

Blossoming dahlia : chinese women novelist in colonial Indonesia

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Abstrak

In the early decades of the twentieth century in colonial Indonesia, one witnessed the proliferation of novels in which women were thematized as the femme fatale. These novels were written largely by male novelists as cautionary tales for girls who had a European-style school education and therefore were perceived to be predisposed to violating customary gender norms in the pursuit of personal autonomy. While such masculinist responses to women and material progress have been well studied, women's views of the social transformation conditioned by modernization and secular education are still insufficiently understood. This essay responds to this scantiness with a survey of texts written by Chinese women novelists who emerged during the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century, drawing attention in particular to the ways in which these texts differed from those written by their male predecessors. More important, this essay highlights the works by one particular woman novelist, Dahlia, who wrote with an exceptionally distinct female voice and woman-centered viewpoint.