



# Manga and Japanese History

*“Kodomo ga hen da”* (The Kids Have Gone Strange):  
Violent Eruptions, Media Panic, and Manga in 90s Japan

# Times of Crisis

- 1990s Japan witnessed the burst of the “miracle” economic bubble and an accelerated breakdown of traditional institutions.
- Economic pressures disrupted conventional gender roles and relations.
- Stable employment declined as precarious labor increased.
- Education no longer offered a certain path to economic security.
- Many youth grew disillusioned with traditional paradigms of identity, institutions, and narratives of citizenship.

# Violent Eruptions: “The Otaku Killer”

Between 1988 and 1989, Tsutomu Miyazaki kidnapped, murdered, and cannibalized four young girls.

News outlets focused on his media collection, dubbing him “The Otaku Killer.”

This media spectacle generated widespread fears centered on the unknowability of Japanese youth.



# Violent Eruptions: Aum Shinrikyo and the 1995 Sarin Gas Attacks

In-Class Viewing: Asahara  
Shōkō interview with  
Kitano Takeshi







“The collapse of the cold war structure and the advent of the Internet most clearly symbolize the shift from ‘narrative to database.’ The Internet is but one vast database in which appears any number of worlds that differ depending on input. Until 1989, the world was organized by ideology, but now the image of the ‘net’ as the matrix for cultural diversity is becoming dominant.”

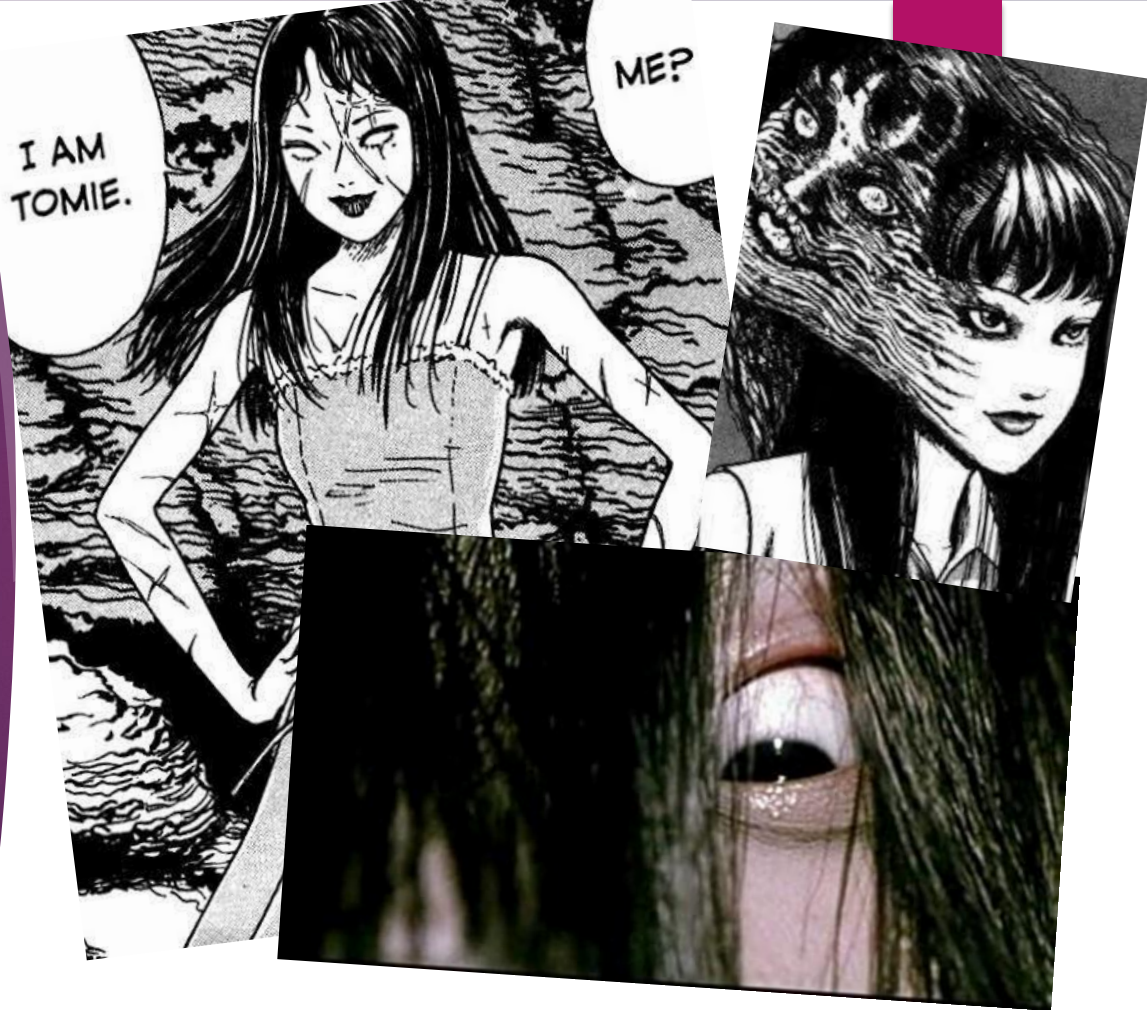
–Hiroki Azuma, “The Animalization of Otaku Culture”



Panels from *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1994–2013)

“One of the sites of Japanese ‘everyday life’ that appears most threatened and vulnerable is that of the traditional family, and one of the more vulnerable victims of this destabilization is the young (female) child. Consequently, prevailing female adolescent identities have further fragmented, spawning more negatively inflected (stereo-)types.”

–Valerie Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and their American Remakes*



Monstrous girls of *Tomie* (1987–2000) and *Ringu* (1997)



# Short Analysis Assignments

Bring to class a ~250-word analysis of *Evangelion*, with attention to how it reflects the growing alienation of youth in the high-tech landscape of contemporary Japan. In your analysis, provide close reading of at least one specific scene.

Bring to class a ~250-word analysis of *Tomie* and *Ringu*, with attention to how these texts use monstrous girls to explore larger anxieties that proliferated in recessionary Japan. In your analysis, provide close reading of at least one specific scene from the manga and the film.