

A Korean Mobility-Themed Novel Read from an Ethical Literary Criticism Perspective: *The Green Juice Girl Has No Time for Sorrow*

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Abstract: Ethical Literary Criticism expands its research areas and methodologically evolves into a generalized literary theory that reflects the relationship between text and society. *The Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow* (2021), which this paper intends to discuss, is a contemporary Korean novel about a young woman who is excluded from her family and society, addicted to alcohol, and works as a delivery woman who overcomes addiction and returns to the social system. By drawing on the concepts of Ethical Literary Criticism theory by Nie Zhenzhao as an analytical framework, this paper aims to elucidate how ethical criticism works in literature dealing with complex modern people. The novel reveals that the delivery person, *The Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow*, is unique. The novel focuses on the delivery person and visualizes this invisible person in the delivery culture. Therefore that is focused on the ethics of the underdog's mobility and immobility. Hence, as an explanation of the ethical issue in this novel, this paper analyzes the ethical structure related to thinking, human relationships, behavior, and norms through three ethical lines of alcoholism and rehabilitation, family relationships, and mobile delivery, and the ethical knots generated from the three ethical lines. In conclusion, *The Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow* has a unique ethical structure in which two ethical lines of alcoholism and delivery work in combination with the ethical line of relationships.

Keywords: *The Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow*; Ethical Literary Criticism; mobility; immobility; ethical line; ethical knot

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标题: 以文学伦理学批评的观点看韩国移动性小说《果蔬汁配送小姐没时间悲伤》

内容摘要：文学伦理学批评为了将其扩展为考察文本与社会关系的广义文学理论，不断拓展其研究对象和方法论。本文介绍的《果蔬汁配送小姐没时间悲伤》是一部韩国现代小说。小说中的主人公果蔬汁配送员 Kang Jeong-min 是一个被家人和社会抛弃的酒精中毒者，小说描述了主人公通过从事配送果蔬汁重返社会，最终克服酒精中毒的过程。聂珍钊教授在《文学伦理学批评导论》中提到了一些伦理学概念，本文旨在阐释在描述现代人复杂的社会生活的文学作品中这些伦理学概念是如何作为其分析框架发挥作用的。《果蔬汁配送员小姐没有时间悲伤》正如其题目中提到的一样是一部把配送员为中心将其形象化展示的十分有特色的小说。可见，这部小说着眼于展示社会弱者的移动性与不动性之伦理。因此，本文通过酒精中毒、康复、家庭关系和配送移动性三个伦理线和由此产生的伦理结，分析与该小说中伦理问题相关的思想、人际关系、行为和规范等伦理结构。这意味着《果蔬汁配送小姐没时间悲伤》有着其独特的伦理结构，文中酒精中毒和配送这两条伦理线与伦理关系线是以复杂的方式相互作用的。

关键词：《果蔬汁配送小姐没时间悲伤》；文学伦理学批评；移动性；不动性；伦理线；伦理结

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I

Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism (2014) is not just a declaration that the status of literature must be restored through ethical reflection. More importantly, an analytical theory of ethical literary criticism established by Professor Nie Zhenzhao has opened up a new methodological horizon (Lee 334). Ethical literary criticism continues to expand its research areas and methodologically evolve, expanding into a generalized literary theory that reflects the relationship between text and society (Nie & Shang 4-8). This is an open literary theory that not only crosses national boundaries, but also can be applied to any literature that captures the past as well as our rapidly changing contemporary society.

The Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow (2021)¹, which this paper intends to discuss, is a contemporary Korean novel about a young woman who is excluded

1 Kim, Hyunjin. *The Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow*. Seoul: HanKyoreh Publishing Company, 2021. Author Hyunjin Kim studied screenplay and narrative creation at Korea National University of Arts. After starting writing the essay "Do whatever you want" at the age of 17, she had published several essays such as "Goodbye Hot" and "Life started a joke when I said I wanted to die." Furthermore, she has written the novels such as "Tell me why did you do that to me," "It is like XX, but this is a love story." In addition, she once worked as a green juice delivery person for a living.

from her family and society, addicted to alcohol, and works as a delivery woman, who overcomes addiction and returns to the social system. The novel intricately intertwines with vast “ethical lines” and “ethical knots” (Nie 2014, 265-266), involving family, close male and female friends, college friends, business people, delivery co-workers, delivery managers, recipients of delivered goods, and people the protagonist meets by chance.

