

INTERVIEW WITH JSPS FELLOW IN THE U.S



Dr. Shun'ichiro AKIKUSA has mainly been studying Vladimir Nabokov and his translation (including his specific self-translation and translation theory). He is currently studying world literature, e.g. contemporary Russian immigrant writers and self-translated writers in the twentieth century as well.

Q1: Why did you choose the U.S. to pursue your research?

The reason why I have reached Cambridge is because I would like to reconsider my works under the term "World Literature." In his monograph, Professor David Damrosch, a leading scholar in this area and my present adviser at Harvard, defines World Literature not as a canon of texts like old huge anthologies in many volumes but as a kind of more fluid substance, a mode of circulation and reading. As a World-literature-ologist, I myself try to circulate through the wider world.

Q2: What is your impression of the research environment in the U.S.? How is it different from your lab in Japan?

Since I have arrived at Cambridge, I have been circulating through splendid libraries such as Widener, Lamont and Houghton at Harvard. I have also visited other university's acclaimed archives such as Beinecke at Yale and Amherst Center for Russian Culture at Amherst. I have always been impressed by American openness which you can find not only in their library's open-stack system but also in their open-minded hospitality towards foreigners.

Dr. Shun'ichiro AKIKUSA

2006-2009: JSPS Research Fellow at the University of Tokyo (DC1)

2009: Ph.D., The University of Tokyo, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology

2009-2012: JSPS Research Fellow at the University of Tokyo (PD)

2009-2010: Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Wisconsin -Madison / the Excellent Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program of JSPS

2012-: Visiting Researcher at the Comparative Literature at Harvard University (Through the Postdoctoral Fellowships for Research Abroad)

Generally speaking, savants of humanities don't have any lab or practice room for research. Instead of a common laboratory or compulsory labor, literary scholars have the privilege of doing their job anywhere you can indulge yourself in reading books, e.g. a quiet reading room both in the library and your own house (if you are a happy bachelor), or a cozy café on a street corner. From this point of view, coffee houses in Cambridge are not so bad; I assure you that you can taste strong coffee served Japanese style while enjoying free Wi-Fi at café Dwelltime.

Q3: What merits do you derive from conducting your research in the U.S.?

I became acquainted with an amicable literary professor visiting here while on his sabbatical. He took many courses, played timpani and went to concerts every night. Although, unfortunately, I am utterly ignorant of how many papers and monographs he would have published in his way of researching, my approach to literature is different from him. Instead of taking many courses, I need a more isolated circumstance. Though temporal conversation with erudite colleagues adds relish to the cut-and-dry life of research, literary study is a personal, solitary business as a rule. Studying in a foreign country bestows a proper solitude with linguistic barriers on you. I always appreciate JSPS for giving me these two years of solitude in Cambridge. Instead of cymbals and concerts, I need to exercise every other day, e.g., jogging, rope-skipping and swimming. To bear the loneliness of the long distance literary

scholar-runner, physical conditioning is a matter of ultimate importance. In this regard I appreciate Harvard for offering me not only Blogett pool with abundant water but also Haruki Murakami's favorite jogging course along Charles River.

Q4: What is your dream? And do you have any advice about doing research abroad for young researchers?

For the first question, I would like to quote the answer of Dr. Yukio Nakano, my former colleague in graduate school at the University of Tokyo—"My dream is very simple. To continue studying literature" (*JSPS News Letters*, Vol. 18, June 2010). This is a common dream for all literary scholars, I believe.

For young scholars, I would like to advise you to keep maintaining your academic network regularly after leaving the U. S. It is a treasure of life, worthy of being revisited again and again. Three years ago, I studied at UW-Madison for a year, thanks to the Excellent Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program of JSPS. I enjoyed interacting with grad students and scholars in Madison Isthmus. The Madison-mafia-connection is still living and has helped me ever since. Additionally, after experiencing a super hibernal season in Madison, I feel much warmer in the winter of New England.