“The Subversive Potential of Parody in *Danchōtei nichijō*, Nagai Kafū’s World War II Diary”

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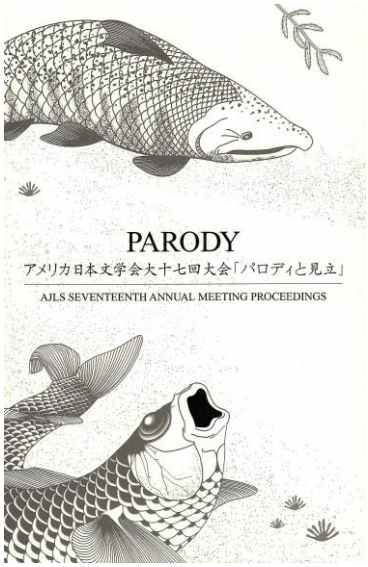

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THE SUBVERSIVE POTENTIAL OF PARODY IN *DANCHŌTEI NICHIJŌ,* NAGAI KAFŪ'S WORLD WAR II DIARY[1]

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Unable to publish during World War II, [2] the aging social novelist[3] Nagai Kafū (1879–1959) made his diary, *Danchōtei nichijō*

[1] This paper is based partly on my PhD dissertation, "*Iyami*, the Subversive Voice in the Wartime Writings of Nagai Kafū; with a Complete Translation of *The Other Shore of the Sumida* (*Bokutō Kidan*), 'Enduring Images' ('Omokage'), 'The Maid's Story' ('Jochū no hanashi'), and Other Late Works" (Washington University in St. Louis, 2001); hereafter "*Iyami*."

[2] Much ink has been spilled over the correct appellation of the war that raged in Asia in the early 1940s. Japan had been at war in China, intermittently, since the invasion of Manchuria in 1931. All-out war between Japan and China commenced in the summer of 1937, a conflict most historians refer to as the Second Sino-Japanese War but called the "China Incident" (Shina Jihen) in the contemporary Japanese press. Japanese forces continued to fight in China until the end of World War II, a fact reflected by the Chinese term for the conflict: the War Against Japanese Aggression. The Japanese blitzkrieg of December 1941 opened a vast new front of fighting. An Imperial Edict proclaimed this epic struggle to be the Great East Asia War (Dai Tō A Sensō), a name that fell into disfavor after Japan's defeat, although occasionally still used by Japanese right-wing groups. Meanwhile, the Japanese left wing treats the entire period of warfare from 1931 to 1945 as one conflict, aptly named the Fifteen Year War (Jūgonen Sensō). From the Japanese perspective, World War II (Dainiji Sekai Taisen) took place primarily in Europe. For the sake of simplicity, in this essay, the "Pacific War" (technically, the Asian Pacific War) indicates the Pacific Theater of World War II, 1941–1945.

[3] Several of Kafū's early works, published between 1903 and 1917, were banned for indecency. See Earhart, "*Iyami*," pp. 9–16, especially p. 34, n26. In the prewar era, the censorship board noted only that a work was banned on grounds of being morally or politically offensive, rarely providing further elaboration. Kafū publicly announced his retirement as an author in a seminal 1919 essay, "Fireworks" ("Hanabi"), which commented acerbically upon the closed trial and execution of the Socialist conspirators in the Kōtoku Incident of 1911 and the futility of the political novel in Japan (Earhart, "*Iyami*," pp. 17–19; Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* [Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984], pp. 120-121). Kafū reemerged as a major writer with a string of late works first appearing in 1931. In particular, he is remembered today for his 1937 masterpiece, *Bokutō Kidan* (*The Other Shore of the Sumida, a Romantic Narrative of Kafū the Recluse*, partial translation by Edward Seidensticker published as *A Strange Tale from East of the River* [Stanford: University of California, 1965]), a complex metafiction centering on an aging