The novel consists of two key concepts: delivery and the underdog. Kang Jeong-min as an underdog is involved with the ethical problem of alcoholism in addition to her job as a delivery worker. In other words, *the Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow* is a novel about ethical reconstruction related to personal rebirth. By drawing on the concepts of Ethical Literary Criticism theory as an analytical framework, this paper aims to elucidate how ethical criticism works in literature dealing with complex modern people.

II

Today, delivery culture has become commonplace, and the recipient is the center around which delivery carried out. In Korea, delivery people are strangers who connect distance and time in a clearly differentiated structure of orderers, manufacturers, and intermediaries. A delivery person becomes an issue when a delivery is delayed, the wrong item was delivered, and the item was damaged, or was not delivered. In other words, they are invisible beings in the delivery system, except when certain problems arise. Who delivered the coffee I drank this morning, and how many people were involved in the delivery?

Our contemporary delivery culture connects the whole world through a mobility system that delivers goods directly to consumers, and also transforms the characteristics of a place called a store. People can conceive of the image of a producer, but they do not know much about the process of getting the goods to their table. This is largely due to human efforts to increase technological and economic efficiency. The invisibility of delivery today has driven the pursuit of convenience and increased returns to capital. As a result, delivery has combined with the advancement of mobility technology to create a new dimension of the world (Humes 61-78).

Just as the title of the novel reveals, *The Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow* is a unique novel that focuses on the delivery person and visualizes this invisible person in the delivery culture. Delivery people in Korea are typically members of an economically and socially underprivileged class (Park 205-210). The novel focuses on the ethics of the underdog. First of all, as an explanation of

the central plot of this novel, this paper will analyze the “ethical structure” (Nie, *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism* 265-266) related to thinking, human relationships, behavior, and norms through three ethical lines of alcoholism and rehabilitation, family relationships, and mobile delivery, and the ethical knots generated from the three ethical lines. First, the main character, Kang Jeong-min, who is the agent of thought, is an alcoholic woman in her early thirties. Her addiction creates the possibility that she will make different ethical choices than if she had not been addicted. Alcoholism inevitably leads to a lack of “rational will” (Nie, “Sphinx Factor and Ethical Selection” 388), a key concept in Professor Nie Zhenzhao’s *Ethical Literary Criticism*. Furthermore, whether alcoholism is classified as “free will” or “irrational will” (Nie, “Sphinx Factor and Ethical Selection” 388) depends on our judgment. Alcoholism can be considered free will in that it is attracted to desires and impulses, but it can also be considered as irrational will because there are many differences depending on the degree of addiction and the amount of alcohol consumed. Therefore, this paper interprets that the ethical device of alcoholism has a spectrum located between free will and irrational will, and clearly comes into conflict with “rational will.”

The key to the ethical situation in human relationships is the family relationship of the male preference idea, which is the trigger for Kang Jeong-min’s alcoholism. She is socially discriminated against or marginalized in her relationships with men. The story also features her female friend Min-joo, and her male friend Jun-hee, who supports the heroine. Her family members, friends, and co-workers play some role in her alcoholism, and by engaging in the norms of rehabilitation as “ethical facilitators,” they help the protagonist’s ethical thoughts and actions to have an ethical structure. In this paper, ‘ethical facilitators’ will be used to refer to key figures who help in such ethical reconstruction, and in this novel, the female friend Min-joo and male friend Jun-hee are such facilitators.

Next, I would like to pay attention to the fact that the main character’s action is delivery. Although she goes through a lot of hardship while doing her delivery job, eventually she learns to reconcile with those who distress her. In other words, she creates a foundation for rehabilitation by accepting social norms. Here, the social norm would be the ethics of civil society in which there is a function of ‘mutual trust’ among people because ‘exclusive selfishness’ has been abandoned (Son etc. 1-44). Alcoholism, which is eliminated from civil society, in the worst case can make the addict immobile by isolating the person from society. Delivery, on the other hand, is a mobile job. In other words, in the literary sense, alcoholism and delivery are expressions of opposite images.

