

The Development of Early Modern Korean Narratives

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The goal of this article is to review the process of development of early modern Korean narratives. The main part of the review is the research of the literature that appeared in the 1890s and early 1900s. In the case of prose, fiction in particular, it is not a good idea to observe early modern Korean narratives from the perspective of the Western concept of the novel. The *soseol*, the Korean counterpart of the novel that appeared during the enlightenment period, is not exactly the same as the Western novel. It was a different genre from the Western novel.

Among the various styles of editorials, the most significant form is the narrative editorial, which is based on a story. In other words, the narrative editorial refers to a literary style of editorial written during the “enlightenment period,” which has allegorical or didactic stories. These were found in the editorial sections of newspapers or intellectual magazines, and are similar to the fiction of the enlightenment period. It can be said that when those traditional genres encountered a modern medium like the newspaper, they accepted and adopted new components of such modern style and transformed into the narrative editorial. This argument is supported by the fact that the narrative editorial, *yadam* and *hanmun danpyeon*, all share the intermixed form of a parable with a moral lesson.

In the newspapers that circulated during the 1900s, many short narratives were serialized under the heading of “*soseol*.” The particular form of narrative, which shares similar functional aspects with the narrative editorial but which is more oriented to the form of a narrative, is the “editorial narrative.” The editorial narrative can be found in the miscellany section of newspapers and is titled *soseol*. Compared to the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*), however, the editorial narrative is closer to the form of an editorial. In this sense, the editorial narrative is a narrative form located between the narrative editorial and the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*), and one which laid more emphasis on an explanation of political affairs than on the plot of a story.

Early modern Korean newspapers often carried a column “*inmul gisa*”

(Famous People). This section provided biographical stories or anecdotes about the lives and works of historically important personages. But these articles were not pure history. Rather, they represented fictive writing based on historical events, and, as such, can be included as another form of short narrative that was popular during the enlightenment period.

Whether they selected an editorial or *soseol* as the medium for their writings, most writers of early modern Korean literature intended to educate the masses with easy words and expressions. The account of ongoing social and political issues in *soseol* is evidence of this enlightenment perspective. It also clearly illustrates that narrative and argument are not divided in early modern literature.

Various forms of short narratives are related to the *sinsoseol*, which represents the next stage in the development of short narratives. Among them are storytelling, questions and answers between two protagonists, and a discussion among many characters. In this sense, it can also be said that short narratives during the enlightenment period played an important role in the development of modern Korean literature. The narrative editorial and other forms of short narratives influenced the emergence not only of the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*) but also the *yeoksa jeongi soseol* (historico-biographical fiction).

Keywords: Modern Korean narratives, the Enlightenment period, narrative editorial, editorial narrative, “new novel” (*sinsoseol*), “novel” (*soseol*)

Introduction: Continuity versus Discontinuity

There have been two perspectives on the development of modern Korean narratives. One is the theory of “continuity,” and the other, that of “discontinuity.” The continuity theory is the idea that pre-modern or traditional Korean literature is linked to modern Korean literature. The discontinuity theory claims that the tradition of Korean literature ended at the close of the 19th century, and that the origins of a new modern literature appeared at the beginning of the 20th century. It is argued that these new forms of literature were strongly influenced by Western or Japanese literature. Another name for the discontinuity theory is that of “transplantation.”

Between the two theories, the discontinuity theory is more influential than the continuity perspective in Korean academia. This is because the advocates of

the continuity theory have failed to provide convincing evidence to support their arguments. For this reason, it is not surprising that the continuity theory has been regarded as the blind pursuit of nationalism or patriotism.¹

Given that the period between the late 1890s and the early 1900s is so important in the early modern history of Korea, it is surprising that so few students of literature have conducted research on this period. Usually, this is called “a vacant period” in the field of Korean literary history. Accordingly, literary histories of Korea always begin with the literary works of Yi In-jik, the first writer of the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*), without any explanation of the literature that appeared in the 1890s and early 1900s. Many Korean literary historians are guilty of this, and of linking the emergence of the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*) to foreign literature. There have been attempts to incorporate the tradition of Korean literature; yet these have been too unpolished and have lacked sufficient evidence to be persuasive.