(*The Diary of the Danchō*,[4] hereafter, *Diary*),[5] a critical record of the transformation of the Japanese home front into a total war society. Kafū's *Diary* recorded this transformation with mournful elegies to well loved people and places, punctuated by parodic blasts of grim humor. Parody was the most expedient means to mock the pompous arrogance of the military and criticize the hypocrisy of the state-mediated official narrative of current events. By exploiting the subversive potential of parody, the *Diary*'s discordant narrative of the war provided future

writer's relationships to a prostitute and to his craft, with a strong undercurrent of political commentary (Earhart, "*Iyami*," pp. 175–212). The following year, he published a collection of novellas, *Omokage* (*Enduring Images*, 1938, unpublished translation in Earhart, "*Iyami*," pp. 414–446) that also dared comment critically on contemporary events. It was the last work of fiction he could publish until after World War II ended (Earhart, "*Iyami*," p. 241). Communications with his publisher, Iwanami, indicated their reluctance to publish new work by Kafū after 1939, as the publishing industry came under greater scrutiny and eventually, nearly all writing not directly tied to the war effort was suspended. Kafū's refusal to join the semi-governmental Japanese Literature Patriotic Society (Nippon Bungaku Hōkoku Kai) also had consequences. When the JLPS published their *Standard History of Japanese Literature* (*Hyōjun Nihonbungaku Shi* [Tokyo: DaiTōA Shuppan, 1944]), they singled him out for unusually harsh criticism, describing his mature works as "little more than imitations of Western culture," reflecting an "aesthetic neither constructive nor healthy." (p. 332) That Kafū ran afoul of Japan's wartime government is evidenced by the 1944 seizure and destruction of the entire stock of his most popular novel at the time, *Udekurabe* (*Geisha in Rivalry*), a serious financial blow.

[4] Kafū's sobriquet, "danchō" literally means "dyspepsia," from which Kafū suffered most of his adult life, although it is also the name of a begonia connoting "a bleeding heart."

[5] A book with a complicated publication history, *Danchōtei nichijō* spans over four decades, from 1917 until Kafū's death in 1959. The entire work was first published in multiple volumes by Hirade Shoten beginning in 1958, although the standard edition was brought out by Kafū's longtime publisher Iwanami in seven volumes from 1963 to 1965; these were reedited (based on a reexamination of the original manuscripts), annotated for textual variations, and published in 1991–1995. However, the five years of the diary spanning the Pacific War (from 1 January 1941 through 31 December 1945)—the period with which this study is concerned—were published in 1947–1948 with the titles *Kafū nichireki (Kafū's Diary*, covering 1941–1944, 2 volumes) and *Risai Nichiroku* (literally, *A Daily Account of the Calamity*, the diary for 1945). Kafū had begun printing sections of these works in several literary magazines as early as November 1945, attesting to his eagerness to share his wartime experience with a larger audience. In this paper, all citations are from *Kafū Zenshū* ([*The Complete Works of Nagai Kafū*] Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992–1995), hereafter, *KZ*.

generations of readers with an alternative cultural history—indeed, an antihistory spanning the cultural chasm of a cataclysmic era.

The *Diary*'s parodic writing falls well within the limits of Linda Hutcheon's broadly inclusive definition of parody: "imitation with a critical difference, not always at the expense of the parodied text." Indeed, unusual for its contemporary Japanese context, the *Diary* meets a more restrictive definition of political parody: its intertextual referents are readily identifiable and its unequivocally critical comments target sitting political potentates.[6] The *Diary*'s parodies give vent to the anti-military sentiments of Kafū's novels and novellas of the late 1930s, which at first blush may appear indebted to the great satirists of the European tradition, in particular Jonathan Swift. Kafū, however, publicly (and correctly) identified himself and his novels with the grand romantic and comic tradition of late Edo *gesaku* writers, especially Tamenaga Shunsui (1790–1843/44) and Ryūtei Tanehiko (1783–1842),[7] as borne out in Kafū's unabashed fascination for bourgeois society's professed discomfiture over its baser instincts, its uncerebral animal functions, and the general messiness of human life.