III

So, let's take a look at the ethical line that governs the ethical structure of mobility and rehabilitation narratives in relation to thought, human relationships, behavior, and norms. First, the ethical line between alcoholism and rehabilitation is the central ethical motif of this novel. The core of this novel is to deliver a message of comfort and healing to those who are frustrated because they think that they are losers in a contemporary society in which values are rapidly changing. This also sounds an ethical alarm regarding the potential desire of many young people, who are prone to falling behind in competition, to find their presence with the help of alcohol. This phenomenon also applies to non-alcoholic addictions.

The novel begins with a prologue about alcohol. The first lines begin by using the word "you" as a second person personification of alcohol, saying, "On a specially frustrating day, I can't stand it without seeing your golden luster" (*The Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow* 7). The narrator and protagonist, a woman in her early thirties, confesses: "Some people call me an alcoholic. I do not deny it" (11).

There are more people like us than we think. Do you know how many alcoholics are in Korea? (. . .) But most addicts are surprisingly ordinary. (. . .) It's just that their true nature hasn't been revealed to you. They will look just like ordinary drinkers. We try so hard to hide behind words like 'tippler', but unlike the 'tipplers,' we are addicted to alcohol and don't have the ability to control our drinking. Studies have shown that the suicide rate for alcoholics is four to ten times higher than that of the general population. The situation is so serious that there is a saying that more people have died from drinking than from drowning. It is said that there are only three endings for us: to die, to spend the rest of our life in isolation in a hospital, and to recover. Which card will I draw out of these? (14-15)

Several personal pronouns are used in the above quotation. "We" are alcoholics, and "you" are the readers of the novel. "They" also refers to alcoholics. The reason why first, second, and third person pronouns are all used is probably because alcoholism is latent in anyone who is "especially frustrated." The novel is telling us this as if it is a common ethical problem that we living in this age can be directly or indirectly involved in. The last paragraph of the Epilogue suggests that the options of mobility and immobility are at the end of the addict's journey. Death or isolation is an immobility situation, and it is a human with the capacity for mobility that

can recover and work. In other words, the ethical choice of alcoholics presupposes healthy mobility.

On the other hand, ethical knots related to alcoholism appear as a chain of large and small incidents related to alcohol. First, let us consider treatment in a hospital specializing in alcoholism.

This is a hospital specializing in alcoholism on the outskirts of the city designated by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. A juvenile detention center is two blocks away. Those children there will look at our hospital and find themselves in an ‘unpleasant facility’ area. (16)

The hospital specializing in alcoholism accepts outpatients, but it is also a facility for the confinement of severe addicts. The juvenile detention center is also a space of immobility, where the inmates are prohibited from moving outside (Adey 125-126). These places are full of predicaments, i.e., “ethical confusion”, created by changes in “ethical order” (Nie, *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism* 13-16) or “ethical identity” (Nie, *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism* 263-265). The ethical line of alcoholism suggests the reconstruction of an ethical order, in that the ethical status of Kang Jeong-min, who visits this hospital, is that of an alcoholic.

Through the literary device of an interview with the patient, the reader learns from a doctor at the hospital that the heroine started drinking when she was in college, and she is now a 32-year-old woman living alone. The therapeutic dialogue presents the ethical knots related to alcohol. If treatment is for ethical reconstruction, the blackout symptom of an inability to remember because of drunkenness is not only a memory problem, but also a problem with the mobility of the body without rational ability. This is an ethical knot that causes ethical confusion by losing one’s own ethical identity and acting against order. Hence, the doctor’s treatment and blackout are in a tension between ethical rehabilitation and confusion, which can be tied or unraveled.