The influence of foreign literature should not be overlooked. However, the foreign influence does not necessarily equal the discontinuity of tradition. It may be one factor in explaining the origins of modern Korean literature, but it is not the only one. The perspective of indigenous development also provides important factors in understanding modern Korean literature. Up until now, however, some seemingly “vacant periods” have discouraged researchers from exploring some of the richest sources in Korean literature.

The nominal dichotomy of the continuity and discontinuity theories is not so important. The most important thing is a closer reading, which makes it possible to look at the real shape of modern Korean literature at the junction between tradition and modernity. The goal of this article is to review the process of development of early modern Korean narratives. The main part of review is the research of the literature that appeared in the 1890s and early 1900s.²

1. Many scholars argue that the discontinuity theory originates from Im Hwa, who was not only a famous poet but also a brilliant literary critic of the 1930s. He also wrote important essays on literary history. His essays were widely considered to be the origin of the discontinuity theory. Recently, young scholars argued that it is a total misunderstanding to read Im’s essays from the point of view of the discontinuity theory and that the essays have nothing to do with the notion that traditional Korean literature was not linked to the modern period. Nevertheless, it is still true that his essays have done much to spread the discontinuity theory for more than a half century. Refer to Munhakgwa Sasang Yeonguhoe (2004: 15-9) for the detail.

2. I do not deny that Korean literature was influenced by Western and Japanese literature. It is impossible that the country, colonized by Japan at its early modern stage, avoided impact from Japan. I just wanted to stress that the theory of discontinuity, that is, that Korean literary tradition, was discontinued and Western and Japanese modern literature were implanted, is incorrect. I also

The Style of Early Modern Narratives

Many existing studies of literary history are preoccupied with an argument that the Korean narrative as a modern genre is inferior to that of the West and Japan. They criticize the Korean modern narrative for its lack of some factors of the modern novel, such as a well-organized plot, sufficiency in length, and distinctive protagonists.

But, in the case of prose, fiction in particular, it is not a good idea to observe early modern Korean narratives from the perspective of the Western concept of the novel. The *soseol*, the Korean counterpart of the novel that appeared during the enlightenment period, is not exactly the same as the Western novel. It was a different genre from the Western novel. Until now, a big problem in accessing pre-modern Korean narratives was to understand the Western concept of the novel first, and then to find individual works in Korean anthologies that fit that concept. This twisted methodology always led researchers to the conclusion that there was no novel in Korea, or, even if there was, that it was inferior to the Western novel. This is not quite true. As the novel is one of the major genres in modern Western literature, so is the *soseol* in Korean literature. Roughly speaking, in the early 20th century, the Western novel is just a novel, the Japanese *shosetsu* is just a *shosetsu*, and the Korean *soseol* is just a *soseol*. A *soseol* is not a part of a novel.

The basic point of view of this article is to read materials as they are, and not from a perspective predetermined by terminology. The name of a genre should not take precedence. The reason that almost all literary historians have overlooked the period from the late 1890s to the middle of the 1900s is not because there were no materials, but because they were not able to find them or did not admit the value of the materials that were available. In fact, many narratives, which were not in the form of the novel, existed during this period. Their obsession with the novel blinded them from objectively observing these modern Korean narratives.³

wanted to argue that there should be something traditional and unique, along with foreign influences, in the development of Korean literature. Of course, external factors are important, but many other scholars have already studied them for a long time, so I omitted them in this paper.

