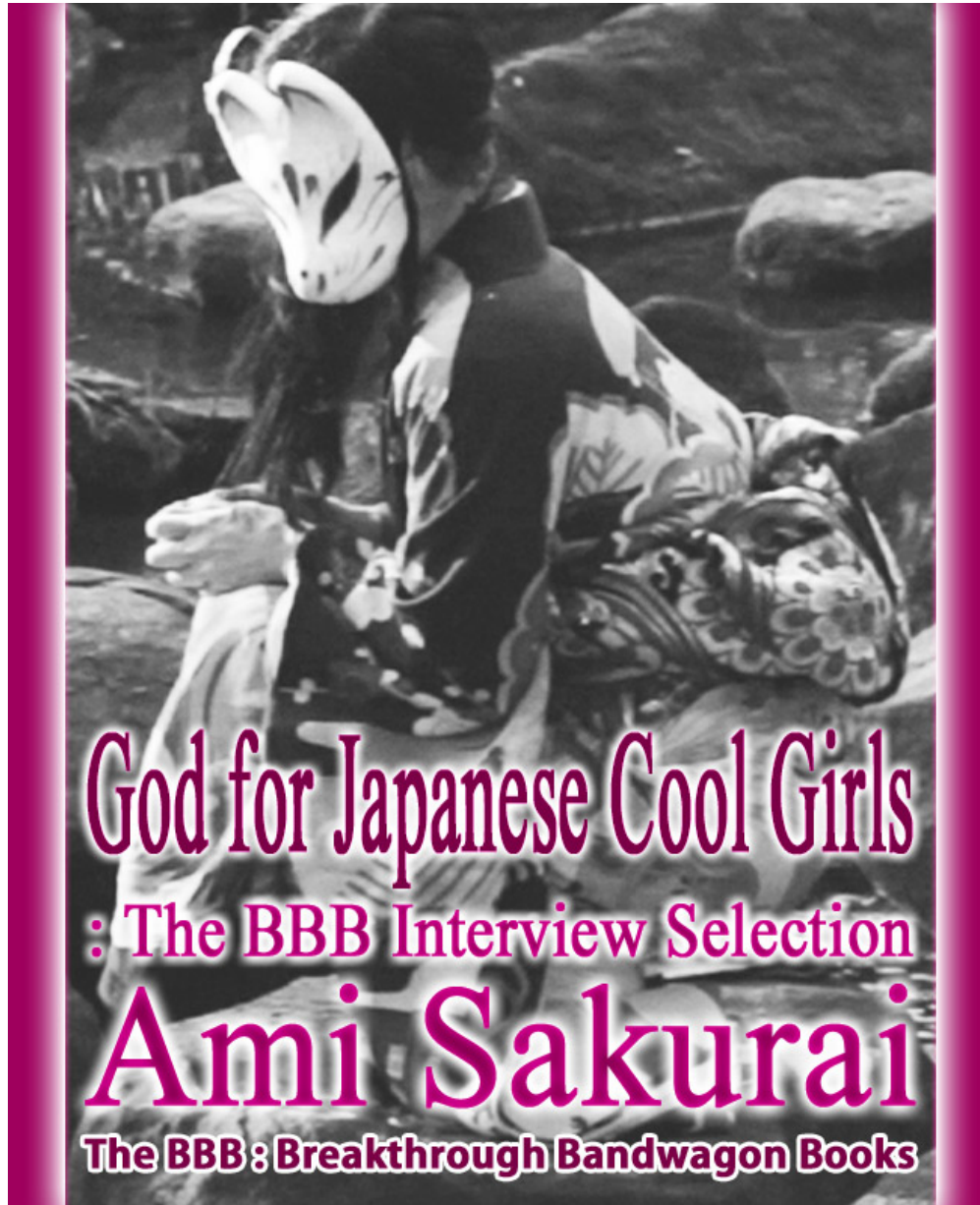


God for Japanese Cool Girls



Told by Ami Sakurai

Interviewed by Ryusui Seiryoin

Cover Photograph by Ami Sakurai

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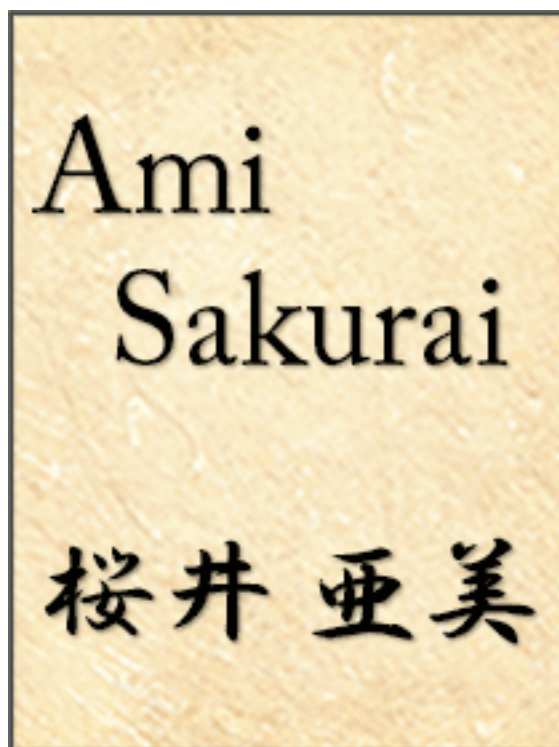
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The BBB website

<http://thebbb.net/>



Ami Sakurai Author Page

<http://thebbb.net/cast/ami-sakurai.html>

Author's Profile

Japanese Novelist and Movie Director

She made a debut in 1996 as a novelist with a work titled “Innocent World”. It was translated into many languages and made into a movie. After that, she has published lots of works to date.

In recent years, she has been eagerly engaged in making movies. She herself acts as a movie director.

In 2016 (the 20th anniversary of her debut), she has published “Girl recruits her God”, the English version of her masterpiece “Girl”. Also, she is about to release the movie of the work.



Recommendation from Mr. Ian Condry

Here is the recommendation for “Girl recruits her God” from Mr. Ian Condry, a MIT professor.

“Thrilling! Shocking! Fun!

Finally, on enjo kosai story on new era.

This novel brings “killer cute” to a whole new level.

I really enjoyed this.”

Mr. Condry published “THE SOUL OF ANIME” in 2013.

In addition, he has a profound knowledge of not only Japanese animation and comics but also Japanese hip-hop and literature.

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I really enjoyed this.

Ian Condry

MIT Professor

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Comparative Media studies, Foreign Languages and Literatures

Interview about “Girl recruits her God”



B (Chief Editor of The BBB): This time I will be introducing an author named Ami Sakurai and her work “Girl recruits her God”. So, today, I would like to share the moment with her.

Sakurai: Thank you for inviting me.

B: The work titled “Girl”, the original version of “Girl recruits her God”, was published in Japan in 1997. Why have you decided to plan to have this work translated into English and make it into movie by yourself?

Sakurai: I have some of my works that I desire to get translated into English. My first novel “Innocent World” was translated in 2004, and was sold not only in the United States but also in Italy, Russia, China, South Korea, and so on, around the world. Also, it was made into a commercial film, although I was not the director at the time.

B: It was a youth movie featuring teens’ psyche, wasn’t it?

Sakurai: Correct. The second novel “Girl” is also the work I have been planning for the translation for years. It has been on top of the priority list of the candidates for being made into a movie for quite a long time. The works I want to get translated into English are, at the same time, the ones I want to make into a movie. I have a strong urge to write the script, and direct the movie of “Girl” by myself. This is the project with which both the translation and my film direction are actually realized.

B: The works you want to get translated into English are always the ones you want to make into movies, aren’t they?

Sakurai: Correct. I think a script for a movie needs intense images that can create a particular view of the world from nothing. I also think the work that has that element has to be easily accepted by people around the world.



B: You chose a high school girl as the main character of this story as you did so in the first novel, “Innocent World”. How do you define the beings that are also known as high school girls?

