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Brazil and Bashō: Negotiating Japanese-Brazilian Hybrid Identity

Through Mujōkan in Adriana Lisboa's *Rakushisha*

Suzanne Noelle Shibuta

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Brazil and Bashō: Negotiating Japanese-Brazilian Hybrid Identity Through Mujōkan in Adriana Lisboa's *Rakushisha*

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Hybrid identities occupy a unique space within the field of identity and culture. Due to the instability and transitory nature of hybrid identities, individuals who fall within the category of hybridity often struggle to recognize and accept their identities. Do such individuals identify with one culture, the other, neither, or both? Adriana Lisboa's novel *Rakushisha* offers new insight into the realm of hybridity through the exploration of mujōkan, a uniquely Japanese awareness of impermanence that also helps to explain the cycle of suffering, continuity, and regeneration that Lisboa's characters experience. Although hybrid identities by nature are unstable, constantly in motion and imbalanced, mujōkan presents a conceptual framework that allows for the possibility of accepting this instability and impermanence as a way of being, allowing Japanese-Brazilians to untangle the web of uncertainty surrounding their identity and embrace the transience of their culture and hybridity. Lisboa's novel and the concept of mujōkan work together to show not only the possibility of Japanese-Brazilians to accept and understand the transitivity of their identity but also to expand this concept to contemporary Brazilians, regardless of whether they claim Japanese heritage or not.

Keywords: hybrid identity, Japanese-Brazilian, Adriana Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, Matsuo Bashō, mujōkan

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Brazil and Bashō: Negotiating Japanese-Brazilian Hybrid Identity

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Reflecting on the unstable nature of cultural identities, the Jamaican-born cultural theorist and political activist Stuart Hall observes, “Cultural identity...is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (225). Hall’s statement regarding the transformation and overall malleability of identity demonstrates a concept that is replicated within most cultures, namely, that as established cultures come into contact with one another, concepts and principles from each culture may be passed on to the other. Reflecting upon national identities, Graciela Spector echoes these same ideas when she explains, “National identities are constructed in different ways. While some are inherited, others are acquired...Sometimes history pushes human beings towards other nations towards another narration, into another language through another culture” (243). While the ever-changing nature of identity here refers to the notion of a single culture or identity adapting new ideas and concepts, it is important to recognize that the collision of human beings, languages and cultures can and often does lead to the formation of an entirely new and different identity in itself, a hybrid identity that embraces ideals and practices from each of the original cultures from which it was formed.

Hybrid identities differ from traditional and presumably stable cultural identities because “hybridity does not refer to a mere mixture or heterogeneity and also differs from a miscegenation, because it is actually a specific item, impure in its essence given its nature, that requires cultural translations of the progressive registrations... hybridity does not lead to a more or less balanced

fit of diversity, but rather to the creation of a specific articulation” (Sabaté 12). The unique nature of hybrid identities places them in completely different categories from their original sources; they do not belong to one culture or another, but they are, in and of themselves, a separate entity whose characteristics envelop a new group of people and practices. Due to the distinctiveness of hybrid forms of identity, it is not surprising that individuals who fall within the category of hybridity struggle to recognize and sometimes accept their identities. Do such individuals identify with one culture, the other, neither, or both?

Both scholars of cultural theory and contemporary authors frequently explore the ways in which various groups and individuals negotiate hybrid identities throughout the world. Within contemporary Brazilian literature, one form of hybridity that has captured the attention of well-known authors such as Bernardo Carvalho, Oscar Nakasato, and Adriana Lisboa is the complex reality of Japanese-Brazilians.¹ In particular, Adriana Lisboa’s novel *Rakushisha* offers new and profound insights into the concept of hybridity and the struggle Japanese-Brazilians face to understand and accept the cultures that make up their identities. *Rakushisha* tells the story of two seemingly unrelated people who embark on a journey to Japan that allows them to face their existential struggles and find inner peace. The structure of the novel centers on the diary of Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō, whose writings are full of Japanese themes that are mirrored within

¹ Critics disagree on the use of the hyphen when referring to hybrid identities. In his article “(Re) Creating Ethnicity: Middle Eastern Immigration to Brazil” Jeffrey Lesser argues that in “Brazil hyphenated identities are very real in spite of the fact that elite culture aggressively rejects such social constructions. Thus... there are no linguistic categories that acknowledge hyphenated ethnicity (a third-generation Brazilian of Japanese descent remains “Japanese” while a fourth-generation Brazilian of Lebanese descent may become a “turco,” an “árabe,” a “sírio” or a “sírio-libanese”)...” (45). Lesser’s argument that Japanese-Brazilians are not accepted as Brazilians explains his use of the hyphen, whereas other scholars, such as Edward King, opt for an unhyphenated explanation of identity, without providing a rationale as to why. I have chosen to include the hyphen in “Japanese-Brazilian” because it demonstrates not only the dual heritage of these individuals but also suggests that such individuals may not belong to either category. A “Japanese-Brazilian” is a type of Brazilian, the “Japanese” here functioning as an adjective. “Japanese-Brazilian” refers to an individual who may not be accepted as being fully Brazilian, but who is torn between the two countries and cultures that make up his or her identity.

the novel itself. These themes establish a connection between cultures from two seemingly different countries, Japan and Brazil.

Despite the novel's references to Japanese culture, critics have primarily focused on the novel as an example of contemporary Brazilian culture. In his book *The Space In-between: Essays on Latin American Culture*, Silviano Santiago argues that Brazilian literature is not bound by the common stereotypes that are traditionally associated with Brazil and that Latin American authors in general are notable for the ways they encourage and aid others in Latin America to recognize and understand the complexities of their culture. Santiago states:

The Latin American writer demonstrates that we should free ourselves from the image of a smiling carnival and fiesta-filled holiday haven for cultural tourism. Somewhere between sacrifice and playfulness, prison and transgression, submission to the code and aggression, obedience and rebellion, assimilation and expression—there, in this apparently empty space, its temple and its clandestinity, is where the anthropophagous ritual of Latin American discourse is constructed. (38)

Santiago's recognition of the opposition and freedom that comes from Brazilian literature is mirrored in the existential and physical journey undergone by protagonists in contemporary literature.

Alessandra Cristina Valério and Regina Coeli Machado e Silva similarly argue that some of the most constant themes within Brazilian literature include that of journeys and movement: "Travessias, viagens, deslocamentos constituem os fios condutores de uma parte significativa das narrativas brasileiras contemporâneas" (101). Making specific reference to the work of Adriana Lisboa, Valério and Silva observe that Lisboa's fiction frequently focuses on the conflict and turmoil that comes from dislocation and living within a foreign country (Valério and Silva 105).

This sentiment is also echoed in the works of Rita Olivieri-Godot, who draws a connection between the theme of the journey and the search for national identity. She states, “Até mesmo quando a ação do romance está situada em terras estrangeiras, o objetivo primeiro desse olhar cruzado continua sendo as imagens de uma realidade brasileira que se revela através do contato com o Outro, através do olhar do Outro” (235). The theme of the journey clearly emerges in *Rakushisha* as the novel’s characters travel to “terras estrangeiras” over the course of the novel. Olivieri-Godot and Valério and Machado e Silva all emphasize the metaphoric relationship between the actual journey of the plot and the characters’ search for identity.