3. Here, I would like to touch upon the short narratives, which were written in pure Korean script during the period from the 1890s to the end of the 1900s. The research on this period has two objectives: To select meaningful narratives from hundreds of articles and editorials in newspa-

In this section, the short narrative forms are analyzed. These forms existed before the emergence of the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*). The narratives at the beginning of the 20th century can be categorized with modifiers such as “argumentative” or “fictive,” depending on their thematic variations.⁴

1. The Narrative Editorial

Among the various styles of editorials, the most significant form is the narrative editorial, which is based on a story. In other words, the narrative editorial refers to a literary style of editorial written during the enlightenment period, which has allegorical or didactic stories. Although these were found in the editorial sections of newspapers or intellectual magazines, these editorials are similar to the fiction of the enlightenment period.⁵

In May of 1897 the first narrative editorial and by 1898 the narrative editorial became popular through the editorial sections of the *Jeguk sinmun*, *Maeil sinmun*, and *Daehan maeil sinbo*. It was an established editorial form until 1910. However, after the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, the narrative editorial seldom appeared in newspapers.

The first narrative editorial is “*kokkiriwa wonsungi iyagi*” (A story about an elephant and a monkey) which was published in *Keuriseudo sinmun* on May 7, 1897. Along with this story, there are some more in *Joseon keuriseudoin hoebo* published in 1897. The *Dongnip sinmun* carried about 30 narrative editorials from January 8, to November 27, 1899, the *Jeguk sinmun* about 40 narrative editorials from September 30, 1898 to May 7, 1900, the *Maeil sinmun* about 30 narrative editorials from April 20, 1898 to March 28, 1899, and the *Daehan maeil sinbo* about 30 Narrative editorials from December 12, 1907 to March 9, 1910.

One of the important stylistic features of the narrative editorial is that it combined two different literary forms: argument and story. This binary structure usually invited the editor’s comments or notes, which in turn played a role in

pers, and to explore their significance in literary history. The narratives are found in many kinds of modern Korean newspapers. They are *Daehan maeil sinbo*, *Keuriseudo sinmun*, *Yesugyo hoebo*, *Sinhan minbo*, *Dongnip sinmun*, *Gyeonghyang sinmun*, *Hyeopseonghoe hoebo*, *Joseon keuriseudoin hoebo*, *Daehan keuriseudoin hoebo*, *Mansebo*, *Maeil sinmun*, and *Jeguk sinmun*.

4. The reason we have to pay attention to the form of argument in a discussion of narratives is that many argumentative narratives were written in the editorial section in newspapers.

5. This unprecedented narrative form is the first step in the development of early modern Korean narratives.

smoothly amalgamating the two component parts. There were different ways in which commentaries were inserted. Three popular ways were as follows:

- 1) Inserting the editor's voice only prior to the story
- 2) Inserting the editor's voice before and after the story
- 3) Inserting the editor's voice only after the story

If the editor's narration begins prior to the main story, it is usually relatively unimportant. This is because his note functions only as a brief introduction to the narrative. More often than not, it reveals how the editor was informed of the story. For example:

Here, I report an essay by my friend, who is a man of letters. (*Dongnip sinmun*, February 5, 1898)

When our reporter stopped by his friend's house in the west village, four or five men of letters sat and led an active discussion. Having listened to it, he recounts here the summary of the talk. (*Dongnip sinmun*, December 28, 1898)

In many cases, editors' notes that are attached to the end of the story are even more important than the narrative because they expose the purpose of the narrative to the reader. At times, writers' opinions and their arguments are added. The below are examples:

The aforementioned story is so interesting that our newspaper decided to print it. We hope that readers of this story will think over what to do in the same situation as the protagonist's. (*Dongnip sinmun*, January 8, 1898)

Treacherous retainers, past and present, always covet gain and goods, and do not take care of the country. How lamentable it is! (*Jeguk sinmun*, March 30, 1900)

As seen above, comments are directly given on the content of the story. The two components of the narrative editorial, story and comment, have a close relationship with each other as a form of enlightenment. The main story is carefully selected for the education of the uncultivated masses. Sometimes editors lay out straightforward arguments for didactic purposes.

The informative and moralistic story in the narrative editorial is delivered to readers in various ways. Among them, three are most prevalent: 1) storytelling; 2) questions and answers between the two protagonists; and 3) a discussion among many characters.

