Women's Voices in Manga

Japanese Cultural and Historical Perspectives

Edited by
Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase · Masami Toku

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Editors
Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase
Chinese and Japanese
Vassar College
Poughkeepsie, NY, USA

Masami Toku
Art and Art History
California State University, Chico
Chico, CA, USA

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Cover illustration: Watanabe Masako, "Chūmon chō" (written by Izumi Kyōka), *Mystery JOUR*

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ARIGATOU,

Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase
Masami Toku

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Notes on Contributors

Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase is Associate Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at Vassar College, USA. Her areas of research include Japanese literature, girls' magazine culture, and manga created by women. She is the author of *Age of Shōjo: The Emergence, Evolution, and Power of Japanese Girls' Magazine Fiction* (SUNY Press, 2019). She has co-edited *Shōjo Manga Wonderland* (Meiji Shoin, 2011), *Manga!: Visual Pop-Culture in ARTS Education* (InSEA, 2020), and a special issue, "Girls and Literature," for *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 62 (2022).

Barbara Hartley is Honorary Researcher in Japanese at the University of Queensland, Australia. She writes on girls and women in modern Japan and modern Japanese narrative. She also researches representations of women in Asia in modern Japanese narrative and visual studies. Barbara was the co-editor with Akiko Uchiyama of the 2023 Routledge collection entitled *Border-Crossing Japanese Literature: Reading Multiplicity*, in which she has a chapter entitled, "The Gaze of the Girl Across Borders: Tawada Yōko's *The Naked Eye That Travels*." In 2022, she translated Kume Yuriko's "Countdown to the Demise of Girl's Novels" for *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, Volume 62.

Jon Holt is Professor of Japanese at Portland State University, USA. His research interests include modern Japanese poetry, Japanese Buddhism, and manga. Recent publications include "Type Five and Beyond: Tools to Teach Manga in the College Classroom" (*Exploring Comics and Graphic Novels in the Classroom*, 2022) and (with Elsa Loftis) "Unexpected Wins: Curating Comics and Teaching Manga from the Dark Horse Comics Collection" for the forthcoming edited volume *Comic Books, Special Collections, and Academic Libraries* (2023). Together with Teppei Fukuda, he has translated numerous essays on manga in English by Natsume Fusanosuke in journals, such as *The Comics Journal*, *INKS*, *Image&Narrative*, *ImageTexT*, *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*, *International Journal of Comic Art*, and *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*.

Emerald L. King is Lecturer in Humanities at the University of Tasmania, Australia. Her research interests include violence in text, masochistic theory, kimono in Japanese literature, costume representation in anime and manga, and cosplay in Japan and Australia. Her work ties these disparate areas together with an overarching interest in costume and word. She has written extensively on manga-based cosplay costumes, with a focus on award-winning competition cosplays; see, for example, her article "*La Robe à la Française et la Robe l'Odalisque*: Wearing Women's Clothing in The Rose of Versailles" (2021). You can find both her academic and her award-winning cosplay work at www.emeraldlking.com.

Rachael Charlow Lenz holds a BA in English and Japanese Literature from Vassar College, an MA in East Asian Languages and Culture from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, has studied at the Inter-University Center in Yokohama, and holds an MAT in Secondary Education from Drake University. Her translation work includes "We Are Now United by the Common Language Called 'Manga'" written by Satonaka Machiko (*Manga!: Visual Pop-Culture in ARTS Education* [InSEA Publications, 2020]).

Mia Lewis is an independent scholar working in the field of international user experience research. Her academic research focuses on questions of gender, genre, and medium in contemporary manga. She received her Ph.D. in Japanese from Stanford University in 2022. Her dissertation is titled "Visions of Possible Girls: Intersectional Feminist Narratives in Contemporary Japanese Boys' Comics." She has taught at Occidental College and Meiji Gakuin University. Her recent publications include "Rumble, Race, and Crash: Space and Movement Through Sound Effects in *Akira* and *American Flagg*" (2021) and "Training the Next Generation of *Mangaka*: A Comparison of Award Announcements in *Shūkan shōnen janpu* and *Hana to yume*" (2018), both in *Mechademia: Second Arc*.

Nozomi Masuda is a professor in the Department of Creative Media Studies at Faculty of Letters, Konan Women's University, Japan, specializing in media studies and manga studies. Her main research fields are media for girls, including girls' magazines and shōjo manga. She has written a number of papers including entries in *Manga Studies*, edited by Yoshimura Kazuma and Jaqueline Berndt (Jimbun shoin, 2020). Her recent publication includes *Shōjo manga wa doko kara kita no? "Shōjo manga o kataru kai" zen-kiroku* (Where Did Shōjo Manga Come From? Complete Proceedings of the Shōjo Manga Roundtable), co-edited by Mizuno Hideko, Yamada Tomoko, Masuda Nozomi, Konishi Yuri, and Sōda Yon (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2023).

Jessica Hiroshima Misiorek is a Doctoral Student of Anthropology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, USA. Jessica graduated from Vassar College in 2023 with a BA in Anthropology and Japanese, with departmental honors in both. Her undergraduate thesis in Japanese was a translation of scholarly essays

about half-Japanese identity, and her undergraduate thesis in anthropology focused on how culture is used when creating half-Japanese identity. Jessica is continuing her research into identity-formation and half-Japanese identity.

Keiko Miyajima received her Ph.D. from the CUNY Graduate Center, and has taught Japanese language, pop culture, and manga/anime at various institutions. Her current research examines the representations of gender and sexuality in manga, in particular in *shōjo* and Boys Love manga. Her recent publications include "XX, XY, and XXY: Genderqueer Bodies in Hagio Moto's Science Fiction Manga," in *LGBTQ Comics Studies Reader* (2022) and "Queering the Palate: The Erotics and Politics of Food in Japanese Gourmet Manga," in *Studies in Comics* (2021).

