

Loss and Renewal in Three Narratives of the *Nikkei* Brazilian Diaspora: Ishikawa Tatsuzō's "Sōbō" and Its Sequels

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In this article I examine Ishikawa's "Sōbō," which won the first Akutagawa Prize in 1935, and its sequels, both of which were published in 1939 (the *Sōbō* trilogy appeared in book form in 1939). The trilogy begins with an account of a group of emigrants' experiences at the national emigration center in Kobe and then during forty-five days of travel to Brazil on a ship called *La Plata Maru*, and ends with their arrival in Brazil and several days spent on a coffee plantation there. All three stories are linked by a fictional character—a twenty-three-year-old woman named Onatsu whose apparent passivity or nonresistance to social hierarchies (including gender relations) mirrors the situation of many emigrants. Ishikawa's shifting voices about the troubling emigration program that formed part of the Japanese government's engagement with modernization and imperialism are discussed, along with the sociopolitical contexts of the 1930s (including censorship and full-scale war against China).

Keywords: emigration, Akutagawa Prize, censorship, imperialism, *Sōbō*, *nikkei*, *kimin*, diaspora, Brazil, Ishikawa Tatsuzō

In 1908 the ship *Kasato Maru* 笠戸丸 set sail from Kobe to Brazil, carrying the first 781 Japanese emigrants to become contract workers at Brazilian coffee plantations. Thousands more would soon make the transpacific voyage, seeking new opportunities, and many of them and their descendants were to remain in Brazil, which now has the world's largest overseas community of Japanese descent, the *nikkei* Brazilians.¹ The aspirations and dreams of the emigrant generations, the trauma and disappointment they frequently encountered, and Japan's ambivalence toward them and their descendants—including towards some who live in Japan today as temporary workers (*dekasegi* 出稼ぎ), in a reversal of this century-long diaspora—have been narrated in accounts ranging from newspaper reports, through Ishikawa's story "Sōbō" that won Japan's prestigious Akutagawa Prize 芥川賞 in its inaugural

¹ The term *nikkei* 日系 refers to Japanese emigrants from Japan, and their descendants, such as *nikkei* Brazilians, *nikkei* Peruvians, and *nikkei* Americans (Japanese-Americans).

year, to longer works of fiction and more.² While the Japanese-Brazilian diaspora has been well examined in terms of its history, demography, economic impact and, recently, musical production, less attention has been given to its literary production.³ This article seeks to correct this relative critical neglect by reading three narratives about early emigrants written by Ishikawa Tatsuzō 石川達三 (1905–1985). I will show how these stories embody shifting assessments of the sense of loss and renewal among participants in the Japanese-Brazilian diaspora during the 1930s, when Japan's colonial expansionism was at its zenith. The three stories are interrelated in complex ways to imperial history, to Ishikawa's own experience, and to the role of literature in this era of censorship and Japanese political debate. Ishikawa's trilogy articulated an ideological transformation that begins with the emigrants' sense of mourning and loss (of ties with the homeland), the physical displacement from the nation, the fading of the dream of returning home in triumph and prosperity, and culminates in a sense of renewal, a discovery of peace, and the prospect of happiness with a newly composed family in a minimalistic environment in a foreign land. The trilogy offers a distinctively humanistic and individualized perspective on the Japanese-Brazilian diaspora. This trajectory from loss to renewal can be read, on one level, as a shift away from critique of the government's emigration policies to acceptance or endorsement, but on another level, as a redirected commentary on Japan's wartime situation itself.

The earliest of the accounts discussed here, "Sōbō" 蒼氓, which won the first Akutagawa Prize and brought the obscure writer Ishikawa instant fame, was published in 1935 in Japan, nearly thirty years after the voyage of the *Kasato Maru*. Along with its two sequels, both published in 1939, "Sōbō" follows a group of emigrants who depart from the national emigration center in Kobe in 1930, traveling on a ship called *La Plata Maru* ラプラタ丸, and arrive in Brazil, where they settled. As an assistant supervisor of the emigrants, Ishikawa himself was among the travelers on that ship; in 1930, he was a twenty-five-year-old college dropout with a government subsidy that provided for a free voyage. Upon arriving in Brazil, he worked for a month on a coffee plantation (the Fazenda Santo Antonio) in Santa Rosa near São Paulo, stayed in the city for another month or so, and then left Brazil on the pretext of getting married. Ishikawa returned to Japan via the U.S. and never went back to Brazil.⁴ Yet even forty years after this trip, he stated that it was his witnessing of the hundreds of wretched peasants in the Kobe center that motivated him to become a writer.⁵

2 The term *dekasegi* (literally, leaving home to earn money) was originally used for the internal circulation of workers within Japan, particularly men from rural areas who came to the cities as seasonal workers and sent money back to their families in their home towns. In the 1980s, *dekasegi* (*dekassegui* in Portuguese) was also applied to the rapidly increasing numbers of foreigners who came to Japan to look for jobs, intending to return to their native countries after saving enough money to support their families there.

3 Important recent studies of the Japanese-Brazilian diaspora include Adachi 2006; Hosokawa 2012 and 2013; Maeyama 2001; Lesser 2003; Linger 2001; Masterson 2004; and Burajiru Nihon Imin Shiryōkan 2008.

4 Through an acquaintance, Ishikawa was sent as a contract laborer to the Fazenda Santo Antonio, where he lived with a Japanese family for a month. His travel diary records that upon arrival at the train station after a long journey, he was given a buggy ride half way to his destination; he then walked for more than three hours through hills and dense woods, and at night he finally arrived at the Mera 米良 family's home. There the family told him that he was lucky not to have been attacked by thieves and killed.

5 Uchiyama 2001, p. 85. As shown in the *Yomiuri* newspaper headline on 11 August 1935, "The first Akutagawa Prize/to Unknown Writer (無名作家) /Ishikawa's "Sōbō," winning the prize brought prompt public recognition to the previously unknown Ishikawa. Kawahara 2015, p. 109.

Ishikawa's Brazil stories are thus partly autobiographical, though they focus not so much on him (or on his persona) as on the other travelers and their attempts to believe in a new and better life in a foreign land. The three stories are linked together through a fictional character, a twenty-three-year-old woman named Satō Onatsu 佐藤お夏 whose acquiescence in her condition mirrors the situation of many emigrants. Ishikawa reflects upon the sociopolitical stresses of the early-Showa era in "Sōbō," and critically documents the troubling and misleading emigration program that was integral to the Japanese government's engagement with modernization and the expansion of its overseas territories. Ishikawa provides a continuous narrative about the characters in his two subsequent stories about Brazil, "Nankai kōro" 南海航路 ("The South Sea Line") and "Koenaki tami" 聲無き民 ("Voiceless People"), both of which appeared in 1939 in the magazine *Chōhen bunko* 長編文庫. Serialized in February, March, June, and July, "Nankai kōro" took the narrative to the point of the ship's arrival in Brazil; appearing in July, "Koenaki tami" explored the travelers' arrival in Santos and their first few days in a coffee plantation in Brazil. In these sequels the critical voice becomes muted, to the extent that the second and third narratives' retrospectives on the diasporic experience invite a re-reading of the initial tale. I will argue that the shifting political contexts of the late 1930s, including Ishikawa's encounter with censorship, influenced his writing of the two later stories about Brazil. His position as critic of the emigration movement was already complicated, ambivalent, and nuanced in the fictional "Sōbō," but he largely relinquished it by the time the story's two sequels were published in 1939.

Ishikawa's *Sōbō* Trilogy in Context

All three stories reverberate with Ishikawa's concern for the human effects of Japan's policies on emigration. After the Meiji restoration in 1868, Japan's efforts to emulate Western modernization by transforming from an agricultural to an industrialized nation had caused profound social and labor-related problems, including dislocations and surpluses in the workforce, which led to mass transpacific immigration to Hawai'i and to the continental United States.⁶ Early in the twentieth century, when Japanese workers faced exclusion from the U.S. under the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 (later reinforced by the Exclusion Acts of 1924), the Japanese government responded by promoting emigration to Brazil, where there had been a shortage of labor for the coffee plantations since black slavery was ended in 1888.⁷ The first wave of Japanese-Brazilian labor emigration was inaugurated with the 1908 voyage of the *Kasato Maru*, as noted above. In 1921, the São Paulo government terminated its subsidy for the emigrants' passage, but further fragility in Japan's social and economic situation (mainly due to the great Kanto earthquake of 1923) led to a second wave that started in 1925 and lasted through 1941. This time it was the Japanese government that sponsored the exportation of laborers, in a project called *kokusaku imin* 国策移民, "emigrants under a national policy," which targeted workers to "recruit, finance, train, transport, and resettle" them in Brazil.⁸ A government-sponsored emigration

6 Azuma 2005, p. 275.

7 Brazil's interest in receiving Japanese laborers had increased after 1902, when the importation of Italian workers, formerly a major workforce component, was terminated by the Italian government due to their alleged "unfair treatment." Masterson 2004, p. 45.

