vein, Myungshik's attack on her ultimately can be seen as guided by rational will, aiming to defend family solidarity, moral order; on the other hand, Yun's affair is to follow free will, the modern ethics that violates moral order to satisfy her instinct, seeking impulse. Therefore, his death can be understood as the result of

the ethical collision between traditional and modern ethics, more precisely, It is a metaphoric, ethical event testifying to the former's defeat by the latter in the time of the railway.

It is notable that, after Myugshik's untimely death, his son, Jaesoo starts to go to a shady bar in the village, learning to drink and enjoy that environment, following his older colleagues. Significantly, thinking that his father's death involves his mother's affair, he rationalizes his immoral behaviour as a sort of vengeance on her, namely, ethical practice to defend moral order. Thus, one night, when he heard her request that "Come in now and sleep," he feels like that "his ear heard a sound ordering the vengeance on his mother" (74); afterward, he runs to visit and drinks heavily with Sunnam, a barmaid, identifying his deviant behaviour with rational activity. At the same time, however, he thinks that "I led the vendetta. However, it seems that, rather, I retaliated against myself" (75) while returning to his home. As for his vengeance for his father, his deviant behaviour might be guided by rational will, the traditional ethics of solidarity; however, by performing an immoral activity that ultimately involves violating moral order, it would be registered as irrational. For this reason, the ethical conflict between both arguably demonstrates Jaesoo's irrational will; in this view, the words, "I led the vendetta. However, it seems that, rather, I retaliated against myself"(75) are interpreted as self-cognitively testifying to his ethical confusion, which oscillates between traditional and modern ethics.

As a critical event in the narrative development, Jaesoo's sudden leaving home is caused by his ethical conflict with his grandfather, Joni Park. Worrying about the village's moral corruption and his grandson's involvement, Park eventually adjures his grandson not to go to a shady bar; nevertheless, Jaesoo goes there at night as before, tricking and ignoring his grandfather, thus violating moral order. In the meantime, Park discovers that Jaesoo entered the bar, and, after then, he eventually decides to leave home to be free from the ethical restraint by his grandfather. An ethical conflict between Park, following his rational will, and his grandson, seeking free will, is resolved through the latter's running away from home. In addition, just after the completion of the railroad, the villagers resume performing ancestral rites and working in the field for about two years, and Park expects that "my grandson will come back! My daughter-in-law also will devote herself to her family" (80), hoping that the village's ethical conflicts are solved explicitly.

To reiterate, the narrative in Kim's novella has an ethical structure, which begins with an ethical question, Yun's affair, develops with Yun's husband's death and Jaesoo's vengeance for his father, and ends with Jaesoo's and Yun's leaving home as sorts of solution. Notably, with the ethical collisions or conflicts between

the traditional ethics as positive (the embodiment of rational will) and the modern as negative (the expression of free will), it weaves the ethical line; that is composed of such ethical knots as first the negative moral value's victory, next to the ethical confusion between both, and concludingly the positive moral value's restoration. By describing the modern ethics of money negatively as violating moral order and, thus, disturbing the village's solidarity, Kim's work might be considered seeking to restore the traditional moral value. However, its narrative demonstrates that, in modern times, the traditional ethics based on blood relation and community exposes its powerlessness, as exemplified in Joni Park's impotence to solve the ethical conflicts that happened in his family. Therefore, Kim's novella's ethical value would be found in its criticism of both ethics, which encourages considering the ethics in the time of the railway; that is, pondering literary ethics in its historical context.

An Ethical Value and Its Historical Contextualization

As discussed previously, in Kim's work, the ethical structure ultimately is erected on the railway, the mobility infrastructure. Its ethical line and knots start to be shaped with the inception of the railway construction, and they culminate with its finalization. By presenting the railway as the embodiment of colonial mobility, the work's ethical value needs to be considered in its historical context of colonial Korea. In this vein, despite its resolution of ethical conflicts, the novella does not conclude its second narrative but rather to narrate a final episode concerning the opening of the railway, which markedly underlines the work's historical contextuality.

