

The Representation and Meaning of “Expo ’70 Trauma” in Urasawa Naoki’s *20th Century Boys*

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Abstract | In this article, I examine Urasawa Naoki’s *20th Century Boys* (*20-seiki shōnen*) as a “post-disaster manga.” In *20th Century Boys*, disasters are layered; there is both immediate disaster in the looming extinction of humankind following a bioterrorist attack and symbolic disaster in the form of trauma. Disaster manga, even while depicting the bleak conditions of an apocalypse, typically convey a hopeful and future-oriented message in which a new generation overcomes the circumstances bequeathed by the preceding generation to forge a new world. The older generation is thus irresponsible and mistaken—a “generation of mistakes” that brought about the apocalypse—and the younger generation a force for change naturally entrusted with the future. *20th Century Boys* parts with this convention. Members of the older generation (the “twentieth-century boys”) are aware of their mistakes and strive to make amends for them, while the younger generation (the “twenty-first-century boys”) supports and encourages them. The apocalypse thus brings together rather than divides generations. In this respect, *20th Century Boys* is a “post-disaster manga,” transcending the frame of traditional disaster manga depicting change through generational transition. It is also a manga strongly critical of the past, evincing trauma rather than nostalgia, as is evident in its grotesque and nightmarish depiction of the 1970 Japan World Exposition. Contrary to claims in the existing literature, this event is not exclusively remembered as an achievement in the pursuit of national interests. As a post-disaster manga, *20th Century Boys* emphasizes an attitude of taking responsibility and making amends for one’s mistakes and breaking the cycle of hatred between and within generations. In the context of postwar cultural discourse, in which Japan has been criticized as “unable to mature,” this is an attitude that may help Japan to truly grow.

Keywords | Urasawa Naoki, *20th Century Boys* (*20-seiki shōnen*), *21st Century Boys* (*21-seiki shōnen*), disaster manga, the 1970 Japan World Exposition (Expo ’70), generation theory, trauma of the World Exposition

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Introduction

Urasawa Naoki's manga have drawn considerable attention in Korea as well as Japan, evaluated as encapsulating various contemporary social problems through a humanist lens (Hong Sŏng-il and Kang Sin-gyu 2014; Yi Hyŏk-chin 2010; Kim Tong-jun 2008; Sin Ki-ju 2008; Kim Pong-sŏk 2006a, 2006b; Kim Tae-hong 2002). The significant fandom they have attracted in Korea is first and foremost an indication of good storytelling (Kim Tong-jun 2008, 90). Critics particularly praise Urasawa's use of layered plotting in long-form manga straddling the line between popular culture and artistic integrity, with his *20th Century Boys* (*20-seiki shōnen*) offering an almost perfect example in this regard (Kim Min-gyu 2020).¹ *Pluto* (*Purūtou*) also provides a window into exploring issues such as the relationship between human beings and robots, the ethics of artificial intelligence, and existential questions of human identity in the current "transhuman" or "posthuman" age (Pak Chŏng-man 2020).

Such praise is balanced by the fact that some scholars criticize Urasawa's attitude toward the Japanese past as reflecting a narcissistic sense of national identity. I shall deal with this view in greater detail, but suffice it to say for now that these scholars regard *Pluto* as verging on a rightist work championing Japan's past imperialism. In *20th Century Boys*' depiction of the 1970 Japan World Exposition (hereafter Expo '70), Pak No-hyŏn (2020, 312-13) sees traces of "a glorious/shameful past of striving to 'leave Asia, join the West' and on to 'unite the eight corners of the world under the Emperor.'"² According to Hong Sŏng-il and Kang Sin-gyu (2014, 130-165), through *20th Century Boys*, Urasawa "yearns for the revival of a postwar Japan in which national interests were prioritized on the basis of material abundance through rapid economic growth," an attitude that can be "understood as an attempt to assert Japan's ultranationalist desire." They also take issue with his representation of the US (and Europe) and "complete lack of representation of Asia" in works like *Billy Bat* (*Biri Batto*) (Hong Sŏng-il and Kang Sin-gyu 2014, 155).

1. The title of the final collected edition is *21st Century Boys* (*21-seiki shōnen*).

2. The full quotations are as follow: "*Pluto* was produced half a century after *Astro Boy* [*Tetsuwan Atomu*], considered both the progenitor as well as a classic of Japanese anime. Fixating on the development of a young boy who has internalized the statist agenda of 'rich nation, strong army' [*fukoku kyōhei*], however, it is closer to a rightist work championing Japan's past imperialism than a postcolonial one." "Viewing the 1970 Osaka World Exposition flag depicted in *20th Century Boys*, one is easily reminded of the various national flags draped above the heads of students divided into blue and white 'soldiers' at elementary school sporting events in the Meiji era—in other words, a glorious/shameful past of striving to 'leave Asia, join the West' and on to 'unite the eight corners of the world under the Emperor'" (Pak No-hyŏn 2020, 312-13).

Such debates demonstrate that Urawasa’s works are not confined to the Japanese subculture of manga; they do not merely entertain young people but allow a glimpse into the “interior” of Japanese society. Of course, there are some who say that manga are little more than an entertainment subculture that do not exercise the kind of influence in Japan that they are believed to have by many Korean critics.³ Recently, however, scholars expressing sympathy with Itō Kinko’s (2005, 456) view that manga “reflect the reality of Japanese society and various social phenomena (social hierarchy, class, and gender/race/age/class discrimination)” have begun to explore the genre’s textuality. Urawasa’s works, generally set in the contemporary era and incorporating historical events, have been of particular interest here, used as a lens for critiquing Japanese modernity and society (Hong Söng-il and Kang Sin-gyu 2014, 133-43).

The narrative of *20th Century Boys*, which I focus on in this article, also begins with a historical event, namely, Expo ’70. In other words, *20th Century Boys* provides a lens for contemplating the significance of “Expo ’70” for “post-war” Japanese society. Meanwhile, the apocalyptic narrative, integrating elements of science, religion, and terror(ism), reflects the mood of a late-1990s Japan scarred by the Aum Shinrikyo Tokyo Subway Sarin Attack and anxious over the impending turn of the century. Above all, the work evinces the character of a Japanese science-fiction manga in its compelling premise, in which a “virtual world” is used to return to the past and attempt to prevent the impending apocalypse. Finally, it also explores philosophical themes, such as the determination of the boundaries between “truth and lies” and “good and evil” relative to the “total faith” and “hopes and illusions” of an individual (or collective) (Ozawa 2011).

