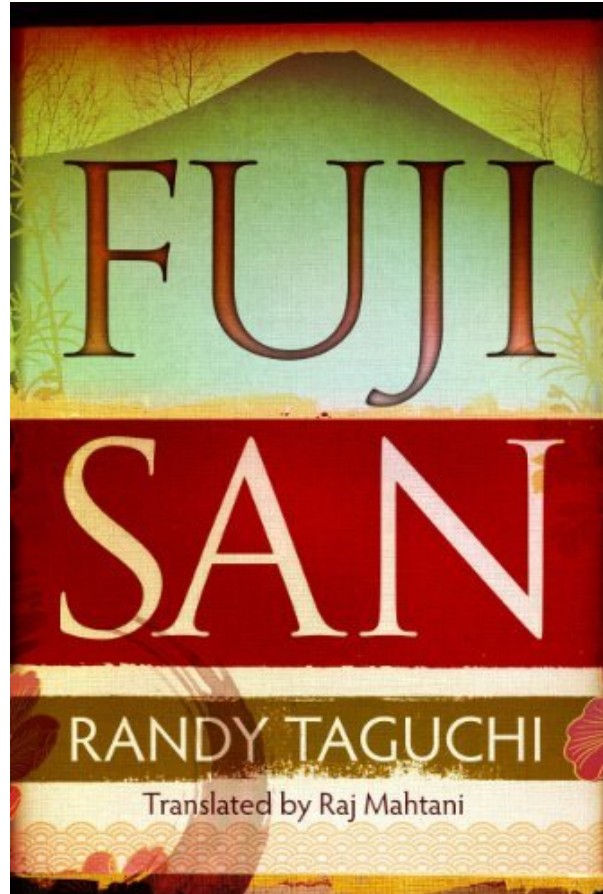
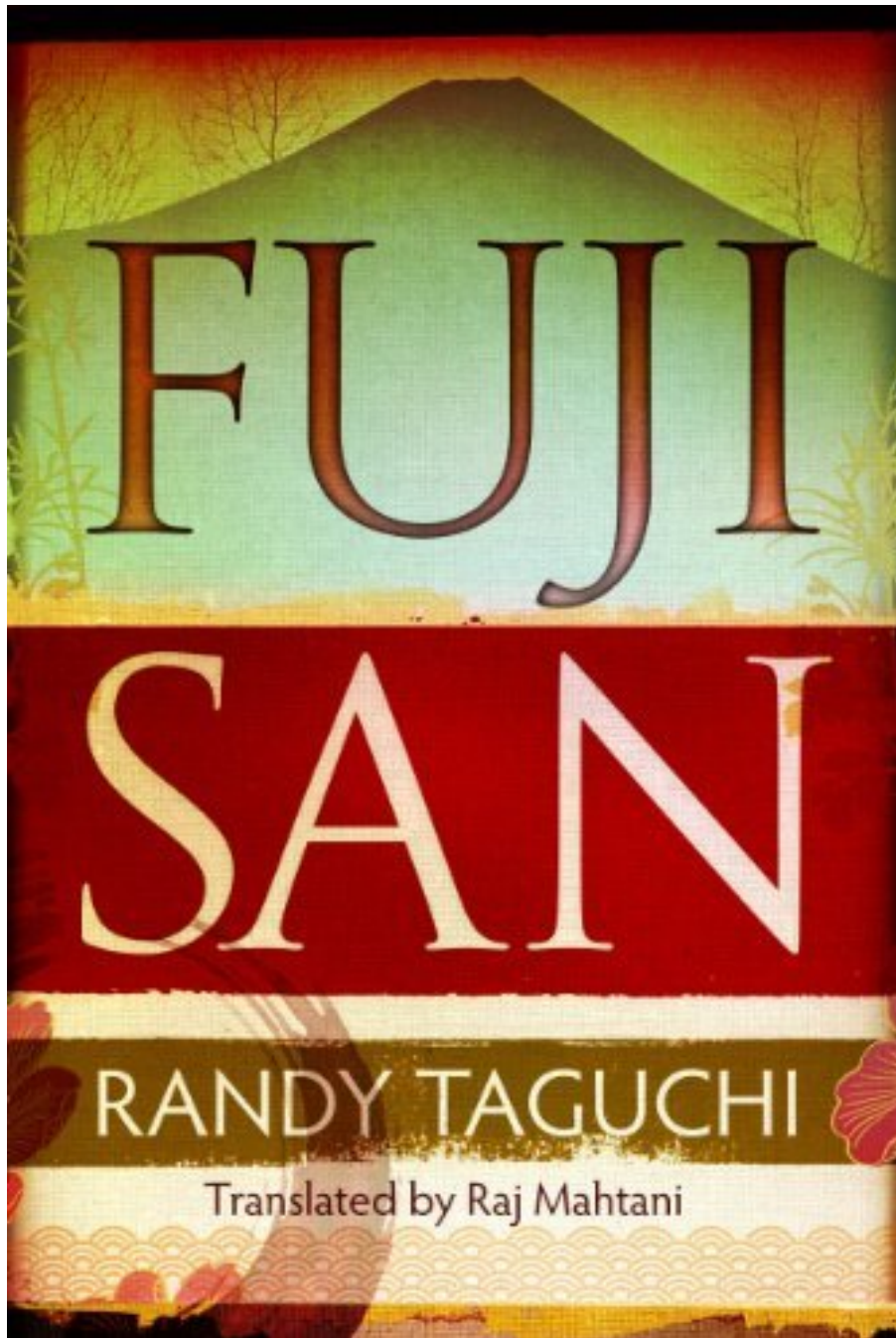


