

The Pig, Unspeaking

*Horrific Language and
Nonhuman Semiosis in
Miyazawa Kenji's "The Pig of the
Furandon Agricultural School"*

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Abstract: This article examines the representation of human language and its limits in the short story “The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School” (c. 1921) by the early twentieth-century Japanese writer Miyazawa Kenji. The story features a domesticated pig, fluent in human language, who is slaughtered for his meat despite displaying a level of linguistic ability generally perceived as exclusively human. The pig’s literacy does not save his life; rather, it renders his experience of the human world more horrific, as he overhears what humans say about his edible body, peruses a death consent form he is subsequently coerced into signing, and comes to realize the transformation into meat that awaits him. In Miyazawa’s story, therefore, the nonhuman animal’s understanding of human language proves irrelevant to a pre-existing hierarchy of lives organized along species lines. As the pig becomes aware of his fate, the text ceases to textualize his speech and psyche, as if refusing to further territorialize the pig within human semantics, while continuing to describe how he appears, sounds, and behaves through onomatopoeia. This article foregrounds the ways in which Miyazawa’s depiction of the pig exposes the limits of human language and offers a glimpse of a world not entirely bound to an anthropocentric semiotic system.

Keywords: *Miyazawa Kenji, anthropocentrism, nonhuman animals, extralingual representation, onomatopoeia*

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Introduction: The Speaking Pig

If a nonhuman animal in a literary text speaks, reads, and communicates in human language, how are we, as readers, to incorporate this ability into our existing interpretative strategies for understanding nonhuman animal life? Do we perceive a highly evolved, enhanced form of animality? Or, rather, do we experience a heightened sense of uncanniness, all too aware of the animal's fundamental nonhumanness? Such responses are typically grounded in an anthropocentric assumption that maintains a seemingly immutable division between human and nonhuman animals. Language, as a system of signification, has long served as a primary factor in solidifying this division, separating humans' meaning-bearing utterances from nonhuman animals' unintelligible cries.¹ Given that language is generally posited as the exclusive possession of the human species, the command of it by nonhuman animals—imaginary or otherwise—emerges as a potential threat to human exceptionalism by revealing the malleability of the species boundary.

Discussions of speaking animals in modern literature have typically focused on European writers such as Franz Kafka or George Orwell.² This article aims to expand the geographical scope of literary animal studies to include the Japanese writer Miyazawa Kenji (宮澤賢治 1896–1933) within such a list of early twentieth-century writers who challenge anthropocentric modes of thought. Of particular focus is Miyazawa's short story, "Furandon nōgakkō no buta" (フランドン農学校の豚, hereafter referred to as "The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School" [c. 1921]), which features a literate pig whose command

- 1 The emerging field of animal linguistics challenges the long-held notion that language is exclusive to humans, arguing that certain nonhuman animals have developed highly functional linguistic (audio-vocal) systems of their own, complete with specific vocabularies and syntactic structures. See, for instance, two recent studies by animal behaviourist Toshitaka Suzuki, "Animal Linguistics" (2024) and "How to Study Animal Syntax" (2025).
- 2 Kafka's "A Report to an Academy" (1917) features an ape, Red Peter, who presents his life trajectory to a human audience in a human tongue, while Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) introduces animal characters who learn to read and write human language. Their command of human language sees them trespass on the human realms of the academy and farm governance, respectively. I am grateful to readers who directed me to writers—especially Miyazawa's contemporaries—who similarly invested in representations of animal speech.

of human language affords a glimpse into the instability and absurdity of human–nonhuman boundaries.³ Written during Japan’s imperial expansion, when the extraction of animal products from colonial territories in Korea and China formed an essential part of the imperial project, Miyazawa’s story can be read as a meditation on the relationship between carnivory, empire, and human violence against nonhuman animals.⁴

“The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School” revolves around an unnamed Yorkshire pig raised alone at an agricultural school in an imaginary kingdom.⁵ The story begins with an anonymous third-person narrator describing the pig’s advanced intellect, which includes the ability to perform arithmetic and, moreover, to read, speak, and understand human language. However, his command of human language serves only to intensify his anguish as he comes to apprehend his impending death, dismemberment, and consumption at the hands of humans through a recently issued royal order mandating signed consent from livestock animals destined for slaughter. The pig initially resists his fate, both verbally and physically. However, unable to elicit empathy from the humans around him, the pig is coerced into signing the slaughter agreement, beaten to death, chopped into pieces, and stored away, soon to be devoured by humans. The anonymous narrator, no longer able to continue the story in the face of its hopelessness, concludes by expressing deep pity for the speaking pig, now reduced to pieces of meat.⁶

3 “The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School” was first drafted circa 1921 and posthumously published. The first public appearance of the story is said to be in 1934, a year after Miyazawa’s death, although I have not yet located the initial publication.

4 Although this subject exceeds the scope of the present article, it is important to note that Miyazawa’s work not only destabilizes the division between humans and nonhuman animals but also interrogates the category of the human itself. Amid Japan’s imperial expansion and the sweeping force of racialization across the globe in the early twentieth century, who counted as a human being was far from self-evident, and the traces of those tensions are clearly discernible in Miyazawa’s writings.

5 While pigs are ungendered in Japanese, there are reasons to assume this pig is male. For instance, the pig compares himself to a “gentleman (紳士 *shinshi*)” (Miyazawa, “Furandon”, 323) and refers to himself using a specific first-person pronoun (おれ *ore*) which is typically reserved for male speakers (324).

6 Miyazawa himself witnessed the slaughter of livestock, including a pig, when teaching at Hanamaki Agricultural School in Iwate. See “Nenpu: 1925 nen”, 300.

Language plays a key role in Miyazawa's story. At the level of the narrative, the story demonstrates the pervasiveness of anthropocentrism by demonstrating that linguistic competence alone will not ensure the nonhuman animal's right to life.⁷ The pig's command of human language does not dismantle the human–nonhuman animal divide; instead, it reinforces a pre-existing hierarchy of living beings, with humanity at its apex. The essential quality of the pig's existence cannot be anything other than his edibility. Miyazawa's story thus acknowledges the uncompromising anthropocentrism that surrounds the speaking animal, reinscribing the precarity of nonhuman animal lives within the human world.

While reiterating an irrevocable anthropocentric hierarchy on the narrative level, the story simultaneously disrupts such a hierarchy by highlighting the possibility of a negation of language through silence and gesturing toward a realm of signs unbound by human signifying practices through onomatopoeia, both of which function to suspend ideas of human sovereignty. As the pig becomes aware of his fate, he stops speaking, or, rather, his use of human language ceases to be textualized in the story. From this point on, when narrating the pig, the narrative distances itself from an explanatory, symbolic use of language focused on the meticulous detailing of events, and instead turns to an onomatopoeic, iconic mode that mimics the sounds, appearance, and demeanour of what it describes. The narrative no longer incorporates the pig's speech or internal monologue, and begins to focus instead on an understanding of the pig gathered only from information accessible from the outside—how he sounds, appears, and behaves. As if to insist that the pig's human-inflicted suffering refuses to be explained away in human semantics, the story comes to sketch how the pig exists in the human linguistic world silently (accompanied by no meaningful locution) and onomatopoetically (depicted with expressions representing sonic, visual, or sensory likeness).

