



Modern Mass Media--An Important Driving Force for the Development of Condemned Novels in the Late Qing Dynasty

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Abstract. The late Qing Dynasty was a special period in which the introduction of mass media brought advanced scientific knowledge and cultural trends from the West, prompting the establishment of newspapers and magazines by the Chinese people and the activities of the Restorationists in running newspapers and their ideology contributed to the first climax of the Chinese people's running newspapers. The late Qing condemnation novels, which relied on the press as a means of serial publication, showed different characteristics from those of previous novels under the impetus of modern mass media. Based on the comparative summary of the research results and the detailed reading of specific texts, this paper will analyze the influence of mass media on the emergence, construction and development of late Qing condemnation novels in turn, and put forward its own viewpoints so as to argue that mass media is an indispensable driving force for the progress of condemnation novels.

Keywords: novel of condemnation in the late Qing; mass media; newspapers and periodicals; public opinion; feudal society;

1 Introduction

The mass media are mass communication media that convey information, connect different segments of society, enable people to understand and adapt to a changing society, and change and influence people's work and daily lives. The emergence of the mass media is not only an innovation in communication technology but also an integral part of culture and civilization, both purposeful and political, permeating ideologies and social concepts all the time through the subjects and contents of the mass media. The mass media have the function of social coordination and socialization, spreading knowledge and social norms and educating people while maintaining social harmony and stability. At the same time, the mass media provide an important platform for culture and art, witnessing the transmission of culture.

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Since the eighteenth century, the mass media, represented by the press and the newspaper, have been rapidly introduced into China and have risen to prominence. The condemnation novel has also developed greatly by relying on the mass media. The rise of mass media provided a more open space for the creation of condemnation novels and a new trend of thinking. The collision between condemnatory novels and mass media in the late Qing Dynasty remains one of the issues that deserves attention and research in the trend of modernization of Chinese literature and thought in the late Qing Dynasty. At present, academics have made much progress. Currently, some studies show that the mass media has an omnipresent penetration into its dissemination subject, dissemination content, dissemination discourse and narrative mode, making the phenomenon that late Qing condemnation novels are inextricably linked to the role and gradually evolving function of the mass media [1-3]. Wang Zuxian shows that the artistic techniques of condemnation novels influenced by mass media reached a new level and discusses the evolution of Chinese novels from classical realism to critical realism [4]. The condemned novels of the late Qing Dynasty have always been the research hotspot of modern Chinese literature, and many scholars have commented on and studied them, which has deepened the understanding of the condemned novels in today's world, promoted the study of modern literature, and broadened the horizons.

However, regarding a series of changes in late Qing condemnation novels by the influence of mass media, it is still necessary to grasp it from a broader perspective. Academics have been studying late Qing condemnation novels for many years, mostly through comparing articles, specific textual analyses, and academic research on the connection between mass media and late Qing condemnation novels from the perspective of communication studies. This paper will be based on the academic research on the connection between mass media and late Qing condemnation novels, as well as the understanding and analysis of specific articles, and analyze the origin, construction, and maturity stage of the influence of mass media on late Qing condemnation novels in order to reflect that mass media is an important driving force for the development of the dissemination of late Qing condemnation novels. In addition, the historical orientation of late Qing condemnation novels will also be analyzed, and its different research directions will be sorted out.

2 Origination: The emergence of the mass media has led to the condemnation of the novel

Condemnation novels emerged and flourished in the late Qing Dynasty. Utilizing advanced printing technology and improved transportation means during the late Qing dynasty, newspapers achieved a remarkable level of timeliness in information dissemination. This facilitated the widespread popularization of news, gradually eradicating language and geographical barriers in news exchange. Consequently, it significantly liberated and invigorated the nation's collective aptitude for literacy and written communication [5]. The introduction of mass media liberated the minds of advanced intellectuals, opened up the communication barriers between the literati and the people, and further attracted a large number of audience groups and possessed a close connection

with the grassroots. It had a strong critical thought and showed a distinct patriotic passion, playing an important role in the literary progress of the time.

In modern times, the mass media, as an important medium for disseminating Western civilization and advanced Western scientific knowledge, has been increasingly understood by advanced Chinese intellectuals. Lin Zexu was the first person in China to attach importance to the modern press. At that time, he did not run a newspaper but devoted himself to translating the Western press. Wei Yuan's "The Illustrated Guide to the Sea and the Country" put forward the idea of "learning from the barbarians to control the barbarians," greatly enriching Lin Zexu's thinking. Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan's compilation of books and newspaper activities inspired the Chinese intellectuals "to seek foreign situations", searching for new ideas and new knowledge of unprecedented enthusiasm. This situation promotes the development of modern mass media in the country[6].