When Kang Jeong-min’s boss, the middle manager of the company she was working for, touches her physically at a dinner party, she “swung a bottle of wine over his head” (38). She blacks out shortly thereafter and cannot remember anything. Eventually, she resigns from the company, and again in blackout, has a series of sexual encounters with men she does not even like. Awakened from her booze-induced haze, she runs out into the street, and talks to herself:

“I’ve never been like this before. It’s not like I’m like this all the time. . . Well,

in fact, it happens quite often. But I really don't want to live like this." She even wants to make excuses this way. The sun rises brightly, and when she sees the bright light, an unknown shame comes over her. If she doesn't run away right away, she'll burn like a zombie. Sizzling. Does Min-joo have time now? I need you. She sends a message that she needs her right now. (87)

Kang Jeong-min goes through the process of recovering her ethical identity through the "light" and "shame" she gained from blackout. Here, "light" is the longing for ordinary rational will that restores the confusion of ethical status, and "shame" is self-reflection on the loss of rational will. The sense of danger of self-extinction, which seemed to burn like a zombie, was because she also recognized her own need for ethical regeneration. Min-joo is a friend who comforts the protagonist who is tired of life and shares similar concerns. As will be discussed below, Kang Jeong-min, who is breaking out of her family, is comforted by talking to her ethical facilitator, Min-joo, about the unethical situation that has happened to her. This communication with an ethical facilitator is very important in that it is an effort to rebuild her rational will. This ethical facilitator helps the protagonist in the recovery of her ethical identity by listening and empathizing.

IV

The ethical line in Kang Jeong-min's family relationships involves ethical contradictions and conflicting ethical knots that show why she could not help but become an addict. The thing to note here is that "Ethical literary criticism is defined as a critical theory for reading, analyzing, and interpreting the ethical nature and function of literary works from the perspective of ethics" (Nie, "A Basic Theory" 189). That which is involved in ethical knots here is a modern turn of money and family ethic. This was due to the discrimination she had suffered from her mother since her childhood. This ethical knot causes ethical confusion, and shows the ethical paradox that has made Kang Jeong-min's ethical identity unstable. First of all, the protagonist lives with an economically incompetent father, a mother who struggles to make ends meet, and an elder brother who is respected simply because he is a son. Her mother happily paid her brother's tuition, who entered college on his third attempt. But she refused to pay the tuition for her daughter, who went to the art department to become a webtoon artist. Although the idea of favoring boys in Korea has largely disappeared these days, it is still a common notion in some families. While it is rare, one can find families like the one in this novel, where excessive Confucian traditional ideas remain.

“The Confucian ethical system was a system in which women were subordinated to men or in severe cases had to sacrifice themselves in order to maintain the family clan, and for this reason, it is criticized that Confucian ethics still remain in our society” (Jeon 94). Besides, Kang Jeong-min thinks that she is blatantly discriminated against compared to her brother, but her mother does not think so at all.

In order to overcome alcohol dependence, one is desperately in need of the help of family, but it’s hard to expect that. (Quoting the doctor)

Help of family. . . Well, I think they almost pushed me to alcoholism, but in fact, that’s just an excuse. As the saying goes, there is no grave without an excuse, there is no alcoholism without an excuse. (152-153)

Kang Jeong-min’s rupture with her family is tied to money as an ethical knot. She worked her way through college, and got a job after arduous efforts. But even there she had to endure discrimination as a woman. She tenaciously saved money, and asked her mother to invest her money to increase it. But her mother put all of this money into her son’s wedding, and when Jeong-min quit the company, she was left with no savings. The mother asks what is wrong with her daughter’s money being spent on family affairs. She pressures her daughter to withdraw her resignation and remain working, despite the humiliation the daughter has to endure there. The daughter says, “Wow, someone else would file a suit” (158). The mother snaps at the daughter, “Suit? Look at what she’s talking about. Family helps each other out. Do you think your brother will do nothing for you when you get married? When things get tough, we help each other, and when things get better, we pay them back, and that’s how we all live” (158).