7 Cary Wolfe makes a similar observation regarding the “sheer irrelevance of speech itself to the question of standing” in his analysis of Hannah Arendt's formulation of the “right to have rights”. Wolfe, *Before the Law*, 8–9; 89–90.

The text's recourse to silence and onomatopoeia is subtle because the former appears as a void of human language and the latter carries relatively minor semantic weight. Yet Miyazawa's rhetorical manoeuvre affords a perspective to unsettle the dominant, symbolic function of human language. By withdrawing from the use of human language as a way of figuring and, thereby, assimilating the nonhuman animal's feelings and experiences, Miyazawa's story directs our attention to the limits of human language. Beyond these limits lies a realm of signs not necessarily constrained by a human system of signification. The text's rhetorical gestures generate room for a new perspective: nonhuman animals may be speaking and signifying, even if humans do not, may not, or refuse to notice. My contention is that although language, especially its symbolic use, is inevitably imbued with anthropocentrism, the text's use of silence and onomatopoeia to depict the speaking pig unlocks the potential of literary language to disrupt anthropocentrism and to resituate the human use of language within the more-than-human world.

Miyazawa's handling of language resonates powerfully with recent scholarly discussions of nonhuman animals in the humanities and social sciences. Of particular relevance are inquiries into how to conceive of the paradoxical and possibly detrimental use of language for analysing nonhumans who do not share the same system of signification. The pressing question, as Gillian Beer notes, is: "How is it possible to be true to animal experience, even if that were the wish, if your medium of description is written human language?"⁸ In a similar vein, Catriona Sandilands emphasizes the limitations of human language in representing and studying nonhuman beings:

The drive toward coherent human representations of human / animal conversation is at least partially authoritarian because all such representations fail to represent the language of the animal, because they fail to acknowledge the language produced from human / animal interaction, and because they deny the impact of the nonhuman actor on the human. Human language about nonhuman nature can never be complete; only by

8 Beer, "Animal Presences", 313.

acknowledging its limits is the space opened for otherworldly conversations.⁹

Humans remain, inescapably, anthropocentric. Yet the fact that human language cannot adequately account for nonhuman agencies and experiences does not mean that we cannot, or should not, use it to imagine what they might be like.¹⁰ To be clear, we do not need to equate the anthropocentrism inscribed in human language with human exceptionalism. As Val Plumwood observes, “[t]he problems of representing another culture’s or another species communication [...] pale before the enormity of failing to represent them at all, or of representing them as non-communicative and non-intentional beings”.¹¹ While we may not be able to fully represent nonhuman perspectives in human language, using our incapacity as an excuse to forego imaginative attempts at understanding is ethically problematic as it risks intensifying the reductionism and subjugation that supports human exceptionalism. I align myself with Plumwood’s sense that “[w]riting is an important place to disrupt this power”.¹² Multiple contemporary scholars have emphasized the transformative potential of creative uses of language to push humans out of human-created contexts and relocate them within more-than-human semiosis.¹³ Literary texts emerge as a particularly generative site for such reimaginations of the human, enabling the kinds of “otherworldly conversations” envisaged by Sandilands.

In his short life Miyazawa made numerous attempts to narrativize nonhuman agencies and experiences. Works such as “Serohiki no

9 Sandilands, *Good-Natured Feminist*, 185.

10 Karla Armbruster cautions that “the notion that human language cannot capture the fullness of animal existence often carries the unstated assumption that it *can* capture humans’ experience of the world”. This observation is important, as in this article I aim to avoid a binary extremism, with a presupposition about perfect consummation of language and what it describes on one hand, and another about language’s ultimate inability of representing the nonhuman on the other. Armbruster, “What Do We Want?”, 26.

11 Plumwood, *Environmental Culture*, 60–61.

12 Plumwood, “Journey to the Heart”, 20.

13 In addition to Plumwood’s *Environmental Culture*, I have in mind these studies: Fischer, *Anthropological Futures*; Zapf, *Literature as Cultural Ecology*; and Herman, *Narratology beyond the Human*.

Gōshu” (セロ弾きのゴーシュ; “Gauche the Cellist”, posthumously published in 1934), “Okinagusa” (おきなぐさ; “Pasqueflower”, circa 1923), and “Oinomori to zarumori, nusutomori” (狼森と筑森、盗森; “Wolf Forest, Basket Forest, and Thief Forest”, 1924), for instance, consistently feature nonhuman beings. In the worlds he writes into existence, animals grieve, plants chuckle, and forests think. Miyazawa’s work, in short, strives to capture what Gregory Golley describes as the “*space between* (in the Cubist sense) the human and the nonhuman”, thereby foregrounding humans’ embeddedness in ecological systems.¹⁴

To highlight this aspect of Miyazawa’s work, I draw on Christine Marran’s notion of “obligate storytelling”. “Obligate storytelling”, explains Marran, “is storytelling as a relation”, and, as such, it “depicts relations among diverse bodies and forms without privileging humanistic endeavor”.¹⁵ In the process, such storytelling affords “a way to account for human life in and through relationships with the more-than-human world”.¹⁶ For both practitioners and scholars, exploring this mode of representation is crucial when writing, as an activity integral to most human civilizations, attempts to account for the suffering of nonhuman beings caused by humans. I approach Miyazawa’s persistent effort to create narratives of nonhuman beings as an example of “obligate storytelling”, one that seeks to decentralize, if not potentially neutralize, our hegemonic, inevitably anthropocentric understanding of the world. I argue that Miyazawa’s literary writing pushes us to open ourselves up to new ways of being in the world, enabling us to conceive of possible ways of throwing accepted human institutions off balance and of better understanding our entanglement with nonhuman entities.

In what follows, I provide a close reading of Miyazawa’s “The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School” to illustrate the story’s varied manifestations of language, highlighting the contrast between its limits and possibilities as a means to represent nonhuman

14 Golley, *When Our Eyes*, 231.

15 Marran, *Ecology without Culture*, 28.

16 Marran, *Ecology without Culture*, 28.

perspectives.¹⁷ First, I analyse the pig's relationship to human language to show how the latter brings horrific experiences upon the former. The narrative reveals that the pig's achievement in human language acquisition is extraneous to his nonhuman status. Thus, I suggest that the horror of the story is not exactly in the pig's slaughter but in the irrelevance of his language skills to his status as a killable farm animal. I then turn to discussing the text's uses of language, focusing on the ways in which two rhetorical functions—silence and onomatopoeia—counteract language's anthropocentrism. Composed in human language, Miyazawa's writing is not free from anthropocentrism. Still, attending to these uses of language embedded in this text facilitates a recognition of Miyazawa's writerly gesture pointing toward semiosis that lies beyond human reach.