8 Endoh 2009, pp. 2, 31.

company, Kaigai Kōgyō 海外興業 (literally, the Overseas Development Company, abbreviated as Kaikō), recruited the emigrants, making false promises of rapid prosperity in Brazil, and the Japanese government paid their travel expenses. In 1928, the *Kokuritsu kaigai imin shūyōjo* 国立海外移民収容所 (National Emigration Center) was built in Kobe to serve as the pre-departure site where emigrants would learn about Brazilian culture and language in preparation for their employment as plantation workers in Brazil. Ishikawa's "Sōbō" explores the week-long experiences of a group of such emigrants in that Kobe center. Right after the peak year of 1934, Japanese immigration was sharply restricted due to Brazil's nationalization project.⁹ In the meantime, Japan's occupation of Manchuria created new directions for emigration in 1931, and a "five million migration to Manchukuo" campaign began in 1936, with similar promises of fast fortunes.¹⁰ Japan's interest quickly shifted to China at the outbreak of full-scale war against China in 1937, and Brazil was no longer of high priority.

Concomitant with Japan's growing militarism and shifting position on emigration in the 1930s, the government tightened restrictions on people's lives. In particular, systematic censorship escalated, targeting writers, including Ishikawa; censorship remained in effect until the end of World War II. Any expression that "disturbed public peace and order" or was "injurious to public morals" had long been subject to censorship under the Publication Law (Shuppan Hō 出版法) of 1893 and the Press Law (Shinbunshi Jōrei 新聞紙条例) of 1909. Clashes between those who produced or distributed creative works, including authors and editors in publishing houses, and the Home Ministry officials who censored them, increased after passage of the Peace Preservation Law (Chian Iji Hō 治安維持法) in 1925.¹¹ After 1927, the use of *fuseji* 伏字 (伏せ字; literally, concealed characters; redaction marks) to replace censored text with marks such as "x x" and "o o," or with a blank space with the number of deleted characters and lines indicated in parentheses, now became the responsibility of authors and editors, in contrast to the previous practice of negotiation between editors and censors. *Fuseji* thus became a symbol of self-censorship, but also of resistance against the authorities. As Jonathan Abel explains, such *fuseji* "cannot be erased or banned, nor can [they] be adequately or fully named ... [*Fuseji*] are both the words not on the page and a marker of explicit social taboos subverted by their inscription within itself."¹² The editor's (and/or author's) self-censorship through *fuseji* often invited, rather than precluded, efforts on the part of readers to "read" these unreadable marks. The practice of *fuseji* was gradually phased out toward the end of the 1930s, and military law completely forbade it at the beginning of the Pacific War in 1941.¹³

Ishikawa's Brazil stories, produced under such ominous circumstances in the 1930s, memorialize one shipload of travelers in the second transpacific wave of state-sponsored human circulations. His narratives exist in several iterations. In 1930, during his trip to

9 Endoh 2009, p. 33. Foreigners who did not fit the new *Brasildade* (Brazilness), including Japanese migrants, were targeted as enemies. From 1936 to 1941, only 22,500 Japanese, the majority of them brides for settled immigrants, migrated to Brazil, and Japanese immigration to Brazil was completely banned when Brazil joined the Allied Forces in January 1942 at the outbreak of the Pacific War.

10 Tierney 2010, p. 21.

11 Toeda 2012, p. 96.

12 Abel 2012, p. 146.

13 Hutchinson 2013, p. 7.

Brazil and his return to Japan via the U.S., Ishikawa wrote more than fifty brief travel diaries, which were regularly published in the Japanese magazine *Kokumin jiron* 国民時論.¹⁴ In 1931, the collected travel diaries appeared as a book, *Saikin nanbei ōraiki* 最近南米往来記 (A Record of Recent South American Travel).¹⁵ In 1935, Ishikawa expanded and transformed the first two chapters of this book, “Kōbe o deru made” 神戸を出るまで (“Until the departure from Kobe”) and “Rapurata Maru” ラプラタ丸 (“La Plata Maru”), into the fictional story “Sōbō,” which he published in the literary coterie magazine *Seiza* 星座. Further, in August 1939, the story “Sōbō” and its two sequels were published together in book form as *Sōbō (sanbu saku)* 蒼氓 (三部作) (Sōbō Trilogy). In the travel diaries he wrote in 1930 and the story “Sōbō” (1935 and later versions), Ishikawa critiques the emigration movement as a “Brazil rush,” organized by the emigration agency, in which the travelers, most of them impoverished, were thrown out into an alien world on the pretext that they would rapidly become wealthy in their new role as *kaigai hatten no senkusha* 海外発展の先駆者 (“pioneers of international development”).¹⁶ The tone of these diaries, however, is sharper and more direct than the later versions. The end of the “Kōbe o deru made” diary, for example, describes “the huge yellow building” in Kobe (the emigration center) as a symbol of the “national disgrace and the deficiency of the government”;¹⁷ and in “Rapurata Maru,” Ishikawa calls on Japan to “consider the discontinuation of emigration, by improving its society and government.”¹⁸ Transformations of genre—from diaries (travel journal entries) into short stories—enabled Ishikawa to create his own fictional world, in which the episodes and their characters convey, often discreetly and ambiguously, his views of the era in which he lived.

The title of the story “Sōbō” 蒼氓, which can be translated as “All People” or as “Dispersed People,” immediately signals translocation through its use of uncommon Chinese characters, especially *bō* 氓, which is composed of two radicals, 亡 (dead/lost/destroyed/forgotten) and 民 (people; lit. “forgotten/lost” people), implying such transitory individuals as nomads and migrants. Combined with *sō* 蒼 (the dark blue-ish color of certain grasses), the title suggests the author’s empathy with and sympathy for the poor and ignorant emigrants who, like grass, were repeatedly trodden down, yet were resilient enough to survive.¹⁹ A mood of gloom and uncertainty dominates the obscure setting of the story’s opening passage: “March 8, 1930. It is raining at Kobe port. It is foggy in the spring rain. The sea looks grey and the town is dark, as if it were already evening.” From early in the day

14 Prior to his trip to Brazil, Ishikawa worked as an assistant editor for the electrical trade journal *Kokumin jiron*. He received an allowance for his trip on the understanding that he would regularly send travel diaries to the journal’s publisher during his voyage.

15 These nonfiction travel diaries are filled with observations of Japanese emigrants and foreign travelers during the voyage; reports of brief episodes when Ishikawa walked around in port cities such as Hong Kong, Saigon, Singapore, Durban, and Cape Town; and accounts of his experiences in São Paulo and on the coffee plantation in Brazil, as well as in the U.S., where he briefly stayed in several cities on his way back to Japan.