Two initial observations about the parodic passages of *The Diary of the Danchō* should complement the findings of other researchers. First, parody is not only intertextual but intermedial. Although Kafū's parodies are entirely textual constructions, they cite images immediately recognizable to any contemporary reader of the Japanese wartime press. This intermediality has important antecedents in *gesaku*, in which plot may be conveyed as much by image as by text, and in which image may parody text and vice-versa.

Second, in Kafū's case, parody remained a valid writerly practice only while Japan appeared to be winning the war. When Saipan fell to Allied forces in the summer of 1944, Japan's defeat was imminent. The press glorified the massive civilian suicide on Saipan, describing it as proof that all Japanese were ready and willing to die for the sake of nation and emperor, and signaling to all Japanese, ultra-patriots or not,

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[6] Jonathan Swift, the first writer in the English language to define the difference between satire and prose parody, did so in "The Apology for the Satires," a preface added to the second edition of *A Tale of A Tub, Written for the Universal Improvement of Mankind* (4th ed., London: John Nutt, 1705). Swift was at pains to explain that his elaborate parody functioned to criticize political powers without explicitly naming them and thereby incurring their wrath. Swift underscored the unflattering nature of parody, noting it is imitation of "an author one wishes to expose."

[7] Earhart, "*Iyami*," pp. 126–133.

that their lives were expendable. (Today, historical consensus attributes the majority of these civilian suicides to coercion by the Japanese military.) Allied air raids on Japan's home islands commenced later that year, terrorizing the Japanese population until the surrender of 15 August 1945. With the people around him suffering terribly and the very survival of Japan in question, Kafū abandoned parodic writing. Thus, in the case of the *Diary*, parody could only be deployed as a counterweight to the hubris of a stable, albeit oppressive, regime. Once the state's authority was diminished and its monolithic façade crumbling, parody became implausible. This state of affairs suggests the conditions and limitations of political parody, not only in Japanese literature of this period, but perhaps in any society in which discourse is tightly controlled and regulated by a seemingly omnipotent, centralized state. Political parody in Kafū's *Diary* functions as a rather benign parasite that requires a robust host, a relationship that surely has parallels in the works of writers of other times and places laboring under the onus of oppressive totalitarian regimes.

Several examples of parody in Kafū's *Diary* demonstrate its subversion of the Japanese government's official narrative of the war, with referents supplied from contemporary Japanese newsjournals in a loose chronology from Pearl Harbor to Japan's defeat. During the war years, the media was tightly controlled by the government[8] through both proscriptive and prescriptive measures. The private press was censored and curtailed, and the government, through a media consortium known as the Cabinet Information Bureau (Jōhōbu),[9] published its own news-magazines, most notably the highly influential *Shashin Shūhō*[10] (*Photographic Weekly Report*, hereafter *PWR*).

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[8] David C. Earhart, *Certain Victory: Images of World War II in the Japanese Media* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2008), p. 9, 89, 99, 162, 203, 320, 322–324, 342; Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), pp. 256–278; Gregory J. Kasza, *The State and the Mass Media in Japan, 1918–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 168–231.

[9] For the history of the Cabinet Information Bureau and an overview of its operations, see Earhart, *Certain Victory*, pp. 7–9, 108–110; Kasza, *The State and the Mass Media in Japan, 1918–1945*, especially pp. 152–153, 157, 174–187, and 219–224; Paul M. A. Linebarger, *Pyschological Warfare* (Washington, D. C.: Infantry Journal, 1948), pp. 184–185.

[10] For *PWR* publication data and circulation figures, see Earhart, *Certain Victory*, pp. 7–8, 486–488; Nanba Kōji, *"Uchiteshi Yamamu": Taiheiyō sensō to hōkoku no gijutsusha tachi* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1998), pp. 54–55.

When war broke out with the Western powers on 8 December 1941 (7 December in the Western hemisphere), the streets and public places throughout Japan's towns and cities were plastered with inflammatory patriotic slogans. "Ichioku hi no tama da!" literally translated, means "One Hundred Million Fireballs!" or more freely, "We One Hundred Million Japanese Subjects Have Raging Morale!"