The Horror of Language

At the beginning of the story, the pig's mood is described as positive; blessed with a healthy appetite, the pig “embraced his own happiness, looked up to the heavens, and felt grateful”.¹⁸ Yet the pig's mental state deteriorates significantly when he begins to read and communicate in human language. Contrary to the general assumption that linguistic competence elevates an individual to a higher, more privileged status, the pig's ability does not serve him well. Instead, it

17 Miyazawa produced a large number of study pieces and sketches, many of which he continuously revised over time. As a result, most of his works are not “complete”, or at least he did not produce an official version for many of his compositions. Although prolific, Miyazawa published little during his lifetime; most of his writings were recognized and published posthumously through the effort of his younger brother Miyazawa Seiroku (宮澤清六) and a small group of acquaintances, including the Fukushima-born poet Kusano Shinpei (草野心平). This means that the works accessible to contemporary readers have likely been modified and edited multiple times, both by Miyazawa himself and by those involved in preserving and compiling his manuscripts. The traces of these edits and revisions are detailed in *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* (新校本宮澤賢治全集), the variorum collection of Miyazawa Kenji's works, compiled by Chikuma Shobō (筑摩書房) in the 1990s. For the purposes of this article, I use the version of “Furandon nōgakkō no buta” — which had already undergone multiple revisions by Miyazawa — included in Chikuma Shobō's collection.

18 Miyazawa, “Furandon”, 322. The only existing English translation of the story is by Roger Pulvers, published as part of a 2009 article in the *Asia-Pacific Journal*. When quoting from Miyazawa's story, I shall refer to this translation, which I have quietly modified in places, when I find the materiality of Miyazawa's language use — peculiar, often awkward wording, for example — important in my discussion. Page numbers refer to the Japanese edition.

drives him into a corner where he is forced to confront his own demise and transfiguration into meat. Moreover, the story shows that the pig's linguistic skills not only contribute to their suffering but have virtually no effect on his fate. The ultimate horror foregrounded in this story is thus the irrelevance of language to the existing species hierarchy, marked by the revelation that mastery of language cannot overturn entrenched ideas of human exceptionalism.

The Law

A prominent example of the horror wrought by human language is framed in legal terms and presented in the story as the Law of Signed Consent Governing the Bludgeoning to Death of Livestock (家畜撲殺同意調印法 *kachiku bokusatsu dōi chōin hō*).¹⁹ Promulgated in the king's name a month prior to the story's present, this law is summarized as follows: "Anyone wishing to kill a farm animal must first obtain a Certificate of Consent of Death from the animal in question. Moreover, these consent forms must be signed and approved by the animals themselves."²⁰ The requirement that an animal provide a signature initially appears to acknowledge nonhuman animals as independent subjects whose lives cannot be taken without their consent. Yet the implementation of this law results in the torturous treatment of livestock animals. As the narrator explains, "cows or horses and all the other animals around this time were forced by their owners, on the day before they were to be slaughtered, to put their feet or hooves or whatever on paper as a mark of approval of their death. The really old horses, having had their horseshoes pried off them, pressed their hooves down to seal their fate, with tears flowing down their faces."²¹

Such a depiction of suffering prompts a question: Whom does this law serve? A system of securing consent is formally in place, and yet in practice there is no consent at all. Voluntariness, will,

19 I provide the word-by-word translation of this law to highlight the graphic brutality of legal language and the specifics of how livestock animals are handled (e.g., bludgeoning-to-death for 撲殺 *bokusatsu*).

20 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 324.

21 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 324.

agency—qualities essential to the granting of consent—are nowhere to be found, especially when, as the story suggests, the law that mandates consent is put into practice. Paradoxical as it may be, the very fact that livestock animals sign the consent form reveals that they remain stripped of the power to consent. As Kalpana Seshadri observes, “the authority of the law, as a discourse of the constitution of the subject, is predicated on making the animal disappear even as it appears”.²² In Miyazawa’s story, livestock animals indeed “appear” as subjects as they sign the consent form. Yet as soon as their signatures are inscribed on paper, they “disappear” again. What this law produces, then, is not nonhuman animal subjects but human subjects whose deeds—what they do to, and how they treat, nonhuman animals—are validated by state authority.

The consent form presented to the pig, printed in an eye-catching yellow, reads: “Death Consent Form: I, having long enjoyed your patronage, will humbly terminate my life whenever it suits you. Year, month, date. Signed, Yorkshire, at the pigsty of Furandon. To the Principal of the Furandon Agricultural School”.²³ The certificate is prepared in print, indicating that it is a typeset, mass-produced document made available in anticipation of the killing of a large number of livestock animals. The signature functions less to verify the singular identity of the signatory (made clear in the pig’s identification as “Yorkshire”, referring to his generic breed) than to enforce the legality—and, by implication, the rationality and compassion—of human action vis-à-vis nonhuman animals. It is a bureaucratic performance, an additional step that livestock animals are forced to undergo in order to make mass slaughter appear less brutal and more humane. An animal’s signature takes legal effect only insofar as it does not belong to the animal who signs. Under this law, the individual death of each animal, punctuated by an original signature, must be subsumed into anonymity, folded into a mass of animals butchered supposedly of their own free will.

22 Seshadri, “Being Human”, 99.

23 Miyazawa, “Furandon”, 328.

The horror of legal language encroaches upon the pig's psyche, with palpable effects on his body. The story shows that the pig, pressed against this law, becomes physically incapacitated, unable to utter a word. The law silences the pig not only figuratively (the ultimate anonymity of his signature) but also literally (the loss of his voice). What Seshadri posits as the "deprivation of speech that characterizes the inhuman" is fully at play here.²⁴ The pig comes in direct contact with the law when the school principal visits the pigpen to persuade the pig to sign the yellow sheet of paper. Below, I quote extensively from the interaction between the pig and the school principal to illustrate how the pig loses his voice before the law:

"How's it going?" he asked. "Feeling happier today?"

"Yes, sir, thank you very much."

"Happier, are you? That's marvellous. Enjoying your food?"

"Thank you very much. It's perfectly fine."

"Fine, is it? Good to hear it. Now, actually, I've come today to have a very confidential talk with you. Your head's clear, isn't it?"

"Huh..." uttered the pig hoarsely.

"Well, in actuality, every creature on this Earth has to die someday. Every single living thing actually dies. Even the nobility among humans, the rich, and middle-class people like me, and even the most worthless beggar."

"Huh..." The pig's voice choked his throat. He could not give a clear answer.

"And, you see, even animals that are not human, for example, even horses and even cows and chickens, and even catfish and even bacteria... they all gotta die. The mayfly is born with the rising of tomorrow's sun, yet it dies in the evening. A life that lasts only a single day. Everything's gotta die. Take me and you. It's our fate to die someday too."

"Huh..." The pig was hoarse. He could say or do nothing.

24 Seshadri, *HumAnimal*, ix.

“So, now comes the thing I want to talk to you about. We here at the school have looked after you up to today. I’m not boasting here, but the school has done its best to take good care of you. Other pigs like you are scattered all over the place, and, well, I’m very aware of this... and, uh, it may sound funny but, uh, there’s no place where animals are treated better than right here.”

“Huh...” The pig thought he would respond. But the food he had eaten before clogged his throat. He was utterly unable to let his voice out.

“So, anyway, this is what I came to talk about. If, uh, you have, because of all this treatment... if you have even a tiny bit of gratitude in you, I’ve got a teeny favour to ask, I mean, to ask for your permission.”