In his analysis of *Rakushisha*, Marcel Vejmelka likewise acknowledges the theme of travel within the novel, and he observes that this theme is a rising trend in contemporary Brazilian literature: “O romance *Rakushisha* de Adriana Lisboa trata de diferentes aspetos da experiência da alteridade e se insere numa série de produções literárias recentes em que escritores brasileiros contam histórias situadas fora do país ou representam experiências próprias no estrangeiro. (“Viagens e leituras japonesas em *Rakushisha*” 313). However, Vejmelka also argues that Lisboa does not focus on the question of identity in her work, stating:

Adriana Lisboa não enfoca a questão da identidade nacional ou transnacional. O pano de fundo histórico serve somente como impulsor para duas viagens em busca de um caminho existencial. O romance explora assim a relação entre lugar e memória, leitura e escrita, todos condensados no indivíduo em busca de si mesmo. (“O Japão na literatura brasileira atual” 229)

For Vejmelka, the question of national or transnational identity is not central to Lisboa’s aesthetic project. Nevertheless, Vejmelka argues that Lisboa does not focus on the idea of cultural identity

(national or otherwise) within her novel, he does recognize the journey that characters undergo not only physically but also existentially as they search for themselves.

One final point of reference is the work of Emanuel Caesar Pires de Assis, which brings together the themes of homogeneity, heterogeneity, and conflicting familial relationships (4), which he asserts further classify *Rakushisha* as typical of contemporary Brazilian novels. A review of scholarship on *Rakushisha* indicates that critics tend to focus on themes such as the journey and search for oneself, themes common in contemporary Brazilian literature. These critics rarely identify or analyze the unique Japanese themes that run throughout the novel, yet examining *Rakushisha* through the lens of Japanese literary concepts opens the novel to new understanding. The novel is not only about a character who is reading Japanese literature and engaging in his own pilgrimage, but the novel also reveals a keen interest in Japanese literary traditions, namely the writings of the Japanese poet Bashō.

One of the principal concepts present in the writings of Bashō is *mujōkan*. *Mujōkan* is a term that refers to a uniquely Japanese awareness of impermanence, a notion that also helps to explain the cycle of suffering, continuity, and regeneration that Lisboa's characters experience. In Lisboa's novel, the concept of *mujōkan* becomes overlaid onto the theme of hybridity, just as texts from distinct literary traditions become joined and connected in unexpected ways. Lisboa's narrative emerges through an intertextual engagement with the works of Bashō. For example, just as the protagonist Haruki reads Bashō's poetry and endeavors to illustrate the text, his life and actions become an illustration of Bashō being translated into Brazilian experience. Similarly, as Celina follows the same physical path once walked by the ancient poet, she incorporates the writings and ideals of Bashō into her worldview. These experiences within the novel create a space for a new interpretation of the concept of impermanence as it relates to the question of negotiating

identity and belonging. Although hybrid identities by nature are unstable—constantly in motion and imbalanced—*mujōkan* presents a conceptual framework that allows for the possibility of accepting this instability and impermanence as a way of being, allowing Japanese-Brazilians to untangle the web of uncertainty surrounding their identity and embrace the transience of their culture and hybridity. This idea is exemplified within *Rakushisha* as characters Haruki and Celina allow the writings of Bashō to lead them on a journey to overcome the bitterness of their pasts and accept the impermanence within their lives in order to finally find inner peace.

Various critics of Brazilian culture and literature have attested to the “‘in-between-ness’, mobility, uncertainty, and multiplicity” (Nilan & Feixa 2) of hybrid identities. Open to the pushes and pulls of different cultures, hybrid identities can be understood as those that “contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation (two-way borrowing and lending between cultures)” (Garcia 14). Such is the case of Japanese-Brazilian identity, continuously changing due to the pull and tug between two different countries and cultures. When analyzing Japanese-Brazilian identity, positionality and perspective remain important considerations. For example, a Japanese-Brazilian living in São Paulo exhibits a different cultural experience from a Japanese-Brazilian living in Tokyo. Ideas of locality and globality are thus crucial to understanding hybridity. “The local and the global interact to create a new identity that is distinct in each context. As the two interact, the local influences the global and the global influences the local. The local is universalized and the universal is localized” (Smith & Leavy 3). Although both global and local identities simultaneously influence one another, for Japanese-Brazilians living in Brazil, global and local pressures impact their sense of self conceptions.

In *Rakushisha*, the narrative focuses on Brazilian characters of Japanese descent who are living in Brazil. These individuals face the struggle of maintaining and negotiating the unique

aspects of their Japanese identity, which manifests itself in Brazil as a global influence, a sort of extra-national or non-Brazilian source of identity that connects them to other people of Japanese descent, but at the same time Japanese-Brazilians must simultaneously worry about being “Brazilian enough” while seeking acceptance by others within the local culture of the country in which they live. This interaction between the global and local cultures is what ultimately produces a hybrid identity. In *Rakushisha*, hybridity emerges through a type of push and pull mechanism, which results not in a clean and uniform identity but rather one much like that described by LeBlanc and Medline in which hybridity “does not suggest the loss of individual parts, like the “melting pot” or “mixed,” for example, might. Hybridity suggests that the edges may show and be sharp at certain moments. Though we present images of reconstitution, we want to preserve an uneasiness, one that will keep us all aware” (LeBlanc and Medine 203). This uneasiness as explained by LeBlanc and Medine is a part of what allows those with hybrid identities to always be aware of the two, often conflicting, cultures that make up a part of their identity.

Unfortunately, the sharp edges and differences expressed through hybridity can lead to stereotyping and misunderstanding of the cultures at hand. The tendency to stereotype and orientalize Japanese culture in Brazilian media is an issue that affects Japanese-Brazilians and the ways in which they negotiate their identity and are viewed by society at large. The availability and popularity of media such as comics and manga² make it easier for consumers to stereotype and categorize Japanese culture, further playing into orientalist ideas of superiority, as described by Edward Said:

One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media’s

² Manga are a type of comic book popularized in Japan. Although originally published for a Japanese audience, translated manga are a part of a flourishing market in in countries such as the United States and Brazil (Poitras 49).

resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of the ‘the mysterious Orient.’ (26)

This reinforcement of stereotypes, especially in regard to youth and digital technology has been reinforced in Brazil through the popular comic *Turma da Mônica Jovem*, whose formatting and style mirrors that of a Japanese manga. In one particular issue of the comic, Mônica and her friends win a trip to Japan, and upon arrival they are greeted by a country seemingly dominated by technology and anime. The portrayal of Japan within the comic demonstrates the “wider tendency to conflate the Japanese presence in Brazil with Japanese dominance in the field of digital youth culture” (King 2). Although it is evident that the Japanese presence in Brazil is not limited to youth culture and media, the widespread existence of stereotypes about Japan and Japanese culture is one of the issues that affect Japanese-Brazilians and how they negotiate their identities.

Another concept that complicates identity and leads to the production of hybrid identities is that of diaspora. Speaking about identity and diaspora, LeBlanc and Medine state:

Diaspora, initially, is an identity detour, a movement or shift away from the traditional understanding of the linear journey of the self from beginning to end of life within established structures, which allows us to make meanings along the way. Diaspora takes us out of those structures, creating dead ends that stop movement and establish new borders, new spaces of contact and interactions that lead to either reinforcement, maintenance of the “old” self, or the mixing, creolization, or hybridity, a remaking/remixing of identity and self in the new place in relation to new “others.” (15)

Diaspora likewise plays an essential part of understanding Japanese-Brazilian hybridity. On 18 June 1908, a passenger ship, the Kasato Maru, reached the shores of Brazil at the port of Santos (Kasato 7). Aboard the ship were the first of a large wave of Japanese immigrants arriving in Brazil to begin new lives and work on coffee plantations. This influx of immigrants initiated a long-standing relationship between Japan and Brazil, one that would lead to the formation of new traditions, enveloped by a new hybrid identity. This Japanese-Brazilian hybridity is reflected in cities such as São Paulo, where the Liberdade District is famous as a center of Japanese culture within Brazil. The streets of Liberdade are lined with shops selling items from Japan, and many of the residents claim Japanese heritage and are bilingual, speaking Japanese with some, and Portuguese with others. In reference to Brazil's history of immigration and migrant cultures, Jeff Lesser notes, "All of the 4.55 million immigrants...brought premigratory culture with them and created new ethnic identities. Yet it was the 400,000 Asians, Arabs, and Jews, deemed both nonwhite and nonblack, who most challenged elite notions of national identity" (*Negotiating national identity* 7). Following Lesser's logic, it stands to reason that on one hand there exists a Brazil that is multicultural, continuously changing and transforming alongside the various cultures that make up the country. However, there is also a different side to Brazil—one in which minority cultures such as Asians, Arabs and Jews are marginalized, hidden, and underrepresented in Brazilian culture. Throughout the twentieth century, political and cultural narratives emphasized the need for immigrants to assimilate and belong at the expense of holding on to the traditions and practices of their cultures of origin (Nielson 194). Lesser further explains that immigrants who were not considered "white" had to give themselves a new category, one in which a hyphen connected them to the Brazilian culture.