Figure 1. Left: An advertisement for Matsuda Lamp, with the slogan "Advance, One Hundred Million, With Raging Morale" arranged as a strikingly modern collage. *Asahigraph* (38:1–2), 31 December 1941 and 7 January 1942, back cover. Right: An advertisement for Chimori, a vitamin and hormone concoction, with the slogans "Slaughter Them! America and Britain, They're Our Enemies" and "Advance, One Hundred Million, With Raging Morale." *Asahigraph* (38:4), *Great East Asia War Report* 4, 21 January 1942, p. 23.[11]

Kafū, who as a young man had lived for four years in the US and one in France, was a lifelong admirer of Western writers, and felt

[11] All texts and translations from David C. Earhart, *Certain Victory: Images of World War II in the Japanese Media* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008). Copyright © 2008 by M.E. Sharpe, Inc. Reprinted with permission. All Rights Reserved. Not for reproduction. (Hereafter, Earhart, *Certain Victory*.) For these illustrations, see pp. 215–216.

disgusted by these slogans, as his *Diary* entry for 12 December 1941 attests:

> Today I saw, along with the Declaration of War displayed in streetcars and other such places, propaganda posters that say:
>
> Slaughter Britain-America—
> That's our enemy!
> Advance One Hundred Million—
> That's our raging morale!
>
> A certain someone, as a joke,[12] made a parody[13] of this and stuck it in a roadside public toilet:
>
> Of yore Britain and America,
> Our respected teachers they.
> How could one hundred million,
> Our debt to them ever repay?

Kafū ("a certain someone") cites the text he parodies and analyzes it: "The propagandistic phrases (*kōkokubun*) of 'modern people' march to the beat of 'That's!': 'That's steel!' 'That's power!' 'That's national strength!' 'That's whatever!' Bombastic rubbish, indeed."[14] In both his published fiction of the late 1930s and here in the *Diary*, he refers euphemistically to Japan's military overlords and their supporters as "modern people," he being a self-professed "recluse,"[15] an old man from a bygone era.

During the first year of the Pacific War, the newspapers were filled with reports of the stunning victories as the seemingly invincible, "war-winning nation" Japan rapidly advanced through Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Kafū had long disparaged the exploits of Japan's military, and

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[12] In the original Japanese, *ge ni*, "ge" here being the same as that of *gesaku*, a rather unusual usage of significance to the larger discussion of Kafū as the last *gesakusha* and of *gesaku* as a parodic literary tradition.

[13] The Japanese reads *mojiri*. A standard Japanese dictionary, *Daijirin*, explains that *mojiri* is to take an original word or phrase and mimic it comically, that is, parody (for which the loan-word *parodii* is supplied).

[14] *KZ* 24, p. 393.

[15] In Japanese, *sanjin*, a word Kafū affixed to his name as the author of *Bokutō kidan* (1937) and *Omokage* (1938). In these works, Kafū frequently referred to his advanced age and his being "out of step" with the times. See my translations of these works in Earhart, "*Iyami*," pp. 312–485.

from the outset of Japan's Pacific adventure, even as the Japanese Army and Navy stunned the world with a string of remarkable victories, he viewed the war's progress with skepticism. The *Diary* caustically remarked on 5 January 1942 that "According to a neighbor, salt and soy sauce have been sold out since the end of last year, and there is no predicting when, if ever, the sake shop will be coming [to make deliveries]. The sugar ration will not be distributed until after the tenth. The more this becomes a 'war-winning' country, the less there is to eat."[16] Later the same month, he dryly noted: "No toilet paper, no tissues, and public baths to be closed more frequently. That ought to serve as some indication of the filthiness of the ladies and girls of this Victor Nation" (23 January 1942).[17]