Joshua Rogers is an assistant professor in the Department of Classical, Middle Eastern, and Asian Languages and Cultures at Queens College, City University of New York, USA. They research secularization in pre-WWII Japanese literature, exploring the roles of religion and science within the work of writers like Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Yanagi Muneyoshi, and Mushanokōji Saneatsu. They have a forthcoming article titled "Politics of the Spirit: Secularity and the Power of Art in 1910s Japan" and are currently working on a book manuscript.

Luciana Sanga is a lecturer and associate research scholar at the MacMillan Center, Yale University, USA. She holds a Ph.D. in Japanese Literature from Stanford University and studies contemporary Japanese literature, with a focus on genre, gender, and book format. She is currently completing a book manuscript on love novels in contemporary Japan. Some of her publications include "Tanabe Seiko, Feminism, and the Making of a Love Novel" (*Japanese Language and Literature*) and "From Girls' Novels to Love Novels: Female Friendship in Yuikawa Kei's *Sayonara, Insecurity* and *Sweetheart Nearby*" (*U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*).

Rebecca Suter is Professor of Comparative Literature and of Japanese Studies at the University of Sydney and Associate Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Oslo, Norway. She teaches and researches on modern and contemporary Japanese literature and popular culture with particular focus on Japan's creative appropriation of Euro-American culture, and the challenges it poses to current views of globalization, multiculturalism, and transnationalism. She has written extensively on manga, including co-editing the collection *Rewriting History in Manga: Stories for the Nation* (2016) with Nissim Otmazgin and *Women's Manga in Asia and Beyond* (2019) with Fusami Ogi, Kazumi Nagaike, and John Lent. She also works as a translator of contemporary literature and manga, and has translated works by Yamazaki Naocola, Shinohara Chie, Anno Moyoko, Miuchi Suzue, Asano Inio, Kitoh Mohiro, Katayama Kyoichi, and Unita Yumi, among others.

Shige (CJ) Suzuki is Associate Professor of Modern Languages and Comparative Literature at Baruch College, The City University of New York, USA. He is the author of *Manga: A Critical Guide* (co-authored with Ronald Stewart, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022). His recent publications include "*Gekiga*, or Japanese Alternative Comics: The Mediascape of Japanese Counterculture" in *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture 2nd Edition*, edited by Alisa Freedman (2023), and "Reviving the Power of Storytelling: Post-3/11 Online 'Amateur' Manga" in *Women's Manga in Asia and Beyond: Uniting Different Cultures and Identities*, edited by Fusami Ōgi, Rebecca Suter, Kazumi Nagaike, and John A. Lent (2019).

Masami Toku is Professor of Art Education at California State University, Chico, USA, since 1999. Her research interest is the cross-cultural study of children's artistic and aesthetic developments in their pictorial worlds and how visual popular culture influences children's visual literacy. She is working internationally as a curator, educator, publisher, researcher, and speaker. She is also a director of the international touring exhibition project "Girls' Power! Shojo Manga!" (2005–2023) and traveling all over the world. She has been writing numbers of articles, book reviews, and books with the themes of visual pop-culture and art education. Please visit her CSUC website for examples on her research projects. https://apps.csuchico.edu/directory/Employee/mtoku

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase and Masami Toku

In 2023, the *shōjo* manga exhibition and lecture series, "Shojo Manga! Girl Power!" and "World of Shojo Manga: Mirrors of Girls' Desires," organized and curated by Masami Toku, came to an end after over eighteen years of traveling around the world.[1] While the title of the exhibition includes the term *shōjo* (girls), many of the works displayed depicted *josei* (women). The exhibition showcased the thematic diversity and inclusivity of manga culture in terms of authors' genders and readers' age groups. Notably, many manga artists who initially started their careers as *shōjo manga-ka* (girls' manga artists) later freed themselves from the confines of the *shōjo* manga genre category and began drawing women closer to their own and their original fans' ages.

The portrayal of girlhood in *shōjo* manga has been thoroughly studied for decades.[2] However, the representation of *josei* in manga has not received the same comprehensive exploration as *shōjo*. The goal of *Women's Voices in Manga* is to examine women in the context of Japanese history, culture, and society, investigating how manga reflect women's gender issues and social problems, and how, over time, women's images in manga transformed. In short, the book treats manga as a lens through which to look at women in Japanese sociocultural, historical, and gender contexts. Manga show how women have been treated stereotypically and confined in gender roles that Japanese patriarchal culture defined. Fictional characters—surrogates of both creators and

H. T. Dollase (✉)
Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, USA
e-mail: hidollase@vassar.edu

M. Toku
California State University, Chico, Chico, CA, USA
e-mail: mtoku@csuchico.edu

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readers—have constantly challenged and subverted fixed women's cultural images, notions, and expressions.

Women's Voices in Manga, including contributions by scholars in diverse fields—manga studies, history, art education, literary studies, and gender studies—as well as interviews with manga artists, aims to serve as a multidisciplinary volume, employing "a polyconic approach"[3] to illuminate Japanese women by showcasing various methods and approaches to analyzing manga. This multiplicity is important to comprehensively understand the lives of women.[4] Although the contributors' approaches vary, we commonly find immense value in manga as a subject of academic study.

