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Theory and Other Dangerous Things

- **Emory Douglas and the Art of Revolution** 7
Mark J. Rainey
- **Translation Strategies for Japanese: Reconsidering Chesterman's Theory on Translation Strategies** 15
Jeroen Bode
- **Conrad's Avatar: Group Membership and Authorial Intent** 22
James A. Elwood

Teaching Tools & Techniques

- **A Comparison of Electronic Dictionaries from Different Perspectives** 32
Hideki Kambayashi & Markus Rude

Around the World

- **My Travels in Korea** 38
Yu Murata

Creative Writing

- **Haiku and Senryū in the German Language** 40
Masayasu Sakaguchi, Noriyuki Murata, Hew May Wong, Koh Takemoto, & Ayaka Sakamoto
- **Kirschblüten in Waka Poems** 42
Yoshiro Takahashi
- **Colder than the Arctic Ice** 44
Syarina Hassan
- **Son** 45
Adam J. Lebowitz
- **Aurora** 46
Laura Acosta

Reviews

- ***Beyond Boundaries: Insights into Culture and Communication.*** 48
Cecilia Ikeguchi & Kyoko Yashiro
Reviewed by Samuel Nfor
- **Baruto no Gakuen** 49
Deme Masanobu (Director)
Reviewed by Manami Morikawa
- **The Edukators** 50
Hans Weingartner (Director)
Reviewed by Noriyuki Murata
- **Lola Rennt** 51
Tom Tykwer (Director)
Reviewed by Ai Kakunou

My Travels in Korea

Yu Murata

I watched a movie called “Spanish Apartment” in my foreign language class. The film was interesting. I found the difficulty of living with different people, customs, and thinking.

The hero of this film, Xavier, said, “Everything started here when my plane took off.” It is the most impressive scene for me. What did he learn from studying abroad in Spain? I think that he found the fundamentally same point among *Erasmus* companions. Upon seeing pictures of his past time, he said, “They are different from my present self, but they are me.” It means that people are different in appearance but are the same at heart. Xavier and his *Erasmus* companions have different native lands, speak different languages, think in different ways, but they feel happy when a happy thing happens and feel sad when a sad thing occurs. Xavier noticed it, so he thinks his companions are him, because they are fundamentally the same.

Another impressive point is differences in customs and views. One is the frequency of using drugs. Of course it is illegal, but it seems to be a daily event for them. I was shocked at foreign students using drugs because drugs are used by illegal people is the general view in Japan.

<p>Area: 100,033km² Population: about 4,846,000 (in 2007) Capital: Seoul Religions: 23% Buddhist, 29% Christian, 46% no religion</p>

I also noticed views of love. There were many love scenes in this film and many of them were hard, but I thought that there were a few deep love. In Japan, people who have some boyfriends or girlfriends at the same time are thought to be immoral and looked at coldly, but it is not the case in this film. Including Xavier, many young people love some people at the same time, but they are not criticized. I know that it is one view of love, but it is unbelievable.

And greetings—they kiss. I know this greeting, but I think that I cannot follow it, because it is too bold for me!

I want to know a lot about the customs of foreign countries and people, and I believe that to go directly is the best way, like in the Erasmus project.

I had wanted to go to Korea before I went there in this summer vacation. It is because I wanted to know what Koreans think about Japan. My knowledge about Korea was only that they like spicy food, they use the Hangul alphabet, and many Koreans do not like Japanese. I doubt that, however, many Koreans do not like Japanese. People and information tell positive and negative things about it. I met foreign students from Korea who were interested in Japan, but on the other side, I saw Koreans who insisted that Japan had to apologize to Korea for our past crimes. It is not possible to know sober things in Japan. I was going to make sure about it. I did not know whether Koreans like Japanese or not because I had never been to Korea, so I wanted to go there to make sure of the truth.

I went to Seoul and Gyeongju (in Japanese 慶州), which are famous for sightseeing, but I saw many traditional things there. I often spoke and read Japanese, but I did not meet or see Koreans who behaved in an unfriendly way.

I maybe saw only a part of Korea because I went to only places where Japanese often go. If I went to a local place, I may have had a different opinion about Korea. However, I do not think Korea continues to hate Japan, because the newest culture gather in capital, and I did not feel the hate for Japanese by Koreans in Seoul and Gyeongju. Japanese who have negative thoughts about Koreans need not watch for them meaninglessly. I hope that Japanese and Koreans will get along with each other, like Xavier and his roommates finally understood each other.

About the author: Yu Murata is a student at the University of Tsukuba.

<p>Murata, Y. (2009). My travels in Korea. <i>OTB Forum</i>, 2(1), 38.</p>
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