Since the 1860s, due to the intervention and influence of foreign ideas, the rise of the foreign affairs movement brought the germ of developing the national capital industry. The people of China then developed the consciousness of founding a modern newspaper. Due to the intervention and influence of foreign ideas, some Chinese intellectuals, to get rid of the constraints of the values of the traditional literati, the writers of this period, the cultural thinking, and the perspective of the selection of things have undergone a profound change, for the traditional literati have always despised science and technology and industry has a new confirmation and realistic choice [7]. For example, Li Boyuan, the author of "The Shape of Officialdom", was a newspaperman with strong commercial colours. Through extensive contact with society, coupled with Kang Youwei and other leaders of the change of law advocates, the rise of the bourgeois improvement movement, and the impetus of the rising tide of reformist thinking, Li Boyun realized that "to arouse the people, prompting the whole country to realize that China will be divided by the scourge of", the press is a "deafening, Effective" propaganda tool. Therefore, he "went into the sea" to run a newspaper as editor-in-chief and chief writer and independently founded a "game newspaper". In order to further expose and satirize the officialdom, he took a unique approach and set up a separate newspaper called World Prosperity Newspaper, which serialized two long novels, The Bouncing Words of the Gengzi National Rebellion and The Present Condition of the Officialdom.

In addition, the emergence of mass media such as newspaper printing and other famous magazines such as A Little History of Civilisation, Sins of the Sea and New Novels were published by newspapers that carried novels. The development of mass media and printing technology and the wide publication of novels in newspapers and magazines also promoted the prosperity of condemnation novels. The condemnatory novels of the late Qing Dynasty opposed feudal superstition, exposed social darkness, deeply expressed the decadence and incompetence of the Qing government, and awakened countless people to save the country and insist on anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism. At the same time, they spread Western ideas of science and democracy, promoted women's liberation and respect for human rights, and laid the ideological foundation for the later revolutionary movement.

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3 Constructing: Newspaper Thought in the Mass Media Constructs the Basic Framework of Late Qing Condemnation Novels

In the late Qing Dynasty, during the Restoration and Reform Movement, 120 newspapers and magazines were published nationwide, more than 80% of which were run by Chinese, and they spread to many cities all over the country, forming the first newspaper publishing climax in China. The newspaper activities of the bourgeois reformists not only broke the monopoly of foreign newspapers but also promoted the development of the reformist movement. Among them, the *Multinational Communique*, *Journal of Strong*, *Current Affairs Newspaper* are representative. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao were the most accomplished of the Reformist Faction newspaper men, and their 'Newspaper Ideology' made an outstanding contribution to the development of the mass media in China.

The background and material of the novels are mostly because the authors, who live in Shanghai or cities with close ties to Shanghai, use open-mindedness to expose dark and corrupt phenomena involving all areas of social life. In 1903, the Shanghai press developed a trend of exposing officialdom and attacking the ills of the times [8]. This is since Shanghai is the window of China's opening to the outside world, connecting the East and the West, and is the centre of cultural activities in China. The authors here learned about the advanced scientific knowledge and open cultural thinking of the West under the effect of the mass media, and in contrast to China, which was in deep water, they resolved to use their own lives as a backdrop and began to write novels by means of the mass media. Some of the more important ones are Shanghai's *Huibao*, Guangzhou's *Shubao* and *Guangbao*. One of the characteristics of newspapers and magazines is that the readers' class and target are clear. For example, *The Study on the Spread of Condemned Novels in the Late Qing Dynasty* argues that the indiscriminate use and prosperity of condemned novels in the Late Qing Dynasty is a result of the 'special demand of the time' and 'to meet the taste of the people of the time' [1]. Not only that, the late Qing dynasty condemnation novels also, through the repetition of narrative art produced by the aggregation effect, further strengthened the information environment, the formation of a virtual social environment, contributing to the formation of public

opinion, and the wave of public opinion has been circling back and forth, urging people to take action, and social change and even revolution played a certain role [1].