“Huh...” The pig was hoarse. He couldn’t respond, no matter what.²⁵

The principal presents rationale behind the consent form. While the pig listens and tries to engage in the conversation, the only sound he manages to make is an exclamatory, non-semantic “huh” (はあ *hā*). The text repeatedly describes the pig as “hoarse” (声がかすれる *koe ga kasureru*), his throat “clogged” (咽喉につまる *nodo ni tsumaru*), and as “unable to let his voice out” (声が出ない *koe ga denai*). There is an intention on the pig’s part to say something in response to the principal, and yet his voice cannot form itself in a legible way beyond a simple “huh”. With the presence of this law, materialized in the form of a yellow sheet of printed paper, the pig is physically paralyzed and rendered mute. By depicting a literate nonhuman animal being silenced, subject to a physical muteness he cannot control, this sequence offers a literal enactment of the privation of speech imposed on the nonhuman animal.

The Law of Signed Consent Governing the Bludgeoning-to-Death of Livestock does not shield nonhuman animals from their already vulnerable standing in the kingdom; rather, it serves its purpose only insofar as it cancels livestock animals’ agency, rendering them

25 Miyazawa, “Furandon”, 327–28.

paralyzed. Out of the workings of this law spills human narcissism, which not only hinders livestock animals from exercising agency but also removes them from the position of beneficiaries. It is humans, not livestock animals, who receive benefits when the law is practiced; these benefits are delivered to humans in the form of a self-satisfaction, assuring that they are being civil and compassionate, that most likely accompanies savoury, juicy pieces of meat. As Adrian Bercea puts it, the kingdom administering this law is nothing other than a “black utopia” for the pig and his animal fellows.²⁶ By rendering the nonhuman animal voiceless as a result of its encounter with the law, Miyazawa’s story depicts the horror produced by a legal language that serves humans alone.

In reference to Miyazawa’s body of work, Nishi Masahiko maintains that anthropomorphism, as a literary device, is literally a “law” that confines nonhuman animals within the bounds of human imagination, a law that alienates both parties from one another.²⁷ Nishi’s remark is insightful, as anthropomorphized creatures in many of Miyazawa’s writings almost always suffer because humans, intentionally or not, bring them harm. Nishi’s observation suggests that Miyazawa’s methods of anthropomorphism, in which the inclusion of speaking nonhuman animals plays a key role, are often employed to demystify utopian visions of human–nonhuman cohabitation. “The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School” is no exception; the story highlights how the pig is trapped within the violence of human institutions of “law”, with the possibility of continuing his life outside of such human laws foreclosed.

The Irrelevance

A further fact underlying the story is that language skills are ultimately of no use for ensuring nonhuman animals’ survival in an anthropocentric world. The interactions between the pig and the principal illuminate the pig’s linguistic proficiency, yet only to confirm that such proficiency does not detach the pig from his nonhuman status. In fact, the

26 Bercea, “Miyazawa Kenji”, 4–14.

27 Nishi, *Mori no gerira*, 30–31; 43.

more the pig demonstrates linguistic competence, the more he becomes aware of *what*, not *who*, he is in the human world. After all, the pig is nothing more than a lowly, nonhuman animal produced to suit the human palate. Miyazawa's piece thus positions language as that which confirms the ultimate impossibility of the nonhuman animal's admission into the predetermined, exclusive circle of humanness.

The pig's literacy is foregrounded throughout his exchange with the principal. After reading aloud the words written on the consent form, the principal declares:

What it means is that you're going to have to die sooner or later, so when you do die, you will do so with good grace. This is not a big deal at all. When you don't need to die, you really don't need to. So I just need you to give me your front foot and put your hoof-print on this. That's the long and the short of it.²⁸

While speaking candidly about the pig's death, the principal simultaneously undermines his own statement by qualifying it. Phrasing such as "you're going to have to die sooner or later" places emphasis on the universality of death, that is, on the mortality of *all living beings*, and in doing so obscures the singularity of the death that awaits the pig. The phrase "[w]hen you don't need to die, you really don't need to" is a mere tautology and does nothing to clarify the actual object of his discourse: the pig's *individual* death.

That the pig is confused by the principal's wording is itself proof of his linguistic competence. Befuddled, the pig stares at the consent form and examines the language for himself. "If this is what the principal says it is, there is nothing to worry about," the pig thinks. Yet, "reading the language written on the certificate closely, the pig was frightened in the extreme."²⁹ The pig's proficiency is such that he can identify the disconnect between the principal's speech and the written content of the form. Unable to cope with the uncertainty produced by the disconnect, the pig summons all his strength to utter speech, asking the principal for clarification — but to no avail:

28 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 328.

29 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 328–29.

“If one can die at any time, are you saying that that time can be today?”

The principal was taken aback, but soon regained his composure.

“Well, yes. But, it absolutely doesn’t have to be today. No.”

“But, are you saying it can be tomorrow, then?”

“Well, uh, tomorrow... nobody’s saying it has to be that soon. Whenever... sometime. It’s really a vague sort of thing.”

“Does ‘having to die’ mean me dying *alone*?” asked the pig, again in a shrill voice.

“Sure, but that’s not really, entirely, the case.”³⁰

Closely studying what is written on the certificate, the pig asks pointed questions. The principal, however, is evasive and provides no clear answer as to when or how the pig must die. The pig’s questions—am I dying *alone*, and when?—are both legitimate and incisive; if everyone and everything dies, as the principal claims, do all beings die together, in the same way, indiscriminately, as if to guarantee equality among living creatures? The truth is that the pig must die an *isolated* death, and human beings are not expected to die in the same manner. The principal maintains the ambiguity of this information by answering both yes and no at once—sure, but not really—a vagueness of which the pig is fully aware.

Throughout their interaction, the principal’s ambiguity paradoxically highlights the pig’s linguistic competence. Interpreting the principal’s indecisive response as a yes—you must die *alone*—the pig attempts to resist vocally:

“No, no! If that’s the case, I refuse to do this. Absolutely not!” the pig cried, tearfully.

“You refuse? Then there’s nothing we can do. You are really so ungrateful! You’re even lower than a dog or a cat!”

The principal shoved the certificate in his pocket and, taking big strides, stormed out of the pigpen, his face bright red from anger.

30 Miyazawa, “Furandon”, 329. Emphasis added.

“Of course! I have always been lower than dogs and cats from the very beginning! Waaah!”

As the frustration and sadness welled up in him, the pig began to bawl for dear life.³¹

To be “even lower than dogs or cats” (犬猫にさえ劣る *inuneko ni sae otoru*) is an idiomatic expression in Japanese, typically used to condemn someone for failing to meet moral expectations. While both the principal and the pig have recourse to the same reference in this exchange, the ways in which they mobilize it generate different effects, ultimately underlining the depth of the pig’s identification with human language. When the principal spits these words out at the pig, he inadvertently reveals the conflicting expectations he has toward him/it; he expects the pig to observe human codes of conduct, while simultaneously demanding that the same pig to die as a nonhuman animal. The principal’s utterance thus highlights the absurd state in which the pig is trapped.