The mobilization of the home front for a protracted battle on two fronts (the war in China that had begun in 1937 and the Pacific Theater of World War II) demanded total allegiance to the authority of the militarized government and complete dedication to the war effort. These goals were expressed through public relations campaigns with jingoistic slogans such as "ichioku isshin," literally "100 Million, One Mind" an expression of the home front's selfless unity, under the emperor's will, to do whatever was required for the sacred purpose of "holy war" (*seisen*). Individuality was also the enemy in the war against the West, and any form of dissension was expressly forbidden. All Japanese were expected to comport themselves in a dignified manner appropriate to the upright leaders of a New Order in Asia. Sober stoicism and heartfelt gratitude toward the military were de rigeur, even when celebrating victory, such as the stunning surrender of Singapore, on 18 February 1942, when all citizens were commanded to give thanks to Japan's protective deities and fighting men for this auspicious victory. The entire nation was given a day off—the only such day of national celebration during the Pacific War—and special rations of sake (for adults) and candy (for children) were distributed. The highpoint of the celebration was Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki leading the entire Japanese Empire in a live radio broadcast cheer of "banzai!" Newspapers and magazines duly printed stirring stories and photographs of celebrations held in every city, town, and hamlet, some filled with local color, but all including solemn prayers at the nearest Gokoku jinja (literally,"Nation-Protecting Shrine") honoring local deceased soldiers and sailors.

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[16] *KZ* 25, p. 6.
[17] Ibid., p. 8.

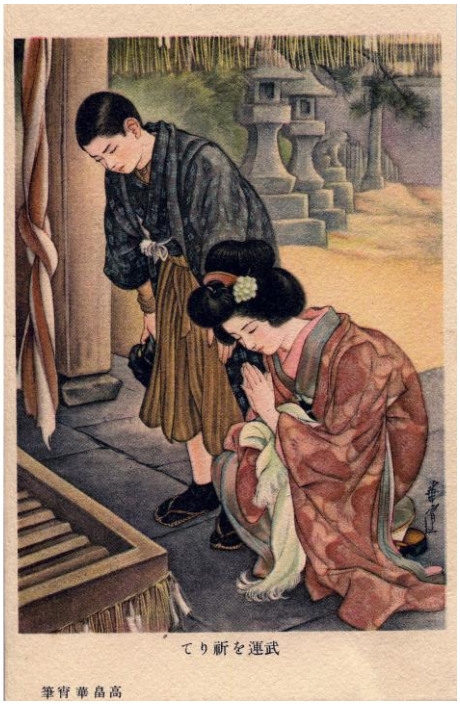

Figure 2. Prayers for Japan's mighty military were to be offered with the utmost sincerity. This painting, "Praying for a Soldier's Fortune" by Takabatake Kashō, shows a mother and son praying for the military success of their man in the service. It was one in a series of such postcards issued in the mid-1930s by the Patriotic Soldiers' Relief Fund, a veterans' assistance society.[18]

Figure 2 provides a visual context in which to read Kafū's comments upon the fall of Singapore, recorded in the *Diary* on 18 February 1942, the day of nationwide celebration:

> I saw a group of women at Shirahige Shrine who, on closer inspection, proved to be Tamanoi whores. A man from their Neighborhood Association had rounded them up, had them form a battalion, and marched them there to offer congratulatory prayers for the fall of Singapore. It was comical in the extreme![19]

[18] Earhart, *Certain Victory*, p. 161.
[19] *KZ* 25, p. 14.

The Tamanoi was the roughest and crudest of Tokyo's many brothel districts, its women famous for their uncouth, earthy manners, which would have been at odds with the Spartan image of the "Leader Nation of Great East Asia," Japan. Kafū, who opposed the war because he saw it as a culturally corrosive, dangerous folly, did note that it brought a rather ironic justice to the smug middle class his novels had often lampooned. The *Diary*'s commentary on the "bamboo spear" policy is a literary parody of a famous wartime visual image, that of housewives wielding weapons (Figure 3).