These immigrants (and their descendants) insisted that new hyphenated categories be created under the rubric “Brazilian.” This was not an easy or smooth process, and attempts to legislate or enforce *brasilidade* were never successful... Brazil remains a country where hyphenated ethnicity is predominant yet unacknowledged. What does it mean to be a public ‘Brazilian,’ and how is ‘Brazilianess’ contested? From the mid-nineteenth century on, both terms, and the notions behind them, were increasingly arbitrary, creating the space needed by newcomers to insert themselves into, or to change, paradigms about national identity. A single or static national identity never existed: the very fluidity of the concept made it open to pushes and pulls from below and above. (Lesser, *Negotiating national identity* 3)

Lesser further confirms the fluidity of the Japanese-Brazilian identity and also demonstrates one of the constant anxieties Japanese-Brazilians experience: are they Brazilian enough?

The question of cultural belonging is one raised by critics Ana Cristina Ferreira-Pinto and Regina Zilberman, who ask “‘O que é ser brasileiro?’ Ou seja, como definirmos a nação se esta, na realidade, apresenta-se heterogênea e pluricultural, formada pelo encontro de sujeitos de etnias diversas, que, embora constituindo uma entidade única que compartilha uma língua comum, são marcados, como é de se esperar, por influências várias e fortes” (20). Brazilian identity is based on ethnic diversity, which allows it to be a country whose identity is constantly in the process of transforming and adapting to include parts of the various different cultures from which it was formed; however, this was not the case when the Japanese arrived.

The first Japanese immigrants that came to São Paulo (or *issei*), were concerned with maintaining their Japanese culture and language, often refusing to learn Portuguese and preferring to form small Japanese communities rather than attempt to assimilate into Brazilian culture. However, the children of these immigrants, known as *nissei*, defined their identity as Brazilians.

Fluent in Portuguese, it was only their physical appearance which revealed their Japanese heritage and subsequently led society to define them as Japanese. Writing about their experience in the student-led magazine *Transição* (1939), they stated:

We, Brazilian children of Japanese, are a transition. A transition between what was and what will be...It is the understanding of our parents, the Japanese, by our brothers, the Brazilians, by a common language, Brazilian...the fusion, in an ideal of mutual comprehension, of the qualities inherent in each. In the end, we are Brazilians conscious and proud of our land and that of our parents. (Kasato 10)

Despite their attempts to be a “transition” and to embrace both their Brazilian and Japanese identities, these early Japanese-Brazilians in Brazil continued to be solely recognized as Japanese, labeled as outsiders by a culture whose roots were based in assimilation (Lesser, *Negotiating national identity* 7). Thus, even though mixed races and hybridity are an essential part of Brazilian history and culture, such concepts were not universally applied. Nelson Vieira explains that “the concern with maintaining Brazilian identity, clearly evident in the literature’s preoccupation with imaging a national spirit, points to an underlying cultural preference for sameness rather than difference despite a rich heritage of cultural regionalism and folkloric differences” (5). This preference for sameness is what pushes different cultures, such as Japanese, outside of the scope of the Brazilian culture. The accusation “You are no longer Japanese... You will never become a Brazilian. What are you then?” (Nishida 11) shows the struggle and rejection faced by many Brazilians of Japanese descent as they struggle to negotiate their hybrid identity. Because of the inability to fit the Japanese culture within the Brazilian national identity, a hybrid Japanese-Brazilian identity evolved in an attempt to recognize the different and seemingly incompatible cultures that defined this population.

The struggle to understand and negotiate Japanese-Brazilian hybridity continues to affect individuals who seek to reconcile their desire to inhabit both Brazilian and Japanese forms of identity, yet the implementation of the Japanese concept of *mujōkan*³ allows these individuals to better understand and accept the uncertainties associated with their cultural positions. The concept of impermanence is not unique to Japanese culture but originates from the teachings of Buddha in India. Buddhism arrived in Japan in the sixth century after it was already popularized in other Asian countries such as China. Within the teachings of classical Buddhism,

Anitya, the notion of impermanence, was considered to be one of three fundamental marks of existence. The other two were *duhka* (suffering) and *anatman* (no-self). *Anitya* is the idea that both the phenomenal world and our perceptions of it are constantly changing. That is, it is not simply that all things change, since our understanding of change is also changing. (Inouye 31)

The idea that all things are constantly changing, and consequently impermanent, was a major premise of Buddha's philosophy of existence (Kalupahana 45), and this understanding was also applied to the notion of human life. In order to further understand the Buddhist conception of impermanence, it is important to recognize that "[t]he whole of Buddhist thought is permeated with the notion that life is transitory, not only in the fact that life terminates in death, but, more philosophically, that between birth and death we live in momentariness" (Inada 171). This momentariness, or the idea that life is fleeting and constantly changing was accepted by most educated people in premodern Japan, regardless of their association with religion (Steenstrup 3).

³ When referring to the Japanese idea of impermanence, it is important to understand that the terms *mujō* and *mujōkan* are not the same and should not be treated as such. *Mujō* (無常) means impermanence, whereas *mujōkan* (無常感) refers to the *awareness* or perception of impermanence. Although various scholars referenced here will simply refer to the idea of impermanence as *mujō*, I am focusing on the *awareness of impermanence* and how this idea affects and is critical to the understanding of hybridity.

When Buddhism was further popularized in Japan, many Japanese began to apply the concept of *anitya* to their own lives and experiences, leading to the creating of mujō. For the Japanese, mujō embraced and explained all changes in life, “the regular cycles of the seasons, the creative transformations formations of nature, the rise and inevitable fall of ruling houses, the inescapable degeneration of aging, the inconstancy of lovers, the inevitability of death, the uncertainty of life, and so forth” (Barnhill, *Bashō's journey* 183). While mujō was often used to refer to death in regards the frailty of life and transience of all things (De Pieri 352), it was not a nihilistic point of view but rather a life-acknowledging concept (Baek 74). Mujō implies that nothing in this world is safe from change, but rather than seeing sadness in the impermanence of life, there is beauty in acknowledging the transitivity of all things.

Not long after Buddhism was popularized in Japan, the concept of mujō not only became a part of the Japanese culture but it also found expression in Japanese literary production.. Although some critics argue that it was only in the later Kamakura Period (1185–1333) that mujōkan began to permeate literature, several famous works from the Heian Period (794–1185), over three hundred years earlier, demonstrate that this sense of impermanence not only was present in the literature of the time but also that “aristocrats were especially aware of their own personal deterioration with age” (Smits). William LaFleur further confirms in his study *The Karma of Words* that “Buddhist stress on evanescence has had a major influence on the literature of the Heian period and later” (60), and Gregory Smits echoes the same sentiment, arguing that “[a] sharp sensitivity to the impermanence of the world, and the anxiety that impermanence creates for humans, is a major characteristic of middle and late Heian-period literature” (Smits). This preoccupation with transformation and impermanence took on significant importance in Heian period works such as *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu. Among other themes, the novel

focuses on the ideas of youth, impermanence, and fleeting beauty. As the protagonist's life comes to an end, Shikibu compares life and death to the passing of the seasons, invoking mujōkan to convey not only an awareness and sadness of death but also an acceptance of life (Shirane 131). Subsequent authors continued to use mujō within their works, and the concept began to be applied to everything. As LaFleur argues, “This suggests that, from this point on, mujō was conceived of not only as *impermanence*—that is as a temporal category—but also as *instability*, a spatial one” (LaFleur 61). This connection of understanding mujō to signify not only impermanence but also instability provided new meaning to the term mujōkan—not just an awareness of impermanence, but also an awareness of instability.

