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Prosthetic Poetics: Projecting Companionship in Adriana Lisboa's *Rakushisha* (2007)

Adriana Lisboa, poet and novelist, translates Matsuo Bashō's travel diary *Saga Nikki*, inserting it as a paratext of her 2007 novel *Rakushisha*. The present study examines the role of Lisboa's translation and depictions of the fictional translator as crucial narrative keys to the structure and plot of *Rakushisha*. In addition, the functionality of absent characters (including author-poets and translators) that emerge in the form of written text, memory, and imagination prompt an exploration of the definitions of character and genre as well as the visibility of translators in prose and poetry. Examining the underlying, unspoken contracts that occur in translation and all forms of communication reveals some assumptions that readers, writers, translators, and other stakeholders make when participating in these media.

Keywords: translation; poetry; Japan; untranslatability; immigration; belonging

Adriana Lisboa is a prominent Brazilian author and poet now well-known outside Brazil. Author of six novels, as well as poetry, short stories, and children's and youth literature, Lisboa has worked and written from Japan and the U.S. and her work has been translated into several languages. Her novel from 2007, *Rakushisha*, narrates the trip taken by two Brazilians, Haruki and Celina, from Rio de Janeiro to Japan and their divergent trajectories through Tokyo (Haruki) and Kyoto (Celina). Haruki, a Brazilian illustrator of Japanese descent, is recommended by his married ex-lover, Yukiko, to illustrate her translation of Matsuo Bashō's travel diary *Saga Nikki*, an autobiographical account of the

famous haiku poet's wanderings in Kyoto in the summer of 1691.¹ Yukiko's publisher agrees to fund a visa for Haruki travel to Japan for inspiration. Just days before his trip, he meets Celina, a Brazilian woman, and invites her to travel to Japan with him. Celina has been single and alone for six years since the tragic death of her daughter Alice at the age of seven.

The novel intercalates between third-person omniscient narration, diary entries by Celina, and passages from Bashō's *Saga Nikki* in the original Japanese and in Portuguese translation. Lisboa draws from an English translation and her knowledge of Japanese to craft the Portuguese rendition of *Saga Nikki*, effectively translating Bashō's book to Portuguese in multiple forms. It exists in Lisboa's own translation of *Saga Nikki* into Portuguese, interspersed throughout *Rakushisha*. Furthermore, the fictional translation rendered by Yukiko represents the Portuguese translation of *Saga Nikki* within the plot. Finally, readers of *Rakushisha* essentially read yet another iteration of Bashō's travel narrative by witnessing Haruki's and Celina's travels as they follow Bashō's geographic path.

This novel tells several stories, all revolving around minor characters. On one level, they are the minor characters in the protagonists' lives: Haruki's deceased father and his ex-lover; Celina's estranged husband and the daughter she lost in the car accident. On another level, *Rakushisha* tells the story of the hidden players in all translations, including the translator, editor, and publisher. This fictional translation portrayed within *Rakushisha* will eventually be published with illustrations, so it tells the story of yet another player: the illustrator, Haruki. As successive producers of meaning in the path of a text from one language to another, their roles are pivotal to the plot of this novel, yet they remain predominantly hidden from public view.

In *Rakushisha*, translation inhabits the pages and the plot, moving the narrative and begging the question: where does translation fit into genre studies? Whereas in recent decades we have witnessed the

¹ For a survey of Matsuo Bashō's travel writings and poetry, see Stephen D. Carter's "On a Bare Branch: Bashō and the Haikai Profession" (1997) or David Landis Barnhill's introduction to his translated volume *Bashō's Journey: The Literary Prose of Matsuo Bashō* (2005).

multiplication of plots focusing on minor characters from canonical texts, this novel does the opposite. Lisboa features the poetry of Matsuo Bashō within *Rakushisha* and intertwines the poet, his poetry, and other minor absent characters as narrative fulcra. The overarching objectives of the present study are to bring light to the hybridity of translation and the genres represented in this work, to contextualize Lisboa's placement of characters who do not apparently belong, and to reinforce the role of translation as a phenomenon that generates meaning, as opposed to reproducing it.

As Susan Bassnett notes, there seems to be an “abyss between the study of world literature and the study of translation,” noting that one reason for this disconnect is that translation studies allows to remain between itself and other disciplines, especially neglecting literary translation in favor of vocational, technical, and technological aspects of translation.² The two fields are more closely related than may be obvious, especially since they both involve creation. Bassnett, again, notes that this generates concerns about whether the translation is a true equivalent to the original:

Definitions of faithfulness and equivalence have changed over time too, and the endless debates have proved pointless [because] languages are structured differently, have different grammars and vocabularies, and different modes of expression, so any attempt to translate something written in one language into another will necessarily involve transforming that text into something else.³

While Bassnett's definition of “something else” is undoubtedly a written linguistic rendering, Lisboa might suggest that it could mean much more. *Rakushisha* demonstrates the multiplicity of metaphors that work for translation. Matsuo Bashō's *Saga Nikki* in translation is at once a roadmap, a companion, and a means of crossing borders. Bashō's diary-poem, a textual mapping of the collective movements of the poet, Haruki, and Celina around Japan, instructs the two modern-day travelers on a prescribed trajectory as much as it communicates to readers of

² Bassnett, “Introduction: The Rocky Relationship”, 1.