16 Ishikawa 1931, pp. 13–14.

17 Ishikawa 1931, p. 18.

18 Ishikawa 1931, p. 22.

19 Iwaya 1988, p. 1064.

onwards, countless automobiles drove uphill on the muddy road to the national emigration center “in an almost incessant line—to Brazil, to Brazil!”²⁰

Onatsu's Travels and Travails

The word “travel” in English derives from the same root as “travail,” and certainly one of Ishikawa's goals in his stories was to counter triumphalist narratives of the Japanese arrival in Brazil as easy or consistently successful. In the trilogy *Sōbō*, he builds upon the varied diary components discussed above to create an imagined world that concentrates on a selection of lightly fictionalized characters and their families, describing individualized perceptions of private or prior experiences, beyond what an actual observer on such a journey would have witnessed. His fictional main character, Satō Onatsu, for example, not only represents the passivity, vulnerability, or nonresistance to social hierarchies found among many of the migrants, but she also has her own story of rape in Japan and the emotionally complicated aftermath it has entailed. Ishikawa uses migrants' diverse dialects (their communities of origin are distributed throughout Japan) and different social positions to paint realistic pictures of multiple ways of life. Though the majority of the travelers in the narrative are poor farm workers, they are differentiated from each other—and from travelers in better economic circumstances. For instance, from Kyūshū (in southwestern Japan) comes a family called Kurokawa 黒川—a very poor couple with ten unkempt children; they offer a stark contrast to a wealthy landowner family, the Katsutas 勝田 from Nagano in central Japan, who have already purchased land in Brazil through a government agency. The main protagonists represent the Tohoku region in the northeastern part of Japan. Like two historical individuals, Katō Momoe 百重 and her brother Magoji 孫治 (whose acquaintance Ishikawa made onboard the *La Plata Maru*), his fictional characters, Onatsu and her twenty-year-old brother Magoichi 孫市, come from Akita prefecture, as does the Ōizumi 大泉 family, which includes Ōizumi Shinnosuke, his wife, and their two children (five and thirteen years old).²¹ At the Kobe center, these two families were assigned to the same overnight room, probably because they were from the same region; they travelled together on the ship and within Brazil.

Ishikawa's most significant revision, from the records of his travel diaries to the imagined world of the short stories, was his creation of Onatsu and the inclusion of episodes of sexual violence against her.²² Onatsu embodies the suppressed condition of the disempowered, when their interests are trampled upon by others (as suggested by the title, “Sōbō”). Her brother needs to leave Japan to avoid military duty, and in response to his

20 Ishikawa 1935, p. 5. “Sōbō” is quoted from this 1935 original version published in *Seiza*. The translations are mine. An anonymous English translation of “Sōbō,” entitled “The Emigrants,” was serially published in the journal *The East* in 1985–1986, and seems to use one of the postwar editions of the story. After the war, Ishikawa made further adjustments to the first “Sōbō” story. For details, see Aoki 2008b, pp. 309–76.

21 Momoe (1907–1986) and Magoji 孫治 (1910–?) came from Yamagata prefecture in the Tohoku region, bordering Ishikawa's home town in Akita. Interviewed in 1973, Magoji said that during the voyage he had talked with Ishikawa about his family situation. Momoe, interviewed in 1976, when she was comfortably living with her family in São Paulo state, said that although some of the descriptions were unrelated to her (or her brother), Ishikawa's story was “the exact picture of the emigrants” at that time (Fujisaki 1997, p. 64; Uchiyama 2001, p. 83).

22 What is not clear, though, is whether the fictional character Onatsu's victimization at the Kobe center reflects Momoe's actual experience. Ishikawa's travel diaries mentioned no such victimization of women at any time in the journey.

repeated pleas, Onatsu agrees to enter into a marriage of convenience with his acquaintance Monma Katsuji 門馬勝治. Their loveless, sexless union will enable them to satisfy both the Brazilian government's expectations for families of workers and the Japanese government's conditions for a subsidy: a family unit including three or more laborers—a married couple under fifty-years-old, and their children or siblings over twelve-years-old—each member of which would receive travel funds of 200 yen.²³ Thus it is that five travelers—Magoichi, Onatsu and her new husband Katsuji, along with Katsuji's younger brother Yoshizō 義三 and their elderly mother—become an emigrant family.²⁴

Onatsu's passivity is manifested in her relationships with three men: Magoichi, her younger brother who is head of the household since their parents are dead; Horikawa 堀川, her supervisor in the spinning factory in Japan where she worked before her departure; and the ship's assistant supervisor for emigrants, Komizu, who shows up at the Kobe center a couple of days after the family's arrival there. As mentioned, the idea of going to Brazil was Magoichi's, and Onatsu has agreed to marry Katsuji because Magoichi needs her to compose a *kōsei* family. The subordinate position that she accepts here recalls her situation when she asked Horikawa, the factory survivor, for days off (due to her father's illness), and he violated her sexually in his office. A young man, "tall and slim with a pale manly face," Horikawa later even proposed to marry her, and in time she also came to love him.²⁵ He made his proposal, however, only after she reluctantly agreed to leave for Brazil, and there was little chance of her marrying him.

At the emigration center, Onatsu is again passive when subject to physical abuse from assistant supervisor Komizu, whose *kaishain rashii* 会社員らしい (businessman-like) appearance immediately differentiates him from the poor farmers.²⁶ As the narrator recounts:

She dreamt. It was a shameful dream. She felt the weight of Horikawa's chest. When she woke up, she realized it was not Horikawa, but the assistant manager Komizu.... She neither resisted Komizu nor tried to wake her brother, who was sleeping only two feet away.... She was completely submissive and showed no resistance. Komizu was anxious and uneasy about her indifference, as if she were a prostitute.... She thought that men [in general] would attack women suddenly, like this. Horikawa had done so, too ... [Afterward] ... Komizu's hand stretched out from the blanket to hold her hands ... His hand was as soft as any hand she had ever touched. It was the hand of city people, who have never done manual labor. She held his hand in return, without any self-reproach.²⁷

23 Around that time, the initial monthly salary of a college graduate was 73 yen and that of a policeman was 45 yen; the daily wages of factory workers in Tokyo were 1.6 yen. The subsidy of 200 yen was a major factor in the decision to emigrate. Shirakawa 2015.

24 The story intimates that many emigrant families, like that of Onatsu, were so-called *kōsei* families (*kōsei kazoku* 構成家族; individuals joined together on the family register in order to satisfy the criteria of the subsidy). The Kurokawa family from Kyūshū is another example. Their oldest child, thirteen years old, is not their own, but belongs to a relative, and has been brought along only because their nine children are all under twelve; they need at least one older child to constitute an eligible family.

25 Ishikawa 1935, p. 29.

26 Ishikawa 1935, p. 26.

27 Ishikawa 1935, pp. 28–29. The term I have translated as "attack" is (*osou* 襲う); it might also be translated as "assault."

Onatsu's passivity in response to Komizu's violation is followed by a gesture (holding his hand) that implies some degree of consent; in her attention to the softness of his hand she is alert to the more "civilized/modernized" male body, as though aspiring to a better life through clinging to a man of power rather than the poor farmer to whom she is ostensibly married.

In these passages about Onatsu's sexual violation by Horikawa and Komizu, Ishikawa points up the hierarchal, authoritarian nature of society which inevitably leads to the abuse, violation, or trafficking of poor women like Onatsu. Onatsu initially writes to Horikawa from the Kobe center, asking him to await her return, but as the emigration process unfolds she gradually realizes that she will not be able to return in a year, as Magoichi had promised, nor even in a few years; yet, she again makes no protest, accepting her fate silently. Her passivity can be seen as a weakness that enables others more easily to abuse her, or else as an inward strength that enables her to survive, which is indeed the outcome at the end of the trilogy.²⁸ In either case, a critique of abuses of hierarchy and authority is implicit, because the sexual violence is inflicted upon her by men who hold positions of power—the supervisor at the factory and the assistant supervisor at the center—not by fellow laborers (or her "husband"). However, Ishikawa's sensitivity to women's issues should not be exaggerated. His concern seems to be not with gender relations as such, but rather with class and status. Onatsu's violations are representative of those of all emigrants, male and female, subject to exploitation.