The ideas of impermanence and instability extended into the Kamakura period, where literary worldviews began to focus on “the ‘yonder world’ of life after death, and unity and organization in this life were undermined. The people of the Kamakura Period yearned for the permanence of the ‘yonder world’ and grieved over the impermanence of this world” (Ishida and Brown 426). The idea of grieving related to impermanence gave way to some of the most famous works within the Kamakura period, and arguably ancient Japanese literature overall. *Hōjōki* [*The Account of My Hut*] written by Kamo no Chōmei opens with one of the most famous verses that elicits the mujō view as it relates to Buddhism:

The river flows unendingly. Its waters pass and shall never return. Where the water eddies and pools, bubbles form only to vanish the next moment, while others are born in their stead. So, it is with man and his dwelling in this world...Some die in the morning, some are born in the evening. All are so destined, just like the bubbles. From where humans, who are born and die, come and to where they go, I know not. Nor have I any idea for whom they take such pains... nor for what reason in this transitory life they love to decorate those

dwelling. The ways in which the owners and houses so readily fade away, as if they compete on fragility, are like the dew and the morning glory: Sometimes the dew falls and the flower remains. Though it may remain, it will perish in the sun of the following morning. Or the flower may wither, while the dew remains. Still it will evaporate by the evening.
(2–3)

Kamo no Chōmei’s comparison of man’s life to the ever-changing elements of nature exemplifies the idea of mujō. He demonstrates not only the impermanence of life, comparing it to bubbles and the morning dew, but he also demonstrates the instability and constant motion of life through the movements of the stream. His acceptance of the transitivity of life also demonstrates mujōkan—he does not mourn the fact that every day some die while others live, rather he sees the beauty in an everyday occurrence that is part of life and nature.

While Kamo no Chōmei uses nature and peace to exhibit the characteristics of mujōkan, *Heike Monogatari* [*The tale of the Heike*] has quite a different approach: that of emphasizing death and destruction. Margaret H. Child’s explains the change by stating, “What especially shifts over time is the literary response to death...In earlier engagements with impermanence during the Heian period (784–1185), the natural world and love were the elements from which images of impermanence were created...During the time when the Heike was being composed, transience took on a darker tone” (7–8). *Heike Monogatari* is a mixture of fact and historical fiction, passed down as vocal literature by biwa hōshi⁴, and compiled and revised by multiple authors. The story follows the extinction of the Taira clan⁵, in twelfth century Japan, during a type of dramatic weakening of the traditional imperial and Buddhist institutions under the growing social, political,

⁴ Biwa hōshi were the equivalent of traveling bards in Japan in the time before the Meiji Period (1868-1912). They recited stories while playing a Japanese instrument called the biwa, similar to a lute.

⁵ The Taira clan is the focus of *Heike*, the kanji associated with the term is 平家, literally meaning Taira family, but read in Japanese as “Heike”

and military influence of warrior families (Mayo 1). The story's opening line, similar to that of *Hōjōki*, reflects on the impermanent nature of life: "The sound of the Gion Shōja bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the color of the sāla flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline. The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind" (The Tale of the Heike 23). The final line of the introduction in Japanese, 盛者必衰 (*jōsha hissui*), or "all that flourishes must decline" ties back once again to the origins of *mujō* and Buddhism, the idea that even the mighty will fall and are not immune to the effects of time and impermanence. The end of *Heike* also elicits images of impermanence, "Having begun with the melancholy sound of bells, this saga of the Taira also ends with somber tones and with this reference to the ephemerality of spring blossoms (*mujō no haru no hana*⁶)" (Inouye 50). Although *Heike* is far more gruesome than *Hōjōki*, both tales use *mujōkan* as an integral part of their narratives. The necessity of recognizing the impermanence of life was an important theme within the Kamakura Period, and it continued to influence Japanese literature and authors.

Perhaps the most well-known author of the Edo Period (1600–1867), and also a scholar of classical literature, Matsuo Bashō⁷ was no stranger to the concept of *mujōkan*. In his study of Bashō's prose and poems, David Barnhill explains:

We have seen how *mujō* (impermanence) is one of the most important themes in Japanese literature. Perhaps no Japanese literary writer developed a more sophisticated notion of time than Bashō...Bashō experienced the world as being characterized by what we have called "soft" transformations of the world, change that involves no radical or unexpected

⁶ English translation: The impermanence of spring flowers.

⁷ Matsuo Bashō's birth name was Matsuo Kinsaku. Born in 1644, he changed his name to Bashō, taking his influence from the banana plant. LaFleur explains, "Bashō...identified himself closely with the Buddhist principle of impermanence. This identification extended to the literary name he used for himself. For *bashō* means banana plant: a specimen of which grew near the famous poet's hut.... It symbolized the frailty, the transiency, of his own life—as he liked to picture it" (68-69).

disruption. Unlike the Heian courtiers, however, his experience of nature's changes is at times marked by immense scale and a sense of awe: "mountains crumble, rivers change course, roadways are altered, stones are buried in the earth, trees grow old and are replaced by saplings. Time goes by and the world shifts, and the traces of the past are unstable." (The Narrow Road to the Deep North) It is noteworthy that while these changes are slow and predictable, they are not reassuringly cyclical and the change created is of a scale far more monumental than depicted in Heian literature. ("The Journals of Matsuo Bashō," 2)

In both his prose and poetry, Bashō was a master of the art of expressing impermanence. He saw not only the transitivity of nature but also of death. His works demonstrate an immense understanding not just of time but also of the imminence and unpredictability of this life. Bashō's understanding and acceptance of mujōkan came from not only his skill as a writer but also his time as a wanderer. Indeed, many critics are quick to make the connection between Bashō and the theme of the journey, whether that be a physical journey, or the journey of life ultimately ending in death.

One of Bashō's most important journeys occurred in 1691, when he traveled to Kyoto and stayed with his disciple Mukai Kyorai at Rakushisha, or "the villa of fallen persimmons⁸." While staying at Rakushisha, Bashō wrote *Saga Nikki* [*Saga Diary*]. The diary focuses on his seventeen days spent at the villa, and within it he contemplates the transience of life. Within Adriana Lisboa's novel, *Rakushisha*, the two main characters develop a connection to Bashō through his work, *Saga Diary*. Although mujōkan is not mentioned specifically in Lisboa's texts, the themes present in Bashō's diary resonate strongly with the journeys of Lisboa's protagonists and also with the Lisboa's aesthetic project. In *Rakushisha* the Japanese concept of mujōkan is overlaid on the

⁸ Kyorai's hermitage gained the name "Rakushisha" after the disciple awoke one morning to find that the persimmons of almost 40 trees surrounding the hut had fallen due to a storm that night. This reference to the fallen persimmons is yet another allusion of the concept of mujō within Japanese culture.

Brazilian concept of hybridity in way that illuminates the struggles to reconcile Japanese-Brazilian identity.

In their theoretical study of the ways in which cultures negotiate hybridity, Smith and Leavy ask, “How do different groups, confronted with specific and diverse cultural forces, economic forces, and institutional settings, negotiate identity and cultural space within this context? In what ways are the cultural spaces created by the fissures between, and fusing of, divergent cultural elements in fact productive spaces in which identities are constructed and contested?” (167). Negotiating hybrid identity, as already discussed, calls for not only insight into the culture and practices of each identity but also an understanding of how these two different cultures react to one another. When identity is analyzed through the idea of impermanence, it becomes clear that not just nature is affected by transitivity, but that “everything is subject to the law of impermanence: human relations, social positions, human beings... and this nobody can deny” (Marra 334). Identities are indeed subject to the law impermanence. In *Rakushisha*, the concept of mujōkan emerges as a principle that might allow Japanese-Brazilians to understand and negotiate their identity.