Sakurai: In Japan, high school girls attract public attention more than anything else from all spectra of generations. Novelists, movie directors, musicians, just to mention a few ... Whatever they do or become, they can create great values only because “high school girls” have done it. The girls wisely make use of anonymity of school uniforms and, at the same time, try to shake off the anonymity. They are the most inspiring and the most exciting beings from my point of view.

B: In this novel, the main character searches for the ‘preys’ through a telephone dating club and continues such an immoral way of ‘hunting’. At the expense of providing sexual services, she threatens and blackmails victims to extort money. Can we say that she is taking advantage of her privilege as a high school girl?

Sakurai: Yes. In the strange wave of enthusiasm involving high school girls in around 1997, some aggressive girls actually executed such ‘hunting’, which is so-called *enjo-kosai* (assisted dating services). Some males paid large sums of money as much as the girls requested, and some supplied the girls so much dough by withdrawing their lifetime savings.

B: I remember it was about the era, around which the residues of this country’s economic bubble still remained.

Sakurai: Right. Yuri, the main character, is the very embodiment of the most extreme example of the girls executing the ‘hunting’. Back then, high school girls could get tens of thousands of yen much more easily than businesswomen in their 30s or housewives in their 40s doing the same thing.

B: Are you saying that such privilege of high school girls can be found only in Japan?

Sakurai: Young and beautiful girls are revered and adored by the majority of people in any country, of course. However, in Japan, uniforms give the girls the particularly special symbolism. We can hardly find uniforms for high school students in other countries. If a 17-year-old girl is wearing a T-shirt and denim pants, she can’t obtain the symbolic meaning. Such girls are just another teenagers.



B: So, Yuri in the novel is always wearing a sailor suit, a type of high school uniform, in the movie, because of the reason having to do with the symbolism.

Sakurai: Yes. The sailor suit uniform is the most reliable battle suit for her to survive in the society. In a movie titled “Kill Bill: Volume 1”, directed by Quentin Tarantino, Chiaki Kuriyama, an actress, is wearing a high school uniform while acting as Gogo Yubari, a high school girl and a professional assassin in the movie.

B: High school girls walking in Shibuya seem to understand that they get the attention and cameras are being pointed at them because they are wearing uniforms.

Sakurai: Their value systems are also special. The notion of being ‘kawaii’ is placed on top of their priority list. The word ‘kawaii’ includes many positive meanings, such as beautiful, pretty, cool, up-to-date, lovely, pure, good, etc. It is a keyword that transcends morals and social meanings, whereas it intuitively expresses the ‘righteousness’.

B: I guess being kawaii is the highest or the best priority for the girls.

Sakurai: The girls demand the quality of being kawaii on everything, including the people with whom they interact with socially, the society itself, clothing, and lifestyles. In short, it is the world in which the righteousness of maternal principle prevails. The righteousness of maternity is about being loved and preciously treated by those who surround them. So, they pursue one-and-only thing that possesses the distinctive beauty and loveliness more than the degree of completeness as consumables.

B: Do you mean that the maternal principle drives the girls?

Sakurai: The center of Japanese society is still operated under the paternal principle that pursues the degree of completeness as consumables. The swing-over between the different principles is no small matter.

B: It is not that the trend involving the principles is found only in Japan, is it?

Sakurai: The trend can be found in many countries. But, Japan is a rare country in which paternal and maternal principles are separated from each other and never fuse with each other. This is the reason why teenage girls in Japan instinctively prefer being kawaii to depending on logic as the only way for them to gain the identities by themselves. In contrast to pursuing the completeness as consumables, the girls desire to be the one-and-only, unique presences.

B: Indeed, the very concept of uniforms represents male chauvinism such as orders and ranks. So, Japanese males often sexually respond to uniforms worn by girls. They might be feeling the sense of relief, probably because they can fit the teenage girls into their system of the order based on chauvinism.

