



The Splendor of Longing in the "Tale of the Genji"

Norma Field

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"In highly informed yet sympathetic and persuasive terms, Norma Field delineates the characters of a number of the most important women who figure in the Tale of Genji in order to show the way in which their lives mirror and ultimately explicate the vast structure of this most wonderful of Japanese novels. This is Genji as read and loved by a person of a truly contemporary sensibility." -J. Thomas Rimer, University of Maryland. Foremost among Japanese literary classics and one of the world's earliest novels, the Tale of Genji was written around the year A. D. 1000 by Murasaki Shikibu, a woman from a declining aristocratic family. For sophistication and insight, Western prose fiction was to wait centuries to rival her work. Norma Field explores the shifting configurations of the Tale, showing how the hero Genji is made and unmade by a series of heroines. Professor Field draws on the riches of both Japanese and Western Scholarship, as well as on her own sensitive reading of the Tale. Included are discussions of the social, psychological, and political dimensions of the aesthetics of this novel, with emphasis on the crucial relationship of erotic and political concerns to prose fictions. Norma Field is Assistant Professor of Far Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago.

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