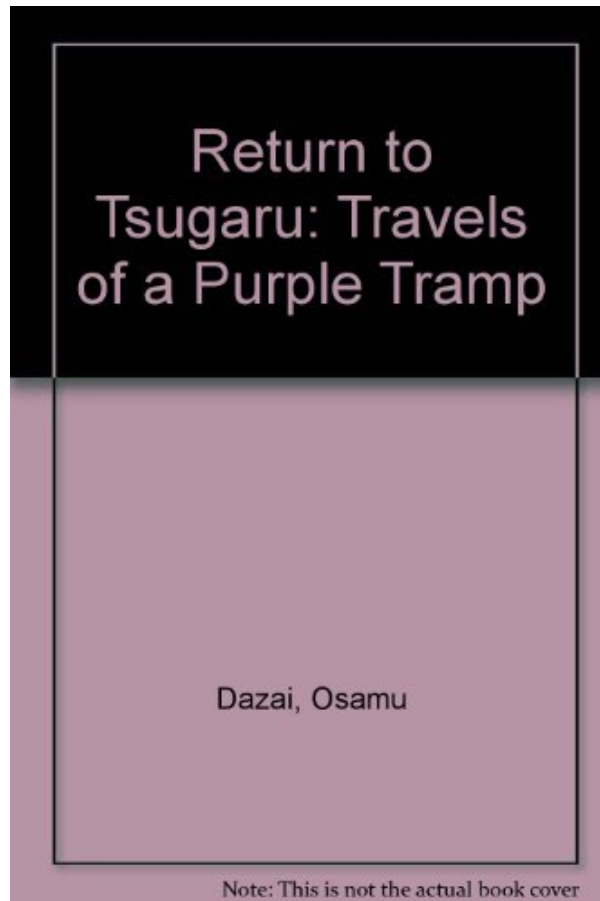


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- 236 pages

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Tsugaru boogaloo

By Zenticant Pangolin

Osamu Dazai is an award winning author from turn-of-the-century Japan who lived a relatively short, somewhat tortured life before dying in a suicide pact with his mistress. Although he has a number of original works of literature to his name this book was commissioned as one number in a multi-volume gazetteer showcasing the various islands and areas of Japan. While I'm sure that the other numbers in this particular set were as dry as toast we are fortunate that Dazai uses this ostensible framework as a pretext to launch what is, in effect, an autobiographical novel.

The action takes place within a two week period of time in which the author leaves from his hovel in Tokyo on a walking and rail journey to visit the homes, towns, and friends of his childhood. Dazai places himself within the context of his native Tsugaru by exposing his various personality quirks to the reader and relating them to vestigial traits handed down to him by the aboriginal and immigrant bloodlines that comprise the populace of the region. He places himself within contemporary society by graciously and with sly humor, recreating the various meetings, drinking parties, meals and day trips that he shares with his friends and family who remain in his native land. Each new town, each new meeting places him further and further back into his past until one realizes that he is effectively regressing to infancy and the penultimate meeting with his very first nanny 'Take' who now lives in the farthest most remote corner of the province (his memory).

According to the extensive and elucidating introduction, Dazai always claimed this travelogue as a novel, and as such, one realizes that in staking out that territory Dazai effectively transforms a section of geographical map into the psychographic diary of an artist, an individual, and a cultural specimen. In Return to Tsugaru, Dazai exposes his soul to the gaze of the reader in literature equivalent of 3-D, for in it he expresses himself, his family, friends and His culture.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Dazai's little known travelogue; Mournful and Magical.

By Mr A ODonnell

Although this book is a lesser known work by the now-infamous Dazai it still has a lot to offer avid fans of his or those interested in Dazai's treatment of one of the more unknown corners of Japan. All of the familiar Dazai vices are here in abundance but are tempered by some interesting stories and recollections of both the writer's past and the things that he has seen come and go in the history of Tsugaru. If you expect an all-round introduction to Tsugaru and Aomori prefecture I'm sure there is better stuff elsewhere but if you are interested in a thoughtful account of Dazai's varied feelings about this area, then you're sure to enjoy it. He also quotes (extensively, in parts) from myths and stories from other writers that influence his recollections which pan out the sense of 're-discovery' that he is feeling. Again- this book has an intensely sad and mournful edge to it (which, in many ways- some would say is typical of Dazai's writing in general) Having said that- the writing still has a sense of beauty which seems, in its conclusion, to remain unnameable.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Powerful book

By Jonathan Anderson

I once had a chance to meet Mr Westerhoven (the translator) when I was an exchange student in Japan in the 1980's. He introduced me to Dazai and I never had a chance to properly thank him for it. (If you're reading this sir, you have my gratitude)

This is a powerful book and a fine translation. It isn't one of Dazai's better known works. I think of it as a lamp shone on his life which helps to explain his views on his home prefecture, his family, his politics and many other things. Dazai fans should read it simply because it sheds light on all his other writings.

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