The book is comprised of three sections: Women's Portrayals and Voices in Manga, Women's Lives, and Reinterpreted History. The first section consists of research articles on the depiction of women in manga, the second section presents life stories of legendary women artists, capturing their voices and social messages through interviews, and the third section introduces a translated manga, "Abe: A Young Woman Emperor-in-Waiting," featuring one of the six Japanese female Emperors in history, Kōken Tennō (later Shōtoku Tennō) of the eighth century. This section demonstrates how the author Satonaka Machiko reframes the life of this historical female figure to make it relevant to our time. The structure of the volume—specifically the fact that interviews and translation of manga are included—may look unconventional in the field of manga studies. Our aim, however, is to present a holistic understanding of experiences of women, both fictional and real. This structure aims to help readers gain comprehensive understanding of women in the light of Japanese cultural history.

Differences Between *Shōjo* and *Josei* in Manga

Some may question why we focus on women (*josei*) in an era where awareness of the diversity of sexuality holds high significance. Although today the term "woman" has become "increasingly contested due to new appreciations of gender fluidity and the questioning of heteronormative imperatives,"[5] nevertheless, a focus on women as historical and cultural agents cannot be ignored or dismissed. Judith Butler's seminal *Gender Trouble* argues that female gender is performative.[6] Women have shaped, negotiated, and appropriated their cultural identity throughout history. Butler asserts that the notion of women is in-flux and that it "ought to be repeated in directions that reverse and displace [its] originating aims."[7]

The term *josei* encompasses a broad spectrum of meanings and connotations. While Japanese dictionaries originally defined *josei* as all biological females regardless of age, its contemporary usage has narrowed to specifically refer to adult women. Thus, *josei* represents an ambiguous term, embodying multiplicity in its interpretation. In our book, we define *josei* as those roughly aged above eighteen, coinciding with the completion of high-school education and in alignment with the legal age of adulthood in Japan. The distinction

between *shōjo* and *josei*, however, is not always clear-cut; putting aside cultural frameworks such as age and social status, they share similar gender issues as they navigate in Japanese social reality. By focusing on mature adult women, we simultaneously address problems faced or to be faced by young girls. Many of the experiences of women examined in this book, furthermore, are applicable to women from diverse cultural backgrounds beyond Japan.

Examples of women in manga include working women, housewives, mothers, young women, middle-aged women, and women of advanced age. Manga mirror women's real-life concerns such as family dynamics, romantic relationships, aging, and childrearing, offering insights into broader societal issues. With the characters' diverse backgrounds and age groups, *josei* images and stories are more varied than those of *shōjo*, whose age range is limited to the teens. Nevertheless, it is difficult to recall widely familiar *josei* manga characters. Sazae-san, originating from postwar newspaper comic strips, created by Hasegawa Machiko (1920–1992), is likely the most famous character. Philosopher Tsurumi Shunsuke states that Sazae, a comical and energetic housewife, is an epoch-making character as she "turned criticism of the authority of the patriarchal family into laughter."[8]

On the other hand, when considering *shōjo* characters, we can readily think of influential heroines that represent specific times in history, including Sapphire in Tezuka Osamu's *Princess Knight* (Ribon no kishi, 1953), Oscar in Ikeda Riyoko's *The Rose of Versailles* (Berusaiyu no bara, 1972), and Tsukino Usagi in Takeuchi Naoko's *Sailor Moon* (Bishōjo senshi seirā mūn, 1992), to name a few. Postwar *shōjo* manga originated as a children's medium, and their characters ingrained themselves in the memories of their young girl readers.[9] Through stories of invincible girl heroines, manga affirmed the importance of girl readers, who were viewed as immature in families and society, offering a safe haven which allowed them to indulge in fantasies. Manga offered *ibasho*, a comfortable space where they felt they fit in, according to manga critic Fujimoto Yukari.[10]

Meanwhile, adult women characters in *shōjo* manga typically play supporting roles such as mothers, teachers, and mentors, all of whom ensure that girl heroines will grow and be empowered. In a fantasy setting, mature women tend to be portrayed as malicious, unknowable characters. Katheryn Hemmann elucidates that in popular media like manga and anime, mature women are presented as "villainous," which marks a sharp distinction from *shōjo* who are depicted as "pure-hearted."[11] Hemmann explains that the portrayal of mature women as monstrous mothers is commonly interpreted as a metaphorical representation of their failure to conform to patriarchal expectations.[12]

However, the arrival of a women-centered manga genre called "ladies comic" (*redīsu komikku* or *redikomi*) in the 1980s provided women with imaginative agency free from Japanese cultural expectations. Ladies' comics projected the real lives of female adult readers and even their brazen sexual fantasies.[13] Many creators of ladies' comics were previously female *shōjo mangaka*. They began drawing manga for their fans who had matured and desired

new entertainment appropriate for their stages in life. The women characters understand that they are members of society and acknowledge the roles in which they are expected to partake, but manga's fantasies allow them to find escape. They tend to confront the notion of female gender and their predetermined social roles. This link to actual social circumstances is an important characteristic of ladies' comics.