The pig’s use of “dogs and cats”, however, does not align with the principal’s. When the pig declares that he has “always been lower than dogs and cats”, he demonstrates highly advanced skills, by re-appropriating the principal’s phrase, shifting its focus, and attaching additional layers of meaning to it. The pig’s rhetorical manoeuvre suggests three points. First, the pig self-deprecatingly places himself below the other two domesticated mammals, illustrating the presence of a species hierarchy beyond the human–nonhuman animal divide. Humans remain at the top of this hierarchy. Below humans, the pig’s words establish, nonhuman animals are classified into further species categories such as dogs, cats, and pigs, with pigs ranked lowest among them. Second, the pig’s reaction implies a history behind this ranking. Swine have been “from the very beginning” (はじめから *hajimekara*) placed below canines and felines and, to the pig’s chagrin, they remain so at the agricultural school despite the pig’s development of language skills. Third, and relatedly, the pig has long been aware of his low status within the strata of nonhuman animals. “Of course” (どうせ *dōse*), pigs are below “dogs and cats”,

31 Miyazawa, “Furandon”, 329.

the pig screeches. In making this statement, the pig, perhaps unwittingly, endorses the hierarchies imposed by humans and identifies himself as a lesser being relative to other domesticated mammals.

It is important to note that regardless of his intentions, the pig manages to produce these linguistic effects in an extremely tense and traumatic situation. While being pressed to sign an agreement to their own death, the pig seizes upon a phrase — “dogs and cats” — that his conversation partner drops in passing and spins it to his advantage, heightening the rhetorical appeal of his utterance, although, to his detriment, the resulting speech emerges only as a self-tormenting reconfirmation of his lower status as a nonhuman domestic animal, a status imposed by the human-centred world. When the pig erupts into a fit of emotions, he is triggered by the principal’s brief reference to “dogs and cats”. This reference, issued by a human authority, brings to the surface ideas the pig has long kept under control: the hierarchies of nonhuman domestic animals and the pig’s own low position within them. At this moment, the pig’s reactive slip demonstrates not only the degree to which he can command human language, but also the extent to which he has internalized the human-centred world order encoded in that language, becoming inadvertently reliant on it to reveal that which he has repressed.

The pig’s handling of human language is more than functional, and yet the text does not present literacy as the pig’s defining characteristic.³² What, then, defines the pig? According to the human characters in the story, the answer is the pig’s *edibility*. The story repeatedly alludes to the pig’s meaty quality, consistently juxtaposing the pig’s identity with his status as food.³³ Students at the agricultural

32 Since the text includes no other speaking animal characters besides the pig, no comparison can be made between the pig’s language skills and those of other animal species. The text does, however, indicate that the human characters do not consider the pig’s literacy exceptional.

33 This association is a historical phenomenon. The production and consumption of pork, as well as beef and other animal-based food products, had been on the rise since the turn of the twentieth century. Carnivory had long existed in Japan. While it had been practiced either regionally by hunters, discreetly by the poor, or as part of medicinal regimens for the privileged, during the Meiji period (1868–1912) meat-eating gained ubiquity and became standard. The emerging Japanese Empire was carnivorous in a quite

school, for example, callously draw associations between the pig and other edible goods in the pig's presence. Below, I quote the verbal interaction students have at the pigpen.

"When are they going to get it [the slaughtering] over with? I can't wait to see it."

"Not me. I don't want to watch it."

"I just want it to be soon. The leeks in storage will freeze if they're left there like that."

"The potatoes are there too."

"There are over fifty kilos in storage. There's no way we can get through that much by ourselves."³⁴

Hearing this conversation, the pig senses that something undesirable is underway but cannot quite discern what is coming or what the "it" means. The pig's body is likened to "platinum" (白金 *hakkin*),³⁵ and as such, he cannot grasp the connection the students claim exists between him and the food items: "But wait, what do I have to do with leeks?"³⁶ Meatiness constitutes the pig's primary, non-negotiable identity, and all the human characters recognize this to such an extent that they do not need to articulate *what* the pig is.

A crucial implication of this story is that literacy does not override edibility. What a pig is supposed to be within the taxonomies of the human world is already determined, and as such, being a literate nonhuman animal carries no more weight than being an edible one. Regardless of the fact that the pig speaks human language, thereby destabilizing accepted species boundaries, he is still beaten to death, with his head smashed open, to be savoured by humans. Literacy is deployed not to undo the boundaries between humans who speak

literal sense, as it sought to extract animal products, both food and non-food items, from the territories it conquered, to its advantage. Meat rapidly became a matter of political and military interest around the turn of the twentieth century. See Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*, chapter 1; Okada, *Tonkatsu no tanjō*, chapters 1 and 2; Majima, "Nikushoku to iu kindai", 213–30.

34 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 326–27.

35 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 322.

36 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 327.

and other living creatures who do not, but to underscore the irrelevance of language skills to the existing order. The hierarchy of beings is immutable, and its boundaries must not be breached, with or without literacy. The presence of the speaking pig thus draws attention to a cynical vision in which language carries little weight in determining species differences and hierarchies.

At this point, it is worthwhile to recall Peter Singer's comments on speciesism. In his study of animal rights and liberation movements, Singer attributed the disadvantage of these movements to "the fact that members of the exploited group cannot themselves make an organized protest against the treatment they receive", and asserted that "we have to speak up on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves".³⁷ Miyazawa's fiction, written roughly half a century prior to Singer's statement, presents a far darker picture of the predicament of animals and their rights. In Miyazawa's story world, nonhuman animals do not enjoy the same rights as humans *even as* they "speak for themselves". Instead, they suffer *precisely when* they do so. The pig repeatedly says no to the principal, yet his words yield no significant effect. The principal weaponizes the pig's literacy, berating him for being "ungrateful"—verbally arousing the pig's sense of guilt, and creating a situation in which the pig can do nothing but comply. For nonhuman animals navigating the regime of anthropocentrism, the story suggests, literacy in human language does not confer privilege; instead, it functions as a lever that drives them into an even more suffocating state than the one they already occupy.

While facilitating communication among those who use it, be they humans or nonhumans, human language in "The Pig of the Furan-don Agricultural School" serves not to repair but to punctuate the rift between species. The rift becomes most pronounced when the nonhuman animal's command of language becomes uncannily indistinguishable from that of humans. As if to signal that this rift is ultimately unbridgeable, human characters in the story who recognize the pig's language skills, such as the students and teachers, do not engage in meaningful conversation with him. The school principal,

37 Singer, "Preface", xxiii.

who verbally interacts with the pig multiple times, does so only to suppress the pig's highly intellectual mind and to deprive him of speech using the language of human law. These humans do not—or rather, cannot—listen even when the nonhuman animal speaks, because the latter's words carry no weight in the human world. Read this way, the pig's competence in human language emerges as a means through which to observe the immutability and, by implication, absurdity of hierarchies of living creatures. This order is arbitrary, and precisely because of this, even a successful mastery of language, a trait typically and exclusively reserved for humans, cannot override other qualities such as edibility.

Human exceptionalism is revealed in its most extreme form at this moment; access to human privilege is denied to the nonhuman animal from the very beginning. To borrow Cary Wolfe's framework, the nonhuman animal exists "before the law"—in other words, "ontologically and/or logically antecedent to the law, which exists prior to the moment when the law, in all its contingency and immanence, enacts its originary violence, installs its frame for who's in and who's out".³⁸ It is not that the pig must demonstrate certain human qualities to enter the human circle; rather, the circle is already established and closed, existing prior to, and independently of, the pig's presence. In this picture, whether or how the pig might become a member of the circle is not a meaningful question, because the possibility of entry is precluded before the pig appears on the scene as an intellectual creature.