Although Adriana Lisboa does not have Japanese ancestry, she became enamored of the writings of Bashō long before she wrote *Rakushisha*. In an interview regarding the novel, Lisboa states, “Meu interesse por Bashō veio da leitura de seus haicais traduzidos pelo Manuel Bandeira, autor que norteou a escrita do meu último romance, um beijo de colombina. Também fiquei bastante interessada numa menção a Bashō e a um de seus diários” (Aragão and Rocha 127). When preparing to write *Rakushisha* Lisboa traveled to Japan and was a visiting researcher in Kyoto at the International Center for Japanese Studies, where she had the chance to experience firsthand Japanese culture and read the writings of Bashō. In fact, the Portuguese translations of Bashō’s

dairy within the novel were all done by the author herself. Lisboa understands Bashō's writings not only on structural level but also on a deep and poetic level as well (Pinheiro and D'Angelo 115). This commitment to research and immersion in Japanese culture not only allowed Lisboa to create a believable narrative, but it also gave her the basis to facilitate the transformations of her characters through the works of Bashō and to develop mujōkan within her own writing.

Rakushisha tells the story of two individuals who meet by chance on a subway in Rio de Janeiro, Haruki and Celina. The characters appear incredibly different from each other, they have their own secrets and issues—Haruki struggles with the Japanese side of his identity, and Celina hides her despair and depression that continues to plague her life. On a whim, Celina agrees to accompany Haruki to Japan, and the two are brought together through the works of Matsuo Bashō, Haruki is an artist who has been hired to illustrate the Portuguese version of *Saga Diary*, and after reading the diary, Celina is inspired to keep her own. Although together in a foreign country, the two embark on completely separate journeys, and in fact they don't have much interaction once they arrive in Japan. Haruki devotes himself to illustrating the Portuguese translation of Bashō's diary, while at the same time exploring the culture of his ancestors that he has refused to be a part of for his whole life. As Haruki travels throughout Japan he questions his identity as well as his relationship with Yukiko, another Japanese-Brazilian and also the translator working on the Bashō project with him. Celina, on the other hand, uses Bashō's diary as a guide, and little by little allows herself to be seduced by Bashō's writing and Japanese culture, which allows her to open up about a dark and traumatic past regarding her family that haunts her and has destroyed all her family relationships.

Although the two journeys within the novel are quite different—Haruki is searching for his origins while Celina searches for herself (da Costa 356)—both journeys are guided by the work of

Bashō. Maria Zilda Ferreira Cury explains, “Matsuo Bashō, ele próprio um poeta itinerante, um dos mestres do haikai, se constitui como móvel da narrativa, já que os princípios filosóficos que tomam a vida como um trilhar de caminhos, como impulsionadora do percurso, dão a tônica às ações e às reflexões dos personagens” (Cury 22). The poetry of Bashō appears in the narrative as a way of helping Celina and Haruki move along their journeys, that is, Lisboa embeds translations of Bashō’s writings throughout the work as a way to acknowledge the transformation Celina and Haruki experience and encourage readers to be similarly swept up in the words of the great poet.

Haruki’s journey to understand his Japanese-Brazilian identity is characterized by themes and emotions that are common to those struggling to negotiate a hybrid identity. Although on the surface Haruki looks Japanese, he was born and raised in Brazil and never learned Japanese or much about the Japanese culture, despite hearing his grandparents speak Japanese at home and being subjected to their attempts to teach him. He views himself as Brazilian and in the beginning of the narrative he rejects his Japanese heritage, but to an outsider he does not look like he is from Brazil. He is torn between his “herança nipônica, que carrega sua conformação genética, e a formação brasileira, que adquiriu durante toda a sua vivência no Brasil” (Aragão and Rocha 129). The narrator describes Haruki’s neglect of his Japanese heritage: “Haruki se sentia um corpo estranho. Ele não deveria estar suando. Ou que estivesse suando, mas que pelo menos falasse um japonês rudimentar. Os traços do seu rosto, o seu nome, tudo lhe impunha essa responsabilidade – que, no entanto, ele nunca havia acatado” (Lisboa 20) [Haruki felt like a foreign object. He shouldn’t have been perspiring. Or if he had to be perspiring, he could at least speak rudimentary Japanese. His facial features, his name, everything imposed that responsibility on him—a responsibility to which, however, he had never deferred (9)]. Haruki reasons that his trip to Japan is for the sole purpose of observing in order to complete the illustrations he has been commissioned

to make, but the journey ultimately becomes a way for him to understand his ancestry and overcome his internal conflicts.

Haruki's Japanese-Brazilian duality is further complicated by Yukiko, another Japanese-Brazilian, Haruki's ex-lover and the translator of the edition of *Saga Diary* that Haruki is illustrating. Yukiko is everything Haruki is not: "A moça de olhos puxados, como os dele. Nissei. Filha de imigrantes japoneses. Ao contrário de Haruki, uma profunda conhecedora do Japão. Ao contrário de Haruki, fluente na língua. Tradutora de japonês. Entre outras coisas. Tinha feito faculdade em Tóquio" (Lisboa 82) [The girl with slanted eyes, like his own. Nisei—second generation. The daughter of Japanese immigrants. Unlike Haruki, fluent in Japanese. A translator of Japanese. Amongst other things She had studied at a university in Tokyo (88)]. When interacting with Yukiko, Haruki is even more aware of the differences between the two of them, but as he falls more in love with her, Haruki decides that although he didn't previously have any interest in his heritage he wants to explore this side of his identity for her (Silva 17). As Haruki explores Japan, which he identifies not as his own land but that belonging to Bashō, he becomes more open to his Japanese-Brazilian hybridity. The narrator demonstrates this transformation of Haruki in these terms:

Ir deixando que a terra de Bashō fosse entrando nele pelos cinco sentidos, se aninhasse em seus pulmões, ficasse impressa em suas digitais, ondulasse em chá verde sobre sua língua (mesmo que acompanhada de donuts), tocasse em seus tímpanos um grande sino de templo zen, mesmo que embaçado em timbres distintos e profusos de telefones celulares. Deixar sobretudo que a terra de Bashō se estampasse em seus olhos e na memória de seus olhos, ainda que em meio a toda a poluição visual que atraía críticas ao Japão dos seus dias. Ver o salto da rã no velho poço de Bashō, ouvir o ruído quase nada

da água, e depois acompanhar os círculos concêntricos a se propagar e a desaparecer.
Quase um sonho. Quase vida real. (51) [Let Bashō's land arrive through my five senses, let it nestle in my lungs, imprint itself onto my fingerprints, undulate in green tea on my tongue, let a great Zen temple bell resonate in my ears, even if mixed with the profuse and distinct timbres of cell phones. Above all, let Bashō's land engrave itself onto my eyes and onto the memory of my eyes, even though it be amidst all the visual pollution of this Japan three hundred years later. See the frog leap in the old pond, listen to the faint murmur of the water, and then observe the concentric circles spread out and disappear (138)]

