

Before the Coherent Plot: Kim Sowŏl's Editors, 1920–1925

Wayne de Fremery

In this paper I argue for a new attention to the sociology of Korean colonial-era texts, and for a critical rethinking of contemporary modes of literary/textual criticism as they relate to the socialization of Korean literary works from the early twentieth century. Studying the editors who oversaw the publication of poems and stories by the canonical Korean author Kim Sowŏl (1902–1934) in the periodicals of his day repositions these literary texts in the socio-textual contexts of their initial production—allowing us to glimpse them before they were canonical. Recontextualizing Kim Sowŏl's works to emphasize the textual contexts in which they initially appeared productively reorients investigations of Kim's oeuvre and presents new creative critical opportunities; we can begin to rethink our methods of engaging his corpus. A review of scholarly approaches to Kim Sowŏl reveals that the conditions under which his works were created have gone unstudied. As a first step toward addressing this oversight in the voluminous discourse about Kim Sowŏl, I survey ten periodicals in which the poet's work appeared and identify many of the editors responsible for overseeing the translation of his poetic manuscripts into print. Identifying Sowŏl's editors illuminates the broader sociology of Korean colonial texts and enables new critical perspectives through investigations of the bibliographic histories of texts by canonical Korean authors.

Keywords: Korean literature, Korean poetry, sociology of texts, Kim Sowŏl, editing

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