The novel also underwent a dramatic structural shift to accommodate newspaper serialization and continuous publication. Fang Xiaohong is concerned about the late Qing novels in the process of writing, publishing and distributing consciously cooperating with the market operation, conforming to the market demand, emphasizing the organic integration with the market, and adjusting the writing ideas, content and strategy [9]. Due to the lack of sufficient and complete time for conceptualization and writing, the structure of the novels is not tight enough, and most of them are of the nature of linking short stories into long ones, lacking a central character that runs through the whole story. For example, in *Bizarre Happenings Eyewitnessed over Two Decades*, "a narrow escape" is used as a clue to link up a relatively independent story. Lao Ts'an in *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* and Jin Wenqing and Fu Caiyun in *A Flower in a Sinful Sea* are characters that run through the whole book, but they play more of a role in linking up the stories, and they lack complete and typical modelling. In his *History of the Novel in the Late Qing Dynasty*, A Ying argues that the use of the "concatenated structure" was due to the development of journalism and the need to organize the many characters and facts conveniently [10]. Fang Guowu sees this as more of a spatial narrative approach, pursuing a sense of fragmentation in the plot. In the era of mass media as the medium of information transmission, the protagonist in late Qing condemnation novels was no longer the centrepiece but rather served as a collector of stories. The author also writes from the text with excerpts from newspapers or what he has heard, creating a pattern of fiction that seems to be a combination of news and rumour. For the author to accommodate the various news minutiae excerpted into the novel at the same time, a freestanding, concatenated structure is necessary. Therefore, most of the condemnation novels in the late Qing Dynasty were first serialized in newspapers and magazines. Then, these short stories were organized and assembled to become a novel [11].

4 Prosperous development: The influence of the mass media on the dissemination and development of condemned novels.

The emergence of the four major condemnatory novels in the late Qing Dynasty is an important symbol of the fact that Chinese novel writing has entered into another period of prosperity. During this period, the rise of mass media brought about the growth of the number of newspapers in the late Qing Dynasty and the development of the idea of freedom of news dissemination. At the same time, it also created a broad space for public opinion for the late Qing condemnation novels in order to expose the malpractices of the officials and the feudal corruption of society and thus to promote the development of the late Qing condemnation novels.

The mass media greatly facilitated the dissemination of condemned novels. The media is the carrier and material basis of literature, and the development of literature requires the media to make corresponding changes to adapt. Advances in media technology have provided strong support for the dissemination of literature. With the continuous development and prosperity of papermaking and printing in China during the Song,

Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, the press significantly impacted the development of literature. When Jin Songcen started working on *A Flower in a Sinful Sea*, he published it twice in magazines and then gave it to the Novel Forest Book Club founded by Zengpu, which printed and published it in book form in Dongjin. After founding the magazine *Novel Forest*, it continued to publish up to 25 times, perfecting the content of *A Flower in a Sinful Sea*. Initially working as an editor at *Guide Newspaper*, Li Boyuan was welcomed after the publication of *The Game Newspaper* and drew on his experience to create *Officialdom Unmasked*, which was widely disseminated with the help of the press. At the same time, after the novel became a commodity, writers began to pursue profits and the novel became gradually commercialized. Many writers worked even harder to write novels in order to make a living, such as Wu Jianren, who finished *The Sea of Regret* in ten days. To summarize, the novel gradually began to take the market as the demand for literary writing to meet the world's hobbies, so more condemnation of the novel appeared in front of the eyes of the people [3].

The communication content of late Qing condemnation novels is characterized by news literature. Condemnation of the novel through the storyline and the environment of the description of the real life and the author's feelings, more things for the story of the narrative, has a distinctive news characteristic. *Officialdom Unmasked* is the first serialized in the newspaper, directly facing the community and achieving the sensational effect of the long chapter book. It is through the officialdom of all kinds of ugly phenomena depicted involving the Qing government, from the emperor down to the minor officials and more, the corrupt political system carried out a relentless attack. In addition, the development of modern mass media has made the structure of late Qing condemnation novels more in the form of a short system of serialization, linking different stories together to suit the needs of serial publication in newspapers and magazines. There are 189 stories in *Bizarre Happenings Eyewitnessed over Two Decads*, which are carefully structured and laid out, using suspense to whet the reader's appetite and stabilize the readership, one after the other [3].

Secondly, the impetus of the mass media to condemn fiction is expressed in the exposure and critique of the social panorama. Famous author Melvin said, 'News is surveillance. Commentary or explanatory reporting is connection.' The surveillance environment of the mass media is like a social radar, and the late Qing condemnation novels criticize official politics in all directions. *The Officialdom Unmasked* portrays a group of bureaucrats of all shapes and sizes, with high and low official positions, big and small powers, and different means. However, all of them are money-minded vampires, regard money as their lives, and prey on the people. Wang Ren, who graduated cum laude, established the museum with the intention of instructing students and igniting their passion for reading. He asserted that participation in reading clubs could pave the way for official positions, which held considerable allure. Attaining the status of a Hanlin scholar, one could secure financial gains and wield authority, both within the halls and beyond. This publication contains unspoken truths, and Wang Ren had the courage to expound upon them within the classroom. It is not difficult to imagine that disciples under this kind of educational ideology can do anything else but wreak havoc on the nation and the people. Let such people fill the officialdom. How ugly the officialdom should be. Officials are corrupt and naturally morally bankrupt. Those who are in the

top positions only know that the beads and jewels of the sirens, promotion and wealth, the so-called political achievements, are nothing more than a scourge of the country and a disaster to the people. The presentation of *Officialdom Unmasked* is realistic. Most of its writing is a real-life character, just change the name Hu Shi has done in the preface to this book on the situation: on the whole, this article can not help but admit that most of the material in this *Officialdom Unmasked* can represent the real situation of the officialdom of the day.