³ Bassnett, “Introduction: The Rocky Relationship”, 2.

Rakushisha the path taken by all three travelers. What the narrator calls Celina's and Haruki's shared path is the "histórico de paisagens", a term that would likewise apply to the itineraries they share with Bashō.⁴ *Saga Nikki* narrates the plights and pleasures of Bashō and his companions as they interact closely with landscapes surrounding Tokyo and Kyoto. As the diary progresses, the poems express with growing poignancy the subtle joy of traveling and the melancholy quality of human interaction.

In his study of the relationship between geography and translation, Federico Italiano asserts that

spatial imaginations negotiate geographies not only across epochs, languages, and literary texts but also across media, in particular between the medium of writing and the medium of the map [...] the word "orientation" – that is, to face east towards the rising sun in order to find one's way – goes beyond the simple illustration of a spatial practice and in fact works as a cultural paradigm [...]

which influences attitudes and perspectives.⁵ In sum, translation can variably be understood as a roadmap to navigate that which is foreign, be it language, culture, or geography. Lisboa portrays translation in its multiple forms, which, I aim to demonstrate, encompass various functions to include that of a roadmap. Translation in *Rakushisha* does not purport to represent a complete transmission of meaning, as the role of the illustrator will demonstrate.

Rakushisha intercalates between highlighting and hiding the presence of translation and the translator within the novel. The translation of Bashō's text represents an accompanying presence for both Haruki and Celina, making his words and the paper on which they are printed into a character. *Rakushisha* is unique at first glance because it doubles as a novel and a translation into Portuguese of Bashō's *Saga Nikki*. By presenting Bashō's work as a paratext, *Rakushisha* ruptures the "translation pact" defined by Cecilia Alvstad as the intention to package and present translated texts as though they were originals.⁶ As Alvstad

⁴ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 19.

⁵ Italiano, *Translation and Geography*, 2.

⁶ Alvstad, "The Translation Pact", 271.

explains, the translation pact resembles what Lejeune (2005) calls the “fictional” and “autobiographical” pacts. Whereas the fictional pact asks the reader to pretend to believe what is told, the autobiographical pact implicitly binds authors to attest to the truthfulness of their texts. In contrast, the translation pact routinely advises readers to consume the translated text as though it were an original in the target language.⁷ Paratexts help translations become books that mimic the format and experience of the original text, yet Lisboa rejects this translation pact by integrating the entirety of Matsuo Bashō’s poem-diary *Saga Nikki*, inserted in sections, at relevant points in Celina’s and Haruki’s movement. As they read the original text and it appears in translation in Portuguese, we as readers also confront those same passages. This narrative mechanism obliterates the narrative fourth wall by pulling readers of *Rakushisha* into the novel to acknowledge *Saga Nikki* in its original form and read it in translation with Celina and Haruki.

The simultaneous use of Yukiko’s translation as a paratext and narrative driver is just one of Lisboa’s innovative strategies. She likewise inserts absent figures as prosthetic voices simulating the role of secondary characters. Though not the only ones, the most important are Alice (Celina’s deceased daughter) and Bashō. In reading Bashō’s text and carrying it around, the characters simulate the poet’s presence through metonymy. His writing constitutes a voice and the pages and text represent a physical presence that accompanies the travelers. Bashō’s poetry is a tritagonistic projection of the poet himself; in other words, Bashō’s text, and the characters’ interaction with it, transform the translation into a character. As the following examples will illustrate, the poetic paratext accompanies and influences characters to such a degree that the poetic voice becomes a metonymic surrogate for its creator.

Deciphering hidden characters

It is not necessarily conventional to conceive of literary texts being much more than just texts. Indeed, words on paper possess a physical quality hard to ignore. Yet, understanding what came before printed texts can help us imagine the multiple functions that texts can now

⁷ Alvstad, “The Translation Pact”, 271.

fulfill. In an exploration of the evolution of Latin vernacular languages into what we know today as Romance languages, Katie Chenoweth coins an innovative conception of printed language as a prosthetic voice transmitting languages previously communicable only through speech and handwriting. In charting the “veritable ‘new media’ movement,” Chenoweth demonstrates that “by extending the reach of the voice typographically, printing endows the vernacular with a new spectral presence and an augmented form of ‘life.’”⁸ Similarly, the printed translation of *Saga Nikki* in Portuguese bestows the manuscript with a physicality that allows it to do a great deal for those who hold it. Both Haruki and Celina gain a sense of companionship and security resulting from their physical possession of the *Saga Nikki*, which essentially takes on the quality of a prosthetic character in the novel.