As these examples show, "The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School" situates language within the diegesis as a tool that underscores irreversible human dominance over nonhuman lives. At the same time, the text also signals an alternative vision of language, showing how it can be used to question and potentially offset the existing order. In what follows, I examine the text's recourse to distinct rhetorical movements—silence and onomatopoeia. While silence and onomatopoeia do not significantly affect the narrative, their textual manifestations enact a modality of existing that puts human

38 Wolfe, *Before the Law*, 8–9.

hegemony on hold. I explore how, through their subtle movements, silence and onomatopoeia give rise to the possibility of representing a nonhuman, extralingual form of engagement with the world.

Silence as Unspeaking

The pig's use of human language disappears from the textual surface after he signs the death certificate, as if to underscore the pig's subjugation to human institutions. Regardless of whether the pig ceases to use language or the text simply chooses not to depict his speech, we no longer encounter the pig communicating through human language. Thereafter, all information about the pig comes either from other human characters' utterances or from the narrator's descriptions. The pig is thus completely deprived of a means of human semantic expression and reduced to silence. Yet this silence carries a lingering ambivalence: what if it is not mere muteness, but active reticence? This section explores the ambivalent quality of the pig's silence, recasting it not necessarily as a deprivation of agency but as a potentially counter-assertive void.

First, the pig loses speech. In his final interaction with the principal, who presses him to sign the consent form, the pig asks, crying "Where should I sign?" in what is to be his last utterance rendered in human language. Once the pig's slaughter is legally sanctioned, the stock-breeding teacher and his assistant force-feed the pig to fatten his body and maximize human gain. As the humans chain the pig by his feet and strip away his mobility, the pig resists physically by "flailing violently" (ばたばた暴れた *batabata abareta*), "shuttering his mouth tightly" (堅く歯を食ひしばり *kataku ha o kuishibari*), and "roaring and crying to the best of his ability" (あらんかぎり、怒鳴ったり泣いたり *arankagiri donattari naitari*).³⁹ The text does not depict the pig using words to oppose the brutal treatment, thereby rendering him aphasic.

Next comes the loss of internal monologue. After seven days of aggressive force-feeding, the pig gains weight, though he feels sick and disheartened. Observing the pig nearby, the teacher and the assistant discuss what is going to happen next:

39 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 333.

"It looks fine now. Just right. This is as fatty as it can be. Let's stop here. If you fatten them up too much, they get sick on you and you lose precious time. Tomorrow would be ideal, I'd say. Don't feed it any more today. And wash its body thoroughly with the custodian. And change its litter. Got it?"

"Yes, sir. Will be done."

The pig listened intently, consolidating all his physical energy into his ears. (The time has come at last. It's tomorrow. This must mean the death written on the certificate. The time has come at last. It's tomorrow. Tomorrow, it is. What could it be like? It's tough. It's tough.) It was so unbearable that the pig banged his head against the planks of the pen.⁴⁰

Note the pig's reaction. As he listens to the humans' conversation, he develops a fearful thought. On the textual level, this inner thought is presented in human semantics within parentheses. However, after this moment, the text ceases to disclose the pig's interiority. Whether it is the pig who stops thinking in human language, or the text that obscures his thoughts, by dissociating the pig's existence from the explanatory functions of human semantics, the reader is forced to consider the pig's experience outside of human language from this point on.

Crucial here is that this displacement of human language does not necessarily indicate a passive surrender to human institutions. The absence of human language may instead materialize as a force that contradicts the anthropocentrism inherent in human language. From this perspective, Miyazawa's text renders the pig actively unspeaking, rather than simply incapacitating him. As Seshadri observes in her study of the potency of silence under the prevalence of law and biopower:

That silence can serve power, however it is conceived, as presence or difference, is well known. But insofar as powerful silence functions as a mode of refusal (of difference or the law), it opens a space for opposition. [...] As a function of language

40 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 335.

that does not signify, silence neutralizes the conventionality that cements language and law by signifying nothing.⁴¹

In this light, the pig's silence can be understood as a deactivation of language. Once the termination of his life is legally authorized, the pig "signif[ies] nothing" in human language. Silence, in this context, emerges as a meaningful void — not in the sense of conveying semantic content, but in the sense of producing a certain effect; not participating in the human system of signification is an act of unspeaking that constructs an empty space in which language and, by extension, anthropocentrism, cannot rule. Precisely because the pig is a competent user of human language, his withdrawal from it emerges as a radical act. The pig's silence generates room to "effectively annul, neutralize, or escape power in the very moment of its exercise".⁴²

What transpires from recasting silence as unspeaking is a recognition of the limits of the human system of signification, as well as the presence of nonhuman lifeforms that exist beyond human institutions. In the next section, I aim to augment this reading of "The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School" by examining how the story further uses language to challenge human hegemony. Miyazawa's mobilization of onomatopoeia produces yet another ambivalent moment of language use that gestures toward a more-than-human realm of signs.

The Onomatopoeic Turn and Nonhuman Semiosis

Miyazawa's body of work is rich in onomatopoeic expression, as Roger Pulvers notes.⁴³ The author frequently exploits Japanese onomatopoeia's grammatical flexibility, deploying it at times as an adverb and at others as a verb, in order to underscore specific features of the objects or actions. Given that the English translation of Japanese onomatopoeia I provide in my discussion may not appear onomatopoeic to English speakers, it is worth noting that Japanese

41 Seshadri, *HumAnimal*, 21.

42 Seshadri, *HumAnimal*, 19.

43 Pulvers, *Odorokubeki Nihongo*, 104.

onomatopoeia is not always based on the imitation of sound. It functions as a verbal rendering of a sensorial or modal aspect of what is described, and as such, in addition to sound, non-sonic components such as feelings, atmospheres, sensations, movements, and demeanours can be expressed onomatopoeically in Japanese; those components are still imitated sonically and rendered in the verbal form to capture each of their specificities. With this characteristic of Japanese onomatopoeia in mind, I follow Michael Ferber in defining onomatopoeia as linguistic signs that “suggest by their sound-shape any feature of what they mean, not just sound: it could be size, form, speed, solidity, duration, or almost anything else”.⁴⁴

In linguistics and semiotics, onomatopoeia has received limited scholarly attention. Both Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, for instance, mention it only briefly and in passing as a “motivated” sign — “motivated” in the sense that a physically identifiable, direct connection exists between the signifier and the signified.⁴⁵ The marginal position assigned to onomatopoeia in studies of signification appears to stem from the assumption that it conveys simple, if not negligible, semantic value. Rather than illustrating the complex semiotics of human affairs, onomatopoeia is often understood as a mode that analogizes, imitates, or mimics the phenomenological features of what it describes — whether audible, visible, or otherwise sensory — and thereby communicates a sense of immediacy and vividness, along with the originality and authenticity of physically perceived experience. Moreover, onomatopoeia is frequently regarded as a marker of infantilism because of its intuitive, seemingly unsophisticated nature. While Miyazawa’s work has indeed long been commercially packaged as children’s literature — by Miyazawa and his followers alike⁴⁶ — his use of onomatopoeia in “The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School” effects more than the simple production of a child-friendly, physically-relatable atmosphere.

44 Ferber, *Poetry and Language*, 86.

45 Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 69–70; Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, 51–54.

46 Hoyt Long provides a thorough discussion of Miyazawa’s handling of his own literary production within the specific socio-historical environment of early twentieth-century Japan. Long, *On Uneven Ground*, chapter 3.