Ishikawa complicates this critique with his inclusion of another fictional character on the ship, an experienced and successful traveler named Horiuchi 堀内. Having lived in Brazil for four years, Horiuchi has temporarily brought his young son back to his hometown in Japan, where the child will live with relatives so he can receive a "proper" Japanese education. Now returning to Brazil, Horiuchi is one of the fortunate emigrants, the so-called *kigyō imin* 企業移民, who, unlike the plantation workers, have acquired land there probably through a Japanese agency. It is also noteworthy that Horiuchi has saved enough money to bring his son home. Observing the naïve and noisy optimism of the new emigrants at the center once they have passed their final medical exam, Horiuchi quietly speaks to the wealthy father of the Katsuta family, musing that "life in an isolated Brazilian village [where the majority of emigrants reside] is like living in a different world, without the intrusion of outside information or preoccupations. My only daily concerns there are the coffee crops and the upbringing of children; aside from these concerns, my [quiet] life has no distinction between yesterday and today."²⁹ Compared to the situation of agricultural workers in Japan, who are constantly fearful and threatened by the effects of modernization and civilization (*bunmei no kyōi* 文明の脅威), Horiuchi regards Brazil as offering an alternative, *nonki na* 暢気な (carefree), secluded existence where regeneration at a new and more comfortable (though static) level is possible.³⁰ It seems to him that the emigration center has collected "the drift of fallen leaves" (*ochiba no fukidamari* 落ち葉の吹き溜まり)—his expression for those who can no longer survive in their villages. Yet, upon arriving in Brazil, "new buds will come out from those fallen leaves."³¹ As a counterpart to other emigrants' exaggerated

28 Japanese (mostly male) critics seldom discuss Komizu's sexual violation of Onatsu. The female critic Sugiuchi Masako just mentions it as "the episode with Komizu" (p. 21) in her 1970 article on "Sōbō."

29 Ishikawa 1935, p. 22.

30 Ishikawa 1935, p. 16.

31 Ishikawa 1935, p. 22.

dreams of great and rapid wealth—dreams fed by government-sponsored inducements—Horiuchi represents a more pragmatic, modestly optimistic assessment of the Brazilian opportunities available for the relatively few, those who will find success as hardworking farmers in remote locations. Although Horiuchi is only a minor character in “Sōbō,” the quiet but satisfying way of life in Brazil that he experiences will be envisaged again at the end of the final story, “Voiceless people.”

As a group, Ishikawa’s disempowered, uneducated, and ill-informed emigrants, waiting in the dimness of the Kobe center’s processing room, effectively convey the painfulness of that era and the author’s sympathy for them. Ishikawa’s narrator does not disregard the inequalities among them, or idealize them or their propensities for fraud (as in the fake families and the avoidance of military service) or for injustice (as in Onatsu’s undesired marriage), but nevertheless he acknowledges their resilience and points out the ease with which many of them start to constitute new communities: “[Those poor] people come to know each other quickly because, unlike intellectuals, they feel no need for *kyoei* 虚栄 (vanity) and caution.”³² They also want to believe themselves to be “pioneers of overseas cultivation, and pioneers of infinite fertile land” as promoted on the emigration poster, rather than what Horiuchi calls “anxious and fearful fallen leaves.”³³

Arrival is deferred, however, and the end of the story returns partially to the dreariness and anxieties of its beginning in the sorrow of emigration. On the morning of embarkation, with most emigrants standing on the deck, shouting “Banzai!” in tears, Magoichi finds his sister Onatsu alone behind her bed at the bottom of the ship, crying aloud, perhaps thinking of Horikawa (whose marriage could provide her a comfortable life, staying in Japan). Her weeping—an unusual outburst of emotion—is ignored and is overcome by the sound of the engine, as the ship’s physical distance from Japan increases.

The Long Voyage to Brazil

Ishikawa’s second Brazilian story, “The South Sea Line,” foregrounds the travelers’ shipboard exhaustion, boredom, and continuing anxiety and endurance during the forty-five-day voyage, which they spend in crowded rooms at the very bottom of the ship—a reminder of their lowly status. The story reinforces the theme of the travelers’ passivity and nonresistance, centering on Onatsu’s interactions with assistant manager, Komizu. Troubled by his conscience, and attempting to forget his violation of Onatsu at the Kobe center (the narrator uses the term *kankei* 関係 [“relationship”] for that episode), Komizu tries to have only minimal contact with Onatsu on board ship, yet her brother Magoichi, who is unaware of Komizu’s wrongdoing to his sister, often approaches Komizu to seek his advice, and thus becomes a reminder of her. While Komizu’s feelings of remorse are repeatedly described, Onatsu herself seems to hold no grudge against him, and her quiet acceptance is stated as the “sign of docility/obedience (*sunao* 素直さ).”³⁴ As in the case of Horikawa, she “probably yearns after Komizu [after the sexual violence].”³⁵ She even, through Magoichi, offers to

32 Ishikawa 1935, p. 10.

33 Ishikawa 1935, p. 22.

34 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 163.

35 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 163.

wash clothes for Komizu. At first he turns down this unexpected offer, but then, believing that his abuse of her is forgiven, accepts it, rejoicing at her goodness (*zenryōsa* 善良さ) and loveliness (*karensa* 可憐さ). Receiving Komizu's clothes from her brother, Onatsu "washes them with care. Such [domestic] action could have brought her a wifely affection, but she has no intention either of seeking marriage or blaming him [for his violation]. His dirty shirts merely bring her memories back. She remembers the smell of his body."³⁶

For a twenty-first-century reader, Onatsu's offer of laundry services to the man who violated her may seem implausible, or at best naïve. Dramatically speaking, Onatsu's actions allow Komizu to salve his conscience by thinking he is forgiven, at the same time prompting feelings of regret for what he has done. Instead of verbally expressing his apology, Komizu gives Onatsu bottles of soda as a token of appreciation for her washing the laundry.³⁷ The rape, which is never identified as such, is displaced by the conventional relationship between a man and a woman who provides routine domestic work, as a servant might. As noted above, in "Sōbō" the term "attack" or "assault" (*osou*) was used for Komizu's act and, significantly, in a generalized way for the behavior that Onatsu expects of other men as well. Here in "The South Sea Line," once Onatsu's actions convince Komizu she holds no grudge against him, they can engage at least briefly in an interaction that has the appearance of conventionality: she washes the laundry, and he gives her a small token of appreciation. Onatsu's sexual exploitation is also a synecdoche for the exploitation of most of the migrants, and her attitude may not necessarily be implausible or naïve. In her hierarchical world, women's opportunities are dependent on men, especially men who have power and access to a better life, represented here by Komizu's soft hands. Her initiative in making the offer to provide domestic work—commonly women's work—can be read as a simultaneous assertion of her value within the social role she has accepted, as well as a recognition of her dependency. In that sense, she is indeed "a strong life-force like weeds."³⁸ She bends, but does so in order to survive.

Toward the end of this second story, Onatsu bends again. Having originally agreed to marry Katsuji only in order to create a *kōsei* family that would be eligible for the emigration subsidy, she decides to become his wife in reality. Twice during the voyage, Katsuji timidly asks her if she still intends to return to Japan in a few years, and says that if not, he wants to remain married despite their earlier agreement to divorce upon arrival in Brazil.³⁹ Her passive response to his second request, a response functionally the same as acceptance ("ask my brother ... I have nothing to say"), symbolizes her acquiescence to a socially approved role of resignation.⁴⁰ Rejecting the opportunity to speak for herself, saying only that she has nothing to say, she will become the wife of a man just as he and her brother desire.

Ishikawa inserts in the story several episodes to underline the silence or voicelessness of other emigrants as well. Other impoverished women travelers fall victim to abuse, this time not by the men of power, but by poor black laborers (*kokujin no ninpu* 黒人の入夫). When the ship has temporarily docked at Saigon and the women are sleeping in suffocatingly hot

36 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 165.

37 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 166.

38 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 241. The complex interdependencies that can occur between abuser and abused are of course a persistent topic of contemporary literature too.

39 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 194.

40 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 241.

and overcrowded spaces, the laborers come on board the ship, walk around, and touch their bodies. Some of the women, “awakened by the intruders, do not dare to scream for fear and shame.”⁴¹ After that incident, the women (including Onatsu) do not venture to walk around any port towns for fear of foreigners. That Ishikawa’s focus is on power and hierarchy, not exclusively on gender issues, is shown in another episode. On another occasion, male emigrants too reveal an inability to speak out effectively and to unite their concerns into one strong voice. When a noisy dispute about who repeatedly clogged the toilets develops among the travelers, the emigrants’ manager, Muramatsu, dismisses their conflict in an authoritative and threatening tone: “Think [hard] about the meaning of making a voyage to [Brazil] that the government is subsidizing with two-hundred-something yen per person! I will act against anyone who causes disorder for such a trifling matter!”⁴² Their “trifling matter” dismissed, the travelers fall silent. The ship is, not surprisingly, a reflection of the hierarchical society that the emigrants have left behind, and as that example shows, the response not only to gendered hierarchies but also to those of class and other aspects of power is usually silence or quiet acceptance.