Soon after arriving in Japan, Haruki departs from Celina’s company and travels to Tokyo, where he networks with his editors’ associates and continues his research. Though the pair’s paths diverge, Bashō continues to accompany both. Not all chapters in *Rakushisha* have titles; however, those that do, have characters’ names as the chapter titles to indicate which characters are featured therein. Two chapters in which Bashō functions as a prosthetic character are titled “Haruki and Bashō.” In one, Haruki retraces Bashō’s path through Tokyo and cites *Saga Nikki*: “Em Tóquio, Haruki caminhava por Fukugawa, onde séculos antes ficava a cabana da bananeira, a Bashō-an [...] Haruki pensa: um mosquito pousado na mão de Matsuo Bashō chupa seu sangue sem que ele perceba [...]. Dormindo, Bashō mexe a mão, para se livrar do incômodo.”⁹ Haruki’s imagination conjures Bashō’s presence; the poet’s actions expressed with present verbs suggest contemporaneity. The other chapter with the same title begins with the sentence “Sozinho em Tóquio.”¹⁰ This contradiction suggests that Haruki, traveling alone, is in fact accompanied by Bashō, who had taken the same path earlier. Haruki carries a collection of Japanese photos, artwork, and haikus compiled in a book he bought for Celina. As he leafs through the book

⁸ Chenoweth, *The Prosthetic Tongue*, 2.

⁹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 80.

¹⁰ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 97.

and finds work by Bashō, he reflects, “Sabia que encontraria Bashō em algum momento, relido ou revisitado por um fotógrafo de quase quatrocentos anos depois.”¹¹ Haruki encounters the poet by reading his work and by spending time in the same places Bashō frequented. The name Bashō refers to his writing, yet the sentence’s metonymic construction allows readers to imagine Haruki finding Bashō himself.

The same companionship occurs for Celina. Upon finding the translated manuscript left by Haruki in their Kyoto apartment, Celina reflects, “Pego as folhas da tradução [...] e reencontro o poeta Bashō.”¹² Within the pages Celina encounters not only Bashō’s poetry, but also the poet himself. On a different day, while carrying the translated manuscript around the city, Celina recounts: “Saí para passear com Bashō. Coloquei as folhas soltas dentro da bolsa.”¹³ When Celina uses Bashō’s name she is referring to his manuscript and his travel narrative. The double sense of her reference to Bashō’s diary reveals that she retraces his steps, thereby travelling with him, though separated from him by more than three centuries. His writing functions not only as a travel guide; it also instructs readers how to accompany him. By carrying the pages of his travel diary, Celina takes the writer with her and reinforces the metonymic quality of his text.

Bashō’s persona as a poet and traveler induces Haruki and Celina to voluntarily follow and be accompanied by the poet/protagonist of *Saga Nikki*. Haruki, the son of Japanese immigrants to Brazil, lacks a connection to his parents’ culture and language, a disconnect that renders him all the more impressionable by Bashō’s text. Likewise, Celina’s alienation from society at large as a consequence of Alice’s death causes her heightened receptiveness to the companionship offered by the *Saga Nikki*. These two examples of social isolation serve to facilitate and heighten the importance of Bashō’s companionship. Their connection to the text, however, is made possible and compelling only because of its accessibility to Haruki and Celina in the Portuguese language; therefore, the importance of the invisible translators (Yukiko and Lisboa) cannot be ignored.

¹¹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 97.

¹² Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 47.

¹³ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 55.

While Celina and Haruki share the role of main character, their imagined accompaniment by absent characters creates the illusory presence of secondary characters. Whereas Bashō as companion inhabits physical text on the printed pages that Celina and Haruki carry around, Yukiko and Alice exist simultaneously through the main characters' memory and longing. To a lesser degree, Haruki's late father and Celina's estranged husband accompany the two characters as reminders of hurt and rejection. Lisboa's narrative and intertextual techniques sustain Bashō, Yukiko, and Alice in an oscillating mid-ground between main and minor characters. By delegating important characters to minor, absent roles, this novel highlights the interconnected and relative sense of all lived experiences. To some extent, the bifurcating plot line subverts the tropes of this narrative genre and the very concept of a main character.

In his recent monograph on genre and minor characters, Jeremy Rosen executes a careful and thorough study of the proliferation of minor character elaboration in recent decades, noting that these spin-offs give voice to human and non-human voices, such as the raven in Madison Smartt Bell's "Small Blue Thing" (2000) and the woodworm on Noah's Ark in Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1990).¹⁴ Rosen asserts that his project is just as much a study of genre as it is of this resurgence of minor-characters-turned-main-characters, noting:

[M]inor-character elaboration usefully demonstrates the overlapping of cultural spheres that are often thought to be in tension if not antithetical. [...] Engagé writers have gravitated to the genre in order to articulate subaltern perspectives or critique the politics of representation in canonical texts, but others have used it to launch explicit programs of cultural conservation and homage.¹⁵

Rosen contends that all genre analysis is comparative in nature because genres evade monolithic characterizations and tend to borrow

¹⁴ Rosen, *Minor Characters Have Their Day*, 3.