The Current Issue of a Women's Manga Category

Today, the term *josei manga* is widely used as a manga category definition amidst the rapid advancement of digital manga. Distinct from ladies' comics, *josei manga* does not have a lewd nuance.[14] It is known that genre classifications—*shōnen* (boys) manga, *shōjo* manga, *seinen* (young male adult) manga, *seijin* (adult) manga, *josei* manga, BL (boys' love) manga, and TL (teens love) manga—are rigidly employed by manga publishers in Japan. These divisions (or *janru* [genre]) are created for marketing purposes by publishers and editors enabling audiences to search for products easily. In reality, however, readers don't adhere to a single category nor follow the category divisions targeted at them, but instead, they read manga across designated genres and age groups. Critic Itō Gō explains that "the categories such as shōjo manga and shōnen manga are nearly defunct today. Manga categories are simply defined by publishers and readers are not preoccupied by them."[15]

To manga artists, the convention of manga categories is often vexing as they curtail the creators' artistic freedom in terms of the themes and types of stories they truly want to pursue. Additionally, those who debuted in *shōjo* manga magazines tend to be continuously referred to as "*shōjo manga-ka*," even if their works no longer depict young girls. Artists like Watanabe Masako (debuted in 1952) and Maki Miyako (debuted in 1957), who played pivotal roles in the early stages of manga culture, shifted their audience interests from girls to adult women. Some of them even published their work in male-oriented manga magazines. Nonetheless, they are still labeled as *shōjo manga-ka* today. Mizuno Hideko (debuted in 1955) expresses her discontent with such conventions, insisting that she is not a *shōjo manga-ka* but rather a woman *manga-ka*.[16]

Attaching the concept of genre to gender can be unnecessarily restrictive and limiting, as women and men alike can write about any subject matter across a wide spectrum of genres. In 2013, novelist Amanda Filipacchi contributed an article titled "Wikipedia's Sexism Toward Female Novelists" to *The New York Times*, denouncing the fact that Wikipedia's page on "American novelists" predominantly features male writers, while women writers are placed in a subcategory labeled "American women novelists."[17] Since then, the idea of gender-based genre categories has sparked "massive discussion."[18] Trisha Brown, for instance, argues that having "a women's genre is sexism."[19] On the other hand, writer Orly Konig expresses a different view, stating that the women's "genre label is the foundation of everything [she does in her] writing. It structures [her] stories and guides [her] marketing efforts."[20]

Women's Voices in Manga intends to examine gender-oriented genre conventions. It aims to examine women's stories inclusively in terms of gender by treating works by both women and male creators as the materials of analysis. It will also contemplate the benefits and disadvantages of having a women's genre category like *josei* manga.

Perspectives of This Book

Discourse revolving around manga emerged in the 1960s. Philosopher and sociologist Tsurumi Shunsuke and his cohort discussed manga as a reflection of young adults on the pages of the journal *Science of Thoughts* (Shisō no kagaku). They "illuminated the potential of manga to be a medium for adults and related to social issues of their time."[21] Cultural critic Ishiko Junzō, who started the journal *Mangaism* (Manga shugi) in 1967, pointed out manga's social engagement. He paid attention to the cultural role of *gekiga* (dramatic pictures) widely read by "young blue-collar workers"; Ishiko's focus was "its publication format, readership, and the mode of consumption."[22]

Gender approaches to *shōjo* manga blossomed in the 1980s, with the efforts of critics such as Yonezawa Yoshihiro, Hashimoto Osamu, and Aramata Hiroshi, who found literary and artistic value in works created in particular by the women artists who emerged around 1970.[23] These critics celebrated women artists who introduced many visual innovations, especially the expression of internal thoughts flexibly utilizing frames and spaces.

In the 1990s, the nature of manga studies shifted from social and narrative perspectives to a focus on manga's pictorial expressions. Manga critics like Natsume Fusanosuke and Kure Tomofusa criticized the critics of the previous generations for not treating manga as a visual medium. Instead, they asserted the importance of examining forms, "the grammar of manga"[24] (*manga no bunpō*) coined by Natsume.[25]

A debate surrounding the importance of considering manga's media specificity has recently emerged.[26] This argument corresponds to the ongoing discussion within the English-speaking academic community regarding the study of Western comics. Among scholars of comics, there is a growing inclination to reflect on the distinctiveness of comics, moving away from the commonly held notion that comics are associated with literary works. Hanna Miodrag explains that scholars used to approach comics "as literature," focusing on elements such as plot, characters, and content.[27] According to Miodrag, however, today, particularly in Europe, an increasing number of scholars are emphasizing the importance of viewing comics as part of visual culture.[28] Miodrag argues that the comic medium "can utilize the linguistic element of its content in ways that create literary, textual effects unique to the comic medium."[29]

Our book treats manga as a window into women's cultural and social issues. We delve into how women are portrayed and narrated. As the critic and manga creator Sawayaka emphasizes, narratives, visual images, and social contexts are all vital components in analyzing manga, as they are interconnected.[30] Jacqueline

Berndt asserts the significance of critical examination of manga beyond specific disciplinary perspectives or orientations.[31]

Manga serve as a powerful cultural lens for several reasons. Firstly, manga is a medium that deeply engages readers, as noted by comic scholar Scott McCloud who famously states that a comic is "a form that requires a substantial degree of reader participation."[32] Each reader must connect one panel to another at their own pace to make sense of the story. Similarly, critic Hilary Chute points out that readers have to "[work] with the often disjunctive back-and-forth of reading and looking for meaning."[33] In essence, reading manga is an emotionally invested, highly individual activity that possesses the power to influence readers on a personal level. Moreover, manga is a culturally influential medium in Japan, where it has become "an extraordinarily successful culture industry" due to its unique publication formats and the existence of a fan community.[34] While reading manga is a solitary activity, manga culture offers a communal space. Conventional manga magazines often contain readers' sections where manga fans can submit their comments, creating a space for readers to communicate, engage in dialogues with other fans, and disseminate their views on manga. The success of today's manga culture couldn't have been realized without the interplay and negotiation between authors, editors, and readers. Manga offers room for multi-dimensional examinations of Japanese women's culture, society, and history, as well as the responses of women readers.