This is a case in which the mother embezzled the money that the daughter earned for her own growth as funds for her brother’s marriage. It cannot be interpreted only as a comment on how the values of mutual support and help in the traditional ethical norms have collapsed in modern times. This is because “the feudal ethic that enforced the unilateral submission and sacrifice of women and children was a variant that did not conform to the original principle (Kim 2005, 128).” However, the main character has a knot of discrimination in that she has been excluded from her parents since she was growing up. From the protagonist’s point of view, the discrimination she experienced is contrary to ethics. Although the protagonist wants to file a “suit,” an ethical dilemma arises because the accused is a

family member. About this dilemma, Jeong-min says to herself:

I know they won't pay me back, even if things get better. You highway robbers, don't contact me again. Let's live forever as strangers. My brother thought that my parents owed me the cost of the wedding, and my parents thought that my brother owed me the cost of the wedding. That is, no one owed me. (158)

Here, we need to think about the work ethic of capitalism (Weeks 33-77), which money symbolizes. This is because the money earned as a result of the work ethic of Live to work is ambiguously mixed with the family ethic. The 50 million won Kang Jeong-min earned was used by her mother to pay for her brother's wedding. The will of the protagonist is not functioning at all. This is problematic when seen from the perspective of the modern subject's ethics. In the end, the brother who got married with her 'money' thinks "his parents borrowed money from her," and the parents think that "their son borrowed money from her." The conclusion is that no one borrowed money from her. The work ethic is a discourse of individualization, and the money earned by the protagonist's labor should be used according to her will.

On the other hand, the private sphere of family ethics compels work in a way that contributes without payment to the social reproduction of family members. In this respect, the family ethics is complicit in the work ethic. The following conversation with the doctor illustrates the dilemma.

There was such a thing. Still, they are parents. . . I saw your chart. It looks like you get angry and want to drink. This is the word I hate the most. 'They're still parents. It's still family.' Why is it that almost all the people who say this are men? Why don't they think about how parents and family could do this to me, their daughter and sister? (159)

It is against the ethics of filial piety between parents and children for Kang Jeong-min to rebel against her mother. It is unacceptable for her, as an independent individual, to accept her mother's recommendation to go to a nursing college that she does not like at all. This conflict seemed to be settled when Kang Jeong-min left home and earned the tuition fees and went to college. But, exhausted from her part-time work and studying together, she resorted to alcohol to get through difficult moments, and as a result became an alcoholic. She grew up in a typical petit-bourgeois class in the 21st century Korean society where the middle class was collapsing, and the poverty of her parents' generation has been passed down to

her. She managed to get a job and saved her money, but her mother had used it up to finance her brother's marriage, and she was penniless. Nevertheless, the ethic of filial piety made it impossible for her to claim her own money back from her mother.

Without the support of her parents, she earned and saved her own money to live the life she wanted, and then lost all that money to her mother. But with no way to appeal on this matter, she finds herself in a dilemma, and becomes an alcoholic of irrational will. Therefore, the ethical line of the family relationship forms a multi-layered relationship with another ethical line, alcoholism, and is the core of the ethical value of this novel.

V

The ethical line of delivery mobility consists of ethical knots that lead to ethical reconstruction through the labor caused by economic deprivation. The main character makes a living by delivering green vegetable juice in the morning, and when the delivery shift is over, works at a part-time job to pay off her debts. This life consists of a chain of positive ethical knots and negative ethical knots. Among them, the ethical knot of immobility is an issue to pay attention to in an era of delivery. In short, delivery workers who work while on the move are supposed to be invisible, but paradoxically, live a life of immobility. This situation of immobility goes against the justice of mobility (Sheller 39-40).

First of all, when delivering at a high-rise building, "In principle, one must come down from the top because the use of elevators should be minimized so as not to interfere with the movement of employees." She moves mostly by emergency stairs, and only when in a hurry sneaks into the freight elevator, which the 'office people' are not even aware of and in which 'human loading' is prohibited. (49)

As shown in the quote above, delivery people who use stairs or freight elevators must work in a mobility-inconvenient manner so as not to disturb the "office people." Such restrictions on the right to mobility are a matter to consider from a perspective of human dignity, but are even more serious considering the importance of delivery in contemporary society. Instead of driving, taking a boat, or a vehicle such as an airplane, her mode of transportation is walking on foot while pulling a delivery cart. She is at the lowest level of mobility capability, having to take the stairs when she is denied access to the elevator at the delivery place. According

to John Urry, mobility capability is deeply involved with economic and social ownership of capital (Urry 38-39). In various places, the novel describes the delivery method with the lowest mobility capability. In fact, delivery at the last stage, whether by motorcycle, bicycle, or on foot, is different from the mobility of commuting. Can the delivery person's personal rights be ignored?