¹⁵ Rosen, *Minor Characters Have Their Day*, 6.

traits and tropes from other genres.¹⁶ With these considerations, a look at Adriana Lisboa's *Rakushisha* reveals a move in the opposite direction: a delegation of Matsuo Bashō, previously hailed as poet-protagonist, to minor character status. This commutation in no way signifies a diminution in importance. On the contrary, Bashō's function as minor character enables his prominence as companion and narrative instigator. Though the shift occurs in a direction contrary to the trend Rosen describes with minor characters coming to the fore, the one effect of this relegation is that *Rakushisha* pays homage to Bashō's foundational cultural text.

The genre of the travel diary is paramount to Celina's emotional evolution. The very idea of starting a diary, a new hobby for her, is inspired by reading the diary entries in Bashō's *Saga Nikki*. Celina recounts, "Comprei o caderno. O caderno se tornou um diário. Só depois disso me lembrei do poeta Matsuo Bashō e de seu *Saga Nikki*, o *Diário de Saga*."¹⁷ Within her new diary, Celina narrates her interaction with Bashō's diary:

Aproximo-me do livro. O diário de Bashō em Saga. São cinco e dez, uma tarde úmida e clara. Sozinha, vejo Kyoto do alto [...]. Aproximo-me do diário de Bashō, cuja tradução para o português Haruki se prepara para ilustrar e que foi o motivo de sua viagem ao Japão. Leio: [...] Os papéis dentro do envelope, o envelope sobre o sofá.¹⁸

Bashō's narrative accompanies Celina in her travels; similarly, Celina's own diary translates for readers the ubiquity of Alice in her thoughts and actions. In this way, the diary genre may be understood as a translation of emotion and lived experience. Physical proximity to the translated manuscript, which Celina mentions twice within two pages, signify a pivotal key to Celina's own diary-writing. As soon as she gets close to Bashō's diary, she initiates her own narration of the hour, weather, location, and social condition. The transmission of meaning

¹⁶ Rosen, *Minor Characters Have Their Day*, 20.

¹⁷ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 24.

¹⁸ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 33 and 34.

(both between languages and between people) of Bashō's experience through his diary catalyzes Celina's subsequent transmission of meaning through her diary. *Rakushisha* is highly effective at communicating these stories of grief and isolation, essentially translating nuanced experiences for readers.

Emerging from the shadows

While *Rakushisha* insistently highlights the presence of the author Matsuo Bashō, it is equally insistent on disguising the translator. Lisboa's novel creates Yukiko as a fictional translator who exists at once absent and present throughout the narrative. Though never placed in a scene within *Rakushisha*, Yukiko surfaces through Haruki's memories and Celina's curious imagination. The translator's absence creates in Haruki feelings of longing and alienation that echo his frustrated attempts to understand his Japanese heritage. Lisboa's exploration of these dimensions of alienation run in tandem with the concept of untranslatability as embodied in Haruki's profession as illustrator. The premise of untranslatability is an unstated circumstance that legitimizes Haruki's trip to Japan; in other words, Yukiko's translation of *Saga Nikki* insufficiently communicates images necessary for Haruki to execute the illustration. Not to mention, the very commissioning of Haruki's illustration suggests that Yukiko's readers need a visual aid to fully comprehend what translation fails to transmit.

In his study of the alienating effects of alterity in “narrativas que buscam expatriar suas vozes para além do espaço nacional,” Leonardo Tonus examines the series Amores Expressos, which commissioned several Brazilian authors to temporarily reside in various countries and write love stories set in those destinations.¹⁹ In particular, the novel *O Único final feliz para uma história de amor é um acidente* (2010), written by one of the series organizers, João Paulo Cuenca (1978), shares in the act of expatriating Brazilian voices to Japan. Tonus critiques this phenomenon in Cuenca's novel:

¹⁹ Tonus, “Alteridades expressas”, 109.

O encontro com o “Outro” já não se realiza aqui pelo conhecimento ou reconhecimento de sua diversidade, mas antes mediante uma “interpelação” eufórica, consensual e cômoda. Os romances de ou sobre a imigração cristalizam assim a contradição que caracteriza o discurso sobre a diversidade no Brasil; por um lado, a hipervalorização de um ideal de diversidade e de coexistência pacífica entre culturas enquanto elemento fundador da identidade brasileira; por outro lado, a instrumentalização de uma diversidade em prol de um projeto social, cultural, e político unanímista.²⁰

While Cuenca’s novel portrays an Eastern European woman who immigrates to Japan, Lisboa’s novel traces a migratory example much more common in Brazil: that of the Nikkei like Haruki who struggles to fully belong to either Japaneseness or Brazilianness. Much as Tonus suggests, Lisboa’s *Rakushisha* critiques this contradiction of diversity, manifesting as the difficulty of belonging.