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### About the Author

Randy Taguchi first began writing online in 1996 and soon attracted a large following in Japan, where she is sometimes referred to as the “Queen of the Internet.” She is a popular and prolific author, whose work includes a busy blog, fourteen novels, just one of which ? Outlet ? has been released in English to date, many short stories, and twenty-one essays. She is currently supporting the Fukushima Kids’ Summer Camp program, helping children impacted by the 2011 earthquake, and she released a short story entitled “How Japan Made the Nuclear Choice” in reaction to the incident.

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## FUJISAN BY RANDY TAGUCHI PDF

From acclaimed Japanese author Randy Taguchi come four unforgettable stories of redemption, discovery, loss, and remembrance anchored by one of the world's holiest peaks. Mount Fuji has been a source of spiritual inspiration since it was first ascended by a monk over a millennium ago.

“Blue Summit” introduces a former cult member struggling to maintain his escape from a mountain monastery, seeking solace in the fluorescent lights of the convenience store he manages. In “Sea of Trees,” three teenage boys who share a fascination with the metaphysical confront the startling realities of death and despair on their final adventure together before parting ways for different schools. “Jamila” chronicles a privileged young man's descent into disillusionment as he works with a compulsive hoarder to clear her mess. And in “Child of Light,” a nurse struggles as she comes to terms with her role in the oft-brutal cycle of birth, life, and death.

Throughout the stories, Mount Fuji stands sentinel even as it fades in and out of view—watching and remembering as it always has.

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### Most helpful customer reviews

38 of 40 people found the following review helpful.

Japanophiles Will Like These Novellas, Others May Be Puzzled

By Reader from Washington, DC

"Fujisan" is a collection of four novellas about people in trouble struggling to survive and find some type of solution for a critical loss of belief in themselves. The collection is called "Fujisan" because all of the stories take place around Mount Fuji, one of the sacred sites of Japan.

The plots are intriguing. Young adults in their twenties and early thirties find themselves in the following situations: a convenience store worker trying to recover from his past as a member of a dangerous spiritual cult; a group of teenage friends who get more than they bargained for when they camp for a night in Japan's haunted and deadly "Sea of Trees" national forest; a handsome, young, lazy womanizing bureaucrat is

ordered to remove an elderly trash hoarder's stash; and a young nurse whose hatred of abortions is driving her out of her profession -- all raise complex issues. These novellas are interesting mini-novels.

I had several problems with the novellas, even though they are interesting.

The English translation is coherent and flows well, but the translator is apparently attempting to convey that Taguchi's prose is vigorous and slangy by substituting Western slang expressions for Japanese slang. I found it disconcerting to see expressions such as "a snowball's chance in hell," "blue in the face," and "buster" and "hip-hip-hooray" in the mouths of young Japanese -- the translator appears to be using 1950s American slang, which is very jarring because the stories are supposedly set after the year 2000.

I say "supposedly," because the stories don't seem to belong to the era they are set in. Despite references to several notorious crime cases that occurred in the middle 1990s as occurring in the characters' childhoods -- so logically the stories are set between 2000 and 2005 -- it's hard to believe that the young protagonists of each story are living in Japan between 2000 and 2005 because there few references to cell phones and no references at all to email or the internet or texting. I found that astonishing. Japan developed smart phones that could access the internet nearly a decade before Americans did and were using them intensively in the 1990s. Japan's internet usage jumped from 37 percent of the population (2000) to 60 percent of the population (2005).

But in the stories people are reading paper books and there is no mention of the internet. It is as if the stories are actually set in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

The problems with the Americanized slang and the uncertain chronological setting of the stories disrupted my absorption in the actual narratives.

Finally, while the stories dealt with people facing crises in their understanding of themselves, I found it hard to care about the protagonists of the stories. They seemed rather passive and negative in their thinking. They were unhappy, but had little self-understanding. They felt rather flat in their affect -- events that would have triggered a major personal revolt among Americans -- or seriously upset even the ultra-self-controlled Japanese courtiers from, say, the medieval Japanese novel, "The Tale of Genji" -- were patiently endured by these protagonists rather than triggering emotional meltdowns.