The “good-natured” (*zenryō na*) Ōizumi observes the special treatment of the first-class passengers (including Muramatsu, government employees, and travelers from the West), and the privileges of the second-class passengers (including the wealthy Katsuta family, Komizu, and Horiuchi) not with objections to these contrasts, but with acceptance of his own subsidiary condition. Without expressing any resistance, Ōizumi just wants to proceed as soon as possible to the plantation in Brazil.⁴³

For travelers like Onatsu, the appropriate, though passive, response to social stratification is to focus on their future lives as farmers.

This second story, “The South Sea Line,” ends with the ship’s arrival in Rio de Janeiro on a day of special significance: “April 29. The loyal Japanese people did not forget this day even in the port of Rio.”⁴⁴ Without directly mentioning the emperor, the story implies the readers’ understanding that this is the date of the emperor’s birthday; all the immigrants shout “Banzai!” and sing the national anthem, shedding tears as they look up at the national flag. This seaport ending is reminiscent of the conclusion of the first story, with its emotional departure from the port at Kobe. The narration here reinforces not only the travelers’ sensation of being translocated far from their native land, but also their intense desire to remain connected with it. On the whole, however, in comparison to “Sōbō,” in this story there is less representation of pain and loss (e.g., there is no loud crying by Onatsu) and more acceptance and anticipation (e.g., Onatsu’s acceptance of becoming a real wife to Katsuji), though the story is still suffused with anxiety about the opportunities and potential for renewal to come.

41 Ishikawa 1939b, p. 169.

42 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 188.

43 Ishikawa 1939c, pp. 118–19.

44 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 256.

New Buds in Brazil

The third narrative of the trilogy, "Voiceless People," describes the arrival in Brazil of Onatsu and her newly formed family, along with the Ōizumi family, and the beginning of their lives on the coffee plantation leading to the construction of an idealized rural life. The migrants' passivity toward their new environment develops into positive acceptance and optimism with Komizu's imminent disappearance from the narrative. The story opens with the ship, having docked at Rio de Janeiro, leaving again for Santos International Seaport in São Paulo at night. Many of the men are drinking to celebrate the final night's voyage, when there occurs a brief, yet surprising contact between Onatsu and Komizu. As the ship reaches its destination, Komizu's uncooperative attitude toward the manager of emigrants Muramatsu has caused him to lose his position as assistant manager, and he is now left totally disconnected from his fellow travelers. On the very last night of the voyage, standing alone on deck, Komizu catches sight of Onatsu coming towards him and abruptly proposes to marry her: "If you wish, why don't you work with me? ... why don't you marry me? I'm alone, and I've wanted to marry you from the beginning."⁴⁵ Her unarticulated response is to sob and to hurry away, an echo of her weeping at the end of the first story when the ship departed Kobe. On the next day, after the ship has landed and all the migrants have left for their assigned coffee plantations, Komizu finds a brief letter from Onatsu on his bed, telling him that his proposal should have come much earlier.⁴⁶

This disconcerting sequence of the sexually violated woman, the laundry with its suggestion of material intimacy, the abuser's proposal, and the woman's letter recall the situation in "Sōbō," when Onatsu had written a letter from the Kobe emigration center to Horikawa, the supervisor at the spinning factory who had abused her and subsequently proposed marriage. Onatsu seems to represent all desperate women willing to consider any chance, even one originating in sexual violation, to achieve the financial security of marriage to a man with greater economic prospects. However, that outcome is precluded by Komizu's disappearance from the narrative. In his final scene, Komizu is isolated and alone in the vacant immigration center at Santos, awaiting the next morning's train that will take him to his designated plantation. The scene is reminiscent of the gloomy air of the Kobe center at the beginning of "Sōbō." Forgotten by his fellow travelers, including Onatsu and Magoichi, Komizu is not mentioned again.

From this point forward, all the conflicts and anxieties, the sorrow and victimization that were so apparent in "Sōbō," and sustained in a more muted way in "The South Sea Line," are—like the gloomy Komizu who disappears at this story's beginning—present no more. Now all is renewal. Onatsu's and Ōizumi's families are assigned to the same Italian-owned plantation in Santa Rosa (based on the one where Ishikawa himself stayed for a month). This plantation is already home to more than thirty families of contracted laborers, including two families from Japan, the Manabes and the Meras, who warmly welcome the new arrivals at the train station, take them to the plantation in wagons, and help them settle in. On the way to the plantation, the head of the Manabe family stops his wagon to pick oranges from nearby trees for the new arrivals, telling them not to dream of quick success, but to think of the rewards of subsistence and survival: "Brazil is a hell if you want to make

⁴⁵ Ishikawa 1939c, p. 262.

⁴⁶ Ishikawa 1939c, p. 282.

a fortune.... Yet it's a heaven if you merely want to eat [and live]."⁴⁷ Evidently the newcomers have already absorbed this pragmatic lesson. Although their houses turn out to be minimal, shed-like structures without doors or beds, nobody seems much disappointed or upset, not even during the first night when they all must sleep on the floor in their clothing.

Onatsu's adjustment to her new environment is rapid. The following morning, on the way to fetch water from the nearby river, she encounters a cheerful black laborer, who greets her with "*bom dia*" (Good morning).⁴⁸ This scene offers a stark contrast with that involving Onatsu and other Japanese women in the second story, where they avoided walking around port towns, and felt fear and panic when touched by black laborers as they slept. On the plantation, in the afternoon, an Italian girl carrying a bucket of water on her head also greets Onatsu with "*boa tarde*" (good afternoon) and gives her oranges. Onatsu replies with a smile, "*obrigada*," using a Portuguese word she has learned on the voyage.⁴⁹ Now, with no trace of uneasiness at finding herself among strangers who look different, Onatsu assures herself: "We can live here. I don't know the joys of life here yet, but absorbing the abundance of nature, picking fruits from the trees and wild pumpkins, wandering around barefoot—we can manage a human life here."⁵⁰ The "bright and peaceful" (*akarui nodoka na* 明るいのだかな) faces of her compatriots comfort her.⁵¹ The term "tranquil/pleasant/peaceful" (*nodoka na* のどかな) echoes Horiuchi's musings in the first story, "Sōbō," about the "carefree" (*nonki na*), nature of his place without the worries of the outside world.

Observing the peaceful landscape in the evening, when Orion's stars are shining, "the cows and horses have come home ... and children, all covered with mud, finally returned home after playing all day outside," the narrator states that "it's a quiet life, without ambition, conflict, or desire."⁵² "This life, though poor, is very different from the life of poverty at the bottom of civilized society [in Japan]."⁵³ This is the romantic concept that there is a "pure happiness, the happiness of primitive people" (*junsui na kōfuku, genshijin no yō na kōfuku* 純粋な幸福、原始人のやうな幸福) to be found in simple agricultural conditions.⁵⁴ Moreover, Mera remarks reassuringly that although the newcomers will miss Japan for the first year or two, their desire to return there will subside.⁵⁵ Onatsu's family immediately accepts this philosophy, abandoning their dream of going home after making a quick fortune, and instead embracing this minimal life that contains "something good" (*betsu no ii mono* 別のいいもの).⁵⁶ This viewpoint they themselves recall having heard in "the comments of the returnee [Horiuchi]" about the "carefree" life of farmers in Brazil.⁵⁷ Brazil is not the "ideal heaven" (*risō no tengoku* 理想の天国) they had imagined before leaving Japan—the plantation exists in nearly total isolation, like an island surrounded by

47 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 299.

48 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 303.

49 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 306.

50 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 303.

51 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 303.

52 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 307.

53 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 307.

54 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 314.

55 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 315.

56 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 308.

57 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 308.

the sea, and dangerous animals and poisonous insects abound.⁵⁸ Yet the narrator repeatedly points to the presence of “something good” in this new life.