Sakurai: For high school girls, being kawaii symbolizes their spirit of independence and the sprouts of their ego. This is a globally rare case of the conscious structures of the value systems. For that reason, the “girl culture” in Japan is an object of curiosity and admiration for teenage girls even in western countries.

B: From this point of view, high school girls embody the social structure in Japan and, at the same time, they try to overcome it. I think that is very exciting.

Sakurai: That’s right. It is the reason why I feel the sense of purpose for writing novels featuring and themed on high school girls.



B: In the movie “Girl recruits her God”, the main character, a high school girl, recruits her god. I wonder if the girls in that situation consciously feel the religious mindset of any sort.

Sakurai: I think they don’t give a darn about Christianity, Buddhism, or anything like that in particular. Instead, they seem to perceive their religious beliefs in a kind of pantheistic way. For example, one of them might worship a stuffed Hello Kitty doll as if it is a god. In another case, they may revere pop idols and the main characters of TV animation as gods.

B: Or, a person who saves or discovers her might be her god ... In the novel, the main character meets a man, who wants to regard himself as the Almighty. Then, the story takes unexpected turns.

Sakurai: Yuri, the main character, is always waiting for the genuine god for her. What is her god is the one theme of this novel. Readers can experience another method of reading the story in a very interesting way by discovering that point of the theme.

B: Then, you, or the author herself, wrote the screenplay and directed the movie. I’m really looking forward to it. May I ask when the movie will be released to the public?

Sakurai: I plan to release it in June, when the bound-up version of the novel will be released. The entertainment factor will be very stimulating, while the conclusion will be what people will ponder about. I would like people to enjoy the movie along with the novel.

B: Have you already finished the filming?

Sakurai: Yes. I have a good feeling about the performance of actors and the visual presentations of the film. This is a story that is structured like a mythology, which contains the universal catharsis that would be enjoyed by people in any countries. The mythology of Japanese high school girls has never been created before. I would like people, especially females, in every country to watch it ...

B: I think it is very meaningful that the author herself directs the movie. “Girl recruits her God” is a worldwide project, in which the novel and the movie develop simultaneously. We would like everyone to receive this message of the new trend from Japan. Sakurai-san, thank you so much for sharing the exciting moment today.

Sakurai: You’re welcome.

(This interview was recorded in Tokyo on January 23, 2016)

[The movie of this interview can be watched at (<http://thebbb.net/ebooks/girl-talk.html>)]



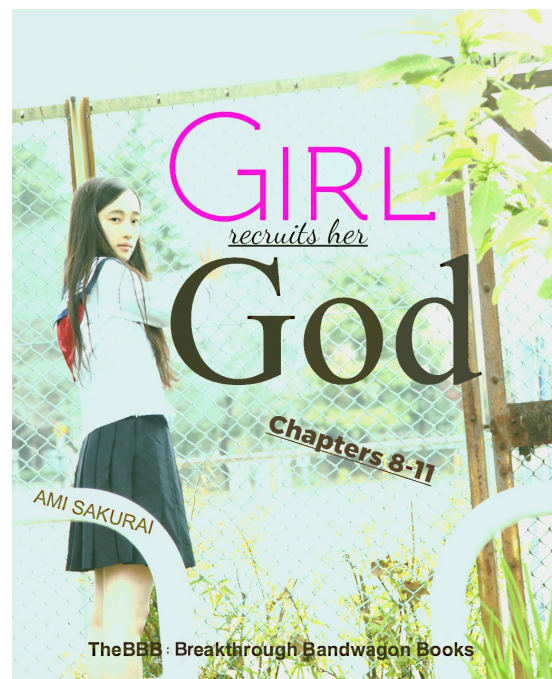
This interview was exclusively conducted as one of the made-in-Japan contents belonging to The BBB: Breakthrough Bandwagon Books.

Ami Sakurai Works List at The BBB



Girl recruits her God: Chapters 1-7

<http://thebbb.net/ebooks/girl-1.html>



Girl recruits her God: Chapters 8-11

<http://thebbb.net/ebooks/girl-2.html>