With these distinct aspects of manga in mind, our book investigates fictional stories as well as real anecdotes. In addition to scholarly examination of works, the book includes the lived experiences of women artists, which are vividly conveyed through insightful interviews. The interviews which elicit their thoughts and messages are a salient part of this book project. We aim to showcase the diverse facets of women's lives, images, and voices—a collective portrayal of evolving dynamics and cultural experiences of women in Japan.

Book Contents

The first section of the book is comprised of scholarly analyses of chosen manga works, exploring facets of women's history and culture. The chapters are grouped thematically: the first segment delves into the subversion and modification of *shōjo* manga conventions, while the latter part centers on social issues addressed in manga. This thematic clustering offers readers a deeper understanding of gender and social issues affecting women in Japan and showcases diverse forms of presentation.

The book starts with the 1960s.[35] The predominant theme in *shōjo* manga was the *haha-mono* (mother story), characterized by sentimental narratives showcasing the profound love between mothers and daughters, often penned by artists such as Maki Miyako, Hanamura Eiko, Watanabe Masako, and even male artists like Yamada Eiji. There were artists who diverged from this

convention by introducing eerie mother figures that evoke fear and dread, depicting young girls desperately fleeing from their terrifying presence.

In Chap. 2, "Maternal Monstrosities in Horror Manga: Umezu Kazuo's Snake Ladies and Scary Mommies," Jon Holt delves into the unsettling portrayal of mother figures in the horror manga of Umezu Kazuo. Holt scrutinizes Umezu's "Snake Women" series, which playfully subverts the tropes of girls' comics. Holt argues that Umezu dismantles the idealized image of the nurturing Japanese mother, transforming her into a devouring entity. By portraying female characters with serpentine forms, Umezu challenges societal expectations imposed on women to conform to a similar, flawless, and innocent archetype. Umezu's contribution to manga culture is significant as his works disrupted the conventional narrative of *shōjo* manga, prompting young readers to question the patriarchal norms that confined them to predefined roles as future mothers, without alternative options. Holt asserts Umezu's work serves as a catalyst for awakening young girls to the realities of patriarchal cultural constructs, encouraging them to challenge and resist societal expectations.

Chapter 3, "Hidden Flowers: Depictions of Sexuality in Shōjo and *Redikomi* Versions of *The Tale of Genji,*" authored by Emerald L King, invites readers to the world of classical Japanese literature. *shōjo* manga experienced a period of maturation and diversification after 1970, and, with the creation of *redicomi* (or ladies comics) magazines in the 1980s, manga artists like Watanabe Masako and Maki Miyako, who had previously catered to young girls, began to produce stories free from restrictions. The shift to adult audiences liberated them from the constraints of taboos, with sexual and moral deviations being more freely explored. *The Tale of Genji* (Genji monogatari), written by woman writer Murasaki Shikibu in the early eleventh century, has provided manga artists with great inspiration. King examines several modern versions of this story. While the original story focuses on the romantic adventures of the incredibly handsome and wonderfully talented Prince Genji, it is the women in his life who, either as fully fleshed characters or as simple plot devices, drive the story. King discusses how the descriptions of their flowing robes lend themselves to the world of *redikomi*, as do the lyrical chains of poems in the text, and examines how *manga-ka* like Yamato Waki and Maki Miyako interpret and reimagine key moments of the story. King pays particular attention to the way sexuality is described and shown, from images discreetly fading to white to explicit drawing. She demonstrates how artists push the boundaries of *shōjo* manga conventions by altering and modifying traditional tropes and themes.

In Chap. 4, "The Zany Aesthetic of Manga for Women: A Reading of Anno Moyoko's *Happy Mania*," Luciana Sanga focuses on manga of the 1990s. Sanga explains that the *josei* manga or *josei komikku* (women's comics) category has become commonly observed in bookstores and internet shops today. However, she contends that *josei* manga remains to be an elusive and generalized term. Her chapter starts with the explanation of the nuances the labels *redicomi* and *josei* manga evoke. Although there is much overlap between these terms, there are subtle differences in their connotations. Her chapter treats *josei*

manga as a separate genre. It unpacks its own themes and visual vocabulary. Taking Anno Moyoko's *Happy Mania* (1996–2001) as an example, Sanga argues that popular women's manga such as this work parodically incorporate formal elements of *shōjo* manga to achieve a zany aesthetic that infuses with humor the woman protagonist's disappointing romantic adventures.

Keiko Miyajima's Chap. 5, "'Don Your Armor!': The Politics of Dress in Higashimura Akiko's *Princess Jellyfish* (Kuragehime)," similarly explores how women's manga borrow and advance *shōjo* manga's visual and narrative conventions. Miyajima argues that, in *Princess Jellyfish* (2008–2017) created by Higashimura Akiko, fashion is presented as an integral element in the constitution of gender and social status for women. She describes how the protagonist Tsukimi and other female *otaku* characters, treated as social outcasts due to their insufficiently gendered clothes and queer obsessions with improper love objects, use feminine clothes for their self-empowerment. Miyajima argues that that this self-empowerment, however, does not lead them along the conventional trajectory typical of the female coming-of-age in *shōjo* manga, asserting that this *josei* manga or "neo"-*shōjo* manga ends with the re-establishment of the women-centered queer communal space, where the women can continue to live happily together and love their objects of obsession.