The theme of Expo ’70 was the “progress and harmony of humankind,” as encapsulated in Okamoto Tarō’s *Tower of the Sun* (*Taiyō no Tō*). A representation of Japan’s “past, present, and future,” the work reflected the perception of the expo as an “epochal event” transmitting Japanese pride and an image of the future envisioned by the Japanese people. Just like the tower, then, Expo ’70 itself functioned as a “system of meaning” for Japanese society. Likewise, *20th Century Boys*, set against this historical event, is very much composed of a “system of symbols,” as evident in the core elements of the narrative: Friend’s distinctive mask, the family-like relations between the characters, the saintliness of female characters mediating between the generations and protagonists,⁴ the “Book of

3. The reasoning here is that those who work at publishing companies such as Kōdansha regard literature as more prestigious and try to avoid working on manga (Wō Maenia 2018).

4. Ozawa Tomomi (2011, 2015, 2016) pays particular attention to such symbolism and imagery. On the one hand, she analyzes the fractured sense of identity of the “faceless boys” (Sadakiyo, Fukubē, and Katsumata), who display an imitative desire in adorning masks to assume the identity of

Prophecies” (*Yogen no sho*) and “New Book of Prophecies” (*Shin Yogen no sho*) that serve as key drivers of the plot, and supernatural abilities and new religions. This system of symbols generates tension, curiosity, and immersion. In its repeated depiction of humanity on the brink of extinction, moreover, the work evinces an apocalyptic worldview through the symbolism and layered signification of disaster.

In this article, I examine *20th Century Boys* as a disaster manga, premised on a worldview of “apocalypse and post-apocalypse.” As such, the narrative depicts two apocalyptic scenarios arising from bioterrorism and concludes with the prevention of the final apocalypse in the attempted use of an antiproton bomb. In typical disaster manga depicting such apocalyptic scenarios, the narrative often conveys a hopeful and future-oriented message in which a new generation overturns the conditions created by the preceding generation and creates a new world. The older generation is usually portrayed as the irresponsible “mistaken generation” that caused the apocalypse, while the new generation appears as the natural custodian of the future and engineer of change. These characteristics compose what can be called a “typical disaster narrative” deriving from an apocalyptic worldview (Park Yi-jin 2022). *20th Century Boys* diverges from this pattern, portraying a responsible older generation (the twentieth-century boys) striving to rectify and make amends for their mistakes and a new generation (the twenty-first-century boys) supporting and encouraging them. From start to finish, in other words, the work is consistently characterized by harmony between the generations, where the apocalyptic situation brings together rather than divides the generations. *20th Century Boys* should therefore be understood as a “post-disaster manga,” transcending the frame of “traditional disaster manga” depicting change through generational succession.⁵

It is also understandable why some scholars identify the characteristic of “narcissistic nationalism” in *20th Century Boys*. To be sure, the technological

Friend. On the other, she analyzes the relationships between the main female characters (Kiriko, Yukiji, and Kanna), paying attention to their role in binding together the “homo-social” world.

5. Disaster-depicting manga emerged in earnest in the 1970s. The plots are typical disaster narratives. In the wake of a great and uncontrollable disaster, the protagonist works with or against other characters in trying to restore the pre-disaster situation. Meanwhile, a hell beyond the disaster emerges as the true nature of human relations unmasked, with a new wave of victims or the protagonist betrayed by someone he or she trusted. Representative are *The Drifting Classroom* (*Hyōryū kyōshitsu*, Umezu Kazuo, *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* serial, 1972-74) and *Survival* (*Sabaibaru*, Saito Takao, *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* serial, 1976-78), in which the main characters are boys who survive civilization’s collapse, an earthquake, or a tsunami and strive not only to stay alive but also change the world. One may define this as the plot of “traditional disaster manga” (Kim So-wōn 2020).

capability displayed at Expo ’70, reflecting Japan’s desire to join the ranks of the advanced countries, would have inspired among Japanese a sense of their nation’s burgeoning status. Nevertheless, *20th Century Boys*’ self-critical stance toward a past stained with trauma outweighs any elements of nostalgia. The significance of this, contrary to prevailing perceptions in the academic literature (especially in Korea), is that memories of Expo ’70 are not uniform; it is not simply remembered as an event successfully carried out in the national interest. Indeed, memories conflicting with the image of Expo ’70 as a mere “success” lay at the heart of *20th Century Boys*, functioning as the key to resolving the plot. The narrative features two expos. The first (i.e., Expo ’70) takes place in 1970 and serves as the catalyst for the events leading to the apocalypse. The second (fictional) expo takes place in 2015 and marks the culmination of the apocalypse. As a reenactment of a “grotesque past” or “nightmare,” then, Expo ’70—a real historical event—functions as a symbolic system in *20th Century Boys*.

In this manner, disasters are layered in *20th Century Boys*; there is immediate disaster represented in the impending extinction of humankind following a bioterrorist attack and symbolic disaster represented as past trauma. I elaborate and analyze this point in the following section.

The Character of “Post-disaster Manga”

Big Comics Spirits (*Biggu komikku supirittsu*) published *20th Century Boys* on a weekly basis from 1999 to 2006 and the concluding series, *21st Century Boys*, from January to July 2007. The manga received numerous awards, including the twenty-fifth Kōdansha Manga Award (*Kōdansha Mangashō*), sixth Agency for Cultural Affairs Media Arts Festival’s Excellence Award (*Bunkachō Media Geijutsusai yūshūshō*), forty-eighth Shōgakukan Manga Award (*Shōgakukan Mangashō*), thirty-seventh Japan Cartoonists’ Association Grand Prize (*Nihon Mangaka Kyōkai-shō taishō*), and thirty-ninth Seiun Award (*Seiunshō*) in the manga category. It was also made into a film trilogy released over the years 2008 to 2009.⁶ Moreover, it contributed to Urasawa Naoki’s international renown. His works have now been translated into English, German, French, and other languages, and *20th Century Boys* received the grand prize and award for best graphic novel at the Angoulême International Comics Festival, the largest such festival in the world, in 2003 and an Eisner Award, known as the Oscars of the

6. The first part of the trilogy received little attention in Korea, however, and the second opened at just ten theaters nationwide screening for two weeks. The third part was not screened (Sin Chin-a 2009).

comic-book world, in the category of best foreign work from Asia in 2011 and 2013.⁷

At the heart of *20th Century Boys*' story is Expo '70 in Osaka, launched soon after the historic Apollo 11's mission to the moon. The protagonist, elementary school student Kenji, and his friends construct a "secret base" as a world of their own. They listen to the radio, read manga, and make-believe they are heroes. Eventually, they go on to university and begin careers, and these childhood memories begin to fade. In 1997, a thirty-eight-year-old Kenji is working as a convenience store manager when he is suddenly reminded of his childhood by the disappearance of a Professor Shikishima and his family. He and his friends realize the events of which they wrote in the "Book of Prophecies," something they made up to amuse themselves, are really happening. They resolve to find "Friend" (*Tomodachi*), the one who they wrote would bring about the destruction of humankind. Friend begins as the mysterious head of a religious sect, which he gradually develops into a political organization that carries out acts of terror and sews chaos. Eventually, he creates the Friendship Democratic Party (*Yūmintō*) and attains political power.

