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# Beautiful Fighting Girl

By Sait Tamaki



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## Beautiful Fighting Girl By Sait Tamaki

From *Cutie Honey* and *Sailor Moon* to *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, the worlds of Japanese anime and manga teem with prepubescent girls toting deadly weapons. Sometimes overtly sexual, always intensely cute, the beautiful fighting girl has been both hailed as a feminist icon and condemned as a symptom of the objectification of young women in Japanese society.

In *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, Sait? Tamaki offers a far more sophisticated and convincing interpretation of this alluring and capable figure. For Sait?, the beautiful fighting girl is a complex sexual fantasy that paradoxically lends reality to the fictional spaces she inhabits. As an object of desire for male otaku (obsessive fans of anime and manga), she saturates these worlds with meaning even as her fictional status demands her ceaseless proliferation and reproduction. Rejecting simplistic moralizing, Sait? understands the otaku's ability to eroticize and even fall in love with the beautiful fighting girl not as a sign of immaturity or maladaptation but as a result of a heightened sensitivity to the multiple layers of mediation and fictional context that constitute life in our hypermediated world—a logical outcome of the media they consume.

Featuring extensive interviews with Japanese and American otaku, a comprehensive genealogy of the beautiful fighting girl, and an analysis of the American outsider artist Henry Darger, whose baroque imagination Sait? sees as an important antecedent of otaku culture, *Beautiful Fighting Girl* was hugely influential when first published in Japan, and it remains a key text in the study of manga, anime, and otaku culture. Now available in English for the first time, this book will spark new debates about the role played by desire in the production and consumption of popular culture.



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## Beautiful Fighting Girl By Sait Tamaki Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #118517 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-11-30
- Released on: 2013-11-30
- Format: Kindle eBook

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"A foundational book illuminating the phenomenon of cool Japan, *Beautiful Fighting Girl* explains the global desire for images of little girls that kick ass. Sait's uncomfortably deep understanding of the particulars of this Japanese phenomenon allows us to finally begin to answer questions about the far-reaching implications of the now nearly universal fetish, of our atomizing technologies of interactivity, and of our obsessions with new media. Its place in contemporary letters is nearly unparalleled and I wouldn't be surprised if this book gives that once a decade jostle leading to the n-th wave of feminism or a complete reconfiguration of our understanding of male desire." —Jonathan E. Abel, Pennsylvania State University

#### About the Author

Saito Tamaki is a practicing psychiatrist and medical director of the Sofukai Sasaki Hospital in Chiba, Japan. He is the author of more than two dozen books. J. Keith Vincent is assistant professor of Japanese and comparative literature at Boston University. Dawn Lawson is New York University's East Asian studies librarian. Hiroki Azuma is a leading cultural critic in Japan.

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