Although their experience on the plantation has been extremely brief, Onatsu’s family has already reached a measure of closure. The three days they have to settle in before beginning to work have passed without drama, conflict, or distress (just as Horiuchi’s description of the quiet life would have predicted). Onatsu now feels totally relieved and happy to become Katsuji’s wife. Katsuji’s elderly mother, who had always complained of her miserable existence, objected to leaving Japan, and mostly stayed in bed throughout the voyage, now willingly accepts her life in Brazil and welcomes Onatsu as her son’s wife. The story ends with a traditional (and traditionally gendered) “happy family” scene on the morning of the third day, in which the two women, Onatsu and the elderly mother, see the three men off to work, cheerfully whistling as they walk away. Onatsu’s mother-in-law smiles contentedly and at the same time (as Onatsu observes) sheds a trickle of tears, saying that it will soon be time to look for a wife for Magoichi. The trilogy thus concludes with a “romantic-primitivist” or “triumphalist” presentation of the immigrants’ rural community, far from Japan and the noise of civilization.

A Prize, Censorship, Ideology, and Fictional Idealism

Four years passed between the publication of the first and last stories of Ishikawa’s Brazil trilogy. Among the factors that may account for the change in tone of the narratives from relative pessimism to relative optimism is the reception and recognition of the earlier stories. Let us look at two examples of how the first story was read, one by Japan’s literary establishment and the other by its literary censorship board. The founder of the Akutagawa Prize, Kikuchi Kan 菊池寛, stated in 1935 that the reason “Sōbō” was awarded the first such prize was Ishikawa’s skillful portrayal of ignorant (or abandoned) emigrants. Another member of the prize committee, Kume Masao 久米正雄, praised Ishikawa’s “solid style in using *tsūzoku teki* 通俗的 (popular and vulgar) writing methods in a good way, along with his unique subject matter, that causes readers to read through at one stretch,” while Satō Haruo 佐藤春夫 pointed to Ishikawa’s “skillful structure beyond the interesting subject matter.”⁵⁹ In these respects, “Sōbō” offered a contrast both to contemporary Japanese narratives that merely provided descriptions of the authors’ own everyday lives, as was common among *shishōsetsu* 私小説 (I-novel) writers; and to works that emphasized purely artistic values and emotional sensitivity, as in *shinkankaku-ha* 新感覚派 (the New Sensibility) writing around that time.⁶⁰ Ishikawa’s story was also different in some respects from the current proletarian literature, as will be noted below, and was welcomed by its audience for its “subject matter with *shakai-sei* 社会性 (sociality),” and its engagement with

⁵⁸ Ishikawa 1939c, p. 304.

⁵⁹ *Akutagawa shō zenshū* 芥川賞全集 1982, pp. 335–37. Kume Masao’s reference to “popular and vulgar” qualities of style probably refers to Ishikawa’s inclusion of dialects and local vulgar songs, while Satō Haruo’s “skillful structure” may refer to the way the narrative organizes its description of various emigrant families from all over Japan, while focusing on the main protagonist Onatsu and her family.

⁶⁰ As the representative form of modernist literature led by Yokomitsu Riichi 横光利一 (1898–1959), *shinkankaku-ha* resisted the Marxist literary movement “looking for inspiration instead to the literary techniques of postwar Europe” (Kato 1990, p. 242).

contemporary issues such as internationalization and emigration, as opposed to what the writer Hamano Kenzaburō 浜野健三郎 describes as “*shishōsetsu*-like escapist writings.”⁶¹

Nearly seventy years later, in his 2002 article on “Sōbō,” Matsumoto Kazuya 松本和也 points out that Ishikawa’s first story—in some respects a hybrid of certain elements of the proletarian literature that flourished in the 1920s and early 1930s, and of *hōkoku* 報告 (reportage) literature—joins other examples of literature of the 1930s in relying heavily on sociality as a major subject matter during the time of national mobilization.⁶² Matsumoto articulates the traces of proletarian literature in “Sōbō,” examining Kobayashi Takiji’s 小林多喜二 masterpiece *Kani kōsen* 蟹工船 (“The Crab Cannery Ship”), published in 1929, a year before Ishikawa’s journey to Brazil.⁶³ Drawing on Marxist ideology and historiography, Kobayashi’s novel described the dehumanized conditions of the workers on board and their resistance to authority. The reader is aware that “the power of the company managers is backed up by hierarchical power—the company itself, the government, and the emperor [at the top].”⁶⁴ As in Kobayashi’s work, proletarian literature typically emphasized the ways that Japan’s exploited classes rose up to challenge hierarchical structures through collective actions such as sabotage and demonstrations. In Ishikawa’s narrative, by contrast, the miserable conditions of the emigrants do not lead to any display of resistance, and the narrator seems to maintain the stance of a passive bystander. Hosokawa Shūhei 細川周平 similarly comments that “Sōbō” does not go beyond a realistic and sympathetic description of poor farmers and their families. He finds that while emphasizing *bunmei no kyōi* (the threats posed by civilization and modernization), the story avoids directly critiquing the government’s management of the processes of modernization or fully articulating the causes of the massive displacement of agricultural laborers and other workers.⁶⁵ Indeed, in “Sōbō” Ishikawa’s critique remains largely indirect, even though the story emphasizes the “sorrow, anxiety, and hope” of the emigration experience, points to social inequalities, and articulates the misleading promises associated with government programs and their implementation.⁶⁶

Why is the balance of gain and loss in the second, and especially in the third, story so different from the indirect critique that suffuses “Sōbō”? One explanation for the ideological shift within these three narratives of the Japanese-Brazilian diaspora might be the influence of censorship, though this explanation is not the only option. The presence of censorship or self-censorship was already minimally evident in the 1935 publication of Ishikawa’s “Sōbō,” where three sensitive words were removed through redaction marks or *fuseji* (in this case, the

61 Hamano Kenzaburō 1976, p. 103. Hamano Kenzaburō (1911–1995) was the author of *Wakai inochi* 若いいのち (1961) and *Senjō: Ruson haisenki* 戦場: ルソン敗戦記 (1979).

62 For the Akutagawa Prize in the mid and late 1930s the significance of the subject matter was paramount, as Ishikawa’s “Sōbō” demonstrates. The third Akutagawa Prize was also awarded to work dealing with locations in *gaichi* 外地 (outside of mainland Japan), rather than *naichi* 内地 (mainland Japan), including Tsuruta Tomoya’s 鶴田知也 portrayal of the Ainu leader Koshamain コシャメイン in “Koshamain-ki” コシャメイン記 (Story of Koshamain) and Oda Takeo’s 小田獄夫 depiction of a Japanese official’s experiences in colonial Shanghai, “Jōgai” (Outside of the Town).

63 The proletarian movement was effectively suppressed with the murder of Kobayashi at the hands of the police in 1933, two years before the publication of “Sōbō.”

64 Kato 1990, p. 231.

65 Hosokawa 2013, p. 713, and pp. 719–29. Like Matsumoto, Hosokawa also points out the lack of ideological depth in “Sōbō,” noting that it does not assert the sharper ideological claims that proletarian writings, such as Kobayashi’s novel, had already lodged against the capitalistic mode of production.

66 Iwaya 1988, p. 1064.

letter x): twice xxxx replaces *tennō heika* 天皇陛下 (“His Majesty the Emperor”); and once xx replaces *chōhei* 徴兵 (the draft) and *kensa* 検査 (a physical examination for the draft). When the travelers eat their first meal in the shabby dining hall in the Kobe emigration center, Yoshizō’s complaint that the food “doesn’t taste good” draws an angry retort from Magoichi: “How can you complain? It’s a meal from xxxx [His Majesty the Emperor].”⁶⁷ Similarly, on the day of departure for Brazil, when Ōizumi enters the huge, bare cabin assigned to the emigrants at the bottom of the ship, he murmurs in spite of himself: “Oh, this is like a storage place.” Yet the moment of negativity is again superseded as everyone recalls that they are receiving free travel, “thanks to xxxx [His Majesty the Emperor].”⁶⁸ Upon the departure from Kobe, Magoichi acknowledges, despite earlier denials, that his motivation for emigrating stemmed from his desire to escape the draft: “For the first time, he realizes that he is running away from xx [the draft/the physical exam for the draft]. He is running away from Japan. He won’t be caught any longer.”⁶⁹ The redacted words, with their “x” signifiers supplied by the editor (or the author), and their signifieds supplied by the reader’s understanding of taboo terms, intensify attention to these concepts rather than delete it.