> . . . The wives and women of respectable families, between the ages of 20 and 40 years, are to be trained in fending off attacking American paratroopers. The proposed strategy is to have the said women fashion spears of bamboo and armed with these, jab the American soldiers right between their eyes when their parachutes alight. The military dispatched a bamboo-spear instructor for three days' practice, which took place from 10 in the morning until three in the afternoon without a break. It was said that there were injuries among the women. Hearing about ladies of good birth training with spears is riotously funny—almost as good as listening to an obscene story. (19 February 1943)[20]

Figure 3. *PWR* 269, 28 April 1943, p. 3. During the annual "Citizens' Health Campaign," housewives were ordered to train with bamboo spears. The title of this article is "Training Mothers to be Healthy Soldiers."[21]

[20] Ibid., pp. 87–88.
[21] Earhart, *Certain Victory*, p. 179.

If Kafū's acerbic comments on the bamboo spear policy seem unfeeling, his contempt for the military exceeded the bounds of good taste. He gleefully composed a "savage poem"[22] upon hearing the news that, following a black out, an unnamed vice admiral had been run over and killed on a busy downtown street.

> Finally retribution comes
> For strutting about,
> Shoulders slicing the air:
> One night the beads of life
> Turn to grit beneath a car wheel. (16 March 1942) [23]

Japan's war against the Western imperial powers was described as a sacred war, a crusade to create a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere—an "Asia for Asiatics" free of Western influence. Naturally, in this arrangement Japan, bringer of civilization and enlightenment, was "big brother" to many Asian "little brothers." The "Nipponification" of Asia followed quickly on the heels of military conquest. Images objectifying exotic places and peoples in lands occupied by Japan were extremely popular in the Japanese press throughout 1942 and 1943 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. *PWR* 230, 22 July 1942, p. 21. "Plastering Over with Nippongo." In Manila, Japanese replaces English on street signs, shop signs, menus, and children's textbooks. A window-shopping young Filipino looks at a Nippongo language chart, displayed prominently above an English-language board game with the ironic name, "Strategy."[24]

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[22] *Hinauta*, an unsophisticated poem composed by a peasant. For "hina," Kafū here uses a nonstandard character, in this case one commonly read "ebisu" (a peasant living far from civilization, a savage).
[23] *KZ* 25, p. 20.
[24] Earhart, *Certain Victory*, p. 277.

In two of his most successful early works, *American Stories* (*Amerika monogatari*, 1908) and *French Stories* (*Furansu monogatari*, 1909) Kafū had written about his firsthand experiences abroad of both prejudice and liberating acceptance. He was appalled by the racial superiority Americans expressed toward all Asians, yet felt no great kinship for the uncouth Japanese laborers and slick Japanese businessmen he encountered in the United States.[25] In Kafū's eyes, Japan's expansion into Southeast Asia was little more than a Japanese version of the wrongs of Western imperialism, as he wrote in his diary on 5 July 1943, when he jotted down overheard conversation under the heading "unfunny jokes":

> Item: You can say it is absolutely mean-spirited and wrong when the kid next door scales the garden wall and steals your persimmons, but you cannot reproach a member of your own family even if you know he ate another family's figs. That certainly tells you what Japanese justice and morals are all about.[26]

Of course, Kafū's parody relies upon recognizing persimmons as a Japanese fruit and figs as being native to Southeast Asia. While this may seem rather arcane, the story Kafū tells here is very similar to a plot found in a wildly popular Fukuchan cartoon.[27]

Parody disappeared from Kafū's diary by the end of 1943, as the war situation grew bleak. Although military historians generally agree that the tide of war had turned against Japan as early as May 1942, when the Battle of Midway was fought, the Japanese government, military, and media conspired to convince the population that the war was winnable. Kafū seemed to know otherwise, as he comments, without sarcasm or humor, on 31 December 1943:

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[25] Mitsuko Iriye, trans., *American Stories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. xvii–xix.
[26] *KZ* 25, p. 127.
[27] See, for instance, *Fukuchan no yoi kodomo* (Fukuchan's Good Kids), a 1941 *kamishibai* published by the Nihon Kyōiku Kamishibai Kyōkai, panels 13 and 14. Fukuchan befriends the neighborhood bully, Kinbō, who is always picking on him. Fukuchan, with an eye to reform Kinbō, gives him a small present. Kinbō, in turn, offers to repay Fukuchan's kindness with a persimmon he will steal by scaling a neighbor's fence. Fukuchan protests, of course. Fukuchan's protestations are overheard by the neighbor, who rewards Fukuchan's virtue with the very persimmon Kinbō intended to steal.