Onomatopoeia in this story signals the existence of extralingual non-human semiosis beyond human systems of signification, suggesting the presence of signs that exceed human representation. While onomatopoeia is undoubtedly part of human language, Miyazawa's use of it gestures toward a realm of signs unbound by human signifying practices. Such a realm arguably eludes human, linguistic capture, as humans may be unable—or unwilling—to register extralingual signs as meaningful. Nevertheless, this does not imply that signs are exclusive to humans. I read Miyazawa's distinctive depiction of the unspeaking pig as his style for modelling what Jacques Derrida posits as a "network of possibilities"—a phrase by which Derrida refers to the "mark in general, of the trace, of iterability, of *différance*", whose "possibilities or necessities, without which there would be no language, *are themselves not only human*".⁴⁷ Derrida's observation resonates with Eduardo Kohn's investigation into extralinguistic signs that operate beyond human semantics. To attend to non-human lifeforms, Kohn argues, "we need to provincialize language" and observe how nonhumans represent the world, because "signs are not exclusively human affairs. All living beings sign."⁴⁸ Read in light of such contemporary accounts of multispecies semiosis, Miyazawa's representation of the pig through silence and onomatopoeia emerges as the writer's attempt to capture the nonhuman as extralinguistically as humanly possible, using the tools available to him, that is, language itself.

The text employs onomatopoeia from the outset, though its use becomes more pronounced once the pig signs the consent form and thereby his own death sentence. As noted above, from that point onward, readers are no longer granted direct access to the pig's speech or interiority. The text thus brings into relief two distinct states of the pig—speaking and unspeaking—corresponding to the periods before and after the signing. As a result, onomatopoeic expressions describing the pig come to assume greater interpretive weight after their loss of language, functioning as a primary source of information through which readers apprehend how the pig exists within

47 Derrida, "Eating Well", 284–85.

48 Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 39; 42.

the human world. In this context, Miyazawa's use of onomatopoeia unfolds as if searching for possible ways of imagining and engaging with extralinguistic modes of existence, while simultaneously acknowledging the limitations of human language itself.

The transition from the speaking to the unspeaking state unfolds in the following sequence, immediately after the pig delivers his final speech and signs the form:

"Where should I sign?" asked the pig, crying.

"Right here. Just under your name," said the principal, staring at the pig's little eyes through his glasses. The pig *nervously* [びくびく *bikubiku*] screwed up his mouth to one side, lifted his short right front hoof *stiffly* [きくと *kikutto*], and then pressed it down *firmly* [ピタリと *pitarito*].⁴⁹

Note the three expressions, "nervously", "stiffly", and "firmly"; the original Japanese words are onomatopoeic descriptors that capture the pig's movement and demeanour. These terms do not necessarily illuminate the pig's emotional or cognitive state; rather, they articulate the specificity of the pig's actions and bodily comportment within the scene in relation to the surrounding objects and conditions.

This pattern of representation recurs throughout the text. The pig resists force-feeding by "flailing *violently* (ばたばた *batabata*)" and attempts to ward off his impending death by "*banging* (ゴツゴツ *got-sugotsu*) his head against the planks of the pen".⁵⁰ On the day of slaughter, the pig is compelled to undergo a series of preparatory steps, and his responses to each step are rendered through onomatopoeic description: when pushed out of the pigpen, he "panted *heavily* (はあはあ *hāhā*)"; when whipped, he "*barely* (やうやう *yōyō*) managed to walk out"; when washed in a bath, the coldness "bit into every part of his body *with a shiver* (ぞくぞく *zokuzoku*)"; when the bathing ends, his empty stomach "made *a rumbling sound* (ゴウゴウ

49 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 332. Emphasis added.

50 Miyazawa, "Furandon", 333; 335. Emphasis added. All further quotations in this paragraph refer to pp. 335 and 336.

gōgō) like a storm” while a “penetrating sound (しんしん *shinshin*) began to ring in his head”; pushed about by humans, the pig “puffed out his cheeks, *gasping for breath* (はあはあ *hāhā*)”, and “began to walk, *listlessly* (ぐたっぐたっと *gutaggutatto*)”, with resignation. The pig’s final moments before execution proceed as follows:

The pig *flicked* [ちらっと *chiratto*] his head up and suddenly saw an intense white light *flash* [ピカッと *pikatto*], scattering sparks like fireworks throughout the sky before his eyes. From there, hundreds, thousands, hundreds of millions of red sparks shot out to the sides like spouts of water. A sharp, piercing [キーンと *kīnto*] sound rang out above his head. A torrent of water *gushed out* [ごうごう *gōgō*] on all sides. [...]

The pig lay at his [the stockbreeding teacher’s] feet. He let out two *sniffing noises* [クンクンと *kunkunto*] and then went completely *still* [じっと *jitto*], as I remember.⁵¹

Presumably, the pig’s head is smashed open by the stockbreeding teacher, and the scene describes how the pig experiences the process of his own death. Once again, we are not given access to what the pig says or thinks at this moment. What we do know of the pig—how he senses his surroundings and moves within them—emerges through the onomatopoeia-laden narration about the pig existing in the situation, as recollected by the narrator.

In this section of the story, onomatopoeia plays a crucial role in conveying the pig’s ways of being. While these onomatopoeic expressions do not substantially alter the sequence of events, they attach vivid perceptual texture to our reading experience and afford a glimpse of how the pig responds to, interacts with, and is acted upon by the things surrounding him, as he is dying as an unspeaking, yet sentient, lifeform. In this sense, these instances of onomatopoeia compare what Kohn terms the “sonic image”, namely, that which “sonically convey[s] an image of how an action unfolds in the world”.⁵²

51 Miyazawa, “Furandon”, 337. Emphasis added.

52 Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 30–31.

Drawing on Charles Peirce's formulation, Kohn understands the "sonic image" — and, by extension, onomatopoeic expressions that share resemblance with their objects — as an "iconic" mode of reference (a sign that signifies by virtue of similarity, simulating the object in itself). The iconic is positioned as distinct from "indexical" (signs that point to objects through a knowable, physical connection), and "symbolic" (signs arbitrarily representing objects in relation to other signs within an established system) modalities.⁵³ The distance between a sign and what it represents is shortest in the icon, evidential in the index, and nontraceable in the symbol. As a system of signification that depends on arbitrary, often nontraceable relations between sign and referent, human language relies heavily on symbols. While icons and indices also operate within the same semiotic system, humans tend to prioritize symbols as a uniquely human mode of representation and conflate language qua symbolic reference with representation itself.⁵⁴

Two points that Kohn raises regarding the anthropocentric postulation of signs are particularly important to my discussion. First, humans are not the only beings who communicate and represent their world through signs; nonhumans also form reciprocal relationships with their surroundings and represent those relationships, though not necessarily in symbolic, languagelike ways. In his example of the emergent relation between a palm tree falling in the forest, its iconic, onomatopoeic representation produced by a human observer, and a monkey interpreting and responding to the potentially life-threatening situation, Kohn illustrates what he calls the "living worldly nature of semiosis", or how living beings sign in less symbolic, more iconic and indexical modes.⁵⁵ Second, the three representational modalities of icons, indices, and symbols are not dissociated from one another but interrelated, as symbols are enabled by indices, and indices by icons. As Kohn explains, "[t]he semiosis of life is iconic and indexical. Symbolic reference, that which makes humans unique, is an emergent dynamic that is nested within this broader semiosis of

53 Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 31–32.