The ending episode is composed mainly of Yun's leaving home and the railway opening ceremony. With the completion of the railway construction, the villagers seem to be returning to their traditional farming lives; however, in practice, they live only by acculturating themselves to the altered circumstance. For example, in the feeling of "a mirthlessness of solitude" (81), Joni Park tolerates his daughter-in-law's affair, hopelessly expecting to restore the family; at the same time, he also expects to perform as a member of the modernized society by attending the ceremony as an invited guest.¹ In short, he expects the restoration of moral order based on a bloodline and community. However, on the day of the ceremony, his daughter-in-law leaves home, and he is not invited to the ceremony; ultimately, his expectations are exposed as futile, for despite the resolution of the ethical question,

¹ From a moral perspective, he thinks the invitation to the railway construction ceremony is natural because he donated his land to the railway and also lost his son at the construction site.

the traditional ethics are not of central importance in the altered world¹. As “the infrastructures of social life,” the railway instead foregrounds as an organizer of social relations and serves as a background for ethics.

In this regard, particularly noteworthy is the following scene that Joni Park converses with a man in a suit inside the station yard, newly constructed:

“Did ‘a sand train’ leave?”

“Yes, it already left at dawn.”

“At dawn?”

Joni Park’s mouth repeated as if imitating the words. On the way to turning back outside, he ran towards the man in a suit.

“Didn’t you see a man in a suit accompanying a young lady?”

“Yes, I saw that a foreman, who had worked at the construction site, was going with a lady.”

The man in a suit laughs uproariously, looking down the elder’s face. He quickly turned as if avoiding the young’s deriding look.

Suddenly, boisterously explosive sounds were heard overhead. His entire body, oriented toward the sky, detained a flock of smoke clumping in the air.”
(86)

First, in connection with the utterances verifying Yun’s leaving home, “boisterously explosive sounds” can be read as celebrating the final elimination of an ethical question, specifically, Yun’s affair, in the village. From its composition, thus, Kim’s novella’s ethical structure can be said to be finally completed with the conversation. Meanwhile, in consideration of the sounds originating from the fireworks that celebrate the opening of the railway in a remote mountain village of the Korean Peninsula, the quotation needs to be understood in terms of its historical context, namely, the mobility infrastructure as the embodiment of colonial mobility. In this vein, the spectacular scenery of fireworks moves Joni Park’s body from the ethical context to the historical, colonial-political context.

Meaningfully, following the scene in the station yard, the railway opening ceremony and a train’s first travel using the new mobility infrastructure are

1 The centrality of the railway in the village is symbolically described in the landscape of the village after the finalization of the railroading, as follows:

“Outside a small mountain valley, the railway embankment engirded fields and hillsides. On the embankment, two-line railway lightening in black laid crossly down on wooden pillows.

A locomotive, which leads ten trucks fully carrying sands, ran through above the railway with the sounds of humming. It is a sand train which conveys the sands for the railway construction.” (79)

consecutively represented, significantly back-grounding Joni Park's ethical story. To be specific, a government official from the district office gives a talk that, with the railway, neighbourhood residents would become convenient, local industries would be developed, and people's lives would become abundant—which is interpreted in the Korean language by a short man in a suit —; next, a train from the town “made a lunge for the station like a fierce beast as it blew steam up” (87); after then, “Joni Park's gaze” stares “the back of the train” running on the railway for a long time by the time when it disappears into the forest (90). These scenes can be interpreted, respectively, as metaphors for the Japanese colonial rule accompanying material modernization, the mobility infrastructure as its effective apparatus, and the traditional ethics marginalized by and excluded from colonial modernization. Through synthesis, they bespeak that what is central in the village is not the traditional ethics but colonial politics, based on the mobility infrastructure.

In this regard, striking is the head of a village, expressed as “a foremost and, rather, one and only advanced thinker in the village” (56), who had actively propelled the railway construction in a mountain village; thus, who later is invited to the railway construction ceremony as one of the speakers and has a right to take the train on its “maiden” passage. Sociologically, he would be categorized as “a rural elite,” who is “from the social class that, with a certain level of economic power, had served as a political and social leader in a local society or village, particularly, “a representative of the colonial rule” in colonial Korea (Takenori 37-44). He is neither engaged in ethical conflicts nor interested in restoring any ethical relations. That is, he does not appear in the narrative's ethical line or knots, thereby seeming to be outside of its ethical structure. However, importantly, he is the one who makes others feel “a powerlessness,” walking with the police; for instance, Joni Park always experiences his impotence in the face of the “rural elite” with rank and wealth (56). For this reason, their relationship cannot be stipulated as ethical but rather political. More precisely, the head of a village attests that a Korean village is not structured merely ethically, but also politically, by an unequal distribution of power; therefore, that, in Kim's novella, ethics entangle with politics.