As Haruki explores Japan and delves into Bashō's journals he allows the words of the great poet to wash over his soul and open his mind to new understanding not only about nature, but also about the impermanence of life in general. As Haruki comes to understand the writings of Bashō, and also become aware about the transitivity of life around him, he finds peace and understanding in the identity that once was a closed off and misunderstood part of his life. Not only does Haruki gain clarity about his inconsistent and forbidden romance with Yukiko, but he also begins to accept and regret his negation of his Japanese identity. As Haruki ponders the work of Basho, he accepts that his longing and love for Yukiko may never work out the way he wants it to. His acceptance of the transitory, impermanent nature of this relationship and the fact that he will most likely never be a permanent part of her life shows how he is applying Basho's journal to the intimate details of his life. But perhaps the greatest change that Haruki undergoes is that of coming to regret his denial of his Japanese hybridity, and accept that part of himself. Sitting alone in a bar in Tokyo, Haruki begins to think about his relationship with his father and his Japanese heritage. Reminiscing on his mistakes he questions: "E por que eu nunca te dei

atenção...quando você vinha querer conversar sobre essas coisas comigo? E por que eu nunca dei a menor bola para as suas (minhas) origens japonesas, e por que nunca achei os meus olhos mais puxados do que o de qualquer brasileiro? Por que foi que eu te ignorei, e a mim também?” (Lisboa 100) [Any why did I never pay any attention to you...when you wanted to talk to me about these things? And why did I never care about your (my) Japanese origins, and why did I never think my eyes were any more slanted than any other Brazilians? Why was it that I ignored you, and myself as well? (71)]. Haruki’s recognition of the impermanence of his relationship with Yukiko, as well as his regret and longing for a chance to accept the identity that his father imparted to him demonstrate the protagonist’s development of mujōkan throughout the novel.

While Haruki’s struggles were based on a Japanese heritage that he shut out, Celina’s suffering came from loss and the inability to let go of pain. After arriving in Japan, Celina decides to follow the path set forth by Bashō, reading his journal with the end goal to arrive at Rakushisha. As the novel progresses, the truth of Celina’s depression comes to light. Her only daughter, Alice, was killed in a car accident while her husband was driving. Her inability to move on from her daughter’s death not only led to depression but also drove her away from her husband, leaving both of them to suffer alone. As Celina explores Japan and becomes entranced with the Japanese culture, she decides to also keep a diary of her experiences.

Nunca pensei em ter um diário. Nem quando era menina, nem quando adolescente.

Talvez esteja fazendo isso agora só porque não resisti ao papel fabricado no Japão...

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. O diário que Bashō escreveu perto daqui, quando estive de visita pela segunda vez ao seu discípulo Mukai Kyorai. (23)

[I’ve never thought about having a diary. Not even as a young girl, not even as an

adolescent. Conceivably I am only doing this now because I couldn't resist the paper they make here in Japan... I bought this notebook. This notebook became a diary. It was only later that I remembered about Matsuo Bashō and his *Saga nikki*, the diary that Bashō wrote near here, when he visited his disciple Mukai Kyorai for the second time. (21–22)]

Celina's decision to keep a diary, and consequentially to continue reading the diary of Bashō, leads her to follow the same path that the ancient poet did, which will lead her to Rakushisha. As Celina learns more about and begins to appreciate Japanese culture, she comes to understand better the transitivity of life itself. For the first time in the novel, Celina accepts that her daughter is not alive, that she won't grow to be another year older but will always continue to be seven years old. "Hoje é o aniversário de Alice. Hoje Alice faria aniversário. Mas os aniversários de Alice acabaram quando ela fez sete anos" (Lisboa 176) [Today is Alice's birthday. Today would have been Alice's birthday. But Alice's birthdays ended when she turned seven (133)]. The struggle of losing her daughter was for Celina a struggle of impermanence—she was unable and unwilling to accept the transitivity and abruptness of life, especially when it brought her sorrow. As Celina comes closer to the hut of fallen persimmons she is able to take the final step of forgiving her husband for the accident, and there, at Rakushisha, she is able to finally mourn the loss of her daughter. "Escorre pelo seu rosto aquela água salgada de uma estação interna das chuvas, sua íntima tsuyu⁹, que se inaugural agora" (Lisboa 180) [Down her face streams salty water from her own internal rainy season, her own intimate tsuyu, which now begins. (136)]. Celina's tears mix with the rain as she stands before Rakushisha, where she allows herself for the first time to accept not just the transience of life in general, but also the death of her daughter.

⁹ English translation: rainy season

The peace found by Lisboa's characters in *Rakushisha* comes from them allowing the writings of Bashō, and the concept of mujōkan to guide their actions, leading them to accept the instability and impermanence within their lives. Both characters develop the ability to search for answers within themselves. While Haruki's journey relates to his understanding his identity, Celina's journey is that of letting go of pain and learning to forgive. This search for oneself, a kind of "intramotion" shows the internal journey of understanding and acceptance and development of mujōkan that both Celina and Haruki need to overcome their struggles (Cury 23).

Although Celina does not have Japanese ancestry, her ability to experience mujōkan within the novel demonstrates the degree to which Bashō's aesthetics permeate not merely the plotted events of the novel but the narrative of those events by expressing an awareness of impermanence. Lisboa's novel and the concept of mujōkan work together to show not only the possibility of Japanese-Brazilians to accept and understand the transitivity of their identity but also to expand this concept to contemporary Brazilians, regardless of whether they claim Japanese heritage or not. Mujōkan is about having an awareness of the transitivity and impermanence of all things. The concept does apply adeptly to explain and help those Japanese-Brazilians struggling with hybrid identities to understand their place, but it also functions to help all Brazilians, and even more so, humanity in general, to understand that their existential search for meaning is a never-ending process, full of beginnings and ends, journeys and motion, instability and impermanence. As Lisboa eloquently writes, "A viagem nos ensina algumas coisas. Que a vida é o caminho e não o ponto fixo no espaço. Que nós somos feito a passagem dos dias e dos meses e dos anos, como escreveu o poeta japonês Matsuo Bashō num diário de viagem, e aquilo que possuímos de fato, nosso único bem, é a capacidade de locomoção. É o talento para viajar" (125) [Traveling teaches us a few things. That life is a path and not a fixed point in space. That we are like the passage of

the days and the months and the years, as the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō wrote in a travel diary, and that the one thing we do indeed possess, our only asset, is our capacity of locomotion. It is our talent for traveling (142)].

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Conference Length Paper

Brazil and Bashō: Negotiating Japanese-Brazilian Hybrid Identity

Through Mujōkan in Adriana Lisboa's *Rakushisha*

Reflecting on the unstable nature of cultural identities, the Jamaican-born cultural theorist and political activist Stuart Hall observes, “Cultural identity...is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’...Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (225). Hall’s statement regarding the transformation and overall malleability of identity demonstrates a concept that is replicated within most cultures, namely, that as established cultures come into contact with one another, concepts and principles from each culture may be passed on to the other. The unique nature of hybrid identities places them in completely different categories from their original sources; they do not belong to one culture or another, but they are, in and of themselves, a separate entity whose characteristics envelop a new group of people and practices. Due to the distinctiveness of hybrid forms of identity, it is not surprising that individuals who fall within the category of hybridity struggle to recognize and sometimes accept their identities. Do such individuals identify with one culture, the other, neither, or both?

Both scholars of cultural theory and contemporary authors frequently explore the ways in which various groups and individuals negotiate hybrid identities throughout the world. Within contemporary Brazilian literature, one form of hybridity that has captured the attention of well-known authors is the complex reality of Japanese-Brazilians.¹⁰ In particular, Adriana Lisboa’s

¹⁰ Critics disagree on the use of the hyphen when referring to hybrid identities. In his article “(Re) Creating Ethnicity: Middle Eastern Immigration to Brazil” Jeffrey Lesser argues that in “Brazil hyphenated identities are very real in spite of the fact that elite culture aggressively rejects such social constructions. Lesser’s argument that Japanese-Brazilians

novel *Rakushisha* offers new and profound insights into the concept of hybridity and the struggle Japanese-Brazilians face to understand and accept the cultures that make up their identities. Examining *Rakushisha* through the lens of Japanese literary concepts opens the novel to new understanding. The novel is not only about a character who is reading Japanese literature and engaging in his own pilgrimage, but the novel also reveals a keen interest in Japanese literary traditions, namely the writings of the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō.