20th Century Boys takes place over a period of fifty-eight years, spanning from Kenji's birth in 1959 to 2017. It is not just the story, then, which is condensed but also the historical background. While it features many characters, its most intricate characteristic by far is its temporal configuration, jumping back and forth between 1997 and the 1970s, 2014 and 2000, and 2017 and 1971. To simplify this complex structure, four different periods may be discerned by dividing the narrative time chronologically. I exclude reminiscences about childhood as they do not directly relate to the narrative's events, marking Kenji's adolescence as the starting point.⁸

As I mention above, *20th Century Boys*' narrative composition is complex, weaving together different temporal settings where the past and present proceed contemporaneously. The story begins in 1997, and the past is depicted either through recollections or the virtual world. Introducing the narrative in a chronological order thus risks diminishing the narrative's excitement and tension. Nonetheless, such a chronological periodization is facilitated by the shift in protagonist as the story passes through each era (Tanaka 2015, 16).⁹ All the main characters except Kanna appear in the "late 1960s and early 1970s," where the

7. *Le Monde*, one of France's top three dailies, also featured Urasawa in a piece on manga (Sin Ki-ju 2008).

8. I have modified Tanaka's (2015, 16) periodization.

9. According to Tanaka, Kenji is the main character of the narrative in the "late twentieth century," whereas Kanna, Otcho, and Yoshitsune are the main characters of the first "age of Friend."

Table 1. A Periodization of Urasawa Naoki’s *20th Century Boys*

1. Late 1960s and early 1970s (1968–73)	Childhood (elementary and middle school days) of Kenji and his friends.
2. Turn of the millennium (1997–2000)	Kenji and his friends discover and begin to oppose Friend. A bioweapon is unleashed across the world and a giant robot destroys Tokyo. *At this time, Kenji fails to prevent the incident and disappears.
3. Age of Friend (2001–15)	Friend has become a hero for stopping the global terrorist attack and assumes the office of the president of the world at the “Expo 2015” opening ceremony (he is also revered as a god). The “murder virus” reemerges, killing off most of humankind, and the “age of Friend” (<i>tomodachi riki</i>) begins.
4. Twenty-first-century restart (2016–17)	Kenji reappears, and he and his friends learn of the final prophecy of “world destruction by an anti-proton bomb.” They bring about the demise of Friend and his forces and prevent the end of the world.

background of the narrative’s main events is described. In the “late twentieth century,” the narrative present, Kenji (aged thirty-eight to thirty-nine) is the main character, gathering his friends to oppose Friend. In the “age of Friend,” Kanna (Kenji’s niece, aged seventeen) inherits from Kenji the task of leading the resistance against Friend. In the “twenty-first-century restart,” Kenji reappears and works with Kanna and their friends to prevent the planned destruction of humankind.

The changes in the main characters according to time period convey a natural generational change from Kenji to Kanna, who is the protagonist of the apocalyptic twenty-first century (the “age of Friend”) following the first bioterror attack. She is variously described as “child of destiny” (daughter of Friend, man who has become a god), “Ice Queen” (leader of the resistance), and “the Messiah” (Jesus Christ).

The end of the world, human extinction, and generational change are all universal elements of apocalyptic narratives.¹⁰ The Book of Revelation in the

10. Eschatological rhetoric is primarily characterized by pessimism about the destruction of humankind and the holiness of divine beings, borrowing the devices of apocalypse and salvation from the Bible’s Book of Revelation. Following the framework of the Biblical apocalypse, it strongly emphasizes religious prophecies and the salvation of the world through an omnipotent Jesus Christ. This narrative of apocalypse, however, signifies not just an end but also a new beginning (Kermode 1967, 26). Furthermore, just as it is women who witness Christ’s death in the Bible, it is a woman, Yukiji, who fulfils the role of witnessing the end of the world and its transition

Bible, an important resource for apocalyptic narratives, evinces a metaphysical world rooted in the “revelation” of religious prophecy and “salvation” of a chaotic world through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This metaphysical world calls for imagining the “overcoming of a crisis triggered by the end of the world,” resonating with a society’s sense of crisis. Since around the turn of the century, however, the “post-apocalyptic narratives”—which rather portray capitulation to crisis and a dystopian future—have become especially prevalent. If apocalyptic narratives offer a strong vision of salvation in the face of crisis, then post-apocalyptic narratives portend a dark future for humankind, highlighted in negative perceptions and a sense of crisis about reality (see Hong Tök-sön 2015, 8).

Even while continuing in the tradition of apocalyptic narratives, *20th Century Boys* is layered with the dystopian visions that often lie at the heart of post-apocalyptic narratives. Kenji and his friends face the ultimate crisis auguring the end of humankind, just as predicted in the “Book of Prophecies” they composed during their childhood, and they, who once called themselves the “children of justice,” set out to save the world. This would be a conventional apocalyptic narrative if concluding at this point. Yet the crisis continues in a “world without salvation or a future,” with two more mass terrorist attacks to follow. This succeeding crisis generally corresponds to the “New Book of Prophecies” composed by Friend after his encounter with Kenji and his friends. Here is foretold the murder of a messiah who has emerged in the name of justice, a “Virgin Mary” who will bring either Heaven or Hell, and ultimately the destruction of the world by a proton bomb. This second crisis is indicative of a post-apocalyptic narrative. As a whole, the narrative is structured such that a post-apocalyptic narrative is framed within an apocalyptic narrative.

