



# **A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of Genji**

*Doris G. Borgen*

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# A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of Genji

*Doris G. Barga*

## **A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of Genji** Doris G. Barga

This text presents an examination of Murasaki Shikibu's 11th-century classic "The Tale of Genji". The author explores the role of possessing spirits from a female viewpoint, and considers how the male protagonist is central to determining the role of these spirits. Relying on anthropological as well as literary evidence, the author addresses the motives of the possessed character and locates Mono no ke within the politics of Heian society, interpreting spirit possession as a female strategy adopted to counter male strategies of empowerment. The author argues that possessions become performances by women attempting to redress the balance of power. The book considers five major instances of spirit possession in the narrative and discusses the rendering of these possessions in the visual arts.

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