Since the beginning of citizen conscription this fall, the poisonous influence of the militarized government has spread to every sector of society. Fathers 44 or 45 years old have lost their family businesses generations old and become factory hands; their sons of 16 or 17 have left school and gone to work in factories from where they are called up to die on the front; and the mothers agonize over how to raise children when there is no food. For the sake of the Nation, everyone is strapped with more tax than they can bear. Winning or losing no longer matters now. There is nothing left to do but hope that the war ends even one day sooner. I secretly think, however, that when the time comes to announce the end of the war, the government will be even more violent and brutal.[28]

Figure 5. *PWR* 289, 15 September 1943, back cover. One of the many advertisements the newly created Air Force Bureau published in late 1943, this one recruiting boys ages eleven to thirteen for its five-year full course and ages sixteen to nineteen for its one-year pilot training course. The minimal requirements are stated, along with the deadline for applying.[29]

[28] *KZ* 25, pp. 188–189.
[29] Earhart, *Certain Victory*, p. 202.

Following the Allied seizure of Saipan in the summer of 1944, the Japanese government demanded that the home front make even greater sacrifices for the war effort, and Japan became a joyless, drab, hungry, desperate place. By this time Kafū, denied even the smallest pleasures, grew exasperated with a war that seemed ruthlessly inhuman and without resolution. His diary entries for 1944 attest to a weakening of his resolve to serve as an aloof critic of the futility of Japan's war. For instance, on 27 May 1944, he notices that the stray cats have all disappeared from the neighborhood and writes, "How pitiful to think that all living creatures in the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere are in a state of starvation. Swallows! Wait not for autumn [to migrate], hurry home now. Geese! When autumn sets in, do not come to the Co-prosperity Sphere!"[30]

The Allies continued to build airfields closer and closer to the Japanese home islands, and the threat of air raids loomed. Although friends urged him to leave the Japanese capital, Kafū decided to stay in his Tokyo home, which he had last left in 1921 to travel to Osaka. The *Diary*'s account of the 25 February 1945 air raid on Tokyo shows parody replaced by fear. Kafū describes his own preparations for the raid: treating himself to some of his last good tobacco and coffee with "a generous amount of sugar" in it, since

> If this were to be the end, then I wanted to leave no desire unfulfilled. All the while the radio next door had been blaring its noise; suddenly the sound of explosions rattled the panes of the doors. What with the snow, there was little point going to the shelter out in the garden, so without further ado I chose the closet and crawled under the shelf for bedding. . . . Some time later, everything outside grew quiet, and finally I heard voices announcing the all-clear. When I looked at my watch it was 4 PM, and the house was already dark. Through the window I could see that heavy clouds covered the sky. The snow was falling soundlessly, in an eerie way that seemed terribly unnatural. Ordinarily, in a peaceful world, the sight of snow spontaneously brings to mind something like a verse of Bashō's or scenes from a sojourn of long ago. On this day, however, it brings nothing but fear that the world may be ending and death lurking nearby.[31]

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[30] *KZ* 25, p. 222. Kafū routinely, and quite pointedly, omitted the word "Greater" when referring to the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.
[31] Ibid., p. 301.

Thousands of people died in this raid, but Kafū's area was unaffected. The next air raid on Tokyo was the infamous Great Kanto Air Raid of 9–10 March. Kafū's house was completely destroyed and his precious library with it. He barely escaped with his life and his satchel bag of manuscripts, including this diary.