Storytelling is the most popular form found in the *Maeil sinmun*. Editors narrate didactic but interesting short anecdotes to attract reader attention. In the form of questions and answers, stress is put on the conversation between two people rather than their behavior. In that sense, it can be termed a dialogue style. A moral lesson is directly exposed through the seemingly light conversation. The topics of the dialogue touch upon ongoing social and political subjects. It was the most popular style of narrative editorial in the *Dongnip sinmun*. In the third case, three or more characters lead a vigorous discussion. Like the dialogue style, topics discussed by participants are socio-political. Nevertheless, deeper discussions and more variant opinions are put forward. This style is not so frequently seen in newspapers, yet the *Jeguk sinmun* and *Dongnip sinmun* did carry a couple such works.

The question as to who wrote most narrative editorials is still unsolved. Though a few narrative editorials have the signature of the writer, more often than not, the name of the writer (or writers) is missing, as is the case with other articles. It is assumed that members of the editorial board might have jointly partaken in their writing.

The narrative editorial is based on a structure in which the comments of an argumentative editor are added to the narrative. In many cases, a fable is selected as the literary form of the story. Due to the light wit of the fable genre, at times, the narrative editorial is regarded simply as an interesting story that has nothing to do with the real world. Nevertheless, a close reading of these fables always discloses some of the social and political problems that early 20th century Korea faced. In other words, the real purpose of the narrative editorial was to awaken readers to recognize the danger and gravity of the situation in which Korea was placed, and to criticize wrongdoers for their crimes through a seemingly unreal parable. This “realistic parable with editor’s comments,” which was sometimes serialized like newspaper fiction, is a modern form of traditional genres such as *yadam* and *hanmun danpyeon*. Putting it a different way, it can be said that when those traditional genres encountered a modern medium like the newspaper, they accepted and adopted new components of the modern style and transformed into the narrative editorial. This argument is supported by the fact that the narrative editorials, *yadam* and *hanmun danpyeon*, all share the intermixed form of a

parable with a moral lesson.

2. The “*soseol*” (The Representative Term for Modern Korean Narratives)

In the newspapers that circulated during the 1900s, many short narratives were serialized under the heading of “*soseol*.”⁶ “Geobuohae” (The Misunderstanding of a Rickshaw Man) is one of the most important short narratives of the 1900s. It was serialized from February 20 to March 7, 1906 in the Daehan maeil sinbo. This story is similar to the narrative editorial in that the main characters in “Geobuohae” directly criticize the social and political situation in Korea. Nevertheless, there are some distinctive differences between the narrative editorial and “Geobuohae.”

“Geobuohae” was published in the news section with other articles, not in the editorial section. In addition, the direct intervention of the writer’s voice or editorial comments is missing. In fact, there are many comments on the political situation of Korea yet these comments are delivered directly through the main characters of the story, not by the voice of the writer or editor. Thirdly, and most importantly, “Geobuohae” has the appellation *soseol* along with the title.

This particular form of narrative, which shares similar functional aspects with the narrative editorial but which is more oriented to the form of a narrative, is the “editorial narrative.” The editorial narrative can be found in the miscellaneous section of newspapers, and is titled *soseol*. Compared to the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*), however, the editorial narrative is closer to the form of an editorial. In this sense, the editorial narrative is a narrative form located between the narrative editorial and the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*), and one which laid more emphasis on the explanation of political affairs than on the plot of a story.

Three representative examples of the editorial narrative are “Sogyeonggwa anjumbangi mundap” (A Dialogue between a Blind Man and a Cripple), serialized from November 17 to December 13, “Hyangno bangmun uisaengira” (A Meeting between an Old Man from the Countryside and a Doctor of Chinese Medicine), serialized from December 15, 1905 to February 2, 1906, and “Sisa mundap” (A Dialogue on Current Affairs), which was serialized from March 8

6. Among them was the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*), which had a relatively longer format. As a great deal of research has already been conducted on the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*), I am not going to discuss this particular form. What I would rather focus on in this section are those short narratives that fall under the category of *soseol*, and their relation to the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*).

to April 12, 1906.

