



Fables for the Patriarchs

Jowen R. Tung

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Exploring issues of gender in Tang-dynasty literature and culture, Jowen R. Tung draws on a comprehensive range of historical, literary, and social texts to unravel the complex mechanisms of one of the world's oldest patriarchal systems. The author reveals the profound damage inflicted by the masculine state ideology on its subjects by illuminating the problematics of male sexuality under the hovering phallus of the emperor, the construct of male and female psyches within the pseudo-monogamous household, the logic of the collective unconscious in the literati's writings, and a female tradition desperately trapped inside the law of the father. Tung poses urgent questions about a civilization that builds itself upon the sacrifice of human lives and arrives at a rather dark interpretation of the Tang—for many the epitome of the Chinese empire. As such, the book moves beyond the confines of gender studies to propose a heightened agenda for feminist studies, which the author argues now stand at a critical conjecture.

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