To predict the world that changes in the delivery industry will bring about, it is essential to take an interest in the delivery person, including taxi drivers and freight truck drivers. The reason why delivery workers are invisible is largely due to the way of thinking that limits delivery within the economic system. Mobility technology's planning of unmanned delivery paradoxically shows that in the delivery system (Kim 2021, 28), the personality rights of the person making the delivery are not required.

As a means of communication between the sender and the receiver of information or goods, delivery is built as a highly capitalist mobility system (Humes 5-6). Historically, mobility technology has profoundly changed human life and society, and it can be predicted that such changes will accelerate in the future. Delivery mobility is one of the important areas in such a prediction. These changes increase the need for discussion of new ethical norms in the world. Moreover, consumers often ignore the human rights of female delivery workers. This ethical knot of human rights is intertwined with discrimination against women and denounces the reality of modern capitalism. Here, I withhold judgment on whether indifference to the human rights of delivery workers is a phenomenon that is unique to Korea.

Of course, there is no character in this novel who completely denies the ethical idea of equality. However, the gap between rich and poor in a capitalist society undermines even the ethics of equality. Beyond that, even the delivery workers compete with each other to earn more. On the other hand, we can also see the main character making a positive ethical search, as follows.

Delivering even on Chuseok (秋夕) holiday and Lunar New Year's Day, and having a hard time not being able to collect money properly, I both hated and liked this delivery job. If I had delivered things like newspapers, I probably wouldn't have felt that way. Unlike newspapers, there was no bad news for green vegetable juice. (330-331)

The sentence "there was no bad news for green vegetable juice" clearly shows just how much the world today is hounded by stressful information. Here, green

vegetable juice is a symbol of recovery and healing. While delivering green juice, the main character always greets the people she meets cheerfully. As a working body and a mobile body, she comes into contact with people from various walks of life, from corporate executives to cleaning women and janitors.

The experience of these meetings is about the ethics of communication that we should live in harmony with each other, beyond the social hierarchy. That is, the protagonist who does not have any preexisting relationship with others can generate “a loose being-together by practicing restricted travel in a specific zone” (Kim, etc. 103) of the city. As a result, in this novel, the delivery act is tied to a complex reality: a configuration made of a city’s history, a diversity represented among the residents, and “the possible ethics of community” (Kim, etc.104). The protagonist, who was always victimized in conflicts with other delivery workers, was able to resolve such conflict by acting so that the other people could understand that people are all equal. She was able to do this because she realized the ethics of communication through her job.

As I have discussed so far, *The Green Juice Girl has No Time for sorrow* has a unique ethical structure in which two ethical lines of alcoholism and delivery work in combination with the ethical line of relationships. In other words, it is no exaggeration to say that this novel is an ethical text that depicts the process of rational thought of young people who are struggling to live in contemporary society while experiencing ethical conflicts. And the backlash against the disrespect for women in the background is raised as both a family and a social issue. Here, the ethical knots show the overcoming of the competitive logic and system of discrimination in capitalism.

In the worst case, alcoholism can make the addict immobile by isolating the person from society. On the other hand, delivery is a job involving mobility. In other words, in the literary sense, alcoholism and delivery are in contrast. As a foreshadowing in the novel, it suggests that, through ethical choices, the protagonist will be cured of alcoholism and become a new person. Green vegetable juice is a health supplement that provides nutrition to the body damaged by alcohol. Hence, the act of delivering the juice to people already has implications for improving human activities such as health recovery. The irony of an alcoholic delivering green vegetable juice suggests a winding ethical choice in today’s society.

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