The layered representation of a (post-)apocalyptic narrative functions to offer the established generation that instigated end of the world an opportunity to reflect on and rectify its past mistakes. In other words, it offers time to rectify an irresponsible past. If the story had concluded as an apocalyptic narrative, a generational change would have occurred at the “turn of the century,” with the new generation, led by Kanna, exacting revenge or rebuilding the world. Kanna, however, as represented in her various titles, is a character with an inherently contradictory fate. Although a Christ-like figure, she does not become the hero; it is rather Kenji who saves the world. She is ostensibly the leader of the resistance to Friend and his minions and “the Messiah” that might save the world,

into a new era in *20th Century Boys*. Referred to as the “final hope,” Yukiji assumes the duty of watching over and protecting Kanna, who epitomizes the new generation of hope following the end of the world. *20th Century Boys*’ use of the devices of Biblical apocalypse and salvation is an important component of its character as an apocalyptic narrative.

but it is Friend, he who brings about the apocalypse, who is her father. Indeed, her designation as "the Messiah," something stipulated in the "New Book of Prophecies" that endows her with a Christ-like status, can be seen as a means of sanctifying her father, Friend.¹¹ Kanna also garners attention as a hero that might save the world because of her special abilities, something for which she unwaveringly accepts responsibility. Ultimately, however, she patiently waits for and encourages Kenji, the catalyst of the narrative's events, and Kiriko (Kanna's mother and Kenji's older sister), co-creator of the virus that brings about the end of the world, to acknowledge, apologize for, and rectify their mistakes.

The "age of Friend," in which a second act of mass terror brings humankind to the brink of destruction, offers the established generation time for reflection. Friend deceives microbiologist Kiriko, and she becomes the primary perpetrator of the bioterror incident.¹² She acknowledges this responsibility as soon as she becomes aware. "I'm Godzilla. I killed 150,000 people," she says. To rectify this mistake, she devotes herself to developing a vaccine. She is successful with the aid of Kenji and his friends and sets out to save people across the world. Likened to the "Holy Mother" (having given birth to the child of a god and created the vaccine), Kiriko acknowledges her mistake and seeks to make better the chaotic age she has bequeathed to Kanna.

Kenji realizes that the first terror attack is unfolding just as written in the "Book of Prophecies" he authored. He tries to prevent it but fails. He is stricken with amnesia and wanders around in remote areas until his memory is restored and he returns to Tokyo to confront Friend once again. On the day of the end of the world predicted in the "New Book of Prophecies," he and his friends, along with Kanna, successfully save humankind and become heroes. The story does not end here, however, and Kenji uses virtual-reality technology to "return" to 1971 to rectify a mistake in his childhood of which he has told no one; that he stole something and lied about it. This was a crime for which Friend was accused, terrorized by his peers, and even called a "dead person." Kenji returns to apologize.

The worldview of a (post-)apocalyptic narrative is the defining characteristic of disaster manga. Likewise, the elements of this genre—an apocalypse brought about by a god or aliens, natural disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis,

11. It is also claimed that Kanna is labelled as the "messiah" that will save the world because she is a character symbolizing the resistance to Friend (Tanaka 2016, 30).

12. Kiriko, whose name is a homage to the "Doctor Kiriko" of Tezuka Osamu's *Black Jack* (*Burakku Jakku*), may be understood as an "incarnation of the grim reaper." "Kiriko" emerges along with a biological weapon attack in *Black Jack*, too, this time the "terror virus" attack perpetrated by American soldiers.

destruction and loss of life through manmade disasters such as war and fire, and environmental devastation caused by bioterror leading to zombies or man-eating monsters—conform to the structure of gruesome apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. Disaster manga depict a desperate, dystopian world severed from the preexisting one by disaster. They emphasize the importance of restoring humanism and community by having agents of destruction become agents of reconstruction. Furthermore, they offer a heroic narrative, where the protagonist of the reconstructed world is a fated prophet, and the supporting characters join him or her on this path (Pak Se-hyŏn 2020). *20th Century Boys* adheres to these conventions, dramatically depicting such a (post-)apocalyptic worldview and heroes.

Kanna, a teenage girl (seventeen) who emerges as the driving force of a new generation in the wake of disaster, is also a typical disaster-manga character. It is difficult to deliver the same sort of “spectacle” found in disaster films through a medium of still scenes. Disaster manga thus focus more on individual hardship given the genre’s limited space (Paek Chong-sŏng 2020). They deal with survival in the wake of disaster and the changing psychological states of the characters according to this situation. This means they focus much more intensely on the plight to survive itself rather than fixing the social system that caused the disaster. For this reason, the characters are commonly teenagers, who are more innocent and vulnerable compared to adults. Disaster manga is thus characterized by the observation and exposure of society’s irrationality by narrating, through disaster, the transformation of human frailty into a strong desire to survive (Paek Chong-sŏng 2020, 15).

This characteristic is perceptible in *20th Century Boys*. The teenage characters, including Kanna and her classmate Koizumi Kyōko, are active, entrusted with the future, and symbolize generational change. Nevertheless, they are not all-powerful heroes able to resolve any crisis and save the people from disaster but rather human beings who grow and psychologically mature through a strong will to survive. Most importantly, they do not reproach Kenji, Kiriko, and those of the preceding generation for their mistakes and irresponsibility but help them to reflect on their mistakes and overcome inter-generational conflict. This is a characteristic of *20th Century Boys* that differentiates it from other disaster manga. One could say the apology for the past offered by the “twentieth-century boys” and the support and forgiveness reciprocated by the “twenty-first-century boys” represents the effort to break a vicious cycle within the divisive symbolic system known as “disaster.” This shows how *20th Century Boys* moves beyond a banal generational perspective to depict inter-generational harmony and responsibility.

Pak No-hyŏn (2021, 217-18), who has studied the image of teenagers in

postwar Japan, observes the (un)conscious conflation of the growth of “teenagers,” the supposed symbolic agent of national reconstruction, and the discourse of postwar growth in manga and anime. *20th Century Boys* also contains this kind of growth discourse, as represented in a young Kenji. “According to the science-fiction imaginary ‘learned’ by Japan-as-teenager in the 1970s,” he writes, “a fifty-meter, one-hundred-ton, laser-wielding ‘giant robot’ confronts an ‘evil organization’ armed with a ‘virus dissemination device’ and seeking world conquest. Wielding a remote control on the robot’s shoulder, it is none other than Kenji—a twentieth-century boy—who saves the world” (2021, 218). Pak No-hyōn thus points out how the growth of teenagers was among the greatest concerns of postwar Japanese society in relation to the national agenda of postwar reconstruction.