Marcel Vejmelka studies *Rakushisha* and two other contemporary Japan-centric novels in his attempt to synthesize the use of Japanese themes in contemporary Brazilian literature. In particular, Vejmelka considers the themes of travel, intertextuality, and Japanese immigration to Brazil, concluding that confrontation with and comprehension of “o Outro” allows readers to contemplate “[a] universalidade da natureza humana” and brings them closer to Japan through a common aesthetic index.²¹ *Rakushisha* also illustrates an Orient-to-Orient relationship, as Martín Camps describes, as an example of a Brazilian seeking mutual understanding with Japan.²² Lisboa fleshes out this scenario within her narrative and demonstrates it meta-fictionally by translating Bashō’s text in the pages of *Rakushisha*. The perspective taken by both Celina and Haruki, seeking commonality and recognizing difference, is precisely what Italiano points to: the importance of distinction as a prerequisite to successful orientation. The assessments put forth by Vejmelka and Camps both apply, considering that Lisboa’s protagonists seek to understand themselves and Japan more deeply as a consequence of exploring Japan, and that their emotional and geographic orientation

²⁰ Tonus, “Alteridades expressas”, 109.

²¹ Vejmelka, “O Japão na literatura brasileira atual”, 216 and 229-230.

²² Camps, “Travel and Japanese Migration to Brazil”, 215.

starts with recognizing their alterity with relation to Japan. Italiano summarizes: “Kant argues [...] that in order to identify and recognize the cardinal directions [...] we must necessarily be able to experience [...] the difference namely ‘between [one’s] right and left hands.’”²³ Stated another way, “differentiation is what enables orientation in the first place.”²⁴ Nelson Vieira, in turn, would likely agree that cultural and geographic differences stimulate the ability of characters in *Rakushisha* to sort out their internal conflicts. He asserts that “Lisboa encena como a locomoção de viajar ao e dentro do Japão pode despertar em personagens nisseis a disposição de serem mais abertos aos elementos estéticos e culturais que enriquecem sua etnicidade.”²⁵ While Vieira seems to suggest that the act of traveling, on its own, instigates the confrontation of other cultures and thereby permits the characters’ expanded understanding of themselves and the world, I argue that the real transformation occurs only because Haruki and Celina also possess the translated *Saga Nikki*, their own cultural and geographic guide(book). In experiencing the world of his parents in conjunction with the accompaniment of Bashō, Haruki gains a more complete acceptance of his stake in his Japanese cultural heritage.

With absolutely no connection to Japan, Celina is likewise out of place when she travels there. She notes, “Eu não nasci aqui [...] Sou do outro lado do planeta.”²⁶ This internal dialogue, carried on with a Labrador she sees on the streets of Kyoto, illustrates how she is distanced from the humans in Japan, an alienation not different from her isolation from Brazilian society. Haruki’s and Celina’s foreignness in the Japanese contexts serves as the premise for their trip to Japan out of a need to delve into the unfamiliar. Haruki’s genetic heritage, which in no way provides him with linguistic or cultural familiarity with Japan, accentuates his alienation in the Japanese consulate and upon arrival in Japan. He embodies untranslatability similar to the way in which immigrants embody invisibility in hegemonic societies. As Siri Nergaard points out in *Translation and Transmigration*, “people

²³ Italiano, *Translation and Geography*, 2.

²⁴ Italiano, *Translation and Geography*, 2.

²⁵ Vieira, “Fora do Brasil”, 61.

²⁶ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 9.

who feel that their lives are suspended in an endless border condition, at the margins of society, in liminality, refer that [...] certain features [of themselves] cannot cross borders, but stand at the threshold, and remain untranslatable.”²⁷ If taken according to Naoki Sakai, translation is the message from one person to another across a language gap. Originating from a “communication model” in which an utterance “travels from the speaker’s consciousness to that of the interlocutor, so the action of translation is represented in a similar schema of communication in which a message is transferred from one language to another.”²⁸ Sakai notes that language is among the more powerful unifiers for national communities, if not the strongest unifier, an assertion supported by the fact that nationalities and languages often have the same name. Looking back upon this commonality, states Sakai, “the trope of border works powerfully to make and determine a particular incident of social and political transaction as translation.”²⁹ I agree with Sakai’s assessment that the communication model, which posits that translation is like any other communication, with the addition of a “gap” between the language bridged by a translator, is faulty. It is more accurate to note that links between languages are fractured and complicated, far deeper than just different words and grammars. As Sakai explains, “The relation between translation and borders is crucial here. For, translation can inscribe, erase, and distort borders; it may well give rise to a border where none was before; it may well multiply a border into many registers; it may erase some borders and institute new ones.”³⁰ Sakai beautifully illustrates how complicated translation can be, and, in so doing, emphasizes the significance of culture and experience involved in the act of communicating meaning. In this way, Sakai’s metaphor of translation as warfare most acutely brings to light the multiple meanings of this process:

Similar to the maneuver of occupation in war, translation deterritorializes and reterritorializes languages and probable sites of discommunication. It shows

²⁷ Nergaard, *Translation and Transmigration*, 115.