By 1939, when the second and third stories were followed by publication of the trilogy *Sōbō* in book form, the first story, “Sōbō,” had been subjected to an increased amount of *fuseji*. This retrospective censorship clearly manifested the strengthening of the state’s power to control the expression of ideas.⁷⁰ The *fuseji* in the story were now recorded not as “x” marks, but as blank spaces on the page or parentheses enclosing a notation of the number of words deleted. In addition to the three words redacted in the 1935 version, as noted above, now more than twenty words and phrases were redacted with blanks. Ishikawa’s readers could easily “read” the short blanks, supplying such terms as His Majesty the Emperor, *kensa* (as in the 1935 version), and *heita* 兵隊 (military), yet it would have been difficult, without access to the earlier publication, to decode the longer blanks, such as *bokoku Nihon no matsuro* 母国日本の末路 (the last days of the motherland Japan) and *kokka soshiki no jūatsu* 国家組織の重圧 (heavy pressure from state organizations). Furthermore, in the scene of Komizu’s sexual assault on Onatsu, nearly two hundred words were redacted. For example, the mention of Horikawa at the beginning of the assault, Onatsu’s indifference resembling that of a prostitute, and Onatsu holding Komizu’s hand after the assault were all redacted. The scene was thus shortened and made less expressive, and all indication of Onatsu’s equivocal gesture of consent was removed. Near the end of the story, Magoichi’s motivation for emigration—that “he won’t be caught any more, and won’t have to go into the military”—is also redacted.⁷¹ In its 1939 reappearance, the story was thus seemingly

67 Ishikawa 1935, p. 11.

68 Ishikawa 1935, p. 53. Kawahara Michiko has mistakenly stated that the *Seiza* version of “Sōbō,” (on the basis of which Ishikawa received the Akutagawa Prize) had no redaction of the phrase “His Majesty the Emperor” (Kawahara 2015, p. 241).

69 Ishikawa 1935, p. 57.

70 Hutchinson, 2013, pp. 4–7. By 1940, “retrospective censorship” was enacted in order to erase all earlier evidence of opposition and thus present a “united ideological front, under the *kokutai* (imperial polity).”

71 Interestingly, the words or phrases redacted in Komizu’s rape scene and in Magoichi’s relief at avoiding military service were also deleted in postwar versions. For details of the changes in the 1935 version and postwar (1947) version of “Sōbō,” see Aoki 2008b, pp. 310–50.

tamed in tone, and yet at the same time, attentive readers presumably paid more attention to those redacted blanks in an effort to decode the meanings behind them.

In contrast to the extensive redaction visible in the 1939 reprinting of the first story (originally published in 1935), no redaction marks were displayed when the second and third stories were both published for the first time in 1939.⁷² The absence of *fuseji*—this “constant reminder of censorship from the public eye”—implies the writer’s (or editor’s) total self-censorship, even before physically writing down the stories or submitting them for publication.⁷³ However, astute readers of Ishikawa’s narratives would have noticed subtle traces of resistance as taboo words were replaced by euphemistic expressions or indirect terms. For instance, while in the first story the statement that free travel on the ship was due to “His Majesty the Emperor” was redacted, now his role is replaced with the “government,” and the immigrants’ miserable conditions on the ship, with bad food and overcrowded rooms, is described merely as due to *roha* ロハ (being free of charge, in the slang of the time).

Aside from such individual locations in the text where self-censorship or substitution is apparent, in Ishikawa’s second and especially his third narrative the overall criticism of Japanese policies that was earlier implied, as noted, seems greatly muted. It is significant that a similar shift in tone, with an initial position of critique becoming muted or absent, is evident in the sequence of two war reportage narratives that Ishikawa wrote about events in China and published at nearly the same time as the latter two Brazil stories. His fame as an Akutagawa Prize winner had persuaded the editors of the Chūō Kōronsha 中央公論社 publishing house to send him to China as a war reporter, and his reports “Ikite iru heitai” 生きている兵隊 (translated as “Soldiers Alive” or “Living Soldiers”) and “Bukan sakusen” 武漢作戦 (“The Wuhan Campaign”) appeared in the March 1938 and January 1939 issues of the magazine *Chūō kōron* 中央公論, respectively.⁷⁴ With “Soldiers Alive,” despite self-censorship and quick editorial intervention—the publisher received Ishikawa’s manuscript on the date of the deadline, and when it was printed nearly a quarter of the manuscript had been removed through deletion or redaction marks—this war report was banned. Further, Ishikawa, the magazine’s editor-in-chief, and the owner of the publishing house were all prosecuted for violating two articles of law (Shinbunshi Hō 新聞紙法) concerning the disruption of peace and order (*annei chitsujo o midasu* 安寧秩序を乱す). On 5 September 1938, Ishikawa was sentenced to four months in prison, with the sentence suspended for three years; the prosecutor appealed, but the final judgment, given in April 1939, upheld the first verdict.⁷⁵ In January 1939, when his sentence would have been under appeal, Ishikawa’s

72 The Home Ministry Police decided to prohibit the use of *fuseji* in 1936, and the authorities issued strong requests to writers and editors to drop this form of self-censorship. A total ban of *fuseji* took place in 1941 (Mitchell 1983, pp. 280–81).

73 Mitchell 1983, p. 281.

74 See Kubota 1969, pp. 566–67 and Ogura 1985, pp. 50–51. See also Cipris 2003, pp. 38–39; and Cook 2001, pp. 149–50.

75 In “Soldiers Alive” (banned in 1939, but published right after the war in December 1945), Ishikawa reports on realistic and graphic descriptions of the violence enacted by Japanese soldiers in Nanking (the events later called the Nanking Massacre). In contrast, in “The Wuhan Campaign” the Japanese personnel are presented as benevolent, not cruel. The latter piece is, as Zeljko Cipris puts it, “a piece of sanitized reportage adorned with sporadic literary touches,” rather than a realistic account (Cipris 2003, p. 40). See also Aoki 2008b, pp. 435–58.

second China war report, “The Wuhan Campaign,” was published, and in print it showed little redaction, a situation that suggests heavy self-censorship. Given the timetable of these experiences, self-protection against government sanctions may have been a factor that the tones of Ishikawa’s Brazil trilogy have changed. Ishikawa’s critique in his first story, already only indirect, was further diminished in its sequels. His second Brazil story began to be serialized in the magazine *Chōhen bunko* 長編文庫 in February of 1939, and his third Brazil story was published in the magazine in July 1939.

Ishikawa also framed the trilogy carefully in his preface to the August 1939 book that collected all three stories, stating:

[A]fter publishing the first story in 1935, due to various reasons, I could not continue writing the sequential stories. Four years later in this spring, I’ve [finally] completed the second and third stories. At the time of the publication of the first story, I was surprised to hear that some critics considered it to be resistance to the national emigration policy. I believe [my] intention is clear if you read to the end [of the entire trilogy]. I neither supported nor rejected the policy of the government ... I even displayed a positive interpretation of emigration through the returnees. Such affirmation, however, stems not from the false advertisements [of the government], but from my facing reality.⁷⁶

Ishikawa’s confession that he was “surprised” that the first story was received as being critical of government policy provides a clue as to how the series arrives at its bucolic ending. Ishikawa distinguishes between the realities of emigration and resistance to its false image, implying his motive was to articulate a broader truth than resistance alone. Accordingly the sequence of the three stories displays both the pain, anxiety, and loss incurred by many of the participants, and the satisfaction experienced by new arrivals, as well as by earlier emigrants such as Horiuchi, for whom Brazil had indeed provided a desirable new life.

After the war, in 1947, Ishikawa again changed course, expressing much more critical views of emigration that contradict his 1939 statement cited above. He now affirms that “the thousands of emigrants who were sent out to South America were an omen (*zenchō* 前兆), the prediction of Imperial Japan which led to the destruction of the country ... [and] to the Pacific War ... *Sōbō* is my sorrow and anger ... I still can’t help shedding tears at the end of the third story. I feel terror about the government policies which caused such a fate and human tragedy.”⁷⁷ Ishikawa’s angry postwar tone implicates the government policy of emigration and colonization both to South America (Brazil) and to China and other Asian countries. More than two decades later, in 1968, Ishikawa reiterated his conviction, in somewhat milder terms, that it was a mistake (*teochi* 手落ち) on the part of the Japanese government that caused those poor farmers to wander across a foreign land as *kimin* 棄民 (the abandoned).⁷⁸ Two years later, in 1970, Ishikawa further elucidated that his earlier

76 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 1. Echoing Ishikawa’s denial of a “protest against the government policy,” Ogikawa Tsurujirō similarly stated in the postscript to the 1939 *Sōbō* trilogy that readers should not think of Ishikawa’s story as protest. Ogikawa also comments that the trilogy presents “how the emigrants’ initial hope [nourished by the recruiters and the government] has been transformed, through their experiences, into a more realistic one” (Ishikawa 1939c, pp. 317, 319).