The entrustment of “renewal and rebirth” to teenagers or young adults is not unique to the postwar period but discernible in as far back as the Meiji era. “Young adults,” who emerged as a new social class with the dissolution of premodern community, consciously strived to form an inner self. Those aspiring to the status of “student = young adult” acquired the label of “teenagers” (*shōnen*), and the distinction between teenagers and children emerged.¹³ Karatani Kōjin (1997, 173), in examining literary discourse of the Meiji period, also explains how the existence of “children” was “discovered according to the needs of modernity.” As feudal society transformed into capitalist society, the “period of adolescence” was inserted between that of childhood and adulthood, and “children” emerged. They were not conceived of, however, in terms of the “childhood” of a standardized life cycle, as they are now. They were rather regarded as a homogeneous group emerging in tandem with modern education. In other words, these were “young adults” in waiting. Karatani thus explains that children were understood not in terms of their present value but future utility; they were objects of education and training for cultivation as “citizens” and “subjects” of the empire endowed with a sound and healthy mind and body. Pak No-hyōn (2020, 289, 309-10) argues that this conceptualization of “children” established during the Meiji period was reestablished in postwar Japanese society, when it was believed that teenagers had imperatively to grow. The growth of teenagers, in other words, was understood metaphorically as the growth of the nation. Pak No-hyōn’s interpretation of the Expo ’70 depicted in *20th Century Boys*—that it was “easily reminiscent of a glorious and shameful history of seeking to ‘leave Asia and join the West’ and ‘unite the eight corners of the world under the Emperor’” and thus

13. The emphasis on education necessary to raise children emerges in the interaction between family and society as premodern community collapses. The “discourse of adolescence” as a particular life stage emerges in modern society, referred to as an “age of adolescence” (Tajima 2016).

a reminder of defeat—is therefore one focusing on the discourses of “children,” “teenagers,” and “young adults” deeply rooted in Japan.

20th Century Boys, however, deviates from “traditional disaster manga” where a new generation overcomes all adversity. It is concerned with redeeming the “mistaken generation,” which displays a reflective and self-restrained attitude and commitment to fulfilling its responsibility. Of course, Pak No-hyŏn (2021, 216-17) also discusses the “autobiographical criticism” of the “twentieth-century boys” as they go from young to middle-aged adults by the turn of the century, calling this a “twenty-first-century reflection on the twentieth century and apologetic gesture by the present establishment to the children of the past.” From this perspective, however, the “twentieth-century boys” appear self-pitying about Japan in the 1970s, the time in which they grew up. Kenji’s generation also ruminates over the past in *20th Century Boys*, as revealed in the following passages: “If our past selves were to see us now, would they sneer at us?” (Urasawa, vol. 1 2018-20, 190); “I thought the city would be a little more . . . futuristic by the year 2000” (Urasawa, vol. 2 2018-20, 343). Such self-deprecation can be seen as the autobiographical reflection of the established generation, which began their childhood in the 1970s and moved into adulthood by the 2000s.

20th Century Boys, however, does not conclude here; it continues in *21st Century Boys*. Kenji reemerges believing peace restored and all conflict resolved by the removal of Friend and the remnants of his organization. This situation also gives the impression that the twenty-first century is unfolding as a new start in contrast to the twentieth century. Yet the focus of the plot of the concluding edition is Kenji’s return to the past. Entering a virtual recreation of the 1970s, Kenji tearfully apologizes to the young Friend for his wrongdoing. He offers sincere consolation and breaks the vicious cycle of “hatred.” Kenji’s apology is an action that a “twentieth-century boy” should naturally have taken in the past. An ostensibly minor mistake made through poor judgement ends up throwing the twenty-first century into crisis through a butterfly effect. Kenji’s return to the past is not an example of self-deprecating reflection rooted in autobiographical criticism but a sincere effort to restore peace to his generation and stem the source of the terrorist attacks yet to be carried out. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, this is also an acknowledgement of responsibility and consolation for the “twenty-first-century boys.” In presenting such a differing perception of generational change, *20th Century Boys* breaks not only with the conventions but also thematic consciousness of “traditional disaster manga.”

Representation of the 1970 World Exposition in Japan as Trauma

Much attention has been paid recently to the historical production of images of “teenagers” and “young adults.” There appear here to be, however, differing criteria for differentiating between and within generations. For example, the well-known “baby-boomer” and “baby-boomer-junior” generations are supposed to be greatly influential based on their sheer numbers. There are also the “bubble,” “lost,” “around-forty” (*arafō*), and “precariat” generations, which are defined by economic criteria (e.g., employment opportunities, labor issues, etc.). Japan’s *shirake* (“white-age” or “apathetic”) generation is defined by a lack of interest in politics. There is also the *satori* (“enlightenment”), divisible into the *yutori* (“relaxed”), and post-*yutori* generations corresponding to changes in education policy.

Japan’s discourse on young adulthood is a generational discourse that tends to pertain to Japanese society as a whole and not just young adults.¹⁴ Since the bursting of Japan’s bubble economy, this discourse has treated young adulthood as a social problem linked with others such as labor flexibility under globalization and neoliberalism, where job instability has discouraged young people from getting married and having children. In a society once referred to as the “100 million middle mass,” the problem of “disparity” became distinctly apparent in the 2000s, animating discussion about inter- and intra-generational differences (see Katō H. 2011; Satō 2000; Shirahase 2005, 2006; Tachibanaki 2006). The young generation was the hardest hit, gaining a reputation as “socially vulnerable” in the 1990s.¹⁵ Since this time it has frequently been associated with negative descriptors such as despair, unhappiness, and poverty.

In the late 1990s and through the 2000s, negative perceptions surrounding freeters (*furitā*) and NEETs (*nīto*) became prevalent. Much commentary emerged on the problems of the labor market, education, and family around this time, provoking a powerful reaction.¹⁶ Following the 2011 Great East Japan

14. An analogous discourse in Korea that over “generation MZ.”

15. This discussion particularly declares the futility of the modern view of the family and value system (Genda 2003; OECD 2010; Honda 2005, 2008, 2014; Miyamoto 2002; Raymo and Iwasawa 2005; Iwasawa and Mita 2005; Katō A. 2011; Matsuda 2013).

16. In *NEETs: Neither Freeters nor Unemployed* (2004), economist Genda Yuji and freelance writer Maganuma Mie explain the rise of NEETs (*Nīto*) in terms of problems related to the labor market, education, and family. In *Debased Society: The Emergence of a New Social Class* (2005), Miura Atsushi ignited controversy over his explanation of young people’s declining desire owing to their “degradation.” In *Do Not Call Me a “NEET”* (2006), education sociologist Honda Yuki and critic Naitō Asao point out the problem of criticism of NEETs prevalent in the media, asserting that there are cases in which young people want to work but are prohibited by social conditions.