One of the principal concepts present in the writings of Bashō is mujōkan. Mujōkan is a term that refers to a uniquely Japanese awareness of impermanence, a notion that also helps to explain the cycle of suffering, continuity, and regeneration that Lisboa's characters experience. In Lisboa's novel, the concept of mujōkan becomes overlaid onto the theme of hybridity, just as texts from distinct literary traditions become joined and connected in unexpected ways. Although hybrid identities by nature are unstable, constantly in motion and imbalanced, mujōkan presents a conceptual framework that allows for the possibility of accepting this instability and impermanence as a way of being, allowing Japanese-Brazilians to untangle the web of uncertainty surrounding their identity and embrace the transience of their culture and hybridity.

The question of cultural belonging is one raised by critics Ana Cristina Ferreira-Pinto and Regina Zilberman, who ask “‘O que é ser brasileiro?’ Ou seja, como definirmos a nação se esta, na realidade, apresenta-se heterogênea e pluricultural, formada pelo encontro de sujeitos de etnias diversas, que, embora constituindo uma entidade única que compartilha uma língua comum, são marcados, como é de se esperar, por influências várias e fortes” (20). Brazilian identity is based

are not accepted as Brazilians explains his use of the hyphen, whereas other scholars, such as Edward King, opt for an unhyphenated explanation of identity, they without providing a rationale as to why. I have chosen to include the hyphen in “Japanese-Brazilian” because it demonstrates not only the dual heritage of these individuals but also suggests that such individuals may not be accepted as being fully Brazilian, but who is torn between the two countries and cultures that make up his or her identity.

on ethnic diversity, which allows it to be a country whose identity is constantly in the process of transforming and adapting to include parts of the various different cultures from which it was formed; however, this was not the case when the Japanese arrived.

Despite their attempts to be a “transition” and to embrace both their Brazilian and Japanese identities, early Japanese-Brazilians in Brazil continued to be solely recognized as Japanese, labeled as outsiders by a culture whose roots were based in assimilation (Lesser 7). Thus, even though mixed races and hybridity are an essential part of Brazilian history and culture, such concepts were not universally applied. A preference for sameness is what pushes different cultures, such as Japanese, outside of the scope of the Brazilian culture. The accusation “You are no longer Japanese... You will never become a Brazilian. What are you then?” (Nishida 11) shows the struggle and rejection faced by many Brazilians of Japanese descent as they struggle to negotiate their hybrid identity. Because of the inability to fit the Japanese culture within the Brazilian national identity, a hybrid Japanese-Brazilian identity evolved in an attempt to recognize the different and seemingly incompatible cultures that defined this population.

The struggle to understand and negotiate Japanese-Brazilian hybridity continues to affect individuals who seek to reconcile their desire to inhabit both Brazilian and Japanese forms of identity, yet the implementation of the Japanese concept of *mujōkan*¹¹ allows these individuals to better understand and accept the uncertainties associated with their cultural positions. The concept of impermanence is not unique to Japanese culture but originates from the teachings of Buddha. Buddhism arrived in Japan in the sixth century after it was already popularized in other Asian

¹¹ When referring to the Japanese idea of impermanence, it is important to understand that the terms *mujō* and *mujōkan* are not the same and should not be treated as such. *Mujō* (無常) means impermanence, whereas *mujōkan* (無常感) refers to the *awareness* or perception of impermanence. Although various scholars referenced here will simply refer to the idea of impermanence as *mujō*, I am focusing on the *awareness of impermanence* and how this idea affects and is critical to the understanding of hybridity.

countries such as India and China. Within the teachings of classical Buddhism, “*anitya*, the notion of impermanence... is the idea that both the phenomenal world and our perceptions of it are constantly changing” (Inouye 31). The idea that all things are constantly changing, and consequently impermanent, was a major premise of Buddha’s philosophy of existence (Kalupahana 45), and this understanding was also applied to the notion of human life. In order to further understand the Buddhist conception of impermanence, it is important to recognize that “[t]he whole of Buddhist thought is permeated with the notion that life is transitory, not only in the fact that life terminates in death, but, more philosophically, that between birth and death we live in momentariness” (Inada 171). This momentariness, or the idea that life is fleeting and constantly changing was accepted by most educated people in premodern Japan, regardless of their association with religion (Steenstrup 3).

For the Japanese, *mujō* embraced and explained all changes in life, “the regular cycles of the seasons, the creative transformations formations of nature... the inevitability of death, the uncertainty of life, and so forth” (Barnhill, *Bashō's journey* 183). While *mujō* was often used to refer to death in regards the frailty of life and transience of all things (De Pieri 352), it was not a nihilistic point of view but rather a life-acknowledging concept (Baek 74). *Mujō* implies that nothing in this world is safe from change, but rather than seeing sadness in the impermanence of life, there is beauty in acknowledging the transitivity of all things.

Not long after Buddhism was popularized in Japan, the concept of *mujō* not only became a part of the Japanese culture but it also found expression in Japanese literary production. Authors continued to use *mujō* within their works, and the concept began to be applied to everything. As LaFleur argues, “This suggests that, from this point on, *mujō* was conceived of not only as *impermanence*—that is as a temporal category—but also as *instability*, a spatial one” (LaFleur 61).

This connection of understanding mujō to signify not only impermanence but also instability provided new meaning to the term mujōkan—not just an awareness of impermanence, but also an awareness of instability.

Perhaps the most well-known author of the Edo Period (1600-1867), Matsuo Bashō¹², was no stranger to the concept of mujōkan. In both his prose and poetry, Bashō was a master of the art of expressing impermanence. His works demonstrate an immense understanding not just of time but also of the imminence and unpredictability of this life. Bashō’s understanding and acceptance of mujōkan came from not only his skill as a writer but also his time as a wanderer. Indeed, many critics are quick to make the connection between Bashō and the theme of the journey, whether that be a physical journey, or the journey of life ultimately ending in death.

One of Bashō’s most important journeys occurred in 1691, when he traveled to Kyoto and stayed with his disciple Mukai Kyorai at Rakushisha, or “the villa of fallen persimmons¹³.” While staying at Rakushisha, Bashō wrote *Saga Nikki* [*Saga Diary*]. The diary focuses on his seventeen days spent at the villa, and within it he contemplates the transience of life. Within Adriana Lisboa’s novel, *Rakushisha*, the two main characters develop a connection to Bashō through his work, *Saga Diary*. Although mujōkan is not mentioned specifically in Lisboa’s texts, the themes present in Bashō’s diary resonate strongly with the journeys of Lisboa’s protagonists and also with the Lisboa’s aesthetic project. In *Rakushisha* the Japanese concept of mujōkan is overlaid on the

¹² Matsuo Bashō’s birth name was Matsuo Kinsaku. Born in 1644, he changed his name to Bashō, taking his influence from the banana plant. LaFleur explains, “Bashō...identified himself closely with the Buddhist principle of impermanence. This identification extended to the literary name he used for himself. For *bashō* means banana plant: a specimen of which grew near the famous poet’s hut.... It symbolized the frailty, the transiency, of his own life—as he liked to picture it” (68-69).

¹³ Kyorai’s hermitage gained the name “Rakushisha” after the disciple awoke one morning to find that the persimmons of almost 40 trees surrounding the hut had fallen due to a storm that night. This reference to the fallen persimmons is yet another allusion of the concept of mujō within Japanese culture.

Brazilian concept of hybridity in way that illuminates the struggles to reconcile Japanese-Brazilian identity.

Negotiating hybrid identity, as already discussed, calls for not only insight into the culture and practices of each identity but also an understanding of how these two different cultures react to one another. When identity is analyzed through the idea of impermanence, it becomes clear that not just nature is affected by transitivity, but that “everything is subject to the law of impermanence: human relations, social positions, human beings... and this nobody can deny” (Marra 334). Identities are indeed subject to the law impermanence. In *Rakushisha*, the concept of mujōkan emerges as a principle that might allow Japanese-Brazilians to understand and negotiate their identity.