Barbara Hartley's Chap. 6, "*The Landlady and I* (Ōya-san to Boku): The Tale of an Elderly Woman's Life," sheds light on elderly Japanese women. The chapter examines the image and the role of an aged character called "*Ōya-san*" (landlady). The work, published in literary magazine *Shōsetsu shinchō* from 2016 to 2017, was created by Yabe Tarō, whose real-life experience with his landlady is the basis of this work. Elderly women's representation is an important area that needs further investigation in today's super-aging society (*chōkōreika shakai*) in Japan. Nevertheless, manga and manga scholarship which feature elderly women are meager. Stereotypes often attach to elderly women, with deeply ingrained assumptions that aging women are vulnerable and in need of care. Hartley's chapter presents the interaction between the main character *Boku* and *Ōya-san*, examining how intimacy develops between them and how they overcome assumptions, stereotypes, conflicts, and tension. Hartley also points out the presence of war in the manga, with concerns that acknowledgement of Japan's actions as aggressor are absent in this young man's narrative of the elderly woman's tale. Hartley, nevertheless, considers that *Boku*'s sensitivity results in a largely valuable narrative of a woman of advanced age.

Up to this point, all the chapter authors touch on the problem of stereotypical representations of women, illuminating how woman's gender images and roles are constantly interrogated and reconstructed in the realm of manga. The next three chapters shift attention to current issues of society addressed in manga, exploring the function of manga as a medium by which to encourage readers' social engagement.

In Chap. 7, "The Malaise of the Modern Family: Examining Depictions of Child Abuse in Manga," Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase focuses on the topic of *jidō gyakutai* (child abuse), one of the most serious social problems in Japan.

Dollase explains that manga magazines today, especially the ones targeted at mature women audiences, are filled with stories about mothers behaving violently toward their children. Bunkasha's "Women with Stories" (Sutōrī na onnatachi), a series of comics dealing with real-life women's problems that begun publication in 2015, has frequently featured mother's violence against children. The social issue of child abuse is contemplated by women artists through various visual and narrative techniques in their works. Dollase conducts a close examination of Sasaya Nanae's *Frozen Eyes* (Kōritsuita me) and Sone Fumiko's *A Person Begging for Love* (Ai o kou hito). She asserts that we cannot underestimate the influence manga have on their audience and the changes that these readers may bring to society.

Chapter 8, "Comics at the Intersection of Womanhood and Disability: Essay Manga, Affect, and Community," authored by Shige (CJ) Suzuki, discusses "essay manga" as an outlet for women's life-writing about lived experiences that explores socially important issues in today's Japanese mediascape. Suzuki first introduces the genre and how it has the potential to create greater social impact beyond manga fans. Then, he discusses the issue of authenticity in essay manga—that is, how the genre can convey a sense of "truth" or "genuineness" to achieve emotional impact on its readers even while employing simplified, cartoony drawings. As an example, Suzuki examines an essay manga by Mikazuki Yumi, a blogger/illustrator/manga creator, about her everyday life as a deaf person in contemporary Japan. Suzuki's chapter highlights the unique nature of essay manga with a focus on the ways it operates on cognitive and affective levels.

Mia Lewis' Chap. 9, titled "Manga's 2.5 D Women: Professional Cosplayers in Men's Manga Magazines," focuses on "gravures" (*gurabia*)—cover and interior photographs featuring young women models, commonly found in popular manga magazines targeting boys and men. This chapter delves into industry and publication practices. It contends that men's comic magazines impact society and culture, perpetuating the objectification of women within male-oriented media. Through a detailed analysis of cosplay gravures and their production and consumption contexts, Lewis asserts that these features in men's manga magazines encourage readers to blur the lines between their erotic fantasies about fictional characters and real individuals. In doing so, she challenges the prevailing discourse in Japanese manga studies, which often posits a clear distinction between manga content and reality in readers' minds. This distinction has often been used to dismiss criticisms of erotic depictions of fictional girls and women in manga and related media.

Rebecca Suter's Chap. 10, "Rethinking Gender and Genre in Contemporary Women's Manga," elucidates how transgender and non-binary character stories challenge genre conventions and provides us with an opportunity to think about the problems these conventions create. Suter starts her chapter with an explanation of manga tropes: women's manga from the 1970s onward are characterized by their combination of an experimental visual style with a challenge to gender and social norms, and by contrast, manga aimed at a male

audience often combine a linear page composition and a realistic graphic and narrative style with heteronormative content. Suter examines the intersection of gender and genre conventions in Japanese comics through a close reading of two recent manga series, Shōji Yōko's *G.I.D.* (Gender Identity Disorder 2006) and Rokuhana Chiyo's *I.S. otoko de mo onna de mo nai sei* (I.S.: the gender that is neither male nor female, 2003–2009). Suter concludes that *shōjo* and *josei* manga tend to celebrate ambiguity and non-normativity through a deliberately anti-realistic style as opposed to their *seinen* counterparts.

Section Two of the book highlights the real lives of women artists, with interviews of prominent manga creators Watanabe Masako (b. 1929) and Mizuno Hideko (b. 1939), who established positions for themselves as professional artists in the male-dominated manga culture of the 1960s, and an artist of the next generation, Satonaka Machiko (b. 1948), who further advanced the flourishing manga culture. These interviews were made possible by Masami Toku, who has cultivated a working relationship with them through the *shōjo* manga touring exhibition that featured their works.

We first need to situate these authors within manga history. Chapter 11, written by Nozomi Masuda and translated by Joshua Rogers, helps us understand how manga artists, both men and women, were involved in the initial establishment of the manga industry. The chapter is a summary of a record from roundtable discussions with those who were involved in early manga culture. Their real-life experiences present fascinating episodes as well as commentary on issues encountered during the process of systematizing the industry.