Earthquake, moreover, the perception of Japan as a “disaster society” generated changes in how young people thought about social participation. Some (Furuichi 2011) have thus expressed a philosophical concern over the individuation of young people, where young people’s worldview is explained as a kind of subculture.

It is a well-known fact that the generational discourse on “young adults” that has persisted in Japan since the 1970s is a self-pitying fiction perpetuated by the established generation. Since 2005, the media has frequently highlighted instances of “unhappy” or “pitiable” young people. Observing rates of life satisfaction or happiness reported in surveys by generation, however, it is rather people in their forties and fifties (middle-aged people) who score low. In other words, it is the very adults who worry that young adults are unhappy that are unhappy.¹⁷ In this context, generational discourse should also be horizontally understood, not just vertically in terms of the vested interests of generational change.¹⁸ There is thus a need for a deeper understanding of how a given incident impacts a single generation and affects intra- as well as inter-generational dynamics. *20th Century Boys* has much to say about such a horizontal and vertical understanding of generational discourse.

Categorizing the characters in *20th Century Boys* in terms of the typical generational divisions of postwar Japan, Kenji and his friends, born in 1959, belong to the *shirake* generation, while Kanna and her classmates, born in 1997, belong to the *yutori* and *satori* generations (Sasano 2017, 7). The *shirake* generation, also known as the “first otaku generation,” additionally belong to the “baby-boom generation,” born between 1950 and 1964. As an “apathetic” (*shirake*) generation, members are thought to be uninterested in anything, particularly politics, as they attended university after the student movement of the 1960s and 1970s had concluded. Urasawa Naoki, born in 1960, belongs to this generation. Urasawa has confirmed in interviews how he drew on his own childhood experiences in writing *20th Century Boys*, but one may also discern this in the frequent homages to manga and anime of this period, befitting of a “first-

Uchida Tatsuru (2007) also drew broad public attention with his *Aiming for the Lower Class*. As the book’s title became a common phrase, the discourse on NEETs gradually converged on educational and other measures for preventing young people from becoming a NEET.

17. According to Furuichi Noritoshi’s (2011) analysis, levels of life satisfaction among people in their twenties rather increased when discourse over social disparity peaked in the year following the Aum Shinrikyo Tokyo Subway Sarin Attack and Great Hanshin Earthquake, which both occurred in 1995.

18. Karl Mannheim’s theory of generational change overcomes the empiricist limitation of generational theory stemming from such a vertical understanding, emphasizing the non-simultaneity within generations. One can also observe the internal differentiation of generations into various units in his work (Mannheim 2020, 47-122).

generation otaku."¹⁹

Kanna and her classmates, the post-apocalyptic protagonists of the story, are born between the years 1987 and 2003 and thus belong to the *yutori* and *satori* generations; they are young adults who have received a *yutori* education. Some perceive this generation in general terms as if its members lead comfortable lives free of competition, greed, and the desire to consume. Within this generation, however, can be found diverse groups with polarizing values and attitudes toward life. In *20th Century Boys*, Kanna appears quite different from her peers, showing little interest in digital technology or popular trends.

There is a pronounced temporal disparity between Kenji and Kanna's generations, which each have its own "common memory." Kenji's rock music and the virtual recreation of the past serve as mediums linking the two generations.²⁰ One should note, however, that the virtual world designed according to Friend's memories is a fabricated past, distinct from that experienced by Kenji and his generation. One particularly important distortion is the image of Expo '70. This is important because world expositions serve as the sole common experience of the two generations in *20th Century Boys*. In Japan, the world exposition was held in Osaka in 1970 and another will be held in Osaka in 2025. In *20th Century Boys*, "Expo 2015" was held as a successor to Expo '70.

As well known, Urasawa inculcated his own memory of Expo '70 in Kenji. How might Urasawa and his generation have viewed Expo '70? Furthermore, in terms of the expo's meaning, what would they have tried to convey to the succeeding generation? One can infer what Expo '70 meant to Urasawa in his depiction of "Expo 2015," the commencement of which coincides with the second (final) apocalypse.

Under the slogan of the "progress and harmony of humankind," one which also often appears in *20th Century Boys*, Expo '70 presented a fantastic city of the future. It was understood as a symbolic national event displaying to the world the reconstruction and resilience of postwar Japan (Yoshimi 2007, 78).

19. Kiriko is reminiscent of "Doctor Kiriko" in Tezuka's *Black Jack* (1973–83, published in *Weekly Shōnen Champion*) and compares herself to "Godzilla." The young boy Sadakiyo always wears the mask of *National Kid* (*Nashonaru kiddo*, 1960–61, a special program that aired on TV(NET), Japan's educational broadcasting channel).

20. It is said that Urasawa himself composed and performed Kenji's song, "Bob Lennon." Kenji's childhood dream of achieving world peace through music is ultimately fulfilled. His niece Kanna often listens to his music, a classmate of Kenji who becomes a DJ broadcasts it on the radio, and it instills in many including those even younger than Kanna the will to resist Friend. I do not deal with this role of music in this article, but there is a need for a thorough discussion of the relationship between the trend in hippie and rock music in the 1970s and social transformation in relation to *20th Century Boys*' themes.

The three faces of the *Tower of the Sun*, the expo's great symbol—black in the rear, white in front, and gold atop—signified Japan's past, present, and future, respectively. To this degree, Japan's twenty-first-century future imagined by Kenji and his friends was a world of "golden light," sharply contrasting with the "dark" past and "colorless" present.

Art critic Sawaragi Noi, born in 1962, refers to himself as an "expo kid" (*banpaku kozō*). "The 'future' of the Osaka Expo deeply impressed [me at the time]. I was an 'expo kid.' Even if regrettable now, it is an unchangeable fact. I was seven at the time and unable to critically evaluate the 'future' of the expo whatsoever. It would not be an exaggeration to say I was completely caught up in the media's active propaganda campaign surrounding the expo" (Sawaragi 2005, 12). "Expo kid" was a widely used term for children aged around ten (born around 1960) who were greatly fascinated or impacted by Expo '70 (Kikuchi 2016).²¹ *20th Century Boys* also features "expo kids." Kenji and his family make plans to visit the Expo '70 that they must cancel, and Kenji ultimately misses his chance. Ironically, the reason for this is his family's assent to watch the house of some relatives who have gone to Osaka to visit the expo. Kenji, however, ends up more informed about the expo than even his friends who attend as he spends his summer reading the *Official Guide of the 1970 Japan World Exposition* (*Nihon Bankokuhaku kōshiki gaido*). This was also Urasawa's actual experience.