Rakushisha tells the story of two individuals who meet by chance on a subway in Rio de Janeiro, Haruki and Celina. The characters appear incredibly different from each other, they have their own secrets and issues—Haruki struggles with the Japanese side of his identity, and Celina hides her despair and depression that continues to plague her life. On a whim, Celina agrees to accompany Haruki to Japan, but once they arrive, the two embark on completely separate journeys. Although the two journeys within the novel are quite different—the poetry of Bashō appears in the narrative as a way of helping Celina and Haruki move along their journeys, that is, Lisboa embeds translations of Bashō’s writings throughout the work as a way to acknowledge the transformation Celina and Haruki experience and encourage readers to be similarly swept up in the words of the great poet.

As Haruki explores Japan and delves into Bashō’s journals he allows the words of the great poet to wash over his soul and open his mind to new understanding not only about nature, but also about the impermanence of life in general. As Haruki comes to understand the writings

of Bashō, and also become aware about the transitivity of life around him, he finds peace and understanding in the identity that once was a closed off and misunderstood part of his life. Sitting alone in a bar in Tokyo, Haruki begins to think about his relationship with his father and his Japanese heritage. Reminiscing on his mistakes he questions: ‘ Haruki’s recognition of this regret and longing for a chance to accept the identity that his father imparted to him demonstrates the protagonist’s development of mujōkan throughout the novel.

While Haruki’s struggles were based on a Japanese heritage that he shut out, Celina’s suffering came from loss and the inability to let go of pain. After arriving in Japan, Celina decides to follow the path set forth by Bashō, reading his journal with the end goal to arrive at Rakushisha. As the novel progresses, the truth of Celina’s depression comes to light. Her only daughter, Alice, was killed in a car accident while her husband was driving. Her inability to move on from her daughter’s death not only led to depression but also drove her away from her husband, leaving both of them to suffer alone. As Celina learns more about and begins to appreciate Japanese culture, she comes to understand better the transitivity of life itself. The struggle of losing her daughter was for Celina a struggle of impermanence—she was unable and unwilling to accept the transitivity and abruptness of life, especially when it brought her sorrow. As Celina comes closer to the hut of fallen persimmons she is able to take the final step of forgiving her husband for the accident, and there, at Rakushisha, she is able to finally mourn the loss of her daughter. “Escorre pelo seu rosto aquela água salgada de uma estação interna das chuvas, sua íntima tsuyu¹⁴, que se inaugural agora” (Lisboa 180). Celina’s tears mix with the rain as she stands before Rakushisha, where she allows herself for the first time to accept not just the transience of life in general, but also the death of her daughter.

¹⁴ English translation: rainy season

Although Celina does not have Japanese ancestry, her ability to experience mujōkan within the novel demonstrates that degree to which Bashō's aesthetics permeate not merely the plotted events of the novel but the narrative of those events by expressing an awareness of impermanence. Lisboa's novel and the concept of mujōkan work together to show not only the possibility of Japanese-Brazilians to accept and understand the transitivity of their identity but also to expand this concept to contemporary Brazilians, regardless of whether they claim Japanese heritage or not. Mujōkan is about having an awareness of the transitivity and impermanence of all things. The concept does apply adeptly to explain and help those Japanese-Brazilians struggling with hybrid identities to understand their place, but it also functions to help all Brazilians, and even more so, humanity in general, to understand that their existential search for meaning is a never-ending process, full of beginnings and ends, journeys and motion, instability and impermanence. As Lisboa so eloquently writes, "A viagem nos ensina algumas coisas. Que a vida é o caminho e não o ponto fixo no espaço. Que nós somos feito a passagem dos dias e dos meses e dos anos, como escreveu o poeta japonês Matsuo Bashō num diário de viagem, e aquilo que possuímos de fato, nosso único bem, é a capacidade de locomoção. É o talento para viajar" (125).

Sample Submission Letter

Suzanne Shibuta
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT 84602

[Date]

Dear [Editor name],

I wish to submit an original research article entitled “Brazil and Bashō: Negotiating Japanese-Brazilian Hybrid Identity through Mujōkan in Adriana Lisboa’s *Rakushisha*” for consideration by [journal name]. I confirm that this work is original and has not been published elsewhere, nor is it currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

In this paper, I examine the unstable and imbalanced nature of hybrid identities, and I explain how a conceptual framework based in mujōkan, the Japanese concept of an awareness of impermanence, creates new possibilities for the understanding and acceptance of these transitive identities. Although the article focuses on the ability of Japanese-Brazilians to negotiate their hybrid identity, I firmly believe that the article would be of interest to any party who is interested in the concept of identity, regardless of their cultural heritage.

Please address all correspondence concerning this manuscript to me at sshibuta08@gmail.com.

Thank you for your consideration of this manuscript.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Shibuta

Identification of Scholarly Venues

After researching the interests and requirements of several academic journals, I have decided that the three scholarly venues to which I would like to send my finalized manuscript are: *The Comparatist*, *A Revista Brasileira de Literatura Comparada*, and *Brasil/Brazil*.

I first heard about *The Comparatist* from a colleague of Dr. Nielson's and also a professor here at BYU, Dr. Emron Esplin. When Dr. Nielson and I first discussed academic venues, we talked about the possibility of sending my thesis to venues that focused on comparative literature because of the connection between Japan and Brazil within my research. After reviewing the structural guidelines of submissions to *The Comparatist*, I found that my paper does meet their requirements. Further, I am interested in this venue because of the diversity that I found within previously published editions. Because the journal focuses on comparative literature, rather than Luso-Brazilian literature, the journal offers a great deal of variety within the articles, the majority of which were published in English. This indicates that the topic of my paper falls within the scope of the journal. Additionally, the journal has published articles that also focus on the connections between Japan and Brazil, as well as identity. One such article is "Japanese Encounters with Latin America and Iberian Catholicism (1549–1973): Some Thoughts on Language, Imperialism, Identity Formation, and Comparative Research," published by Inaga Shigemi. I was also pleased to find that I was able to access the journal without problems online through BYU, so that if my article were published it would have a greater reach than a journal which is not available online.

My second chosen venue is *A Revista Brasileira de Literatura Comparada*. Dr. Nielson and I came across this venue when first searching for contemporary literature options for my

thesis. After further researching the journal guidelines, I was pleased to find that they do in fact publish articles in English and that my paper met all other requirements. I am interested in this venue because my main audience for my paper are Brazilians, or those interested in Brazilian literature, so a magazine published by the Brazilian Association of Compared Literature was a perfect place to start. Upon further research, I found that the journal is available at several top universities across the country that have exceptional Portuguese programs, such as Brown, UCLA, Vanderbilt, and the University of Texas, amongst others. I was able to find an article on their online database that also researches compared literature in relation to Japan, “A ‘New Study’ with 70 Year’s History,” written by Kyo Cho. Something that I also really enjoyed about this source was that the journal is open access. I was able to search and read full articles directly from their website. Further, because the journal is published in Brazil, if I were to have my thesis published by this venue, scholars in both Brazil and the United States (as well as other countries) would be able to easily access my work.

Finally, a journal that was suggested to me by Dr. Nielson, and for which my thesis meets all the literary requirements is *Brasil/Brazil*. I was drawn to the journal because while I was originally researching for my thesis I had come across this journal more than once. Although I did not find an article that talked about the Japanese in Brazil, the article “Confessing Diaspora from Within: Transgression and Afro-Brazilian Identity in Helena Parente Cunha’s *Mulher no Espelho*” by Rebecca Marquis, focuses on themes that are also present in my thesis, such as diaspora and identity. After further researching the journal I was impressed by the quality of their publications, as well as the academics that are associated with the publication. Further, because the journal is open-access, it means that my work would be readily available to scholars, and would have more opportunity to be read.