In Chap. 12, "Reflections on the Touring Exhibition 'World of Shojo Manga' (2005–2023)," Masami Toku presents an overview of her *shōjo* manga exhibitions, "Girls' Power! Shojo Manga! (2005–2008)" and "World of Shojo Manga!: Mirrors of Girls' Desires (2013–2023)," illuminating the evolution and diversification of styles and themes of manga since the 1950s. Through the chapter, Toku also introduces some episodes with manga artists in the process of developing the exhibitions and findings as the results of those world-touring exhibitions and lecture series.

Toku's overview is followed in Chap. 13 by interviews with the three artists—Watanabe, Mizuno, and Satonaka—conducted by Masami Toku and Hiromi Dollase, which show the trajectories through which they became manga artists and the challenges they faced as professional women. Such anecdotes "offer an intriguing everyday reality of experiences of feminism."[36] In these interviews, we hear testimonies of women's history. To these artists, manga is a means to present their ideals and life philosophies, as well as to engage with readers and society. Watanabe has always been interested in providing her audiences with fantasies, including sexual ones. Mizuno, who has constantly challenged cultural taboos and cultivated new artistic expressions, relates that she wants to be a "*manga-ka*," without being narrowly defined as a "*shōjo manga-ka*." For Satonaka, manga serves as a platform to demonstrate how young girls and women should live by looking at the realities that they might face in their own life. Through her independent heroines with strong

wills, she teaches her readers the importance of being strong and being able to make decisions in their lives. She also believes in manga's power to enrich lives and cultivate feelings of love and sympathy toward others.

Lastly, in Section Three, we introduce a chapter from the historical manga *Memoirs of a Woman Emperor* (Jotei no shuki, 1992) by Satonaka Machiko. Critic and translator Barbara Hartley's introduction highlights the importance of the central female character, Kōken/Shōtoku Tennō, who ruled from 749 to 770, with an interregnum from 758 to 764, as well as discusses the challenge she faced translating the work because of archaic and historical terms. The selected section ("Abe: A Young Woman Emperor-in-Waiting") addresses the deeply ingrained sexism of the time, including imperial titles strictly associated with gender hierarchy, issues contemplated by the heroine Abe in the form of monologues. The gender politics embedded in Satonaka's work are brought to the surface by Hartley.

The accuracy of historical manga is often criticized. However, the history we learn is usually presented from a male point of view. Satonaka's work reinterprets history, turning it into "herstory." According to comic studies scholar Hilary Chute, "graphic narratives suggest that historical accuracy is not the opposite of creative invention."[37] Satonaka's manga illuminates women's roles in the historical past, roles which are often dismissed as unimportant. Using the historical record and her own creative power, Satonaka synthesizes a vivid depiction of historical women's lives.

In summary, this book showcases women's issues, portrayals, and lives. Manga, as a consumer-oriented medium, disseminates expressions of women's issues across society, inviting readers to relate them to their own lives. Manga function as a discursive space on women's gender. While the featured manga often illustrate dominant gender norms, they also reveal the processes through which these norms are challenged, negotiated, and renewed. Women on the page and in the world continue renewing themselves and evolving in tandem with history.

Notes

1. The touring exhibition had two tours. The 1st one called "Shojo Manga! Girl Power" was from 2005 to 2008, traveling in North America (USA and Canada) and Japan, showcasing more than 200 shōjo manga artworks illustrated by twenty three artists. (Please refer to Chap. 12 for the list of artists and detailed descriptions of the exhibition.) It provided a significant opportunity to present the artistic sophistication and richness of manga culture based on points of view from the world of shōjo manga to audiences outside Japan. The 2nd tour was re-developed in response to audiences' requests after the 1st touring show was over, and incorporated 60 manga from twelve selected artists from the 1st show under the theme of "World of Shojo Manga: Mirrors of Girls' Desires," which focused on the changing roles of women and their desires in Japan over time. Beginning in North America, the exhibition, which had a profound ripple effect, subsequently traveled to East Asia, Europe, and South America.

2. There is abundant scholarship on *shōjo* manga in Japanese, many examples of which are included in this volume, so specific titles are omitted here. Valuabe anthological schoraly works written in the English language include *Shōjo Across Media: Exploring "Girl" Practices in Contemporary Japan*, edited by. Jaqueline Berndt, Kazumi Nagaike, Fusami Ogi (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); *Women's Manga in Asia and Beyond: Uniting Different Cultures and Identities*, edited by Fusami Ogi, Rebecca Suter, Kazumi Nagaike, and John A. Lent (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); *International Perspectives on Shojo and Shojo Manga: The Influence of Girl Culture*, edited by Masami Toku (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2015).
3. Susan E. Kirtley, *Lynda Barry: Girlhood through the Looking Glass* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 9.
4. Ibid.
5. Rebecca Copeland, "Introduction: When Women Write," in *Handbook of Modern and Contemporary Japanese Women Writers*, edited by Rebecca Copeland (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023), xx.
6. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
7. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 123.
8. Tsurumi Shunsuke, "Sazae-san," in *Sazae-san no shōwa* (Sazae-san in the Shōwa era), ed. Saitō Shinji (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shoten, 2006), quoted in Hayakawa Hiroyuki, "Jendā no shakai chishiki-gaku (The Study of Social Knowledge through Gender)," *Nagoya gakuin daigaku ronshū* 53, no. 2 (2016): 71.
9. See Masami Toku, *World of Shōjo Manga!: Mirrors of Girls' Desires* (n.p.: Independently Published, 2013).
10. Fujimoto Yukari, *Watashi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no?: shojo manga ga utsusu kokoro no katachi* (Where is My Place? The Shapes of Hearts Reflected in Girl Manga) (Tokyo: Gakuyō shobō, 1998).
11. Kathryn Hemmann, "Short Skirts and Superpowers: The Evolution of the Beautiful Fighting Girl," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 47 (2014), 60.
12. Ibid., 56.
13. Magazines aimed at mature women proliferated in the 1980s. These magazines were called "Ladies' Comic" magazines. Naturally, sexual scenes are part of these comics as stories deal with conjugal relationships. However, the mass media focused on and sensationalized this aspect of the magazines. Mori Naoko asserts that comic magazines for mature women about everyday issues and comic magazines which focus only on women's sexual fantasies should be distinguished from one another and proposes to call the former women's comics (Mori Naoko, *Onna wa poruno o yomu: Josei no seiyoku to feminizumu* [Women Reading Porn: Women's Sexual Desire and Feminism] [Tokyo: Seidosha, 2010], 92). Emerald L King in Chap. 3 and Luciana Sanga in Chap. 4 of this volume elaborate on ladies comics.
14. Kinko Ito states that "early ladies' comics were often misinterpreted by the mass media and general public as women's pornography, but with the television dramatization of many of the ladies comic series in the last dozen year or so, this misunderstanding has been more or less eliminated" (Kinko Ito, "Chikae Ide, the Queen of Japanese Ladies' Comics: her life and Manga," in *Mangatopia:*