Kenji's friend Donki is also unable to attend Expo '70. His family is poor and cannot afford the train ticket to Osaka. Donki is good at math and science—his friends call him a "science boy"—and dreams of one day "going to the moon." Longing to see the "moon rock" (*tsuki no ishi*) brought back by the Apollo spaceship on display at the US pavilion, which has drawn much public attention, he borrows a bike and sets out for Osaka. The bike breaks down, however, and he must give up. Among the children who do manage to visit the expo, one group of children gains the title "expo group" (*banpaku gumi*). These are the children who were able to stay with relatives in Osaka and enjoy the expo all summer long. Donki's classmate and fellow genius Yamane visits the unpopular pavilions first and the popular pavilions several times at his leisure. Represented in his character is one who experienced the expo in its totality, whose mind is branded with its "future." As an adult he ends up becoming a scientist fixated on technical achievements, and he develops the "deadly virus" and "murder virus." Persuaded by Kiriko, however, he realizes his mistake, owns up to it, and assassinates

21. Kikuchi Fumihiko, who was born in 1952, was not an "expo kid." He rather felt repulsed by the excessive attention given to the expo. He also describes Urasawa as an "expo kid" in introducing *20th Century Boys*. In the current article, I borrow from Kikuchi (2016) in referring to experiences as "expo kid" and using the term "expo trauma."

the villainous Friend. Then there is Kenji's close friend, honor student Otcho, who makes it to Osaka but fails to join the illustrious "expo group." He collapses of sunstroke after lining up for hours for the most popular pavilions, such as those of the US, Russia, and Japan.

Fukubē, who will eventually become Friend and destroy humankind, like Kenji, has plans to attend the expo that are cancelled. Also like Kenji, he ends up studying about the expo by reading the *Official Guide*. Unlike Kenji, he writes a fictitious diary to support the lie that he attended the expo, which his classmates believe. He stays home all through the summer, and when he does venture out, he wears a National Kid mask borrowed from his classmate Sadakiyo, who wore it every day and whom Fukubē would boss around. Fukubē later hides his identity to become Friend, and opens a virtual world known as "Friend Land" after the destruction of humankind. The purpose of the attraction is indoctrination, allowing future generations to directly experience his childhood. Since Fukubē lied about attending Expo '70, the events of summer 1970 take place in 1971 in the virtual world.

In *20th Century Boys*, this "lie about 1970" is an important clue in exposing Friend's identity. In other words, it is precisely through their recollections of Expo '70 that Kenji and his friends uncover Friend's identity. Memories of Expo '70—Kenji and Donki's disappointment about not attending and Fukubē's desire to join the popular "expo group" even if he must lie—thus constitute the story's main motif. Eventually, the injury and trauma surrounding Expo '70 that Fukubē experienced is seamlessly reproduced in the opening of "Expo 2015." To heal his injury, he has plotted the destruction of humankind.

The story reaches its climax as the traumatic memory of Expo '70 is reproduced in "Expo 2015." Friend, who has come to rule the world, opens the expo only in Tokyo. A tower is erected in imitation of the *Tower of the Sun*, and all the pavilions and exhibits of the past are recreated. For Kenji and his friends, "Expo 2015," as a reproduction of the Expo '70 that has become a shocking and unfortunate memory, symbolizes the "past as nightmare" returning as if to exact retribution. Meanwhile, Kenji's generation passes on this "expo trauma" to Kanna, for whom grotesque reproductions become symbolic of evil. As the leader of the resistance, she plans to assassinate Friend, but he ultimately emerges even more powerful—a god—through "Expo 2015," and the world is destroyed once again.

Regarding Expo '70, the late scholar of city design Hashizume Shin'ya recollects the following:

For me, the expo was a place of science fiction and wonder. One could find there space, fantasy, and, above all, the city of the future. . . . I think I learned several

important life lessons at the expo. To a young mind these were no more than feelings of “surprise” and “excitement,” but looking back, I believe I learned the inspirational power of imagination and the significance of a culture that tolerates diverse values. This is what I learned at the expo. (Hashizume 2005, 3)

Such affectionate recollection of the expo is also intelligible in the comments of Ōkawara (2022), a Panasonic representative sitting on the preparatory committee for the upcoming Expo '25. Alluding to his “vivid memory of perceiving a brightly shining future,” he emphasized his desire and sense of responsibility to recreate this experience for the “alpha generation” (born after 2010).²² No such memories or images of a successful expo, however, appear in *20th Century Boys*. There is only the repeated mentioning of the slogan “progress and harmony of humankind,” as if it was an illusion.

Hong Sŏng-il and Kang Sin-gyu (2014, 130-65) argue that *20th Century Boys* is about “nostalgia for a past Japan.” Urasawa, they say, seeks to portray an ideal or at least somewhat better Japan by returning to the past rather than depicting Japan’s future, as evident in the narrative structure hinging on the year 1970 (Expo '70). Furthermore, they claim that “1970,” three decades before Urasawa began work on *20th Century Boys*, represents a past linked not with “bygone days” but “the future.” This analysis is premised on sociologist Mita Munesuke’s argument that Japan entered a new era in the 1970s. This, he says, was an “age of fiction,” one of directionless but overflowing abundance where Japan had achieved a high-degree of economic growth but lost any ambition to higher goals or ideals.²³ Hong Sŏng-il and Kang Sin-gyu thus understand Urasawa’s return to Expo '70 as an attempt to create an “alternate Japan” and escape the “age of fiction.” The logic here is that *20th Century Boys* is characterized by the agony of pursuing a new identity for Japan at the end of the “age of fiction,” where the past does not signify escape from the present but a doorway to the future. It appears this perspective is also implicitly premised on an idealistic understanding of a “boy who has not reached adulthood,” in which a boy who has failed to mature fixates on Expo '70 as a twentieth-century success story. For Hong Sŏng-il and Kang Sin-gyu, “The quest of Japan’s ordinary thirty-somethings [like Kenji] to restore the past is precisely one to save the world” (158). In this regard, they highlight Friend’s desire to destroy the world as a whole and not just Japan.