These narratives, which were carried in the *Daehan maeil sinbo*, are thought to have been created by one person or the same group of people. Even if these pieces were authored by a single person, it appears that he benefited from collective efforts in the discussion and planning of the work. The primary evidence for this view is the lack of individuality in terms of writing style. This argument is supported by the strong degree of analysis and criticism of current affairs manifested by the works, which appear to be beyond the level of individual personal understanding.

The *Hwangseong sinmun* was forced to close its doors following the critical editorial, “Siilya bangseong daegok” (Crying Today), which denounced the brutality of Japanese imperialism. In such a highly unpredictable situation, any strong criticism put forth by an editorial narrative would likely affect the fate of the newspaper company. Accordingly, editorial boards often decided to carry editorial narratives, such as “A Dialogue between a Blind Man and a Cripple” and “A Meeting between an Old Man from the Countryside and a Doctor of Chinese Medicine” in the miscellaneous section in order to escape Japanese censorship and the possible discontinuation of the newspaper. Using the generic title *soseol* for works such as “Geobuohae” can be understood in the same context. Nevertheless, to the writers of the editorial narrative, the content of a story was more important than its form. In other words, as long as critical arguments were contained in a narrative, its designation as novel or editorial did not matter. In sum, the editorial narrative is a literary style, which externally manifests the title of *soseol* yet, internally hides powerful arguments. Such a strong linkage between narrative and argument is the most important aspect of early modern Korean narratives.

The *Jeguk sinmun* published many narratives in the section titled *soseol* from September 18, 1906. From the time the *soseol* section was established, the newspaper ceased to carry narrative editorials.

The *Gyeonghyang sinmun* is worth examining closely since its *soseol* section independently existed among various other newspaper sections, and many short narratives were carried in this section. It published around 50 examples of *soseol* from November 30, 1906 to December 30, 1910. Every *soseol* in the *Gyeonghyang sinmun* has a title, but none name authors.

The most important characteristic of the *soseol* in the *Gyeonghyang sinmun* is the similarity to the narrative editorial. Many *soseol* contain comments from an editor, and, again, they illustrate that the combination of narrative and argu-

ment was a popular literary form at the time.

3. The “*inmul gisa*” (Famous People: Newspaper Column)

Early modern Korean newspapers often carried a column entitled “*inmul gisa*” (famous people). This section provided biographical stories or anecdotes about the lives and works of historically important personages. But these articles were not pure history. Rather, they represented fictive writing based on historical events, and, as such, can be included as another form of short narrative that was popular during the enlightenment period.

The first of these columns appeared in the *Dongnip sinmun* on February 22, 1898. This newspaper carried a story about Washington’s Birthday, and described in detail that he was a person who dedicated himself to the independence of the United States in its battle with England. He was portrayed as gentle and brave. His strong leadership gathered people and encouraged them to fight against England for their independence. Externally, the *Dongnip sinmun* stated that the focus of this article was on the celebration of Washington’s Birthday: “As today marks the birthday of such a heroic figure, it is worthwhile to record his historical achievement.” Internally, however, the real intention of the writer was to stress the necessity of raising passionate leaders who could promote military power for national defense.

The *Dongnip sinmun* carried similar stories following this story of Washington. “Mogi jangggunui sajeok” (The Heroic Deeds of General Mogi) ran on August 11, 1899, and Bismark, the chancellor of Germany, was introduced on October 31, 1899. A column with the same title can be also found in *Keuriseudo sinmun*. “Alfrednimgun” (King Alfred) ran on May 16, 1901 “Euljimundeok” on August 22, “Wonchunseok” on August 29, and “Giljae” on September 5 of the same year. There were many stories on heroes in the *Daehan maeil sinbo*. In particular, “Italiguk amachijeon” (The Story of Amachi, Italy), which was serialized from December 12 to December 21, 1905, merits close examination since it provides important links among these stories of famous people, the editorial narrative, and the historico-biographical novel.⁷

The *Gyeonghyang sinmun* carried these stories of famous people in the sec-

7. The historico-biographical novel was another major form among the early modern narratives of the enlightenment period.

tion titled *soseol*. “Saramen meonjeo geu nuneul bolgeosira” (When Looking at People, Look at the Eyes First), published on June 18, 1909, was one of the typical *inmul gisa* during the enlightenment period. Though it was printed in the *soseol* section, this article touched upon the anecdotes surrounding the life and deeds of General Im Gyeong-Op.