I found it hard to believe that the protagonists were able to work out solutions for their crises, given how passive and pessimistic they were. But this may be a cultural difference between modern Japanese and modern Americans -- psychological profiles of the Japanese population show far higher levels of self-criticism and passivity than exists among Americans.

So while the stories are intriguing on a first reading, I would not be interested in rereading them. You may feel differently.

I think Japanophiles will like these stories, but other readers may be puzzled.

16 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

Good Novel with a Clumsy Translation

By Zack Davisson

"Fujisan" is an interesting concept piece. It has four novellas, linked thematically by Mt. Fuji, and musings on life and death. The themes are entirely appropriate--in Japan, Mt. Fuji is traditionally a god as well as a mountain, a secret of the source of everlasting life (much like the Fountain of Youth), and a symbol of the

country. It is also a place of death. Aokigahara, the forest at the base of Mt. Fuji known colloquially as the Sea of Trees, is Japan's favored suicide spot. The dense forest hides more than bodies; it is also a favorite dumping ground for garbage as people try to dodge the steep disposal fees.

Mt. Fuji plays a role in each of the stories. In "The Blue Summit" a convenience store worker struggles with his life as a former member of one of the numerous cults that surround the sacred mountain. In "Sea of Trees," a group of boys journey into the Sea of Trees for one last adventure before they grow up and go their separate ways. In "Jamila," a bureaucrat struggles with a local woman who has built her own mountain of refuse, taking in all of society's flotsam and jetsam and claiming it as her own. Then in "Child of Light," a nurse climbs Mt. Fuji as one last hope of redemption and revitalization, disgusted at all the careless death she sees day in and day out.

As far as the book goes, Randy Taguchi wrote four thoughtful little vignettes. She does an excellent job capturing the ennui and miasma that shrouds many in Japan. This kind of detachment from life, the emptiness and gloom, is a hallmark of Japanese literature and Taguchi plays the familiar tune well. Her book is bound up with Japanese religion and social issues, and the more familiar you are with these the more depth you will get from her stories.

I found her female characters much better written than her male characters. In "Child of Light," (my favorite in the collection) the nurse is trapped between life and death--she works at a hospital and sees parents desperate for a child, and at the same time sees girls with unwanted pregnancies throwing fetuses in the trash can as little more than an annoyance. She knows firsthand that life isn't fair, and that the gods are not righteous. The nurse is conflicted, and rightly so. She climbs Mt. Fuji with a woman dying of cervical cancer and another woman who lost her child in a street attack, and is able to borrow their courage as they make the summit.

Taguchi's male characters, by contrast, are soulless and empty. The cult member in "The Blue Summit" is a system of mechanical operations, of daily tasks. He has been hollowed out by his cult. Taguchi dangles a sexually available young co-worker in front of him, and he has no reaction at all. At the end, he can't must up any feelings, and the best he can be is a companion in nothingness. Likewise the handsome bureaucrat in "Jamila" is an empty vessel. He is attractive and nothing else--able to easily bed women but unable to care about them. He floats along on the river of life, following the path others set out for him, but with no drive or initiative. And the boys in "The Sea of Trees" ... they are less boys and more mouthpieces for philosophy. I don't think any Jr. High boys talk like that in real life.

I found the translation for "Fujisan" to be tough to get through. I am a translator myself, so I can be more picky about these things, but I thought Raj Mahtani's translation was clunky and inelegant. He clearly translated it in sequence--the opening of the book is particularly choppy, but the translation improves as the book goes on. Especially with Japanese, there is always a balance between preserving and author's voice and making the book readable for English speakers. I felt like Mahtani erred too much of the former, keeping odd sentence structures and paragraphs. The use of slang was also inconstant, especially in the "Sea of Trees" story. The boys in the story lack a consistent voice, going from sounding like ageing college professors one minute to refugees from "The Little Rascals" the next.

This is the first "AmazonCrossing" book that I have read. I applaud Amazon's efforts to get more material translated and available. There is a wealth of fiction around the world, and the more of it translated the better. But maybe a little more quality control would be helpful.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Only Somewhat Interesting

By Charlemagne

This book is a collection of four stories that try to tie in something about Mt Fuji in each one. When reading this book, it felt more like overhearing someone telling these tales as opposed to reading a story that flows smoothly and make the reader want more.

I think the best story in the book is the Sea Of Trees which is about three junior high boys who camp out in a forest that might be haunted. The story is based on the real life Aokigahara forest which is known to be a place where many people go to take their lives. They find an older man who tries to kill himself and attempt to help him.

The book deals a lot with the subject of death and the question of what happens afterwards. It doesn't seem as though any of the main characters in each story really come to terms with their problems and some issues just seemed unresolved.

I am someone who is interested in Japanese culture and I really wanted to like this book more. It wasn't bad, and it did give some insight into Japanese life but, it just wasn't all that interesting to make me want to read it again or highly recommend it.

See all 69 customer reviews...



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