



The Sarashina Diary: A Woman's Life in Eleventh-Century Japan (Translations from the Asian Classics)

Takasue no Musume Sugawara no

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A thousand years ago, a young Japanese girl embarked on a journey from the wild East Country to the capital. She began a diary that she would continue to write for the next forty years and compile later in life, bringing lasting prestige to her family.

Some aspects of the author's life and text seem curiously modern. She married late and identified more as a writer than as a wife and mother. Enthralled by romantic fiction, she wrote extensively about the disillusioning blows that reality can deal to fantasy. The *Sarashina Diary* is a portrait of the writer as reader and a tribute to the power of reading to shape one's expectations and aspirations. As a person and an author, this writer presages the medieval era in Japan with her deep concern for Buddhist belief and practice. Her narrative's main thread follows a trajectory from youthful infatuation with romantic fantasy to the disillusionment of age and concern for the afterlife; yet, at the same time, many passages erase the dichotomy between literary illusion and spiritual truth.

This translation and its introduction draw attention to the poetry in the *Sarashina Diary* and the juxtaposition of poetic passages and narrative prose, which brings meta-meanings into play. The translators commentary offers insight into the author's family and world, as well as the fascinating textual legacy of her work.

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