The central figures of *inmul gisa* were various. They were not limited to Korean heroes in the present but included noteworthy people without regard for era or country of origin. In any case, however, the real purpose was to discuss Korean issues in the present. In this sense, it can be said that these stories are similar to the editorial narrative, the purpose of which was to examine the then current social and political situations and problems of Korea. Due to this political engagement, however, the *inmul gisa* could not continue to be published after the annexation of Korea in 1910.⁸

The Significance of Short Narratives in the Literary History of Korea

Whether they selected an editorial or *soseol* as the medium for their writings, most writers of early modern Korean literature intended to educate the masses with easy words and expressions. The account of ongoing social and political issues in *soseol* is evidence of this enlightenment perspective. It also clearly illustrates that narrative and argument are not divided in early modern literature.

Many writers of short narratives were intellectuals who had insights concerning the penetration of the Korean peninsula by foreign powers. Their consciousness of the need for national security created a new style of narrative. This new style combining story and argument provides evidence that early modern Korean literature had progressed by accepting and adapting to social and cultural stimulation from the outside.

Various forms of short narratives are related to the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*), which represents the next stage in the development of short narratives. Among them are storytelling, questions and answers between two protagonists, and dis-

8. The one and only exception to this is the case of the *Sinhan minbo*. It published *inmul gisa* even after the annexation. It carried articles about famous people from April 7, 1909 to November 30, 1916. I believe that since the *Sinhan minbo* was printed outside Korea (in the U.S.), it was able to keep on publishing these brief accounts of nationalistic figures with relatively little disruption from Japanese censorship.

cussion between many characters. In this sense, it can also be said that short narratives during the enlightenment period played an important role in the development of modern Korean literature. The narrative editorial and other forms of short narratives influenced the emergence not only of the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*) but also the *yeoksa jeongi soseol* (historico-biographical fiction). Such relationships, however, do not mean that one form disappeared after influencing the next genre. Even after the *sinsoseol* and the *yeoksa jeongi soseol* appeared, short narratives coexisted with these new narrative forms. The longer prose forms, such as the *sinsoseol* and the *yeoksa jeongi soseol*, which have been intensively researched, have a natural linkage to short narratives to which no one has paid due attention.⁹

An interesting phenomenon can also be observed with respect to the term *sinsoseol*. When these works first appeared in newspapers, sometimes they were referred to merely as *soseol*, thereby providing no distinction between these works and short narratives. “*Sin*” of the term “*sinsoseol*” was a prefix, which simply meant “new.” Accordingly, *sinsoseol* simply referred to a newly written, newly translated, or newly published work of prose fiction; it was not a proper noun designating a new genre. Presently, the *sinsoseol* represents a distinct genre that is different from the *soseol*, but nobody used the term in this way at the time such works were written and published.¹⁰

For example, the *Gyeonghyang sinmun* published *sinsoseol* such as “Haewe

9. There are a couple of criticisms regarding the relationship between the editorial narrative and the “new novel” (*sinsoseol*). In particular, their purposes are said to be different: The narrative editorial is based on patriotism while the *sinsoseol* puts forth pro-Japanese ideas. However, a contrary relationship in terms of purpose does not necessarily mean a contrary relationship or discontinuity in literary style. From the perspective of a history of literary style, there existed a mutual relationship between the editorial narrative and the *sinsoseol*. Refer to Han Ki Hyung (1999: 18-21) and Kim Young Min (2005: 149-52).