22. Panasonic unveiled a time capsule at Expo '70. It is also featured prominently in *20th Century Boys*.

23. Sociologist Mita Munesuke describes the transition from an “age of ideals and dreams,” lasting from 1945 to the early 1970s, to an “age of fiction” in the 1980s. He judges that the Aum Shinrikyo Tokyo Subway Sarin Attack signified the culmination of this “age of fiction” brimming with a sense of identity loss and apocalyptic anxiety (Ōsawa 1996, 10-64; Yoshimi 2013, 190-91).

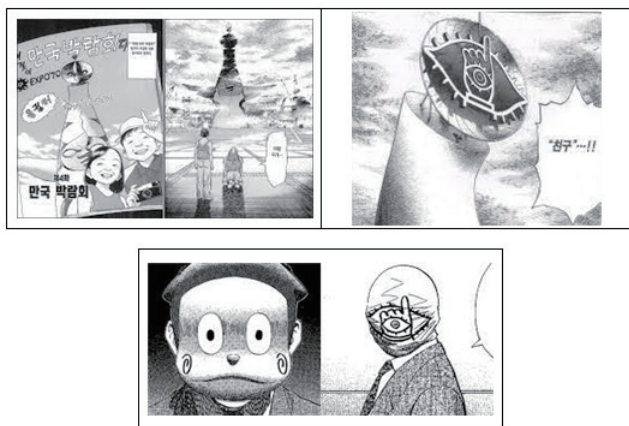


Figure 1. Repeated representation of the expo of “illusion” and the faceless Friend in *20th Century Boys*

Expo ’70, however, signified an ominous nightmare and past trauma to both Kenji and Kanna’s generations. Nowhere does *20th Century Boys* depict the “success story” of the 1970s. Rather, it associates the science and technology unveiled at Expo ’70 with the emergence of the “giant virus-disseminating robot” and “murder virus” designed to bring about the destruction of humankind. One may observe how the anticipation of a “golden shining future” emerging out of the “progress and harmony of humankind” at that time was little more than an illusion.

The portrayal of Expo ’70 as an illusion is also highlighted in the character of the “faceless” Friend. Fukubē, who borrows Sadakiyo’s mask to conceal his “expo trauma,” becomes even more alienated from Kenji and his group of friends when he is unable to join the popular kids “expo group” as he desired; he had hoped to become popular and attract the attention of Kenji and his friends. Thereafter, Fukubē’s reflection in the mirror appears to him as an “egg ghost” whenever he is belittled or ignored by those around him. Developing a fear of himself and a suspicion about his identity, he eventually dons a mask branded with the “friend mark” drawn by Kenji’s close friend Otcho; he becomes faceless. On Friend’s behalf, Sadakiyo and Katsumata (another classmate) also wear masks with the “friend mark” and pretend to be Friend while involving themselves in various incidents. In *20th Century Boys*, Friend is a symbolic character for whom identity is unimportant. Furthermore, he is a character that emerges in association with Expo ’70. It is significant that “Friend,” acted out by “faceless” boys exchanging places with one another, is born of the gap between self-

perception and others' perception. This difference between the "I" and the "other" vis-à-vis self-identity signifies the perceptual differences between and within generations surrounding national events such as Expo '70.

Conclusion

The 1970s were a momentous era for Japan. Expo '70, attracting sixty-four million visitors, was Japan's largest event since the war. The government also announced its grandest postwar economic plan, known as "income doubling." The twentieth-first century, as imagined by the "expo boys," was to be era in which war, conflict, and pollution would entirely disappear; the world would be peaceful, space freely accessible, and death due to cancer or other terminal illnesses no more (Shigematsu 2002).²⁴ There was not only an anticipation but also trust and faith in the future. Rudderless abundance ensued, however, as the "age of fiction" emerged, and such dreams and ideals dissolved. This understanding of the state of Japanese society combined with the discourse on the "growth of children," and expanded into the postwar cultural discourse of a "Japan unable to mature."²⁵ Such social and cultural criticism has undoubtedly deepened the understanding of postwar Japan. There is room to question, however, whether returning to this era to yearn for the revival of Japan necessarily signifies an attempt to crystallize Japan's ultranationalist desire based on the criterion of only "good" memories of national events and a booming economy. Does the discourse of the "growth of children" signify merely a revival of a defeated Japan, nostalgia, and an ultranationalist agenda? In that case, perhaps it would have been advisable to Kenji and Kiriko's generation to develop better weapons and "ideals" (ideology) for dreaming of a better "future" as way of reflecting on and rectifying their mistakes. Yet they rather seek inter-generational reconciliation and consolation of the new generation through confession. It is for this reason, if at all, that *20th Century Boys* may be associated with the postwar discourse of growth—that is, the theme of a Japan "unable to mature." *20th Century Boys* presupposes mental

24. Writer Shigematsu Kiyoshi (2002) describes this work reflecting his memories of Expo '70 in the epilogue as a "requiem for the boys and girls of the 1970s."

25. As is well known, the discourse of defeat is an important one that cannot be ignored in postwar-Japanese cultural discourse. Japan's sense of subjectivity was harmed through the trauma of defeat in the war, and it became a "nation of children." Etō Jun and others have repeatedly asserted postwar Japanese society's the "inability to grow," to mature into an adult. When discussing the history of manga, too, the archetypal motif of "difficulty maturing" may be observed in the work of authors such as Ōtsuka Eiji and in *Astro Boy*, a robot that is forever a boy.

maturity as preceding physical and technological change. Such mental maturity emphasizes “self-reflection and a sense of responsibility regarding the past,” which also implies the true meaning of boys’ “growth.”

20th Century Boys’ depiction of an “exaggerated” tragedy—the destruction of humankind through a giant virus-wielding robot and “murder virus”—set against Japanese society at the turn of the century and again metaphorically in “child’s play” set against Japanese society in the late 1960s and early 1970s can be understood precisely in this context. The work is a caricature of the postwar Japan “unable to mature.” This is because reality—the inner world of Japan symbolized by the contemporaneous Aum Shinrikyo Tokyo Subway Sarin Attack—is crueler for its innocence, like the playing of children, and is thus represented metaphorically as “eternal child’s play.”

Finally, rather than a nationalistic perspective regarding the state of Japanese society, perhaps greater attention should be paid to the attitude of the postwar generation urging the generation of today to engage in reflection. This is an attitude ever entrusting triumph over crises and disasters to the next generation, merely hoping children will avoid or overcome an irresponsible future. In this respect, *20th Century Boys* calls on the postwar generation to realize the strength to responsibly settle a past of misdeeds and break a vicious cycle. This is an attitude of voluntarily recognizing one’s own mistakes.

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