Abstract

This is primarily a critical study of a late Qing novel—Nieh hai-hua (A Flower in the Sea of Sin), one of the four novels of Social Criticism of that period.

From its first publication in 1905, this novel has continued to attract enthusiastic response and criticism among literary circles right up to the present. However, in the 80 years since it was published, the position of Nieh hai-hua in contemporary Chinese Literature is still a controversial issue, especially with regard to the revised second edition, which the writer began in 1927.

In order to give a fair evaluation to this novel, it was decided to make an in-depth study and critical analysis of this novel with respect to its ideology and artistry, based on the second edition.

The findings show that Nieh hai-hua appears as a literary precursor of its age. It is filled with hopes and expectations of a free state. The writer criticizes the officials of the old society, then describes the activities of the revolutionary party. The reader is left with the feeling that a new society is at the doorstep. Without affecting this ideology, the writer manages to achieve enormous creative artistry in the second edition, for example the architectonic structure and the brilliant satirical technique. With the above achievements, it was believed that Nieh hai-hua will remain a "landmark" in contemporary Chinese Literature.