Under the influence of modern mass media, condemnation novels have gradually become popularized, vernacularized and popularized. It makes extensive use of the spoken language of the people, ballads, and proverbs. *A Flower in a Sinful Sea* utilizes a lot of citizen's language and portrays a large number of people in the marketplace, such as A Fu and Wang Er. Their language is dry and sharp and contains a strong flavour of life. Among them, Fu Caiyun's language is sharp and spirited, and the image is commonplace and vivid. Fu Caiyun is a symbol of a new woman in the context of feudal society. Originally from a family of prostitutes, she was the plaything of men in the olden times, but after meeting Jin Wenqing, she became the "First Lady of China" that no one in the Western high society knew about, thus realizing a change in her identity. After becoming a minister's wife, Jin Wenqing questioned Fu Caiyun's social skills with the incident of the Marquis' wife, and with her eloquent tongue, she boldly expressed her thoughts with "She is gold in general, jade in general honour, I am the mud under my feet, and the grass by the roadside is not as good as." Such a metaphor gives vent to the inner resentment and injustice and makes Wenqing shut up by demeaning herself. This kind of language is infectious, more in tune with the language of the marketplace, and strikes at the heart, making it easier for the public to understand the ideas conveyed in the book. In the novel, "Know your enemy and know yourself, you will win and nothing ventured, nothing gained" is the use of idioms. It is easier change mountains and rivers than to alter one's character is the use of proverbs and sayings. The language of the whole novel is popular, graphic and vivid, with a popular appeal, which is pleasing to the public and greatly contributes to the dissemination of literature.

The combination of modern mass media with literature has converted the narrative perspective of the novel from the traditional third-person narrative to the first-person narrative. The third-person omniscient point of view to chronicle the events lacks authenticity and does not show the main character's thoughts in a substantial way; it is just the author evaluating the events and characters through himself. Late Qing Dynasty condemnation novels use first-person narratives, such as *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*. Compared with the third-person God's point of view, the first-person narrator expresses his true feelings from his own point of view, placing the events in the narrator's five senses of feeling, increasing the authenticity of the events and the infectious power to the readers.

Finally, with the condemnation novelist's recognition of the function of the media in literary creation, condemnation novels also show a convergence with the media, "correcting and bombing the current political situation, supervising the society" function, the press creates a broad space for public opinion for the society [8], the news public opinion is also an indispensable perspective in the study of the condemnation novels of the late Qing Dynasty.

5 Conclusion

To sum up, modern mass media promoted the dissemination and development of condemnation novels, which made great changes in condemnation novels, the content of which conformed to the aesthetic needs of the masses, exposed the social reality, and promoted the emancipation of people's thoughts. Condemnation novels use much vernacular in their line statements, which meets the needs of the citizen class and makes the novels more understandable. In the realm of narrative structure and perspective, there exists a capacity for the seamless transition of the conventional novel into a more contemporary framework. Furthermore, amidst the backdrop of late Qing press advancements and the emergence of the freedom of the press ideology, a substantial readership was cultivated for these novels, accompanied by a forum for public discourse. This public sentiment regarding the press proves to be an essential viewpoint in the examination of late Qing condemnation novels. When contemplating the contemporary and forthcoming eras, it becomes evident that newspapers, periodicals, radio, television, and various other mass media outlets wield significant influence as the driving forces behind modern cultural existence. The communication media enable the continuous development of human society's cultural endeavours, feed new literature, disseminate new knowledge and new ideas, and are the important carriers of the dissemination of literature. At the same time, the mass media have injected fresh blood into today's literary world and brought new opportunities and challenges, enabling human beings to adapt and master the relevant skills continuously and constantly promoting social progress. To sum up, modern mass media and literary development interacted with each other to promote political progress and guide social improvement and change.

This essay takes a holistic view of the changing influence of the mass media on the condemnatory novels of the late Qing dynasty. From a social point of view, focusing on the social utility of the mass media, the process of its contribution to the emergence - formation - development of the condemned novel is discussed. However, there are still omissions and deficiencies in the text-specific analysis and in the city's assessment of the novel. In the future research, with the continuous progress of mass media, the late Qing condemned novels may be presented to the public in another way and gain a broader development.

Authors contribution

All the authors contributed equally, and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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