In the ceremony scene, the unequal power relation is immediately and obviously displayed. A government official from the district office gives the letter of appreciation to “those who generously supported with materials and sincerities, in particular, in laying the railway this time” (87). Also, among villagers, several collaborators, including the head of a village, alone are accorded the right to embark on the train's maiden voyage running on the new railway. Notably, except for the head, those who received the letter of appreciation and took the train are precisely

Daedong Park and Chosi Kim, who had run shady bars during the period of the engineering work. In other words, encouraging the villagers to seek the modern ethics of money and practice an immoral lifestyle, their behaviours were recognized as supporting the national policy project, the railway construction. Given that Joni Park was critical of the modern ethics, which ultimately aided the colonial policy, it is not surprising that Joni Park aspired to but could not take the train. Hence, the ceremony scene can be said testifying to the divided, hierarchical reorganization of a Korean society according to colonial politics, thus the collusive tie between modern ethics of money and colonial politics.

In consideration of Kim's novella's ethical structure based on the mobility infrastructure, its ethical value also needs to be assessed in its historical context when Korean villagers' social lives were reorganized according to modern ethics and colonial politics, simultaneously. Notably, as seen in the disrupted moral order during the railroading in the village, there would be no human moral relation in the colonial-modern society seeking private interest or satisfying instinct without also desiring power. Therefore, Kim's criticism of modern ethics as immoral and the traditional ethics as impotent addresses an ethical circumstance that Koreans' social lives are organized by an unequal money-power complex rather than a universal moral norm, and traditional ethics of solidarity based on a bloodline and community are no longer effective there. Hence, the novella demonstrates its ethical value in encouraging the contemplation of an alternative moral for the colonial Koreans necessarily by spelling over the entanglement of literary ethics and anti-colonial politics.

Conclusion: Literary Ethics and Anti-Colonial Politics in Colonial Korea

Kirim Kim's novella, *The District along the Railway*, essentially addresses a historical context, when, after its occupation of Korea, Japanese imperialism enthusiastically developed the modern mobility infrastructure via the rail system, aspiring to rule the Korean Peninsula thoroughly. Starting with the launch of the railway construction and completing with its finalization, the narrative in Kim's work has an ethical structure, constituted of several ethical knots in which modern ethics of money and traditional ethics of solidarity collide. Also, the scene of the railway construction ceremony displays the entanglement of ethics and colonial politics that works in ruling over a Korean village, thus adjuring us to consider literary ethics in relation to colonial politics. In this vein, as a literary work of colonial Korea, Kim's novella encourages the pondering of an alternative moral for the colonial Koreans by considering an entanglement of literary ethics and anti-

colonial politics.

After the ceremony scene, Kim's work returns to the main narrative that a narrator, Chambong Park, converses with his neighbour. The train running at night leaves Park in the middle and, again, keeps passing through the landscapes of colonial Korea in about 1935, almost interminably:

The train is still entering the cramped flats of the valleys of many of the steep mountain peaks shaded black. (88)

The 'tanks' of heavy oil factories seem to be scattered like black ink here and there, and, above them, several lines of power cable pass through the sky. (88)

However, the suffocating sound of the train wheels running through this dense dark air alone is getting sharper. (89)

The quotations can be seen as alluding to the degree of the development of the mobility infrastructure on the Korean Peninsula, its ensuing industrialization, and the continuous progress of such development and industrialization. The narrative tells that "the ruthless rush of history" would progress endlessly, wholly covering the Korean Peninsula with the railway and reorganizing it in a colonial-modern way. Park, who lived in the remote mountain village, now lives in an "inn." Symbolically, while disembarking the train, Park says: "That Gwanbuk inn is my home. Please stop by if you ever pass by" (89). Given the developed colonization-modernization of colonial Korea, his home, "inn," would imply the colonial Koreans' state of homelessness makes ethical or human relations a thing of the past. However, by portraying colonial Korea as endlessly unethical, significantly seen in "the suffocating sound of the train wheels running through this dense dark air," Kim's novella triggers an ethical imagination for people living in the "dense dark air."

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