²⁸ Sakai, “The Modern Regime”, 105.

²⁹ Sakai, “The Modern Regime”, 106.

³⁰ Sakai, “The Modern Regime”, 106.

most persuasively the unstable, transformative, and political nature of border, of the differentiation of the inside from the outside, and of the multiplicity of belonging and non-belonging.³¹

Like Sakai, Nergaard sees translation as a type of border crossing and adopts Shahram Khosravi's "border gaze" to describe how xenophobic perspectives marginalize marks of alterity, including physical features, religions, and language.³² In Haruki's case, his Brazilian identity causes him to feel alienated by his own Japanese markers: his physical features and his parents speaking Japanese. Haruki simultaneously rejects his Japaneseness and longs to understand that element of himself and his parents. Haruki's father and Yukiko embody antithetical affective representations of Haruki's Japanese identity. Haruki is attracted to the idea of Yukiko's heritage and her link between Japanese and Portuguese languages, while his father represents the memory of Haruki's failure to embrace his Japanese heritage. Yet both the father and the translator cause pain for Haruki because of their absence from his life.

In a way, Yukiko is hidden because she never presents herself on the "scene" unless through secondary media or correspondences and memory. At the same time, however, her existence is paramount to the entire plot, for her translation drives the characters' movement from Rio de Janeiro to Japan. Yukiko functions as surrogate for Lisboa herself. In fiction and in reality, respectively, Yukiko and Lisboa render Bashō's *Saga Nikki* in an unprecedented translation in Portuguese. *Rakushisha* therefore manufactures a fractured meta-translation, or a narrative *about* the translation in Portuguese and its path to publication. In his study of poet-translators, or poets who translate poetry, Christian Refsum (2017) traces the "creative tension between authorship and translatorship in translated poetry."³³ Refsum draws on Michel Foucault's concept of the "author function," which defines authority and ownership, and has changed over time and through different contexts, to coin the concept of the analogous "translator function."³⁴ Just as time and context have

³¹ Sakai, "The Modern Regime", 106.

³² Nergaard, *Translation and Transmigration*, 116.

³³ Refsum, "When Poets Translate Poetry", 102.

³⁴ Refsum, "When Poets Translate Poetry", 102.

variously influenced whether a person is defined as an author or just as someone who writes, the field of translation has historically influenced whether someone is called a translator and whether the translator's name is even given.³⁵ When applied to *Rakushisha*, this discussion becomes salient because Adriana Lisboa, though the translator of Matsuo Bashō's *Saga Nikki*, evades the official role of translator of this text by positioning her translation as a narrative fixture, prosthetic character, and paratext of her own novel.

Yukiko evades readers' view except when the translation links readers to Haruki's memories. Her vestige is in fact just an erasure of a memory, existing in imagination and in correspondence. Her presence resembles the original text that exists only as an awareness of past existence but no longer manifests visibly. Yukiko's as an entity resides in the margins of the plot, in correspondence, memory, and imagination. In a chapter titled "Yukiko e Bashō," Celina constructs a mental figure of Yukiko: "Imagino-a. Imagino mãos firmes e unhas curtas. Unhas sem esmalte. Mãos firmes que digitam com força no teclado do computador. [...] Costas ligeiramente arqueadas enquanto ela digita palavras. Montes de palavras. Multidões de palavras que se acrescentam ao ruído do mundo."³⁶ The volume of translated words and the force with which the imagined Yukiko types them suggest not only a supposition about the imagined work of translators, but also a clue to the real translation task undertaken by Lisboa. In this chapter, Lisboa even provides a translator's introduction with a brief history of Japan's Tokugawa era, more than a page long, a paratext camouflaged within Celina's reading: "O senhor Bananeira, Matsuo Bashō, Celina leu na apresentação que Yukiko Sakade escreveu para sua tradução, nasceu em família de samurais de baixa linhagem."³⁷ Lisboa's clever structural stunts allow the translator to exist, at once exhibited and hidden, within *Rakushisha* and behind the text of *Saga Nikki*.

³⁵ Refsum, "When Poets Translate Poetry", 102-103.

³⁶ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 91.

³⁷ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 93.