Essays on Manga and Anime in the Modern World, edited by Timothy Perper and Martha Cornog [London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011], 12).

15. Itō Gō, *Tezuka izu deddo: Hirakareta manga hyōgen-ron e* (Tezuka is Dead: Opening Up the Theory of Manga Expression) (Tokyo: NTT shuppan, 2005), 14.
16. See our interview with Mizuno Hideko in Chap. 13 of this volume.
17. Amanda Filipacchi, "Wikipedia's Sexism Toward Female Novelists," *The New York Times*, April 24, 2013, accessed August 14, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/opinion/sunday/wikipedias-sexism-toward-female-novelists.html
18. Kendra Winchester, "What is Women's Fiction," *Book Riot*, March 9, 2022, accessed August 14, 2023, https://bookriot.com/what-is-womens-fiction/
19. Ibid.
20. Orly Konig, "Embracing the Women's Fiction Genre Label," *Janice Hardy's Fiction University*, January 7, 2020, accessed August 14, 2023, http://blog.janicehardy.com/2020/01/embracing-womens-fiction-genre-label.html
21. Ibid., 303.
22. Shige (CJ) Suzuki, "Manga Studies #4: Traversing Art and Manga: Ishiko Junzo's Writings on Manga/Gekiga," *Comic Forum*, August 11, 2014, accessed August 14, 2023, https://comicsforum.org/2014/08/11/manga-studies-4-traversing-art-and-manga-ishiko-junzos-writings-on-mangagekiga-by-shige-cj-suzuki/
23. Kayo Takeuchi, "The Genealogy of Japanese Shōjo Manga (Girls' Comics) Studies," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 38 (2010): 81–112.
24. In Japan, art education is one of the required subjects for elementary and middle school students (1–9th grades). However, manga was not discussed in the curriculum for a long time since educators didn't accept the value of manga for children. Times have changed. Especially, the concept of the "Grammar of Manga" (also called the "language of manga" including pictures, words, and frames) has been adopted in the national curriculum of art education to develop children' visual literacy skills starting in 8th grade in 1998 by the Ministry of Education and implemented in 2001 under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).
25. Natsume Fusanosuke, "The Grammar of Manga: Manga's Inherent Hyogen 'Stylistics,'" translated by Judith Kroo, in *Manga!: Visual Pop-Culture in ARTS Education*, edited by Masami Toku and Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase (Viseu, Portugal: InSEA Publications, 2020); See also "The Characteristics of Japanese Manga," translated by Jon Holt and Teppei Fukuda, *International Journal of Comics* 22, no. 2 (2020).
26. Shige (CJ) Suzuki, "Teaching Manga: A Medium-Specific Approach Beyond Area Studies," in *Manga!: Visual Pop-Culture in ARTS Education*, edited by Masami Toku and Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase (Viseu: InSEA Publications), 208.
27. Hannah Miodrag, "Comics and Literature," in *The Routledge Companion to Comics*, edited by Frank Bramlett, Roy T. Cook, and Aaron Meskin (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 391.
28. Ibid., 390.
29. Hannah Miodrag, *Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 263.

30. Genron henshū-bu, "'Nippon no manga-teki, Manga no yomikata kōza,' ibento repōto" (Reporting the Event "Lecture on How to Read Japanese Manga"), *Web Genron*, October 3, 2020, accessed August 14, 2023, https://www.genron-alpha.com/article20201003_01/
31. Jaqueline Berndt, "Considering Manga Discourse: Location, Ambiguity, Historicity," in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, edited by Mark W. MacWilliams (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2008).
32. Scott McCloud, *Undersabdnding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Harper, 1993), 69.
33. Hillary Chute, "Comics as Literature?: Reading Graphic Narrative," *PMLA* 123, no. 2 (2008): 452.
34. Jaqueline Berndt, "Considering Manga Discourse: Location, Ambiguity, Historicity," in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, edited by Mark W. MacWilliams (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 299.
35. The history of manga goes back to the 1920s and women characters such as housewives, female students, and modern girls appeared in comic strips. See Eike Exner's study for more information in his *Comics and the Origins of Manga: A Revisionist History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021).
36. Nicola Streeten, *UK Feminist Cartoons and Comics: A Critical Survey* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 11.
37. Chute, "Comics as Literature?," 459.

PART I

Women's Portrayals and Voices in Manga