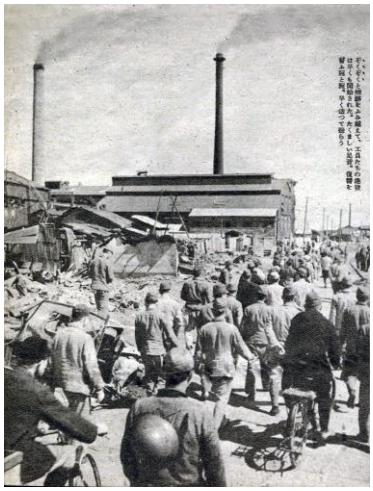

Figure 6. *PWR* 364–365, 28 March 1945, front cover and p. 6. Aftermath of the Great Tokyo Air Raid. (left) Survivors return to their former homes to clear away rubble and plant crops. The information at the bottom of the page provides planting instructions for different staple foods. (right) According to the caption published with this photograph, the men passing through this scene of devastation are not refugees, but factory workers on their way to work. The article advised readers that if they found their workplace burnt to the ground in an air raid, they should go apply for a job at any factory still standing.[32]

For Kafū, the war had not yet ended. He evacuated to the outskirts of Tokyo, where the rooming house in which he was temporarily staying was burnt down in the air raid of 25 May 1945. Over half of Tokyo had been burnt down by this time, creating vast swathes of desolate moonscapes. Kafū reluctantly boarded a refugee train and headed to Okayama. With little left to bomb in Japan's large cities, the Allies turned their attention to smaller targets, and so Kafū was burnt out of his temporary Okayama abode on 28 June 1945.

[32] Earhart, *Certain Victory*, p. 448, 450.

Small wonder that Kafū greeted the end of the war with happy relief. On the evening of the surrender announcement, Kafū secured chicken and wine—virtually impossible to buy at any price—and shared them with two traveling companions in a celebration of the war's end. The diary simply notes that it is "perfectly fine with me" that the war has ended and that "everyone went to bed drunk." There is a similarly plain note of unvarnished truth when Kafū writes a few days later, on 20 August, that while many people were worrying about the impending Occupation, as far as he was concerned, "Nothing is as good as peace, and nothing so frightening as war."[33]

The *Diary of the Danchōtei*'s parodies of the first war years are doubly ironic: their creation constituted an explosively transgressive act of treason during wartime, when such acts were routinely punished with indefinite terms of imprisonment, torture, and even death at the hands of the Kenpeitai, Japan's "thought police." And yet by the time of the *Diary*'s publication in 1947–1948,[34] the criticism of wartime rhetoric had lost the political context in which it functioned as parody and it ceased to be a powerful expression of dissent. The people who had, *nolens volens*, participated in the war, greeted with scant enthusiasm the publication of Kafū's wartime diary. His parodic record of the devolution of Japanese culture had not lost its meaning or its historical import, but it was deemed irrelevant by a war-weary society hoping to forget the stigma of defeat and shake off the shackles of occupation, being eager to build the "new" Japan.

As already mentioned, in Kafū's case, parody was only a valid writerly practice while Japan appeared to be winning the war. The socially and politically subversive potential of Kafū's parodic commentary was not fully realized upon its publication. In this instance, we can surely agree with the author that the social import of his writing, including his parodic texts, was a failure, since it affected no change in politics and has been all but ignored by literary critics and the reading public. Kafū's "failure" raises a difficult question: how do we measure the "success" of political parody? From a suprahistorical perspective, Kafū's record of the war offers a powerful indictment of a corrupt and evil political regime, one bent upon economic and military expansion at the cost of millions of lives. In this sense, his parodic treatment of a state-mediated narrative of racial superiority and sacred war succeeds as an

[33] *KZ* 25, p. 357.
[34] Published under the titles *Kafū nichireki* and *Risai nichiroku*. See note 5 above.

example of cultural resistance that transcends the particular circumstances of its creation and continues to inspire new generations of readers to be true to ideals, even those that are deeply unpopular.