One of the metaphors this novel offers is that of the translator as a fleeting, volatile essence. Haruki contemplates his longing for Yukiko while acknowledging her ephemeral nature:

[O] espírito, Haruki pensava, morava nas células nervosas, e o corpo era substância volátil, como álcool – apenas demorava um pouco mais para se volatilizar [...] Não fazia muito tempo, tinha intuído o silêncio em outra mulher [...] Guardava dessa mulher invisível, desse corpo alcoólico que evaporou quando o sol voltou a bater, uma quantidade alarmante de desenhos [...] Yukiko era o nome dela. A tradutora.³⁸

Yukiko's name often precedes the qualifier "a tradutora," as though her profession is inextricable from her identity. Perhaps as part of her identity, Yukiko is also invisible, silent, and practically evaporating into thin air. Yukiko's persona, characterized by absence, inevitably reflects the imperceptibility of the figure of the translator. As transmitters of meaning, translators are not meant to make themselves visible, audible, or perceptible at all. Instead, their role is to support the text and camouflage their role in its creation.

Before Haruki departs for Japan, he notes how Yukiko, though absent, instigates the personal and professional interruption in his life: "O Japão saltando como um soluço para dentro de sua vida, tudo por causa dela. Yukiko. A tradutora. Hoje, só isso: a tradutora. Os nomes dos dois iam se casar na ironia da capa de um livro. Iam colocar seus nomes no papel. Amorosamente, friamente, levianamente."³⁹ The adulterous relationship between Yukiko and Haruki ends when Yukiko returned to her husband and left Haruki's life. Haruki's thought here, imagining Yukiko's name next to his on the cover of the illustration, is doubly ironic. Haruki imagines their names "married in irony on the book cover" (translation mine) because they will reside together textually despite not being a couple. The double irony is understood at the end of the novel when the couple reunites. It is as though the concrete reality of the names written together on the published translation brings resurrects

³⁸ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 52-53.

³⁹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 16.

their personal connection. Even in this sense, the written translation produces meaning.

The manuscript pages on which the translation is printed and the excerpts inserted strategically through *Rakushisha* convey the multivalent importance of translation as a process and a product. Celina's access to the translation, but not (initially) the translator, elicits vivid ruminations on the nature of translation and Yukiko's translation techniques. Much like Yukiko exists for readers only through the thoughts and utterances of Celina and Haruki, the translator of any text is both present and absent in the text. Bassnett, citing André Lefevere, notes that translation should be seen as a manipulation of the text, or "rewriting," akin to the intervention exercised by editors.⁴⁰ Ironically, though Lisboa translates Matsuo Bashō's *Saga Nikki* within the pages of *Rakushisha*, the responsibility for this act is refracted through the fictional translator, Yukiko. In line with Bassnett and Lefevere, Rosemary Arrojo's work on fictional translators corroborates the assertion that translation is an act that generates new meaning. Using Jorge Luis Borges's "Pierre Menard," asserted as the "most concentrated commentary [...] on the business of translation"⁴¹ as the inspiration for her work, Arrojo observes that Borges's short story offers "a wealth of material on the dynamics of reading, which, like translation, is viewed by the story's narrator as a practice that actually produces meaning rather than merely reproduces it."⁴² Furthermore, states Arrojo:

[“Pierre Menard”] also underscores some of the multiple ways in which fiction can be read as a deconstructive instrument that helps us reevaluate mainstream statements about the relationships that should be established between texts and what is routinely repressed or ignored by such statements, that is, the premises, the illusions, as well as the anxieties and the desires that often underlie the ways in which we deal with issues of language and the subject.⁴³

⁴⁰ Bassnett, "Introduction: The Rocky Relationship", 1-14.

⁴¹ George Steiner, quoted by Rosemary Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 31.

⁴² Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 31.

⁴³ Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 31.

For instance, the physical placement of the translated manuscript functions almost as a portal in and out of memories for Haruki. When the transcript first arrives by mail at Haruki's apartment in Rio de Janeiro, he sets it aside: "Deixou os papéis dentro do envelope. Deixou o envelope em cima do sofá..."⁴⁴ When Celina and Haruki arrive together in Kyoto, Celina finds the manuscript. A nearly identical description of their location, "Os papéis dentro do envelope, o envelope dentro do sofá,"⁴⁵ opens and closes small flashback vignette about how Haruki earned the translation gig. Enclosing this memory about the translation and commissioned illustration with the same sentence denoting the manuscript's location on the couch reveals the translation's physicality as a bridge between past and present, as well as a bridge between Brazil and Japan.