10. Some people argue that the term *sinsoseol* came from Meiji Japan, and others argue that Yi In-jik coined it. Still others say that publishers coined the term for commercial purposes. All of these are incorrect. At the time, it was only a common noun referring to “a newly introduced novel.” Today, *sinsoseol* is a proper noun, referring to a certain type of fiction published during the enlightenment period. This has given rise to a deep misunderstanding of the *sinsoseol*. Many scholars believed that the *sinsoseol* was an established genre even at that time, and accordingly, they neglected many important narratives other than those labeled *sinsoseol*. Nonetheless, we have to keep in mind that the *sinsoseol* was only a common noun, meaning “a newly introduced novel” at that time. Not until the 1940s did the *sinsoseol* become a proper noun referring to a literary genre. Refer to Yi Jae Sun (1972: 12-13) and Jun Kwang Yong (1986: 8-14).

gohak” (Studying under Difficulties Abroad) or “Paseonmilsa” (A Secret Story of a Broken Ship) in the *soseol* section. The editors of the *Gyeonghyang sinmun* showed little concern for differences of form between short and long narratives. Both were simply designated *soseol*. “A Secret Story of a Broken Ship” was serialized from July 3, 1908 to January 1, 1909, and “Studying under Difficulties Abroad” from March 25 to October 21, 1910. Both enjoyed extended runs, and while these two works were being serialized, the *Gyeonghyang sinmun* did not publish any short narratives. This situation indirectly indicates that the editors of *Gyeonghyang sinmun* regarded both long and short narratives as being of the same genre, namely, the *soseol*.

The *yeoksa jeongi soseol* (historico-biographical fiction) is closely related to the *inmul gisa* in newspapers. Not only the writing of *inmul gisa*, but also the translation of foreign biographies was important in the formation of historico-biographical fiction. The basic form of historico-biographical fiction was the *jeon* (biographical narrative), which was one of the most popular traditional narrative forms in pre-modern Korea. The link between these two narrative forms was provided by the *inmul gisa* in newspapers. An exploration of the *inmul gisa* will be also helpful in understanding historico-biographical fiction and its significance in the history of early modern Korean narratives.¹¹

Conclusion

The narrative editorial and editorial narrative are the bases for modern literature because:

- 1) They reflected the reality of life. In particular, the narrative editorial, though it did touch upon seemingly unrealistic stories and had a fable-like aspect, displayed strong criticisms of the times. This evaluation of the

11. The *sinsoseol* was only one part of the category *soseol*, as were short narratives. Nevertheless, most scholars have studied only the longer narratives, represented by the *sinsoseol*. I believe that this is one of the most important reasons scholars have previously not been able to explain the development of modern Korean literature. We need to pay attention to the short narratives published in newspapers during the enlightenment period. A close reading of short narratives will answer many of the questions surrounding the development of Korean literature—questions which have been left unanswered for more than half a century—since such a reading will require us to observe the literature of the past as it was, not projecting current literary theories into the past.

outer world, though cloaked in a seemingly unrealistic mechanism, was the essential function of the narrative editorial at the time.

- 2) They were written in pure Korean or the mixed script of Korean and Chinese. Along with the *eonmun ilchi* movement (making the written and spoken languages correspond), pure Korean or the mixed script of Korean and Chinese were important components indicating the emergence of modern literature.
- 3) They were published in newspapers and reflected the modern aspects of newspapers.
- 4) They were written by professional writers who were ever conscious of the existence of readers.

Additionally, the narrative editorial and editorial narrative contained enlightenment ideas. These components also indicate that the narrative editorial and editorial narrative represent an important starting point for modern narratives.

Traditional genres in late Joseon, such as *yadam* and *hanmun danpyeon*, were linked to the narrative editorial. Then, this narrative editorial was connected to the editorial narrative and other short narratives, which in turn influenced the *sinsoseol*. This process can provide one possible answer to the emergence of the *sinsoseol*, which, until now, has been difficult to explain.

The representative features of early modern Korean narratives are as follows:

1. A narrative and argument were combined.
2. In the early stages of short narratives, collective authorship was applied in the process of writing, and the theme of narratives focused on engagement in social affairs and collective identity.
3. Later, more stress was put on narration than argument, and on individuals rather than groups. This process is an important phase in the development of modern Korean fiction.
4. The “fictionalization” process of short narratives made stories longer.

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