



# **Straight from the Heart: Gender, Intimacy, and the Cultural Production of Shojo Manga**

*Jennifer S. Prough*

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Manga is the backbone of Japanese popular culture, influencing everything from television, movies, and video games to novels, art, and theater. *Shojo manga* (girls' comics) has been seminal to the genre as a whole and especially formative for Japanese girls' culture throughout the postwar era. In *Straight from the Heart*, Jennifer Prough examines the *shojo manga* industry as a site of cultural storytelling, illuminating the ways that issues of mass media, gender, production, and consumption are involved in the process of creating *shojo manga*.

With their glittery pastel covers and focus on human relationships and romance, *shojo manga* are thoroughly marked by gender—as indeed are almost all manga titles, magazines, and publishing divisions. Drawing on two years of fieldwork on the production of *shojo manga*, Prough analyzes *shojo manga* texts and their magazine contexts to explain their distinctive appeal, probe the gendered dynamics inherent in their creation, and demonstrate the feedback system that links producers and consumers in a continuous cycle of "affective labor." Each chapter focuses on one facet of *shojo manga* production (stories, format, personnel, industry dynamics), providing engaging insights into this popular medium. Tacking between story development, interactive magazine features, and relationships between male editors and female artists, Prough examines the concrete ways in which *shojo manga* reflect, refract, and fabricate constructions of gender, consumption, and intimacy. *Straight from the Heart* thus weaves together issues of production and consumption, human relations, and gender to explain the unique world of *shojo manga* and to interpret its dramatic cultural and economic success on a national—and increasingly global?scale.



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