For Haruki, the failure to belong in the Japanese-Brazilian community generates emotional conflict and professional productivity. He experiences a subtle pathology of isolation linked to his exclusion from full Japanese-ness as the child of Japanese immigrants as well as his inescapable mark of difference from other Brazilians because of his Japanese facial features. Just as much as Celina, Haruki is an outsider in Japanese contexts. Haruki's trip to the Japanese consulate in Rio de Janeiro to obtain a visa exemplifies this exact alienation. Phenotypically Japanese but culturally Brazilian, Haruki understands several words in Japanese but does not speak the language. Upon entering the consulate, he feels discomfort: "Haruki se sentia um corpo estranho [...] sentia-se integralmente desajeitado [...] [t]ão atrasado, tão deselegante e antinipônico, que direito ele tinha de sair por aí usando um par de olhos puxados?"⁴⁶ Haruki's own perceived inferiority in comparison with the meticulous, methodical Japanese-ness permeating the consulate exacerbates his feeling of exclusion from the community of Japanese descent in Brazil despite his facial features. Saito Tamaki likewise notes that expectations for academic, professional, and financial success are especially high for firstborn Japanese sons.⁴⁷ For

⁴⁴ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 32

⁴⁵ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 34 and 35.

⁴⁶ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 14-15.

⁴⁷ Saito, *Hikikomori*, 51.

instance, in *Rakushisha*, Haruki's father is disappointed in him for disregarding traditional values, including learning to speak Japanese. The two have trouble identifying with each other and Haruki feels disconnected from his Japanese heritage. His parents' admonitions and expectations alienate him from Japanese culture at large, a dilemma resolved with Haruki's travel through Japan in conjunction with his reading of Yukiko's translation.

The translation of Bashō's *Saga Nikki* sparks a connection with Haruki's past in Brazil and his heritage in Japan. From Haruki's point of view, "O Japão não tinha nada a ver com sua vida e com seus olhos puxados. Até que um dia conheceu aquela moça. Yukiko Sakade. A tradutora."⁴⁸ Haruki lives his life disconnected from his Japanese identity, a fact that limits his professional repertoire: "Em seu arsenal de metáforas visuais, Haruki pensava em um Brasil de jabuticaba e jaracatiá..." It came as a surprise to find that Yukiko had suggested him to illustrate the translation of Bashō's work. He scoffs to hear his editor thought it a good idea: "Ótima idéia! Não era para ele, Haruki. Era para alguém com maior conhecimento de causa. Alguém que colocasse uma cerejeira florida no lugar do jatobá. Um samuraizinho no lugar do menino descalço."⁴⁹ Haruki recognizes his unpreparedness to depict what he supposes to be Japanese visual icons, once again nodding to his own embodiment of untranslatability. At once an assimilated Brazilian who rejects his Japaneseness at the margin, he acknowledges that Yukiko's rendering of the *Saga Nikki* in Portuguese is insufficient to inspire Haruki's creation of Japanese images. This crucial point in Lisboa's narrative links Nergaard's dual notion of untranslatability in language and migration. Not only does this demonstrate Haruki's perceived failure in inhabiting two cultures; it also brings to the fore the shortcomings of assuming that exact, equivalent meaning can be conveyed between two languages, especially when differences in the cultural context will inevitably leave beautiful imperfections in the translation.

⁴⁸ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 36.

⁴⁹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 35.

Conclusion

In many ways, Lisboa's *Rakushisha* conforms to what the translation industry asserts that translation should do: simulate a text in its original form and disguise the translator. This novel highlights the original author, Matsuo Bashō, making him visible even more than a strict translation would do, by giving his translated manuscript physicality, placing it in the hands of the main characters, and intercalating the Japanese original and Portuguese translation as paratexts in her novel. At the same time, Lisboa reminds us of the translation process and subverts the supposition that a translation can be read as though it were the original work. Bashō's visibility unravels the simulation of translation as an original work by compelling readers to see Bashō and his texts as characters. More than an author, Bashō is made into a companion. The translator, in contrast, is traditionally a hidden role. Yukiko's existence, though pervasive in Haruki's memory and Celina's imagination, is also fleeting, explicitly invisible and volatile. In these descriptions, Yukiko literally lacks visual and tactile substance and seems, therefore, to not exist. This contradiction responds to the misplaced idea that successful translation should obliterate our awareness of the translator or the deed of translation. While it is true that translation, when executed well, should sound like an original utterance, this is not to say that the act of translation should be hidden. Likewise, the translator need not be occluded. I surmise that Lisboa shuffles Yukiko to the background to highlight her centrality and, more broadly, the importance of all translators.

Repeated reminders of Haruki's initial alienation in Japanese contexts bring to light the other metaphors of translation, such as the creation of meaning and the crossing of borders. Haruki's physical transition to Japan coincides with his full engagement with Yukiko's translation. The two actions, taken in tandem, create meaning that Haruki has hitherto failed to grasp. Though Haruki's travels through Japan and his reading of Yukiko's translation succeed in delivering him to a new plane of understanding, his embodiment of untranslatability still applies to his professional role in illustrating that which translated language cannot necessarily convey. Whether an illustration suffices to bridge the gap that

skillful translators cannot bridge remains undetermined. What matters is that among the many analogies of translation that *Rakushisha* offers, readers may be most delighted to discover the metaphor of translation as a process of nuanced reading, which, even after multiple encounters with this novel, continues to generate poignant new meanings.

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