54 Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 39.

55 Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 34.

life from which it stems and on which it depends”.⁵⁶ The world, then, is saturated with nonsymbolic, extralinguistic forms of representation provided by humans and nonhumans alike, even as these forms are often dismissed or overlooked by humans. Kohn thus urges us to be more attentive to these other semiotic modalities — iconic and indexical, not always symbolic, nor necessarily human-focused — that permeate the world, in order to reimagine multispecies relations beyond the human–nonhuman dualism.

I propose to approach Miyazawa’s use of onomatopoeia through the lens of Kohn’s work. As the pig nears the end of his life, the text relocates his outside the symbolic use of language. This textual turn deprives readers of a means of understanding the pig through symbolic language, redirecting our attention to less symbolic, more iconic, onomatopoeic expressions that register the pig’s way of being during his final walk toward death. In this context, onomatopoeia opens a window onto a world that emerges before, is experienced by, and may even be represented by the unspeaking pig — a realm less constrained by the symbolic mode of representation.

One might object to my suggestion: these onomatopoeic words, be they “flicking (ちらっと *chiratto*)” or “gushing (ごうごう *gōgō*)”, approximate particular patterns of sound, appearance, and sensation that are observed, conventionalized, and hence mediated by humans in symbolic language. As Derek Attridge maintains, “[o]nomatopoeia does not lead us into a realm of direct and concrete significance”, because “we remain firmly held within an already existing system of rules and conventions, and whatever mimetic capability the sequences have they owe entirely to this fact”.⁵⁷ The chirping of birds, the meowing of cats, and the barking of dogs, for example, are onomatopoeic, imitating the sounds these living creatures make. Yet it goes without saying that onomatopoeic representations of such sounds vary across languages. Unless one is already familiar with both the sound and its onomatopoeic rendering within a given signification system, onomatopoeia does not properly function. The

⁵⁶ Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 55.

⁵⁷ Attridge, *Peculiar Language*, 138.

unspeaking pig's demeanour, onomatopoeically represented, is interpretable only because each onomatopoeic expression in the text does not exceed conventional usage. It is therefore fair to say that Miyazawa's onomatopoeia has semantic value and is part and parcel of the established human semiotic system of symbols.

I do not disagree about the still-symbolic quality residing in onomatopoeia. Yet I would respond to such a claim by qualifying the unique linguistic function onomatopoeia serves, that is, what Attridge posits as onomatopoeia's "intensified referentiality".⁵⁸ A successful case of onomatopoeia, particularly a lexical kind functioning as a simulative word with a set semantic value, marks not a "simple relationship of imitation or resemblance" but a "momentary and surprising reciprocal relationship established between phonetic and semantic properties, a mutual reinforcement that intensifies *both* aspects of language".⁵⁹ With sound and semantics sensitizing each other's effects, lexical onomatopoeia appeals to reader's sensory perceptions and incites physical — muscular, oral, visual, rhythmic, and so forth — reactions beyond our mental recognition of the word's symbolic aspect. In Miyazawa's text, for instance, when reading about liquid "gushing" (ごうごう *gōgō*) out the side of the pig, we cannot help but have a visceral reaction — we visualize red blood spurting from the pig's head and hear, or even pronounce, the repeated sound "*gōgō*" — even as what we actually experience is a word written on the flat surface of paper. With such referential intensity, onomatopoeia prompts us to invest experientially in the words provided in the text, perhaps more strongly than in other linguistic elements.

This means that onomatopoeia has the capacity to pull us into language itself, enabling the perception that we are in closer contact with the things and phenomena depicted and are sensorily and physically experiencing them. In this instance, the word written on the page becomes readers' perception and experience itself. Attridge explains this process as follows: Onomatopoeia, when effectively composed, gives rise to "a heightened experience of language *as language*":

58 Attridge, *Peculiar Language*, 135; 153.

59 Attridge, *Peculiar Language*, 151.

language in the act of *producing meaning* and thereby momentarily fusing the abstractness of *langue* and the concreteness of *parole*, the ahistoricity of the system and the historicity of this moment in time, the shared social convention upon which language depends and the individuality of my vocal activities as I speak these words.⁶⁰

In other words, onomatopoeia gains its effect by annihilating the distance between a conventional sign and a particular referent and, in so doing, brings the act of signing itself to the fore.

Attridge's point about lexical onomatopoeia and its workings brings us back to Kohn's discussion of iconic signs, those that represent objects in themselves. Both scholars identify a moment in which the distance between sign and referent appears to vanish within a particular mode of representation. Such nondistance is, of course, illusory, and it remains the case that the perception and experience enabled by iconic, onomatopoetic signs comes into being only through the human system of signification. Yet it is precisely because onomatopoeia accomplishes this illusory effect of nondistance as part of language, housed within human signification systems, that it can bring us to the edge of the institutions of human signs, impel us to encounter the intensity of signification itself, and afford a potential vision of how signing might be done otherwise, beyond human language.

All the onomatopoetic expressions Miyazawa incorporates in "The Pig of the Furandon Agricultural School" are lexical, conventional ones. The author could have invented neologisms to communicate the pig's predicament in a more sensational way, but he did not choose that path. This text, in other words, is designated to operate within the boundaries of human signification systems and the existing lexicon of contemporary Japanese. While remaining within these conventions, Miyazawa's use of onomatopoeia invigorates the relationships among different modalities of signing, from icons to symbols. The words he selects capture the pig, who is capable of

60 Attridge, *Peculiar Language*, 152.

handling symbolic signs yet placed outside human signification systems, and is still navigating the world, though in a less language-focused way. These words have little symbolic value, and precisely because of that, they counter the symbolic use of language familiar to humans and help to question human exceptionalism. Through these effects, the text pushes us to envision signs that are not necessarily human.

Conclusion

Miyazawa's story, in continuing to portray the disenfranchised pig as unspeaking while still displaying certain forms of signing, offers a powerful case of obligate storytelling. If, as Marran observes, obligate storytelling records a "palimpsest through the voices and materials involved in the story",⁶¹ Miyazawa's text constitutes one such archive; it accumulates varied types of sound that come from the pig's physical organs, be they recognizable human speech or indistinct noise, and takes note of the diverse ways that he comports his body and responds to his surroundings. As a palimpsest, the text registers the pig's ontology—how he exists and remains relevant to this world even without human speech.

Miyazawa uses language to represent the nonhuman animal despite the anthropocentrism inscribed in it. He does so in such a way that human language emerges as a signification system with which he illuminates multiple relations—ones between the nonhuman animal and human characters, between the nonhuman animal and human language, and between how the animal uses human language and how the human perceives such usage. These relations help us not only discern the limitations of an exclusively human conception of language but also conjecture about signs that do not necessarily resemble or function as symbolic language. As we explore possibilities of signing otherwise, we may be able to use human language not to emphasize or dismiss differences between humans and nonhumans but to envision ways of being connected through those very differences. Such a possibility is both urgent and important for

61 Marran, *Ecology without Culture*, 36.

contemporary readers, especially literary scholars, as we seek to remain attentive to how we conduct language-based analysis and to consider how human language might engage with broader forms of nonhuman semiosis.

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