77 Aoki 2008b, pp. 354–55. Preface to *Ishikawa Tatsuzō senshū*, Ishikawa 1947.

78 Uchiyama 2001, p. 84; originally from Ishikawa, “Kokoro ni nokoru hitobito” 心に残る人々, 1968.

intention had been to write a “protest against the national emigration policy itself.”⁷⁹ These comments call into question the surprisingly peaceful world of the final story in the trilogy and reinforce the assessment that, at least in part, the shift of Ishikawa’s perspective reflected his (as well as the editor’s) self-censorship in the political setting of imperialistic Japan in the late 1930s.

However, self-censorship may be only one aspect of the shift that has occurred in this sequence of Brazil narratives. In “Voiceless People,” Ishikawa’s description of “pure happiness” in the insulated world of a plantation in Brazil might also be understood as a type of yearning or nostalgia for an alternative outcome, a distant location where—in contrast to the deeply troubling situation both within Japan and overseas with its aggressive colonization of China—it was indeed possible to lead a satisfying and quiet life. In this vision, a place still existed where family and personal conflicts could in fact be resolved, and where new beginnings could be undertaken with optimism. The final scene of “Voiceless People” brings into view only Onatsu and her small family, a fake family reconfigured as real, who willingly accept their new bucolic environment. This is a prototypical social unit, with its members fully reconciled to each other and with the implication of regeneration to come. There is one married couple and, the mother-in-law suggests, there may soon be another. At least for the moment, this family exists without the presence of “men of power,” or of any of those whose actions led to the translocation of this family to a coffee plantation in Brazil. As the good-natured Ōizumi desired to work on the plantation with his fellow poor laborers, rather than brooding over or attempting to overturn the hierarchal reality he encountered during the voyage, so Ishikawa may have desired to present a harmonious picture of the strong bonds within families and among the (mostly uneducated) farmers. His own experience might have led him to anticipate the intention of the government—that most of the laborers would become not *dekasegi* but *kimin*. If so, he rewrites the meaning of *kimin*, since this family, at least, seems willing to cut its ties. A few days after arrival at the plantation, Magoichi’s desire to write a letter to friends in Japan disappears, for he is already feeling disconnected from his native land. This is what Ishikawa calls “a positive interpretation of emigration” based on facing reality, rather than believing false advertisements. Thus Ishikawa demonstrates that in Brazil “new buds will come out” for the immigrants who no longer resemble fallen leaves. In this peaceful space, Onatsu’s family discards the dreams that had been nourished by the Japanese government, and discovers “another happiness” that reflects Ishikawa’s sympathy and empathy toward these forgotten people. Distant Brazil offered an alternative existence with opportunity for personal and social renewal.

Remembering Onatsu in Brazil

While the renewal of Onatsu’s family at the end of the Brazil trilogy may have been intended as a positive message to readers in Japan of the late 1930s, today’s readers may perceive rather negatively not only “Onatsu’s passivity concerning her forced marriage

79 Aoki 2008b, p. 355. See Ishikawa’s *Keikenteki shōsetsuron*, 1970. In 1976, Hamano, who also considered “Sōbō” as a criticism of the government emigration policy, stated that “Sōbō” was “fortunate” to have been published in 1935. If it had appeared a few years later, the story would have probably been banned in the increasingly fascist environment of the late 1930s (Hamano 1976, p. 101).

and voicelessness against sexual violation,”⁸⁰ but also the narrative’s dream-like resolution. This is all the more likely if they are aware of the actual history of Japanese emigrants of some eighty years ago. As in the case of the *Kasato Maru* emigrants in 1908, many of the actual travelers who arrived in Santos on *La Plata Maru* in April 1930—including Katō Momoe and her brother Magoji, the models for Onatsu and Magoichi—soon ran away from their assigned plantations because of the unbearably harsh conditions they encountered there.⁸¹ Even before Ishikawa’s trilogy was completed, the positive construct that he would postulate in its final section had already dissolved for some participants. Back in Japan, and continuing to rework his narrative materials from 1930, Ishikawa seems not to have fully realized the gap between his narrative and the Brazilian reality. In his preface to the 1939 trilogy, Ishikawa recalls the immigrants with whom he had traveled on *La Plata Maru*, stating, “it has been [nearly] ten years since I went to Brazil ... I haven’t heard any news about them since. I’m wondering if they have all settled in coffee plantations on that continent.”⁸² In his nostalgic tone, Brazil sounds far removed, physically and psychologically, both for Ishikawa and probably also for his Japanese readers, who by 1939 were preoccupied with Japan’s Asian neighbors. Nevertheless, his three Brazil stories retain their integrity and their interest as a fictional sequence concerning Onatsu and her family, with the optimistic vision that was built into the first tale mostly through the marginal character Horiuchi becoming central and essential in the third tale. In the end, its balance in the economy of loss and renewal is found to be unequivocally on the side of renewal.

The response to Ishikawa’s work in Brazil was different from that in Japan. According to Uchiyama Katsuo 内山勝男 (1910–2004), who went to Brazil in 1930 (coincidentally on the same ship as Ishikawa), the title story “Sōbō” was unpopular among the *nikkei* people in Brazil for a long time because it established the image of the Japanese immigrants as “dark and gloomy.” In contrast, the ending of the trilogy—creating a “bright image of *Nikkei* [people] and Brazil” through the newcomers, Onatsu and Magoichi—seems to have been warmly received and widely remembered, especially among the first generation (*issei* 一世) of *nikkei* Brazilians.⁸³ For them, the fictional character Onatsu came to represent the Japanese emigrant wife (*imin zuma* 移民妻), whose gentle, yet strong life-force enables her to support her husband and family and produce a comfortable life in Brazil, as the end of “Voiceless People” suggests.⁸⁴ In a nursing home for *nikkei* Brazilians on the outskirts of the city of São Paulo, in 1995, at the 100th commemoration of the bilateral relationship between Brazil and Japan, a stone monument called “Sōbō no hi” (蒼氓の碑) was built and inscribed with the following haiku:

Sōbō no/Onatsu no mura mo/haru no kaze 蒼氓のお夏の村も春の風
In Sōbō/Onatsu’s village too/wind of spring

80 Hosokawa 2013, p. 736.

81 Fujisaki 1997, p. 64; Uchiyama 2001, p. 83.

82 Ishikawa 1939c, p. 2.

83 Uchiyama 2001, pp. 79–80; Hosokawa 2013, pp. 736–37.

84 Maeyama has also stated that *imin zuma* is a symbol of the young women who were brought to Brazil by their husbands (without their own volition) yet who were strong (like weeds) despite and because of their voiceless existences. Maeyama 2001, p. 217.

The haiku was written by Takano Kōsei (高野耕声 1922–2008), who had emigrated to Brazil in 1934, four years after Ishikawa's voyage.⁸⁵ The haiku's reference to Onatsu's village could imply both her native village of Akita in Japan and the community of "pure happiness" she finds on the coffee plantation, or perhaps every emigrant's home village in Japan, and the communities where they eventually settle in Brazil. The haiku incorporates not only this reminder of the immigrant wife, Onatsu, but also the change in imagery from the gloomy "spring rain" at the very beginning of "Sōbō" to the hopeful warm "spring wind" at the end. It is no coincidence that a Portuguese translation of Ishikawa's trilogy was finally published in Brazil in 2008, a century after the 1908 pioneers of Japanese emigration to Brazil. Most of the first generation of immigrants who traveled on *La Plata Maru* in 1930 (including Momoe) are now gone, yet the voices of these "voiceless" people (including Onatsu) will be remembered through this latest iteration of Ishikawa's troubled but finally triumphant trilogy.

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85 Uchiyama 2001, pp. 76–77.

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